

Managing ambition with reality

Commercial trends study 2026

January 2026



What's in store?

Opinions and views

of over **1900 key stakeholders** from various B2B industries

Introduction to this study

In 2026, **B2B companies are entering with growth ambitions** following a turbulent period marked by inflation, cost pressure, and shifting customer behavior. While optimism is present, **many of the structural challenges from recent years remain unresolved**, revealing **execution capability** as the decisive constraint between ambition and results.



Commercial trigger points for 2026



Priorities, trade-offs, and measures



Simon-Kucher perspective: turning ambition into excellence

Executive summary: B2B companies enter 2026 with renewed optimism and clear growth ambitions, but performance in 2026 will be defined less by strategy choices and more by execution capability

Topic	Market environment and sentiment	Financial outlook and value creation	Strategic response and differentiation	Execution readiness and performance risk
Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Positive expectations for 2026Improved confidence in tech-driven changeEconomic uncertainty and talent constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Revenue expectations are positiveProfit expectations are positiveMargin upside remains limited	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Priority of commercial measures over cost cuttingFocus on operating model redesign, digital, and talentSales execution is deprioritized in some regions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Companies show strong commercial ambitionsKey priorities are widely recognizedCapability to execute at scale is weak
Implication	<p>Plan for growth, but design for volatility</p>	<p>Value depends more on discipline than growth</p>	<p>Pricing power and execution quality will decide winners</p>	<p>Closing the execution gap drives performance</p>

For 2026, commercial excellence becomes the decisive differentiator between firms that grow and firms that outperform

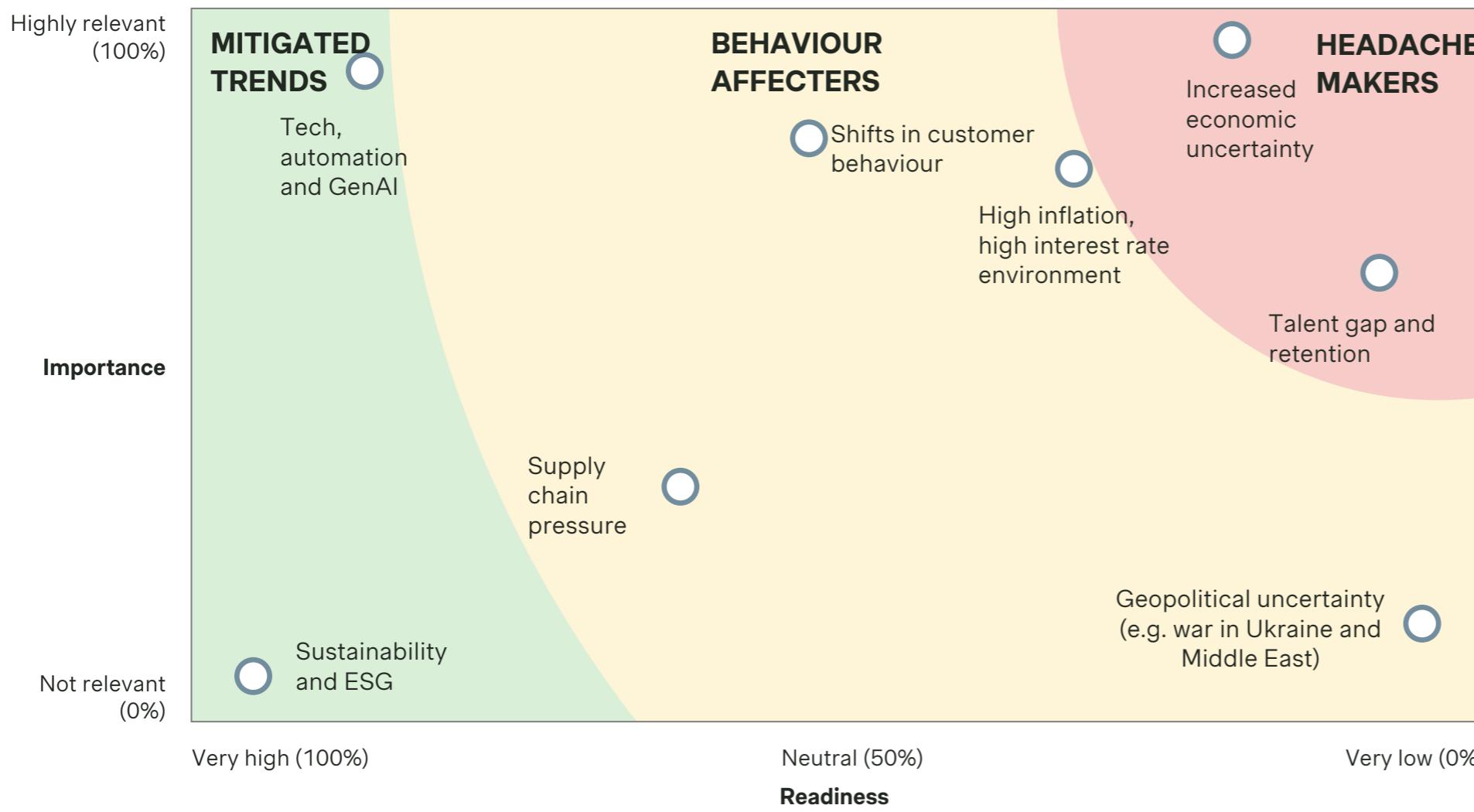


Market environment and sentiment

Growth expectations are present, but firms plan for volatility rather than momentum

B2B outlook: Confidence in technology, vulnerability in resilience as 2025 pressures carry into 2026

Importance and readiness of commercial trends, average rating relative to lowest and highest

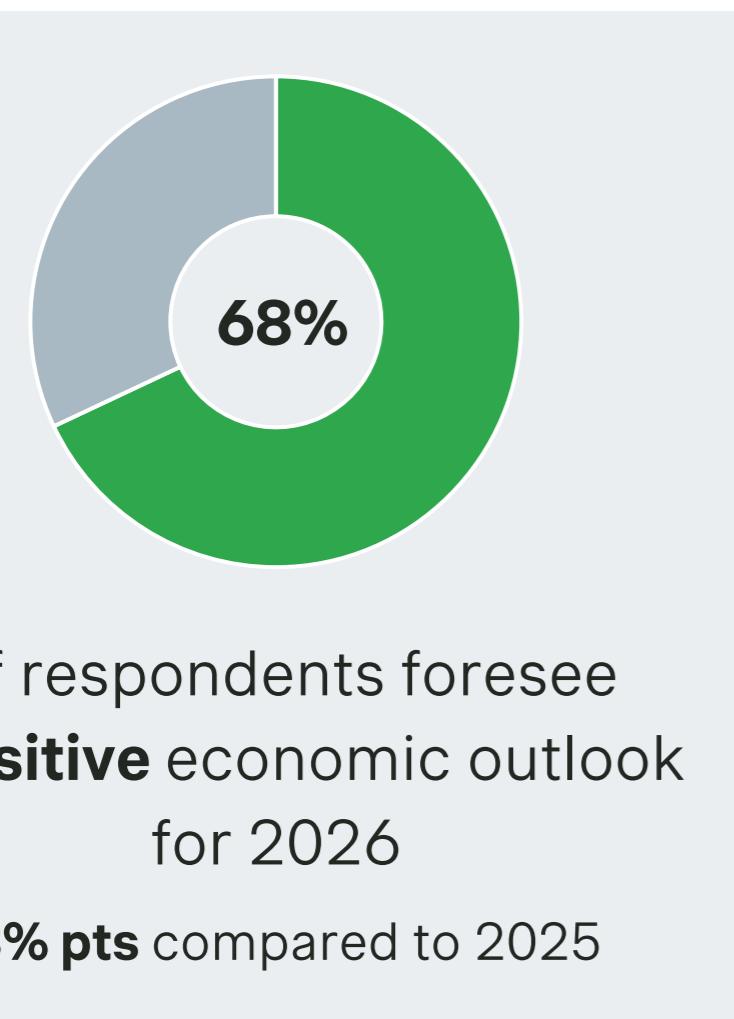


Source: Simon-Kucher, Commercial Trends Study 2026 conducted from Dec 8th 2025 to Jan 9th 2026 | Total n=1948 | Survey questions: "How important are the following trends for your business in 2025?" ; "How ready is your company with its current set-up to react to those important trends?" | "Don't know" excluded | Normalized results

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- **Winning in 2026 will require balancing tech led transformation with stronger organizational and commercial resilience**
- **2025 market pressures are expected to persist into 2026**, but readiness is uneven across topics
- **Economic uncertainty and talent constraints remain highly important** and insufficiently addressed, while tech, automation, and GenAI are seen as well managed
- The **main challenges** are not new, but **unresolved**, leaving firms **exposed to macro volatility** and people related constraints that affect execution
- Confidence in technology will only matter if it strengthens organizational and commercial resilience

B2B outlook: Economic optimism holds for 2026, but momentum weakens across Europe and the Americas



Europe

- Southern Europe most positive sub-region with Italy, Portugal and Spain all expecting positive outlook for 2026
- UK least optimistic country with ~25% being negative about 2025 outlook

63%



Americas

- Brightest outlook in Mexico with <3% seeing a negative outlook
- US outlook is least optimistic with 67% foreseeing a positive outlook, driving overall outlook in a negative direction

76%



APAC

- APAC with most optimistic outlook for 2026, primarily driven by India
- India drives optimism where ~94% of respondents are positive, whereas in China 73% are positive about 2025 outlook, driving the optimism down

