

# COMPLEXITY. CONFIDENCE. CONSENSUS.

---

The new DNA in modern decision-making.

The world has changed.  
So has decision-making.  
Let's take a look.

## **Workplace. Reshaped by a pandemic. Workforce. Transformed by diversity. Growth. Redefined by sustainability. Economy. Who knows.**

**After an astonishing three years of global tumult – surely –  
decision-making cannot be the same as it was before.**

And the insight from our research is clear: **it's not.**

We already knew there were individuals behind decisions. Now, we can see them.  
We already knew emotions were influencing decisions. Now, we can name them.  
We already knew there was complexity. Now, we can see how different  
decision-makers are dealing with it.

The decision-making unit is no longer just a unit.  
It's a layered and characterful collection of individuals,  
with their own traits and tendencies, egos and insecurities.

**They say we're in the age of AI. We say decision-making just got more human.**

# CONTENTS

---

<b>Foreword</b> – the right research at the right moment	<b>Page 4</b>
<b>Context</b> – complexity at tipping point	<b>Page 5</b>
<b>Overview</b> – no alarm and some surprises	<b>Page 6</b>
<b>Deep-dive</b> – meet the modern decision-makers	<b>Page 11</b>
<b>Conclusion</b> – just the beginning	<b>Page 30</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>Page 31</b>

# FOREWORD

The right research at the right moment.



**Enzo Diliberto**  
Global Insight Director  
Financial Times

We regularly examine how decision-makers are navigating change in different markets, sectors and geographies. In this research – for the first time – we look at the discipline of decision-making itself.

And it's the right moment. With change accelerating along every axis – economic, political, technological, social – we find out how these headwinds are affecting the way decisions get made.

To build dimension, we layered attitudinal responses over firmographics. This allowed meaningful clusters to crystallise and six discrete decision-making personalities are revealed.

Our hope is to provide guidance for decision-makers looking to develop their process, and for those seeking to support or influence them.

If you would like to further understand this research please get in touch via [research@ft.com](mailto:research@ft.com)



**Claire Davidson**  
Executive Strategy Director  
Twogether

As a B2B technology marketing agency, it's our job to know *who* is making the big decisions inside businesses. This research starts to tell us *how* they're doing it.

When it comes to buying decisions, we're seeing a degree of cross-department consultation like never before. This research shows the nuance behind that trend and fills in what firmographics alone fail to show: that decision-makers are human.

Studying the personalities of the modern decision-maker, moves us past the faceless Decision-Making Unit, and feeds campaigns, communications and experiences that truly resonate with individuals.

We're delighted, in partnership with the Financial Times, to bring modern decision-makers to life.

If you'd like to talk about these findings please get in touch via [marketing@wearetwogether.com](mailto:marketing@wearetwogether.com)

# CONTEXT

## Complexity at tipping point.

**Decision-making is drawing in more data, more consultation, and more consensus than ever before. All the options need to be examined through all the big strategic lenses: tech, cybersecurity, ESG, ethics, culture, mental health, diversity, not to mention profit and purpose. Choices that used to be contained within a department or two, are now interconnected with everyone and everything else.**

This complexity is the reason decision-making has become democratised. Buying choices are more likely than ever to involve multiple lines of business and input from both inside and outside the C-Suite. It's the reason collaborative, cross-functional decisions take longer, and why decision-paralysis is a thing. Because the risk of getting it wrong can mean catastrophic, enterprise-wide disruption.

Now at tipping point, complexity is starting to bring out character. So let's see what our decision-makers are made of.

We asked 434 business decision-makers across Europe, North America and Asia Pacific: how do you do it? How do you prioritise the multiple factors in play? What do you care about? Who do you consult? What keeps you awake at night?

**We present the Modern Decision-Makers.**

# OVERVIEW

No alarm and some surprises.

## 1. Confidence is high.

Three years of almost constant major-scale crisis have bred a resilience among leaders and a belief in their ability to steer their businesses through choppy waters. Despite facing significant challenges, decision-makers across all our segments are optimistic about their ability to lead their organisation safely through. More self-directed segments are defined by a particularly high level of confidence but interestingly, confidence isn't necessarily a product of leadership longevity, with under 45s showing the highest levels of confidence overall.

**How confident are you that your organisation will successfully navigate the current climate?**



**29%**  
very confident

**58%**  
moderately confident

## 2. Consensus can be quick.

Tech-enabled collaboration that took off during the pandemic means consultation and consensus-gathering are no longer necessarily slowing decisions down. Our research shows that the size of the decision-making unit does rise with complexity, but only in enterprises, and only for large-scale IT purchases from new suppliers. Otherwise, decisions generally involve a maximum of four stakeholders, with some leaders being happy to consult just one other person. Other segments are hard-wired to seek consensus regardless of complexity or scale, believing that diversity of input leads them to better decisions.



## 3. Decisions flow better with digital.

More than two thirds of our respondents feel that decisions are more complicated now than in the past, but those who are further along with digital transformation are able to accelerate decisions regardless of complexity. Those who are less mature in terms of digital transformation find making decisions very complex compared to average. This might be down to new tech not yet embedded or not yet understood. A deluge of newly available but unmanaged data would also be likely to slow decisions down.

### Digital maturity is making decisions simpler:



High digital maturity: 56% say decisions feel more complex today than they used to be

### Likelihood of being able to make quick decisions:



High digital maturity: 69% say decisions are being made more quickly



Low digital maturity: 74% say decisions feel more complex today than they used to be

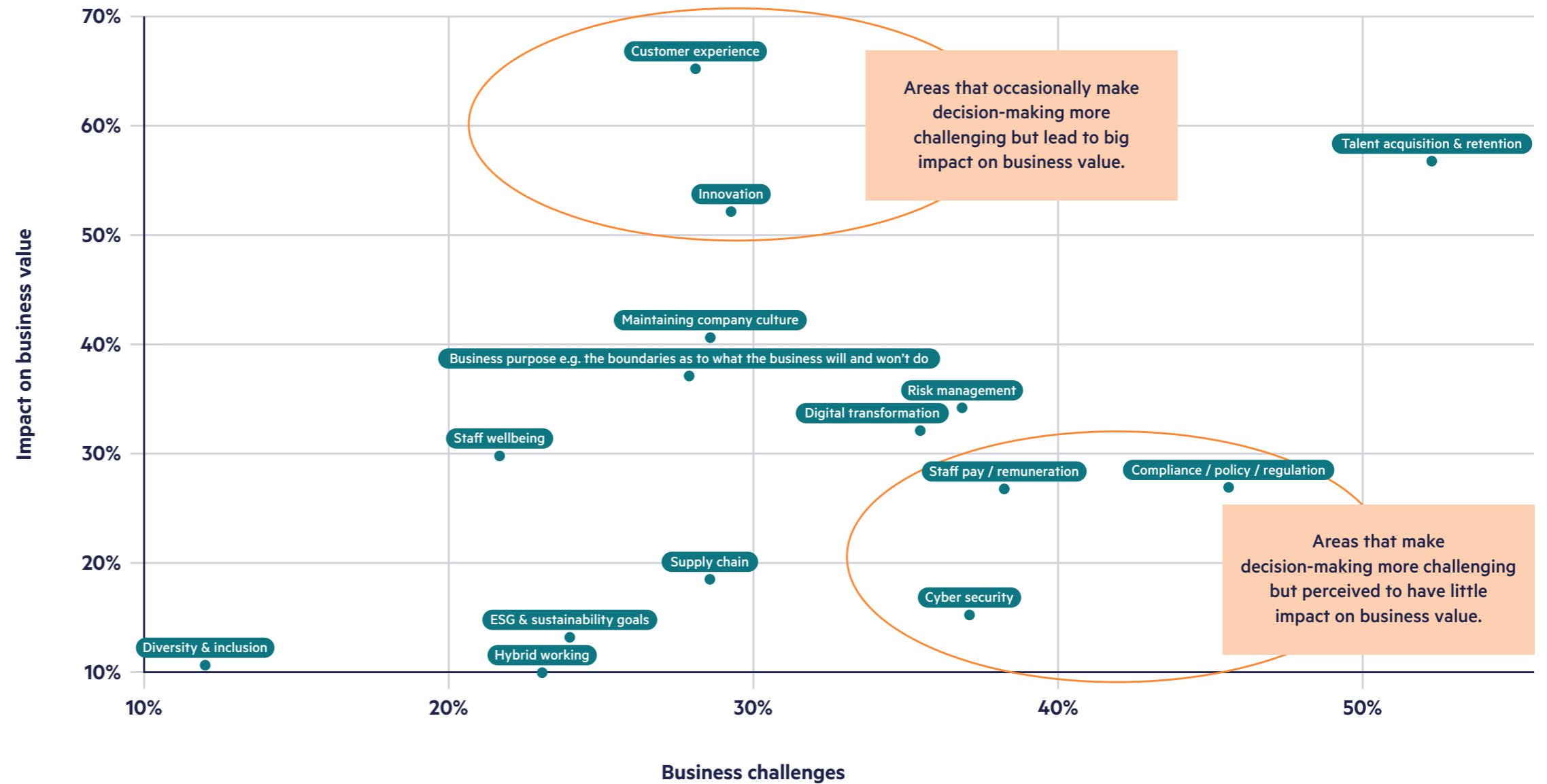


Low digital maturity: 50% say decisions are being made more quickly

**4. Many of the knottiest decisions create the least value.**

Talent (acquisition/retention), compliance, and remuneration are the top three most challenging areas for decision-makers. Compliance and remuneration (along with cybersecurity) are also perceived to drive the least business value. This presents leaders with a conflict around where their time is best spent – and perhaps an opportunity to explore processes, tools or tech that can limit the impact of critical-but-hygiene factors on decision-making mindshare. Conversely innovation and customer experience are seen as both value creators and lesser challenges. Decision-makers might look to free up resources/garner support to allow them to focus more on these value drivers.

