



Brands  
in **Motion**

The Asia Pacific  
Technology Mandate:

Can **Technology**  
**Brands** Be the  
**Partners B2B**  
**Decision-Makers**  
**Need** in 2022?



# Table of Contents

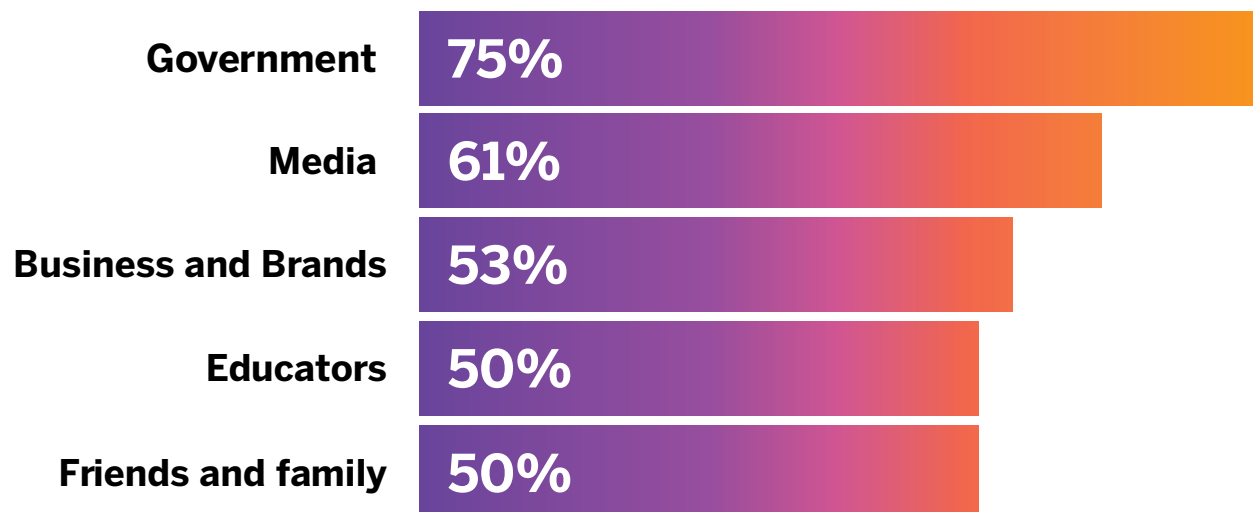
Connect and Collaborate for Change	01
Operating From a Place of Strength	03
Expectations of Technology Leaders	07
What Can You Do Now	09
Appendix	11
Your Brand in Motion	12

# Connect and Collaborate for Change

We are at an inflection point. The global pandemic, accelerating climate change and social tensions are transforming our lives at warp speed.

Now more than ever the times are calling for bold, brave action, and the pressure on technology brands to deliver is at an all-time high. In the past two years, the number of people who expect brands to create stability rose by 30%. In the Asia Pacific region, **55% of consumers and B2B technology decision-makers believe that brands have a responsibility to create stability in uncertain times**. This means that brands — including B2C and B2B technology brands — are now as important a pillar of society as schools and friend-and-family networks. That's right: The brands that people look to for their computers or mobile phones are now expected to have the same responsibility as educators and family. And every day, consumers and B2B decision-makers vote with their wallets and their budgets. Two in three respondents say they are more likely to purchase or recommend products or services from brands that address societal issues that matter to them.

## Asia Pacific Business Technology Decision-Maker Respondents: Who is responsible for creating stability in uncertain times?



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# Operating From a Place of Strength

Between 2010 and 2020 about 50% of Asia's GDP growth came from total factor productivity, a broad measure of the contribution to the economy of technology and innovation.<sup>1</sup> Over the past 10 years, technology brands have contributed to the economic and social fabric of the region, and over the past 18 months, technology brands have enabled continuity that Asia needed — creating technology that allows people to work from anywhere, putting in place contact tracing systems that slowed the spread of the coronavirus and enabling businesses to continue to function. This is especially true of business technology decision-makers whose trust in technology companies has soared throughout the pandemic: 86% of all business technology respondents in Asia Pacific believe that businesses and organizations have a moral obligation to help bridge differences in times of high societal division.

