

2022 | Q3

CREATIVE OPERATIONS REPORT

Why In-House Brand
and Creative Teams
are Restructuring



Executive Summary

Did you know that three out of four in-house creative teams either restructured in the past year, or plan to do so soon? Maybe it's not surprising.

Last quarter's Creative Operations Report revealed that in-house creative teams are growing in size, increasing their influence, and becoming better represented at the strategic table where decisions are made. Coupled with the acceleration of workplace changes driven by the pandemic, the Great Resignation, and flashing economic warning lights, there are plenty of reasons for restructuring that we could speculate about.

We wanted to do more than speculate, though – so we asked. And the community answered.

The Why: Experience, Efficiency, and Employees

Why have teams restructured? **The top three reasons are all around the experience of teams and their stakeholders:**



45%

**Better internal
collaboration**



39%

**Sustainable
workload**



36%

**Improving customer
experience**

There are other common reasons mentioned for restructuring. Many relate to creating internal efficiency by improving internal communication (35%), clarifying roles and responsibilities (35%), and managing changing priorities (35%).

The least common – but still well represented - reasons were all focused on employees and roles: integrating marketing or analytics roles (31% each), integrating account manager (23%), or project manager roles (20%).

Becoming More Strategic: Easier for Mid-Sized Teams

Continuing the theme of strategic empowerment from the Q2 Creative Operations Report, 34% of respondents reorganized to better engage with their stakeholders on a strategic level. However, large (21+) and small (1-5) teams have the lowest strategic engagement, with large teams spending less than 4% of their time on strategic work. Mid-sized (6-20) teams, in contrast, spend between 19% and 24% of their time involved in strategic services.

Small teams, of course, often start as in-house studios that are focused on production. With larger teams, it's worth asking if there are missed opportunities for further strategic engagement.

The How: Use a Platform? Use the Data!

Most respondents (91%) had a creative operations/workflow platform in place, or at least a project management solution. Most respondents (81%) used the data from that platform or solution in making their restructuring decisions.

The inputs used tended to be project-centric (number of requests received, type of projects, type of deliverables) more than people-centric (hours of work, utilization/capacity of team members). This fits with the finding on the reasons for changes, with experience and efficiency being more popular reasons for change than employees. However, many of the efficiency-oriented objectives also benefit team members by freeing up time and improving communication.

The Results: Acceleration, Quality, and Collaboration

If experience was the biggest reason for a planned restructuring, efficiency was the biggest result, with 37% of teams reporting that their ability to deliver work more rapidly was the top outcome. 19% of teams found the ability to improve their output had improved the most, while 12% found the biggest benefit to be improved collaboration.



37%
delivering more rapidly



19%
delivering better quality



12%
collaborating more effectively

Perhaps you've recently been through a restructuring and want to understand how your experience compares to that of your peers. Perhaps you haven't, and you just want to understand how and why others are working to structure their teams for success and improved strategic contribution.

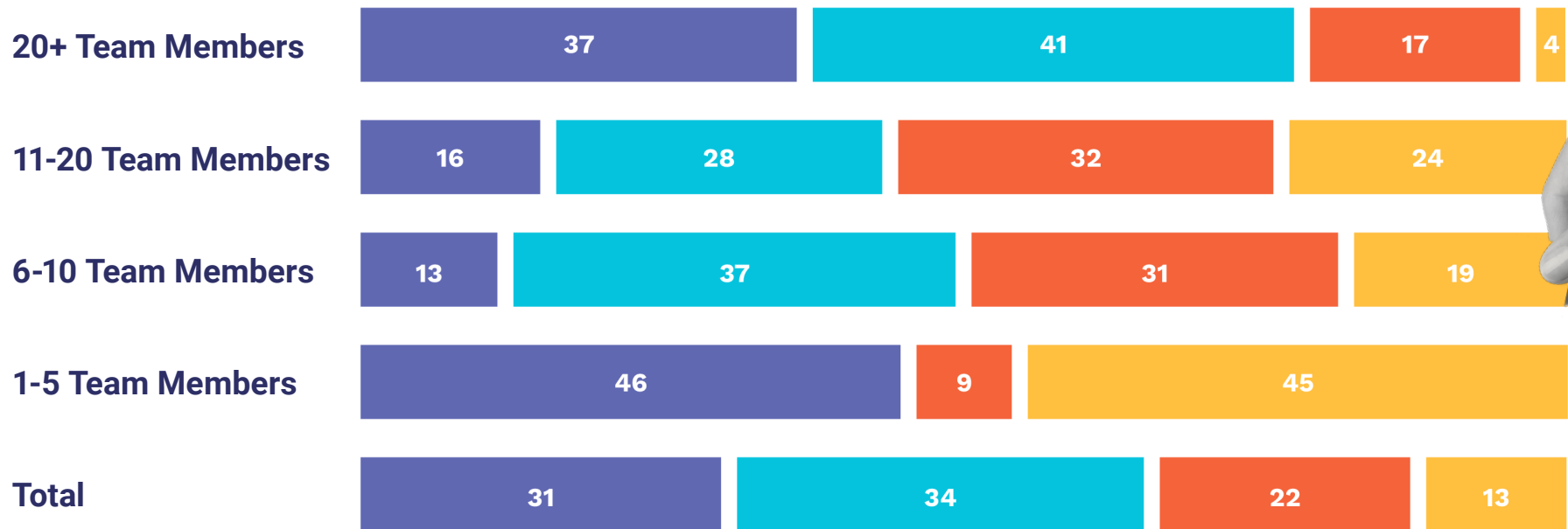
Either way, we hope this report is useful to you, and we'll continue researching the market and sharing our findings. Feel free to reach out to us at marketing@lytho.com with comments or suggestions for further research.

