



The State of Collaboration Technologies in Consumer Goods

TARGETED RESEARCH

Collaboration depends on communication. When the consumer goods industry was flipped on its head during the pandemic, one of the biggest business impacts may have been the abrupt shift in how we interact with our employees, colleagues, and partners.

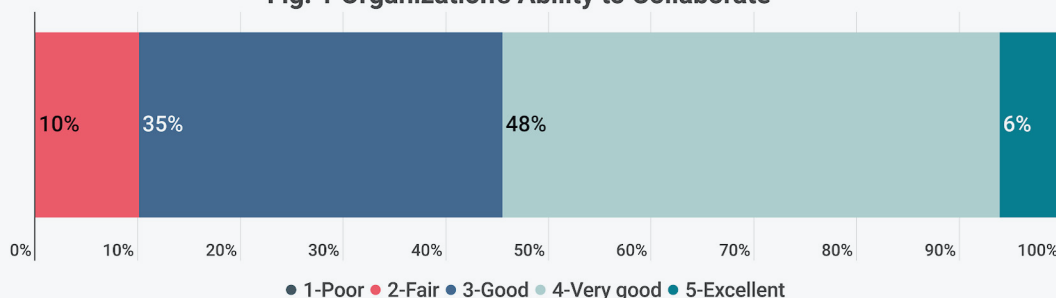
From ideation to execution, we were forced to rethink how we share information — often on the fly — and, much like today's new consumer behaviors, many of these new ways of working have stuck and solidified into new habits.

But with these new ways of working come fresh challenges. Faced with overly complex tech stacks, less than enthusiastic uptake, and even security concerns, consumer goods companies must act strategically to ensure these technologies enable rather than hinder a culture of collaboration.

We surveyed the CGT audience to get the pulse on the good, the bad, and the exciting opportunities contained by the state of collaboration techniques today. Read on to see where your company measures up.

Today's evolving work environment has kept consumer goods leaders on their toes, with a need to be agile and adaptable. In general, we found companies are fairly optimistic about their abilities to collaborate. When asked to rate their organizations' ability to collaborate on a scale of 1-5, just 10% put themselves at the bottom of the heap (Figure 1). The large majority (83%) described their abilities as being either "good" or "very good," while another 6% went so far as to call their abilities "excellent."

Fig. 1 Organization's Ability to Collaborate



When asked why they rated their abilities that way, responses included:

EXCELLENT

- We are always on the lookout for other brands and retailers to collaborate with. We've done it in the past, and it has worked out very well for both parties.
- [The] basis for our management style is collaboration.

VERY GOOD

- We have been effective at it while driving growth for the company. We have been intentional on when and how to collaborate with each other.
- We are small and therefore it is easier to keep the right people in the

loop; however, there is often confusion as to who needs to be included in specific projects or decisions.

- People are mostly collaborative and consensus-seeking, but it's a bit "much" and hinders progress, risk, and speed.

GOOD

- We occasionally have communication problems. Information that needs to get to one individual is not passed on.
- Our systems do not speak well at the moment, nor do some of our functions.
- We still have functional silos in plac-

es, and our remote locations don't always share best practices.

- There is no formal process; limited structure prevents efficiency.
- For most of our initiatives, we have highly cross-functional teams working together which ensures collaboration and shared ownership, and minimizes silos.

FAIR

- We have difficulty in communicating effectively with employees at over 1,000 retail locations. There is no intranet or other user-friendly vehicle to do so.
- People just send emails.

While technology is not a cure-all for effective collaboration, it's certainly a requirement for today's modern work settings. In order to receive a more holistic view of how leaders are communicating with their colleagues and business partners, we asked them about the technologies they're using in both their own offices and with their partners (Figure 2).

In general, results indicate an opportunity for technology to improve collaboration between consumer goods leaders and their partners and customers. (Case in point: The comment above from someone rating capabilities as just "fair" and noting that "people just send emails.")

Email, unsurprisingly, did top the list for both internal colleagues and ex-

ternal business partners, followed closely by video conferencing. While most respondents (71%) said they're using messaging apps within their workplaces, this falls to less than half (48%) for collaboration with external employees. Shared documents are used by 58% of respondents with their colleagues, but just 39% are using them with outside partners.

