workfront®

State of Work

2020

At Workfront, our mission is helping people do their best work. Each year, we survey thousands of workers in multiple countries to understand how people get things done, how they collaborate in large organizations, and how technology is changing the way work happens.

The findings in this report help us chart the course for new solutions for work management, and provide insight into how companies can and should shape their own organizations to build lasting leadership, starting with people.

—**Steven ZoBell**
Chief Product & Technology Officer
Workfront

The survey was conducted online by Regina Corso Consulting between July 8-12, 2019, among 3,750 respondents in the US (1,500), UK (1,000), Germany (750), and the Netherlands (500), all of whom are employed by a company with at least 500 employees, work on a computer, and collaborate with other people on projects.

Send inquiries to Workfront at: social@workfront.com.

Doing business at scale has never been more complex. Every industry is undergoing rapid transformation. Customer expectations change daily. The workforce is increasingly global. Networks, including social platforms, are changing the way customers, companies, workers, and even governments interact. Employees juggle seemingly infinite work streams and dozens of connection points in real time. People and teams are under constant pressure to work faster and more efficiently. Companies are required to move from a focus on building and shipping products to continuous delivery of high-value customer experiences just to maintain market differentiation, value, and growth.

Even in this period of transformation, there is a class of companies that consistently outperforms the competition. The essential question is *why*? How do they change pressure into opportunity? How do they simultaneously move faster, anticipating, or even driving, industry change? What sets these organizations apart year after year?

jetBlue

"We work in a competitive and fast-paced environment, and live in a society where technology is ever-changing and consumer expectations are ever-growing. This, coupled with the need to provide safe, reliable, and differentiated products, means that the workplace pressure is constant. The most difficult thing about this pressure is narrowing in on what is going to move the needle, on what is going to most help differentiate and keep us competitive, while also continuing to shore up our foundation upon which these innovations are built."

—Whitnee Hawthorne
Director Strategic Execution, Technology, JetBlue
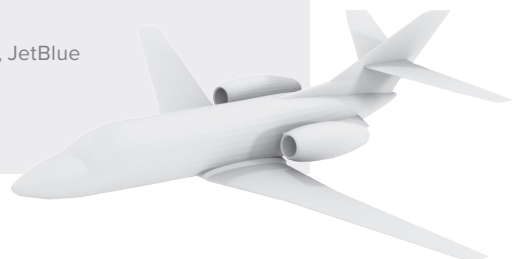
Companies that outperform share fundamental attributes.

We have worked with more than 3,000 companies around the world in designing and implementing transformations. From that front row seat, we've observed four fundamental attributes shared by teams and corporations that consistently outpace their rivals.

1 They start with visibility and context.

Organizations that demonstrate resilient leadership—the ability to sustain their position in an industry over a long period of time—actively communicate company strategy through departments, teams, and all the way out to each person. Strategy at all levels of the organization is well-defined, informed by data, and clearly communicated. Workers, along with executives, have visibility into exactly what the company strives to achieve. Most importantly, each person understands their own context: the role they play in company achievement. Maintaining that continuous connection is a component both of leadership responsibility and company culture.

2 They actively manage work.

These companies have the ability to put relentless pressure on work performance while simultaneously creating a culture that is positive, open, and honest. People and teams operate with confidence, not fear. They use data to align and make decisions regarding both status and performance of teams and projects, and they strive for excellence in resource management, making decisions based on real-time data rather than assumption.

3 They deploy technology to help people get work done.

Work management drives technology strategy, and these organizations support their people with the applications and systems they want and need, anything from instant messaging to product design tools or the latest creative suite. But they also put in place a digital backbone that ties together individual tools into an orchestrated whole, supporting dynamic work processes, and capturing information that supports visibility and context.

4 They focus on agility as a core competency.

These companies display exceptional levels of organizational agility. Rather than simply make existing work easier or more fluid, they actually take on a more dynamic approach, working across departmental seams, changing more often, empowering new leaders, and redeploying themselves at the individual, team, or even organizational level to drive new market opportunities.

Arthrex®

"The definition of work has changed. If you think back even ten years ago, 'near-real time' was a term that brought joy to technology teams. Now, with true real-time collaboration, working with people means working on a deliverable digitally with people across the globe.

The idea of a single person creating a deliverable on their own, then bringing it to a team in a coordinated review, is no longer the norm. So not only do we have the distractions of more work being requested at any time, but now the collaborative element provides real-time distractions as well.

And of course, we all want the latest and greatest technology. End users want to bring their own device, work in their own apps, work on their own schedules. As a business, we need standards; we have to agree to work together during some intervals, in common technologies. In order to do so, our needs must converge."

—**Dale Whitchurch**
Director, Engineering Global Program Management, Arthrex

State of Work

2020

Each of the four fundamental attributes we observe in organizations that lead starts with a focus on helping people—each individual—get their best work done. In order to further understand how companies can improve their performance, we regularly study the state of work, specifically work management, through the lens of knowledge workers. In our sixth annual global State of Work report, we examine how business practices are helping and hindering both employee and organizational success.

