

A photograph of a city skyline, likely New York City, featuring several skyscrapers and a body of water in the foreground. The image is framed by a blue circular border.

— 2020 —

PERFORMANCE AND
TECHNOLOGY SURVEY

INTRODUCTION

The Critical Convergence of Development and Technology

Technology is a ubiquitous part of modern work. From the factory floor to the conference room to the sales pitch, we use software and hardware every day as vital tools to help us understand and complete our jobs successfully.

But over time, technology has also become an intrinsic part of our employee experience—for better or worse—shaping how we think about our work, how we think about our colleagues, and how we think about and approach our own development.

Technology is a linchpin for many of the issues that drive employee satisfaction, empowerment and engagement—such as flexibility, talent management, connectedness and productivity. What technology tools a company provides to help guide development can be instrumental in both employee satisfaction and success, and yet in many ways we have come into 2020 with an incomplete understanding of how employees interact with talent management technology at work, how they regard it, and what they expect from it.

Technology has been a part of work for the living memory of most people working today. Beginning with mainframes in the 1970s and continuing up through the age of the internet, but the advent of personal connectivity—comprising the rise of WiFi and portable computing in the 2000s and smartphone access in the 2010s—has democratized technology. Where once technology was entirely centralized and controlled by the company, today technology is individual, and employees expectations are deeply personalized.



BYOD (bring your own device) has become mainstream in today's workplaces, as employees incorporate mobile into their personal and professional development. According to one study, **nearly 9 out of 10 companies** are letting workers access company data over personal devices. But in many ways software—and in particular performance management software—has been struggling to catch up with where employees are—both in tech and in consumption preferences. Few talent management solutions have fully taken on board the idea of employee-led development and employee driven feedback, for example. A majority of companies still default to the centralized, top-down, employer-controlled constructs of time gone-by.

iCoachFirst set out to better understand the impact technology is having on the employee experience—particular to the world of performance management and feedback. We surveyed over 650 fully employed workers across the US to better understand how these issues around tech and talent management intersect. We wanted to understand:



How employees are thinking today about their work and workplaces



Employee relationships with and practices around technology



The impact of feedback, coaching and performance management



The intersection of technology and employee satisfaction

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- 1 *Most employees report being somewhat happy in their jobs, but only 25% believe their companies care a lot about their development.*

94% of employees report being at least somewhat happy at work, but 75% doubt their companies care strongly about development and growth—impacting both satisfaction and turnover intent.

- 2 *Workers are tech-enabled and on the move.*

80% of employees are using smart technology at work, but more than half of employers have yet to fully implement technology in service of employee performance and development.

- 3 *Coaching at work improves important employee KPIs*

36% of respondents have a coach or mentor, but they tend to be happier, more productive, more engaged and more satisfied with performance than those who do not have coaching.

- 4 *Having a performance management solution makes managers more successful.*

Employees who have access to performance management software are more likely to trust and like their managers and 15% more likely to say their managers' feedback is timely and effective.

- 5 *People prefer regular, face-to-face feedback—but to be effective it must be supported by technology.*

40% of employees receive less feedback than they want, and 70% of employees prefer strengths-based positive feedback.

- 6 *Employees are excited to incorporate technology into coaching and feedback.*

70% of employees believe that coaching and feedback technology helps to improve their performance.

DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT

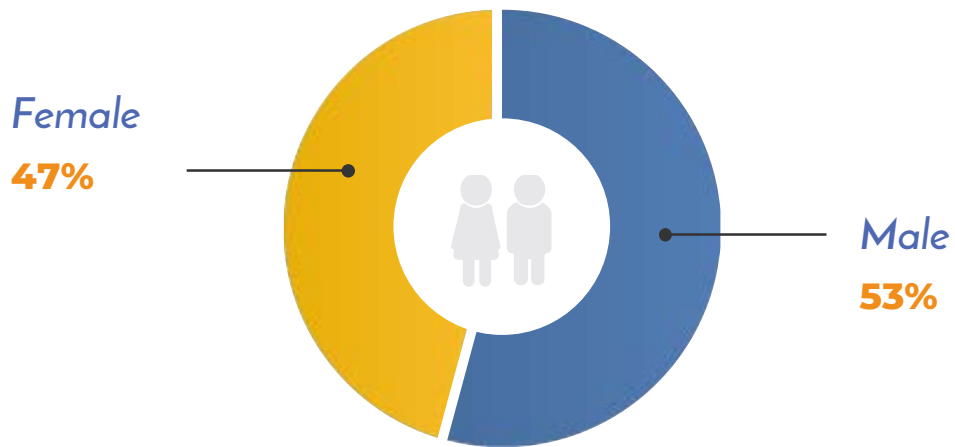


FIGURE 1

AGE :

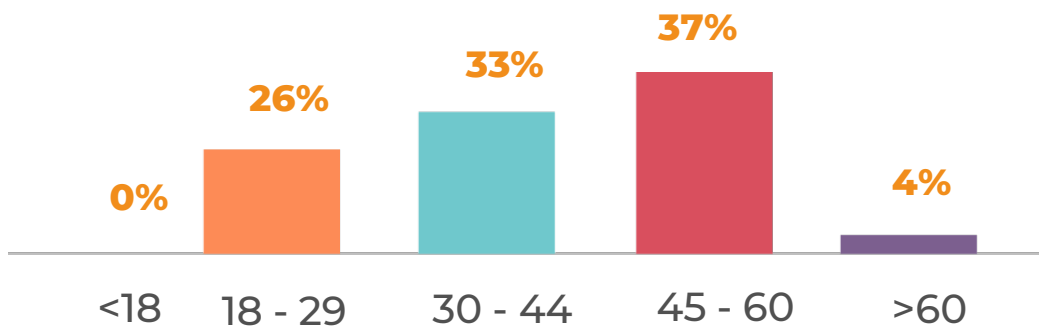


FIGURE 2

LOCATION:

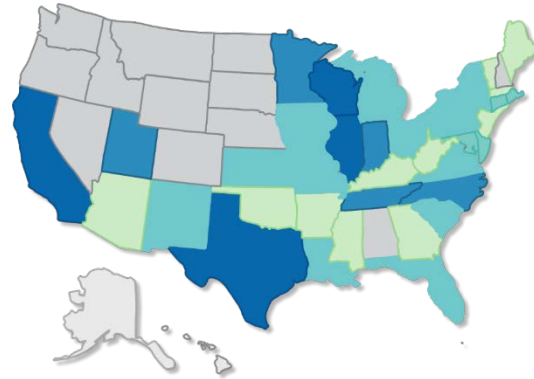
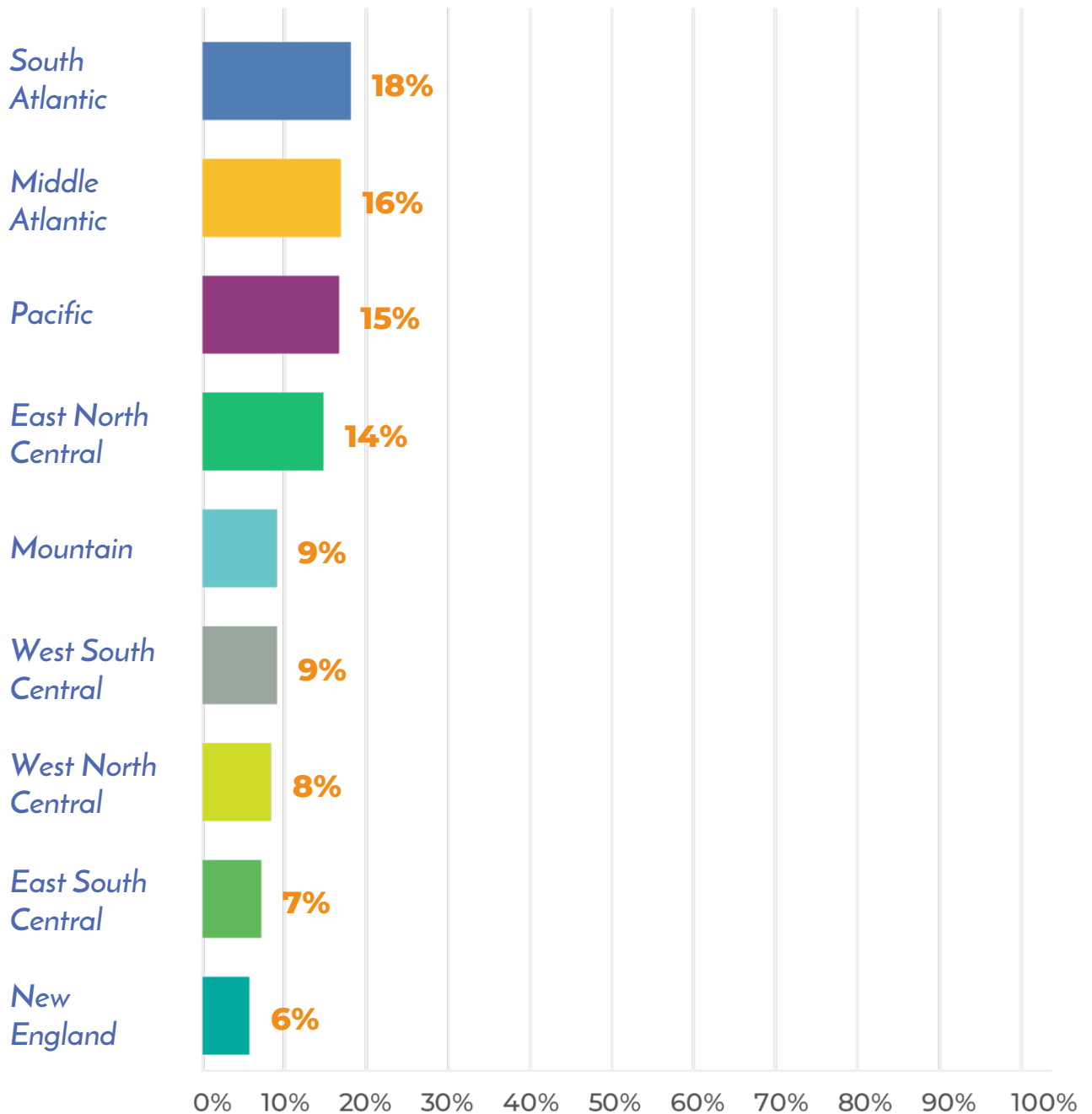


FIGURE 3



FINDING #1

Most employees report being somewhat happy in their jobs, but only 25% believe their companies care a lot about their development.

We began our survey by acquiring a baseline on how today's employees feel about their work and companies in general, and though the news was generally good, there is definitely room for improvement.

When we asked if people were happy at work, 56% of employees agreed they were, while 39% of workers reported feeling only somewhat happy. Only 6% of workers reported they were not happy at work (Figure 4).

This aligned with 70% of employees reporting they feel engaged at work—going above and beyond to get the job done. Another 27% reported feeling somewhat engaged and only 3% admitted to outright not being engaged at work (Figure 5). These numbers may feel somewhat reversed from what you may see from organizations such as Gallup, so it's worth pointing out that when people are asked directly if they feel engaged at work, they are likely to over-report. When employees are asked about peers' engagement or team productivity (Figure 6) they tend to come closer to the numbers we are used to seeing around engagement. However, self-reporting around engagement is useful for year-over-year benchmarks, so we'll be interested to see how this number performs in future surveys.

When we asked about productivity, about half of employees (50%) said their teams are very productive, where 45% admitted their teams are only somewhat productive. 5% of employees said that their teams are not at all productive (Figure 6).

All of these numbers were fairly expected and in line with other such surveys—for example a CNBC survey conducted last spring that showed 85% of Americans are happy in their jobs. However, when we dug a little deeper, we found some cause for concern—particularly in light of the war for talent and persistently low unemployment figures.

Since performance management and talent management are a key focus of this research, we asked employees whether or not they felt like their employers were dedicated to their personal career development and growth. The results were tepid to say the least—only 25% of employees answered strongly in the affirmative. A plurality of respondents (40%) said their companies cared only somewhat about the employees' development and growth, and 22% of respondents believe their companies are only “going through the motions” when it comes to performance and talent management. A final 12% of employees told us outright that their companies do not care about their development (**Figure 7**).

Finally, we asked survey takers whether or not they intend to remain in their jobs—71% of them told us they are, while 29% (roughly 3 in 10) said they are currently looking for a new job (**Figure 8**). Given their relatively high levels of happiness, this number is probably higher than employers should be comfortable with. Indeed, of those who are looking for work, 28% said they are currently happy in their jobs.

Development seems to have a direct correlation with both happiness and intent to leave. Employees who told us they felt their companies don't care about their development were 3x more likely to be looking for work (**Figure 9**), and more than 5x less likely to say they were happy in their jobs (**Figure 10**). This represents a significant opportunity for companies to demonstrate to employees their commitment to development and growth, and in turn earn both their loyalty and satisfaction.

