

# The State of Employee Teams in 2018

Adopting new paradigms and practices to boost organizational performance



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## Executive Summary

As organizations become more networked and team-oriented, HR has a central role in team development. The same dynamics that drive individual engagement and performance also apply to teams. HR's role is to foster those dynamics and prepare people to work together toward a shared team purpose.

HR.com produced this study in partnership with TTI Success Insights, a leading source for research-based, validated assessment and coaching tools that enable organizations to effectively meet their talent management needs. The goal of the research was to:

- Investigate how organizations rely on teams
- Discover the challenges teams face in their organization
- Learn what drives team effectiveness
- Reveal how companies manage, appraise, and reward teams
- Uncover effective practices for developing and engaging teams

### About the study

The survey "Employee Teams Today and Tomorrow" was conducted between February and March of 2018. Our sample was based on 562 HR respondents. Half the sample is working for a company primarily operating in the U.S. with their workforce primarily being U.S. based. The remainder came from companies outside the U.S. or companies who employed people both within and outside the U.S. Thirty percent of the organizations that responded had more than one thousand employees. All major industry sectors were included in the sample.

TTI Success Insights® partnered with HR.com to conduct this research. TTI Success Insights reveals human potential by helping people to become more aware of themselves, the people around them, and the organizations of which they are a part. By going deeper than DISC, TTI Success Insights enables teams to excel today and into the future.





## Below is a quick overview of some of the key findings.

**Organizations rely heavily on teams to get work done.** Three-quarters of respondents say their organizations rely on teams to get work done to a high or very high degree.

**In a majority of organizations, most people work in teams.** Fifty-nine percent said over three-fifths of their employees work in teams.

**Teams are most likely to have four to six members.** Respondents reported an average team size of four to six members over twice as often as any other group size. The next most frequent team size was seven to nine. Overall, two-thirds of teams have between four and nine members.

**Project teams and workgroups are the most frequently used team types.** Seventy-nine percent of respondents said their organizations use project teams, and 66% use workgroups. Thirty-one percent have self-directed teams.

**Teams face three primary challenges.** The top challenge is accountability (49%), followed by difficulty in making decisions (45%) and a lack of participation (44%).

**Good communication and clear goals are widely viewed as critical to team effectiveness.** Communication (78%) and goal setting (72%) are at the top of essential characteristics for both team members and their managers.

**Organizations most commonly hone goal-setting, collaboration, and communication when developing team members.** Development efforts are most focused on communication (71%), which is the foundation of interpersonal relationships so crucial to teamwork. Fifty-eight percent also cited collaboration, which requires a more profound understanding of interpersonal dynamics.



**Above all else, team leaders need to be communicators and organizers.** Eighty-four percent of respondents said team leaders need to be good communicators, and 74% chose “organized” as a key characteristic.

**Only a third of respondents said their organizations appraise performance at the team level.** Of the organizations that measure performance at the team level, almost three-quarters (72%) base it on productivity.

**Only 16% rated their teams as excellent.** Above average and excellent ratings comprise 64% of responses. Over a third view their teams as average or below, suggesting many are in serious need of improvement.

**Organizations with excellent teams versus average-to-poor teams tend to:**

- have most employees working in teams
- use self-directed teams
- place a higher value on collaborative leaders
- develop team skills in a wide range of areas
- make greater use of collaborative tools
- view a “sense of purpose” as key to team effectiveness
- appraise team performance
- rely on appraisals based on quality of products, ability of team members to work together, and customer evaluations
- use peer evaluations in teams





## Employee Teams Today and Tomorrow

Team-driven organizations have been around for years, especially in the technology sector. Fluid groups of teams are traditionally used for enterprise software development and implementation.

These days, more organizations are adopting similar structures. [The agile methodology](#) used in the technology sector today is finding its way into the mainstream of business operations. [Four disruptive trends are driving it:](#)

- a quickly evolving environment,
- the constant introduction of disruptive technology,
- accelerating digitization, and
- a new war for talent.

In the [Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends 2018](#) report, analyst Josh Bersin and his colleagues predicted that a growing number of organizations would soon be made up of “networks of teams,” driven by the necessity for businesses to grow more agile.

Others have also viewed teams, especially self-directed teams, as a growing trend. In *Inc.* magazine, [Chuck Blakeman wrote](#), “A tidal wave of companies are moving in that direction because the data on why you should do it is irrefutable.”

We conducted our research, in part, to discover just how far along this path we have come. This report is an assessment of where the HR profession is today in developing team-driven organizations. We identify trends, highlight current practices, and offer recommendations to help organizations move further along the path to team excellence.





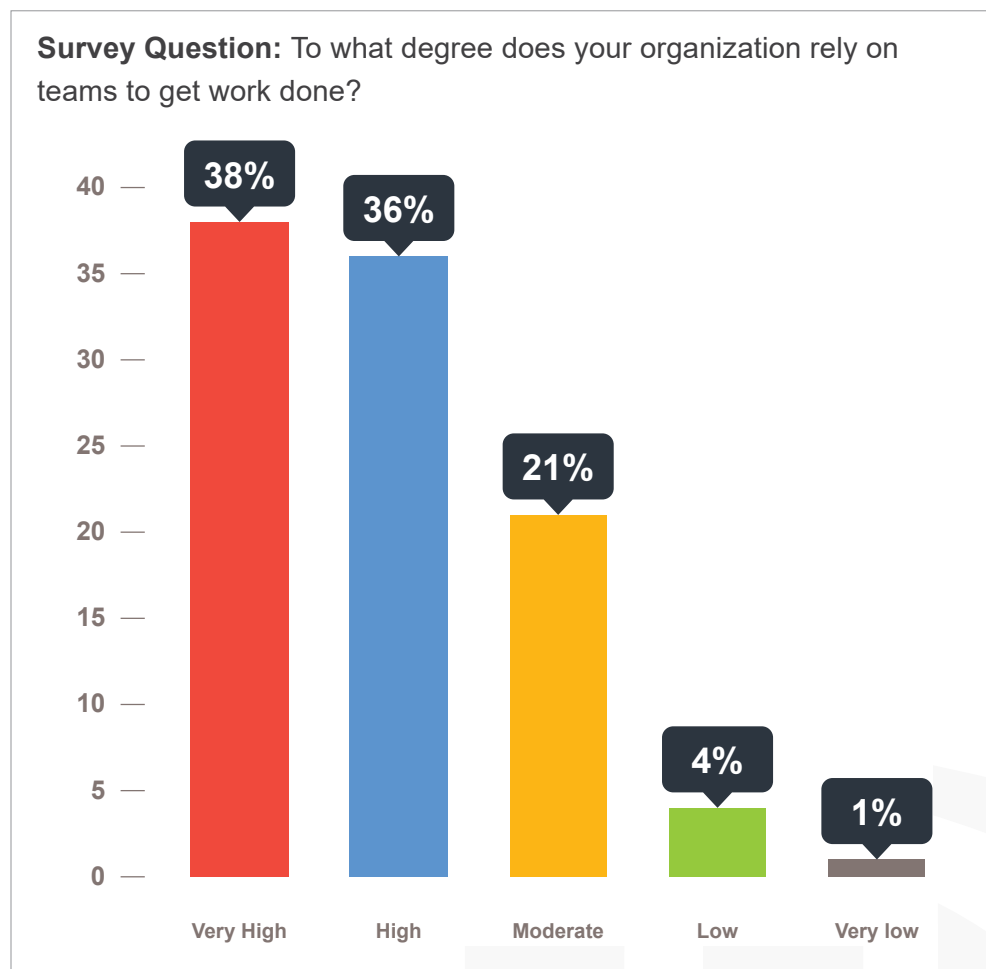
## How Widely Used Are Teams Today?

### Finding: Organizations rely heavily on teams to get work done

Teams, however we define them, are essential to operations in most businesses, and in many industries, they have simply become the way work gets done.

In today’s business environment, there is often little time for delay in making and implementing decisions. In many organizations, teams are empowered to make critical decisions at the point of need, giving the people closest to a problem the freedom to act.

This helps explain why teams have become so prevalent. We found that a majority of participants (74%) said their organizations are highly reliant on teams to get work done.

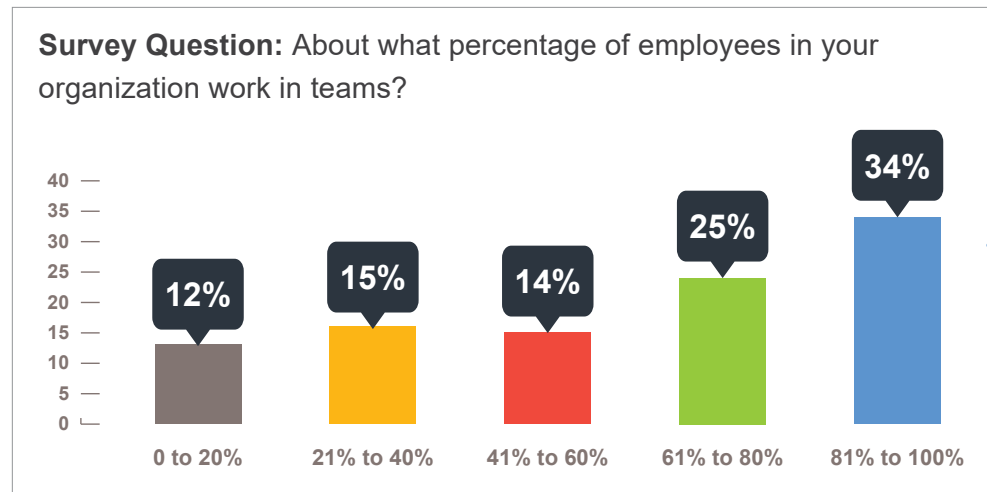


Only 5% of respondents report low reliance on teams in their organizations



**Finding: In a majority of organizations, most people work in teams.**

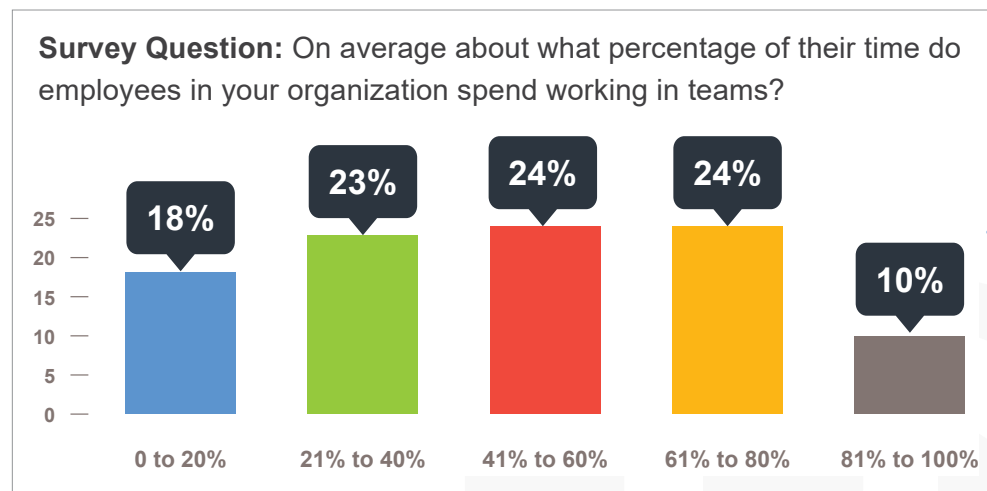
Fifty-nine percent said over 60% of their employees work in teams. This is a result of the high reliance on teams in today's organizations as integration, coordination, and collaboration spread outside functional boundaries into extensive networks of organizations.