For this year's study, we surveyed 3,750 knowledge workers during July 2019 across the United Kingdom, the United States, the Netherlands, and Germany. The findings reflect a workforce that is ready to move forward, eager to engage in high-impact, strategic efforts, and yet at the same time struggling and frustrated in their efforts to get work done.

The challenges companies confront on the path to resilient leadership are addressing strategic *and systemic opportunities* rather than simply solving issues and symptoms. Here are some of the reasons why.

Employees are engaged and want to make a strategic impact.

89% of our respondents believe their role matters, and 78% say their job represents more than a paycheck. When we asked our thousands of survey participants to choose the word that most represents the job they do, "accountable" came out as #1. Not only are employees engaged, they feel a great responsibility to their jobs well. The bottom line is that the vast majority of workers are doing more than punching the clock.

## People take pride in their work and know that results matter.

91% of the people we surveyed say they are proud of the work they do. They also care about bigger picture objectives. In fact, 65% of respondents told us they wish they were rewarded more on results instead of just deliverables. This matches our experience in working with many large organizations; as companies scale, it becomes easy for people and teams to focus efforts on project milestones, tasks, or individual deliverables while losing sight of strategic objectives.

65%
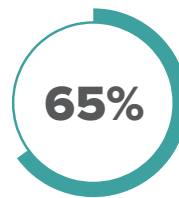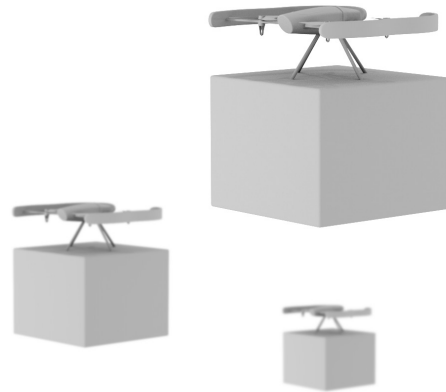
65% of employees wish they were rewarded more on results as opposed to just deliverables.

Work is getting in the way of...work.

Even in the middle of a technology and connectivity revolution, today's workforce still devotes a tremendous amount of time to low-value activity. And they know it. Over the six years we have published the State of Work report, we've consistently found knowledge workers on average spend just 40% of their work week on the job they were hired to do. Despite trillions of dollars[1] and countless initiatives, *companies have gained almost no ground* in helping workers focus on their most important work.
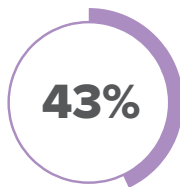
43% Employees said they spend only 43% of their day on their primary job duties.

The number one culprit? Wasteful meetings. And based on our qualitative review of thousands of companies and teams, the central driver of wasteful meetings is poor mechanisms for strategic alignment, work planning, and work status communication. Also on the list of productivity blockers cited by our respondents: excessive emails, excessive oversight, poor work prioritization, and a lack of standard processes for workflow.

1. IDC predicts companies will spend roughly $2 trillion on digital transformations annually by 2022.

Digital tools such as email, instant messages, and social media are interrupting work.

Based on our 3,750 worldwide survey participants, workers are interrupted an average of 13.9 times per day. Scientific study indicates it can take more than 20 minutes[2] after an interruption to return to the original task. The very tools we're using to enable communication and collaboration may actually interfere with productivity. Digging deeper, the same research also finds that people who work in a state of constant interruption report higher levels of stress and actually adapt their behavior to the interruption environment.

Company decisions aren't always based on data.

In stark contrast to the visibility and context we observe in leading organizations, workers in our survey shared concerning perspectives on how and where decisions are made in their companies. Fewer than half (46%) believe business decisions are made based on data and 25% of respondents told us they aren't sure how company decisions are made at all.

46%
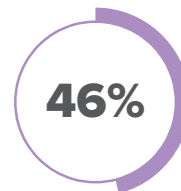
Fewer than half of respondents think business decisions are made based on data.

2. https://www.fastcompany.com/944128/worker-interrupted-cost-task-switching

People expect consumer ease and simplicity at work.

Employees live in a world where Facebook, Apple, Amazon, and Google set the bar for information access, user experience, personalization, and connection. 86% of this year's respondents say next-generation employees expect workplace technology that looks more like Amazon and Instagram, with 94% saying searching at work should match the ease of Googling.

Workers think companies can and should do better with technology.

87% of respondents think leaders should reconsider the way they think about technology in the workplace, while 84% say businesses today are missing opportunities by not moving to more modern solutions.

91%
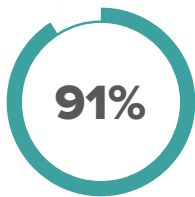
91% of workers surveyed say that they crave modern technology solutions.

Workplaces with modern technology attract and keep the best talent.

88% of workers in our survey told us technology is an important part of the employee experience. And 91% say they *crave* modern technology solutions.

Most workers wish they had one centralized place to see all work across the company.

In fact, 71% would like to have a single destination to understand and manage work. But nearly as many—69%—tell us they don't have that type of solution in place.

66%
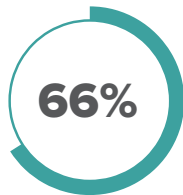
66% report their company has yet to have a "Chief Work Officer" in place.

