

BUILDING A FUTURE-READY TECH STRATEGY 2022

The race against obsolescence: Future-proofing your organization

Technology moves at a breakneck pace that threatens to leave flat-footed organizations in the dust. But industry leaders are leveraging the bleeding edge to get ahead of the pack, and never look back.

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Original research from

AMERICAN BANKER

National
Mortgage News

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Financial Planning

The race against obsolescence: Future-proofing your organization

Introduction

Keep up or fall behind. Considering the fervent pace of technological advancement in 2022, financial and professional service organizations may often feel locked into one of those two trajectories as they incorporate digital tools into their daily business to work better, smarter and faster. Adding to the pressure of getting your tech stack right are the costs required to stay in the race, and a greater dependence on technology as the pandemic makes logging in from the couch a more attractive option than walking into an office for many clients.

But with a well-defined approach and unwavering commitment, organizations can get ahead and stay ahead by leveraging technology in a digital transformation plan that takes the bleeding edge into account while never losing sight of the traits that define them. Instead of reacting to what's next, the most successful organizations will be able to confidently navigate what's now.

This study from Arizent — parent company of American Banker, Financial Planning, Digital Insurance and National Mortgage News — explores the state of digital transformation across various industries in an effort to identify the factors that are critical to developing a future-ready technology strategy capable of advancing innovation, driving business growth and keeping your organization from being left behind.



Why read this report?

The moment ideas or applications once deemed intimidating become second nature and find their place in a company's arsenal, new technology emerges to shake things up, leaving decision-makers questioning their ability to match pace. In this report, insight from management level professionals and decision-makers across the banking, insurance, wealth management and mortgage industries provides a framework to help organizations understand if they are putting the right practices in place and using technology effectively to achieve the best outcomes. Are your people and processes future-proof? And what do you stand to lose if they aren't?

Key findings

- Customer satisfaction ranks high on the list of priorities for organizations in the midst of developing digital transformation strategies, with customer experience, support and access identified as key drivers.
- Regardless of the industry, feelings related to progress are largely divided in two, with half of the respondents believing their digital transformation plans are still in the early stages and half believing that they are already successfully implementing transformation initiatives throughout their organizations. Wealth managers are the most sheepish when it comes to the maturity level of their digital transformations, while the insurance industry is the most confident.
- Despite understanding how valuable leveraging technology is to achieving success, most respondents are either working to keep up with the pack or lagging behind. Less than a third of all respondents consider themselves to be leaders in the use of technology.
- Having a fully defined strategy — which includes steps such as assigning responsibility for achieving certain goals and having metrics in place to measure success — is considered the most important driver impacting an effective leveraging of technology for digital transformation.
- Organizations considered leaders in the space stand out by empowering employees and allowing them to play an active role in the organization's transformation strategy. Respondents see a strong correlation between spending and success, with organizations who have made commitments to increase technology funding both now and in the future experiencing more positive outcomes.
- Merging new technology with existing systems is the top challenge for respondents looking to advance transformation initiatives at their organizations. But challenges related to customer knowledge, reliance on vendors and availability of skilled staff must be overcome as well.
- Leaders are able to separate themselves from the pack by having greater confidence in their digital transformation strategies and a greater willingness to adopt new tech as it emerges.
- Technology that improves efficiency in the ongoing era of remote work is seen as high value across all industries.

About this report

This survey was conducted online in February 2022 with 394 management level respondents from four different industries: banking (31% of respondents), insurance (27%), wealth management (26%) and mortgage (15%). The majority of respondents are managers or senior managers (35%), followed by senior executives (22%), division/departments heads (16%), director/senior directors (16%) and C-level executives (11%).

Nearly half (48%) of respondents say they contribute to their organization's strategy and participate in digital transformation initiatives. About 38% lead their organization's efforts and 15% say they have considerable knowledge of but no direct participation in their company's digital transformation plans.

Of the 123 banking respondents, 36% work in organizations with total assets of less than \$5 billion; 25% work in organizations with between \$5 billion and \$20 billion in total assets; 20% work in organizations with assets between \$20 billion and \$100 billion; and 18% work in organizations with \$100 billion or more in total assets. National banks were the most well-represented, with 26% of the respondents, followed by regional and community banks, which accounted for 21% of the respondents each.

The insurance industry was represented by 107 respondents, approximately 41% of whom work at companies with a size by premium of between \$5 billion and \$10 billion. About 39% work at companies with a size by premium of less than \$5 billion and 20% work at companies with a size by premium of \$10 billion or more. The majority of respondents (32%) work at P&C carriers, followed by health insurance and life insurance providers at 18% and 16%, respectively.

In wealth management, 41% of the 103 respondents work at firms with less than \$500 million in assets under management; 35% at firms with more than \$5 billion in AUM; and 25% at firms with between \$500 million and \$5 billion in AUM. Approximately 30% of respondents are fee-only advisors with an independent RIA; 23% are independent broker-dealer and corporate RIA advisors; and 17% are independent broker-dealer and hybrid RIA advisors.

Most of the 61 mortgage respondents (41%) work at mortgage/title insurance companies. Approximately 23% work at mortgage brokers; 21% work in the mortgage division of a bank or credit union; and 15% work at a nonbank mortgage servicer and/or lender. At 42%, the most common annual mortgage origination volume for respondents is between \$1 billion and \$10 billion; 25% of respondents have an annual volume of under \$1 billion; 20% an annual volume of \$25 billion or more; and 13% an annual volume of between \$10 billion and \$25 billion.

In the context of this survey,

digital transformation refers to how an organization uses technology to remake processes, pursue new business models and/or create new business value.

The state of digital transformation

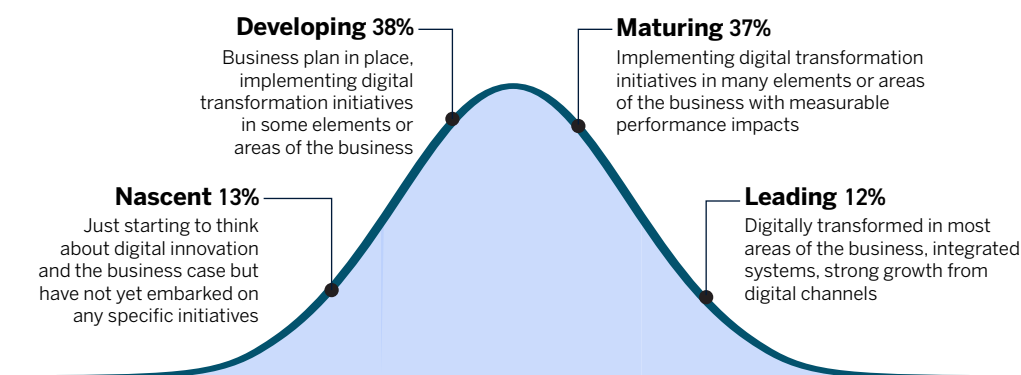
Leading, following or somewhere in between?

The journey toward establishing a future-ready tech strategy begins with knowing your position in the race. Is your organization already winning with a plan that works? Or is your team still in the starting blocks listening for the gunshot that will propel them forward?

A little more than half of the professionals surveyed (51%) characterize their organization's digital transformation journey as being in the early stages. Approximately 38% of these respondents say their transformation is still developing, meaning a business plan is in place and digital transformation initiatives are being implemented in some elements or areas of the business, while the other 13% say they are just starting to think about digital innovation, but have not yet moved forward with any specific initiatives.

