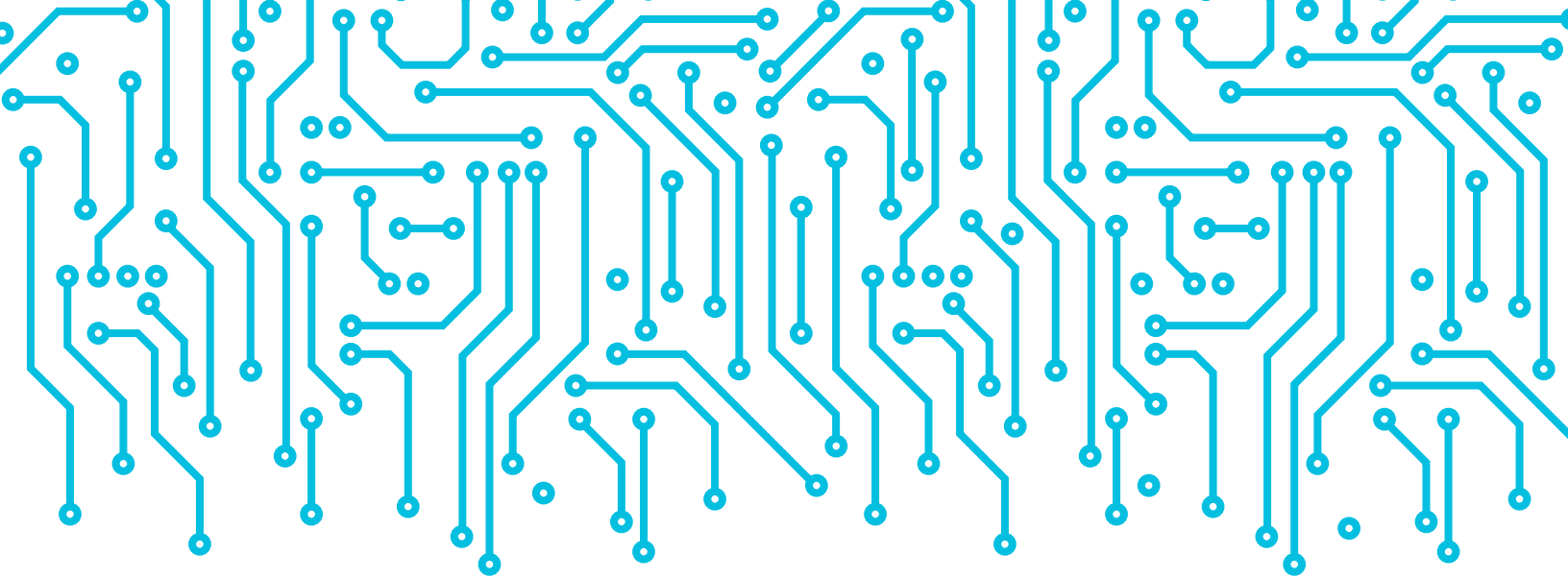


# Change-Ready and Able

Building Agility Into the  
Organizational DNA

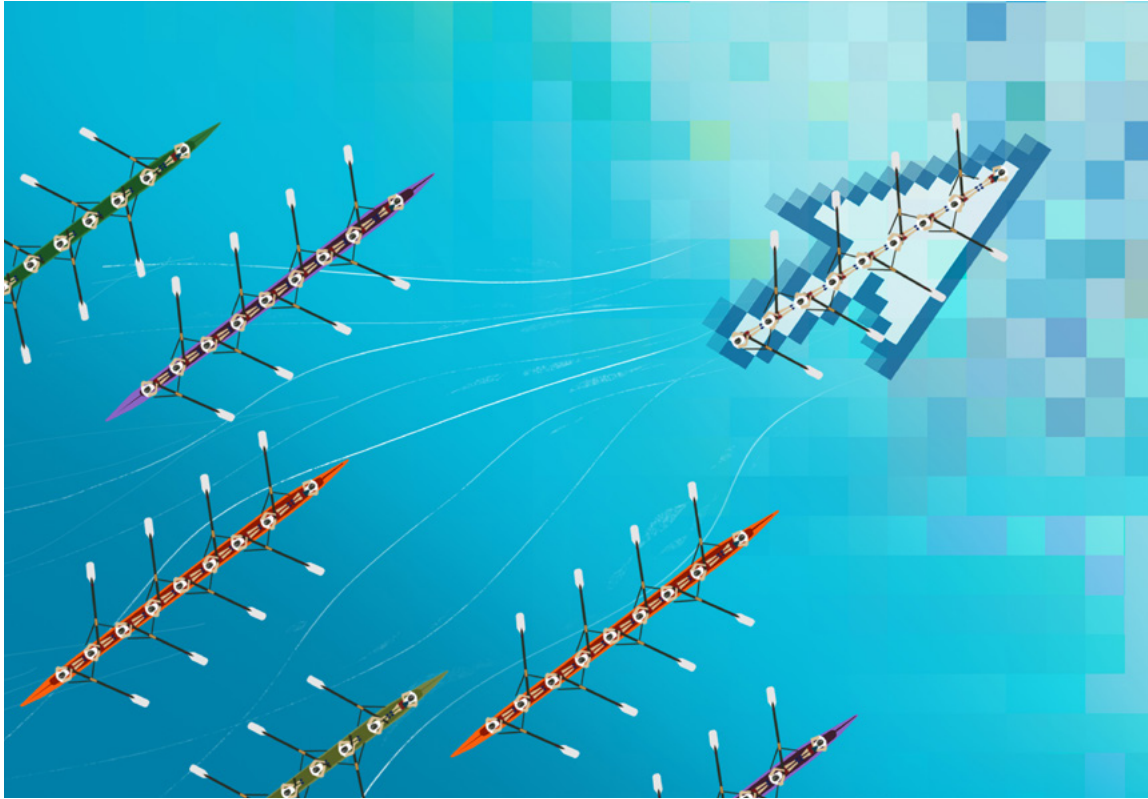




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Illustrations by Eva Vázquez



## Ready, Set, Change!

Thriving amid disruption requires project leaders to develop new skills and mindsets.

Geopolitical unrest, supply chain woes, a worsening environmental crisis, wildly fluctuating economic projections and serious project talent shortages are all pushing organizations and their project teams to the limit. On top of all that, customer demands are changing rapidly, forcing companies to innovate and lean into approaches that speed time to market and maximize ROI.

But there's a disconnect: More than half (**53 percent**) of COOs in a 2022 [PwC survey](#) say increasing agility is very important for their company to grow this year. Yet only **33 percent** of respondents reported high organizational agility in [PMI's 2021 Pulse of the Profession®](#).

Perhaps nowhere is the need for nonstop agility more apparent than in healthcare—an industry forced to fundamentally rethink,

reimagine and restart during the pandemic. Nearly all (**97 percent**) healthcare executives said COVID-19 significantly accelerated their transformation efforts, according to a 2021 [KPMG global survey](#).

