



## The right partner for a changing world

At IBM, we collaborate with our clients, bringing together business insight, advanced research and technology to give them a distinct advantage in today's rapidly changing environment. Through our integrated approach to business design and execution, we help turn strategies into action. And with expertise in 17 industries and global capabilities that span 170 countries, we can help clients anticipate change and profit from new opportunities.

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# Capitalizing on Complexity

*Insights from the  
Global Chief Executive  
Officer Study*

# Capitalizing on Complexity

## Insights from the Global Chief Executive Officer Study

How are leaders responding to a competitive and economic environment unlike anything that has come before? Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and their organizations are seeing that avoiding complexity is not an option – the choice comes in how they respond to it.

In our past three global CEO studies, CEOs consistently said that coping with change was their most pressing challenge. In 2010, our discussions identified a new primary challenge: complexity.

Our 2010 Global CEO Study – based on face-to-face interviews with more than 1,500 CEOs, general managers and senior public sector leaders worldwide – reveals that many CEOs seriously doubt their ability to cope with rapidly escalating complexity. CEOs told us they operate in a world that is substantially more volatile, uncertain and complex. A surprising 79 percent of CEOs expect significant complexity ahead, yet fewer than half feel prepared to handle it.

We found that certain organizations – we call them “Standouts” – have delivered solid business results during both good and bad economic conditions. These organizations and the people who lead them feel much more ready to capitalize on complexity.

## So, what are Standouts doing to thrive?

The effects of rising complexity call for CEOs and their teams to lead with bold creativity, connect with customers in imaginative ways and design their operations for speed and flexibility to position their organizations for twenty-first century success. To capitalize on complexity, CEOs:

### **Embody creative leadership.**

CEOs now realize that creativity trumps other leadership characteristics. Creative leaders are comfortable with ambiguity and experimentation. To connect with and inspire a new generation, they lead and interact in entirely new ways.

### **Reinvent customer relationships.**

Customers have never had so much information or so many options. CEOs are making “getting connected” to customers their highest priority to better predict and provide customers with what they really want.

### **Build operational dexterity.**

CEOs are mastering complexity in countless ways. They are redesigning operating strategies for ultimate speed and flexibility. They embed complexity that creates value in elegantly simple products, services and customer interactions.

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