The workforce understands that work management, as a practice, is vitally important. If it were up to them, it would be an executive leadership role.

We asked respondents to consider the idea of a "Chief Work Officer," a person to coordinate people, work, content, process, performance, and oversee the complete experience of working for the company. 67% of respondents told us it would be important to them to have a person like that in their company. A similar number—66%—report their company has yet to have that person in place.

Modern work management.

Corporations have long run on a set of accepted disciplines. Imagine trying to find an enterprise without mechanisms for human resources management, financial management, or even customer relationship management. In each case, there are clear processes for managing, retaining, improving, and leveraging major corporate assets. Missing from that list, however, is work management. How do corporations manage, retain, improve, and leverage their intellectual capital? How do they consistently provide visibility, create a culture of work management, and ultimately achieve the agility to drive markets?

Strategic shift: moving to work management

Based on our experience, and the needs of the modern workforce, we believe it is time for enterprises to consider work management as a holistic practice and begin treating work—people, their actions, and the intellectual capital they create—as a tier-one asset.

jetBlue

"Corporations will need to offer more than a paycheck and traditional benefits to attract and retain employees. They will need to drive personal investment in the work by championing innovations that align with corporate goals, and helping employees understand the "why" behind the company by linking it to a greater good in the world."

—Whitnee Hawthorne
Director Strategic Execution, Technology, JetBlue

sage

"Given that our organization has over 12,000 employees across the globe, the hardest part of getting work done is collaboration and communication. Without technology, things become quickly unmanageable, with the sheer volume of emails, workshops and meetings that require attention. Once the team (and technology) is in place, the magic starts to happen as you allow them to collaborate on projects, which helps to drive innovation in ways that you never expected."

"The speed of technological change that is in turn driving cultural and societal change can be frightening. The expectations of someone joining the workforce today—versus their mother or father—plays into everything from a platform design or UX to the company's ways of working. Companies that fail to recognize and adapt to this dynamic environment will quickly be left behind."

—Paul Tasker
Director of Marketing Technology & Demand Operations, Sage

JPMS

"While we are still on a journey, we have experienced significant revelations toward making work more strategic. When we started, the norm was to see departments managing the same 'project lists' as their own version of the truth. This resulted in dates, tasks, and even in some cases deliverables being out of synch. By elevating work to a more strategic level and platforming it, we are gaining the ability to align complex, cross-department projects around one common goal (say a launch for example) and minimize the management overhead. This enables leaders to focus on results—not just being busy managing lists of tasks."

—Phil Oster
Vice President, Information Technology,
John Paul Mitchell Systems

Are you ready for work management?

Equipping your enterprise for the shift to strategic work management starts with considering these questions:

- Does every person in my organization understand our company strategy and their role in our success?

- Do leaders in our organization work to ensure people and teams can focus on the work they've been hired to lead, drive, and accomplish?

- Are we measuring and incentivizing our people for accomplishing tasks and finishing projects, or achieving strategic outcomes?

- Are the technology tools we use helping people accomplish their strategic objectives?

