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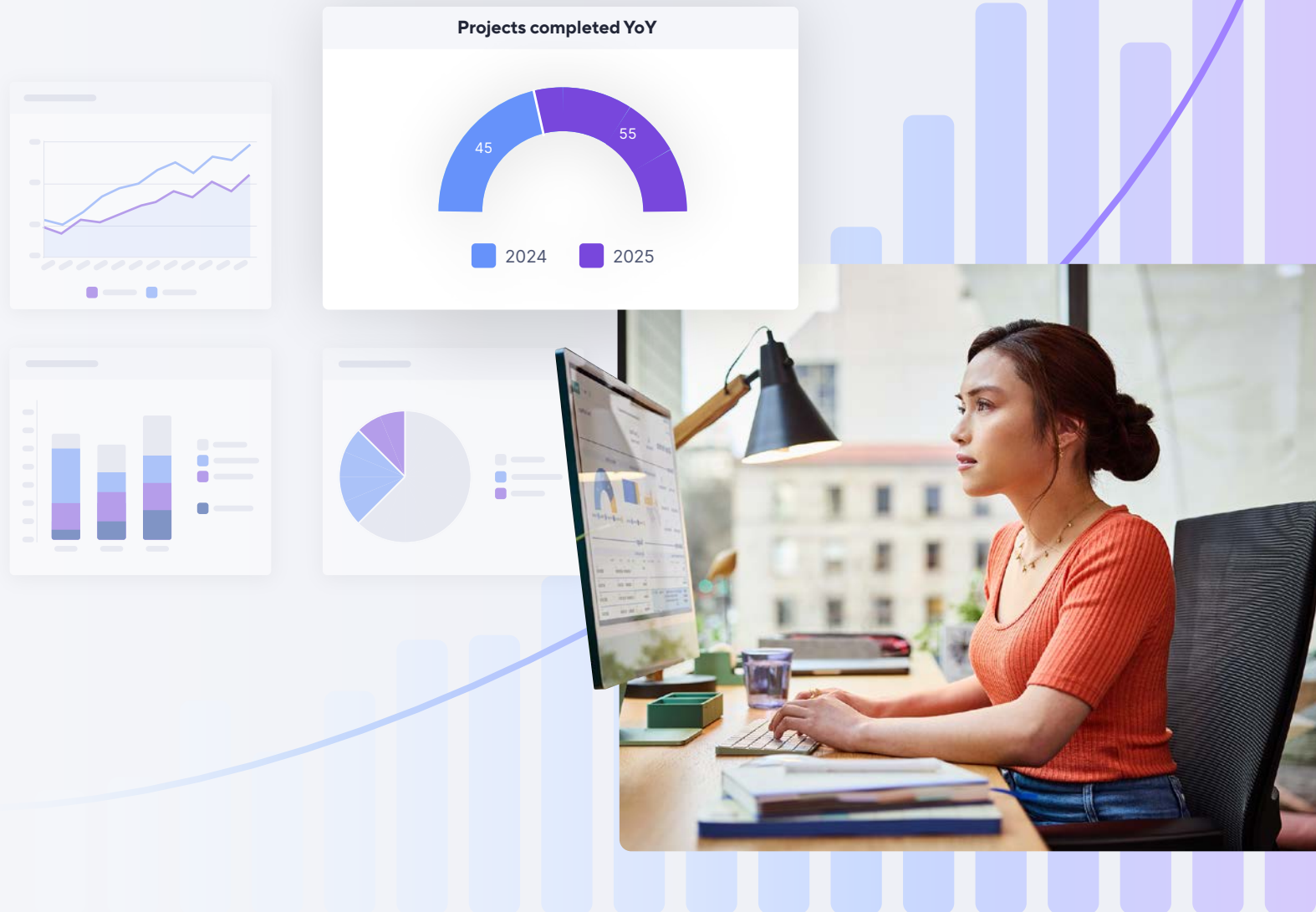
THE 2025 PROJECT AND PORTFOLIO
MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES REPORT

Managing work in an era of exponential change

Insights from 1400+ professionals

Projects completed YoY

45   55

■ 2024   ■ 2025

Contents

Executive summary

Change has always been a part of business, but disruption has now become the status quo. The Information Age has landed us in an era where the rate of change has scaled exponentially and in unpredictable ways. Becoming adaptive is key to staying competitive in a market that is constantly evolving, so the burden of expectation has only increased for employees, especially those tasked with managing, communicating, and implementing the changes.

Now, more than ever, project and portfolio management (PPM) professionals are under immense pressure to adapt quickly and deliver successful, impactful projects. To explore how project teams are navigating workplace changes and identifying opportunities for improvement, Smartsheet commissioned a survey of 1,488 PPM professionals and learned that a staggering 92% indicate that adapting to change remains a significant struggle.

92%
of PPM professionals indicate that adapting to change remains a significant struggle.

The research reveals that change, though filled with opportunity, almost always presents challenges for teams. In fact, change is often associated with having an adverse impact on key business metrics. When disruption occurs, businesses often lean on their project teams' ability to adapt and execute at the same pace and level of excellence. The research suggests that, as a result, frequent change is creating a sense of fatigue and overwhelm for project teams.

A few specific challenges for PPM professionals stood out in the research, including: frequent shifts in work priorities, gaps in communication and collaboration, and lack of access to critical data and information.

