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## Customer Experience Holds Key to SME Growth, Study Shows

### *Global SMEs Adopting New Technologies and a Customer-Centric Approach to Fuel Recovery and Growth; Security Remains Top Priority*

BEDFORD, Mass.--(BUSINESS WIRE)-- Providing a positive customer experience using transformative cloud technologies is the number one key to driving economic growth for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) according to new research conducted by independent market research firm [IDG Research Services](#). The study sponsored by [Progress](#), a global software company, polled 300 key decision-makers across the US and Europe about their biggest business challenges and key goals.

SMEs are businesses with less than 249 employees (Europe) and between 50 and 999 employees (US). The survey found that most are improving the customer experience through value added services and business applications and that cloud services are helping these organizations to deliver on customer demands.

#### **Customer-centric approach driving growth**

Often applauded for a more personalized, customer-centric approach than larger enterprises, the study found that SMEs are continuing to focus on this area, with 74% looking to achieve growth through an improved customer experience and the delivery of value added services. Further, 60% said they plan to adjust business models over the next 18 months to better meet customer demands and stay ahead of the competition. Nearly half (48%) reported that ensuring security for their key applications was their highest priority.

In a competitive business environment, businesses also are increasingly looking for new applications that can help improve efficiency and boost productivity. More than half are focusing on application initiatives that deliver agile, responsive business environments, with 54% planning to deploy new business applications to increase productivity within the next 18 months.

In line with the maturity of the market, SMEs in the US were found to be slightly ahead of their European counterparts with a greater focus on implementing Big Data initiatives (48% US v 33% Europe). Showing the need for more agility, 47% will be focusing on increasing collaboration between IT and business organizations to build better business applications faster over the next 18 months.

#### **Cloud services and business applications delivering on customer demands**

To meet fast-changing customer demands and deliver tailored applications, nearly two thirds (61%) of US businesses surveyed have implemented or plan to implement cloud infrastructure/services in the near term. As with Big Data initiatives, European organizations are lagging behind the US in terms of cloud adoption, however 39% of European SMEs plan to implement cloud infrastructure/services within the next year.

#### **Executive Quote:**

"Global economic data shows a correlation between a steady SME market and a stable or recovering economy — we believe this is because SMEs combine many of the best traits from their large enterprise and start-up counterparts, offering a mix of reliability, innovation and flexibility which is best suited for quick growth," said Karen Tegan Padir, chief technology officer at Progress.

The IDG Research Services study, conducted between August and September 2013 surveyed 300 decision makers involved in setting business and IT strategy at SMEs in the US, UK, Germany, France and Benelux.

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