Team Changes



Type of Team

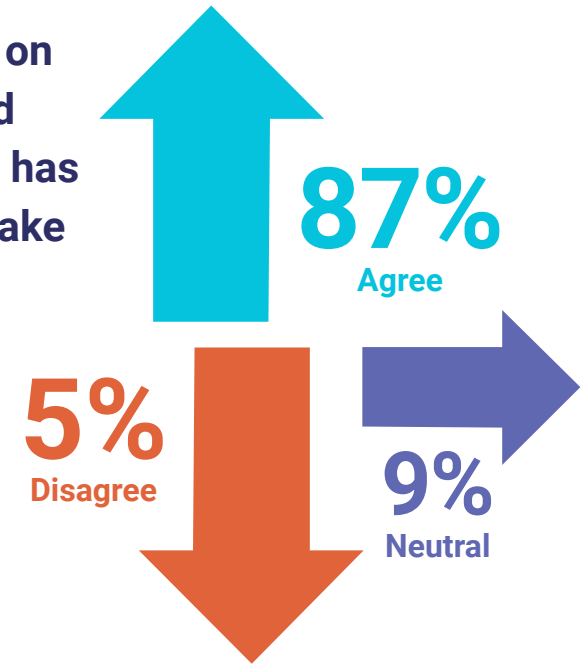
Most teams (**56%**) do a mix of tactical and strategic work but the mix is different depending on the size of the team



- Pure Strategic Services** – Only strategic work. We direct external agency partners on original conceiving and tactical/production work
- Pure Production Services** – All tactical/production work. We receive all strategy and direction from external agency partner
- Evolving In-House Agency** – Mostly tactical/production work with some strategic work and original conceiving
- In-House Agency** – Regularly involved in strategic work and original conceiving, but still some tactical/production work

Current structures allow for clear delegation of authority and expectations but could improve in allocating workload

I am clear on who on my in-house brand and creative team has the authority to make important project decisions



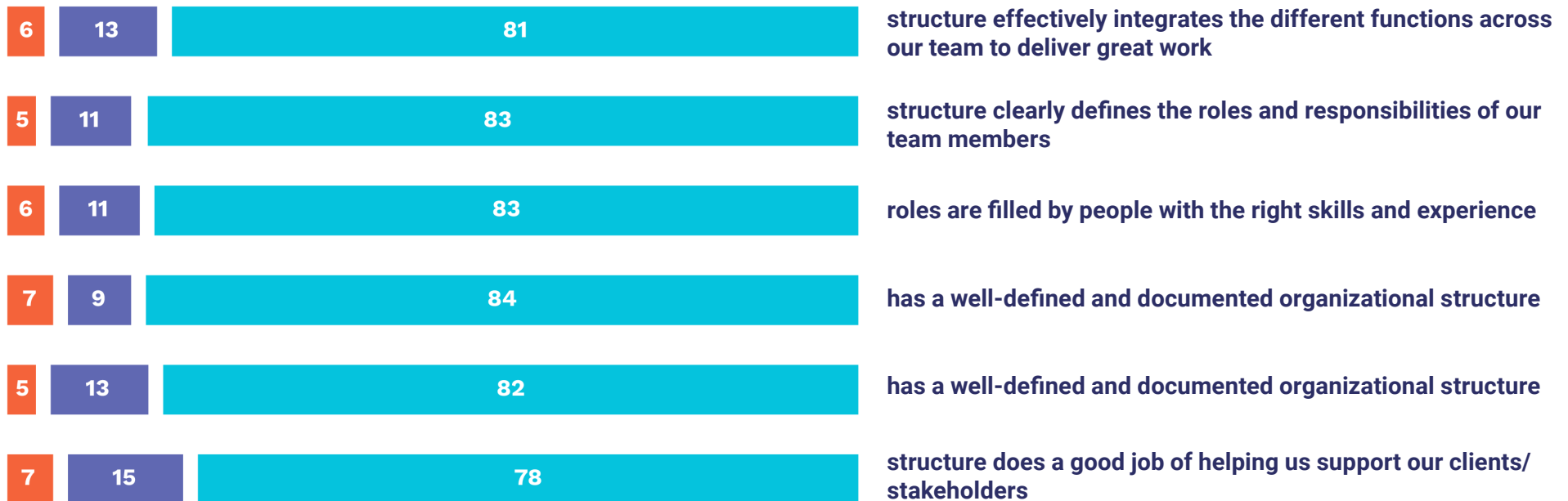
Our in-house brand and creative team...



Current structures allow for clear delegation of authority and expectations but could improve in allocating workload



Our in-house brand and creative team...



To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

 Agree  Neutral  Disagree

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Peter Skophammer

Manager, Marketing Operations & Creative Services at Children's Minnesota

Peter has managed teams, departments, and projects across channels in both agency and in-house creative environments. He leads marketing operations and creative services for Children's Minnesota, leading strategy and creative development while managing projects, resources, and teams across projects and channels. Peter balances adaptability with the reality of hard deadlines and process requirements and is skilled in coaching teams and business partners to achieve success.

