

The Crisis Of Fractured Organizations

How Teams Can Address Organizational Misalignment
And Achieve More In The Modern Work Environment

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Executive Summary

The way we work has seen seismic shifts of late. As line-of-business teams have become more autonomous and decentralized and the proliferation of niche software solutions meant for specific teams accelerates, organizations are faced with critical data sets trapped in spreadsheets and line-of-business, software-as-a-service (SaaS) apps. Organizations are fractured. Broken processes, inaccurate data, and organizationwide disconnections are derailing productivity, impacting business, and decreasing team morale.

Organizations can overcome their challenges and improve business processes and outcomes by leveraging low-code tools to build their own apps on top of shared data and better connect software across the organization. In doing so, they bridge the information that is locked within different teams and systems, demolishing silos and fostering better cross-functional work collaboration in the process.

Airtable commissioned Forrester Consulting to evaluate how teams are working today and the impact of fractured systems and organizational silos. Forrester conducted an online survey with 1,022 respondents in roles from individual contributor to the C-suite in the US and the UK to explore this topic. We found that when teams use low-code tools and solutions to increase cross-functional collaboration, organizational alignment, and data accessibility, they achieve better productivity, employee experience (EX), and revenue.



Key Findings

Teams are drowning in tools. Large organizations with more than 20,000 employees use an average of 367 software apps and systems. Widespread software adoption at the team level has led to silos and blind spots across organizations. Teams are making poor or slow decisions based on the limited information in front of them, unaware of critical insights hiding in different tools.

Large organizations' business processes are more fractured than they think. Data silos and manual and electronic workflows like spreadsheets and email are hamstringing organizations and restricting their ability to get work done. This issue exists across SaaS tools and systems, sapping 2.4 hours daily from respondents as they look for data and information to do their work.

Fractured organizations can't compete. When cross-collaboration is difficult, productivity, employee morale, and revenue drop. Disconnected and inefficient processes result in a 24% drop in productivity across the organization, while revenue, employee engagement, and the ability to innovate also suffer. The top reason that employees disengage is that it's too hard to find the information they need to do their jobs.

Low-code tools that allow for connected apps boost bottom lines and EX. On average, respondents reported they would save 29% of their week (11.6 hours) by implementing low-code tools to build their own apps. These tools align the organization, close silos, and generate data and insights required for better decision-making and sustained bottom-line results.

Silos And Manual Workflows Fracture Organizations And Debilitate Businesses

Businesses are managing more systems and data than ever. It's harder than ever to connect people, technology, and processes across the organization. The global COVID-19 pandemic only accelerated these challenges as remote and hybrid work took hold — and continues to predominate across industries. As a result, teams have become more distributed and decentralized. This has led to teams purchasing more and more of their own systems that don't connect to each other, creating silos across the organization. As a result, organizations have become more fractured and teams are misaligned.

In surveying 1,022 respondents in roles from individual contributor to the C-suite in the US and the UK, we found that organizations plan to address these challenges and fuel innovation and business growth by focusing on how they can boost EX, bridge disconnected data and teams, and drive innovation over the next year. We also found:

- **Organizations are fractured.** Eight in 10 decision-makers said reducing data and information silos is a top priority for their organizations. Disparate apps, data, and spreadsheet sprawl are the main culprits, hindering teams across the organization given their sheer volume (see Figure 1). This issue is only exacerbated for large organizations with more than 20,000 employees, large teams of more than 500 employees, and respondents in the role of director through the C-suite. As teams work cross-functionally, this complexity swells to other teams, getting worse by the time it's organizationwide. Forty-three percent of product respondents said working collaboratively across teams/departments is a major challenge for their organization (vs. 38% for marketing respondents and 34% for IT respondents). Ultimately, information becomes trapped in these different systems and teams, locking key data points, creating boundaries across teams, and hindering cross-functional visibility. Part of the problem is the sheer number of tools teams are using. Large organizations use 367 software apps and systems, on average.