Only 12% of organizations have a fifth or fewer of their people working in teams

**Finding: About a third say employees spend more than 60% of their time working in teams**

Since most organizations rely heavily on teams, we can expect employee roles and effort to reflect that reliance. As organizations become less hierarchical and the pace of change increases, more and more industries are adopting technology's proven methods. In a tenth of organizations, employees spend nearly all their time working in teams.



In most responding organizations, employees spend 41% or more of their time working in teams





## How Are Teams Deployed and Managed Today?

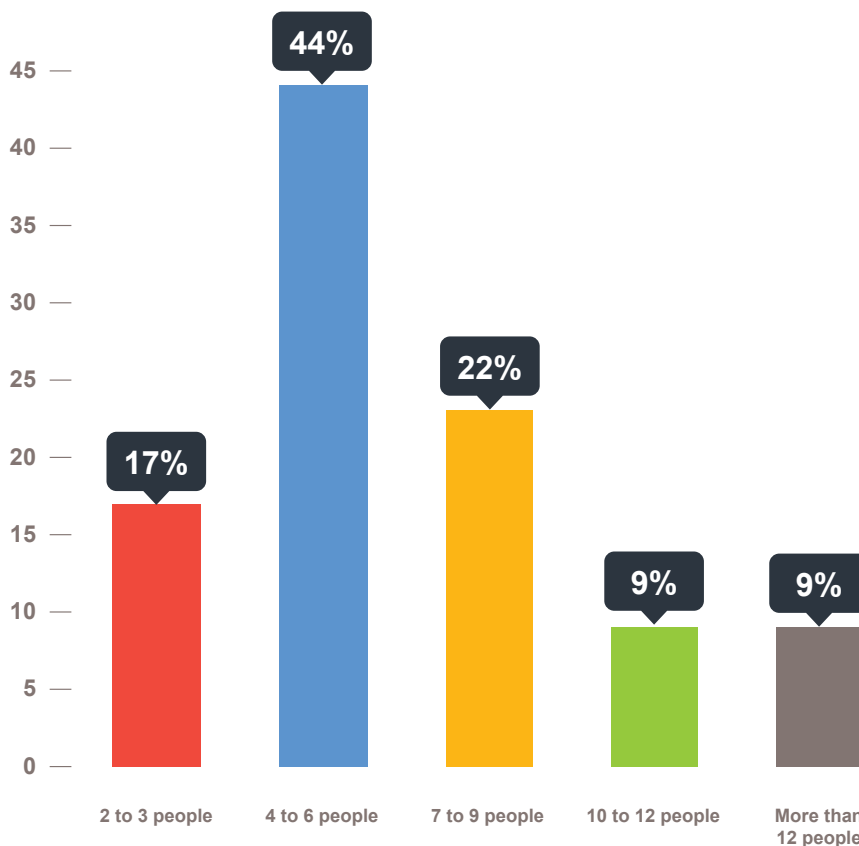
### Finding: Teams are most likely to have four to six members

Respondents reported average team size of four to six members over twice as often (44%) as any other group size. This range is generally supported by the literature on teams. Some have stated the optimal average number on a team is 4.6, and [Wharton](#) uses five or six for the number of MBA students chosen for its 144 separate learning teams.

The number, however, should not be the first consideration, and the size of teams will depend on their function. Managers should not duplicate skills and knowledge just for the benefit of appearing all-inclusive. The [right size](#) is the one that includes the right abilities, has sufficient bandwidth, can adapt quickly to change, has diverse viewpoints, and gives a chance for each member to be heard in team discussions.



**Survey Question:** On average, about how large are teams in your organization? (select one)



Few organizations deploy teams of ten or more people



## Finding: Project teams and workgroups are most frequently used

About four-fifths of respondents reported that they use project teams. Much of the work in organizations today is project work, and people may be working on several projects at once. This is driving the need for more fluid, less hierarchical organizational structures.

In our 2018 report, "[Managing Talent in Today's Project-Focused Organizations](#)", three-fifths of respondents said their organizations hire people specifically for projects. Forty percent reported that 6% or more of new hires are for specific projects.

Sixty-six percent use workgroups, so there is a substantial overlap in using both teams and workgroups. Managers tend to use "team" and "workgroup" interchangeably, but some experts feel that there is [a distinct difference](#) in the way they work.

A workgroup tends to be a collection of people brought together to perform specific related tasks, coordinated by a manager. Their purpose is to complete assigned individual tasks or responsibilities. Over time, workgroups can become teams as they develop if they have the culture, coaching and working environment to do so.

A well-developed team is a group of people with a common purpose. They assign their own tasks and frequently work on them together. Leadership can be fluid, changing to fit each situation, and passing from one individual to another as the team addresses issues in specific areas of expertise.

A team can be self-directed if given the authority to make decisions and the freedom to act. This is where teams can have the most impact on an organization – when decision-making is placed closest to the issues and problems.

As organizations become more geographically dispersed and fluid, technological advances have broken down distance barriers and



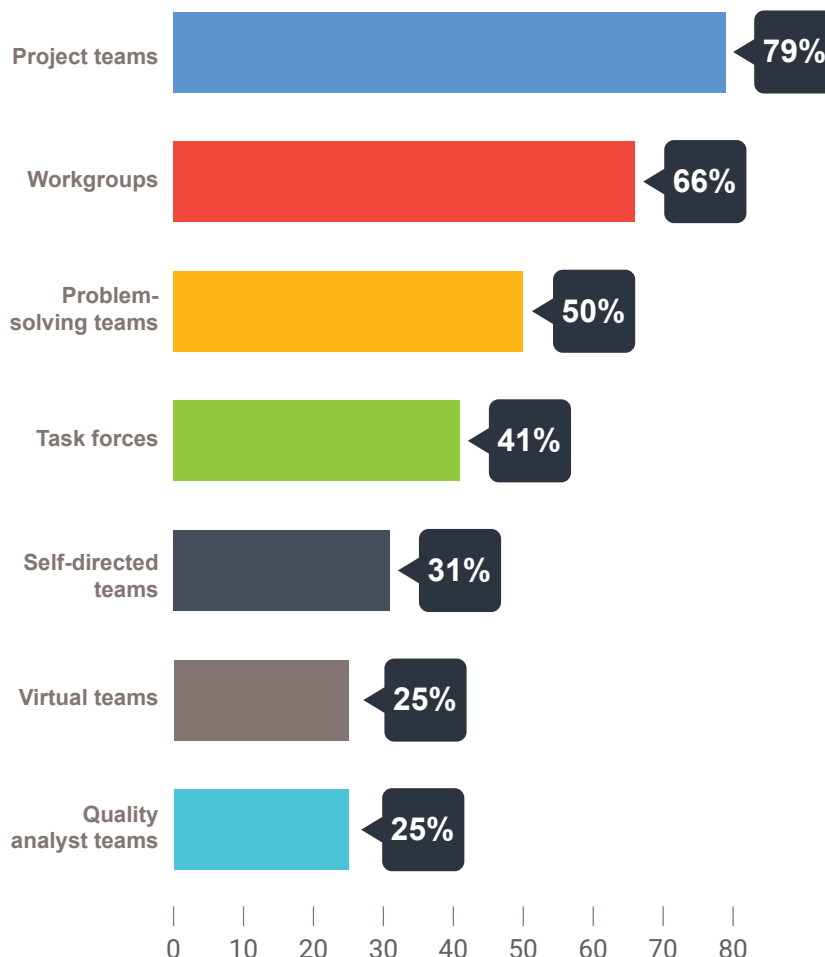


enabled virtual teams. Software implementation teams in the early 2000s were often virtual, but the technology options were limited to conference calls and email. We now have cost-effective video conferences and online collaboration tools, making it easier for virtual teams to succeed.

Quality teams are in a class by themselves. In the quality movement of the 1980s and 1990s, it seemed that nearly everyone was on a quality improvement team as improvement techniques born in manufacturing found their way into other functions. Quality teams have now become a specialization, but the methods they taught us over the past 30 years have become ingrained in the way we work and have blossomed into business analytics.



