

RESEARCH REPORT

# 2022 State of On-Demand Hiring

---

How independent experts will continue to power the future of work





# Table of Contents



A Year of Sustained Growth. An On-Demand Future. | 3

2021: A Workforce in Transition | 6

State of On-Demand Functional Skills | 9

State of On-Demand Industry Skills | 24

2022: The Year of the On-Demand Workforce | 32

**01**

# **A Year of Sustained Growth. An On-Demand Future.**

---



## Building Resiliency and Flexibility with On-Demand Hiring

We adapted in 2020 and evolved in 2021. Disruptions in 2020 set the stage for transformative workplace and industry changes. Employees demanded increased flexibility in their work location led by safety concerns, and employers either acted swiftly or lost highly skilled experts as part of the Great Resignation. And now remote and hybrid work is the new normal.

We saw the transformation first-hand at Graphite. The number of new independent experts who joined Graphite in 2021 increased by 39% compared to 2020.

**39%**

YoY increase of  
independent experts  
joining Graphite

**170%**

YoY increase  
in spend on hiring  
independent  
experts







To sustain growth in a changing business environment, companies added independent experts to their teams, attaining greater flexibility while maintaining a consistent bench of reliable subject matter experts to respond to capacity and capability gaps.

Data from our platform supports this trend. Spend on hiring independent experts on Graphite grew by 170% in 2021 compared to 2020. The trend continues upward as companies are beginning to see the value of using independent experts as a strategic growth lever both for enterprise businesses and professional services firms.

But what will 2022 hold for companies? We dug into Graphite's proprietary data, taking a look back at 2021 to reveal the trends shaping the future of on-demand hiring for both functional and industry-specific skills. With this information on hand, businesses can benchmark where they stand while also taking a proactive approach in how they can use independent expertise in the new year.

**02**

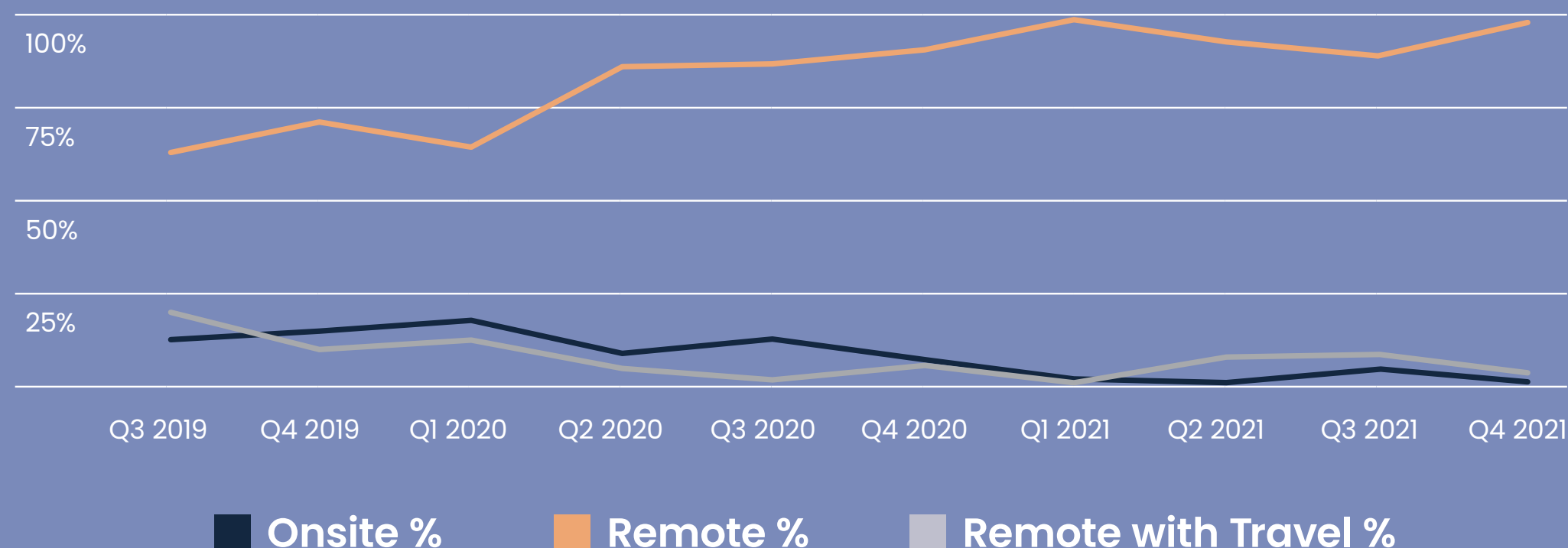
# **2021: A Workforce in Transition**



#### 4 Benefits of the On-Demand Workforce Model:

- ✓ Provides better access to top talent
- ✓ Improves speed to market
- ✓ Increases productivity
- ✓ Accelerates innovation

#### Growth in Onboarding Independent Experts Remotely



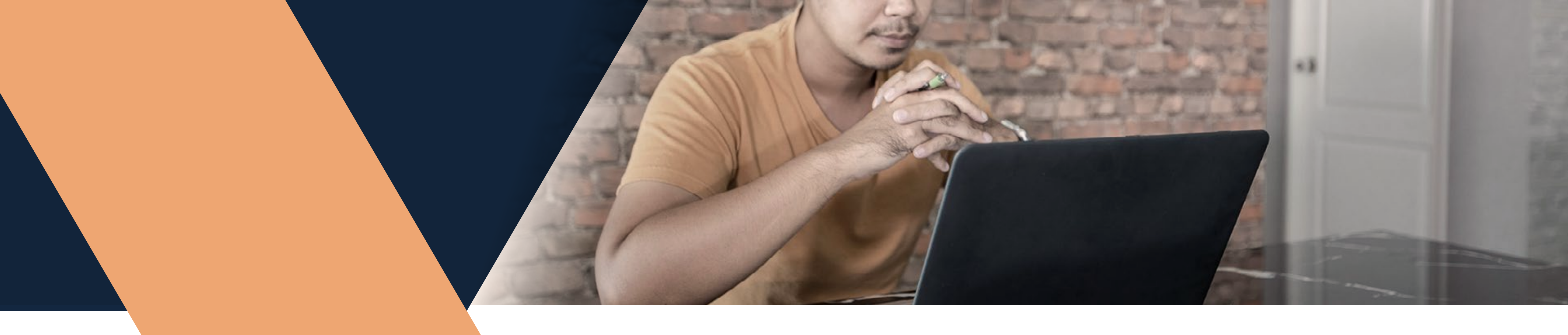
## The Year of Human Capital Change

4.5 million Americans quit their jobs in November 2021. A staggering statistic with a very human face. Many turned to the independent workforce, representing 59 million Americans and 36% of the total workforce. But employees weren't the only ones that saw the benefits of the independent, on-demand workforce.

Companies began to see the value in the agility of having a blended talent model of full-time employees augmented with highly skilled remote independent experts. By using the on-demand work model, companies can create pools of resources to rapidly allocate talent to mission-critical jobs, regardless of location.

In doing so, they can quickly respond to shifting client and business needs — successfully completing initiatives on time and on budget. In 2021, 96% of independent experts hired on Graphite were for remote projects.





Consulting firms, in particular, became the poster child for recognizing the value of independent experts to fuel sustainable business growth. A recent analysis found that management consulting firms that achieved significant (>30%) growth since COVID-19 adopted a resilient approach to their business.

More specifically, high-growth firms focused on having the right talent at the right time to create smart and sustainable strategies, pivoting to address capacity and capability gaps with ease. And the results speak for themselves. According to [McKinsey](#), companies that can quickly allocate talent to evolving priorities are twice as likely to report strong performance and also deliver better results per dollar spent.

As remote and hybrid work continues to become a mainstay in the work environment, we expect that more and more companies will continue to adopt the on-demand workforce model as a viable solution to growing and scaling their business in 2022 and beyond.