Whether it was record-breaking vaccine developments or sudden shifts to virtual care, many healthcare organizations found their way, delivering breathtakingly innovative and patient-centered care. The forward-thinking ones are continuing their efforts: **60 percent** reported adding new digital projects, and **42 percent** said they were accelerating existing digital transformation plans, according to a 2021 [BDO global survey](#).

Case in point: India's Technology Information Forecasting and Assessment Council launched a pilot to scale telehealth services for 60,000 patients living in rural areas. Project leaders aim to increase patient monitoring through wearables and health data transfer. But for that to happen, teams must adapt—overcoming slow internet, other connectivity issues and stakeholder resistance.

It's not just the healthcare sector, of course. Across industries and regions, there's an urgency to get ahead of the next wave of disruption—from retailers making moves in the metaverse to financial institutions developing digital-only banks. And almost all of them have the benefit of pandemic hindsight: the avalanche of pivots providing momentum and lessons learned for how companies can deliver meaningful change.

**53%** of COOs say **increasing agility** is very important for their company to grow this year.

Source: PwC

“Now we see the correlation between the adaptability of a company and its ability to cope with any crisis,” says Jorge Alberto Pérez Torres, PMP, deputy director of software development at financial services company Allianz, México City. “From the companies that are mere survivors to the ones that become leaders, it is clear the importance of organizational agility to respond to change.”