**Survey Question:** Which types of teams does your organization use? (select all that apply)



Nearly a third of organizations use self-directed teams



## What Are the Top Challenges for Today's Teams?

### Finding: Teams face three primary challenges

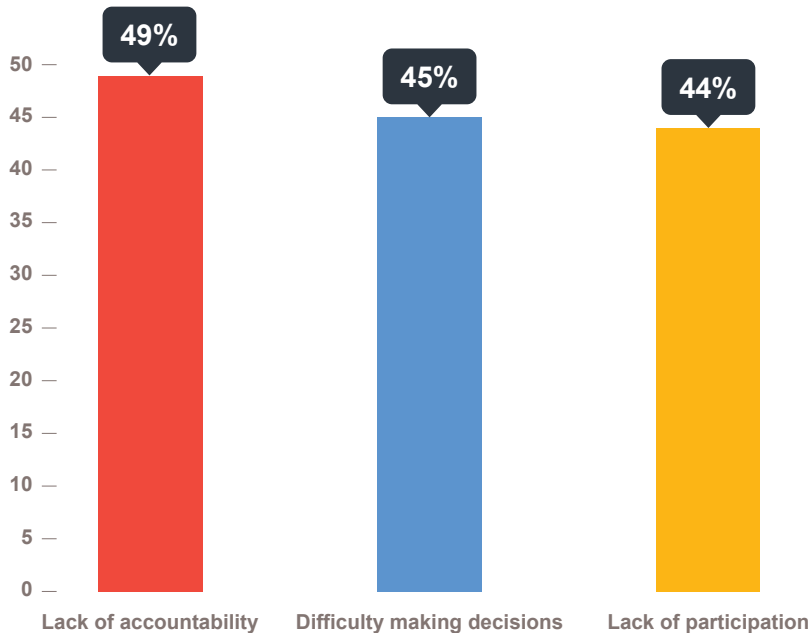
The top challenges are accountability, difficulty making decisions, and lack of participation. Accountability is driven by organization culture, but team leadership is also a determining factor. If a leader skillfully helps the team set its own targets and agenda rather than imposing them, team members are more likely to take ownership and hold themselves accountable.

Difficulty in reaching decisions is a sign that an intervention may be needed. Decision-making is a trainable individual and team skill, but it also requires supportive team dynamics. It might be a sign that the team is not focused on its mission. An executive team that spends an hour discussing the design of the meeting room table probably needs outside help.

Participation is a byproduct of purpose and accountability and a reflection of organizational culture. Teams with a common purpose and the proper training and leadership will hold themselves accountable and deal with lack of participation.



**Survey Question:** What are the biggest challenges associated with teams? (top 3)



The top three challenges teams face are lack of accountability, difficulty making decisions, and lack of participation





## What Drives Team Effectiveness?

### Finding: Good communication and clear goals are widely viewed as critical to team effectiveness

Communication (78%) and goal setting (72%) are at the top of essential characteristics for both team members and their managers (see next finding). That is where organizations spend their skill training efforts.

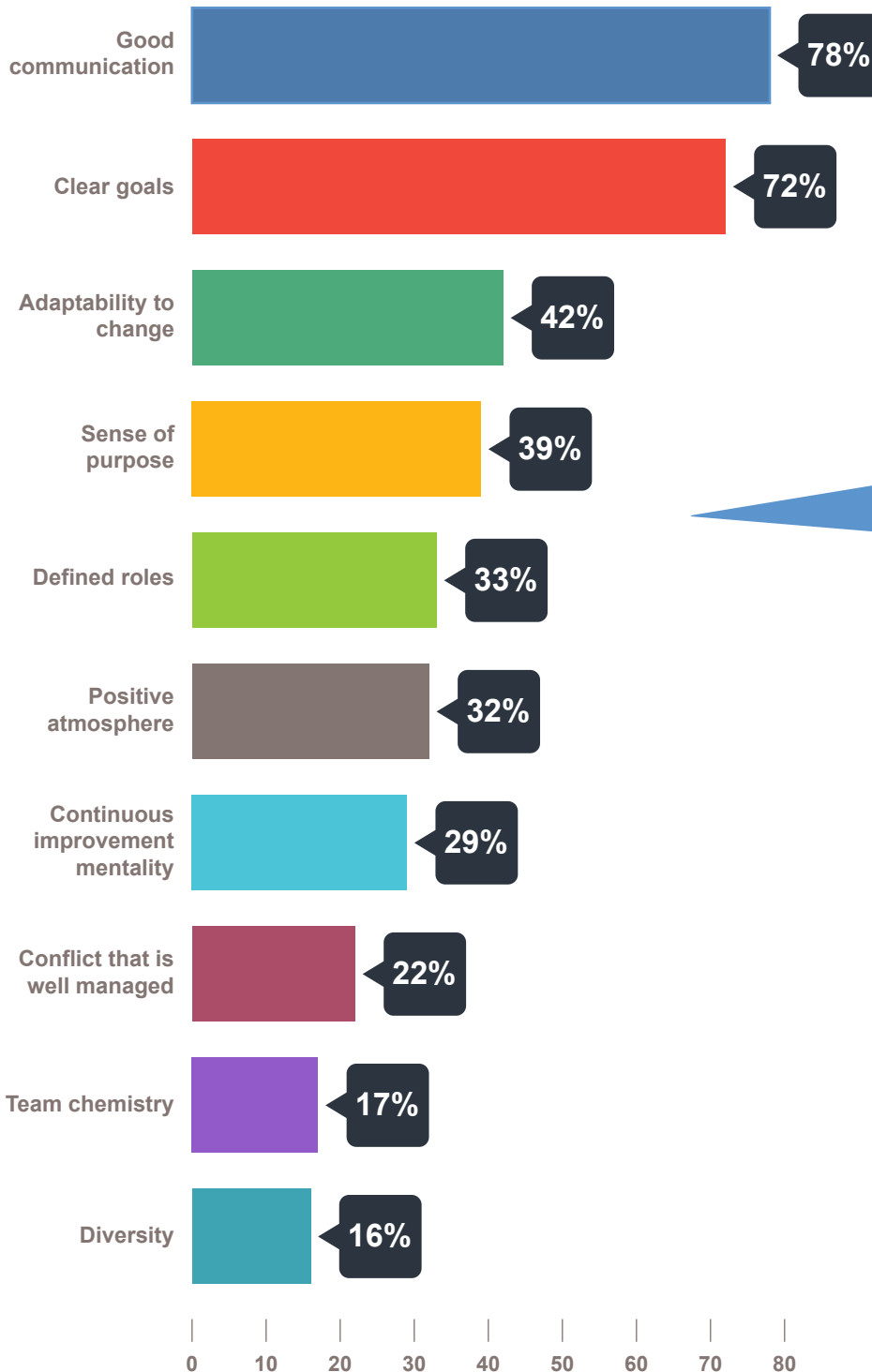
However, the data suggests that organizations might not be attaching enough importance to a sense of purpose. Purpose is the driving force behind everything that follows in creating and developing teams. Without it, organizations may be doomed to mediocrity or worse, and the same goes for teamwork.

After the emphasis on diversity over the past few years and the wealth of empirical evidence that diversity improves performance, we are surprised to see diversity at the bottom of the list. It is much more than demographics, and teams that do not have enough variety in thinking will not be as adept at those who embrace it.





**Survey Question:** In your organization, which four of the following characteristics do you consider most important for team effectiveness? (select up to four)



Only 39% point to a sense of purpose even though it's often essential to communication and goal-setting



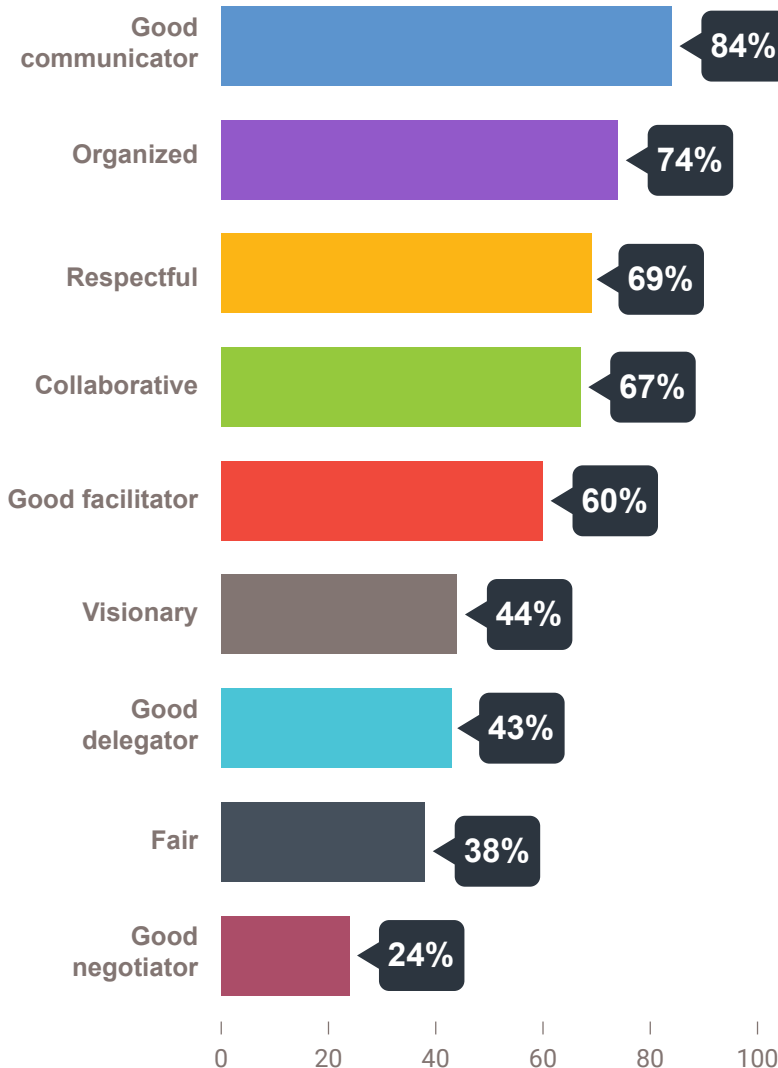


**Finding: Above all else, team leaders need to be communicators and organizers**

Eighty-four percent of respondents said team leaders need to be good communicators, and 74% chose “organized” as a key characteristic. This finding may be a function of the way many teams operate. In many situations, leaders assign tasks and direct discussions. In other cases, teams are essentially made up of peers, perhaps with a rotating or ad hoc peer leader. In either of these cases, whether there’s a single leader or an ad hoc leader, communication is key, and goals need to be clear in order to get work done.



