



Loopio

RFP Response Trends & Benchmarks

2026 REPORT


IN PARTNERSHIP WITH  APMP



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About This Report: This report was created by Loopio, the market-leading software that helps companies streamline their response process for RFPs, DDQs, and security questionnaires. This research surveyed 1,533 companies around the globe, in partnership with the Association of Proposal Management Professionals (APMP), with data analyzed by Qualtrics.



Response management is going through a period of transformation. So how can you adapt—and stay ahead of the curve?

From the economic realities shaping our world to the wide-reaching impacts of AI, the only constant for teams that work in response management is change. Featuring insights from 1,533 proposal and sales professionals, this report delves deep into the trends that matter. Drawing from seven years' worth of insights, we explore everything from submission rates to the key skills teams need in 2026. Plus, we share data-backed practices from top-performing teams to help you win more.

Whether you're a writer or a sales rep, in pre-sales or proposals—you'll find something in this report for you.



1,533
participants



79%
using AI in their
response process



40%
average company revenue
influenced by RFPs

As we release our seventh annual research report, one clear theme has emerged: The world of response management is going through a noticeable period of intensity. We're seeing a triple threat of rising pressures: submissions are up, AI use is near-universal, and bandwidth challenges have spiked, becoming the number one hurdle for practitioners for the first time in five years.

As the pace of work accelerates, so do the stakes for the businesses we surveyed. This year, RFPs influenced 40% of the average company's revenue—the highest level of influence we've recorded since 2019. This confirms what we've long known: the response function is not just a back-office necessity, but a key engine for growth.

However, "doing more" is no longer enough to win. This year's report highlights the contrast between those who are simply keeping up, and the top performers who are thriving. The data tells us that the most successful teams are doing things a bit differently:

- **They use AI throughout their full workflow:** They aren't just using GenAI to draft faster; they're using it in varied ways to analyze data and improve the quality of their responses.
- **They lean into their strategic value:** They're more likely to be viewed as strategic partners within their organizations, with a strong influence on sales success and deal strategy.
- **They're more selective than their peers:** They win more by doing less of the wrong work, leveraging go/no-go processes to protect their team's bandwidth.
- **They value quality over speed:** They spend more time on each RFP than the average team, prioritizing the personalization that drives wins.

As you dive into the 2026 RFP Response Trends & Benchmarks Report, our goal is to provide you with more than just benchmarks. We hope these insights serve as a strategic roadmap, helping you move from reactive responding to intentional, revenue-driving excellence.

Thank you to the community of responders who shared their stories and data with us this year. Here's to a successful 2026!



Zak Hemraj
Loopio CEO & Co-Founder

Each year, Loopio’s RFP Response Trends & Benchmarks Report highlights key developments in the bid and proposal profession, giving teams the data they need to measure performance, benchmark progress, and elevate their impact.

The 2026 report is no exception. Capturing perspectives from members of the Association of Proposal Management Professionals globally, this year’s report offers a deeper understanding of high-impact and timely topics, including the increasing strategic impact of bid and proposal professionals, the rapid evolution of AI, and resourcing and workload benchmarks.

These insights are designed to help you and your team continue to work smarter, strengthen your strategic influence and ultimately, win more. As the profession continues to evolve, APMP remains committed to supporting you with the resources you need to succeed.



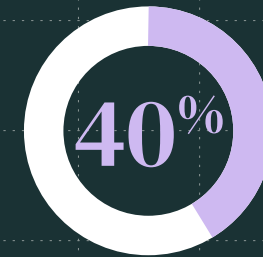
Vani Ungapen, CAE
APMP CEO

Top Trends & Benchmarks for 2026



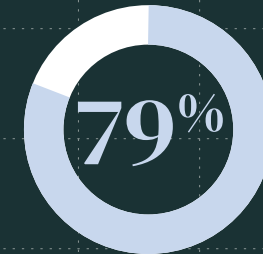
166 Annual RFP Submissions

Teams submitted an average of **166** RFPs last year, an increase from **153** the year before.



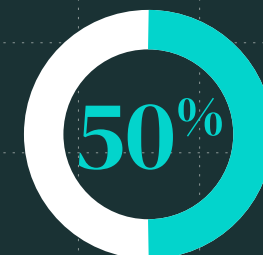
40% of Company Revenue Comes From RFPs

RFPs are responsible for **40%** of company revenue, the highest share we’ve reported since 2019.



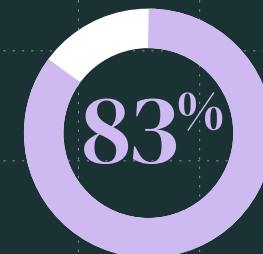
79% of Teams Use AI

Almost **80%** of teams used generative AI in 2025, up **10 percentage points** from the year before—and these use cases are growing more sophisticated.



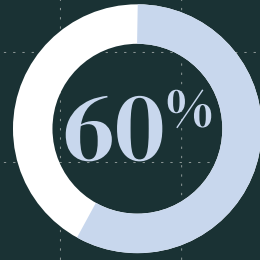
50% Say Bandwidth Is a Top Challenge

50% of respondents rank “having enough bandwidth” as a top challenge, overtaking other challenges for the first time.



83% of Teams Feel Confident

Despite challenges, the majority of RFP teams feel ready to meet the demands of 2026.



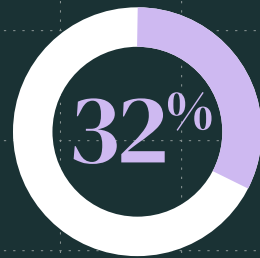
60% of Top Performers Are Viewed as Strategic Contributors

Top performers differentiate themselves by being strategic and are recognized for these capabilities—compared to only **47%** of the average.



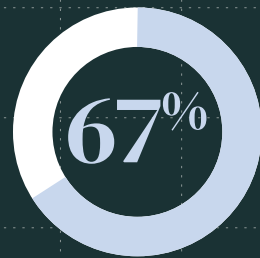
33 Hours Is The Average Time to Complete an RFP

Writing time decreased slightly as teams spent an average of **33 hours** on an RFP response from start to finish, two hours faster than last year.



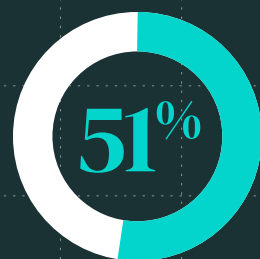
32% of Teams Say AI Is Giving Them New Responsibilities

AI is raising expectations, with **32%** of teams saying that leadership expects them to take on new responsibilities and **42%** saying their leadership expects them to deliver better results.



67% of Teams Say Winning More RFPs Is an Important Part of Their Company's Sales Strategy

RFPs remain critical to a robust sales strategy, with **67%** of teams saying that winning more is important.



51% of Teams Say They'll Need AI and Automation Skills in 2026

The top three skills teams say they'll need in 2026 show a desire for efficiency and influence, with AI and automation (**51%**), content development and messaging (**48%**), and strategic planning and deal strategy influence (**44%**) topping the list.



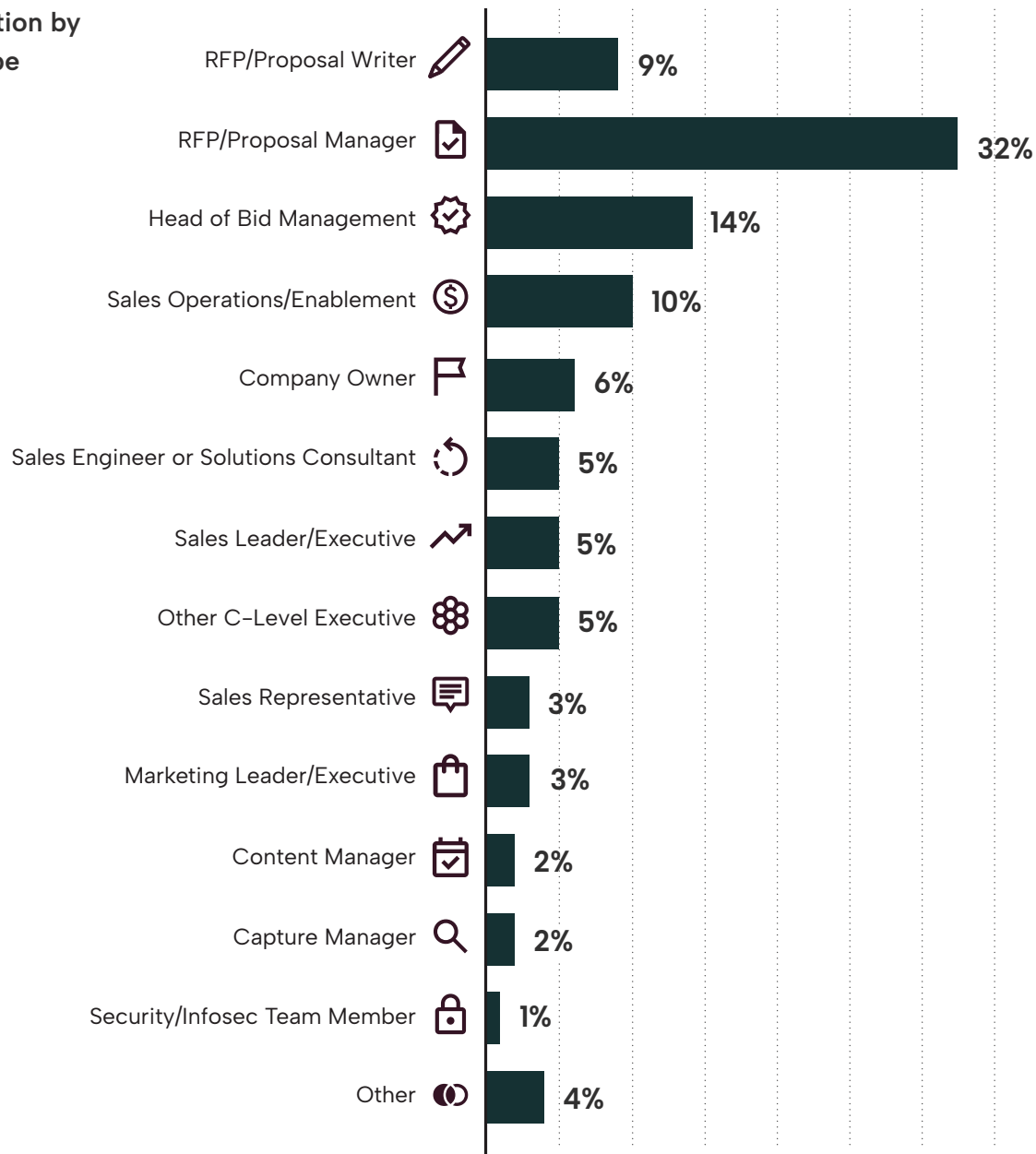
Participation Distribution & Demographics

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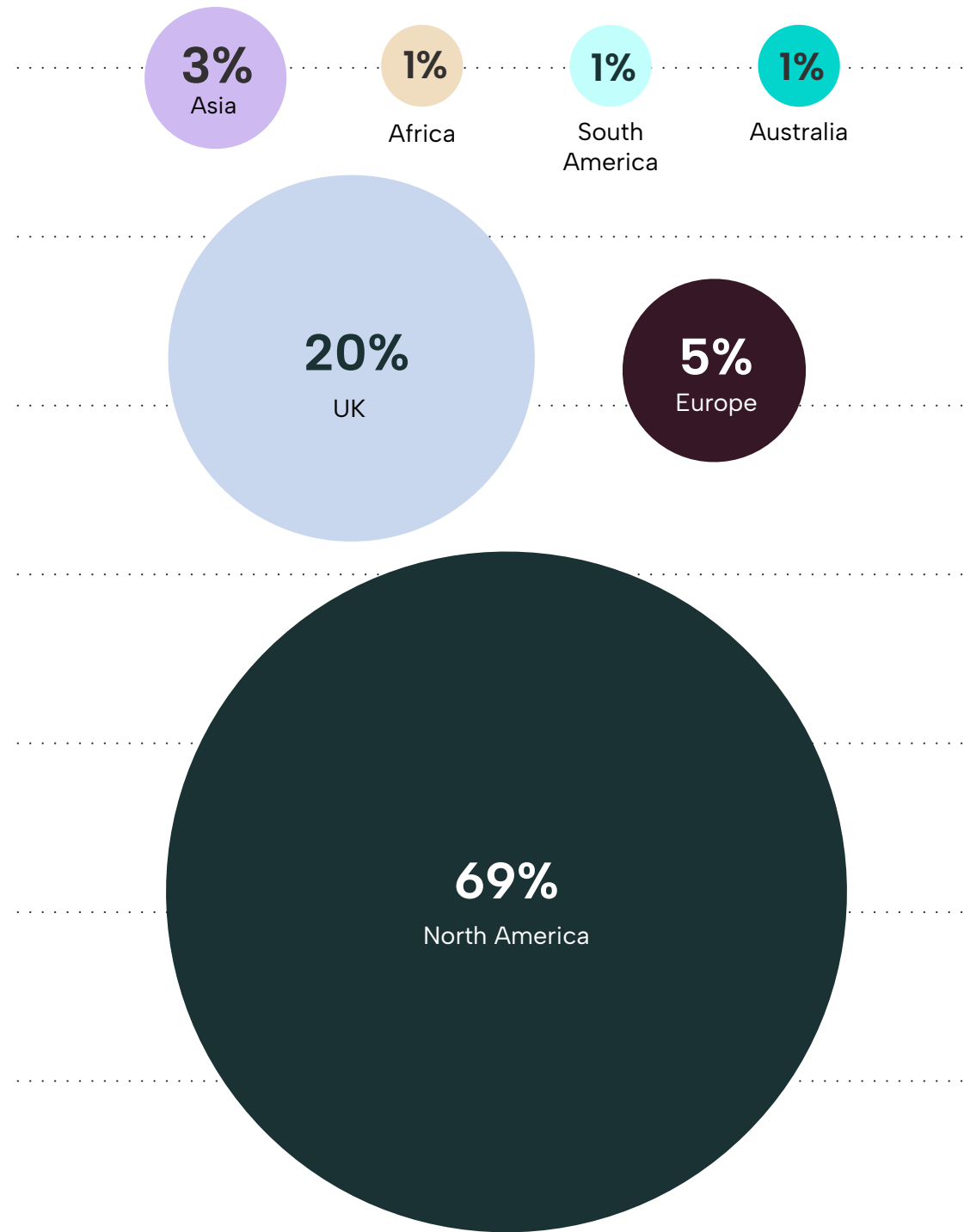
Who We Surveyed

We surveyed 1,533 people from around the world, all of whom are involved in responding to RFPs. All participants are either involved in the process directly, or are involved indirectly through managing a team that responds to RFPs.

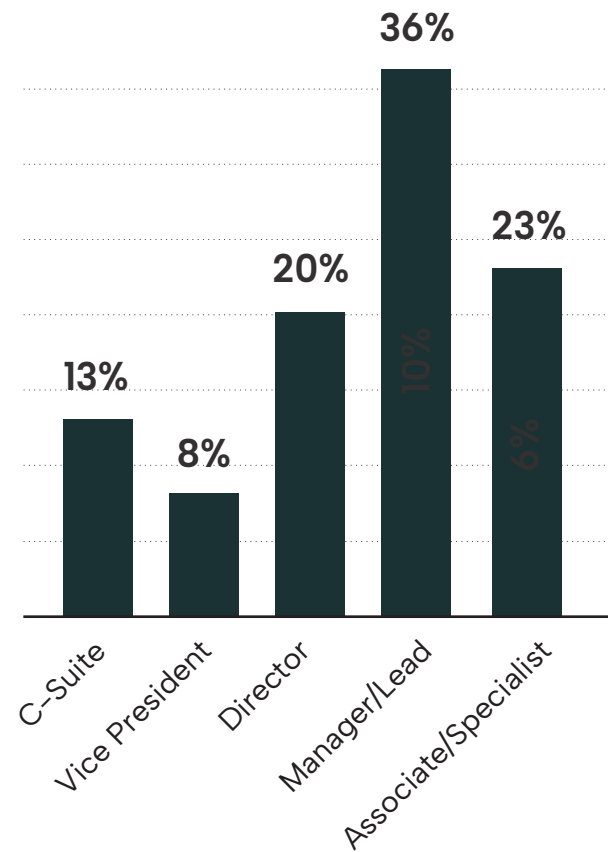
Distribution by Role Type



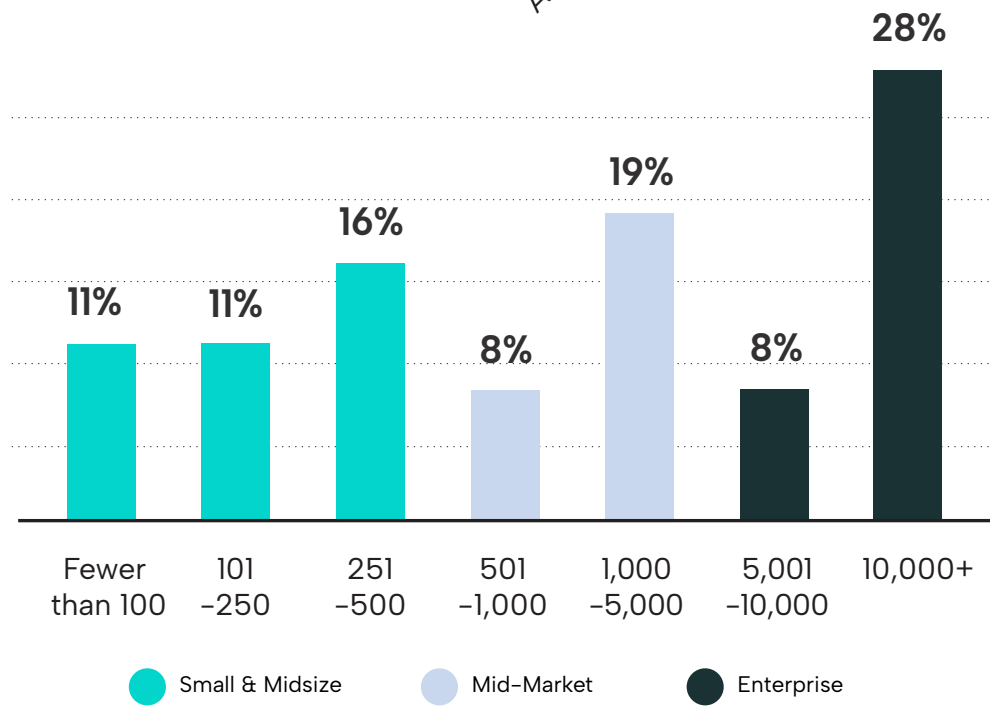
Distribution by Geography



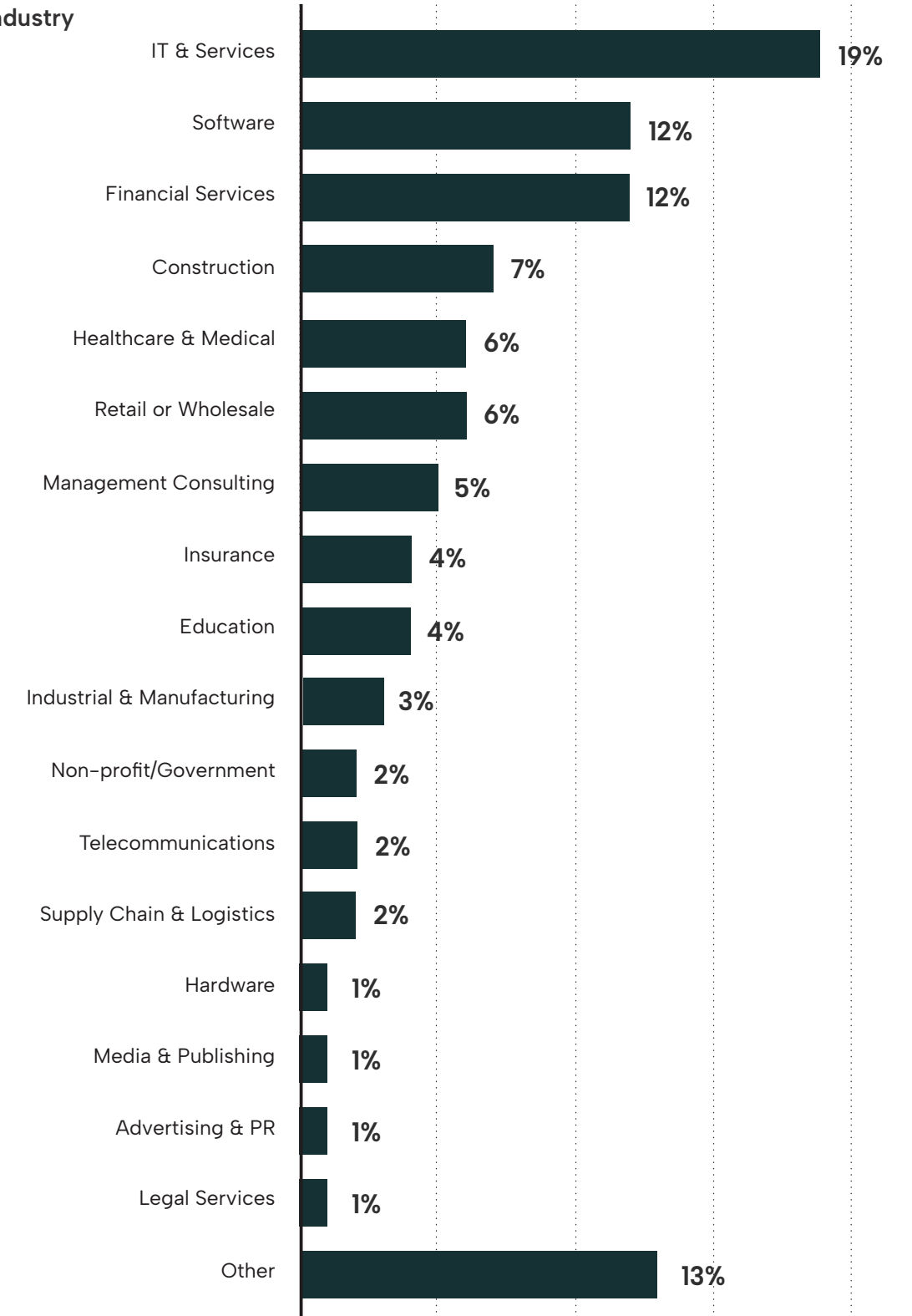
Distribution by Employee Level



Distribution by Company Size



Distribution by Industry





CHAPTER 1

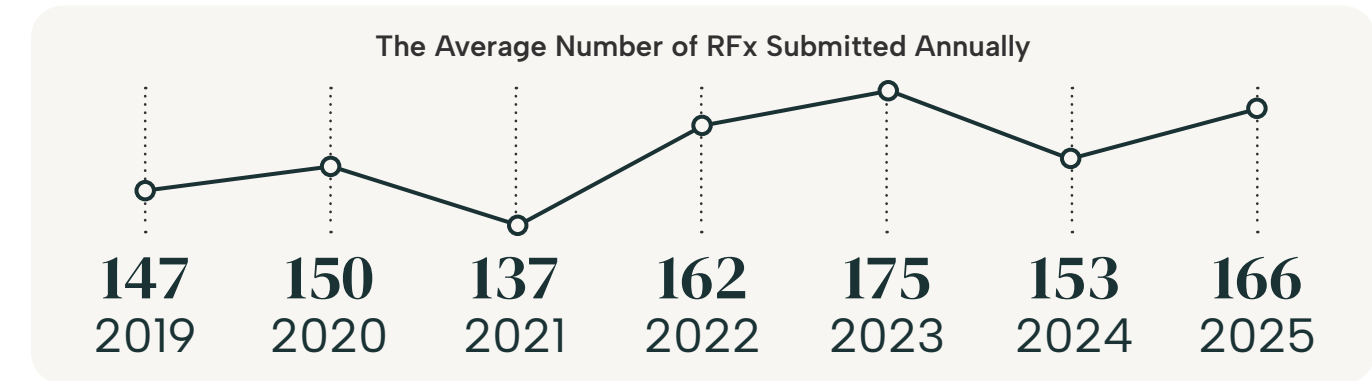
RFP Volume

Submissions Increase as Economic Pressures Mount

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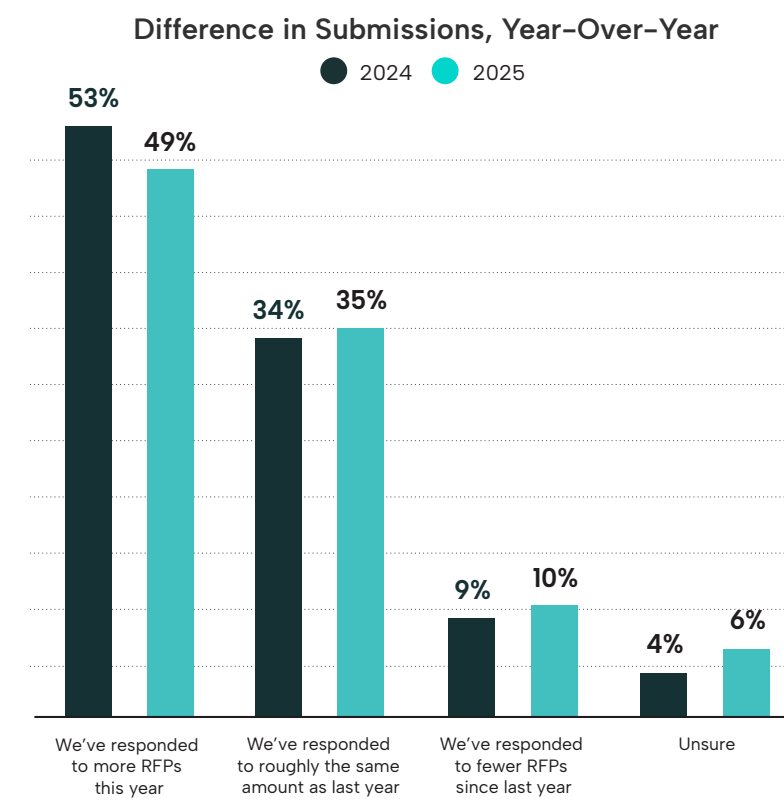
RFP Submissions Increase As Teams Grow Less Selective

The average number of RFPs responded to each year was 166, an increase over last year's number of 153.



