TOWARD GREATER VISIBILITY IN TODAY'S KNOWLEDGE WORLD:

2024 SURVEY ON INFORMATION SHARING AND TRANSPARENCY

Procedure*Flow*

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Produced by Unisphere Research,
a Division of Information Today, Inc.

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INTRODUCTION

Fast, accurate information is the lifeblood of today's business, but things often change too quickly with conditions on the ground for managers and employees to keep up – even with the latest technology. Organizations are having difficulties keeping employees up to speed on the latest and most viable knowledge assets available to do their jobs – documents, reports, emails, texts, and more. What assets are readily available? What assets are still relevant, and which are outdated? Which ones have been changed? What process changes have altered the flow of information?

The need to keep executives, managers, and workforces up to date and aware of changes is essential in today's fast-moving economy. This calls for continuous improvement and learning. This is especially apparent in the significant amounts of onboarding, training, or skills refreshes that are now constantly required within today's enterprises. Employees require information about their tasks, changes to those tasks, connectivity to colleagues and teams, as well as access to the latest documentation pertaining to their jobs. If not delivered, organizations risk lengthy times to proficiency, low morale, low productivity, and high turnover.

We explored the challenges of keeping employees up to date with today's fast-changing processes in a survey of 156 executives and managers overseeing knowledge management services and functions.

The survey, fielded among readers of KMWorld in December 2023-January 2024, was conducted in partnership with ProcedureFlow and covered organizations within North America with revenues exceeding $500 million annually. Respondents consisted of knowledge management managers and professionals representing a broad range of industries. (More information on demographics is available at the end of this report.)

The following are key findings to the study:

▶ Half of executives agree knowledge remains trapped within silos, and that skills shortages and training lags are holding back their ability to deliver.

▶ Silos and substandard data hamper information access. Data quality concerns reduce the ability to deliver the right information at the right time to agents and decision makers, cited by a majority of respondents. In addition, a majority also report difficulties with silos that create the need to search across systems.

▶ Visibility is key to keeping decision makers on top of changes to the business. While supply chains and field service are considered the most adaptable and flexible processes within enterprises, these fast-changing areas have the least visibility to decision makers and employees.

▶ It still takes months for employees or other users to be fully trained in using tools to access the process information they need to do their jobs, especially among new hires. With the growth and increasing complexity of technology, there has been little improvement in this time over the past five years.

▶ To address the need to move information that keeps up with fast-changing processes, visibility is key. Accelerated training is also essential. Another is to implement easier-to-use software to provide more clarity and transparency to these efforts.

On the following pages are the results of this survey on the key issues facing today's knowledge managers.

1. EVEN WITH NEW TECHNOLOGIES, THE KNOWLEDGE GAP PERSISTS

Half of executives agree knowledge remains trapped within silos, and that skills shortages and training lags are holding back their ability to deliver.

Technology has advanced impressively over the past decade, with great strides being made with digital technologies, data analytics, and now, artificial intelligence. But many gaps in knowledge management remain, and there is still much work to be done.

Tellingly, close to half of the executives and managers surveyed, 49%, agree that decision-makers in their organizations lack a "full view" of their onsite knowledge bases. And key information goes out the door when employees leave. (48%). Skills shortages and appropriate training are also creating headaches for executives and managers responding to the survey. (See Figure 1)

Many survey respondents documented the issues they face in bringing employees and managers up to speed with changes to their jobs or their organizational processes. "We have too many unconnected business systems, along with poor documentation, findability and discoverability of product and customer info," said one.
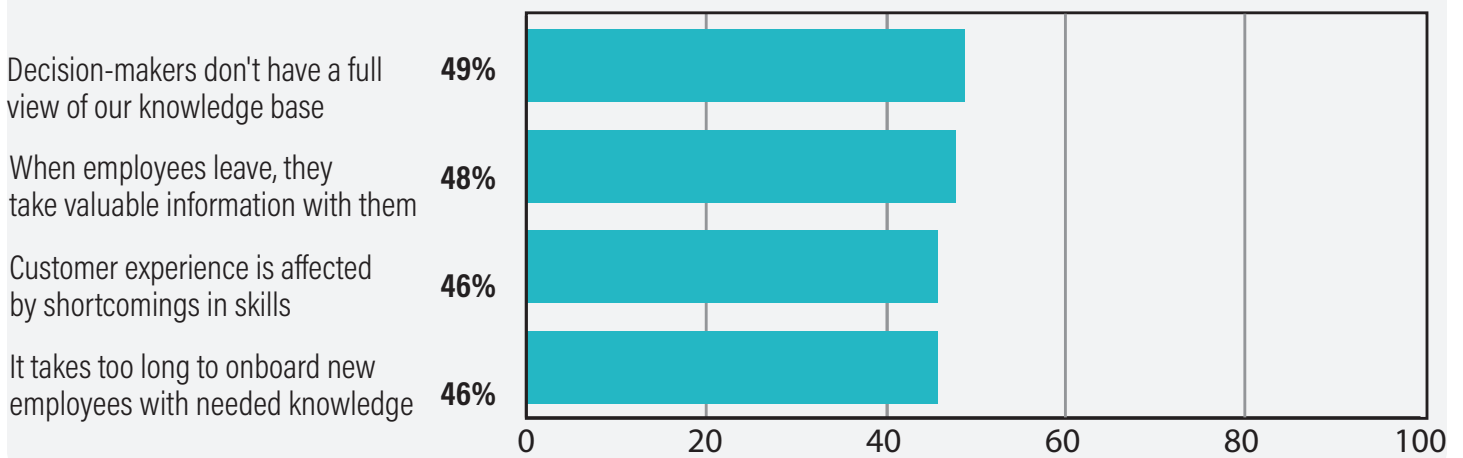
It's still too difficult to get a picture of what is occurring across enterprises. "We have too much latency in reporting," an executive relates. "Reports do not cascade until several days or weeks later. We also have low visibility to departmental metrics — only highly summarized views."

Another noted that their organization "suffers from lack of fundamental data collection, digitization and organization. In areas where we do collect data, the metrics and dashboards are periodic representing historical performance – and therefore not offering real-time corrective action if needed."

As another lamented: "We have too many systems, duplicate content, no time to train people who input, and a lack of governance."

Figure 1: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:
(Assigning a ranking of 4 or 5 based on a 1-5 scale)

Statement	Percentage
Decision-makers don't have a full view of our knowledge base	49%
When employees leave, they take valuable information with them	48%
Customer experience is affected by shortcomings in skills	46%
It takes too long to onboard new employees with needed knowledge	46%

2. DESPITE TECHNOLOGY, TIME IS NOT ON EMPLOYEES' SIDE

Silos and substandard data hamper information access. Data quality concerns reduce the ability to deliver the right information at the right time to agents and decision makers, cited by a majority of respondents. In addition, a majority also report difficulties with silos that create the need to search across systems.

In a real-time economy, delays in getting the right information to employees and customers may be costly. More than one-third of respondents, 35%, estimate it takes agents or decision-makers longer than 15 minutes to locate or access the information they need to complete an engagement or transaction. More than one in five say they spend more than a half hour. In a real-time economy, this latency can be costly to the business. (Figure 2)

Few respondents indicate their employees can access information instantaneously. In many cases,

it can take 15 minutes or more to find information needed on the spot.

Overall, only 36% report that sufficient amounts of the unstructured information they require are available on demand to users or decision makers. (Reporting that more than 75% of the unstructured information they require is available). (Figure 3)

There is also the complexity of multi-platform domains that requires additional integration work to keep information sources and access aligned. A majority of respondents, 54%, say they rely on five

Figure 2: On average, how long does it take agents or decision-makers to access the information they need for a real-time engagement, transaction, or process?

	Percentage
Less than 1 minute	7%
2-5 minutes	21%
6-10 minutes	22%
11-15 minutes	16%
16-30 minutes	13%
More than 30 minutes	22%

16-30 minutes + More than 30 minutes = 35%
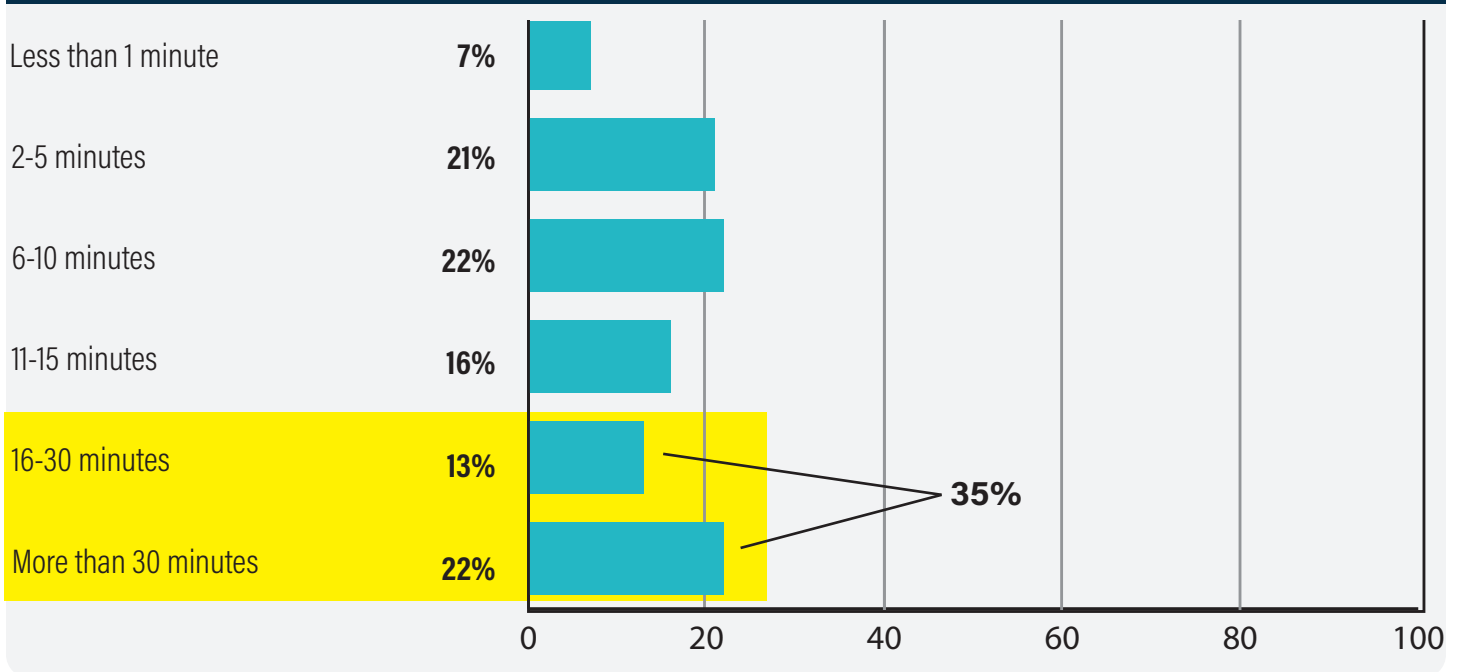
or more platforms to document processes or share information. Close to a third state that they have more than 10 platforms under their domains. (Figure 4)

Data quality is one of the two leading issues that by far hampers the ability to deliver the right information at the right time to agents and decision makers, cited by a majority of respondents (55%). A like amount also have difficulties with silos that create the need to search across systems. (Figure 5)

Even artificial intelligence, seen as an intelligent solution for organizing and appropriating data, is not up to the job, as one respondent reported:

"Our knowledge management software platform has inaccurate or poor algorithms to return the right results. Its' AI layer doesn't improve because of the same algorithm. Our knowledge software is lacking in analytics to better solve knowledge gaps."