83%

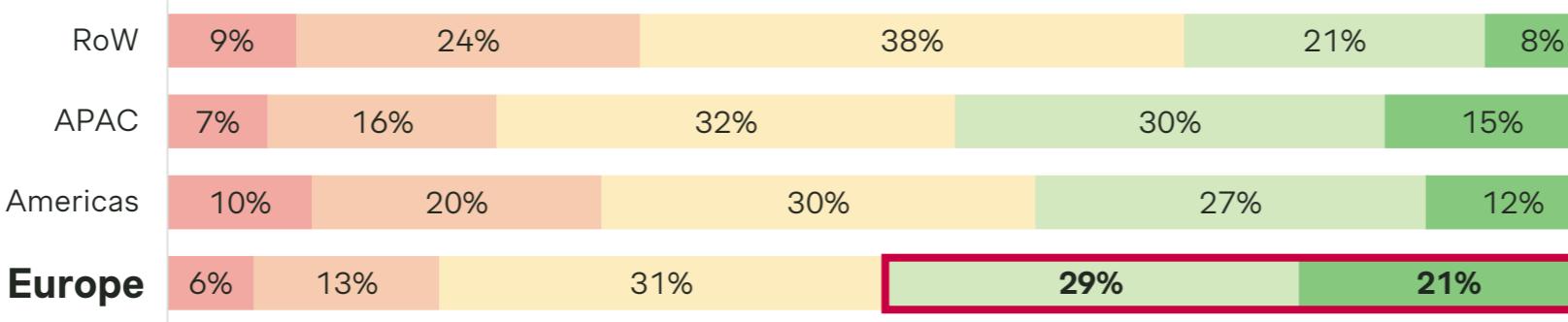


- Optimism has softened compared to last year, particularly in Europe and the Americas, signaling growing caution rather than a reversal in sentiment
- The outlook suggests resilience rather than momentum, with firms expecting growth, but preparing for a more volatile and uneven macro environment

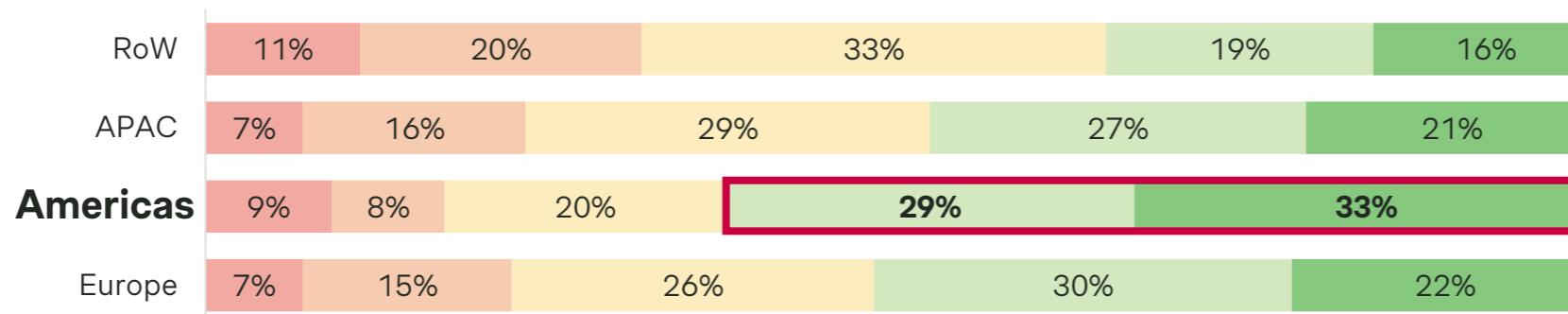
Regional focus: Companies are more concerned about external regions than their own outlook

For your industry, which region do you expect will have the weakest economic outlook in 2026?

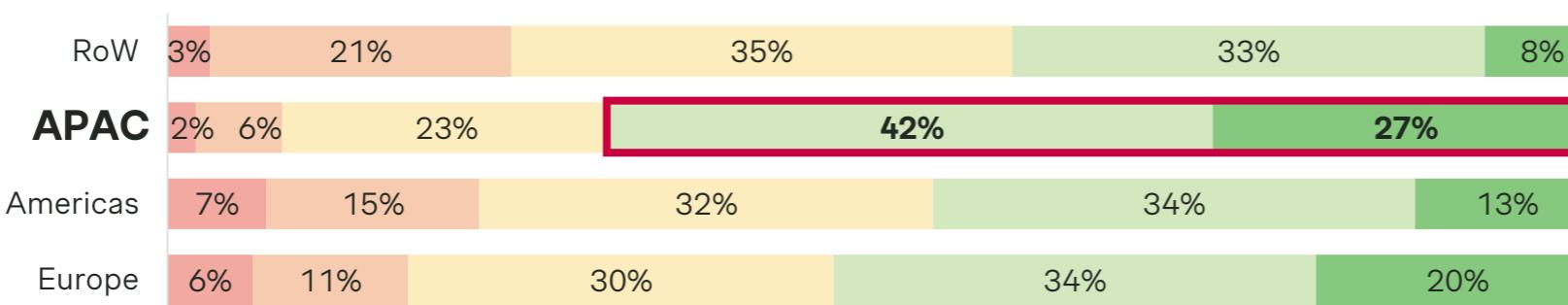
Europe



Americas



APAC



■ Negative ■ Rather negative ■ Neutral ■ Rather positive ■ Positive

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- Across all regions, companies **consistently expect weaker economic conditions outside their home region** than within it
- **Europe-based companies are more concerned about APAC and the Americas** than Europe itself, while APAC and Americas respondents also rate Europe among the weakest outlook regions.
- This pattern suggests that **pessimism is driven less by local conditions and more by perceived global exposure** and uncertainty.

Elevated **external risk perception increases the importance of resilience** and execution discipline over aggressive expansion



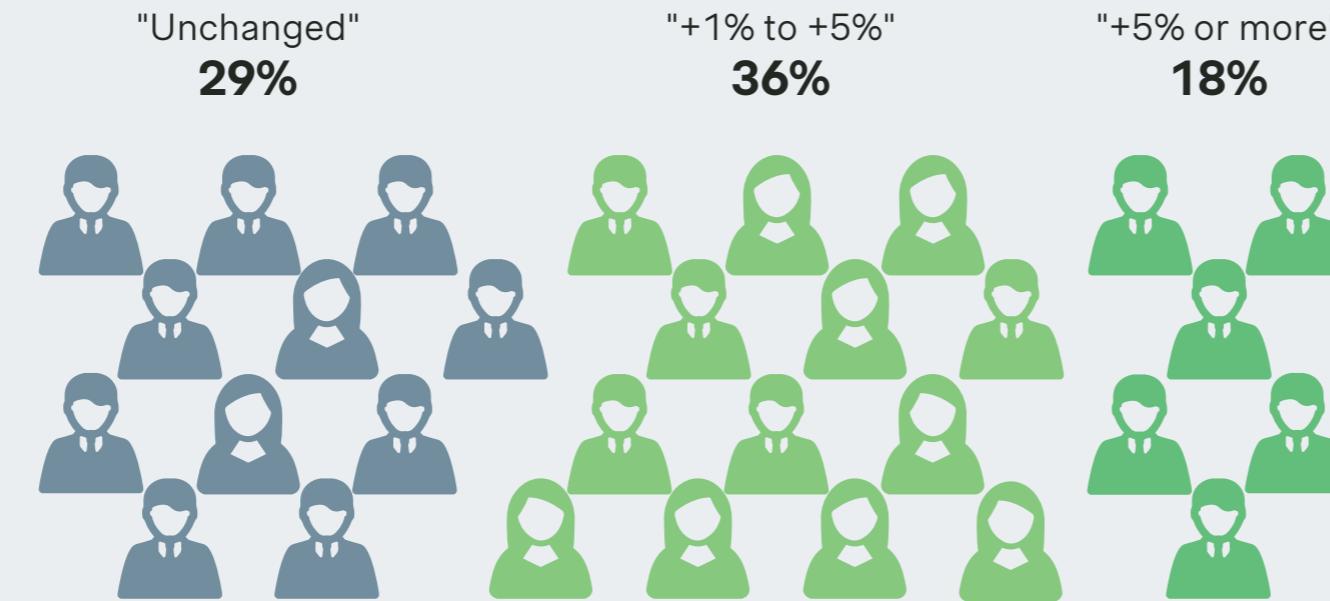
Financial outlook and value creation

Revenue and profit growth are expected, but limited price-cost headroom puts margin quality at risk

B2B outlook: Profits are expected to rise, but expectations remain concentrated in modest growth

Expected profit change in 2026 compared to 2025, distribution of responses¹

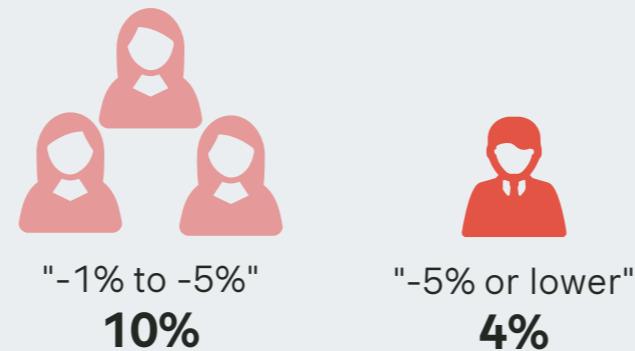
- Most optimistic country: **India**
- Most optimistic industry: **Paper & Packaging**



~7/8th
of respondents expect
stable or increasing profits

-1%pts
from last year

- Most pessimistic country: **UK**
- Most pessimistic industry: **Chemical**

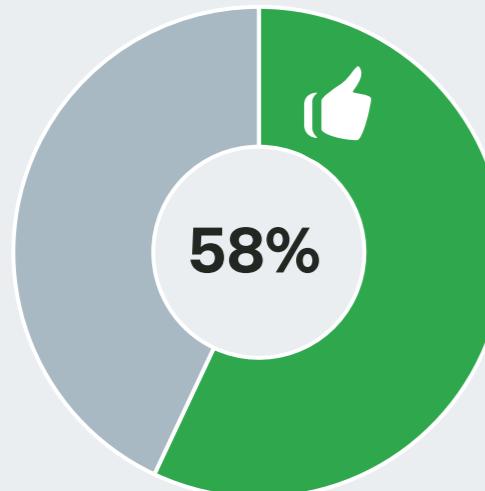


~1/8th
of respondents expect
declining profits

B2B outlook: While revenue and profit confidence remains, limited price cost headroom reinforces the need for commercial excellence

