409

Businesses Surveyed

In our annual survey, more than 400 businesses let us peer into the good, the bad, and the ugly of their processes.

We learned not only about their challenges, but also how they are leveraging **Workplace Innovation Platforms** to escape the work rut.

Introduction

Keeping customers is what you **should** be focusing your business on.

But, if you're like most businesses, operational inefficiencies and work rut are sucking energy, attention, and resources away from your prime focus.

These inefficiencies eat into profits and lower employee morale.

Most importantly, they will take your attention away from your reason for existing: **your customers**.

> **The purpose of a business is to get and keep customers.**

Peter Drucker
Management Guru

Business operations
are hard

A business is a constantly evolving organism —
but supporting processes often lag behind. If you struggle
to streamline your business processes, you are not alone.

Business operations are hard

1. It's not just you

Most people didn't start a business because they have a passion for efficient processes. If you feel a little bit embarrassed by your cobbled together workflows and manual processes, don't worry, you're in good company. The large majority of respondents admitted that they experience challenges with their business processes, file sharing, email, and mobility.

2. Critical business information lives in too many places

As the needs of a business evolves, the information required to run that business often lags behind. One of the biggest challenges for our respondents was that important business information lived in too many disparate sources. This problem can have many downstream effects such as lack of trust in your business data, and inefficient processes.

3. Email is the go-to workaround for poor business processes

When business information can't be easily accessed by the people that need it, your team will find workarounds, usually through email. Aside from some of the obvious shortcomings of relying on email as the main conduit for information, sharing data through email makes your business much more vulnerable to pervasive security threats.

4. Technology solutions often fall short

Businesses who need to address these challenges can opt to choose from off-the-shelf products or attempt to customize existing solutions. However, every business has unique needs and these approaches often fail to meet the challenge of addressing them. Our respondents overwhelmingly found these solutions to be limiting, expensive, or inflexible.

5. Manual and paper processes haven't gone away

In a digital age in which everyone walks around with a computer in their pocket, paper is surprisingly persistent. According to our survey, many business processes are still struggling to unshackle themselves from paper. Manual data entry is a close cousin of this shortcoming, with many of the paper documents being keyed into a digital system by an employee. This not only creates inefficiencies, it also opens the door for data entry mistakes which can end up being very costly.
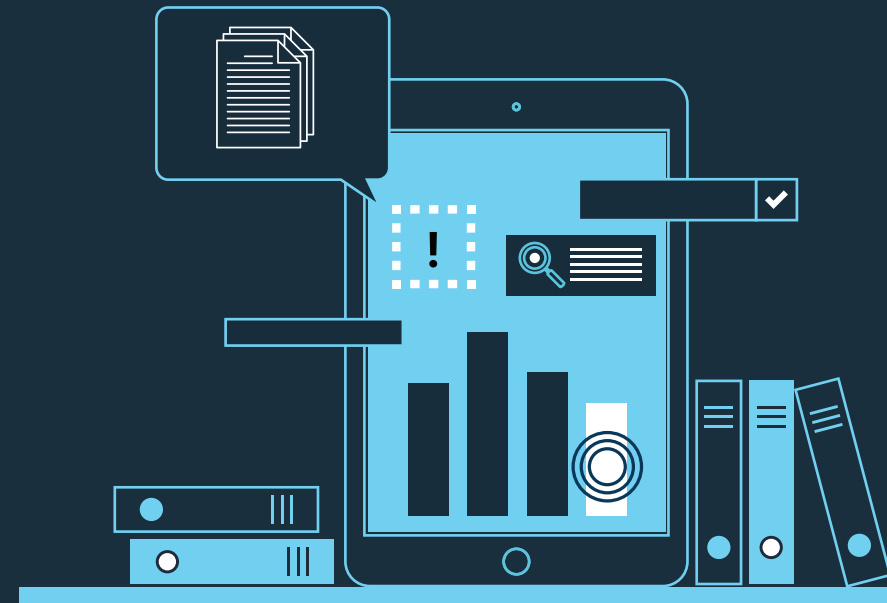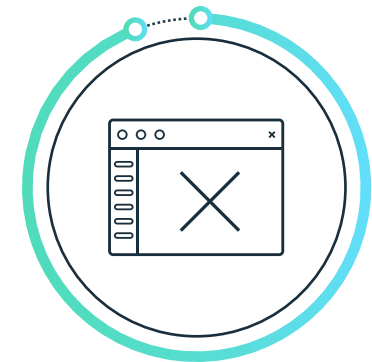
It's not just you