MOST EMPLOYEES ARE HAPPY IN THEIR JOBS

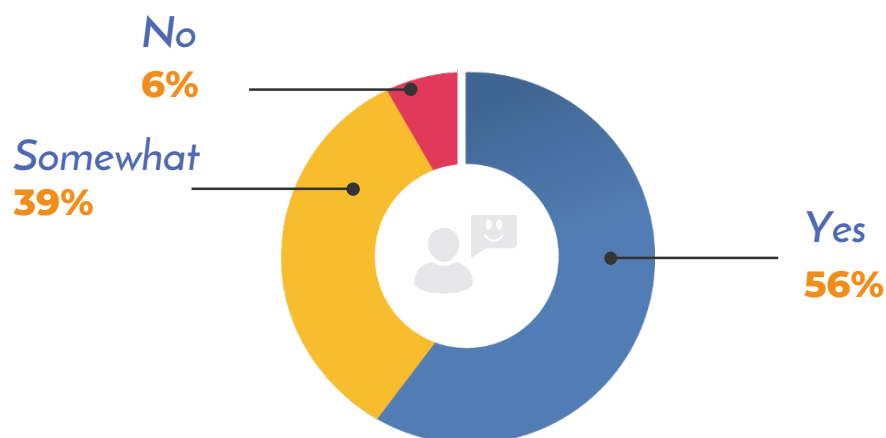


FIGURE 4

Q. Are you happy at work?

70% OF EMPLOYEES REPORT BEING ENGAGED

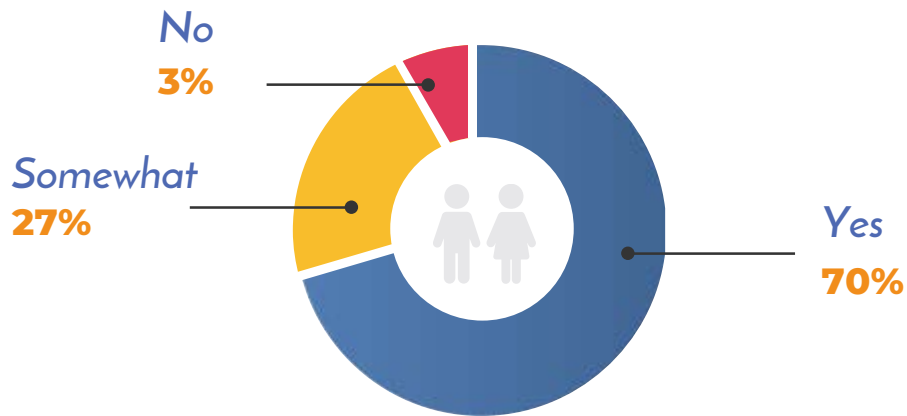


FIGURE 5

Q. Do you consider yourself engaged in your work? (Going above and beyond to get the job done.)

HALF OF WORKERS REPORT BEING ON VERY PRODUCTIVE TEAMS

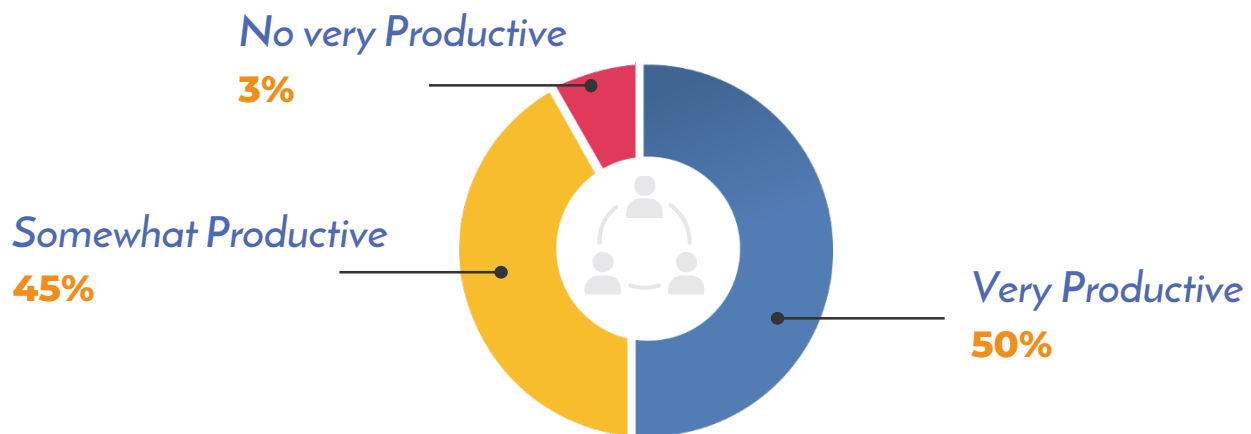


FIGURE 6

Q. Do you think your team is productive at work?

65% OF PEOPLE BELIEVE THEIR COMPANIES ARE DEDICATED TO THEIR PERSONAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH

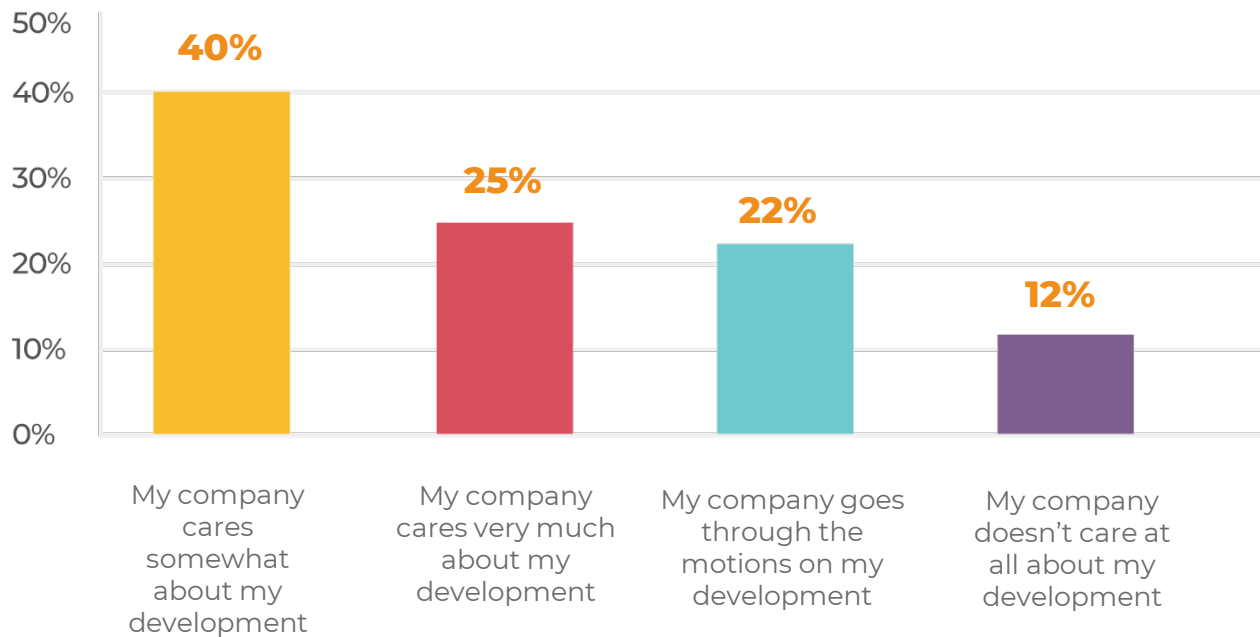


FIGURE 7

Q. How dedicated is your company to your personal career development and growth?

ABOUT 3 IN 10 WORKERS ARE LOOKING FOR WORK

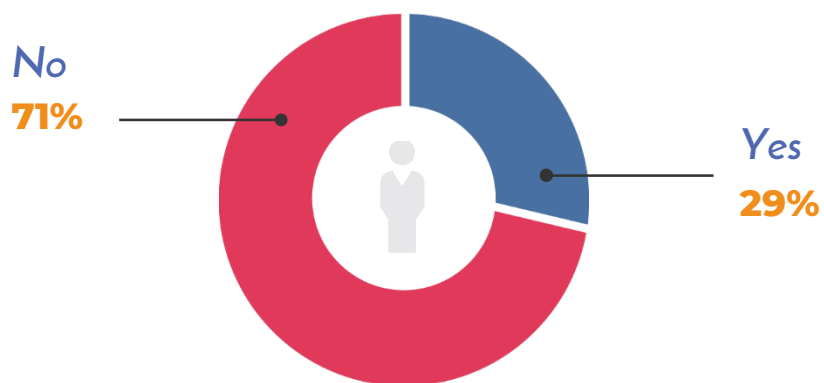


FIGURE 8

Q. Are you currently looking for a new job?

EMPLOYEES WHO FEEL THEIR COMPANIES DON'T CARE ABOUT THEIR DEVELOPMENT ARE 3x MORE LIKELY TO BE LOOKING FOR WORK

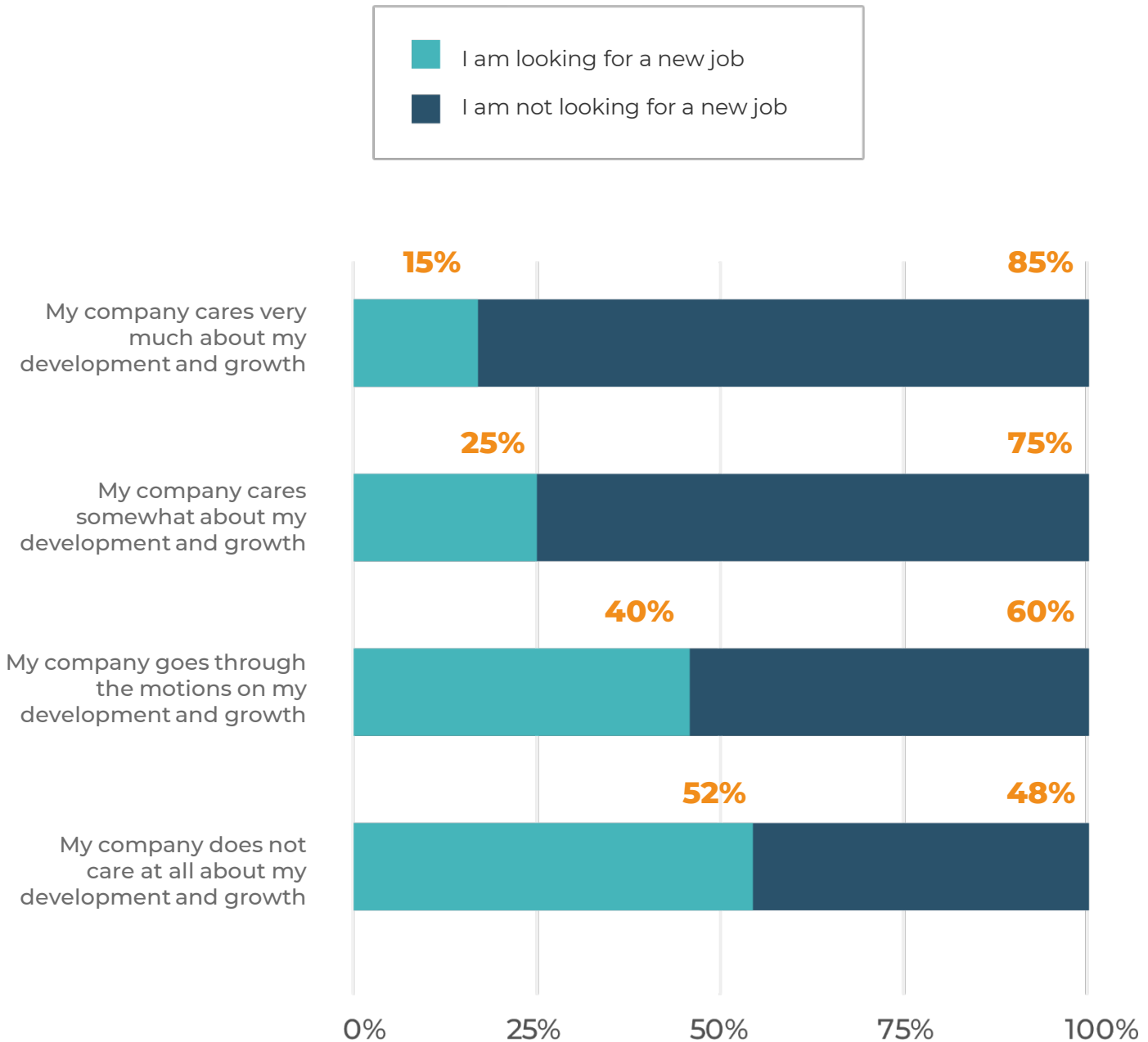


FIGURE 9

Q 1. Are you currently looking for a new job?

Q 2. How dedicated is your company to your personal career development and growth?

