

# Foreword

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Technology has incredible power to improve people's lives, foster economic growth, and create opportunities for individuals, companies, and nations around the globe. Over the past 13 years, the transformative potential of information and communication technologies has been well documented in the annual *Global Information Technology Report (GITR)*.

This year's theme—centered on ensuring inclusive growth—is an important reminder that the work is far from over. Many regions and billions of people remain unconnected or underserved, and significant opportunities for further social improvement and economic growth exist. As the following chapters will show, the social and economic challenges of inclusive growth are inseparable from key topics on the global corporate agenda.

We are living in an age of unparalleled digital disruption, with massive amounts of technology-driven change, huge innovation, and significant evolution in the ways people use technology. In this era of dynamic disruption, our Strategy& colleague Christopher Vollmer has often noted that “the enemy is standing still.” Whether to facilitate social progress or commercial leadership, in order to unlock the growth that digitization promises, companies and governments alike must act swiftly, decisively, and strategically along three important dimensions.

First, it is critical to get the strategy right. Chart your future with digital at the center and be clear-minded about where you can lead. Identify the solutions you can provide better than anyone else. Every truly great strategy answers the fundamental question “Who are we going to be?” Digital strategy is no exception. The most capable organizations have a clear understanding of who they are and how they add value. This allows them to stay true to their unique identities and focus on developing the powerful capabilities that will reimagine and reinvent what they do and how they do it in order to thrive in a more digital world. The right strategy is bold yet practical—one that can actually be executed to drive transformations and to fuel sustainable and inclusive growth.

Second, it is important to put the user of technology at the center of everything. The user may be a student in a remote school with no Internet access or a consumer

looking for a smart phone to help run a small business. Only when we truly understand the individuals using the technology—their behaviors, needs, and problems—can we create better solutions, solve bigger problems, and achieve significant change. Constantly listening to users' feedback and continually iterating strategies and solutions based on deep observational understanding of the needs of citizens and consumers will drive smarter innovation and greater success.

Third, digital leadership requires a bias for action. Disruption presents a myriad of opportunities—but in a swiftly evolving landscape their value often dissipates if not captured quickly. Mobilizing rapid decision-making and action can be particularly challenging for governments and public enterprises, but many established, historically successful companies face this problem as well. Organizations that quickly build or acquire the capabilities they need to be “first and fast” will be best placed to secure and sustain advantage in our increasingly technology-driven world.

Doing these three things extraordinarily well will chart a path for significant growth. With untold economic value and billions more people poised to get connected, governments and business leaders have both a tremendous opportunity and a responsibility. It is up to us to ensure that we fully leverage the potential of digital disruption. One of the dangers is that we might set the bar too low and the horizon too close, and fail to strive far enough. The worst thing we could do is box ourselves in by using technology simply to achieve incremental growth or make the status quo more efficient.

The greatest opportunity lies in reimagining what is possible—to compel ourselves to become fearless explorers and innovators who push past boundaries, create bold visions, and make plans not constrained by today, but fueled by what technology will be able to do tomorrow. The goal for all of us should be to propel ourselves into uncharted territory that will transform our collective futures and accelerate the social, political, and economic benefits that only strategic global connectivity can deliver.