Building a future-focused enterprise means cultivating a bone-deep instinct to shift on demand. And that often requires an overhaul of how companies choose, plan, execute and measure projects.

“For a change to really land, it's not enough that you simply create and deploy it,” says Taise Cadore, global transformation PMO director for consumer goods company Reckitt, Frankfurt. “It also needs to be used and embedded on a daily basis. It needs to become part of the business—because if not, it gets lost over time.”

Here's how organizations and their project leaders are making agility part of their DNA.



## Embracing New Ways of Working

The pandemic proved to be a powerful incubator for fresh thinking around the very nature of how people work, especially when it came to digital transformation. There's still much to be done, though: **55 percent** of companies said their digital strategy is often outpaced by business demands, according to a global survey published in April by Workday.

For those companies that get it right, the rewards are massive. By accelerating the use of emerging technologies and adopting a digital-first mindset, companies can position their teams to better anticipate risks and more proactively pursue opportunities.

One prime example: To mitigate supply chain gaps and modernize operations, Kraft Heinz migrated its global data center to a cloud-based AI-driven system that generates real-time predictive analytics. The shift is helping the company anticipate shortages and interruptions so it can get products to retailers—and consumers—more quickly. Those insights will not only improve the customer experience, but also drive investment in further innovations.

Digital tools and adaptable platforms are fast becoming a must-have at Government Technology Agency of Singapore (GovTech).

The goal? A tech infrastructure “that can accommodate and support changing requirements quickly,” says Lorraine Ong, deputy director, advanced cybersecurity capabilities in GovTech’s cybersecurity group.

By replacing traditional data center infrastructure with cloud technology, for instance, GovTech can scale resources more quickly and act on strategic priorities more efficiently. It’s part of a larger digital transformation that helps the organization’s teams maintain agility and “tweak delivery approaches in response to changing needs,” Ong says.

While the demand for tech-driven agility might be fast and furious, organizations

mustn’t be tempted to take shortcuts. When U.S. apparel giant Levi Strauss & Co. launched a digital transformation to boost agility, it devoted four years to developing a robotic process automation center of excellence. Not only has this helped build an enterprise-wide understanding of the technology, it has increased the staff’s focus by streamlining processes and eliminating certain manual tasks. The company also invested in building tech knowledge from within. That push included rolling out an eight-week machine learning bootcamp in 2021—offering training for more than 100 employees across North America, Europe, and Asia Pacific.