...over the past 18 months, technology brands have enabled continuity that Asia needed

## Technology brands in Asia Pacific operate from a place of strength

**95%** of Asia Pacific respondents had a **positive impression of technology companies**

**93%** believe that **technology companies are looking out for the common good**

**94%** believe that **technology companies are innovative**

**95%** plan to make **business technology purchases in the coming year**

These high expectations for technology brands in Asia Pacific shouldn't be seen as revolutionary: They're the result of decades of investment and engagement in the region.

What is revolutionary is the way technology decision-makers expect technology brands to behave more like corporate citizens and what that means for the way technology brands communicate with customers, governments and the communities they serve.

<sup>1</sup> McKinsey: "How Asia can boost growth through technological leapfrogging," December 2020

**Becoming a leader on societal issues is both a marathon and a sprint. It requires the agility to respond to events in real time, and the endurance to maintain sustained, long-term commitments.**

## A marathon

If a technology brand wants to stand out from its peers in the Asia Pacific region, it should address long-term systemic issues:



**Employee  
personal  
needs**



**Income/  
employment  
opportunity  
inequity**



**Education  
opportunities**



**Climate change/  
environmental  
sustainability**

For the APAC business technology community, employee support ranks especially high in Singapore (47%) and Australia (41%) while China registers much higher than average for income/employment opportunity inequity (39%) and inequity in access to health care/health services (32%). India ranks higher than average for social justice related to gender.

### Case Study: Microsoft Lenovo EdVision

In 2020, Lenovo partnered with Microsoft on its EdVision program, assisting schools across South Asia and Southeast Asia in digital transformation and increasing digital literacy among the new generation of teachers and students. When over 300 million students in India could not attend classes during COVID-19 induced lockdowns, **Lenovo launched a virtual platform** enabling teacher-volunteers to create unique learning experiences for students who needed it the most. Last year, this initiative **engaged over 13 million people in just two months** and sparked similar campaigns across Singapore, Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand.

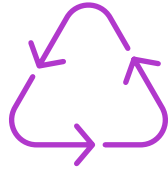


## A sprint

But APAC business technology decision-makers also expect technology brands to address key topics in the next six months:



**Climate change mitigation**



**Waste reduction**



**Water conservation and access**



**Access to education**

Brands looking to make investments in these areas should also review local needs; for example, climate change is important to 45% of business technology decision-makers in Australia and Singapore while in China access to education ranks most highly.

### Case Study: Adobe

In 2020, Adobe led a collaboration of the 12 leading technology companies to develop **Skill Finder, a world-first marketplace**, to enable Australians including 3.5 million JobKeepers and 1.5 million JobSeekers to equip themselves with in-demand, immediately applicable technical and digital micro-skills for free. The platform developed in response to a call for action from the then Minister for Industry, Science and Technology has since expanded to **2,301 courses**, adding **12 new partners** and receiving **almost 50,000 enrollments**.

Skill Finder also partnered with Australia's leading bank, Commonwealth Bank, to integrate the platform in its Benefits finder feature on the app to reach more Australians and help equip them with digital skills needed for new jobs and sectors. The platform proved to be popular with customers, with **over 50% who visited Skill Finder through the Commbank App choosing to enroll** in at least one course.

Following a successful proof-of-concept in March this year, the Australian Federal Government provided a **\$2.7 million grant** to move Skill Finder into the next phase of production to drive growth.