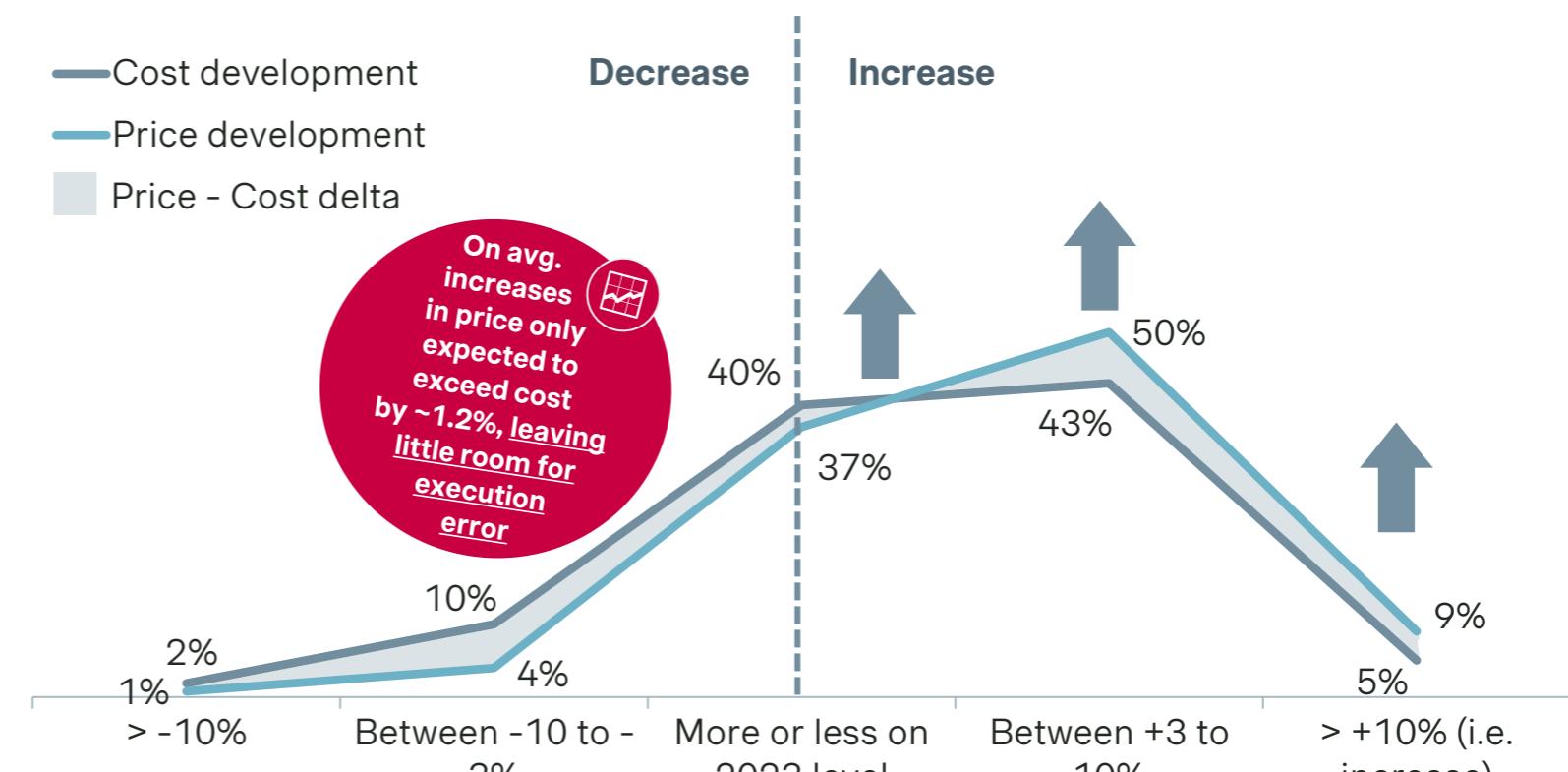
Expected revenue, cost and price change in 2026 compared to 2025, distribution of responses¹

Majority of companies expect revenues to increase ...



Of respondents expect an **increased** revenue in 2025

... but the planned price increases are expected to only slightly outperform the development in cost

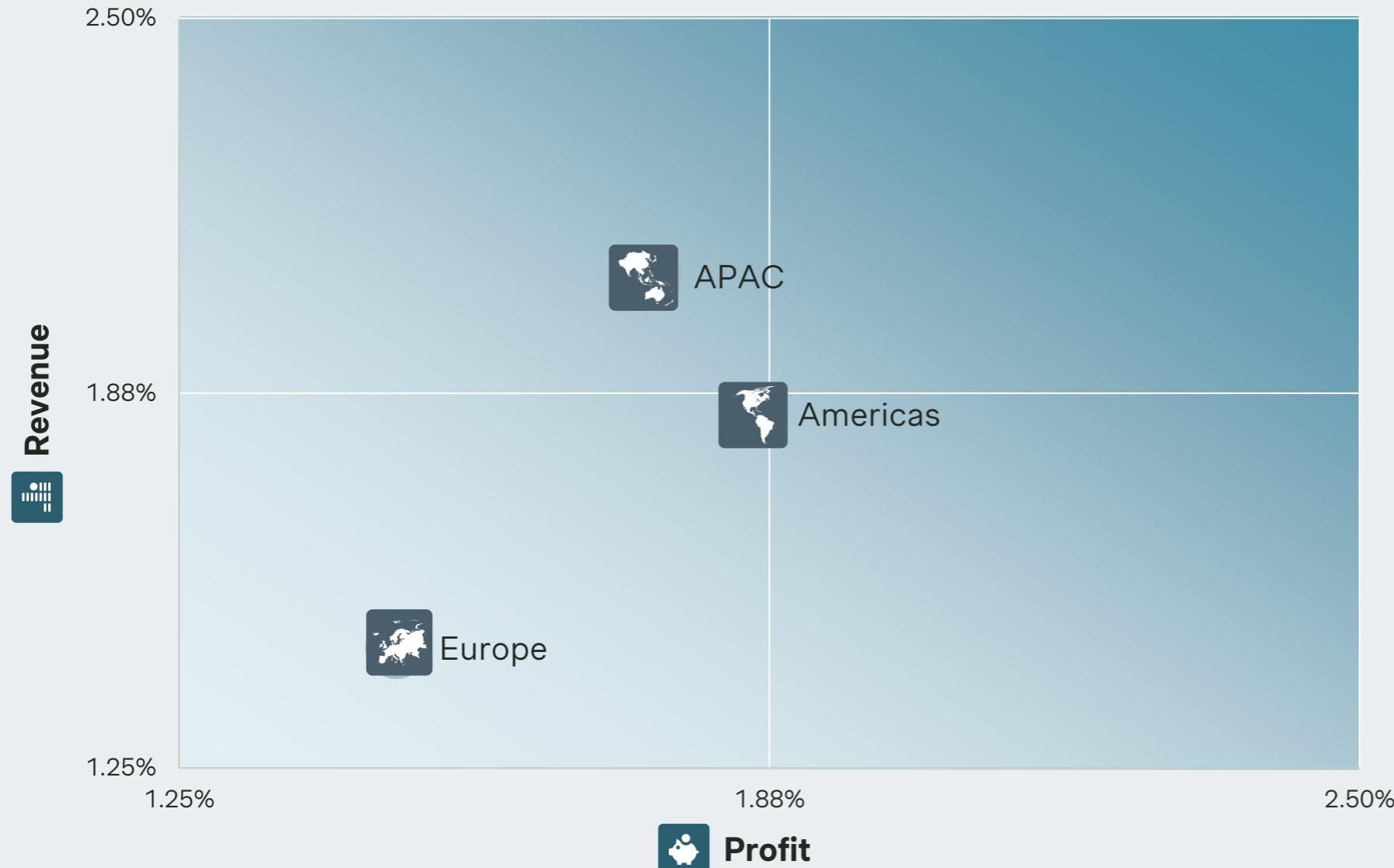


! Need for commercial effectiveness
! measures to protect margins



Next performance unlock will not come from demand alone, but from reconnecting revenue growth with profit through sharper commercial discipline

Expected revenue, and profit change in 2026 compared to 2025, weighted average of responses¹