**“[Change] needs to become part of the business—because if not, it gets lost over time.”**

—Taise Cadore, Reckitt, Frankfurt

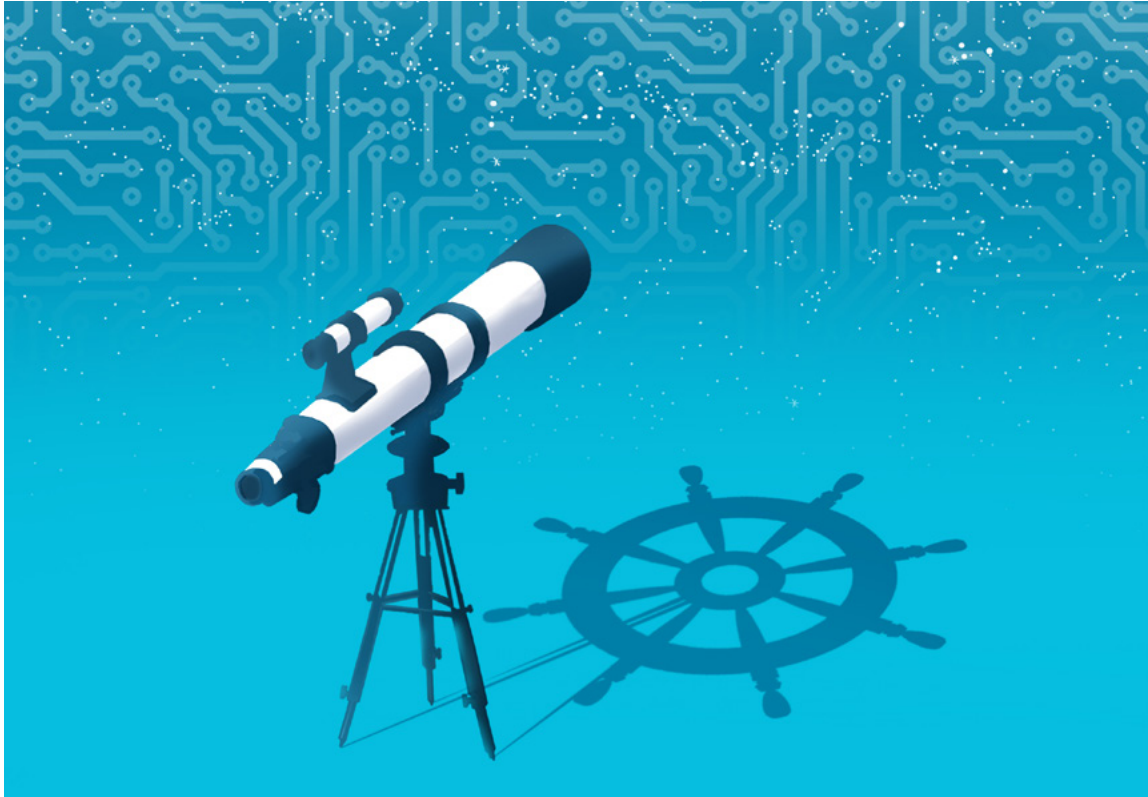
## The Catalyst for Change

Here’s what COOs believe will drive organizational shifts this year:



Source: [PwC Pulse Survey](#), 2022, PwC





## Empowering Changemakers

People are at the heart of any change-ready enterprise. Armed with the right knowledge and skills, project leaders can serve as the connective tissue—keeping teams in sync with the organizational strategy even as it must shift with market demands. The need for such leadership requires an organization-wide focus on identifying, developing, retaining and upskilling the right talent.

Creating internal teams dedicated to scaling agility across the enterprise can ensure there's a centralized strategy and a go-to source for truth. But those efforts can't be siloed, or companies may find the breadth and speed of buy-in may be limited. "It is critical to have an agile organizational culture across people, processes and technologies," Ong says.

As part of its goal to become a net-zero company by 2050, for example, BP created a center for agility and designated influencers to seed and elevate its vision for new strategies, processes and talent investments aimed at accelerating change. The payoff? In the past three years, some 350 teams contributed to more than US\$1 billion of accelerated delivery through

cost savings, engineering innovation and efficient delivery.

Core to such efforts for any company is elevating an ethos of flexing with purpose. “You need a culture that allows time to adapt, which implies investing in training, promoting collaboration and tolerating some mistakes, instead of always being in a hurry,” Pérez Torres says. “If you live in an environment in which everything is urgent, this initiative would not be possible.”

As part of building a changemaker mindset across the enterprise, companies must be deliberate in promoting skills like collaboration and empathy—which often means starting with basic power skills that are the building blocks for more agile ways of thinking and working. At Allianz Mexico, agility training includes a focus on time management, communication, change management and digital knowledge, Pérez Torres says. The company also encourages team members to pursue certifications or other specialized external training that can fine-tune knowledge and skills.

The goal is to build and maintain cross-functional teams, Pérez Torres says. Developing dynamic and versatile project



**“You need a culture that allows time to adapt.”**

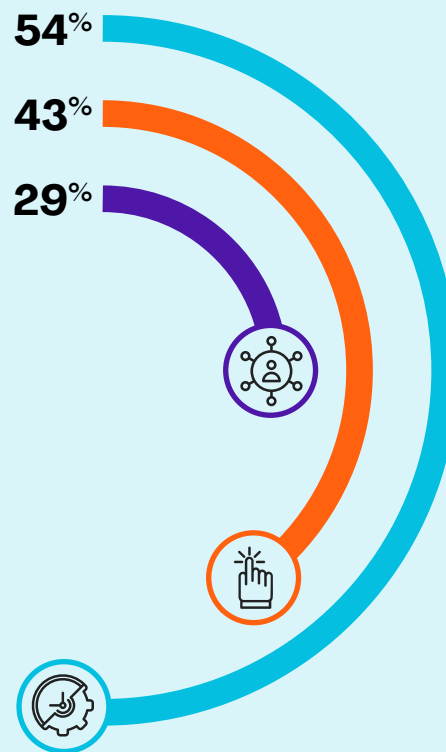
—Jorge Alberto Pérez Torres, PMP,  
Allianz, México City

## Pivoting with a Digital Edge

Company leaders see digital transformation as key to helping their organizations adapt and advance:

**41%** are investing in **digital capabilities.**

Which areas are companies targeting?



