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Improving Collaboration Tools Facilitates Creativity, Innovation, And Profitability

Businesses With The Most Effective And Versatile Employee Collaboration Tools Will Boost Profits And Gain A Competitive Marketplace Advantage

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Executive Summary

The pandemic has changed the way companies will operate moving forward. At the onset of the lockdown, companies embraced remote working at a record pace. While they effectively managed to get employees up and running with basic videoconferencing and file-sharing tools, the focus was on speed of implementation rather than identifying which tools were best suited to their business operations and employee needs.

In 2021, Forrester expected 60% of large companies to operate in a hybrid model, which means at least 10% of workers work at least two days a week from anywhere.[1] With this in mind, facilitating frictionless employee collaboration will only become more critical. Companies need to reinvent how they facilitate collaboration experiences to their distributed workforce. The most successful companies will create remote collaboration experiences that are secure, immersive, context-based, personalized, and automated.

Lucid commissioned Forrester Consulting to evaluate the state of enterprise collaboration during the pandemic, as well as companies' plans to improve collaboration to support a permanently hybrid workforce. Forrester conducted an online survey in North America and Europe among 311 decision-makers responsible for choosing the productivity tools used by knowledge workers, including development teams. Survey questions inquired about companies' experience with collaboration solutions with regards to performance and delivery, investment, satisfaction, areas for improvement, impact on business outcomes, and more.

Forrester found that companies recognize the need to improve the current collaboration tools for several reasons, which all ladder up to direct business benefits.

Key Findings ⟶

Key Findings

Companies are prioritizing efficiency with the hybrid work experience moving forward. Initiatives that companies are considering high/critical priorities in the next 12 months are: improving operational efficiency (76%), improving the remote-work technology experience (73%), and enabling hybrid/flexible work (69%).

The most frequent collaboration tasks are the most challenging to execute, yet companies are willing to invest for the long term. Companies are investing in tools to support more complex and diverse use cases. These include product roadmapping, strategic planning, creating wireframes and mockups, and making software/enterprise architecture, network, or database diagrams.

Companies recognize that more advanced collaboration tools drive better innovation and increased profitability. Eighty-two percent of respondents reported that investing in a cohesive collaboration solution allows their organizations to stay competitive and makes their organizations a leader in their industry.

Invest In Collaboration To Support A Productive Hybrid Workforce

In the post-pandemic world, a company's most critical resource — its employees — will work in a mix of ways: in-office (exclusively), remote (exclusively), or hybrid (both in-office and remote). Remote or hybrid work will take place at unprecedented levels. Given the need for employees to ideate and collaborate, this poses a challenge like never before. In the next year, companies must focus on collaboration and the technology neccesary to enablement.

In surveying the 311 decision-makers who are responsible for choosing the productivity tools that knowledge workers, including development teams, use, we found the following:

- **Employees are considered companies' most critical resource.** Almost three-quarters (72%) of respondents reported that their organizations are people-centric, which makes their employees each company's strongest asset. Sixty-six percent of respondents said that their companies focus on making

Figure 1

"To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the evolution of your firm's approach to technologies that support employee collaboration or partner collaboration?"

● Strongly agree ● Agree

My company is people-centric; our employees are our strongest assets.

| 37% | 35% | 72% |

My company always considers employee experience to be a top priority when making decisions about devices and business applications.

| 32% | 34% | 66% |
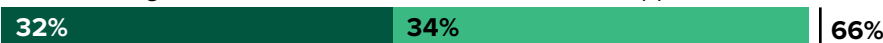
My company's culture is centered on cross-functional collaboration.

| 27% | 38% | 65% |

My company invests in technologies that enable our employees to collaborate effectively with third-party partners.

| 22% | 32% | 54% |

Base: 311 global decision-makers overseeing knowledge workers, responsible for choosing the productivity tools used by development teams, if buyers
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Lucid, April 2021

65%
of respondents "Strongly agree" or "Agree" that their organizations' culture focuses on cross-functional collaboration.