03

# State of On-Demand Functional Skills

---

# Corporate Strategy

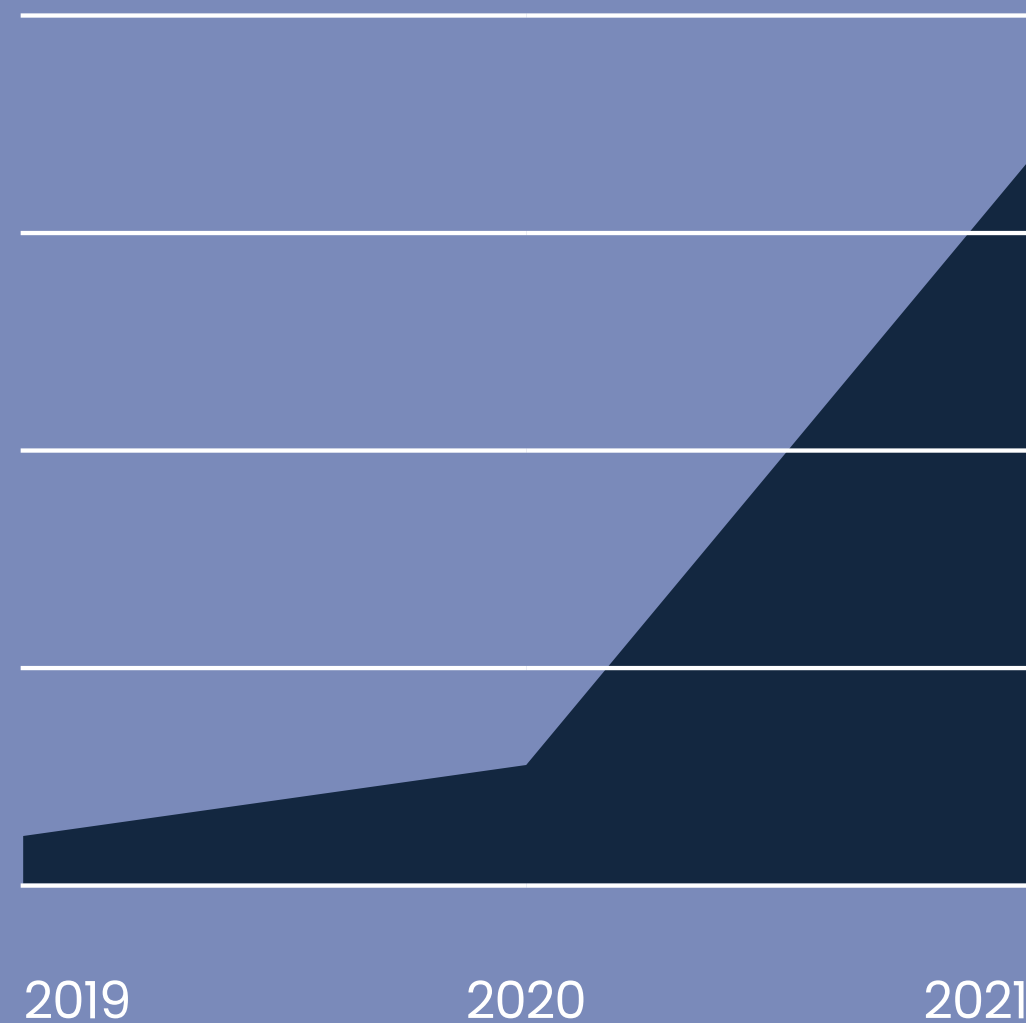
Corporate strategy teams prepared for a post-pandemic economy by re-thinking the broader corporate strategy and business unit plans in 2021.

As building resiliency became a top priority, corporate strategy teams were tasked with creating long-term winning strategies while building agility in their teams to respond to a constantly changing business environment.

Spend for corporate strategy expertise rose to 559% YoY in 2021. One of the drivers of this growth was the surge in M&A transactions, with 2021 becoming a record-breaking year — hitting an all-time peak of \$5 trillion by December.

It's not surprising that to support the record pace of deals, the spend on hiring independent M&A expertise rose by 2,019% YoY in 2021. And the momentum on M&A deals shows no signs of abating in 2022. According to a recent KPMG survey of more than 350 US business leaders, M&A is poised to climb even higher this year.

**Demand for independent corporate strategy expertise was up 559% YoY**





Just like companies did in 2021, there will be a continued focus on transforming human resources, technology, and processes at a corporate and business unit level over 2022 as well.

Over 2021, companies spent 108% more YoY in hiring independent product strategy expertise and 230% more YoY on hiring independent expertise for crafting business unit strategies.

Propelled by the impact of the pandemic and the groundwork laid in 2021, corporate strategy teams in 2022 will focus on making headways into new industries, innovations, and digital transformations. As the pace of change continues to accelerate in 2022, this year is expected to look more like the same.





## Graphite Success Story

### **How One Company Attained \$313K in Savings on a Global Transformation Project**

A management consulting firm won a project to help a client in the diamond industry maintain its market position by developing a business case and strategic roadmap. But the consulting firm had one problem. They didn't have someone on the team to lead the initiative. After engaging Graphite, not only were they able to hire a former MBB consultant, they also saved \$313K in hiring an independent expert compared to a full-time employee on a \$126K project.



**Read Their Story**



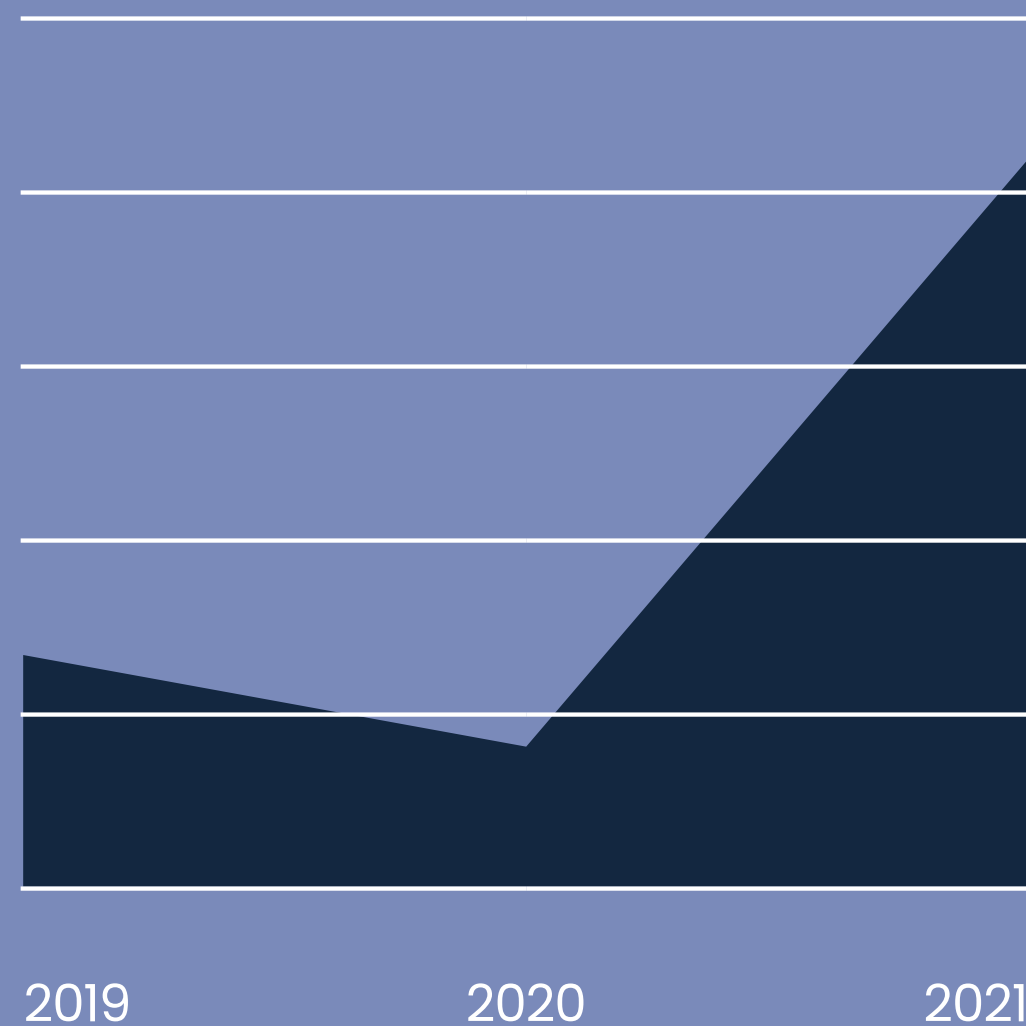
## Sales & Marketing

Sales and marketing investments rebounded in 2021 as changes in corporate strategy pushed brands to pivot and innovate at faster speeds to reflect a changed consumer. With digital becoming the preferred channel to communicate and make purchasing decisions, marketing teams placed a premium on building sound digital marketing strategies to better reach consumers.

The shift in pivoting to revisit GTM strategies with the inclusion of digital to create more omnichannel experiences resulted in \$120 billion in spend on digital advertising — exceeding pre-pandemic ad spend.

We saw a 522% YoY increase in spend for independent GTM expertise and a 314% YoY increase for independent digital marketing and advertising, contributing to an overall 469% YoY increase in spend to onboard independent sales and marketing expertise.

**Demand for independent sales & marketing expertise was up 469% YoY**





2022 will build on the lessons learned from 2021. This year, sales and marketing teams will focus on creating hybrid experiences — the seamless connection between online and offline. Companies that can harness the data and create a human-centric design approach will win in the new year.

In a recent Deloitte survey of over 1,000 global marketing executives, 75% said they will invest more in delivering hybrid experiences over the next twelve months.

