UBS Global Entrepreneur Report: Optimistic About 2026 and Beyond

Entrepreneurs globally are optimistic about their business in the year ahead, driven by customer demand, rapid advances in technology and innovation, and an appetite for expansion

Luxembourg, March 16, 2026 – UBS, the leading and truly global wealth manager, announced the publication of the second UBS Global Entrepreneur Report, which surveyed 215 UBS entrepreneur clients and members of the firm's Industry Leader Network, across 26 markets. Their businesses account for approximately USD 34.3 billion in combined annual revenue, which equates to an average of USD 167 million each.

This year's report shows that entrepreneurs are entering 2026 with strong momentum, with solid growth plans, rising hiring intentions, and optimism toward AI?driven opportunities. More than two?thirds are optimistic about the year ahead, with over half planning to increase their workforce, and nearly half considering expanding or relocating their business internationally to capture new customer markets. AI remains the standout opportunity, as business leaders pursue efficiency gains and smarter decision?making to support their next phase of growth.

"Entrepreneurs are entering this year with remarkable resilience and a renewed sense of ambition," said Benjamin Cavalli, Head of Strategic Clients & Global Connectivity at UBS Global Wealth

Management and Co-Head EMEA OneUBS.“ Despite persistent geopolitical uncertainty, nearly seven in ten remain optimistic about the year ahead, driven by strong customer demand and rapid advances in technology.”

“We’re seeing founders double down on innovation, expand into new markets, and adapt their strategies to stay ahead of shifting global dynamics. What comes through loud and clear in this year’s findings is that entrepreneurs are not preparing for retrenchment. They’re preparing for reinvention, and they’re doing so with the clarity and confidence that have always defined the world’s most dynamic business builders,” he added.

Political and economic backdrop challenges sentiment

Entrepreneurs around the world are looking ahead with confidence. Sixty?eight percent say they’re optimistic about their business over the next 12 months, a sentiment fueled by rising demand, with 64% expecting increased appetite for their products and services. Many point to favourable economic conditions (34%), advances in technology and innovation that support their operations (34%), and the benefits of adopting more sustainable practices (23%) as further reasons for their positive outlook.

That confidence isn’t spread evenly. Entrepreneurs in Switzerland are the most enthusiastic, with an impressive 83% expressing optimism, closely followed by 74% across Europe. In Asia?Pacific, more than half (53%) still hold a positive view of the year ahead.

More than half of all entrepreneurs surveyed plan to expand their workforce in 2026, with the strongest hiring intentions coming from the technology, healthcare, finance and real estate sectors. In Europe, 63% expect to take on new staff, and over a third (34%) aim to do so significantly. Over the next five years, 80% of entrepreneurs globally expect to increase headcount, and 37% plan to do this in a substantial way.
Entrepreneurs in the United States lead the pack, with 94% anticipating workforce expansion, followed closely by 86% in Europe.

This growth is also extending geographically. Forty?five percent of entrepreneurs are considering relocating or expanding their business to another country or location. This intention is strongest in the technology and healthcare sectors, where 54% are contemplating a move, and among consumer?discretionary and consumer?staples entrepreneurs, where the figure reaches 50%. The contrast with finance and real estate is stark, with only 33% considering relocation. Their motivations are clear: 64% want access to new customer markets, 30% hope to be closer to clients, partners or suppliers, 25% are searching for more favourable regulatory environments, and 24% aim to reduce operating costs. Europe leads this expansion mindset, with 51% expecting to

relocate or grow beyond their current borders, more than any other region.

Still, entrepreneurs are well aware of the challenges ahead. Political uncertainty stands out as the top concern, cited by 42% for 2026 and by 46% over a five?year horizon. They're also watching for potential shifts in trade policy (36%), the risk of a global recession (35%), and the possibility of major geopolitical conflict(s) (35%). These anxieties vary widely by region. In Asia?Pacific, nearly half view geopolitical conflict (49%) and recession (49%) as the most pressing threats over the next year, while those in Europe (47%) and Latin America (40%), are the most likely to worry about higher taxes.

In response, two?thirds (66%) of entrepreneur's plan to boost operational efficiency, while 60% are looking to diversify their markets and customer bases. But the strategies differ regionally. In Asia? Pacific, 67% are adjusting their business strategy or product and service offerings, compared with just 39% in the US.
Sector?specific responses vary too. Seventy percent of consumer?staples entrepreneurs are investing in new technologies and innovation, whereas only 36% of those in the finance and real estate sectors are doing the same.

Uneven AI adoption

Artificial Intelligence ("AI") has become the new frontier of competitive advantage, and entrepreneurs are aware of this. With AI adoption accelerating, 61% of entrepreneurs see it as the technology offering biggest commercial opportunity, but sentiment varies by size and geography. Two?thirds (66%) of businesses with over USD 100 million in revenue see AI as offering the greatest advantage, compared with 57% of smaller firms. Entrepreneurs in Europe and Switzerland are the most optimistic.

The clearest advantages of AI are operational. Sixty?seven percent expect efficiency gains and automation to have the most powerful impact over the next five years. More than half (55%) believe it will sharpen data analysis and decision?making and cut costs to improve margins (54%). Yet few entrepreneurs (18%) see AI as a tool for breaking into new markets or creating new revenue streams, and even fewer tie it to sustainability goals (8%).

Sector differences are stark. AI enthusiasm is strongest in technology and healthcare (73%), followed by finance and real estate (68%), while only 53% of industrial entrepreneurs share this view. Consumer discretionary and staples businesses are the most likely to see AI's biggest value in data?driven decisions (62%), giving them an edge in forecasting, pricing and customer engagement. They also lead in recognizing AI's role in supply?chain optimization (38%), compared with the 26% average across all sectors.

However, turning potential into practice is tough. Forty?six percent cite a shortage of skilled employees with relevant expertise, a challenge that hits consumer?focused sectors the most (51%) and finance and real estate the least (36%). Another 41% admit a lack of understanding of how to apply AI in their business. While almost half of industrial entrepreneurs (47%) see automation and robotics as the technology with the biggest opportunity, expectations for AI remains uneven across sectors.

Looming wealth transfer

Exiting a business is becoming a defining moment for many entrepreneurs, shaping not only the future of their companies but their personal wealth too. Thirty-two percent are considering a transition within the next five years, a figure that surges to 57% among those aged 65 and over. The US stands out as the clear outlier, with 63% considering exiting their business, compared with just 10% in Latin America, 18% in Asia-Pacific, 38% in Europe and 31% in Switzerland.

When choosing how to exit, most favor familiar paths. Forty percent expect to sell to a strategic buyer within their industry, while 23% plan to hand the business to the next generation. Only 13% anticipate selling to a financial investor such as a private equity fund, and even fewer envision taking their company public (6%) or merging with another (6%).

Nearly a third of entrepreneurs (32%) admit they've not built up their private wealth as much as they could, especially in the US (47%) and Latin America (39%). But the tide is turning – 42% of these entrepreneurs globally plan to focus on their personal wealth after a sale. Overall, 44% feel they've already built up the right amount, and 25% believe they've accumulated more than enough. As wealth transfer looms, preparing the next generation becomes a top priority. Two-thirds (67%) plan to focus on helping heirs manage wealth responsibly, and 61% are concerned about tax efficiency when transferring assets. When seeking guidance, most entrepreneurs would turn to trusted independent experts.

Sixty-nine percent expect to consult lawyers, tax advisors or estate planners. About half (47%) say they would consult a banker or client advisor, but only 23% plan to rely on advice from their children or future heirs.

Download the report here