employee experience a top priority, particularly when making decisions about devices and applications (see Figure 1).
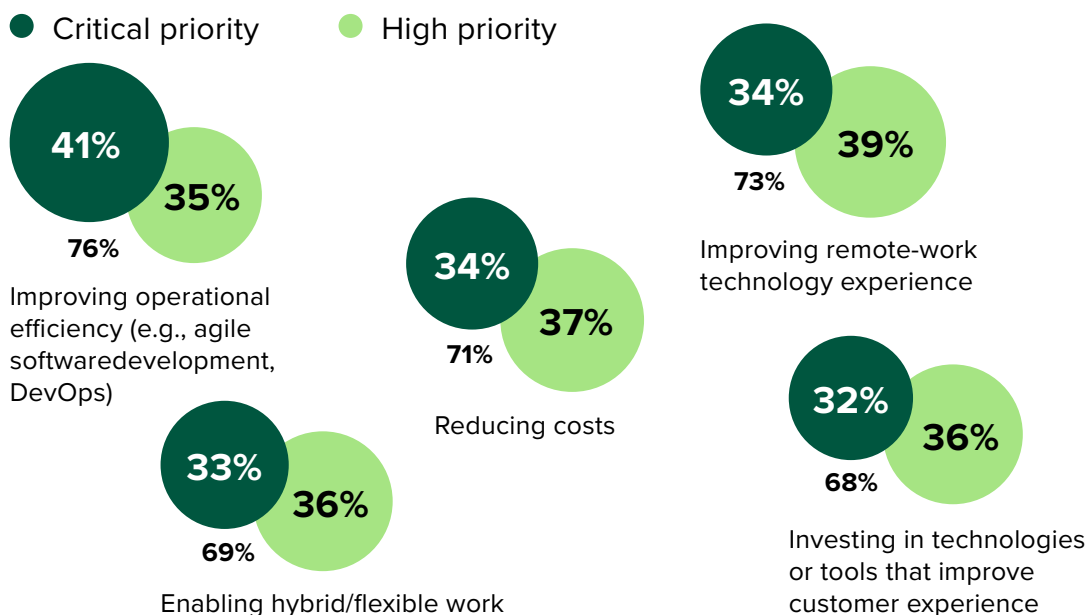
- **Companies prioritize investing in cross-functional collaboration technology.** Nearly two-thirds (65%) of surveyed decision-makers reported that their companies' culture focuses on cross-functional collaboration, while more than half (54%) believed that their organizations make technological investments that allow them to collaborate well with third-party partners (see Figure 1).

- **Companies are especially keen on finding technology to improve the remote and hybrid work experience.** Over three-quarters (76%) of respondents believe that improving operational efficiency (e.g., agile software development, DevOps) is a top priority for their organizations in the next 12 months. Other high priorities include improving remote-work technology experience (73%) and enabling hybrid/flexible work (69%) (see Figure 2).

72%
of respondents reported that their organizations are people-centric.

Figure 2

"To what extent is your organization prioritizing the following initiatives during the next 12 months?"

● Critical priority   ● High priority

41% **35%**
76%
Improving operational efficiency (e.g., agile softwaredevelopment, DevOps)

33% **36%**
69%
Enabling hybrid/flexible work

34% **37%**
71%
Reducing costs

34% **39%**
73%
Improving remote-work technology experience

32% **36%**
68%
Investing in technologies or tools that improve customer experience

Base: 311 global decision-makers overseeing knowledge workers, responsible for choosing the productivity tools used by development teams, if buyers
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Lucid, April 2021

Key Collaboration Concerns

The collaboration solutions that companies are using fail to effectively facilitate the hybrid work experience. Inflexible tooling does not support flexible working. Respondents reported their organizations' current collaboration solutions are missing vital features to support many of their employees' use cases, most of which they rely on for everyday tasks. In fact, only 37% of respondents said they are satisfied with their organizations' current collaboration and productivity solutions. The good news? Companies are willing to invest to better support remote and hybrid employee collaboration in the long term.

- **Employees struggle most frequently with the tasks requiring team collaboration.**
  The collaboration tasks employees do most frequently are also the tasks that are most challenging to perform. Surveyed decision-makers

Figure 3a

"Which of the following ideation/brainstorm activities do you or your employees perform in your day-to-day tasks?"

68% Working sessions

57% Strategic planning sessions

55% Group brainstorms

54% Action planning sessions

Figure 3b

"Which of the following brainstorming/ideating activities do you believe are the most challenging for you and your employees to perform day-to-day?"