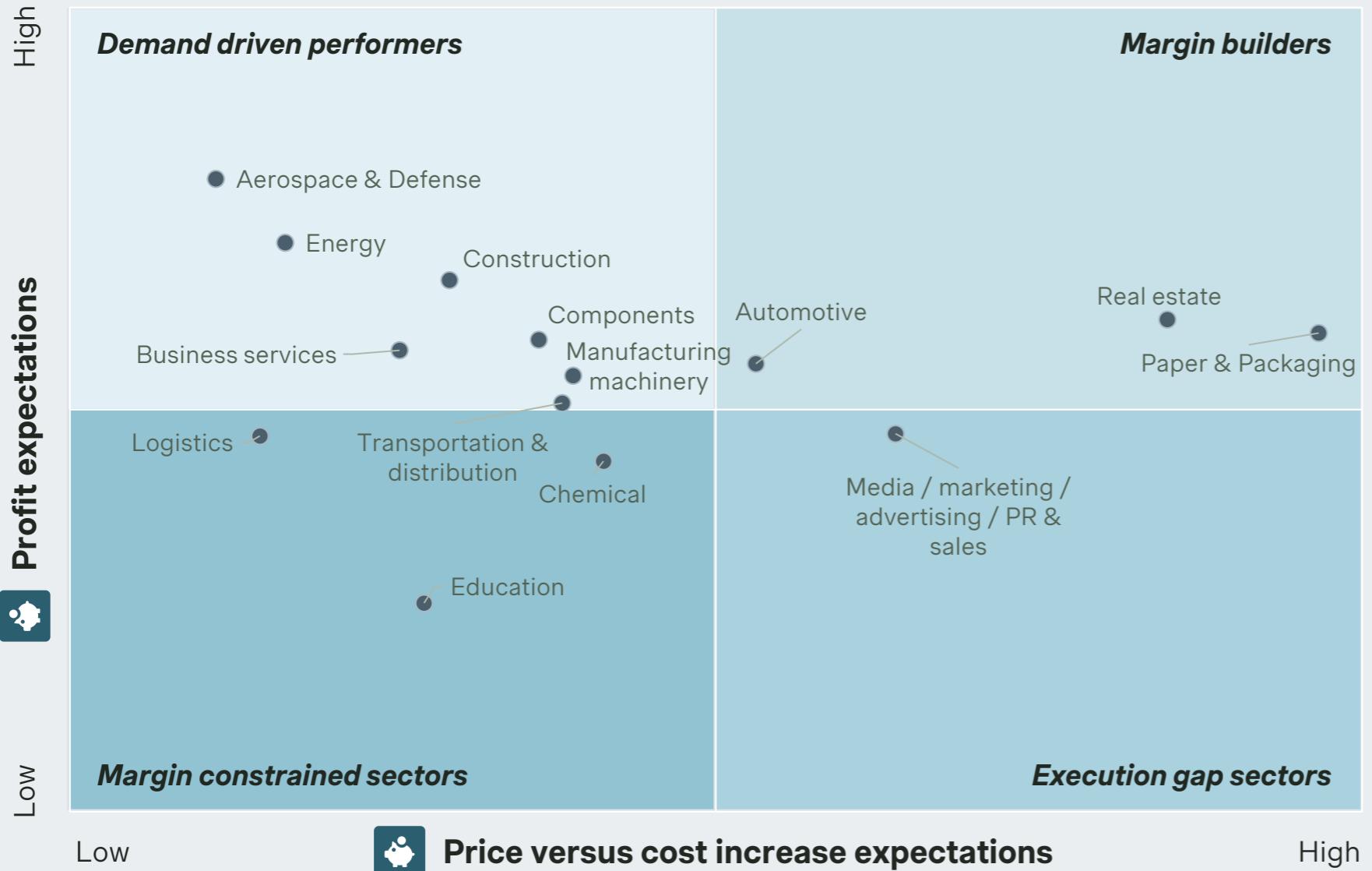
Source: Simon-Kucher, Commercial Trends Study 2026 conducted from Dec 8th 2026 to Jan 9th 2026 | Total n=1948 | Survey questions: "How much will your revenue probably change 2026 vs. 2025 (in %)?"; "How much will your profit probably change 2026 vs. 2025 (in %)?"; "Don't know" excluded

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- Expected revenue and profit growth are closely aligned across regions, indicating confidence that growth will largely translate into profit
- APAC and the Americas show slightly stronger growth expectations than Europe, with a similar revenue to profit relationship
- The small but consistent gap suggests mild margin dilution likely driven by cost pressure
- As a result, **value creation will depend less on stimulating demand and more on improving the quality of growth** through stronger monetization and commercial discipline

Industry outlook: Pricing power, not demand alone, also differentiates profit outlooks across industries

Profit versus price-cost increase expectations going into 2026, split by industry, relatively distributed



Source: Simon-Kucher, Commercial Trends Study 2026 conducted from Dec 8th 2026 to Jan 9th 2026 | Total n=1948 | Survey questions: "How much will your revenue probably change 2026 vs. 2025 (in %)?"; "How much will your profit probably change 2026 vs. 2025 (in %)?"; "Don't know" excluded

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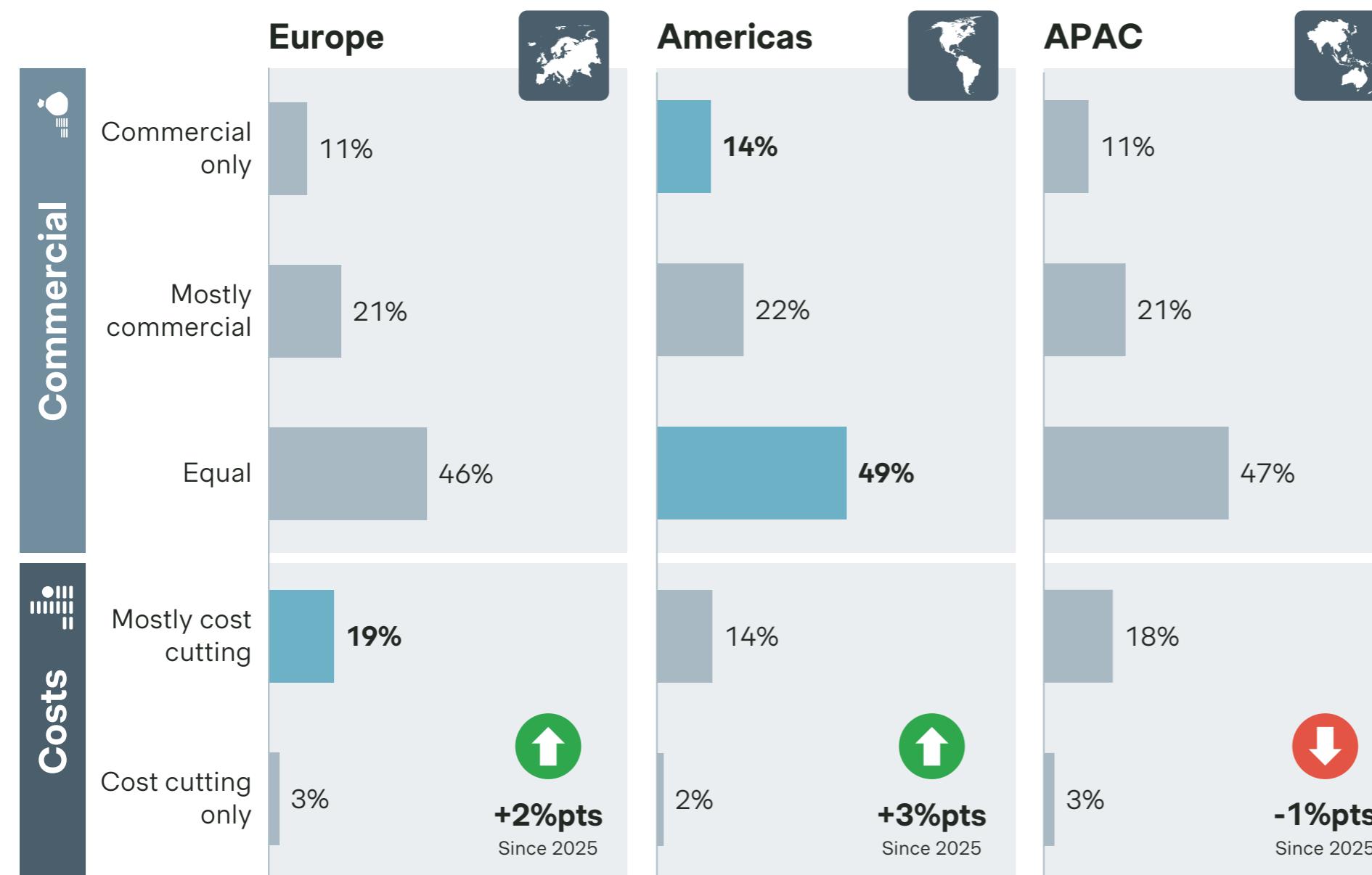
- Industries with strong price cost headroom combine pricing power with higher profit expectations, positioning them as margin builders
- Several sectors show healthy profit outlooks despite limited pricing headroom, indicating reliance on demand, backlog, or volume rather than pricing
- Margin constrained sectors face structurally limited ability to convert growth into profit under continued cost pressure
- Execution gap sectors highlight unrealized pricing potential, where stronger pricing discipline and commercial execution could unlock additional margin
- Across industries, the **ability to translate pricing into profit will be the key differentiator** for 2026 performance



Strategic response and differentiation

Companies focus on commercial levers,
increasing both upside potential and
execution risk

2026 mitigating measures: **Commercial topics seen as powerful mitigation measures by most of the companies**



Source: Simon-Kucher, Commercial Trends Study 2026 conducted from Dec 8th 2025 to Jan 9th 2026 | Total n=1948 | Survey question: "For your company, how are you mitigating the challenges posed by the current macroeconomic environment?" | "Don't know" excluded

