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The future of business lies in happy humans

Toronto, Ontario – Almost four out of five (79%) Canadian businesses expect to grow in the next two years, changing everything from what they sell, where they sell it and how they work, as they seek opportunities in a fast-changing world. But while technologies like robotics top their spending plans, firms – both in Canada and abroad – are also prioritizing investment in the health, happiness and harmony of their staff, according to a new global HSBC survey.

'Navigator: Made for the Future' is a survey of over 2,500 companies in 14 countries and territories, including Canada. It shows that 54% of Canadian companies plan to invest in research and innovation to drive that growth. While this strategy isn't surprising, results demonstrate that nearly as many business leaders prioritize boosting spending on skills training (47%) and employee satisfaction and well-being (42%) to supercharge that growth; ahead of investments in logistics (37%), premises or equipment (37%), business restructuring (37%), and 'bricks and mortar' stores (29%).

"The future of work is about much more than technology: it's about the future of workers," said Dan Leslie, Deputy Head of Commercial Banking at HSBC Bank Canada. "This survey demonstrates that technology is only half the story; business leaders recognize that we need to invest in people to be successful. Businesses made for the future will need their people to be highly trained and highly engaged – or they may take their skills elsewhere. Canada is well positioned to take full advantage of this, given our business leaders' commitment to investing in people and continued opening of new trade markets."

By upskilling employees and adopting innovative technologies, the end goal for businesses is to become more efficient, more customer-centric and greener. Over half the companies surveyed in Canada plan to increase their investment in customer experience (54%) and 38% will raise spending to become more environmentally sustainable over the next two years.

A number of new technologies have already been embraced by businesses and include wearables (39%), Augmented and Virtual Reality (38%), Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (37%), 3D printing (35%), and the Internet of Things (34%). The biggest benefits of employing these five technologies are improvements in productivity, customer experience and product or service quality.

While 77% of Canadian companies think technologies will make their staff more productive, 74% think they will enhance satisfaction and well-being, 74% think they will need to upskill their workforce, while 61% also said they think they'll need fewer workers in the future. More than half (53%) intend to introduce or increase flexible working practices to enhance well-being and adapt to a rebalancing between human and automated output.

Interviews for the 'Navigator: Made for the Future' survey were conducted in Australia, Canada, China, France, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, Singapore, the UAE, the UK and the USA in May 2019.

How Canada compares to the globe

Investment priorities (identified by businesses as investment priorities over the next two years)	Priority area	Canada	Globe
	Customer experience	54%	52%
	Research innovation and technology	54%	55%
	Selling more products and services online	48%	53%
	Skills and training	47%	52%
	Employee satisfaction and well-being	42%	43%
	Becoming more environmentally sustainable	38%	45%
	Premises, plant, equipment	37%	34%
	Business restructuring	37%	37%
	Logistics and operation	37%	42%
	Setting up brick and mortar stores	29%	29%
Technology adoption (specific technologies embraced by businesses)	Wearables	39%	37%
	Augmented and virtual reality	38%	35%
	Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning	37%	41%
	3D printing	35%	35%
	Internet of Things	34%	40%
Impact of technology on workers (Use of technology will...)	Make their teams more productive	77%	76%
	Enhance their employees' well being	74%	72%
	A need to upskill our workforce	74%	76%
	Lead to a reduction in our workforce	61%	59%

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About Navigator: Made for the future

HSBC's '[Navigator: Made for the future](#)' report is based on research commissioned by HSBC and conducted by Kantar. It surveyed over 2,500 businesses in May 2019 with turnover of USD5m or above from 14 key markets globally, including: Australia, Canada, mainland China, France, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, Singapore, UAE, UK, USA. Survey respondents were key decision makers and those having significant input into the decision making of their company's strategic direction. The survey gauges sentiment and expectations of the businesses in the near to midterm future, and covers business outlook, future of business in terms of opportunities & threats, investment priorities and changes foreseen in the future; as well as business innovation and workforce, sustainability and success factor for the future.

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