54% Working sessions

52% Strategic planning sessions

45% Action planning sessions
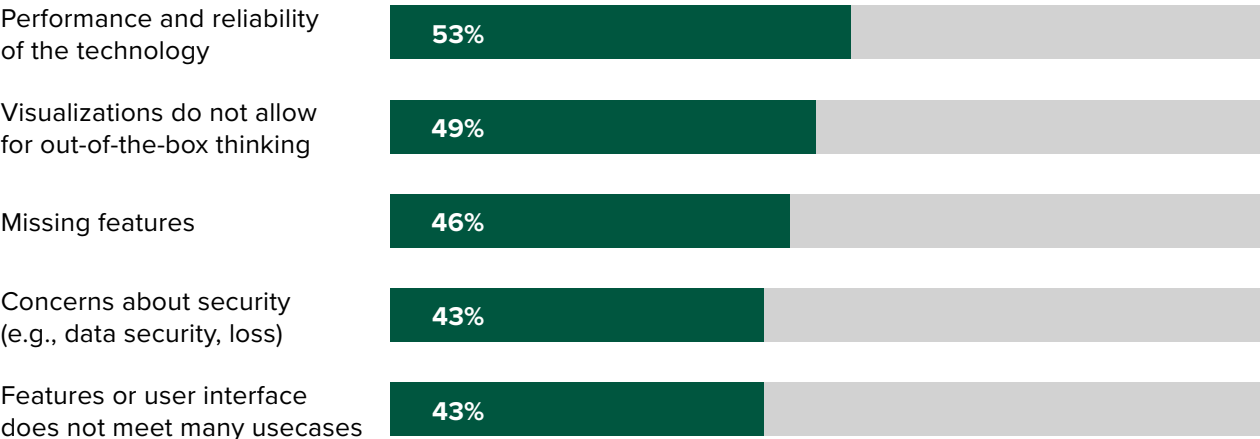
41% Group brainstorms

Base: 311 global decision-makers overseeing knowledge workers, responsible for choosing the productivity tools used by development teams, if buyers
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Lucid, April 2021

ranked the frequency of day-to-day tasks and how difficult it is to perform them. Working sessions were ranked first in both instances, while strategic planning sessions came in second in both instances. Action planning sessions were the fourth most frequent day-to-day task and the third most difficult, while group brainstorming was the third most frequent and the least difficult of these tasks (see Figure 3).

- **Current collaboration tools lack features to enable employees to do their best work**. As companies prioritize improving cross-functional collaboration and experience agnostic of location, they must invest in reliable tools (and the infrastructure to support them) that support all use cases. Their top challenge, however, is that current tools are lacking in performance and reliability (53%). Other top challenges shed light on the fact that current tools fail to support diverse needs. Respondents said that current tools are missing features (46%), don't support many use cases (43%), and don't allow for out-of-the box thinking (49%) (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

"What challenges and/or barriers has your firm experienced with your current collaboration solutions/tools?"

