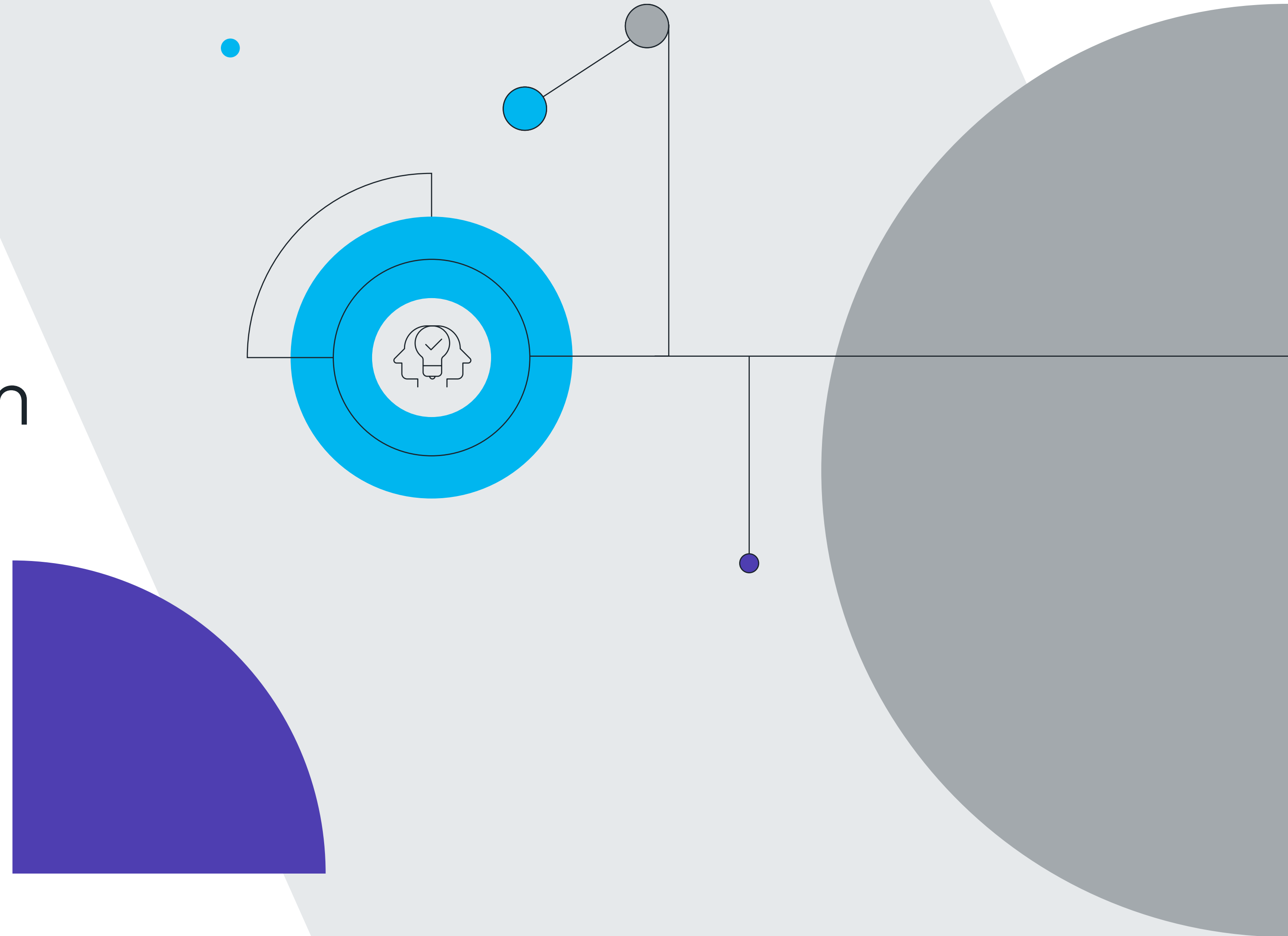**APPDYNAMICS**™
part of Cisco

Agents of Transformation Report 2020

How Agents of Transformation are leading their organizations through the COVID-19 pandemic

Research methodology

To better understand the challenges and changing priorities that technologists are facing during the COVID-19 pandemic, AppDynamics has undertaken comprehensive global research, from board-level directors and CIOs, through to senior and mid-level IT management.

This research entailed:

▶ Interviews with 1,000 IT professionals in organizations with a turnover of at least $500m

▶ Interviews were conducted in 10 markets — US, UK, France, Germany, Australia, Canada, UAE, Russia, Japan, Singapore

▶ Respondents worked across a range of industries, including IT, financial services, retail, public sector, manufacturing and automotive, and media and communications

All research was conducted by Insight Avenue between 22nd April and 6th May 2020.

How Agents of Transformation are leading their organizations through the COVID-19 pandemic

Introduction

Organizations are facing the biggest challenge of our lifetime, as the COVID-19 pandemic forces businesses to respond to unprecedented customer and employee demands. Huge segments of the workforces have gone remote, and companies are switching to digital-only strategies to deliver services and products. Millions of people are accessing websites and applications for data and information. The pressure on technology and the people running IT departments all over the world has never been greater.