With advertising spend estimated to exceed over \$300 billion in 2022, we expect independent sales and marketing subject matter experts to have a big year on Graphite as companies continue to reimagine GTM plans and use marketing and advertising to fuel continued growth.





## Graphite Success Story

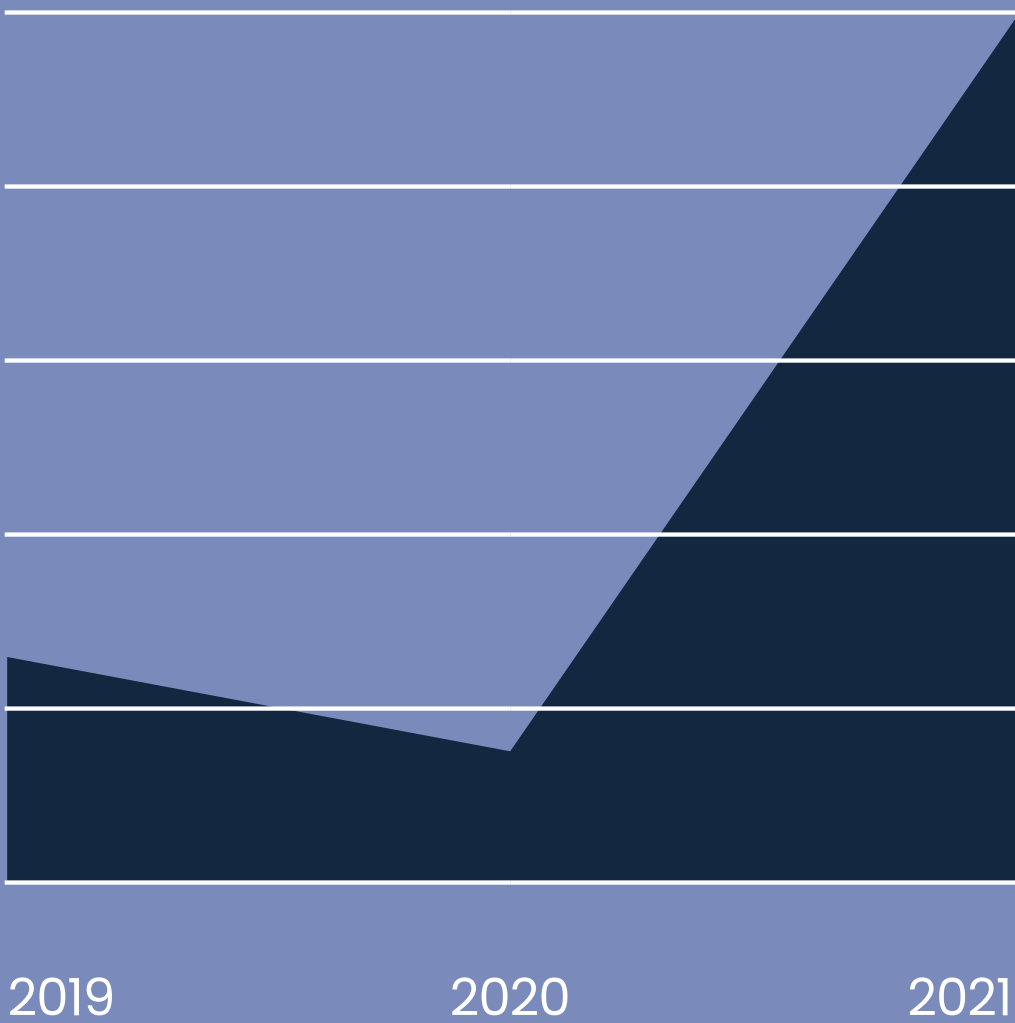
### **Tech-Enabled Legal Services Provider Finds Independent Product Marketer within 72 Hours**

A strategic product roadmap is key to attaining the next level of growth. Fortunately for this tech-enabled legal services provider, they found the right candidate for the job on Graphite. With over 10 years of product marketing experience, the independent expert delivered a solid product marketing strategy for a new product launch, including defining the value proposition and buyer persona, plus developing sales enablement tools to accelerate the sales cycle.



**Read Their Story**

**Demand for independent  
market research  
expertise was up 687% YoY**



# Market Research

2021 saw a rapid surge in demand for market research expertise. Companies worked rapidly to understand the immediate and longer-term needs of their customers and employees better — leading to a 687% YoY increase in spend for independent market research expertise.

As companies changed strategic directions, conducting M&A deals and re-focusing GTM strategies, it triggered the rise for on-demand hiring of market mapping (up 1,328% YoY), primary research (up 319% YoY), and secondary research (up 213% YoY) expertise as a key input in building resilient businesses.



2022 will be the year market researchers harness technological advancements to understand a nuanced consumer. Technology advancements driven by artificial intelligence (AI) can capture the complexity of a multi-dimensional society, enabling companies to deliver agile, responsive insights.

As research continues to be technology-driven, market research teams will need to change from simply asking questions to listening and participating in conversations while analyzing mountains of data at scale.

We expect the market research function to have another strong year on Graphite as technology will enable insights to be more accessible than ever before, empowering businesses to make faster and smarter decisions.



## Graphite Success Story

### **Fintech Client Breaks into New Market with Experienced Independent Expert**

Knowing your market, customers, and competitors is essential when positioning your business in a new market. To help their fintech client out, this consulting firm knew they had to bring outside expertise to get the job done. Within 48 hours of engaging Graphite, the consulting firm found an independent expert with 10 years of financial services experience to help their fintech client conduct a primary market research project, including sourcing, scheduling, and conducting in-depth interviews with product and operations leaders of Tier 2 Latin American retail and commercial banks.



**Read Their Story**



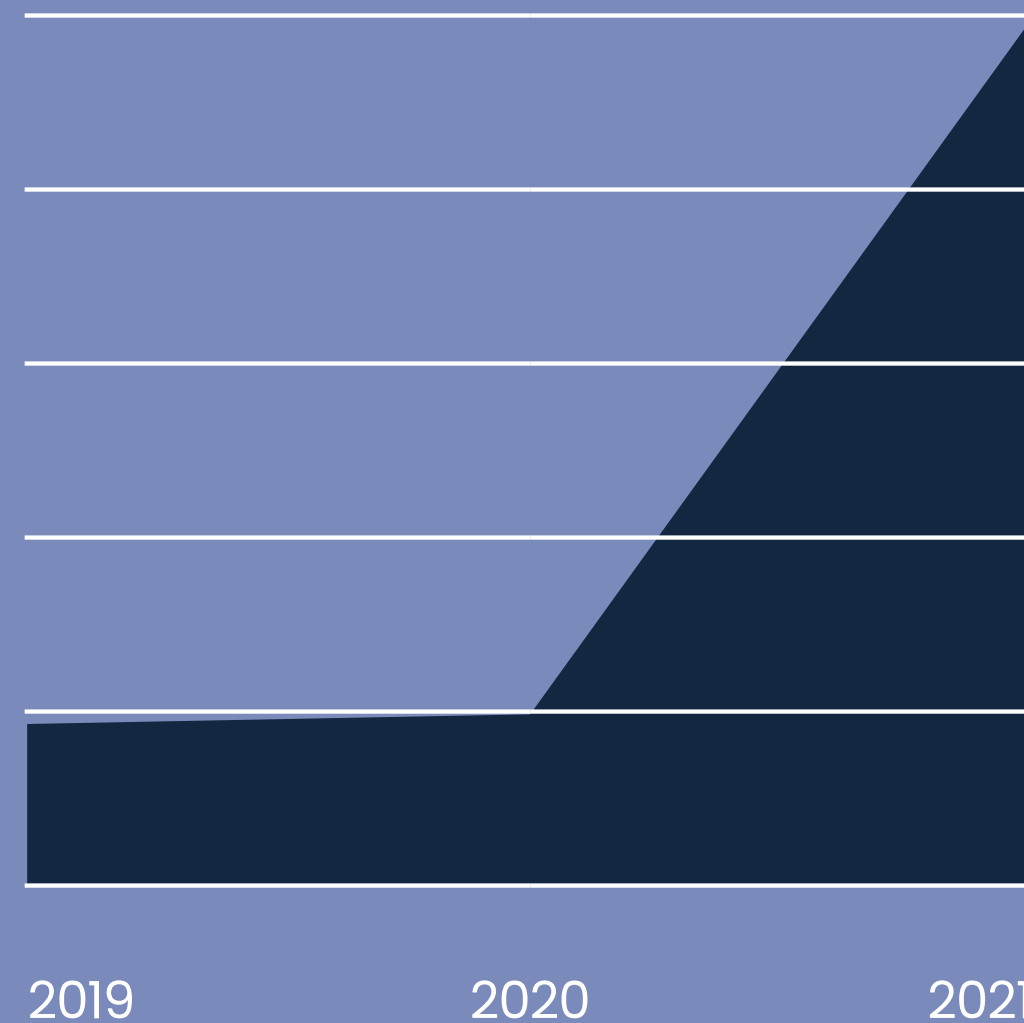
## Technology & IT

Technology and IT teams accelerated business transformation in 2021 by investing in the future. Companies focused on cybersecurity advancements and updating antiquated systems to drive IT transformations.