- **Teams are relying on manual or electronic workflows that exacerbate silos.** The majority of respondents (53%) said their organizations either frequently or always use paper-based manual workflows to manage or automate business processes (72% for large teams). Another 83% of decision-makers said their organizations either frequently or always use electronic manual workflows, i.e., spreadsheets and email. However, this is not scalable; it encourages multiple sources of truth and it makes it harder for teams to find the data they need at hand because it's hidden across countless emails and spreadsheets. On average, respondents said they spend 30% of their week (2.4 hours daily) trying to find the right data and information to do their jobs (see Figure 2). The amount of time spent per week is more severe for more severe for respondents in the role of director through the C-suite, and at large organizations and teams, who face even more obstacles when attempting to bridge deep cross-functional silos.

**COMPARED TO THE US,
THE UK IS:**

- Less likely to significantly invest in business processes (38% vs. 54%).
- Less likely to increase investment in business processes over the next 12 months (58% vs. 73%).
- More likely to say reducing costs is a top business priority over the next 12 months (40% vs. 28%).
- On average, more likely to use fewer software apps and systems across the organization (31% use 300+ vs. 41% use 300+) and individually on a weekly basis (22% use 60+ vs. 36% use 60+).
- More likely to spend less time on average trying to find the right data and information (one in three spend 30%+ of their week vs. half spend 30%+ of their week).

- **Organizations are prioritizing increased efficiency to improve collaboration and reduce silos.** Four in five respondents viewed reducing data and information silos as a “Critical priority” or “High priority.” Ninety-three percent of respondents said increasing process efficiency in their organization is a “Critical priority” or “High priority.” Similarly, 90% noted improved collaboration as a top priority. Organizations know they need to improve processes and enable teams to move fast and together.

Figure 1

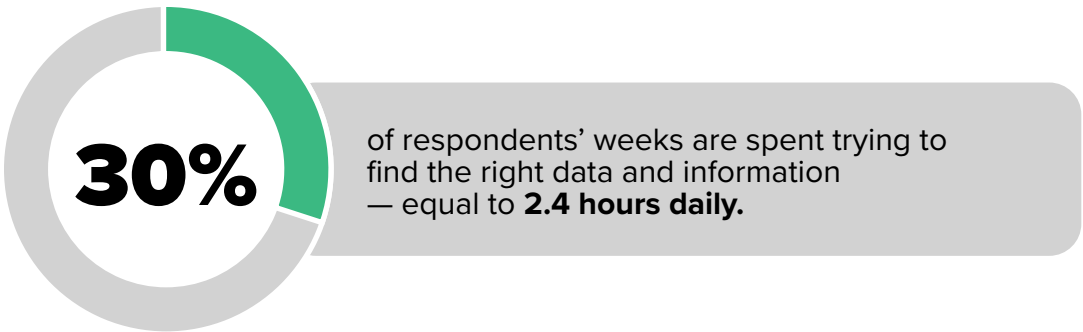
The Number Of Tools Hinder Teams Across The Organization



Base: 524 directors and above collaboration decision-makers in the US and the UK
*Base: 1,022 individual contributors through C-suite collaboration decision-makers in the US and the UK
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Airtable, September 2022

Figure 2

On average:



Base: 1,022 individual contributors through C-suite collaboration decision-makers in the US and the UK
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Airtable, September 2022

Fractured Organizations Lead To Poor Decision-Making, More Errors, And Weaker Revenue

As software adoption at the team level has become the new norm, divisions across teams have deepened. Modern businesses face silos and blind spots across the organization. Teams make decisions according to the information they have in front of them, moving quickly but unaware of critical insights living in different places. Teams are working at lightning speed, but the organization as a whole is pulled in a million different directions, inevitably missing powerful opportunities to collaborate and achieve what's required for market leadership. Organizations currently:

- **Don't have the full picture.** Decision-makers lack the visibility to understand what's happening elsewhere in the organization as silos impede visibility into work being done. Four in five respondents (79%) said teams throughout their organizations are siloed (see Figure 3). Three in four (76%) noted silos between business and IT departments, while two in three (66%) respondents said their teams are siloed (77% for large teams). These silos are even worse according to the director-level or higher respondents who oversee their organizations' processes.