In contrast, about 49% percent of all respondents are not only further along, but are seeing at least some measure of success from their efforts. About 37% say their organization is in the maturation stage, meaning digital transformation initiatives are being implemented in many elements and areas of business with measurable performance impacts. Just 12% consider themselves leading, meaning they have digitally transformed in most areas of the business and have seen strong growth from digital channels.

Figure 1: At least half of the organizations surveyed are still in the early stages of their digital transformation journey



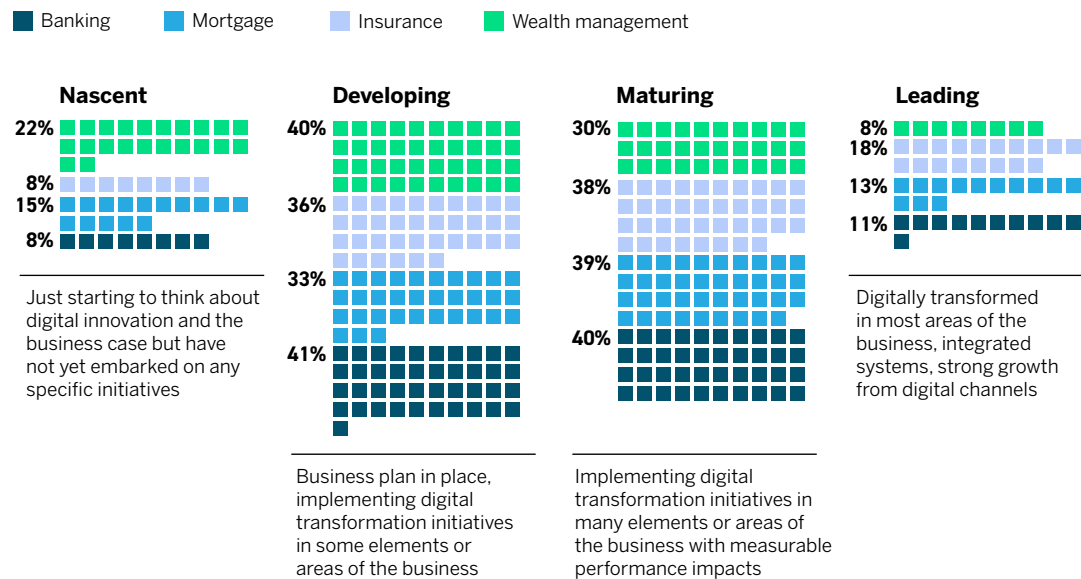
Source: Arizent, Building a Future-Ready Tech Strategy 2022
Base: Total respondents n=394

Question: How would you characterize your organization's digital transformation maturity?

Across industry sectors, wealth management is least likely to be approaching the digital transformation tipping point, with 62% of respondents saying they are still in the early stages. It is also the only industry with more than half of all respondents reporting either nascent or developing digital transformation maturity.

Insurance was the strongest sector, with 56% of respondents having reached the maturing or leading stage of their transformations, followed by mortgage (52%) and banking (51%).

Figure 2: Across financial services, wealth management has more organizations in the early stages



Source: Arizent, Building a Future-Ready Tech Strategy 2022

Base: Banking n=123; Mortgage n=61; Insurance n=107; Wealth management n=103

Question: How would you characterize your organization's digital transformation maturity?

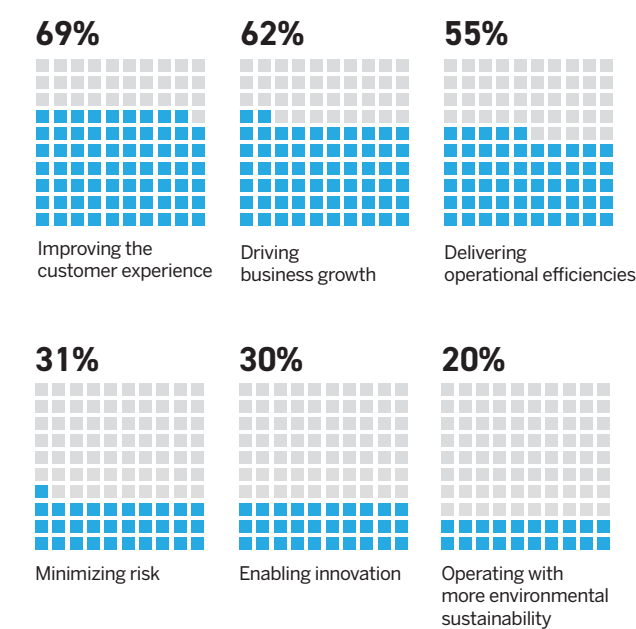
The goals of transformation

The benefits of crafting and implementing a future-ready tech strategy are many. But for most organizations, the customer comes first. Improving customer experience was the number one goal of digital transformation, followed closely by driving business growth and delivering operational efficiencies. The top three goals were listed as focus points for 69%, 62% and 55% of respondents, respectively.

Survey participants were asked to select their top three goals. Minimizing risk was selected as a top goal for 31% of respondents, enabling innovation was selected by 30% of respondents, and operating with more environmental sustainability was selected by 20% of respondents.

2 out of 3
business leaders surveyed cite customer experience and business growth as key digital transformation goals.

Figure 3: Improving CX and driving business growth are the top digital transformation goals for 2022

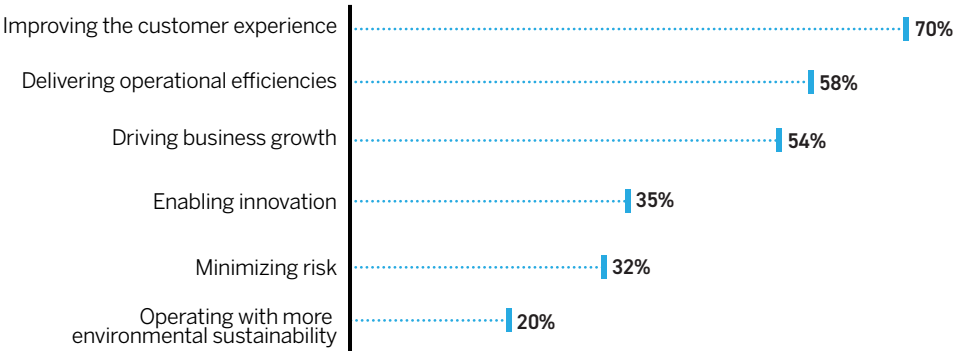


Source: Arizent, Building a Future-Ready Tech Strategy 2022
Base: Total respondents n=394

Question: What are your organization's primary digital transformation goals for 2022?

When respondents were asked how they believe technology can most significantly impact their industry or business, the top three and bottom three goals largely remained the same. Customer experience again came out top with 70%, while operating with more environmental sustainability remained at the bottom with 20%.

Figure 4: Technology is viewed as a key enabler to the top three digital transformation priorities



Source: Arizent, Building a Future-Ready Tech Strategy 2022
Base: Total respondents n=394

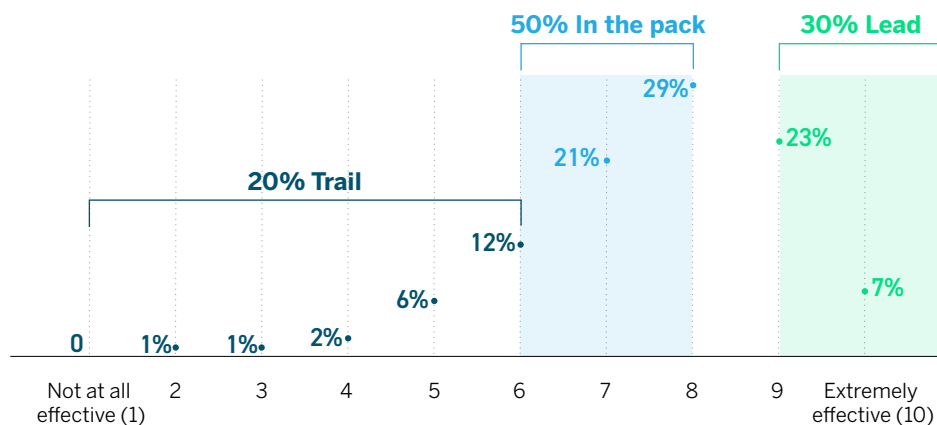
Question: In which of the following areas do you think technology can most significantly impact your industry or business?

