How to grow your Return on Resilience

A strategy for winning now and next

Accenture Strategy

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Table of contents

Resilience has become one of the top priorities for chief executive officers. Yet few of them treat resilience as a powerful driver of future growth.

They should.

The definition of "resilience" has changed. Today, turning resilience into a competitive advantage is less about managing risk and more about sustaining high performance through continuous reinvention and balanced investments. In fact, our research shows resilience has become an important source of revenue growth and profitability, especially over the long term. Highly resilient companies can expect to grow their revenues six percentage points faster than their peers and have profit margins that are eight percentage points higher.

To succeed in optimizing this Return on Resilience, business leaders must balance their investments across six capabilities. As they do, they should emphasize strengthening their organization's talent and technology capabilities, as well as their own personal resilience. These actions all play a role in positioning resilience as a true and sustainable competitive advantage.

Introduction

In today's highly volatile world, resilience calls for much more than a business continuity plan. Anticipating and managing risk, diversifying supply chains and enhancing agility are all necessary for resilience, but they are no longer sufficient. Today, resilience requires capabilities that go beyond ensuring stability to driving long-term profitable growth. Capabilities that enable companies to achieve, sustain and even predict future performance. Capabilities that serve as a catalyst for reinvention.

Reinvention is a deliberate strategy that aims to set a new performance frontier for organizations and the industries in which they operate. Companies looking to activate such a strategy must be resilient. This means more than effectively managing risks or surviving disruptions. It means balancing investments across six distinct capabilities to achieve and sustain profitable growth across business cycles, through good times and bad. In this regard, resilience is a cornerstone of a company's ability to continuously reinvent.

This new perspective—seeing resilience for what it truly is: a powerful driver of sustained future performance and core to reinvention—changes everything. CEOs need to think about how they can measure resilience, invest in it with confidence and use it to create and maintain a competitive edge.

Our findings reveal that wise and continuous balanced investments in resilience address all these imperatives. Importantly, they produce a tangible Return on Resilience (RoRes), which takes the form of enhanced revenue growth and profitability, particularly over the long haul. This is particularly apparent among companies that score highest on the Accenture Resilience Index (and are, therefore, the most resilient). These resilient leaders of today are set to achieve three years from now, on average, a compound annual revenue growth rate (CAGR) that is six percentage points higher than their industry peers and profit margins that are eight percentage points higher.[1]

What is the Accenture Resilience Index?
A framework to evaluate companies' performance and uncover the link between the strength of their capabilities and their ability to grow profitably. The index captures a company's percentile position within its industry peer set along the following dimensions: financial strength, business strength (which includes strengths associated with Sales, Talent, Global Operations, and Sustainability/ESG) and technology strength. A company's overall Resilience Index score is the average of its financial, business and technology strength.

How can companies optimize their Return on Resilience? The first step is to objectively assess their current level of resilience, identifying relative strengths and areas for improvement. Then the real work begins. We have identified three actions that can help ensure that resilience is embedded across the organization as a driver of growth and CEO-led. Companies that adopt these strategies not only enhance their ability to thrive amid short-term disruptions, but also set themselves up to attain and sustain long-term success.

A company's Return on Resilience (RoRes) is defined as its expected revenue growth and profit margin three years into the future and relative to revenue growth and profit margins of the average low-performing company in its industry.

* Unless otherwise indicated, all data and figures within this report are attributed to 2024 Accenture Research insights and analysis from the Accenture Resilience Index, which contains data from 1,615 global companies.

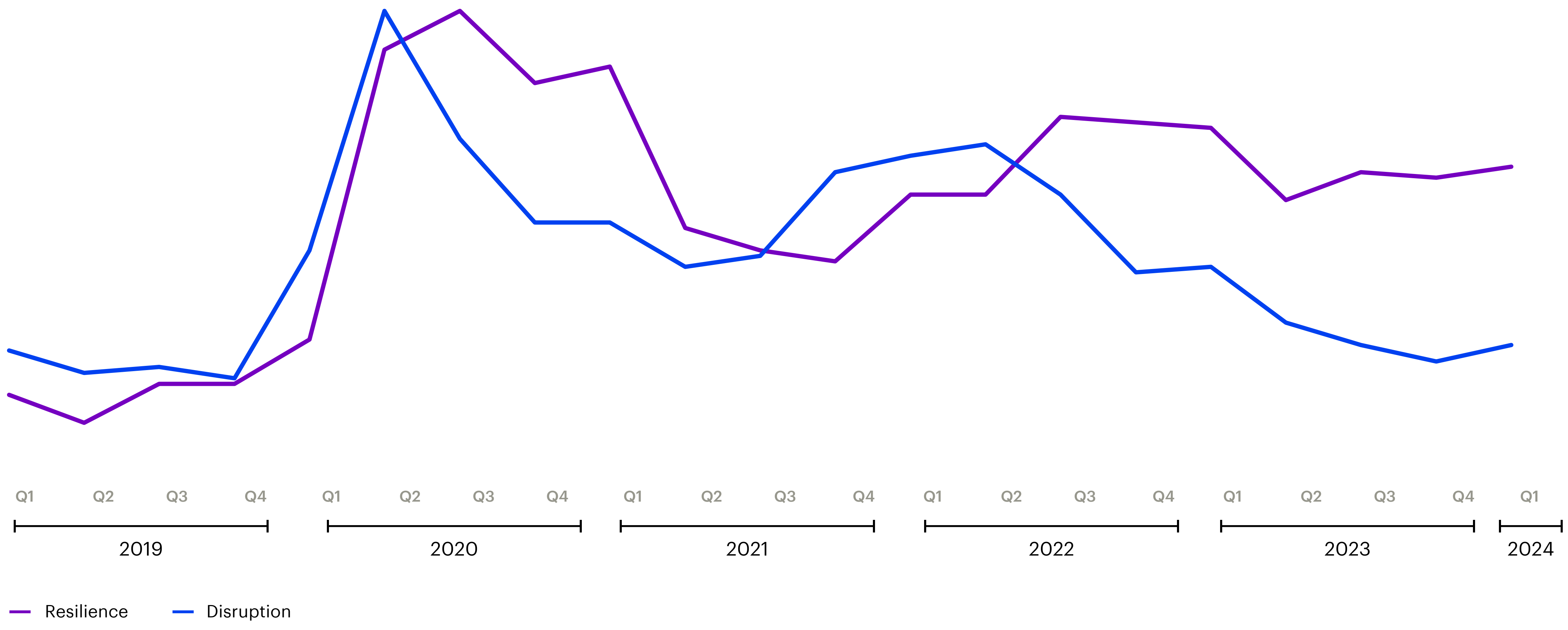
Leaders have become desensitized to the shock of constant change and consider resilience more than an antidote to disruption.

Resilience-related terms are mentioned twice as frequently on earnings calls than before the pandemic. In contrast, mentions of disruption (which peaked during the pandemic) have returned to 2019 levels (see **Figure 1**).