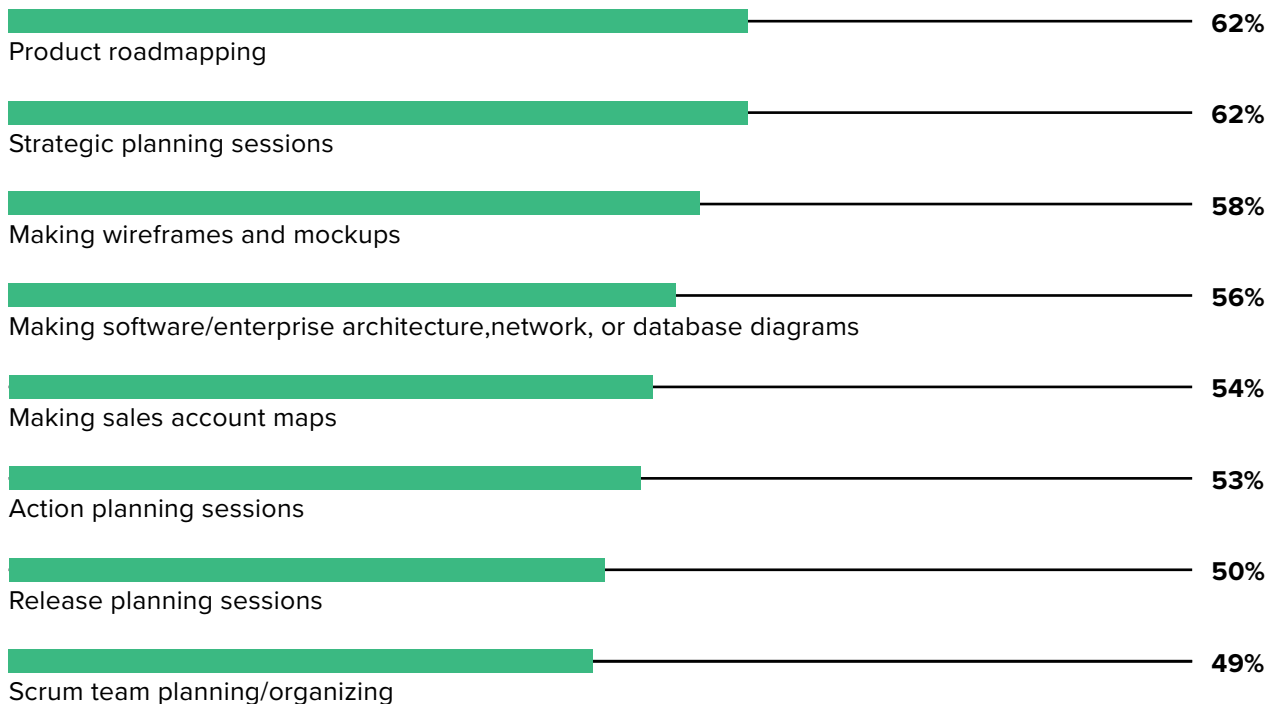|	
Performance and reliability of the technology	53%
Visualizations do not allow for out-of-the-box thinking	49%
Missing features	46%
Concerns about security (e.g., data security, loss)	43%
Features or user interface does not meet many usecases	43%

Base: 311 global decision-makers overseeing knowledge workers, responsible for choosing the productivity tools used by development teams, if buyers
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Lucid, April 2021

- **Companies plan to make long-term investments to better support remote/ hybrid employee collaboration.** Since hybrid work is here to stay, decision-makers understand they must make strategic and complex tasks easier to achieve virtually. Respondents plan to make long-term investments in improving tooling for product roadmapping (62%), strategic planning (62%), creating wireframes and mock-ups (58%), and making software/enterprise architecture, network, or database diagrams (56%) (see Figure 5).

Figure 5

"Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many organizations are turning to technologies and tools to support their remote/virtual collaboration needs. Of the following activities, which would you invest in to better support remote/virtual employee collaboration? And would this be a long-term investment or short-term investment?"

● Long-term investment

Product roadmapping — 62%

Strategic planning sessions — 62%

Making wireframes and mockups — 58%

Making software/enterprise architecture,network, or database diagrams — 56%

Making sales account maps — 54%

Action planning sessions — 53%

Release planning sessions — 50%

Scrum team planning/organizing — 49%

Base: 59 to 212 global decision-makers overseeing knowledge workers, responsible for choosing the productivity tools used by development teams
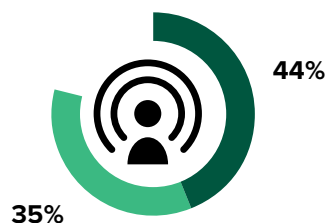Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Lucid, April 2021

Effective Collaboration Yields Innovation, Creativity, Differentiation, And Profitability

Forrester found that sophisticated collaboration tools will streamline employee interactions, fostering process improvements, enabling employees to solve business problems, and improving customers' experiences and loyalty.[2] Most companies have either already implemented or plan to implement a comprehensive collaboration tool suite. Top of mind is finding a single, secure solution to support diverse employee use cases.

- **Immersive collaboration experiences require improved processes and tooling.** Most surveyed decision-makers agreed that cross-functional collaboration is a challenge because collaboration workflows are often conducted in silos (79%). They also realized the need for more immersive digital collaboration experiences for employees to optimize creativity (66%) (see Figure 6). Investing in processes and tools designed for cross-functional collaboration is key to enabling immersive experiences. Experiences that are invisible or immersive will lighten workers' cognitive load and free their mental bandwidth for more interesting or useful pursuits.[3]

- **There is a need for an enterprise-ready collaboration solution.** Rather than piecing together the appropriate collaboration solution, companies would prefer a solution that's prepared and best suited to their needs. Respondents reported that their organizations seek solutions that work for all devices/

Figure 6

44%

35%

Cross-functional collaboration is a challenge because collaboration workflows are often conducted in silos.