**Survey Question:** In your organization, what are the key characteristics of a good team leader? (select all that apply)



Communication, respect, and collaboration are more valued than fairness



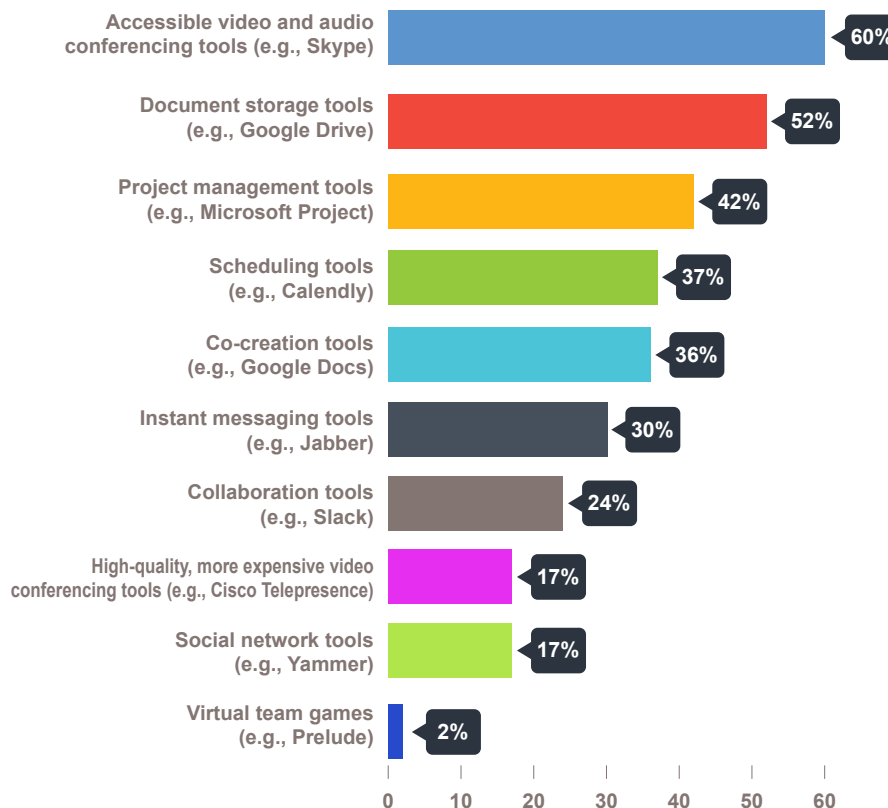
**Finding: Video and audio conferencing tools are the number one technology to facilitate good teamwork**

Video and audio conferencing are most widely cited as technologies used to facilitate teamwork. Instant messaging, collaboration tools, and social networking have not gained as much of a foothold as we might expect, based on the way we use those tools today as consumers. Some of today’s collaboration tools, however, now have document storage, project management, instant messaging, and social networking embedded in them. Some experts believe that chatbots are about to make a big impact on employee self-service.

Therefore, the challenge for teams today might not be finding helpful technology but choosing from the vast array of tools available. The first consideration should be interoperability with existing and planned technology.



**Survey Question:** In your organization, what technologies are used to facilitate good teamwork? (select all that apply)



**Collaboration and social networking tools are not yet deeply entrenched as team facilitation technologies**



**Finding: Organizations most commonly develop teams by honing communication skills, collaboration, and goal-setting**

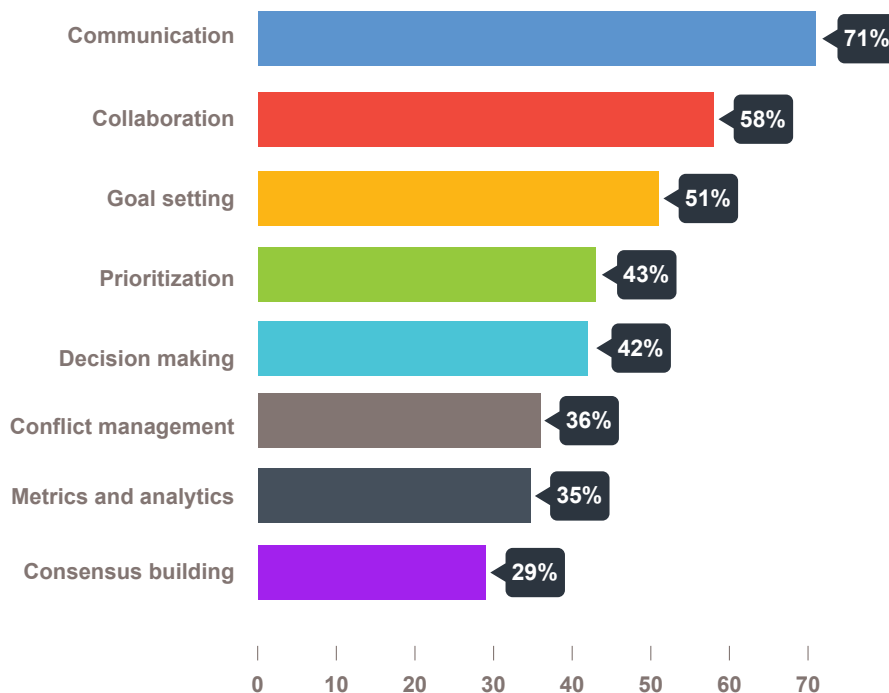
Development efforts are most focused on communication (71%), which is the foundation of interpersonal relationships so crucial to teamwork. Fifty-eight percent also cited collaboration, which requires a more profound understanding of interpersonal dynamics. Both are essential skills in teamwork.

Just over half (51%) said their organizations develop goal-setting skills, but fewer selected the skills that support goal-setting: prioritization, decision making, conflict management, metrics and analytics, and consensus building.

HR can help train team leaders and members to build consensus based on metrics and analytics. This will help teams reach the right decisions and minimize conflict. Data-driven decisions will drive an evidence-based agenda. Communication and collaboration are essential, but “being nice” is not the same as working together toward a common purpose.



**Survey Question:** What skills does your organization develop among your teams? (select all that apply)



Few organizations develop teams in the areas of conflict management, consensus building or metrics

**Finding: Organizations do not tend to focus their training on the skills that would address the top challenges that teams face**

Earlier in the report, we reported that the top three challenges facing teams are a lack of accountability, difficulty making decisions and lack of member participation. Yet, most organizations fail to train people in the skills required to address those challenges: that is, by honing the skills of decision-making, conflict management, consensus building, and metrics and analytics.

Teams are more likely to lack accountability, for example, if there are not solid metrics and analytics. Likewise, it will be difficult to make decisions if teams are not skilled at consensus building and decision making, as can be seen in the following graphic.

**The Skills that Address Top Challenges Are Not the Ones Most Widely Developed**

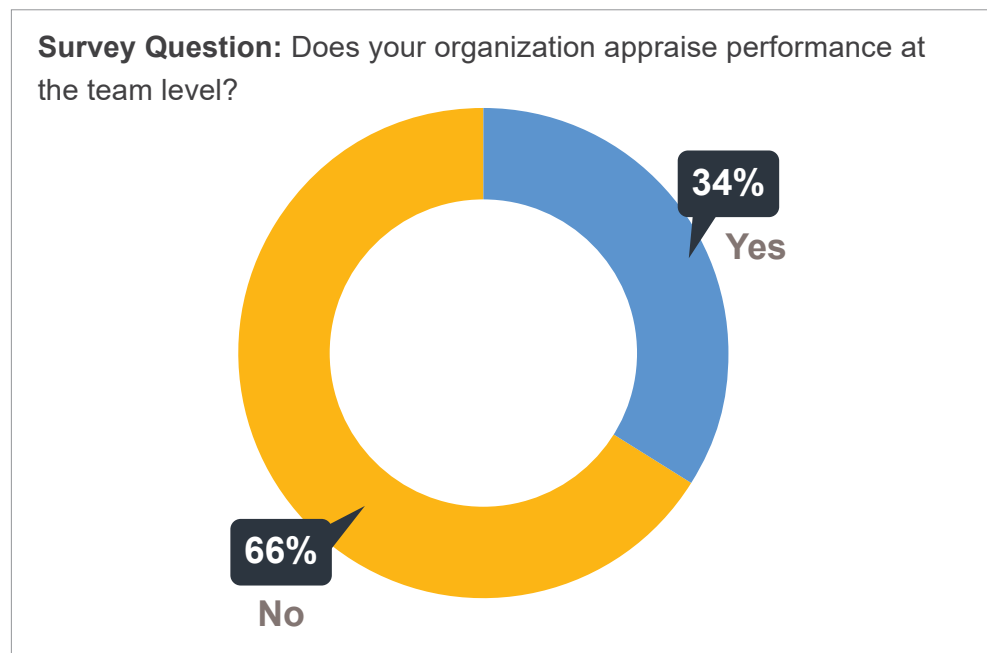




## How Do Organizations Measure Team Performance?

### Finding: Only a third of respondents said their organizations appraise performance at the team level

Only 34% of organizations measure the performance of their teams, yet most rely heavily on teams, so there appears to be a disconnect. Why? That's not clear. As the next section suggests, however, some organizations may not be sure what to base such appraisals on.



Given the pervasiveness of teams, it seems strange that most organization do not appraise performance at the team level

### Finding: The most frequently used performance measures are productivity and goal achievement

Of the respondents whose organizations measure performance at the team level, almost three-quarters (72%) base it on productivity. Although this makes sense, it can also present problems. When it comes to knowledge work, for example, productivity can be hard to measure.

Sixty-four percent base appraisals on whether the team meets its goals. How effective that measure will be depends on the relevance of the goals to organizational performance. Over half (58%) cited a team's ability to work together as a basis for measuring team performance.



Relatively few base appraisals on customer experiences. Of course, not every team interacts with customers or has their products evaluated by them. For those it applies to, however, it can be a valid criterion. According to the latest [Customer Experience Industry Report](#), 95% of executives say that a great customer experience is critical to their success.

It's interesting that not many organizations use peer evaluations to measure team performance. Perhaps that's because such evaluations are targeted at individual rather than team performance. If not conducted well, such evaluations might also lead to fractured working relationships, especially if they are tied to compensation rates.