However, amid significant challenges brought on by exponential change, PPM professionals have reason to be optimistic. The research uncovered a number of strategies that will help teams confidently adapt in 2025, including:

Establishing a detailed and structured approach to managing change with guardrails for governance

Leveraging flexible and innovative tools that allow the right balance between standardization, experimentation, and innovation

Supporting organization -wide visibility to empower leaders to make the most effective business decisions

Disruption offers organizations an opportunity to create value if they can harness it for innovation, scale, and business agility. Teams have a choice: stumble through change and face competitive headwinds—or leverage change to reinvent, gain efficiencies, and achieve exponential growth.
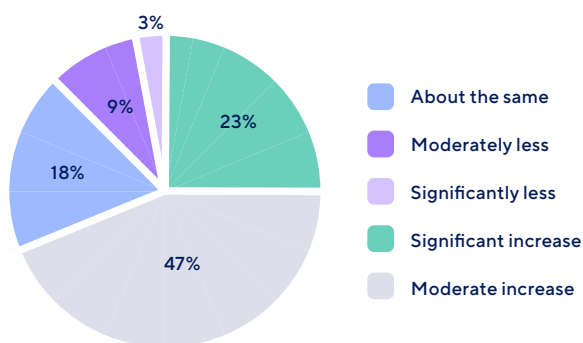
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# Change fatigue is negatively impacting key business metrics

Workplace change is on the rise

Almost all (97%) PPM professionals report that they experienced change at work in 2024, and 70% report a "significant" or "moderate" increase in how frequently they experienced business changes in 2024 compared to previous years. Change at work can be the result of a wide range of internal and external factors, but technology disruption (59%) tops the list, followed by organizational changes (57%). Market or industry changes (52%) and macroeconomic changes (49%) were also frequently mentioned.

Thinking about the different types of business changes you've experienced at work in 2024, how does the frequency of these changes compare to other years?

3%
9%
18%
23%
47%

About the same
Moderately less
Significantly less
Significant increase
Moderate increase

n = 1443 ("I haven't experienced any changes in the past year" not asked; "I don't know" excluded)

What changes have you experienced at work in 2024?

80%
60% — 59% 57%
52%
49%
40%
20%
0% — .5% 3%

Technology disruption
Organizational
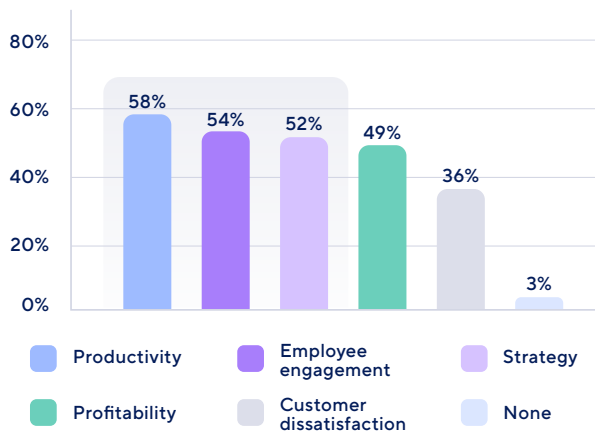Market or Industry
Macroeconomic
Other
None

n = 1448 (All)
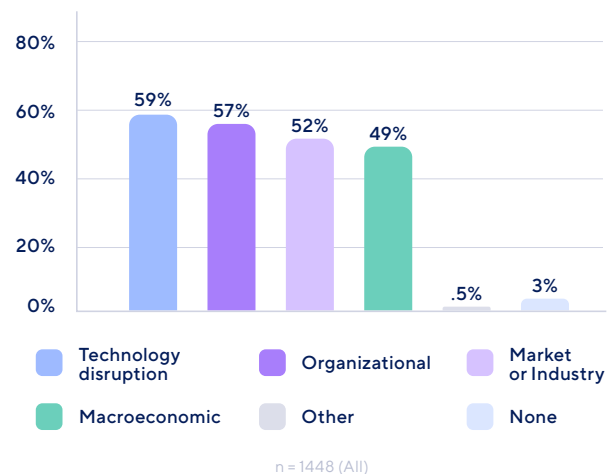
Change impacts employee productivity

The research shows that nearly all PPM professionals surveyed (97%) report the work changes they experienced in 2024 have had a negative impact on key business metrics. Change often triggers uncertainty among employees, negatively impacting productivity. Survey respondents said that change had an adverse impact on productivity (58%), employee engagement (54%), and strategy (52%). Other adverse business impacts of change include profitability (49%) and customer dissatisfaction or churn (36%). Negative impacts to productivity are especially concerning since the pressure to "do more with less" is on the rise due to economic uncertainty and tighter budgets.

The challenges of adapting

Whether adopting new technology, understanding new governmental regulations, or dealing with new management after an acquisition, employees are struggling to adapt to constant business changes. Over half (54%) of PPM professionals say business changes require them to "constantly" or "frequently" change work priorities, while 71% report that constant changes in the workplace make it difficult to remain productive.

What adverse impacts did these changes have on the business?

Legend:
- Productivity
- Employee engagement
- Strategy
- Profitability
- Customer dissatisfaction
- None

n = 1443 ("I haven't experienced any changes in the past year" not asked; "I don't know" excluded)

How often do you feel that business changes require you to change your work priorities?