35%

32%
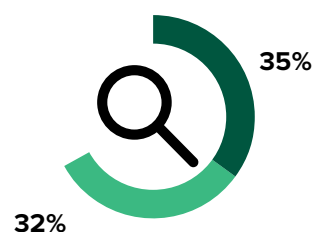
Visualizing ideas and processes is crucial to doing my job.
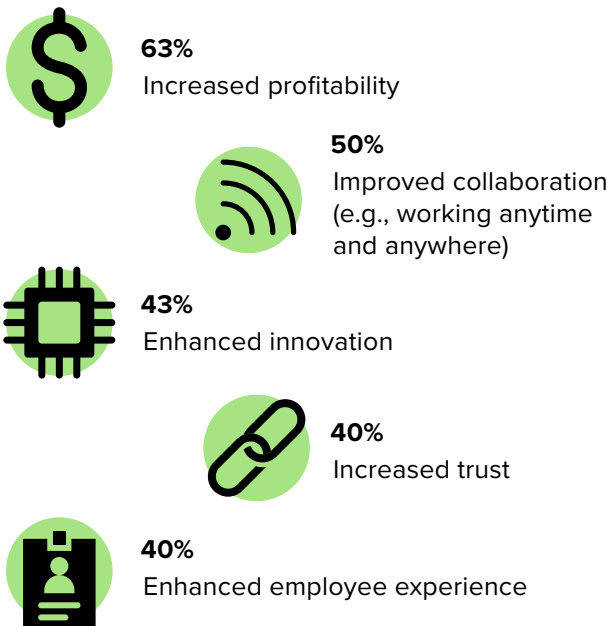
41%

25%

We need immersive digital collaboration experiences for our employees to optimize creativity.

Base: 311 global decision-makers overseeing knowledge workers, responsible for choosing the productivity tools used by development teams, if buyers
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Lucid, April 2021

operating systems the business supports (53%), provide security (50%), and are easy to manage and integrate into their existing technology stacks (47%) (see Figure 7).
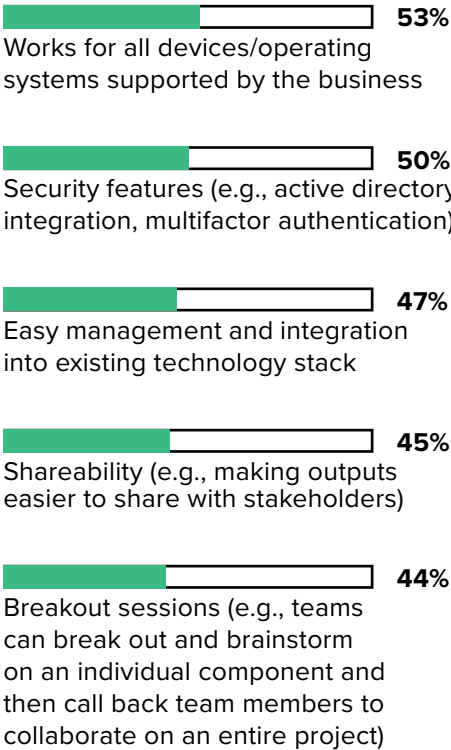
- **Once in place, customers expect better results from a holistic collaboration experience.** Respondents expected that moving to a holistic collaboration experience will come with multiple benefits, including increased profitability (53%), improved collaboration (50%), enhanced innovation (43%), increased trust among colleagues (40%), and enhanced employee experience (40%) (see Figure 8).

Figure 8

Benefits Of Implementing Or Expanding A Cohesive Collaboration Solution

63%
Increased profitability

50%
Improved collaboration (e.g., working anytime and anywhere)

43%
Enhanced innovation

40%
Increased trust

40%
Enhanced employee experience

Base: 311 global decision-makers overseeing knowledge workers, responsible for choosing the productivity tools used by development teams, if buyers
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Lucid, April 2021

Figure 7

"Which of the following capabilities/functionalities would you be most interested in having in a comprehensive suite of collaboration tools?"