Only 39% of respondents say their organization uses peer evaluations to measure team performance



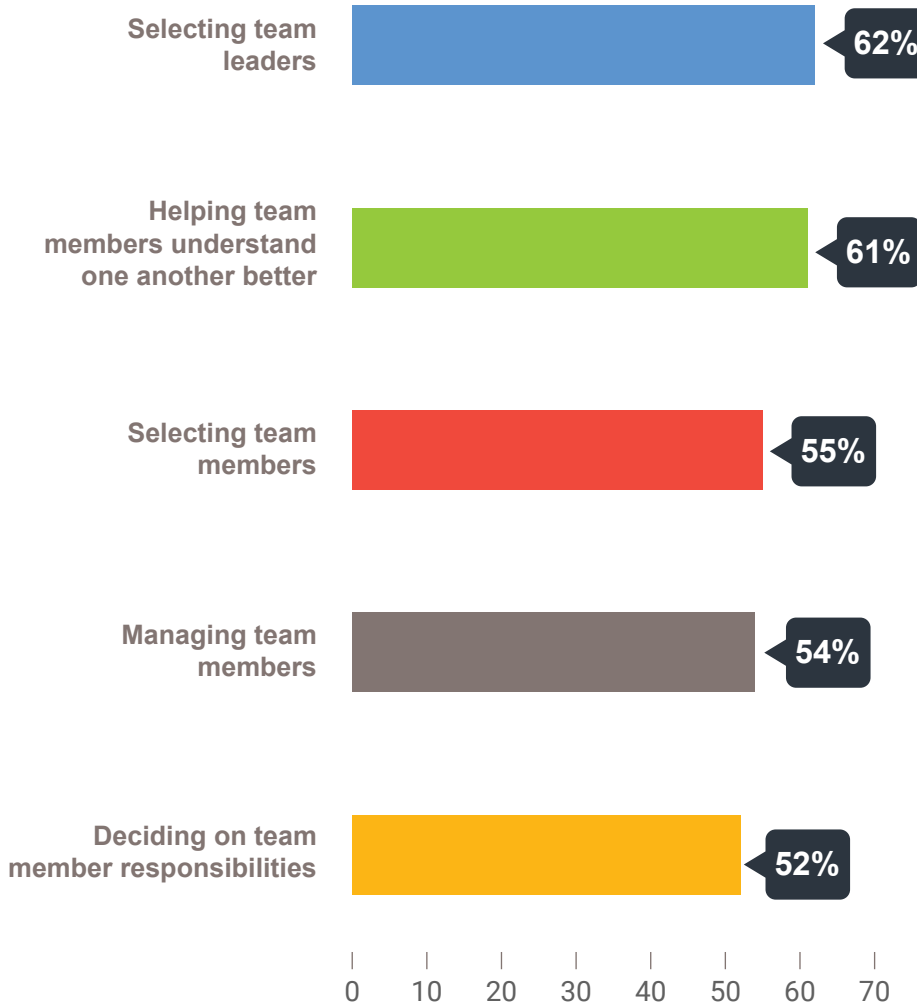


**Finding: A majority of respondents agree that assessments can be useful for teams**

Sixty-two percent agreed that assessments are useful in selecting team leaders and 61% said assessments help team members understand one another better. Fewer (55%) say assessments are useful for selecting team members. Of course, the focus should be on team performance, not on individuals. Find skilled people who are the right fit for the team, and then train them to work together.



**Survey Question:** To what degree do you think assessment tools are useful for the following: [percent to a high or very high degree]



Respondents agree that assessments can be useful for helping team members understand one another better



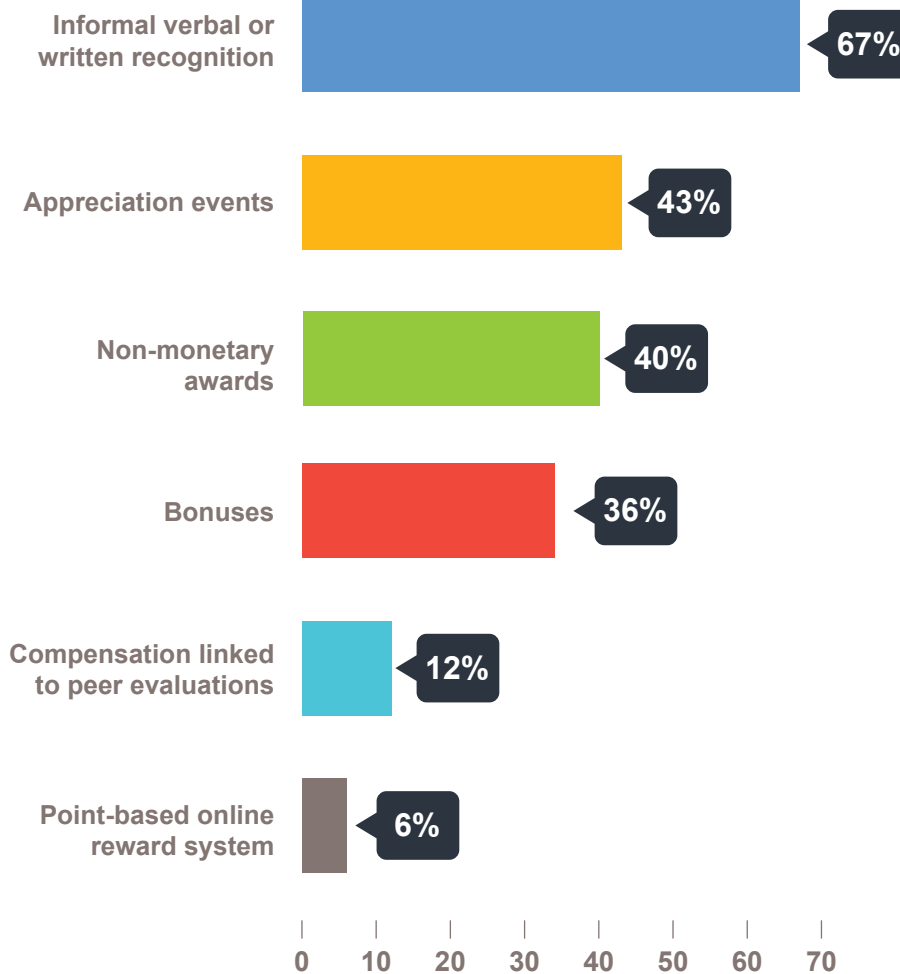
## How Do Companies Reward Teams?

**Finding: Organizations rely more on recognition and appreciation than on compensation to reward teams**

Of the organizations that measure team performance, two-thirds said their organizations use informal verbal or written recognition. Considerably fewer reward via bonuses (36%) or compensation that is linked to peer evaluations (12%).



**Survey Question:** How do you reward teams in your organization?  
(select all that apply)



Informal recognition is used by two-thirds of organizations to reward team performance



## How Well Do Organizations Use Teams?

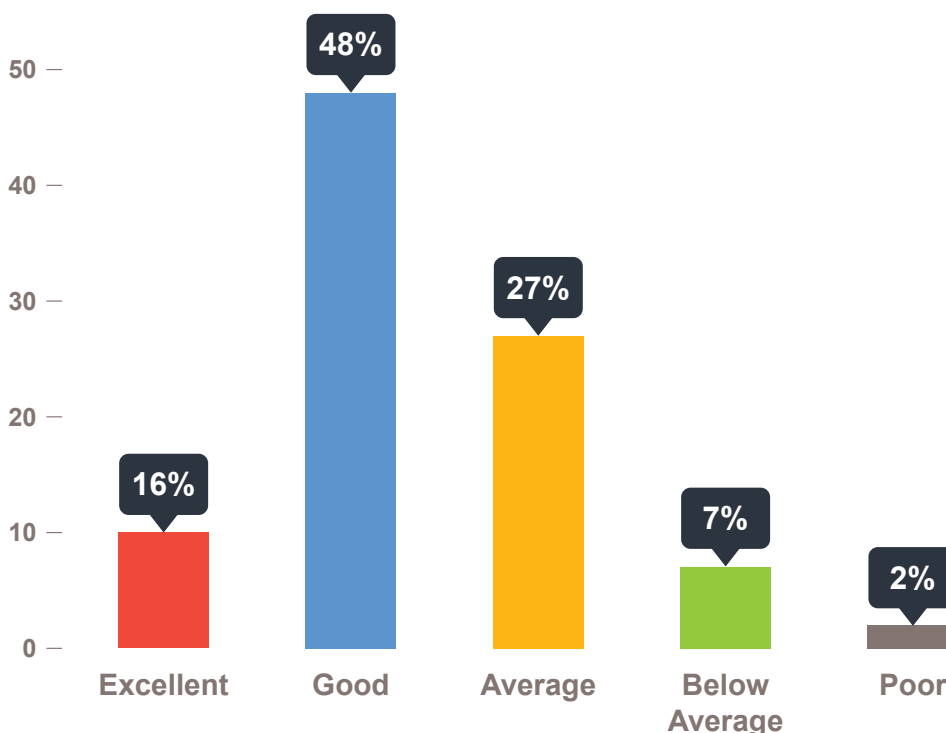
### Finding: Only 16% rated their teams as excellent

Most (64%) respondents view their teams as good or excellent. This is welcome news, suggesting that organizations have developed skills in team management over the years. On the other hand, this data also suggests that there's much room for improvement among today's teams. Just 16% view their teams as excellent, and over a third view them as average or below.

Of course, as we've seen already, most organizations fail to assess their teams. This begs of the question: If most organizations fail to assess teams, how can they be sure so many of them are at least good? One reason to question the widespread quality of teams is that official productivity growth rates in many of today's nations, including the U.S., are quite low. In order to discover why, more organizations may need to assess team performance in more rigorous ways.