Figure 1

Mentions of resilience in earnings calls is higher than the pre-pandemic period

Relative frequency of the term "resilience" and "disruption" in earnings calls



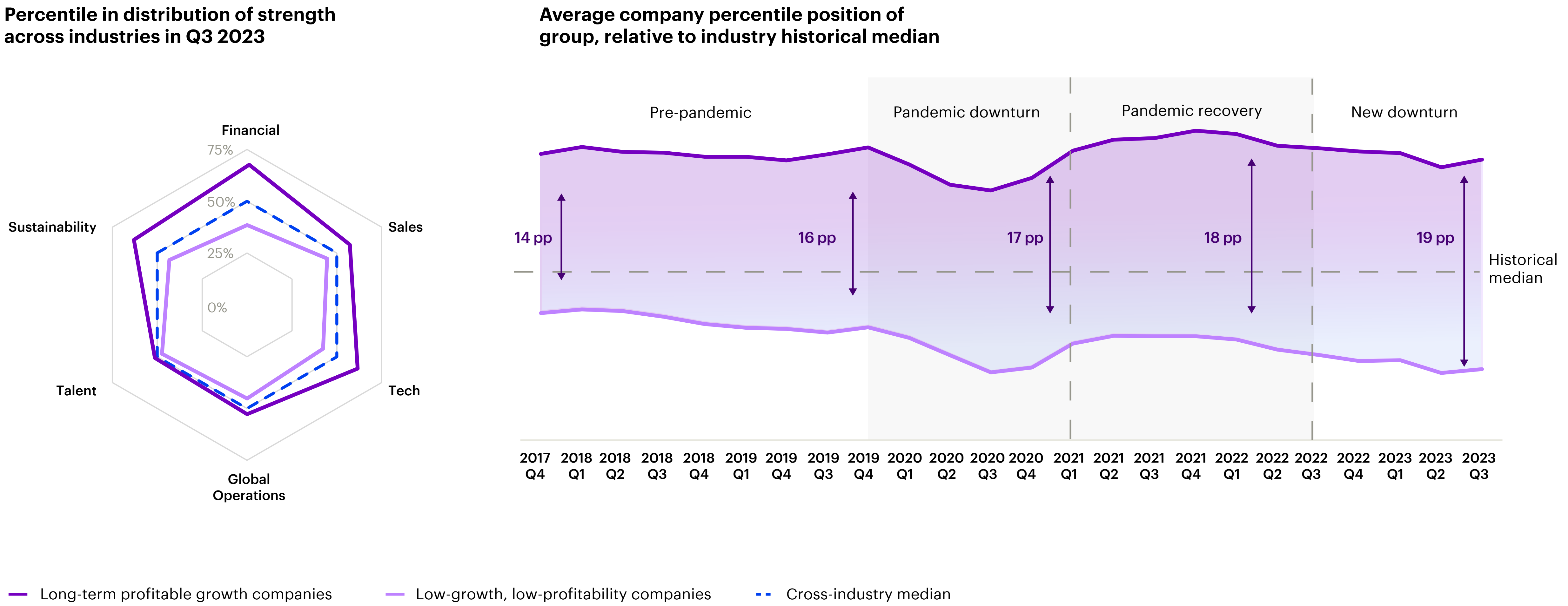
Source: AlphaSense, based on the earnings call reports of publicly traded companies with market cap > $0.1 billion published between Jan 2019 and Mar 2024.
The quarterly scores within a selected time period are normalized with a score of 100 assigned to the highest percentage within that time period.

Resilience is measurable. Predictable. And predictive.

Accenture's Resilience Index (RI) determines and quantifies resilience by assessing a company's strengths across six performance dimensions: financial, sales, technology, global operations, talent and sustainability (see About the Research). Our analysis finds that only 15% of companies have cracked the resilience code, outperforming their industry peers across all six performance measures (see **Figure 2**). These are the companies using resilience as an engine for growth.

Figure 2

Companies that achieve continuous superior growth exhibit strength in all resilience dimensions on the Resilience Index



Source: Accenture Research analysis of 1,615 global public companies.

In 2023, we found companies that had a high RI score—and were, therefore, more resilient—were also those exhibiting long-term profitable growth. When we applied machine learning algorithms to the previous four quarters of companies' performance, we saw that our Resilience Index successfully classified companies into the correct performance tiers 80% of the time.

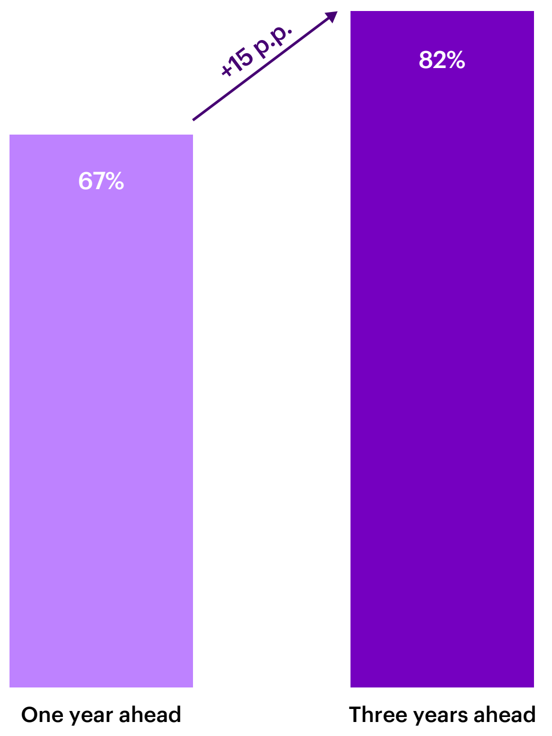
In 2024, we've gone one step farther. Now, we are able to see that RI performance is also an early indicator of future financial performance. Specifically, our index predicts future performance in one year's time with 67% accuracy. That predictive accuracy rises to 82% when looking three years ahead (see **Figure 3**). This increase in accuracy over time suggests a strong connection between companies' index scores and their ability to sustain high financial performance in the medium to long term.

Figure 3

Accenture's Resilience Index accurately predicts financial performance

Prediction success rate of the Accenture Resilience Index for high performers

Prediction success increases in accuracy over longer time horizons



Source: Accenture Research analysis of 1,615 global public companies.

Growing your Return on Resilience matters. Higher resilience predicts better financial outcomes.

Return on Resilience captures the potential of achieving and sustaining profitable growth by strengthening resilience across functional capabilities, systems and people.

By wisely investing in resilience, companies can multiply by a factor of four the chances of sustaining financial performance three years from now. As previously mentioned, the most resilient companies can expect to achieve revenue CAGR of six percentage points and eight percentage points of profit margin over their less resilient industry competitors. The potential impact of this Return on Resilience is huge. For the average company in our sample with high financial performance—which reports $7 billion in revenue, 14.3% in revenue growth and 23.1% in profit margins—these differential returns translate into an additional expected value of $420 million and $704 million in revenues and profits per year, respectively.

