



ARTICLE
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Breaking down the myths

What's really behind the decision paralysis
among European businesses?



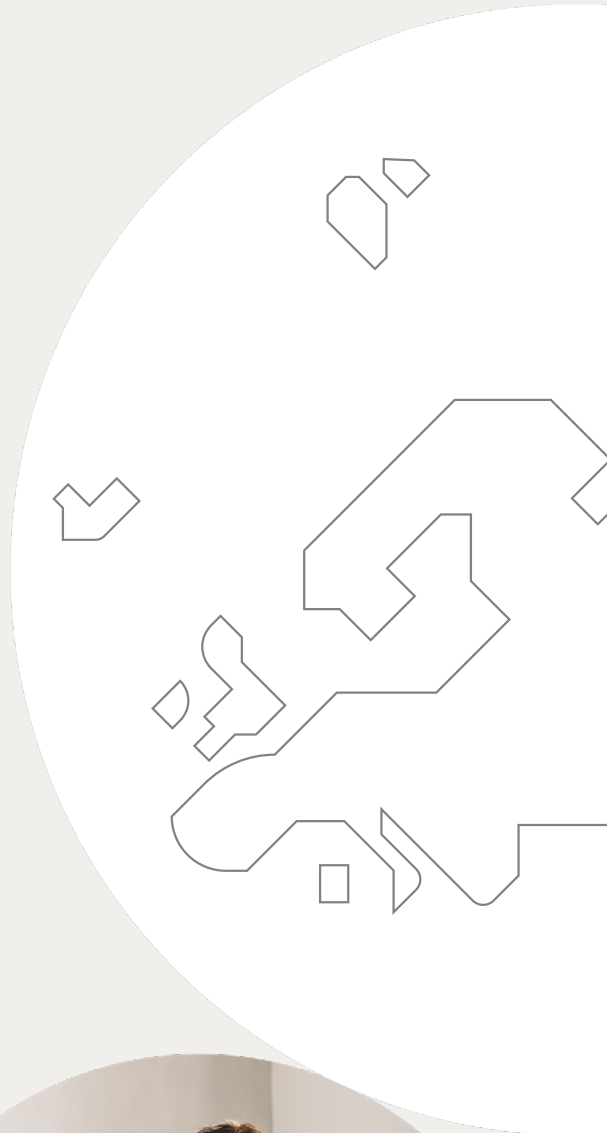
Growing confidently through complexity

European businesses aren't lacking in ambition. Across industries and markets, Europe's leaders want to **move faster, innovate more** and **drive growth**. But the conditions in which these ambitions must be delivered have become significantly more challenging.

External factors including rising customer expectations, rapid technological change, evolving regulation, and increasing scrutiny of business decisions are putting mounting pressure on leaders. At the same time, many organisations are operating with legacy technology, constrained resources, stretched teams and increasingly complex stakeholder environments.

As a result, **the challenge for many organisations is not deciding where they want to go, but overcoming indecision and building confidence in how to get there**. In a time of great uncertainty for many businesses, leaders are increasingly open to third-party providers who can support a shift **from complexity, to consensus, to confidence**.

Drawing on comprehensive research of European business leaders, here we unpack some of the biggest myths among large corporates and reveal the truth behind these misconceptions, shining a light on the true reality of the business landscape today, along with actionable takeaways for Europe's leaders.



Myth 01

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The more data you have, the better your decision making

Reality: Data only supports decision making if organisations know *which* insights to focus on and how to translate them into clear, trusted and actionable takeaways.

73%

of the leaders surveyed told us that prioritising which insights to act on is a top challenge

Nearly nine in ten (86%) European business leaders say that access to data and insights is an important consideration when it comes to securing organisational success over the coming year.

The potential gain is clear, and those already using data and insights are seeing the benefits, with a third (33%) saying enhanced use is driving efficiency in their department.

But data is the starting point. Knowing which insights to focus on – and the quality of those insights – is the key to unlocking more strategic and accurate decisions, and this is where many business leaders are struggling.

Almost three-quarters (73%) of the leaders surveyed told us that prioritising which insights to act on is a top challenge, while improving data accuracy, consistency and completeness across systems also emerges as a number one priority.

Key takeaway: Transform data into confident action by prioritising the insights that matter and translating them into decisions.



Myth 02



Choosing the right technology is the most important factor in digital transformation

Reality: Choosing the right technology is one part of the puzzle. The bigger challenge is being able to integrate it across complex organisations, many of which are using a combination of legacy and modern systems.

69%

say integrating AI into existing systems and infrastructure is challenging

The EU AI Act is widely recognised as the world's first comprehensive legal framework governing the use of AI. It sets a global standard for the regulation of AI that have boosted business confidence.

As a result, AI adoption is now nearly universal across Europe, with 99% of business leaders telling us they are either exploring the technology or actively using it. Automation is driving new gains, with a third (34%) citing improved productivity through automation or digital tools.

However, the rapid pace of change creates difficulties. Three in ten (29%) say that keeping up with the latest technology or digital tools is one of their greatest departmental challenges – and the issue extends far beyond simply accessing such tools.

The majority of European businesses are grappling with technological constraints as they seek to embed AI more deeply into their operations. More than half (52%) are using a mix of legacy and modern systems, while 12% still rely primarily on limited legacy systems that are fragmented across the business.