- Tech transformation for efficiency
- Tech for staff interaction and culture
- Connected products and services

Source: [PwC Pulse Survey](#), 2022, PwC

talent with a healthy appreciation (and tolerance) for change reduces the risk of change fatigue among teams.

“If the organization can avoid overspecialization and overdependence on specific persons by switching them among diverse tasks or teams, it will help decrease burnout because you will have more members of the team who know about one assignment,” he says. “And at the same time, it would help to improve resilience.”

At Reckitt, a tiered portfolio means multiple projects are run simultaneously, but at different levels of prioritization and

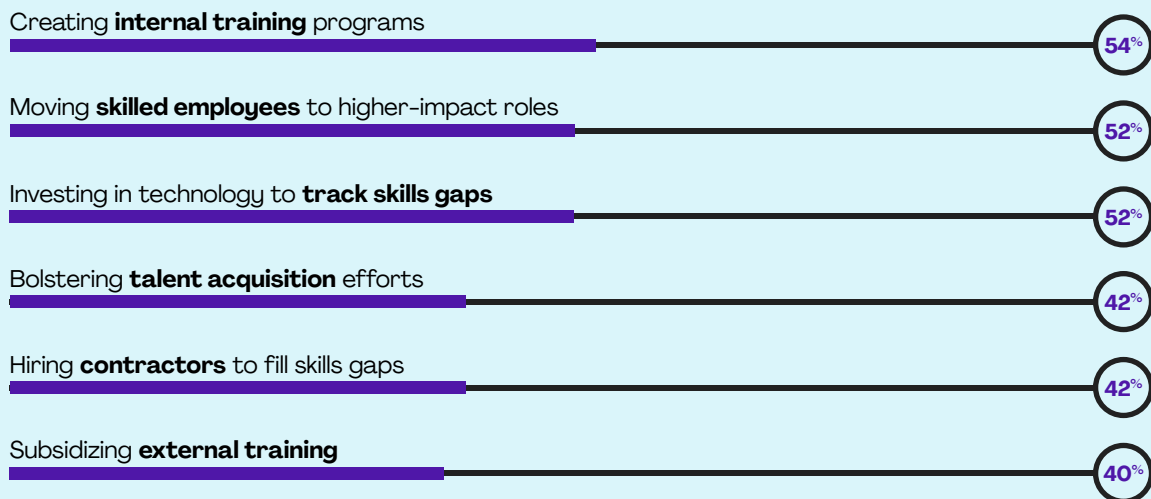
maturity. So when an obstacle arises—like inflation driving up costs or supply chain bottlenecks triggering delays—the company reevaluates each project and reallocates resources to those that are most urgent.

“We try to understand the strengths we have in the portfolio to overcome this difficulty,” Cadore says. “When a situation occurs, we deep-dive into our projects to understand which ones we can accelerate and which we can deprioritize.”