**Survey Question:** overall, how would you rate the teams in your organization?



Over a third view their teams as average or below, suggesting many are in serious need of improvement



Using data from this question, we grouped team performance into two categories:

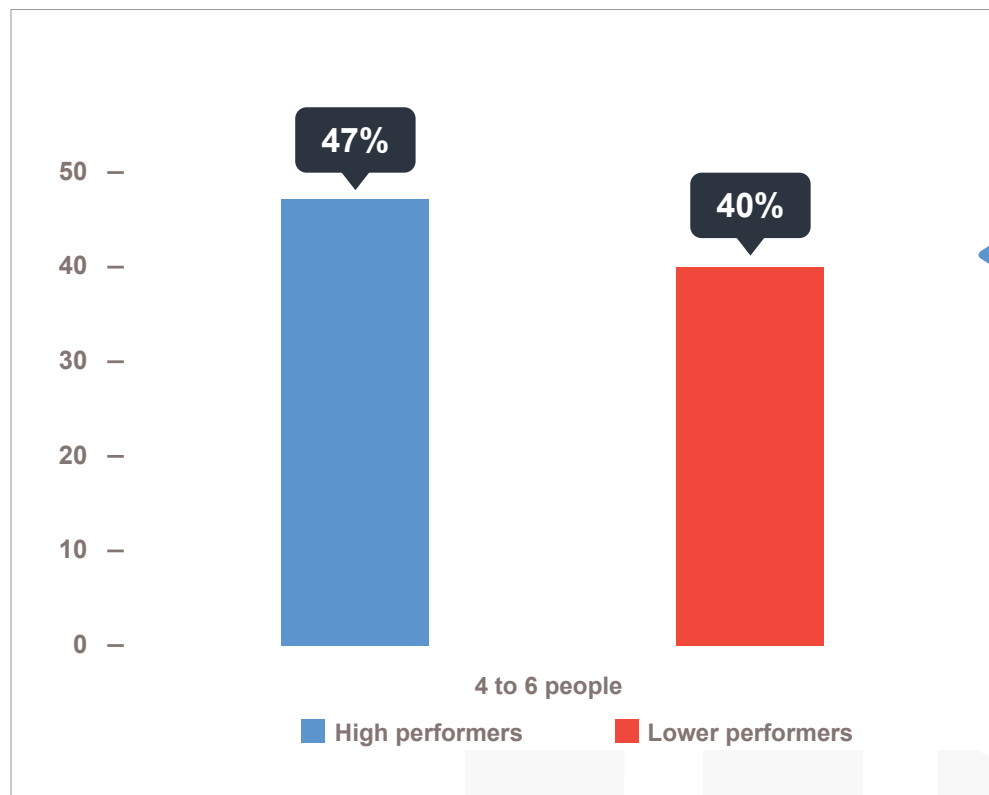
- High-performing team (HPT) organizations, which viewed their teams as excellent
- Lower-performing team (LPT) organizations, which viewed their teams as average, below average, or poor.


In the following sections, we compared these groups in order to discern if there are useful distinctions between the two.

## What Practices Are Linked to Successful Teams?

**Finding: The size of high-performing teams is more likely to be in the “sweet spot” of four to six members**

Organizations with high-performing teams (HPTs) are considerably more likely than those with lower-performing teams (LPTs) to have teams with an average size of four to six people. Whereas 47% of HPTs have average teams of that size, the same is true for only 40% of LPTs.

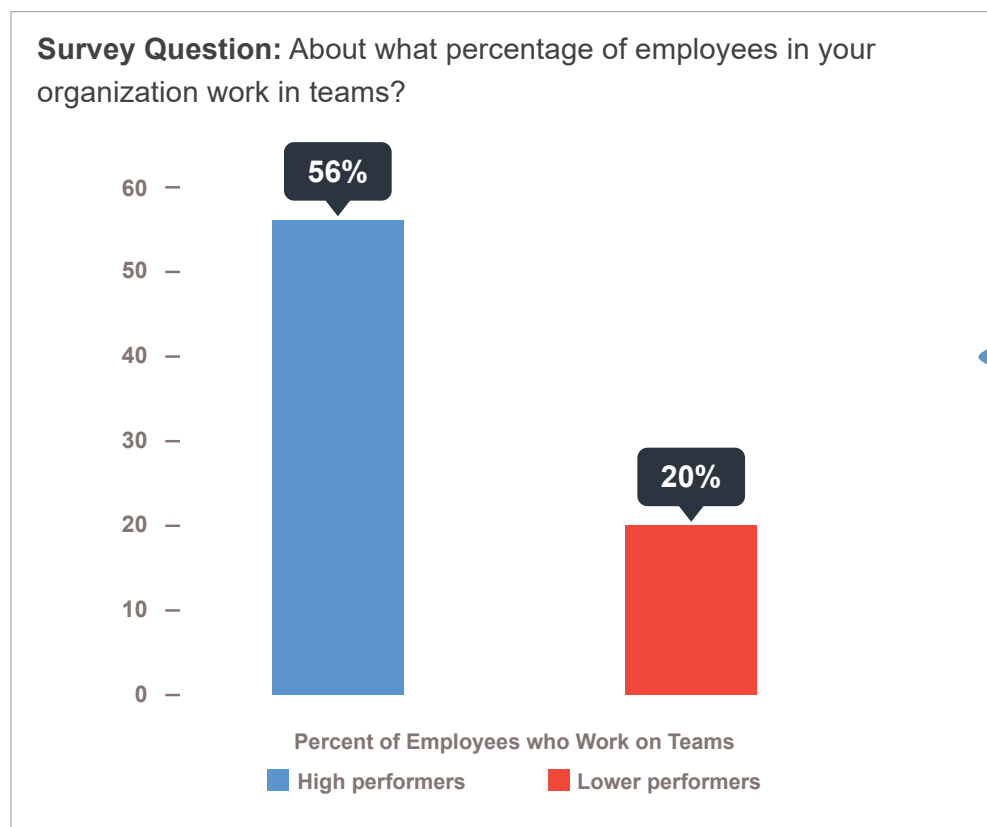


  
High-performing team organizations were about 18% more likely than their lower-performing counterparts to have team sizes of four to six people



**Finding: Organizations with excellent teams are much more likely to have most employees working in teams**

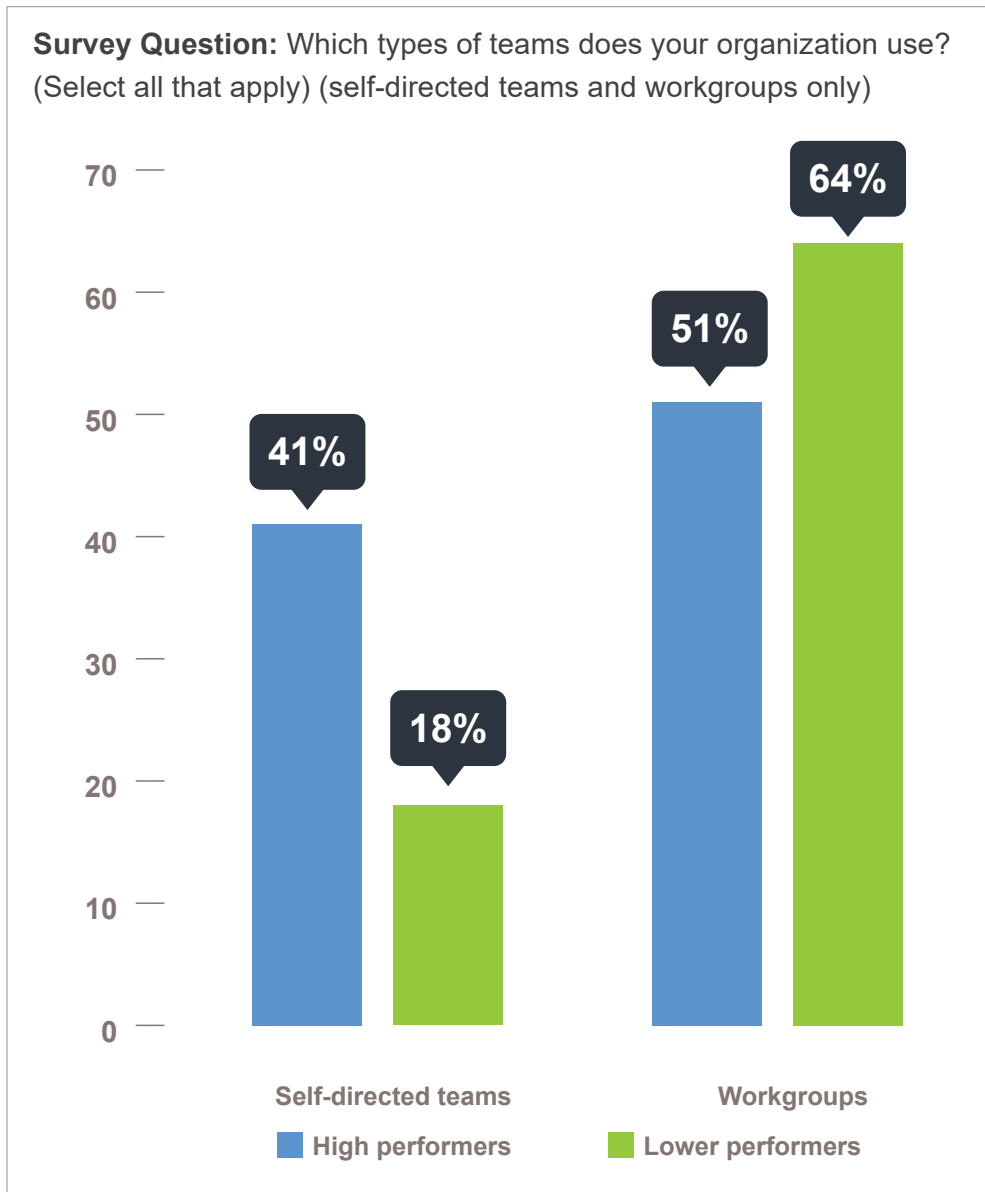
Whereas 56% of respondents from HPT organizations say that most employees—that is, 80% to 100%—work on teams, the same is true for only 20% of those with lower-performing teams. This suggests, of course, that HPTs have much more experience in using teams across most of the organization, which may be one of the reasons they’ve been able to achieve excellence.



High-performing teams are nearly three times more likely to have workforces in which most people work on teams

**Finding: High-performing organizations are more likely to have self-directed teams**

Organizations with excellent teams are over twice as likely to have self-directed teams, but they are considerably less likely to use workgroups. Workgroups and self-directed teams tend to be polar opposites in the way they are usually managed. A workgroup is a collection of people with specific tasks, most often directed by a manager. Self-directed teams often have shifting leadership roles and take responsibility for decisions, task assignments, and results.