- Do we provide all of our team members with the "why" behind their work? Are we helping our people and teams align with strategic decisions?
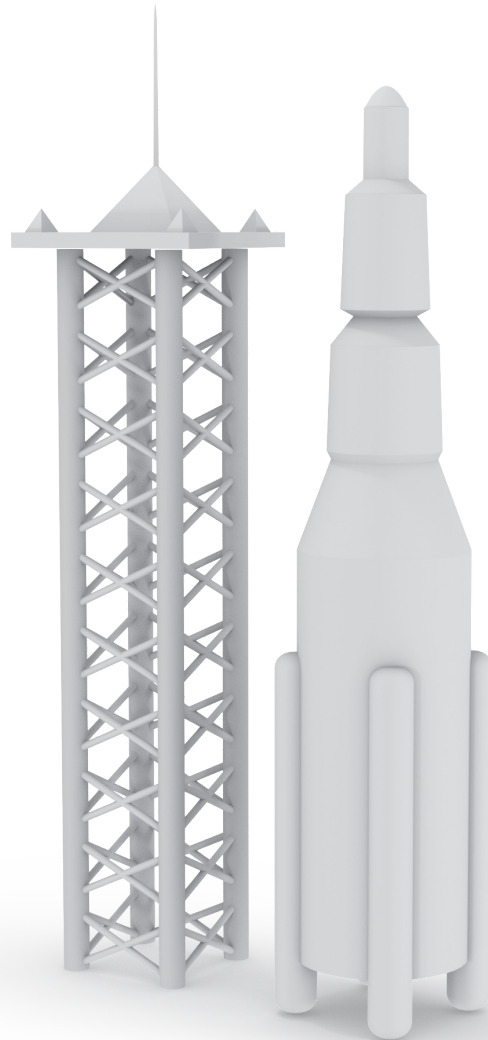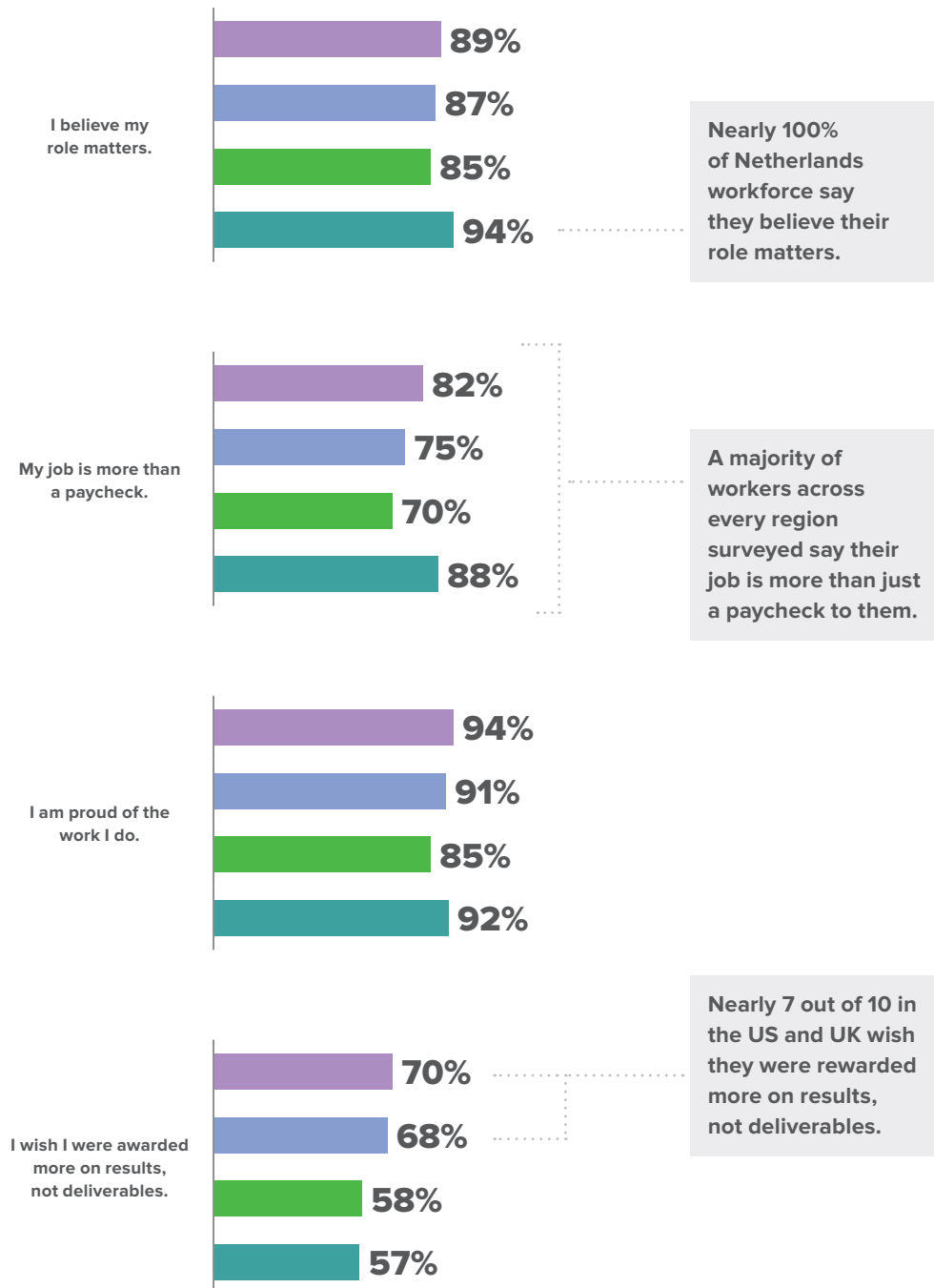
Global Data Highlights

KEY:
- U.S.
- U.K.
- Germany
- Netherlands

Q: How strongly do you agree with the following statements:

(Agree responses)

I believe my role matters.
- 89%
- 87%
- 85%
- 94%

Nearly 100% of Netherlands workforce say they believe their role matters.

My job is more than a paycheck.
- 82%
- 75%
- 70%
- 88%

A majority of workers across every region surveyed say their job is more than just a paycheck to them.

I am proud of the work I do.
- 94%
- 91%
- 85%
- 92%

I wish I were awarded more on results, not deliverables.
- 70%
- 68%
- 58%
- 57%

Nearly 7 out of 10 in the US and UK wish they were rewarded more on results, not deliverables.

KEY:
- U.S.
- U.K.
- Germany
- Netherlands

Q: Which of the following, if any, ever get in the way of work?
   **Please select all that apply.**

Wasteful meetings
(e.g. not needed, not engaging, inefficient)
- 60%
- 68%
- 64%
- 55%

62% of global respondents chose wasteful meetings as the number one thing that gets in the way of getting work done. Excessive emails was rated second at 53%.