**What makes decision-making more challenging vs what has the biggest impact on business value**





## 5. Time spent on talent is seen as time well spent.

Decision-makers now see talent (acquisition and retention) as a primary driver of business value, with a top-5 ranking alongside customer experience and innovation. However, talent also emerged as one of the biggest challenge areas, both for decision-making and for the organisation in general.

### Biggest impact on business value

	Top-5 ranking	Top-2 ranking
Customer experience	63%	40%
Talent acquisition & retention	56%	25%
Innovation	51%	25%

Likelihood to have the biggest impact on business value

## 6. Decision-support: old school is also new school.

Traditional channels are still the go-to trusted source for decision-makers looking to make better decisions. Major business publications, peer-to-peer conversations and industry events are more important than ever in helping decision-makers become aware of vendors and find out more about their services. LinkedIn leads the social field for learning about vendors and their services. For heavier lifting around credibility and vendor selection however, LinkedIn works best in conjunction with peer-to-peer and influencer interactions.

### Helps me make better business decisions



- 80% Traditional media publishers
- 68% Peer-to-peer conversations
- 48% Industry events

### Helps make me aware of a vendor/provider



- 67% Peer-to-peer conversations
- 62% Industry events
- 62% E-newsletters

### Reliable sources for vendor credibility

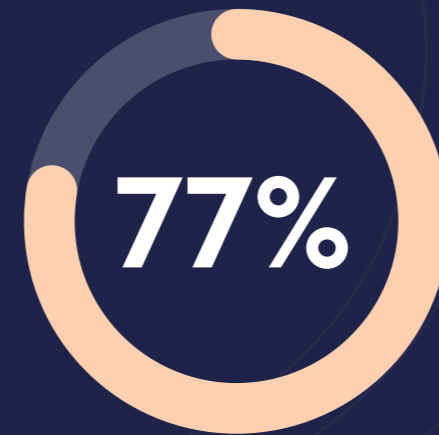


- 65% Peer-to-peer conversations
- 48% Influencers

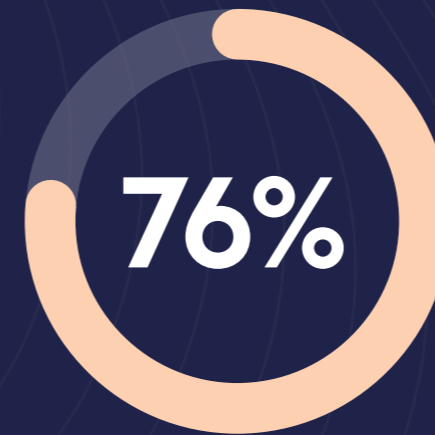
## 7. ESG and D&I are hygiene factors.

In response to questions of ethics, decision-makers say the 'right' thing, but the data shows a more hard-nosed 'get-the-job-done' attitude – clearly prioritising other contributors to effective business such as profit, innovation, talent, or customer experience. ESG and D&I are on the list but much further down, alongside other hygiene factors such as compliance and hybrid working. Suppliers who are at pains to show their sustainability credentials aren't wasting their time, but should lead with proof points around quality of service and cost.

### Saying the right thing



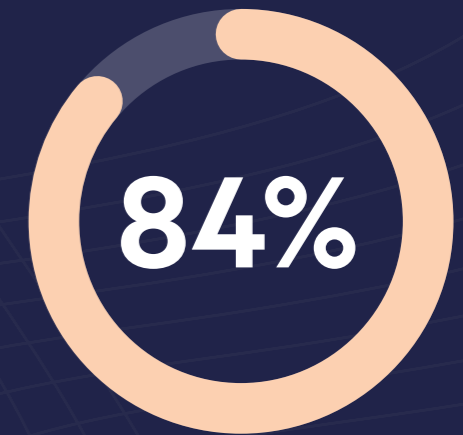
77% agree – “ethics are very important to me when buying service”



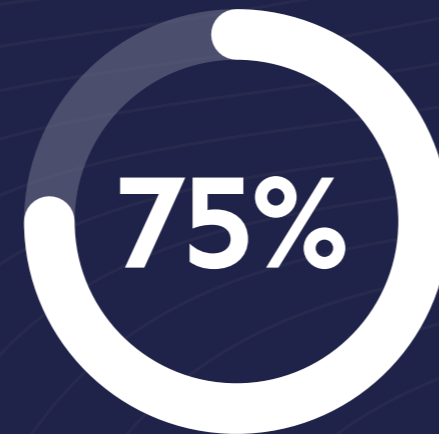
76% agree – “I enjoy working within a diverse team of people; it helps to improve decision-making”



81% agree – “equal treatment and opportunities for all employees is vital to business success”



84% agree – “always demonstrate company values when doing my work”



75% disagree – “as long as a company makes money it doesn't matter how it acts”

### Doing a different thing

In your company, which of the following factors do you perceive as most important when engaging with suppliers?



# DEEP DIVE

## Meet the modern decision-makers.

These are the characters that are emerging in the new world of business leadership.

Shaped by experience, education, temperament and countless other nuances of working life, they are all still moving targets. Every new challenge and success adds fresh dimensions to who they are. But at this moment, these are the personifications of the decision-makers who are near or at the top of modern organisations.



### Conservative Companions

Our largest and least confident segment, Conservative Companions think decisions are harder now than they used to be, and seek consensus from a wide group.



### Inspiring Innovators

Our most sure-footed segment, Inspiring Innovators always have the final word, but seek wide consensus first. Some things still keep them awake at night though.



### Assured Alphas

Our most senior segment with the most sway in final decisions, Assured Alphas are also highly climate-conscious decision-makers, devoted to long-term business purpose.



### Brazen Buccaneers

Our most get-the-job done segment, Brazen Buccaneers have a decision-making bravado that allows no delay and no interruption. Just don't ask them about ESG.



### Cautious Confidants

Our most troubled segment, reeling from economic upheaval, Cautious Confidants find decision-making tougher than ever, and are driven into the arms of consensus.



### Margin Managers

Our youngest and most single-minded segment, Margin Managers are ruthlessly focused on cost and profitability to the exclusion of almost everything else.



# CONSERVATIVE COMPANIONS



Consensus seekers



Climate-conscious



Wellbeing worriers



Digitally immature

**The largest and least confident segment in our sample, Conservative Companions wholeheartedly agree that decision-making is more complex today than it used to be. Taking comfort in consensus, these decision-deliberators involve more colleagues in their process than any other segment in our survey. Overwhelmed with challenges around technology, risk and change, Conservative Companions consult a wide and diverse group in the hope of better (though slower) decisions.**

Showing the highest level of empathy, Conservative Companions value face-to-face conversation and believe that staff wellbeing has a direct impact on business success. Not usually part of the C-Suite, they probably don't have the final say in strategic decisions, but are seen as highly trusted internal advisers. They often wish they were consulted earlier in the process when there's more time to weigh up all the perspectives they love to gather.

The most ESG-conscious cohort, Conservative Companions are willing to spend more for environmentally friendly products and services, valuing long-term outcomes over short-term efficiencies. Like all segments, they remain open to supplier influence in terms of pricing and value for money but are more likely to agree that sometimes you need to compromise quality in order to deliver cost savings.



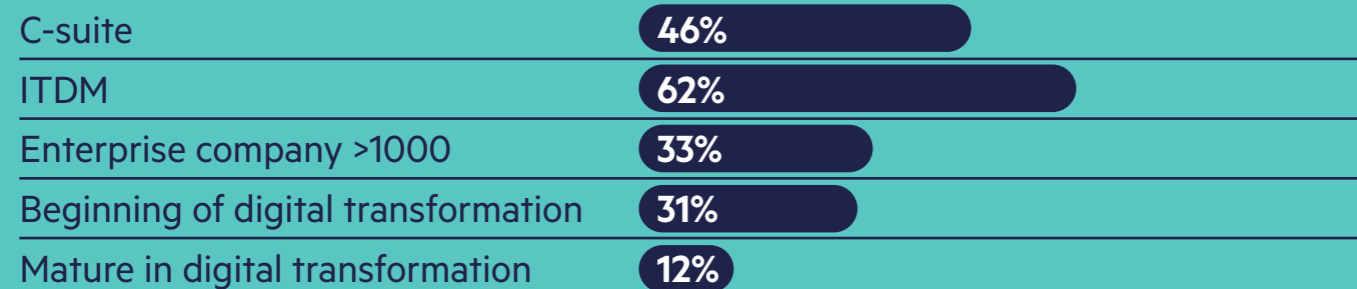
**Most likely to worry about:**

- “ The volatile external environment – unpredictability of policy, of change factors in the wider society.”
- “ Getting consulted early enough in the process. Too often, I’m not brought in until discussions are quite far advanced and I’m not then in the position to have as much leverage to negotiate as I would like.”