53%
Works for all devices/operating systems supported by the business

50%
Security features (e.g., active directory integration, multifactor authentication)

47%
Easy management and integration into existing technology stack

45%
Shareability (e.g., making outputs easier to share with stakeholders)

44%
Breakout sessions (e.g., teams can break out and brainstorm on an individual component and then call back team members to collaborate on an entire project)
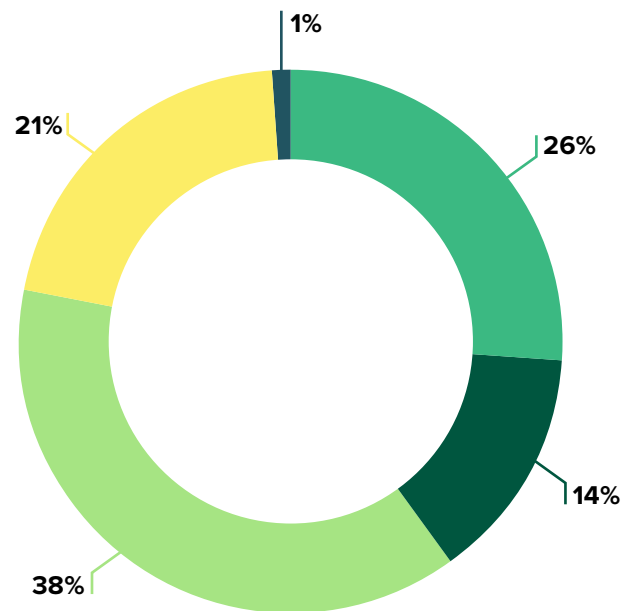
Base: 311 global decision-makers overseeing knowledge workers, responsible for choosing the productivity tools used by development teams, if buyers
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Lucid, April 2021

- **Companies are actively investing in these tools now to realize business improvements.** Eighty-two percent of respondents said that they believe investing in a cohesive collaboration solution will help their organizations stay competitive and become a leader in their industry. As a result, 85% of respondents reported that their organizations have currently implemented or plan to implement a comprehensive suite of collaboration tools in the next 12 months (see Figure 9).
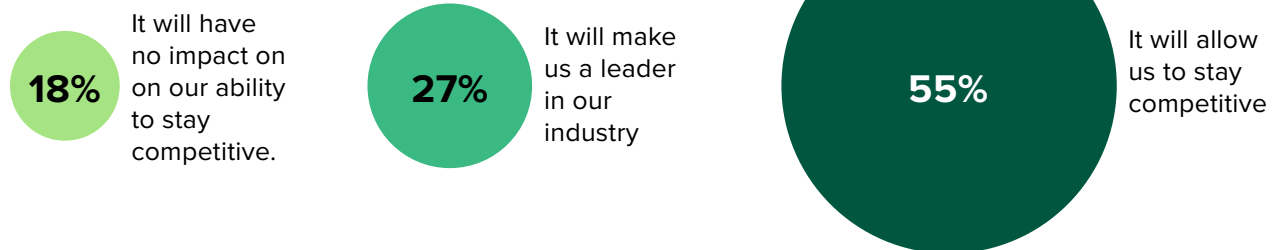
Figure 9

"What are your organization's plans to invest in a comprehensive suite of collaboration tools during the next 12 months?"

● Interested, but no immediate plans within the next 12 months

● Planning to implement within the next 12 months

● Currently implemented

● Expanding/upgrading current implementation in the next 12 months

● Decreasing or removing capabilities in the next 12 months

1%
26%
14%
38%
21%

"What impact will a cohesive collaboration solution have on your organization's ability to stay competitive in your industry?"

18% It will have no impact on on our ability to stay competitive.