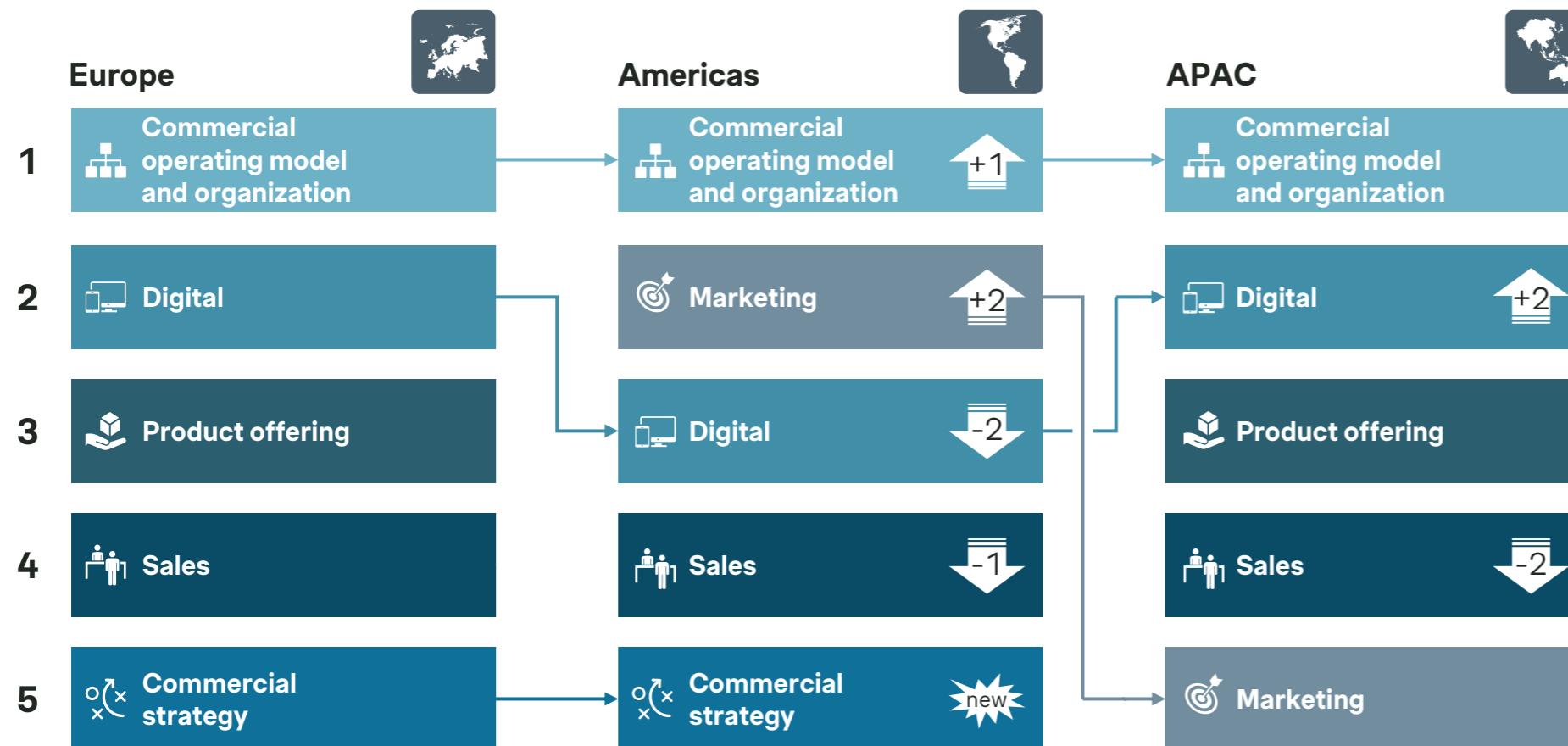
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Higher % vs other regions

- Across regions, ~80 % consider commercial actions at least as important as cost cutting
- Pure cost cutting is rare, with only around one fifth focusing primarily on cost measures
- The Americas show the strongest tilt toward commercial led mitigation
- As firms prioritize growth and pricing over cost cutting, commercial execution becomes the key risk and reward lever for 2026 performance
- This places greater pressure on commercial capabilities to deliver margin, not just growth

Commercial initiatives: **Organizations aim to redesign their operating models and attract talent, using digitalization as a key lever to navigate changing market dynamics**

Prioritized commercial areas of development for 2026 (top 5, by region)



- **Commercial operating model and organization and digital are the 2 major planned initiatives for 2026**
- **Sales has decreased in importance as an initiative in APAC and Americas**
- **Product offering being an important initiative in Europe and APAC**

Source: Simon-Kucher, Commercial Trends Study 2026 conducted from Dec 8th 2025 to Jan 9th 2026 | Total n=1948 | Survey questions: "How important are the following commercial initiatives for your business in 2026?" | "Don't know" excluded | Normalized results

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- **Commercial operating model redesign and digital are top priorities** across all regions
- **Talent and capability building is a key differentiator**, especially in the Americas
- Product and digital innovation plays a stronger role in Europe and APAC
- Sales execution is deprioritized, increasing the need to translate structural change into frontline impact

Companies are investing in the foundations of commercial performance, shifting focus from short-term results to structural change. The value will be realized only if operating model and digital initiatives materially improve execution, not just structure

Higher than last year

Lower than last year

New top 5 area



Execution readiness and performance risks

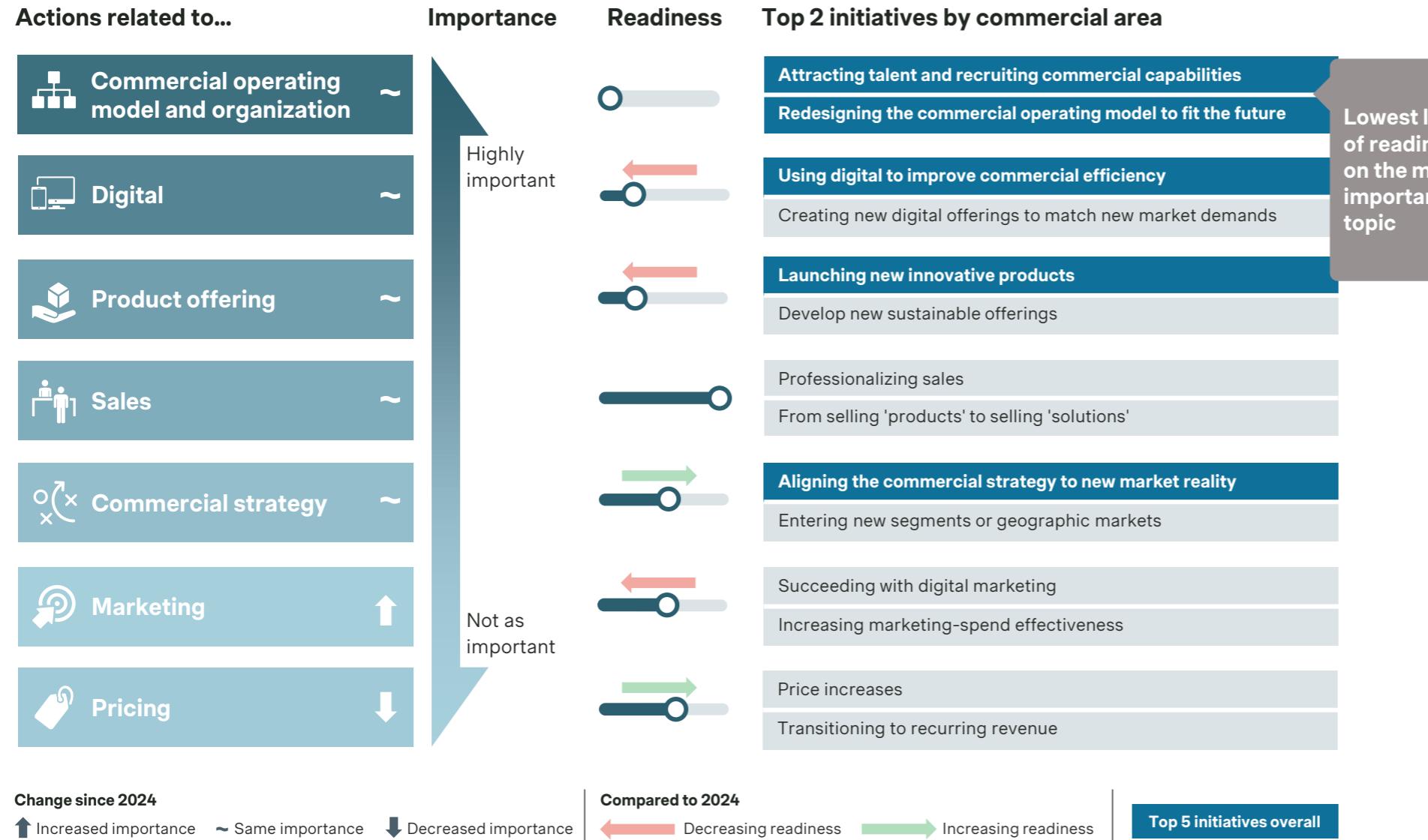
Commercial ambition increasingly outpaces
readiness, creating a widening execution gap





Commercial initiatives: While companies are focusing on commercial topics, readiness and execution capabilities remains low on most important actions

Importance and readiness of commercial initiatives, average rating relative to least and most relevant



Source: Simon-Kucher, Commercial Trends Study 2026 conducted from Dec 8th 2025 to Jan 9th 2026 | Total n=1948 | Survey questions: "How important are the following commercial initiatives for your business in 2026?" ; "How ready is your company with its current set-up to carry out those important commercial initiatives?" | "Don't know" excluded | Normalized results

Prioritized planned commercial initiatives for 2026 include:

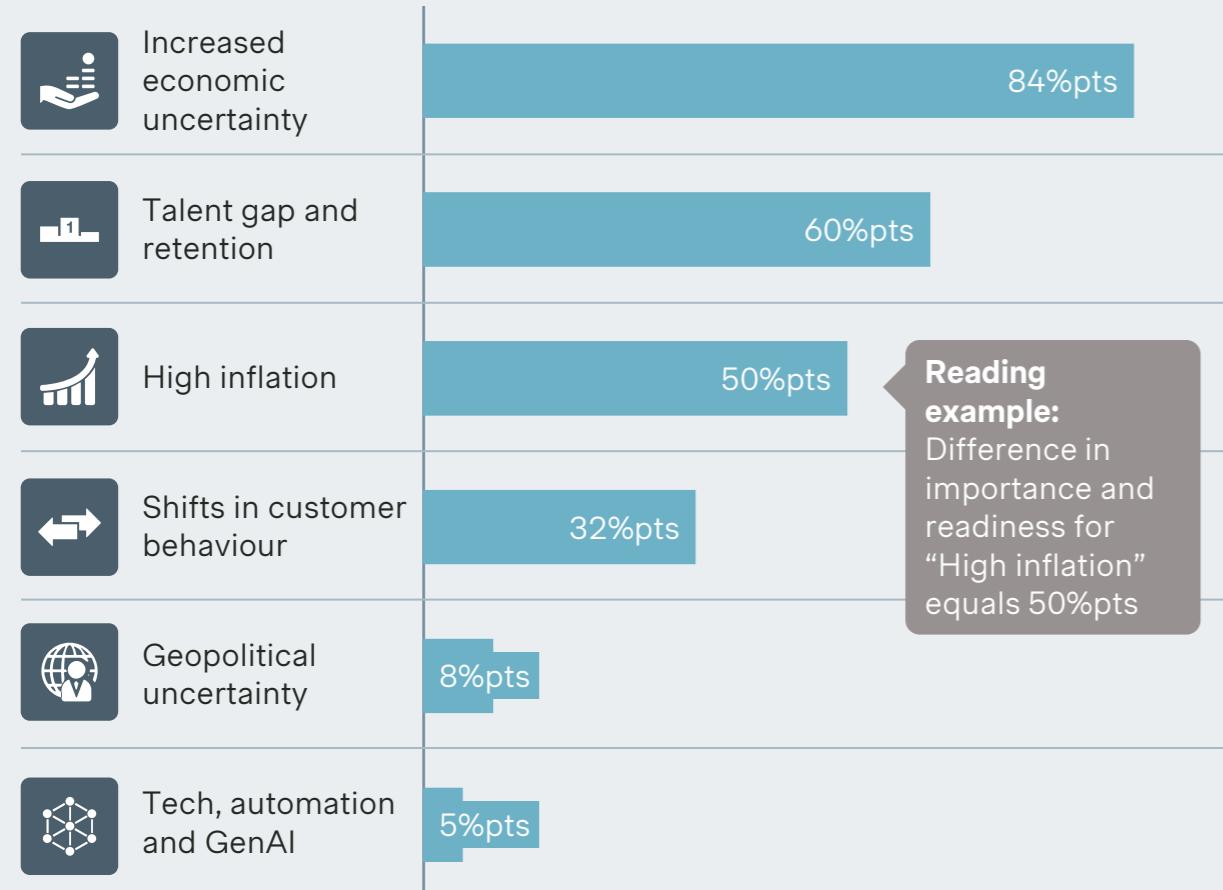
- The redesign of commercial operating model and strategy to fit a changing market and different requirements
- Launching new innovative products
- The recruitment of new talents and commercial capabilities that drive the business
- The use of digitalization to improve commercial efficiencies

Organizations are de-prioritizing inorganic growth (M&A) as a strategy to address 2025 challenges, ranking it among the least important levers

Execution gap index: Economic uncertainty and talent show the largest readiness shortfalls

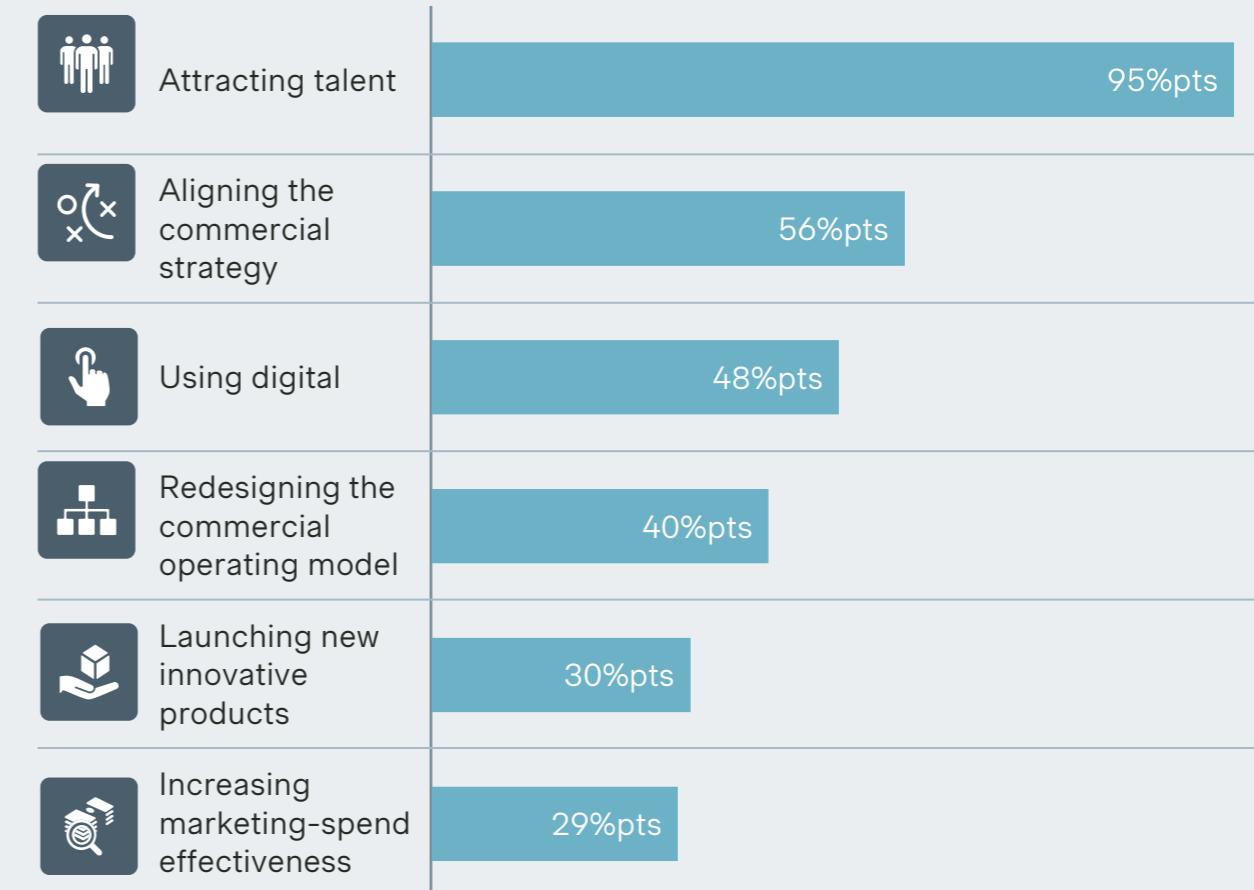
Increased economic uncertainty leads in importance but lacks in readiness

Trends: Execution gap index



Attracting talent and recruiting commercial capabilities is a top priority, but capability is not there yet

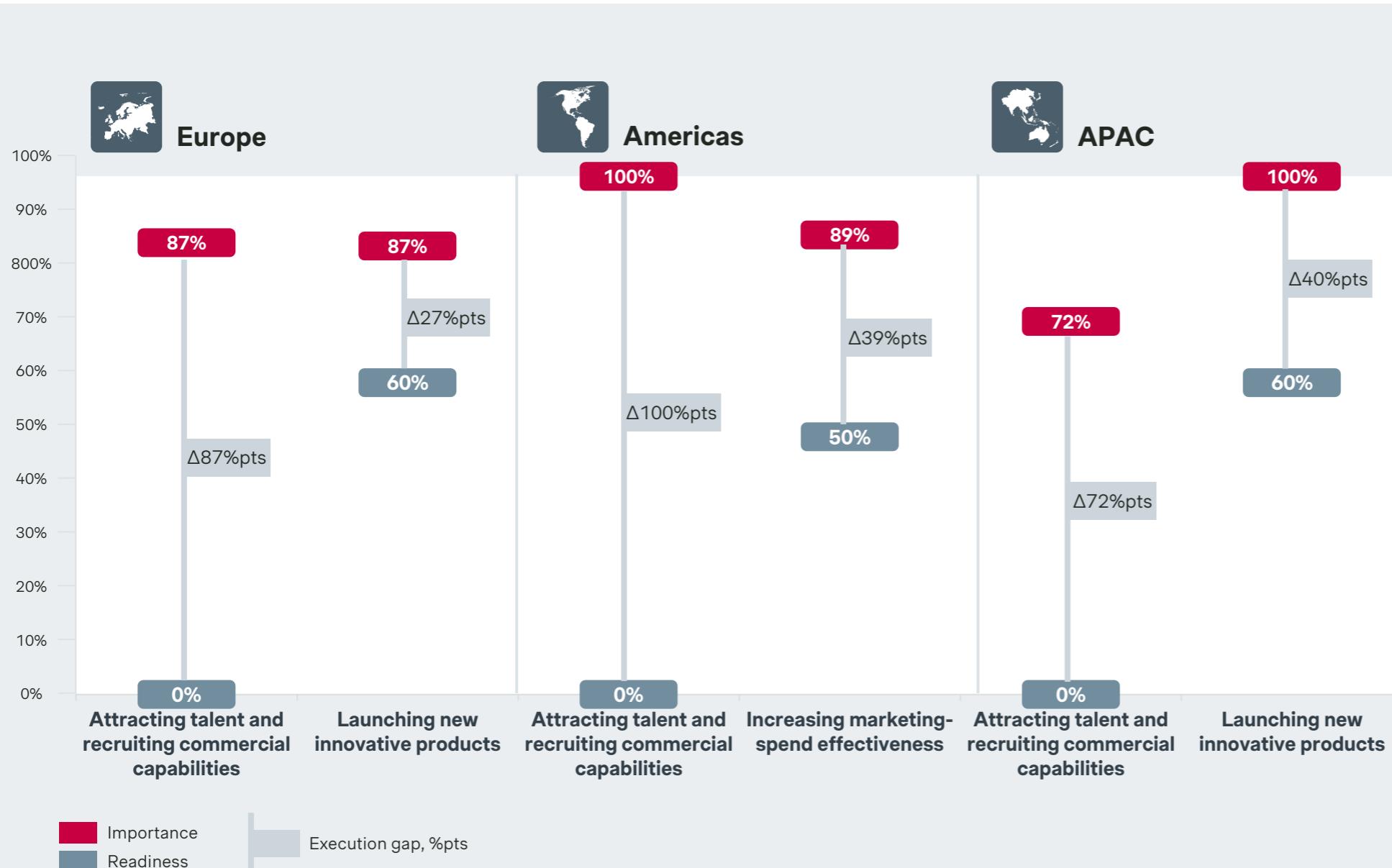
Initiatives: Execution gap index



Source: Simon-Kucher, Commercial Trends Study 2026 conducted from Dec 8th 2025 to Jan 9th 2026 | Total n=1948 | Survey questions: "How important are the following commercial initiatives for your business in 2026?" ; "How ready is your company with its current set-up to carry out those important commercial initiatives?" ; "How important are the following trends for your business in 2025?" ; "How ready is your company with its current set-up to react to those important trends?" | "Don't know" excluded | Normalized results



Importance vs readiness by region: **Talent is the number 1 gap globally, then innovation and marketing by region**



- **Talent is the largest execution gap everywhere.** All regions struggle most with building commercial capabilities fast enough.
- **Europe and APAC's next-largest execution gap is innovation**, where readiness doesn't match importance.
- **The Americas differ on their second gap.** Their next-largest execution gap is increasing marketing-spend effectiveness.