Organizational issues also are slowing progress. "Organizations are slow to recognize the ROI for knowledge management because it is considered a cost rather than a cost reducer (therefore, increase in profits)."

When it comes to dispersing information, email still rules. Close to six in ten respondents, 58%, say they rely on email to move information to the users who need it at the time it is needed. Microsoft OneNote/ SharePoint are also employed by a majority to distribute information. Half rely on intranets across their enterprises. (Figure 6)

As a respondent described the challenge: "There's still a lot of emailing questions around the business, when we know that some of the information could be found using self-service through our knowledge management platform. We're working on educating people and convincing them they need to build KM into their workflow to boost their efficiency and it's slow in gaining traction."

A diminishing of collaboration in today's workplaces also may slow employee's access to critical information. "In times like these, when half of our staff is working from home, effective communication and collaboration has suffered compared to the old days," a survey respondent observed.

Figure 3: How much unstructured information such as policies, procedures, and knowledge articles are available in your organization?

Less than 50% of the information users require is available on demand	20%
51%-75% is available	31%
76%-99% is available	25%
100% is available	9%
Don't know/not sure	15%
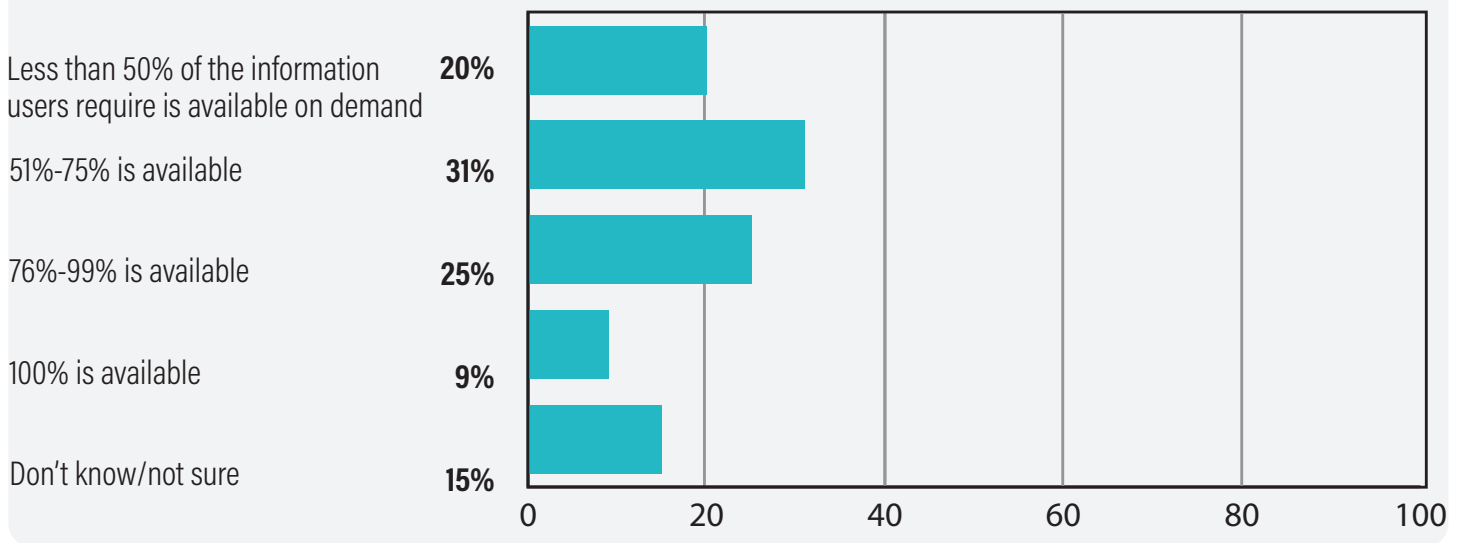
Figure 4: How many platforms does your organization depend on for documenting processes or sharing information?

Category	Percentage
1	7%
2	7%
3	15%
4	17%
5–7	16%
8–10	9%
More than 10	29%

54%

0   20   40   60   80   100
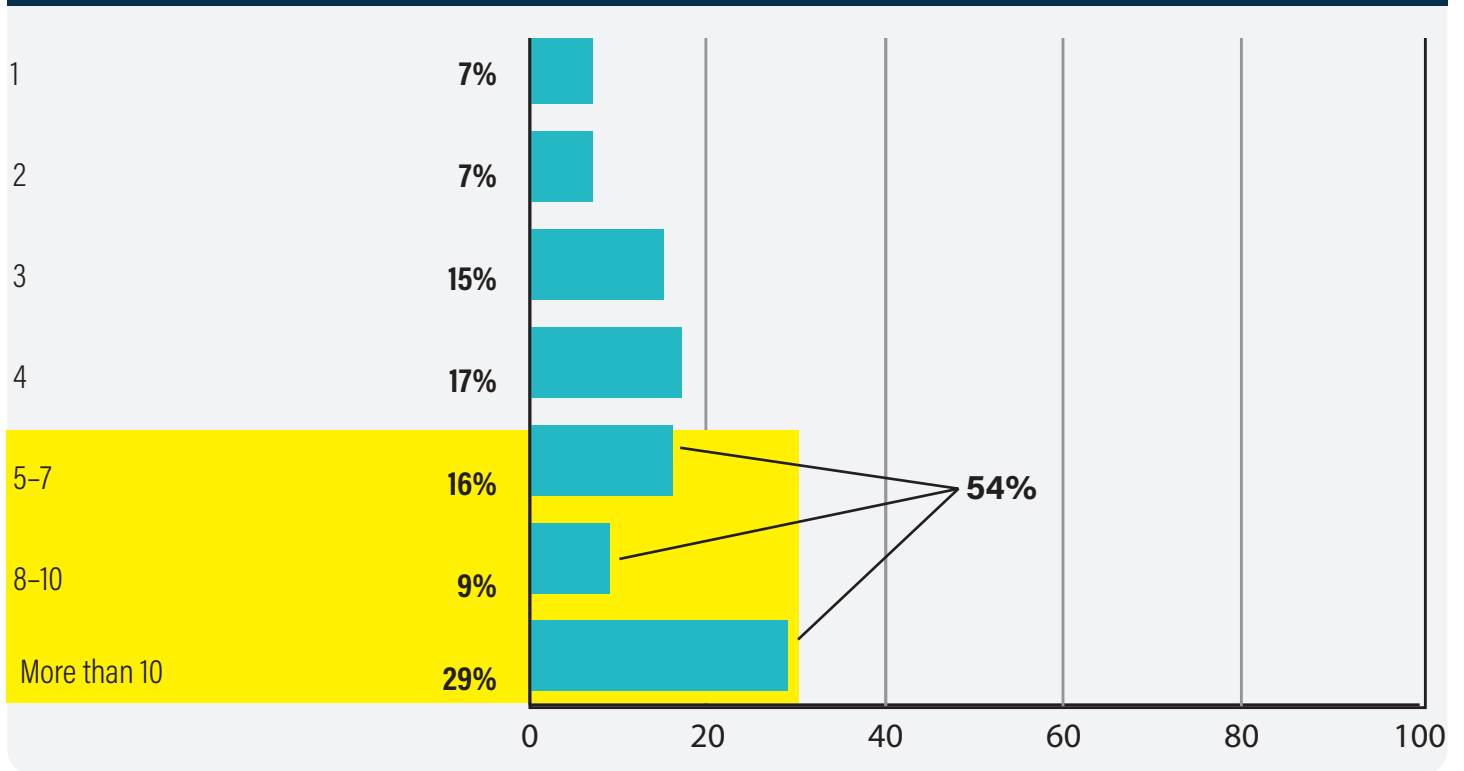
Figure 5: What obstacles do you encounter when trying to provide necessary and timely information to agents or employees?

Obstacle	Percentage
Issues with information and data quality (missing, outdated, or conflicting)	55%
Difficulties searching across systems	55%
Problems with information and data silos	50%
Insufficient content sharing	46%
Managing high volumes of information and data	42%
Inadequate information and data management infrastructure	41%
Onboarding or training employees with business process knowledge	39%
Challenges in finding the correct search terms to locate desired information	39%
Communication/collaboration issues	37%
Complex systems requiring training and skills	28%
Difficulty visualizing/identifying process information	27%
Limited or no access due to security protocols	19%
None of the above	7%

Figure 6: How would you rate the following platforms or methods in terms of helping keep employees informed at the time it is needed?
(Assigning a ranking of 4 or 5 based on a 1-5 scale)

