

Press release
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Singaporean bosses among least confident globally in leadership ability to implement digital change

- 17% of Singapore business leaders say they are not confident their organisations have the right leadership team to implement digital change – above the global average (12%)
- Leaders cite lack of management support or interest (55%) and lack of change management experience (47%) as the main reasons for not having the right leaders to implement digital change – the highest rates globally

Singapore, 24 October 2019 - As digital transformation continues to impact all industries, companies need to focus on developing a new generation of digital leaders. Despite this, independent research by specialised recruiter [Robert Half](#) shows Singaporean bosses are among the least confident globally that they have the right leadership talent to navigate a digital future.

While the majority (78%) of Singaporean managers are somewhat to very confident their businesses have the right leadership team to implement digital change, according to the survey of CFOs and CIOs around the world, 17% of Singaporean bosses are *not* confident, second only to Belgium (18%) and well above the global average of 12%. Within the pool of Singaporean survey respondents, financial leaders are more concerned than their tech counterparts with 20% of CFOs saying they're not confident of their leadership, compared to 11% of CIOs.

Management support holding back the transformation efforts of Singaporean leaders

The research highlights the four most significant reasons why Singaporean bosses aren't confident their organisations have the right leadership to implement digital change. More than half (55%) say they lack management support or interest, followed by 47% who refer to the lack of change management experience. Almost four in 10 (39%) highlight the lack of communication and, finally, 39% say they don't have the technical know-how.

"Singapore government digital efforts and ambitions, as evidenced by the Smart Nation program, has positioned the city-state as a global leader in digital transformation which in turn has further challenged Singapore's businesses to embrace a digitally-led mindset and implement change at a similarly fast pace¹," says **Matthieu Imbert Bouchard, Director of Robert Half Singapore.**

"Alongside the many opportunities, digital transformation presents a host of challenges to businesses as failing to adequately capitalise on the change can jeopardise short and long-term competitiveness. A business leader driving digital change in Singapore will be expected to conduct a refurbishment of legacy systems and internal operations, offer an agile evaluation of strategic business models, and drive cultural change amongst employees which requires them to embrace a fluid business structure and a willingness to compromise short-to-mid-term performance metrics for long-term change."

Strong digital leaders are more than their technical skill

With disruption now the norm, companies must be able to continually adapt and change in order to embrace new opportunities, remain competitive and be successful. This demands a new mode of digital-first leadership that brings together technical expertise, change management experience, and an agile collaborative leadership style.

¹ <https://www.edb.gov.sg/en/news-and-events/insights/innovation/government-leads-digital-disruption-in-singapore.html>

While there are prominent traits that are understood to underpin strong digital leadership for different job functions and industries, Robert Half research also suggests that different industries and job functions prioritise different skills and traits needed to lead an organisation into the digital future.

Amongst Singaporean survey respondents, Singaporean CIOs identify technical know-how (67%), change management experience (56%), and involvement of specialists in decision making (56%) as the top three skills needed to successfully lead the IT department into the digital future.

CFOs, by comparison, identify communication skills (58%), technical know-how (58%), and change management experience (56%) as the top three skills needed to successfully lead the finance department into the digital future.

“A strong digital leader is not necessarily the most technically skilled, or possessing the most extensive background in IT. What makes a strong digital leader is fluid by its very nature - they must be able to effectively navigate uncertainty and change, as well as understand the impact of technology on their department - and our research suggests there is not a ‘one size fits all’ profile for this,” says **Matthieu Imbert-Bouchard**.

“A digital leader should respond to their specific business context to optimise the human-technology relationship in order to navigate the organisation through a period of major change through innovative digital strategies that leverage data across every tier of the organisation. They then need to bring relevant stakeholders on board to implement this change. Critical to this is developing a non-siloed working culture by driving different business functions to work together and create an organisational culture of collaboration, innovation, and openness.”

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Notes to editors

About the research

The annual international workplace survey is developed by Robert Half and was conducted in January 2019 by an independent research firm, surveying 6,075 business leaders in 13 countries worldwide: Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, United Arab Emirates, France, Germany, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Singapore, Switzerland, The Netherlands, and the UK. This survey is part of the international workplace survey, a questionnaire about job trends, talent management and trends in the workplace.

About Robert Half

Robert Half is the world’s first and largest specialised recruitment consultancy. Founded in 1948, the company has more than 300 offices worldwide providing interim management, temporary and permanent recruitment solutions for accounting and finance, financial services and technology professionals in Singapore. More information on roberthalf.com.sg.

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