Challenging Times Bring Changing Models

Peter started at Children's by taking an already-strong project management approach and optimizing it. A team of project managers routed the work to the right resources across the channels in the organization. Things were relatively locked down in terms of permissions. **"We didn't want an account person to go in and change dates or anything like that," says Peter, "so it was a pretty old-school project management-based model."**

What neither Peter nor anyone else had foreseen was the COVID-19 pandemic. Healthcare, even more so than other industries faced significant challenges. Functions like marketing that weren't seen as essential to providing healthcare found themselves struggling. "Just about every health care organization went through a workforce reduction," observes Peter, "and so of course we did."

That left Peter with a very different team. For starters, although there were many team members to serve across web, PR, digital, social, sales, and other teams, there was only one project manager to route and manage the work.

Although the existing model had been effective, Peter was no longer staffed effectively for it. He knew he had to think differently. He worked to empower the channels by giving them both independence and training, giving the marketing leads from the various teams more flexibility. **"Everybody got project manager credentials to accept projects, set up templates, set dates, and more,"** explains Peter. "And that's how we operated during the pandemic."

The Right Prescription for Long-Term Health

The team began staffing up as the environment stabilized. Peter had initially envisioned going back to a project management model, but the department leadership saw an opportunity to have the marketing leads function more like account managers. Requests for work for the web team would include the marketing lead for that business area, for example, instead of being handled in a silo by the web team. The same held true for the other channels. Peter was open to the change, but knew that the processes, systems, and people would need to operate differently.

“For that to work,” says Peter, “You need a really strong kind of triage. The intake process has to be strong, and you need to function a little bit more like a traffic team when the work comes in.” Centralizing the work at intake ties the work together, allowing for not just more efficient execution but better brand and message consistency across channels and tactics..

Peter finds that people respond well to ideas from within their own industry, so he turned to healthcare for inspiration. “Your primary care physician isn’t doing all of the work,” he notes. “But they have a chart that has all your information. If you’re getting your tonsils out, or seeking mental health, you might see someone who’s not that primary care physician, but there should still be someone who understands what is happening with you holistically. We set up a model that allowed us to do that. There is always a person who has line of site to everything happening in a particular business area”

Leading the Team Through Change

The marketing leads were concerned that they’d be overwhelmed with incoming work. Peter made it clear that they were not accountable for managing every project. “It’s not your job to do everything or route everything,” Peter reminded them. The channels should be able to execute most work on their own, but “it’s your job to be the person who has visibility to all of the work happening in support of your accounts.”

The teams soon found the new process empowering rather than overwhelming. “Our leadership is focused on making sure that our work is strategically aligned to the organization,” Peter explains.

“Team members are now in a position to see how their work ties to that strategy, and they got fired up about the ability to flex their strategic muscles.”

The fundraising arm, Children’s Minnesota Foundation, was a rapid adopter of the new process and set the model for the other teams to emulate. The account manager is tagged on incoming work. Often that work requires no intervention but goes directly to the web team or other channel to fulfill. But the marketing lead is always aware of the incoming work, able to monitor and speak to the projects in process, and able to maintain brand and message consistency. Other teams quickly followed suit.

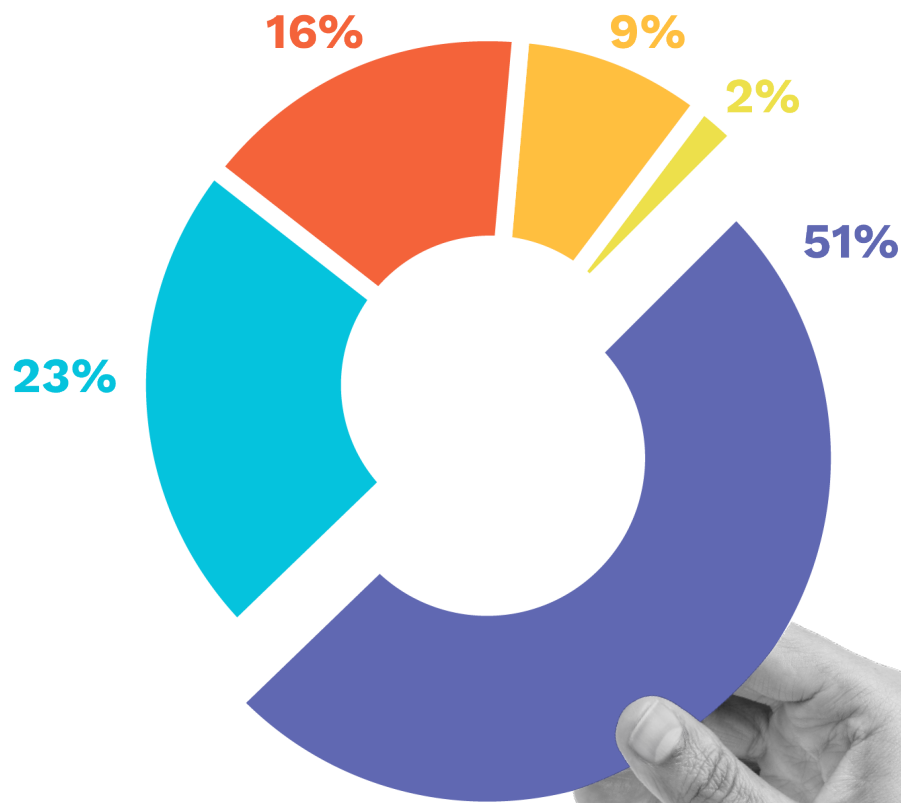
“People tend to worry that new processes will make things more complicated, but we’re not trying to set up process for the sake of process,” Peter concludes. **“We’re trying to set up processes for people to do what they do best. If you listen and learn from them, and incorporate that into the process, they’ll embrace it.”**

Team Restructuring



Restructuring Process

Almost **3 out of every 4** respondents are on a team that has been restructured in the last 12 months or currently being restructured



Has your in-house brand and creative team experienced a restructuring of roles and responsibilities in the past 12 months or is one being planned for the future?