**Most likely to say:**

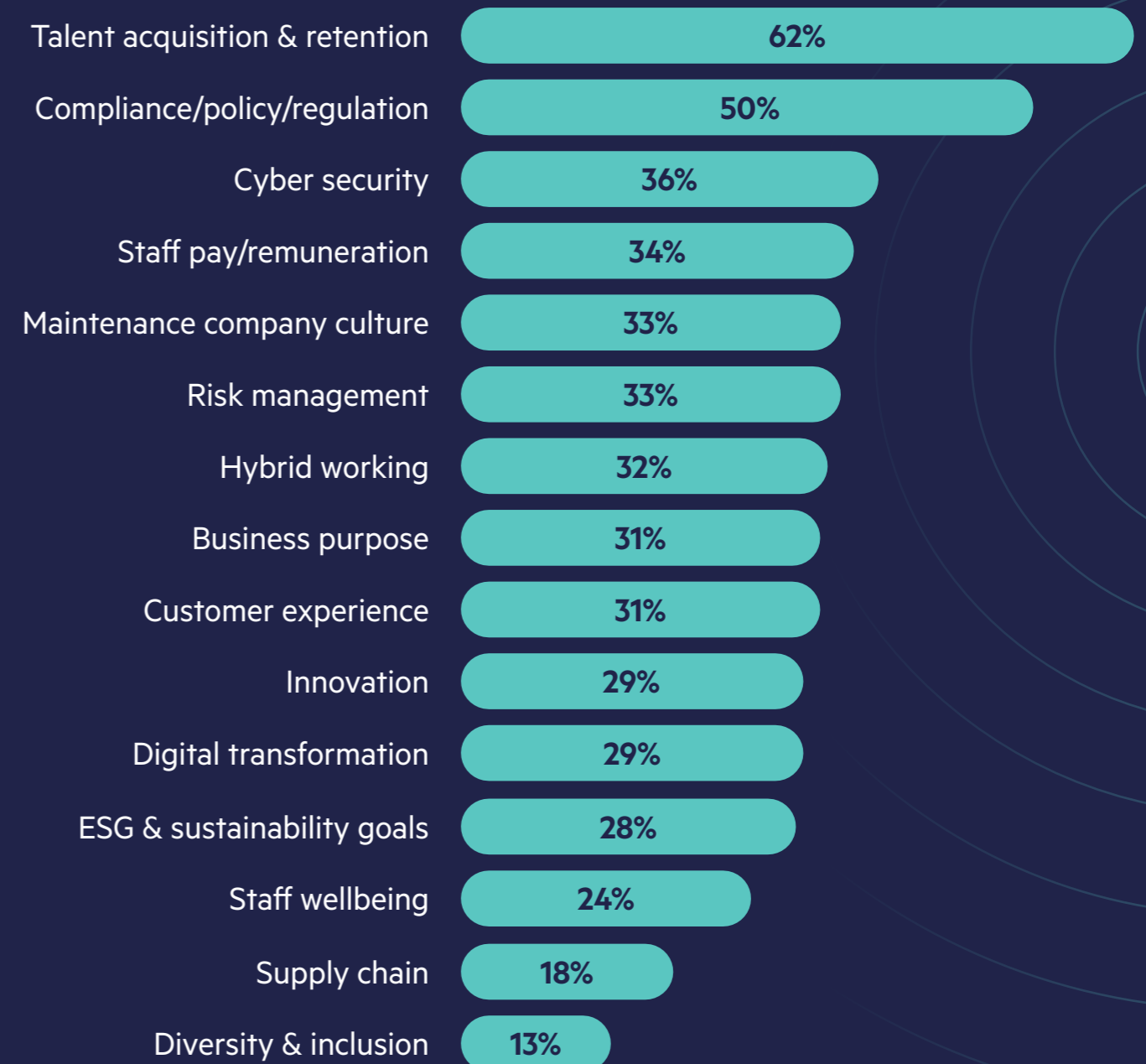
- “ It’s hard to keep up with all the information needed to make business decisions.”
- “ Ethics are very important to me when buying products/services.”

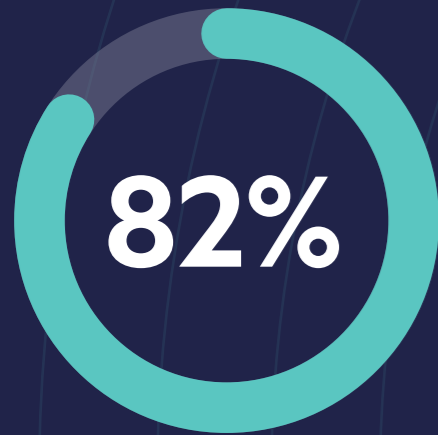
**Conservative Companions Profile**



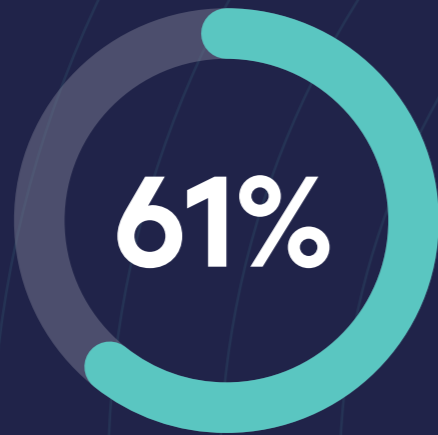
**64% of Conservative Companions have been a ‘strategic decision-maker in their area of expertise’ over the past 12 months.** Over 4 in 10 have ‘advised or interacted with members of national, regional and local govt.’ as part of their job and 38% have spoken at an industry event or a conference recently.

**The two standout challenges Conservative Companions face in making business decisions are Talent (acquisition & retention) and Compliance (policy & regulation).**





Agree that decisions are more complex than they used to be



Agree that decisions involve more stakeholders than they used to



Agree project scope often changes during the purchase decision process



believe that “Human interaction and personal decision-making will remain key to the success of my company”



believe “Ethics are very important to me when buying products/services”



### Conservative Companions in your team?

- ✓ If you’re building a business case for a Conservative Companion, aim for KPIs that feed into their top priority areas (talent, innovation and customer experience) and into their values around internal culture and the wellbeing of colleagues.
- ✓ Conservative Companions need more time than any other segment to gather a wide consensus and form their own view. Bring them into conversations early to ensure you get the benefit of their broad perspective and any buy-in legwork they’ve already done.

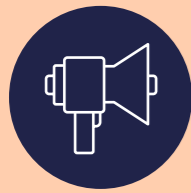


### Conservative Companions in your audience?

- ✓ To engage Conservative Companions, focus on traditional media platforms and industry events. Consider content formats which can carry peer-to-peer conversations such as podcasts, firesides, candid conversations, testimonials and small group meetups.
- ✓ If a Conservative Companion is part of your target audience, prepare to engage the wider circle of decision-makers around them with your marketing outreach. You *can* win over a Conservative Companion in isolation, but it’s much harder.



# ASSURED ALPHAS



Self-directed



Climate-conscious



Purpose-minded



Digitally developing

**Meet our most senior segment in terms of age, experience and authority. You'll find Assured Alphas confidently leading medium-sized and smaller organisations, where they are used to having the most sway or the final say in strategic decisions – including IT ones.**

Assured Alphas say they're making decisions quickly, despite low-to-moderate digital maturity. Not fazed by risk (but not complacent either), their age and experience leads them to find decision-making more straightforward than ever. This means they consult fewer colleagues than average and are happier in smaller purchasing groups, with just a few advisers.

Assured Alphas place great weight on long-term outcomes and business purpose. Indeed, they list purpose alongside talent retention and customer focus as their holy trinity of priorities. These latter two areas present them with some decision-making difficulty, particularly the need to balance staff remuneration.

Alphas are a green-minded group, exhibiting the second-highest level of climate-consciousness in the survey. They enjoy meeting peers at industry events and you'll often find them on the agenda as expert speakers. Many of them will also have interacted with local and/or central government as part of their role.