The overwhelming majority of businesses are struggling with their business processes in some form.
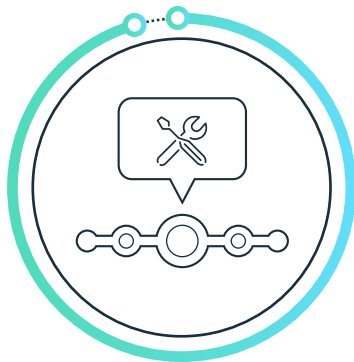
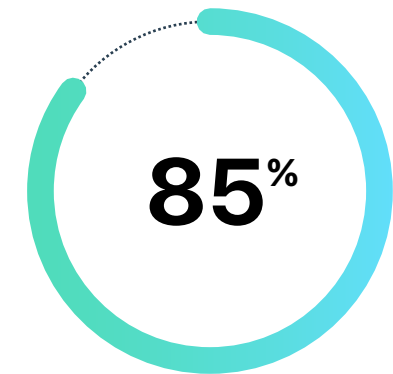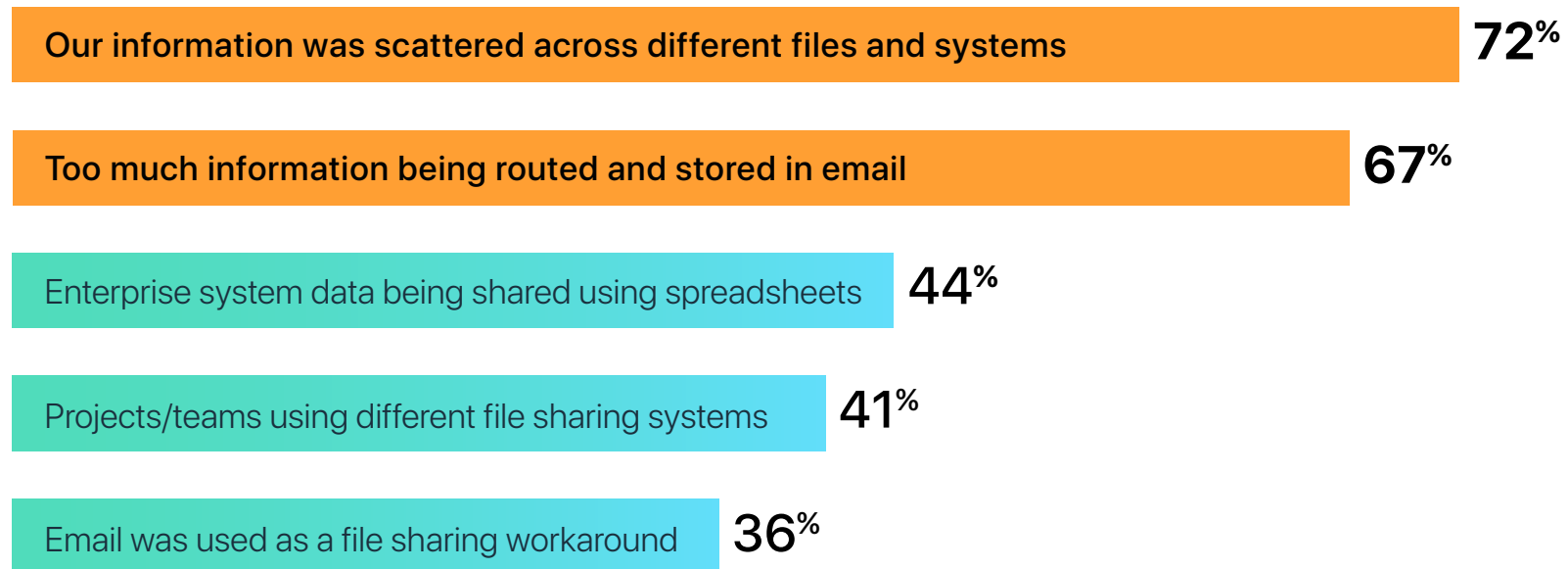**96%** Problems with business processes

72% Problems with file sharing

94% Challenges with existing apps and software

Critical business information lives in too many places

Before implementing a custom app built on your Workplace Innovation Platform, what challenges did you face with your business processes?

Our information was scattered across different files and systems **72%**

Too much information being routed and stored in email **67%**

Enterprise system data being shared using spreadsheets **44%**

Projects/teams using different file sharing systems **41%**

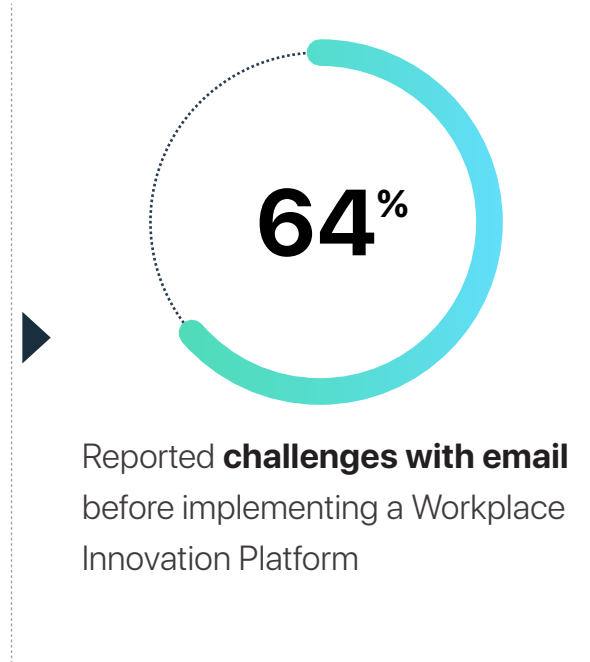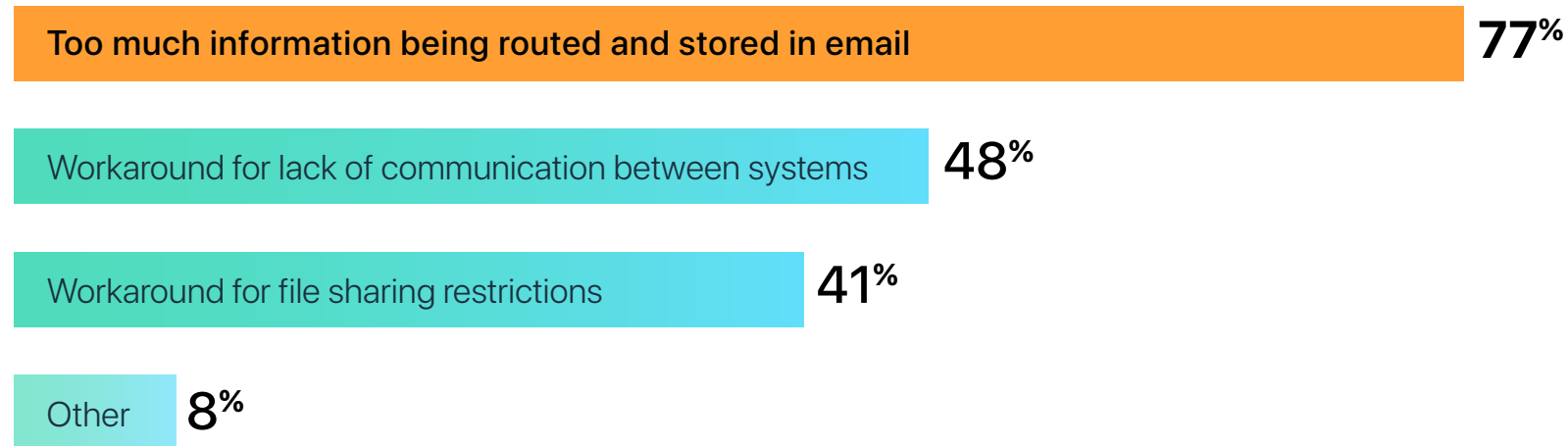Email was used as a file sharing workaround **36%**