EMPLOYEES WHO FEEL THEIR COMPANIES CARE ABOUT THEIR DEVELOPMENT ARE 5x MORE LIKELY TO BE HAPPY AT WORK

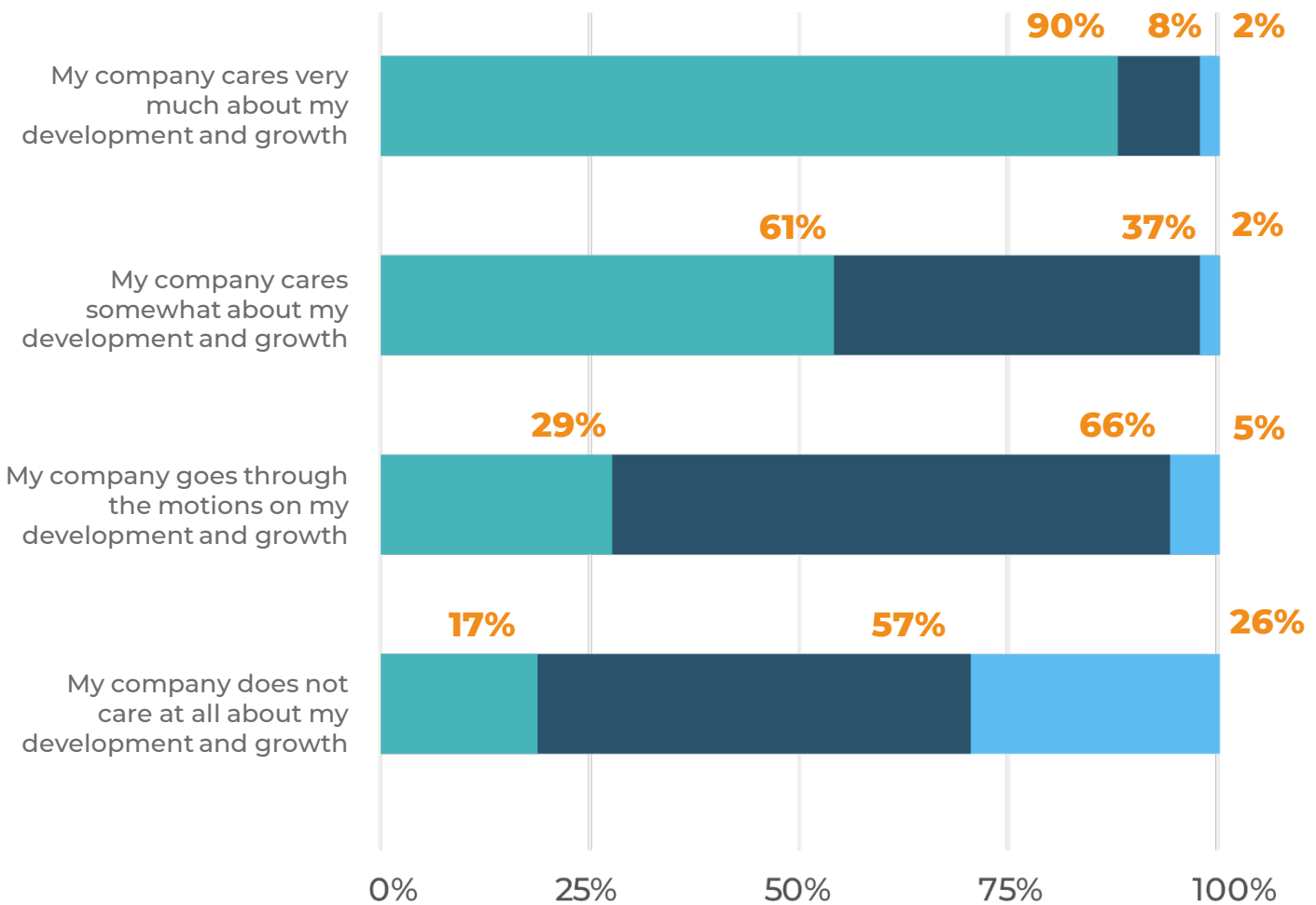
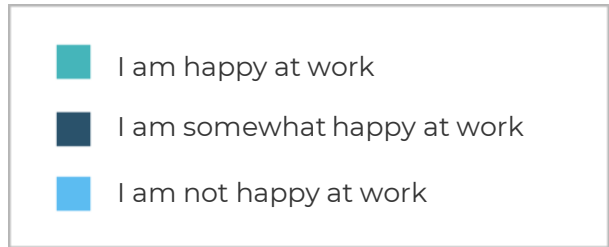


FIGURE 10

Q 1. Are you happy at work?

Q 2. How dedicated is your company to your personal career development and growth?

FINDING #2

Workers are tech-enabled and on the move.

You don't have to look hard to realize smartphones and smart devices have permeated the work environment—from the boardroom to the factory floor. This onslaught of personal technology has proven to be instrumental in allowing employees ever-increasing levels of flexibility in terms of where and when they work. It has also served to connect previously isolated functions—such as manufacturing and sales—that tended to not be sitting in front of traditional network computers every day.

When we asked people how tethered they are to their desks, a majority (63%) told us they are always or often working away from the desk—either remotely from home, in the field or otherwise outside the office (**Figure 11**). Only 37% of employees work only from their desks or workstations anymore.

We then asked employees how they use personal technology for that work, a whopping 80% indicated they use some sort of smart device for work purposes (**Figure 12**). Of this, a majority (70%) report using a smartphone, 35% say they use a tablet for work, and 8% indicated they use a wearable device such as a smart watch.

When it comes to employee development, feedback and coaching, we asked employees if their companies are employing technology, and only about half (45%) said they were, while 43% said their companies are not using tech to facilitate development, and 13% said they were not sure (**Figure 13**).



63% OF WORKERS ARE NOT ALWAYS WORKING AT THEIR DESKS OR WORKSTATIONS.

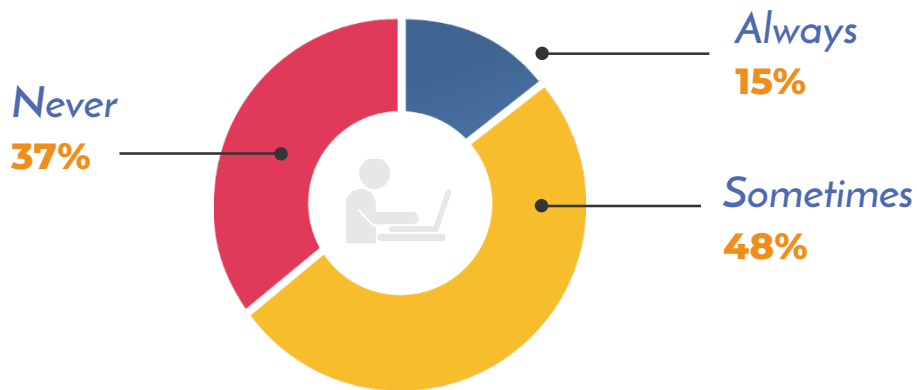


FIGURE 11

Q. How often do you work remotely, from home, in the field or outside the office?

80% OF WORKERS ARE USING SOME SORT OF SMART DEVICE FOR THEIR WORK.

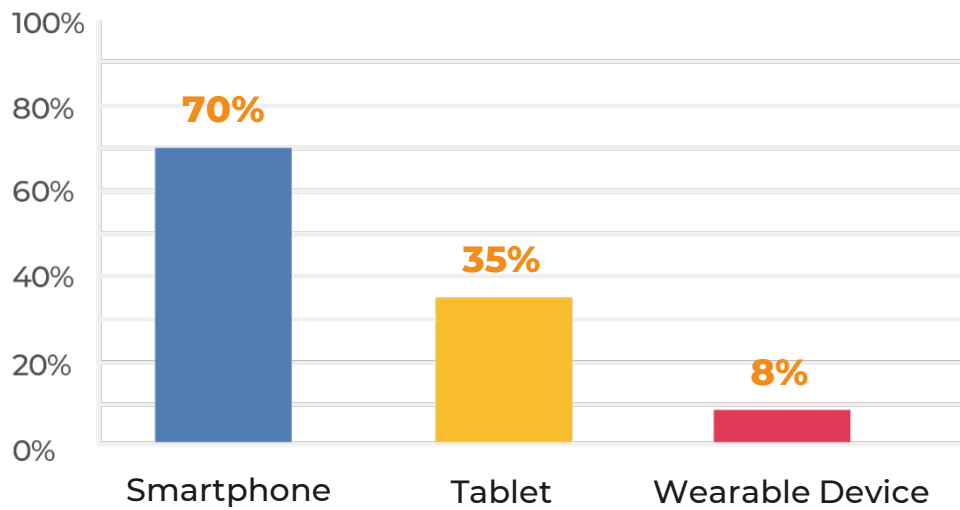


FIGURE 12

Q. Do you conduct your work on any smart devices? (Check all that apply)

LESS THAN HALF OF WORKERS SAY THEIR COMPANIES ARE USING TECHNOLOGY AND SOFTWARE TO FACILITATE COACHING AND FEEDBACK.

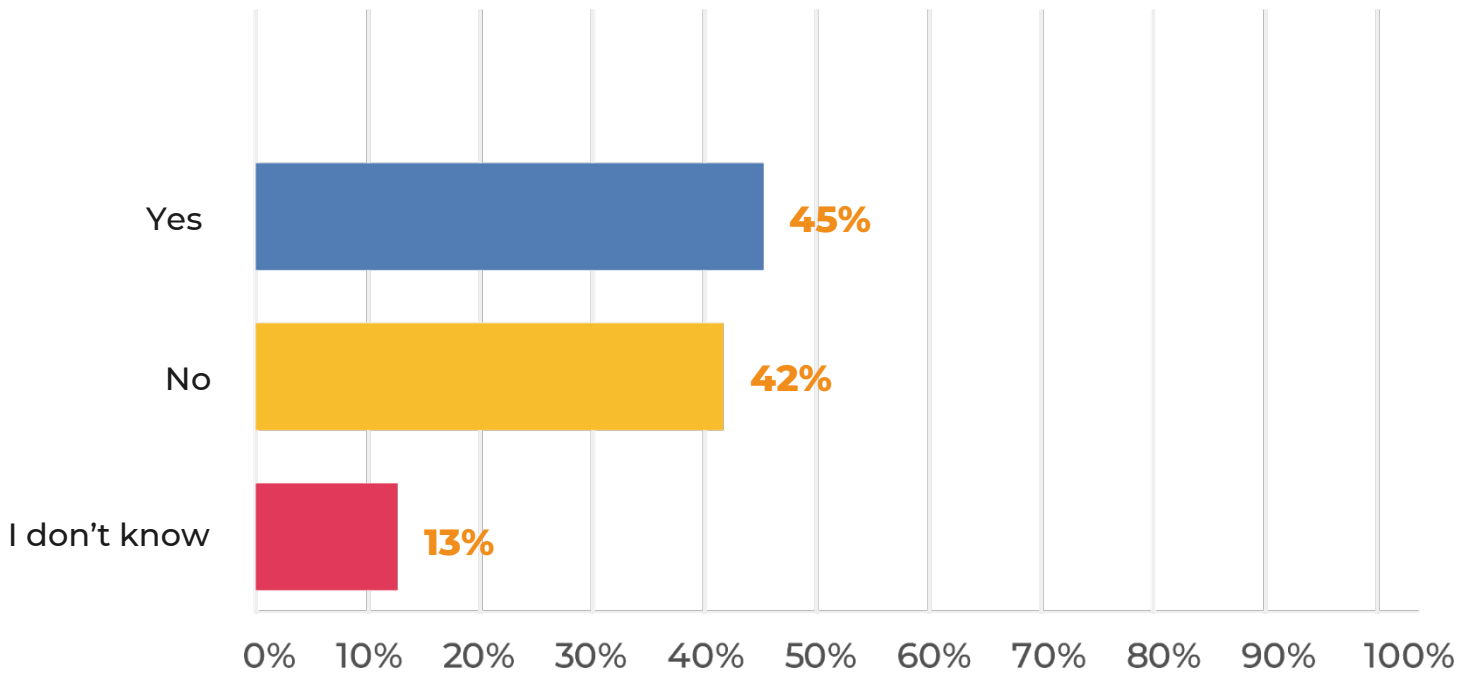


FIGURE 13

Q. Does your company use technology and software to facilitate coaching and/or feedback?



FINDING #3

Coaching at work improves important employee KPIs.

One of the most striking observations to come out of this survey was the impact we see across the board as a result of employee coaching or mentoring activities. These comprise the relationship an employee has with either a manager or another knowledgeable colleague, and might be referred to in some organizations as a 1:1 or a check-in—but they should not be confused with performance or task-related feedback. Coaching is generally focused on employee learning, development and growth, rather than on a particular set of deliverables.

Coaching and mentoring, it turns out, are a significant indicator for higher KPIs. It's difficult to determine whether this is correlative or causative—as indeed the kind of organization who focuses resources on supporting coaching and mentoring is likely to be doing many other things well—but it is clear that enabling this kind of relationship in an organization will be a net win for companies.

Unfortunately, many companies are not quite there yet, as only 36% of survey respondents told us they have a coach or mentor at work **(Figure 14)**.

Employees themselves seem to require some education around the benefits of having a coach or mentor. While 23% of respondents said they don't have, but would like a coach or mentor, 41% of respondents don't have a coach or mentor and don't think they need one. Only 11% of respondents said they don't need the coach they have, while 70% of those who have coaches (23%) said they value them **(Figure 15)**.

Employees may not yet understand the benefits of having a coach, but they are evident in the results of the survey. When we compared how people with and without coaches replied to other questions (regardless of whether or not they value those coaches, employees with coaches or mentors performed better across the board. People who were happier at work were 3x as likely to have a coach or mentor **(Figure 16)**. People who were more productive at work were 2.5x as likely to have a coach or mentor **(Figure 17)**. People who were engaged were also 2.5x as likely to say they had a coach or mentor **(Figure 18)**.

Coaching is also correlated with satisfaction. People who love their performance management were more than twice as likely to have coaches, vs. those who said they hate their performance management, coaching and feedback at their company (**Figure 19**). People who believe their companies genuinely care about their individual development and growth are nearly 6x more likely to have a mentor or coach at work, vs. those who believe their company doesn't care about them at all (**Figure 20**).