Figure 3

Organizations Experience Silos Throughout The Business



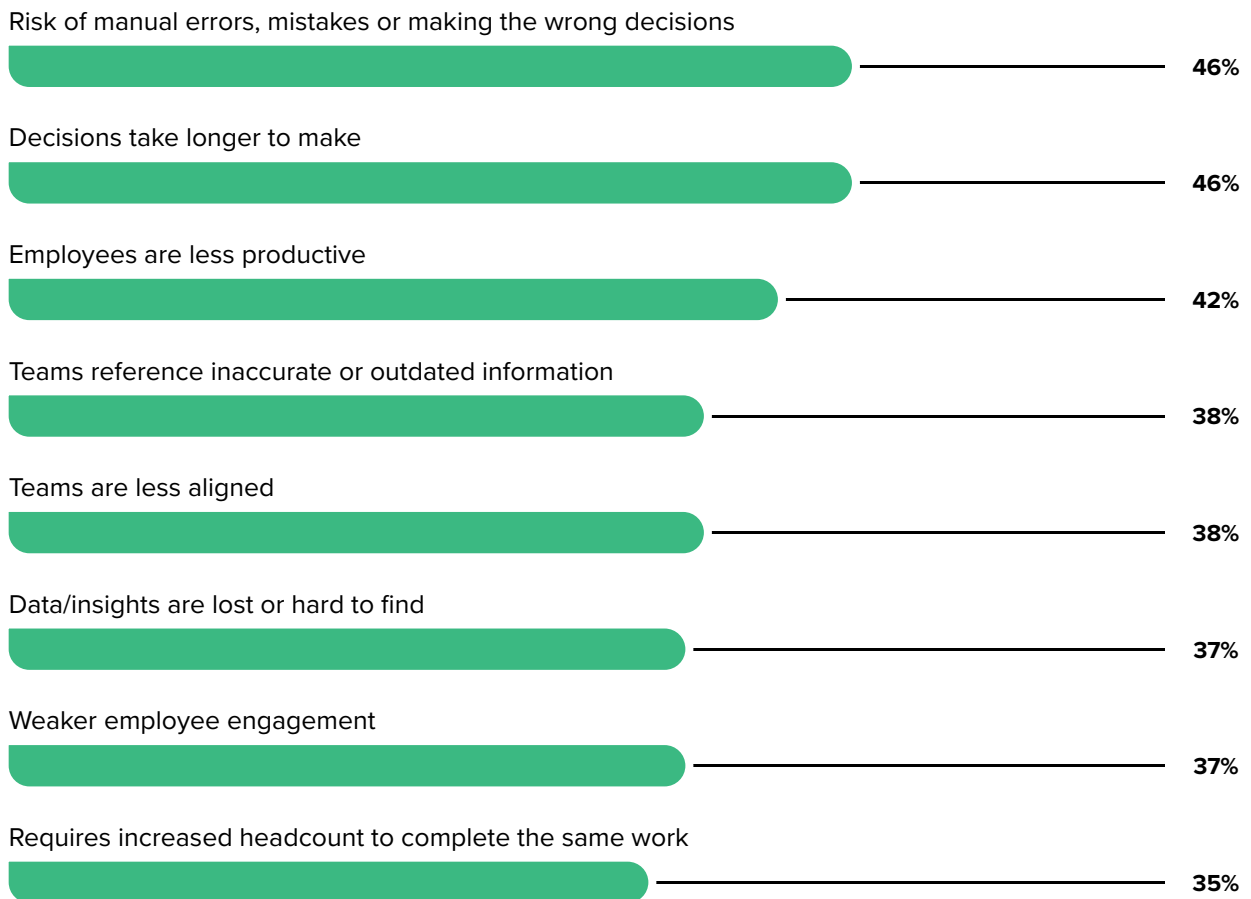
Base: 1,022 individual contributors through C-suite collaboration decision-makers in the US and the UK
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Airtable, September 2022

- **Are at greater risk of errors and poor decision-making.**

Nearly half of respondents (46%) said poor business processes result in higher risk of manual errors, mistakes, or making the wrong decisions (see Figure 4). When employees don't know where to look for real-time, accurate information, they become more mistake prone and slower to make decisions. Other risks, such as security concerns, are multiplied given the number of disparate apps and systems with which teams currently work. When organizations can't confidently and safely orient their businesses, they become susceptible to weaker customer experience (CX), innovation, and productivity.