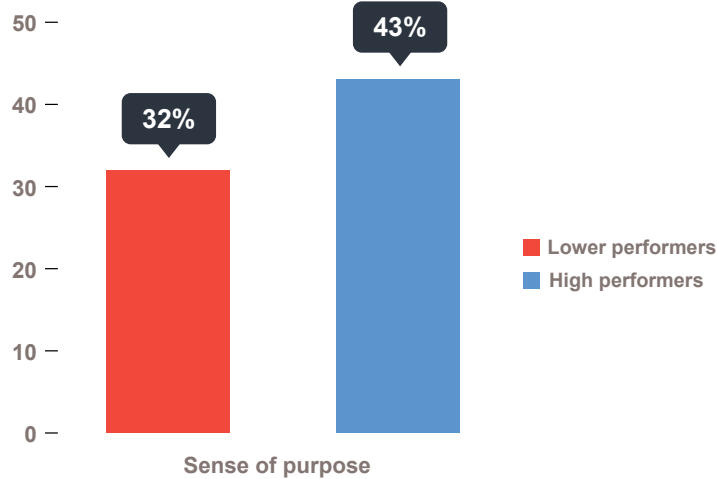
**Finding: Respondents from high-performing teams are considerably more likely to view a “sense of purpose” as a characteristic key to team effectiveness**

Whereas 43% of respondents from high-performing organizations said that a sense of purpose was important for team effectiveness, the same is true for only 32% of those from lower-performing organizations. We believe this difference makes sense. Without a strong orientation toward a purpose and mission, how can team members be motivated except by relatively ineffective carrot-and-stick approaches? Organizations with high-performing teams might have, overall, a more purpose-driven culture.





**Survey Question:** In your organization, which four of the following characteristics do you consider most important for team effectiveness? (select up to four)

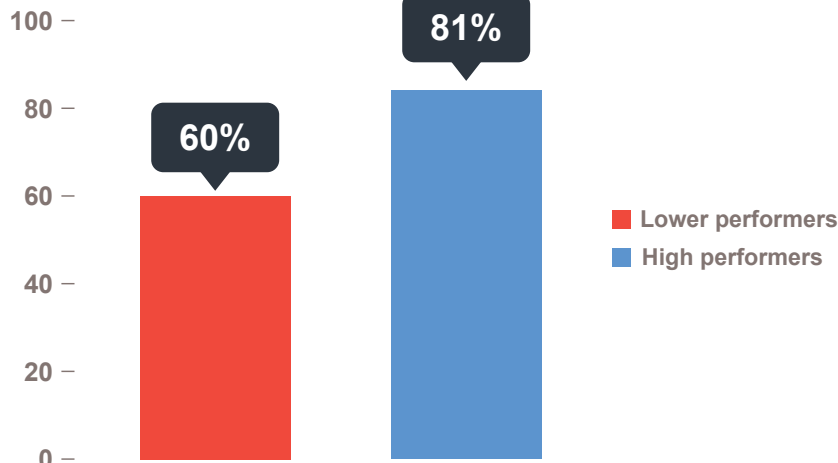


High performers favor sense of purpose as an essential team characteristic more frequently than their lower-performing counterparts

**Finding: High performers value collaborative leaders more**

Respondents from high-performing organizations were considerably more likely to identify “collaborative” as one of the key characteristics of a good team leader. Why? One reason may be because such organizations tend to have a greater percentage of self-directed teams, and such teams require more collaborative leaders.

**Survey Question:** In your organization, what are the key characteristics of a good team leader? [percent that chose “Collaborative”]

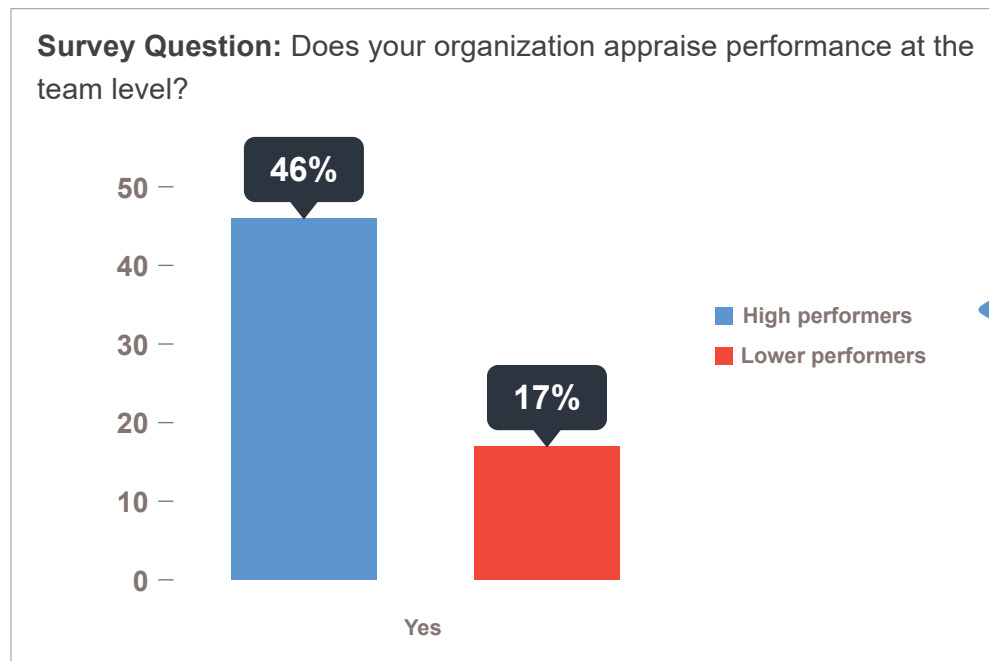


Lower-performing organizations are less likely to view “collaborative” as a key leadership character



**Finding: Organizations with high-performing teams are much more likely to appraise teams**

Organizations with excellent teams are over two times more likely to appraise team performance compared with those with lower-performing teams. This finding may support the traditional management idea of “what gets measured gets done,” but there might be other factors at play here as well. For example, if a team’s mission is clearly aligned to organizational objectives, their performance is more likely to be highly valued and worth measuring. Moreover, since high-performing organizations are more likely to use self-directed teams, conventional manager-based assessments may not be as effective.



**Just 17% of lower performers appraise performance at the team level**

**Finding: High performers tend to assess team performance differently**

Among high-performing and lower-performing organizations that measure team performance, high performers are much more likely to use metrics that evaluate the quality of the product produced, the ability of teams to work together, and customer evaluations.

In today’s quality-focused marketplace, it makes sense for the many organizations to focus on quality, perhaps even above productivity. After all,

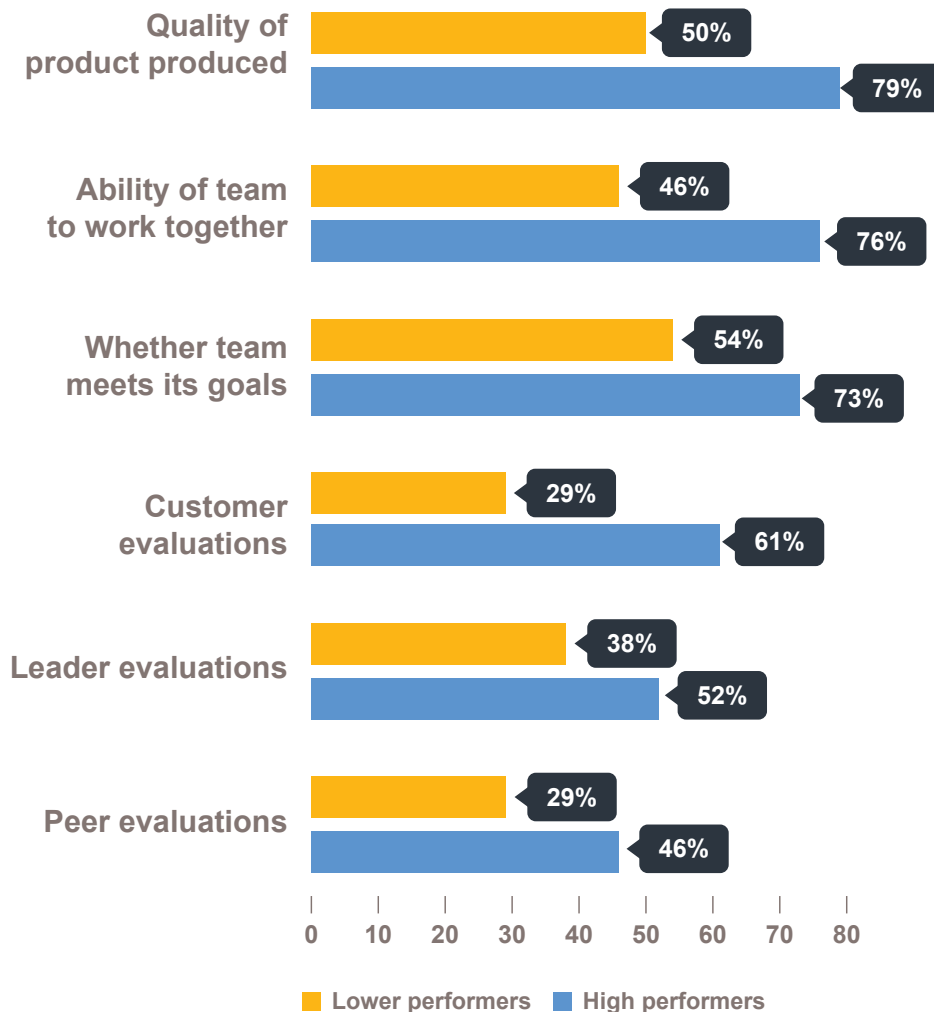


many organizations now use quality metrics such as Six Sigma, which is a disciplined and data-driven approach for eliminating defects in any process—from manufacturing to services. Moreover, it can be a better indicator than productivity for certain kinds of quality-dependent knowledge work.

Whereas 79% of higher-performing organizations use quality for team assessment, the same is true for only half of lower-performing organizations. In some cases, customer evaluations—another area of great contrast between high and lower performers—are also used to assess quality. The ability of teams to work well together is also an area of great contrast: 76% of higher performers do this, compared to just 46% of lower-performers.