Legend:
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never
- Constantly
- Frequently
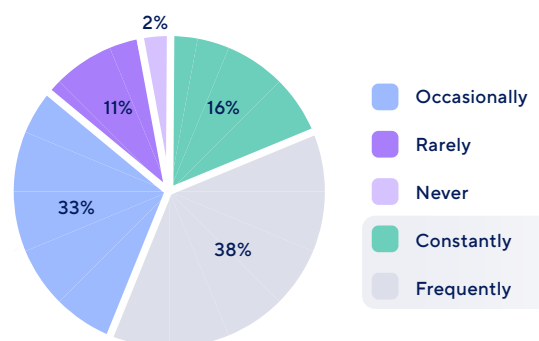
n = 1446 ("Not applicable" excluded)

71% believe constant changes in the workplace are making it increasingly difficult to adapt effectively and remain proactive.
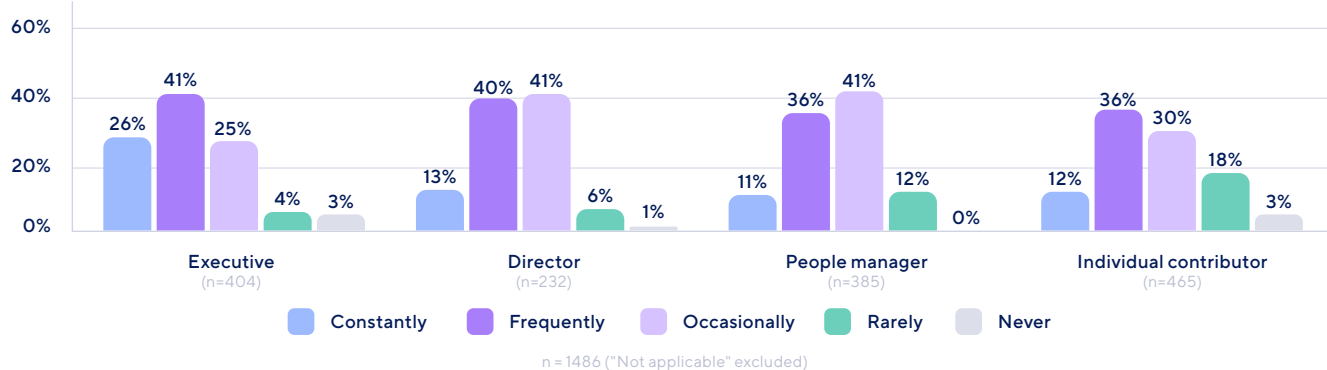
The pressure to change work priorities is much higher among more senior roles. More than twice as many executives (26%) say that change "constantly" requires them to change work priorities, compared to individual contributors (12%).

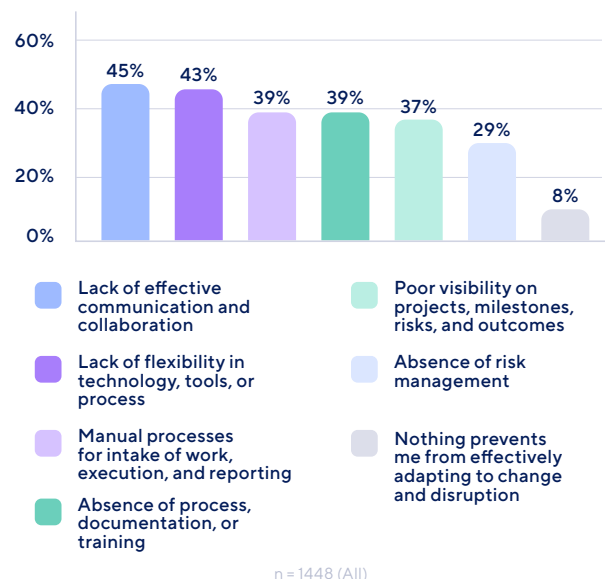## How often do you feel that business changes require you to change work priorities?

By job level

	Executive (n=404)	Director (n=232)	People manager (n=385)	Individual contributor (n=465)
Constantly	26%	13%	11%	12%
Frequently	41%	40%	36%	36%
Occasionally	25%	41%	41%	30%
Rarely	4%	6%	12%	18%
Never	3%	1%	0%	3%

n = 1486 ("Not applicable" excluded)

The ability to pivot is critical for dealing with disruption. However, these pivots can also lead to a certain level of experimentation with strategy, business models, and product that require enabling technology and processes. A staggering 92% say there are factors that prevent them from effectively adapting. PPM professionals say that lack of effective communication and collaboration (45%) is a challenge, followed by lack of flexibility in technology, tools, or processes (43%). Manual processes for intake of work, execution, and reporting (39%), absence of process, documentation, or training (39%), poor visibility into the right information on projects, milestones, risks, and outcomes (37%), absence of risk management (29%) are other factors that prevent PPM employees from effectively adapting to change and disruption.

The wide variety of factors that prevent PPM professionals from being able to adapt points to just how broadly exponential change is impacting organizations. Early and effective response to change requires continuous, open, and effective communication and a collaborative mindset. Organizations that invest in technology and tools that foster collaboration and flexibility are ultimately most successful in creating long-term value from disruption.

Which factors prevent you from effectively adapting to change and disruption?

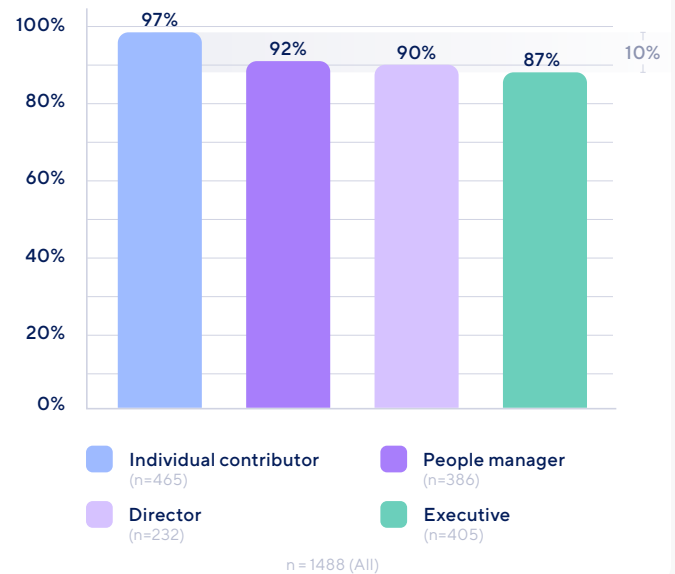| Factor	%
Lack of effective communication and collaboration	45%
Lack of flexibility in technology, tools, or process	43%
Manual processes for intake of work, execution, and reporting	39%
Absence of process, documentation, or training	39%
Poor visibility on projects, milestones, risks, and outcomes	37%
Absence of risk management	29%
Nothing prevents me from effectively adapting to change and disruption	8%

n = 1448 (All)