85%

Reported that they struggled with **information living in disparate sources** before implementing a Workplace Innovation Platform.

Email is the go-to workaround for poor business processes

Before implementing a custom app built on your Workplace Innovation Platform, what email challenges did you face?

Of respondents who reported having email challenges:

Too much information being routed and stored in email — 77%

Workaround for lack of communication between systems — 48%

Workaround for file sharing restrictions — 41%

Other — 8%

64%

Reported **challenges with email** before implementing a Workplace Innovation Platform

Technology solutions often fall short of expectations

What challenges did you face with your alternate implementations?

Challenge	Percentage
Customization is too costly and time consuming	32%
Not adaptable enough for our needs	27%
Paying for irrelevant features	24%
System was too cumbersome or difficult to use	18%
Unable to share data across systems	15%
Other	2%
None	5%

95%
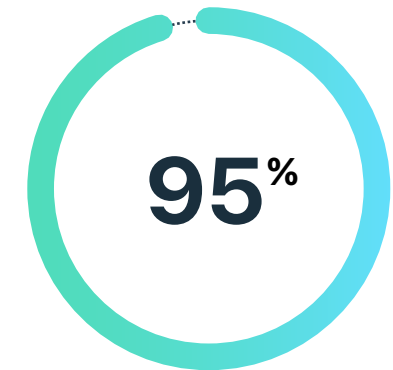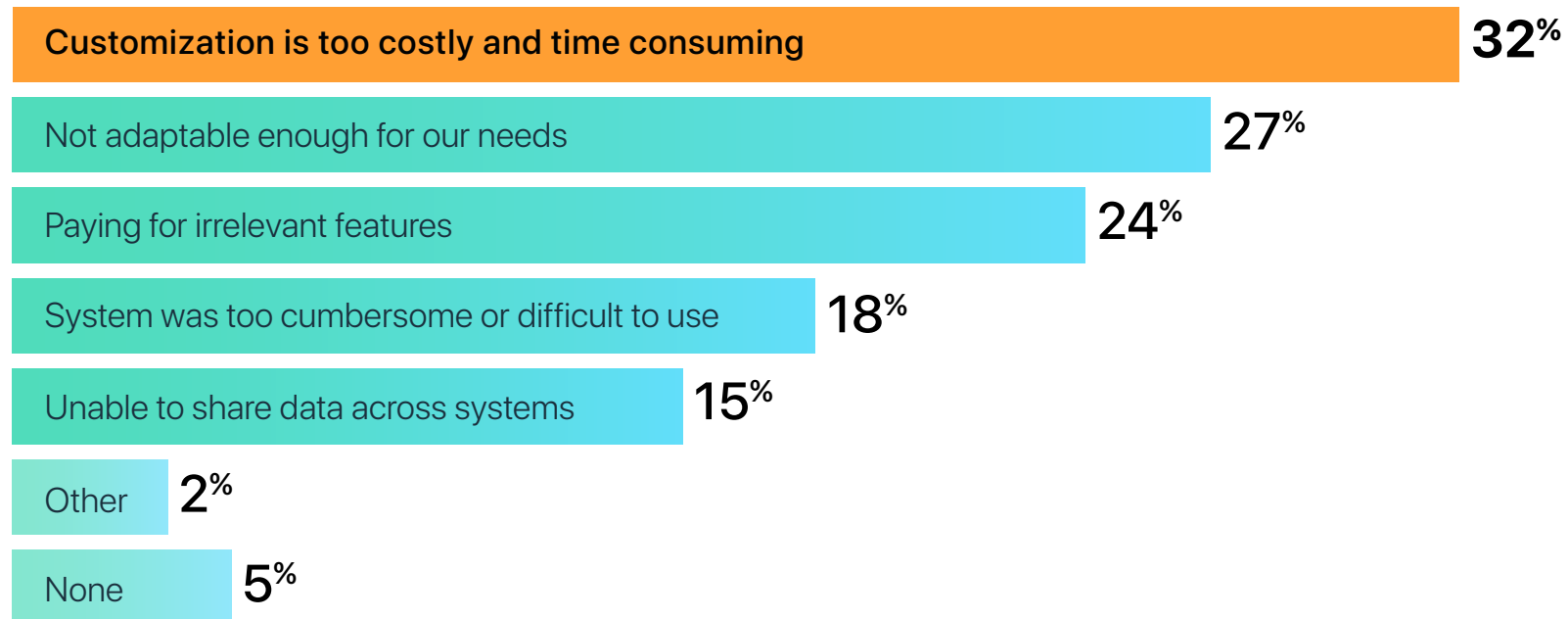
Of respondents who tried technical solutions faced **significant challenges** with the implementation.