Getting ahead in the collective pursuit of digital transformation

Drivers of success

Despite technology being viewed as a key enabler to the top three digital transformation priorities, just 30% of respondents say their organizations lead in leveraging technology to advance digital transformation. Nearly half of all respondents consider themselves as being “in the pack” and 20% of respondents feel they are lagging behind.

Figure 5: Just three out of 10 organizations lead in leveraging technology to advance digital transformation

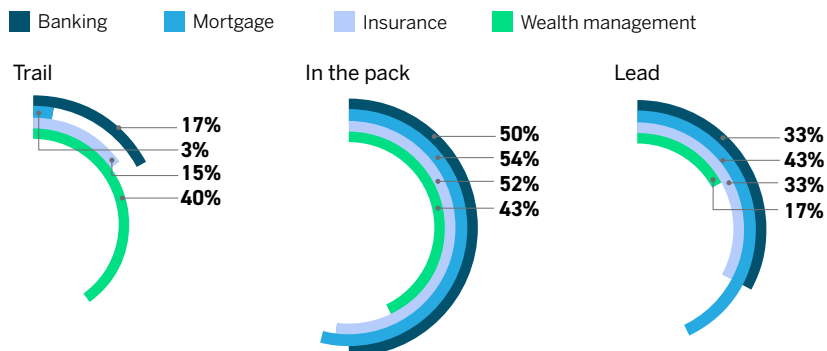


Source: Arizent, Building a Future-Ready Tech Strategy 2022
Base: Total respondents n=394

Overall, how effective has your organization been at leveraging technology to advance its digital transformation goals?

Professionals in the mortgage industry view effectively leveraging technology to advance digital transformation with the most confidence, while wealth management professionals see this as a bigger challenge than respondents in other sectors. About 43% of mortgage respondents believe themselves to be leading, compared to just 17% in wealth management. A third of banking and insurance respondents view themselves as leaders in the space.

Figure 6: Effectively leveraging technology to advance digital transformation is a bigger challenge for wealth management, but few are leading across financial services



Source: Arizent, Building a Future-Ready Tech Strategy 2022
Base: Banking n=123; Mortgage n=61; Insurance n=107; Wealth management n=103

Question: Overall, how effective has your organization been at leveraging technology to advance its digital transformation goals?

Technology

is viewed as a key enabler to the top digital transformation priorities but only a minority of organizations are highly effective at leveraging tech.

But determining what separates the leaders from the rest of the pack requires a deeper understanding of what is propelling those organizations forward. To gain that understanding, a regression model was run and identified the following five core drivers and the attributes that comprise them.

What makes some companies better than others at leveraging technology in the pursuit of digital transformation?

These five factors may be key to driving success

Fully Defined Strategy

- We have assigned responsibility for achieving specific data-driven metrics and have empowered decisions relating to meeting these targets
- We have a clearly defined and articulated digital transformation strategy
- We have a comprehensive, documented data governance plan that we follow
- We have metrics in place to measure the value of our technology investments to the business
- Our technology priorities, including investment strategies, are aligned with key digital transformation priorities

Data Access for Decisions

- We are successfully equipping employees with access to data and the ability to analyze that data to create business value
- We have made significant progress toward integrating and consolidating data to provide a single view of the customer

Technology Orientation

- Our technology investments are made with the customer experience in mind, including enhancing customer-facing tools for self-service and new customer onboarding
- We are investing in scale-out architecture and resources (e.g., virtualized servers, cloud, “as-a-service” solutions)

Security and Privacy Practices

- We have the tools and services in place to effectively secure our IT infrastructure and customer data
- We are taking the steps necessary to improve preference and privacy management for our customers

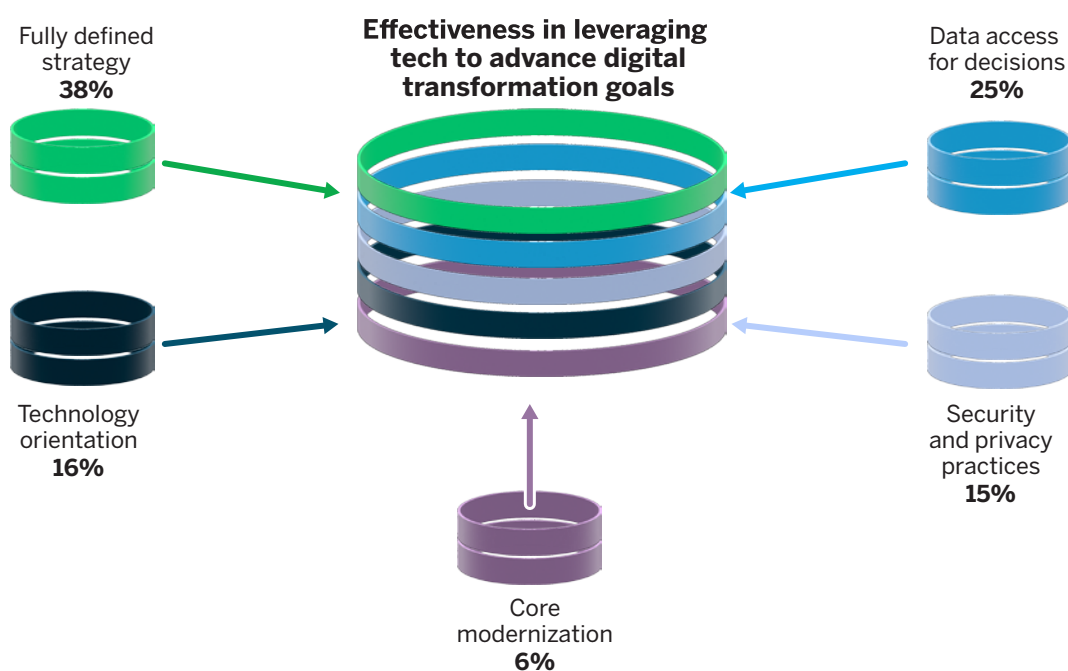
Core Modernization

- We are taking the steps necessary to modernize our core IT infrastructure for the future

All five factors play a statistically significant role, but the majority of respondents (38%) consider Fully Defined Strategy the most important driver impacting effective leverage of tech for digital transformation. Data Access for Decisions is deemed the second most important (25%), followed by Technology Orientation (16%), Security and Privacy (15%) and Core Modernization (6%). Although Fully Defined Strategy takes the top spot, only slightly more than half of respondents say they have practices in place to capitalize on that driver.

