



2023
Sales Industry
Scouting Report



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About the Scouting Report

Data drives today's business decision-making—and sales is no exception. Revenue leaders rely on data to inform their go-to-market strategy, in an effort to ultimately increase company revenue and growth.

Ambition provides reliable industry data. With partners from SMB to the Fortune 100—combined with our platform's ability to look at data in powerful ways—we can present discrete, aggregated data specifically for quota-carrying teams. Our goal with the *2023 Sales Industry Scouting Report* is to supply sales, revenue operations, and enablement leaders like you with relevant insights that help you make smart business decisions.

If you've been wondering where to place your bets next year, Ambition will help you figure out ways to optimize your programs and teams, and where to invest your time and money in 2023.

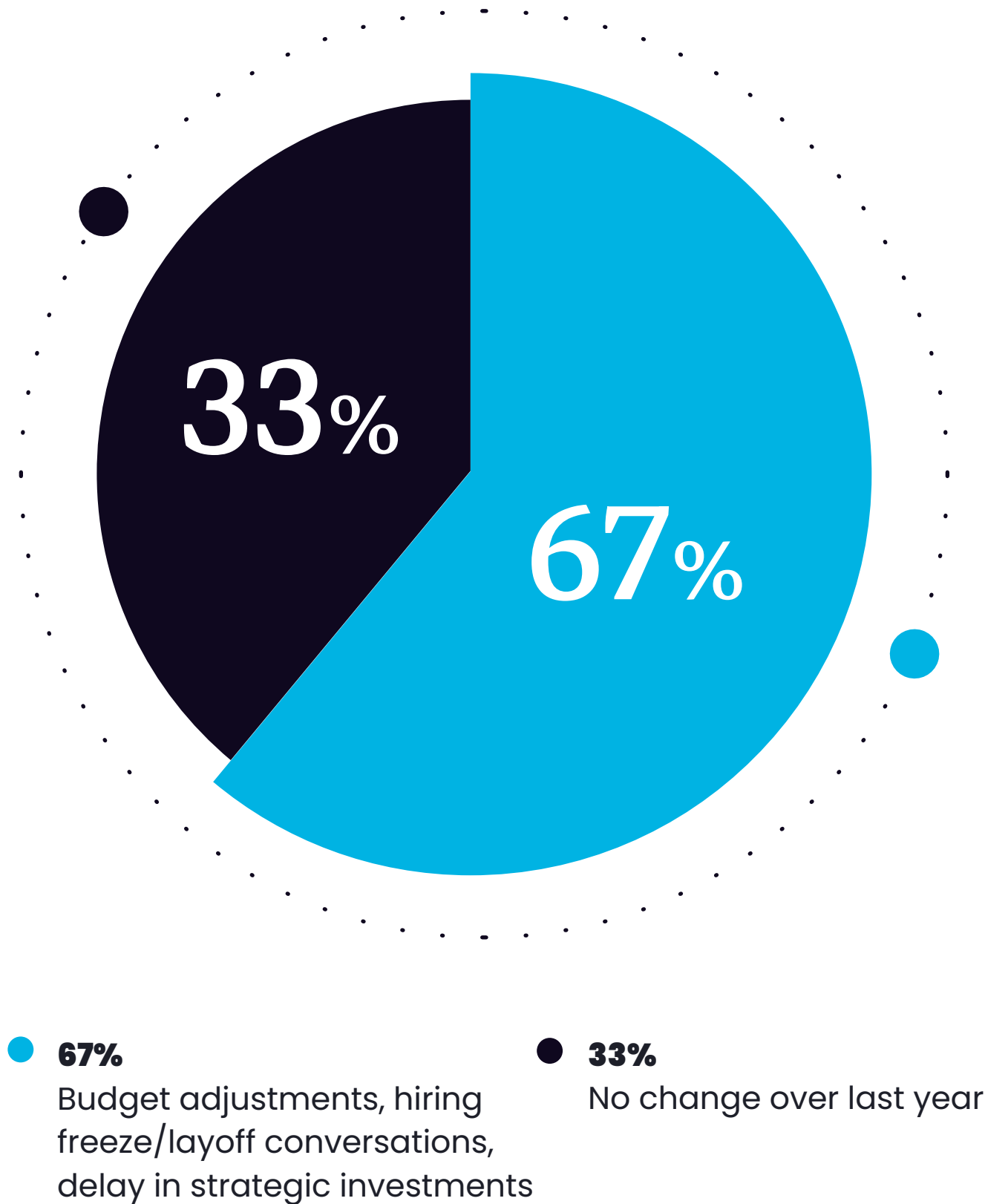


How Revenue Leaders Are Rethinking Growth in 2023



Turbulent, uncertain, hazardous, “an upheaval”: these are just a few of the many ways 2022 has been described by our industry. While aggressive revenue targets seemed viable earlier this year, the economic downturn came by surprise and caused 67% of companies to reevaluate their budget, headcount, and strategic investments mid-year with 40% directly impacted by layoffs and/or internal restructures [Figure A and B].