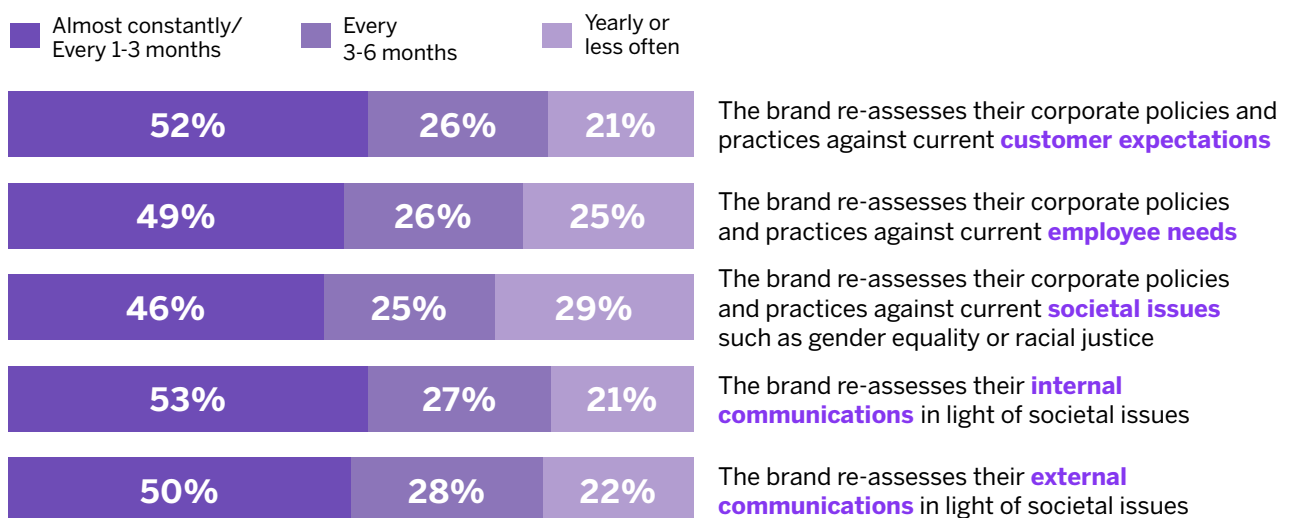


## Communicator Alert: Asia Pacific Audiences Require Consistency, Continuity and Proof

It's not enough just to communicate your point of view or create a campaign. Audiences in Asia Pacific in 2021 demand more. Forty-one percent of global respondents and 56% of Asia Pacific business tech respondents expect brands to make local communities better (over prioritizing global action). This sentiment was especially strong in Australia and India where 60% of business tech respondents wanted brands to focus on solving local issues.

Seventy-five percent of global business technology audiences believe that brands should make a multiyear investment toward a single issue or cause with almost a quarter of respondents saying that brands should evaluate and communicate their positions almost constantly in relation to what is happening in the world around them.

### Asia Pacific Business Audiences Recommended Frequency of Communication



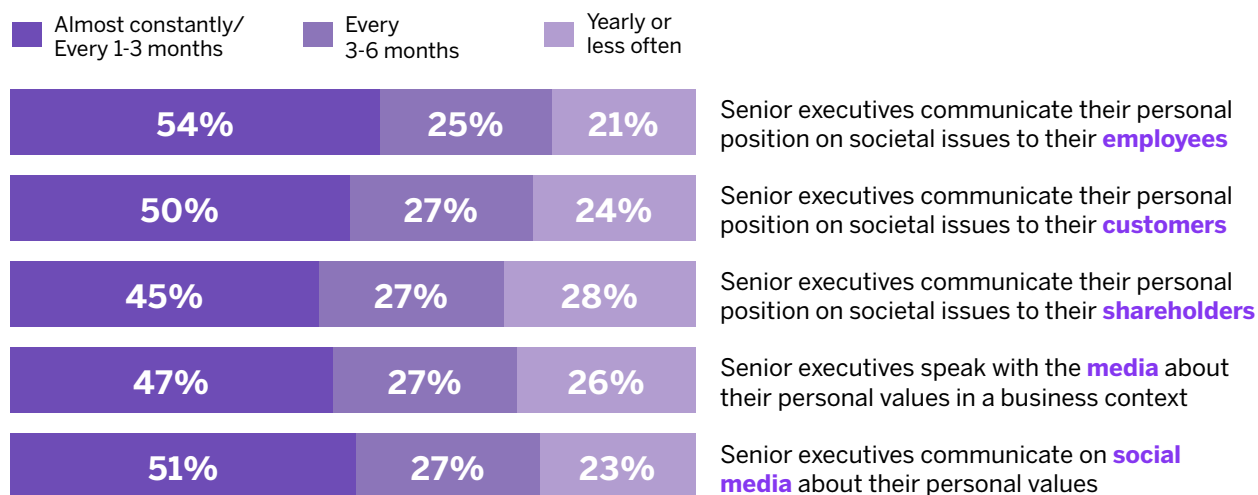
Figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding.



# Expectations of Technology Leaders

Now that senior technology leaders like Mike Cannon-Brookes from Atlassian, RenZhengFei from Huawei and others are speaking out in a very personal way — and doing so frequently — they have changed the audience’s expectations. Over half of our respondents in the business technology space in Asia Pacific expect senior executives to convey their personal positions with very high frequency — from “almost constantly” to every three months.

