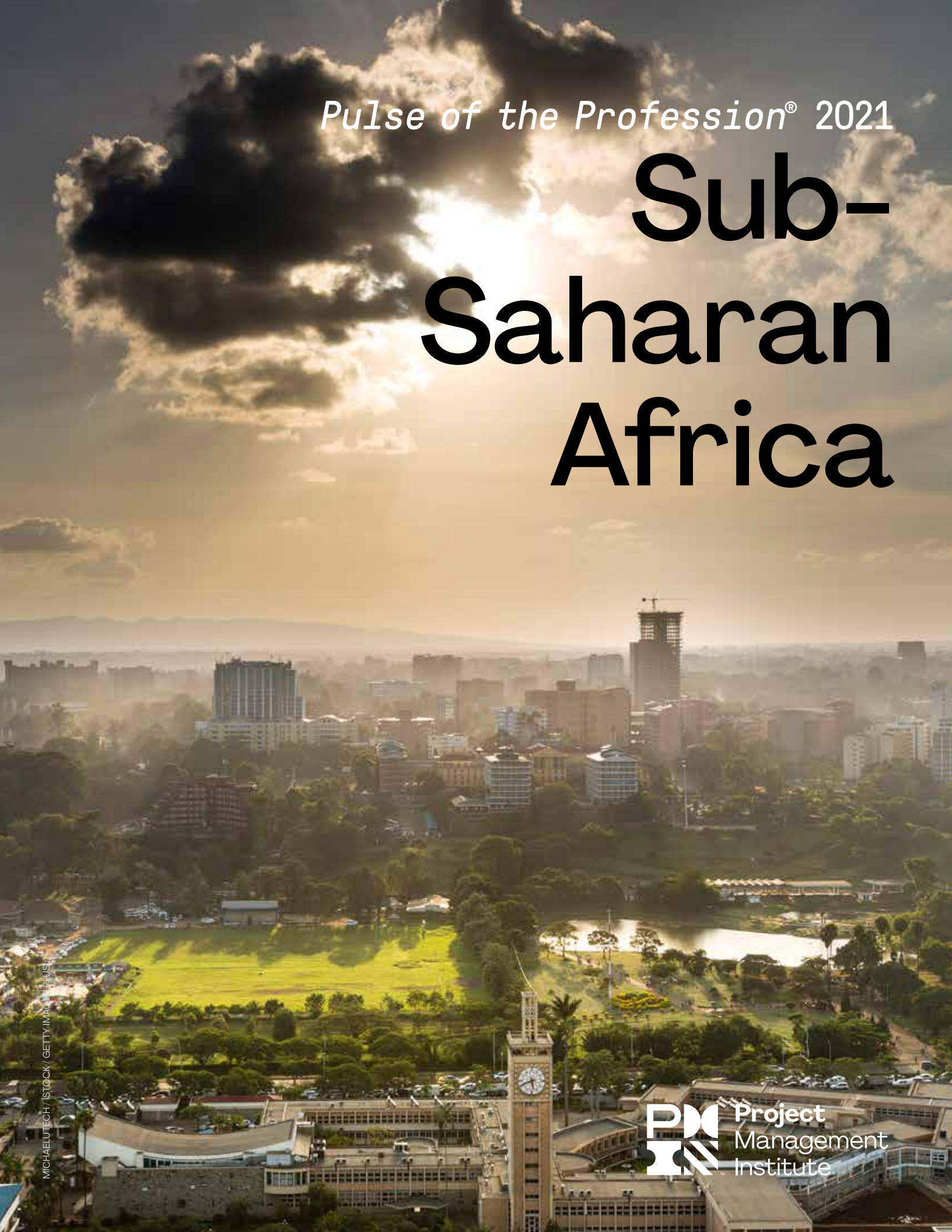


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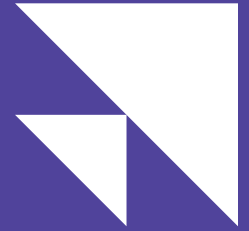
# Sub-Saharan Africa



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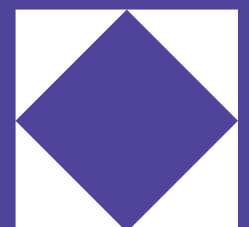
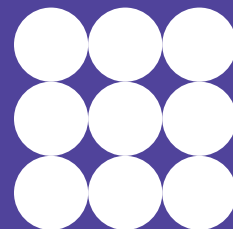


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# The New Work Ecosystem

For our sub-Saharan Africa<sup>1</sup> edition of *Pulse of the Profession*<sup>®</sup>, we surveyed 560 project professionals in October and November 2020 to assess the impact of the pandemic and how organizations were responding to it.

