ESSEC – BearingPoint Study identifies the human and operational factors behind scale-up success

Scaling up means understanding the pace at which every part of the company must evolve.

Cergy, November 5, 2025 – ESSEC Business School's *Leading@Scale Chair* and BearingPoint have released the *Scaling Stories* study, uncovering the human and organizational factors that enable a company to successfully navigate the transition from start-up to scale-up.

Academic research has historically focused on large corporations before recognizing the value of entrepreneurship. The intermediate growth stages between start-up and scale-up remain largely unexplored, even though they require a radical transformation of vision, management practices, and success metrics. These periods of rapid growth are crucial: **scale-ups drive innovation, create jobs, strengthen economic sovereignty, and solidify investor confidence in innovation-driven ventures.** They also inspire a generation of entrepreneurs determined to conquer the world rather than settle for a quick exit. The study shows that scaling up is about more than securing funding. It requires a transformation of leadership and management approaches, adopting a data-driven by design mindset, and changes in commercialization and early professionalization of processes and tools. Successful companies are those able to balance rapid growth, cultural coherence, and operational excellence.

The study identifies the key factors for successful scaling:

- Nearly 70% of executives surveyed consider leadership and company culture to be the most decisive factors when scaling up (p. 8).
- The qualities that distinguish scale-up leaders are resilience, authenticity, and adaptability (p. 10), as these traits help maintain cohesion and inspire teams in rapidly-changing environments.
- On the operational side, product differentiation and quality emerge as the top performance drivers: 90% and 70% of respondents ranked them highest, well ahead of customer service (53%) and price (37%) (p. 23).
- The main challenges cited are process management (60%), cash flow management (53%), and talent recruitment and retention (49%) (p. 28). Leaders emphasize that collaboration, continuous learning, and critical thinking have become central in hiring.
- On the financial side, companies seek investors who are capable of challenging them constructively—but only 15% say they receive this level of support.

“At a time when AI dominates discussions, it is remarkable to see the strong consensus among leaders of high-growth companies on the vital importance of leadership, company culture, and human qualities. Beyond management techniques, these traits underpin ESSEC’s pedagogy and 23 research & teaching chairs, built around the values of responsibility, humanism, innovation, and open-mindedness,” explains **Yann Motte, Executive Director of the *Leading@Scale Chair*, ESSEC Business School.**

“It would be a mistake to consider hypergrowth companies as smaller versions of mature organizations. Their reality is fundamentally different: they operate in environments of constant uncertainty, with short decision cycles and ever-evolving structures… BearingPoint is committed to offering them dedicated attention, as demonstrated through this study,” **notes Franck Szabo, Partner at BearingPoint in charge of the Tech sector.**

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About ESSEC Business School:

Founded in 1907, ESSEC is a world-class academic institution distinguished by its humanistic approach. In response to current and future economic, environmental, social, and geopolitical challenges, ESSEC is actively transforming its teaching, research, and campuses to educate inclusive, influential, and multicultural leaders. With 7,855 students in initial programs and 5,000 participants in executive education, spread across its four campuses (Cergy, La Défense, Rabat, and Singapore), ESSEC offers programs ranked among the best in the world. Its exceptional faculty — 194 professors, including 25 emeritus professors — along with 230 partnerships with prestigious international universities and a network of 74,000 alumni, reflects its enduring commitment to academic excellence and innovation.

About BearingPoint

BearingPoint is an independent management and technology consultancy with European roots and a global reach that transforms businesses using technology intelligently. The firm operates across three core units: Consulting, Products, and Capital. Its Consulting services focus on selected areas, combining business and technology expertise with profound industry knowledge. The Products unit provides IP-driven solutions and managed services for business-critical processes. Capital delivers deal advisory and transaction services. In addition to its core operations, BearingPoint runs two joint ventures: Arcwide, a JV with IFS, which specializes in business transformation based on IFS technology, and BearingPoint North America, a JV with ABeam, which is dedicated to consulting excellence and business transformation built on SAP. BearingPoint serves many of the world’s leading companies and organizations. Together with its strategic alliance partner ABeam Consulting, the firm brings together 15,000 professionals and supports clients in over 70 countries, delivering seamless business transformation with sustainable impact. BearingPoint is a certified B Corporation, driven by a strong sense of purpose – today and into the future. For more information, please visit:www.bearingpoint.com and www.linkedin.com/company/bearingpoint.