How change is perceived by different employee groups

Experience and seniority often correlate with employee perception, and this is no different when it comes to disruption at work. Although executive-level employees report feeling like they've experienced more change in 2024 than in other years, and at a more frequent rate, it is the individual contributors (97%) who are more likely to report challenges adapting to change. Leaders need to create a shared understanding of the reasons for change, how it will positively impact the employees and the organization, and communicate this openly and effectively.

Interestingly, PPM professionals from all job levels cited communication and lack of flexibility as the top barriers to adapting effectively. From executives to individual contributors, the lack of effective communication and collaboration and lack of flexibility in technology, tools, or processes top the list of issues impeding the ability to adapt to change.
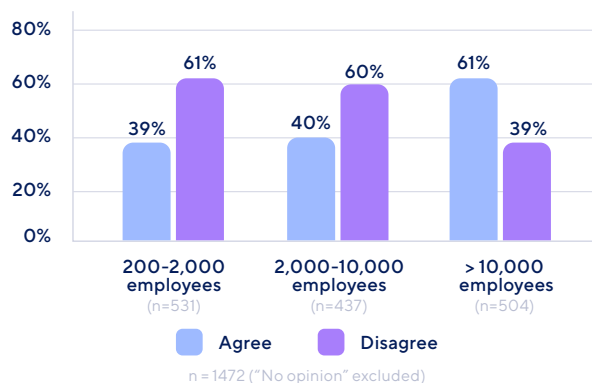
Employees who face barriers to effectively adapting to change
By job level

- Individual contributor (n=465): 97%
- People manager (n=386): 92%
- Director (n=232): 90%
- Executive (n=405): 87%
- 10%

n = 1488 (All)

"My organization does a poor job of adapting to change"
By company size

- 200-2,000 employees (n=531): Agree 39%, Disagree 61%
- 2,000-10,000 employees (n=437): Agree 40%, Disagree 60%
- > 10,000 employees (n=504): Agree 61%, Disagree 39%

Agree   Disagree

n = 1472 ("No opinion" excluded)

Scaling invites more challenges

Responding to change becomes more challenging as companies grow. Sixty-one percent of employees at organizations with 10,000 or more employees agree their organization does a poor job adapting to change, compared to only 40% of those with 2,000 to 10,000 employees.

This suggests that larger organizations face more challenges in addressing and communicating change at scale, and underscores the need for tools that support change as companies grow.

Structured processes are key to responding to change effectively

What is the right response to change?

Some organizations have a winning formula for tackling change, while others are yet to establish frameworks. The research found that nearly a quarter of organizations (23%) don't have a standardized process for responding to change.

Interestingly, there is a significant gap in the perceptions of executives versus other employees in how their organizations are dealing with change. Executives (87%) were much more likely than other positions to report their organization has a structured approach to change compared to individual contributors (67%). The gap suggests that executives are over-optimistic about how their staff is experiencing and implementing changes.
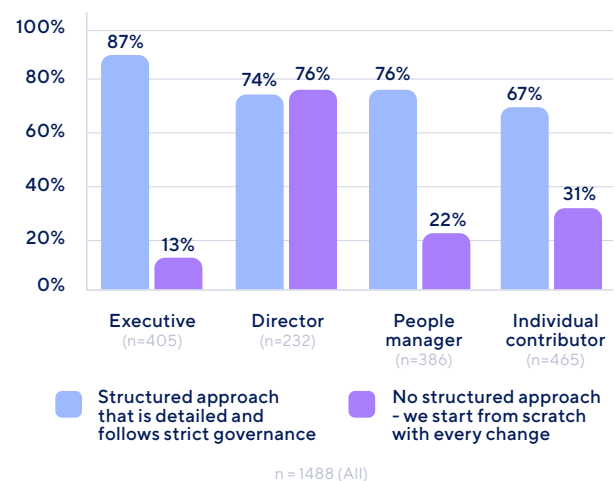
Adapting quickly is a challenge, and the complexity increases when change needs to happen across an entire organization. Almost half (47%) of PPM professionals say their organization is "very" or "somewhat" slow in their approach to adapting to change.

This raises some key questions. Does the way a company handles change management affect its ability to adapt? And do companies with a tried-and-tested framework for tackling change adapt more quickly than those who respond more reactively? This research indicates a resounding "yes." Companies with a structured approach to change management are more likely to say they can adapt "very quickly" than those with a non-structured approach.

This could be due to a few different factors. For example, a defined process with clear directives ensures changes are implemented with as little friction as possible. Additionally, having a clear communication plan can address potential resistance throughout the process and provide mechanisms to collect and tackle feedback, creating a sense of grounding during uncertainty.

How does your organization approach change management?

By job level

	Executive (n=405)	Director (n=232)	People manager (n=386)	Individual contributor (n=465)
Structured approach that is detailed and follows strict governance	87%	74%	76%	67%
No structured approach – we start from scratch with every change	13%	76%	22%	31%

n = 1488 (All)

How quickly is your organization able to adapt based on your current approach?