Nearly Half of Teams Responded to More RFPs This Year

Digging deeper, we can see that almost half (49%) of teams are responding to more RFPs this year and about a third (35%) are responding to close to the same number. That means the majority (84%) responded to the same or more RFPs. Only 10% are responding to fewer.



This increase is happening for numerous reasons—lower selectivity, reduced go/no-go process use, and perhaps most notably, an increase in AI usage. Teams are relying much more heavily on AI this year (more on that in [Chapter 5](#)). We’re seeing both the positive and negative sides of this increased AI adoption: Efficiency is way up, but so too is pressure on teams to produce results fast. We’ll unpack all these effects in the chapters ahead.

If you submit more than 500 RFPs per year, you’re in the busiest 12% of responders.

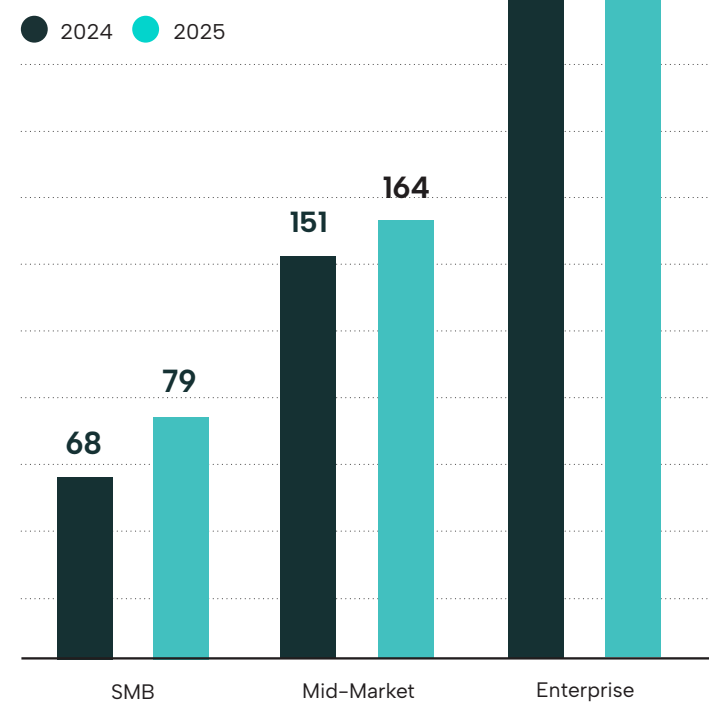
It’s worth noting that submission numbers tend to correlate with the economy. In challenging economic times, companies feel pressured to be more fiscally responsible, and therefore compare vendors by creating more RFPs. For sellers, that means there are more RFPs in the market to respond to—which can explain why volume is up, while win rates are not.

As we’ll dig into in the next chapter, this was a year rife with economic uncertainty—so it makes perfect sense that teams are submitting more in response.

Companies of All Sizes Are Submitting More

This year, we saw submission gains across all company sizes—with an increase of 9 to 13 proposals for SMBs, mid-market, and enterprise organizations.

Average Annual Submissions by Company Size

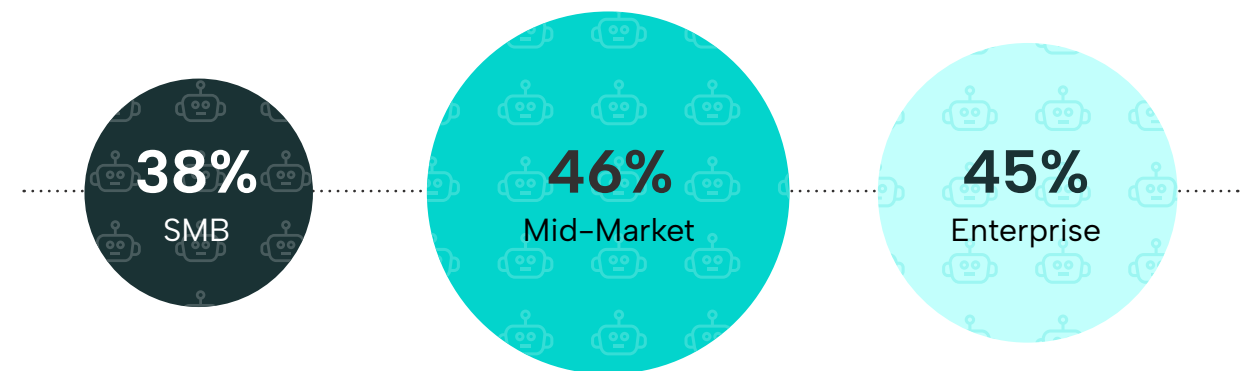


RFP Software Users Submit 10 More RFPs Per Year
When it comes to submissions, RFP software users have an edge—submitting **176 RFPs** per year. That’s ten more than the average!

Mid-market companies edged out the others slightly, an increase seemingly explained by process improvements and better resourcing. When asked why they were submitting more, a higher-than-average percentage of mid-market companies said they had improved their RFP process (39%) and had more resources to respond this year (25%).

Generative AI may also be helping with levelling the playing field. All three groups were more likely to use AI in their process this year, but mid-market and enterprise companies were the most likely to use the tool daily.

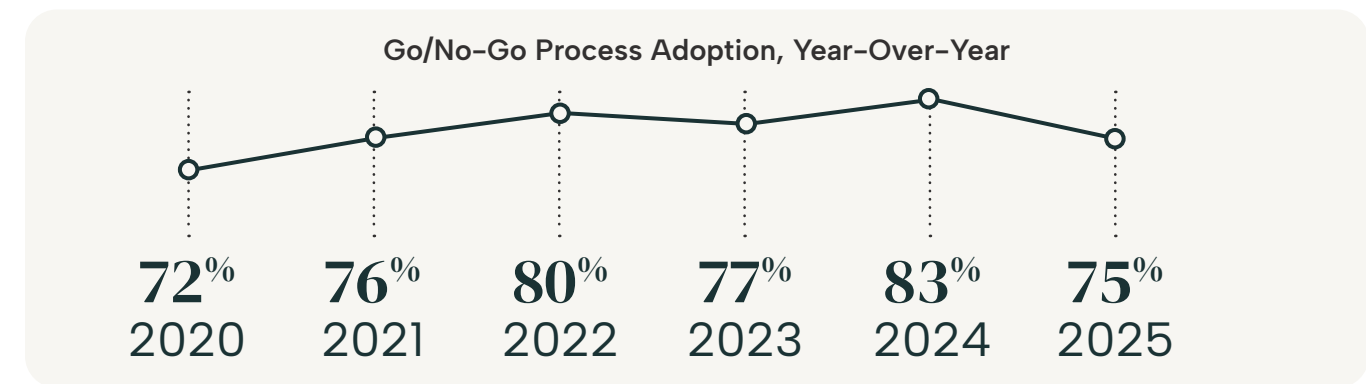
% of Companies that Use AI Daily



Go/No-Go Use Falls Amid Teams Receiving More RFPs

Submission numbers and go/no-go process use typically have an inverse relationship: When teams submit more, they tend to be less selective and vice versa. This year was no exception, and in the wake of increased submissions numbers, we saw go/no-go process use fall to the lowest it’s been since 2021. Still, three-quarters of teams are using some kind of go/no-go process.

Go/No-Go Process Adoption, Year-Over-Year

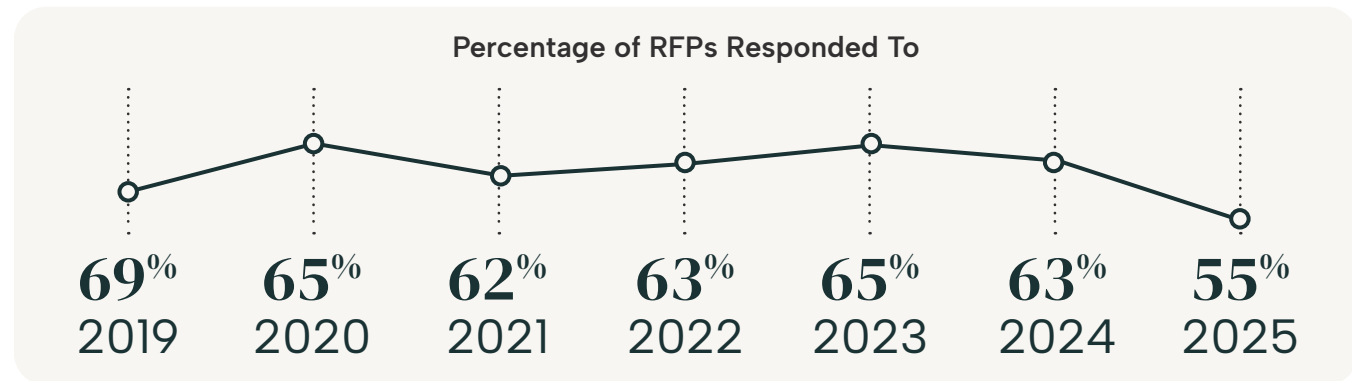


At the same time that go/no-go process use is falling, overall participation rates are as low as they've ever been in the history of this report, which might seem odd. How can teams somehow be responding to fewer of the RFPs they receive while submitting more? Well, it might be related to the sheer total of RFPs in the market.



81% of top performers use a go/no-go matrix.

This year, 68% of teams reported that they were receiving more RFPs. In addition to economic challenges forcing buyers to be more fiscally responsible, this could also suggest that AI isn't just enabling responders to work faster—it's doing the same for procurement teams who send them. More RFPs = more hard decisions about what to respond to.



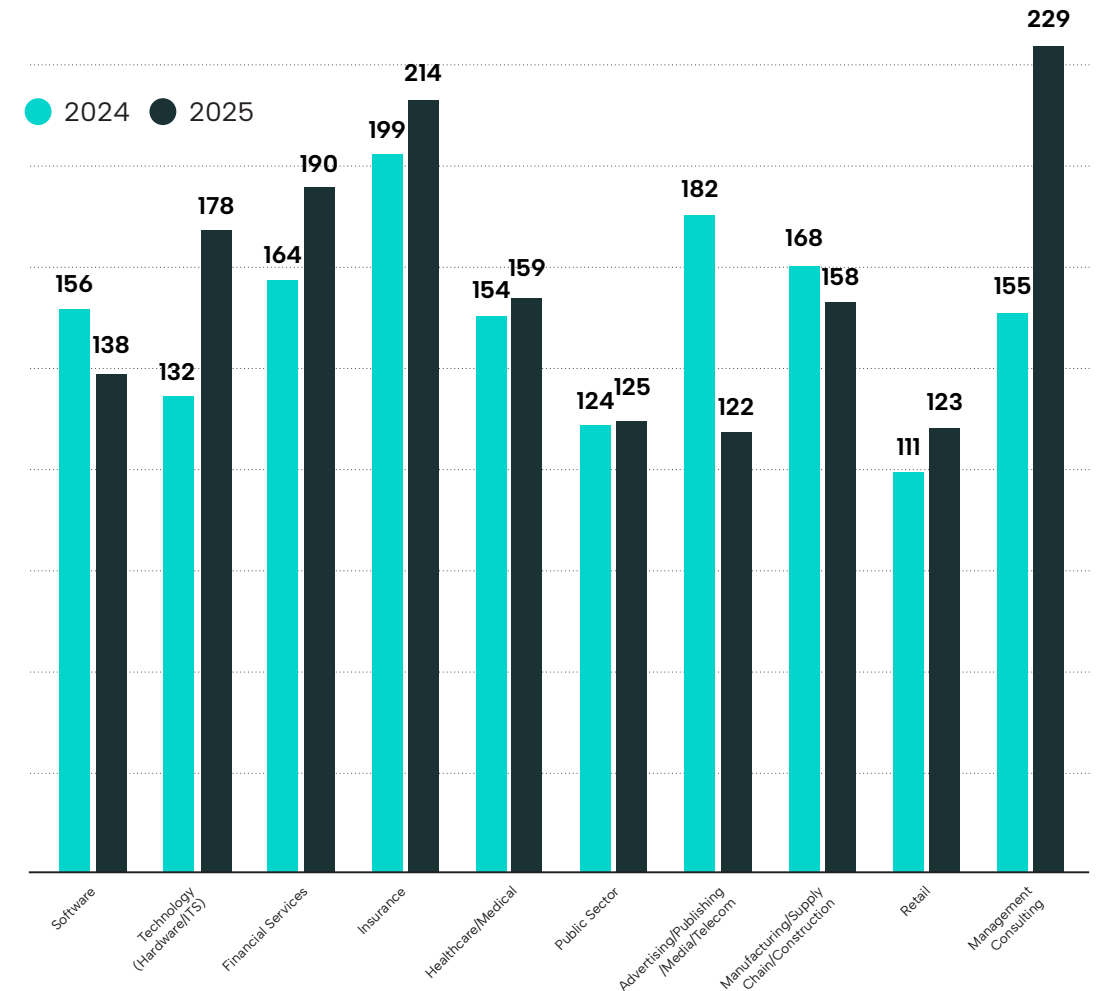
Management Consulting Responds to the Most RFPs

This year, Management Consulting overtook Insurance—the longtime industry frontrunner—for the most annual submissions. Insurance is now in second place, followed by Financial Services. This is notable because historically, Insurance, Advertising, and Financial Services have dominated the top three spots, which shows just how important RFPs are to these fields. For Management Consulting to edge them all out is a significant shake-up.

Advertising in particular has been hit hard this year, dropping from an average of 182 last year to just 122 this year. This makes sense when you consider that advertising agencies have been hit with [huge layoffs](#) this year and many legacy firms have shuttered. As companies increasingly turn to generative AI to support their creative needs, the traditional ad agency model [is changing](#)—but it's not yet clear what will replace it.

That said, most other industries have increased their submissions this year, in line with the overall trend we're seeing. Only Advertising, Software, and Manufacturing have decreased.

Average Number of RFPs Submitted Annually by Industry, 2024 vs. 2025



Key Insight: Teams Are Responding More Because of Volume—But Also Better Resourcing and Process Improvements



When asked to explain why they were responding to more RFPs this year, the top reason teams provided is that they received more RFPs (68%), followed by the fact that they're proactively seeking more business through RFPs (52%).

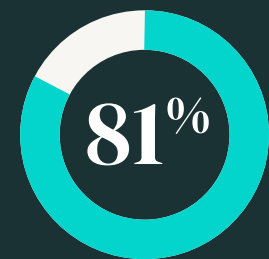
Perhaps the most interesting change, however, is the jump in the percentage of teams who say they've improved their RFP process (35%) and have more resources (21%). This shows the measurable impact better processes and resourcing can have on a team's submission numbers.



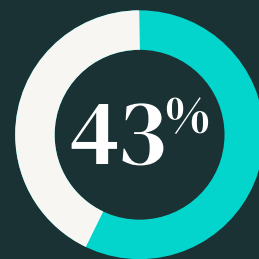
Top-Performer Insights

When we look at what top performers are doing differently in terms of their response volume and selectivity, a few key trends emerge.

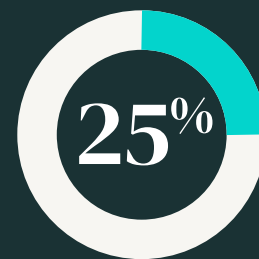
For the purpose of this report, we define a top performer as those who win 50%+ of the RFPs they respond to.



Regularly Use A Go/No-Go Process
81% of top performers use a go/no-go process compared to the average of 75%. Being more selective ensures they're focusing on the best-fit RFPs.



Improved Their Processes
When asked why they're responding more, 43% of top performers say it's because they improved their process—significantly higher than the average of 35%.



Gained Resources This Year
A quarter (25%) of top performers list resource gains as a reason they're responding more, as compared to the average of 21%.



Top Performers Responded to an Average 180 RFPs
Combined, these actions mean that top performers are able to respond to an average of 180 RFPs per year. That's 14 more than the average of 166.



Chapter Summary: Submissions Speed Up, at the Cost of Selectivity

On average, teams are responding to more RFPs this year, though this varies by industry and company size. Mid-market companies in particular are submitting significantly more, as is the Management Consulting industry—while the Advertising industry has decreased submissions dramatically.

There are several reasons why teams are responding more: more RFPs in the market, greater economic pressure to secure more deals, and critically, higher AI adoption in the response process. But more is not always better. We also saw teams becoming less selective and less likely to use a go/no-go process. While these are understandable shifts, choosing to pursue too many poor-fit RFPs can be a distraction from RFPs that better align with your business' goals.

Top performers stood out from the crowd by not only submitting more, but submitting wisely—focusing on go/no-go use, process improvements, and resourcing.

Up next: Teams submitted significantly more this year—but were also less selective. How has that impacted win rates and revenue?



CHAPTER 2

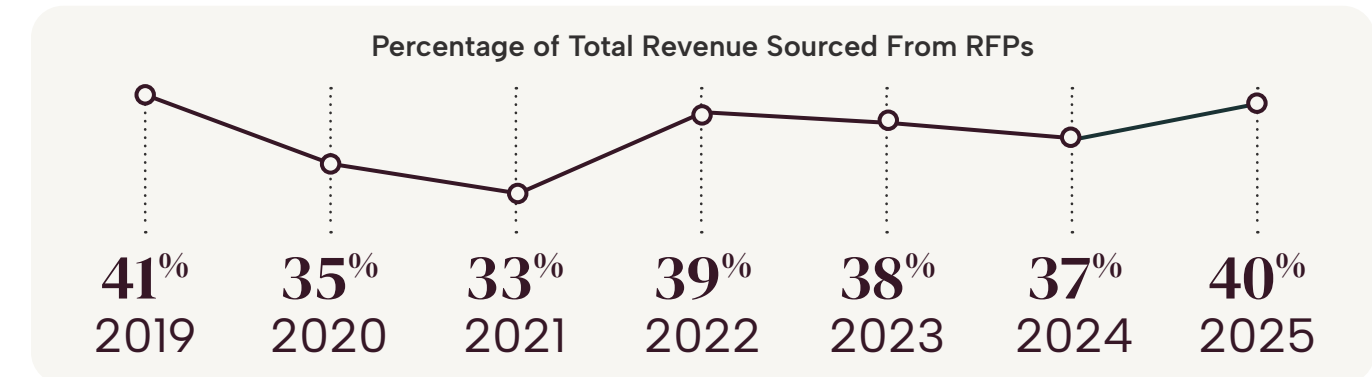
Revenue & Win Rates

RFPs Are More Critical to the Bottom Line—But They’re Getting Harder to Win

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RFPs Generate an Average of 40% of Company Revenue

This year, RFPs influenced 40% of total revenue—a slight increase over last year, and the highest number we’ve reported since 2019.



Since this survey’s inception, RFPs have consistently been responsible for a third or more of company revenue. With seven years’ worth of data to back us up, we can confidently say that RFPs aren’t just nice to have—they’re foundational to a successful revenue strategy.

This lift in revenue share goes to show that RFPs are only becoming more important in today’s increasingly complex procurement landscape and challenging economy. It’s even more significant when you consider that the majority of teams maintained their resources this year, and a growing share cited “getting more resources” as a challenge. If this is what teams are able to do with what they have, imagine what they could be doing with more.

As we saw in the previous chapter, teams who benefited from more resources and process improvements were able to turn those gains into more submissions. At the end of the day, a strong RFP function is a strategic investment in your bottom line.



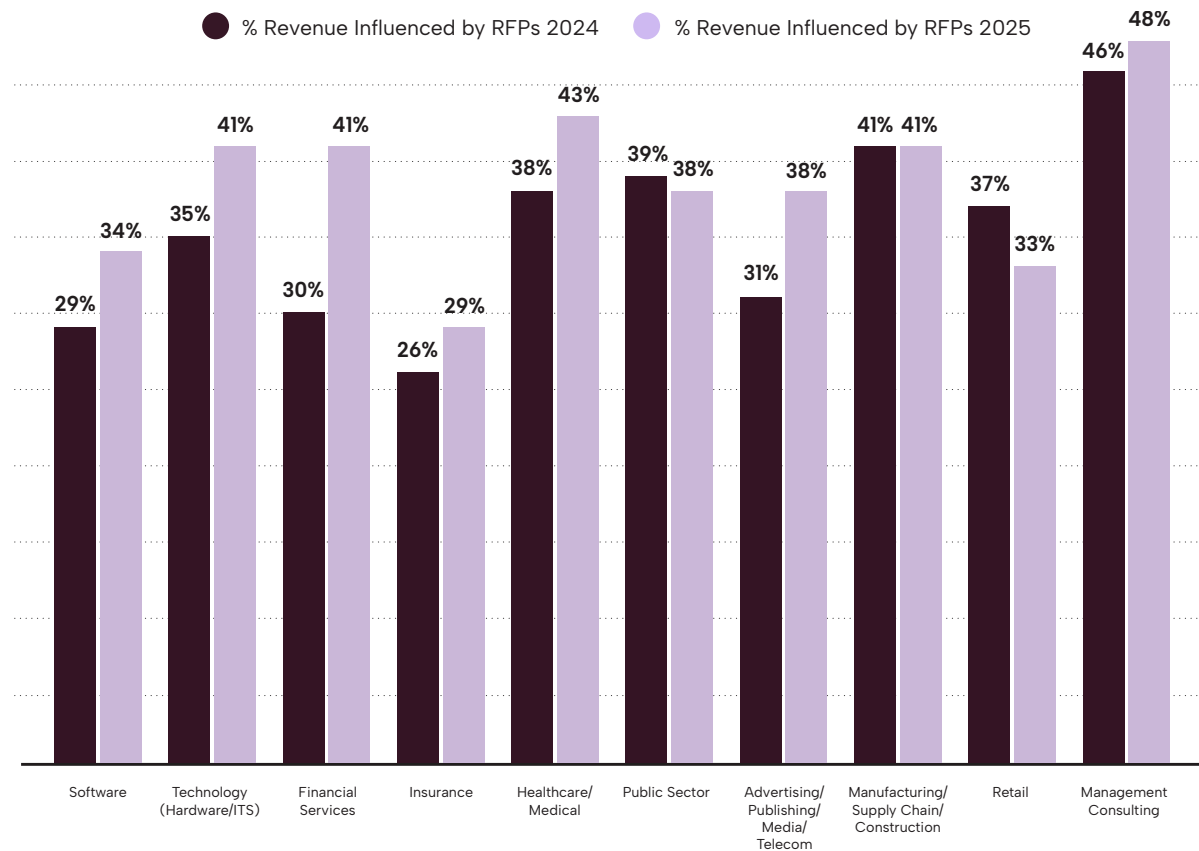
Financial Services Increased RFP-Influenced Revenue by 11%

The percentage of revenue influenced by RFPs varies by industry from 29–48%, but the majority of industries report that their RFP revenue falls between 35–45%. At the high end of the range, Management Consulting gets about half their revenue from RFPs, while at the low end, Insurance takes in less than a third.

Financial Services increased its share of revenue generated from RFPs the most this year.

Nearly every industry this year saw an increase in the percentage of revenue influenced by RFPs. The biggest leap was in Financial Services, which jumped 11 percentage points.

Percentage of Company Revenue Influenced by RFPs, by Industry

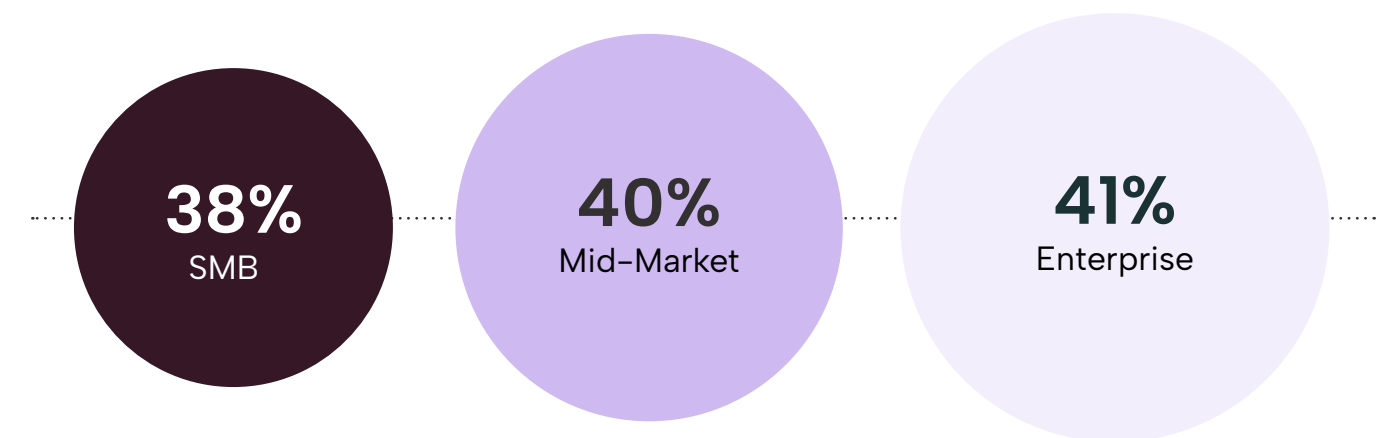


The only companies to lose RFP revenue share this year were the Public Sector and Retail, but these variations are slight.

Companies with 5,000+ Employees Influence the Greatest Revenue Share

Breaking down the data by company size, we can see that enterprise companies rely on RFPs the most for their revenue. This makes sense, as deal complexity tends to grow with company size. This is in line with the trend we've observed for many years of this report—but it is a notable shift from last year, where we saw SMBs hustling hardest with the largest share of company revenue.

Percentage of Revenue Influenced by RFPs, by Company Size



That said, at just three percentage points behind enterprise companies, SMBs are not far behind. Even more interestingly, mid-market companies—which dramatically boosted submissions rates this year—are almost on par with enterprise companies for overall share of revenue from RFPs. As we'll unpack later on, SMBs struggle more than their larger counterparts with resourcing and win rates, which may be impacting this data.