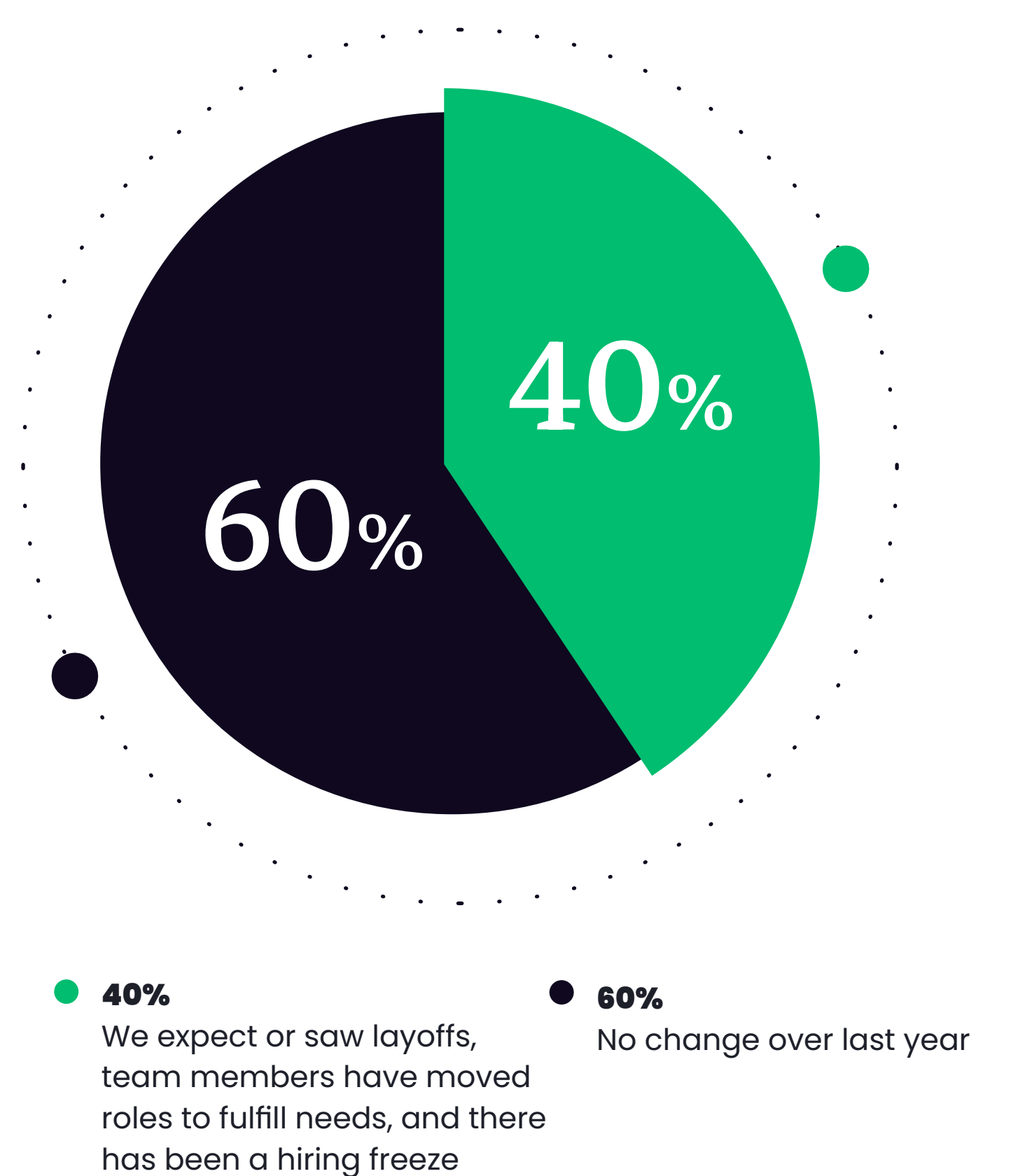
Figure A.
In what area is the current business climate affecting your organization the most?



