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Innovating Sales Strategies To Better Meet Buyer Needs

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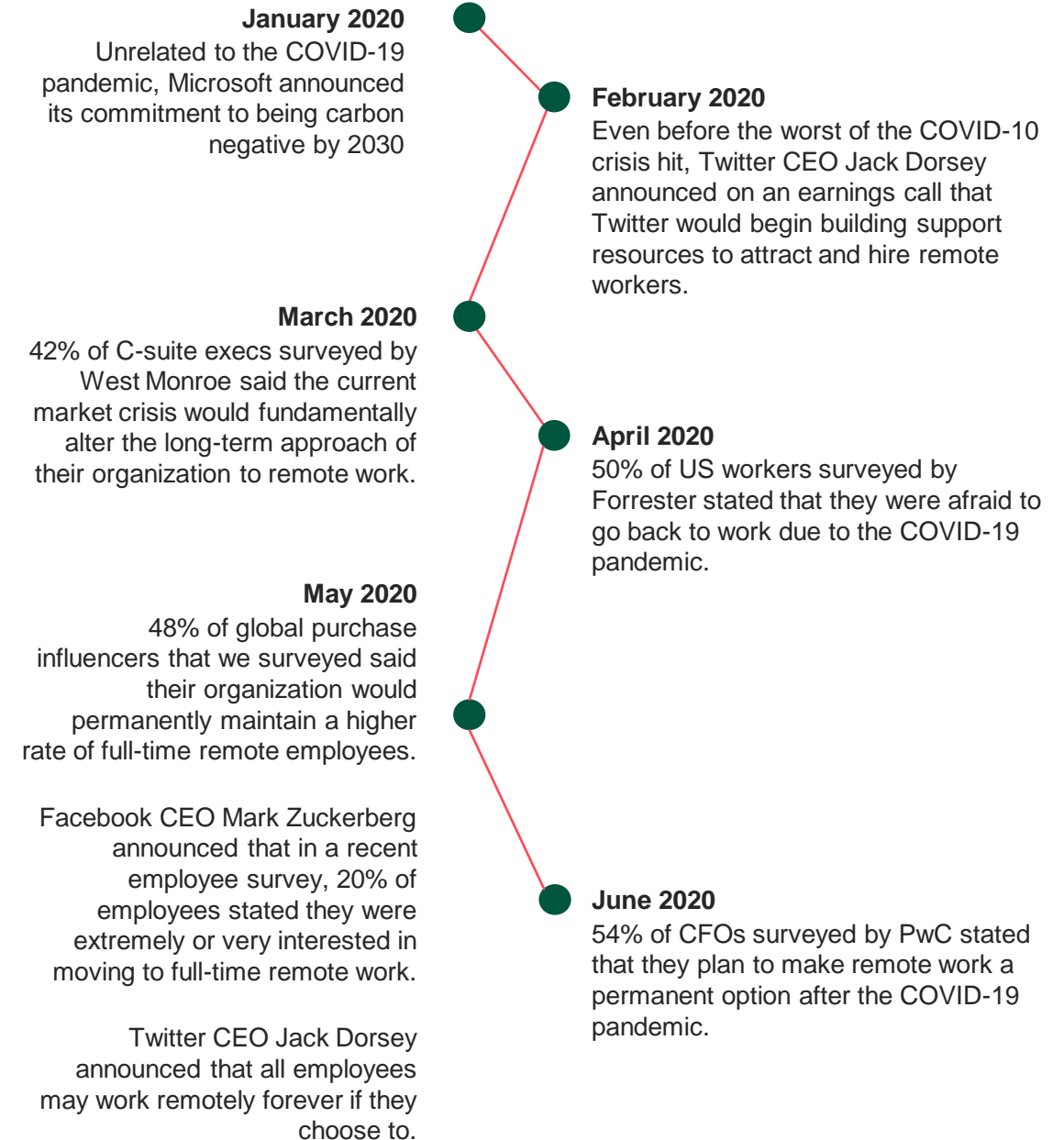"Every organization will need the ability to remote everything at a moments notice."