Excessive emails
(e.g. sending, responding, sorting)
- 52%
- 62%
- 49%
- 46%

Excessive oversight
(needing too many approvals or reviews)
- 34%
- 39%
- 32%
- 28%

Lack of standard processes for workflow
- 31%
- 30%
- 33%
- 29%

Poor work prioritization at my company
- 29%
- 34%
- 34%
- 37%

Lack of collaboration within my team
- 23%
- 28%
- 31%
- 24%

Poor alignment between my team and overall corporate goals
- 21%
- 22%
- 21%
- 28%

Excessive delegation from your boss or manager
- 19%
- 23%
- 18%
- 12%

KEY:

- U.S.
- U.K.
- Germany
- Netherlands

Q: Best guess for what percentage of your work week is taken up by each of the following:

45% **40%**

45% **43%**

Performing the primary duties of my job
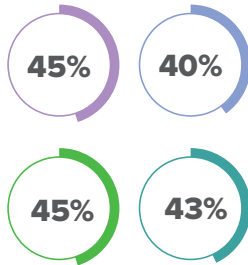
Employees across all countries surveyed spend less than half (the average is 43%) of their work week working on their primary duties at their job, with the UK spending the least amount of time per week on primary duties.

11% **14%** **13%** **14%**
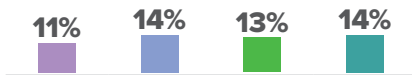
Administrative tasks

15% **15%**

13% **14%**
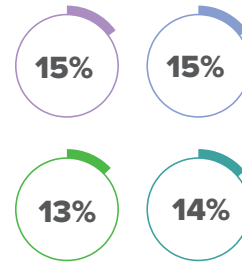
Emails (e.g. sending, responding, sorting)

Wasteful meetings can make up nearly 10 percent of an average work week, resulting in hundreds of unproductive hours annually.

8% **8%** **9%** **8%**

Wasteful meetings (e.g. not needed, not engaging, inefficient)

8% **8%**

9% **8%**
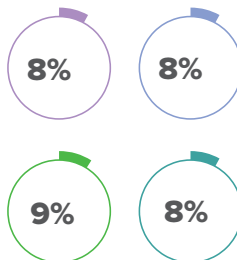
Interruptions for nonessential tasks

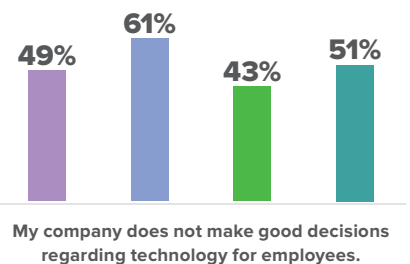**15%** **14%** **13%** **14%**
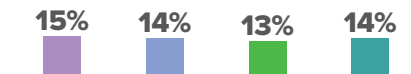
Everything else
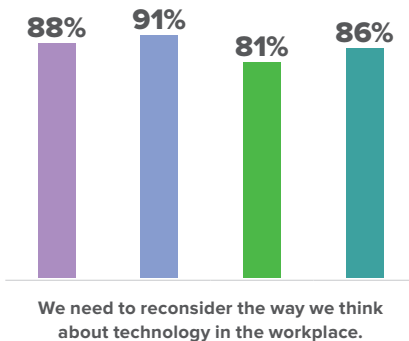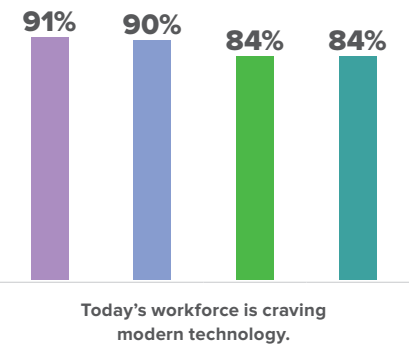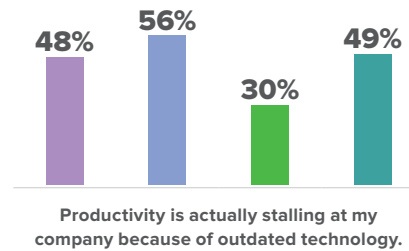
KEY:
- U.S.
- U.K.
- Germany
- Netherlands

Q: How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements: (Agree responses)

90% **89%** **81%** **79%**

The next generation of employees are going to expect workplace technology that looks a lot more like Amazon, Google, and Instagram.

95% **96%** **94%** **91%**

It should be as easy to find information at work as it is to find information on Google.

84% **87%** **79%** **84%**

Businesses today are missing opportunities by not moving to more modern technological solutions.
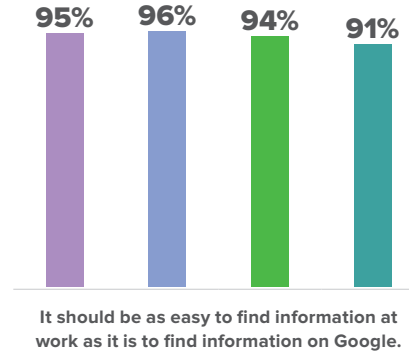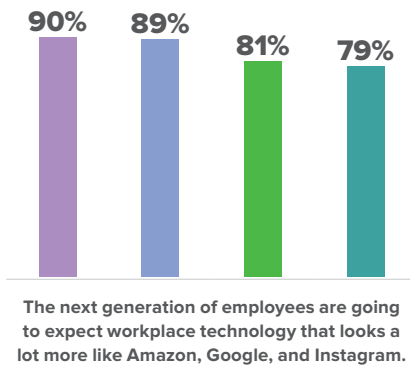
UK workers are most likely to say productivity is stalling due to outdated technology.