Our global survey<sup>2</sup> revealed that project outcomes generally had not suffered, although this may have been due to many projects being put on hold.<sup>3</sup> Across sub-Saharan Africa, most project outcomes were on par with the global average (see Figure 1). Although fewer projects were completed on time, fewer also experienced scope creep.

But organizations in the region stood out from the global average when it came to accelerating business changes in 2020, in areas like strategy, adaptability, efficiency, and innovation (see Figure 2). In addition, 64 percent saw productivity gains in 2020 compared to the year before, which was on par with the global average (61 percent).

FIGURE 1  
**Better Project Outcomes**

	Sub-Saharan Africa	Global
Met original goals/business intent	75%	73%
Completed within original budget	62%	62%
Completed on time	52%	55%
Failed project, budget lost	34%	35%
Experienced scope creep	29%	34%
Deemed failures	11%	12%

Q: In your estimation, what percentage of the projects completed within your organization in the past 12 months... (Mean percentages shown.)

FIGURE 2  
**Big Changes**

Recent Business Changes	Sub-Saharan Africa	Global
Business strategy	71%	64%
Digital transformation	70%	68%
Organizational adaptability	66%	61%
Operational efficiency	65%	57%
Innovation approach	64%	57%
Diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives	58%	55%
Project management maturity	57%	49%
Organizational culture	55%	53%
Talent management	44%	42%

Q: How would you describe the change in your business over the past 12 months compared to the 12 months prior in the following areas? ("Many/some significant changes" shown.)



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# Regional Resilience

Many organizations rose to the challenges presented by the pandemic; many, however, did not. What separated them? Our global research reveals the emergence of what we call the gymnastic enterprise: an organization that combines structure, form, and governance with the ability to flex and pivot on demand.

Gymnastic enterprises focus more on outcomes than process: instead of favoring any one approach to project management, they select the very best ways of working depending on the situation. Instead of using people skills—what we call power skills—primarily to motivate and seek alignment, or to facilitate autonomous decision-making, gymnastic enterprises champion these skills both as a means to inspire and deliver, depending on the desired outcome. And instead of encouraging deeply specialized skills or more generalist approaches, gymnastic enterprises aim to build both breadth and depth in their people—what we call business acumen.

To identify these organizations, we looked at their ways of working (see Figure 3). Those that primarily utilized any and all possible methods to solve problems were classified as gymnastic enterprises. Those that primarily used tried-and-tested methods were classified as traditional enterprises.

**Gymnastic enterprises focus more on outcomes than process: instead of favoring any one approach to project management, they select the very best ways of working depending on the situation.**

FIGURE 3

## A Competitive Edge: Sub-Saharan Africa

The **gymnastic enterprise** embraces “new” ways of working

We consider any and all possible methods available to solve the problem at hand.

**32%**

The **traditional enterprise** uses “old” ways of working

We consider only methods that have proven effective for us in the past.

**34%**

Q: Please characterize your organization’s approach to ways of working to address problems and needs. (“Mostly/exclusively describes us” responses shown.)

Like their global counterparts, gymnastic enterprises in sub-Saharan Africa were much more likely than traditional enterprises to have high organizational agility (48 percent versus 26 percent) and were much more likely than traditional enterprises to report productivity gains (77 percent versus 59 percent) in 2020 compared to the year before. The importance of these two factors took on greater significance in the face of the pandemic, as organizations scrambled to deliver remotely while trying to make up for lost time.

Gymnastic enterprises in the region were also far more likely than traditional enterprises to have embraced business change in 2020 compared to the year before, in terms of innovation approach (79 percent versus 55 percent), organizational adaptability (77 percent versus 61 percent), digital transformation (77 percent versus 67 percent), operational efficiencies (75 percent versus 57 percent), organizational culture (68 percent versus 49 percent), and project management maturity (66 percent versus 53 percent).