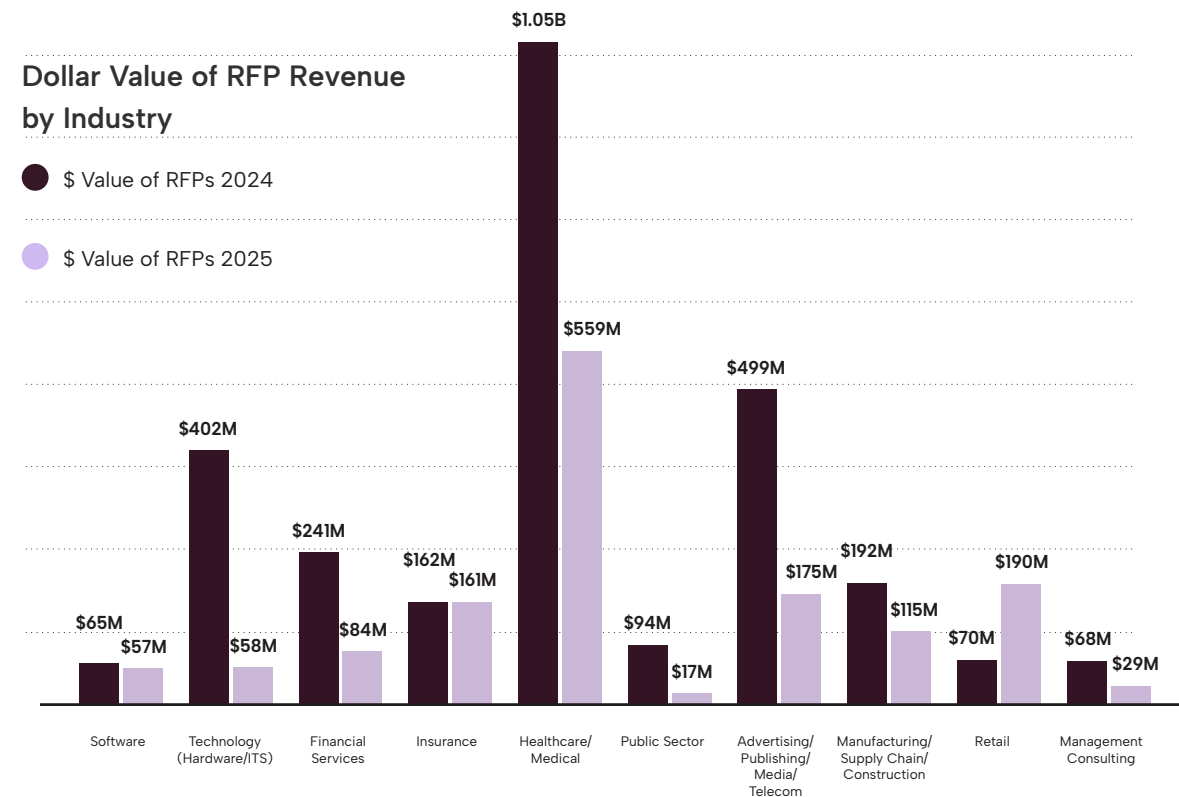
APMP members influence 42% of their companies' revenue through RFP—slightly higher than the average.

RFPs Bring in An Average of \$129 Million Annually

In the last year, RFPs influenced an average of \$129 million dollars of company revenue, a significant decrease from last year's average of \$256 million.

There are a few different reasons for this drop. Our survey demographics have shifted slightly, leading to a marginal increase in representation from smaller companies (SMBs make up 38% of our dataset this year, as compared to 35% last year). Additionally, we chose to make this question optional this year, leading to only 485 responses compared to 1,531 last year.

Economic factors may also be at play. North America, where the majority of our survey audience resides, has faced especially challenging economic headwinds this year, which is having a significant impact on our dataset. Between government cuts, trade disputes, and a rapidly shifting economic landscape—seen especially in industries like Advertising and the Public Sector—it's been tough for companies to stick to a consistent RFP strategy. As a result, overall revenue is down across the board.



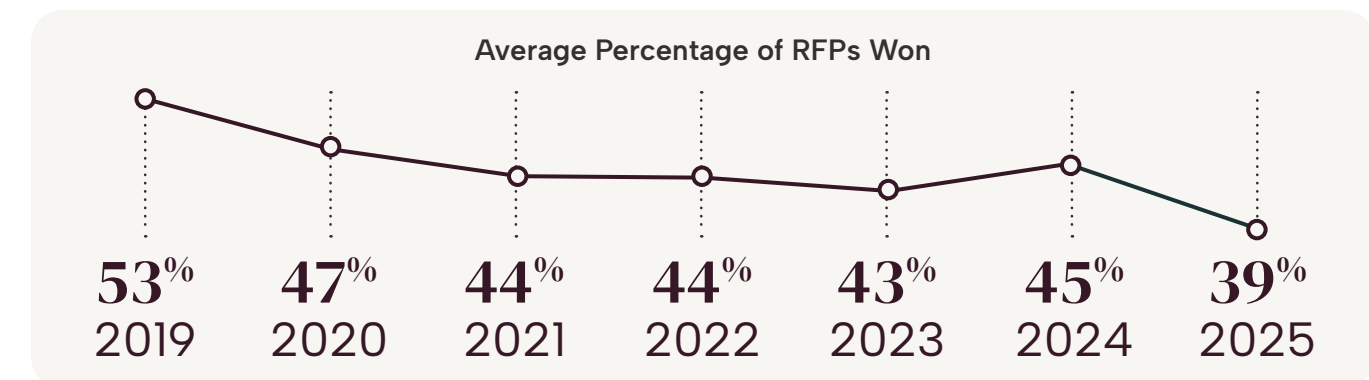
Healthcare Influences \$559 Million in Revenue

If we break this down by industry, we can see that while Management Consulting brings in the largest percentage of RFP revenue, Healthcare comes out on top in terms of dollar amount, likely due to the scale and complexity of projects in this highly regulated space.

That said, nearly every industry experienced a drop in the real dollar value of RFP revenue this year—except for Retail, which more than doubled. Despite rising costs of living, total retail sales actually increased over the course of the year, showing surprising resilience in the face of economic challenges.

Win Rates Decrease in the Wake of Economic Challenges

This year, win rates decreased to 39%—down from 45% last year.



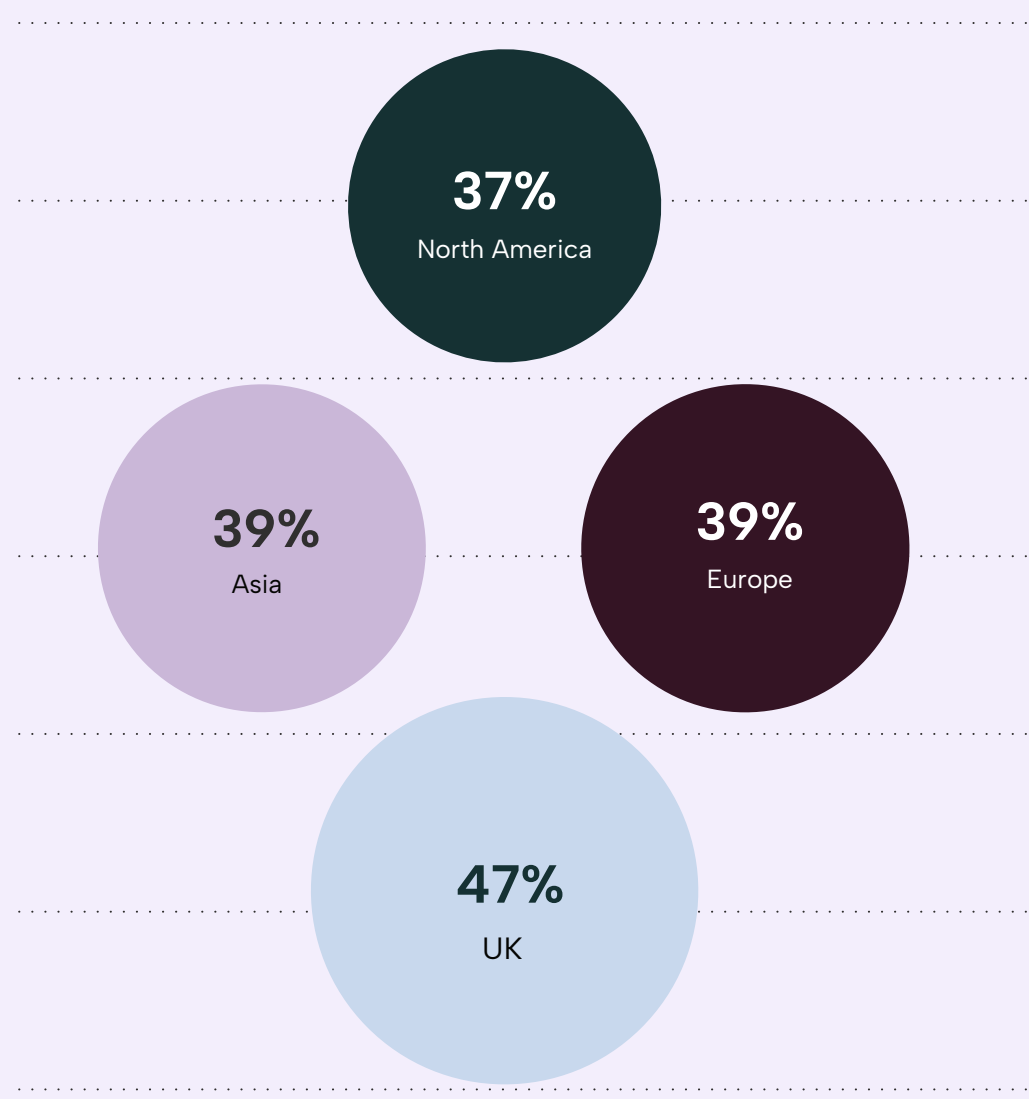
A greater proportion of teams than previous years (35%) listed “increasing advancement and win rates” as a key challenge this year, something this data supports. Similar to the decrease in revenue we saw this year, economic challenges are likely—at least partially—to blame. With a tighter economy comes more competition, and individual RFPs become more difficult to win.



Key Insight: North America Faces Headwinds, While UK Win Rates Soar

When we break down the data by region, we see that North American revenue fell dramatically this year. Win rates are also down to 37%, below our global average and a significant drop from 44% last year. The UK has the highest win rates at 47%—a position they’ve maintained for the last few years. Interestingly, they’ve increased their win rates despite the average global drop. Last year, there was only a 1-point gap between the UK and North America. Now, it’s a 10-point delta.

Average Percentage of RFPs Won by Company Size



Advancement Rates Drop by 9% on Average

Advancement rates—which refers to the percentage of RFPs that are shortlisted for the next round—are 46% this year, a marked decrease from last year’s 54%. This lines up with the decrease in win rates we’re also observing. The fewer RFPs you advance on, the fewer opportunities you have to win.

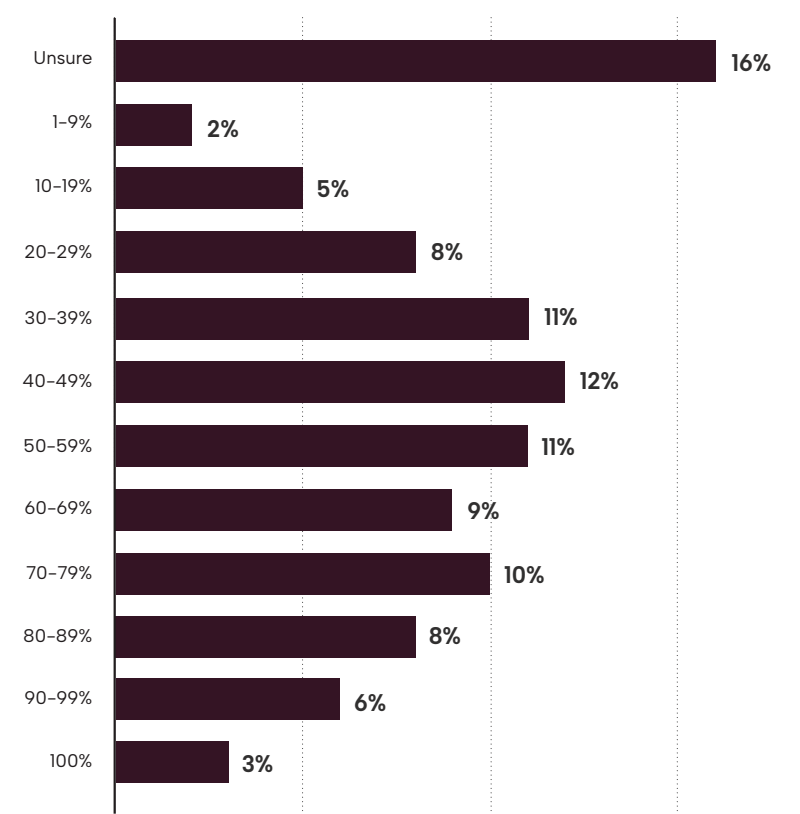
That said, looking closer at the data, there is some good news: Fewer teams than last year are saying that they advance on <30% of the RFPs they respond to. We can also see that the range of advancement rates is more hopeful than the average might suggest. The majority (53%) advance on 30–80% of the RFPs they advance on, and about 1 in 3 respondents report an advancement rate of 50–79%.

Three percent of teams even say they advance on every RFP they respond to—if that’s you, tell us your secrets!

Interestingly, the gap between advancement rates and win rates is the same across company sizes—a 7-point gap. This is smaller than last year’s 9-point advancement gap, which means that companies are actually more likely to win the RFPs they advance on. The challenge appears to be getting shortlisted in the first place, as seen by the lower advancement rates as compared to last year.

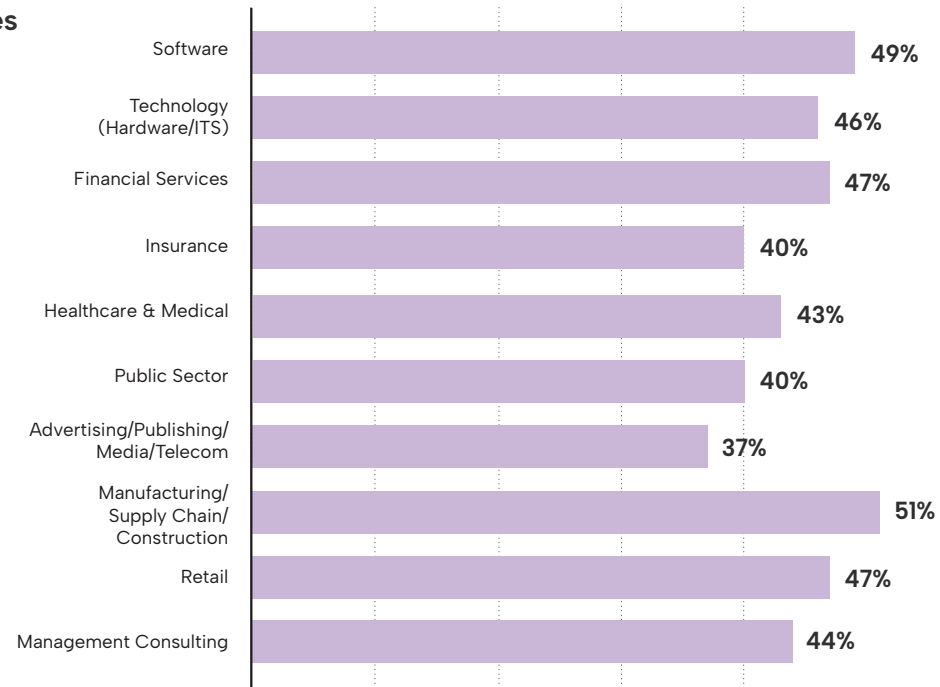
If we break down the data by industry, we can see that Manufacturing advances on the most responses, followed by Software, Financial Services, and Tech.

Percentage of RFPs Advanced to the Next Round

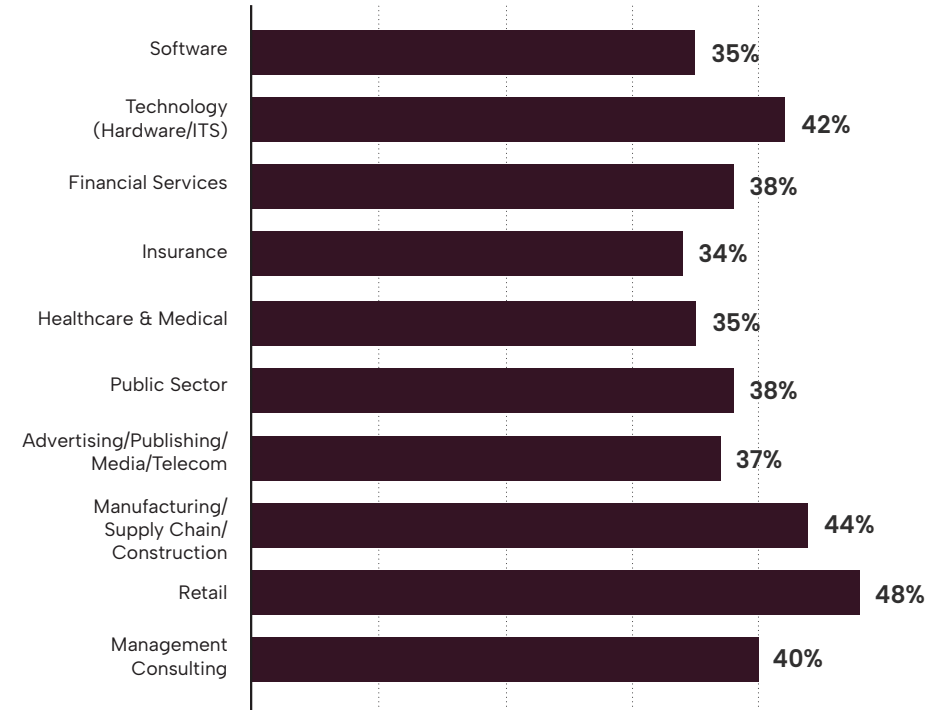


At a high level, Software has the biggest gap between advancement and win rates (a 14-point delta), while Retail and Advertising experience almost no gap at all.

Advancement Rates by Industry



Win Rates by Industry



Why Teams Believe They Lose (Not *Just* About Price)

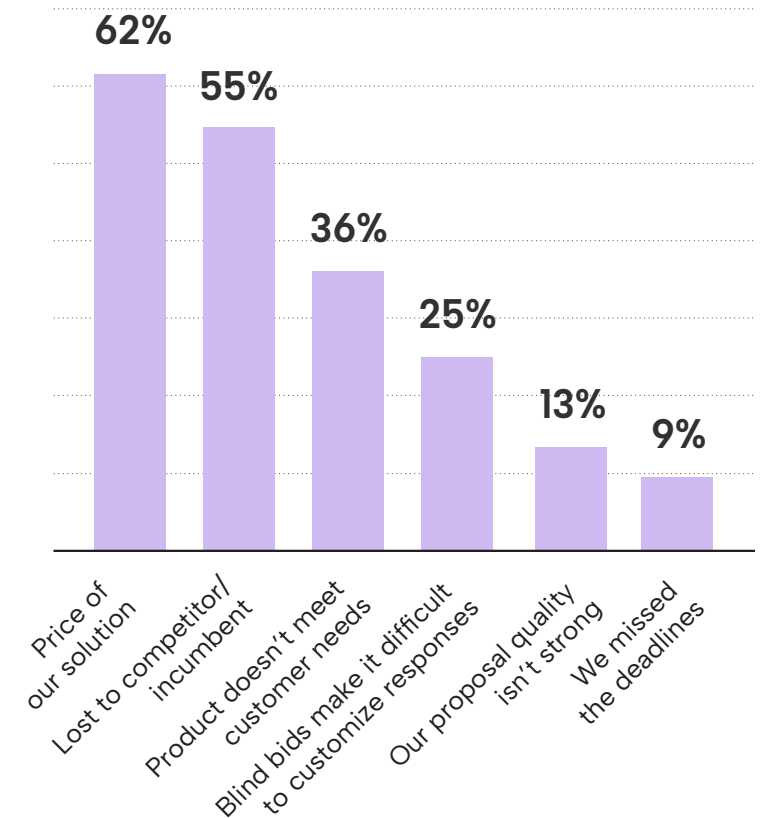
Price has always been a convenient scapegoat for losing a bid—holding the top spot since 2021. What may be more interesting are the other reasons teams blame for losing, which have shifted somewhat since last year.

Fewer respondents are saying they lost to a competitor (though North Americans are more likely to select this reason than the average). Additionally, teams seem a lot more confident in their proposal quality, with only 13% citing it as an issue this year.

On the other hand, timelines are a growing problem, with almost double the number of teams as last year flagging it as a cause. This is likely related to the higher submission numbers we've seen this year, alongside an increased pressure to produce.

Companies of all sizes were most likely to say that price was the biggest factor on why they lost—but the extent to which they blame price differs. Enterprise and mid-market companies are more likely to say they've lost on price than smaller firms, while SMBs were almost as likely to say they lost to a competitor (50%) as losing on price (53%).

Top Reasons for Losing Bids
Respondents could select multiple answers.

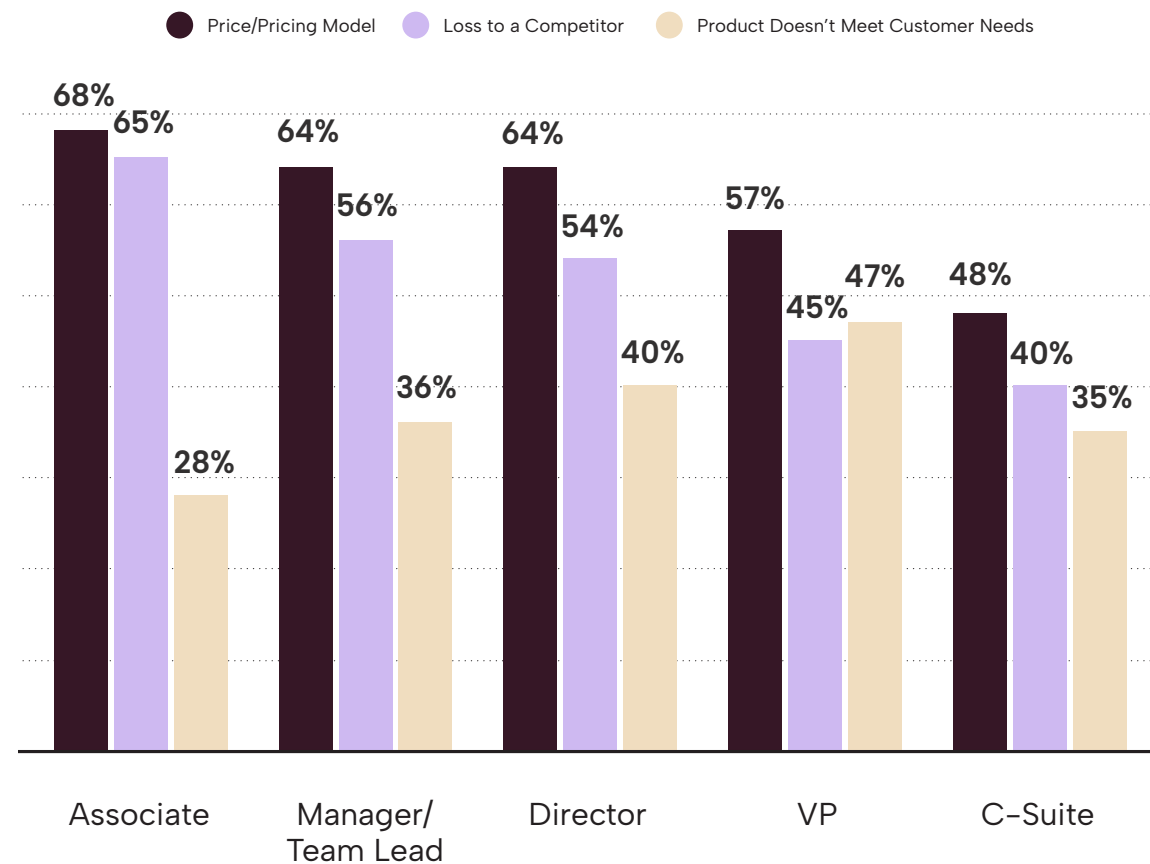


Why Different Roles Believe They Lose

When it comes to why different roles think they lost a bid, there's a gap between more junior and senior employees. Associates are more likely to blame price and competition, while directors and up are more likely to put the blame on poor product fit.

This is in line with the data we saw last year: Upper management tends to believe the product is the sticking point, not the price tag. However, we sometimes see a shift towards more agreement on price during periods of economic disruption, as we did during the post-pandemic downturn. This time, management doesn't seem to be budging.

Reasons for Losing by Role



Expert Insight: Highlighting Value When You're Not the Lowest Bidder



Lauryn Hagel, CF APMP
RFP Manager at Ignite Reading

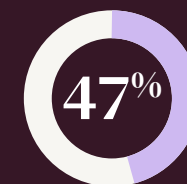
In proposal management, we're taught to justify our pricing when we're not the lowest bidder. But I realized that's already a losing game—it assumes evaluators see us as a commodity to be compared on cost per hour. I

partnered with our marketing team to fundamentally reposition how we present in RFPs: stop talking about what we do (our services) and start owning who we are (the value we bring). Nothing about our service model changed—just how we framed it.

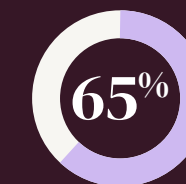
That shift changed everything about how I write ROI sections. Instead of justifying why our program costs more, I lead with the cost of continuing as-is. In our industry, that means school districts investing in interventions that aren't moving the needle fast enough, so students' reading gaps widen while the window to close them shrinks. Budgets are already tight, so when evaluators see us as addressing the root cause rather than adding another service, our pricing becomes an investment in cost avoidance. The lesson for proposal managers: you don't need permission to lower your prices to increase your win rate.

Top-Performer Insights

When we look at what top performers are doing differently in this section, a few key trends emerge. Of course, they win more (that's in the definition!) but what's most interesting are the factors and behaviors that lead to those higher win rates.



Average Revenue Influence
Top performers influence a greater share of revenue—47% compared to the average of 40%.