Figure 7: A fully defined strategy is seen as the most important factor in effectively leveraging tech for transformation

Percentage of variation explained by each factor

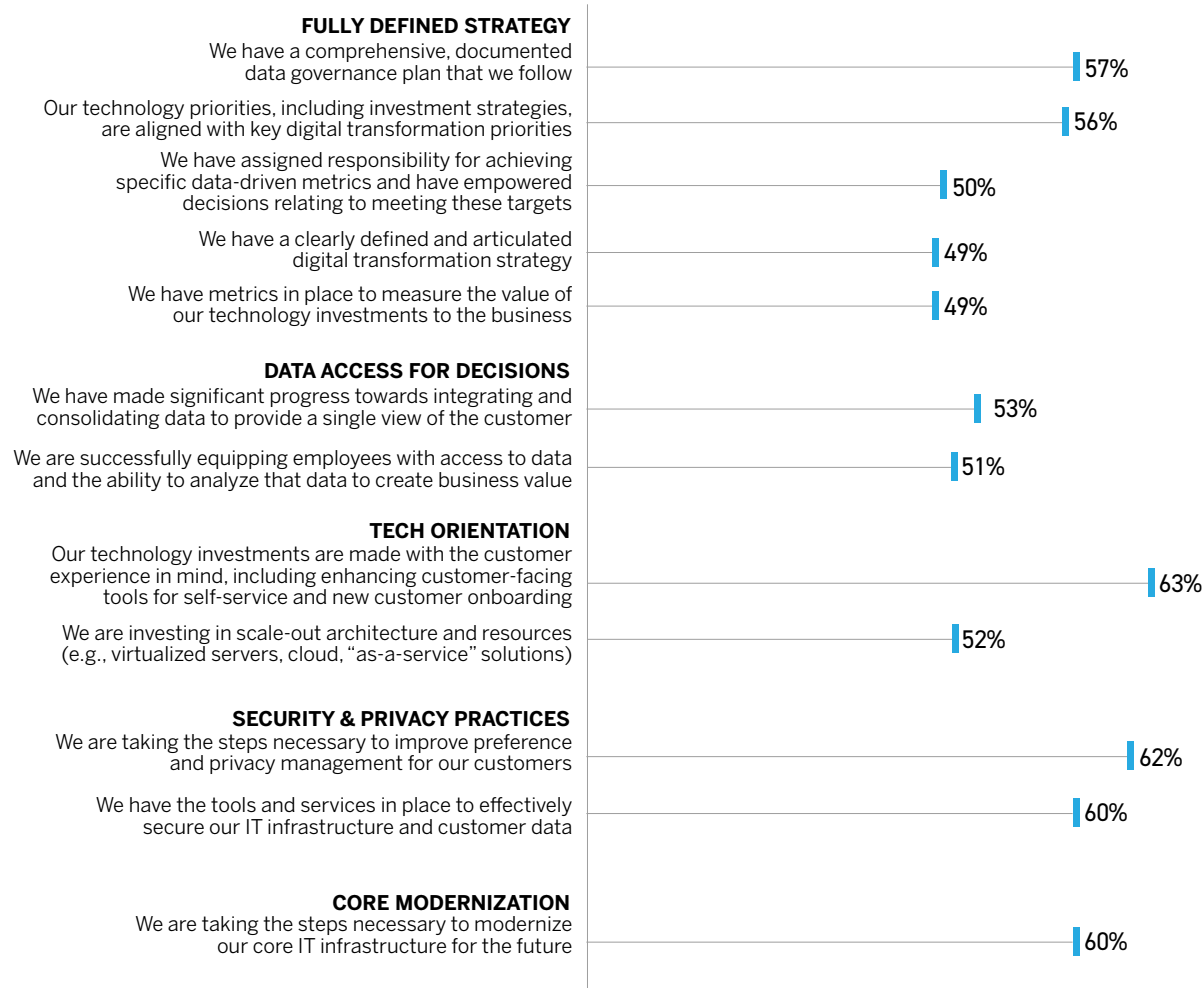


Source: Arizent, Building a Future-Ready Tech Strategy 2022
Base: Total respondents n=394

Leader organizations are consistently stronger at all measured elements of each driver, while the lack of empowerment for employees at trailing organizations is significant. The largest divide is observed in the Data Access for Decisions driver in which 86% of leaders strongly agreed that their organizations are successfully equipping employees with access to data and the ability to analyze that data to create business value. Only 5% of respondents who feel they are trailing their contemporaries agreed with that statement.

Figure 8: Nearly half of all respondents do not have the practices in place to successfully execute on the top driver

% who strongly agree with the statement (8, 9 or 10 on 10-point scale)

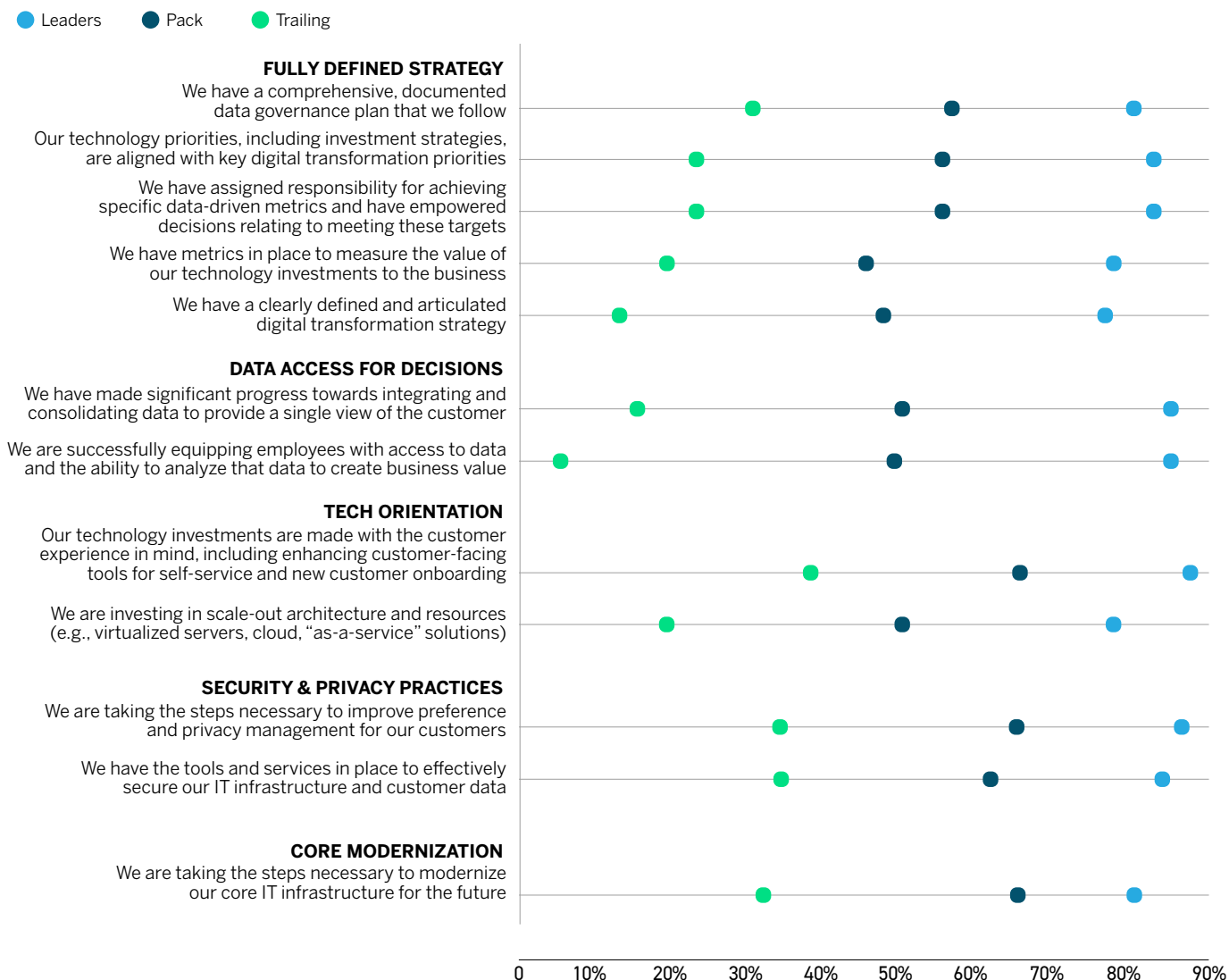


Source: Arizent, Building a Future-Ready Tech Strategy 2022
Base: Total respondents n=394

Question: Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each as it relates to your organization.