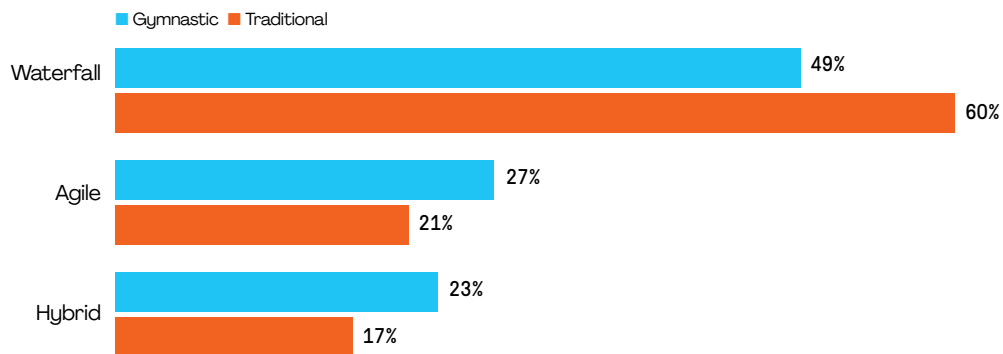
So how, exactly, are gymnastic enterprises delivering better value? They're creating changemakers—those who, regardless of their role, feel inspired and equipped to turn ideas into reality. And they're doing this by enabling their people to work smarter through mastery of new skills.



# New Ways of Working

Like their global counterparts, gymnastic enterprises across sub-Saharan Africa were more likely than traditional enterprises to use a variety of project management approaches (see Figure 4). They were also more likely to use cloud solutions (61 percent versus 46 percent) and the Internet of Things (43 percent versus 30 percent) to manage projects, which aligns with global patterns in these areas.

FIGURE 4  
**Right Way, Right Time**



Q: In your estimation, what percentage of the projects that you managed and completed within your organization in the past 12 months used the following types of approaches? (Mean percentage of projects shown.)

Additionally, gymnastic enterprises in the region were more likely than traditional enterprises to adopt certain tech-enabled ways of working across the enterprise (see Figure 5), also reflecting global trends in these areas.

FIGURE 5

### Embracing Tech-Enabled Ways of Working



Q: At your organization, how high a priority is enterprise-wide adoption of the following? ("Very/somewhat high" responses shown.)



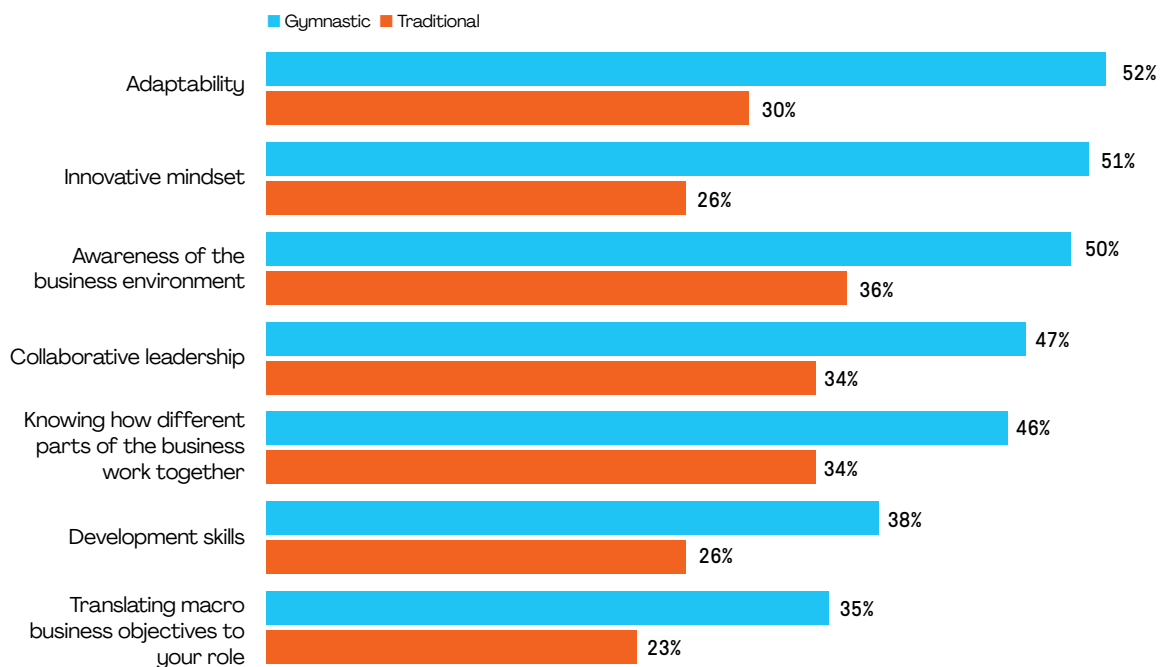
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# A Portfolio of Skills

When it comes to talent development, gymnastic enterprises in sub-Saharan Africa were much more likely than traditional enterprises to place a high priority on an innovative mindset (56 percent versus 42 percent). Although there was little difference in prioritization when it came to other skills, gymnastic enterprises have made much more progress than traditional enterprises in developing a wide range of skill sets over the past three years, reflecting global trends (see Figure 6).