Our world changed almost overnight. With no chance to prepare, IT departments are facing a brand new set of priorities and challenges, and technologists are suddenly under immense pressure to deliver the infrastructure, applications and security required to maintain world-class digital experiences, both internally and externally. And they're having to do this in real-time, through a period of massive change, often whilst working remotely.

In November 2018, AppDynamics released a global study reporting that Agents of Transformation, those elite technologists driving successful digital transformation, made up only 9% of the world's technologists. The number was alarmingly small, but there was hope — 97% of global technologists had the ambition and desire to innovate, drive change and digitally transform their organizations.

In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for greater numbers of technologists to step up as Agents of Transformation has not changed. What has dramatically changed is the urgency.

Organizations need technologists to fulfil their potential, drive new innovation and perform at the very highest level, not in the future, but today. This is how businesses, and our wider communities, can respond most effectively and quickly to the current crisis — and how we can rebuild our economies and return to growth in the months ahead.

This report examines in detail the pressures that technologists are experiencing and how their priorities are changing as a result of COVID-19. It explores the challenges that they must overcome to drive immediate but sustainable innovation within their organizations, and the skills, tools and support they need to perform at a higher level.

These Agents of Transformation are the heroes of IT departments around the world. Cisco AppDynamics is committed to helping technologists during this pandemic and beyond by providing the technology, technical support, remote learning, training and financial support that they need to prosper.

COVID-19 – A challenge like no other

The COVID-19 pandemic is impacting technology departments across the globe in a way that was unimaginable just a few months ago. Technologists find themselves spearheading their organizations' response to the biggest global economic crisis for generations and, in many cases, with the immediate survival of their businesses resting on their shoulders.

81%

81% of technologists state that COVID-19 has created the biggest technology pressure for their organization that they have ever experienced.

61%

At an individual level, **61% of technologists** feel under more pressure at work than ever before.

The research finds that technologists are experiencing pressures from all sides, accelerating digital transformation projects, mobilizing huge sections of the workforce to operate from home, while at the same time needing to manage their network and maintain security throughout the technology stack.

Everything has changed. Structures and processes have been turned upside down and priorities have radically shifted, with individual roles and responsibilities having to adapt to meet them.

95%

Technology priorities have changed within **95% of organizations** surveyed during the pandemic.

88%

88% of technologists report that digital customer experience is now the priority.

2/3

Almost two thirds (64%) of technologists are now being asked to perform tasks and activities they have never done before.

Digital transformation at speed

Organizations are urgently having to adapt their go-to-market strategies and create and launch new digital services and applications in the current environment. As a result, technologists are being asked to deliver major transformation projects in previously unthinkable timeframes — all the while ensuring flawless customer experience.

66% say the pandemic has exposed weaknesses in their digital strategy, driving an urgent need to push through initiatives which were once a part of multi-year digital transformation programs.

74% of technologists report that digital transformation projects which would typically take more than a year to be approved, have been signed off in a matter of weeks.

71% point to digital transformation projects that have been implemented within weeks rather than the months or years it would have taken before the pandemic.

65% of technologists report they have already implemented digital transformation projects during the pandemic that were previously dismissed as unnecessary.

With such pressure to deliver projects at this incredible pace, there is no time for lengthy planning cycles and comprehensive proof of concept testing. Compromises have to be struck — and many technologists are concerned that future-proofing is taking a back seat.

59%

76%
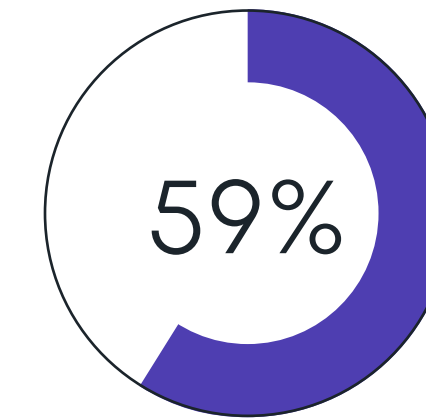
59% admit that they are firefighting and introducing short-term fixes to technology problems.
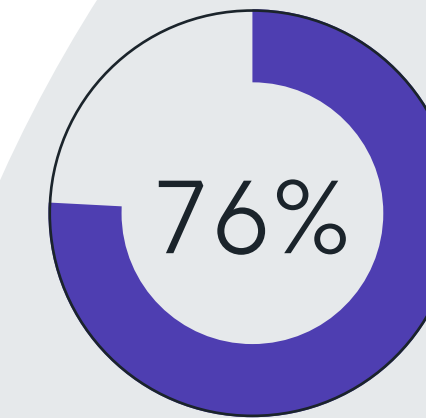
76% of technologists express concern about the longer-term impact of digital transformation initiatives they have had to rush through during COVID-19.