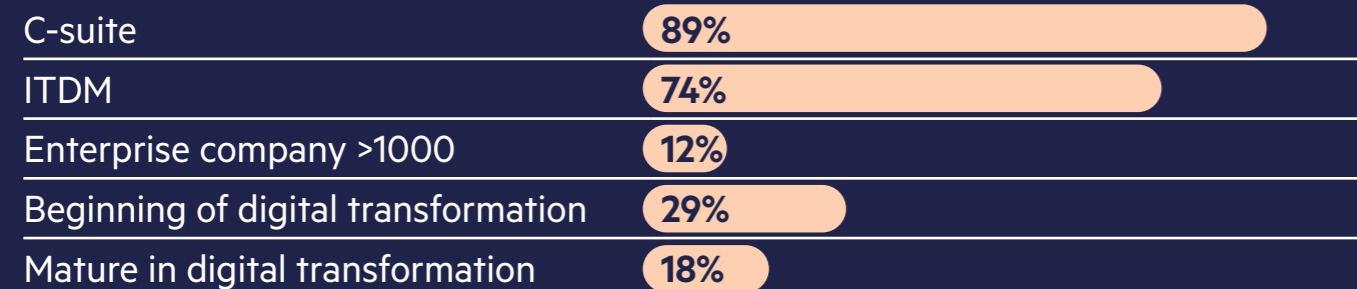
**Most likely to worry about:**

- “ There’s too much information presented to me for consideration – much of it is irrelevant or insignificant; but it takes time to sort them out.”
- “ Finding the time to reflect and to incorporate longer-term strategic considerations into operational decisions.”

**Most likely to say:**

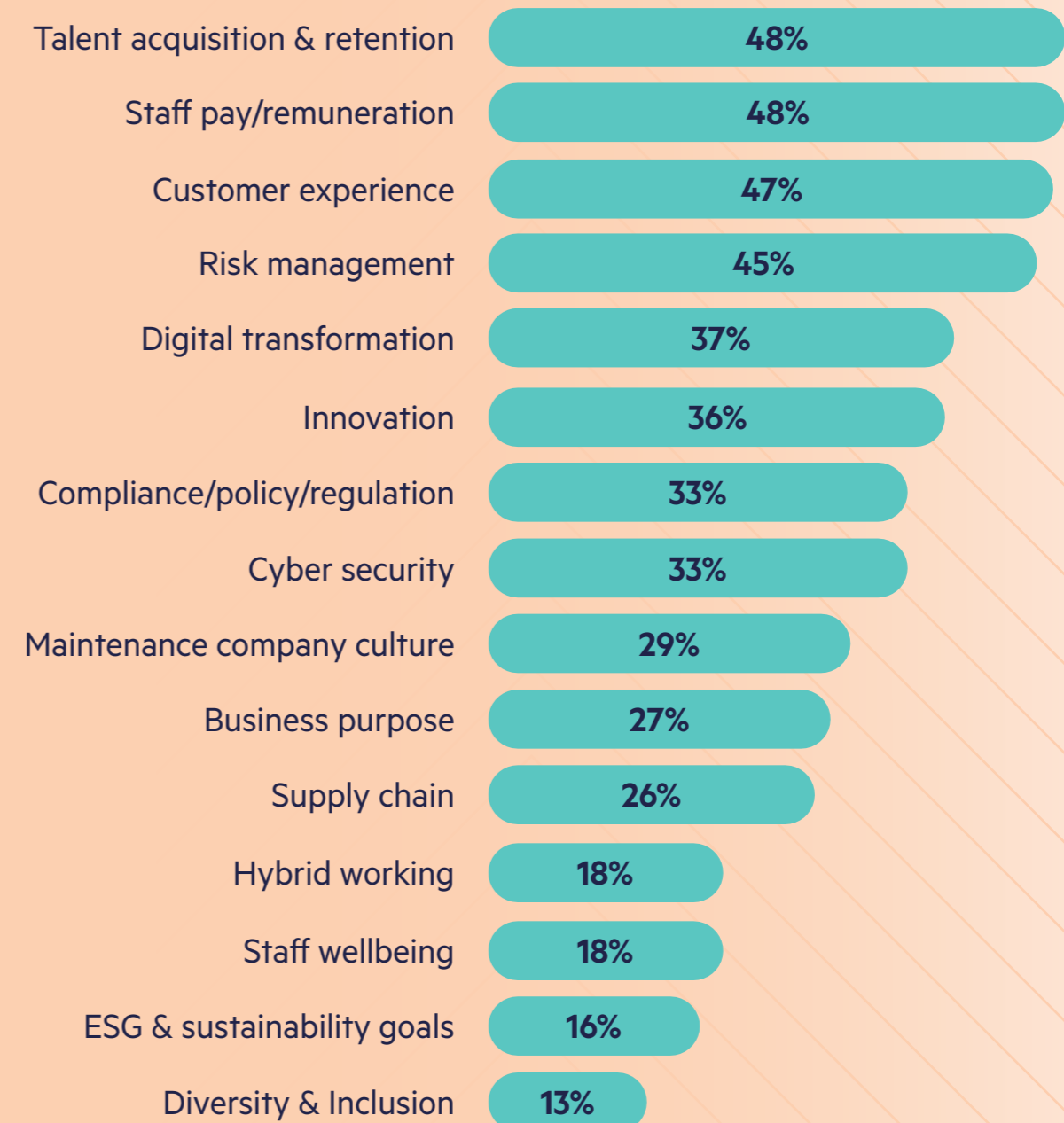
- “ Long-term outcomes are more important than short-term efficiencies.”
- “ Quite often decisions must be taken in a highly uncertain environment. This increases the risks of unnecessary purchases. Many decisions need to be made prior to having all the information.”

**Assured Alpha Profile**

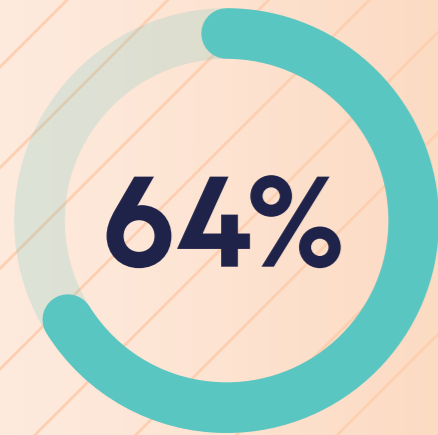


**Assured Alphas are called upon as strategic decision-makers within their organisation.** And over 1/3 will have interacted with local and/or central government as part of their role. They might speak at an industry event but are unlikely to have published a blog.

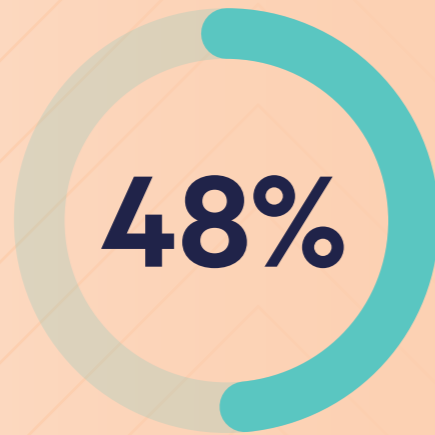
**Talent, staff pay, customer experience and risk management are all making business decisions more challenging for Assured Alphas.**







Agree that decisions are more complex than they used to be



Agree that decisions involve more stakeholders than they used to



Agree project scope often changes during the purchase decision process

89%

believe that “Human interaction and personal decision-making will remain key to the success of my company”

83%

say “Long-term outcomes are more important than short-term efficiencies”



### Assured Alphas in your team?

- ✓ Put your Assured Alphas front of stage; their experience and authority are significant assets for building industry presence and reputation, particularly on ESG topics. Introduce thought-leadership channels such as blogs, PR and press articles to carry their voice.
- ✓ Assured Alphas limit the number of opinions they seek directly, so aim to influence their influencers instead. Focus your time and attention on the key stakeholders around the Assured Alphas and get their trust first.



### Assured Alphas in your audience?

- ✓ Assured Alphas are customer-first and place great weight on business purpose, valuing human interaction and a focus on the longer-term outcomes for their business. Make sure you’re including brand/awareness-level marketing which touches on these values.
- ✓ Because Assured Alphas tend to make decisions less consultatively, they place less trust in social media and non-traditional media. Use peer-to-peer formats such as roundtable events with senior leaders and B2B influencers to engage this segment.



# CAUTIOUS CONFIDANTS



Consensus seekers



Caring & careful



Pro-innovation



Economic worries

**In the later stages of a corporate career, Cautious Confidants care about customer experience above all else. After earning a seat in the C-Suite – and a final say in all major strategic decisions – these warm-hearted worriers are most likely to say that ethics are important in business. They are also our sample’s biggest advocates for mental health and wellbeing.**

Cautious Confidants have always enjoyed working with a wide variety of people to arrive at decisions together, but uncertainty is driving them to seek more consensus than ever. Reeling from three years of economic turbulence, particularly troubled by rising costs, high inflation and reduced spending power, Cautious Confidants think business decisions never used to be so difficult. A new normal can’t come quick enough.

Slightly overwhelmed by the amount of information needed to make good decisions, Cautious Confidants feel they lack the resources to make sense of the data that proliferates. They believe better decisions come from an extended consideration phase and this extends to the vendor selection process. Final selections are heavily influenced by the perceived quality of a supplier’s product or service as well as their ethics.

Cautious Confidants see new technology as a way to usher in necessary improvements and are keen to champion innovation, but see compliance complexity as a significant blocker to change.