Average Advancement Rate
Top performers advance on 65% of the RFPs they respond to, setting them up to win more bids—likely pointing to their increased selectivity and go/no-go use.



Chapter Summary: RFPs Remain Critically Important to Revenue Numbers, Despite Challenges



Over the past seven years we've run this survey, RFPs have consistently generated more than a third of company revenue, now topping the charts and accounting for an average of 40% of a company's revenue.

That said, teams faced numerous challenges in winning RFPs this year—especially for our North American respondents, who make up the largest sample in our survey data. While there are economic factors outside of their control, there are also steps respondents can take to improve their chances of winning. We've already discussed some strategies (like using a go/no-go matrix) and we'll explore more in the coming chapters.

The good news is that the gap between advancing and winning is narrowing—so if teams can put their best foot forward to get shortlisted, their chances of winning are good.

Up next: Teams are submitting significantly more this year—and also relying more on AI in their writing process. How is that affecting speed and overall proposal quality?



Writing Process

Pressure Builds as Teams Balance Volume & Quality

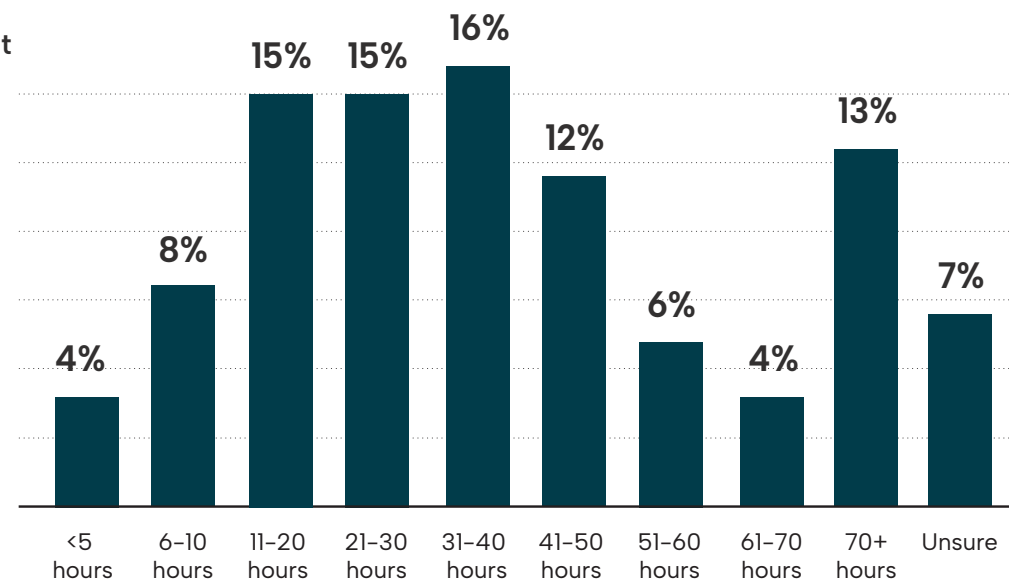
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Teams Spend 33 Hours Responding to an RFP

This past year, teams spent an average of 33 hours on each RFP, or about four working days—a slight decrease over last year’s 35 hours. This makes sense in the context of the trends we’re seeing: Submission numbers are up and teams are relying much more heavily on AI than in previous years. It’s only natural that teams are spending less time per RFP.

But a two hour decrease feels small compared to the promise of AI. Weren’t these tools supposed to free up responders? The reality seems to be more complicated. While AI is helping improve efficiency, it’s also raising the bar for what’s possible. Increased competition is putting pressure on RFP teams to not just respond more, but to respond better. As we saw in the last chapter, fewer teams are saying their response quality is low, but more teams are saying they’re missing deadlines. It’s pointing to a tricky balance between quality and efficiency—one that teams are still trying to get right.

Average Time Spent on a Single RFP



One important change from last year’s report: In previous years, we focused on the time that teams spend writing. Now, in order to better represent the totality of the RFP response process, we’re tracking the time spent on the RFP process as a whole, from receiving the RFP to submitting it.

One interesting callout is that those using RFP software spend the least time, at 32 hours. That’s one hour less than average—but they still perform better than average in win rates.



Key Insight: The Average Team Spends 5,478 Hours on RFPs Annually

Some quick math: If a bid requires 33 hours to complete and teams submit an average of 166 RFPs per year, that means the average team spends 5,478 hours on RFPs each year.

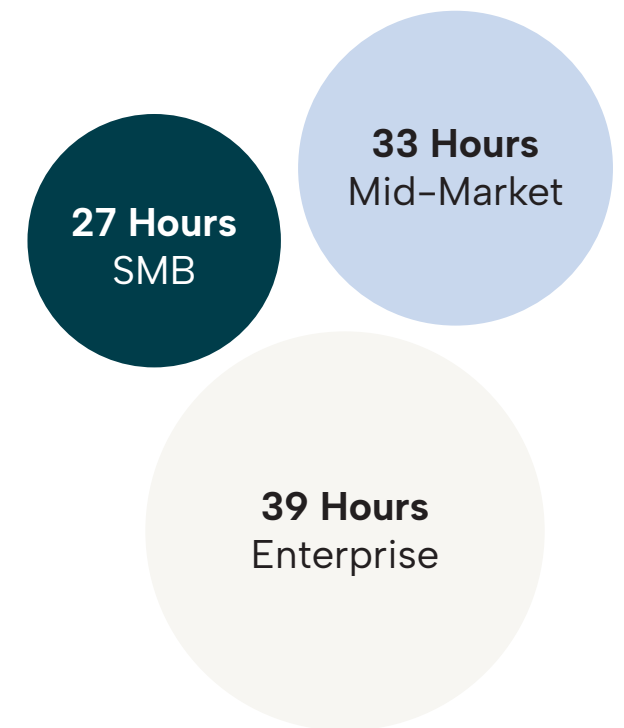
While teams are relying more heavily on AI this year, they’ve also taken on a lot more, both in terms of volume and quality expectations. However, it’s important to still prioritize efficiency, especially when the pressure’s on. Extra hours are a good thing if they’re being used to enhance personalization and quality—but not if they’re being lost to repetitive tasks or team coordination issues.

Small Teams Get a Speed Boost—But Struggle to Keep Up With Quality

Our data shows that SMBs spend 27 hours per RFP, a whole 12 hours less than enterprise companies, who clock 39 hours on average—almost a full workweek. Mid-market companies, true to their name, are smack dab in the middle at 33 hours.

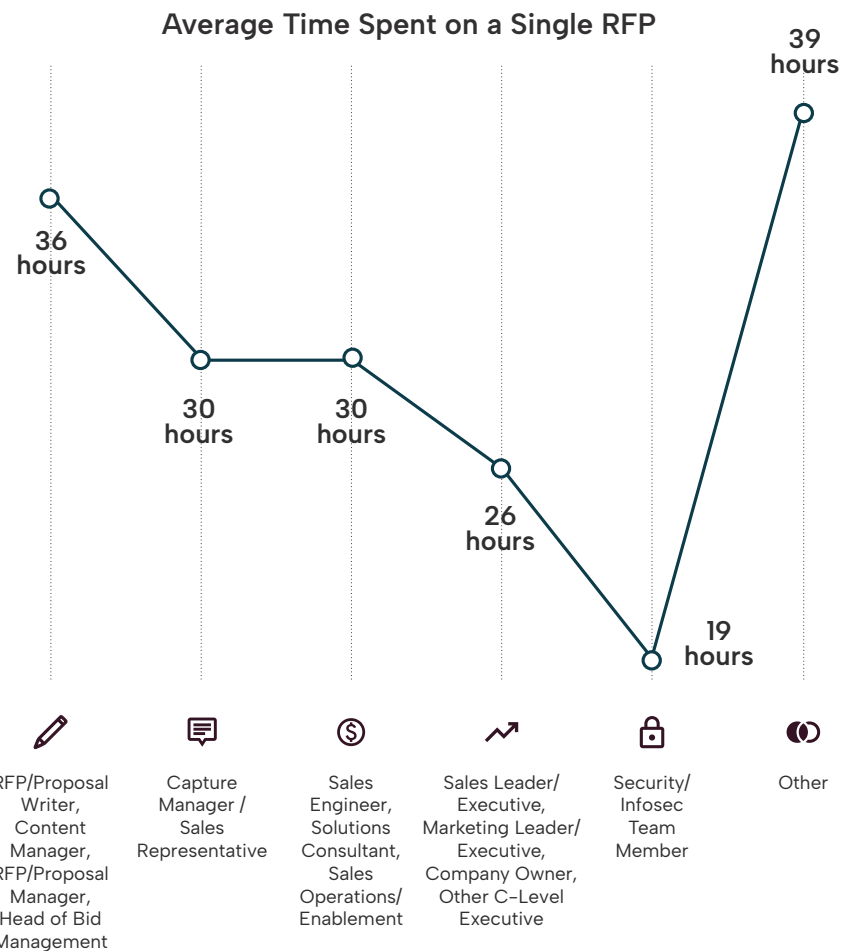
However, speed isn’t everything. While it’s good to be efficient, it’s more important to take enough time to produce a quality response that will increase your chances of winning the bid. Larger companies seem to invest more time and resources into their proposals and it shows in their higher win rates. That said, mid-market companies win almost as many RFPs as larger companies and spend six less hours to do so (and they’ve also invested a lot more into their resources and process improvements this year).

Average Time on a Single RFP



Proposal Teams Spend the Most Time on RFPs

When we break down time by team, we can see that proposal teams spend 36 hours per RFP—that’s three more hours than the average.



Sales teams spend 6–10 hours less and security/infosec teams do it in almost half the time. This is likely related to the factors we’ve already discussed—there’s not only pressure to submit more, but to submit better quality RFPs in a tight market, leading to more time spent on each RFP.

Additionally, compared to other roles, RFP teams may have more time to spend exclusively on proposals, while other roles are likely juggling additional responsibilities.

Expert Insight: Structuring the Review Process for Faster Turnaround Times



Danica Nelson, CPSM
Proposal and Marketing Coordinator, WGM Group

To keep our review cycles strategic and on-time, we separate reviews by purpose and by stage, with different reviewers assigned to each stage and clear direction on what they should focus on at that point. We focus on strategy and compliance first, then clarity and refinement later.

When multiple reviewers are involved, we use shared documents so everyone is commenting real-time in the same place, and can see existing feedback before adding more. Reviewers are also asked to comment based on “why this matters to the client,” which keeps input strategic and avoids repetitive or preference-based edits.

Win Rate & Submission Volume = Top Metrics Tracked

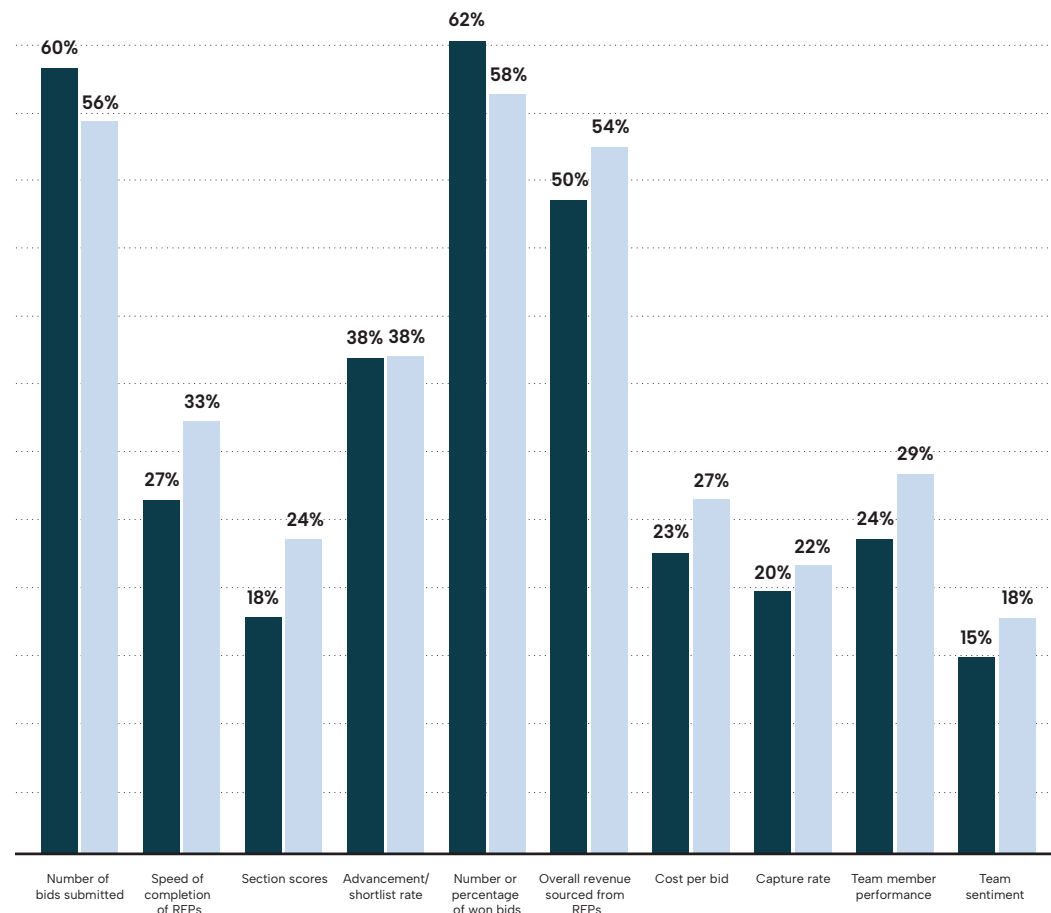
More than 90% of respondents have tracked success metrics since we began this survey and it’s only grown more important over time—now sitting at 95% of all teams surveyed. Having real data to point to is also key for advocating successfully for more resources—especially during more challenging economic times.

When it comes to the types of metrics tracked, win rates are the most popular, followed by the number of bids submitted, which is consistent with previous years. Slightly fewer teams are tracking revenue sourced from RFPs and the speed of completion as compared to previous years.

That said, what the average team is choosing to track is not the same thing as what’s most effective. When we drill down into that data, we can see that top performers are more likely to track granular process metrics, like speed of completion, section scores, cost per bid, and team member performance, over more general metrics like the number of bids submitted or total bids won. This focus on what they can control likely gives them an edge when trying to improve their processes or success rate.

Metrics Tracked by Top Performers vs. the Average

- Average
- Top Performers



Chapter Summary: Response Time Decreased Slightly as Teams Felt the Pressure

The amount of time teams spent on each RFP decreased only slightly this year, despite growing reliance on AI. Even though teams are spending less time per RFP, an increase in submissions means they're spending a lot more time on responses overall.

The pressure seems to be building on all sides. Teams have both volume and quality expectations to contend with, making it difficult to build sustainable workflows. But to be able to keep this pace up long term, they'll need to prioritize getting more resources, improving their processes, and maintaining a healthy work/life balance.

The good news is, RFP teams already have a head start by regularly tracking success metrics. They can use this data to help improve their efficiency and make a case to leadership that they're overstretched and need more resources.

The kinds of metrics that they track matters, though—and it's better to focus on more granular process metrics that will help show where the gaps are, rather than more general data, like the total number of submissions.

Up next: Teams dealt with new pressures this year. How is that impacting their stress levels and what they perceive to be their biggest challenges?

Top-Performer Insights

When we look at what top performers are doing differently in this section, a few key trends emerge.

35 Hours Spent Per RFP

Top performers spend a little extra time (35 hours) per bid than the average. Those extra two hours likely give them more time to personalize and polish—leading to more wins.

Tracking Granular, Process-Focused Metrics

Top performers look beyond general metrics and focus on process improvements that will move the needle, like speed of completion, section scores, cost per bid, and individual team member performance. These nuanced metrics allow them to make more strategic adjustments to their team's processes, leading to greater overall success.

CHAPTER 4 CHAPTER



Team Challenges

Bandwidth Challenges Increase as Submission Pressures Grow

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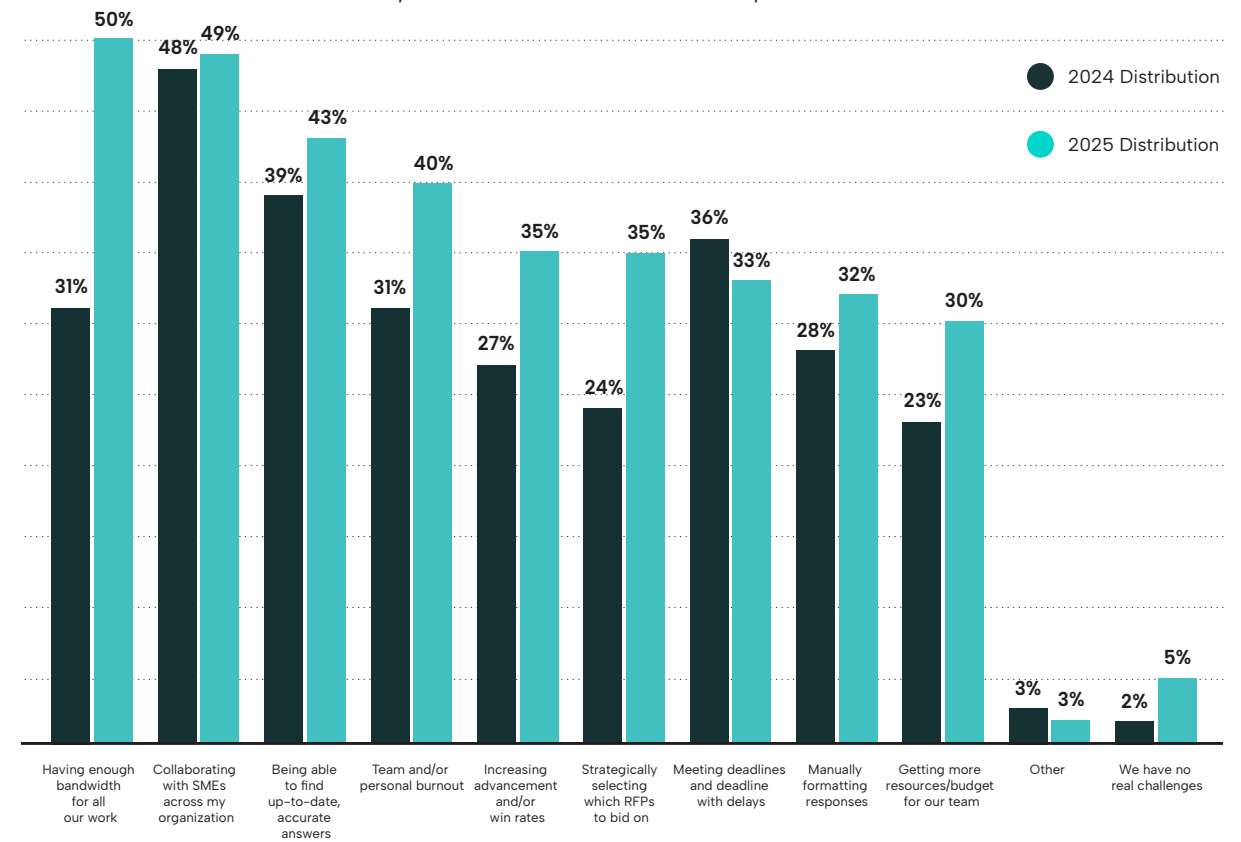
Bandwidth Challenges Overtake Collaboration With SMEs

This year, for the first time in five years, the largest share of responders ranked “having enough bandwidth for all our work” as one of their biggest challenges.

It’s a huge shift. Last year, just 31% of respondents chose this challenge—meaning it’s up almost 20 percentage points over the prior survey. It’s even knocked down our historic frontrunner, collaboration with SMEs, which has been the top challenge since 2020. That said, collaborating with SMEs is just as challenging as it ever was (49% as compared to 48% last year).



Top Challenges in Response Processes
Respondents could choose multiple answers



This increase in bandwidth challenges is likely related to the increase in RFP submissions we're seeing and the pressure to do everything at once. In fact, almost all challenges have grown more, well, challenging as teams ratchet up production while trying to maintain quality: finding up-to-date answers, burnout, strategically selecting RFPs, manual effort, and getting more resources all scored higher this year.

In better news, there's a small but growing contingent of teams that seem to be doing really well—5% of teams claim to have "no real challenges," up from 2% last year.

Expert Insight: Balancing Burnout With Increasing Submission Numbers



Tiffany Reyes, CF APMP
Senior Commercial Bid Manager
at TaskUs

To protect our team's bandwidth without sacrificing output or quality at TaskUs, we have leaned heavily into verticalization. By aligning our Bid Managers with specific vertical markets, we allow them to build deep

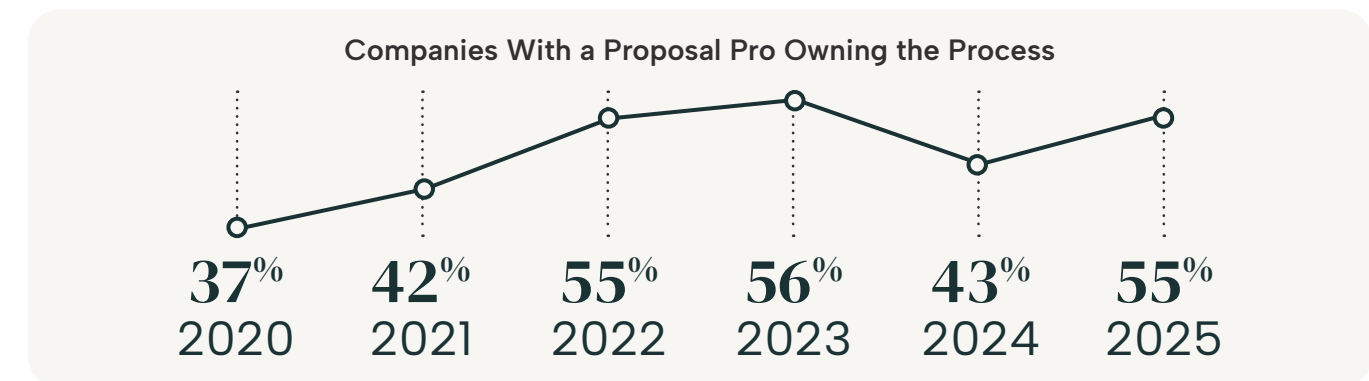
domain expertise and stronger rapport with their counterparts.

To protect capacity, we've matched this vertical focus with strict global shift schedules. This boundary ensures that our global stakeholders know exactly when a Bid Manager is 'on' for their region, preventing the burnout often caused by the 24/7 nature of global bidding. It allows the team to be all in during their shift—delivering the high-quality, specialized expertise our verticals demand—while providing a hard stop to recharge. Should a manager not be available, especially when there's a fast-moving deal involved, they have a counterpart and teammate who will be able to cover for them and keep the ball rolling.

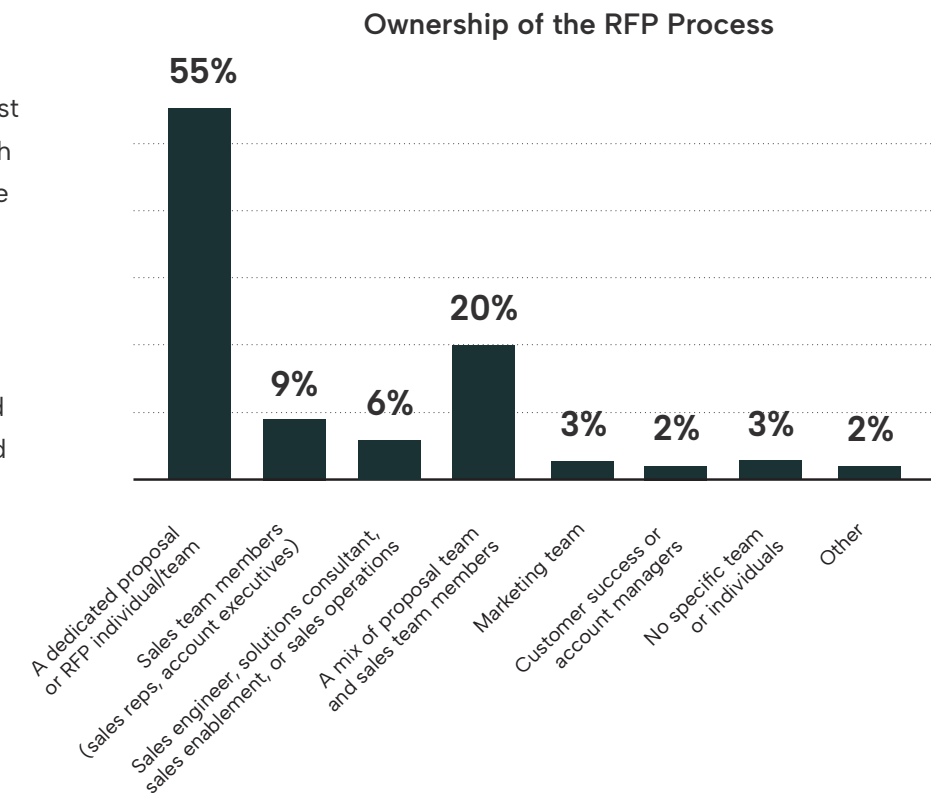
Apart from this, we rely on tools and AI-enabled platforms to help boost our productivity as we automate simple tasks. This allows more focus and bandwidth to go to higher level tasks.

Dedicated RFP Resources Stabilize

Last year, just 43% of teams said they had a dedicated proposal manager owning their RFP response process. This year, it's over half (55%). While this might seem like a big increase, it's in line with the overall trend we've observed for the past few years.



In comparison, at just 35% combined, sales roles now have less ownership as compared to last year's 51%. Considering how much revenue RFPs are now responsible for, this shift makes sense. Sales roles typically have other responsibilities outside of RFPs, while dedicated proposal people can give RFPs their full, undivided attention—which is what's needed in a competitive market.