ONLY 36% OF PEOPLE HAVE COACHES OR MENTORS AT WORK

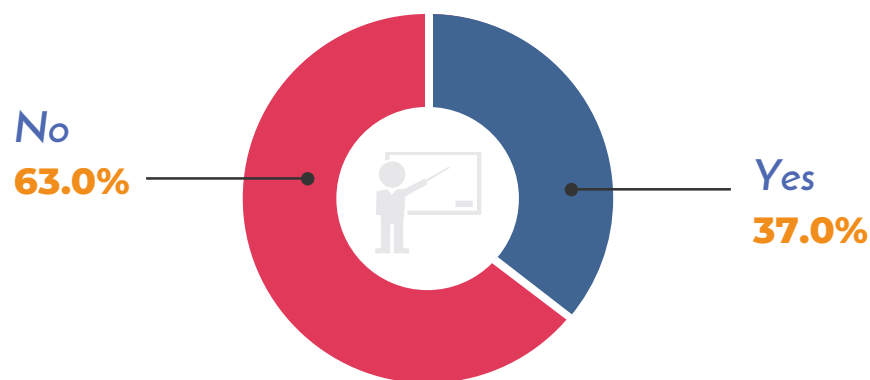


FIGURE 14

Q. Do you have a coach or mentor in your organization?

ONE IN FIVE WORKERS WOULD LIKE TO ADD A COACH OR MENTOR

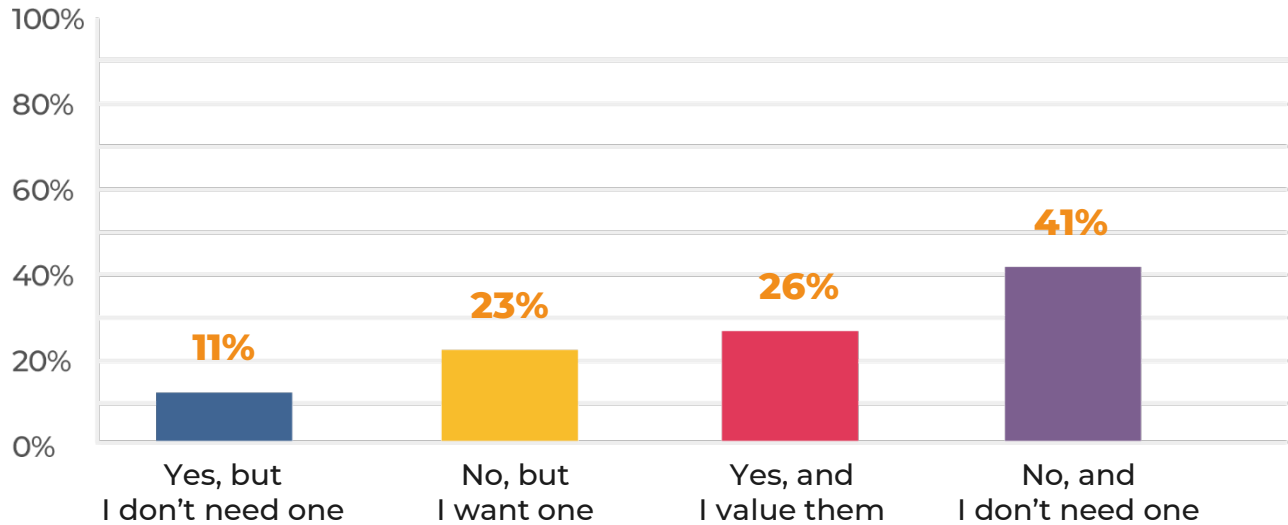


FIGURE 15

Q. Do you have a coach or mentor in your organization?

PEOPLE WITH COACHES ARE HAPPIER AT WORK.

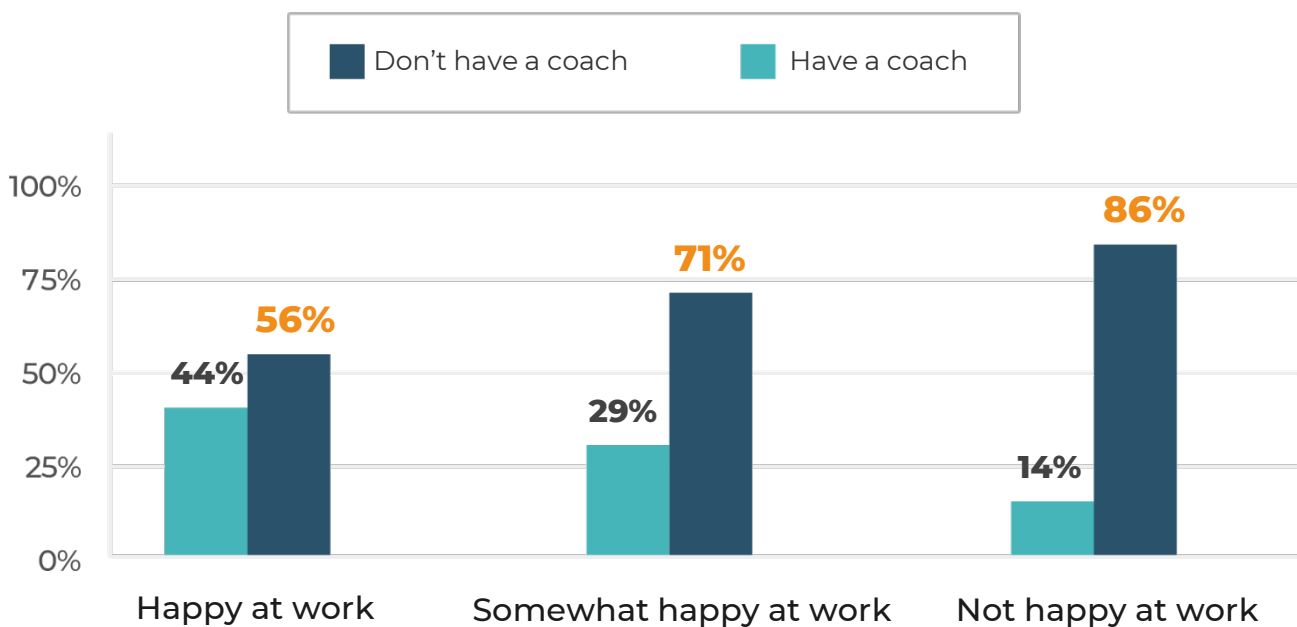


FIGURE 16

Q1. Are you happy at work?

Q2. Do you have a coach or mentor in your organization?

PEOPLE WITH COACHES ARE MORE PRODUCTIVE AT WORK.

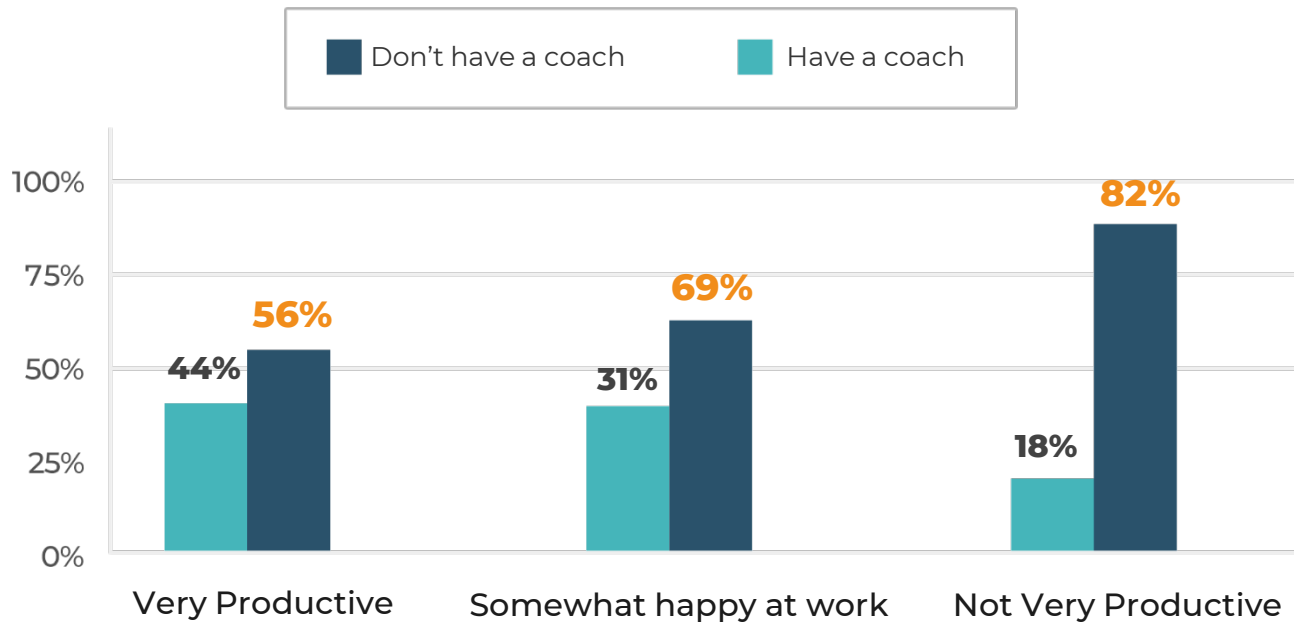


FIGURE 17

Q 1. Do you think your team is productive at work?

Q 2. Do you have a coach or mentor in your organization?

PEOPLE WITH COACHES ARE MORE PRODUCTIVE AT WORK.

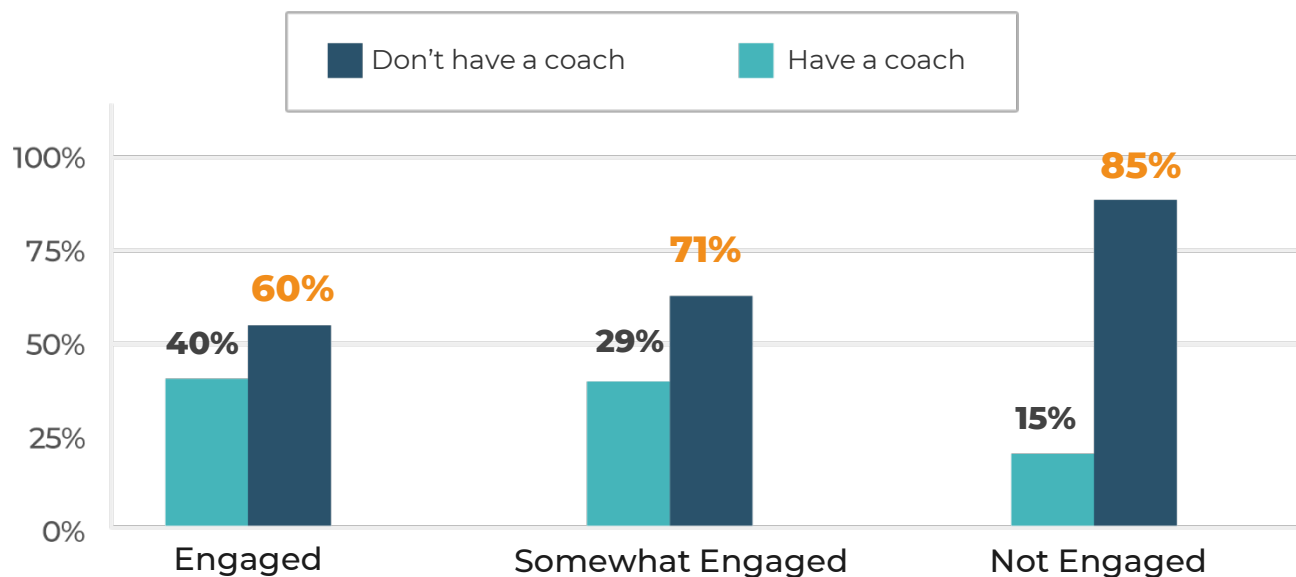


FIGURE 18

Q 1. Do you consider yourself engaged in your work? (Going above and beyond to get the job done.)

Q 2. Do you have a coach or mentor in your organization?

PEOPLE WITH COACHES RATE THEIR SATISFACTION WITH PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT HIGHER.