Organizations across all sectors are recognizing that having real-time visibility and insight into their application performance, to be able to identify and resolve issues immediately and consistently deliver world-class digital experiences, is vital to making the right decisions for long term value to the business.
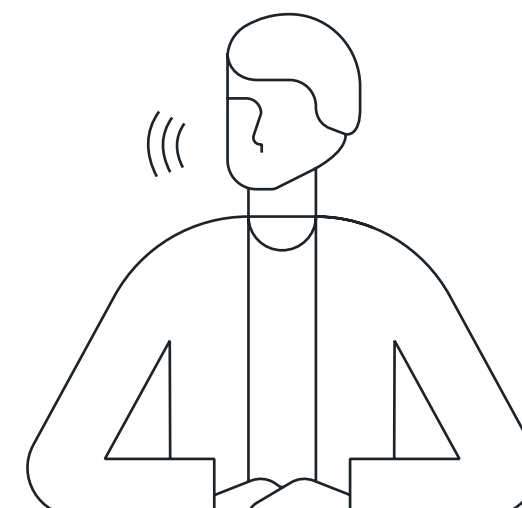
# New barriers to optimal digital experience during COVID-19

Unsurprisingly, given the scale and urgency of the task at hand, technologists are encountering many challenges as they navigate these unchartered waters. These range from handling dramatic increases in website traffic and demand for applications, to expanding capabilities for self-service and digital sales, and maintaining Mean Time to Resolution (MTTR) levels whilst operating as a remote IT department.

80% of technologists believe that the performance of applications and digital services is critical to their business during this time; yet the same number state that they are being held up by a lack of visibility and insight into the performance of their technology stack.
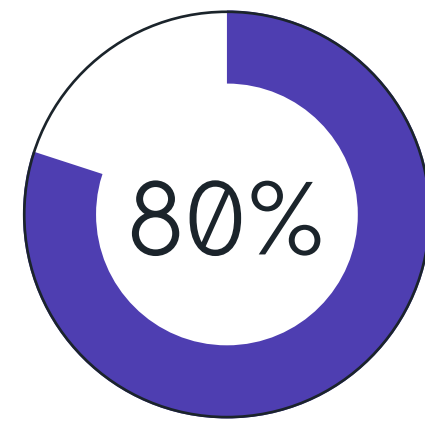
What are the major challenges to delivering high quality digital customer experience during the COVID-19 pandemic?
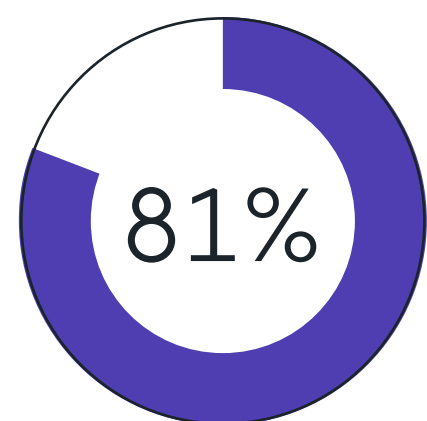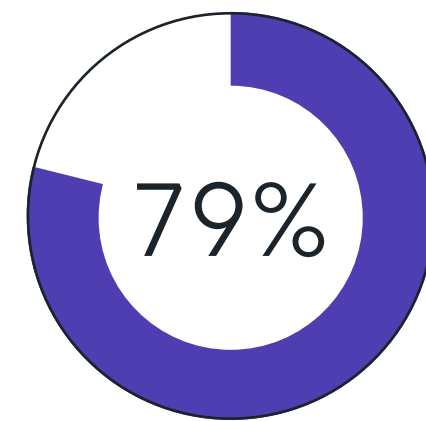
81%
Managing spikes in website traffic
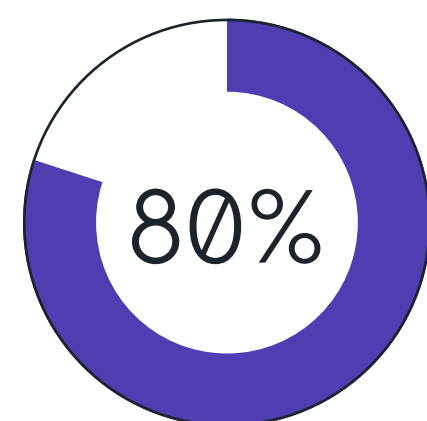
80%
Providing positive digital customer experience across all channels

80%
Lack of unified visibility and insight into performance of technology stack and its impact on customers

79%
Managing Mean Time to Resolution (MTTR) with a remote IT department

Today, the application is the business, and more than ever technologists must find ways to ensure they have access to the tools and accurate data they need to make informed, strategic decisions in real-time, and connect application and digital performance to key business outcomes.

Organizations need to recognize that only with the right actionable insights can technologists succeed in delivering the highest levels of performance across all digital services, and enhancing digital experiences for customers during the pandemic and beyond.

# The challenge of mobilizing a new remote workforce

The study also reveals challenges in providing optimum digital experiences to a workforce that is in many cases now entirely remote and unfamiliar with the applications and platforms they need to be productive away from the office.

Large sections of the workforce have suddenly found themselves working at home, without the connectivity, devices and software to be effective, and often lacking the skills and knowledge to resolve simple issues. And it has fallen to the IT department to tackle this problem.
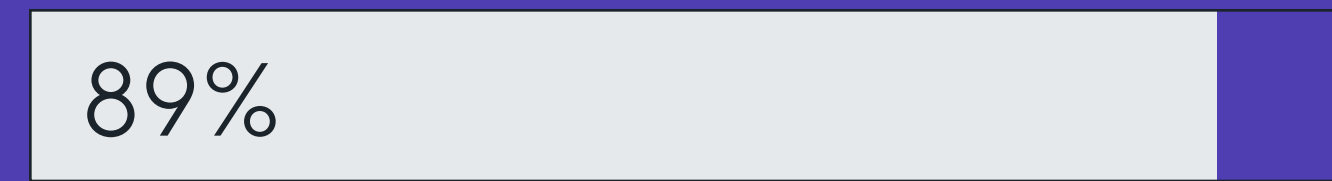
87%