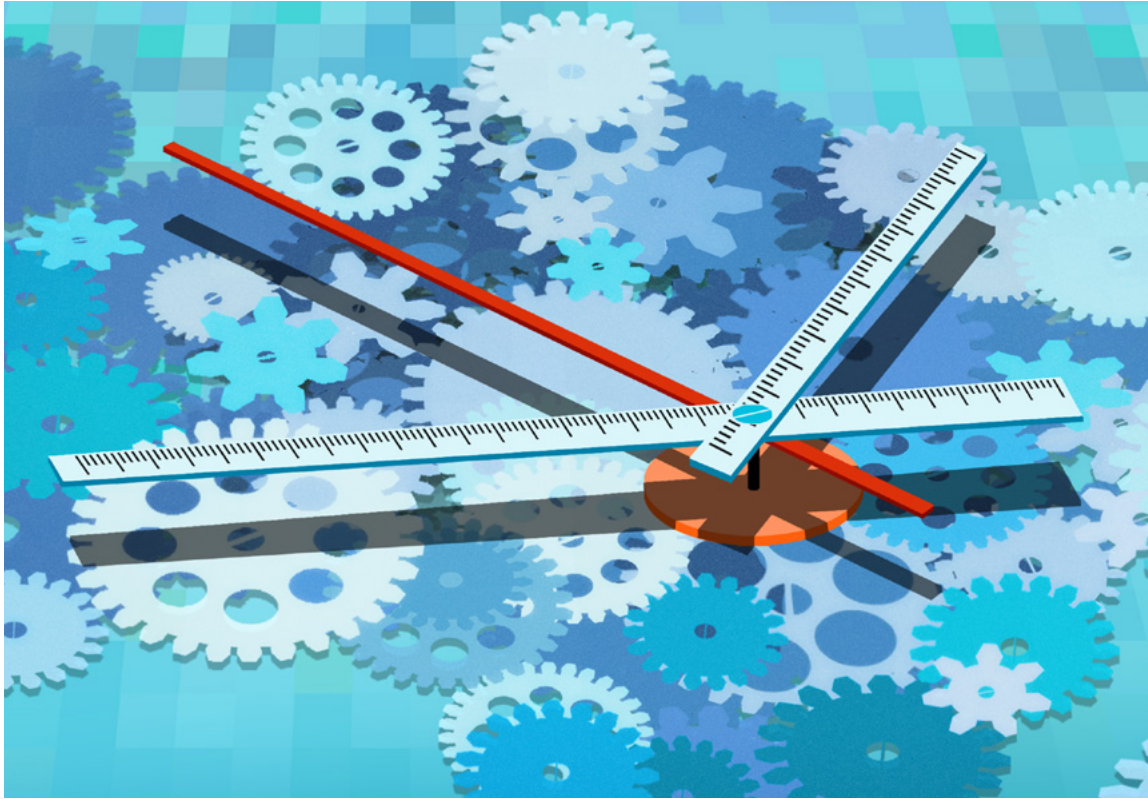
It’s those moments that highlight the ROI of having project leaders with the skills and mindsets to quickly adjust to shifting priorities.

## How to Empower Changemakers

Organizations need the right people to scale agility. Here’s how they’re developing top talent:



Source: [2022 Executive Survey: Making Agility More Than a Mindset](#), Ceridian, 2022



## ● Measuring Impact and Instilling Accountability

As agility becomes even more of a strategic priority, companies need to make certain their projects and the underlying processes and practices are driving the kind of change that supports strong performance—and even boosts the bottom line. Only by tracking the impact of their efforts can organizations identify weak links and adjust accordingly.

But in such a fast-paced environment, companies must ensure they're not pivoting for the sake of pivoting—but rather delivering meaningful change that meets customer demands. By capturing and analyzing targeted metrics against KPIs, organizations and their project teams can verify which shifts are delivering measurable value and more confidently course correct when the numbers don't add up to impact.

“The measurement of success need not be fixated on one or two outcomes but can evolve around the various objectives and goals for agility,” Ong says.

Assessing the right data and insights helps companies prioritize project resources—both funds and talent—and send them to the places they’re needed most. Getting this calculus right requires an ironclad process for aggregating data, coupled with a deep commitment to understanding the true benefits.