Although most respondents (58%) felt they have all the information they need from their colleagues in order to do their jobs well most of the time, 42% said they only have it sometimes, indicating a need for improvement (Figure 3). (Interestingly, no one said they have all of the information all of the time, nor did they say they never have it.)

In keeping with an optimistic theme, most respondents (55%) said collaboration for their organization has improved compared with a year ago (Figure 4). Forty-two percent said it has stayed the same, and just 3% reported it has gotten worse.

Fig. 3: Have all info needed from colleagues

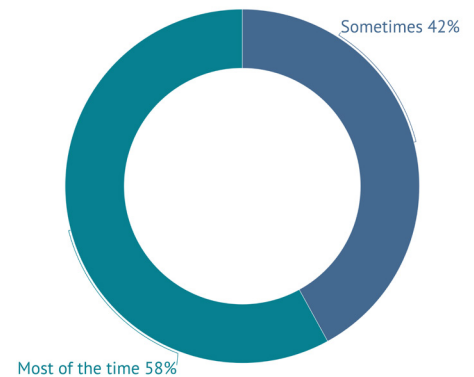


Fig. 4: Collaboration for organization

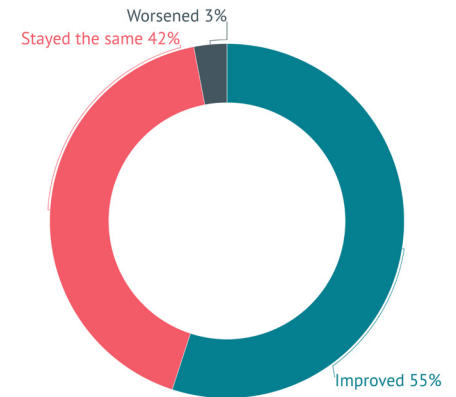
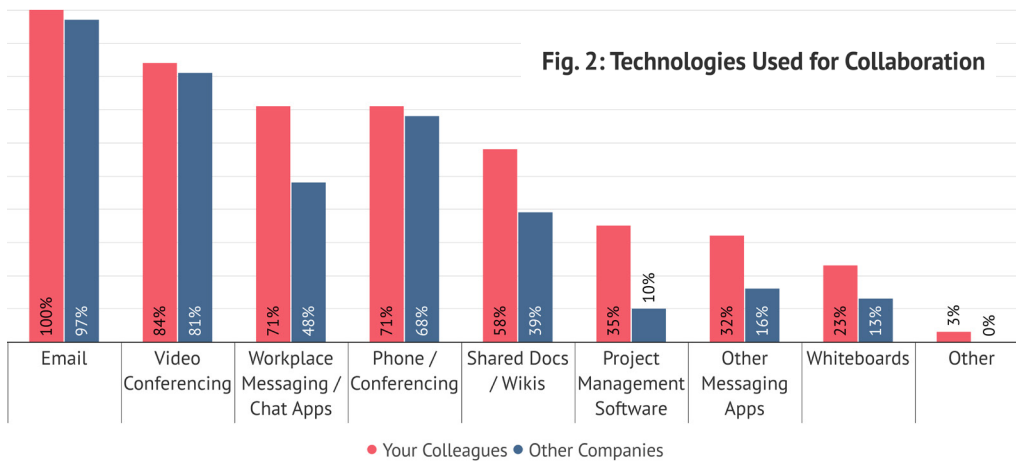


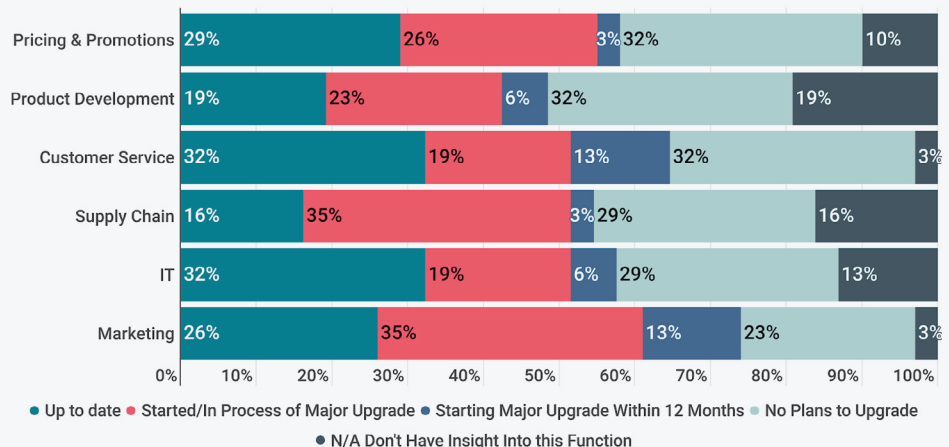
Fig. 2: Technologies Used for Collaboration