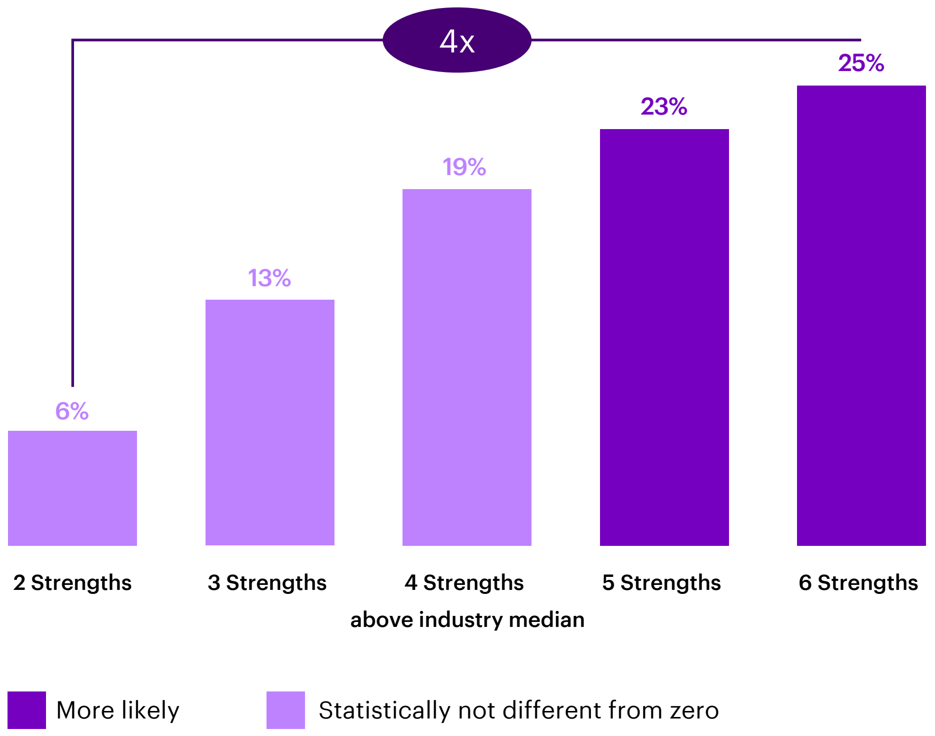
This all begs the question: What constitutes wise investments? The answer: those that target the financial, business and technology dimensions of resilience and balance investments across all three. Such investments significantly increase the chances of a company staying in a leadership position. Moreover, the greater number of RI capabilities that a company invests in, the greater the chances of that company sustaining high performance (see **Figure 4**).

Figure 4

RI strength enables companies to grow their Return on Resilience

Return on Resilience (RoRes) – Expected payoff of sustaining performance in the next 3 years

Increased likelihood of sustaining high financial performance (HFP) over the next 3 years



Most resilient companies deliver maximum RoRes

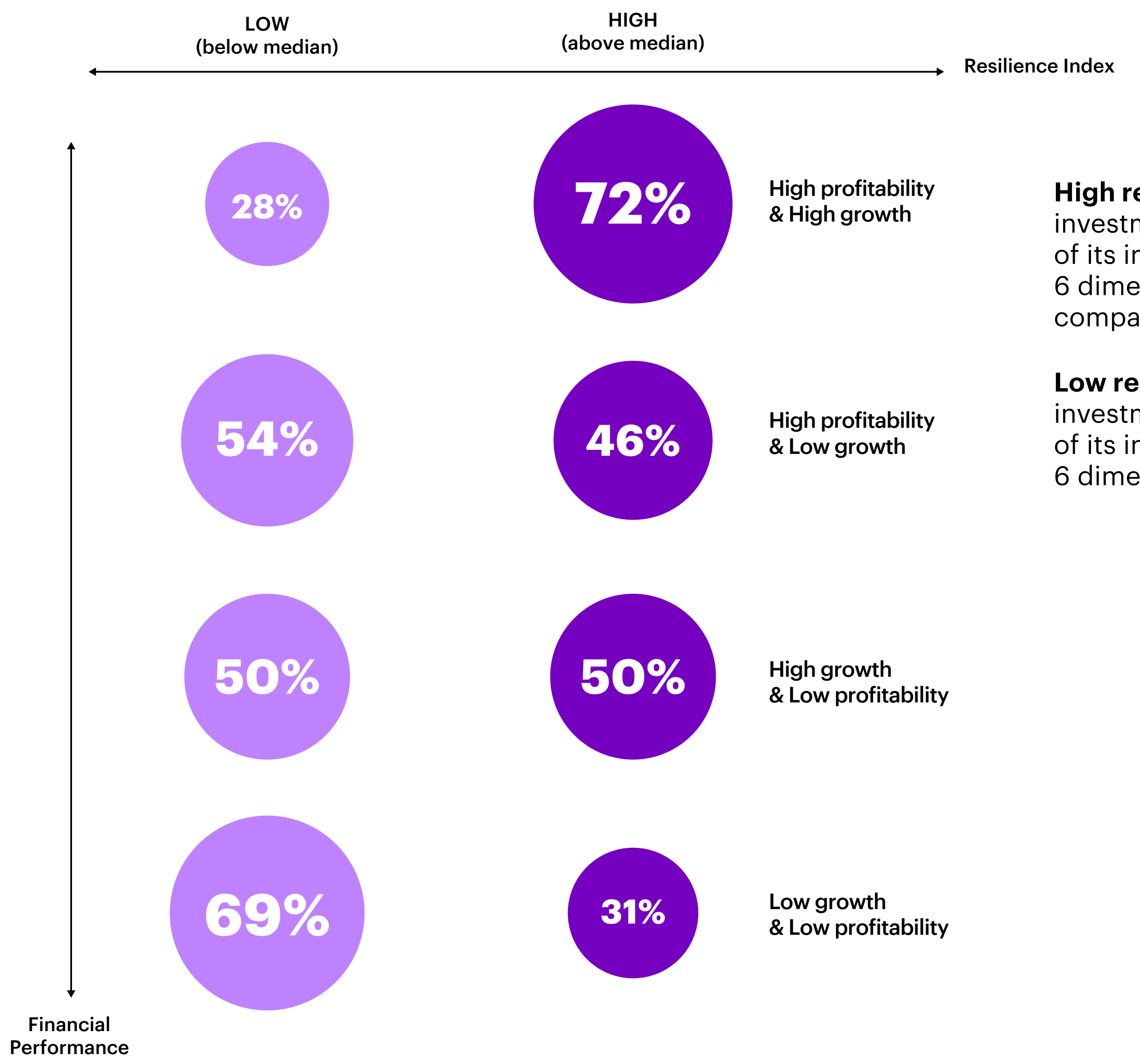
RoRes of highly resilient companies	**3.2%** 2y rev CAGR	**6.1%** Profit margin
RoRes of least resilient companies	**-2.6%** 2y rev CAGR	**-1.5%** Profit margin
RoRes premium	**5.8 pps**	**7.6 pps**

RoRes = likelihood of HFP x (high growth/margin) + likelihood of LFP x (low growth/margin)

Source: Accenture Research analysis of 1,615 global public companies.

Figure 5

28% of companies that are growing profitably today are under-investing in resilience



High resilience score implies investment above median of its industry across the 6 dimensions that build company resilience.