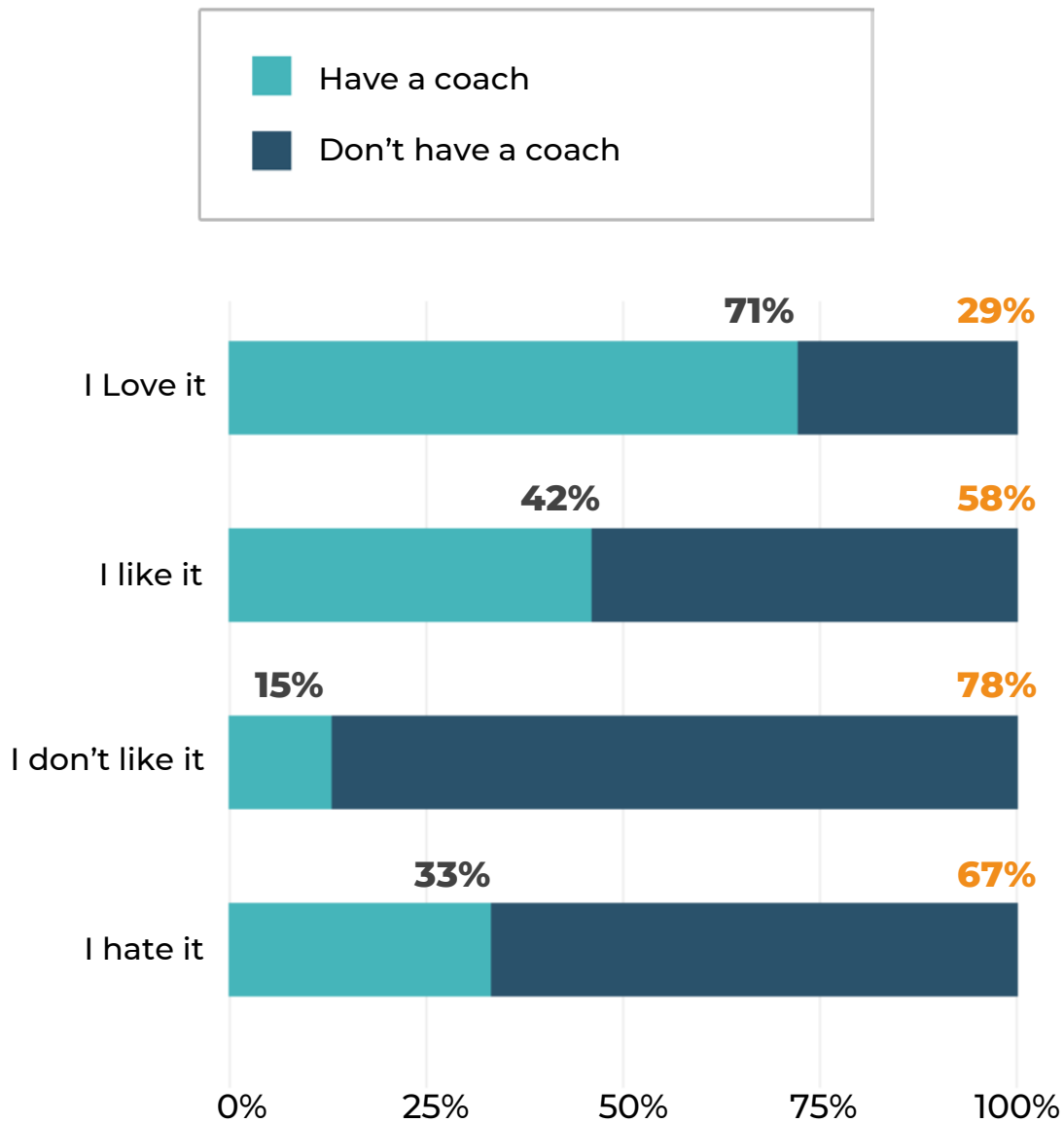


FIGURE 19

- Q1. *Rate your overall satisfaction with your company's performance management, coaching and feedback.*
- Q2. *Does your company use technology and software to facilitate coaching and/or feedback?*

PEOPLE WITH COACHES ARE MORE LIKELY TO FEEL THEIR COMPANY CARES ABOUT THEM.

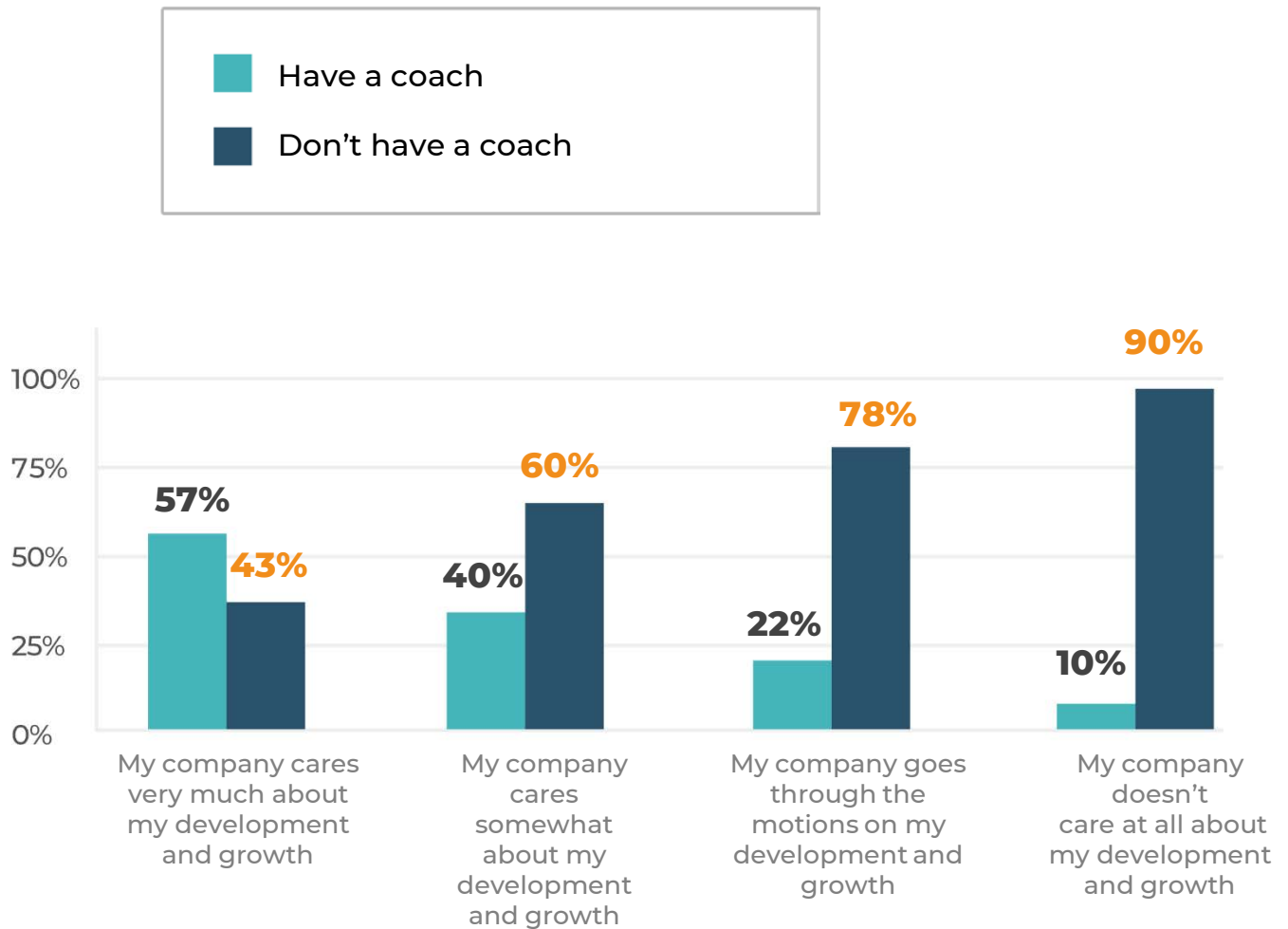


FIGURE 20

Q 1. How dedicated is your company to your personal career development and growth?

Q 2. Do you have a coach or mentor in your organization?

FINDING #4

Having a performance management solution makes managers more successful.

Only 1 in 3 employees has access to a performance management software solution, according to our survey respondents, with 39% saying they do not have such a platform at their organization. What is maybe even more disappointing than this is the 28% of respondents who were not even sure if they have access to a solution to help them measure and improve performance through feedback, recognition and coaching (**Figure 21**).

This is another opportunity for companies to boost employee metrics across the board. According to consultants like Gallup, managers are responsible for up to 70% of the differential between high and low performing employees. According to the findings here, arming your managers with a structured performance management solution will result in increased levels of trust (**Figure 22**) and increased levels of affinity between employees and managers (**Figure 23**).

This affects employees at a manager's team level also, as survey takers were 12% more likely to report having a very productive team, and 2x less likely to report their team as not very productive (**Figure 24**).

Why are managers more effective when supported by performance management software? The answer is also in the data from this survey, where employees with performance management software were 15% more likely to report that they get timely, effective feedback (**Figure 25**).

The net result of this is that employees who have access to performance management software tend to be more satisfied with coaching, feedback and performance management, and those without access tend to be more likely to say they don't like, or hate, their system for performance management. (**Figure 26**)

32% OF EMPLOYEES SAY THEY HAVE ACCESS TO A PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SOLUTION

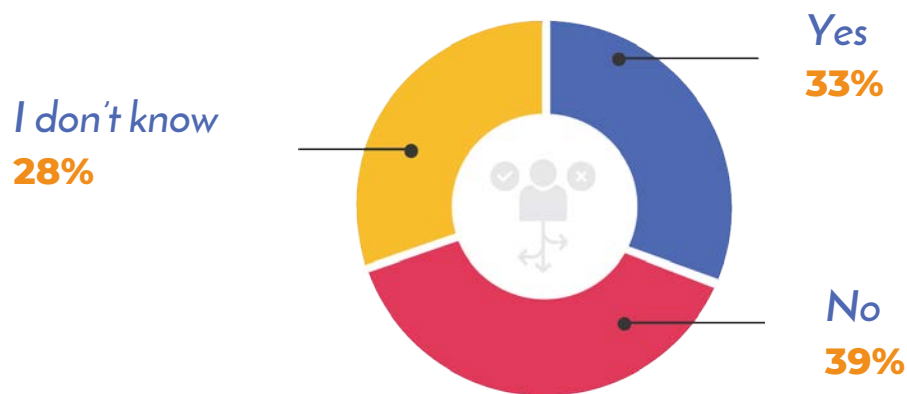


FIGURE 21

Q. Does your company have performance management software?

PEOPLE WITH PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE TRUST THEIR MANAGERS MORE.

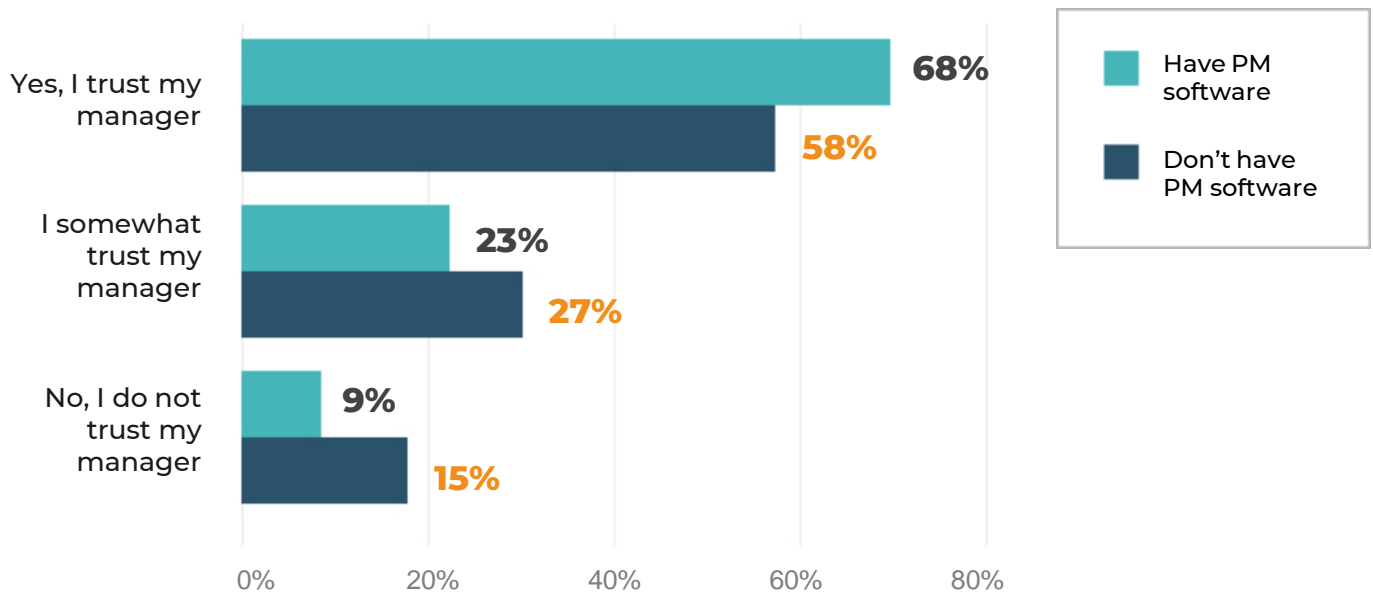


FIGURE 22

Q1. Do you trust your manager?

Q2. Does your company have performance management software?

PEOPLE WITH PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE LIKE THEIR MANAGERS MORE.

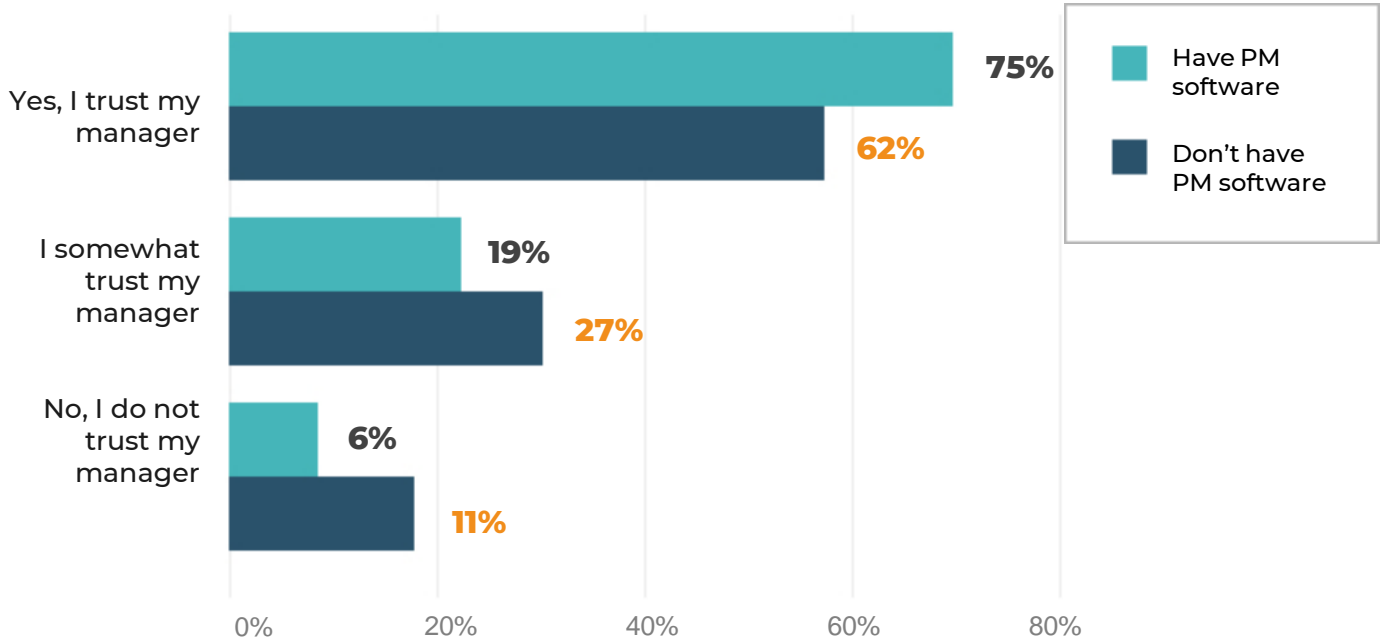


FIGURE 23

Q 1. Do you trust your manager?