The overall spend to onboard independent technology and IT expertise on Graphite was up 402% YoY. Double-clicking on that data, we saw the spend on hiring independent cybersecurity experts increase by 2,688% YoY as companies responded to a surge of phishing and malware attacks against businesses. And as companies accelerated the digitization journeys, the spend on onboarding independent experts for IT transformation projects saw an increase of 589% YoY.

IT leaders in 2022 will keep their focus on future-proofing their businesses, continuing their investments in cybersecurity and IT transformations.

**Demand for Technology and IT Expertise was up 402% YoY**



Emerging technologies will also reshape the industry, and companies will increasingly view tech as a value driver versus a cost driver, enabling businesses to build new products and services to drive new revenue streams for a company.

We expect technology/IT to maintain its strong performance on Graphite this year as companies increase spend in emerging technologies and IT transformations, creating value for the business and for the customer.





## Graphite Success Story

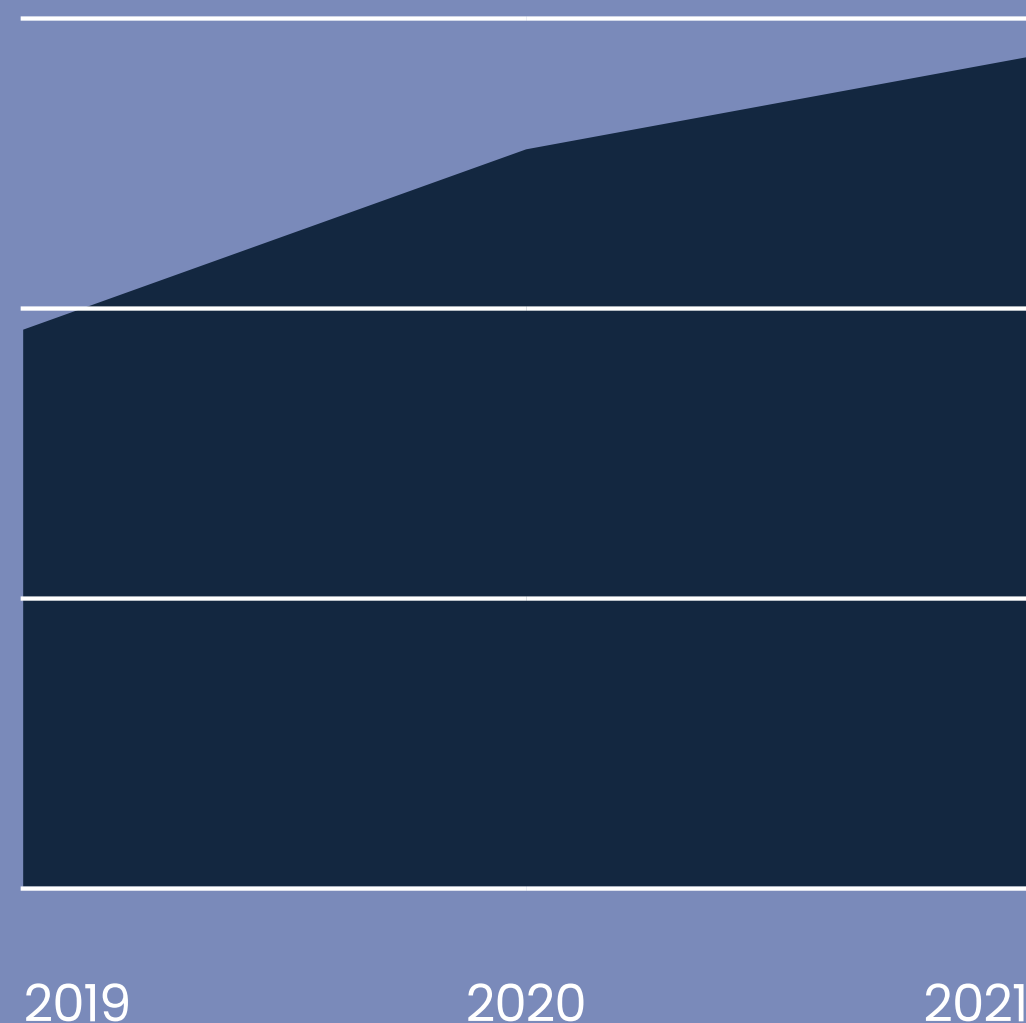
### **Leading Professional Services Firm Sources Independent Pricing Strategy Consultant within 48 Hours**

A leading private equity consulting firm was tasked with developing a pricing strategy project. With over 1 million rows of data to review, they needed outside help to analyze and develop the pricing hypotheses. After engaging their Graphite Account Executive, the consulting firm hired an independent analytics expert with 15 years of experience.



**Read Their Story**

**Demand for independent  
finance & accounting  
expertise was up 15% YoY**



## Finance & Accounting

Finance teams navigated a host of challenges in 2021: a new competitive landscape, changes in government regulations, and evolving technologies. They also had a busy year with the influx of M&A deals and the rise in IT transformations.

Spend on hiring independent financial due diligence experts on Graphite had a 394% increase YoY as a result of an uptick in deal volume. And companies increased their spending on hiring independent finance transformation experts by 226% YoY as the broader economic environment forced them to relook their financial models strategically.

As the year progressed, consumers demanded more transparency across the supply chain. This affected every aspect in the sphere of finance organizations, from tax to auditing and regulations. In turn, finance became the number one in-demand skill in 2021 as corporate strategies focused on business sustainability.



With 2022 underway, finance leaders will invest in new [digital tools](#) to ensure their companies are future-ready. It's business critical for finance teams to use the new technologies to mitigate liability and risk exposure in a changing landscape while also driving down cost by automating key business processes.

According to the [Global CFO Survey](#), more than 45% of CFOs believe that legacy systems and shifting cultural trends are the top roadblocks to succeed in a post-pandemic world.

We'll see a continued focus on finance transformations as leaders double down on digital transformations. Likewise, the trend toward supply chain transparency will persist as companies focus their strategies toward sustainability, driving an uptick in finance skills such as tax, auditing, and regulations.

With M&A set to have a strong 2022, we expect to see finance teams continue to hire for this in-demand skill for due diligence and forecasting.



## Graphite Success Story

### **Seasoned Independent M&A Consultant Saves Client \$143K on M&A Projects**

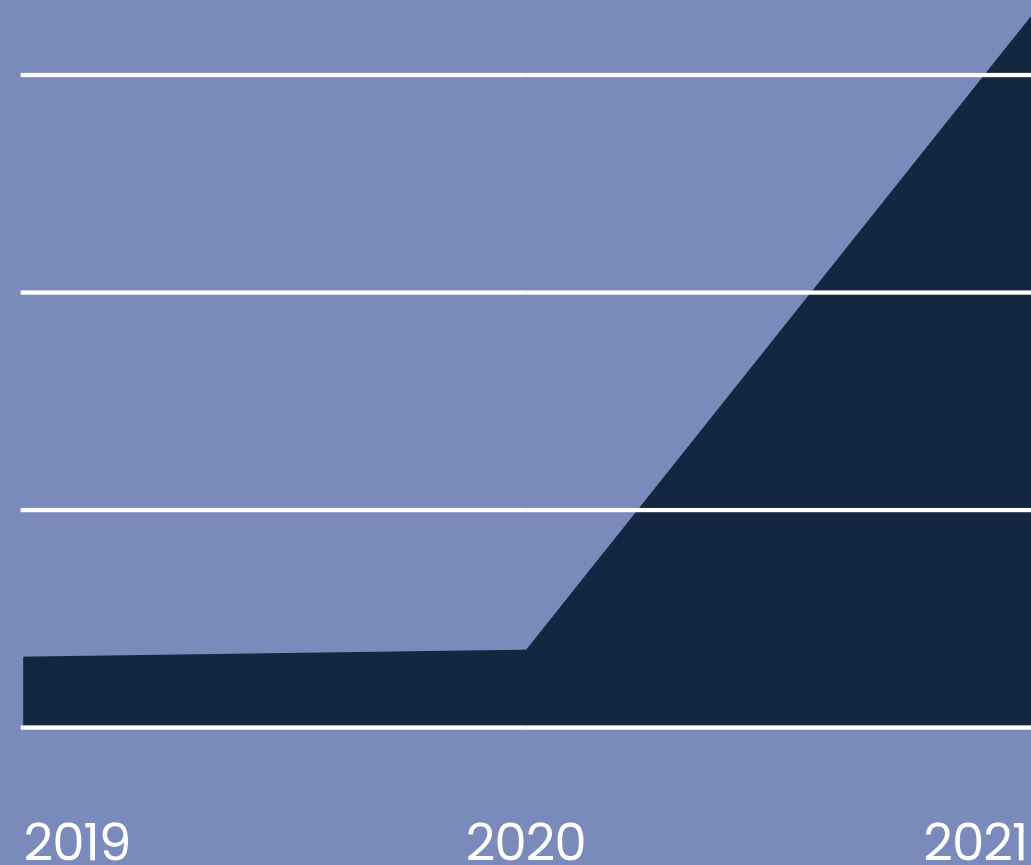
This management consulting firm had a great problem: an increase in demand for its M&A expertise. So they enlisted the help of Graphite to find a candidate that could help them out. The client found an expert with over 20 years of experience to help them provide strategic recommendations for structuring transactions to optimize growth, portfolio rationalization, and associated risk portfolios that served as a catalyst for transaction, restructuring, and cost transformation events.