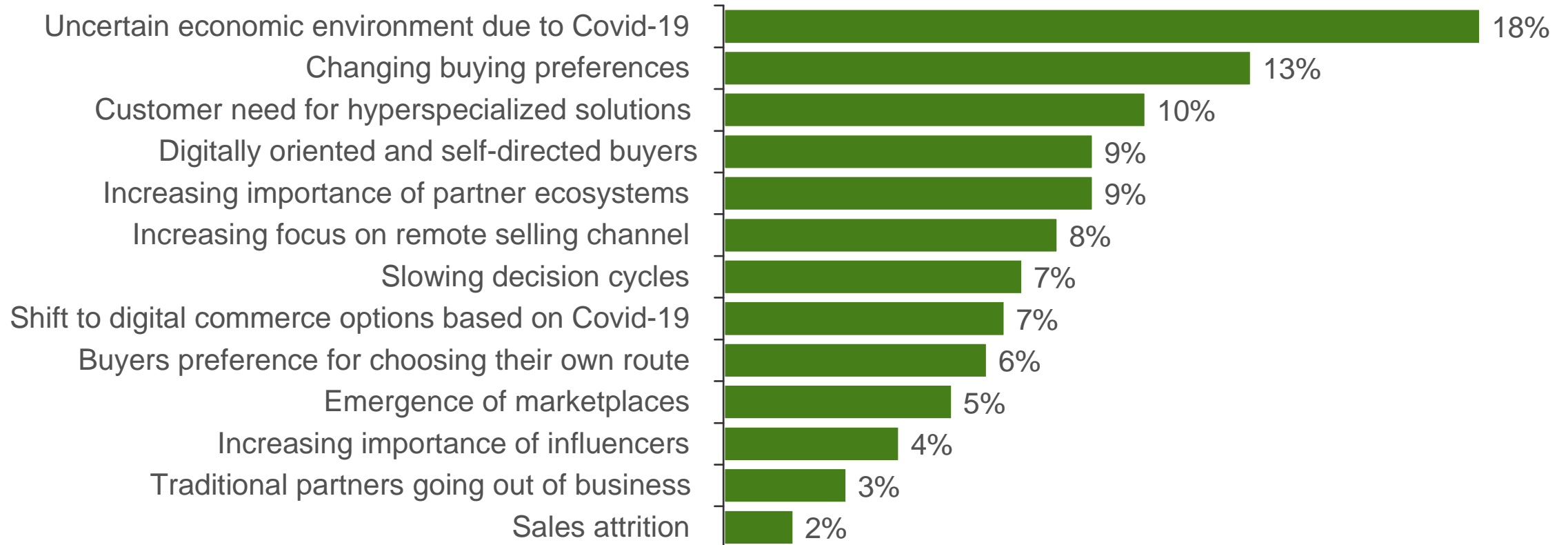— Satya Nadella, CEO Microsoft

WFH Will Extend Indefinitely

53% of workers who are currently remote hope they will be able to continue to WFH more often even after the crisis is over.

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January 2020
Unrelated to the COVID-19 pandemic, Microsoft announced its commitment to being carbon negative by 2030

February 2020
Even before the worst of the COVID-10 crisis hit, Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey announced on an earnings call that Twitter would begin building support resources to attract and hire remote workers.

March 2020
42% of C-suite execs surveyed by West Monroe said the current market crisis would fundamentally alter the long-term approach of their organization to remote work.

April 2020
50% of US workers surveyed by Forrester stated that they were afraid to go back to work due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

May 2020
48% of global purchase influencers that we surveyed said their organization would permanently maintain a higher rate of full-time remote employees.

Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg announced that in a recent employee survey, 20% of employees stated they were extremely or very interested in moving to full-time remote work.

Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey announced that all employees may work remotely forever if they choose to.

June 2020
54% of CFOs surveyed by PwC stated that they plan to make remote work a permanent option after the COVID-19 pandemic.

How highly each factor will influence changes in your GTM strategy? Choose the top 3 factors

Factor	Percentage
Uncertain economic environment due to Covid-19	18%
Changing buying preferences	13%
Customer need for hyperspecialized solutions	10%
Digitally oriented and self-directed buyers	9%
Increasing importance of partner ecosystems	9%
Increasing focus on remote selling channel	8%
Slowing decision cycles	7%
Shift to digital commerce options based on Covid-19	7%
Buyers preference for choosing their own route	6%
Emergence of marketplaces	5%
Increasing importance of influencers	4%
Traditional partners going out of business	3%
Sales attrition	2%

Base: 240 responses from sales and channel professionals

Source: Forrester's Q2 2020 B2B Channel and Sales Survey

How do you intend to address the aforementioned challenges? (Select all that apply.)

Challenge	Percentage
More tech	10.4%
Expansion in number/type of partners	10.4%
Remote selling models	10.2%
Investment in reskilling/upskilling sellers	10.2%
Restructuring of the sales organization	9.6%
Different hiring profiles	8.8%
Better use of influencers	7.7%
Acquisition of more sales enablement tools	7.1%
Acquisition of different sales talent	6.6%
Investment in eCommerce/marketplaces	5.8%
Compensation	4.9%
Use of overlay specialists to assist sellers	3.8%
Quotas	2.5%
Reduction in sales force	1.9%

Base: 364 responses from sales and channel professionals

Source: Forrester's Q2 2020 B2B Channel and Sales Survey

What were the top three challenges your sellers faced regarding buyer/customer engagement at the end of 2019 pre-COVID-19?

Challenge	Percentage
Buyers must include multiple stakeholders in the decision process with different agendas.	26%
Buyers/customers are taking longer to make their decisions.	22%
Buyers/customers just want to talk about pricing/product.	14%
Buyers don't perceive sellers as adding value to their process.	10%
Buyers/customers want to meet in person less often.	9%
Buyers/customers won't take sales phone calls from sales reps.	8%
Buyers/customers view interactions with sales reps as â€œlow value.â€•	7%
Buyers can find everything they need on their own.	4%

Base: 228 responses from sales professionals

Source: Forrester's Q2 2020 B2B Channel and Sales Survey

What are the top three challenges your sellers face regarding buyer/customer engagement in 2020 post-COVID-19?