Q 2. Does your company have performance management software?

PEOPLE WITH PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE LIKE THEIR MANAGERS MORE.

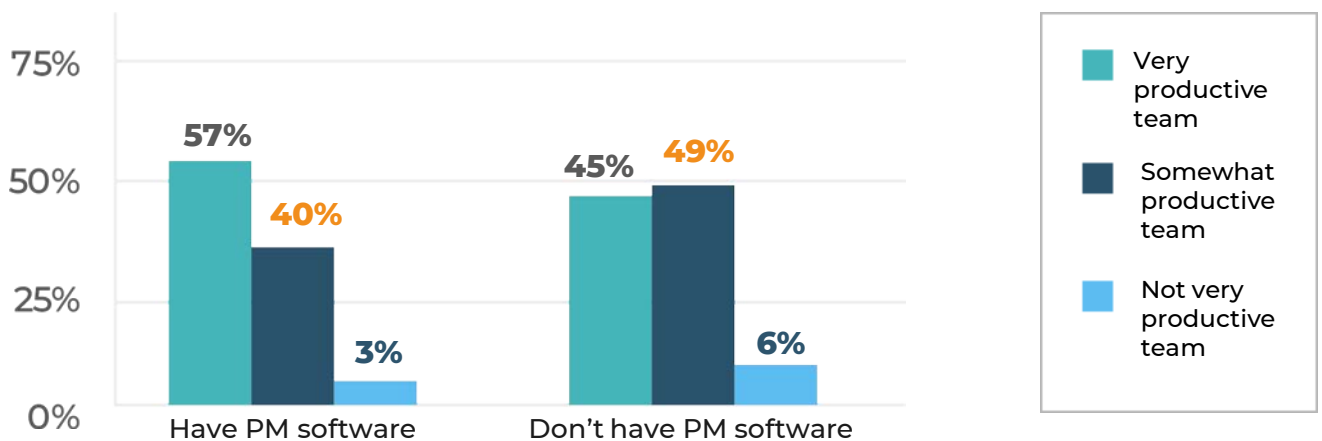


FIGURE 24

Q 1. Do you trust your manager?

Q 2. Does your company have performance management software?

PEOPLE WITH PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE ARE MORE LIKELY TO SAY THEY GET TIMELY, EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK

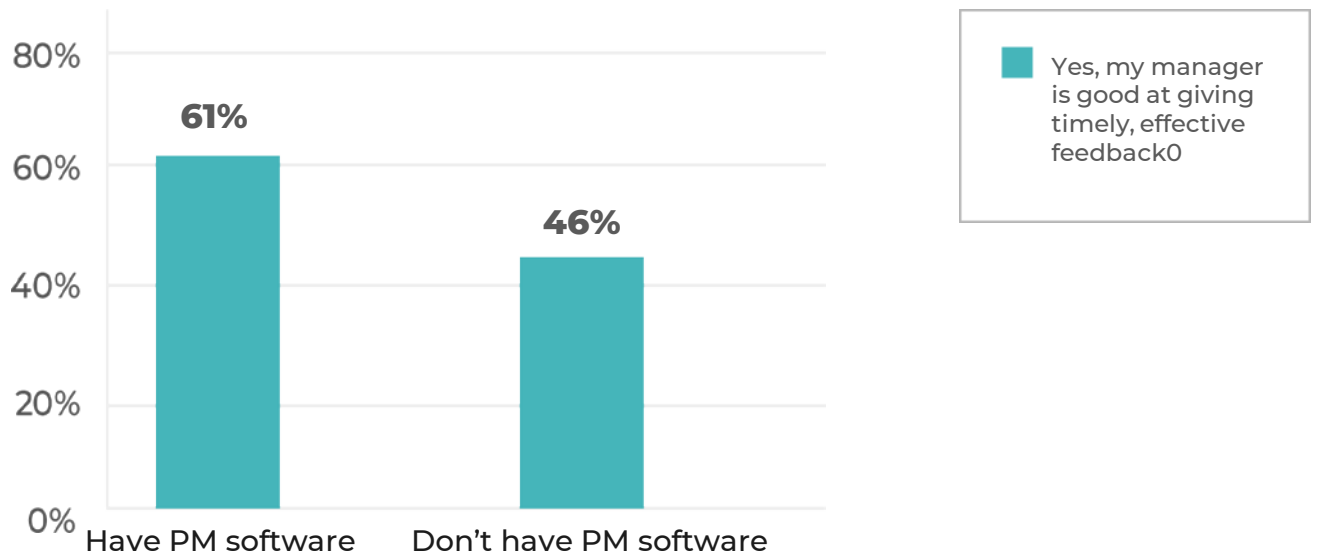


FIGURE 25

Q 1. Is your manager good at giving you timely, effective feedback?

Q 2. Does your company have performance management software?

PEOPLE WITH PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE ARE MORE SATISFIED WITH OVERALL PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT, FEEDBACK & COACHING

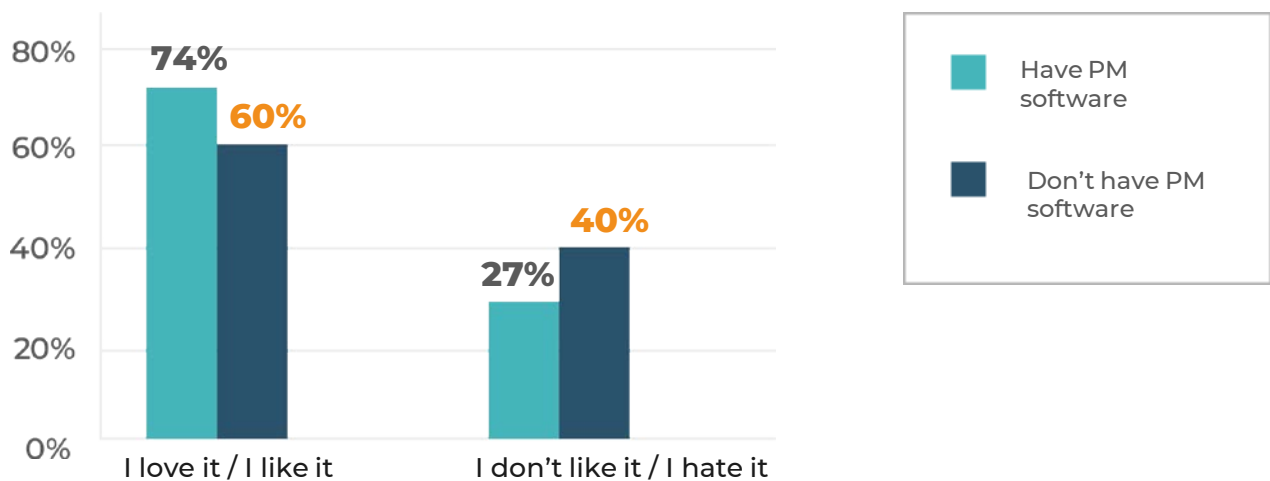


FIGURE 26

Q 1. Does your company have performance management software?

Q 2. Rate your overall satisfaction with your company's performance management, coaching and feedback.

FINDING #5

People prefer regular, face-to-face feedback—but companies aren't always able to support it with technology.

Respondents of this survey sent mixed messages on the topic of feedback. While they did not express a uniform desire for unlimited feedback, they were clear that they want more feedback than they are getting, preferably delivered in a regular cadence that is not limited to an annual or biannual review.

In general, employees are not getting the level of feedback they desire, with just about half saying feedback is about right, but another four in ten employees (40%) saying they receive less feedback than they want and 6% say they get no feedback at all. Only 3% of employees say they get more feedback than they want (**Figure 27**).

How often do employees want this feedback? The best answer here is that it varies—although a plurality of survey takers suggested quarterly or monthly feedback is desirable, with another 25% suggesting they'd like feedback as events occur to warrant it (**Figure 28**). Our take away from this is that managers should be working with employees to determine what level of feedback is right for them as individuals, and then deliver that consistently—with the help of technology tools and performance management systems that can help feedback be more timely and effective (See Finding #4).

In this survey, the top way to receive feedback was face-to-face meetings (83%) followed by email (41%) and recognition and rewards (35%). Periodic written reviews (27%) and through a feedback platform (23%) rounded out the top five options (**Figure 29**). Though it is worth noting that when people have access to a feedback platform, this number increases to 37% (vs 18%) and all technology channels receive a boost (**Figure 30**). In fact, people without access to PM software are more likely to choose face-to-face feedback (86%) vs. those who have software (77%).

These results were fairly expected. When surveyed, employees generally will say that they prefer that regular feedback to be face-to-face, which raises an interesting question for this survey: [what role does technology play in face-to-face feedback, or vice versa?](#)

While employees may prefer a verbal conversation, managers know the perils of failing to capture those conversations in a performance management solution so that goals and PIPs can be remembered and tracked. It is also important for looking back on data for individuals and teams. Face-to-face feedback also doesn't always perform as expected for employees, we noted, as we found that employees who prefer their feedback via a software solution expressed a greater satisfaction with performance management overall than their peers who said they prefer face-to-face feedback **(Figure 31)**.

Reconciling these two competing needs—along with reaping some of the benefits mentioned in the prior finding—means employing a feedback technology solution that has the flexibility to support verbal 1:1 check-ins and then record notes on what was discussed and the words agreed-upon next steps caveat emptor!

Lastly, we asked employees about what kind of feedback resonates best with them. Seven in ten employees (70%) told us they prefer positive, strengths-based feedback, while 30% asked managers to challenge them with more critical feedback **(Figure 32)**.



ONLY HALF OF EMPLOYEES ARE GETTING THE AMOUNT OF FEEDBACK THEY PREFER

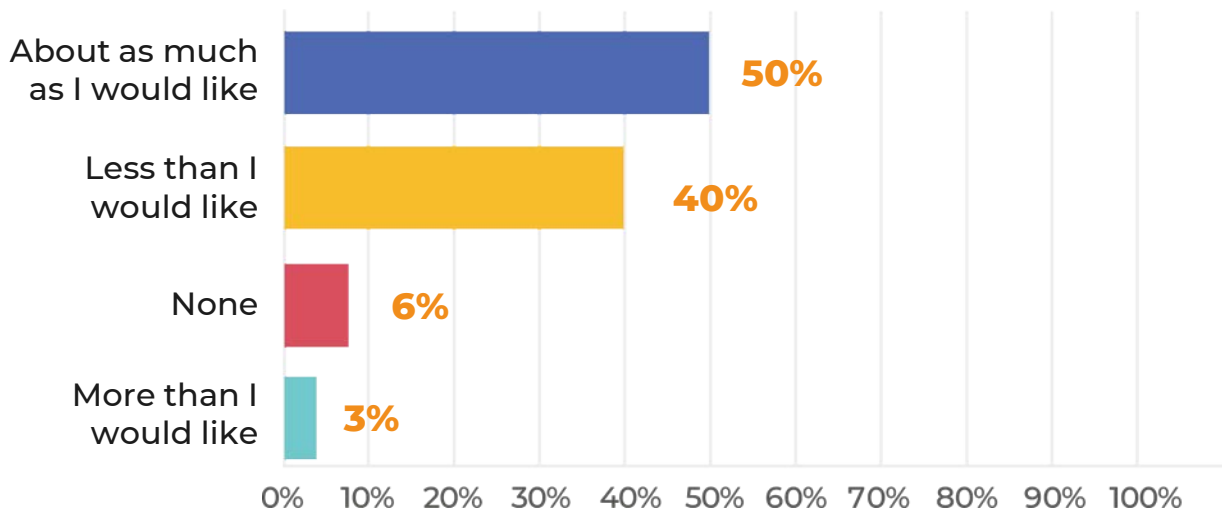


FIGURE 27

Q. How much feedback do you receive on your performance at work?

99% OF PEOPLE WANT FEEDBACK. 90% WANT MORE THAN ANNUAL FEEDBACK.