- Yes, we restructured within the past 12 months
- Yes, we are currently in the middle of a restructure
- Yes, we are planning to restructure sometime in the next 12 months
- No, we have not restructured in the past 12 months and do not plan to in the next 12 months
- Not sure

Drivers Behind Restructuring

Improving collaboration and managing workload top the drivers for restructuring an in-house brand and creative team

45%

To improve internal collaboration

39%

To create a more sustainable workload

36%

To improve our customer's experience

35%

- To improve internal communication
- To add and integrate new roles into our team
- To better manage changing responsibilities
- To improve the consistency in how we work with clients/stakeholders
- To clarify roles and responsibility

34%

- To better engage with clients on a strategic level
- To deliver work to clients/stakeholders faster

31%

- To add and integrate analytics roles into our team
- To add and integrate marketing roles into our team
- To improve our product(s) or service(s)

25%

To support a new staffing model

23%

To add and integrate account manager roles into our team

20%

To add and integrate project manager roles into our team

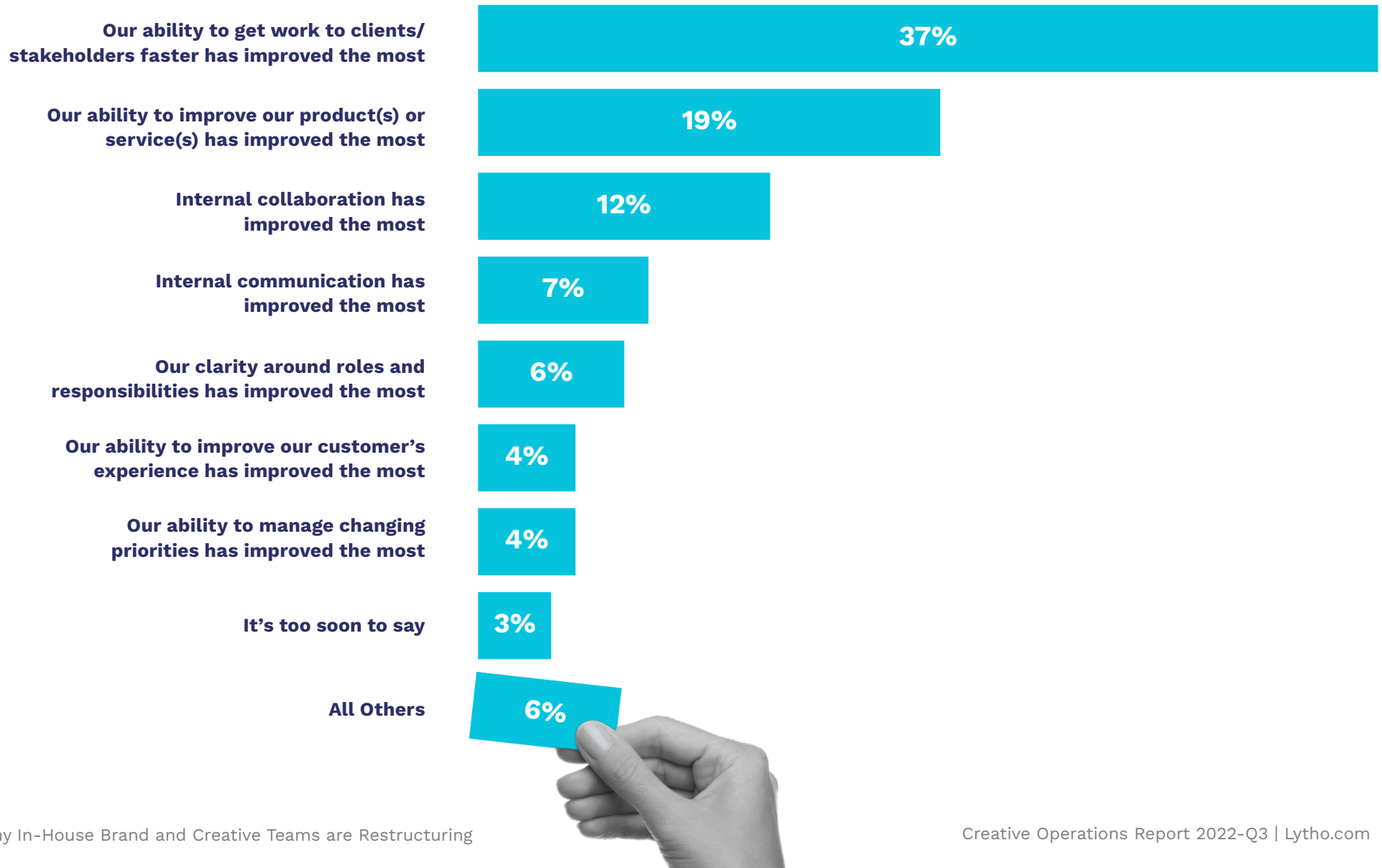
2%

Other



Results After Restructuring

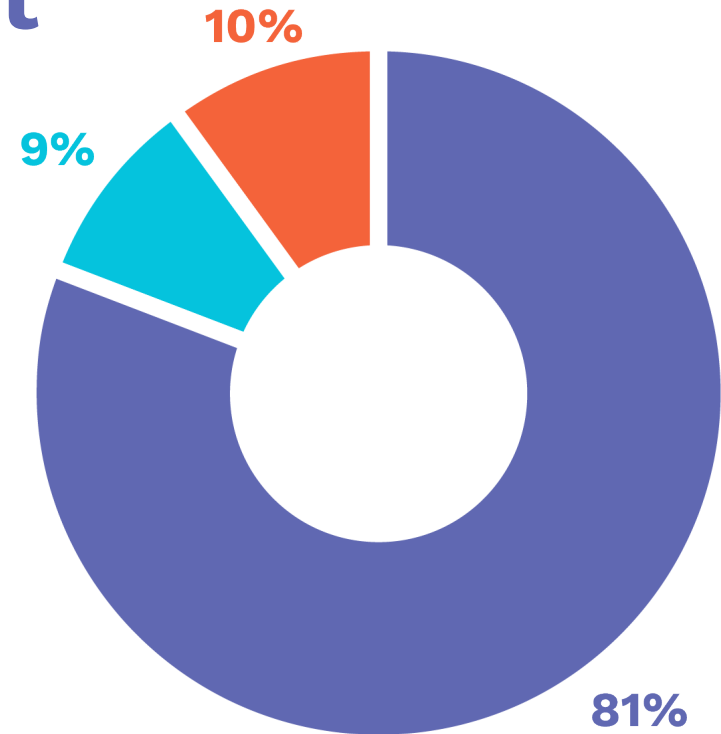
Timely delivery and improved quality of products and services are the top outcomes of recent restructurings



Use of Workflow/Project Management Solution

The **vast majority (91%)** of respondents whose organization **had a recent restructure indicated** their company has a workflow/project management solution

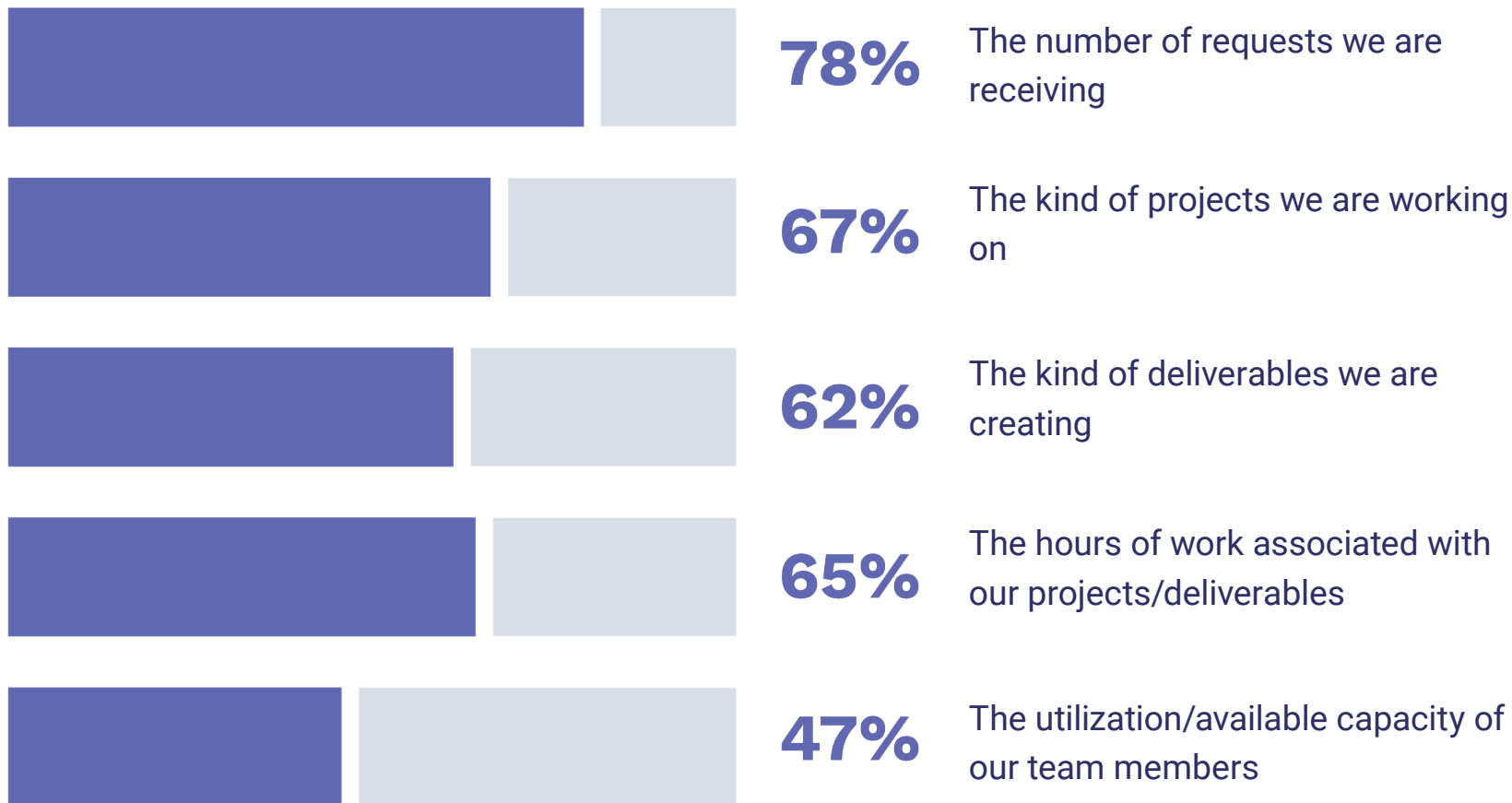
Most respondents (81%) also indicated that **tool was used during the design phase of the new team structure**