Buyers/customers are taking longer to make their decisions. **26%**

Buyers must include multiple stakeholders in the decision process with different agendas. **25%**

Buyers/customers can't meet with salespeople in person. **16%**

Buyers/customers just want to talk about pricing/product. **11%**

Buyers don't perceive sellers as adding value to their process. **7%**

Buyers/customers won't take sales phone calls from sales reps. **7%**

Buyers can find everything they need on their own. **5%**

Buyers/customers view interactions with sales reps as "low value".• **3%**

Base: 228 responses from sales professionals

Source: Forrester's Q2 2020 B2B Channel and Sales Survey

Organizations face a challenging current state

Buyers are changing, firms struggle with too many priorities & delivering to end customers, and their current tools aren't cutting it

Buyers are changing faster than organizations can keep up

They make purchases more frequently, expect higher levels of personalization, and are more price-sensitive.

Q11-How have your organization's buyers changed over the past two years?

B2B

They make purchases more frequently.	37%
They expect a high degree of personalization.	35%
They take longer to make a purchase decision.	31%
They are facing internal cost-cutting measures.	29%
Buyers have smaller budgets.	27%
Procurement plays a more important role in the decision process.	26%
Buyers have larger budgets.	26%
More stakeholders are involved in the purchase decision process.	25%
More millennials are involved in the decision-making process.	24%
They make purchases less frequently.	24%
Our buyers have not changed over the past two years	3%

B2C*

They have become more price-sensitive.	52%
They expect a high degree of personalization.	45%
They do more of their shopping online.	45%
They expect increasingly faster levels of responsiveness.	39%
They provide feedback more frequently.	31%
They take longer to make a purchase decision.	25%
They make purchases less frequently.	18%
They do more of their shopping in stores.	17%
They make purchases more frequently.	13%
Our buyers have not changed over the past two years	7%

Base: 152 global decision makers of sales tools, technology, and processes
*Base: 89 global decision makers of sales tools, technology, and processes
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Microsoft, June 2020

Firms struggle most with sales effectiveness (explore & ask phases)

**Q14-At which point in the customer journey do you find it most difficult to support your customers?**
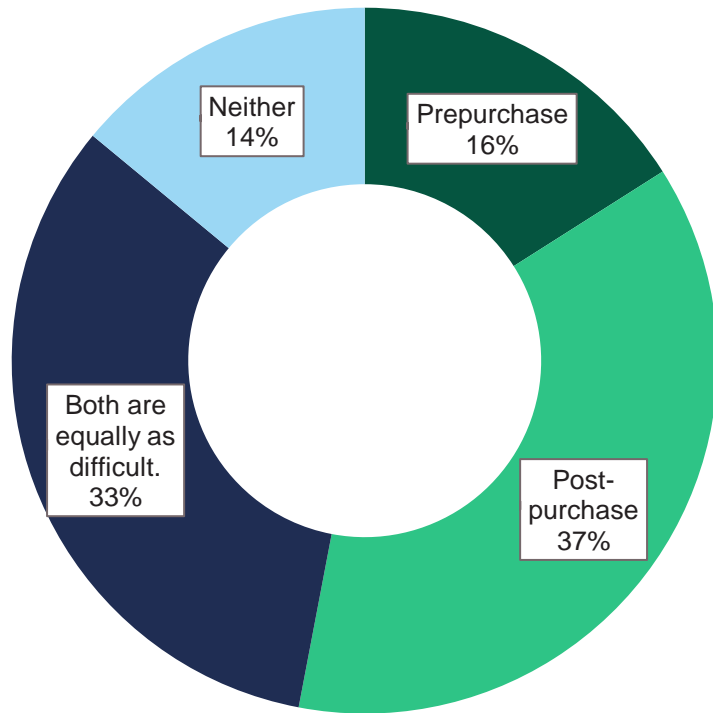
Prepurchase 16%

Post-purchase 37%

Both are equally as difficult. 33%

Neither 14%

Base: 501 global decision makers of sales tools, technology, and processes

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Microsoft, June 2020

Q15-Which prepurchase task is most difficult for your organization?

Discover	20%
Explore	49%
Buy	19%
All are equally as difficult.	12%
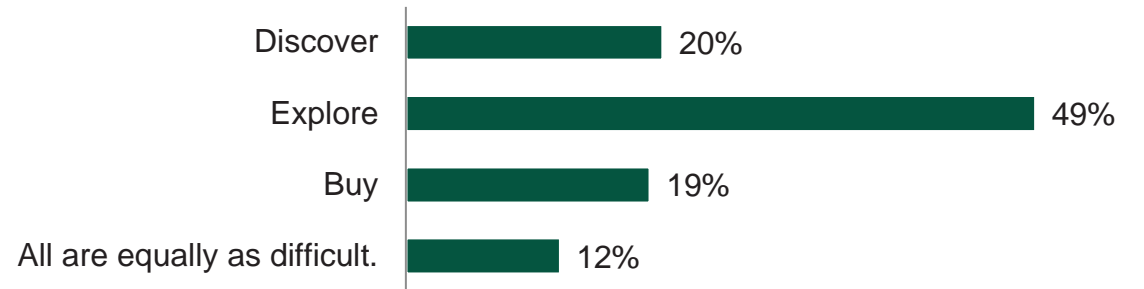
Base: 246 global decision makers of sales tools, technology, and processes

Q16-Which post-purchase task is most difficult for your organization?