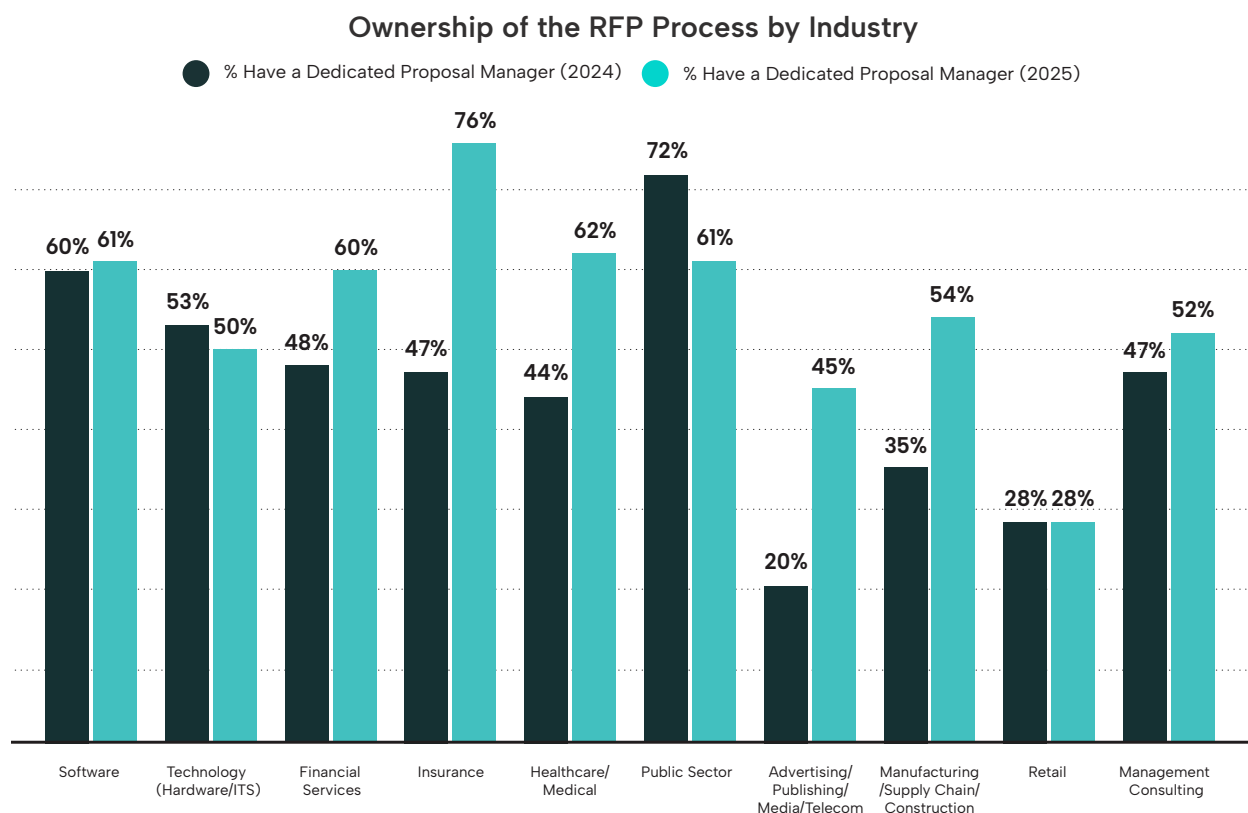


Proposal Managers Now Lead, No Matter the Industry

If we break down the data by industry, we can see that the trend towards having a proposal manager or team in charge of the process is pretty consistent across the board. Most industries experienced an increase in dedicated RFP teams, or stayed the same as last year. This is a sign that RFPs are becoming a greater area of focus across industries, not just in specific fields.

In some industries, however, the change is particularly noticeable. Dedicated RFP resources in Insurance is up 29 percentage points compared to last year, putting them in first place for the industry most likely to have an RFP manager running their process. Healthcare/Medical has also increased their resources significantly, coming in second place.

While still likely to have an RFP manager in charge, the Public Sector was one of the only industries to have fewer dedicated RFP teams than the year before. This is likely related to a reduction in overall resources.

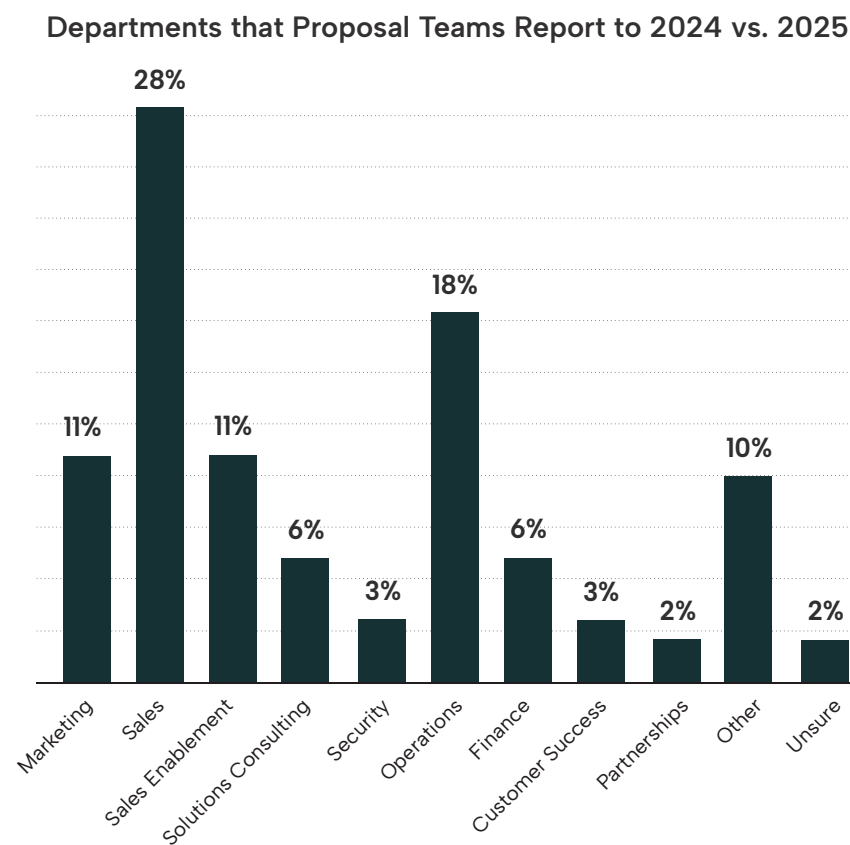


43% of Proposal Pros Report to Sales—But Ownership Is Shifting

For businesses with a proposal team of their own, they're more likely to report to Sales than other departments. That said, it's no longer a given. Last year, a majority (63%) reported to Sales, Enablement, or Solutions Consulting. This year, it's just 43% for all Sales functions combined (Sales, Enablement, and Solutions Consulting).

If teams aren't reporting to Sales, who are they reporting to? We've seen a 10 point increase in the number of teams reporting to Operations departments, plus slight increases in other departments like Finance and Customer Service. There doesn't seem to be one consensus for the "right" department for RFP teams; rather, companies are experimenting with different models that work for them.

 **19% fewer teams are reporting directly to Sales leaders than last year.**

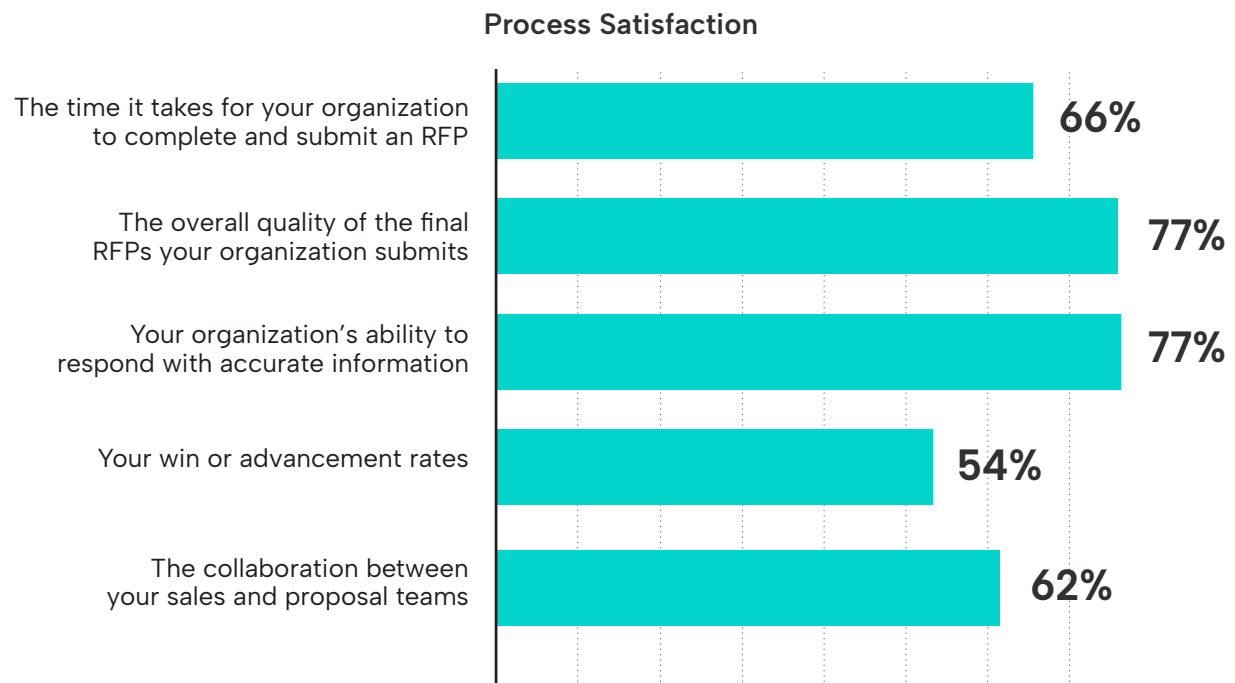


Despite Challenges, Teams Feel More Satisfied With Quality & Collaboration

This year, an average of 67% of teams said they were 'satisfied' with their RFP process across 5 key process metrics, a slight increase in satisfaction from last year.

When we dig into those specific metrics, however, we can see that sentiment varies. Teams are slightly more satisfied with quality, accuracy, and collaboration as compared to last year. They're also somewhat less satisfied with the time it takes to complete an RFP and their win/advancement rates as compared to last year.

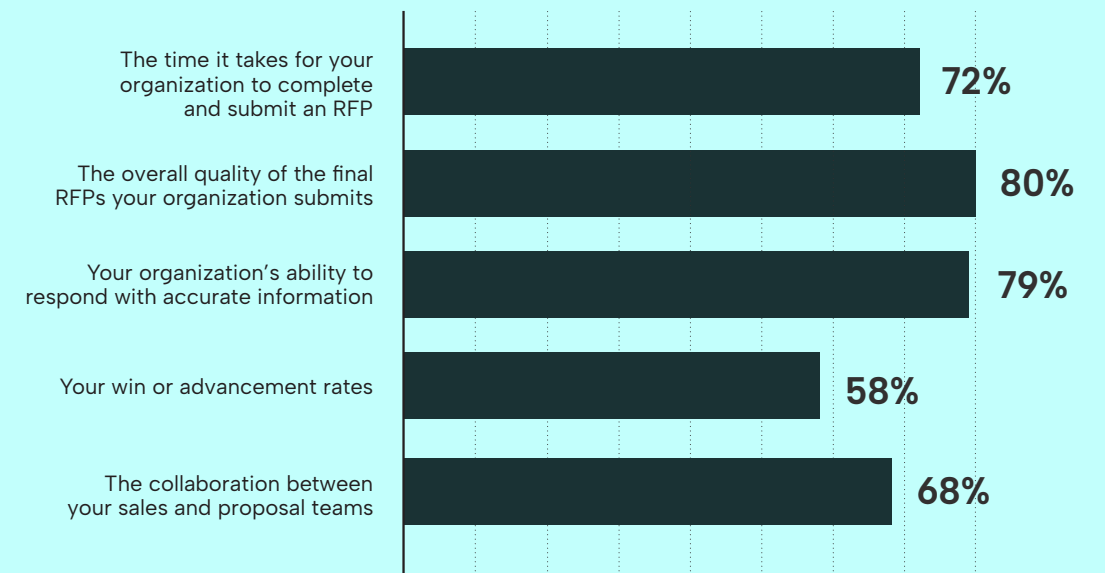
This lines up with the trends we're seeing around more time being spent on RFPs overall, but resulting in lower win rates. It's an understandable frustration: if things are taking more time and teams are winning less, then something is broken in the process.



Key Insight: RFP Software Users Report Higher Process Satisfaction

Teams that use RFP software are more satisfied across all five process metrics. This is especially apparent around factors like the time it takes for an organization to submit an RFP, where teams were expressing less satisfaction this year. As we saw in the last chapter, software users are able to spend less time per RFP—saving time while still maintaining quality standards. Critically, they're also happier with their win rates.

Process Satisfaction by Software Use



Fewer Teams Report Unmanageable Stress

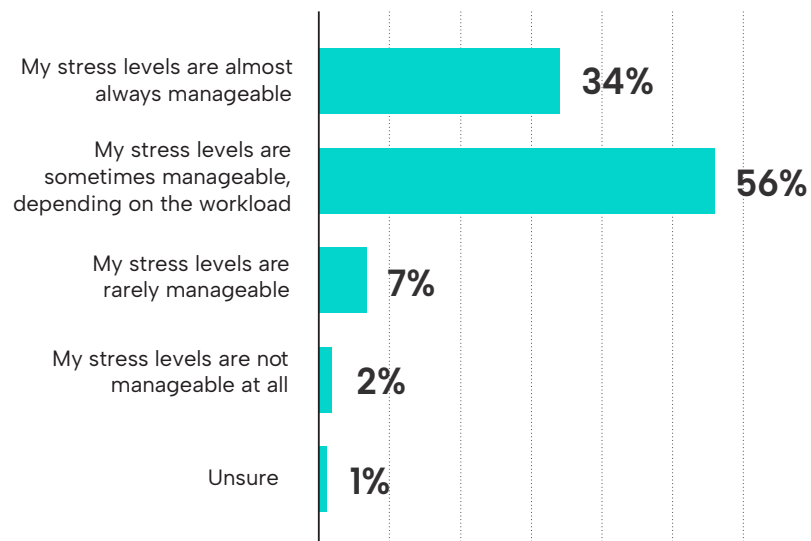
Last year, 1 in 5 respondents said their stress levels at work were unmanageable. This year, we changed the answers slightly, in order to provide more nuance. We added an option for respondents to share that their stress is sometimes manageable but dependent on their workload, which is where the majority of our responses fell (54%).



1 in 10 RFP teams report feeling unmanageable stress, compared to 1 in 5 last year.

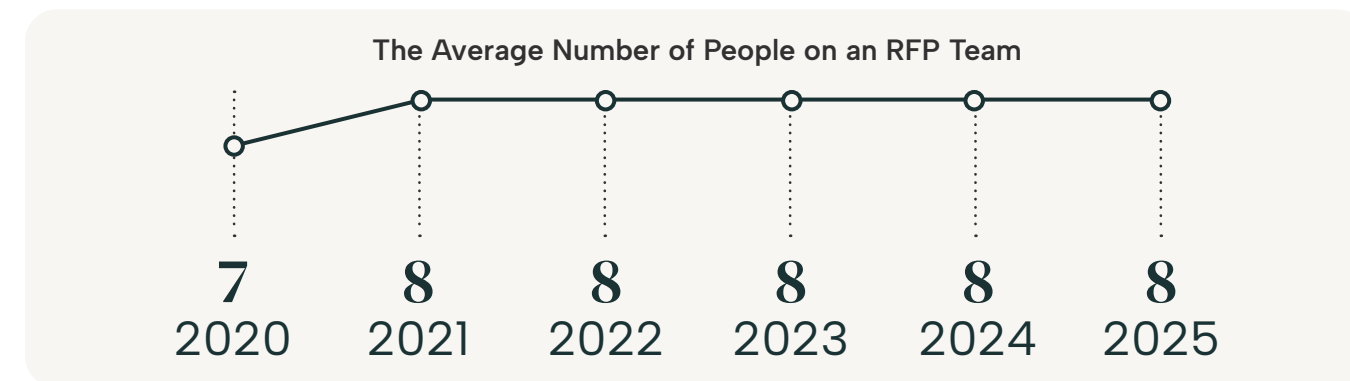
Responders' Stress Levels at Work

As a result, now only about 1 in 10 teams report feeling unmanageable stress, which is impressive considering how much submissions have increased. It's heartening to see that the majority of teams feel capable of managing their stress, at least most of the time. While a certain amount of stress is unavoidable in the RFP process, it's important that teams ensure that their work is also going through lighter periods, so they have time to recover from more intense pushes.



Average Team Size Holds Steady at 8 People

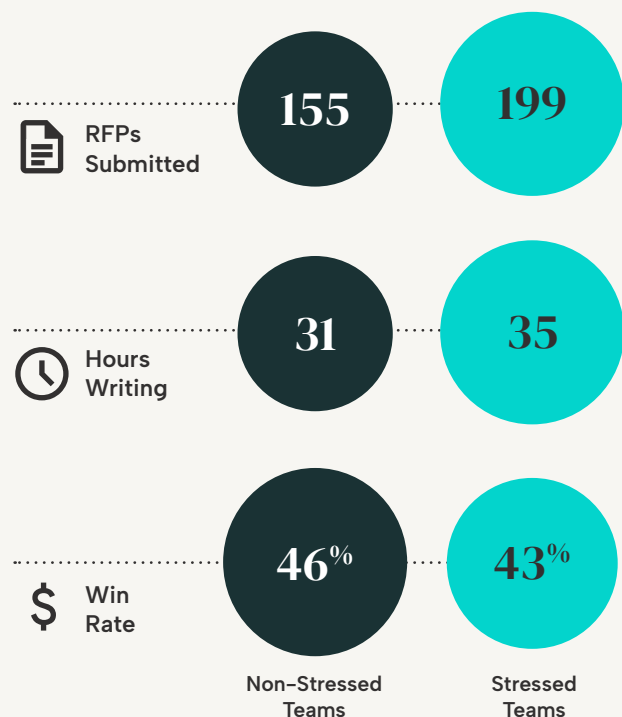
Despite the increased workload teams have taken on this year, their team size hasn't changed. In fact, it has stayed consistent since 2021.



How Stress Levels Impact Success Rates

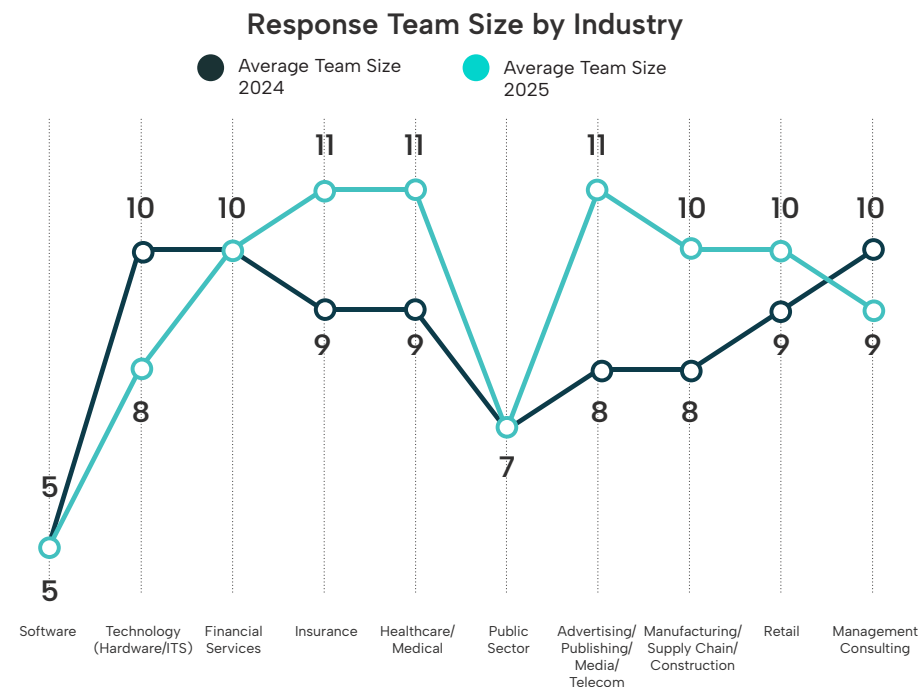
The relationship between stress and success is complicated. On one hand, stressed responders do submit more. On the other hand, they end up working less efficiently by spending more time per RFP and winning less.

For some teams, the trade-offs of submitting more may be worth it in the short term, but it's difficult to sustain this pace indefinitely. At the end of the day, ambitious teams need to walk a fine line between high performance and burnout—and it's not always clear where that line is.



That said, this average hides some natural variation between industries. For instance, Software companies have the smallest RFP teams, at just five members—that's half as large as the three biggest (Technology, Financial Services, and Management Consulting).

There have also been some shifts since last year: Team sizes in Technology and Management Consulting have grown, while Insurance, Healthcare, Advertising, Manufacturing, and Retail have all shrunk. Software and—shockingly, considering the cuts in this field—the Public Sector have stayed the same. Advertising has reduced the most, which is understandable given the economic battering this industry went through this year.



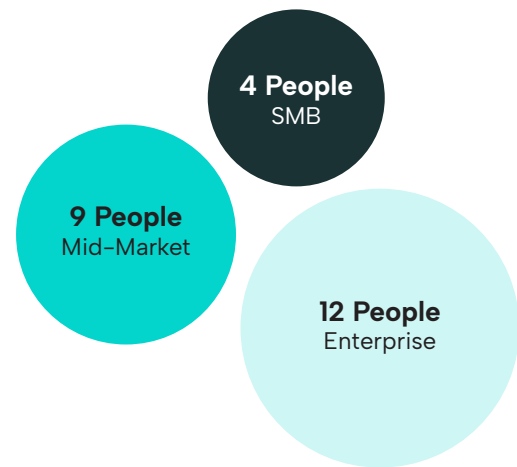
So what team size is most optimal? While it depends on individual company needs, our data shows that having a few extra hands seems to help. Top performers have an average of 10 people on their RFP teams, while low performers scrape by with just 6.

The Gap Between the Smallest and Largest Teams Shrinks—But so do Enterprise Teams

Unsurprisingly, SMBs tend to have the smallest dedicated RFP teams and enterprise companies the largest—about 3 times as large as SMBs.

That said, the gap between the smallest and largest teams has shrunk somewhat from the 10-point difference we observed last year. That’s not because SMB teams are getting bigger, however, but because enterprise teams are getting smaller (12 people, compared to 14 last year). This could be related to the layoffs that hit multiple industries this past year. Mid-market companies, meanwhile, have stayed exactly the same size.

Response Team Size by Company Size



Average Number of Contributors Holds Steady at 9 People

The RFP process involves a whole range of contributors, from subject matter experts (SMEs), to legal staff, technical teams, and more. Our research shows that nine people on average contribute to a proposal, which is in line with our data from the past five years.

Digging a little deeper into the numbers, we can see that the majority (65%) report that they involve between 6 and 15 people in their RFP process, which is about the same as last year. Despite an increased workload, teams are getting by with the same number of people. Whether this will continue to be sustainable, however—especially given their increased workloads—remains to be seen.

Top-Performer Insights

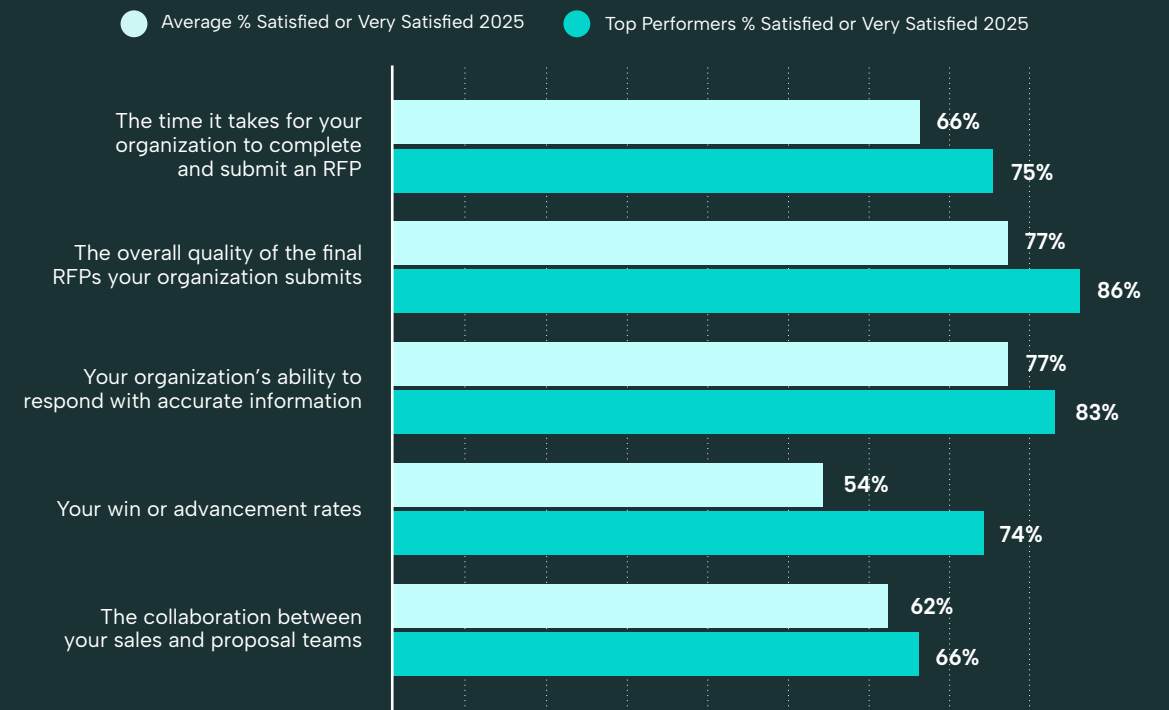
When we look at what top performers are doing differently in this section, a few key trends emerge.

More People Support: Top-performing teams have an average of 10 people, two more than the norm. This is a chicken and egg situation: Are they getting more resources because they perform so well, or are they performing so well because they have more resources? Either way, that extra support can make a big difference in terms of producing a polished proposal without getting overwhelmed by stress.

Less Stress: 39% of top performers say their stress levels at work are “almost always manageable,” 5 points higher than the average. This could also be related to the increased resourcing these teams tend to see.