Platform/Method	Percentage
Email	58%
Microsoft OneNote/SharePoint	55%
Internal intranet	50%
Other commercially available knowledge bases	49%
Manually created "cheat sheets"	48%
An internally developed knowledge base	47%
Visual diagrams/search	35%
Other	28%
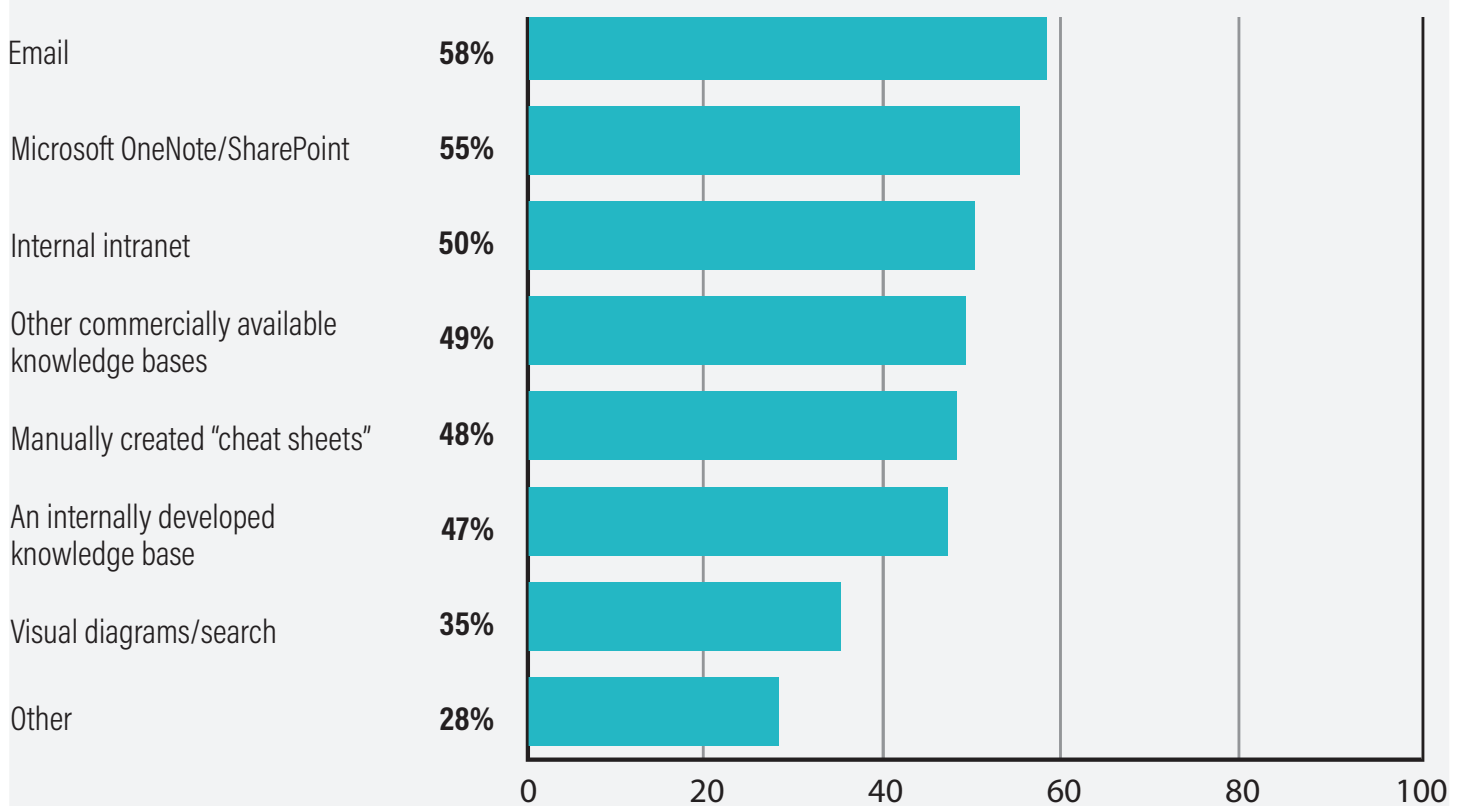
3. THE SUPPLY CHAIN VISIBILITY GAP

Visibility is key to keeping decision makers on top of changes to the business. While supply chains and field service are considered the most adaptable and flexible processes within enterprises, these fast-changing areas have the least visibility to decision makers and employees.

Product development processes rank as the areas most difficult to change or re-configure, cited by 35%. In addition, HR and benefits are seen as the second-ranked area to change, cited by 31%. At the same time, supply chain processes – shipping and logistics – are considered to have the greatest flexibility. (Figure 7)

Supply chain processes and field service work – considered to have the most adaptability — are suffering the most from obscured information. Forty percent of respondents rate shipping and logistics as lowest in terms of information visibility, along with 37% requiring more visibility in field service work. (Figure 8)

Figure 7: What Business Process Areas are Most Difficult to Change or Reconfigure?

Business Process Area	Percentage
Product development	35%
HR and benefits	31%
Production	27%
Call centers	24%
Sales	23%
Field service	22%
Marketing	15%
Shipping/logistics	10%
Other	12%

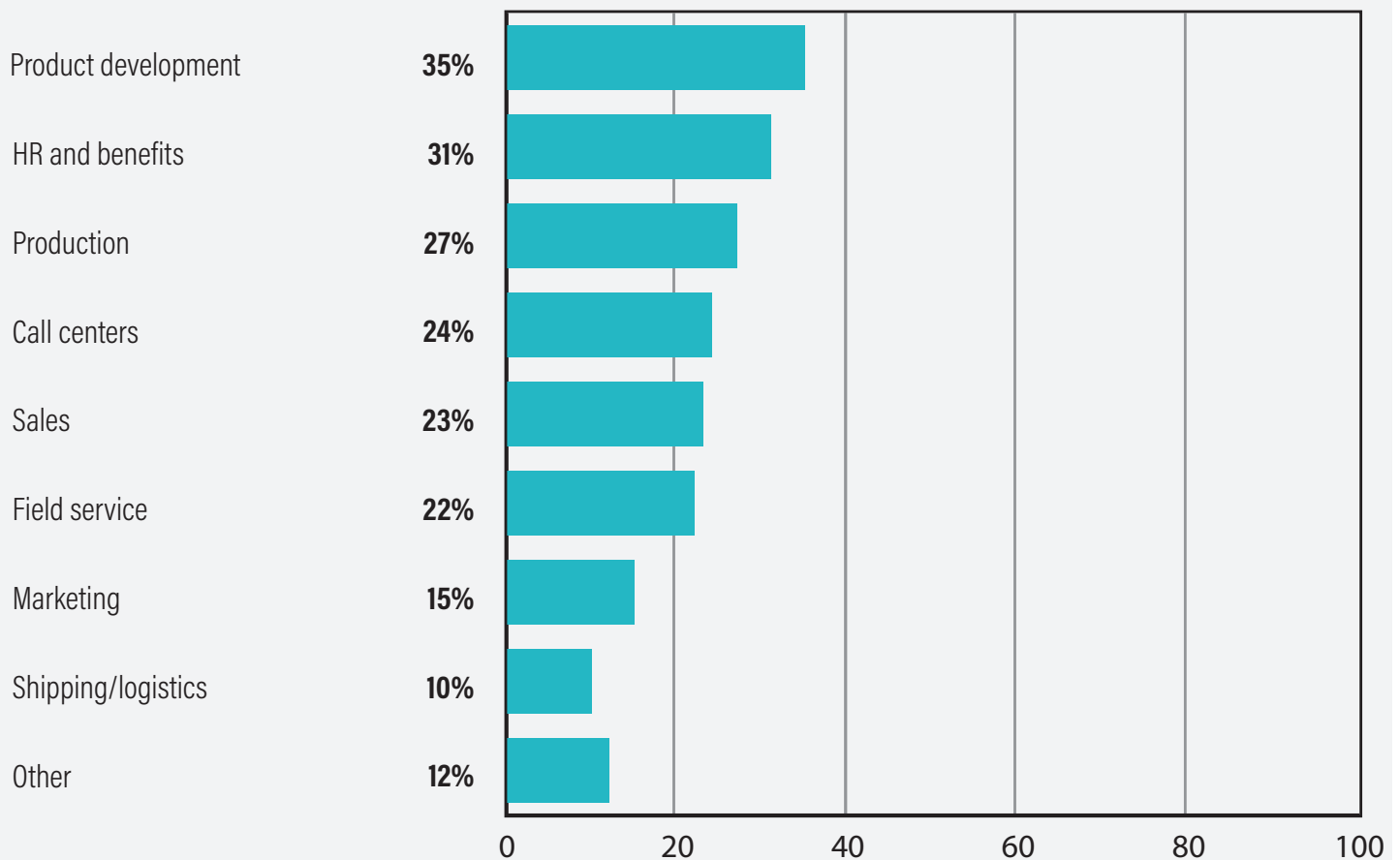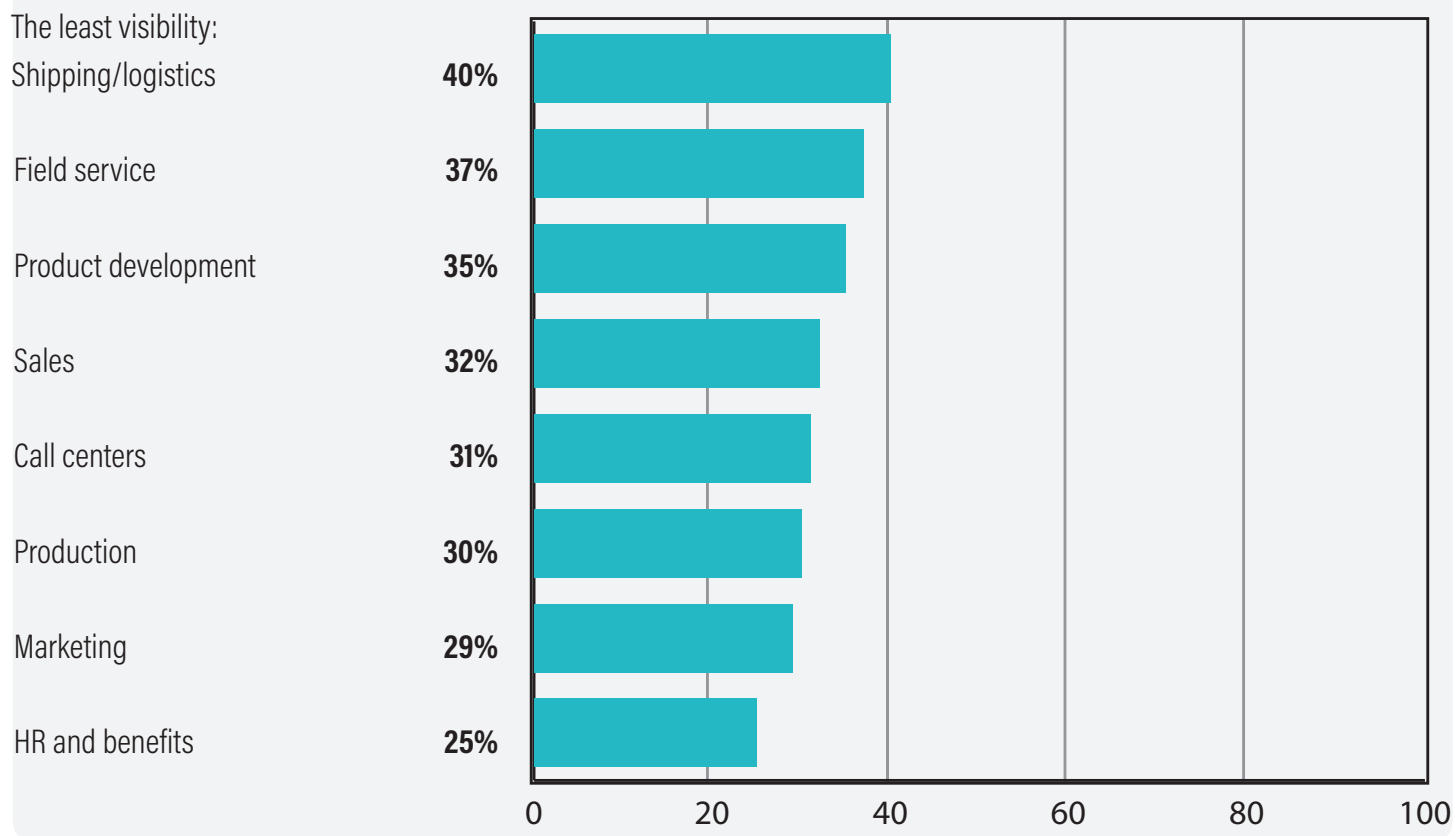## Figure 8: How satisfied are you with the visibility of information around the following business processes?