Use	19%
Ask	48%
Engage	25%
All are equally as difficult.	8%
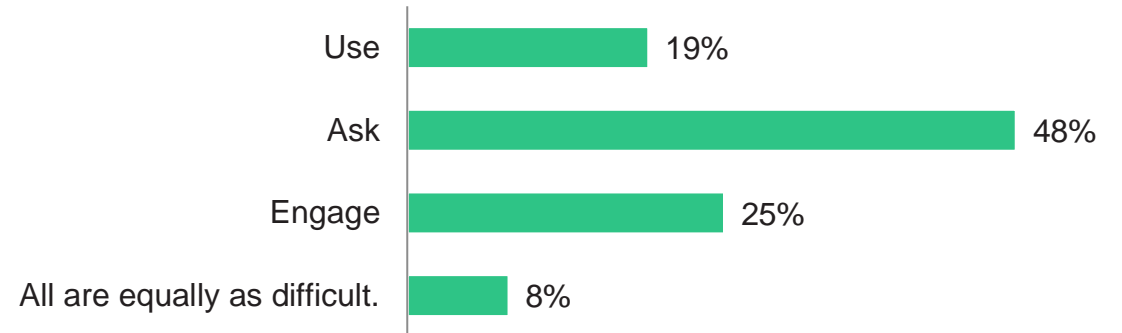
Base: 349 global decision makers of sales tools, technology, and processes

95% experience challenges when delivering end products to customers

Actionable insights, nurturing relationships, and team integration are barriers to delivery – not problems that can be fixed overnight.

Q9-What challenges do you face when delivering end products/services to your customer?

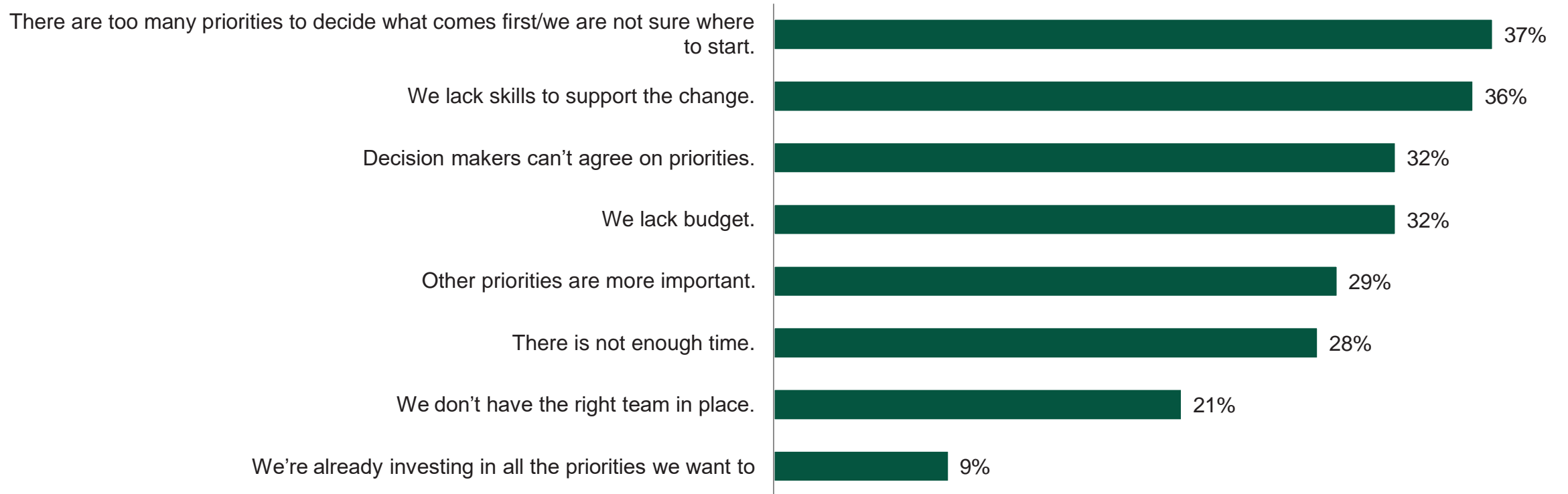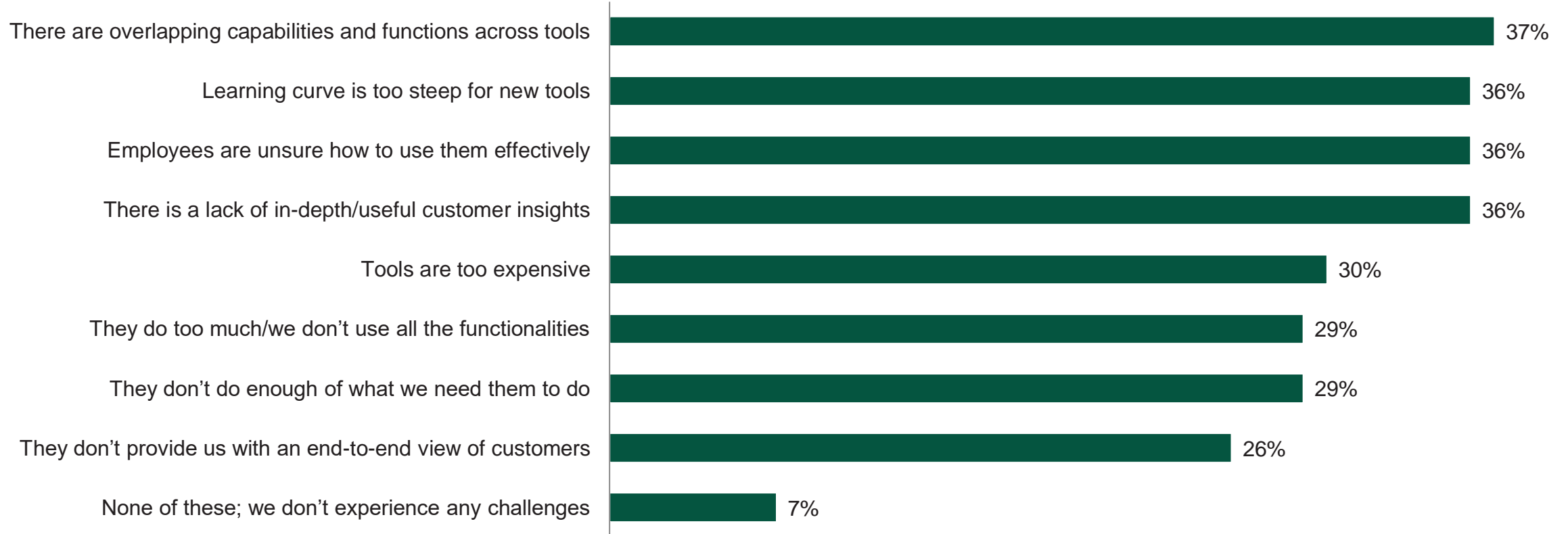| Challenge	Percentage
Lack of visibility and integration between sales/marketing/service teams	38%
Difficulty turning customer data into actionable insights	34%
Struggles with continuing to nurture customer relationships post-purchase	34%
Inability to clearly communicate with the customer	34%
Difficulty gathering feedback from customers	33%
Inconsistent experiences across all customer touchpoints	31%
Difficulty being more agile (i.e., understanding needs as they evolve)	31%
Difficulty collaborating internally	29%
We don't experience any challenges	5%

