

New survey of C-suites sees 2018 as 'Year of the Employee'

The inaugural Worldcom Confidence Index (CI) has revealed a 43% increase in the number of business leaders planning to give employees the most attention in 2018 than did so in 2017. The first annual Worldcom CI was released today, 24 April 2018, by the Worldcom Public Relations Group, a global partnership of independently owned public relations firms. Included in the findings are what leaders see as the biggest threats to achieving their plans.



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The leap in attention for employees – the only audience to see an increase – seems to be driven by concerns over three main threats: government or legislative changes (#1 threat), lack of available talent (#2 threat) and cyber crime (#3 threat). It may also be a response to very low confidence levels when it comes to their ability to attract (2nd lowest CI Score) and retain (4th lowest CI Score) the best talent.

Employees have a crucial role in ensuring compliance with regulations and essential cyber protection practices. As a result, the report's findings are a clear signal that leaders see employees as a vital ingredient for success. In fact, attracting the best talent ranked highest as the criteria that will have the most influence on success in 2018 – just ahead of the strength of the global economy. It was three times higher than disruptive competition, which declined to almost half its 2017 score.

Despite a lower than average confidence in ability to attract and retain the best talent, business leaders remain surprisingly optimistic about their ability to satisfy customers, rating it as their top source of optimism for 2018. However, leaders indicate only moderate confidence (CI Score of 26.4, 1.1 points above average) in ability to increase productivity by energizing and engaging employees.

“When you look at the data, you start to see some very interesting contradictions and inconsistencies which highlight global uncertainty,” said Todd Lynch, managing director of Worldcom Public Relations Group. “As engaged employees are fundamental to delivering a great customer experience, the report suggests that leaders’ confidence in the ability to satisfy customers might be misplaced if they struggle to retain their best talent. The combination of issues uncovered places the employee front and center for global businesses like never before. It is for this reason we believe 2018 will be the year of the employee.”

Available in its entirety at <https://worldcomgroup.com/confidence-index>, the Worldcom Confidence Index also highlights key issues and trends, and uncovers interesting differences in the confidence levels of respondents across 18 demographic categories, including business roles, ages, gender, business size, geographic presence and more. Highlights of the 2018 Confidence Index include:

- **Cyber Crime Concerns:** Overall, business leaders are least confident in their ability to protect their organization from cyber crime, and at least 50% more American companies than those in the other regions see cyber crime as the biggest threat.
- **American Confidence:** Organizations headquartered in America sit atop the Confidence Index with an overall score of 34.9/100, nearly nine points above the average and almost two and a half times the confidence score for Japan.
- **Asian Hesitation:** Organizations headquartered in Asia are at the bottom of the Confidence Index with an overall score of 19.1.
- **Generation Gap:** Confidence in the ability to both attract and keep the best talent declines significantly as leaders age.
- **Brand Power:** When compared to larger organizations, 71% more of smaller organizations think the ability to attract talent with the quality of their Employer Brand will have the most influence on business success in 2018.
- **Unknown Course:** Nearly one in 12 of all business leaders see global instability as the biggest threat to achieving their plans.
- **Political Positivity:** More than double the number of organizations from America (28%) than EMEA (13%) think the style of political leader communications positively impacts their optimism about growth potential.
- **Mid-Market Squeeze:** Midsize organizations are the least confident (along with smaller sized organizations) about their ability to protect their brand in the event of a crisis.

“The high-level challenges and opportunities identified in Worldcom’s first global confidence survey provide the insights and knowledge necessary to help CMOs and CEOs make informed and knowledgeable decisions,” said Patrik Schober, group chair of the Global Board, Worldcom Public Relations Group. “We believe this report highlights what’s on the C-suite’s mind and focuses on the challenges and opportunities impacting their future actions and outcomes.”

The global report was conducted by two independent research companies, Research Now and 3Gem, and gathered responses via an online survey in six of the G7 countries (France, Germany, Italy, Japan, United Kingdom and the United States) as well as China. The methodology resulted in a total of 585 responses (167 America; 106 Asia; 312 EMEA) from leaders of all ages and business sizes.

The report concludes with an analysis of the issues and key recommendations that business leaders can implement to increase their probability of success in 2018.

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