Low resilience score implies investment below median of its industry across the 6 dimensions of resilience.

Source: Accenture Research analysis of 1,615 global public companies.

In fact, having just four or fewer capability strengths renders insignificant results three years ahead. That means that companies need to build strengths in five or more RI dimensions to increase their chance of sustaining long-term performance across disruptive business cycles.

Companies that are doing financially well today but are not growing their investments in resilience will struggle to preserve their position. Our research shows that 28% of companies that are growing profitably are under-investing in resilience relative to their industry peers. As a result, their chances of sustaining high performance in the future is four times lower than their peers. Conversely, almost a third of companies (31%) showing low growth and profitability are investing more than their peers in resilience. These companies may very well leapfrog to the top quartile of financial performance going forward (see **Figure 5**).

A winning approach to resilience

Business leaders have long looked to unlock resilience, often focusing on a single intervention such as adopting a cloud-based infrastructure, fortifying operations, or building resilience into their supply chain. While all are important, what we've learned is that creating resilience is a multi-faceted undertaking, requiring companies to think about resilience holistically instead of as a series of point interventions. Like the way we think about one's personal health… exercise, eating well, getting enough sleep, or stress reduction. Each of these actions may produce benefits, but they won't in isolation make someone healthy. And while certain combinations can have an outsized positive impact, what's needed is a holistic approach, with multiple interventions sustained over time.

We found that all of the high performers in our study focus on building a strong foundation of financial discipline. Furthermore, nearly two-thirds of them (62%) exhibit above-average strengths in technology. This is by design. Leaders are recognizing that investments in technology are increasingly essential to achieve resilience and reinvention, who in addition to establishing new ways of working and a culture of continuous innovation, our research has found that reinventors see a strong digital core as a primary source of competitive advantage.

But a focus on financial solvency or technical prowess simply isn't enough. Companies that focus their investments in new technologies, for example, often under-emphasize other capabilities such as talent or operating processes that are needed to unlock technology's full potential. For them, the lack of investment balance among the resilience capabilities can devalue the substantial investment in their digital core.

On this, our research findings are clear: Investing in one or even a few dimensions of resilience may help companies achieve high performance and ultimately positions them well for reinvention.

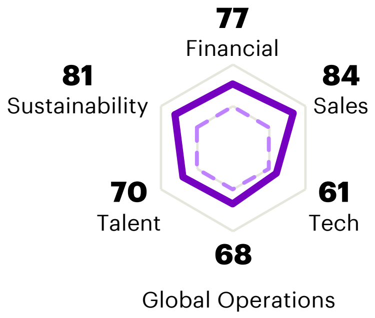
But sustaining that performance requires a perfectly balanced set of strengths across all RI dimensions.

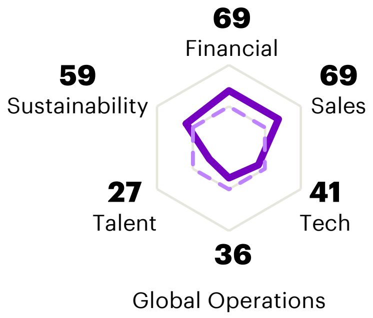
In fact, companies on that path enjoy a higher RoRes of 5.8% in revenues compared with 2.9% for companies opting to heavily invest in a single RI dimension (see **Figure 6**). These leaders stand out because they consider all dimensions necessary to thrive in good and bad times.

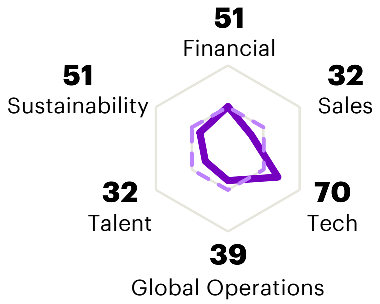
Figure 6

Balancing and sustaining investments across all RI dimensions delivers the greatest Return on Resilience

	Balanced strength across all dimensions	Uneven strength		Singular strength
Number of Companies	**58**	**61**	**61**	**43**
Likelihood of sustaining high financial performance in 3yr (vs low performers becoming high performers)	**3.7x**	**3.8x**	**3.4x**	**3.2x**
RoRes– Expected revenue growth difference vs low performance industry median (profit margin difference)	**5.8%** (7.6%)	**4.13%** (6.6%)	**4.8%** (6.9%)	**2.9%** (6.6%)







Average scores on RI dimensions — Industry median

Source: Accenture Research analysis of 1,615 global public companies.

Optimizing the Return on Resilience

Leaders who want to optimize their Return on Resilience should consider the following:

1. Focus on early warning signals today to help weather the storms of tomorrow

In the same way that a training regimen is crafted with a clear finish line in view, forging resilience returns demands foresight and a view to the desired end state. Being attuned to early warning signals and identifying the associated capability gaps and target investments to close those gaps begins to shift the focus to a resilient future state.

The correct combination of capabilities and investments is essential. While the actions to build resilience will differ from one company to the next, investment across the three dimensions of financial, business and tech—and sustaining those investments over time—enable companies to thrive. In fact, our research shows that companies that are not high performers can double their chances to achieve top performance by balancing their investments in resilience and preserving their investments year after year.

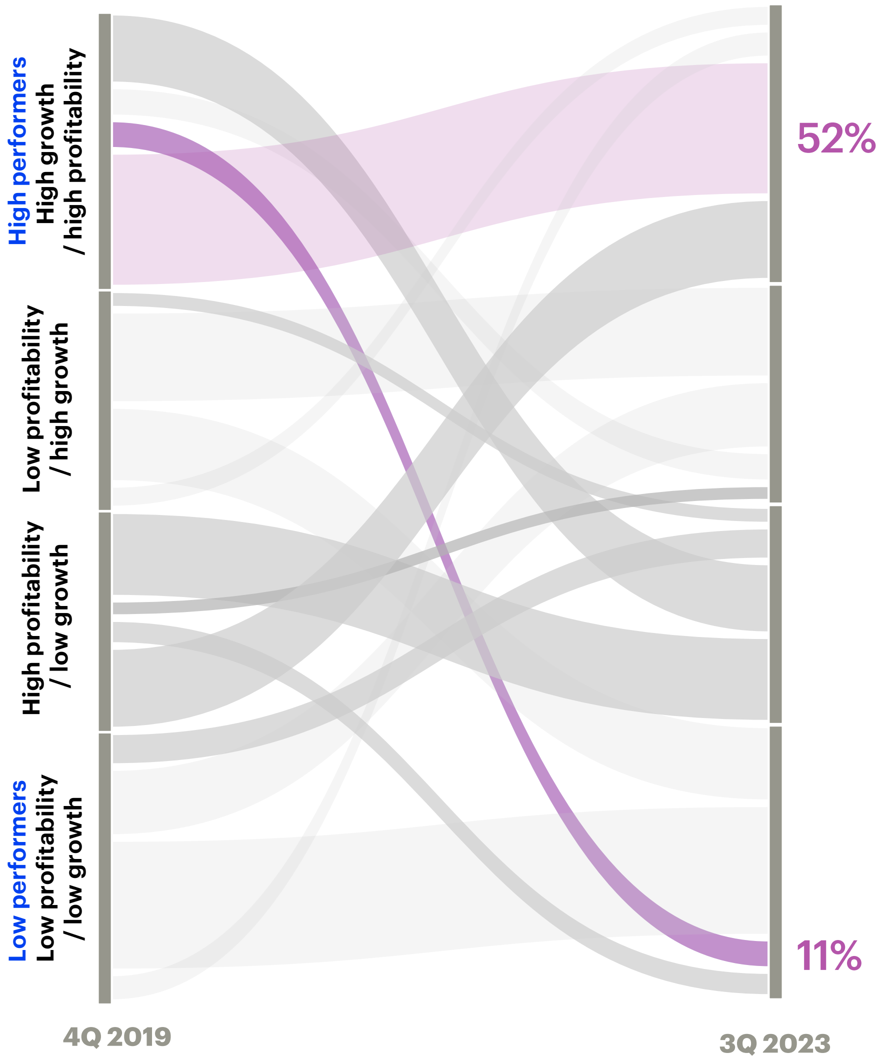
Consider this: Over the past four years, 52% of highly resilient companies have been able to stay in the top tier of performance, but 11% saw their fortunes reverse. (see **Figure 7**). These companies, now experiencing low growth and low profitability, grew weaker in their financial and sales capabilities. In effect, they lost sight of the need for balance and then failed to see the threat that uneven patterns of resilience investments posed. Without vigilance, high-performing companies will be at risk of falling behind. Investment consistency is key.