Figure 4

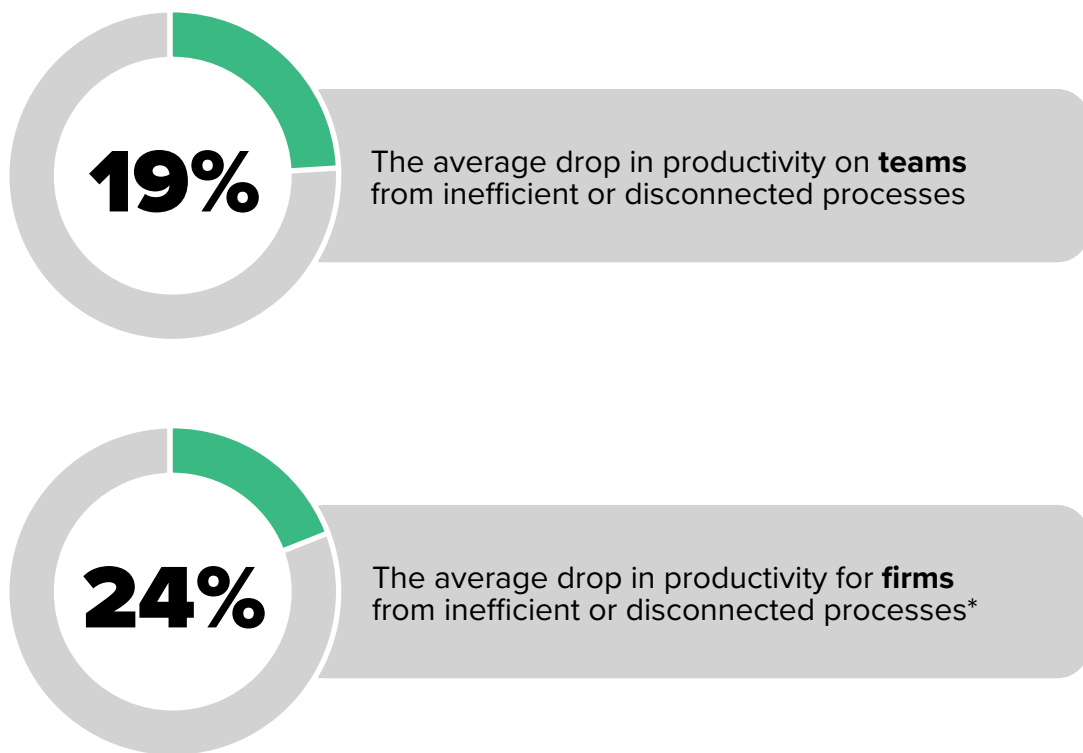
Impact Of Poor Business Practices



Base: 1,022 individual contributors through C-suite collaboration decision-makers in the US and the UK
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Airtable, September 2022

- **Experience weaker productivity and revenue.** Forty-two percent of respondents noted a decrease in employee productivity as a result of poor business processes. Further, managers and individual contributors said they've experienced a 19% drop in productivity on average in their teams from inefficient or disconnected processes, while directors through the C-suite claimed a 24% drop in productivity at the organizational level (32% for large organizations) (see Figure 5). For large teams, these figures grow to 29% and 31%, respectively. As employee productivity suffers from organization silos, inaccurate data, and broken work processes, weaker products, services, and revenues follow suit. In fact, 31% of respondents indicated they saw decreased organizational revenue as a direct impact of these challenges.