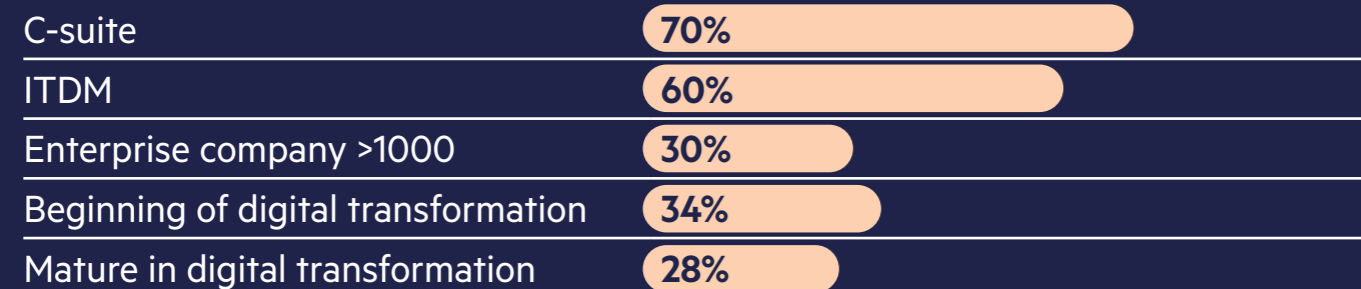
**Most likely to worry about:**

- “ Money, money, money. Rising costs, customer budgets, market conditions, competition.”
- “ Having the systems in place and the resources with the necessary competency to interpret complex and incomplete data.”

**Most likely to say:**

- “ The process is getting more complex: integrating quality, cost, sustainability and innovation demands more and more surveys, analysis and risk mitigation.”
- “ Brexit has limited our choices due to additional costs. The economy hasn't completely recovered from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.”

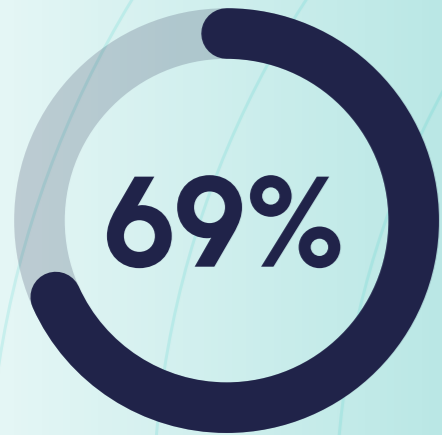
**Cautious Confidants Profile**



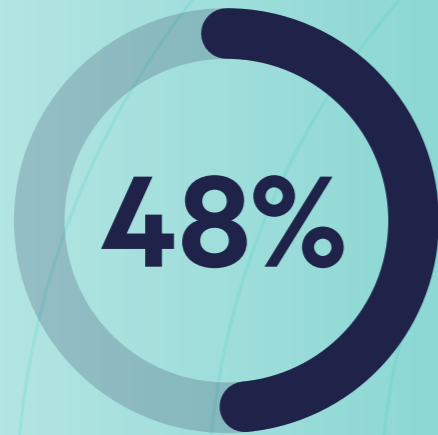
**Cautious Confidants take the lead in decision-making with 62% having been a 'strategic decision-maker in their area of expertise' over the past 12 months.** Almost half have 'advised or interacted with members of national, regional and local govt.' as part of their job and 37% have spoken at an industry event or a conference.

**Compliance, staff pay and risk are all making business decisions more challenging for Cautious Confidants.**





Agree that decisions are more complex than they used to be



Agree that decisions involve more stakeholders than they used to



Agree project scope often changes during the purchase-decision process

92%

say ethics are very important to me when buying products/services”

85%

say “I consider technology adoption to be key factor for the future growth of my company”



### Cautious Confidants in your team?

- ✓ Cautious Confidants need a good cushion of decision support in order to feel as though they’re making good decisions. Prioritise access to data expertise and analysts to speed up what might otherwise be a slow consensus-to-decision process.
- ✓ There’s a lot to balance in the mind of a Cautious Confidant; they’re just as keen to champion ethics and innovation as they are mental health and customer experience. They benefit from a strong team of direct reports to share the load and help move things forward.



### Cautious Confidants in your audience?

- ✓ Build trust during Cautious Confidants’ extended consideration phase with:
  - the quality of your product/service (customer testimonials and case studies)
  - your reputation in the market (analyst reports)
  - presence at trade events and visibility on traditional media
- ✓ Appeal to the Cautious Confidant’s strong customer-first attitude with an approach that’s focused on innovation and best practice in this area. Be sure to extend your targeting and communications to include the wider set of influencers around them.



# INSPIRING INNOVATORS



Consensus seekers



Pro-innovation



Quality-driven



Cybersecurity concerns

**Sure-footed C-Suite dwellers, Inspiring Innovators are commonly found at the top of more digitally mature enterprises, taking strategic IT purchasing decisions in their preferred ‘command-and-control’ approach. Their say is the final say, but they’ve done a lot of listening first.**

Inspiring Innovators seek diverse input into their decisions. Not because they’re uncomfortable with ultimate responsibility, but because they enjoy working with a wide range of people. These experienced GenX leaders firmly believe decisions are better made in the round, and think the growth of hybrid working has slowed their process down. Nevertheless, they remain confident in their organisation’s ability to navigate economic shockwaves.

Far from overwhelmed by data and digital transformation, they think decision-making is easier than ever, and have few concerns about keeping up with technology. If anything keeps Inspiring Innovators awake at night, it’s cybersecurity, compliance, and a lack of available talent.

Their decisions are driven by a focus on quality, and they’re willing to pay for it; you won’t find Inspiring Innovators easily compromising on business outcomes for a quick cost-saving. They carry this through everything they do, whether it’s seeking the right talent for a job or delivering CX improvements.



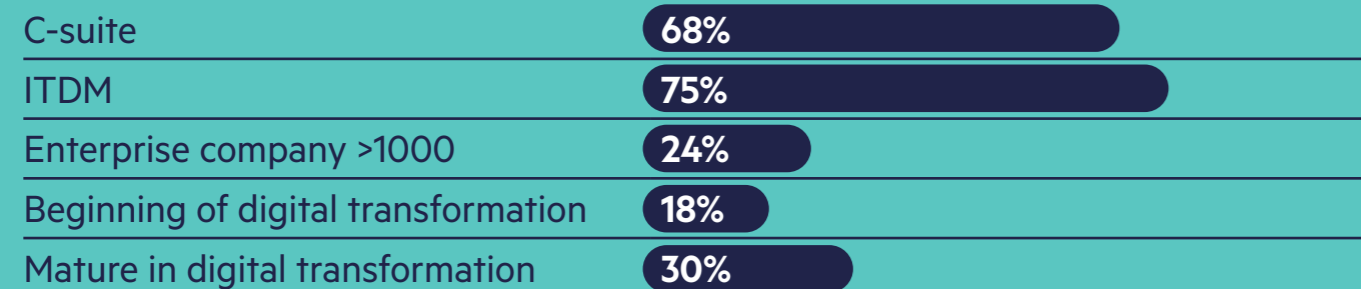
**Most likely to worry about:**

- “ Too many companies offering similar products/technologies, sometimes apparently contradictory if you’re not expert in the field. Very time consuming.”
- “ Regulation and the inherent administrative requirement. The internal bureaucracy to onboard new vendors.”