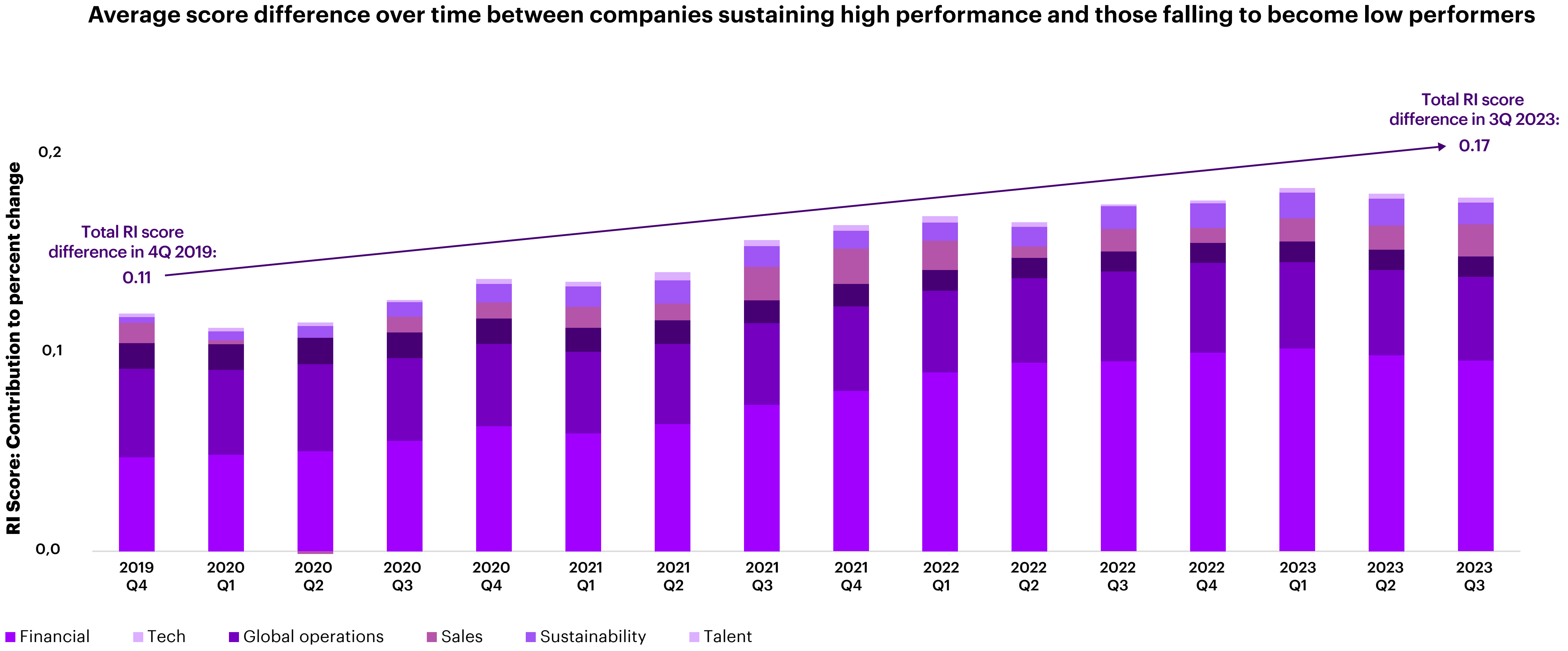
Next steps:

- Define and assess the resilience of your organization
- Identify gaps in the resilience dimensions that will deliver long-term profitable growth
- Invest in a balanced set of capabilities—and commit to sustaining those investments over time

Figure 7

Performance is not guaranteed. Balanced investments in resilience must be maintained over time





Source: Accenture Research analysis of 1,615 global public companies

Case Study

A balanced approach to business—and resilience

An American energy infrastructure company has aligned its business portfolio to address the long-term macroeconomic environment. That means it has divested non-core assets to streamline operations and is now prioritizing safety, climate and clean energy infrastructures.

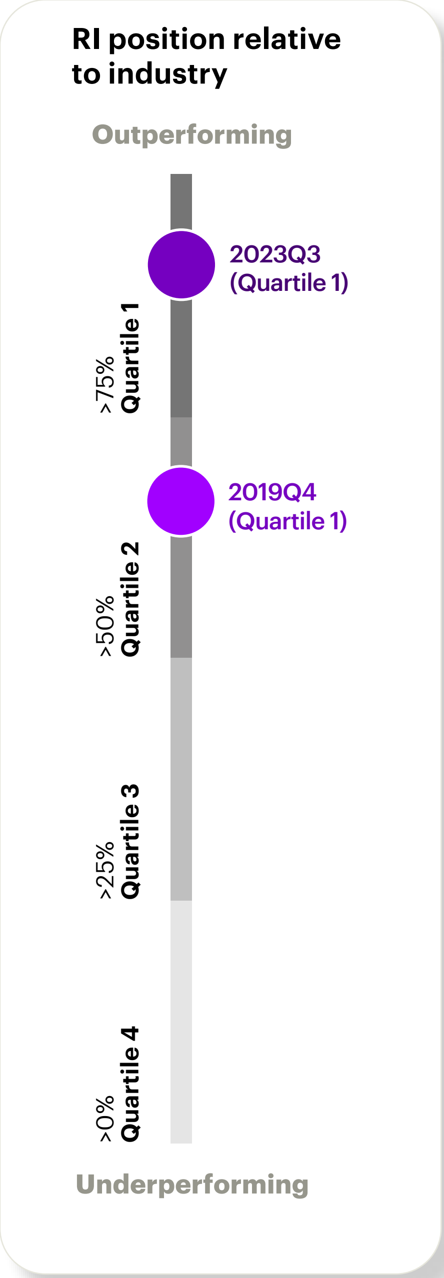
As it strengthens these areas of its business, the company is also building a number of its resilience capabilities. For example, the company's cost-saving measures have increased efficiency and reduced expenses, while investments in renewable energy projects have allowed it to diversify its revenue streams and capitalize on market trends. In these ways, it is improving its financial dimension of resilience.