By organization's approach to change

	Very quickly	Somewhat slowly	Very slowly
Structured approach (n=1131*)	58%	34%	8%
Non-structured approach (n=343*)	39%	48%	14%
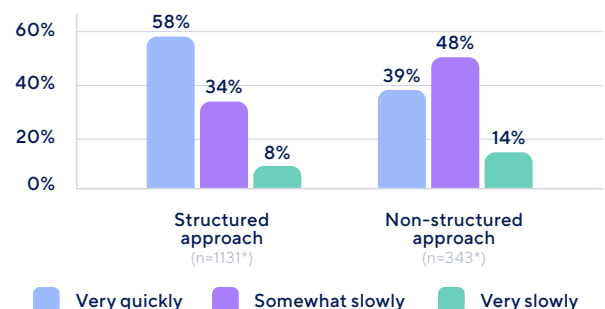
*"Neither of these" excluded | n = 1485 ("I don't know" excluded)
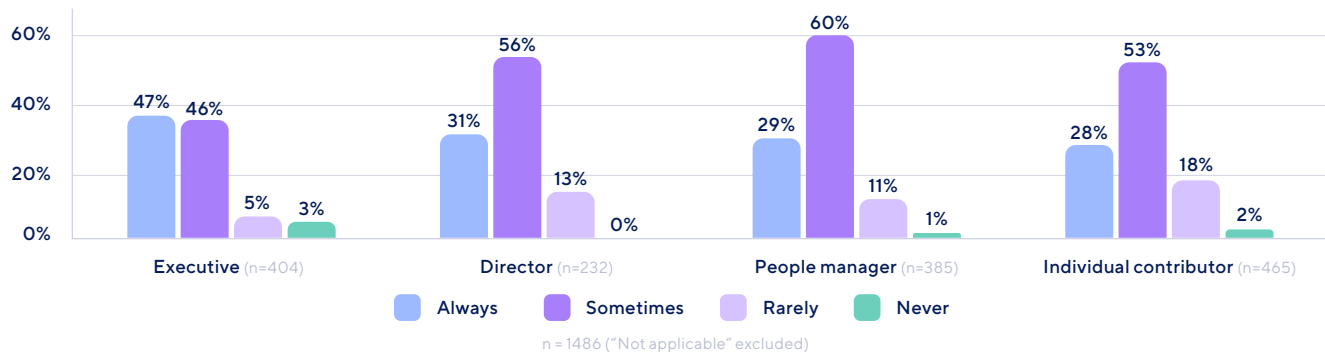
The need for visibility

Having visibility into the right data and information about projects is crucial for PPM professionals to anticipate risks and take steps to mitigate them. However, two-thirds (66%) of the respondents report they lack visibility into the data they need to pivot when change happens. Executives (47%) are far more likely to say they "always" have visibility compared to their teams, as companies tend to design the flow of information more towards leadership. This is especially problematic since employees at all other levels equate this with lack of transparency and feel less accountable for the outcomes.

Executive perspective

Executives are twice as likely to say they've experienced a "significant increase" in change in 2024 compared to director-level staff. With executives most often defining, communicating, and implementing the change, this makes sense. They have visibility into all the changes happening across functions whereas the rest of the organization will only be aware of the changes impacting their function and the functions they work with. A good reminder that organization-wide visibility can unlock a proactive, cross-functional approach to change management.
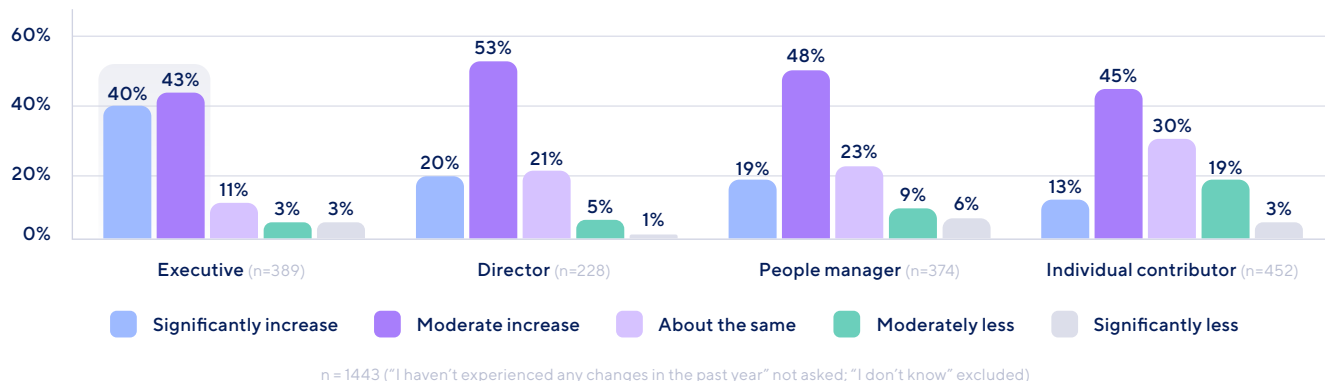
How often do you feel you have visibility into the right information you need to anticipate disruptions and make necessary decisions to pivot quickly?