(Assigning a ranking of 4 or 5 based on a 1-5 scale)

The least visibility:

Process	%
Shipping/logistics	40%
Field service	37%
Product development	35%
Sales	32%
Call centers	31%
Production	30%
Marketing	29%
HR and benefits	25%

4. GETTING EMPLOYEES FULLY ONBOARD WITH PROCESSES AND RELATED CHANGES CAN BE A MATTER OF MONTHS
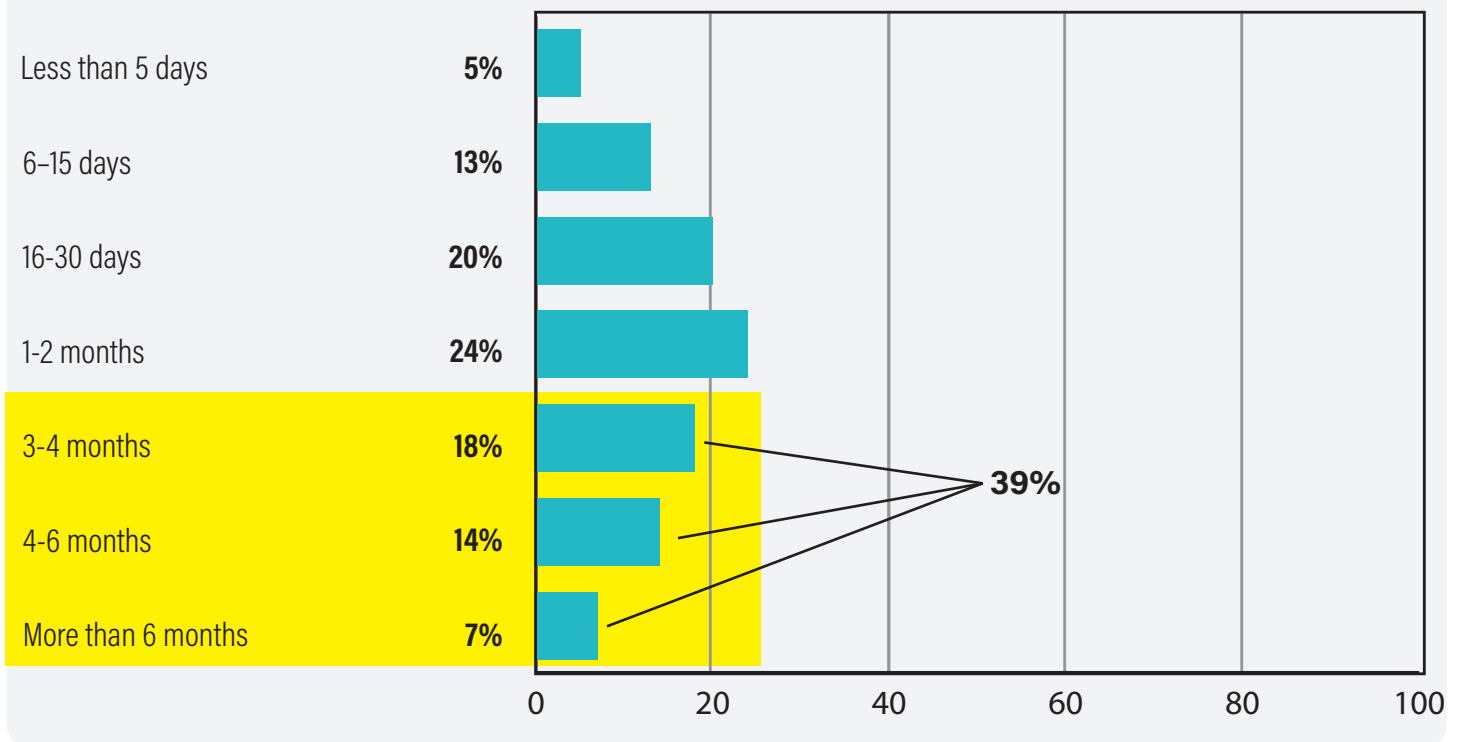
It still takes months for employees or other users to be fully trained in using tools to access the process information they need to do their jobs, especially among new hires. With the growth and increasing complexity of technology, there has been little improvement in this time over the past five years.

As indicated above, close to half of executives and managers surveyed regard the process of getting employees – both newly hired and existing – as too slow to keep up with their ever-evolving business requirements. To keep pace with the fast-changing processes involved in data-driven organizations, employees need regular, constant skills refreshes. However, such activities take time, and organizations are falling short of keeping their people up to speed.

Executives and managers were asked about the lengths of time involved in getting both newly hired employees and existing employees up to speed with changed processes. Getting newly hired employees ready and capable with the information they need is a time-consuming process for many organizations, with 39% requiring more than three months of training. (Figure 9)

Figure 9: How long does it take to fully train newly hired agents or employees to do their jobs?
(Time to proficiency)

Category	Percentage
Less than 5 days	5%
6–15 days	13%
16-30 days	20%
1-2 months	24%
3-4 months	18%
4-6 months	14%
More than 6 months	7%

39% (3-4 months, 4-6 months, More than 6 months)

The pace of process change is surpassing efforts to get new employees onboard. Close to half of executives and managers, 44%, report that the time needed to bring new hires up to speed has increased over the past five years, versus 22% reporting decreased time to proficiency. (Figure 10)

The main reasons for such increases in training new hires stem from expanded business product lines or services (61%), or a proliferation of additional tools or software to learn (57%). (Figure 11)

Among those reporting decreases in training time for new hires, a majority report ramped up training and onboarding programs have helped (63%), along with 48% seeing more user-friendly systems or interfaces. Another 41% of this group cite greater proactive collaboration efforts. (Figure 12)

The picture is somewhat brighter for existing employees, who can be assumed to be better-versed and experienced with corporate processes and may have even played a role in transforming those processes as technology advanced. Still, with more software and systems coming online within their enterprises, the challenge of keeping them up to speed increases.

Close to one-third (32%) spend a week or more training current employees in new processes. However, 35% say the time needed has increased over the past five years. As with new hires, the reason training is taking more time due to the rise of additional tools/ software to learn (51%), along with business expansion (48%). (Figures 13, 14, 15)

Figure 10: How has the amount of time needed to fully train newly hired agents or employees to do their jobs changed over the past five years?

Category	Percentage
Increased significantly	10%
Increased moderately	34%
Has not changed	35%
Decreased moderately	20%
Decreased significantly	2%

44% (Increased significantly + Increased moderately)

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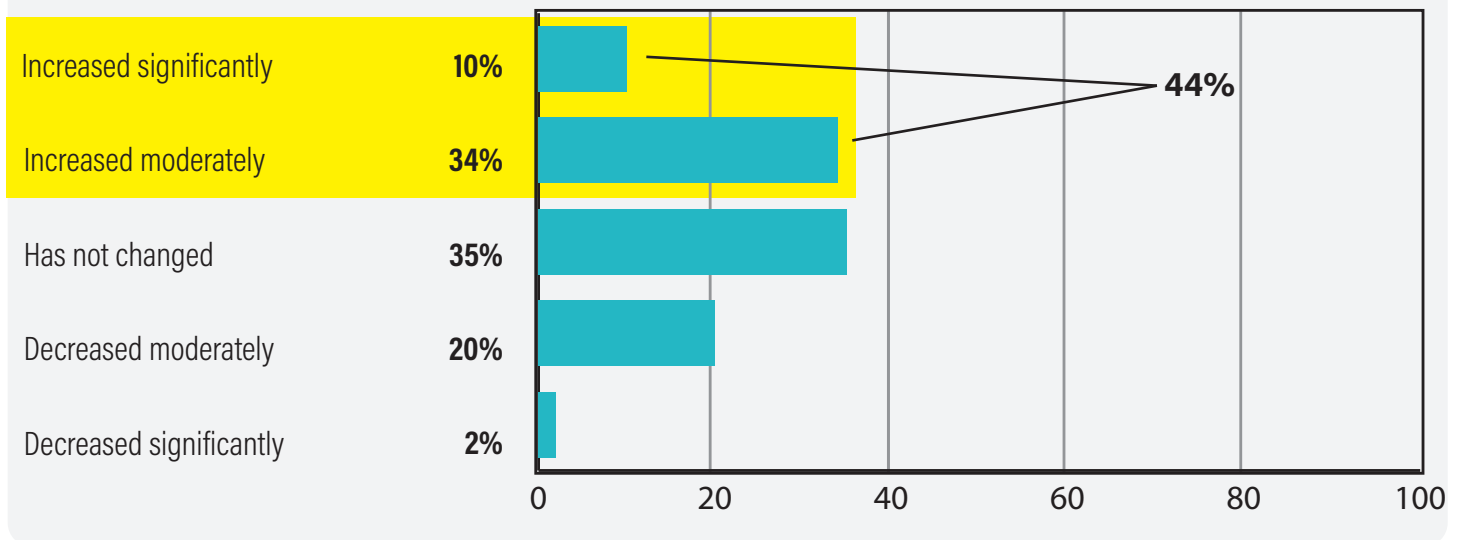
Figure 11: Why has the amount of time needed to fully train newly hired agents or employees increased?