27% It will make us a leader in our industry

55% It will allow us to stay competitive

Key Recommendations

Hybrid work is here to stay. Companies must address the gaps in their collaboration strategy to ensure teams are aligned and share a common language and repository to drive successful business outcomes in hybrid work. Otherwise, multiple aspects of the business will suffer — from employee experience, to customer satisfaction, to operational agility, innovation, and ultimately, revenue growth and competitive differentiation.
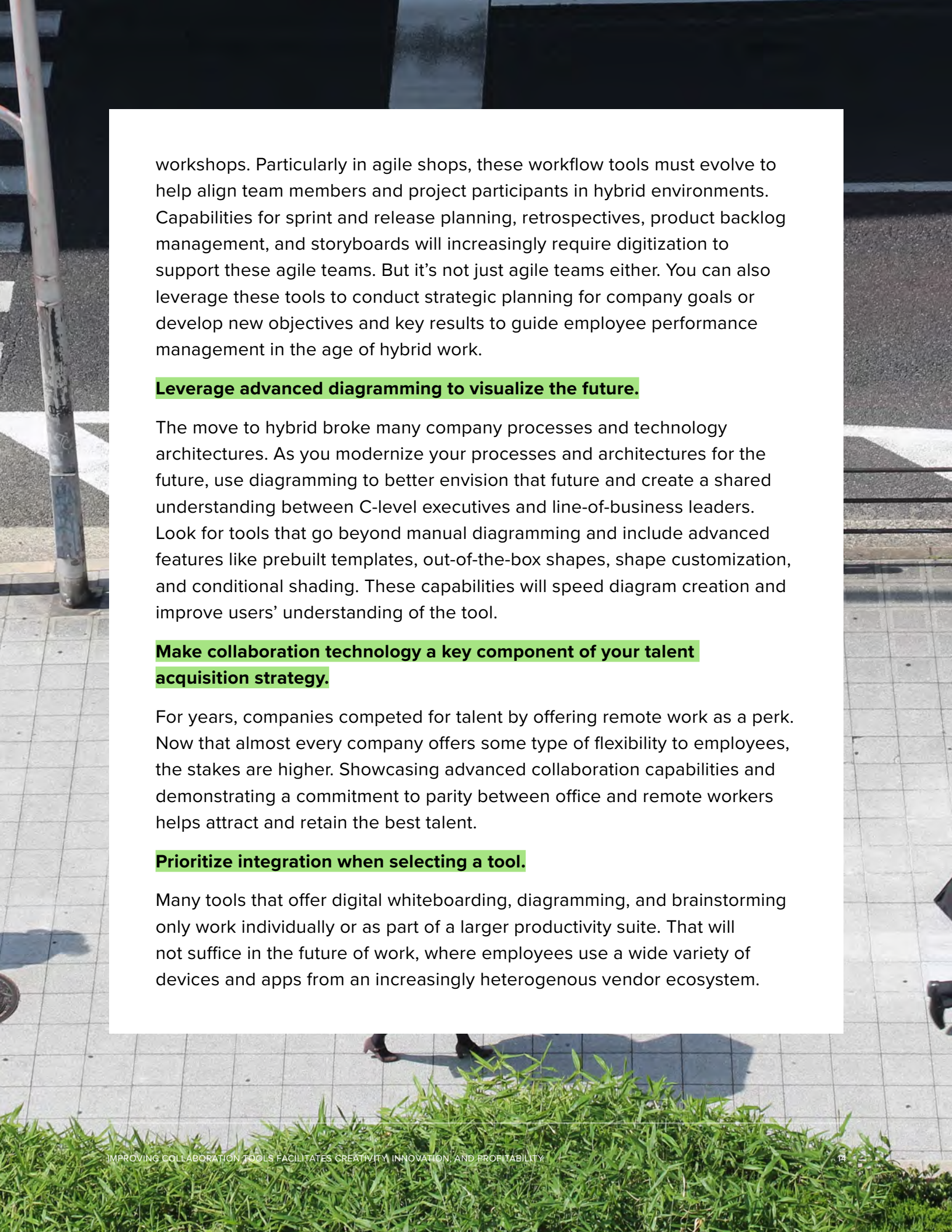
Forrester's in-depth survey of 311 decision-makers responsible for productivity software yielded several important recommendations:

Evaluate your firm's evolving worker profiles and return-to-work workspace requirements.

To ensure employees feel safe, productive, and engaged when they return to the office, business stakeholders must maximize employee engagement, enable individual productivity, facilitate employee collaboration, and enhance strategic planning and brainstorming initiatives. Pay particular attention to enabling frictionless collaboration between in-office and remote workers. Deploy technologies, tools, and processes to support effective methods of working together, no matter where individual team members are located. These tools and technology solutions should support efficient, sealable collaboration between team members spanning multiple projects and distributed offices.