When it comes to strengthening its sustainability and global operations dimensions of resilience, it has made substantial investments in energy infrastructure. It is expanding its subsidiaries' energy storage capabilities, investing in new talent to pioneer hydrogen energy infrastructure solutions, and implementing microgrid projects to enhance grid reliability.

Most recently, the company has launched new products and energy management tools to help customers monitor and optimize their energy usage. Technology investments play a key role. The company, for example, leveraged data analytics and artificial intelligence to optimize energy forecasting, grid operations and customer targeting.

The combination of these (and other) strengths allows the company to not only effectively navigate the evolving energy landscape, but also enter the future of energy with a clear focus on sustainable and profitable growth. Its balanced approach to investing has produced a Return on Resilience of 6.5 percentage points higher than its peers in revenue growth and 5.1 percentage points higher in profitability.

An energy infrastructure company strengthened its performance by strengthening its resilience capabilities



Likelihood of sustaining high performance: 4x (vs low performing peers)

RoRes-Revenues: 6.5 pps (vs peer median)

RoRes-Profits: 5.1 pps (vs peer median)

2. Tech, talent and TQ can be an unbeatable triple threat

Investing in all dimensions of resilience is important. But investments in technology and talent are particularly noteworthy because their benefits are multiplied when they are considered in tandem. It's not hard to understand why.

Resilience depends on a strong digital core. Technologies such as cloud, data and AI are critical to creating the flexibility and new ways of working that resilience requires. We found that companies that sustain their financial performance over time are more likely to be investing in the development of their digital core components, including AI and generative AI in particular.

But a focus on technology will only take a company so far. We found that it's the talent behind the tech—the human creativity, intuition and experience, as well as the technology quotient (TQ) of a company's Board of Directors—that unlocks its full potential. The combination of a strong digital backbone, a robust talent strategy and Board TQ amplifies the value.

The combination of technology and talent strengths is actually very rare. Just over a quarter of companies in our sample achieve it. These companies have a higher chance of sustaining high performance. Last year, we observed that companies that achieved high RI scores in technology and talent increased their probability of becoming a long-term profitable growth company by a factor of four. This year's analysis confirmed the power of the tech + talent combination. Companies pursing a balanced growth model are twice as likely than the average company to show this specific combination of strengths.

The tech + talent + TQ combination not only helps high-performing companies maintain their performance, but also plays an important role in helping under-performing companies leapfrog ahead. In this year's analysis, we found that companies with the best chance of rising to the top are 1.7x more likely to present this triple set of strengths.

> **Companies that exhibit a triple set of strengths in technology, talent and TQ have 1.7x greater chance of becoming top-tier financial performers.**

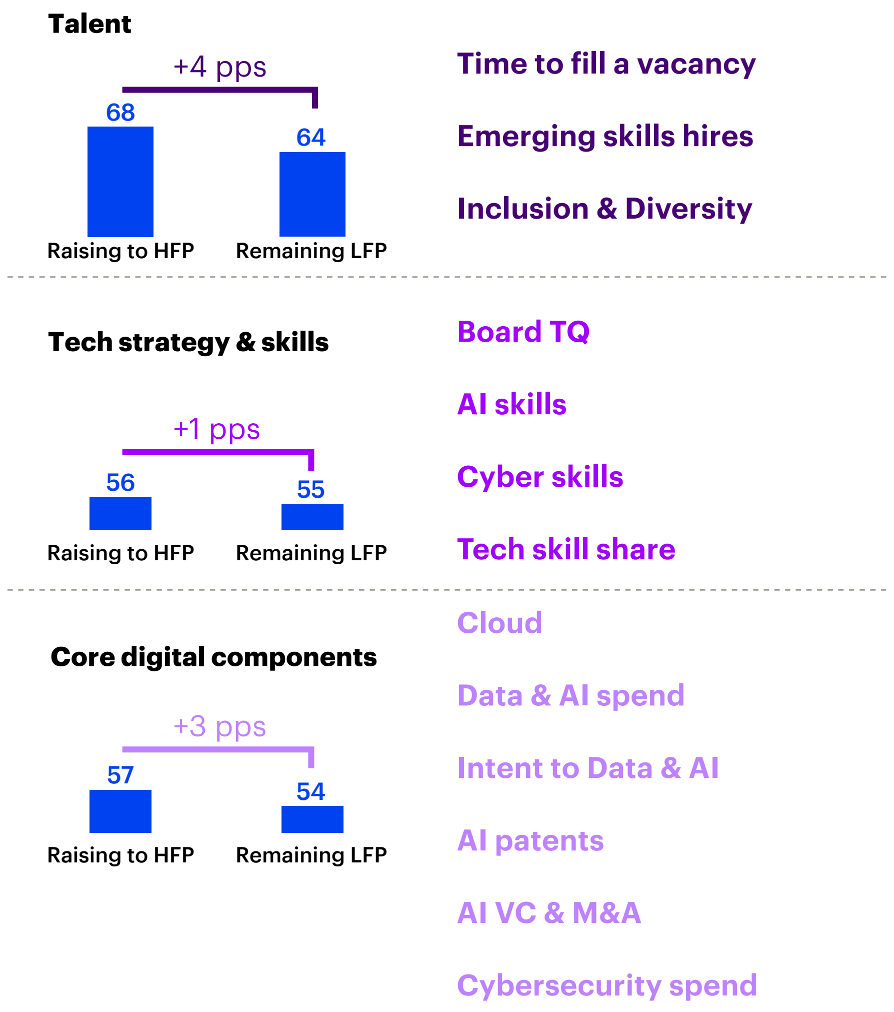
Next steps:

- Invest in strengthening two critical dimensions of resilience: talent and technology
- Increase your workforce's and your Board's TQ—especially when it comes to optimizing AI's value potential for the organization
- Invest in closing the AI gaps—and in empowering your workforce to use the technology for the greatest advantage

Figure 8

Achieving high financial performance requires investing in technology, talent and TQ

2019 Q4	**Of the 272 Low Financial Performing companies** (with highest potential to raise to the top)
2023 Q3	**71 companies raised**



Source: Accenture Research analysis of 1,615 global public companies.