**Most likely to say:**

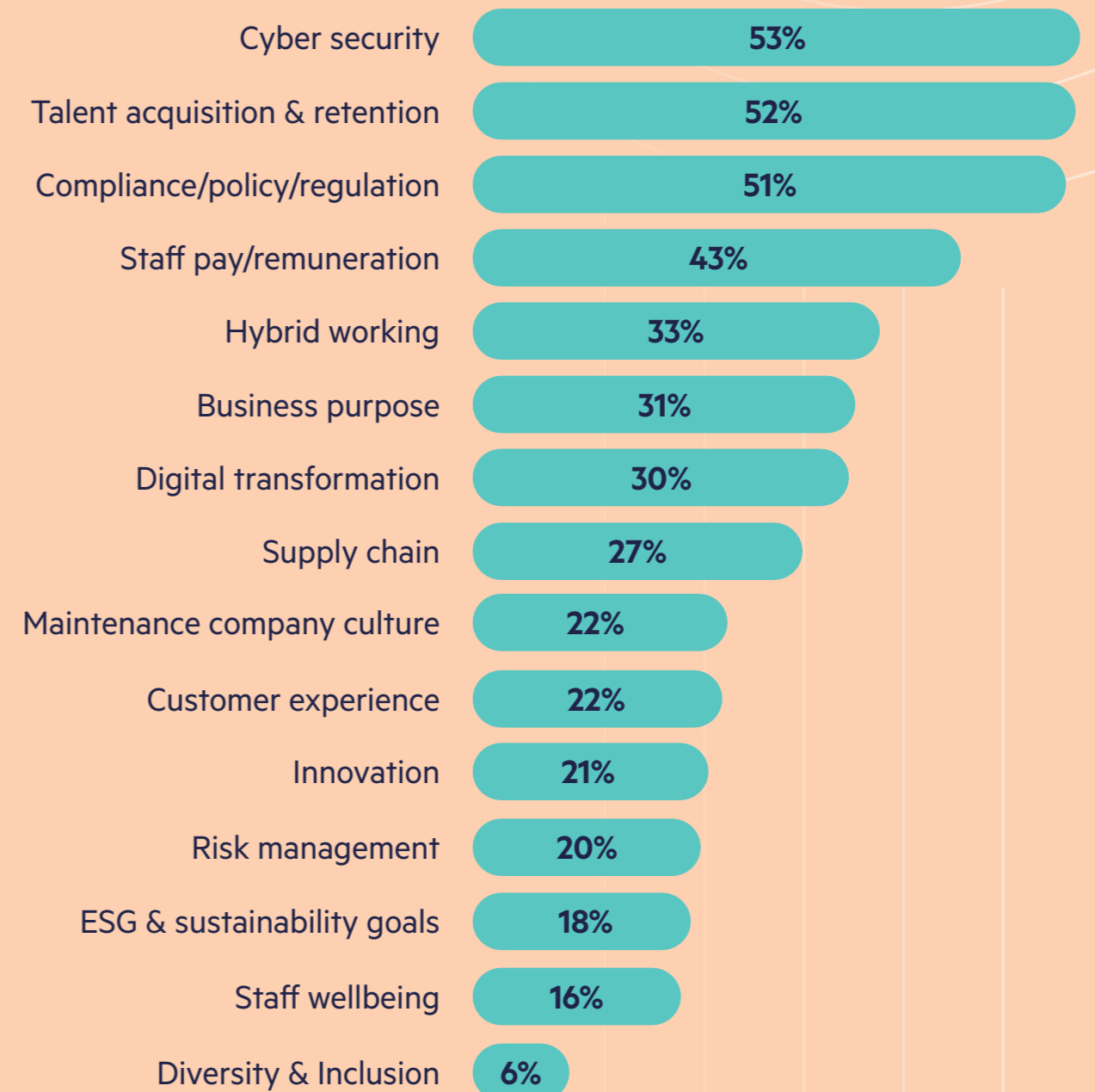
- “ I tend to go for premium rather than standard goods/services.”
- “ I consider technology adoption to be a key factor for the future growth of my company.”

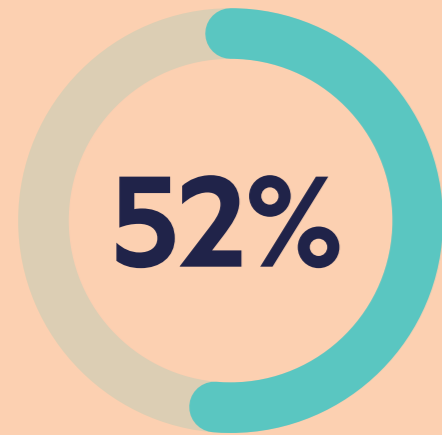
**Inspiring Innovators Profile**



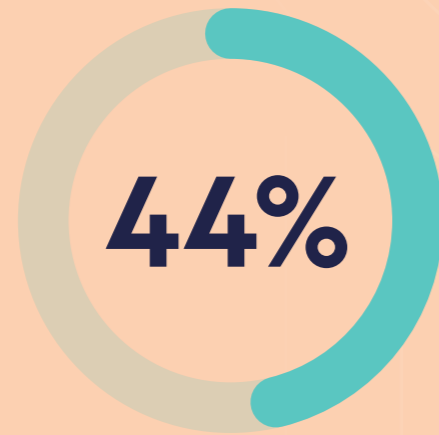
**Inspiring Innovators take the lead in decision-making with almost 7 in 10 having been a ‘strategic decision-maker in their area of expertise’ over the past 12 months.** 43% have spoken at an industry event or a conference recently and just under a 1/3 have ‘advised or interacted with members of national, regional and local govt.’ as part of their job.

**Cyber security, compliance and talent are all making business decisions more challenging for Inspiring Innovators.**

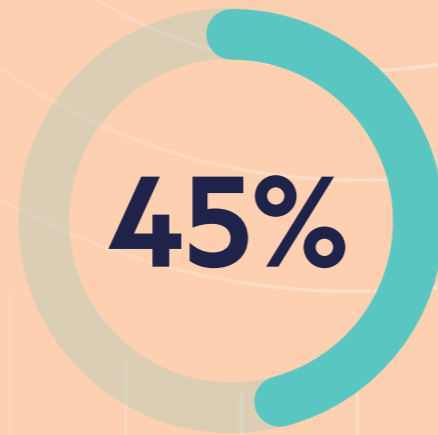




Agree that decisions are more complex than they used to be



Agree that decisions involve more stakeholders than they used to



Agree project scope often changes during the purchase decision process

**87%**

say “I consider technology adoption to be key factor for the future growth of my company”

**79%**

strongly disagree with “as a long as a company makes money – its doesn’t matter how it acts”



### Inspiring Innovators in your team?

- ✓ Your Inspiring Innovators are experienced tech-savvy leaders with a vision. To harness their knowledge, help them manage major roadblocks such as internal bureaucracy, talent gaps and compliance challenges.
- ✓ Inspiring Innovators have a highly aligned view of efficiency v effectiveness: for them, what makes the business run well, also creates business value. This enlightened stance might conflict with other personas heavily focused on single aspects, such as costs or purpose.

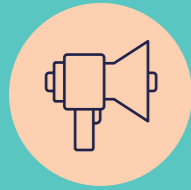


### Inspiring Innovators in your audience?

- ✓ Despite their name, Inspiring Innovators place little trust in social media and rely on traditional channels just as much as the rest of our research sample, especially credible media publishers and platforms. They gain particular value from evidence-based content such as case studies and news articles.
- ✓ As drivers of an innovation-led agenda, these decision-makers are constantly seeking out information on technological advances. Feed their need to stay ahead of the game with thought-leadership on the latest news and research.



# BRAZEN BUCCANEERS



Self-directed



Economy over ESG



Talkers not listeners



Fast decisions

**Self-assured soloists who like the final word on decisions, Brazen Buccaneers' confidence is part-complacency, part-control. Often found at the helm of smaller companies, they are exclusively focused on economic issues, with little regard for environmental concerns – or any other concerns for that matter.**

Though often consulted by other decision-makers, consensus is something Brazen Buccaneers neither like nor look for, considering only the financial factors in play. Taking pride in decisions made at speed, Brazen Buccaneers don't trouble themselves with issues such as ESG, diversity, inclusion, wellbeing and mental health. In fact they may be keen to actively avoid a 'woke' mindset.

They've made moderate progress on digital transformation, and are notably confident in their organisation's ability to navigate the current economic and geopolitical climate, perhaps because of confidence in their own ability to do so. They see tech adoption as a key factor for future growth.

If Brazen Buccaneers admit to struggling with anything, it's finding/keeping the right staff – and what to pay them. They rank talent acquisition and remuneration among their biggest challenges. Their haste also brings them up against blockers like compliance and supply chain. They perceive decision-making as more complex because of these realities.





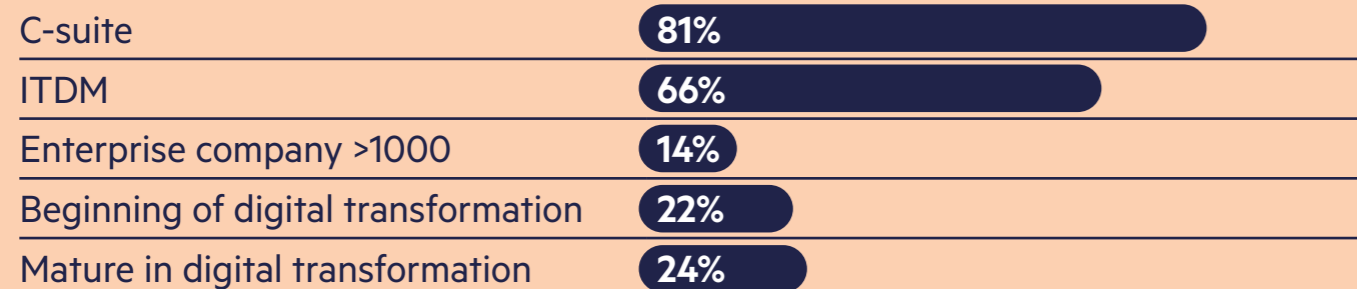
**Most likely to worry about:**

- “ Increased regulatory interference with supply chains affecting availability of goods and services.”
- “ The state of the economy and business taxation.”