Higher Satisfaction: This all leads top performers to be more satisfied than the average across 5 key process metrics—including time, quality, accuracy, win rates, and collaboration.

Process Satisfaction: Average vs. Top Performers



Chapter Summary: Teams Face New Challenges



Like any big collaborative project, the RFP process will always involve a certain amount of challenge. But what form those challenges take is telling. This year, teams are feeling more of a time crunch than in previous years. Plus, other ongoing challenges, like collaborating with SMEs, still persist.

With lower satisfaction around win rates this year, it's clear something isn't working in the RFP process. It might be related to higher submission targets, more pressure to achieve both volume and quality, and in some cases, simply not enough contributors. What we can say with certainty is that larger teams seem to be more successful and less stressed. So too are teams that use RFP software and AI in their process.

Keeping stress in check seems key: Lower stress is associated with higher win rates, and high stress seems to result in more inefficiencies and worse results. Each team will have to determine exactly what stress-reduction strategies will work best for them, whether that's adopting a new software tool or adding headcount to lighten the load—or perhaps both.

Up next: Teams greatly increased their AI use this year. How has that changed the response process? And could it help reduce some of the stress and pressure that teams are feeling?



Software & AI

From AI Adoption to Full Integration

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Almost 80% of Teams Used Generative AI in 2025

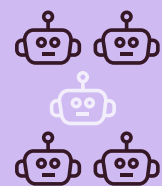
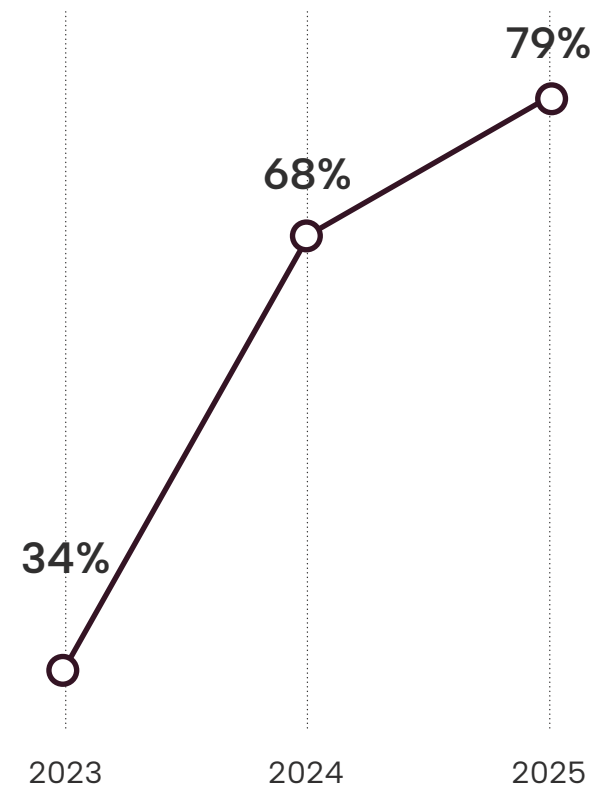
This year, the vast majority of teams (79%) have used AI in their RFP workflows. This is up more than 10 percentage points over last year.

Since AI came onto this scene in late 2022, we've seen RFP pros go from initial curiosity about the tool, to truly integrating it in their processes. This year, we've reached a new level of saturation, with 4 out of 5 RFP teams saying they've used AI in their response processes in the past year. That's a complete reversal from two years ago, when only 34% of teams had done so.

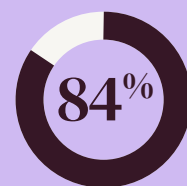
The frequency at which teams are using AI is growing, too. Of the group that has used AI, the vast majority (84%) use it at least once a week, and 43% use it every day.

When we dig into the data, we can see that companies of all sizes are more likely to be using AI than previous years, but enterprise and mid-market companies are about 10 points more likely to be using it than SMBs. This may be because mid-market and enterprise companies are more likely to have access to more sophisticated software tools that allow them to use AI without putting sensitive company data at risk.

% Have Used AI as Part of the RFP Process in the Last 12 Months



4 out of 5 teams use AI in their RFP workflows.



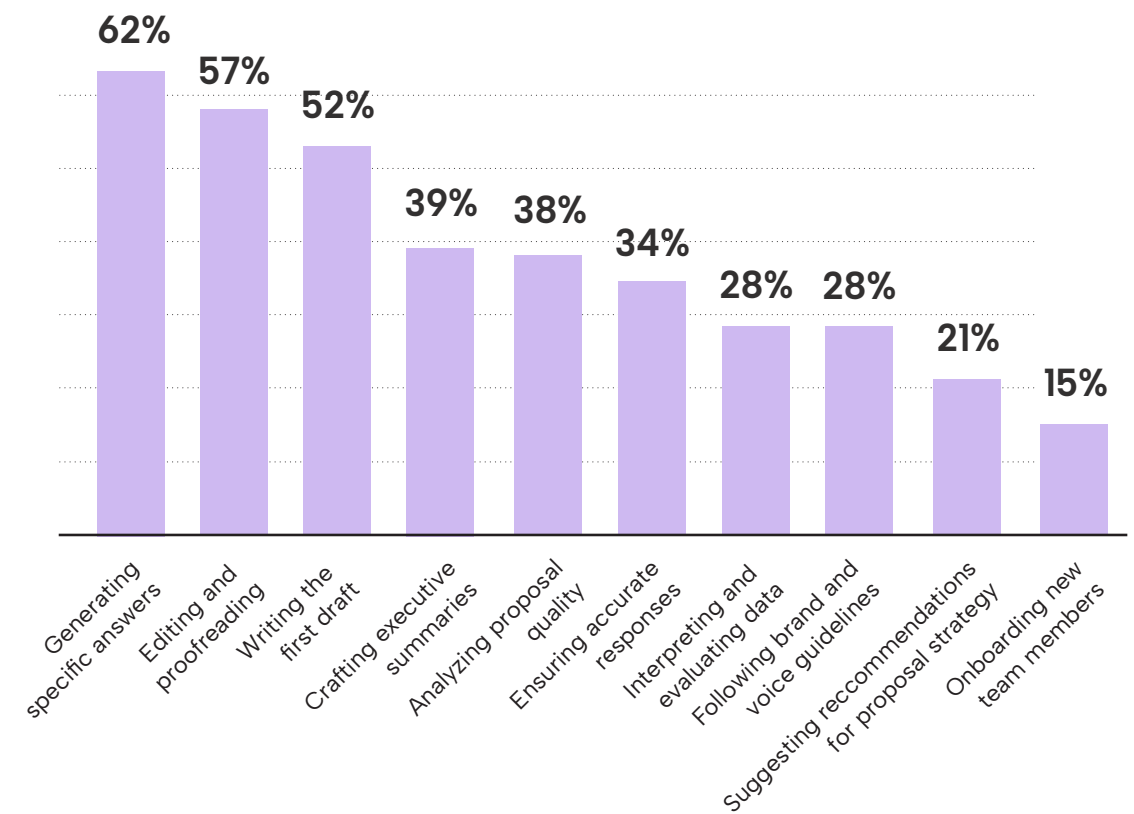
84% of teams using AI use it at least once a week.

More Teams Are Using AI to Generate Specific Answers

This year, more than half of teams (62%) are using AI to generate specific answers, an increase from last year (46%). Last year, this was tied with editing and proofreading for the top use of AI, which now comes in second place. Writing the first draft is in third, up from 39% last year.

These changes seem to show that teams are putting more trust in AI to generate answers and even create a first draft, not just check their work. The question is, is this trust warranted? It depends quite a lot on the tools they're using, which we'll break down below.

How Teams Are Using AI in Their RFP Response Processes

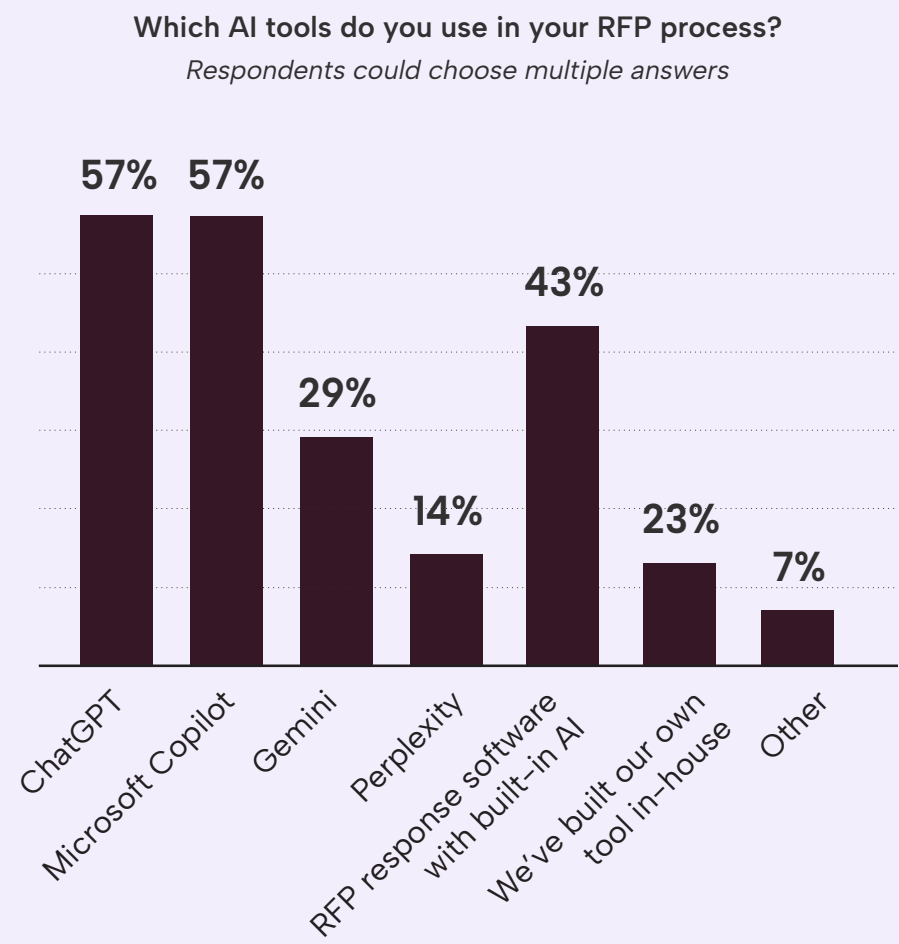




Key Insight: More Teams Are Choosing AI Built for Response Management, but Generalist Tools Remain Popular

This year, 43% of teams are using AI through an RFP software, up from 33% last year. That said, the share of teams using general AI tools is still higher, at 57% for the two most popular options, ChatGPT and Copilot.

While general AI tools are accessible and budget-friendly, it's important to be aware of the very real security and compliance risks inherent in them. As soon as you feed data into one of these tools, that data is no longer yours—it belongs to the AI company, which does not differentiate between public and private data for learning purposes. That's why it's best practice not to feed anything confidential into an AI tool, such as past RFPs, previously-used answers you want to keep private, or proprietary data.

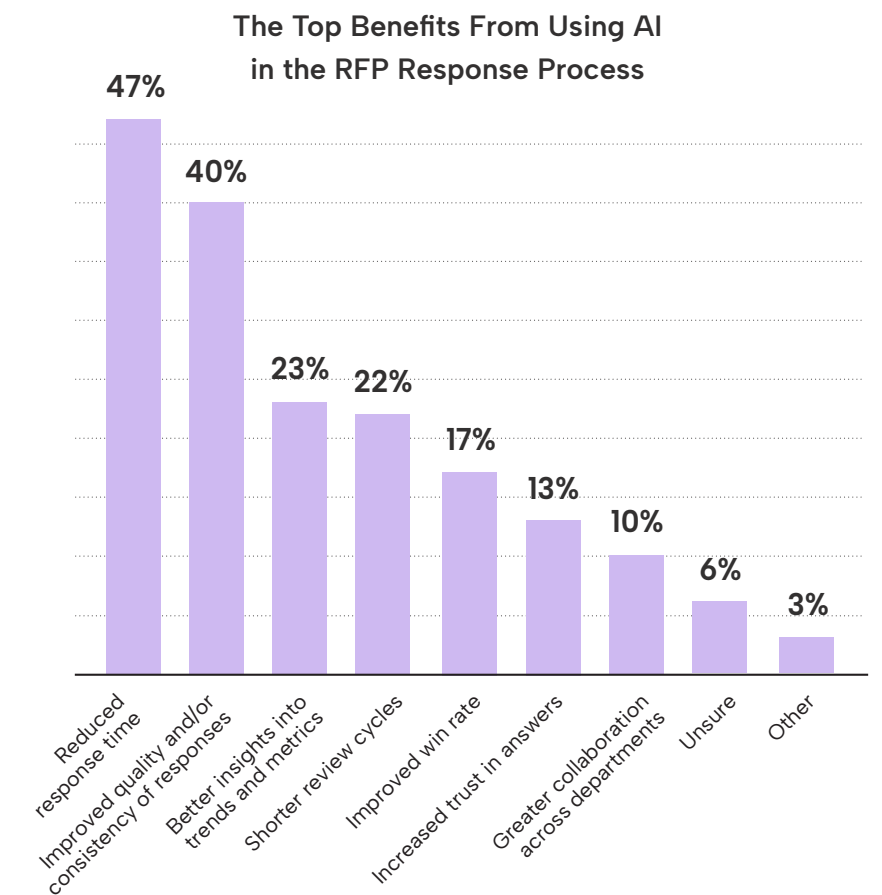


Speed & Quality are Top AI Benefits, But They're Not Turning into Win Rates

Teams cite numerous benefits to using AI in their response process, most notably reduced response time, improved quality and consistency of their responses, and better insights into trends and metrics. We can see these benefits manifest in the small but noticeable reduction in RFP completion time we discussed in [Chapter 3](#).

Interestingly, teams are not listing improved win rates as a key benefit of using AI. This either means that they're not yet measuring the impact of AI on win rates, or that there's a gap somewhere. They claim that AI is improving quality, but if that's not correlating with more wins, there may be an implementation problem along the way. Teams should be cautious that they're not just using AI to get their responses done, but to make sure they're getting done *well*.

To get the most out of the technology, RFP teams should track how they're using AI in their process and how that translates into win rates. That way, they can assess how well their AI strategy is working based on real data, not just feelings.

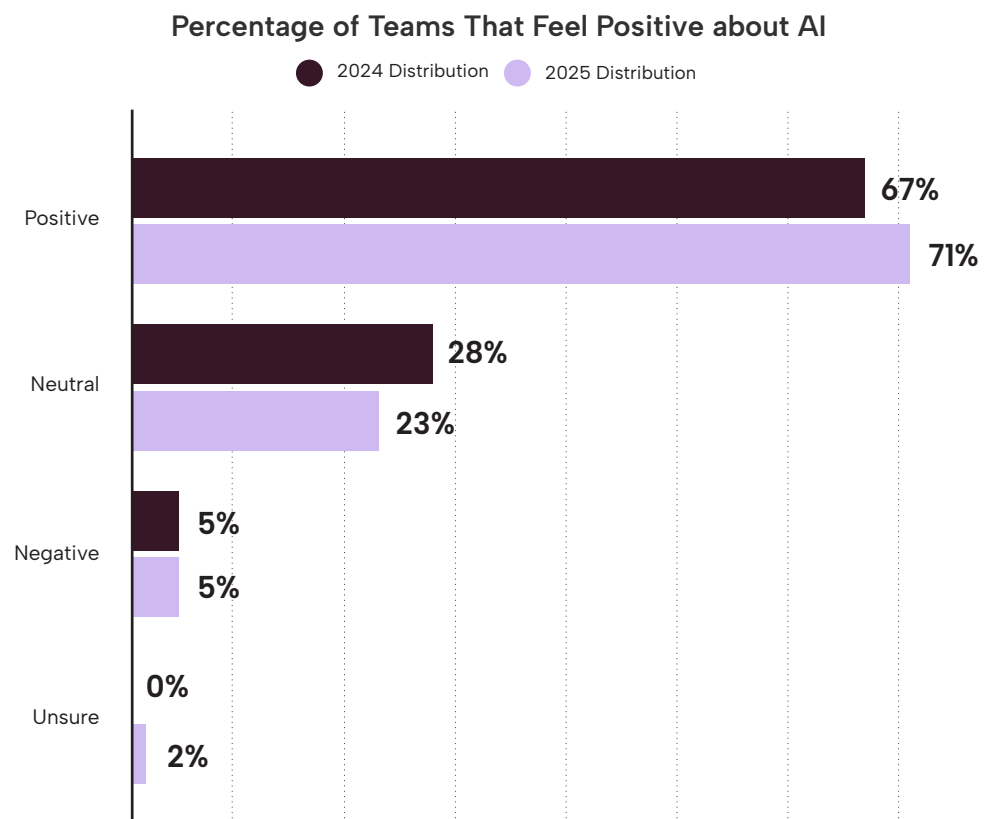


Already Positive About AI, Teams Feel Even More Optimistic This Year

This year, 71% of respondents reported feeling overall positive towards AI, a slight increase over last year's 67%. This continues a trend we've seen since we first started asking questions about AI in 2023.

The change seems greatest among the group formerly neutral on AI—that category has shrunk while those feeling more positive has grown. Given the usage increases we've seen, respondents have likely now had the chance to experiment with AI (perhaps with a secure solution they didn't have access to before) and have been able to experience the benefits for themselves. The percentage of responders with a negative outlook on AI has remained exactly the same since last year.

One interesting correlation: teams who feel more positive about AI also feel less stressed at work—36% said their stress levels were almost always manageable as compared to 29% of respondents with a negative outlook toward AI.



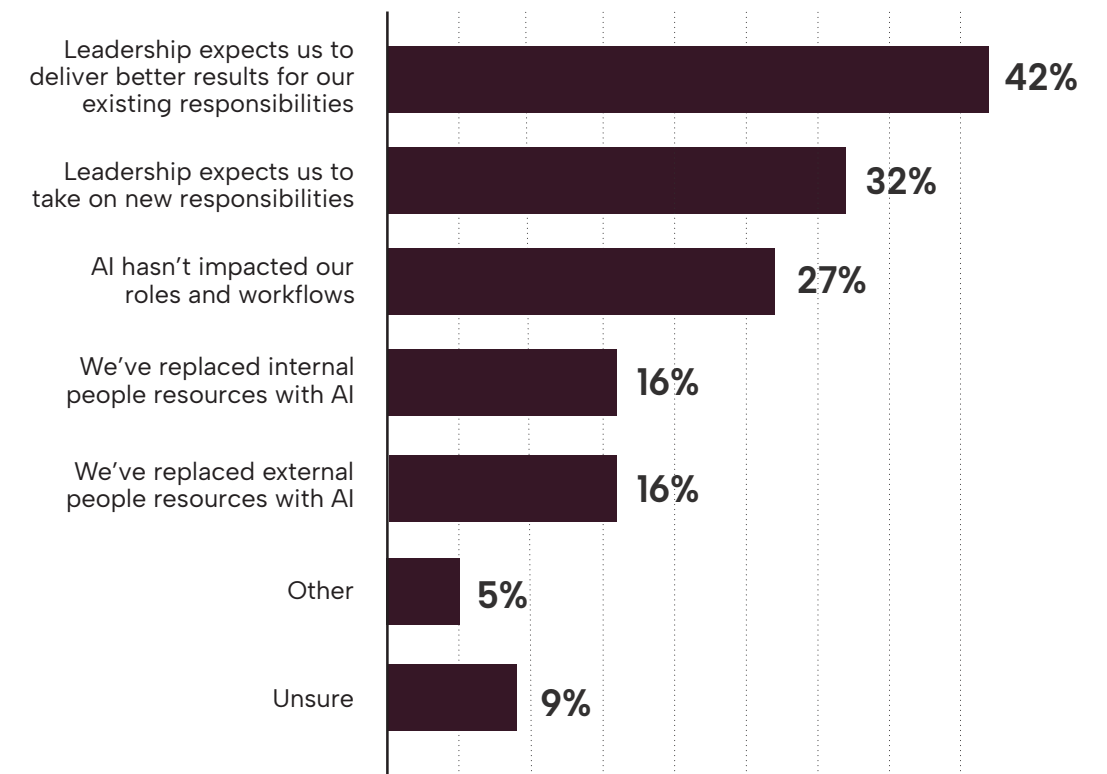
How AI is Impacting Roles and Workflows

If we dig into exactly how AI has been impacting roles and expectations, we see that the majority of teams are not replacing people resources (internal or external) with AI. Instead, teams are reporting that expectations for what they should be able to accomplish are increasing: 32% of teams say that leadership expects them to take on new responsibilities and 42% say leadership expects them to deliver better results.

This lines up with other trends we've observed this year around pressure to submit more, submit faster, and produce higher quality RFPs. It's a pattern that often occurs when new technology comes onto the scene—instead of making the task in question "easier," it raises expectations for what's possible.

How has AI impacted roles and workflows in your organization?

Respondents could choose multiple answers



If we break the data down by role, we also see that there's a disconnect between more junior and senior staff. Associates are more likely to say that AI hasn't impacted their roles and workflows (or they're unsure of the impact) compared to more senior staff—perhaps because the total amount of work hasn't changed, even if some processes have.

More senior roles, on the other hand, are also more likely to say that leadership expects RFP teams to deliver better results and take on new responsibilities, which may be because they themselves are setting those expectations. They're also more likely than other roles to say that they've considered replacing internal or external roles with AI, which is likely related to their level of ownership.

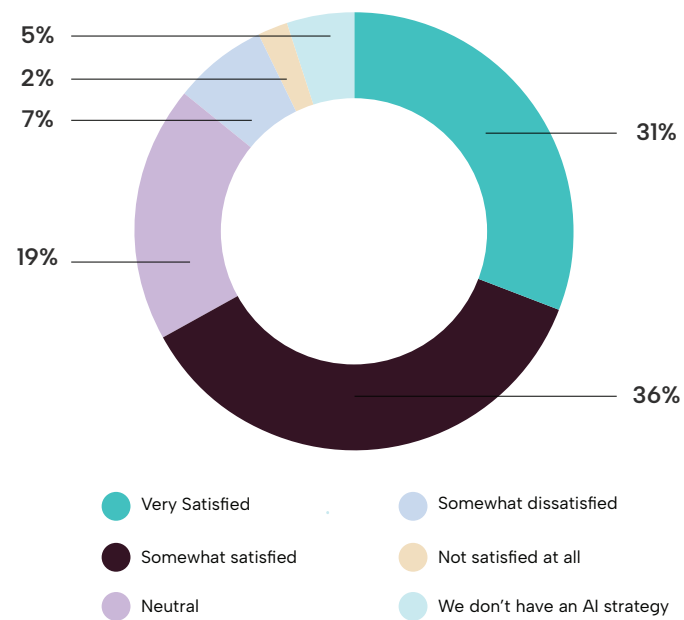
It's worth checking in to see if there's a gap between what your senior leaders and responders on the ground think that AI is accomplishing in your organization. If there is a gap, see if you can get clear on what your goals are and what metrics you'll use to know you've reached them. Just "adopting AI" is not enough—it needs to be tied to clear, measurable goals that everyone can get behind.

Despite Increasing Pressure, Two-Thirds of Respondents Feel Satisfied With Their Organization's AI Strategy

Surprisingly, when you consider how much expectations have increased for what teams should be able to accomplish with AI, responders are overall feeling positive about their AI strategy. About two-thirds (67%) say they are satisfied or very satisfied with their AI strategy, and less than 10% are dissatisfied.

In other good news, only 5% of teams are reporting that they don't yet have an AI strategy, which is a positive sign that teams are thinking critically about how they want to use this tool.

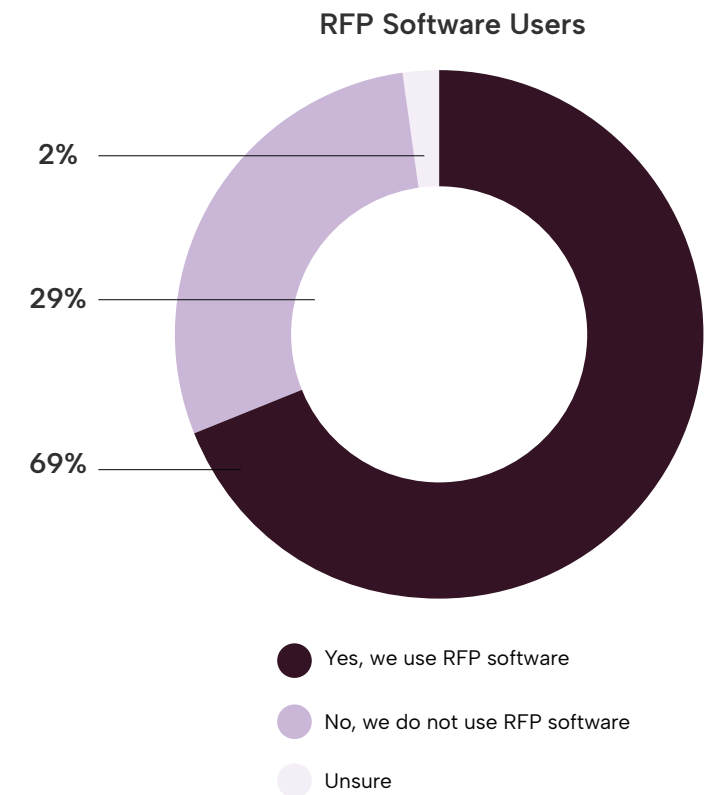
How satisfied are you with your organization's AI strategy?



RFP Software Use Increases

More than two thirds (69%) of respondents now use RFP software, a slight increase over last year.

It's interesting that teams are increasing their use of RFP software alongside AI technology, which is also a trend we noticed last year. This is important because—alongside structured project management and approval workflows, version control, and collaboration—modern RFP software tools also give users access to built-in AI. Combined, these increases could be helping teams feel more well-resourced, which is something we'll dig into next chapter.