Base: 501 global decision makers of sales tools, technology, and processes

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Microsoft, June 2020

Investment indecision is due to competing priorities and lack of cultural support, not that they don't have the right resources

Lack of budget, time, and team are lower on the list – meaning this is a cultural shift more than a quick fix.

Q17-What is preventing your organization from investing in all the sales priorities you want to?

There are too many priorities to decide what comes first/we are not sure where to start.	37%
We lack skills to support the change.	36%
Decision makers can't agree on priorities.	32%
We lack budget.	32%
Other priorities are more important.	29%
There is not enough time.	28%
We don't have the right team in place.	21%
We're already investing in all the priorities we want to	9%

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Current sales tools show marked room for improvement

Current tools overlap, are hard to learn, and employees require education.

Q8-What challenges do you experience with your current selection of sales tools?

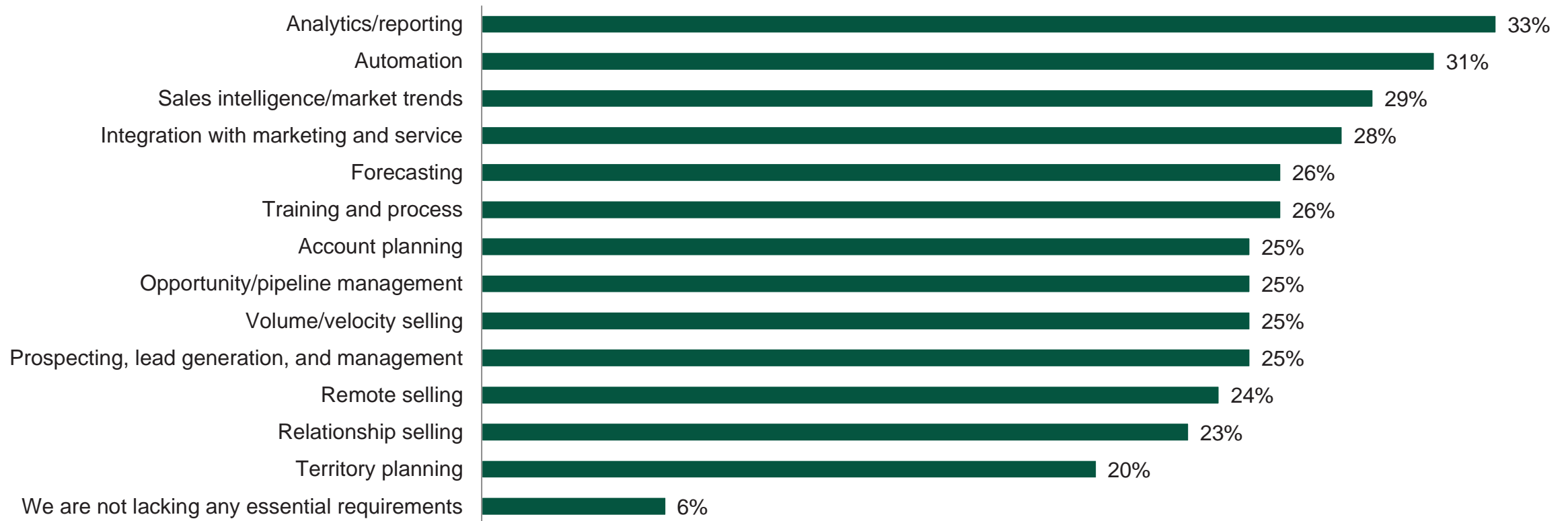| Challenge	Percentage
There are overlapping capabilities and functions across tools	37%
Learning curve is too steep for new tools	36%
Employees are unsure how to use them effectively	36%
There is a lack of in-depth/useful customer insights	36%
Tools are too expensive	30%
They do too much/we don't use all the functionalities	29%
They don't do enough of what we need them to do	29%
They don't provide us with an end-to-end view of customers	26%
None of these; we don't experience any challenges	7%