**Most likely to say:**

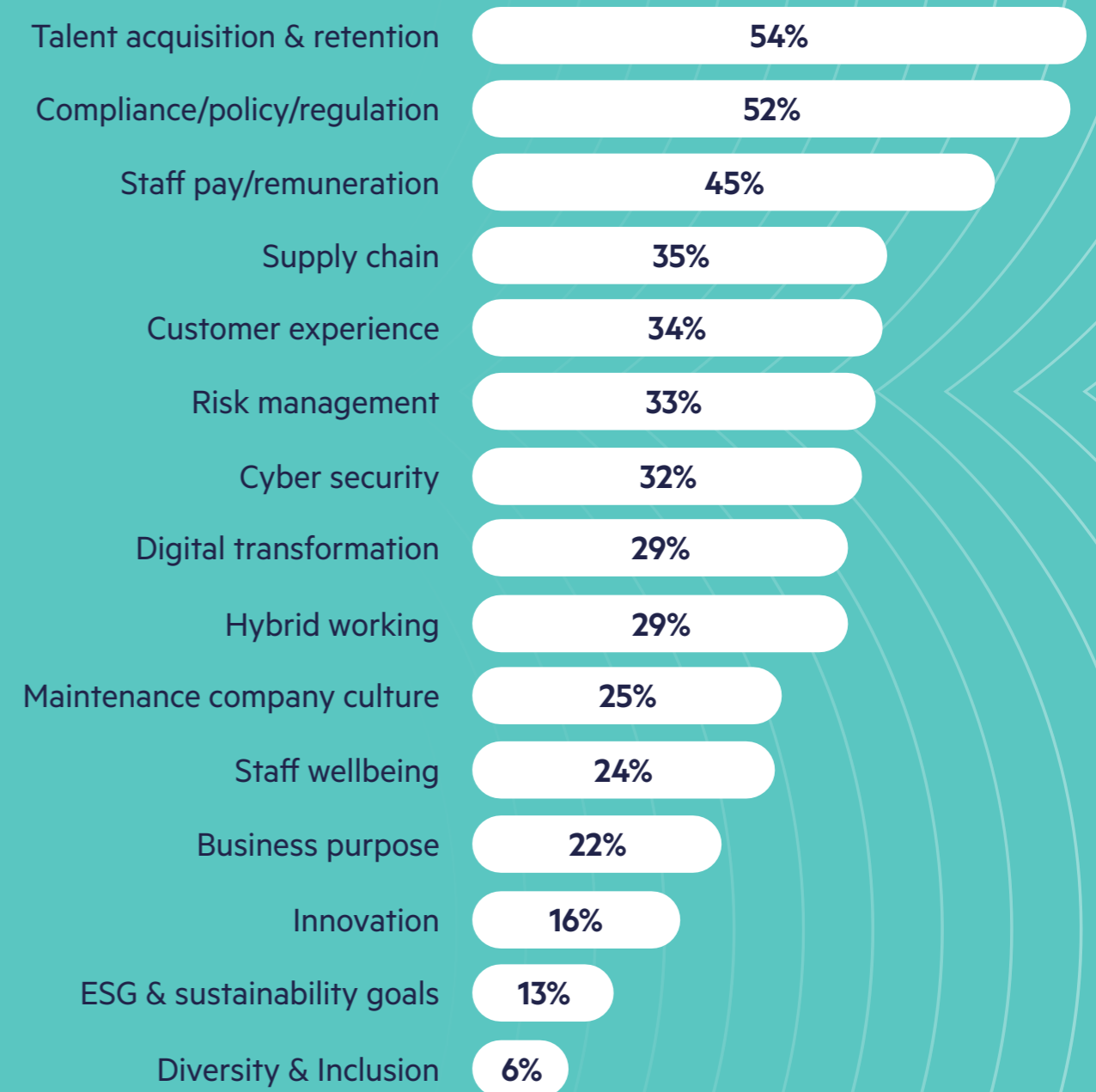
- “ Many [suppliers] are not living up to their timelines or budgets.”
- “ Balance the need for short-term cost savings with investment needed for the future.”

**Brazen Buccaneers Profile**



**Brazen Buccaneers take the lead in decision-making with 53% having been a ‘strategic decision-maker in their area of expertise’ over the past 12 months.** Almost 4 in 10 have spoken at an industry event or a conference recently and a 1/3 have ‘advised or interacted with members of national, regional and local govt.’ as part of their job.

**Talent, compliance and staff pay are all making business decisions more challenging for Brazen Buccaneers.**





Agree that decisions are more complex than they used to be



Agree that decisions involve more stakeholders than they used to



Agree project scope often changes during the purchase decision process

87%

say “I consider technology adoption to be key factor for the future growth of my company”

73%

say “Long-term outcomes are more important than short-term efficiencies”



### Brazen Buccaneers in your team?

- ✓ The senior team around a Brazen Buccaneer may need to take ownership of issues that fall outside the leadership’s narrow show-me-the-money focus: sustainability, ethics, diversity and inclusion.
- ✓ Persuade a Brazen Buccaneer to champion their low-priority issues such as workplace wellbeing, mental health and communication by linking them to a higher-priority issue – talent acquisition and retention.



### Brazen Buccaneers in your audience?

- ✓ Feed Brazen Buccaneers’ hunger for financials. Flesh out campaign content such as case studies and business cases with as many quantified outcomes as possible. Show how much value you can add, how much cost you can save – and where.
- ✓ Brazen Buccaneers don’t wait around. Once you’ve got the attention of a Brazen Buccaneer, be ready to move at pace, be quick to seal the deal, quick to roll out and crucially – quick to demonstrate ROI.



# MARGIN MANAGERS



Cost-obsessed



Lone wolves



Speak numbers



Profit is king

**Meet the only segment in our research that considers decisions to be simpler than they used to be. An almost obsessive focus on cost-cutting tends to make things seem straightforward. These are the Margin Managers. A relatively small, mainly millennial group with limited experience, Margin Managers are outstandingly poor team players who avoid all forms of collaboration and consensus.**

Often found in smaller companies with low digital maturity, profit is the only prize for Margin Managers. They see low operating costs as the route to competitive success, and don't consider tech or innovation as strong levers in their relentless pursuit of profit.

Not yet in C-Suite positions, Margin Managers rarely have the final say in decisions. Still, they make themselves heard loud and clear in the group, armed with spreadsheets to back them up. They're the least likely cohort to let issues like ethics, wellbeing or mental health play a part in their decision-making, saying that as long as the business is making money, that's all that matters.

Unlike our other segments they do not make a connection between talent retention and business value, only business efficiency. And when it comes to supplier selection, they rank cost above product or service quality – the only segment to do so.



**Most likely to worry about:**

“ The rise in interest rates and risk of economic downturn.”

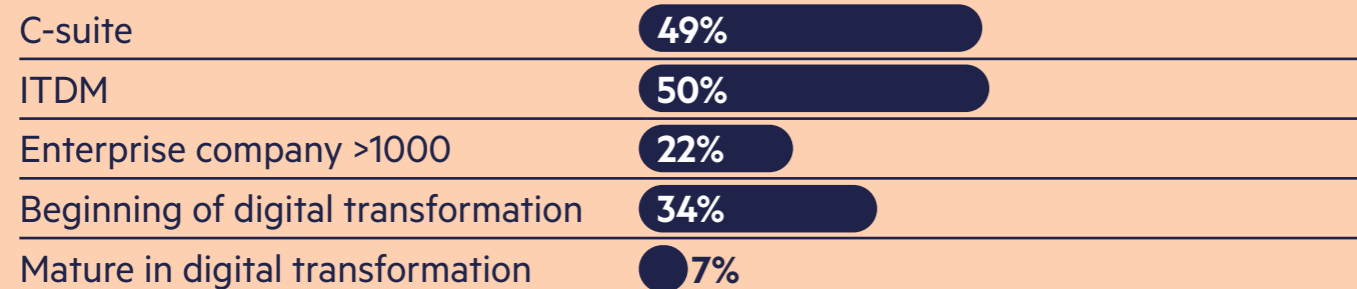
“ Passing the increase in costs on to clients.”

**Most likely to say:**

“ As long as a company makes money, it doesn't matter to me how it acts.”