By job level

	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Executive (n=404)	47%	46%	5%	3%
Director (n=232)	31%	56%	13%	0%
People manager (n=385)	29%	60%	11%	1%
Individual contributor (n=465)	28%	53%	18%	2%

n = 1486 ("Not applicable" excluded)

Thinking about the different types of business changes you've experienced at work in 2024, how does the frequency of these changes compare to other years?
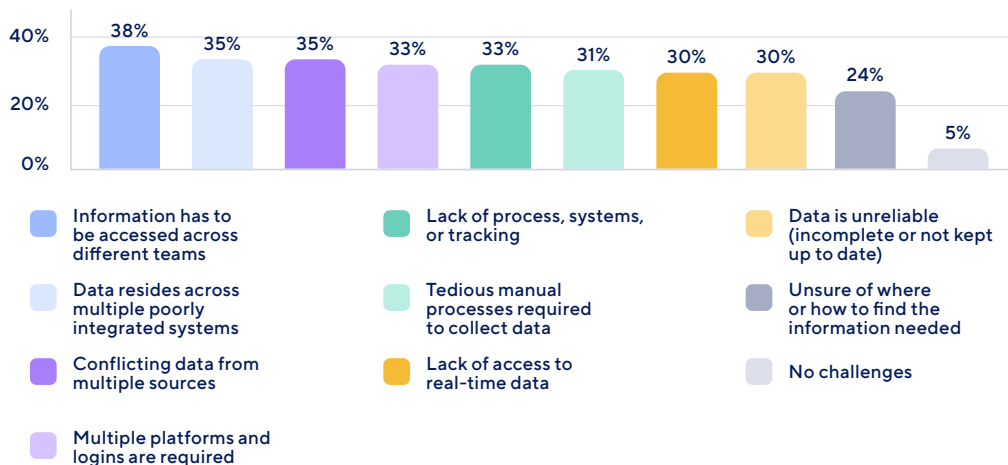
By job level

	Significantly increase	Moderate increase	About the same	Moderately less	Significantly less
Executive (n=389)	40%	43%	11%	3%	3%
Director (n=228)	20%	53%	21%	5%	1%
People manager (n=374)	19%	48%	23%	9%	6%
Individual contributor (n=452)	13%	45%	30%	19%	3%

n = 1443 ("I haven't experienced any changes in the past year" not asked; "I don't know" excluded)

Organizations face many challenges in making strategic decisions, with the top three all relating to their ability to access the right data at the right time. For most, data/information need to be collected from multiple teams (38%), reside in different systems (35%), and lack consistency (35%). They report struggling with lack of immediate access to information, tedious data collection processes, and conflicting information due to multiple platforms and sources.

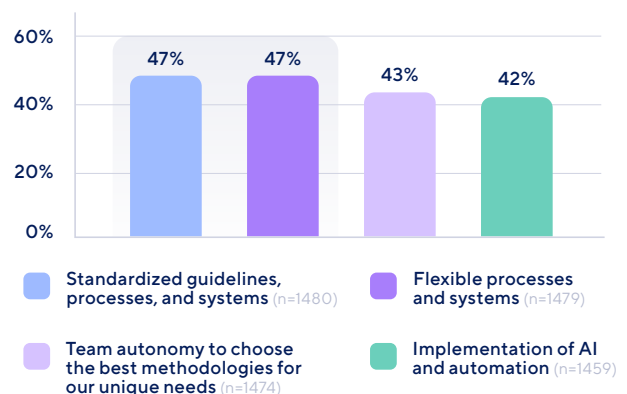### What challenges do you face when you need to make a business decision?

40%	
20%	
0%	

38% 35% 35% 33% 33% 31% 30% 30% 24% 5%

- Information has to be accessed across different teams
- Data resides across multiple poorly integrated systems
- Conflicting data from multiple sources
- Multiple platforms and logins are required
- Lack of process, systems, or tracking
- Tedious manual processes required to collect data
- Lack of access to real-time data
- Data is unreliable (incomplete or not kept up to date)
- Unsure of where or how to find the information needed
- No challenges

n = 1485 ("Not applicable" excluded)

Balancing structure and flexibility

Two factors rose to the top as most critical for responding to change: (1) Standardized guidelines, processes, and systems, and (2) flexible processes and systems for teams to respond to change. PPM tools that support just one or the other would result in one of these: 1. Overly rigorous processes stifling innovation, creating a culture of resistance to change, and eventually stifling company growth; or 2. Lack of quality, consistency, and scale from the absence of streamlined processes. That said, the right balance of standardization and flexibility will be different for each company, each project, each client. The important takeaway is the openness to being as flexible as needed.

How important are each of the following in helping you and your teams respond to project and portfolio change effectively?

"Very helpful"

60%	
40%	
20%	
0%	

47% 47% 43% 42%

- Standardized guidelines, processes, and systems (n=1480)
- Flexible processes and systems (n=1479)
- Team autonomy to choose the best methodologies for our unique needs (n=1474)
- Implementation of AI and automation (n=1459)

Organizations need innovative thinking and technology to adapt to change

A majority of PPM professionals (87%) agree that their team would be more effective if they were better equipped to anticipate and adapt to change instead of being reactive. Being reactive impacts the speed of response and increases the cost of addressing change. For example, a competitor that has addressed change faster might expand their presence and impact margins. The use of an enabling technology that can harness the power of standardization while nurturing innovation can help companies tackle change and help create value from it.

> "Standardization allows us to measure. Flexibility is extremely important as well. We do a lot of external client work, and clients care about different things. So we need to be able to measure what they care about, but we also need to be able to measure what we care about."
>
> **Emely Grisanty**
> Senior Project Manager, Avison Young

Hybrid methodology leads the pack

Almost half (42%) of PPM professionals say their organization uses hybrid methodology, i.e., a combination of agile and more linear methodologies, for project and portfolio management. Hybrid approaches are more common (48%) in smaller organizations as they look to blend the best of both to create methods that work well for individual teams. This evolution in methodologies supports the flexibility needed for customization as projects continue to grow in complexity and volume.