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Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Microsoft, June 2020

Better CX hinges on more advanced AI-driven factors than just improving sales tactics

Firms say better analytics, improved automation, and sales intelligence would boost CX.

Q10-What sales technology capabilities, if any, are you currently lacking that would be essential to helping you provide a better customer experience?

| Capability	Percentage
Analytics/reporting	33%
Automation	31%
Sales intelligence/market trends	29%
Integration with marketing and service	28%
Forecasting	26%
Training and process	26%
Account planning	25%
Opportunity/pipeline management	25%
Volume/velocity selling	25%
Prospecting, lead generation, and management	25%
Remote selling	24%
Relationship selling	23%
Territory planning	20%
We are not lacking any essential requirements	6%

Base: 501 global decision makers of sales tools, technology, and processes

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Microsoft, June 2020

More than two-thirds of firms find their current tools to be subpar for reaching their goals.

Role/industry cut for this q

68%
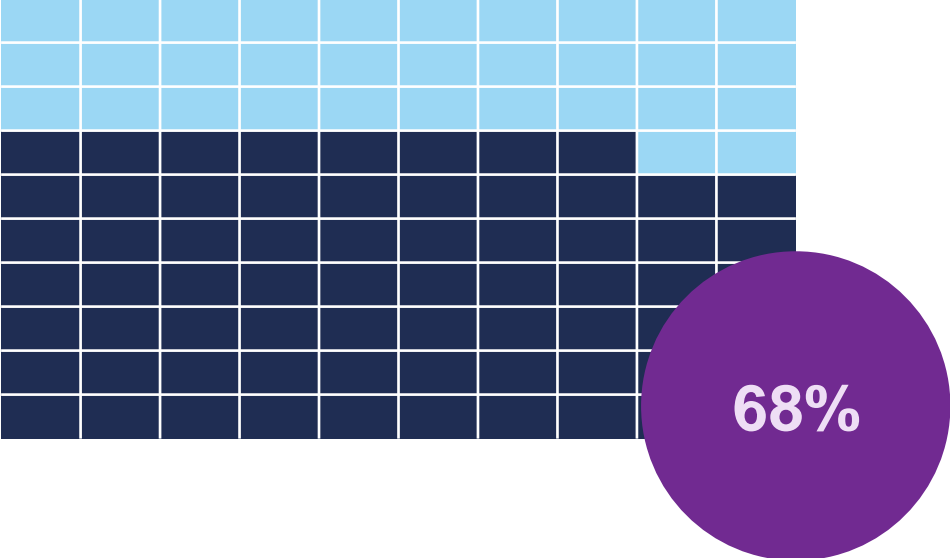
Our current suite of sales tools is ineffective at producing the outcomes we need.

Base: 501 global decision makers of sales tools, technology, and processes

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Microsoft, June 2020

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Where do we go from here?

Further investment in SFA – with the key functionalities in mind – will be what sets firms apart in the future.

The good news: firms are focused on righting these wrongs over the coming years

Firms plan to continue improving CX, data quality, and SFA investment.

Q19-What are your sales organization's priorities for the next 12 to 24 months? (Select up to top three.)