The economic downturn in 2022 came by surprise and caused **67%** of companies to reevaluate their budget, headcount, and strategic investments mid-year.

STATE OF THE INDUSTRY SURVEY, FALL 2022, AMBITION


Figure B.
How has the economic uncertainty impacted your team in 2022?



40% of respondents were directly impacted by layoffs and/or internal restructures in 2022.

STATE OF THE INDUSTRY SURVEY, FALL 2022, AMBITION





As we enter 2023 on the cusp of a true recession, revenue leaders at every level are asking themselves **this difficult, but important, question:**

If I could have predicted the outcome of 2022, what would have I done differently?

We recently interviewed top sales executives and learned that leaders across verticals and roles are rethinking and redefining what growth strategy looks like. From elevating the customer voice to hiring people with deep resilience and adaptability, here are the top ways to pivot and future-proof your go-to-market function for a brighter (and bigger) year ahead.

Top Ways to Pivot Your Growth Strategy

Pitch a point-of-view. The best pattern interrupt in 2023 will be having a strong point-of-view. In this business climate, sales reps need to make it easy for buyers to say yes or no—and that will come by elevating the meeting. Doug Landis, growth partner at Emergence Capital, says ***discovery is dead*** (the kind where sales reps ask a million questions) because we need to make it a meaningful two-way business conversation. Build a case to earn your prospect's time. *"Economic uncertainty leads to indecision. It's hard to overcome the status quo as everybody settles into the wait-and-see mindset. Companies and salespeople must lead with higher conviction to have a chance at breaking through."*

– Travis Truett, CEO, Ambition

Double-down on growth through your customer base. 2023 is the year of the customer. Instead of focusing on converting net-new leads, find greater and quicker returns by investing in the relationships you already have. In fact, most B2B companies expect 77% of revenue to come from existing customers in the form of cross-sells, renewals, and upsells.

Emphasize the importance of partnerships, integrations, and affiliates. Nothing is too precious not to share in 2023. Strategic partnerships are a foot in the door with a wider audience that will help you grow revenue and pipeline. *"If you are an organization going at growth alone in 2023, it is going to be a very hard road. Find the players in your space where there is mutual benefit and build a portion of your growth strategy around that. Everyone is trying to win."*

– Sawyer Ritz, Director of Sales, Company Cam

Surface ROI throughout the entire lifecycle. The responsibility of CX in 2023 is to offer customized consultation services and surface ROI at key business inflection points. By helping implement and identify client success, accounts stay healthy for smoother renewal and expansion opportunities. *"Be sure to show proof points that you're solving the problems your customers originally came to you for. Quarterly ROI and accurate dollar calculations help customers justify spend and see long-term business impact."*