**FIGURE 6**  
**Talent Development Progress**



Q: How would you rate your organization's progress in developing talent in these skill areas over the last three years? ("Excellent/very good progress shown.")



Power skills were a key focus, including not only innovative thinking, but also adaptability and collaborative leadership. But technical skills still matter, with gymnastic enterprises more likely to have made progress in IT development skills. Gymnastic enterprises have also worked hard to build business acumen, including an understanding of the business environment, how different functions work together, and how macro objectives relate to individual roles.

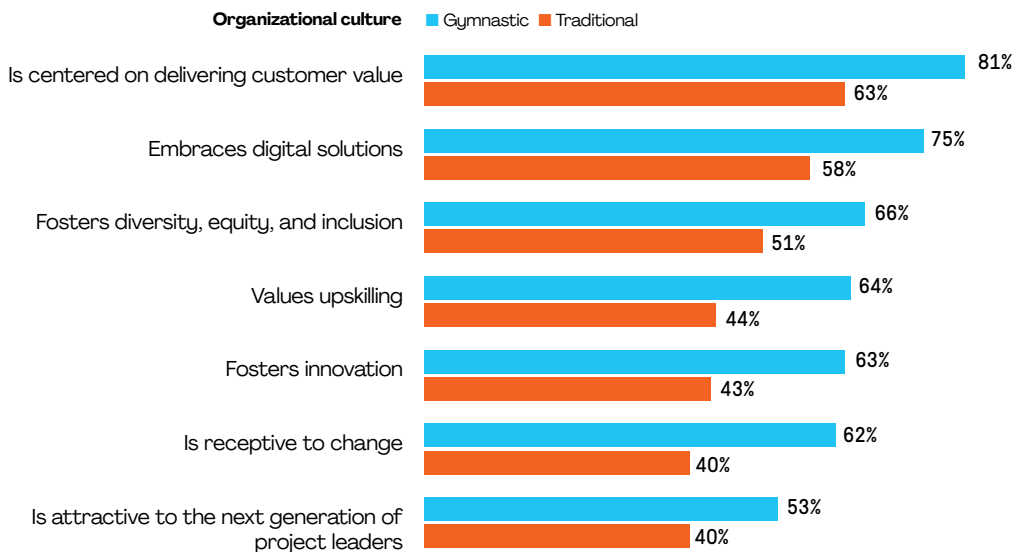


# Connective Tissue

Building an environment where changemakers thrive doesn't just magically happen. The role of organizational culture cannot be overstated. Nor can the role of executive leadership in intentionally identifying the culture and capabilities it wants to have—and the role of talent management in promoting and reinforcing the right behaviors.

Like their global counterparts, gymnastic enterprises in sub-Saharan Africa were more likely to place a high priority on strengthening many aspects of organizational culture, including customer centricity, digital solutions, and diversity, equity, and inclusion (see Figure 7).

FIGURE 7  
**Changing Priorities**

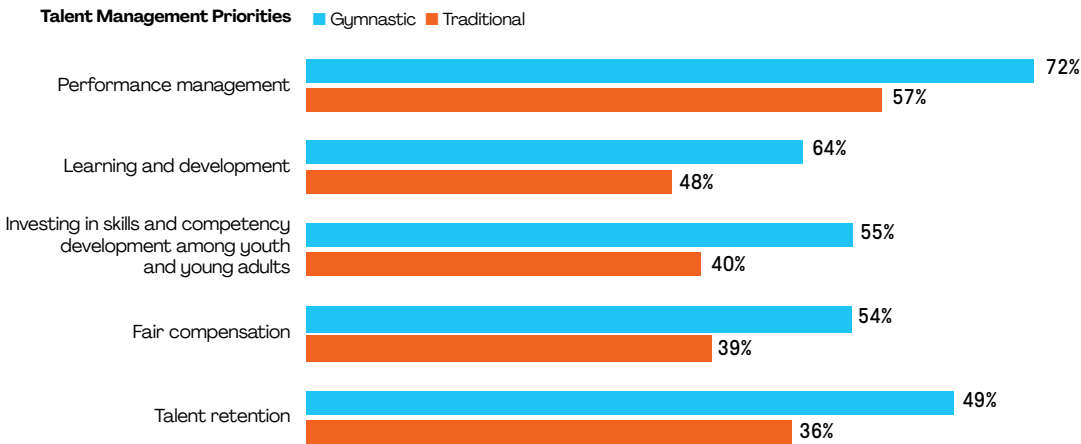


Q: How high a priority is each of the following aspects of organizational culture? ("Very/somewhat high" responses shown.)