Which methodology does your organization currently use at work?

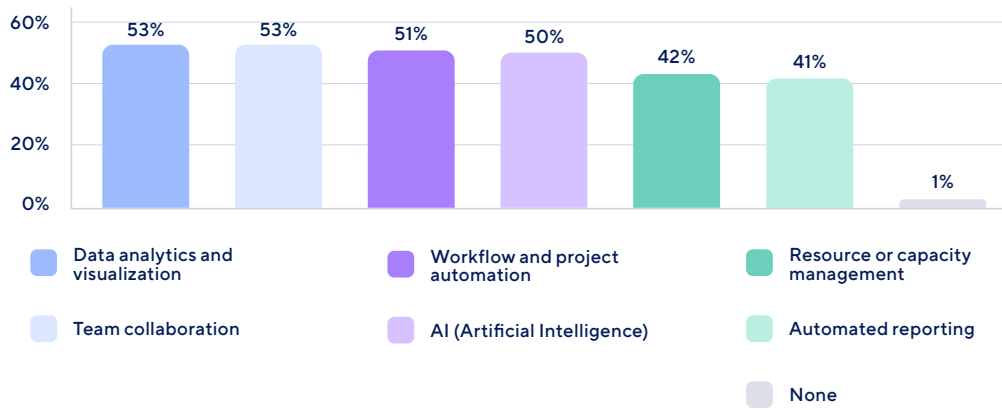| Methodology	Percentage
Hybrid	42%
Agile	33%
Scrum	32%
Lean	30%
Waterfall	30%
Kanban	29%
None	9%
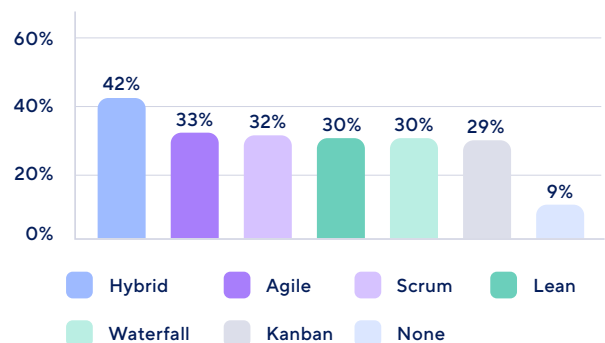
n = 1468 ("I don't know" excluded)

Project teams want better tools

Successful companies have leveraged technology to promote visibility and better decision-making. More than half (58%) of the survey respondents say the current tools in their organization are inadequate, challenging their ability to demonstrate value from their projects. On top of this, a staggering 99% of PPM professionals say their organization would benefit from better enabling technology that helps them adapt to change. Capabilities around data analytics and visualization (53%), team collaboration (53%), workflow and project automation (51%), and AI (50%) would be critical in helping organizations embrace, manage, and adapt to change.

In your opinion, which of the following capabilities would help your organization adapt more effectively to change and disruption?

53%	53%	51%	50%	42%	41%	1%

- Data analytics and visualization
- Team collaboration
- Workflow and project automation
- AI (Artificial Intelligence)
- Resource or capacity management
- Automated reporting
- None

n = 1483 ("I don't know" excluded)

58% " My organization's current tools and systems make it difficult for me to demonstrate my contributions to project outcomes.

87% " My team would be more effective if we were better equipped to adapt to change instead of reacting to it.

Achieving growth and reinvention in an era of exponential change

As businesses continue to face waves of change and disruption, project teams need to find ways to not only survive but thrive. Project management tools that help them become change-ready–supporting adaptive planning, efficient risk assessment, innovation, portfolio value, and cross-functional collaboration–will gain greater traction. The value of such tools lies in supporting distinct and unique responses that suit individual organizations without force-fitting them into a one-size-fits-all approach.

While organizations may face sudden and unexpected changes from time to time, they need to become change-ready. Smartsheet is a powerful enterprise work management platform that helps organizations establish an ecosystem for efficient work execution in an environment of change. By combining best-in-class user experience with a portfolio approach to collaborative work at scale, Smartsheet allows project teams to align their project portfolios with the strategic goals of their organization, ensuring adaptive planning, resourcing, automation, process consistency, and integration across multiple enterprise systems of record.

Thriving in the midst of change requires continuous effort, adjusting, recalibrating, and optimizing your processes on an ongoing basis. Organizations that have achieved a certain level of people, process, and technology maturity adapt better than others.

Take our PPM Maturity Assessment to evaluate your PPM processes and get expert advice on how to improve.