48% **56%** **30%** **49%**

Productivity is actually stalling at my company because of outdated technology.

91% **90%** **84%** **84%**

Today's workforce is craving modern technology.

88% **91%** **81%** **86%**

We need to reconsider the way we think about technology in the workplace.

49% **61%** **43%** **51%**

My company does not make good decisions regarding technology for employees.

KEY:
- U.S.
- U.K.
- Germany
- Netherlands

Q: How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements: (Agree responses)

I wish we had one centralized place to see all work across the company.

- 73%
- 76%
- 62%
- 68%

Workplaces with modern technology attract and keep the best talent.

- 91%
- 88%
- 86%
- 84%

Q: Do you have one online destination to work, such as a modern work management application platform that combines project management, intelligent work automation, and in-context collaboration to empower teams?

Despite the vast majority of global workers (71%) stating they would like to have a single destination to understand and manage work, 69% say they don't have that type of solution in place.

US
- 28% Yes
- 72% No

UK
- 25% Yes
- 75% No

GER
- 43% Yes
- 57% No

NETH
- 36% Yes
- 64% No

KEY:
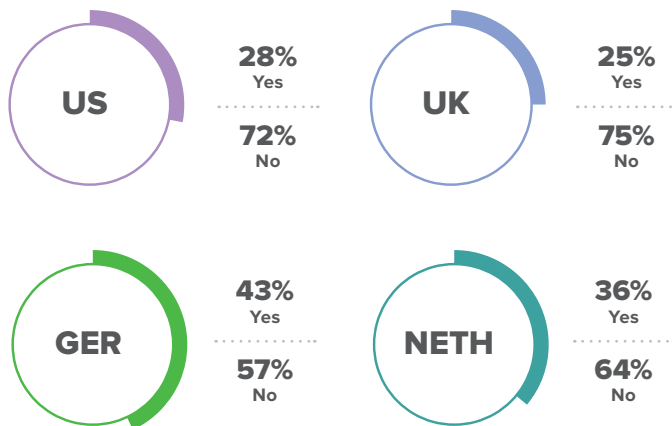
- U.S.
- U.K.
- Germany
- Netherlands

Q: Would you say that searching for information (e.g. presentations, documents, facts, etc.) at work is easier or harder than finding information as a consumer?

57%   60%   62%   56%

CONSUMER IS EASIER
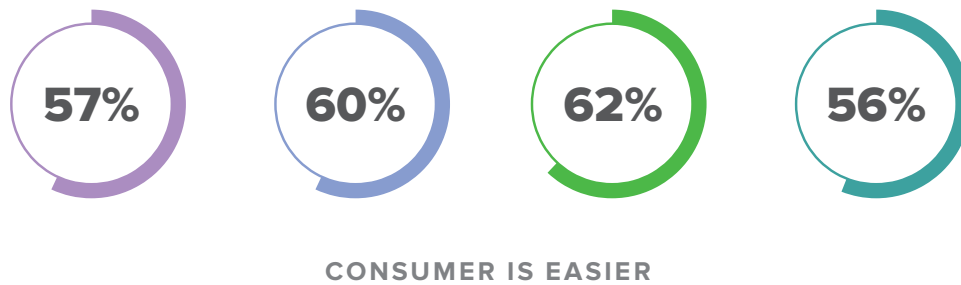
Q: How much would you say that each of these contributes to you being unproductive at work and not being able to get all of your work done in a timely manner:
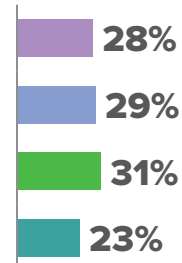
(Contributes responses)

The number of applications, digital interruptions, and communications options available to workers have a major impact on worker productivity.

The number of apps and programs I have to deal with
- 44%
- 43%
- 38%
- 41%
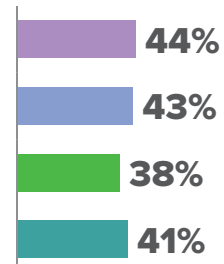
Digital Interruptions from social media or instant messaging platforms
- 28%
- 29%
- 31%
- 23%

The number of communication options available
- 39%
- 47%
- 41%
- 40%
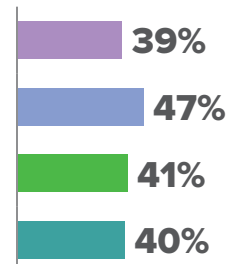
KEY:
- U.S.
- U.K.
- Germany
- Netherlands

Q: Thinking of a typical day, how many times would you say you are interrupted by digital/technology tools? By digital tools, we mean email, Slack or other collaboration tools, instant messaging tools, social media, and so forth. If you are not sure, please use your best estimate.
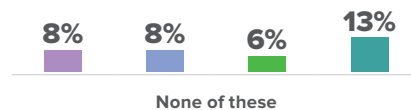