(Among respondents reporting increased training times)

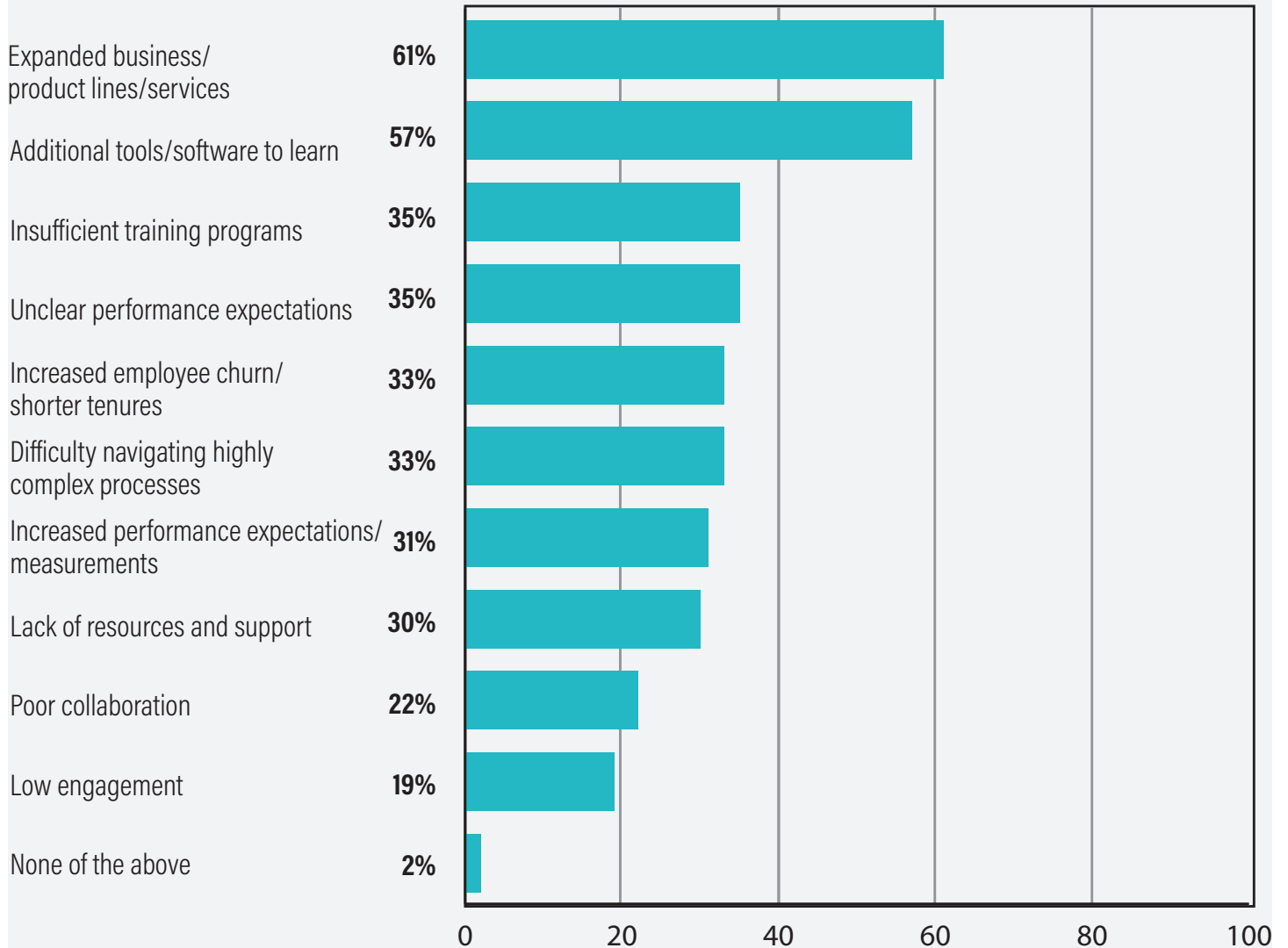| Category	Percentage
Expanded business/product lines/services	61%
Additional tools/software to learn	57%
Insufficient training programs	35%
Unclear performance expectations	35%
Increased employee churn/shorter tenures	33%
Difficulty navigating highly complex processes	33%
Increased performance expectations/measurements	31%
Lack of resources and support	30%
Poor collaboration	22%
Low engagement	19%
None of the above	2%

Figure 12: Why has the amount of time needed to fully train newly hired agents or employees decreased?
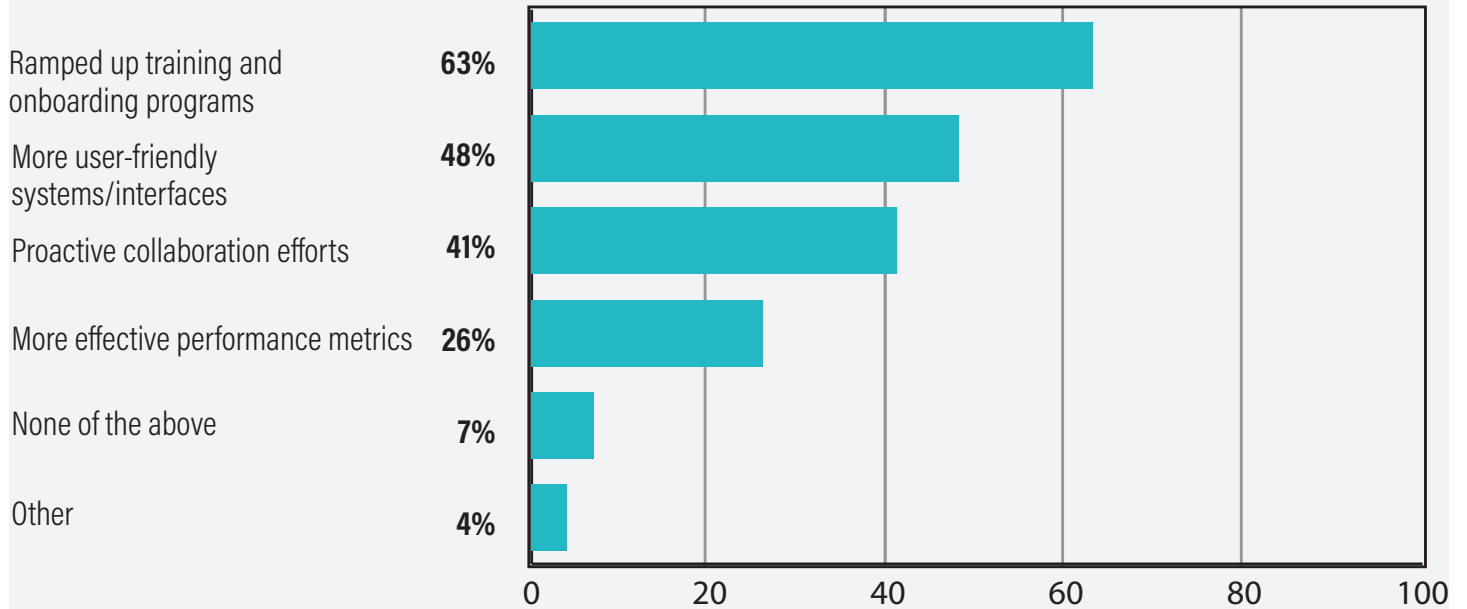### (Among respondents reporting decreased training times)

Ramped up training and onboarding programs	**63%**
More user-friendly systems/interfaces	**48%**
Proactive collaboration efforts	**41%**
More effective performance metrics	**26%**
None of the above	**7%**
Other	**4%**

Figure 13: How long does it take to fully train <u>current agents or employees</u> for a new process or campaign?

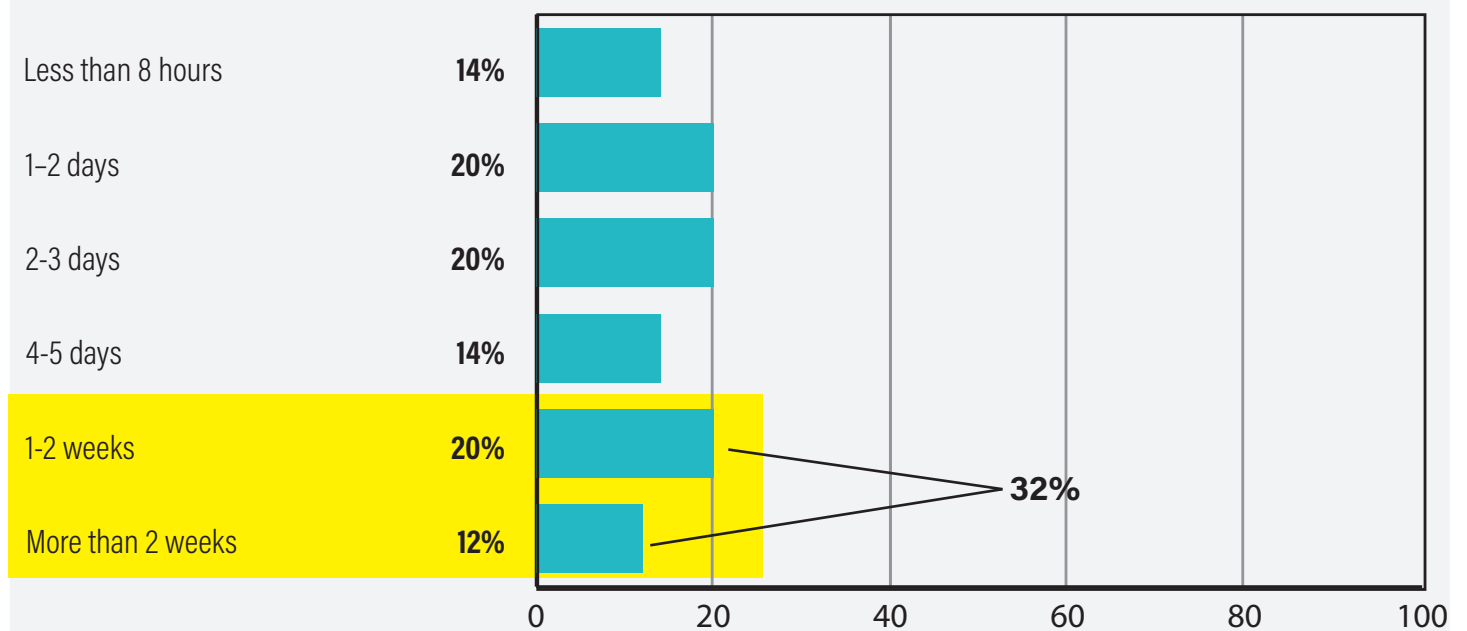|	
Less than 8 hours	**14%**
1–2 days	**20%**
2-3 days	**20%**
4-5 days	**14%**
1-2 weeks	**20%**
More than 2 weeks	**12%**

32%

Figure 14: How has the amount of time needed to train current agents or employees for new processes changed over the past five years?