Figure 9: Leaders are consistently stronger on all drivers; the lack of empowerment for employees at trailing organizations is particularly notable

% who strongly agree with the statement (8, 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale)



Source: Arizent, Building a Future-Ready Tech Strategy 2022

Base: Leaders n=119; Pack n=195; Trailing n=80

Question: Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each as it relates to your organization.

Each industry has its own strengths and weaknesses

When looking at the survey results by sector, each industry has its own strengths and weaknesses. The banking industry is strongest on practices related to core modernization, tech orientation and security/privacy practices. However, there is room for improvement in the areas of data unification, data access and metrics to measure ROI from tech investments.

The mortgage industry shows strength in customer-facing tech orientation, preference and privacy management, data unification and alignment of technology priorities with digital transformation goals. But investing in scale-out architectures and resources such as virtualized servers, cloud technology and as-a-service solutions could be improved.

Insurance strengths include security/privacy practices and core modernization efforts. Weaknesses include establishing clearly defined and articulated digital transformation strategies and investing in scale-out architectures.

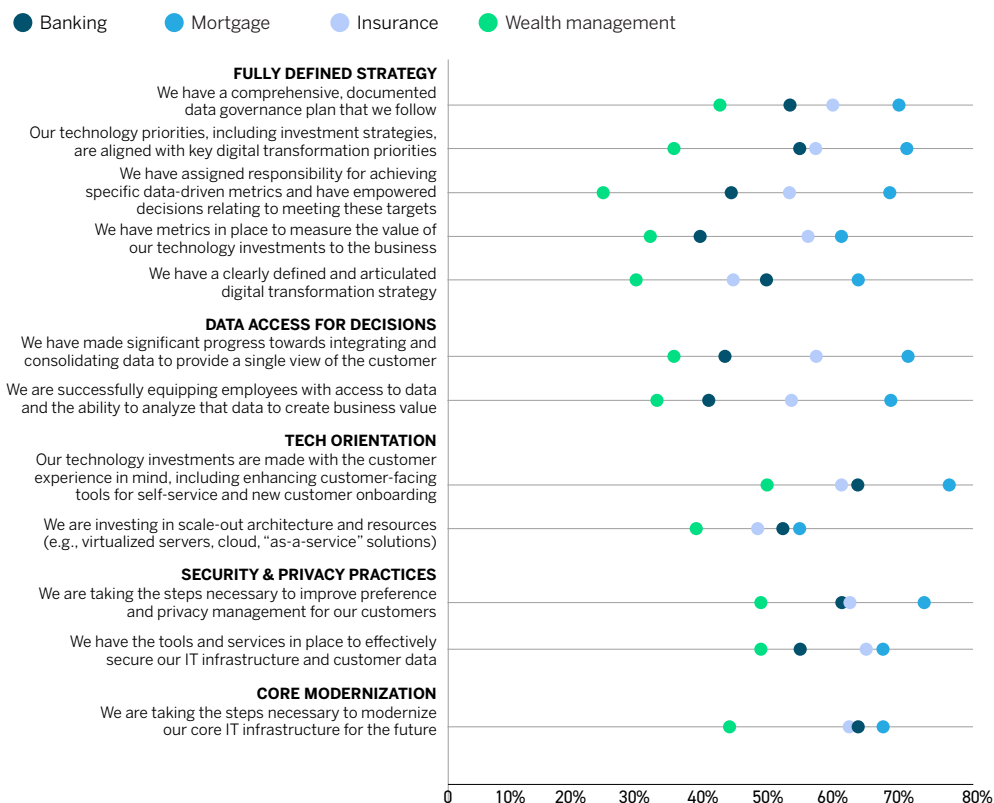
Wealth management, which trails overall compared to the other sectors, is strongest on customer-facing technology orientations and security/privacy practices. The biggest weaknesses are practices related to strategy, data unification and data access.

For most organizations

there is opportunity to improve practices related to unifying and providing access to data.

Figure 10: There are some notable differences in readiness by vertical

% who strongly agree with the statement (8, 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale)



Source: Arizent, Building a Future-Ready Tech Strategy 2022

Base: Banking n=123; Mortgage n=61; Insurance n=107; Wealth management n=103

Question: Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each as it relates to your organization.

The roadblocks to success and overcoming challenges

What's now and what's next

Organizations across the represented industries are making significant investments in a wide range of technologies to advance their digital transformations. However, some tools are seeing more extensive adoption than others.

Once again, the pandemic seems to be impacting the results, as resources that support remote work see the widest implementation.

In terms of tech already being implemented across industries, collaboration tools like Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Slack are the most prominent, with 69% of respondents saying such applications are being used for all possible use cases. The only other types of tech to see such wide implementation among more than half of all respondents are enhanced security and fraud mitigation (58%), mobile apps (56%) and cloud-based architectures (51%).

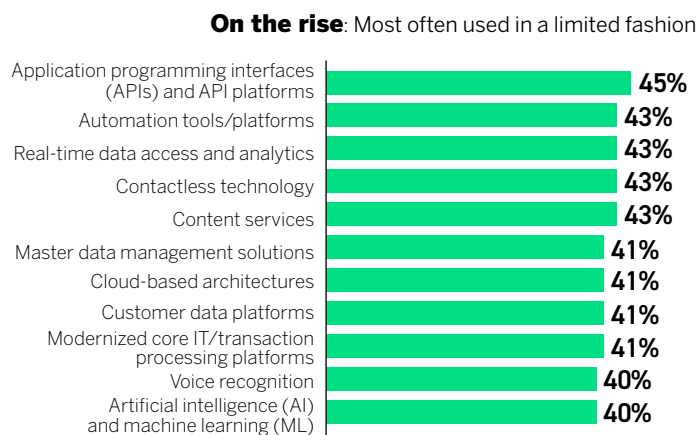
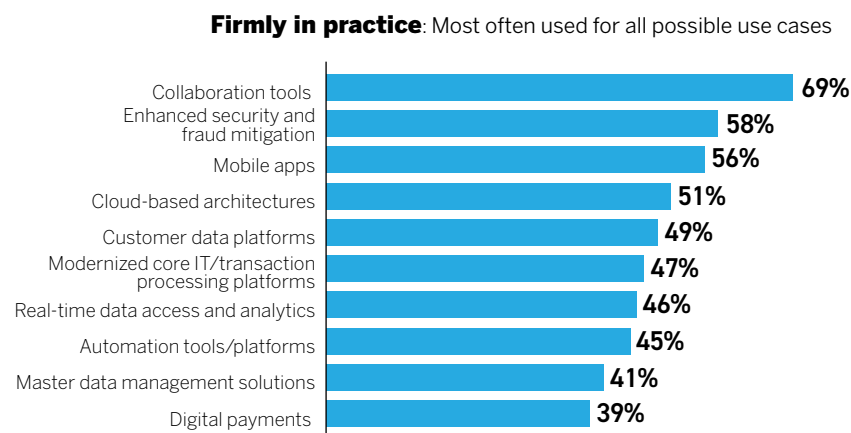
Bringing up the rear are customer data platforms (49%), modernized core IT/transaction processing platforms (47%), real-time data access and analytics (46%), automation tools/platforms (45%), master data management solutions (41%) and digital payments (39%).