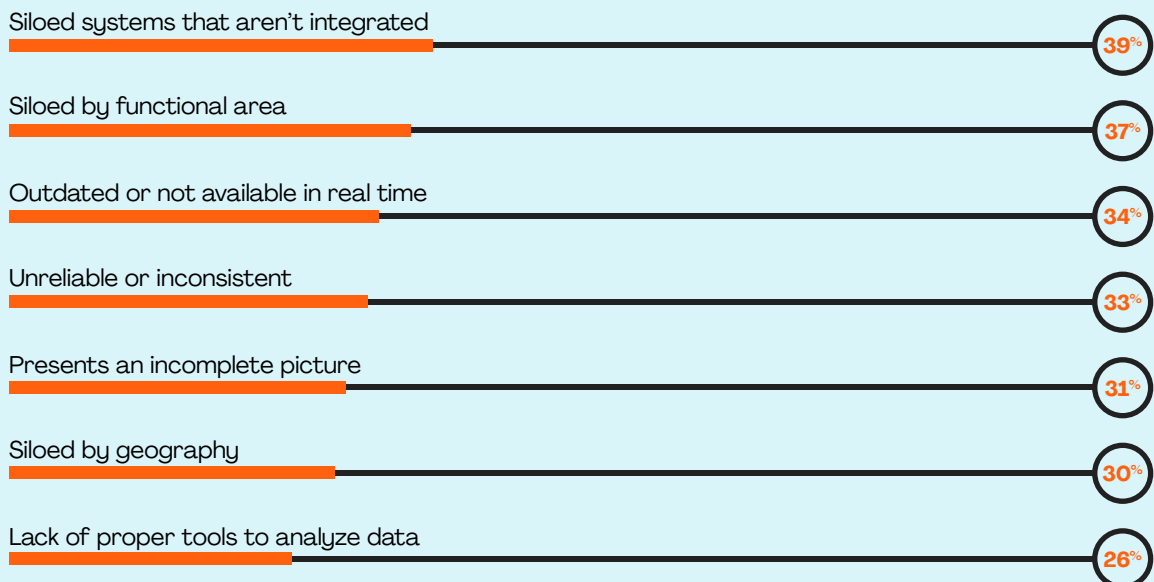
“The easy, direct metric is financials and time to deliver, which are often directly connected: We deliver, we get benefits,” Cadore says. “But then there’s another layer to big projects that we need to add, and that’s what else they intend to do. Transformation projects not only deliver productivity, but

they also change the way we work.”

Starting small can help companies prove that new processes and priorities are delivering the intended benefits—and can also help earn buy-in. BP seeded success by launching an agility pilot at its Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey business, where in just five months, teams achieved new efficiencies—like cutting an outstanding maintenance backlog by 30 percent—and boosted employee engagement scores. By capturing these metrics and showing real impact, project leaders were able to demonstrate benefits—and cement plans for scaling new ways of

## Improving Data-Driven Insights

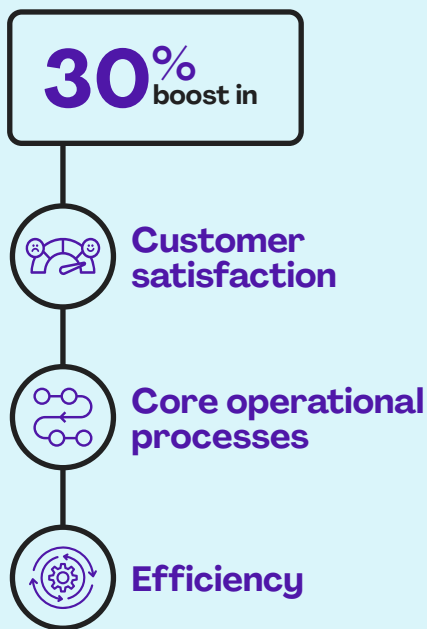
Pivoting in the right direction won’t happen if a company’s data is off target. These are the most common data challenges:



Source: [2022 Executive Survey: Making Agility More Than a Mindset](#), Ceridian, 2022

## High-Impact Benefits of Agility

Seeding an enterprise-wide ability to flex with change can have a huge payoff—delivering critical gains across the company:



**5x to 10x**  
increase in **decision-making speed**



Source: McKinsey & Co., 2021

working across the company's production and operations teams.

Customer satisfaction can be another powerful metric, providing a read on the strength and maturity of an organization's agility and its ability to meet market demands.

"Organizations that value customers and involve them as part of their project and product development life cycle are able to create better products and successful projects," Ong says. "Capturing customer feedback regularly and making modifications to the product roadmap help project teams achieve faster time to market, adapt and adjust processes, and innovate products that can meet customers' needs."