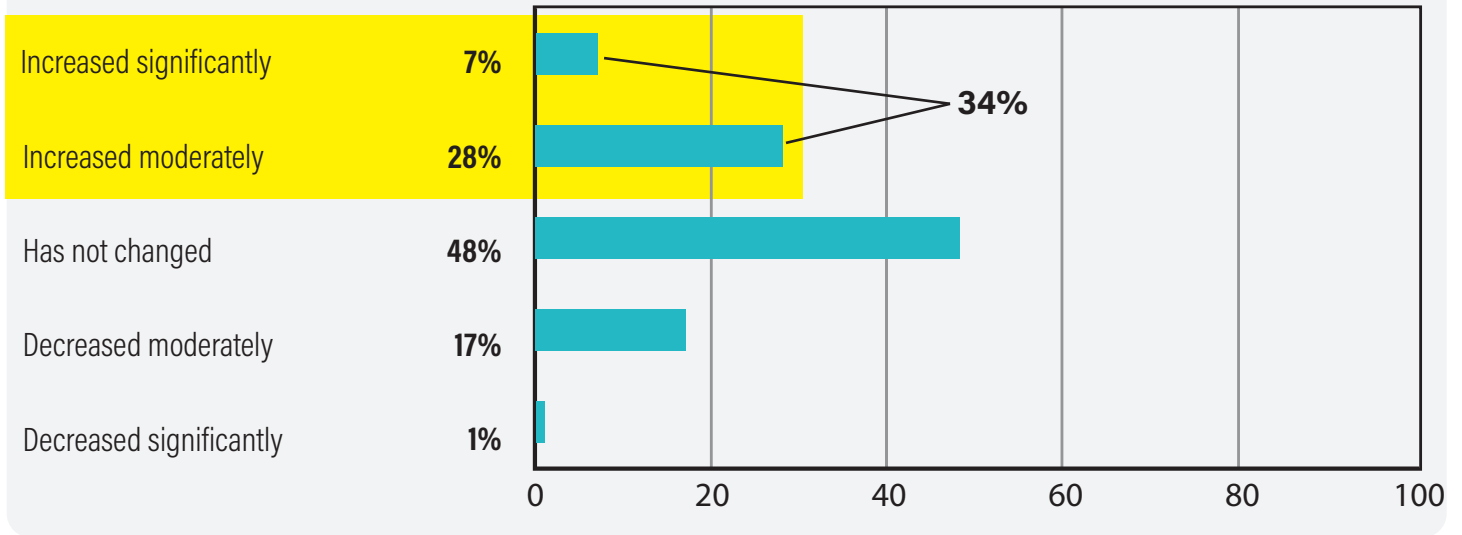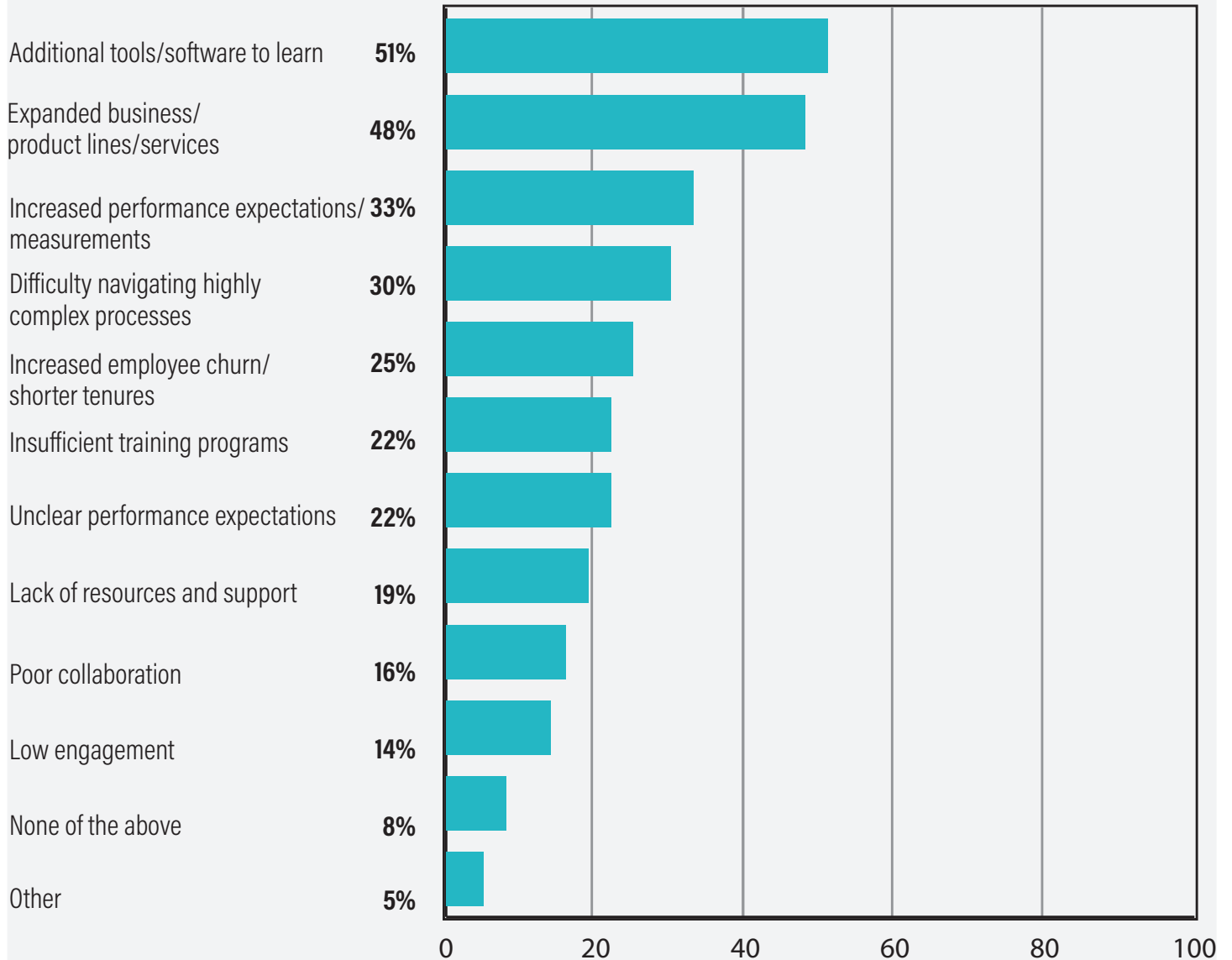|	
Increased significantly	7%
Increased moderately	28%
Has not changed	48%
Decreased moderately	17%
Decreased significantly	1%

34%

0   20   40   60   80   100

Figure 15: Why has the amount of time needed to train current agents or employees increased?
(Among respondents reporting increased training times)

Category	Percentage
Additional tools/software to learn	51%
Expanded business/product lines/services	48%
Increased performance expectations/measurements	33%
Difficulty navigating highly complex processes	30%
Increased employee churn/shorter tenures	25%
Insufficient training programs	22%
Unclear performance expectations	22%
Lack of resources and support	19%
Poor collaboration	16%
Low engagement	14%
None of the above	8%
Other	5%

5. ACCESSIBLE TOOLS, VISUAL DIAGRAMMING SEEN AS AID TO MANAGING INFORMATION CRISIS

What are the best remedies to address the need to move information that keeps up with fast-changing processes? Visibility is key. Accelerated training is also essential. Another is to implement easier-to-use software to provide more clarity and transparency to these efforts.

When asked for the kinds of tools or platforms respondents would like to see to help familiarize or onboard employees with key processes, knowledge executives and professionals point to accessibility and convenience as key to these efforts. Importantly, technology alone will not make things clearer – human oversight is essential. "It's really not about the platform," said one respondent. "It's about how convenient it is. It's also about good info management practices. Garbage in/garbage out is true now more than ever. AI just makes it easier to surface the garbage!"

Another respondent observes that in a multi-platform world, "the level of integrations between the platforms is a complexity point. Even getting a specialized onboarding platform only helps so much as the data needed is in other systems."

Ease of use is important, as another respondent would like to see "easy-to-use and click-to-find mini-lessons, which seem to be more useful than long 30- or 60-minute trainings."

Visual diagramming is also seen as a way to shorten training cycles for both new hires and current employees. More than half, 51%, say they would benefit from a visual diagram/search capability – or are already using such a capability — to better deliver information across their enterprises. (Figure 16)

A majority, 58%, say their training processes could be accelerated from a visual diagram or search capability – or are already using such a capability. In addition, 54% also state that adding a visual diagram or search capability would accelerate efforts to acquaint employees with changes in business processes. (Figures 17, 18)

Figure 16: Would a visual diagram/search capability with your knowledge base aid this process?

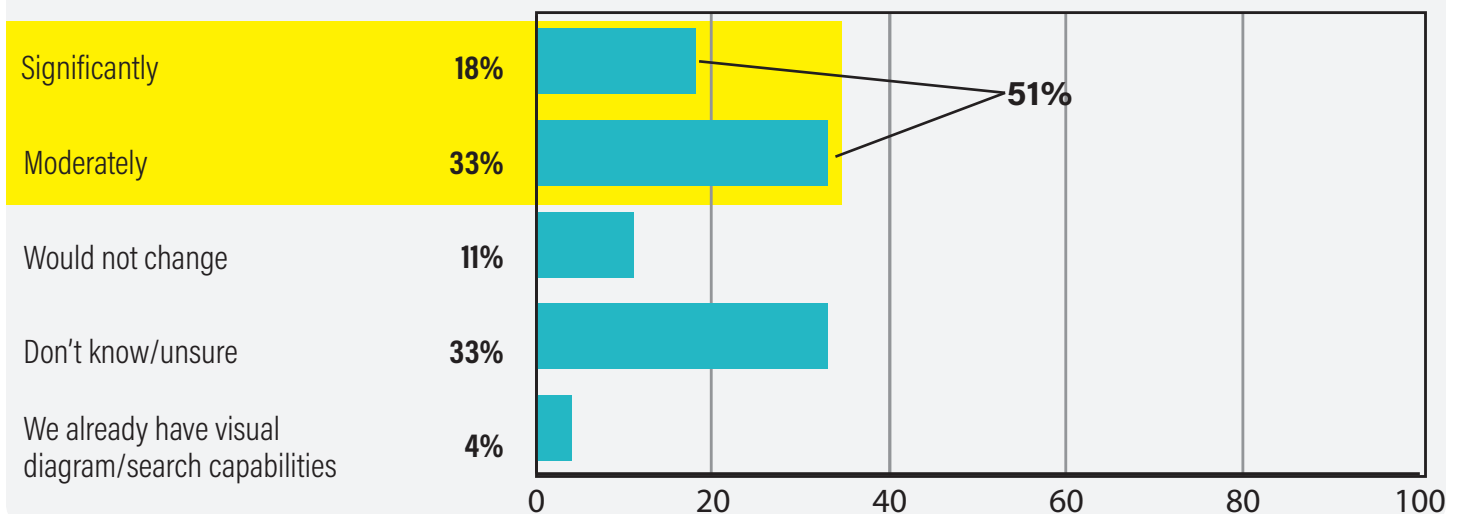|	
Significantly	18%
Moderately	33%
Would not change	11%
Don't know/unsure	33%
We already have visual diagram/search capabilities	4%

51% (Significantly + Moderately)

Figure 17: Would a visual diagram/search capability with your knowledge base aid in bringing new employees up to speed with changing business processes?