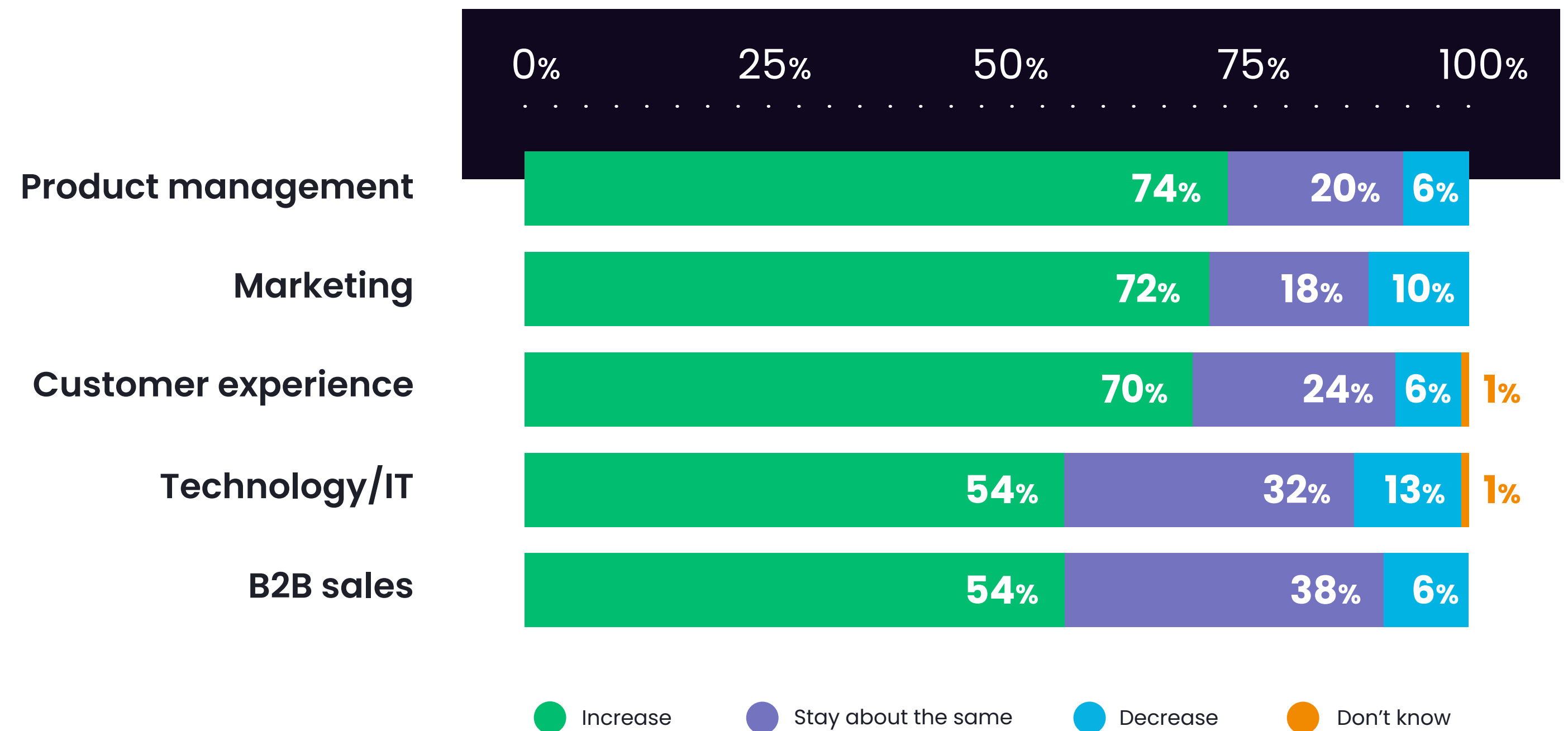
– Kelly Berg, VP of Customer Success, Ambition



Invest in best-of-breed talent and productivity tools.

According to Forrester, companies plan to expand product, marketing, and CX departments in 2023 before investing in additional sales headcount [Figure C]. This data sends a loud signal to our industry that we'll be expected to hit increasing (or the same) goals with less, which means investing in the talent we do have is critical. To help with employee development, 78% of organizations are carving out bigger budgets for *technology and talent/productivity solutions* [Figure D and E].

Figure C.
Respondents who planned or anticipated a change in their organization's investment in personnel in the next 12 months by functional area