There is far less variance among respondents when considering forms of technology that are still finding their place in the digital transformation strategies of their respective industries.

When asked about tools most often used in a limited fashion but seen as “on the rise,” application programming interfaces and API platforms rank the highest at 45%. This was followed by automation tools/platforms, content services, contactless technology and real-time data access and analytics. Each form of tech are most often used in a limited fashion by 43% of respondents.

Cloud-based architectures (41%), master data management solutions (41%), modernized core IT/transaction processing platforms (41%), customer data platforms (41%), voice recognition (40%) and artificial intelligence and machine learning (40%) complete the list of resources still being embraced on a more limited scale across industries.

Figure 11: Companies are making investments in a broad selection of technologies



Source: Arizent, Building a Future-Ready Tech Strategy 2022
Base: Total respondents n=394

Question: How is your organization using each of the following technologies?

Getting out what you put in

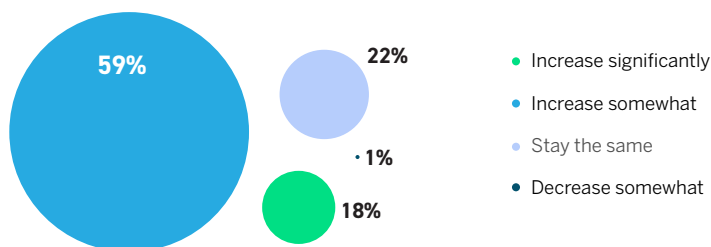
The nearly 400 management-level respondents surveyed see great value in a long-term commitment to technology and say their organizations are willing to back up that commitment with investment.

Approximately 76%, or three out of four respondents, expect technology spending to increase in 2022. More than half (58%) say they will increase spending somewhat, while nearly one in five (18%) say they will increase spending significantly. About 22% of respondents say technology spending will remain stagnant, while just 1% plan to scale back.

Collaboration

tools, enhanced security and fraud mitigation, mobile and cloud are among the most widely deployed technologies today.

Figure 12: Companies are signaling a continued commitment to technology with 3 out of 4 expecting spending to increase in 2022



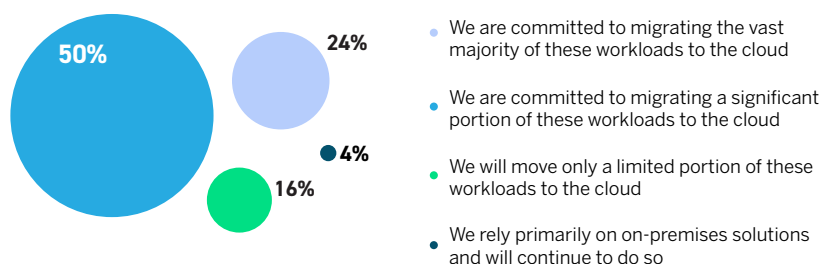
Source: Arizent, Building a Future-Ready Tech Strategy 2022
Base: Total respondents n=394

Question: How is your technology spend likely to change over the next 12 months?

The commitment to increasing the technology budget is fairly consistent across all surveyed industries, but banks are willing to go further. The banking industry was the most likely to signal a “significant increase” at 25%, followed by insurance at 16%, mortgage at 15% and wealth management at 12%.

And companies aren’t just allocating their dollars. They’re allocating their work process to tech as well, relying on the efficiencies provided by these tools to push their bottom lines a bit higher. Nearly three out of four, or 74% of respondents, say their organizations are committed to moving a significant portion or a majority of workloads central to digital transformation to the cloud.

Figure 13: A majority have committed to moving a significant portion or a majority of workloads that are central to digital transformation to the cloud



Source: Arizent, Building a Future-Ready Tech Strategy 2022
Base: Total respondents n=394

Question: Which of the following best describes your organization’s use of the cloud to manage the IT/application workloads that are central to your digital transformation initiatives?

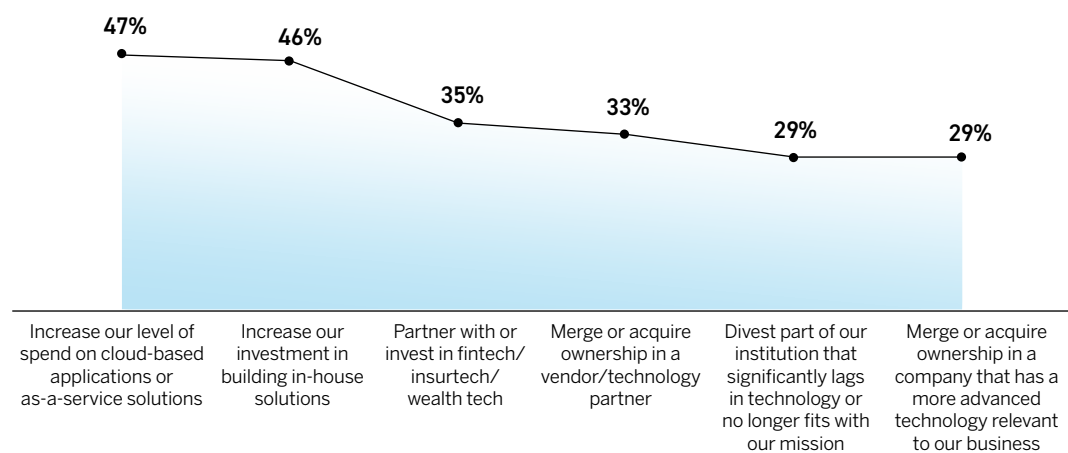
When it comes to accelerating their digital transformation initiatives, professionals across all industries understand the correlation between spending and success. To reap the benefits of a strong, future-ready tech strategy, organizations must be willing to invest in emerging tools, as well as provide the budget to support the tools already in their arsenals.

When asked how likely their organizations are to take certain actions over the next 12 to 18 months in order to achieve their digital transformation goals, increasing spend level on cloud-based applications or “as-a-service” solutions is ranked the highest at 47%. This is followed closely by increasing investment in building in-house solutions at 46%.

Rounding out the list are partnering with or investing in fintech/insurtech/wealth tech (35% likely), merging with or acquiring ownership in a vendor/technology partner (33%), divesting part of our institution that significantly lags in technology or no longer fits with our mission (29%) and merging with or acquiring ownership in a company that has a more advanced technology stack that is relevant to our business (29%).

Figure 14: Companies are most likely to increase spending on cloud-based services and in-house solutions

% who are highly likely to take the action (8, 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale)



Source: Arizent, Building a Future-Ready Tech Strategy 2022
Base: Total respondents n=394

Question: How likely is your organization to take any of the following actions over the next 12-18 months to accelerate your digital transformation strategy/initiatives?

1 out of 3
are likely to turn to fintechs, M&A to accelerate digital transformation initiatives.

Identifying obstacles

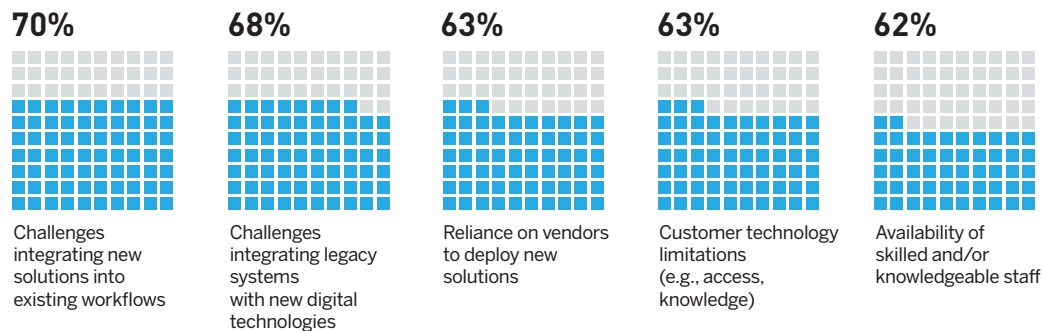
The roadblocks companies need to overcome to advance key technology initiatives are numerous. Chief among them are challenges related to integration, customer limitations, reliance on vendors and staff availability.