**Read Their Story**



**Demand for independent human resources expertise was up 1,130% YoY**



## Human Resources

Since 2020, HR has seen an expanded role in business as a result of the pandemic. HR executives now have a seat in the C-Suite, working side-by-side with their strategic counterparts to build sustainable strategies for the business.

HR leaders faced a dizzying array of challenges in 2021: a hot labor market, re-skilling employees, hybrid/remote workplaces, and employee mental health.

Human capital management shifted into focus in 2021 as HR leaders were tasked with understanding how to better attract and retain their workforces amid changing employee behavior. While we saw that the overall spend on hiring independent HR expertise was up 1,130%, drilling down further, we saw a 1,004% increase YoY in spending for hiring independent compensation strategy experts and a 400% YoY increase in spending for onboarding human capital expertise.



In 2022, HR leaders will continue their focus on human capital management. Nearly three-quarters of CEOs expect labor and skills shortages to influence or disrupt their strategy over the next 12 months. As the labor market continues to thrive, leaders will need to respond to the shortages in the market, skills gaps, and any pandemic-related work environments.

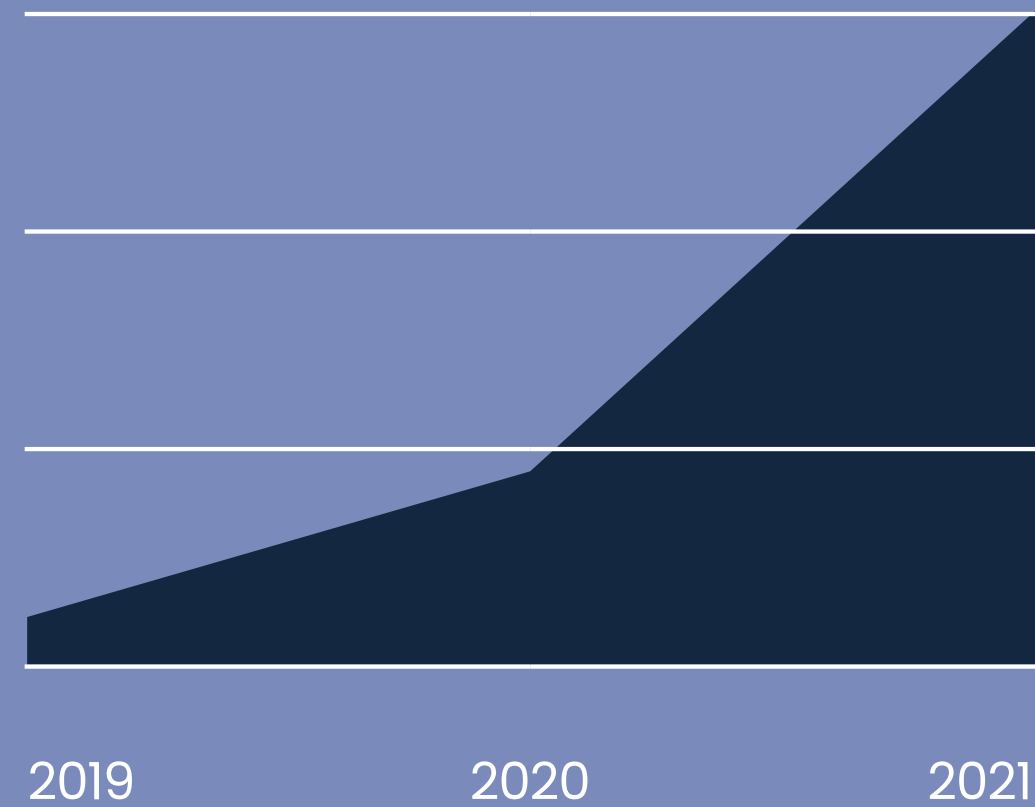
Leaders will look for innovative ways to create thriving post-pandemic organizations. Focus will shift to creating purpose, values, and culture as leaders set the tone for the organization, addressing why employees should work for a particular organization. This is a strategic alignment with Gen Z's values-driven expectations in the workplace.

Another key way HR leaders are transforming their organizations is by re-thinking how to attract and retain top talent. Two years into the pandemic, it's clear employees prefer remote and flexible work. The shift now focuses on how HR leaders approach various workforce models.

Whether it's full-time employees, gig workers, crowdsourcing, or independent contractors, HR organizations have a range of options to get the work done, enabling organizations to build a bench of experts with on-demand hiring platforms like Graphite.



**Demand for independent operations expertise was up 251% YoY**



## Operations

Disruption to the supply chain has remained a constant theme during the pandemic. The narrative hasn't changed much since then: shortages of raw materials, a tight labor market, outdated technology systems, and increased pricing.

Operations teams doubled down on digital transformation projects, automating key business processes to streamline production and drive efficiency. We saw a 251% increase YoY in spending on operations projects as consulting firms and enterprises focused on compliance (up 348% YoY) and organizational design (up 301% YoY) as the supply chain, regulatory, and broader economic environment consistently evolved over the year.



Still, we enter 2022 with the supply chain disrupted. Experts expect it to last another two years, making any return to normalcy unlikely. Solutions abound: Open ports 24/7, revive US factories, and chartering your own container ship. Operations leaders will continue to troubleshoot the problem of the moment while simultaneously planning for the future.

Operation teams will also focus on building out their resiliency and agility capabilities. 87% of supply chain professionals plan to invest in resilience within the next two years. Leaders will continue to invest in technologies to advance business performance, including real-time transportation visibility platforms, AI, advanced analytics abilities, and robotics.

But that's not the only investment operation teams will make. Many will also spend on investing in the right talent to build the supply chains of the future, turning to on-demand hiring platforms like Graphite to identify risks and opportunities in procurement, manufacturing, logistics, and distribution.





## Graphite Success Story

### **How One Client Overcame Supply Chain Issues with an Independent Consultant**

A client of a management consulting firm had a problem. They needed help improving the customer experience through current and future state end-to-end process mapping and more. The client moved forward by hiring an independent consultant with 15 years of experience in supply chain and digital transformation.