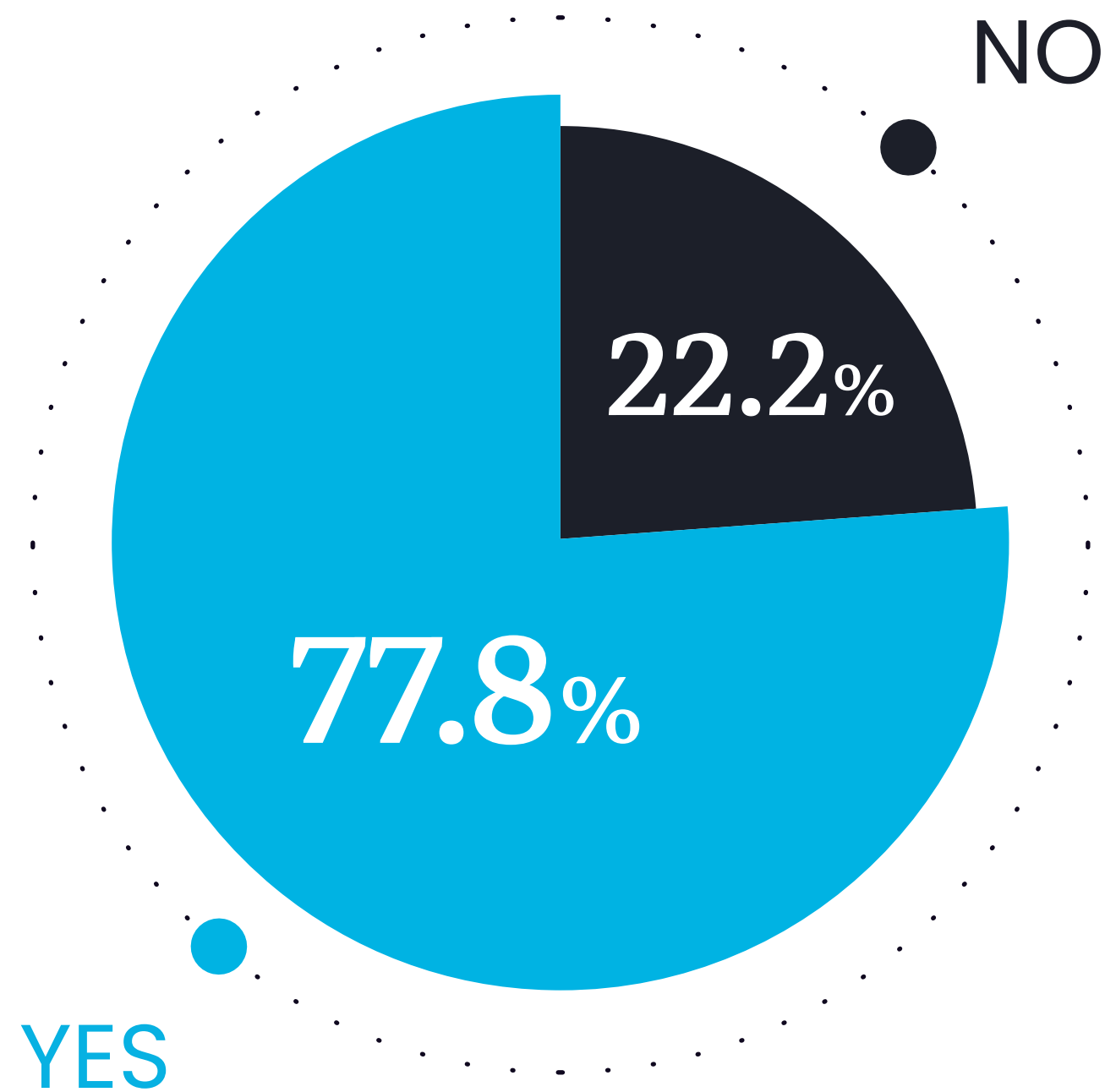
Companies plan to expand product, marketing, and CX departments in 2023 before investing in additional sales headcount. This data tells our industry that we'll be expected to hit increasing (or the same) goals with less in the upcoming year.

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Figure D.

According to a recent JP Morgan survey, a majority of companies are projected to increase their technology spend by 5.7% in 2023. Despite the current business climate, does this trend align with what you're seeing within your IT and RevOps organizations?



With smaller headcount budgets, nearly 80% of revenue organizations are increasing their technology spend to fill gaps and create efficiencies for their existing employee base.

STATE OF THE INDUSTRY SURVEY, FALL 2022, AMBITION



Figure E.

Where to increase investments in 2023

Increase investments in:

Talent and productivity

Example 01	Example 02	Example 03
Talent acquisition	Coaching programs	Sales productivity tools