When asked to rate the barriers to advancing technology initiatives at their organizations on a 10-point scale, with 1 indicating that it is not a barrier and 10 indicating it is a permanent roadblock, respondents rate challenges integrating new solutions into existing workflows the highest at 70%. The rest of the top five barriers are challenges integrating legacy systems with new digital technologies (68%), customer technology limitations (63%), reliance on vendors to deploy new solutions (63%) and availability of skilled and/or knowledgeable staff (62%).

Looming just outside the top five are matters related to resistance, oversight and experience. Customer resistance to adopting new technologies (59%), regulatory/compliance concerns or requirements (58%), siloed data sources (57%), data governance/data management (57%) and lack of organizational experience with new technologies (56%) round out the top ten barriers.

Figure 15: Among the roadblocks companies need to overcome to advance technology initiatives are integration, customer limitations, reliance on vendors and staff availability

% who rate each a significant challenge (6 to 10 on a 10-point scale)



Source: Arizent, Building a Future-Ready Tech Strategy 2022
Base: Total respondents n=394

Question: What are the barriers to advancing technology initiatives at your organization?

How leaders manage to stay out front

Confident approach = positive outcomes

With the top investment priorities and challenges identified, what separates the industry leaders from the rest of the pack?

For the 119 respondents who identify themselves as leaders in this research, the differences lie in outcomes, confidence and embracing the next big idea.

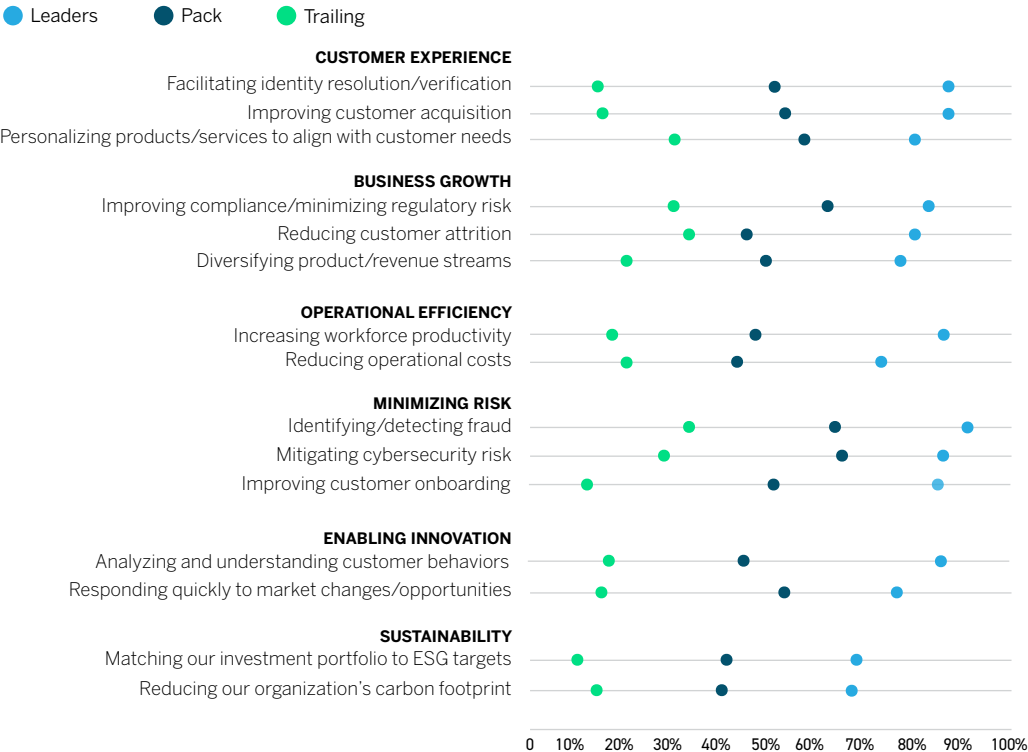
Leaders are shown to get better outcomes in every measurable category relating to matters of customer experience, business growth, operational efficiency, risk mitigation, innovation and sustainability. The largest measured divides between leaders and the rest of the field are customer service elements.

Leaders say they are 88% effective at facilitating identity resolution/verification compared to those who are in the pack at 51% effective and those who trail at 15% effective.

Customer onboarding saw similar gaps, with leaders at 86% effective, those in the pack at 51% effective and those who trail at 13% effective.

Figure 16: Leaders get better outcomes

% who are highly effective (8, 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale)



Source: Arizent, Building a Future-Ready Tech Strategy 2022
Base: Total respondents n=394

Question: How effective is your organization at each of the following?

Organizations best at leveraging technology are much more likely to realize key business outcomes.

Trusting your gut

Leaders are more confident that the choices they make related to their digital transformation strategies are the right ones. When asked if their organization is focusing on the right technology priorities to establish or maintain a best-in-class position among its core competitors, 62% of leaders say “Yes, definitely,” 37% say “Yes, probably,” and 1% say “Not sure.” None of the surveyed leaders say “No.”

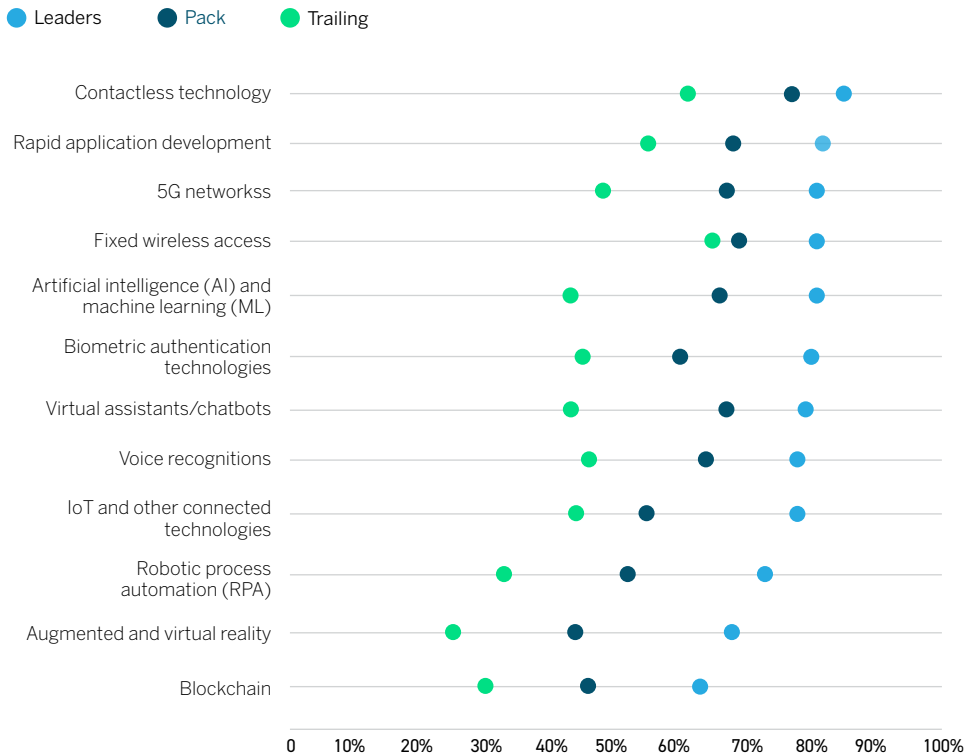
Meanwhile, those in the pack are slightly less confident. 36% of those respondents say “Yes, definitely,” 58% say “Yes, probably,” 4% say “Not sure,” and 2% say “No.”