**Read Their Story**

04

# State of On-Demand Industry Skills





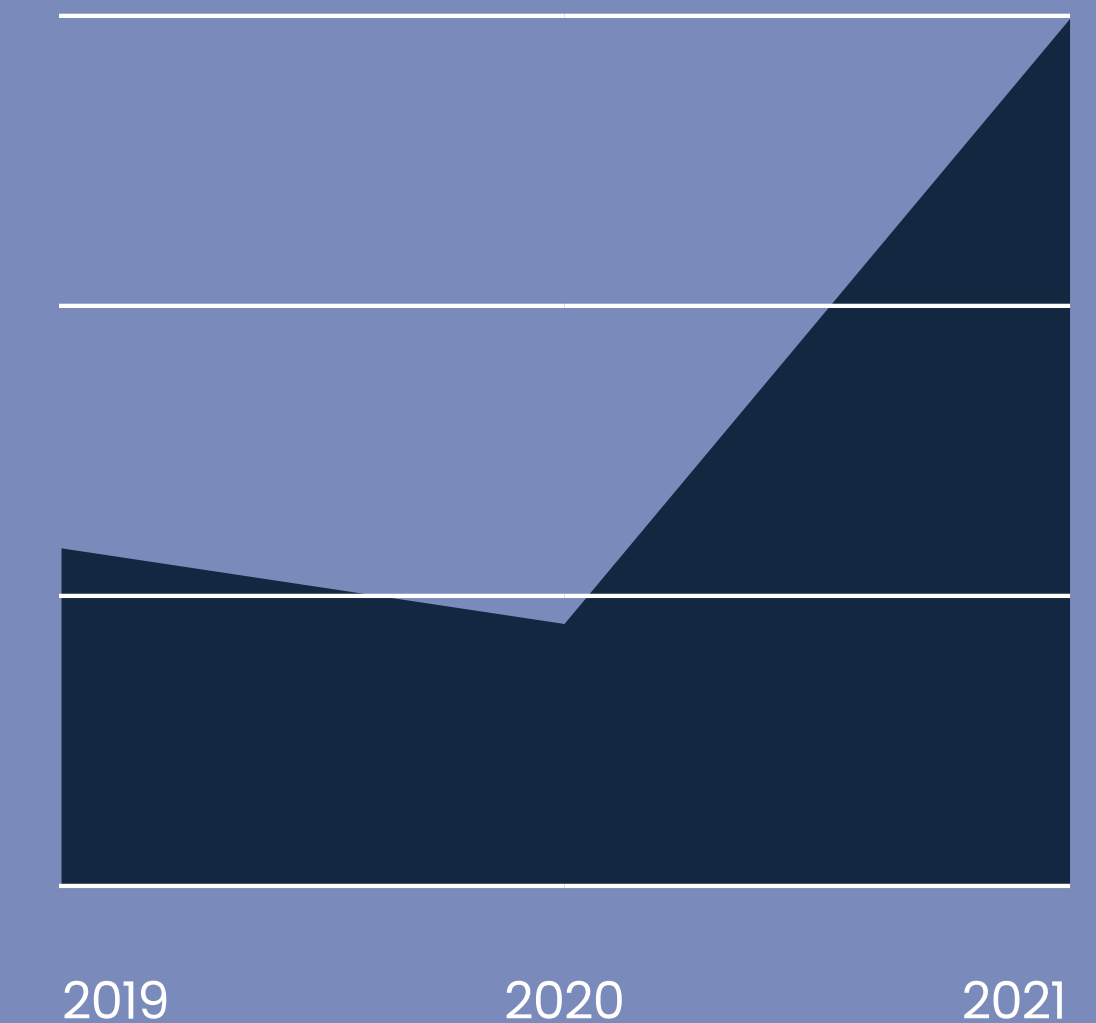
# Technology

Businesses have fast-tracked their digital transformation in 2021, accelerating their digitization of their customer and supply-chain interactions and of their internal operations by three to four years.

Digital transformation is now viewed as a way to preserve a business, with innovation playing a critical role in how organizations operate. In 2021, companies invested in emerging technologies to improve business operations, combat phishing and malware attacks, and improve cybersecurity.

This surge in technology investments powered a year of unprecedented growth for technology companies. The hiring of highly vetted independent technology industry veterans grew by 240% YoY on Graphite as a result.

**Demand for technology industry experts was up 240% YoY**



Looking ahead to 2022, digitization will play a critical role in adding business value. Innovations will abound in established and emerging industries, including cybersecurity and privacy, life sciences, and emerging players such as climate tech.

With the global digital transformation market projected to grow by 16.5% by 2025, expect businesses to capitalize on the emerging technology trends, including AI, robotics, and 6G to drive the most business growth.





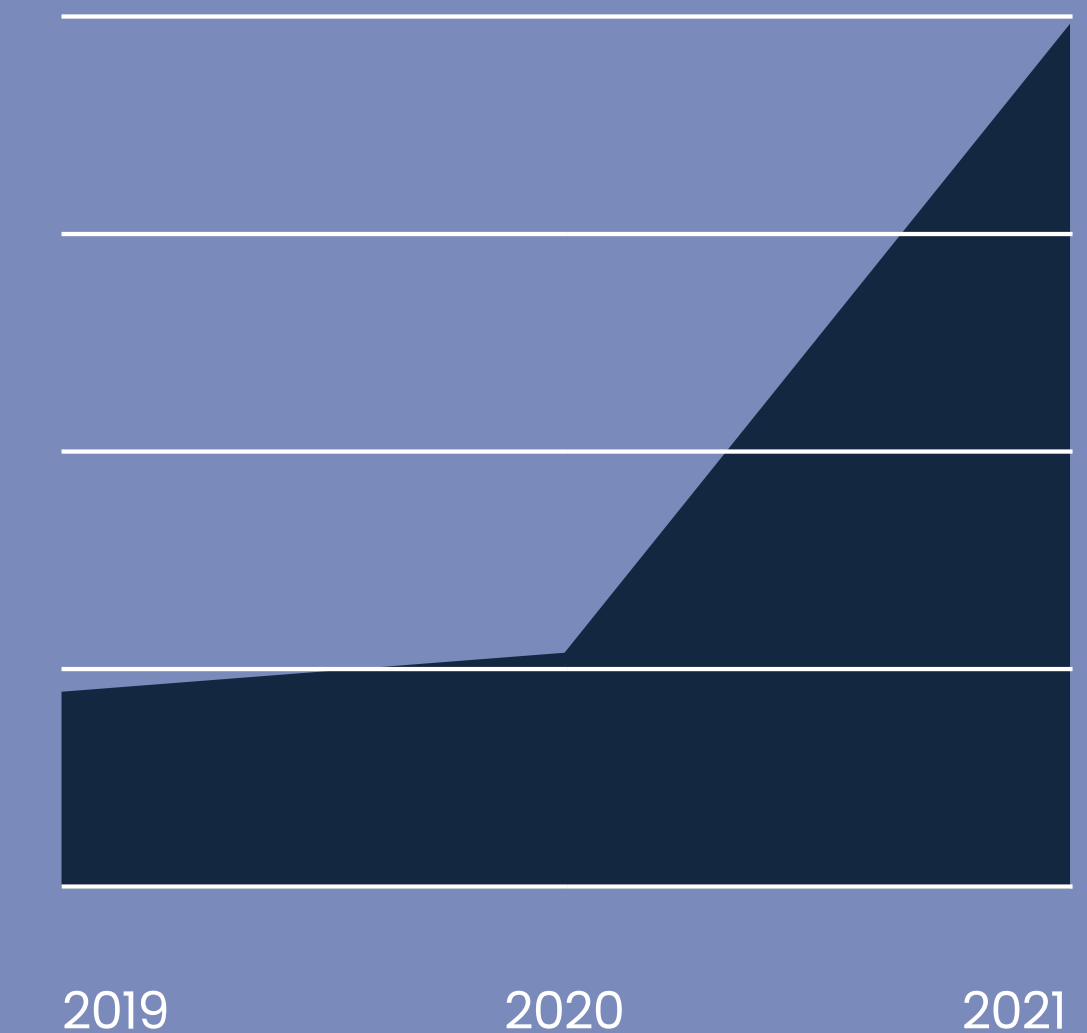
# Manufacturing

The narrative in the manufacturing industry has remained constant since the start of the pandemic: worker shortages, disrupted supply chains, and increased shipping costs. Entire sectors including automotive, technology, and food industries have been affected. In 2021, manufacturing companies continued to deal with disruptions, fighting to keep their workforces intact and shore up cash liquidity.

Yet despite the challenges, companies turned to investing in sustainable manufacturing practices in 2021 as a way to transform the entire system.

Companies looked at how they design, source, manufacture, deliver, and service their products. We saw the hiring of manufacturing experts grow by 252% YoY as companies invested in sustainable manufacturing practices to grow their business.

**Demand for independent manufacturing industry experts was up 252% YoY**





In 2022, sustainability will continue to be a key theme as manufacturers drive continued innovation in the industry. Companies will take further steps toward Industry 4.0, a term synonymous with smart manufacturing, using automation, the internet of things (IoT), AI, and big data to transform the industry.

The outlook for 2022 looks promising. Factory orders are accelerating, increasing 18% YoY according to Reuters. And the government is increasing its investment to advance manufacturing capacity across the US.

We expect the hiring of independent manufacturing experts on Graphite to grow as business leaders continue to invest in sustainable practices to deliver financial, operational, and environmental benefits to drive business growth.