- Yes, we used data from our workflow/project management solution to inform how we should design our team structure
- No, we didn't have a workflow/project management solution
- No, though we have a workflow/project management solution it was not used to inform our restructure

Data Input to Workflow/Project Management Solution

The inputs used to design the team were more project centric than people centric and focused on the inputs to complete a project



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Kyle Hamer
Chief Marketing Officer, Asite

Kyle's built his career by transforming brand and companies – and, most importantly, cultures. As Chief Marketing Officer at cloud collaboration solution Asite, he helps companies in the construction industry harness their asset and construction project data. Kyle's focused on transforming the way we build, operate, and live – one project, one enterprise, and one person at a time.

Step One: Reorganizing Asite's Team for Role Clarity and Market Impact

As an incoming CMO, Kyle saw immediate opportunity to improve delivery by realigning the team. The team was flat, all reporting into the Head of Marketing. The team was primarily focused on thought leadership and sales enablement deliverables and was made up of copywriters, designers, a front-end web development role, and a videographer.

There was a substantial amount of red tape and bureaucracy, so deliverables sat as work in progress, idle, waiting for approvals. Team members felt lost and disconnected from results. "For lack of a better word", says Kyle, "It was chaos."

Kyle revised the marketing organization. His core objective was to bring transparency to the process, so the team focused on two main areas.

First, Kyle established a design team lead over all visual content, including graphic design, web, and video. Second, he appointed a content manager in charge of the written elements of content, charged with understanding and finessing the message of all content that would be distributed.

The reorganization was successful in reducing the work in progress problem. It was also effective in creating role clarity, as the two teams – design and content – were able to work more effectively under their respective team leads, making red tape and bureaucracy largely a thing of the past.

"The team responded really well to different structure, new management, getting their work seen like that," notes Kyle. But teams grow and situations change – and Kyle is relentlessly focused on optimizing for the next challenge ahead.

Step Two: Realigning for Strategic Focus

The team gained a lot of ground and more effective coordination with the first reorganization, but the team had also grown. It had become even more global, with team members in Australia, Europe, and the US. Just as troubling, brand continuity was becoming an issue. The website and the product value were not well aligned, in part because the UI/UX team was not reporting in to or aligned with the marketing team.

Team members saw an opportunity for further improvement. “People said that we had outgrown that structure, that we had achieved the objectives and reached a point where the structure was actually preventing us from that next step.”

As a culture-first leader who’s also focused on continual improvement, Kyle knew two things.

First, the reorganization had delivered the results he’d wanted, but there was more opportunity for improvement, based on team growth and changes.

And second, the word “reorganization” risked scaring the team. “If I’m in HP or Dell or Amazon,” says Kyle, “and somebody says the word ‘restructure’, everybody is like ‘Oh no, I’m losing my job,’ and they stop working. There’s a great deal of sensitivity to the words that I would choose when we talk about it.”

Kyle set about working with the team to “realign” to realize further gains. In communication, he focused on a simple message: “this is about roles and responsibilities in helping us achieve what we’re really setting out to do.”

The realignment kept many areas of the first reorganization, with Creative and Content as separate areas. But there were changes. A designer who’d taken lead on high-profile projects such as high-level brand work and board presentations was promoted into a Creative Director role. Similarly, the creative team lead was moved into an Art Director role.

That created two co-owners of the brand. The Art Director was responsible for the visual aesthetic and the presentation of the

information, whether web, video, or any sort of multimedia. The Creative Director was in charge of how that information was presented both externally and internally. Together, the two owned determining how the core brand message was delivered.

Additionally, the Creative Director owned the UI/UX delivery. That provided better creative direction to the UI/UX team and resolved the problem of the website and marketing deliverables being disconnected from the experience in the software product. With this change, Asite moved towards a consistent, integrated product experience.

Lessons Learned

Kyle advises remember that organizations have a personnel makeup – almost a persona – in making organizational changes. “I might have made different decisions at the start,” says Kyle. “One of the most complex things when it comes to creatives is that they’re harder to lock down with numbers, and everything can become very subjective, so I try to move the conversation to something that’s objective.”

The other lesson was to begin with an open mind. Kyle’s seen many executives come in and make moves to what they considered the “right” organization structure – and found those moves resisted. He seeks first to understand the team and the rationale for the current structure. “I usually walk in and have an idea of how I want to set it up,” notes Kyle. “But I also believe that making people feel rewarded is the number one job of an executive for a team.” He advocates starting with a clean sheet of paper, listening to the team and assessing the landscape, and making changes based on that assessment.