Since collaboration effectiveness can vary across functions, we also asked leaders to best describe the team collaboration technologies within the following functions: pricing and promotions, product development, customer service, supply chain, IT, and marketing (Figure 5). Customer service and IT reported the most mature states, with 32% being up to date. The supply chain and marketing functions topped the list of those that had either started a major upgrade to the technologies or were planning to do so in the next 12 months, at 38% and 48%, respectively.

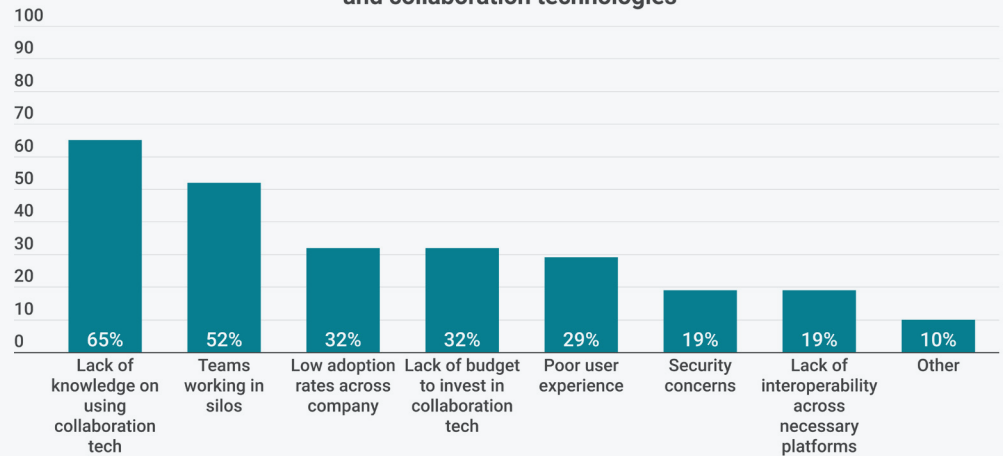
Product development indicated the most room for improvement, with just 19% reporting technology was up to date and 32% saying there were no plans to upgrade.

Fig. 5: Team collaboration technologies within functions



So what's causing the biggest challenges? For most respondents (65%), it's simply a lack of knowledge on how to use collaboration technologies (Figure 6). This indicates that any technology that's deployed within an organization to facilitate collaboration requires robust training to ensure widespread adoption. (Indeed, nearly a third reported they have low adoption rates of these technologies across the company.) Other common roadblocks include working in silos and a lack of budget to invest.

Fig. 6: Biggest obstacles to team collaboration and collaboration technologies



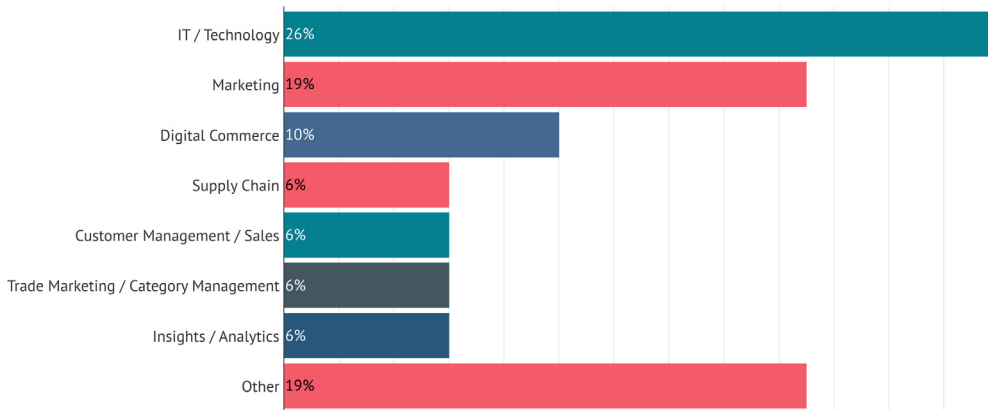
METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in February and March 2023 in partnership with CGT parent company EnsembleIQ's research division. The survey was sent to consumer goods manufacturers and retail executives at both small and large organizations. Eighty-four percent of the 31 qualified respondents identified as a consumer goods manufacturer, while 16% identified as a retailer. Respondents were senior-level employees, with