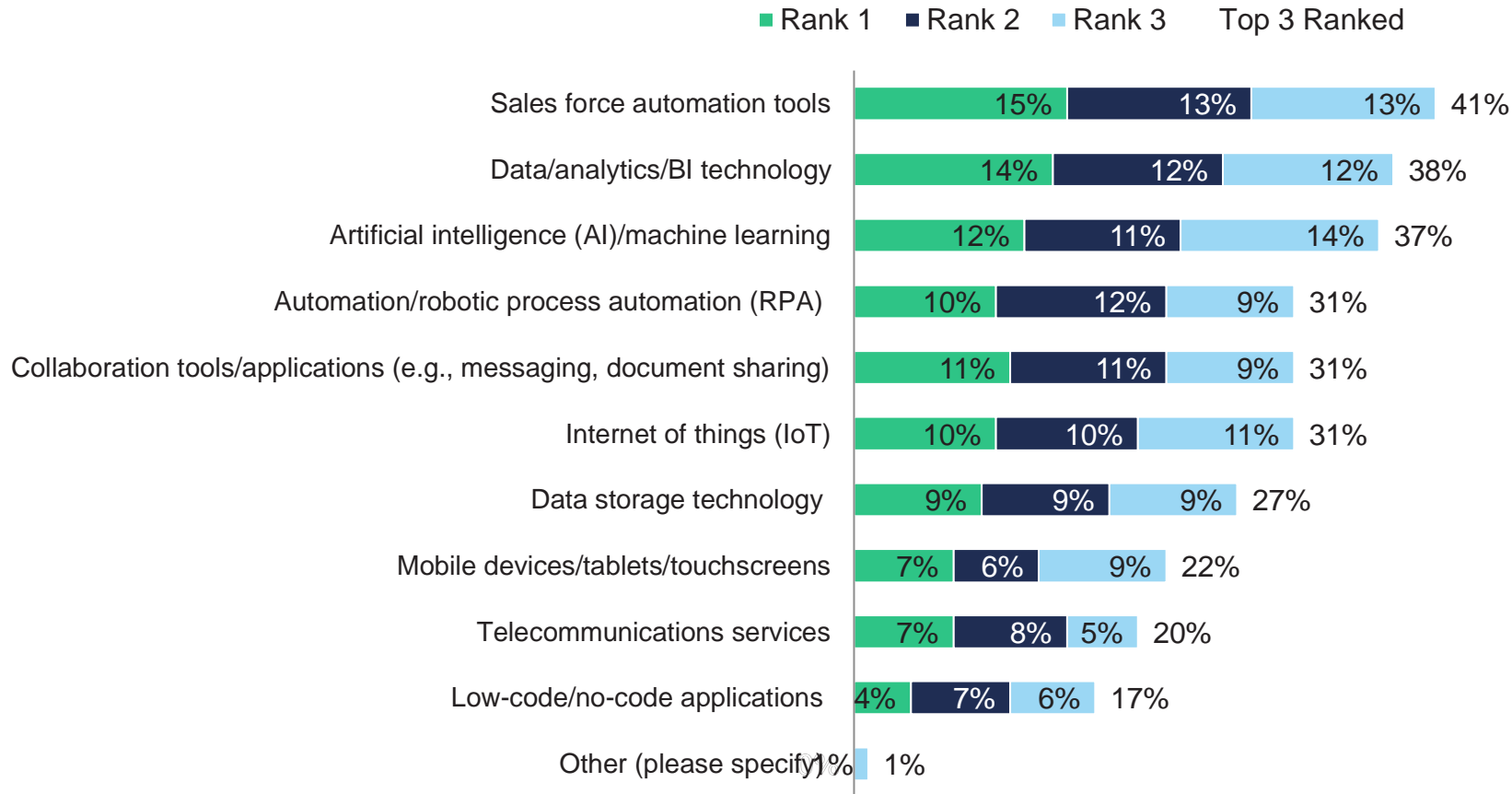| Priority	Percentage
Improve customer relationships/customer experience	41%
Improve the quality of our customer data	40%
Increase investment in our CRM/sales force automation (SFA) solution	39%
Better enable remote selling	36%
Improve use of data to support insights-driven decision making	36%
Implement/expand sales enablement tools/capabilities	32%
Improve data to support insights-driven selling	31%
Improve metrics/reporting capabilities	29%

Base: 501 global decision makers of sales tools, technology, and processes

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Firms also plan to center future investment on SFA tools and cutting-edge technology

Q18-Where is your company overall putting the greatest investment/attention when it comes to technology?