Respondents' Profile

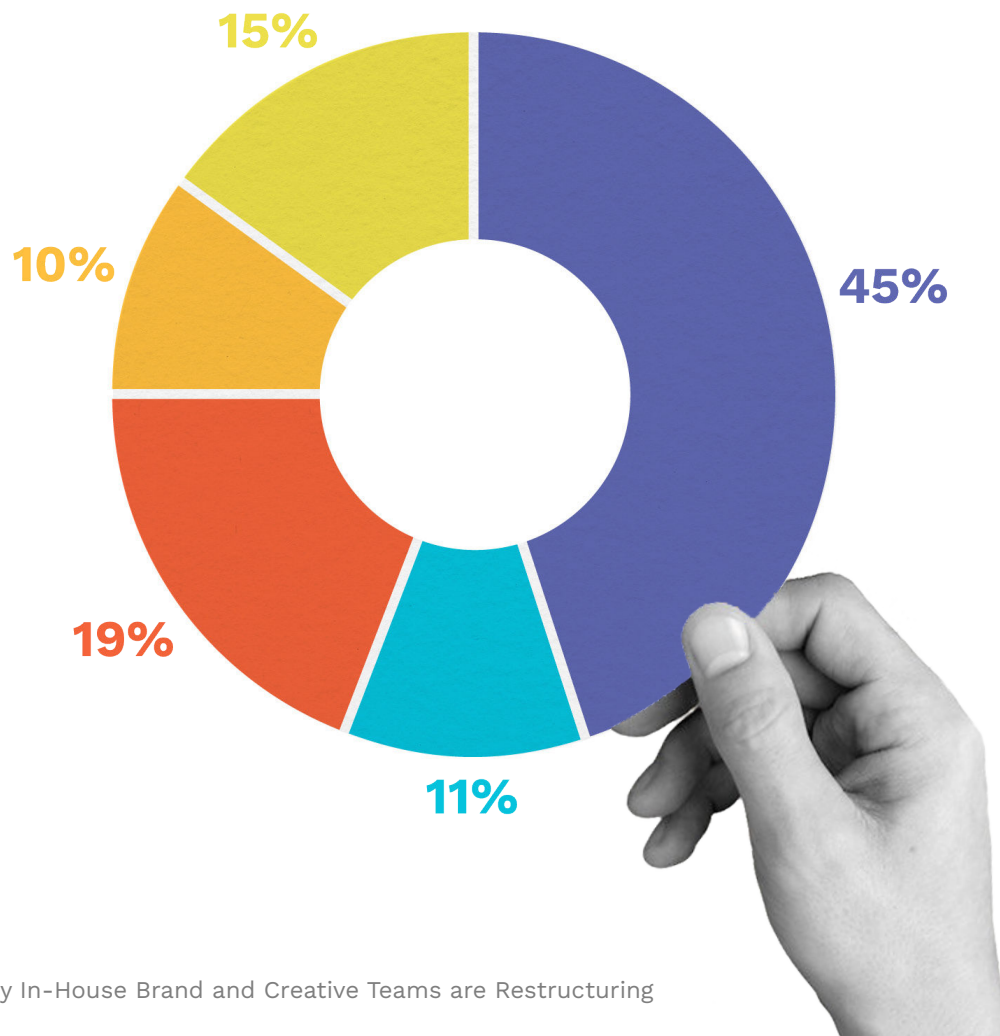


Respondents' Role

Most respondents (56%) consider themselves to be part of a creative role verse **marketing role (29%)**

The remaining **15%** are in an **operational/project management role**

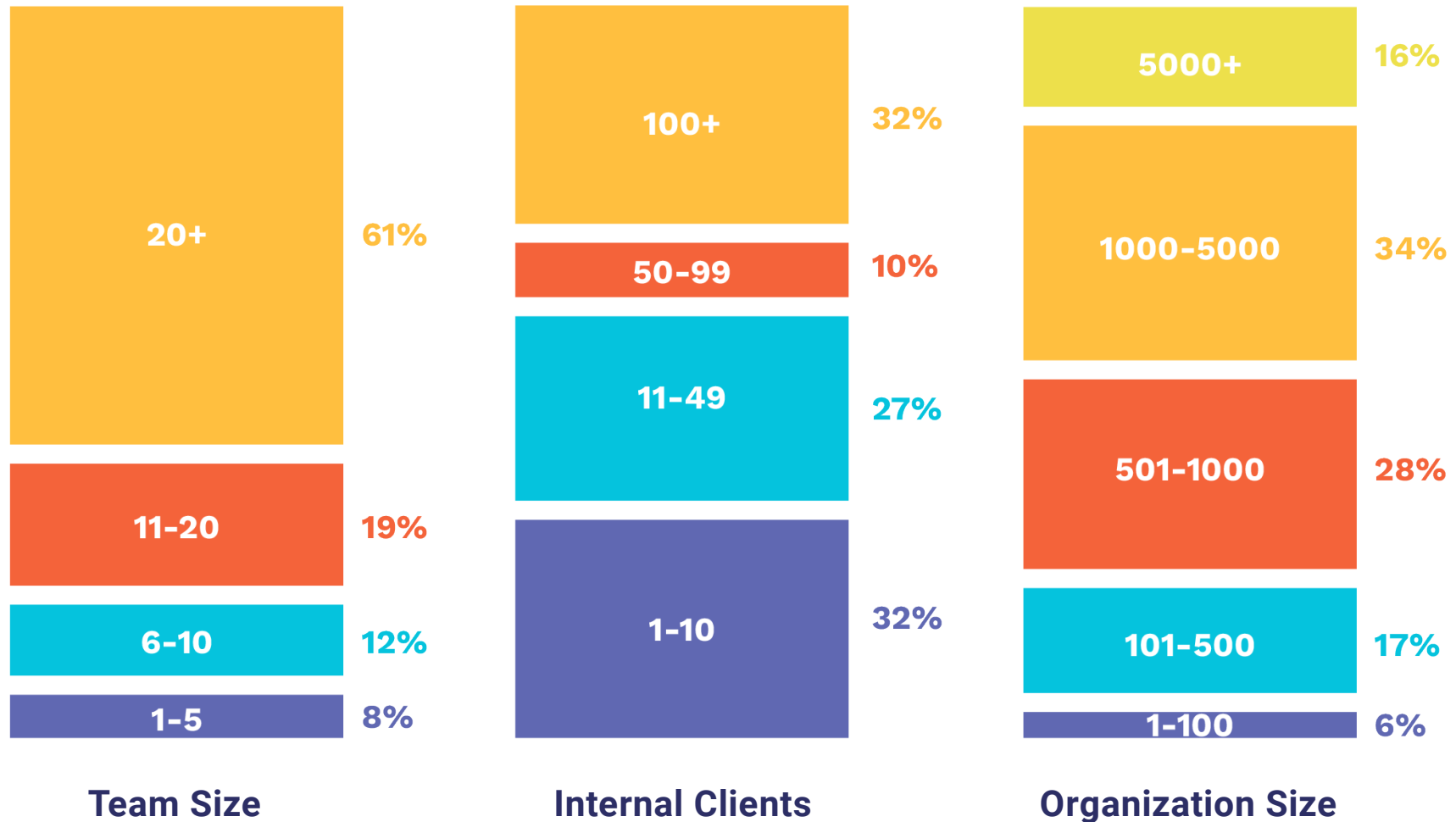
Most respondents were in a **management role (64%)**