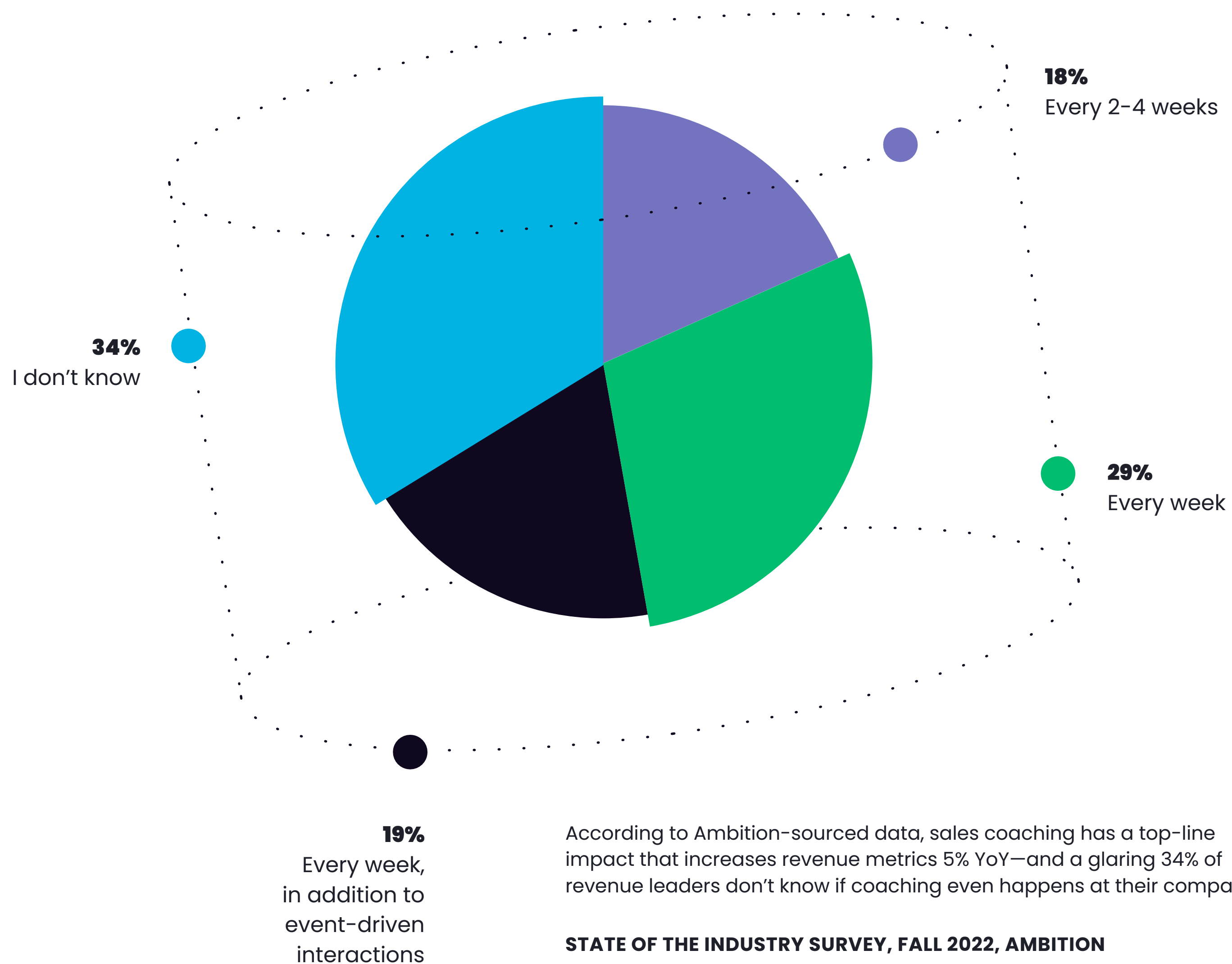
To assist smaller, more nimble sales teams, Forrester recommends companies increase investment in talent and productivity tools including programmatic coaching and sales productivity.

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Measure the effectiveness of your middle managers.

According to Wesleyne, Founder of Transformed Sales, “Initiatives go to die in middle management” and 34% of revenue leaders don’t know if coaching happens at their companies [Figure F]. The role of a manager has traditionally been straightforward and their performance evaluated strictly on anecdotal evidence. Today, however, this role needs to be capable of executing on initiatives while working as a mentor, co-pilot, and empathetic leader. Being able to *measure coaching* effectiveness and frequency, at every level, with data will be imperative to scale and grow into the future.

Figure F.
How often are your managers having coaching conversations with reps?



According to Ambition-sourced data, sales coaching has a top-line impact that increases revenue metrics 5% YoY—and a glaring 34% of revenue leaders don’t know if coaching even happens at their companies.

STATE OF THE INDUSTRY SURVEY, FALL 2022, AMBITION



Integrate customer voice into your enablement strategy.

Enablement leaders typically look to sales to help define and design their programs, but this model is biased and overlooks the most important factor in the equation: the customer. *“Instead of looking within your own organization to decide what to train on in 2023, think about how you can get customer feedback on the quality of their sales experience and find ways for reps to deliver better.”*
- Jen Allen, speaker and co-founder of Social Social


Hire employees who display high levels of resilience and adaptability.

The only thing we can predict going into an unpredictable year is that it will stay that way. 2022 taught us that organizational changes arise quickly; 56% of revenue teams experienced these interruptions last year **[Figure B]** and the best way to be prepared is having a team who can respond, adapt, and add value at every twist and turn. In fact, Forrester reports that organizations grow 2.5 times faster than their competitors when employees exhibit mature resilience.



2023 SaaS SDR Benchmarks






What is benchmarking? Benchmarking is the practice of comparing business processes and performance metrics to industry bests. At Ambition, we've been serving SaaS sales development organizations for nearly a decade and are excited to highlight potential growth opportunities for your SDR team through the following proprietary data set.