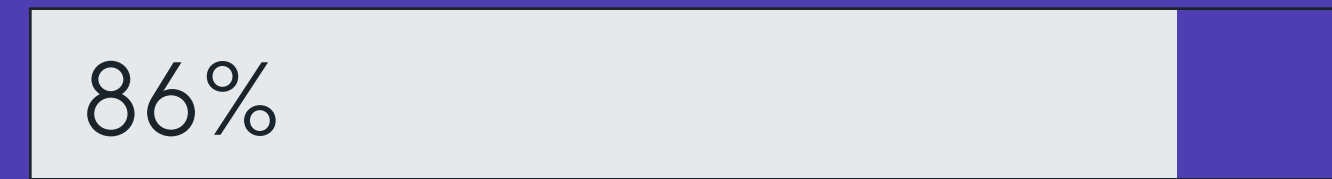**of technologists** admit that remote working provision is a challenge.

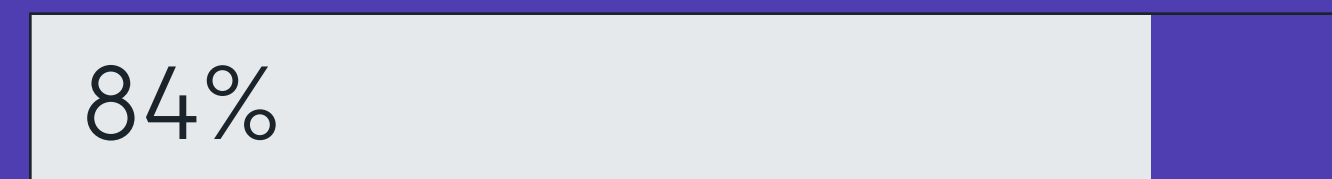## Top 5 digital workplace challenges:

90%
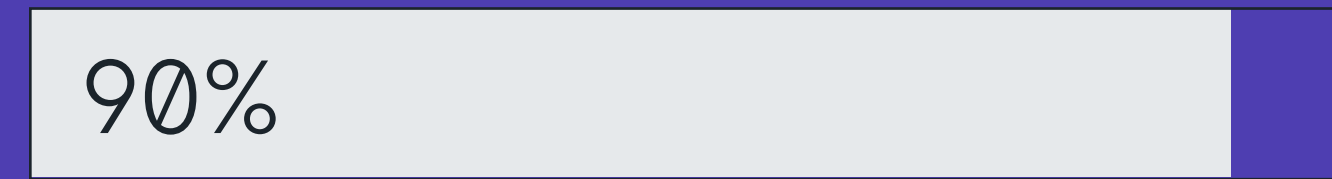
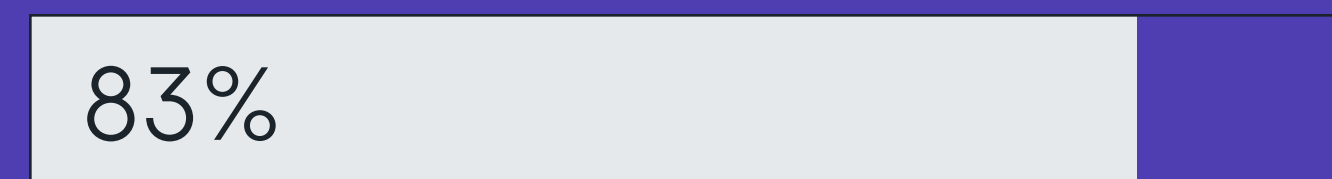Quickly acquiring or scaling technology capabilities

89%

Expanding bandwidth and network capacity to ensure remote access availability and performance

86%

Surges in help desk requests from staff

84%

Security and robust identity and access management for network / corporate systems (VPN / SSO, RASP)

83%

Security of mission critical applications

> Digital services and applications are essential in keeping workforces productive at home and therefore it is vitally important that IT departments are able to handle huge surges in demand. This means having the right tools to monitor and manage the technology stack, from the user experience at the application layer, right through to the network.
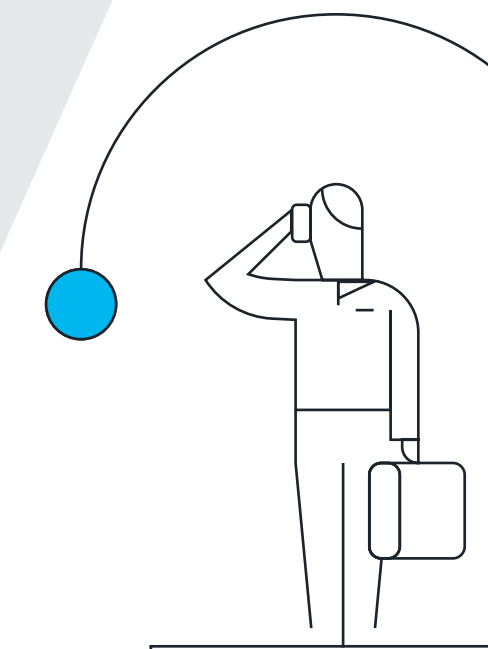
The urgent need for Agents of Transformation

As organizations prioritize digital experiences for both internal users and external customers, they must recognize the critical role of technologists in responding to the current crisis.