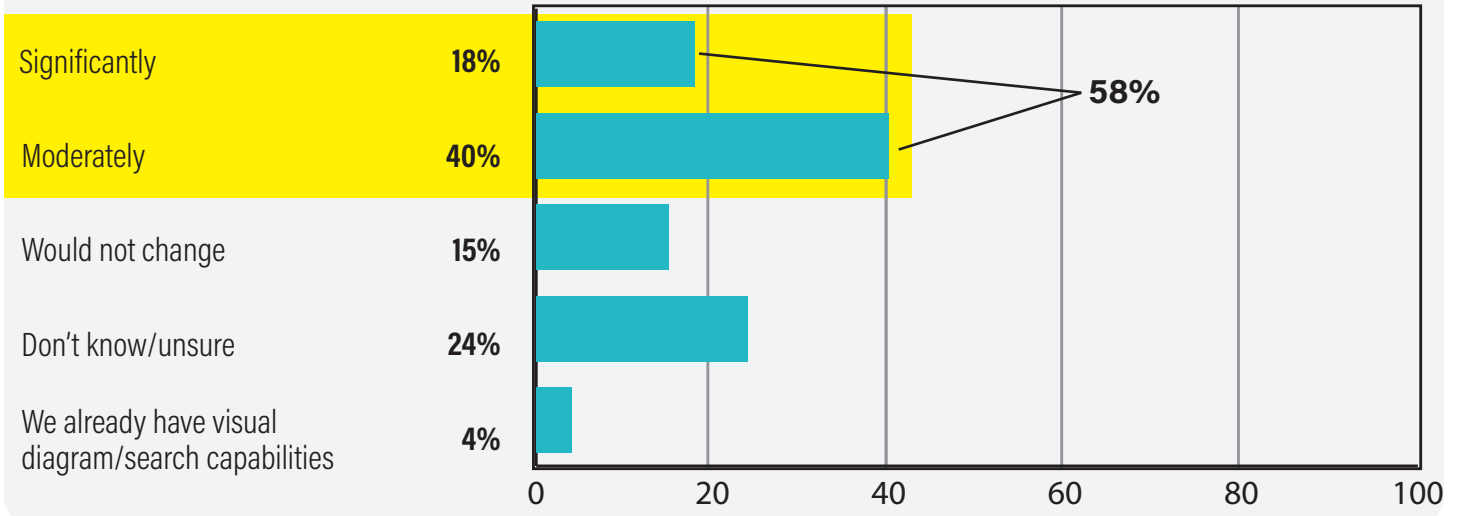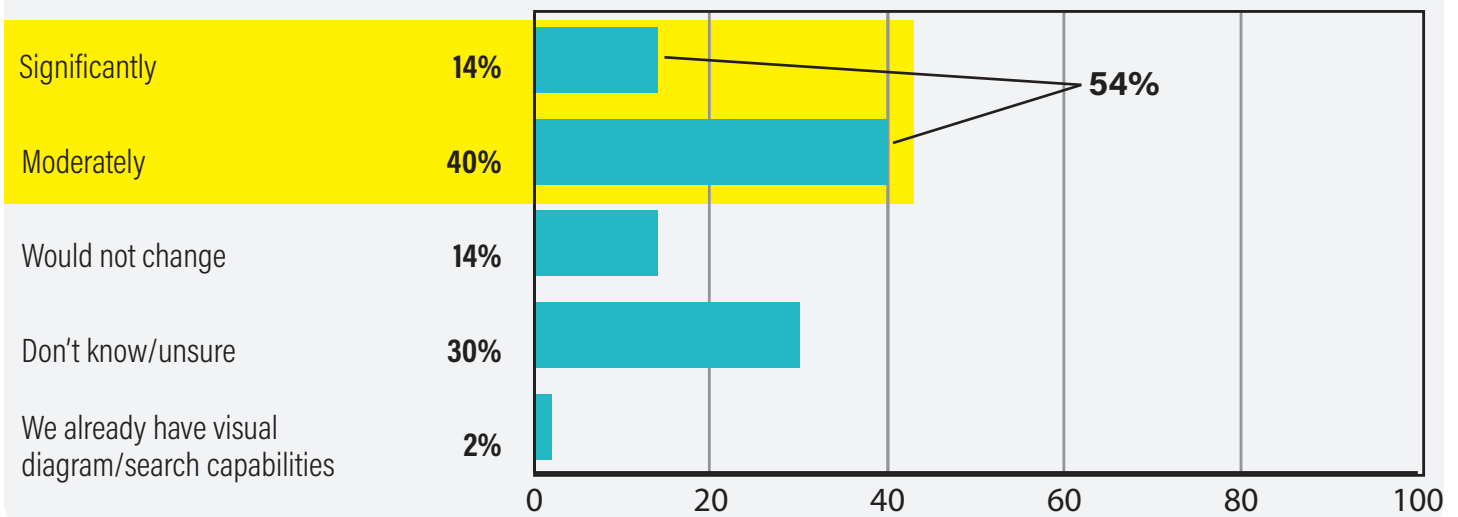|	
Significantly	18%
Moderately	40%
Would not change	15%
Don't know/unsure	24%
We already have visual diagram/search capabilities	4%

58%

(x-axis: 0, 20, 40, 60, 80, 100)

Figure 18: Would a visual diagram/search capability with your knowledge base aid in bringing current employees up to speed with changing business processes?

Significantly	14%
Moderately	40%
Would not change	14%
Don't know/unsure	30%
We already have visual diagram/search capabilities	2%

54%

(x-axis: 0, 20, 40, 60, 80, 100)

6. SUMMARY AND ACTION ITEMS

For today's organizations, conditions on the ground changes too rapidly for managers and employees to keep up – even with the latest technology. Organizations are having difficulties keeping employees up to speed on the many process changes that affect the flow of information.

This survey of 156 executives and managers shows there is still a wealth of knowledge that is trapped within silos. Business leaders, managers, and employees need visibility and the ability to address, in real time, the constant flow of changes that impact their organizations. It still takes months for employees or other users to be fully trained in using tools to access the process information they need to do their jobs, and there has been little improvement in this time over the past five years.

Addressing these gaps requires a comprehensive, multi-pronged effort which incorporates the following measures:

▸ **Assess existing knowledge assets.** Organizational leaders and changemakers need to understand what knowledge is available across their enterprises, and what is still required to help decision-makers paint a complete picture. Plus, decision-makers need to understand what assets are duplicated and outdated.

▸ **Provide greater visibility.** Executives, managers, and employees shouldn't be taken by surprise with unforeseen effects of upstream process changes. They need to be informed, ahead of time, how these changes are reshaping job roles and organizational priorities. Managers and employees need to play a wider role in designing new workflows or capabilities.

▸ **Elevate from text to visual knowledge.** Decision-makers can enhance their visibility with visual tools that provide them with a bigger picture on process changes – where they're taking place, and their downstream implications. This provides a broader scope of understanding than most current text-based knowledge bases, which tend to only provide limited or one-dimensional information on changes.

▸ **Blend human expertise and technology capabilities.** Technology alone can't deliver organizational growth and productivity. Rather, technology needs to be seen as an enabler – and amplifier — of human productivity.

▸ **Encourage greater collaboration.** If an organization is siloed, workflows and new capabilities may be blocked. Business and team leaders need to recognize that cross-enterprise collaboration is now essential for the sharing of ideas and design of innovation.

▸ **Pursue continuous training and upskilling to keep pace with process changes.** Training is no longer a once-and-done event – it must be constant and highly available to current and incoming employees. Processes are continuously changing, and so must employee abilities to manage these processes.

Today's enterprises – and the knowledge generated and maintained within – are going to grow increasingly more sophisticated as technology expands, and expectations for fast and accurate data and information increases. As this survey shows, knowledge leaders are looking for ways forward that build upon the expertise of their people.

7. DEMOGRAPHICS

Figure 19: What are your organization's total annual revenues?

Revenue	Percentage
Less than $500M	0%
$501 million to $750 million	14%
$751 million to $999 million	5%
$1 billion-$4.99 billion	16%
More than $5 billion	32%
Don't know/Unsure/NA	34%
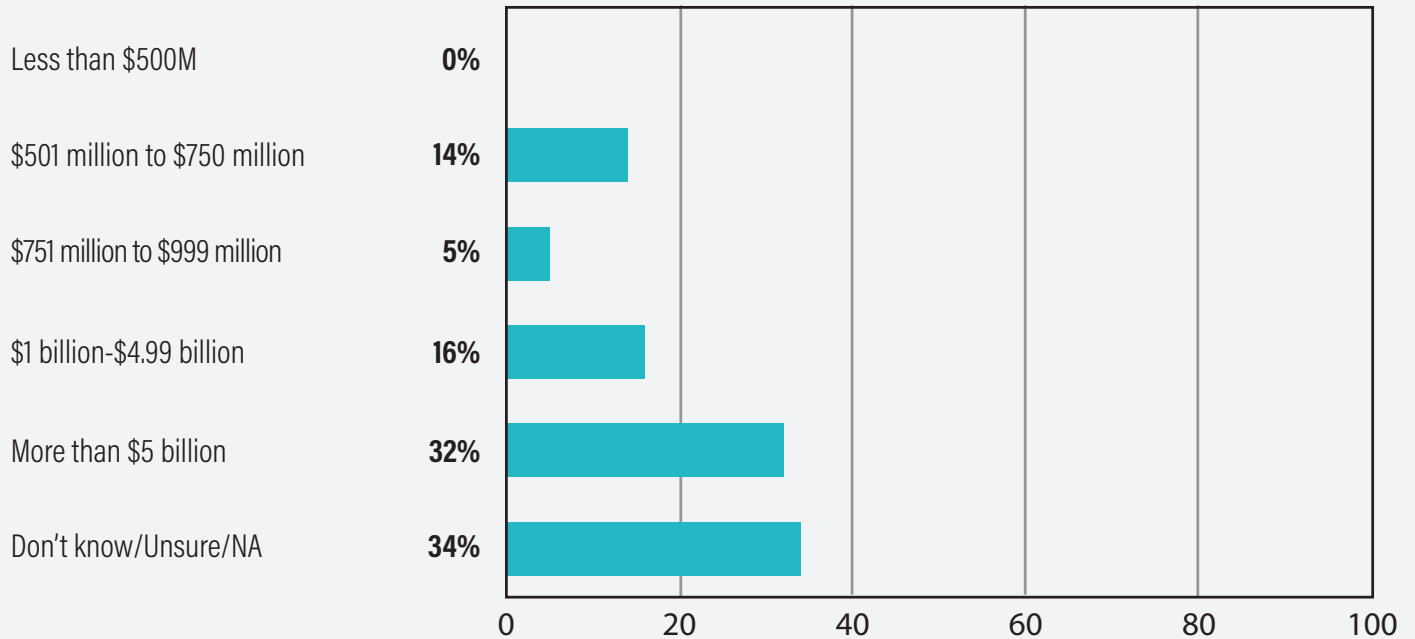
Figure 20: How many employees are in your entire organization?
(Including all locations, branches, and subsidiaries)