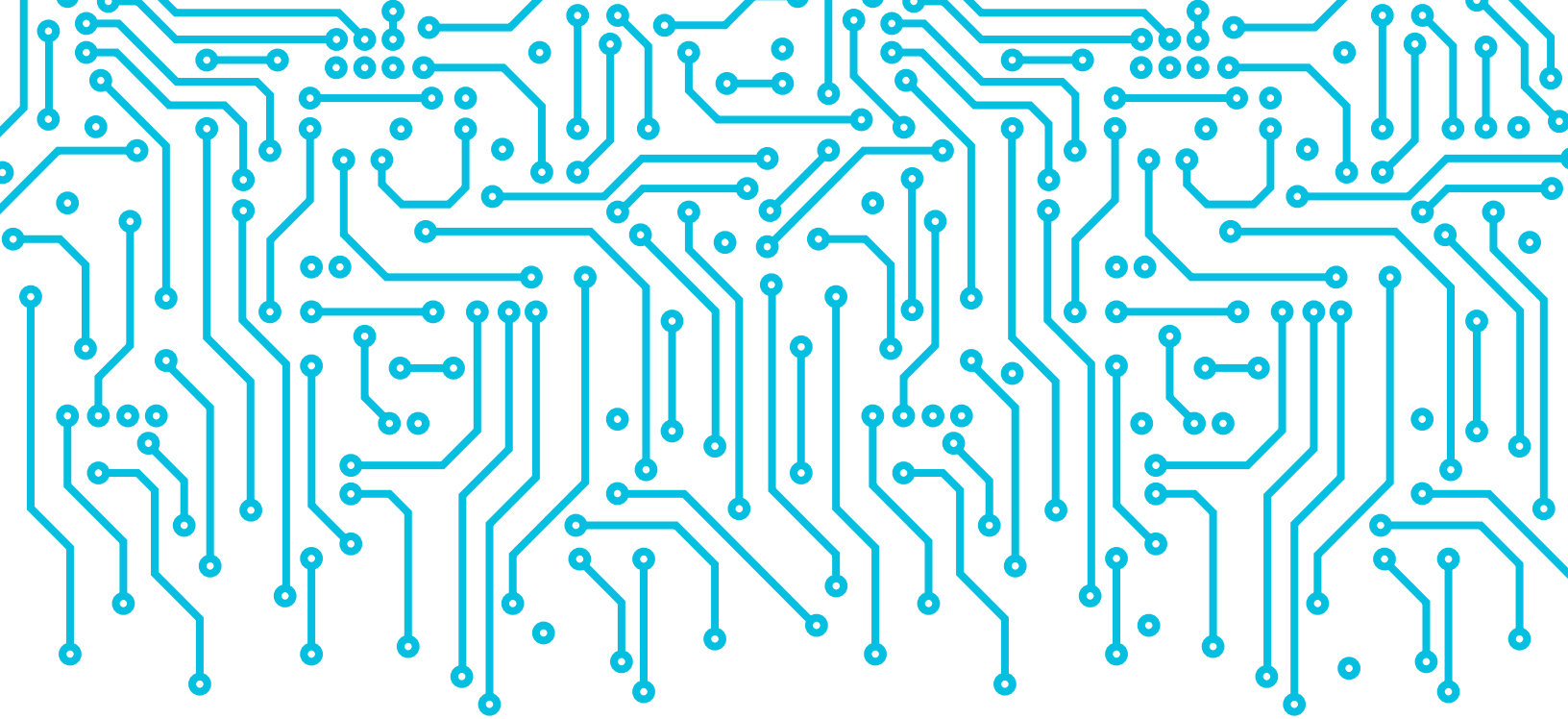
Applying lessons from a deluge of changes both big and small helps the entire company get ahead of the next wave of disruption.

"Organizational agility is not just about the performance of each individual team but redesigning the organization into a network of high-performing teams to achieve the collective outcome," Ong says. "Only in this way can an organization mature and truly become agile."



**"Success need not be fixated on one or two outcomes but can evolve around the various objectives."**

—Lorraine Ong, Government Technology Agency of Singapore



## Strengthening Muscle Memory

Now more than ever, companies must empower their people to make change happen. That process might not look the same for every organization, but there are certain fundamental requirements: mastering new ways of working through digital transformation, developing changemakers who can inspire others, and establishing accountability by measuring the true depth and breadth of agility across the enterprise.

The result? Future-focused project leaders and teams that deliver real value to the organization and fuel new ways of doing business. And those are precisely the kind of people companies need right now.



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Project Management Institute | Global Headquarters | 14 Campus Blvd Newtown Square, PA 19073-3299 USA | Tel: +1 610 356 4600

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