Figure 5



Base: 419 managers and below collaboration decision-makers in the US and the UK

*Base: 483 directors and above collaboration decision-makers in the US and the UK

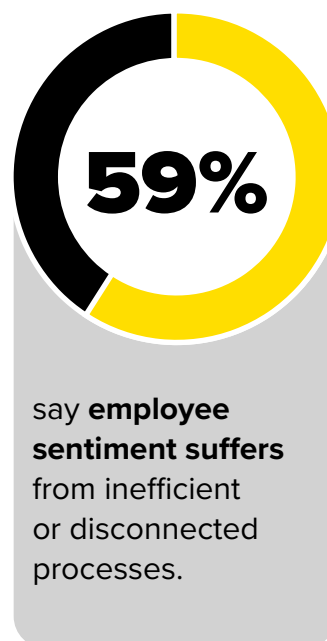
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Airtable, September 2022

WHEN ORGANIZATIONS ARE FRACTURED, PEOPLE SUFFER

Employees are also impacted by disconnected and broken processes. Employee morale is suffering and these fractures are leading people to feel frustrated and disengaged. What's worse, decision-makers appear to have an incomplete picture of their fractured processes. Despite 91% of respondents reporting they know where to find accurate, up-to-date information on team projects and 82% reporting they're satisfied with their organization's business processes, decision-makers said they're spending 30% of their time every week — equal to 2.4 hours daily — trying to find the right data and information. Similarly, nine in 10 decision-makers stated that their teams' work is connected to other teams' work in the organization, but eight in 10 also said they feel siloed or disconnected from those teams. As a result, organizations:

- **Struggle to manage employee stress and sentiment.** Three in five respondents (59%) said employee sentiment suffers from inefficient or disconnected processes (see Figure 6). This figure grows to 69% for large teams. Thirty-eight percent of IT teams, 32% of product teams, and 24% of marketing teams said improving the experience of their employees is likely a top business priority over the next 12 months. The top reason behind employee disengagement is data and/or information that's too hard to find (46%) (see Figure 7). Once more, respondents demonstrate that collaboration isn't working well, which takes a toll on employees. Broken business processes reinforce poor collaboration in the future and deepen disconnections and silos, eventually adding emotional resistance to collaborating.¹ Traditional workplace processes with top-down approaches and rigid IT platforms frustrate employees and deny people the flexibility they need to do their best work. Businesses need to reimagine how they build a work environment that connects people, fosters engagement, and drives bottom-line impact.

Figure 6



Base: 941 individual contributors through C-suite collaboration decision-makers in the US and the UK
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Airtable, September 2022

- **Experience greater challenges when working cross-functionally.**
Sixty-eight percent of respondents from large teams said their work is negatively impacted because they don't have visibility into cross-functional projects. Four in 10 respondents said working collaboratively across teams is a major challenge. Working across disparate apps and systems and maintaining a single source of truth for data and information are further top challenges, signaling that people and tools aren't working well together. In fact, more than a third of respondents (37%) said maintaining a single source of truth for data and information is a major challenge. Teams are misaligned and lacking flexibility as they aim to connect data and knowledge.

Figure 7

The Top Reason Employees Feel Disengaged From Work



Base: 1,022 individual contributors through C-suite collaboration decision-makers in the US and the UK
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Airtable, September 2022

Low-Code Tools Connect Teams And Lead To Better Business Outcomes

Organizations need a future fit strategy to enable teams to work off of the same data and move fast together. Shifting toward more customizable software that allows organizations to connect silos and work with more agility and autonomy will allow organizations to better meet future customer and employee needs with speed.² Low-code tools empowering teams to build their own connected apps on top of shared data can help teams achieve this. In fact, respondents expected low-code app-building tools to offer the greatest transformational increases in productivity. Citizen development, where enterprises empower non-IT employees to develop apps, is gaining further momentum amidst the call for faster development, better work connectivity, and greater innovation.³

It's evident organizations need better solutions to foster greater connectivity and bridge silos across data and teams. In this vein, we propose introducing a new category of future-of-work solutions building off of low-code tools. These connected apps platforms will allow people to build their own apps on top of shared data all on a single platform, bridging the information that is locked within different teams and systems. Connected apps platforms allow for improved visibility and speed at scale; enable better, faster, and more accurate decision-making; remove friction from fractured processes; increase alignment across teams; and improve business outcomes. With these tools, organizations can:

