New Vertex Research Signals a Turning Point for Indirect Tax and Compliance: The Rise of Decision-to-Defense

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Drawing on more than 2,100 enterprise leaders across two independent research firms, the findings reveal two compounding forces — Defensibility Drift and CompOps Drag — that widen a Compliance Confidence Gap and make the case for governing the lifecycle from Decision-to-Defense

KING OF PRUSSIA, Pa., July 30, 2026 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- **Vertex, Inc. (NASDAQ: VERX) ("Vertex" or the "Company")**, the Decision-to-Defense™ global indirect tax and compliance company, today released new research pointing to a structural shift in how global enterprises must manage indirect tax and compliance. As governments move compliance obligations directly into the transaction — with invoice-level precision that varies by market and changes continuously — the research finds that indirect tax has outgrown its back-office origins and become a real-time, board-level discipline: an era Vertex defines as Decision-to-Defense.

The research identifies two compounding forces that work against every transaction record from the moment a decision is made to the moment it must be defended at audit:

- **Defensibility Drift™** — the widening gap between the decisions a business makes at the point of transaction and its ability to prove those outcomes to authorities across a global, fragmenting landscape of jurisdictions. Today, 58% of enterprises face highly complex indirect tax audits, 45% cite keeping up with changing tax regulations as a top compliance challenge, and 80% can reach audit readiness only through significant manual effort — with 46% of audit issues stemming from a mix of factors, not a single cause, a signature of systemic drift rather than isolated error.
- **CompOps Drag™** (Compliance Operations Drag) — the compounding operational cost of running compliance without a coordinating discipline: the manual rework, integration friction, and delayed audit response created by fragmented tax, ERP, e-commerce, and reporting systems never designed to run continuous compliance in real time. Integrating tax with existing systems is cited by 56% of enterprise leaders as their most common challenge. 59% want easier integration above all else, and even as 94% expect closer IT-Tax-Finance collaboration, only 12% have achieved full end-to-end integration of those systems.

Left ungoverned, drift and drag compound into a vicious cycle of complexity — where every new mandate, manual workaround, and failed audit deepens exposure and drains strategic capacity. Their cumulative cost has a name and a number: the Compliance Confidence Gap™ — the growing distance between the revenue an enterprise could book with defensible confidence and the revenue it conservatively reports because it cannot prove every determination. When confidence erodes, enterprises play it safe at the transaction. The result: 1 in 3 US enterprises leave $1M+ on the table every year, by their own estimate, for example by treating uncertain transactions as taxable, missing exemptions, or not reclaiming eligible indirect tax.

"For decades, indirect tax was treated as a back-office calculation — something you filed and forgot. That era is ending. Global compliance increasingly lives inside the transaction, and the enterprises that lead the next decade will be the ones that can prove, defend, and improve every outcome they decide — not just report it," said Allison Cerra, Chief Marketing Officer at Vertex. "The enterprises we studied are not describing a tooling problem — they are describing a control problem that disjointed systems and operating models were never built to solve."

The same lifecycle that produces the vicious cycle can compound the other way — into a virtuous cycle of control. The Decision-to-Defense approach describes what that discipline demands of any enterprise, organized around four operational pillars — Determine, Prove, Defend, and Improve — coordinated by Govern as one continuous flow:

- **Determine** — accurate tax calculation and compliance in real time, the starting point of every decision.
- **Prove** — every determination backed by an audit-defensible source of tax truth.
- **Defend** — readiness for audit, notice, appeal, and litigation, where the determination is tested and stands.
- **Improve** — configurability and continuous learning that adapt controls and tax logic as business, regulation, and risk change.

Governed end-to-end, the lifecycle turns compliance from a cost of doing business into a source of growth — where outcomes are accurate, audits are answerable, and the Compliance Confidence Gap closes.

"Our research shows that enterprises are struggling to keep pace with escalating regulatory requirements and are seeking a coordinating discipline to manage complexity," said Tammy Kaneshige, Partner and Chief Executive Officer at Emerald Research Group. "The organizations that will pull ahead are those that stop treating compliance as a series of disconnected steps and start governing it as one continuous lifecycle."

For more information on Vertex and its Decision-to-Defense approach to global indirect tax and compliance, visit https://www.vertexinc.com/decision-to-defense.

About the research

The findings draw on the most comprehensive evidence base Vertex has assembled on the state of indirect tax and compliance: more than 2,100 senior enterprise decision-makers surveyed in 2026 across two research firms. Emerald Research Group conducted two quantitative studies — one among 402 enterprise decision-makers in the US and Germany ($150M+/€150M+ revenue; 1,000+ employees), and one among 650 enterprise decision-makers across the US and Europe ($250M+ revenue; 1,000+ employees) — each with authority over enterprise tax and compliance software. Censuswide, on behalf of Vertex, surveyed an additional 1,050 senior IT, Finance, and Tax leaders across the UK, US, France, DACH, the Nordics, and Benelux. Full methodology and question-level sourcing are available on request.

About Vertex

Vertex is the Decision-to-Defense™ global indirect tax and compliance company. Vertex helps enterprises bring control to indirect tax and compliance across the full transaction lifecycle — from tax determination and e-invoicing through reporting, filing, and audit defense — to make outcomes easier tc prove and improve over time. Trusted by more than 60% of the Fortune 500, Vertex combines decades of tax expertise, deep global tax and compliance knowledge, and embedded integrations to help organizations operate globally with confidence. With headquarters in North America and offices in South America and Europe, Vertex's purpose is to ensure businesses and communities thrive through trusted transactions.

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