Among those who are trailing, confidence drops sharply. Just 9% say “Yes, definitely,” 63% say “Yes, probably,” 13% say “Not sure,” and 16% say “no.”

Leaders are also more eager to adopt key technologies like digital payments, content services and master data management. Willingness to lean into emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, machine learning, biometric authentication, and augmented and virtual reality is another quality that helps leaders stand apart.

Figure 17: Leaders are more likely to lean into more emerging technologies like AI/ML, biometric authentication, augmented and virtual reality and others

% using in a limited fashion or for all possible use cases

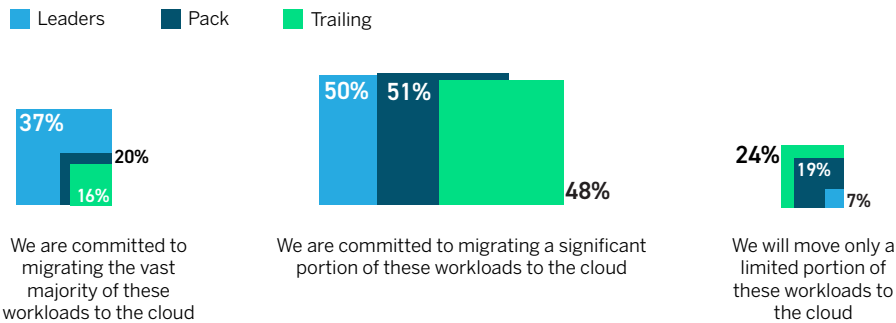


Source: Arizent, Building a Future-Ready Tech Strategy 2022
Base: Leaders n=119; Pack n=195; Trailing n=80
Question: Which of the following technologies are you using?

Looking to the cloud and beyond

No matter where their organizations are in the race toward a future-ready tech strategy, about half of all respondents are willing to move at least a significant portion of workloads to the cloud. Commitment to take that step among leaders, those in the pack and those trailing are 50%, 51% and 48% of respondents, respectively.

Figure 18: Leaders are more likely to demonstrate a commitment to move the majority of workloads central to digital transformation to the cloud



Source: Arizent, Building a Future-Ready Tech Strategy 2022

Base: Leaders n=119; Pack n=195; Trailing n=80

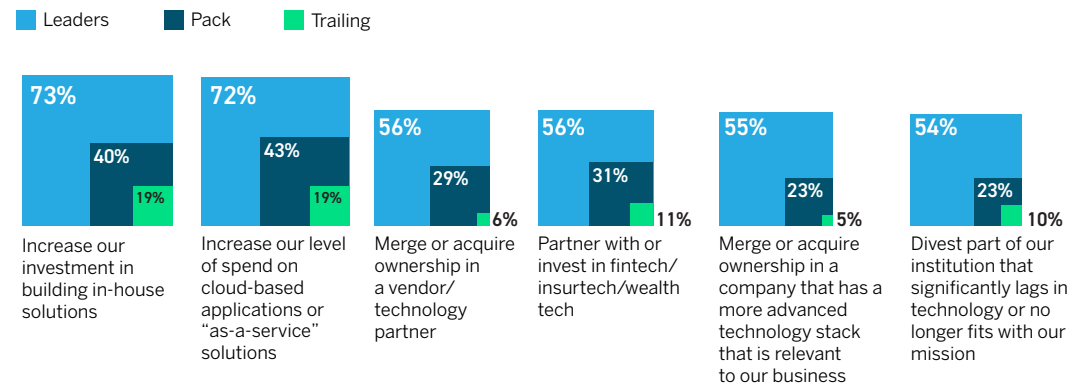
Question: Which of the following best describes your organization's use of the cloud to manage the IT/application workloads that are central to your digital transformation initiatives?

Leaders also have the edge in willingness to spend. Among this group, 73% say their organizations are likely to increase investments in building in-house solutions and 72% are likely to increase their level of spending on cloud-based applications or “as-a-service” solutions.

In comparison, 40% of those in the pack say their organizations are likely to invest in in-house solutions and 43% are likely to allocate spending to the cloud. Among those trailing, likelihood percentages for both initiatives sit at just 19%.

Figure 19: Leaders are more likely to increase spending on both in-house and cloud, partner with tech firms, invest in M&A or divest of parts of the business that are underperforming

% who are highly likely to take the action (8, 9, or 10 on a 10-point scale)



Source: Arizent, Building a Future-Ready Tech Strategy 2022

Base: Leaders n=119; Pack n=195; Trailing n=80

Question: How likely is your organization to take any of the following actions over the next 12-18 months to accelerate your digital transformation strategy/initiatives?

9 out of 10

leaders are committed to moving a majority of workloads central to digital transformation to the cloud.

Conclusions

- Those most effectively leveraging technology to advance digital transformation goals (Leaders) and followers are separated by confidence, commitment and cash. More than half of all leaders (62%) are confident that they are “definitely” focusing on the right technology priorities to establish or maintain a best-in-class competitive position, while more than a third (37%) are confident that they are “probably” making the right choices. Leaders are also more than three times as likely to increase spending to support digital transformation efforts than those who trail the pack. This suggests that organizations should take a proactive approach to forming tech strategies and stay the course as their industry evolves. Because leader organizations exhibit a higher level of empowerment among staff, there may also be benefits to extending decision-making to those outside of management.
- Professionals are looking to the cloud to bolster their digital transformation strategies and reliance on that technology is expected to persist into the future. Regardless of transformation maturity, about half of all respondents are willing to move at least a significant portion of workloads to the cloud, as well as increase spending to support cloud-based technology. This bodes well for financial and professional services, as clients and staff members who regularly rely on cloud-based services from the likes of Google, Apple or Amazon to store their personal information will feel right at home with the transition.
- Although customers are top of mind as organizations explore why and how they want to evolve, there is an understanding across industries that customers can present a number of barriers to progress as well. Customer limitations and customer resistance to new technology rank high as factors that can cause progress to grind to a halt, meaning organizations must seek buy-in from clients on the same level they seek buy-in from staff to ensure success.
- Decision-makers should keep an eye on emerging technology that aids remote work and gives customers greater access to an organization’s full suite of tech tools from afar, as working face-to-face remains a secondary option for many. Digital collaboration tools like Zoom and Slack dominate in terms of wide adoption among financial organizations, followed by tools to fight fraud, improve the mobile app experience and leverage use of cloud-based architectures.

- Spending paves the way for success and there is no one investment area that dominates the field as organizations fortify their digital transformation plans. In terms of emerging tech that is just starting to see widespread adoption, API platforms, automation tools/platforms, content services, contactless technology and real-time data access all rank high and are separated by mere percentage points. This feedback illustrates that making sure the tech you rely on fits neatly into your organization's specific strategy has a greater impact than the type of technology chosen.
- The majority of respondents are still "in the pack" with their contemporaries, meaning the ability to break out as a leader could be just a few tweaks and adjustments away. With the right changes, organizations can enjoy better outcomes related to customer experience, business growth, operational efficiency, risk mitigation, innovation and sustainability.



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