13.7

13.9

13

15.5

US

UK
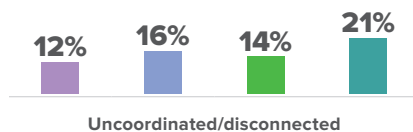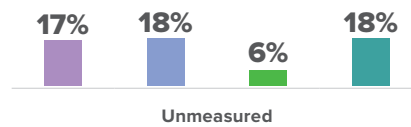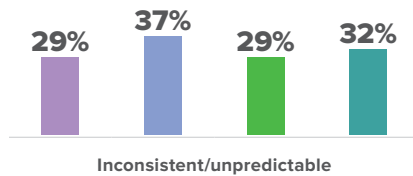
GERMANY

NETHERLANDS

TIMES INTERRUPTED PER DAY
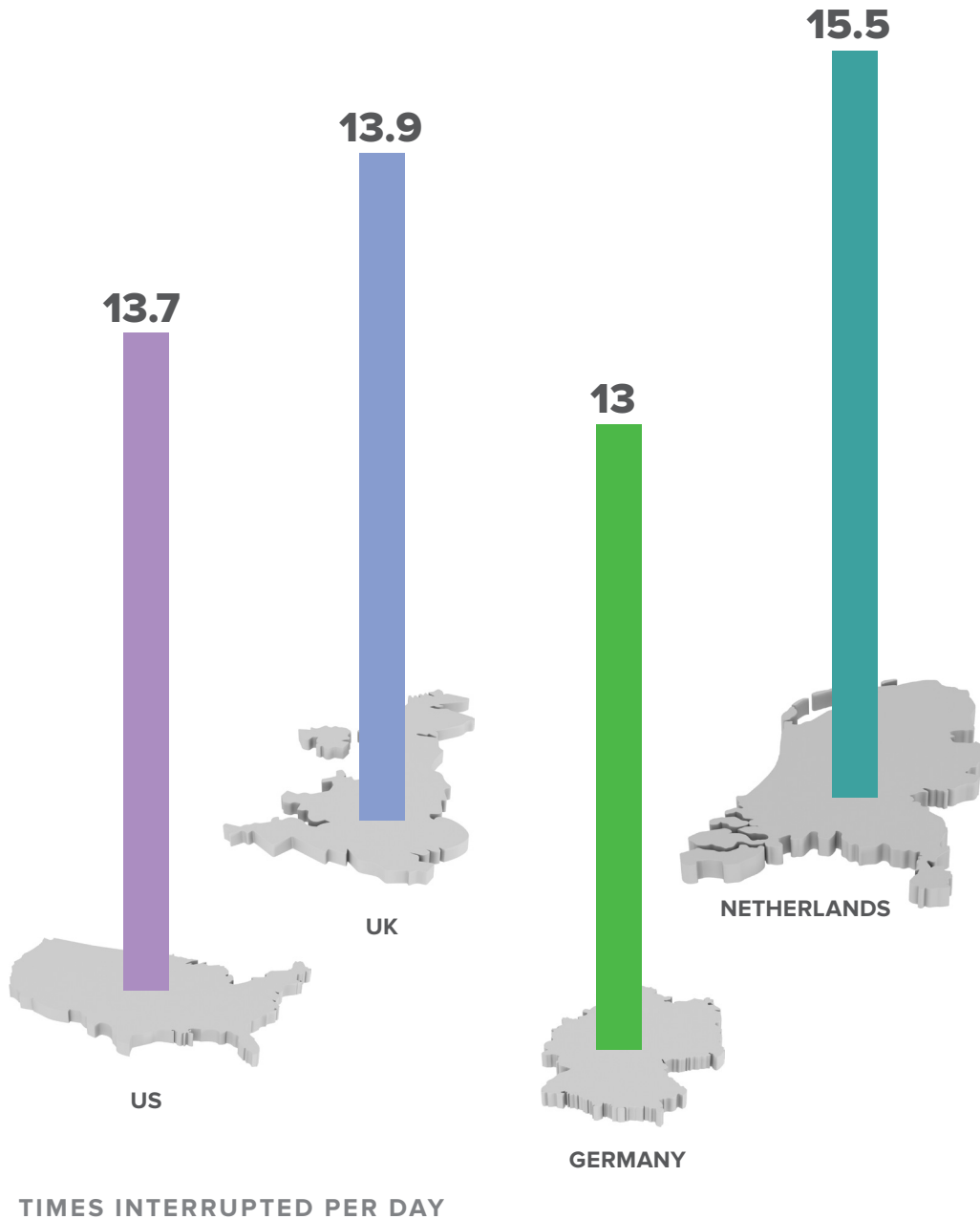
Q: When you think of your average week, which words would you say most represent the work that you do during the week? Please select two that represent the work you do.

Accountable

- 61%
- 49%
- 71%
- 35%
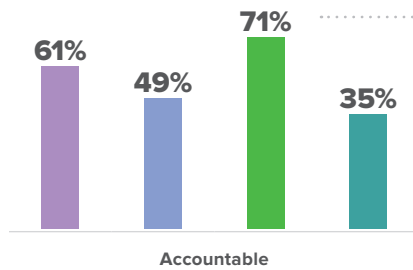
Twice as many in Germany chose "accountable" as respondents from the Netherlands, but Dutch workers are more likely to choose "harmonious" than those in the other countries.