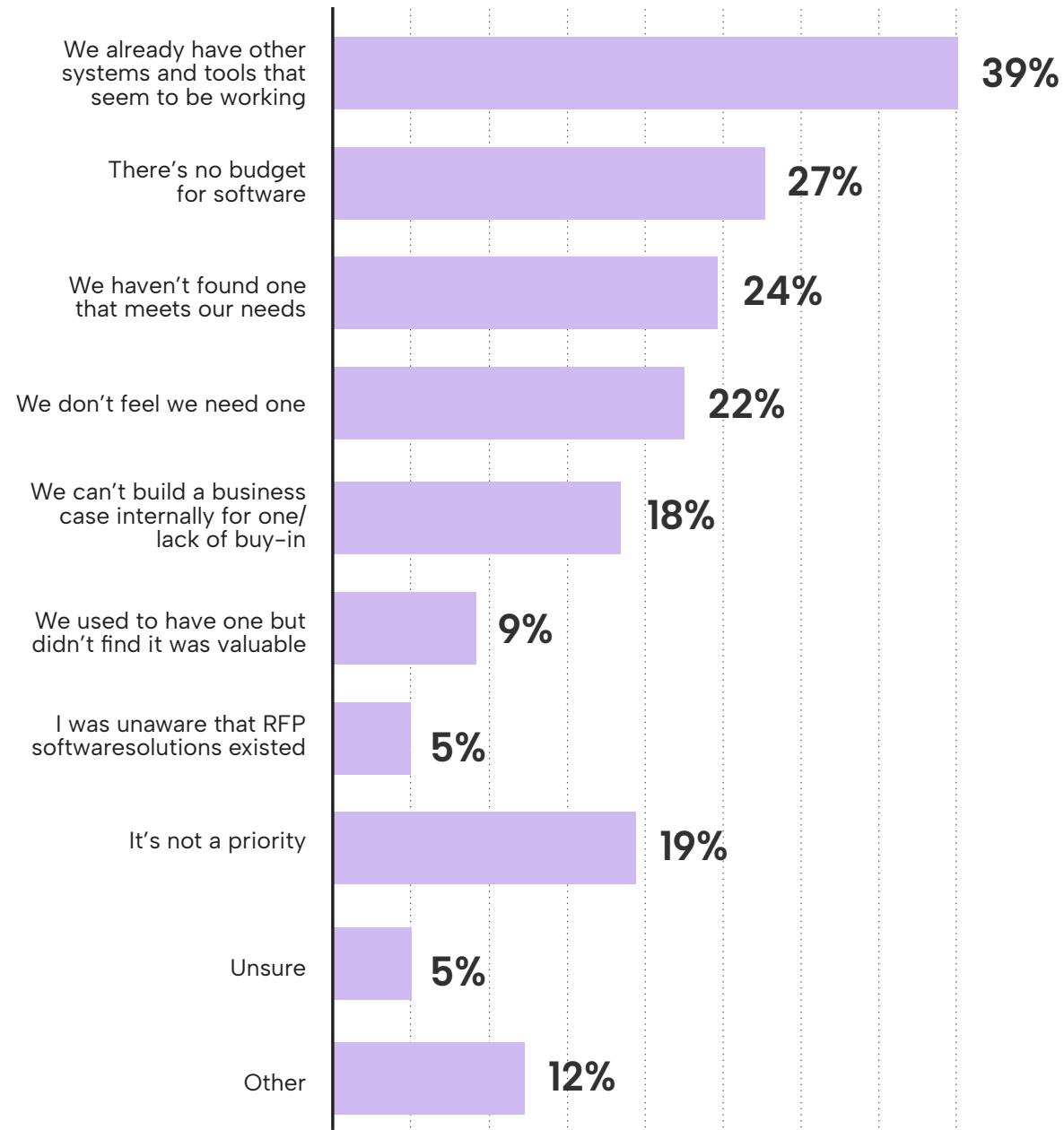
Why Some Teams Aren't Using Software (Yet)

For the minority of teams who are not yet using RFP software, the main reason they haven't switched is that they have other tools and systems that are working for now. However, fewer teams have selected this response as compared to last year, suggesting that these existing systems may no longer be cutting it.

Budget still remains a key constraint (27%), in spite of the fact that nearly half (46%) of teams gained new resources this year. Finding the right fit is also a problem, with almost a quarter (24%) of teams saying that they haven't found an RFP software solution that meets their needs.

But for those who have tried RFP software, it's hard to go back to life without it. Of those teams who have used software before, less than 10% said they got rid of it because they didn't find it valuable.

Why doesn't your organization use RFP software?

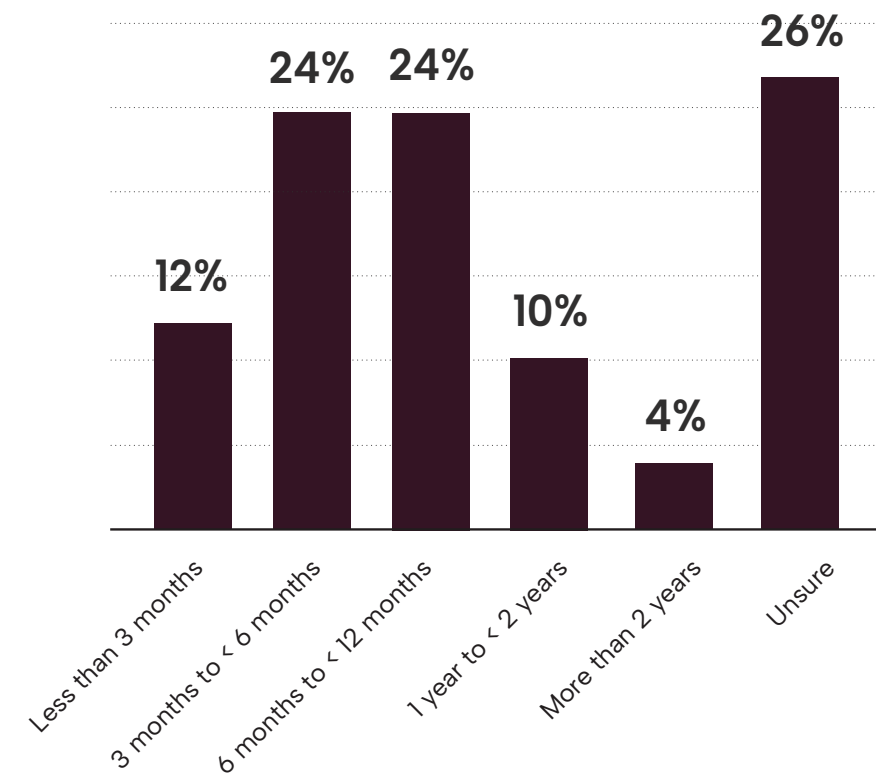


Majority of Software Users See ROI Within One Year—But a Greater Share Are Seeing it in Less Than Six Months

When we look at the data, 60% of respondents report seeing a return on investment from using RFP software within the first twelve months—about the same as last year. But this overall average hides a notable shift: more responders (36%) are getting there in six months or less as compared to previous years.

The main reason we're not seeing the overall average time to ROI go down is a growth in the number of respondents who marked "unsure" on their survey this year. So just a friendly reminder: if you're planning on investing in software, it's worth tracking your adoption milestones so you know you're getting your money's worth.

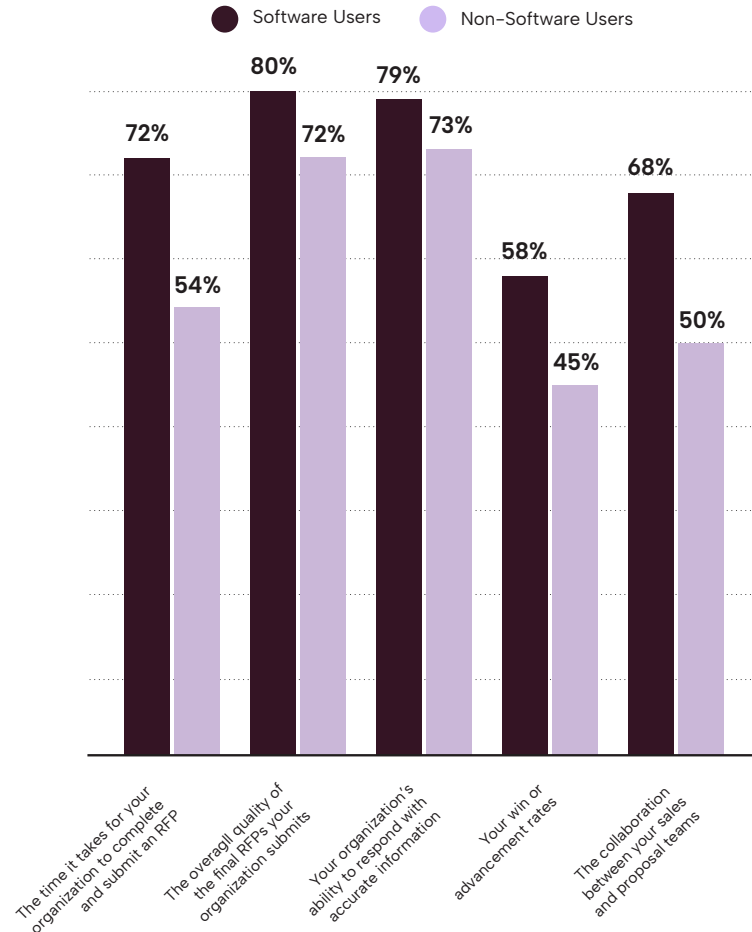
Time to ROI With RFP Software



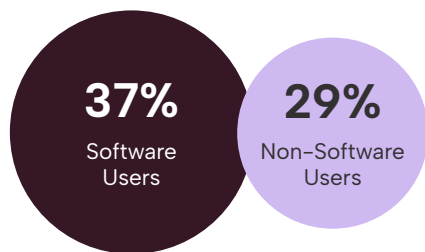
Software Users Report More Satisfaction and Less Stress

Teams who use RFP software report higher satisfaction across five key process metrics as compared to the average—and this is even more clear when compared to non-software users. Software users are able to more easily resurface content, collaborate with their teams, and use secure AI, making their workloads more streamlined. This allows them to save time while maintaining high quality standards. With all these benefits, it's unsurprising that RFP software users are also more likely to say that their stress levels at work are almost always manageable.

Impact of RFP Software on Process Satisfaction



My Stress Levels At Work Are Almost Always Manageable



Key Insight: 45% of RFPs Are Submitted Through Online Portals

This year, 45% of RFPs were submitted through online portals, slightly less than last year but in line with our overall trend. The Public Sector, Manufacturing, and Management Consulting industries were most likely to submit through portals.

Top-Performer Insights

When we look at what top performers are doing differently in this section, a few key trends emerge.

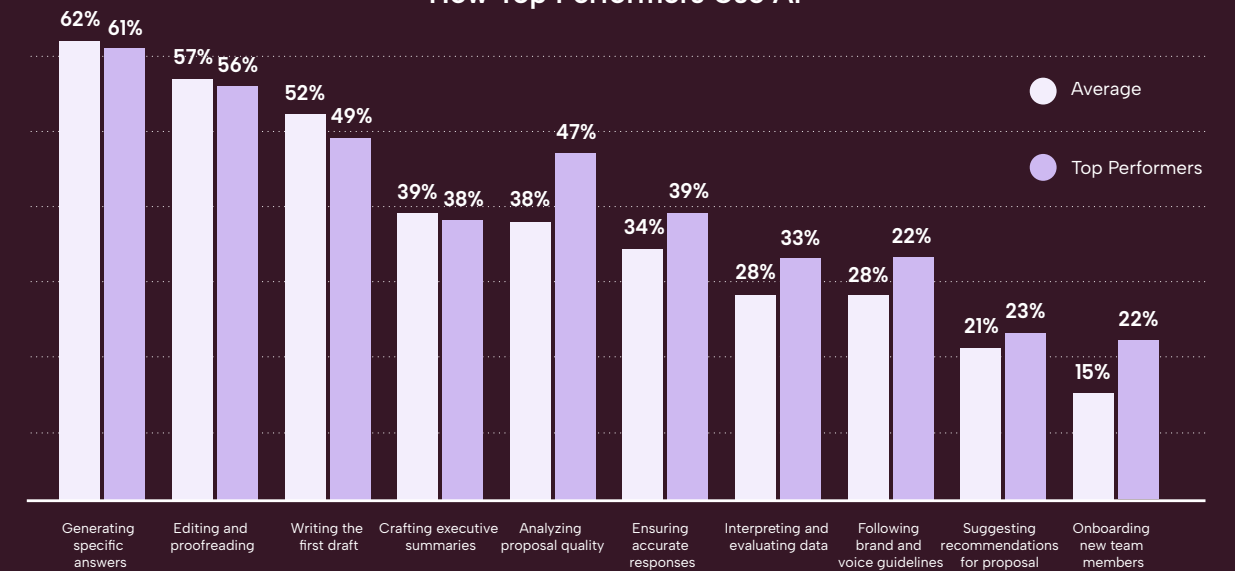
Higher RFP Software Adoption: Top performers are more likely to have adopted RFP software, with 72% of top performers using this tool compared to the average of 69%. Using software likely allows these teams to spend less time resurfacing old content and coordinating with their SMEs, and frees them up to push their responses the extra mile.

Specific AI Use Cases: While top performers aren't significantly more likely than other groups to use AI—80% of best in class teams use it compared to the average of 79%—there is a difference in how they use AI. Elite responders are about as likely to use AI to write the first draft or generate specific answers as the average. However, they're also significantly *more* likely to use AI to:

- Analyze proposal quality
- Ensure accuracy
- Interpret and evaluate data
- Follow brand and voice guidelines
- Suggest recommendations for proposal strategy
- Onboard new team members

These more in-depth, analytic use cases show that AI can support the response process in complex and strategic ways, beyond the first draft. This tactical use of AI likely gives our top performers an edge in understanding what's working in their proposal strategy, and how they can continue to improve.

How Top Performers Use AI





Chapter Summary: AI and Software Use Surges—But *How* Teams Use Them Matters

This year saw a slight but noticeable gain in the number of teams using both AI tools and RFP software—as well as the number who are using both tools in parallel. Teams took advantage of the efficiency boosts of these technologies, using them to speed up their process and quickly generate first drafts.

At the same time, how teams use technology matters. With AI, we recommend teams explore more deliberate uses beyond generating first drafts or editing—more nuanced use cases can help strengthen a submission or strategy, as shown by top performers.

The good news is that teams who are leveraging these technologies well don't only win more, but also unlock gains in terms of efficiency, satisfaction, and reduced stress. That's a win-win-win.

Up next: With all these new tools at their disposal, how well-resourced are responders feeling? And does being better-resourced make a difference to win rates?




Resourcing

Resourcing Outlook Is Strong, But Gaps Remain

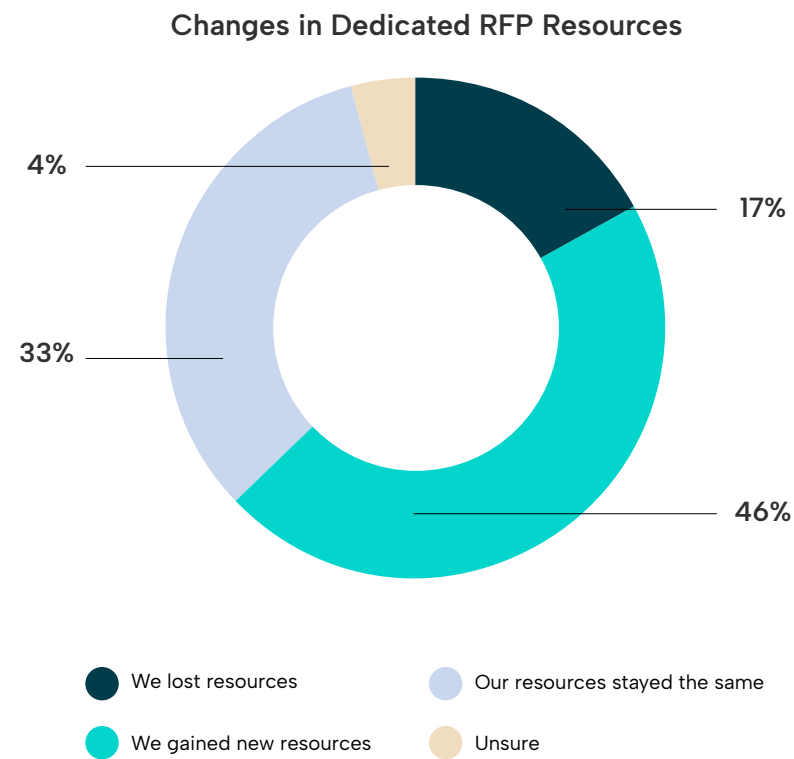
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Nearly 80% of Teams Gained or Maintained Their Resources This Year

Just under half (46%) of teams claim they gained new resources such as headcount, budget, or software in the past year. Another third (33%) maintained their resources. Put together, 79% of teams are working with the same or more resources than last year.

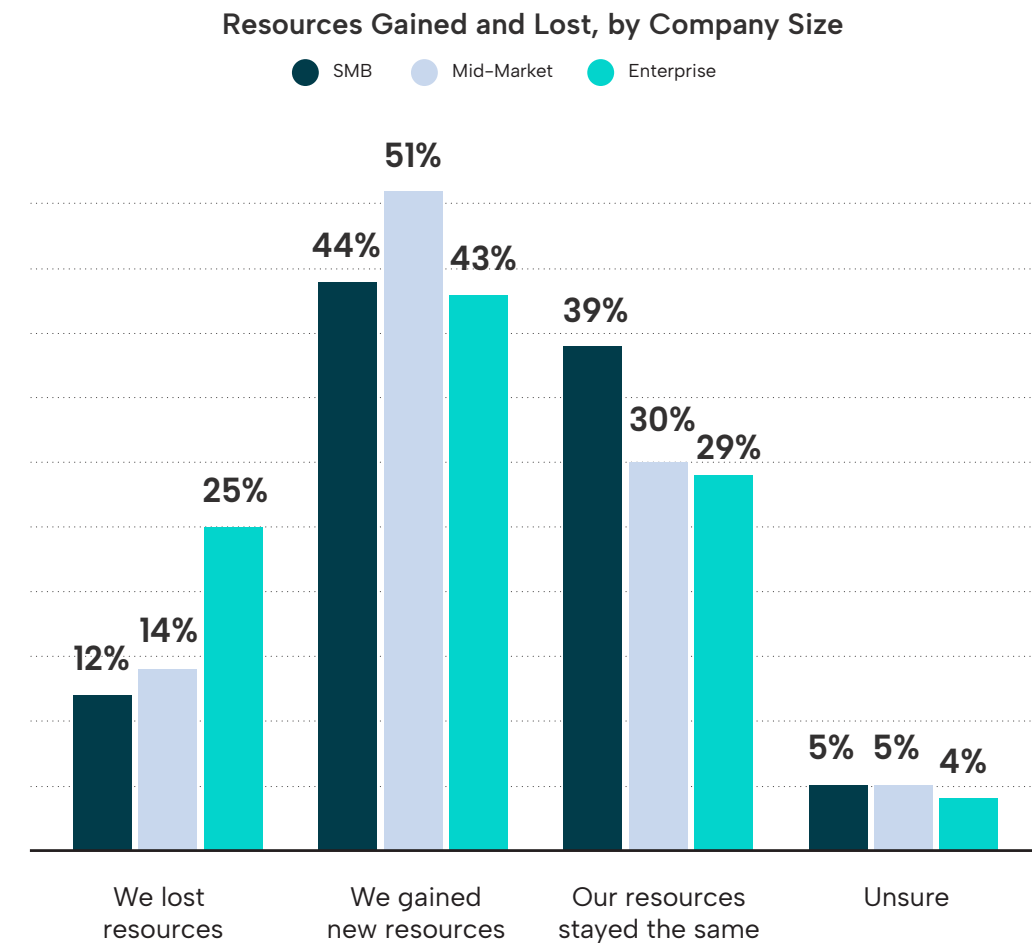
 **81%** of top performers gained or maintained their RFP resources this year.

While teams were slightly less likely to gain resources this year when compared to last year, the percentage of teams that gained is consistent with our overall trend. Crucially, there's no noticeable difference in the number of teams that lost resources, meaning that teams are maintaining their gains from last year's surge. With the high adoption of AI and software starting last year and increasing into this one, we can see that technology remains a core area of investment.



When we break down these gains by company size, we can see that mid-market companies were most likely to gain new resources this year, SMBs were most likely to maintain, and enterprise companies were most likely to lose resources.

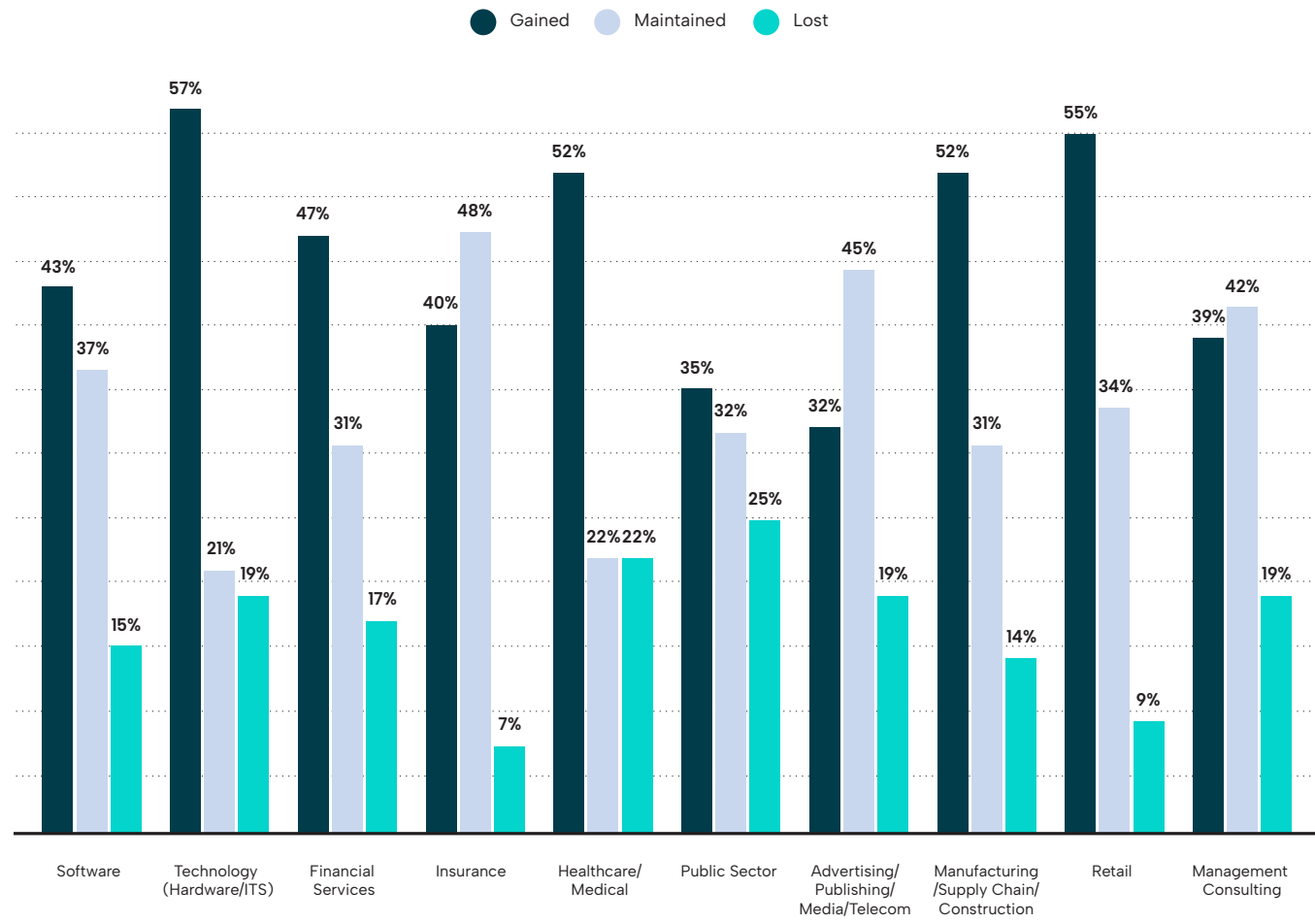
This makes sense when you consider the fact that enterprise teams may have been hit harder by the layoffs that have swept through large companies in multiple industries this year. Their decreases in team size also reflect this.



Digging into the data by industry, we see that the Technology and Retail sectors were most likely to have gained new resources this year. This is especially interesting because Technology was the most likely to have lost resources last year. It may be possible that they cut too severely and are course-correcting now.

The Public Sector was the most likely to have lost resources—which is perhaps unsurprising given the disruption they’ve faced over the course of the past year in the U.S.

Resources Gained, Maintained, and Lost by Industry



Teams Feel Good About Resources, but Acknowledge Gaps

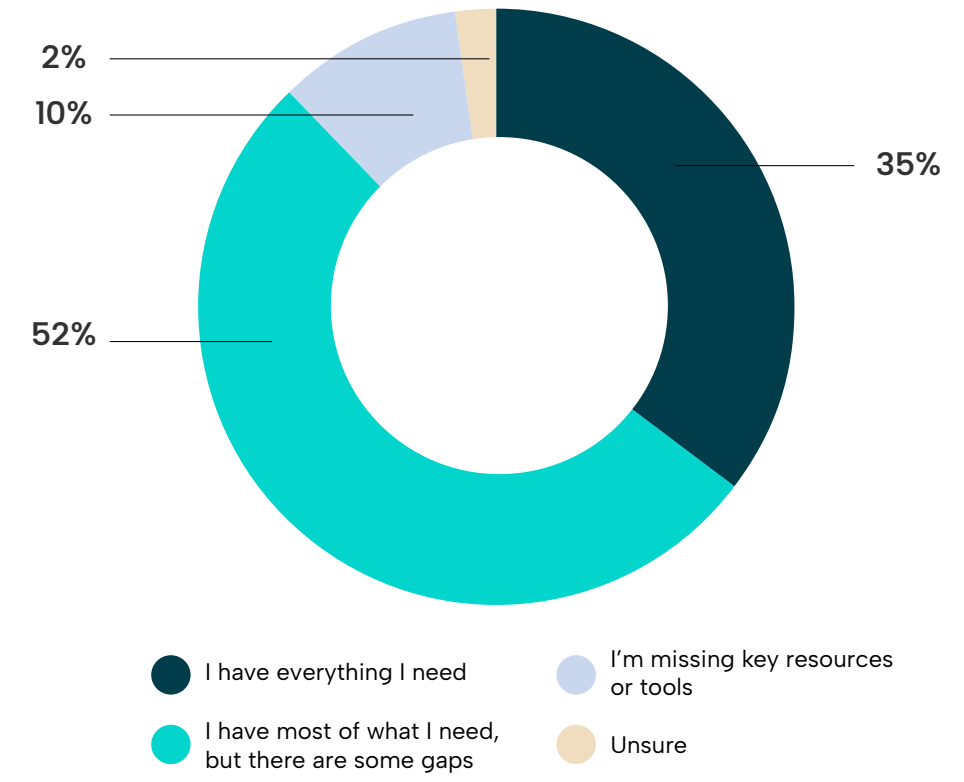
This year, when asked “do you feel you have the resources and tools you need to efficiently and effectively respond to the RFPs your team receives or pursues?,” the majority of teams responded positively.