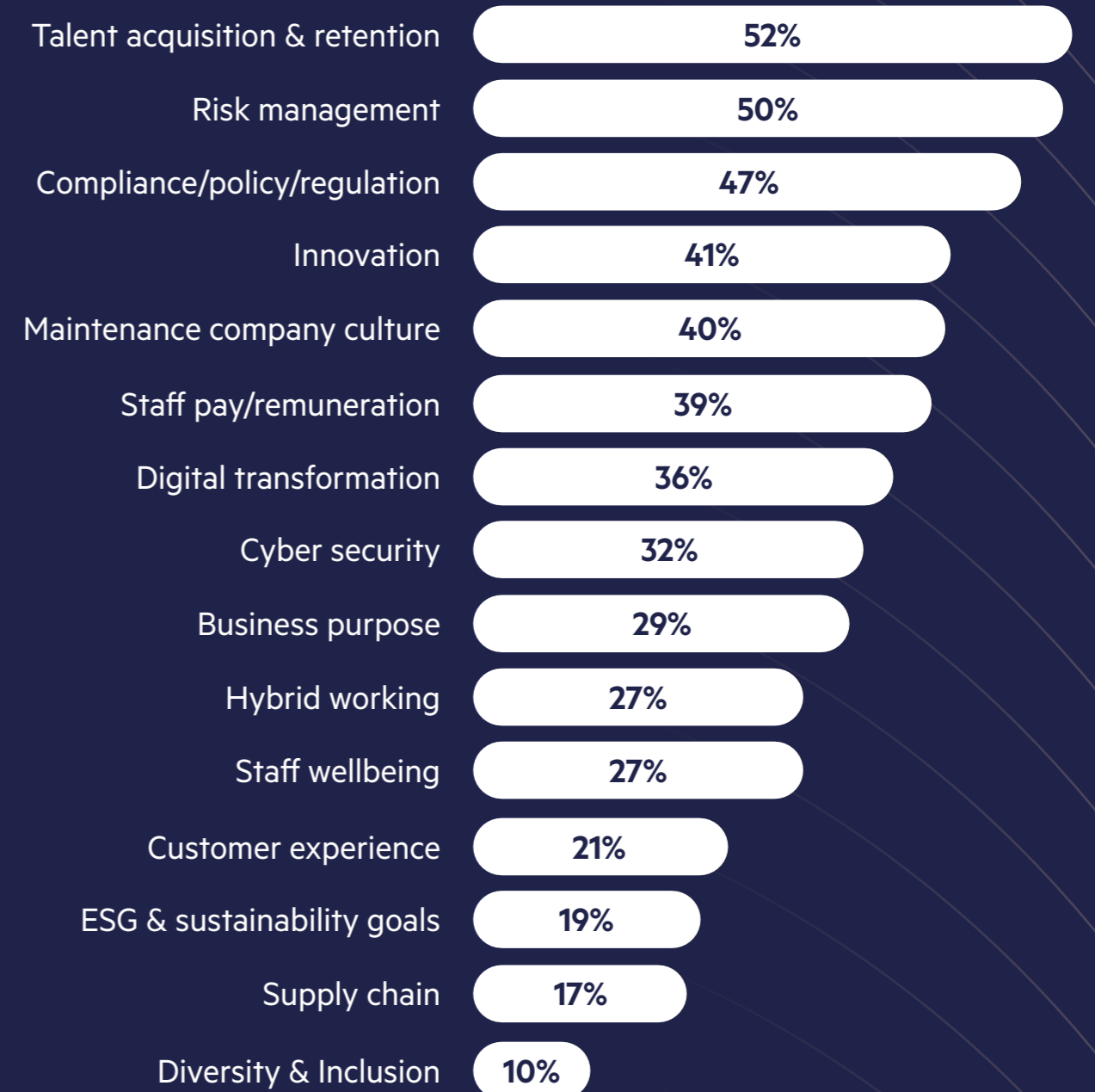
“ Suppliers pull the wool over my eyes with increasingly complex service specs which are difficult to compare.”

**Margin Managers Profile**



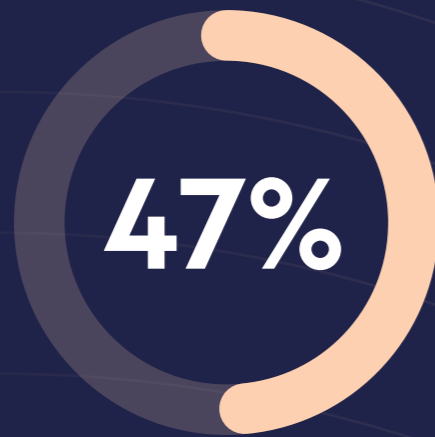
**Margin Managers are likely to have been interviewed in the press, or TV or on the radio representing their company.** Also they will have been a strategic decision-maker in their area of expertise. They are less likely to have spoken at an industry event or published a blog.

**Talent and risk management are making business decisions more challenging for Margin Managers.**





Agree that decisions are more complex than they used to be



Agree that decisions involve more stakeholders than they used to



Agree project scope often changes during the purchase decision process

55%

agree "As long as a company makes money, it doesn't matter to me how it acts"

52%

agree "market leadership is achieved through lower operating costs"



### Margin Managers in your team?

- ✓ Encourage Margin Managers to work within a cost-cutting strategy for a less arbitrary, more selective application of what is an otherwise fairly rigid decision-making style.
- ✓ Ask Margin Managers for nuance behind cost proposals: get them to classify good costs (aligned with growth and customer experience) and bad costs (wasted resources).



### Margin Managers in your audience?

- ✓ Conferences and industry events won't be where the hearts and minds of Margin Managers are won; they show much less reliance on their peers than other decision-makers. However they do value traditional media titles and e-newsletters.
- ✓ Suppliers who come to Margin Managers with new ideas around how to reduce costs – or better visibility around costs – can easily distinguish themselves from the pack. By proactively helping them save money, you're building loyalty and protecting your revenue.

# CONCLUSION

---

## **In conclusion, it's just the beginning.**

We've seen six new decision-makers take the stage. You'll recognise them: in your business, in your customer base, in yourself.

We've seen how they combine consensus and confidence to wrangle complexity in different ways. We've seen how that might change the game for businesses, for marketing, for media.

## **Decision-making has changed. How will it change us?**

# APPENDICES

## Our methodology

Our survey was sent to the FT Feedback Forum, a global panel of FT readers. Respondents were screened to ensure that they were all currently in-role, and had business decision-making responsibilities as part of their job.



**Fieldwork date:**  
June 2023



**Sample size:**  
434 responses, 283 ITDMs

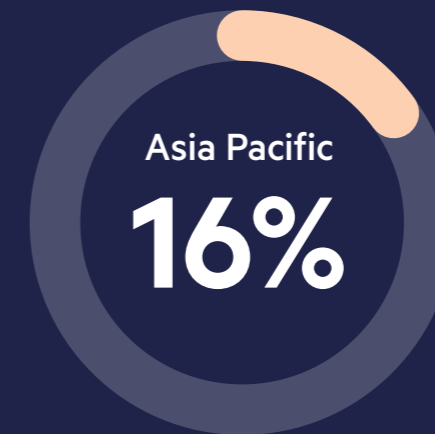
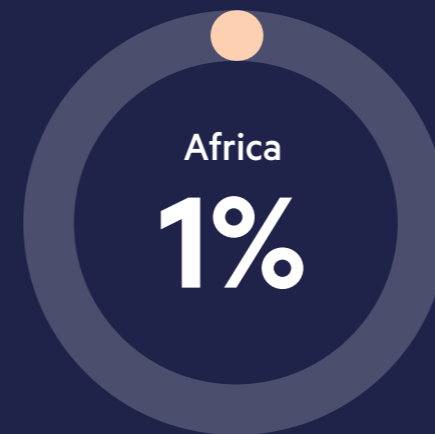
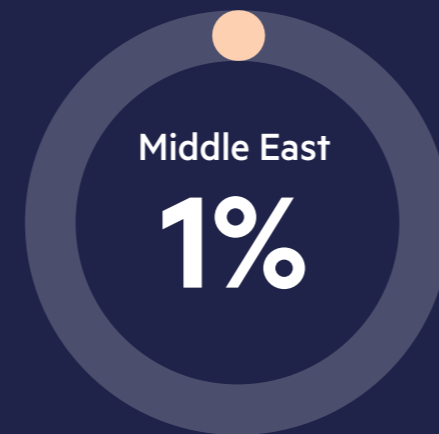
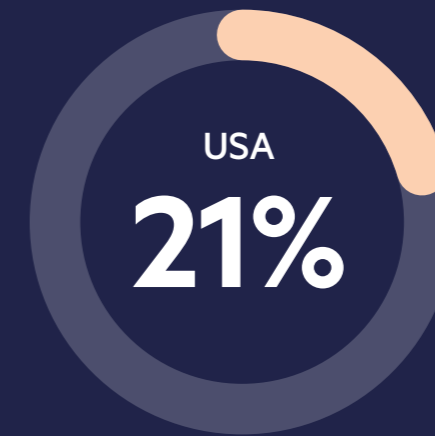


**Mean company size:**  
2632 employees



**Mean total value of purchase decisions:**  
£992,910

## Geographical split



Our data

Top 5 areas they believe are important for running an effective business

	Conservative Companions	Assured Alphas	Cautious Confidants	Inspiring Innovators	Brazen Buccaneers	Margin Managers
1	Talent & acquisition	Customer experience	Customer experience	Customer experience	Talent & acquisition	Talent & acquisition
2	Customer experience	Talent & acquisition	Talent & acquisition	Talent & acquisition	Customer experience	Risk management
3	Innovation	Business purpose	Innovation	Innovation	Risk management	Cyber security
4	Business purpose	Staff wellbeing	Risk management	Business purpose	Business purpose	Customer experience
5	Staff wellbeing	Innovation	Maintaining company culture	Maintaining company culture	Innovation	Staff wellbeing



# CONTACT

---



**Enzo Diliberto**  
Global Insight Director  
Financial Times  
[research@ft.com](mailto:research@ft.com)



**Claire Davidson**  
Executive Strategy Director  
Twogether  
[marketing@wearetwogether.com](mailto:marketing@wearetwogether.com)