In particular, business and IT leaders need to identify and support those elite technologists that have the skills, vision and determination to deliver digital transformation and innovation in these most testing of circumstances.

It is these Agents of Transformation that are uniquely capable of tackling the unprecedented challenges presented by COVID-19.

What is an Agent of Transformation?

In 2018, our research revealed the emergence of a new breed of technologist that is primed to deliver transformation and business impact within their organizations.

Agents of Transformation possess all the personal skills and attributes needed to drive innovation, and they operate within organizations that have the right culture, leadership and tools in place to enable successful digital and business transformation.

These elite technologists care deeply about the future role of technology within their organizations and the wider world, and they are excited about the opportunity to play a part in shaping this future. They recognise the importance and urgency of true innovation and can think both technically and creatively to find solutions to problems. They pride themselves on the strategic use of data and insight to drive positive change, reassuring and influencing others along the way.

The research reveals that technologists are in no doubt about the important role they must play during this period and beyond.

83%

believe that Agents of Transformation are critical if businesses are to recover quickly from the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, the study highlights the need for more technologists to step up and start operating at the highest level of their profession.

9%

In 2018, only 9% of technologists were operating as Agents of Transformation, but there was consensus that 45% of technologists within an organization needed to be operating as Agents of Transformation within ten years in order to remain competitive.

Two years on and the situation is far more urgent.

46%

Organizations now need 46% of their technologists to operate as Agents of Transformation — right now.

Technologists see this immediate increase in the number of Agents of Transformation as critical in order for their organizations to emerge successfully from the COVID-19 pandemic.

What was once seen as a ten year personal journey for technologists to climb to the summit of their profession has now become an immediate necessity.

Accelerating the journey to becoming an Agent of Transformation

Incredibly, despite the enormous pressure technologists are under, the report points to a staggering response from the technology community,

with 87% regarding the response to COVID-19 as an opportunity for tech professionals to show their value to the business.

Already, 80% of technologists report that the response of their IT team to the pandemic has positively changed the perception of IT within their organization.
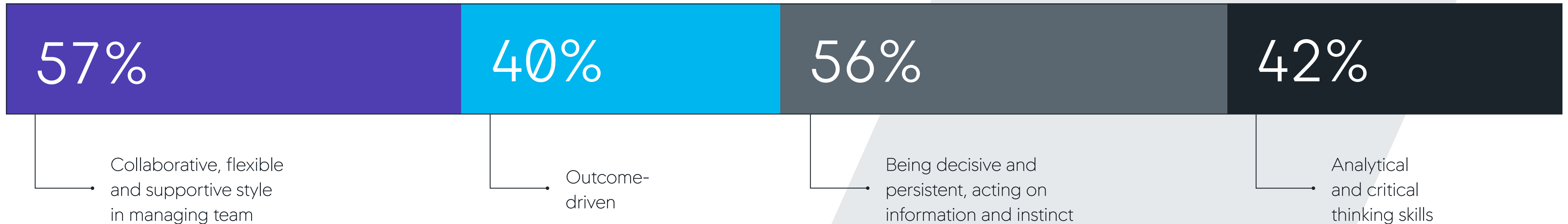
Agents of Transformation take responsibility for their own success and are always developing their skills and attributes in order to continually improve, perform at a higher level and be better

connected to the business. They are also adept at driving through the necessary structural and cultural changes to create the right environment for innovation.

This is evident in the skills that technologists identify as most essential during the COVID-19 pandemic — collaboration, analytical thinking and outcome-driven decision-making.

> Technologists also need the right tools, support and environment to drive through successful digital transformation and deliver positive business outcomes for their organizations.

Which skills are most important for technologists to display during the COVID-19 pandemic?

57%	40%	56%	42%
Collaborative, flexible and supportive style in managing team	Outcome-driven	Being decisive and persistent, acting on information and instinct	Analytical and critical thinking skills

92%

At the top of the list, 92% of technologists report that having visibility and insight into the performance of the technology stack and its impact on customers and the business is the most important factor in becoming an Agent of Transformation during this period.

Other key factors in becoming an elite technologist include having autonomy and accountability, real time data at the point of need, and access to senior mentors or Agents of Transformation within the business.

Technologists want to work with long-term strategic technology partners that can help them through the current situation and support them on their journey to becoming an Agent of Transformation.