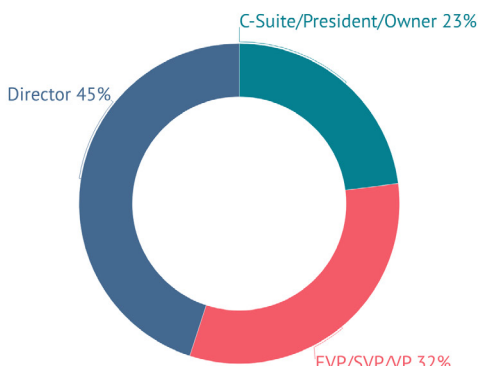
45% holding a director title; 32% holding EVP, SVP, or VP titles; and 23% serving as president, owner, or in the C-suite.

It was a mixed bag when it comes to work settings, with most respondents (65%) reporting that they work in a hybrid environment. Just 13% are fully remote, while 23% are now back in the office (or on-site) full-time.

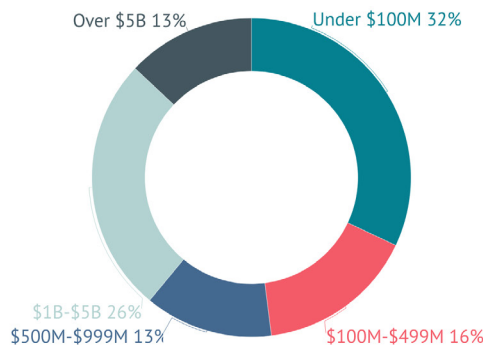
Key Business Functions



Job Title



Company Revenue



Primary Consumer Goods Vertical

48% 
Food & Beverage

19% 
Apparel, Footwear, Accessories

13% 
Health & Beauty

10% 
Home Goods, Small Appliances, Furniture, Consumer Electronics

9% 
Household Goods & Other

CONCLUSION

As the demand for top digital and tech talent continues to tighten, it behooves consumer goods companies to take fresh and hard looks at the type of work environments they're providing all types of employees. Collaboration and communication are the vital keys to unlocking growth and retaining your most valuable workers, and today's hybrid and remote work environments require new standards to propel innovation.

Given the general optimism in the survey results, it's heartening that many companies are either on a brighter path, or at least well aware of the importance of doing so.

KEY FINDINGS

- Seventy-eight percent of consumer goods leaders said their organization is operating in a fully remote or hybrid work environment.
- Just 6% of respondents described their company's ability to collaborate as "excellent," but, thankfully, none of the respondents went so far as to describe it as being "poor."
- More than half of the CGs (55%) said collaboration for their organization has improved from a year ago.
- Collaboration remains crucial for most CGs, with 97% reporting it as "very important" or "extremely important" to their team's success.
- A lack of knowledge about using collaboration technologies is the biggest obstacle for most CGs.

TARGETED RESEARCH: SPONSORED CONTENT

Slack is the productivity platform for customer companies. Customer companies put their customers at the center of everything they do, using data, automation and AI to deliver exceptional customer experiences. Slack is how you get there. We help organizations transform how they work, so they can realize their potential.

The ways companies used to drive productivity can't scale to meet the demands of this moment. For years, businesses have been working with tools that reinforce linear processes (think endless meetings and email threads), leading to siloed, disconnected and disengaged teams.

Slack offers a new approach that helps teams be more efficient and productive with no-code automation, equips them with the knowledge and insights they need to perform, and empowers them to drive their own productivity. And thanks to our open platform, Slack has a large app ecosystem, with more than 2,600 enterprise apps that are ready to go in Slack.

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Slack customers report that their teams are 49% more productive, their sales teams are seeing a 27% increase in win rate, and customer service teams are getting issues resolved 26% faster.

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