Employees	Percentage
1–500 employees	16%
501–1,000 employees	12%
1,001–5,000 employees	17%
5,001–10,000 employees	9%
More than 10,000 employees	46%
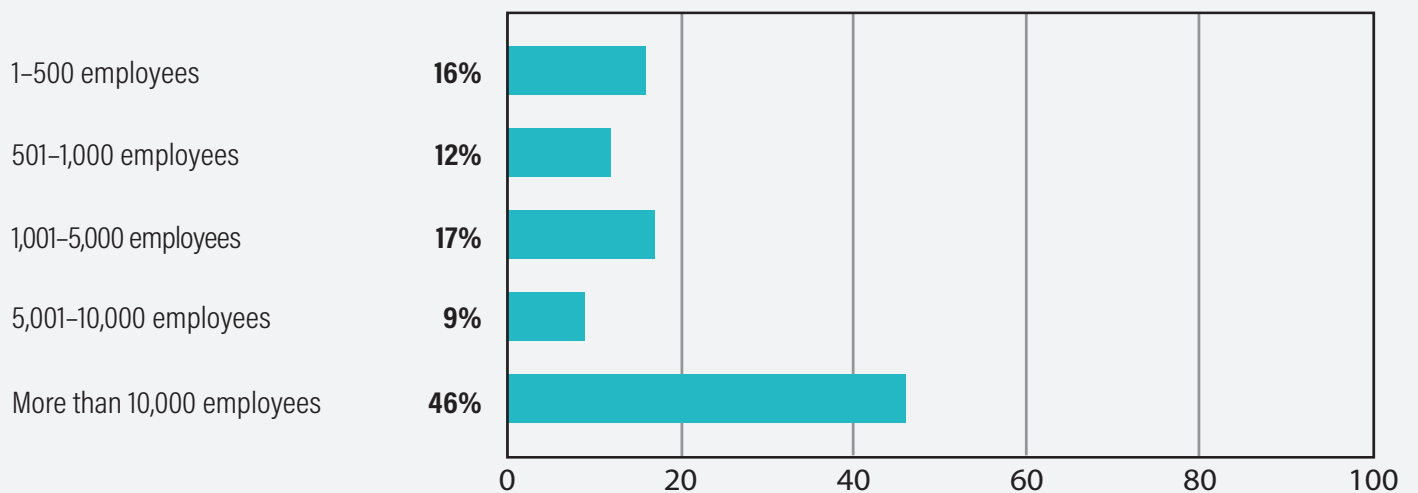
Figure 21: What is your reporting level within your organization?

Specialist/Professional	**32%**
Manager/Sr. Manager	**29%**
Director/Sr. Director	**22%**
C-level (CEO, CIO, CMO, CFO, etc.)	**14%**
Other	**4%**

Axis: 0 20 40 60 80 100
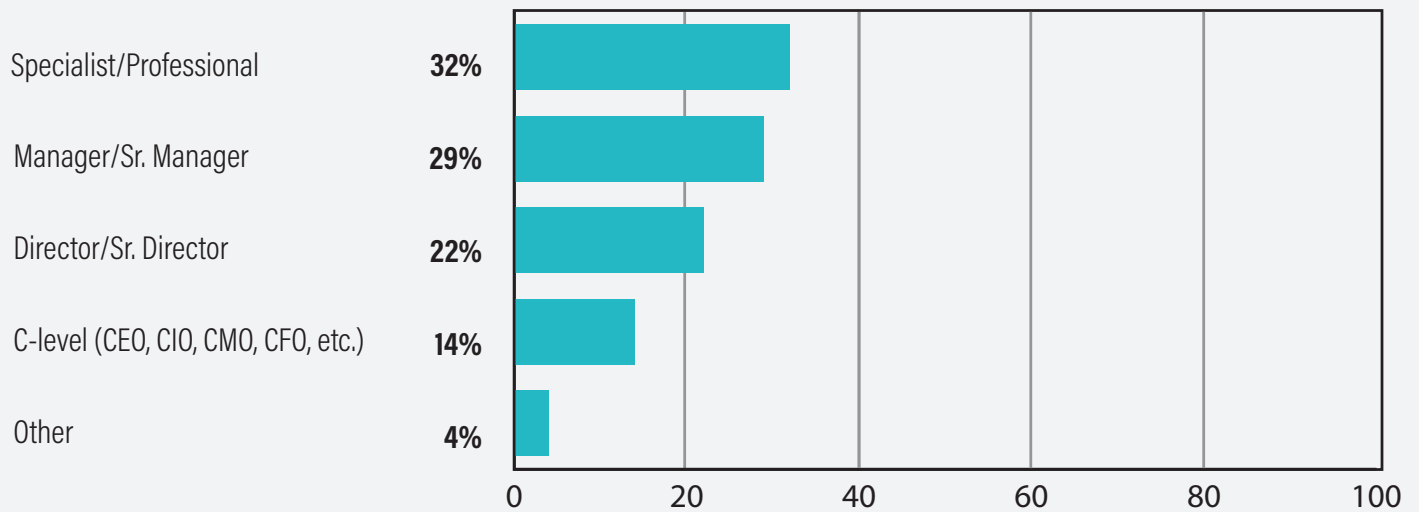
Figure 22: What is your primary focus area?

Focus Area	%
Knowledge management	**38%**
Information tech/Software	**31%**
Legal	**11%**
Engineering	**6%**
Customer support/Customer service	**5%**
Operations	**5%**
Sales/Marketing	**5%**
Finance	**3%**
Human resources/People	**1%**
Product development	**1%**
Other	**4%**
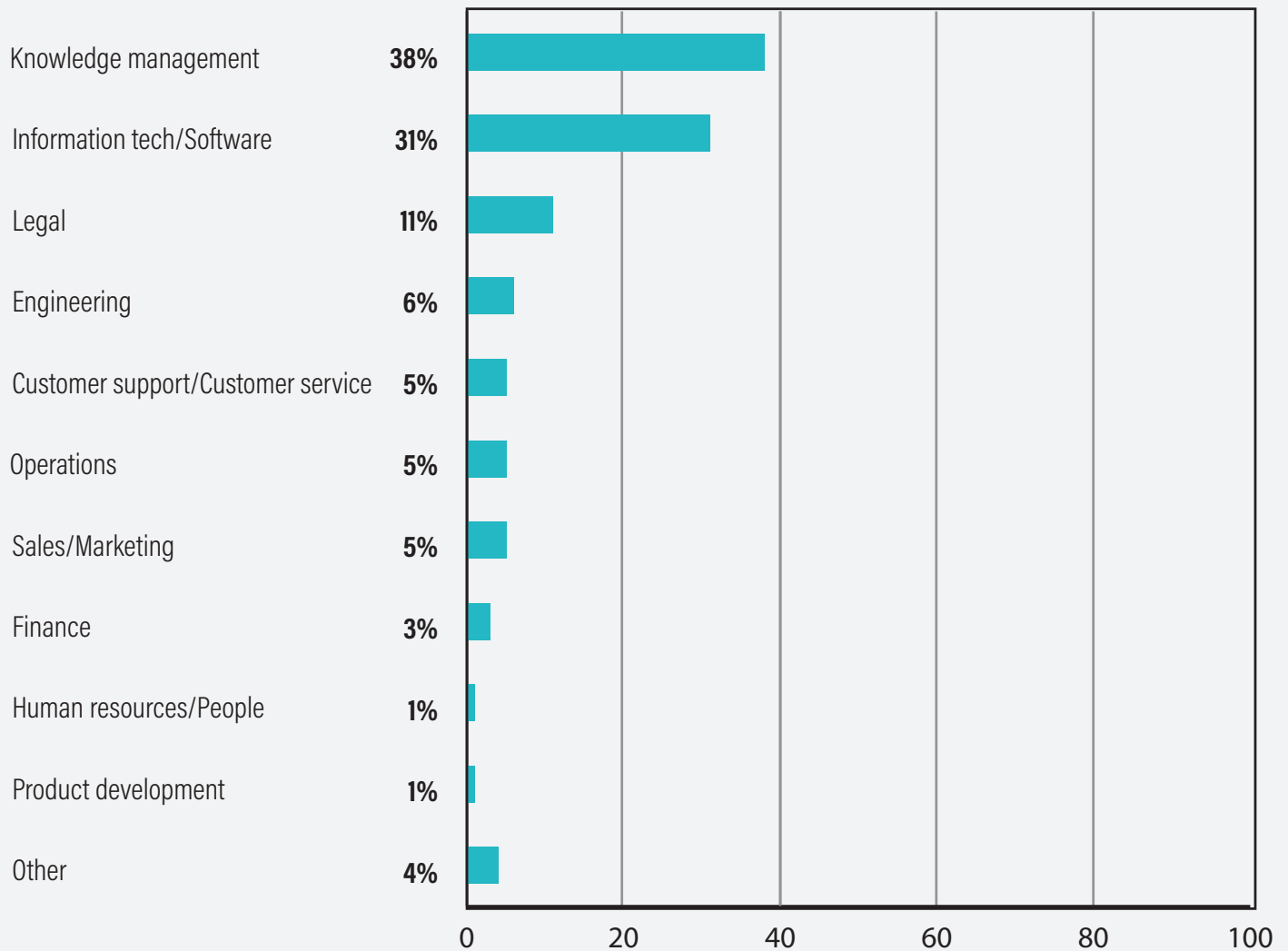
Figure 23: What is your organization's primary industry?

Industry	Percentage
Technology: Hardware or software	17%
Business services	12%
Government (all levels)	11%
Education (all levels)	8%
Financial services	8%
Healthcare	6%
Manufacturing	6%
Retail	6%
Pharmaceutical	3%
Transportation	3%
Energy	2%
Insurance	1%
Media/Entertainment	1%
Telecommunications	1%
Other	1%