Take the assessment

To learn more about how Smartsheet can help you and your team leverage change to achieve growth and create lasting value, request a demo.
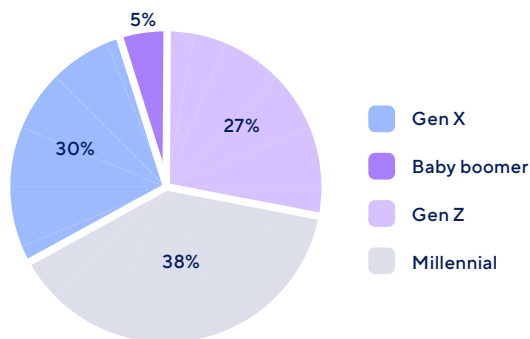
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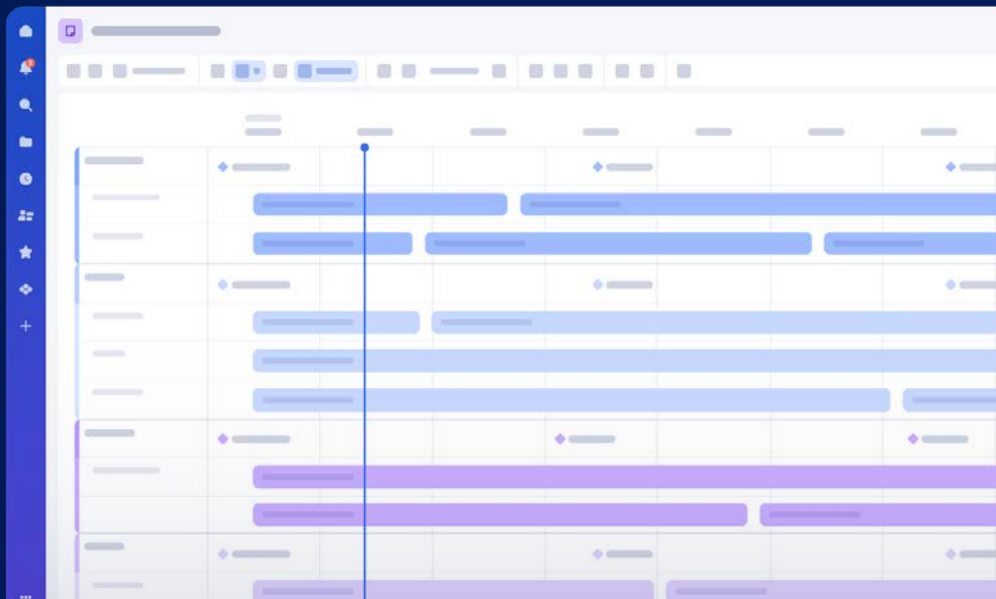
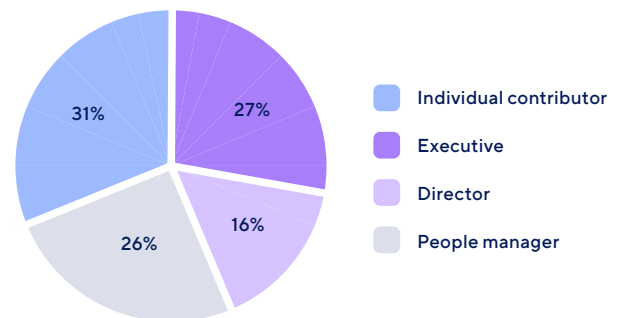# Survey methodology and participant demographics

Independent sources of Product and Portfolio Management (PPM) professionals were invited to participate in an online survey. A total of 1,488 qualified individuals with job responsibilities for project and portfolio management at companies with more than 200 employees in the United States completed the survey. Participants included a mix of ages, job levels, job functions, company sizes, and industries. The survey was fielded in September 2024. Due to rounding, certain graph options may not add up to exactly 100%.
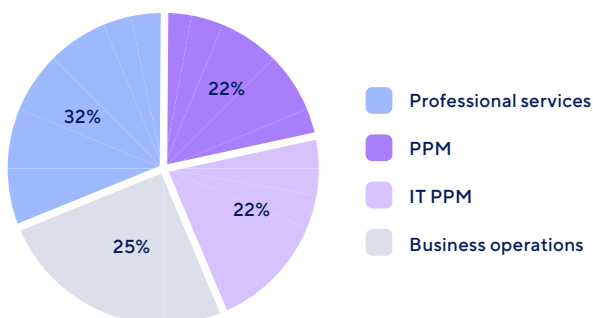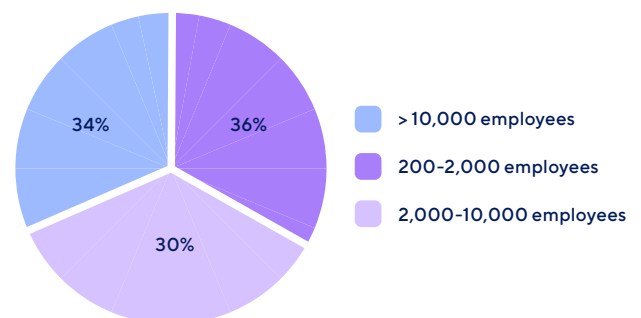
Generation

- 5% Baby boomer
- 27% Gen Z
- 30% Gen X
- 38% Millennial

Legend:
- Gen X
- Baby boomer
- Gen Z
- Millennial

n = 1488 (All)

Job level

- 31% Individual contributor
- 27% Executive
- 16% Director
- 26% People manager

Legend:
- Individual contributor
- Executive
- Director
- People manager

n = 1488 (All)

Job function

- 32% Professional services
- 22% PPM
- 22% IT PPM
- 25% Business operations

Legend:
- Professional services
- PPM
- IT PPM
- Business operations

n = 1488 (All)

Company size

- 34% >10,000 employees
- 36% 200-2,000 employees
- 30% 2,000-10,000 employees

Legend:
- >10,000 employees
- 200-2,000 employees
- 2,000-10,000 employees

n = 1488 (All)

About Dimensional Research

Dimensional Research® provides practical market research to help technology companies make their customers more successful. Our researchers are experts in the people, processes, and technology of corporate IT. We understand how technology organizations operate to meet the needs of their business stakeholders. We partner with our clients to deliver actionable information that reduces risks, increases customer satisfaction, and grows the business. For more information, visit www.dimensionalresearch.com.

About Smartsheet

Smartsheet is the modern enterprise work management platform trusted by millions of people at companies across the globe, including approximately 85% of the 2024 Fortune 500 companies. As a pioneer and market leader in this category, Smartsheet delivers powerful solutions fueling performance and driving the next wave of innovation. Visit www.smartsheet.com to learn more.