Closing execution gaps will require building real capabilities in people, innovation, and go-to-market, not just redefining strategies or structures.

Source: Simon-Kucher, Commercial Trends Study 2026 conducted from Dec 8th 2025 to Jan 9th 2026 | Total n=1948 | Survey questions: "How important are the following commercial initiatives for your business in 2026?" ; "How ready is your company with its current set-up to carry out those important commercial initiatives?" | "Don't know" excluded | Normalized results

Readiness: While commercial actions, particularly the operating model, are a management priority, companies still lack readiness in key areas

Importance and readiness of commercial initiatives, average rating relative to lowest and highest



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From optimism to outperformance: **Execution capability will define winners in 2026**

Three reasons why to act

Optimistic outlook

68% have an **optimistic outlook on 2026**, with even higher numbers in Americas and APAC where >75% think of 2025 as a positive year indicating opportunities for growth



Launching commercial initiatives

80% are looking into **launching commercial initiatives** that not only enhance their business but transforming and adapting them to the new reality

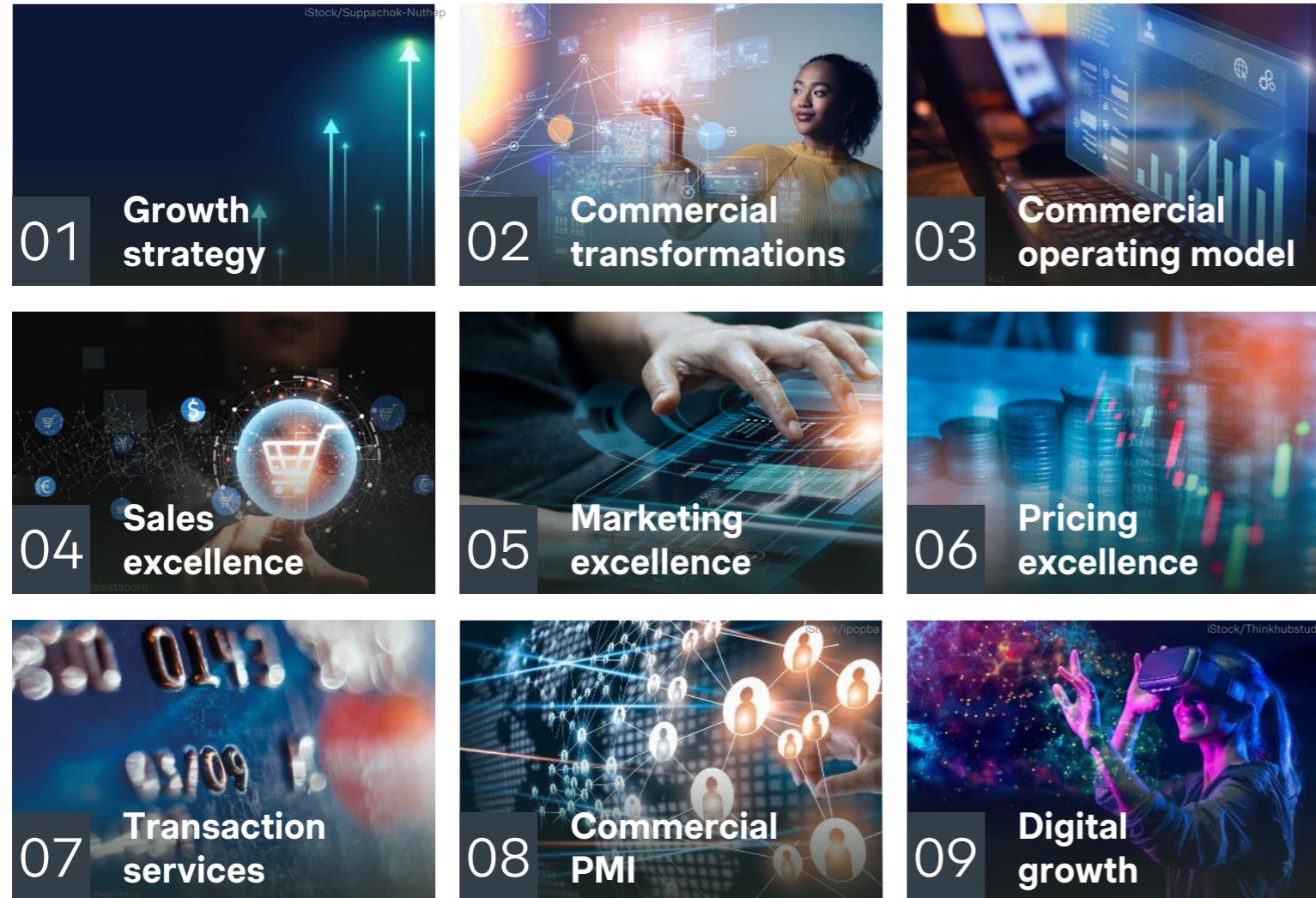


Lacking readiness

37% find themselves **lacking readiness to implement and launch** the desired initiatives despite high ambitions of commercial excellence in 2026, presenting an opportunity for getting ahead of competition

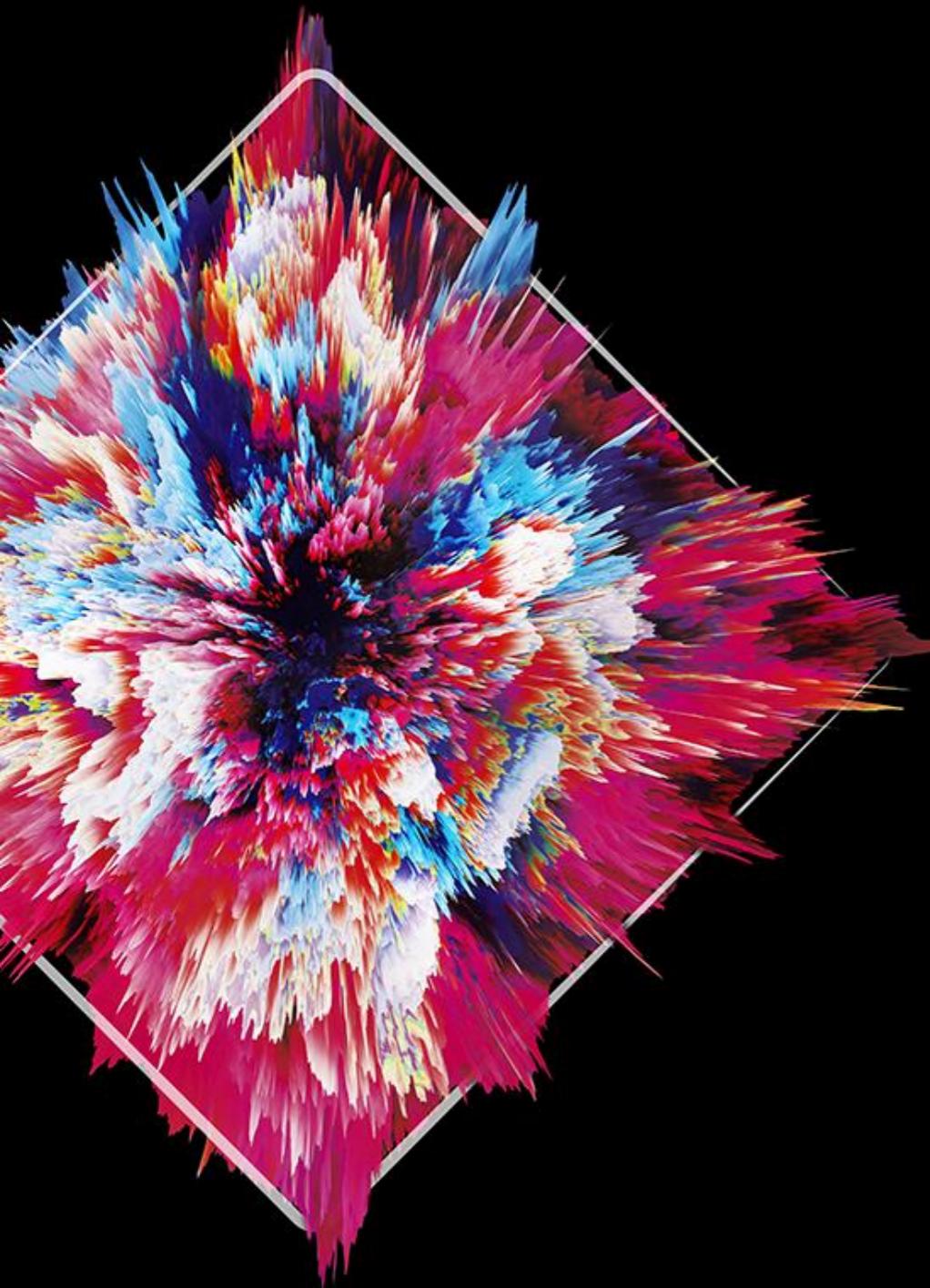
Choose your battles wisely - embrace the opportunities of the digital age and prioritize the commercial strategies that will define success in 2026 and beyond

Simon-Kucher is your trusted advisor on commercial topics to excel in 2026



40 Years
Unlocking Better Growth.

Simon-Kucher is the world-leading pricing and profitable growth specialist.