- **Make data more widely accessible across the organization.** Aggregated and shared data is increasingly an organizational necessity. Eighty-four percent of decision-makers expected solutions that improve business processes to provide significant transformation benefits by making data and insights easier to find. Four in 10 decision-makers thought their organizations should adopt tools that increase data accessibility. By establishing a single source of truth, organizations can make better and faster decisions — also a top benefit of improved process solutions according to 42% of respondents.
- **Use low-code tools to build connected apps that improve productivity.** Low-code tools that enable people to build apps offer promise of

improved processes, connections, and collaboration. Low-code tools allow less technical users with little to no coding experience to develop customizable, flexible apps that suit their unique business needs so teams can work the way they want to work.⁴ These products can be used to develop connected apps on one shared platform with shared data and consolidated sources of truth, allowing for customized and flexible workflows, greater team alignment, and improved work efficiency.

- **Improve business outcomes, including organizational revenue.** The majority of surveyed decision-makers (51%) saw greater employee productivity from improved business process solutions (see Figure 8). Nearly half (47%) expected transformational benefits in the form of increased revenue from improved business processes. Additionally, 30% of respondents expected to save 12 hours each week when trying to find the right data and information from implementing tools to increase cross-functional collaboration and organizational alignment (see Figure 9). Similarly, 29% of respondents said they expect on average to save 11.6 hours a weekly from using low-code tools to build their own apps. These tools minimize inefficiencies across systems and spreadsheets, integrating capabilities while reducing costs.
- **Strengthen organizational alignment and employee engagement.** Forty-one percent of respondents believed their organizations would benefit from tools to increase cross-functional collaboration and organizational alignment. Demand for such tools is only expected to grow as anywhere-work models, uncertain economic outlooks, and future-looking organizational initiatives bring to light the importance of better workplace connectivity. Nearly half of respondents (48%) pointed to stronger employee engagement as a top benefit from implementing solutions to improve business processes. Additionally, 41% said their teams would be more aligned from adopting these solutions. Improved engagement in the workforce lends itself to greater connectivity across teams, allowing the organization to more effectively demolish silos; bridge knowledge gaps; orchestrate processes with speed; encourage innovative growth; and build a competitive edge.

Figure 8

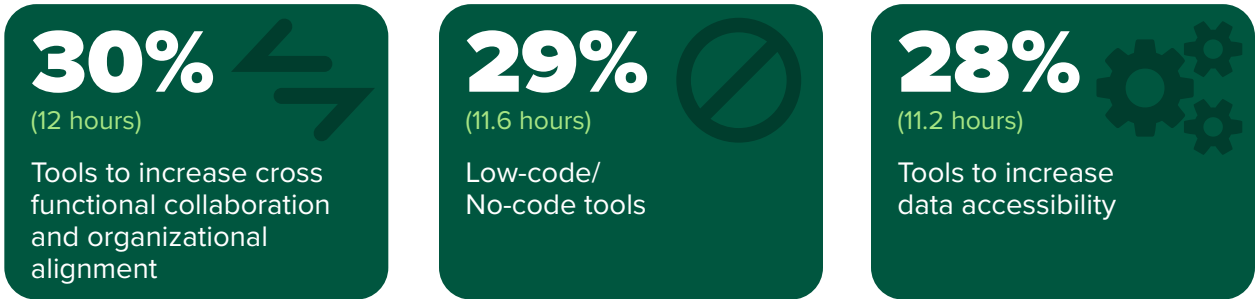
“What benefits do you think your organization could gain from implementing [business process] solutions and improving the way your organization manages business processes?”



Base: 1,022 individual contributors through C-suite collaboration decision-makers in the US and the UK
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Airtable, September 2022

Figure 9

Time Saved Finding The Right Data And Information



Base: 240 to 451 individual contributors through C-suite collaboration decision-makers in the US and the UK
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Airtable, September 2022

Key Recommendations

Forrester's in-depth survey of 1,022 collaboration decision-makers and individual contributors about how teams are working today yielded several important recommendations:

Accept what digital really requires — and pursue it.