Gymnastic enterprises in sub-Saharan Africa were also supported by senior leaders who put in the extra effort to support the culture and capabilities they wanted to create. These enterprises were more likely to have executives who were guided by organizational values (94 percent versus 83 percent for traditional enterprises). And they were far more likely to have senior leaders who recognize the value of projects, in terms of prioritizing strategy implementation (83 percent versus 67 percent), active project sponsorship (62 percent versus 47 percent), and development of project management skills across the enterprise (51 percent versus 37 percent).

Additionally, gymnastic enterprises in the region kept pace with their global counterparts by focusing on building culture and capabilities from the bottom up. They outdid traditional enterprises in many aspects of talent management we asked about, including performance management and learning and development (see Figure 8).

FIGURE 8  
**Prioritizing Talent Management**



Q: How high a priority is each of the following aspects of organizational culture? ("Very/somewhat high" responses shown.)

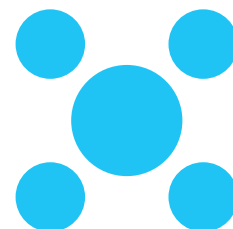


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# Adapt and Advance

It's taken a lot of resilience for organizations to navigate the pandemic. But the next normal demands even more. Our research shows gymnastic enterprises leading the way by developing a range of value delivery capabilities.

For gymnastic enterprises in sub-Saharan Africa, this means embracing different project management approaches and tech-enabled ways of working. It also means complementing technical know-how with power skills and business acumen. And it means having an organizational culture, senior leadership team, and talent management function that serve to enable and strengthen these capabilities.

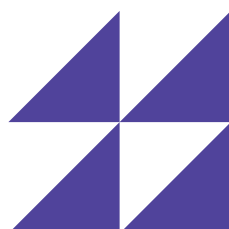
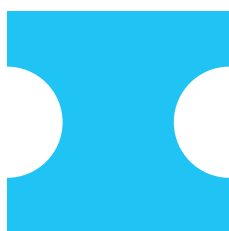


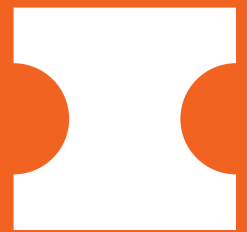
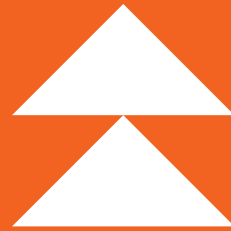
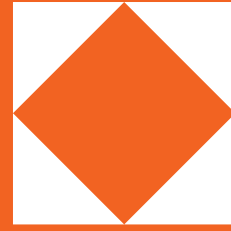
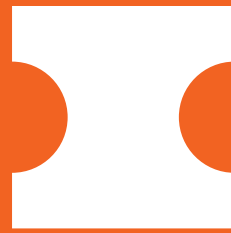
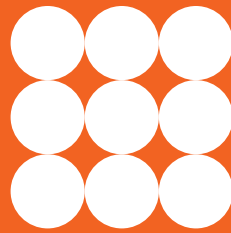
## About This Report

Conducted since 2006, *Pulse of the Profession*<sup>®</sup> is the premier global survey of project management professionals. *Pulse* tracks major trends in project management now and in the future, featuring original market research that gathers insights from project, program, and portfolio managers. The 2021 edition of *Pulse* comprised an online survey of 3,950 project professionals conducted in October and November 2020. Respondents represented a range of industries and regions, including North America, Europe, Asia Pacific, Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, South Asia, Middle East/North Africa, and China. The survey was supplemented by in-depth interviews spanning a wide range of industries and regions.

## Sources

1. The sub-Saharan Africa survey includes respondents from: Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya, Ghana, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Cameroon, Uganda, Zambia, Mauritius, United Republic of Tanzania, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Namibia, and Senegal.
2. *Pulse of the Profession*<sup>®</sup>: *Beyond Agility*. PMI, March 2021.
3. Results from the *PMI Make Reality Global Survey 2020-2021* showed that 93 percent of business leaders had to put a project on hold in 2020. Of those, only 39 percent said they had adjusted their plans to execute these projects later in 2020. (For more information about the survey, please contact PMI at [customercare@pmi.org](mailto:customercare@pmi.org).)





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