Manual and paper processes haven't gone away

58% Wasting time on administrative tasks

52% Too much time spent doing manual entry

61% Too reliant on paper processes

Inefficient processes don't just waste time and money, they result in frustrated team members and leaders who feel their productivity is being limited by current technology and processes.

Our survey shows that this collection of symptoms is extremely common, but no one has ever named it. **Until now.**

Work rut [wurk ruht]
noun

Individuals spend more time on error prone manual processes and administrative tasks than they do on meaningful work that adds value and contributes to scaling the business

Critical business data is stored in a complex network of sources, making it difficult to access, keep up to date, and trust.

Affects businesses of all sizes, a few to a few hundred

Off-the-shelf apps and enterprise systems are too brittle for the unique needs of each business

Workplace Innovation Platforms help

If you have diagnosed **work rut** in your organization, there is light at the end of the tunnel. Most businesses that implemented a Workplace Innovation Platform saw their costs go down and productivity go up.

It's not all bad news out there — how Workplace Innovation Platforms help

1. Workplace Innovation Platforms save time and money

When you have process inefficiencies in your business, you are slowly leaking money and wasting time. A large majority of our respondents told us that a Workplace Innovation Platform helped them be more productive and saved them time and money. This savings can create a domino effect because the time savings can be invested into growing the business, rather than plugging the leaks.

2. Better, more trustworthy data

Business data isn't just for science geeks, it is the lifeblood of your business. It helps you determine cash flow, manage inventory, gather customer feedback, and make realistic projections about your next quarter. If you don't trust your data, your ability to run your business suffers. Our respondents told us that implementing a Workplace Innovation Platform helped to give them more trust in their data, and better visibility into their business operations.

3. Easily integrate cutting edge technology

Most Workplace Innovation Platform customers are small to medium businesses. These companies don't usually have an R&D branch to develop solutions for cutting edge technology innovations. Fortunately, you can let the super geeks do the heavy lifting for you, and use a Workplace Innovation Platform to integrate their products into your custom apps whenever you are ready. By integrating new technology quickly without sacrificing flexibility, your business can leapfrog the competition.

4. Business operations can finally catch up to their mobile workforce

Mobile devices have changed the way companies work, and the way that customers can interact with your business. Even though mobility has been around for a while, many businesses still struggle with connecting their mobile workforce to their existing back-end processes. When organizations implemented a Workplace Innovation Platform, they were able to increase the connectivity of their mobile workers and improve their process efficiencies.

5. Happier employees and happier customers

When your team has to deal with a lot manual data entry and inefficient processes, it's no surprise that your workforce can start to feel frustrated and unmotivated. Your process inefficiencies impact customers as well if they face long waits for service, or are at the receiving end of data entry errors. Companies who implemented Workplace Innovation Platforms reported happier employees and happier customers. And happy customers are the bedrock of any successful business.

Workplace Innovation Platforms save time and money

After adopting a Workplace Innovation Platform, how much more productive is your team in general?

75 – 100 %	19%
51 – 74 %	21%
26 – 50 %	29%
1–25 %	25%
Not at all	7%

85%
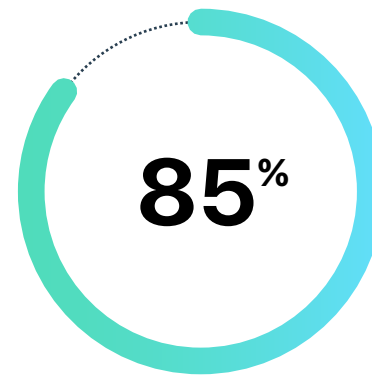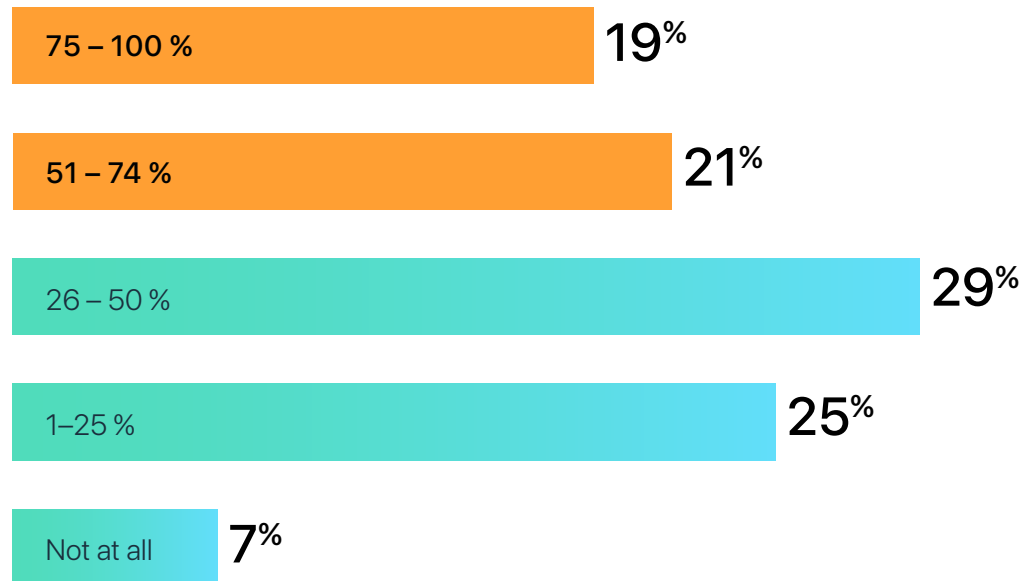
Of respondents reported **savings of time and money** with a Workplace Innovation Platform

" Our job cost tracking for billing went down from an average of 4 hours per job to under 2 minutes per job. "

Frank Masle,
Manager, J.B. Brighton Electric Co

Workplace Innovation Platforms save time and money

How much has implementing a Workplace Innovation Platform helped reduce inefficient tasks?