## How often should APAC Technology Brand Leaders communicate their point of view



Figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Many regional senior executives are uncomfortable with this demand, but the leaders who believe that communicating on societal issues distracts from the core business are missing a key point: Your audience wants to hear it. Ninety-one percent of respondents said that the behaviors of the executive leaders of a company in the technology industries would influence their decision to support the brand.

C-suite executives who show the courage to communicate frequently and with authenticity will stand out as leaders.

C-suite executives who show the courage to communicate frequently and with authenticity — rather than via committee-written platitudes — will stand out as leaders. Across the four markets surveyed in Asia Pacific, communication with employees came up as the most important stakeholder group for senior leaders. A third of APAC business tech respondents believe

that senior executives should communicate their personal position on issues to their employees at least every one to three months; 21% say that it should be almost constantly.

Employees can either be a brand's most influential evangelists or devastating critics.

## The Employee Effect

This has always been true, but the pandemic has thrown rocket fuel on this principle. Across most sectors, respondents rated **employee well-being and personal needs (physical, mental, financial) as the most important issue**. Eighty-eight percent of respondents in Asia Pacific said that brands have a moral obligation to engage with societal issues when they affect their employees.

Before brands try to save the world, they must make sure their own house is in order. You can't run a mental wellness campaign if your managers are sending emails at 3 a.m. You can't fight homelessness or hunger if your front-line workers can't make ends meet. Purpose starts at home, and in the most populous social media nations in the world, employees can make or break a brand.



### Case Study: Alibaba

In China, Alibaba is at the forefront of connecting over **1,000 rural communities, farmers and traders** to broadband internet through its **Alibaba Rural Vitalization Fund**, so that people in rural regions can access digital technologies and partake in the country's booming digital economy. As part of its Rural Support Program, farmers can access Taobao Live — Alibaba's livestreaming channel — at no cost and benefit from other tools and resources offered by the Alibaba Digital Economy. More recently, the tech giant's leaders also announced a **\$15.5 billion investment to finance 10 "common prosperity" initiatives**, supporting the nation's push toward a more equitable society. This includes plans to ramp up technology investments that help underdeveloped regions strengthen their digital infrastructures and economies.

# What Can You Do Now

In a world where everything is recorded, where the audience has multiple sources of information about how brands are behaving, the rules have changed. Organizations can no longer control the message; the only thing they can control is what they say and do.

That's why it's critical that brands find their internal bearings. This will enable them to both respond in real time when high-octane issues hit the headlines and maintain the stamina to go the distance

**Great expectations.** You're coming from a place of strength. Over 90% of business technology decision-makers believe that brands are working for the common good. They're looking to technology brands with positive expectations.

**Build on the promise of your brand.** Long-term single-issue investment is the way to build credibility. Choose projects that extend upon the products or services that your brand offers, programs that build upon your proven authority in the market.

**Collaborate for the common good.** Companies should embrace the principle that their reputations emanate not from the example of their power, but from the power of their example. This extends not only to their investors and shareholders but with all who can affect, or be affected by, their actions. To this end, communicators in tech firms have a large part to play in keeping executives on track to not lose sight of the stakeholder-centered ambitions laid down during their company's inception.



As the goal posts change and standards mount, many brands feel they're in a continuous cycle of whiplash.



**Employees first.** To withstand the current climate — tumultuous news cycles, rapid-fire social media responses — brands must first ensure their own house is in order. Prioritize employee well-being and local community engagement. Planting trees on the other side of the world is great, but it won't mean much if you're not committed to best environmental practices in your backyard.

**Don't tell, ask.** Your stakeholders expect near constant communication from you, but you can't just point a megaphone in their direction. Your employees and your customers want you to consult them on which societal issues are meaningful to them.

**Stay the course.** Focus your efforts on long-term commitments to initiatives that audiences can see, feel and touch. Present quantifiable impact statements and share this data with stakeholders.



# Appendix

## Methodology

This white paper looks at the needs and opportunities presented by decision-makers and recommenders for financial, medical/health, enterprise or information technology, within organizations in Australia, China, India and Singapore.

## Respondents

Australia: 453

China: 403

India: 454

Singapore: 424

# Your Brand in Motion

Our world is constantly changing. Brands in Motion reports provide data-driven tools that will help you develop the agility to respond to disruptions and the stability to build an enduring legacy.

**To learn more about Brands in Motion or find out about Brands in Motion events in your area, contact WE:**

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