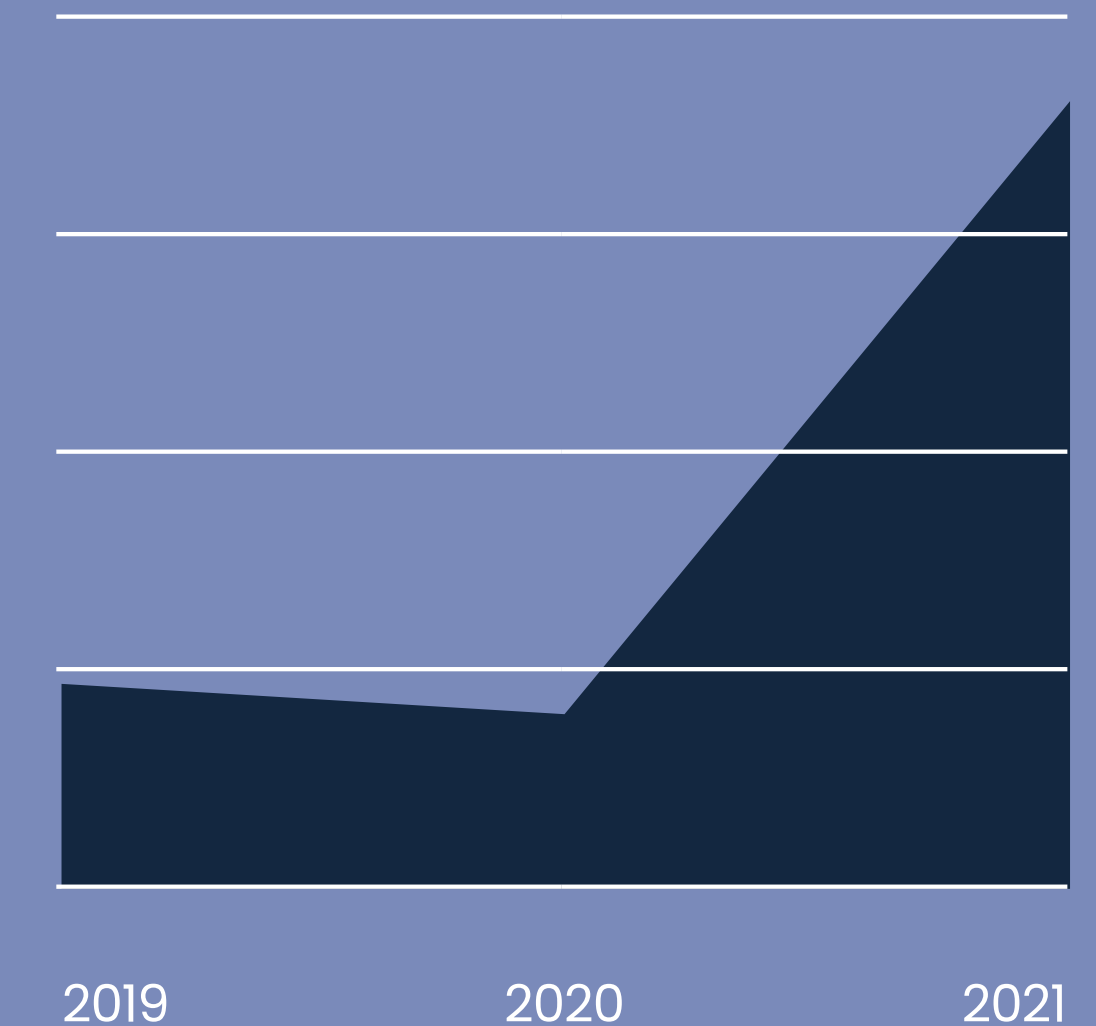


# Retail

Customer behavior and shopping habits once again changed as a result of the pandemic. In 2021, retailers had to work even harder to offer authentic, seamless customer experiences by merging the physical and digital world – leading to new advancements in retail technologies.

For example, retailers developed technologies that made contactless shopping and payment a reality. Radio-frequency-identification (RFID) tags played a major role in the automation of store checkouts. Contactless commerce is now being enabled by AI-powered analysis of biometric data, helping industries such as food and beverage provide automatic, contactless experiences.

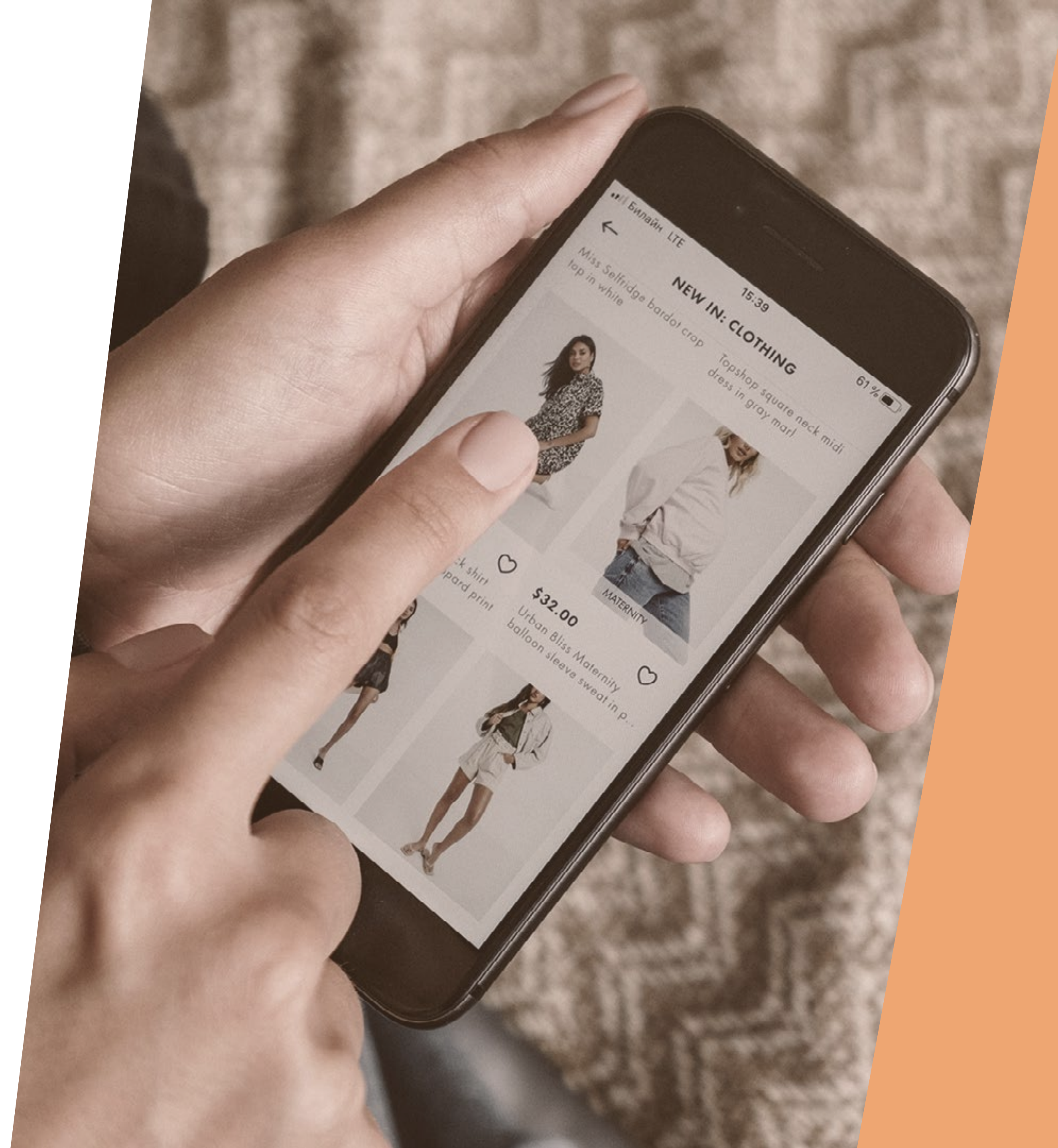
**Demand for independent retail industry experts was up 460% YoY**





With technology becoming a mainstay in how retailers reach consumers, 2021 was the fastest-growing year since 1984, with retail sales up by 13.5%. Retail experience became an in-demand industry skill, driving a 460% YoY increase of highly vetted independent retail experts.

In 2022, we expect technology to continue to shape the world of retail with more intelligence, including AI, VR/AR, and sensor technologies. Smart technologies will enable consumers to make choices and purchases across different platforms — voice, mobile, online and off, providing a seamless customer experience.







However, that will not spell the end of brick and mortar. Physical retail will continue to attract shoppers, claiming 72% of US retail sales in 2024. Retailers will use the best of e-commerce and integrate it into their stores, further merging the worlds of online and offline. Engaging technologies, including touches of VR, hands-on encounters, and in-store app functionality, are elevating the experience.

Customer experience will be key to retail's transformation this year. Retail teams will need to use technology and customer research to create an experience that is as frictionless as possible. We expect the hiring of independent retail experts on Graphite to grow, enabling retailers to quickly recalibrate their businesses and offerings to meet consumer expectations.