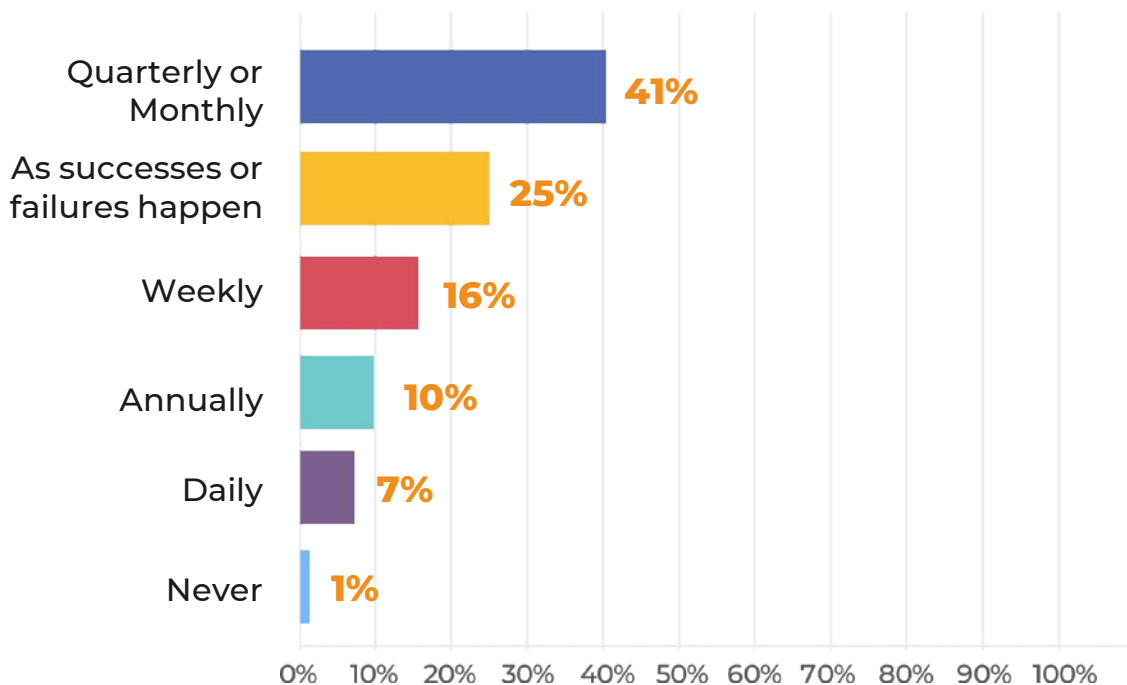


FIGURE 28

Q. What is your most preferred timing to receive feedback?

PEOPLE PREFER 1:1 FEEDBACK GIVEN FACE TO FACE

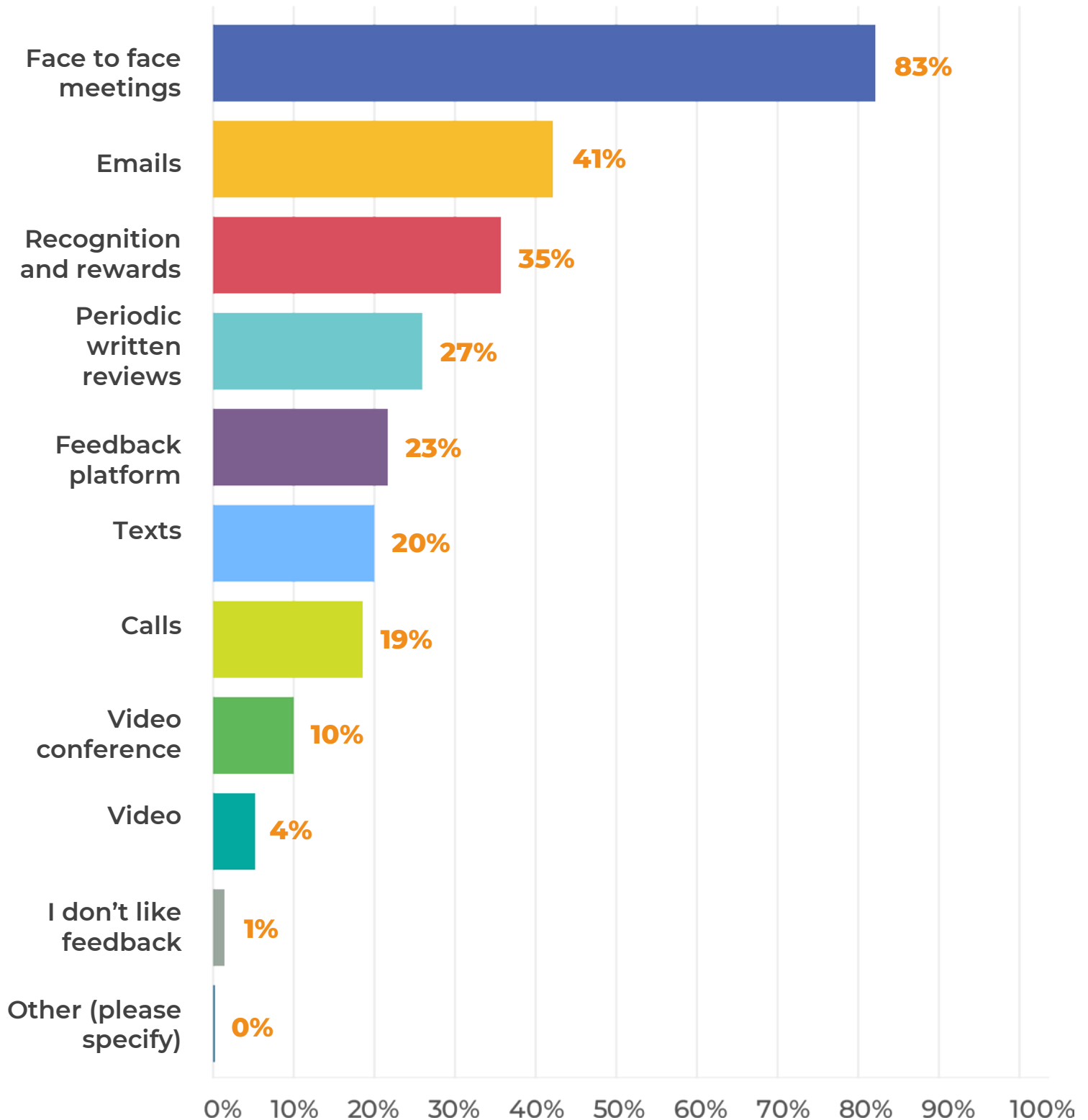


FIGURE 29

Q. Which ways do you like to receive feedback from managers or peers? (Check all that apply)

PEOPLE WITH PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE ARE 2X AS LIKELY TO PREFER FEEDBACK VIA THAT PLATFORM

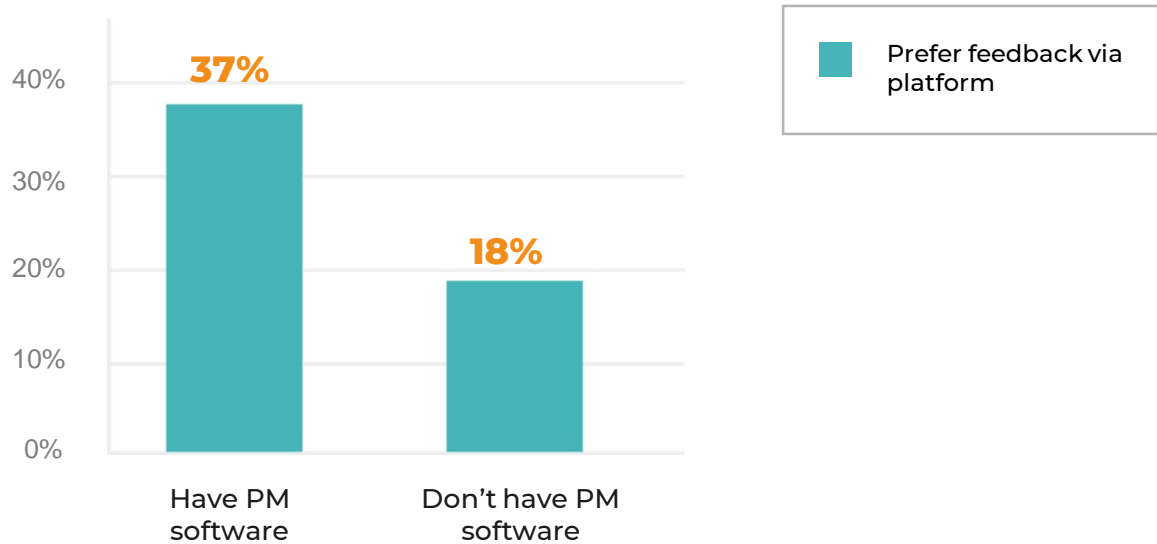


FIGURE 30

Q 1. Which ways do you like to receive feedback from managers or peers?

A. Through a feedback platform B. Face to face meetings

Q 2. Rate your overall satisfaction with your company's performance management, coaching and feedback.

PEOPLE WHO PREFER 1:1 FEEDBACK ARE LESS LIKELY TO REPORT SATISFACTION WITH CURRENT PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE

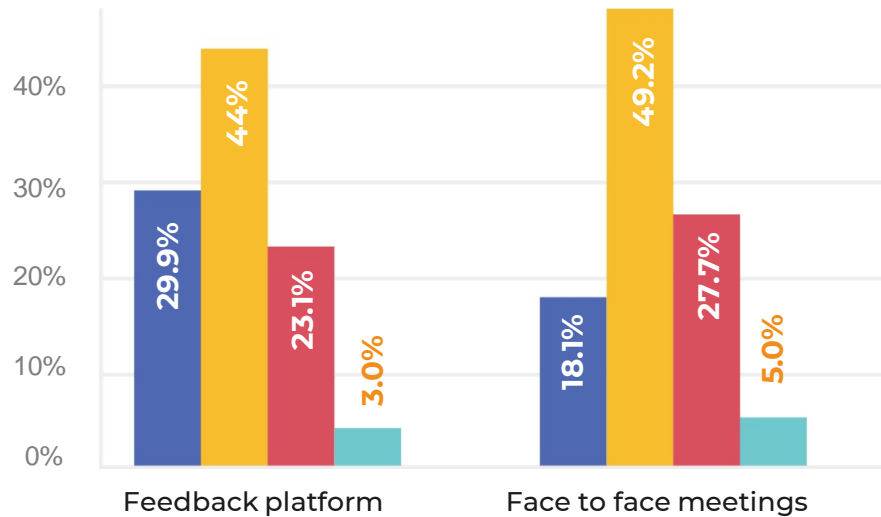


FIGURE 31

Q 1. Which ways do you like to receive feedback from managers or peers?

A . Through a feedback platform B . Face to face meetings

Q 2. Rate your overall satisfaction with your company's performance management, coaching and feedback.

EMPLOYEES PREFER POSITIVE, STRENGTHS-BASED FEEDBACK

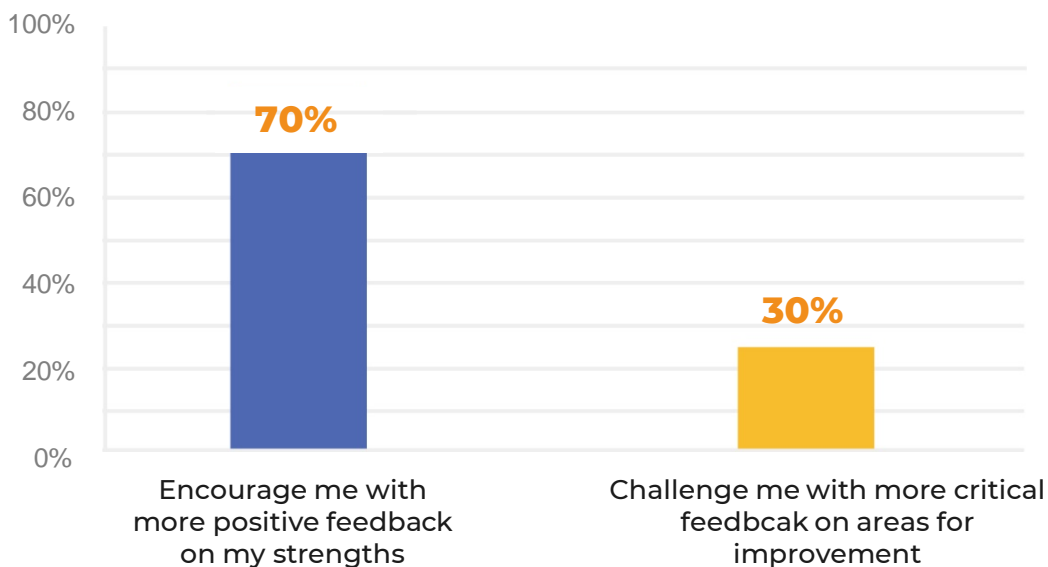


FIGURE 32

Q . What kind of feedback do you think is most effective in motivating your performance?

FINDING #6

Employees are excited to incorporate technology into coaching and feedback.

Less than half of all employees have access to technology or software to facilitate coaching and feedback and only 25% have a Learning Management System (LMS) that can integrate with that solution—to enable managers and coaches to link directly to training modules and other learning tools (Figures 33 & 34). Yet among those companies that are using tech in employee development, all signs point to an enthusiastic embrace of technology focused on feedback, coaching, and recognition.

We asked employees themselves what the impact of coaching and feedback technology is on their performance, and 70% of them told us it helps to improve their work (Figure 35). Moreover, when we looked at survey takers who had performance management software solutions implemented, we found that they were significantly (24%) more likely to say they like or love performance management, coaching and feedback at their company (Figure 36). They were also 22% more likely to report they were entirely happy at work (Figure 37).

45% OF EMPLOYEES HAVE ACCESS TO COACHING AND FEEDBACK TECHNOLOGY.