Spoiler alert! What you're going to learn: **outbound is not dead.** SDRs are critical to the health of your revenue machine. Fast follow-up, higher conversion rates, greater sales and marketing alignment, and increased productivity from quota-carrying sales reps are just a few of the reasons why you need this function to grow your bottom line.

But how do you effectively measure and optimize your SDRs for 2023?

Refer to our industry benchmarks on the following pages.



SDR Metrics Benchmark

Across a swath of public and large private SaaS companies with SDRs, 379 total metrics were logged in 2022 with the most common being: **Emails Sent, Outbound Calls, and SQLs/Opportunities Created.**

Top SDR Metrics Tracked Last Year

Activity Score Benchmarks

- Emails
- Calls
- LinkedIn Messages
- Connected Calls (Conversations)
- Meetings Set

Objective Score Benchmarks

- SQLs / Opportunities Created
- Sales Accepted Leads
- Meetings Completed
- Pipeline Created

Emails Sent Benchmark

Emails sent was tracked by every group sampled for this report, totaling 350 SDRs.

Targets

Average
Daily
Benchmark

57
per day

Median
Daily
Benchmark

54
per day

Overall, the 80th percentile performers exceeded the daily benchmark set on average sending 45% more emails than prescribed. Across our sample groups, only 4 of 10 see their 80th percentile performers averaging fewer emails than the benchmark target.

Outbound Calls Benchmark

Throughout our reporting sample of more than 317 SDRs, outbound calls were the second most popular metric tracked.

Targets

Average Benchmark **49**
per day

Median Benchmark **43**
per day

Scorecard Benchmark

The majority of SDR groups set “Monthly Objective” scores, but several used Weeks for Objective tracking.

Top Configuration of Scorecard Metrics

Daily Activities Benchmark **3-4**

Monthly Objectives Benchmark **2-3**

Opportunities Created or SQL Benchmarks

The most common variations of Objective Scores for SDRs across our group was Opportunities Created or SQLs (Sales Qualified Leads). The range of benchmark expectation and variance on what time reps were measured on Opportunity creation varied widely.

Most Common Range of Target Opportunities Created

Monthly Benchmark **8-16**

Note: Some groups expect significantly higher early-stage funnel production, expecting ~20 and even up to 40 opps generated per month. One thing to consider is our sample group likely have customized sets of qualifications to progress an account or a contact to SQL or an early opportunity stage.

Coaching Trends & Next Steps

If you fall in the 58% of revenue leaders who have been in sales your entire career [Figure G], you know it has been a decade of evolution for our industry. 2022 reminded us that there is only one thing we can count on next year: a world that constantly changes.

Running the same playbook year over year is a gamble. You must make critical adjustments to your strategy and invest greater time and resources in your sales managers—your force multipliers [Figure H] who have the power to influence business outcomes in 2023.

Ambition Coaching Orchestration™ is your place to start. Whether you're building your coaching strategy from scratch or optimizing an existing program, our platform will empower your frontline sales managers to drive greater impact and maximize their time.

It's never too early to begin documenting development and creating fluid coaching motions that will help you reach your revenue goals. To get you thinking about next steps, here are our recommended coaching benchmarks to guide your planning.