Harmonious/connected

- 39%
- 25%
- 34%
- 40%
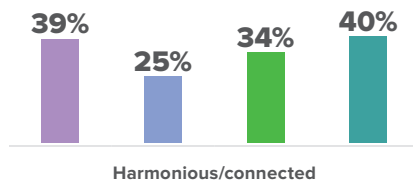
Workers from the US, Netherlands, and Germany are more likely than UK workers to say "harmonious/connected" most represents the work they do.

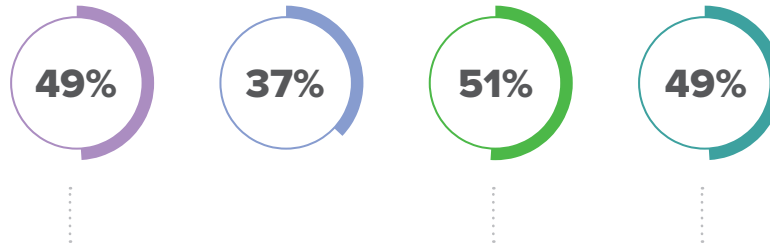**Inconsistent/unpredictable**

- 29%
- 37%
- 29%
- 32%

Unmeasured

- 17%
- 18%
- 6%
- 18%

Uncoordinated/disconnected

- 12%
- 16%
- 14%
- 21%

None of these

- 8%
- 8%
- 6%
- 13%

KEY:
- U.S.
- U.K.
- Germany
- Netherlands

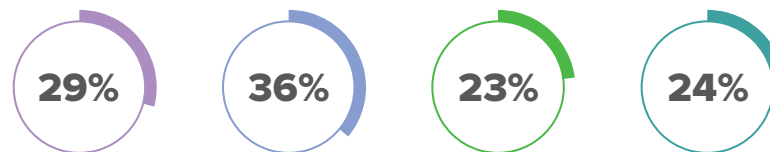**Q: Do you feel executives at your company make more of their business decisions based on assumptions or based on data?**

DATA

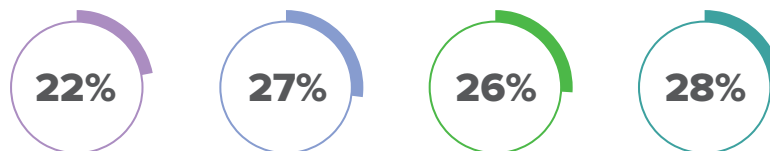| U.S.	U.K.	Germany	Netherlands
49%	37%	51%	49%

While nearly 50% of workers in the US, Germany, and Netherlands agree that executives are making decisions based on data, workers in the UK are less convinced.

ASSUMPTIONS

U.S.	U.K.	Germany	Netherlands
29%	36%	23%	24%

NOT AT ALL SURE

| U.S.	U.K.	Germany	Netherlands
22%	27%	26%	28%

Q: Assume there were a role in your company for a "Chief Work Officer," a person to coordinate people, work, content, process and performance, and oversee the complete experience of working for the company. How important would it be to you to have a person like that in your company?

IMPORTANT

64%

66%

69%

74%
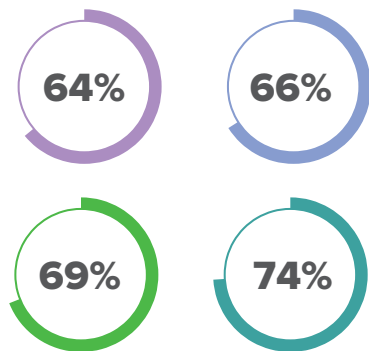
67% of global respondents said having a Chief Work Officer in their company was important to them, however 66% said their company has yet to have that person in place.

Q: Is there a leader on your company's management team that focuses on helping people and/or teams get their work done?

64%   72%   66%   55%

NO
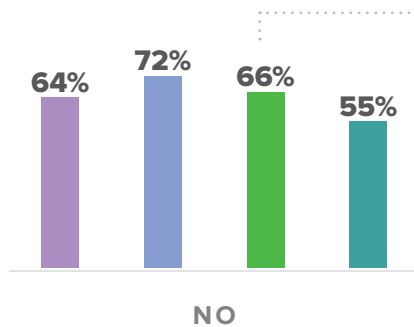
workfront

Workfront is the modern work management application platform, helping people do their best work so companies can thrive in a digital world. Workfront is built for people, effortlessly connecting teams and easily integrating into existing applications and systems. The ability to see, measure, and analyze critical factors such as resources, outcomes, and priorities keeps everyone on the same page, with a clear understanding of why their work matters. Workfront has helped thousands of companies successfully transform their businesses into modern enterprises that increase revenue, improve customer experiences, and reduce cost, including BT, Cisco Systems, Comcast, Fender Musical Instruments Corporation, Fossil Group, TSB, and Trek.

To learn more about how Workfront can help your team thrive, visit workfront.com/best-work.

workfront®