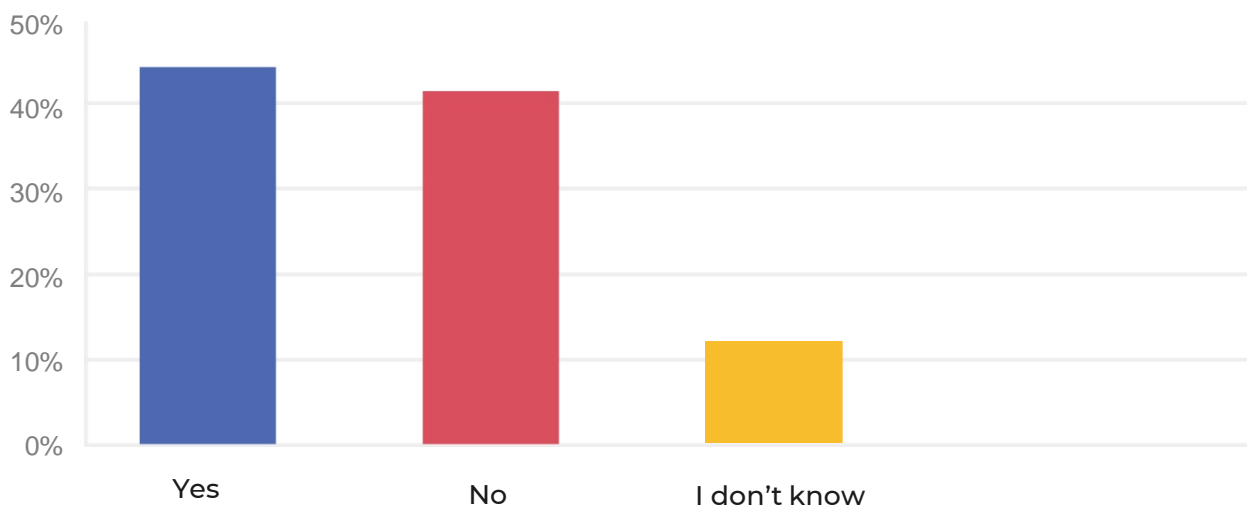


FIGURE 33

Q . Does your company use technology and software to facilitate coaching and/or feedback?

50% OF EMPLOYEES HAVE AN LMS, BUT ONLY 25% HAVE AN LMS THAT WORKS WITH THEIR PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SOLUTION

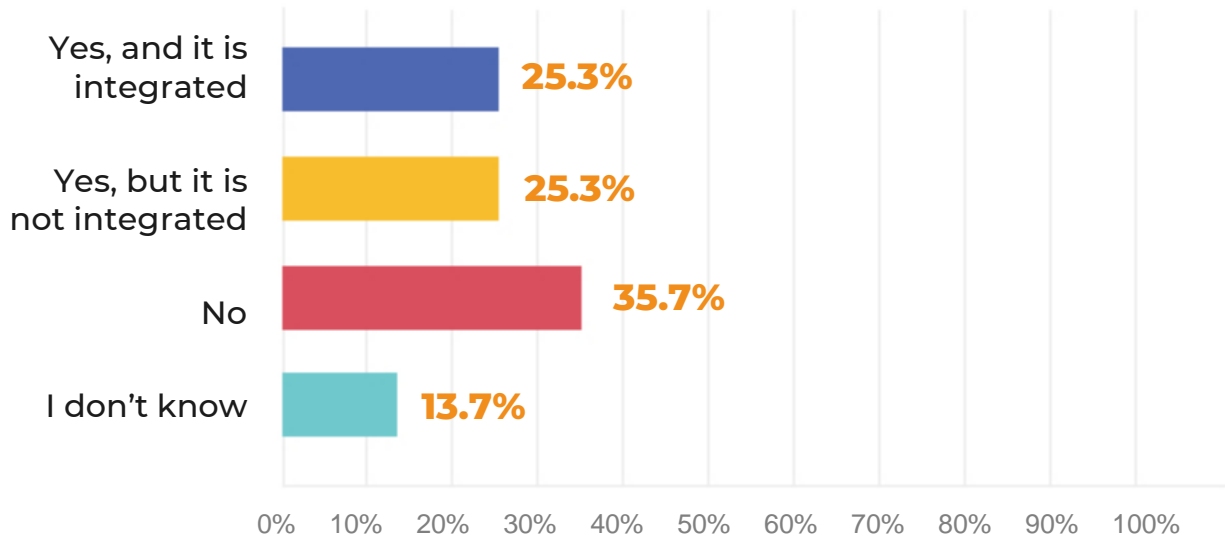


FIGURE 34

Q. Does your company have a learning management system (LMS) or training software?

70% OF EMPLOYEES BELIEVE COACHING AND FEEDBACK TECHNOLOGY HELPS TO IMPROVE THEIR PERFORMANCE.

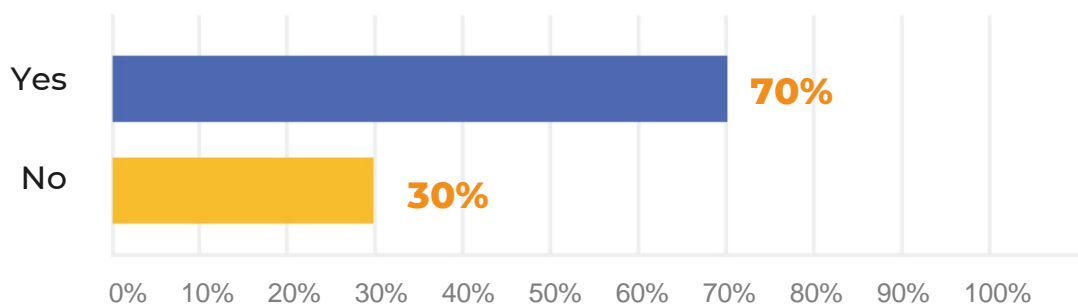


FIGURE 35

Q. Do you think coaching and feedback technology and software helps you to improve your performance?

EMPLOYEES WHO HAVE TECHNOLOGY INCORPORATED INTO COACHING & FEEDBACK ARE HAPPIER WITH PERFORMANCE MGMT, COACHING AND FEEDBACK.

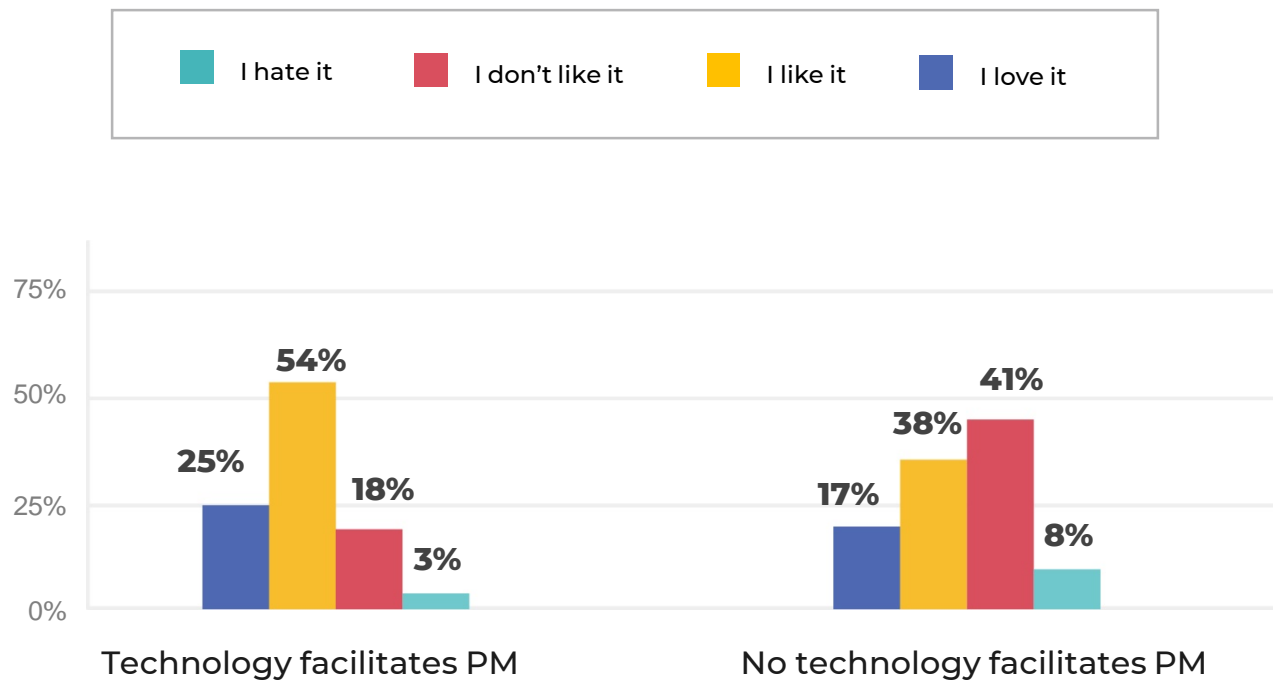


FIGURE 36

Q 1. Does your company have performance management software?

Q 2. Rate your overall satisfaction with your company's performance management, coaching and feedback.

PEOPLE WHO PREFER 1:1 FEEDBACK ARE LESS LIKELY TO REPORT SATISFACTION WITH CURRENT PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE

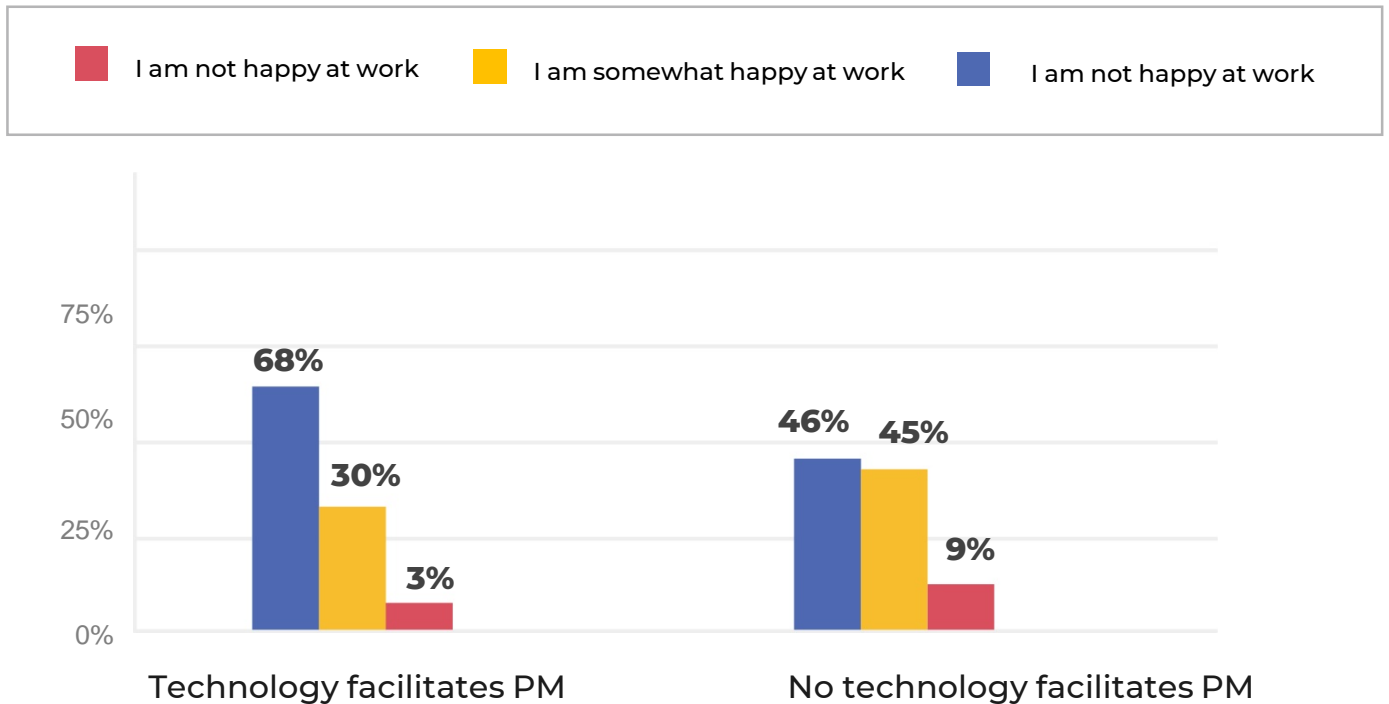


FIGURE 37

Q 1. Do you think coaching and feedback technology and software helps you to improve your performance?

Q 2. Does your company have performance management software?

A. Yes

CONCLUSION

Overall, these findings should be exciting for anyone looking to incorporate technology into their performance management system, or to implement a more robust solution for feedback, coaching and mentoring.

So what are our recommendations for companies looking to put this research to work in their organizations? Here are three main pieces of advice based on the aggregated contents of this report.

- 1** Give managers the support they need by implementing a dedicated performance management system that has the ability to integrate with your LMS system to compound the impact of your feedback systems.
- 2** Understand that all employees are unique, and deploy a solution that has the flexibility to meet employees where they are—incorporating options for always-on microfeedback, but also accommodating those who desire a face-to-face experience of feedback.
- 3** Don't sleep on coaching. Employees need to have check-ins not only on tasks and projects, but also to meet periodically to discuss their own development and goals.



METHODOLOGY

About the Survey

The Performance and Technology Survey was conducted by iCoachFirst from August 9-11, 2019. This is the first deployment of this survey. The final sample of the survey was composed of 655 fully employed workers in the United States, sourced through Survey Monkey and balanced for region, gender and age. The survey had a margin of error of +/- 3.91 percentage points at a 90 percent level of confidence.

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For more information on performance management, coaching, and feedback please visit www.icoachfirst.com or connect with us via Twitter, LinkedIn, or Facebook.





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