**Survey Question:** What are team appraisals based on? (select all that apply) [percent by areas of contrast between high and lower performers]



High performers are much more likely to base appraisals on product quality



**Finding: Organizations with top-performing teams are better at developing essential skills in all areas**

High performers develop all team-related skills to a much greater degree than do lower performers. The differences are especially great in two key areas: collaboration and prioritization. The emphasis on collaboration is, of course, a recurring theme among high performers. The emphasis on prioritization is interesting because it helps address one of the main perceived weaknesses of teams: difficulty in decision making. Overall, this finding suggests that if organizations want high-performing teams, they need to invest in team-focused training and development for teams.



**Survey Question:** What skills does your organization develop among your teams? (select all that apply)



**High performers are far more likely than lower-performers to develop collaboration on teams**

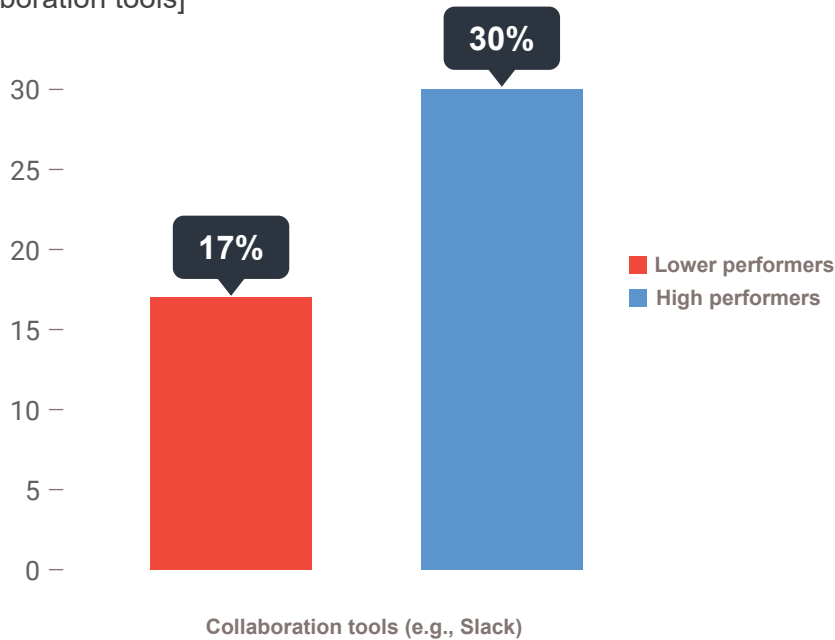


**Finding: Organizations with excellent teams tend to use collaboration tools more**

Organizations with top-performing teams are almost twice as likely to use collaboration tools when compared to lower-performing organizations. This lines up well with the previous findings that high-performing organizations tend to value leaders who are more collaborative and tend to emphasize collaboration in their skills development programs.



**Survey Question:** In your organization, what technologies are used to facilitate good teamwork? (select all that apply) [percent that use collaboration tools]



High performers are far more likely than lower-performers to embrace collaboration technologies

**What Is the Future of Teams?**

**Finding: Teams will become increasingly virtual in the future**

Forty-six percent of respondent expect teams to become more virtual, a conclusion that is true for both high and lower performers. One reason may be that employers expect them to become more geographically dispersed (35%).

Another possible reason is that teams are expanding beyond organizational boundaries as more companies operate in extended enterprises. This may



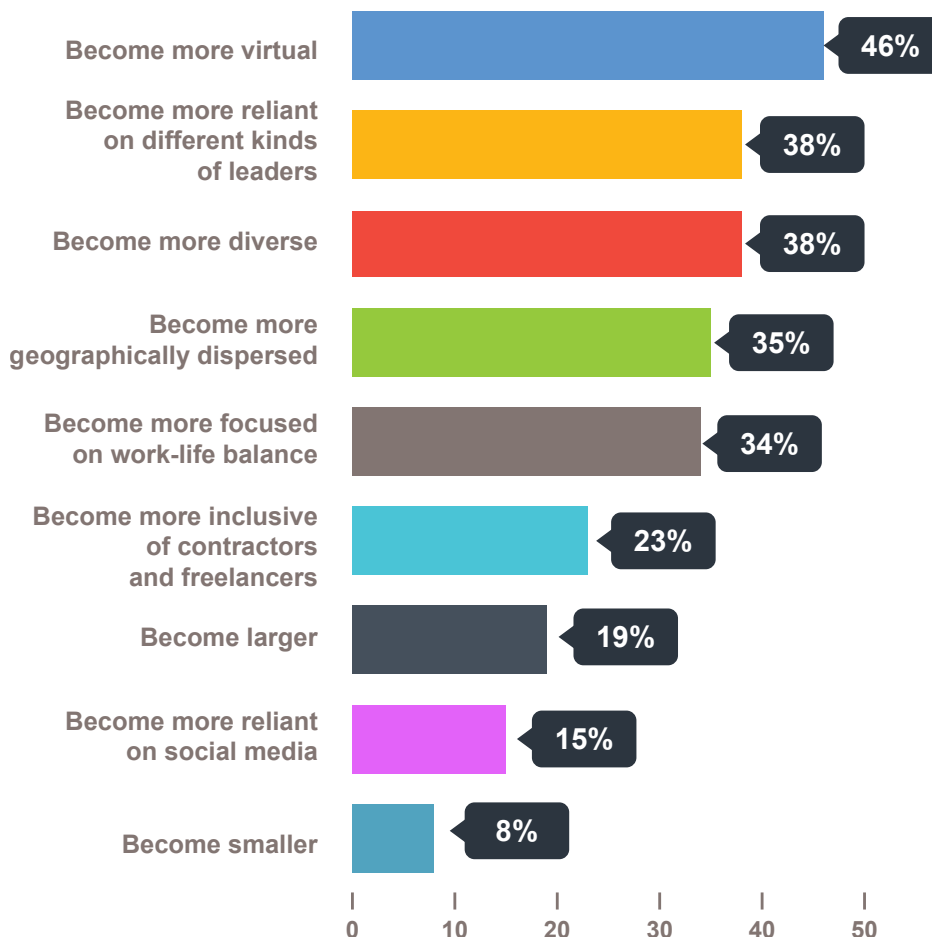
explain why respondents chose video and audio conferencing as the most frequently used technology in supporting teams.

Thirty-eight percent expect teams to become more diverse and to become more reliant on different kinds of leaders. The diverse organizations of the future will require a lot less “bossing” and much more leading and facilitating. Based on data from organizations with excellent teams, it’s likely such leaders will be increasingly collaborative. A team leader increasingly needs to learn when to manage and when to take a back seat in team discussions and decisions.

The trend toward diversity is also positive. The dynamics of diversity [strengthen the ability of teams](#) to problem-solve and make decisions.



**Survey Question:** From the list below, choose three ways in which teams will change over the next several years in your organization. (select up to three)



Teams may become more diverse and more reliant on different kinds of leaders in the future





## Top Takeaways

This study shows that organizations vary in terms of how much they use teams, which kinds of team they leverage, how they appraise their teams, and their degree of success in terms of team management. Based on all the findings, below are some key tactical and strategic takeaways.

**1**

**Optimize the executive team.** The executive team (or team of teams) sets the tone for the entire organization. A high-performing executive team will be focused on its mission and will delegate nonstrategic activities and decisions to junior teams. But this doesn't mean that the process of building healthy teams is strictly top down. It must come up from the front lines as well as down from the top. As employees find new ways of working together to solve problems, they will help build the culture.

**2**

**Develop a sense of purpose.** Nothing motivates a team more than a shared sense of purpose. Without it, teams can “aim low” to satisfy minimum administrative requirements and achieve little else. Develop a mindset that the ultimate objective is the benefit to provide a high quality product while serving the customer, the community, and even society. Charge your teams with supporting the objective and, to a large degree, get out of their way.

**3**

**Provide the right kinds of tools.** Because teams are so dependent on virtual work and on collaboration, make sure they have the tools required to collaborate well across geographical boundaries.

**4**

**Consider appraising teams.** Higher performers are much more likely than lower performers to appraise teams. Not only that, they use a wider variety of assessment methods, especially focusing on product quality, the ability of teams to work together, and customer evaluations.

**5**

**Develop an agile mindset.** Forty-two percent of survey respondents highly value adaptability to change. We hear a lot about “agile” these days, often shrouded in a cloud of hype—but it has [real meaning and purpose](#). In part, it comes from the Scrum project management in technology, where teams deliver continuous improvement with small, fast enhancements in short cycles, with frequent customer feedback.



6

**Create a culture of accountability.** Accountability is more than objectives, goals, and deadlines. It requires an open, trusting culture that welcomes feedback and does not leave a wake of emotionally wounded employees behind. People need to be at ease asking for help to keep their commitments.

7

**Develop leaders, not bosses.** Team leaders who help teams set their own goals and let them own the results and rewards will be more likely to develop enthusiastic, high-performing teams. Growing leaders is not easy, and it may require a long-term culture change. Let new leaders make mistakes, then pick them up, dust them off, and set them on the right path. Use team feedback to help develop them, and make sure they have critical skills such as the ability to collaborate.

8

**Develop critical team skills.** Get past the idea that if we just teach people how to be kind to each other, we can dump them into a team and they'll perform. High performers tend to be better at teaching such skills across the board. The skills they especially emphasize are collaboration and prioritization. Communication is important, but so is developing a sense of shared purpose and accountability. Teams also need the skills required to analyze alternatives and make decisions. They should learn how to deal with uncertainty and risk.

9

**Let teams learn from mistakes.** The most effective learning in team dynamics will not come the moment the team is formed. It will work best after they have worked together long enough to experience the changing dynamics of their own behavior. A team leader who acts like a jerk might benefit more from team feedback than from a class on effective communication, and the team will rally around a leader who is sincerely trying to improve. Remember to support smart failures as long as they result in valuable learning.

10

**Get better at diversity.** Many respondents believe teams will become more diverse, and studies suggest that diverse teams tend to perform better over time. People are often at their best when they interact with people who think differently from themselves. If diversity ever leads to unhealthy conflicts, then be sure they receive whatever training they need in order to get the most from diversity of thought and experience.



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