9 Actions for Winning Through a Recession
A 2022-2023 Playbook for Supply Chain Leaders
Gartner research showed that only a very small number of companies broke away from the pack during the Great Recession (end-2007 to mid-2009) and sustained their performance for the subsequent decade.

As the threat of another downturn looms, it’s timely to revisit lessons learned — in particular, that outperformers win because of the decisive actions they take at the beginning of contractionary periods.

Outperformers:

• Commit before the downturn to the differentiating elements of their strategy to position themselves to power through uncertain times, not simply respond to them.

• Effectively balance top- and bottom-line growth across business conditions. Focusing only on cost-cutting has historically come at the expense of top-line growth.

Unique headwinds further complicate today’s operating environment, but the differentiating decisions clearly hinge on digital.

Among CEOs, 94% want to maintain or accelerate the already intense pace of digital transformation sparked by the pandemic, and 70% of CFOs expect digital technology to get more funding.

The imperative for organizations is placing the right digital bets at the right cost.
Navigating Recession Now Will Be Much More Difficult Given the Triple Squeeze

The Triple Squeeze
3 compounding pressures that most executives have likely never experienced

1. Persistent high inflation
   69% of CFOs still believe nonlabor input costs will rise significantly.

2. Scarce, expensive talent
   47% of CFOs find it difficult to find and hire enterprise talent.
   50% of CFOs still see a significant wave of workforce resignations.

3. Global supply challenges
   48% of CFOs believe supply chain volatility and shortages will last beyond 2022.
What Failure Sounds Like During Recession

What we hope you don’t have to tell the board in 2024:

“**We cut costs too far** and could not keep pace with demand when it returned.”

“**Our costs kept increasing with inflation**; now our margins are unattractive to investors.”

“**We continued to spend aggressively on digital**, but we did not capture the value like competitors.”

“**Higher product pricing led to permanently losing market share.**”

“**Competitors out-innovated us** with digital products and services.”

“**Other companies secured great digital talent at a discount.**”
Goal: Make the Right Trade-Offs to Improve Profitability While Funding Faster Digital Acceleration

CFO Plans for Digital Technology Spend (July 2022)
Percentage of CFOs and finance leaders, cross-industry, $50M – $100B in revenue

Increase 69%
Maintain 28%
Decrease 3%

“I’m telling my teams to fund digital acceleration by finding savings and inefficiencies.”

“Our business leaders will need to live in an environment of trade-offs, which we haven’t had to do for a while.”

n = 154 CFOs and finance leaders
Q: Q8 from CFO Recession Planning Poll: Which spend categories do you plan to decrease/maintain/increase for the next 12 months?
Top CSCO Questions We’re Tackling for Clients

1. How can I deliver cost savings in a high inflationary environment?
2. How can I work with the rest of the C-suite to account for key material input issues in integrated business planning decisions?
3. Should we be increasing wages in the supply chain to retain key talent?
4. How do I work with the CFO to align expectations around supply chain cost savings targets?
5. How do I define risk appetite with the C-suite and my risk management partners?
6. How do we balance the trade-offs between the need for cost savings and supply chain resilience?
Nine Actions for Winning Through a Recession

1. **Manage spend**
   - Create a prioritized list of the trade-offs you will make in your budget, with a story about why.

2. **Accelerate movement to the cloud**, while paying attention to shifting pricing strategies from software providers as prices rise.

3. **Radically challenge workflows and processes** to make them faster, simpler and more agile for the long term.

4. **Secure talent**
   - Fundamentally rethink the way your company leverages humans (locations, hours, part- vs. full-time, in-house vs. outsource).

5. Clarify your employee value proposition (EVP) so you are positioned to attract and retain the right digital talent.

6. **Aggressively source key digital talent** that will shake loose and help accelerate your digital plans.

7. **Accelerate digital**
   - Develop a future vision of the customer and employee to accelerate the right digital investments for 2025.

8. **Invest in predictive and autonomous digital projects** that will make the organization faster and leaner.

9. **Narrow the metrics** you use to measure and manage digital initiatives to the few that align to outcomes.
Gartner CSCO Playbook for Navigating Recession

Sample research, benchmarks and other resources for winning in this period. Let us help you plan your unique step-by-step path.

**Step 1:** Evaluate Risk Appetite
- Supply Chain Risk Management Scorecard
- Four Steps to Write a Risk Appetite Statement

**Step 2:** Benchmark Spend
- Supply Chain Budget Benchmarking
- Top Supply Chain KPIs

**Step 3:** Align with CFO on critical spend categories
- Gartner Hierarchy of Supply Chain Metrics Benchmarking
- Gartner Supply Chain Strategy Template

**Step 4:** Confirm product and portfolio are optimized for current inflation pressure and recession contraction
- Gartner Hierarchy of Supply Chain Scenario Planning
- 14 Tactics to Counteract Supply Instability

**Step 5:** Build deeper ties with suppliers and logistics providers
- How to Build a Supply Chain Ecosystem
- Gartner’s Automated Supplier Scorecard Platform

**Step 6:** Establish governance to review risks and manage proactively across the supply chain
- Guide to Optimizing Supply Chain Costs
- Supply Chain Cost Optimization Playbook for Sourcing & Procurement
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