Of respondents who felt their organization was wasting time on administrative tasks:

75 – 100 %	**32**%
51 – 74 %	**25**%
26 – 50 %	**21**%
1–25 %	**17**%
Not at all	**5**%
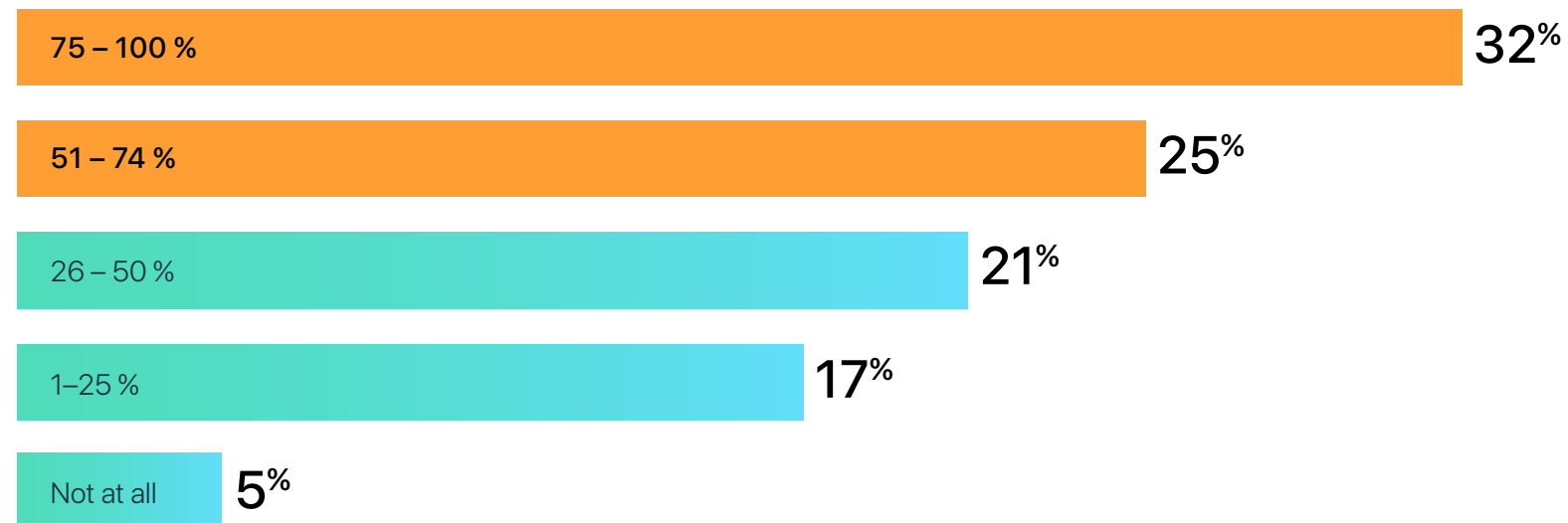
" We had one department that was using six different spreadsheets to track information on their clients. We were able to build a database to suit their needs and now everything is at their fingertips, no messy spreadsheets and different versions and all info stays up to date much easier. "

LeeAnne Goldsmith,
Manager, East Bay Innovations

Easily integrate cutting edge technology

Smaller businesses can face challenges leveraging cutting edge innovation. Fortunately, Workplace Innovation Platforms make it easy to integrate third party products that offer this technology as soon as your business is ready for it.

Which of the following technologies, if any, does your organization have concrete plans to use?

Of respondents who answered that they are currently considering or using emerging technologies:

Internet of Things (IoT) **69%**

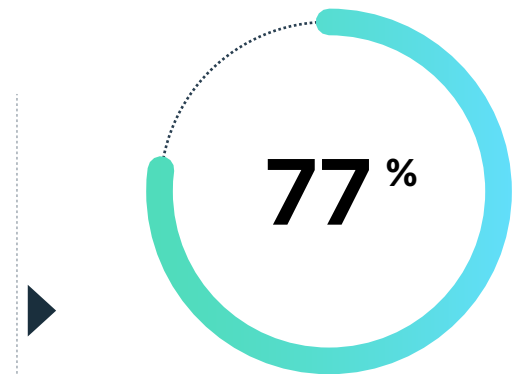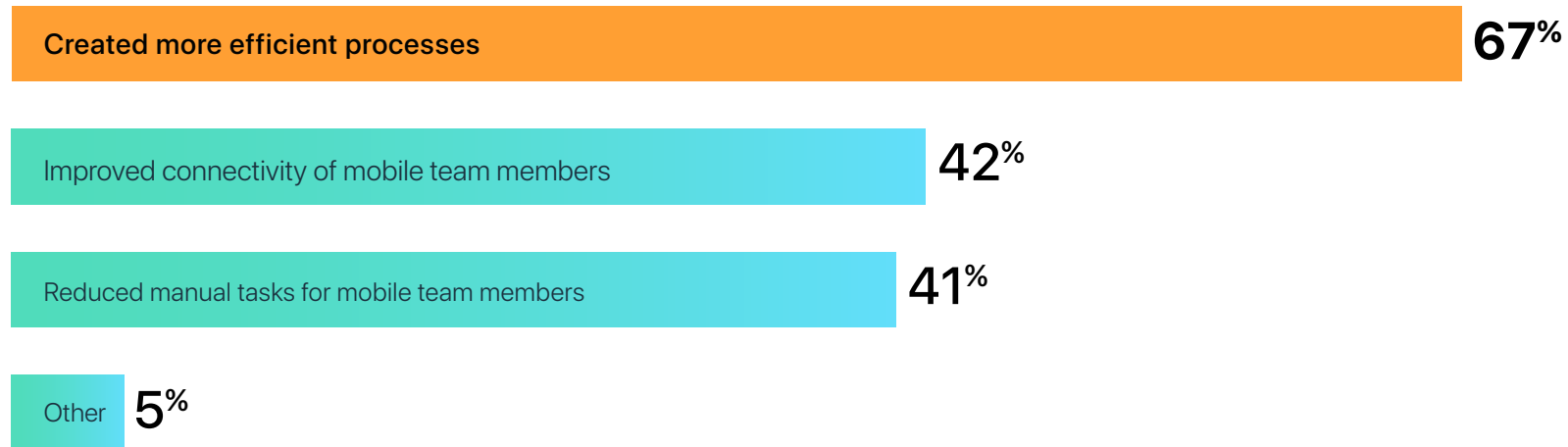Artificial Intelligence **48%**

Machine Learning **40%**

41%
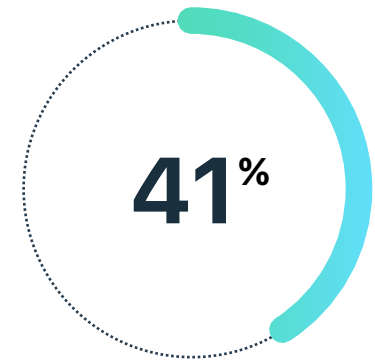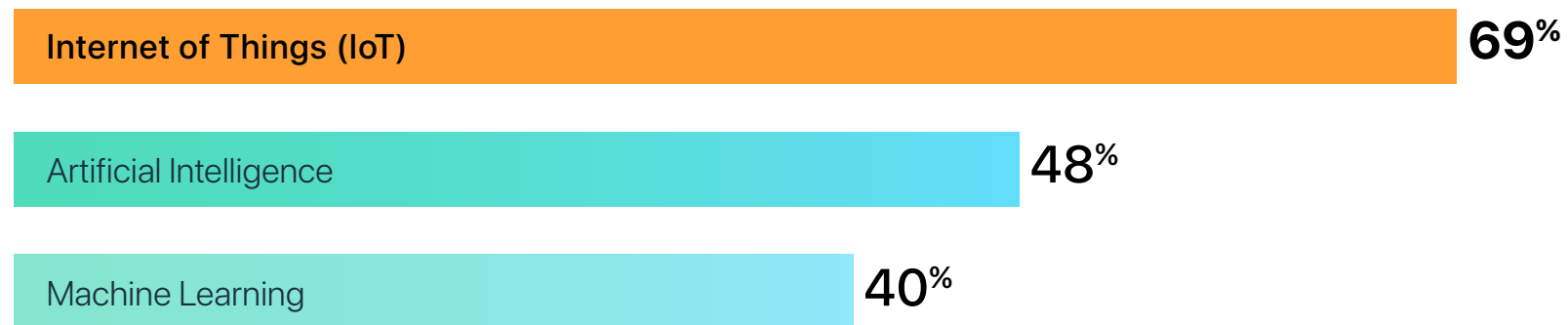
Of respondents said they are currently using/leveraging **emerging technology** or are considering it.

Business operations can finally catch up to their mobile workforce

What mobility benefits did a Workplace Innovation Platform give you?

Of respondents who reported mobility being of average, very or extremely important:

| Benefit	Percentage
Created more efficient processes	67%
Improved connectivity of mobile team members	42%
Reduced manual tasks for mobile team members	41%
Other	5%

77%

Of respondents rated **mobility as average, very, or extremely important** to their business.

Better, more trustworthy data

How much has your custom app(s) helped reduce data entry errors?

Of respondents who felt they had little trust in the accuracy of their data:

75 – 100 %	**26**%
51 – 74 %	**27**%
26 – 50 %	**24**%
1–25 %	**17**%
Not at all	**6**%
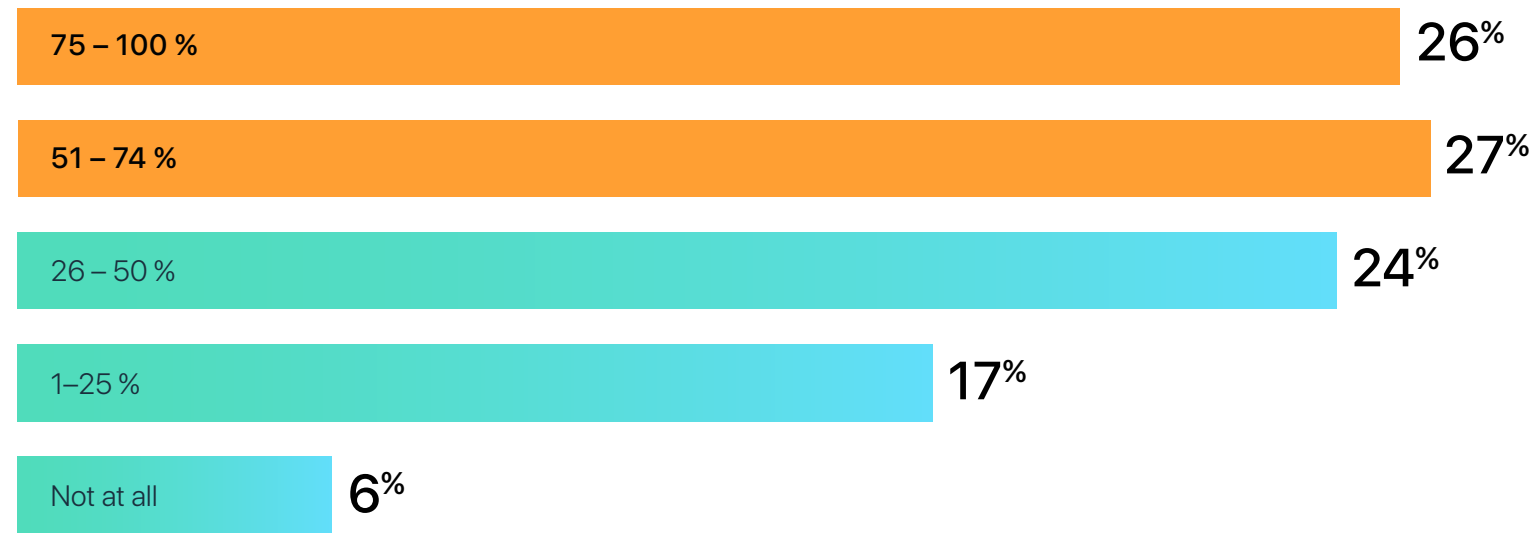
> The same information has to be shared / exported frequently for specific use cases — prior to using FileMaker this was all done with spreadsheets which resulted in a lot of copying and pasting and information would get garbled or mixed up or misentered on one spreadsheet, but correct somewhere else.
>
> Consolidating all info within FileMaker helps us identify and correct any data entry errors and feel confident that the info we export / share is always accurate.

Charles Zimmer,
Owner/CEO, Satellite Office Services

Happier employees, happier customers, and reduced costs

There aren't many business investments you can make that will result in happier employees and happier customers, all while saving you time and money.

If that's not a win-win-win situation, we don't know what is.

Of those who had challenges with employees spending too much time doing manual entry:

67%

Of respondents reported **increased employee satisfaction** with a Workplace Innovation Platform

41%

Of respondents reported **increased customer satisfaction** with a Workplace Innovation Platform

Less numbers, more stories

Our annual survey gives a good high-level overview of business process challenges and how Workplace Innovation Platforms can help solve them. But there is nothing like hearing it directly from a customer. Here are some stories of how customers saved time and money, streamlined their processes, increased productivity, and took their workforce mobile.

The leading Workplace Innovation Platform

Over the course of the 20-year history of FileMaker, Inc., the core vision has remained consistent — to make powerful technologies accessible to everyone. As the leader in the Workplace Innovation Platforms category, the FileMaker Platform allows business users to create, share, and integrate custom apps to innovate their workplace.

Case study — Commonwealth Commercial

Commonwealth Commercial is a full-service commercial real-estate property management firm headquartered in Richmond, VA. The company also has offices in Florida, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Tennessee and Texas. With 160 corporate employees, the firm has an additional 470 employees through its hotel subsidiaries.

Commonwealth Commercial needed a better way to track its managed properties.
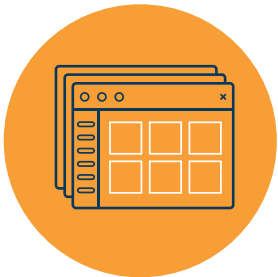
Multiple versions of files were owned by multiple people who spent too much time on manual data entry. Entry errors and poor version control resulted in inefficient workflows and costly mistakes.

> **"This is the second company I've worked for that I've convinced to purchase the FileMaker Platform. It is such a good tool that it has grown beyond its original scope and people keep finding new uses for it. "**

Eileen Surina,
Accounting Information Systems Analyst,
Commonwealth Commercial

Case study — Commonwealth Commercial (continued)

Centralizing all property information.

Eileen Surina, accounting information systems analyst at Commonwealth, used FileMaker Workplace Innovation Platform to create a custom app that gathers detailed property information in one place. The app makes it easy for employees to access that information in real time across any location.

Processes were improved across the company.

Accurate, up-to-date data: Multiple accounting systems stored different data about their properties in different places. The custom app put all this property data such as location, who manages it, who administrates leases (and more) all into one place.

Quick and smooth accounting process: The custom app seamlessly logged rent checks from tenants.

Goodbye spreadsheets: The custom app is used across multiple offices and departments, consolidating all their spreadsheets.

Information is **entered once and shared easily**, ending tedious and inefficient duplicate manual entry.

51–75%
Reduction in data errors

+50%
Reduction in time spent on inefficient tasks

50%
Increased productivity

Case study —
Etowah Utilities

A city-owned utility company in Etowah, TN that serves more than 12,000 customers in three different counties. With more than 50 employees, the company distributes natural gas and energy, and operates a water treatment plant.

Etowah Utilities needed a better way to manage its work order program.