78%

78% express a preference for working with established, stable and trusted vendors who show flexibility and support during COVID-19.
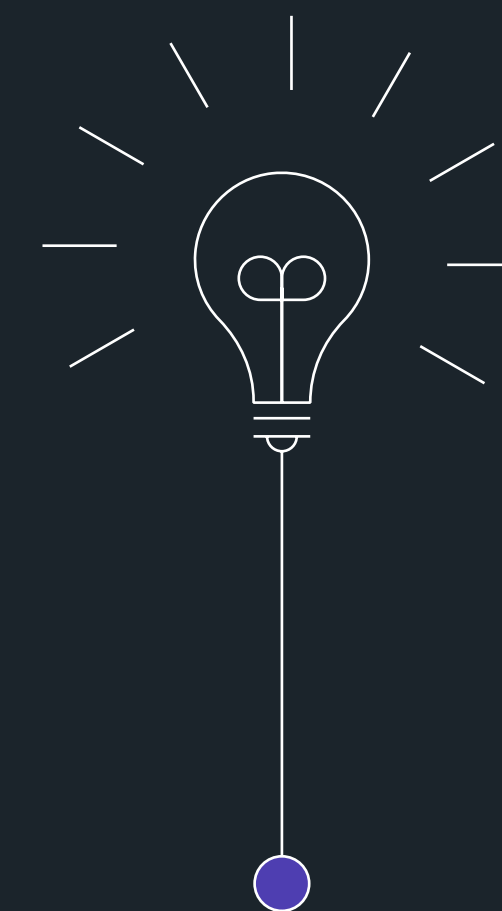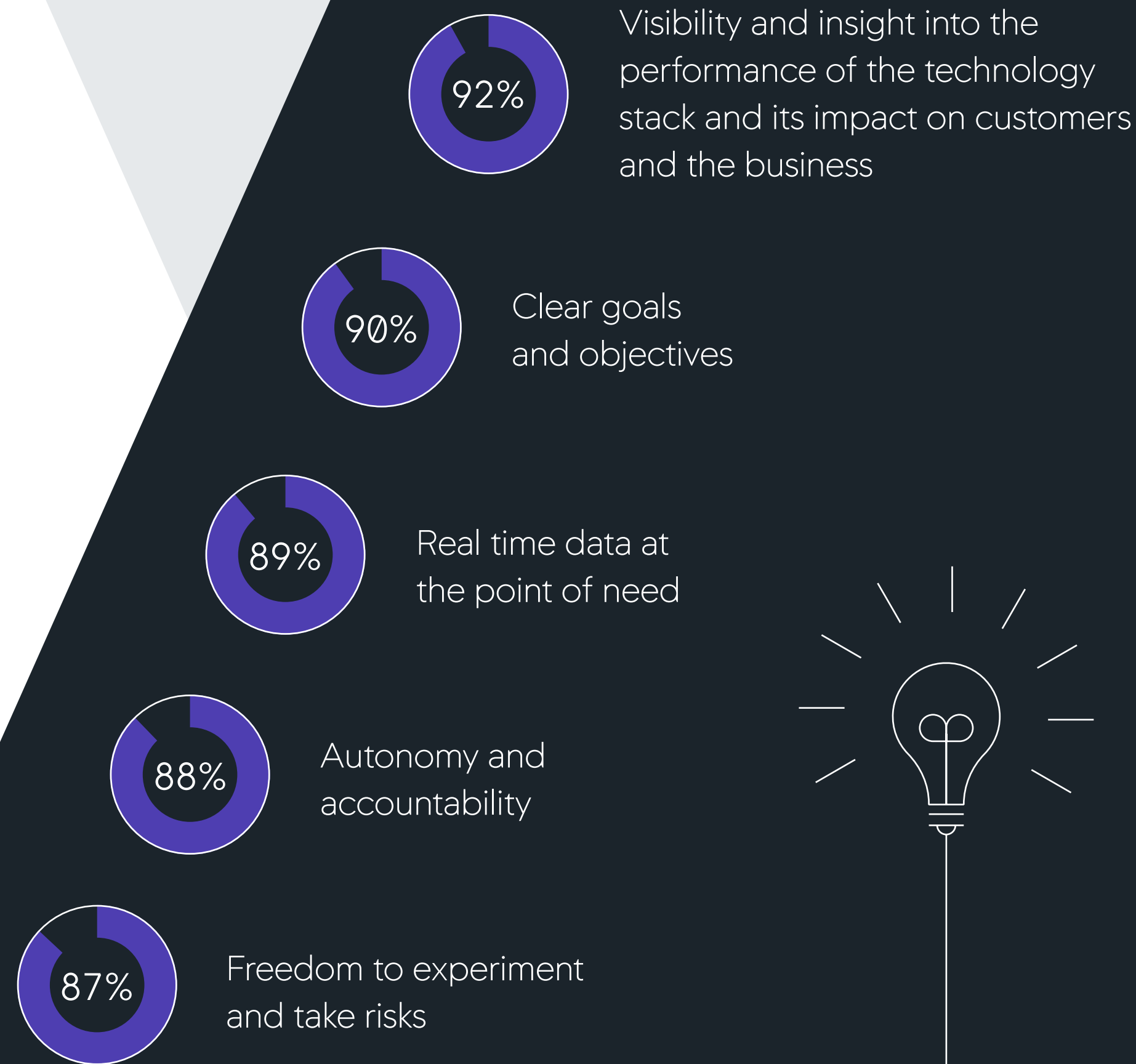
66%

Interestingly, 66% say they are accessing free or heavily discounted software, services, support and training from trusted technology partners and vendors in their bid to tackle the technology challenges of COVID-19.

Armed with the data and insight they need to make smarter decisions, the right internal structures and culture, and close support from strategic technology partners, technologists can guide their organizations through the current crisis.

87%

Indeed, 87% believe they can positively impact how their business responds to — and then recovers from — the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.
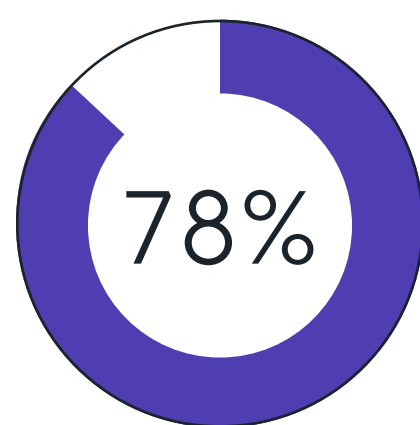
What do you need from your organization to rise to the challenge of becoming an Agent of Transformation?