- Manage in-house creative design team
- Creative role on the in-house creative or marketing team
- Project mgt / operational support role on the in-house creative or marketing team
- Marketing role on the in-house creative or marketing team
- Manage in-house creative marketing team

Respondents' Team and Organization

All size teams, organizations and client bases were represented with few differences in patterns of restructuring



Respondents' Industry

Technology was the most represented industry equaling **25% of respondents**

8% CPG

25% Tech

12% Manufacturing

5% Financial

2% Banking

4% Entertainment

2% Hospitals

5% Health Care

1% Government

4% Hospitality

2% Non-Profit

14% Retail

1% Higher Education

5% Telecommunication

11% Other



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Nathan Jackson

Executive Vice President, Presentify – A Mediafly Service

With many years of executive and creative leadership experience, Nathan leads the global creative teams at Mediafly. But until a recent reorganization (Spring 2022), the creative functions at Mediafly were split – the internal creative team reported into Brand Marketing, whereas client-facing services reported into Presentify, Mediafly's Creative Division.

Why the change? The thought process behind the reorganization was simple: with Presentify, Nathan and team work with some of the world's most innovative brands, pushing the boundaries through visual and interactive design. What if that competency was extended to all of Mediafly's creative initiatives – from marketing collateral and digital campaigns to sales presentations, enablement, web and more?

Drinking Their Own Champagne

The core problems Nathan set out to solve with the reorganization are familiar to many creative leaders. **“Internal creative teams are typically challenged with tight deadlines where they don't have as much time as they would like to produce amazing work,”** says Nathan, that challenge ends up leading to poor creative briefs. As a result, designers are forced to skip critical steps, left unable to truly apply their creativity and use the skills in which they've been trained.”

“I found the process we used to manage our commercial team worked very efficiently, but it wasn't applied internally, impacting the deliverables delivered to stakeholders.”

Nathan is quick to point out this challenge is not unique to Mediafly. “This is something I see many of our external customers

face in working with their own internal creative teams – which is why they often tap outside services.”

Nathan opened a conversation with incoming CMO Lindsey Tishgart. “She agreed there was an opportunity to leverage the proven best practices used with our external clients, with our internal team. For Mediafly Marketing to be treated like a client – and for our talented internal design team to break down the silos and collaborate with their creative peers.” Nathan and Lindsey called it “Mediafly for Mediafly.”

Aligning On Content Outcomes

The core objective was to provide better service to stakeholders. But defining “better” was, in Nathan's eyes, something to quantify. “Any asset we create has to fundamentally help the stakeholder achieve a pre-defined objective,” explains Nathan. “By using our platform to host content, we get detailed data into how the

content is consumed and shared — whether in prospecting, mid-sales cycle, or with current customers. Those insights, along with an integration to our CRM makes it easy for our team to understand the impact on pipeline and overall ROI the content is generating.”

Aligning on the desired outcomes has created a virtuous circle, driving the right behavior from all stakeholders involved in the process — sales, marketing and designers. “From the start, everyone thinks about who the audience is, the purpose of each piece of content, and the desired call to action,” shared Nathan. “What’s the message? Is there a range of personas to connect and engage with? We ensure there’s a cohesive story in the content development.” **With a little more process up front, comes better briefs. And better briefs deliver better outcomes, happier stakeholders, and business growth.**

Overcoming Internal Fears

A change in process always brings concerns from stakeholders, and this process change was no exception. “Team members were afraid we’d lose velocity and that projects would take

longer,” recalls Nathan. However, he credits the Mediafly team and culture for **making one of the most common concerns - “we’ve always done it this way” - not a concern.** “We are growing and acquisitive, so the team has an open mind to change. That mindset helped us roll this out in a positive way quickly.”

Advice for Others

When asked what guidance he’d give to others considering restructuring, Nathan is pragmatic, yet appeals to the idealism of the creative soul in selling the idea. “When creatives don’t feel they’re empowered or that their skills are being fully utilized, it’s the perfect time to drive change.”

Stakeholders, of course, need to buy into the idea. “I recommend getting a few influential stakeholders on board and conveying how this approach will allow the creative team to **do even more for them,**” he says. “Find a project where you can collaborate on with the most senior person in your organization and show them what differentiation can truly mean. Get them on your side, and they become your greatest advocate.”

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