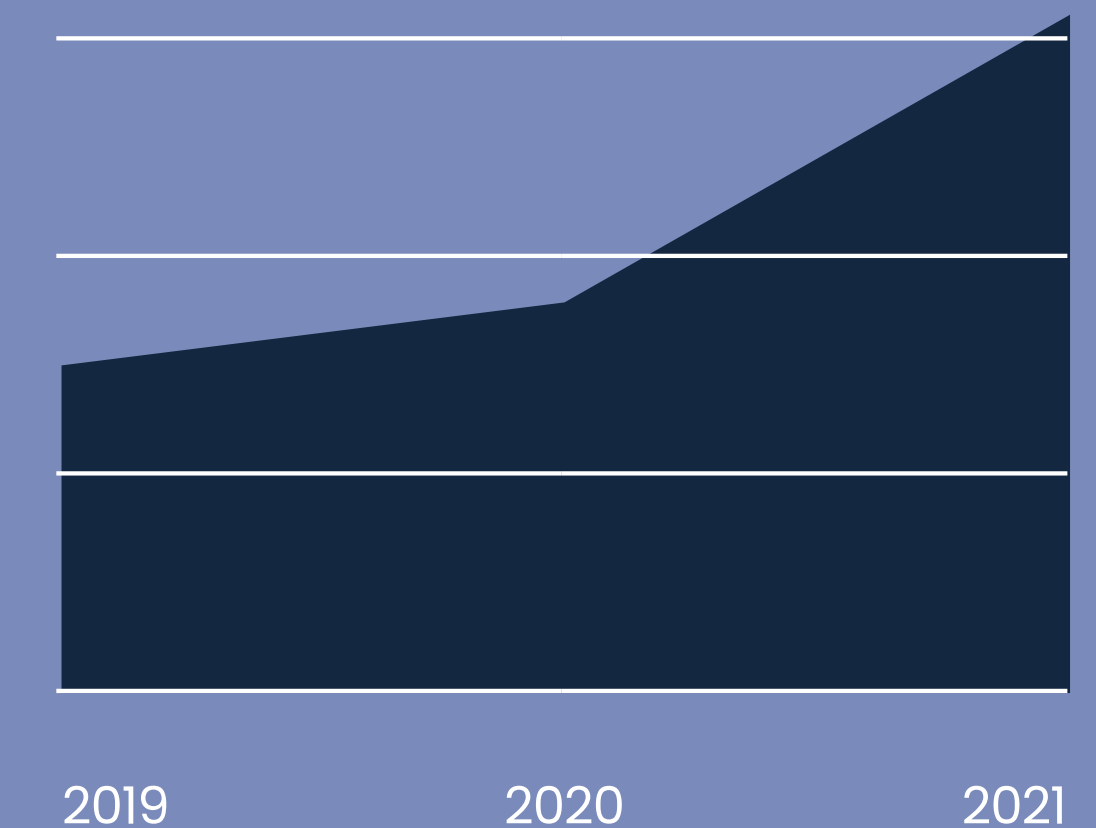
# Financial Services

Financial services made significant investments in modern data and analytics tools, AI capabilities, and digital platforms in 2021 to improve business performance and operations.

The impact of the pandemic made it abundantly clear that many of the core systems used by the industry had not been designed to handle the volume and pace of change required. Due to the rapid growth and modernization of the financial services industry, we saw the hiring of finance experts grow by 76% YoY with companies looking for M&A due diligence, financial modeling, and forecasting/projecting expertise.

In 2022, financial institutions will further prepare for the future. The industry is poised to spend on innovations to accelerate their digital transformations, with AI giving the boost required to be more effective, accurate, and self-adaptive.

**Demand for independent financial services industry expertise was up 76% YoY**





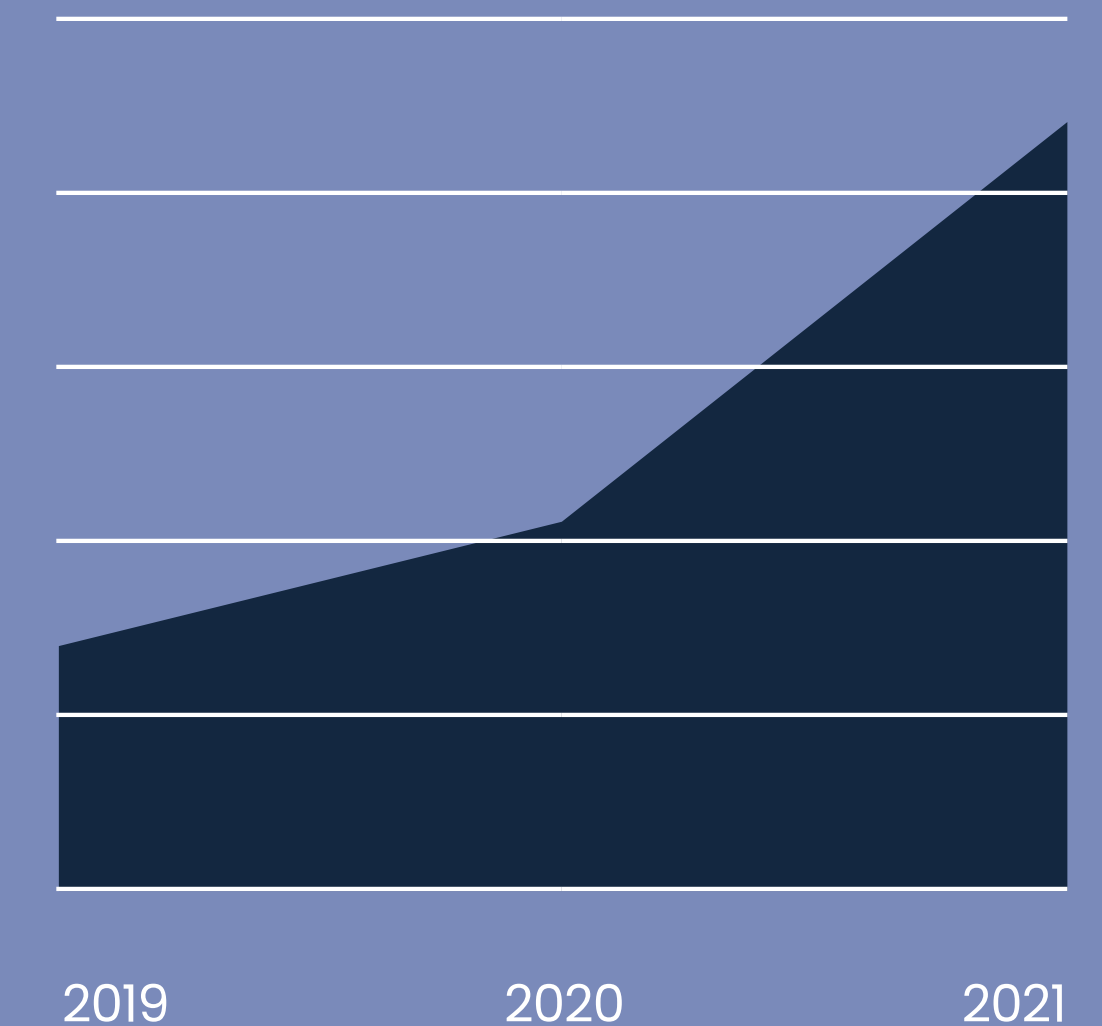
# Life Sciences

Life sciences continued its road to transformation in 2021. In year two of the pandemic, we saw the development of various vaccines, the rise of telemedicine, patient-centric user experiences, and the expansion of the healthcare workforce.

Innovations in the industry transformed supply chains and improved cross-functional collaboration with a focus on improving patient outcomes worldwide.

Companies accelerated their digitization, investing in safer infrastructures, digital tools, cloud computing, and faster (5G networks to enable greater productivity and speed to market.

**Demand for independent life sciences experts was up 106% YoY**



At Graphite, we felt the impact of these initiatives with spend on hiring life sciences expertise up 106% YoY. This year, life sciences will maintain the momentum of digital innovations.

AI will play a key role with global AI in the drug discovery market expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 36% by 2025. Developments in AI applications are occurring across the spectrum of the pharma business, automating processes and generating insights from large-scale data.







Focus will shift to patient-centric business models, with businesses designing services and solutions around patients and empowering them to take control. Harnessing technology, especially AI and analytics, will enable leaders to find innovative ways to foster greater communication and collaboration between patients, providers, and pharma companies.

With the global physical, engineering, and life sciences market expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 13% in 2022, we foresee the hiring of independent life science experts on Graphite to grow as companies continue to find innovative ways to work and collaborate.

**05**

# **2022: The Year of the On-Demand Workforce**

---



## Why the Shift to On-Demand Hiring will Continue to Grow in 2022

On-demand hiring has enabled companies to adapt to the changing needs of a rapidly evolving business landscape. As customer preferences, technology, and industries change, businesses today have started to realize the strategic value of hiring independent experts on-demand.

Not only does the on-demand workforce provide companies with the needed agility to thrive today, it also allows them to capture strategic value faster and more cost-effectively than ever before. On the employee side, the on-demand workforce presents an opportunity to design their ideal workday — which was not readily available with a traditional nine-to-five.

As the world of digitization rapidly changes, businesses and employees alike can now work together on mutually beneficial terms — enabling work to happen at any time from anywhere without impacting the bottom line.

## About Graphite

Graphite is shaping the future of work by enabling seamless access to the world's best independent talent. It's home to 8,100+ leading independent experts that can enhance various areas of your organization. They're masters in their field, possessing deep functional and/or domain experience. Interested in learning how you can build a pool of high-caliber independent professionals that can help you execute and win more projects? Connect with a Graphite specialist today to learn how.

**Let's Connect**