92% Visibility and insight into the performance of the technology stack and its impact on customers and the business

90% Clear goals and objectives

89% Real time data at the point of need

88% Autonomy and accountability

87% Freedom to experiment and take risks

Redefining technology strategies for the future

The impact of COVID-19 will be long lasting, far beyond the easing of restrictions on how people work, travel and interact. Things will not simply go 'back to normal' – the way we expect to use digital services and applications will be changed forever.

Organizations will recognize the benefits of having greater numbers of people working remotely and adopt more agile approaches to all areas of the employee lifecycle, from recruitment and onboarding, to internal communications and collaboration between teams.
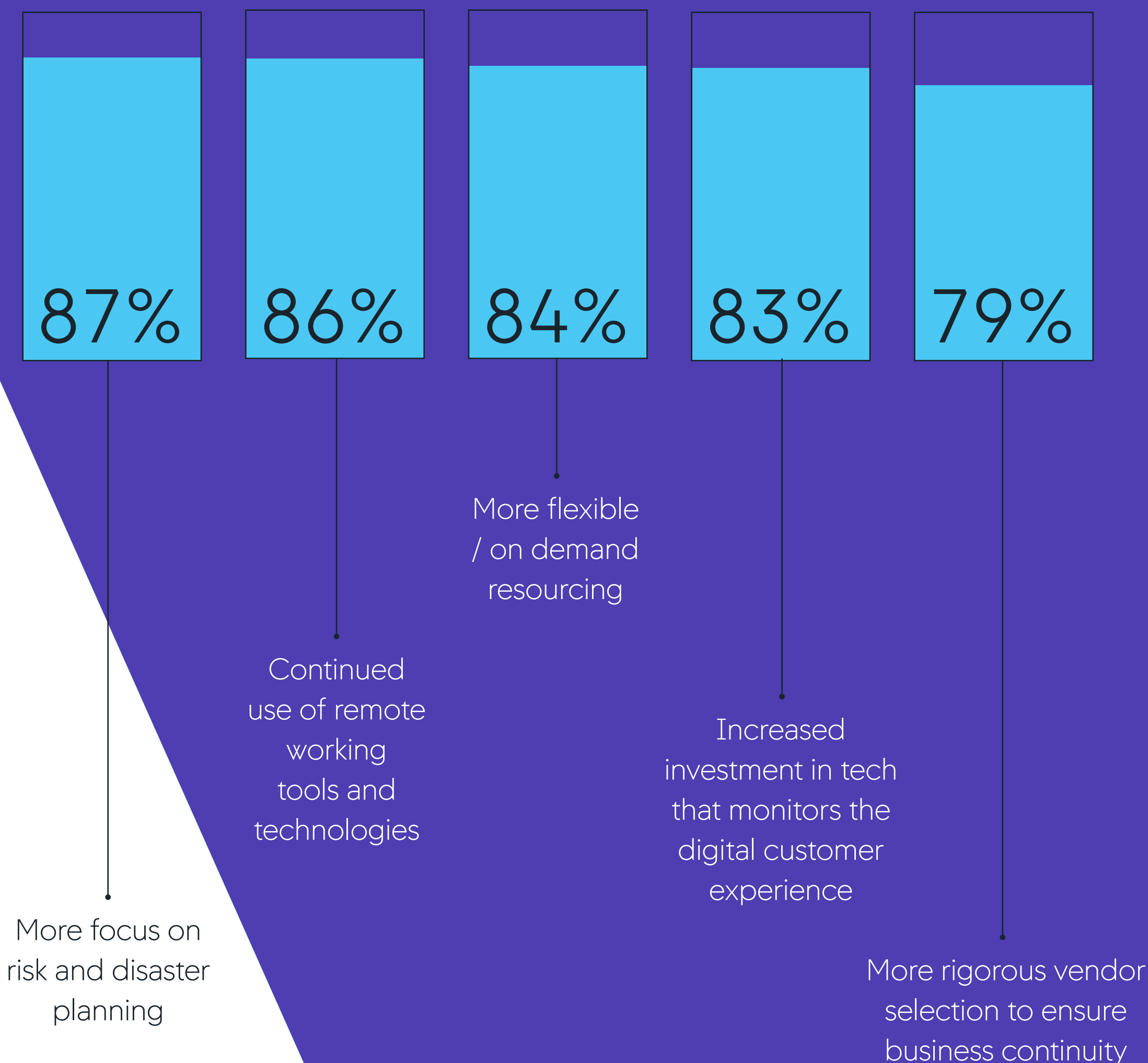
Outside of work, people will continue to connect with friends and family on video calls when they can't meet in person and take their exercise in virtual classes rather than going to gyms. More than ever before, consumers will use digital services to buy groceries, educate their children, enjoy entertainment and access the new digital health services which havebeen so critical during the pandemic.

At the same time, technologists predict that there will be more focus on application security and disaster recovery in their organizations following the pandemic, alongside increased investment in technology that monitors the digital customer experience, and in training and developing technologists themselves.