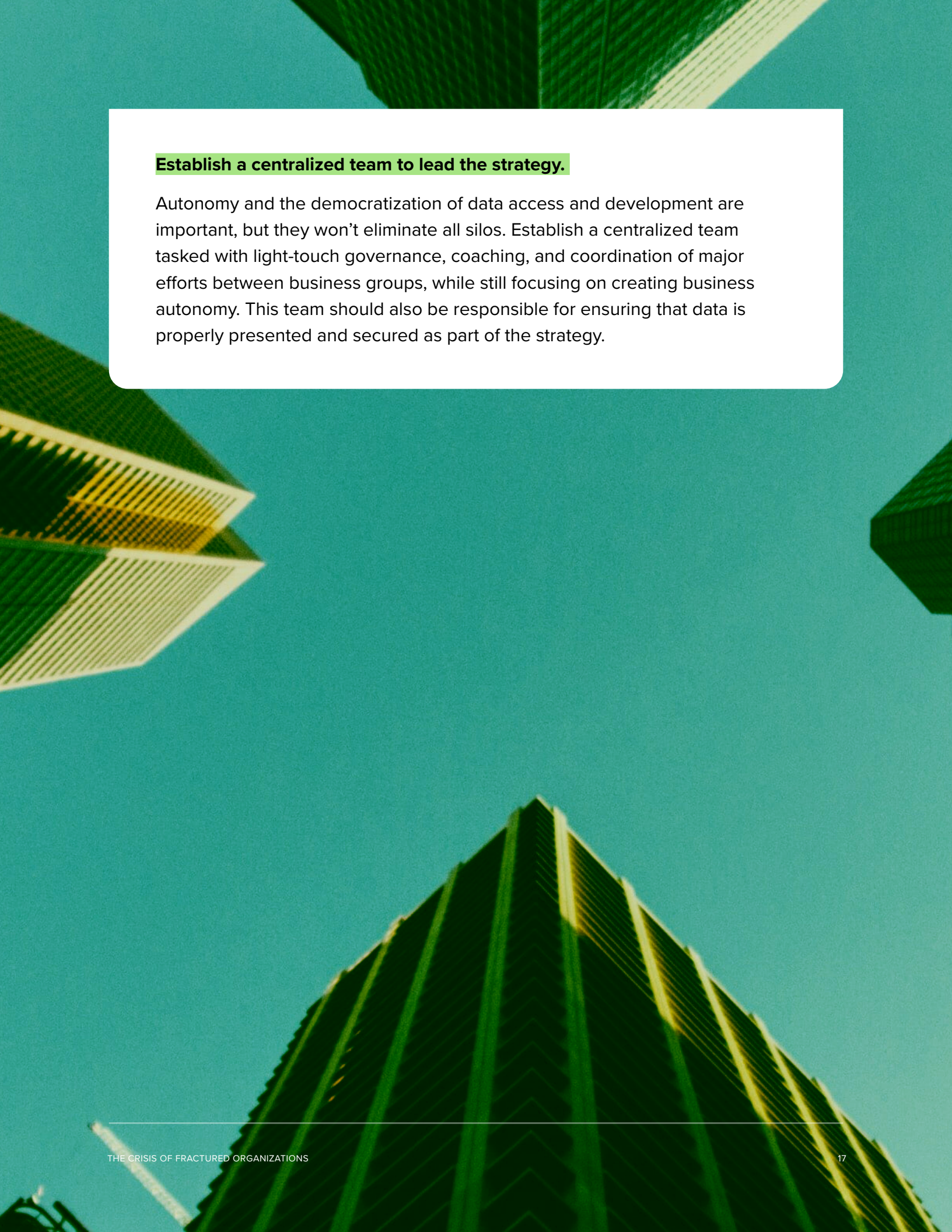
Becoming truly digital means that software is an expression of the business, i.e., everything about an organization — its policies, processes, procedures, data, know-how, etc. — must be quickly turned into software that changes as the business changes and is continuously improved. The widespread use of spreadsheets, paper, and manual processes is unacceptable in a digital world. Business leaders must recognize the problem and address it. We recommend a policy of digitize everything always. Get rid of the spreadsheets, the paper, and the manual processes, and consolidate the SaaS app sprawl. Pursue digital business through flexible, bespoke, and constantly changing applications instead. This is hard — but it's necessary.