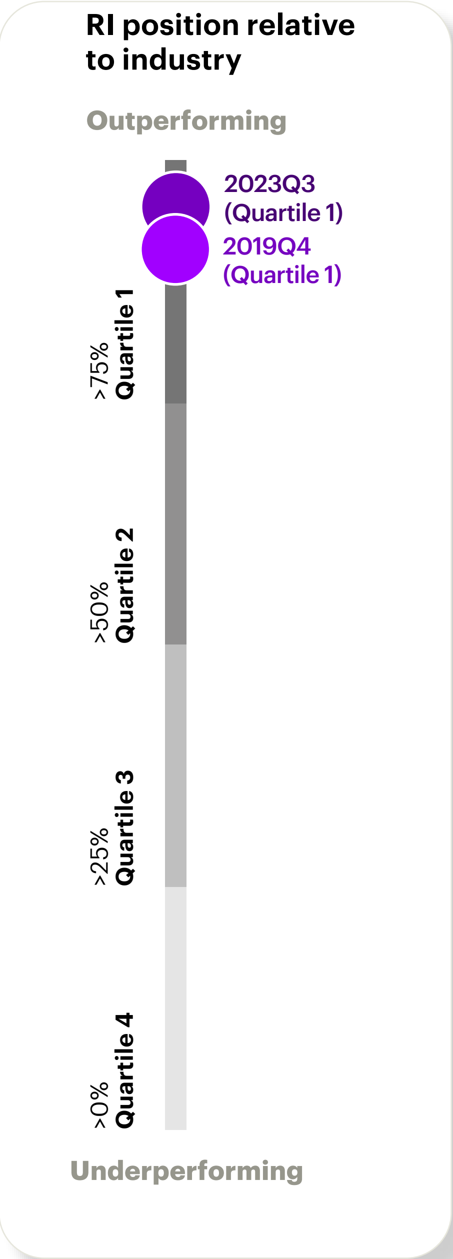
Case Study

AI leadership starts at the top

A multinational technology company has grown by becoming a dominant player in the world of AI, investing in cutting-edge technologies and R&D, and establishing strategic partnerships that continually expand its technical expertise. Its success is also due to the caliber of its technical talent, which is second to none. Its workers are building the future of AI today. But they aren't the only technical experts in the company. The company's vision is driven by senior executives and board members of the company who have a high technology quotient (TQ) and exceptional technical expertise. Even these technical experts are expected to take advantage of ongoing education and training opportunities to stay abreast of emerging technologies and industry trends.

In this way, the company is building its resilience from the top down and with a commitment to developing and supporting its technical talent. The strategy is paying off. The company has not only sustained, but improved, its top-tier performance among its industry peers. Its Return on Resilience stands at over 22.7 percentage points higher than its peers in revenue growth and 22.1 percentage points higher in profitability.

A high tech company's strengths in talent and technology are paying off



Likelihood of sustaining high performance: **4.2x** (vs low performing peers)

RoRes-Revenues: **22.7 pps** (vs peer median)

RoRes-Profits: **22.1 pps** (vs peer median)

3. Resilience is personal

CEOs can also steer the future course of their organizations by focusing on strengthening their personal resilience. Personal and organizational resilience are closely linked. Yet, building personal resilience can be tough. We found that 85% of leaders believe their personal resilience has been tested more in the past three years than any other time in their careers. And 68% admit to feeling unprepared to address disruptive events. When they aren't confident in their abilities to build personal resilience, it's understandable that they would be challenged to build it in their businesses. The good news is that leaders want to change: 90% agree that they would benefit from adopting more effective practices that grow their personal resilience. That, in turn, would have a marked effect on their ability to make their organizations more resilient, too.

The CEO's mindset can also influence the mindset and actions of employees. Our research shows that CEOs have a direct role in building worker resilience and mobilizing actions that enable long-term profitable growth. For example, 58% of workers believe their company's CEO directly impacts their personal resilience, and 67% of workers look to their CEO to determine how well their company can withstand disruption. In turn, highly resilient workers are 1.7x more likely to drive a highly resilient enterprise.

> **Highly resilient workers are 1.7x more likely to drive a highly resilient enterprise.**

To mobilize resilience throughout the enterprise, CEOs need to lead with purpose and by example. Workers who believe their CEO leads with purpose are 1.9x more likely to be highly resilient themselves. They also need to implement people-centric talent practices and omni-connected cultures that welcome, encourage and enable all employees to become more personally resilient.

When combined with a positive purpose, resilience is a powerful driver of culture. Leaders can play a critical role in creating a culture of achievement and ambition in several ways. For example, they can (and should) embody a "happy resilience" mindset. We believe it's likely that leaders who embrace resilience more joyfully and with a belief that building this capability can propel the entire organization forward tend to be more successful in their efforts. Why? Because their employees are happier. And their culture is strengthened by a clear vision that permeates the entire organization. "Happy resilience" in these circumstances is a galvanizing spark that produces superior returns.

Next steps:

- Assess your personal resilience and seek opportunities to strengthen it
- Lead with purpose
- Create a culture of resilience that permeates and inspires your workforce

Case Study

Purpose-driven growth

During the pandemic, many pharmaceutical companies focused on achieving short-term gains by shifting their portfolios to help prevent, treat or manage COVID-19-related illnesses. One industry player resisted that temptation. It stayed true to its purpose of making life better for people around the world by tackling health challenges in six specific areas.

By staying true to its purpose of focusing on defined treatment areas, the company saw its revenues pick up substantially since the pandemic subsided. It has maintained its top-quartile RI standing among its industry peers since 2019. Its Return on Resilience stands at 3.9 percentage points higher than its peers in terms of revenue and 7.4 percentage points higher in profitability.

A pharma company balances its strengths—and aligns them with its purpose

Likelihood of sustaining high performance: **4.2x** (vs low performing peers)