78%

Overall, state that the pandemic is a wake-up call to their organizations to focus on digital business and longer term resilience.

In which areas do you think business practice will change in your organization following COVID-19?

87% More focus on risk and disaster planning

86% Continued use of remote working tools and technologies

84% More flexible / on demand resourcing

83% Increased investment in tech that monitors the digital customer experience

**79%** More rigorous vendor selection to ensure business continuity

A time for Agents of Transformation to create their legacy

In the 2018 Agents of Transformation study, technologists expressed a determination to ensure that technology is a force for positive change within their organizations and beyond.

69%
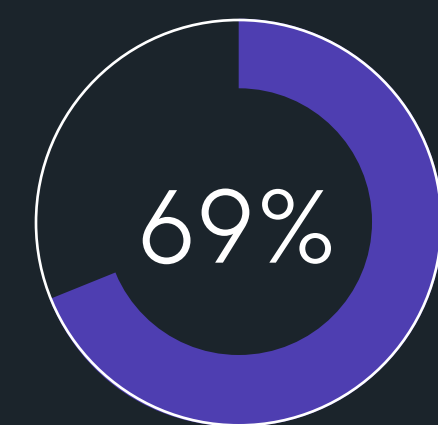
69% said that they wanted to make a difference to the world and leave a lasting legacy through their work.

76%
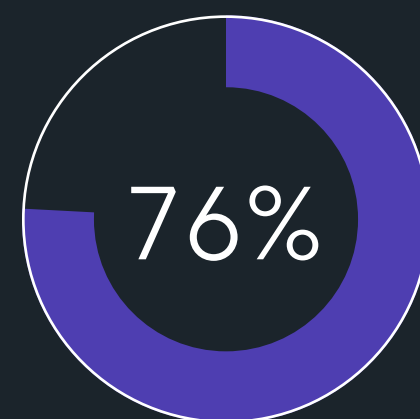
They also viewed digital transformation as a huge opportunity for them personally, with 76% believing that rapid technological advances over the coming years will present them with greater opportunities to develop their careers and skills.

Two years on and these same technologists have an unprecedented and unforeseen opportunity to fulfil their potential and realize their ambitions. This is a career-defining moment.

Technologists are acutely aware of both the challenge and the opportunity in front of them.

79%
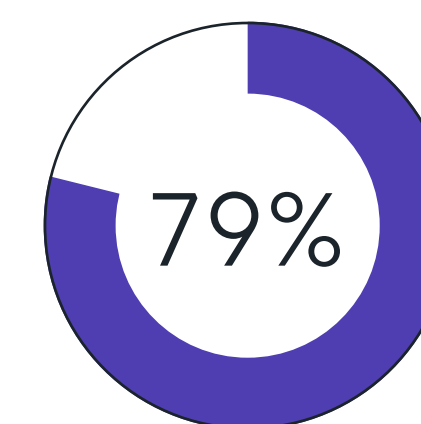
79% believe the pandemic will separate the strong from the weak in tech teams across the world.

Technologists are stepping up in their organizations' hour of need, guiding them through the current crisis and accelerating a return to growth. They are relying on visibility and insight into the performance of their technology stack, from the applications, through the IT infrastructure, to the network. They are leveraging this intelligence to innovate and adapt, taking action

and implementing new strategies to meet the needs of their customers, securely and at record speed. **They are reimagining applications, securing data, transforming infrastructures and empowering their teams.**

Organizations must do all they can to provide their technologists with the tools, leadership and support they need to accelerate their journey to become an Agent of Transformation and deliver the positive business outcomes required at this time.

More than anything, it will be the skill, vision and determination of Agents of Transformation that will determine how businesses are able to navigate this turbulent period and emerge stronger on the other side.

APPDYNAMICS™
part of Cisco
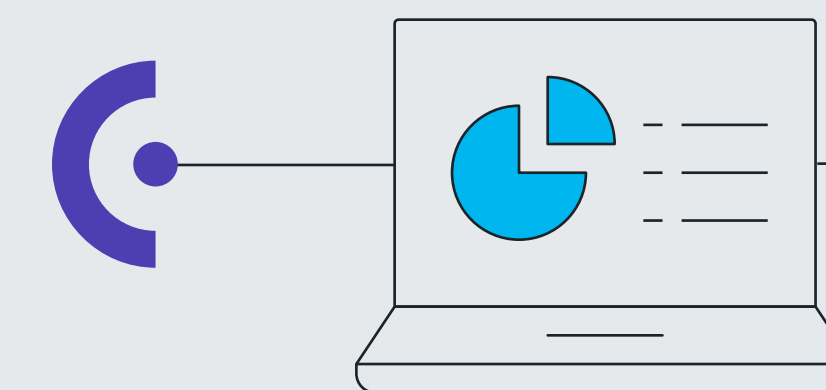
> Cisco AppDynamics is committed
to helping technologists to navigate
the challenge posed by COVID-19
and to drive positive and sustainable
digital transformation within their
organizations. We're proud to be
working alongside many of the world's
most innovative companies, and
supporting the most skilled, visionary and
ambitious technologists during these
unprecedented times. We're working
closely with technologists to provide
them with the tools, insight and training
they need to accelerate their journey
to becoming Agents of Transformation
and deliver game-changing business
outcomes to their organizations.