Simon-Kucher is the world-leading commercial growth and pricing specialist.

Our people

- Specialists in Commercial Strategy & Pricing Consulting, Transaction Services & Private Equity, Digital and Software
- Our partners and experienced leadership team are hands on, delivering results at pace

Our sector expertise

- Consumer
- Financial Services
- Healthcare & Life Sciences
- Industrials
- Technology Media and Telecoms

Our clients

Our clients come from 120+ industries and range from Fortune 500 and FTSE 100 firms to unicorns

Our reputation

Pioneering pricing for decades, Simon-Kucher defined the discipline – it's part of our DNA



1985
FOUNDED

46
OFFICES

31
COUNTRIES

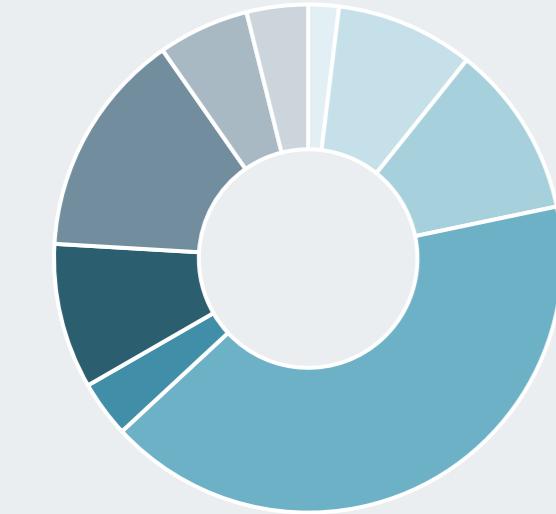
2,000+
EMPLOYEES

200+
PARTNERS

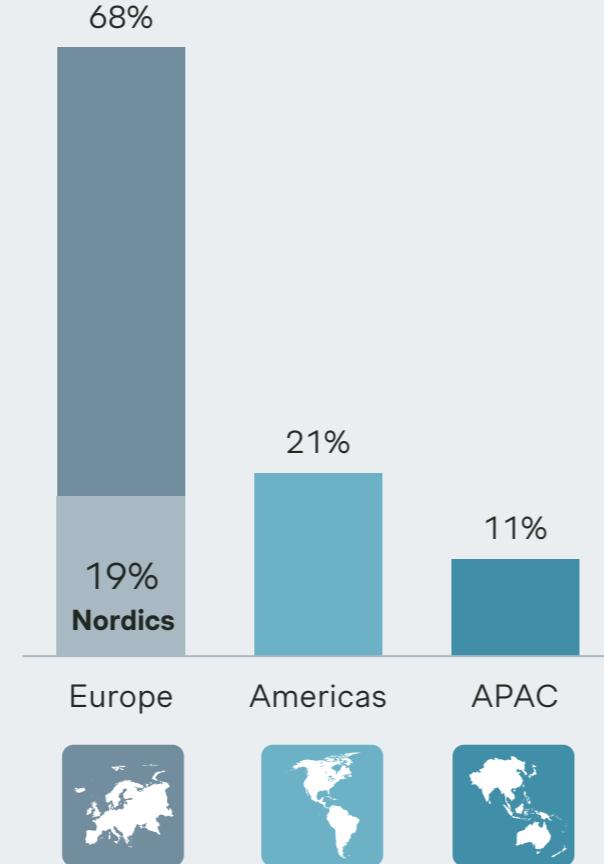
Sample overview

In total we have had **1948** respondents surveyed in the period between December 8th and January 9th

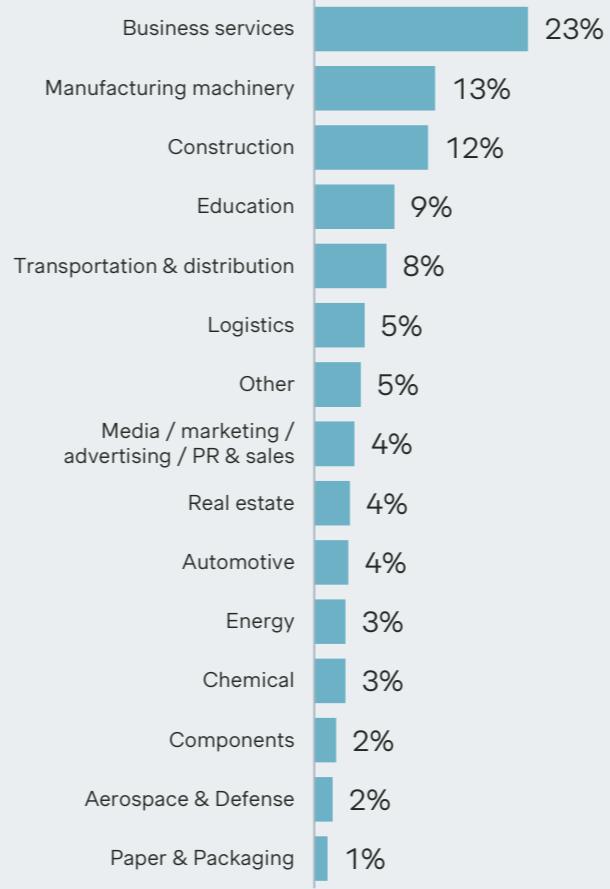
Across a variety of positions ...



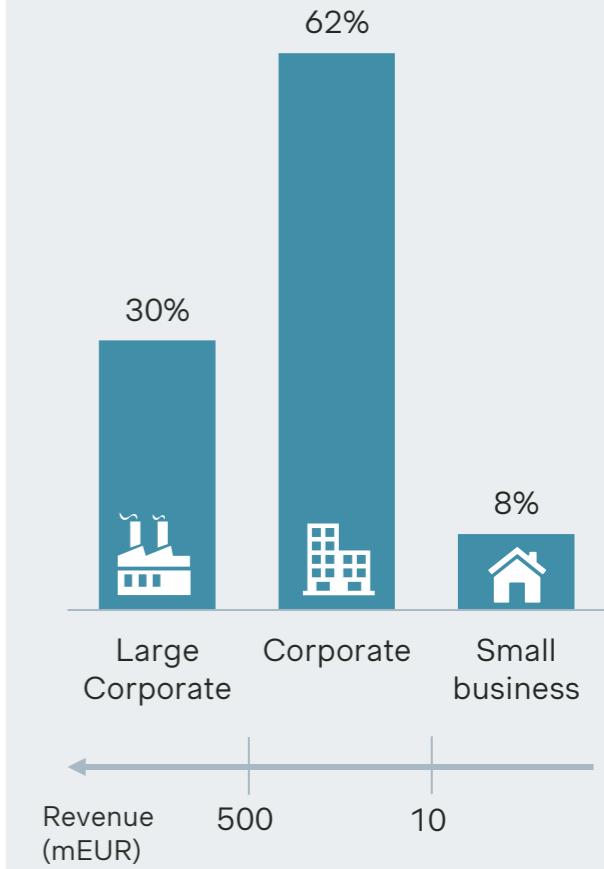
... Regions ...

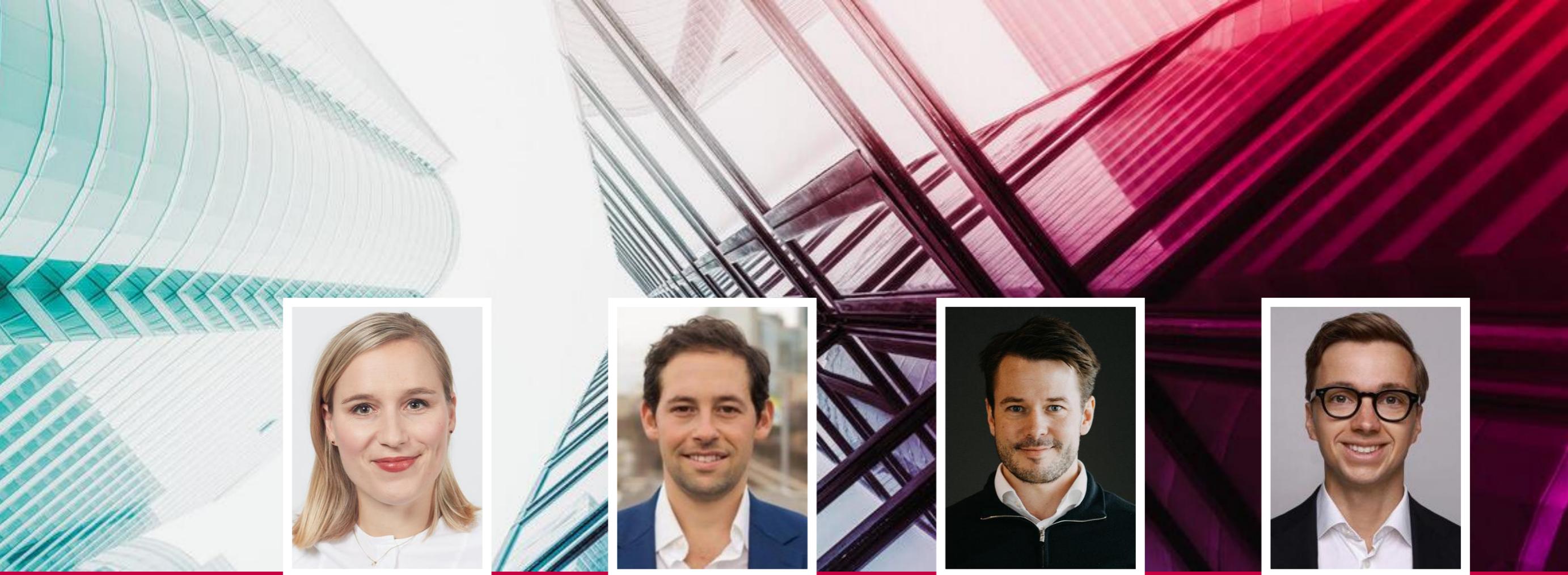


... Industries ...



... and companies





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