Office staff generated work orders for field crews, who had to pick up paper forms at the beginning of the day and return them at day's end.
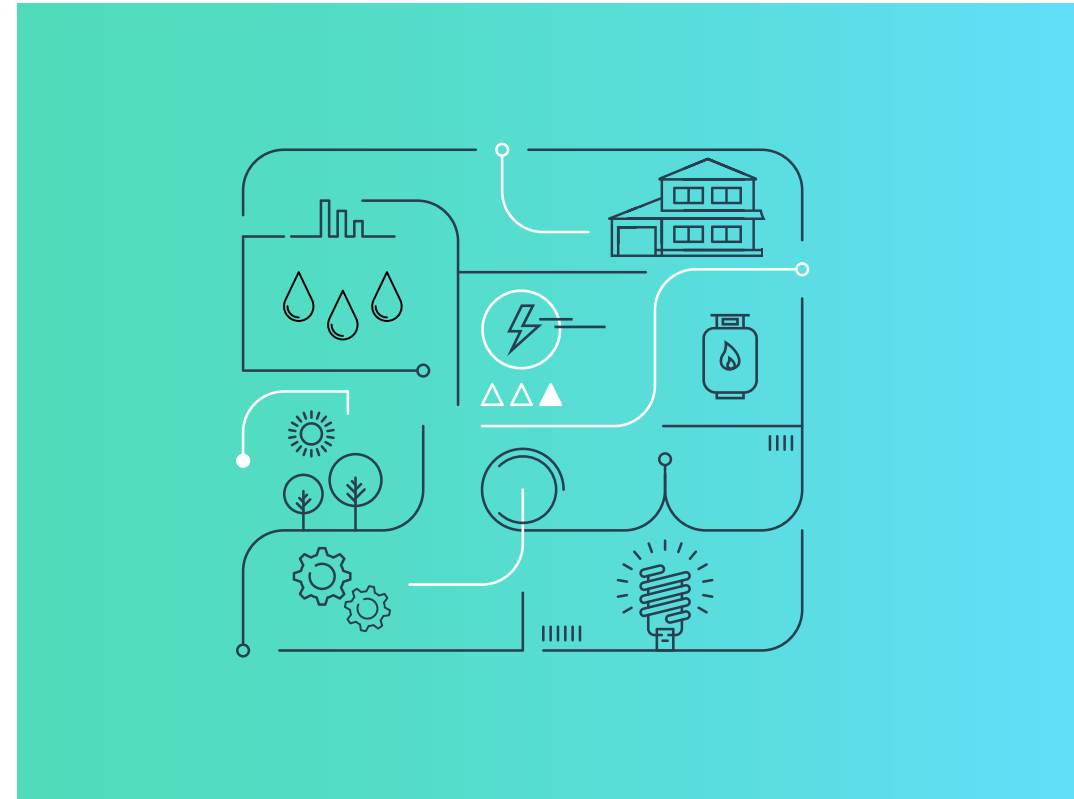
Case study —
Etowah Utilities (continued)

It was time to do away with the paper.

Etowah Utilities IT Director Russ Duggan and Administrative Operations Assistant Jason Wilson, created a custom app using the FileMaker Workplace Innovation Platform. Paper processes were replaced with digital forms, saving many hours of drive time and administrative work per work order.

Immediate transformative results.

The company has gone completely mobile. All work orders, timesheets and purchase orders are now digitized.

Yearly state reports used to take 2 days for plant operators. **Now they take minutes.**

Safety has increased thanks to pre-work job briefings available on workers' iPad devices.

Daily truck inspections are also conducted and **easily recorded** via the company's custom app.

> **" We've converted all of our paper processes to digital. Work orders get sent directly to field workers, and purchase orders are handled efficiently. We've been using the Workplace Innovation Platform for three years now, and it's worked out well for us. "**

Russ Duggan,
IT Director, Etowah Utilities

Case study —
Annie's

Annie's, headquartered in Berne, IN, is part of a third-generation, family-run business focused on crafts, nostalgia and home decor. The company's products include magazines, books, kits and supplies, online classes and television programming.

Annie's information was scattered.

Several craft-related companies were consolidated under the Annie's name, **resulting in multiple sources of disparate information in different systems.** The company needed a way to bring all of this information together, to be able to easily catalog intellectual property, send out contracts and monitor schedules across product lines.

Case study — Annie's (continued)

A custom app helped integrate data and streamline communications.

Product Operations Director Brenda Wendling created a custom app using the FileMaker Platform to help integrate acquisitions into Annie's fold. The custom app gathered all of the company's critical information in one place. It also helped streamline communication between the production and editorial departments, which previously kept production notes in a shared, spiral notebook.

Processes were improved across the company.

About 85 employees and 25 remote workers use a custom app built on the FileMaker Workplace Innovation Platform as part of their daily workflow.

The company can easily keep track of contributors to its publications. Their custom app stores intellectual property contracts and enables the company to monitor royalty payouts.

Email communication is largely automated, **speeding up communication with current and prospective contributors.**

> " I love working with a Workplace Innovation Platform — from the first video I watched about FileMaker to today. I can't imagine doing things the way we used to do them before we had FileMaker. It enables us to easily share our mission of celebrating home, family and creative spirit with our customers. "

Brenda Wendling,
Product Operations Director, Annie's

Workplace Innovation Platform survey

In January 2019, FileMaker, Inc. launched its Workplace Innovation Platform survey to our customers.

The data in this report is based on 409 responses giving most results a confidence interval of +- 3% with a 95% confidence level.

The research was conducted by Macadamian Technologies Inc.

16[%]

1000+ employees

5[%]

500-999 employees

11[%]

200-499 employees

20[%]

50-199 employees

48[%]

5–49 employees

Most respondents were small to medium businesses