Create a data sharing strategy.

Spending 2.4 hours per day searching for information is unacceptable. The data currently hidden in spreadsheets, on paper, and in multiple SaaS apps and enterprise systems must be made available to business users in an organized, self-service, and frictionless way. This will require organizations to secure and curate shared data sets on common platforms presented to business users for both reporting needs and for the development of new applications and digital processes. A data strategy is the only way to digitize everything always. Without access to data, there is no digital strategy.

Democratize software development.

To be digital, massive amounts of ongoing software development and continuous adaptation of that software is necessary. But professional developers can't do all this work; there aren't enough of them and even the most high-performing teams rarely deliver at the pace required to become (and stay) truly digital.⁵ Create a citizen developer strategy — and scale it — to change developer from a highly specialized technology role to a normal part of business work.⁶

A low-angle, upward-looking photograph of several modern skyscrapers. The buildings are constructed with glass and steel, featuring repetitive window patterns. The perspective creates strong vertical lines that converge towards the top of the frame. The sky is a clear, bright blue. The overall image has a clean, professional aesthetic.

Establish a centralized team to lead the strategy.

Autonomy and the democratization of data access and development are important, but they won't eliminate all silos. Establish a centralized team tasked with light-touch governance, coaching, and coordination of major efforts between business groups, while still focusing on creating business autonomy. This team should also be responsible for ensuring that data is properly presented and secured as part of the strategy.

Appendix A: Methodology

In this study, Forrester conducted an online survey of 1,022 respondents in roles from individual contributor to the C-suite in the US and the UK to evaluate how teams are working today and the impact of fractured systems and organizational silos. Questions provided to the participants asked about workplace processes and collaboration. Respondents were offered a small incentive as a thank-you for time spent on the survey. The study began in August 2022 and was completed in September 2022.

Appendix B: Demographics/Data

COUNTRY	
US	63%
UK	37%

COMPANY SIZE (EMPLOYEES)	
More than 50K	16%
20K to 49,999	16%
5K to 19,999	27%
1K to 4,999	41%

VISIBILITY INTO ORG	
Complete insight	52%
Good insight	48%

RESPONDENT LEVEL	
C-level executive	27%
Vice president	5%
Director	19%
Manager	38%
Project manager	6%
Full-time practitioner	5%

BUSINESS MODEL	
B2B only	8%
Primarily B2B	14%
Split B2B and B2C	28%
Primarily B2C	38%
B2C only	12%

COMPANY REVENUE	
More than \$20B	25%
\$6B to \$20B	18%
\$1B to \$5B	30%
\$100M to \$999M	27%

TOP 4 INDUSTRIES	
Technology	14%
Media/entertainment	14%
Financial services	13%
Retail	10%

BUSINESS PROCESS INVESTMENT	
Significantly invest	48%
Somewhat invest	41%
Slightly invest	10%
None	1%

DEPARTMENT	
Product	31%
Marketing/advertising	30%
IT	17%
Finance	8%
Human resources	5%
Business operations	5%
Sales	4%

Appendix C: Endnotes

¹ Source: “Your Collaboration Process Only Gets You Halfway There,” Forrester Research, Inc., October 17, 2022.

² Source: “Forget About Build Versus Buy; Your Choice Is Customize Or Compose,” Forrester Research, Inc., April 6, 2021.

³ Source: “The Democratization Of Development Is Accelerating,” Forrester Research, Inc., September 28, 2021.

⁴ Source: Ibid.

⁵ Source: “2022 US Tech Labor Market,” Forrester Research, Inc., April 11, 2022.

⁶ Source: “The Democratization Of Development Is Accelerating,” Forrester Research, Inc., September 28, 2021.



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