Deploy tools to facilitate effective workflows and collaboration among team members.

Successful collaboration requires team members to share timelines and documentation and streamline workflows. Team members need an easy-to-access, single source of information to communicate and visualize how individual work streams contribute to the overall success of the project. Extended collaboration functions include facilitating strategic planning sessions, enabling team brainstorming, and supporting journey mapping

workshops. Particularly in agile shops, these workflow tools must evolve to help align team members and project participants in hybrid environments. Capabilities for sprint and release planning, retrospectives, product backlog management, and storyboards will increasingly require digitization to support these agile teams. But it's not just agile teams either. You can also leverage these tools to conduct strategic planning for company goals or develop new objectives and key results to guide employee performance management in the age of hybrid work.

Leverage advanced diagramming to visualize the future.

The move to hybrid broke many company processes and technology architectures. As you modernize your processes and architectures for the future, use diagramming to better envision that future and create a shared understanding between C-level executives and line-of-business leaders. Look for tools that go beyond manual diagramming and include advanced features like prebuilt templates, out-of-the-box shapes, shape customization, and conditional shading. These capabilities will speed diagram creation and improve users' understanding of the tool.

Make collaboration technology a key component of your talent acquisition strategy.

For years, companies competed for talent by offering remote work as a perk. Now that almost every company offers some type of flexibility to employees, the stakes are higher. Showcasing advanced collaboration capabilities and demonstrating a commitment to parity between office and remote workers helps attract and retain the best talent.

Prioritize integration when selecting a tool.

Many tools that offer digital whiteboarding, diagramming, and brainstorming only work individually or as part of a larger productivity suite. That will not suffice in the future of work, where employees use a wide variety of devices and apps from an increasingly heterogenous vendor ecosystem.

Choose a tool that is extensible and fits into your company's existing tool sets. For example, tools that work across multiple operating systems will enable employees using a myriad of personally owned devices to use the tool equally. Integrations with key employee applications, such as project management, team messaging, identity and access management, file sync and share, and service management, will speed deployment and make it easier for users to adopt the tool.

Expand these tools across the entire workforce.

Immersive collaboration tools have a reputation for being specialized and less useful for the run-of-the-mill information worker. The advent of remote work will change this paradigm, but it's up to the company to better understand how immersive collaboration technology will improve the experience for certain employees. An in-depth journey-mapping or design-thinking session helps companies better understand how these technologies can aid the knowledge worker, especially when using the collaboration technology to facilitate such a session.

Appendix A: Methodology

Forrester conducted an online survey in North America and Europe of 311 decision-makers responsible for choosing the productivity tools used by knowledge workers, including development teams. Survey questions asked about their organizations' experience with collaboration solutions with regards to performance and delivery, investment, satisfaction, areas for improvement, impact on overall business, and more. The study began in March 2021 and was completed in April 2021.

Appendix B: Demographics

COUNTRY	
United States	**47%**
Canada	**20%**
France	**10%**
Germany	**10%**
United Kingdom	**13%**

TOP 5 INDUSTRIES	
Advanced manufacturing	**14%**
Retail	**12%**
Technology and/or technology services	**12%**
Healthcare	**12%**
Financial services and/or insurance	**12%**

RESPONDENT LEVEL	
C-level	**10%**
Vice president	**17%**
Director	**41%**
Manager	**23%**
Project manager	**9%**

POSITION/DEPARTMENT	
IT (36%)	**36%**
Operations (excluding IT) (18%)	**18%**
Marketing/advertising (15%)	**15%**
Product development (12%)	**12%**
User experience (UX) (9%)	**9%**
Project management (6%)	**6%**
Sales (5%)	**5%**

COMPANY SIZE	
2,000 to 4,999 employees	**41%**
5,000 to 19,999 employees	**41%**
20,000 or more employees	**18%**

Appendix C: Endnotes

[1] Source: "Use The Lessons Of 2020 To Create Your Anywhere-Work Strategy," Forrester Research, Inc., November 17, 2020.
[2] Source: "Effective Enterprise Collaboration Grows Your Bottom Line," Forrester Research, Inc., November 13, 2020.
[3] Source: "The Tools That Matter: Demystifying Emerging Technologies," Forrester Research, May 25, 2021.

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