Coaching Best Practices

Monthly Scheduled 1:1 Benchmark

Minimum of 1 per rep, 2-4 (weekly or bi-weekly) preferable

Monthly Team Meeting Benchmark

Minimum of 1, 2-4 (weekly or bi-weekly) preferable

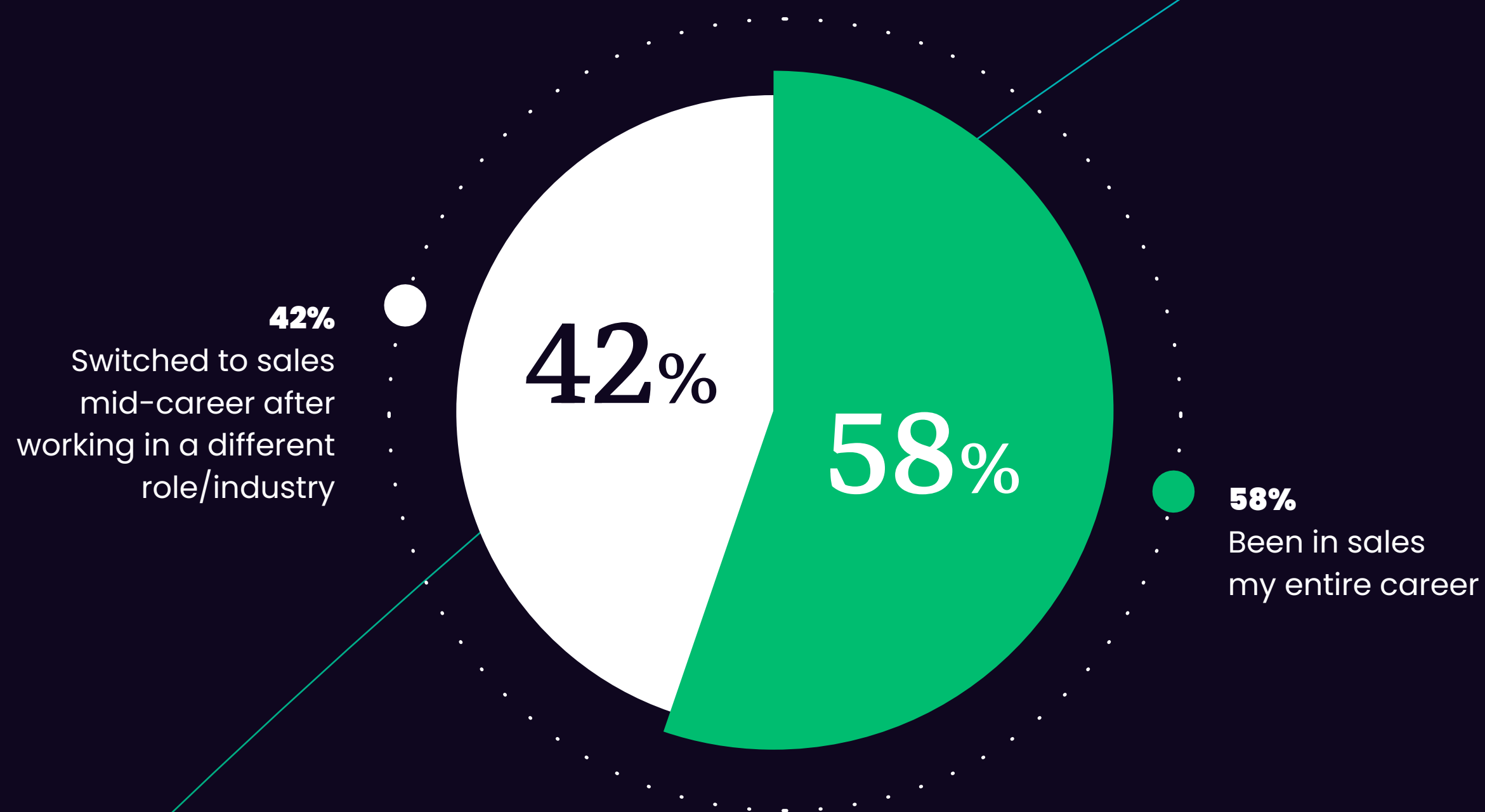
Monthly Coaching Activities Completed Benchmark

98-112 activities

Monthly Coaching Effectiveness Conversion Rate Benchmark

Complete 70-80% of scheduled check-ins

Figure G.
Have you always been in sales?



The industry is seeing nearly a 50/50 split in revenue leader backgrounds. 58% of respondents report being in sales their entire career with 42% entering the industry mid-career.

REVENUE PERFORMANCE MATURITY ASSESSMENT, AMBITION

Figure H.
Who is the most influential to your success?



65% of sales reps indicated that their direct manager is most influential to their success.

**TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT™ OF AMBITION,
A COMMISSIONED STUDY BY FORRESTER**



Resources to Help You Be Greater in 2023

What we know is true: it's going to take everyone from individual contributor to executive leader to realize revenue growth and greatness in 2023. There's no reason to do it alone. Here are resources to reference.

[*The Ultimate Guide to Cold Calling*](#)

[*The Ultimate Guide to Quota Attainment*](#)

[*The Revenue Leader's Guide to Programmatic Coaching*](#)

[*30 Ways to Go the Extra Mile in Sales*](#)

[*How to Evaluate Your Coaching Influence*](#)

[*5 Ways Forward-Thinking Revenue Leaders Are Preparing for 2023*](#)

[*ROI of Coaching Orchestration™*](#)

[*Sales Coaching Templates*](#)

[*Sales Scorecard Templates*](#)