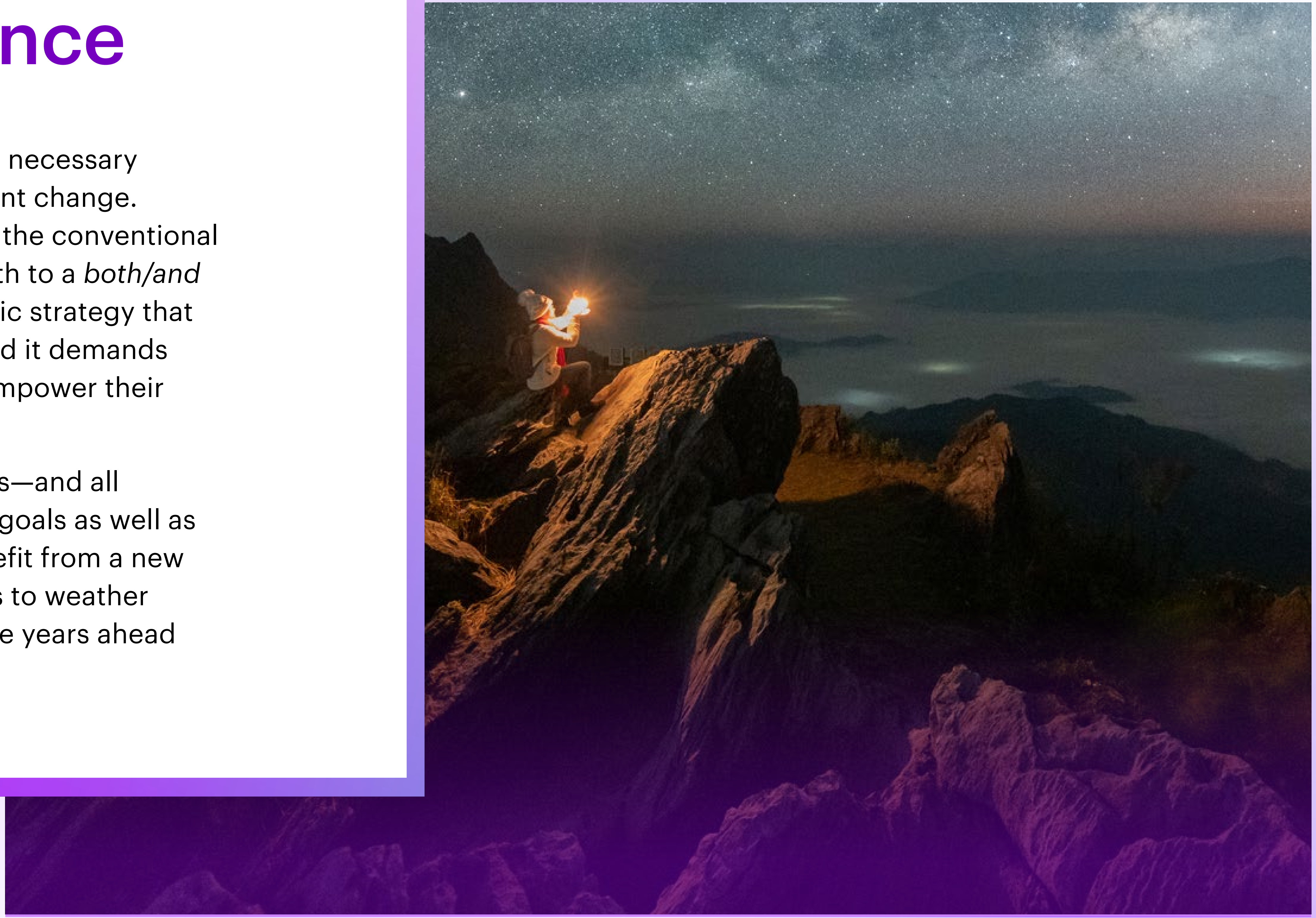
RoRes-Revenues: **3.9 pps** (vs peer median)

RoRes-Profits: **7.4 pps** (vs peer median)

Reimagine resilience

Returns on resilience are not only possible, but necessary in a world of heightened disruption and constant change. Optimizing returns requires leaders to reframe the conventional *either/or* tradeoff between resiliency and growth to a *both/and* mindset. It calls for leaders to embrace a holistic strategy that balances the right dimensions of resilience. And it demands that leaders pursue personal resilience—and empower their workforces to do the same.

This approach applies to all types of companies—and all types of leaders. Those focused on short-term goals as well as those looking for long-term resilience can benefit from a new mantra: Resilience not only enables companies to weather disruption, but also predicts performance in the years ahead and supercharges their future growth.



About the Research

What is the Resilience Index?

Accenture's Resilience Index offers a framework to evaluate company level performance across the functional value chain to uncover the link between the strength of its capabilities and its ability to grow profitably. We use this index to review the resilience of more than 1,600 companies operating across 18 industries globally. The quarterly time series from Q4 2017 to Q3 2023 was selected to assess and understand how these companies performed before, during and after a disruptive event (i.e., the COVID-19 pandemic) along financial, business and technology dimensions.

Dataset construction

Our model leverages outside-in data to construct a set of 25 indexes (0-100) reflecting a company's percentile position within its industry peer set along three macro-dimensions: financial strength, business strength—which includes strengths associated with Sales, Talent, Global Operations, and Sustainability (ESG)—and technology strength. The overall Resilience Index score is the average of financial, business and technology strength.

The Resilience Index scores are early signals of performance and structures across the following dimensions:

- **Financial solvency:** Ability to sustain a healthy balance sheet. We measure it through the Altman z-score.
- **Sales:** Ability to sustain and grow sales.
- **Technology:** Company's focus on talent technology quotient and core digital components—including Cloud, Data & AI and cybersecurity—as enablers of agility, innovation and trust.
- **Global operations:** Ability to balance risk exposure and cost efficiencies in global operations.
- **Talent:** Ability to attract and nurture the talent needed for the organization to thrive amidst disruption.
- **Sustainability:** Ability to embed environmental, social and governance (ESG) measures and practices across the organization.

The Resilience Index as a leading indicator of profitable growth

We tested the power of the index to classify companies into the profitable growth groups by training an XGBoost machine learning model on a four-quarter lag and trained over the post-pandemic period. The resulting model has an average classification success rate of 72% (+7pp vs 1 year ahead). It is most accurate in classifying long-term profitable growth companies in the long-term vs the short-term, with 82% and 67% success rates, respectively.

The Return on Resilience (RoRes)

We define the Return on Resilience of the company as the expected revenue growth and profit margin three years into the future and relative to revenue growth and profit margins of the average low performing company in the industry to which the company belongs to. Analytically, it is computed as the likelihood of belonging to a given performance segment three years into the future times the average performance (revenue growth or profit margin) of companies in that segment relative to the median company in the industry. The company is assumed to preserve its current financial performance relative to peers with a probability equal to staying in its current performance segment.

Profitable growth segmentation and pathways

We clustered companies into groups based on their capacity to grow profitably from 2019 till 2022. Profitable growth is defined as above-industry peer set median of both revenue growth and profit (EBIT) margins. For companies achieving profitable growth today, we distinguish between those that were already growing profitably in 2019 and those that weren't. We call the former group "long-term profitable growth companies." The latter group comprises the "emerging profitable growth companies." To understand resilience drivers behind these pathways, we compare the strength profiles of these groups with those of companies that stopped growing profitably for the former and those that continue to lack either above peer-set median revenue growth or profitability.

Models of Resilience

We use ML clustering techniques (k-means) within each of the pathway groups to classify companies into resilience models (clusters) that reflect the similarity of their scores across the dimensions of the index. We analyzed the evolution over time of the companies under each of these resilience models, which allowed us to gain insight into the profile strengths underpinning financial performance pathways.

Talent & Organization Pulse Survey

Accenture Research conducted a survey of 570 CEOs and 2,700 workers from organizations reporting $1B+ in annual revenue in September-October 2023. We conducted the surveys in 11 countries: Australia, Canada, Germany, France, India, Italy, Japan, Sweden, Singapore, the United Kingdom and the United States. Respondents operated in 10 industries: Banking, Insurance, Consumer Goods & Services, Communications & Media, Energy (Oil & Gas), Healthcare, High Tech, Public Service, Life Sciences, and Software & Platforms.

Enterprise resilience was measured by aggregating self-report ratings of the organization's ability to withstand disruption across the six dimensions identified in Accenture's Resilience Index. Personal human resilience was measured through a framework comprising five dimensions (emotional mastery, social synergy, wellness advocacy, purposeful anchor and agile thinking) and assessed via an adapted version of the Resilience at Work Scale published and validated in the academic literature.

References

1. Unless otherwise indicated, all data and figures within this report are attributed to 2024 Accenture Research insights and analysis from the Accenture Resilience Index, which contains data from 1,615 global companies.

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