A little over one third (35%) say “I have everything I need” and over one half (52%) say “I have most of what I need”—put together, that’s 87% of teams. Only 10% of teams say they are missing key resources or tools that they need to be able to respond effectively.

Still, the majority acknowledge some gaps, suggesting that they’re doing the best with what they have, but could do even better with more.

46% of top performers say they have everything they need to respond effectively and efficiently.

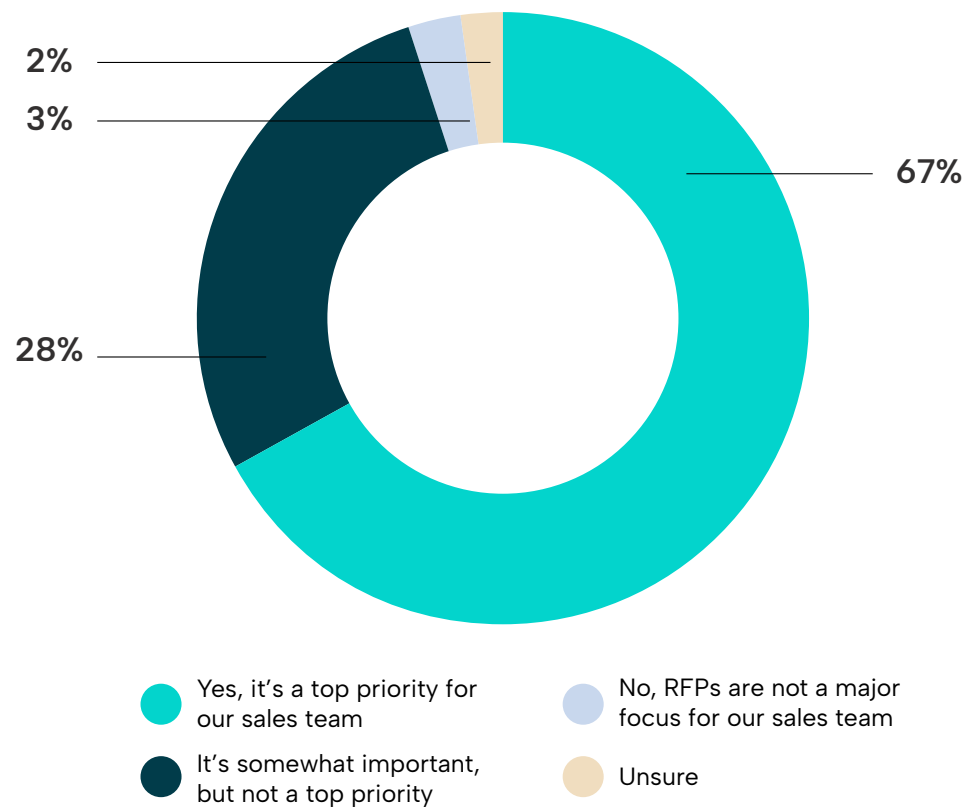
Resource Sentiment



67% of Teams Say Winning More RFPs Is a Company Priority

The overwhelming majority of teams say that winning more RFPs is an important part of their company's sales strategy, with a combined 95% saying it's either a "top priority" or "important." Only 3% say it's not a major focus.

Is winning more RFPs an important part of your company's sales strategy?



As income from RFPs grows to take up a larger share of the revenue pie—now 40% this year—it makes sense that teams would want to prioritize them as part of their sales strategy. However, with the lower win rates we're seeing this year, there's room to refine the strategies teams are using to achieve this goal.

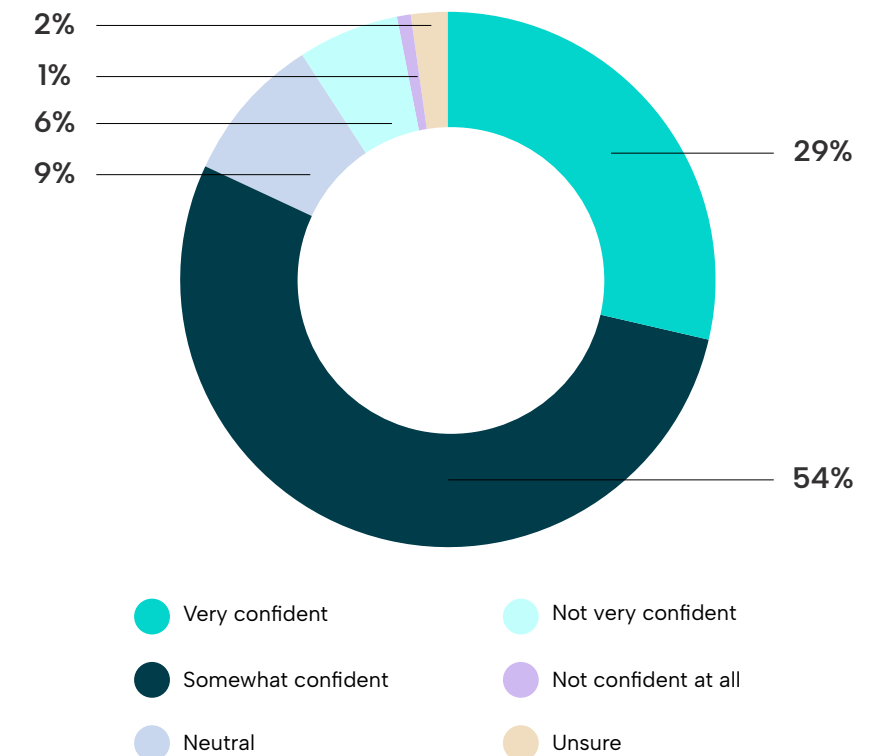
 **73%** of top performers say winning more RFPs is a top priority.

83% of Teams Feel Confident to Meet the Demands of 2026

When RFPs teams were asked about how confident they feel to meet the demands of 2026, a combined 83% of teams say they are very or somewhat confident. Only 7% feel unconfident.

This is a bit surprising considering the increasing pressures responders are facing and the fact that half of teams flagged "bandwidth" as a big challenge this year. Perhaps teams have learned a lot over the course of the past year and feel ready to apply those lessons to 2026. Or, perhaps they just have indomitable spirits.

Confidence to Meet the Demands of 2026



When we break this down by company size, enterprise companies are more likely to say they're "very confident" (34%) compared to mid-market (28%) and SMBs (25%). This may be because—even considering their resourcing setbacks this year—they're still much better resourced than their smaller peers.

Top performers are the most confident of all, with 40% saying that they're "very confident" and a combined 88% saying that they're "confident."

Expert Insight: The Mindset Shift Leading to Increased Confidence in 2026



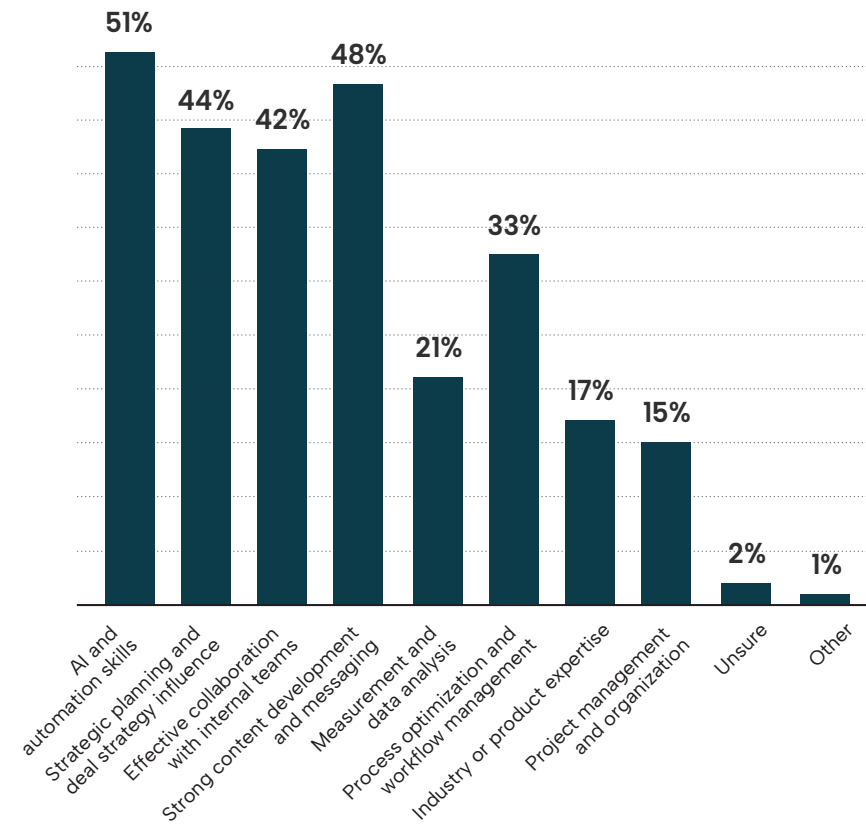
Ceri Mescall
Managing Director,
Strategic Proposals Canada

In a time of 'more, more, more,' the teams feeling most confident are doing the opposite—they're doing less. By systematically reducing noise, errors, and procrastination, leaders are creating capacity, focus, and resilience.

Teams Believe AI Skills, Content Development, and Deal Strategy Will Be Most Critical in 2026

When asked which skills will be most important for teams, in 2026, the top three skills that teams selected were AI and automation skills (51%), content development and messaging (48%), and strategic planning and deal strategy influence (44%).

Most Important Skills and Capabilities in 2026
Respondents could choose multiple answers



These rankings are a positive sign that teams are going beyond just “use AI” or “write a good response”—they’re thinking big picture about how to use the tools at their disposal to improve their influence and messaging. If they keep up this strategic focus, we should hopefully see an uptick in win rates next year.

For top performers, it’s even more stark: 47% rank strategic planning and deal strategy influence as a key skill. They also put more emphasis on industry and product expertise, at 20%.

Expert Insight: Where to Upskill in 2026



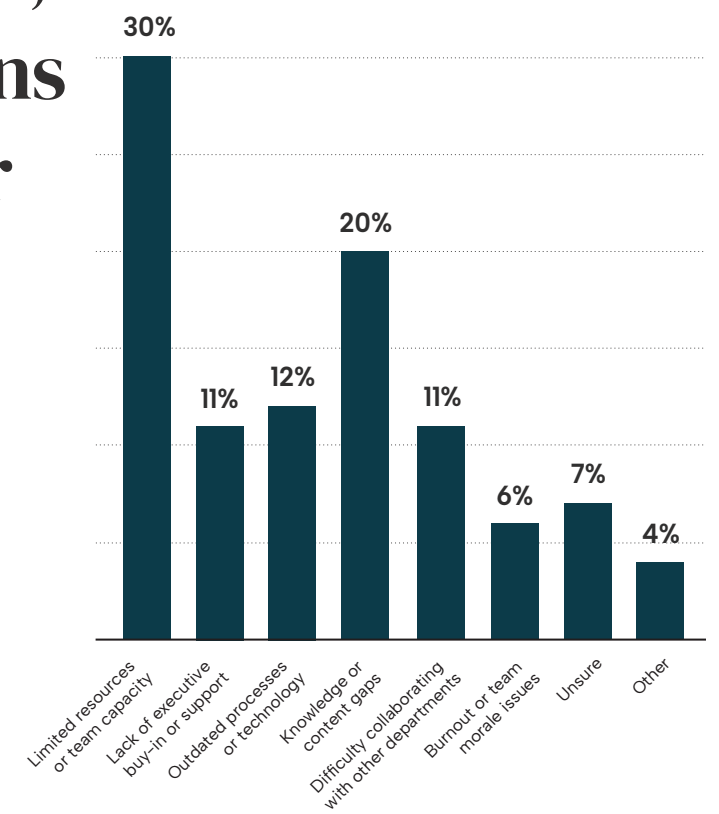
Lisa Puvar
Manager, Proposals,
Global Law Firm

Mental health awareness along with burnout prevention techniques are areas of focus to upskill this year. Quality sleep, exercise, nutrient dense foods, and decluttering aid in helping my wellbeing. Feeling drained and overexerted are signs I put work ahead of myself.

Despite Confidence, Resourcing Remains the Biggest Barrier to RFP Success

While responders are overall feeling confident about their capabilities and resources, the gaps they’ve acknowledged do seem to be holding them back. When asked about the biggest barriers to their success, about a third (30%) say resourcing, followed by knowledge or content gaps. Thankfully, only 6% are reporting burnout or team morale issues.

Biggest Barriers to Success



For teams that aren't getting the resources they need, this can be a real barrier. As we've seen, software and AI are not yet replacing people or reducing the need for staff to contribute to RFPs—in many cases, they're raising expectations to take on new responsibilities and deliver better results. So to be successful in this new environment, teams need an effective balance of staff and tools to support them.

This is especially clear when we look at top performers, who are less likely to cite resources as a barrier (27%), and more likely to talk about knowledge or content gaps. This proves what many RFP responders probably already knew intuitively: having enough resources to do your work effectively makes it easier for you to win more.

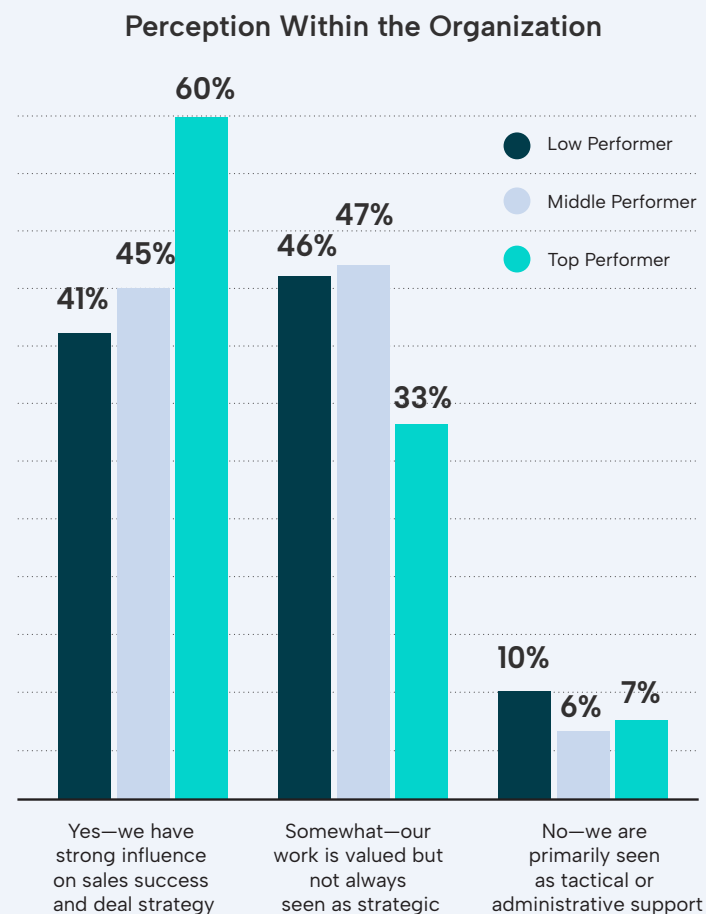
Key Insight: Top Performers Are More Likely to Be Viewed as Strategic Contributors



Top performers are more likely to say that they're seen as strategic contributors within their organizations and that they have a strong influence on sales success and deal strategy (60% compared to an average of 47%).

That said, it's hard to separate out correlation from causation. Are they seen that way because they're top performers? Or are they performing so well because they are given so much respect within their organizations?

Either way, it marks a clear difference between low and middle performers who say their work is valued but not strategic. Low performers in particular are more likely to say that they are seen primarily as tactical or administrative support. Ultimately, being seen as a strategic partner seems to be significant to top performers' success.



Top-Performer Insights

When we look at what top performers are doing differently in this section, a few key trends emerge.



Higher Confidence

Top performers are the most confident in their ability to meet the challenges of 2026 with 88% reporting they're confident and 40% saying they're very confident.



More Ambition

Higher confidence translates into more ambition, with 73% saying that winning more RFPs is a top priority this year, compared to the average of 67%.



Strategic Influence

Top performers are more likely to be seen as strategic contributors to the business, with 60% saying they have a strong influence on sales success and deal strategy—13 percentage points more than the average.



Better Resourcing

Over half (51%) of top performers gained new resources this year, compared to the average of 46%, and just 43% of low performers. Top performers are also less likely to cite limited resources as a barrier.



Different Skill Priorities

Teams that win the most RFPs put more emphasis on strategic planning and deal strategy influence than the average, as well as on industry or product expertise.

Chapter Summary: Better Resources = Better Outcomes



Overall, the resourcing outlook this year looks positive, with teams feeling confident in their ability to meet the demands of 2026.

And they should feel good—the majority gained or maintained their resources, and say they have what they need to be successful. They’re also focusing on key skills that move the needle: mastering AI, improving their messaging, and becoming more strategic. That said, there are still some key gaps, and, at least for some teams, getting enough resources is still their biggest barrier to success.

The correlation between resources and success becomes especially clear when you look at top performers: The teams with the highest win rates are better resourced, more confident in their resources, and are more likely to be treated as strategic partners by their organizations. They also focus much more on strategy and deal influence than other groups. Teams who aren’t yet getting what they need should use this data to make their case to their own higher-ups—more resources directly correlates with higher win rates.

Up next: We’ve covered a lot, from economics, to technology—now, let’s look at how the most successful teams are leveraging their resources.






Top-Performer Insights

What Sets Top-Performing Teams Apart


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What Makes a Top-Performing Team?

There are many success metrics you can examine when determining the health of an RFP program: shortlist rate, win rate, and the amount of revenue influenced, just to name a few.

 <p>Shortlist Rate How often your proposal makes it to the next round</p>	 <p>Win Rate Percentage of RFPs that end in closed deals</p>	 <p>Revenue Influence Return on investment for your team's work</p>
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While these core metrics should be assessed together to truly understand your company's response success, for the purpose of this next chapter, we focus solely on the behaviors of teams with win rates of more than 50%.

 **51-100% Win Rate**
For the purposes of this report, we define top-performing teams as those who win more than half of the RFPs they participate in.


What Sets Top-Performing Teams Apart

Throughout this report, we've been highlighting the factors that we see influencing top performers' success. Now, let's really dig into some of the key habits that allow them to work more effectively and, ultimately, win more.


Winning more starts with being shortlisted more. Top-performing teams advance on almost two-thirds (65%) of the RFPs they respond to.

 **1. They Set Ambitious Targets (and Meet Them).** With an average of 180 submissions per year, top-performing teams are certainly staying busy. They keep their eye on the prize, knowing that more responses gives them more opportunities to win. But they're not just responding willy-nilly: Their careful selection of which RFPs to respond to, as well as their attention to detail in those responses, gives them an edge.

→ [Read the full story in Chapter 1](#)

 **2. They're Deliberate With Their Submissions.** The flip side of submitting more is knowing what to submit. Best-in-class teams know that fit is one of the most important factors in winning. For that reason, they're careful about the RFPs they choose to pursue: 81% of top-performing teams use a go/no-go process, as compared to our average of 75%. Taking this time at the beginning to critically evaluate an opportunity stops these teams from wasting time on poor-fit proposals, and gives them more time and energy to devote to the ones that really matter.

→ [Read the full story in Chapter 1](#)

 **3. They Focus on the Process.** Teams that win more don't just focus on winning—they also pay attention to the many small steps within a submission. Best-in-class teams are significantly more likely than other groups to say that the reason they've been able to submit more is because they've improved their process—43%, compared to the average of 35%.

→ [Read the full story in Chapter 1](#)



4. They Track Granular Metrics. Similarly, top performers are more likely than others to track granular process metrics, such as the speed of completion, section scores, cost per bid, and individual team member performance. This understanding of the many factors that contribute to success allows them to make steady, incremental improvements that turn into higher advancement and win rates.

→ [Read the full story in Chapter 3](#)



5. They Have Extra Helping Hands. While the average RFP team has eight people on it, best-in-class teams have ten. That's two extra people to help chase down SMEs, write thoughtful responses, and personalize the proposal. In the fast-paced world of RFPs, every person can make a difference—and top performers reap the benefits of this extra support.

→ [Read the full story in Chapter 4](#)



6. They Spend (a Little) More Time Per RFP. Those with higher win rates spend two hours longer per RFP than the average (35 hours compared to 33). While efficiency is great, this extra time likely reflects in the quality of submissions these teams complete: Factors like increased personalization, deeper storytelling, or even just an extra set of eyes on a final review can contribute to teams cinching the deal. And, since this group tends to have larger teams, they can afford to spend this extra time without holding up other important work.

→ [Read the full story in Chapter 3](#)



7. They Feel Confident and Unstressed. Top performers are the most confident of all groups in their ability to meet the demands of 2026, with 88% reporting they're "confident," and 40% saying they're "very confident." They're also relaxed at work, with 39% saying their stress levels are "almost always manageable," five percentage points better than the average. It could be that a positive attitude helps with performance, or this confidence could come as a result of doing so well. Either way, top-performing teams reap the benefits.

→ [Read the full story in Chapter 6](#)



8. They Use Software and AI Deliberately. At first glance, top-performing teams might not look that different in terms of their technology adoption. They're slightly more likely than average to use RFP software (72% compared to 69%) and about average with their AI use. But what separates them is how they leverage these technologies.

Top responders are overall just as likely to use AI for generating answers, editing, and writing, but are also far more likely than the average to go deeper with it—leveraging AI to analyze proposal quality, ensure accuracy, and interpret data, to name a few examples.

→ [Read the full story in Chapter 5](#)



9. They Make the Most Out of Their Resources. While top performers are not significantly more resourced than their peers (81% gained or maintained their resources, as compared to the average of 79%), how they use their resources seems to matter. Top performers make good use of what they have—they're more than ten percentage points more likely to say they have everything they need. Plus, they're less likely to cite limited resources as a barrier to their success.

→ [Read the full story in Chapter 6](#)



10. They're Seen as Strategic Partners. The crux of it all seems to be this: Top-performing teams are more likely to say that they're seen as strategic contributors within their organizations, and that they have a strong influence on sales success and deal strategy—60% compared to 47% of the average. Whether they're given this trust because they're top performers, or they're top performers because they've already been given this trust, is a stickier issue to untangle—but the correlation is clear. By contrast, the majority of low and middle performers say that their work is valued but not always seen as strategic.

→ [Read the full story in Chapter 6](#)

How to Become a Top-Performing Team

If there's one thing to take away from this report, it should be this: Teams that have positioned themselves as **strategic drivers of revenue** and that have **real influence in their organizations** are the top performers. This group measures more granular insights, they use AI deliberately for more than just content generation, and they prepare themselves for the year ahead so they feel confident. As a result, they win more and drive a higher percentage of revenue.



Set ambitious, but realistic goals: How much revenue do you need to earn this year? How many deals would it take to get there? What kinds of RFPs move the needle the most? Start with the end in mind, and clearly define the steps you'll need to achieve your ambitions.



Slow down to speed up: If you don't already have one, build a go/no-go process to ensure the RFPs you pursue align with your goals. Spend a little extra time per RFP when possible to polish and personalize—the difference between a good response and a great one is in the little details.



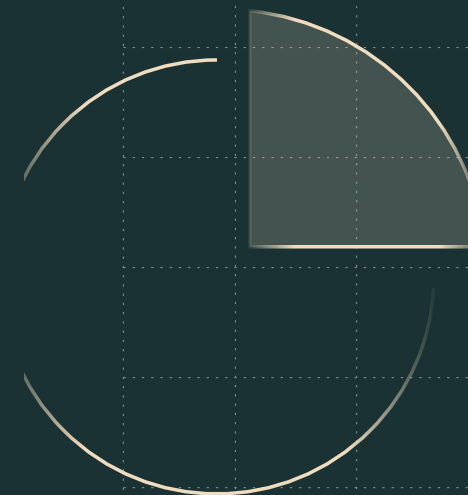
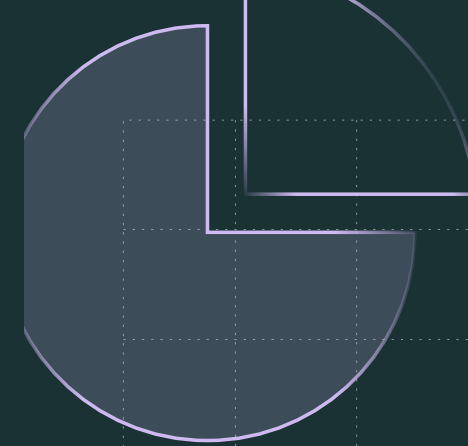
Focus on steady, incremental improvements to your process: Track metrics like speed of completion, section scores, and cost per bid. Use what you learn to continuously optimize your process.



Make the most of what you have, especially when it comes to technology: Get scrappy and use your resources to their highest potential, no matter your team's budget. Use AI strategically—not just as a drafting companion, but as an analytical tool that can help you make your responses the best they can be.



Demonstrate your strategic value: Show leaders the value you bring in by clearly tying your responses to revenue. The more you can show that your influence on sales and deal strategy matters, the more successful you'll be. Use the data in this report to help show how significant your impact is to the bottom line—and if there are gaps, make a case for the resources you need to help your company win more.



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