It's therefore unsurprising that 69% say integrating AI into existing systems and infrastructure is very or extremely challenging.

Key takeaway: Lay the foundation for successful AI and digital transformation by prioritising integration, interoperability and resilience from the very beginning.



Myth 03



Building in-house is better

Reality: Amid a complex and highly competitive operating environment, European businesses are increasingly looking outwards for specialist partners that can go beyond the traditional business-vendor relationship model and act as strategic execution partners.

83%

report an imbalance between internal resources and their technology ambitions

European businesses told us that they are increasingly turning to specialist partners for support. Outsourcing has become much more than a cost-cutting exercise, spanning areas including IT services, administrative workflows and regulatory compliance.

Across all key business priorities, business leaders are more likely to say they plan to leverage third-party providers than build up their own in-house capabilities. This sentiment is particularly prominent when it comes to online safety (61%), managing payments (59%) and customer experience (57%).

The research exposes a resource gap that is prompting this shift towards specialist partners. Around eight in ten (83%) business leaders report an imbalance between current internal resources and their technology ambitions, and 30% believe that a lack of internal expertise or skills is a barrier to successfully integrating AI and other new technologies.

When it comes to finding the right partner, credibility is enhanced through customer endorsements, transparent business practices and a prospective partner's trusted brand.

Key takeaway: Close the gap between ambition and execution by working with trusted partners that bring the specialist expertise, scale and credibility needed to move faster with greater confidence.



Myth 04

“ Cybersecurity is the IT team's problem”

Reality: Security decisions are much bigger than just an IT challenge. In today's world they are a whole business challenge, and closely linked with long-term growth, customer trust and operational resilience.

Our research shows that nearly all organisations (93%) have experienced fraud or attempted cyber-attacks within the last year. Worryingly, a third (32%) say that such attempts are becoming more frequent, and 19% say they are becoming both more frequent and sophisticated as bad actors employ deepfakes and other AI-led tactics.



One in three business leaders mentioned that, with their use of technology increasing, cyber defence priorities are broadening in tandem to include:

- Improvements to real-time monitoring and incident response
- Managing third-party risks and vendor security assessments which is a key focus of the EU's Digital Operational Resilience Act (DORA)
- Ensuring compliance with evolving AI regulations

Evaluation of any defence is a challenge - seven in ten (69%) say that measuring the success of cybersecurity investments is somewhat or very challenging, with similar numbers flagging integrating security with legacy systems and managing AI-enabled attack sophistication as other pressing challenges that must be overcome.

With attacks becoming more frequent and sophisticated, protecting a business can feel a daunting and complex task, and additional expertise may be needed to help strengthen defences.

Key takeaway: Treat cybersecurity as a board-level priority by making risk measurable, resilience continuous and trust central to every decision.

Myth 05

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Moving fast is the most important way to stay ahead of competitors

13.6

people make up the average buying group

Reality: Speed only creates value when it is balanced with control, resilience and risk management.

It's clear from our research that pace is prized by European businesses. More than half (54%) say that work within their organisation is valued for being fast and efficient, and 59% say experimentation and bold ideas are actively encouraged.

But almost as many want thoroughness and predictability. 41% of business leaders say that caution and minimising risk are prioritised, and **nearly nine in ten** agree that online safety, and managing risk and compliance are crucial to their continued success over the next year.

The consideration of so many factors could explain why, across all major purchasing categories, around 95% of organisations involve multiple people in decision-making, with around a third involving more than 10 people. The average buying group is 13.6 people.

Key takeaway: Speed matters, but confidence is what turns momentum into real, tangible progress. To stay competitive, organisations must balance oversight with speed in decision making processes.



Myth 06

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**Customer experience
is all about
personalisation**”

Reality: While personalisation is a focus, leaders must also prioritise security, building trust and delivering measurable outcomes.

Customer experience is critical in the digital age. In a world where people are faced with seemingly limitless choice, any friction in a user journey can drive prospective buyers towards competitors.

The majority (84%) of European business leaders say that improving customer experience is of high or moderate importance when it comes to their organisation's prospects of success over year ahead, with 29% of respondents citing enhancements to the personalisation of marketing communications as a top priority.

But 71% say that delivering personalisation at scale is somewhat or very challenging, and the same proportion believe that moving beyond impression-based metrics to measure real purchase outcomes is another prominent challenge.

Equally, other factors matter too in enhancing customer experience. Around a quarter (26%) say that improving security and fraud protection during the payment process is a top priority, with a similar percentage (24%) pointing to the need to increase flexibility in customer payment channels.

These elements all contribute to convenient and secure customer journeys and must be considered in unison. This can pose challenges, and 68% of leaders say they are still struggling to balance customer experience with security requirements.

Key takeaway: Stay competitive by creating customer journeys that are highly personalised, and at the same time secure, measurable and trusted at every step.

Methodology: Research conducted by independent research agency Opinium which surveyed more than 7,200 business decision makers in large corporate businesses across 16 global markets, including UK, France, Italy, Netherlands, Sweden, Germany and Spain in Europe. Data gathered between January and February 2026. Weighted to be globally representative.