■ Rank 1 ■ Rank 2 ■ Rank 3 Top 3 Ranked

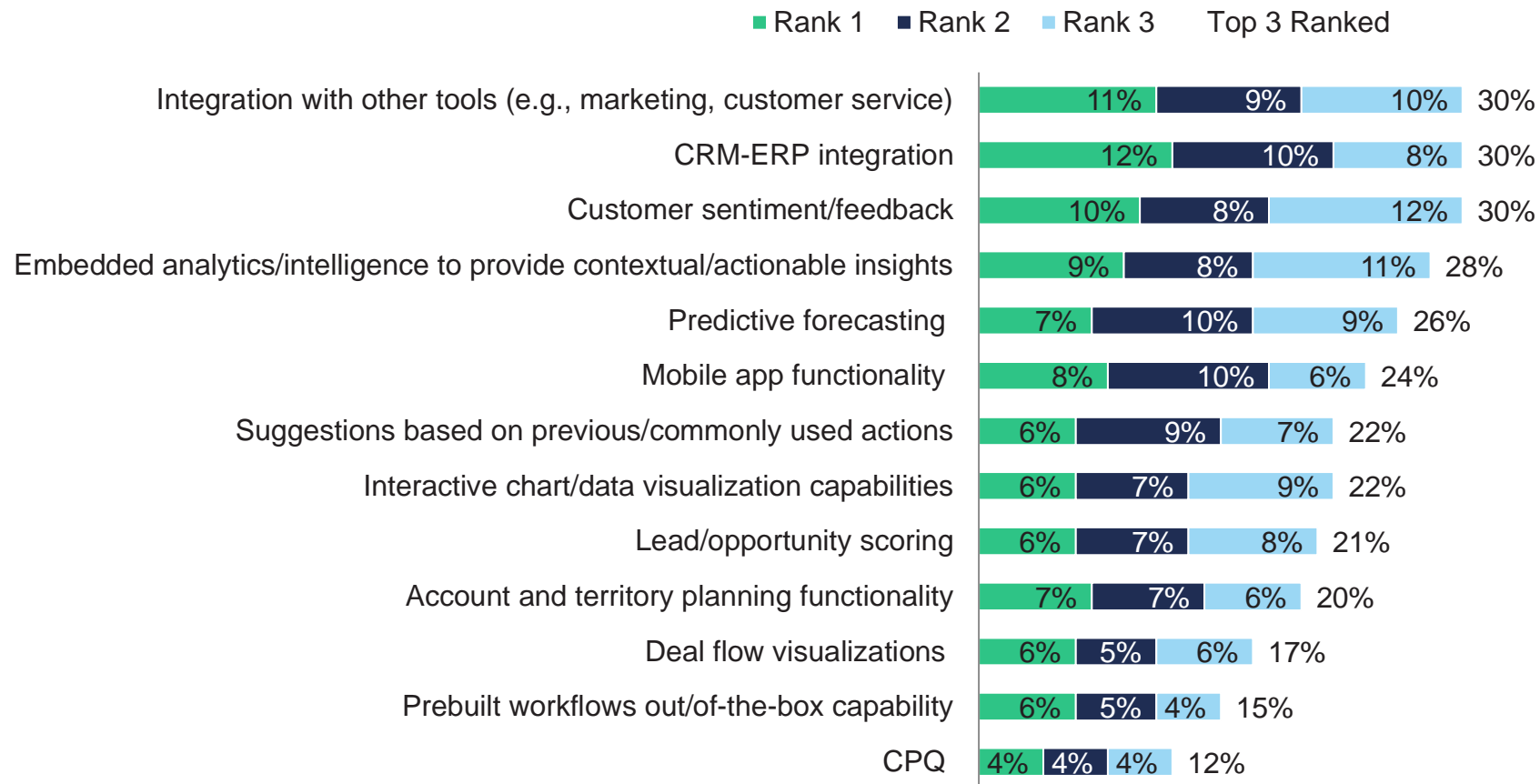| Technology	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Top 3 Ranked
Sales force automation tools	15%	13%	13%	41%
Data/analytics/BI technology	14%	12%	12%	38%
Artificial intelligence (AI)/machine learning	12%	11%	14%	37%
Automation/robotic process automation (RPA)	10%	12%	9%	31%
Collaboration tools/applications (e.g., messaging, document sharing)	11%	11%	9%	31%
Internet of things (IoT)	10%	10%	11%	31%
Data storage technology	9%	9%	9%	27%
Mobile devices/tablets/touchscreens	7%	6%	9%	22%
Telecommunications services	7%	8%	5%	20%
Low-code/no-code applications	4%	7%	6%	17%
Other (please specify)	1%			1%

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To provide the most value toward goal achievement, these tools must encompass integration, feedback, and analytics capabilities

Q20-Which of the following CRM capabilities would be most helpful in enabling you to achieve your future sales goals?

Legend: ■ Rank 1 ■ Rank 2 ■ Rank 3 Top 3 Ranked

Capability	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Top 3 Ranked
Integration with other tools (e.g., marketing, customer service)	11%	9%	10%	30%
CRM-ERP integration	12%	10%	8%	30%
Customer sentiment/feedback	10%	8%	12%	30%
Embedded analytics/intelligence to provide contextual/actionable insights	9%	8%	11%	28%
Predictive forecasting	7%	10%	9%	26%
Mobile app functionality	8%	10%	6%	24%
Suggestions based on previous/commonly used actions	6%	9%	7%	22%
Interactive chart/data visualization capabilities	6%	7%	9%	22%
Lead/opportunity scoring	6%	7%	8%	21%
Account and territory planning functionality	7%	7%	6%	20%
Deal flow visualizations	6%	5%	6%	17%
Prebuilt workflows out/of-the-box capability	6%	5%	4%	15%
CPQ	4%	4%	4%	12%

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Proper utilization of these tools is expected to yield myriad benefits (1/2)

Q22-What internal/business benefits have you experienced, or would you expect to experience, from using CRM/SFA tools?

Benefit	%
Improved data accuracy	39%
Improved productivity	39%
Improved process efficiency	37%
Increased revenue	30%
More qualified leads	30%
More actionable data/insights	29%
Reduced costs	29%
More time on selling/less time on manual data entry	29%
Improved collaboration between teams	29%
Ability to build and maintain relationships	28%
Faster time-to-market	28%
Ability to address customers' rising expectations	27%
Enhanced brand awareness	26%
Unification across departments and lines of business	25%

Base: 501 global decision makers of sales tools, technology, and processes

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Microsoft, June 2020

Proper utilization of these tools is expected to yield myriad benefits (2/2)

Q26-What external/customer benefits have you experienced, or would you expect to experience, from using sales force automation tools?

Benefit	Percentage
Better relationships with customers	46%
Better ability to predict customer needs	43%
Better customer engagement	42%
Better personalized customer relationships	40%
A more complete view of the customer	39%
More targeted marketing	38%
More integrated sales and marketing	37%
Higher close rates	32%
Shorter sales cycles	28%
None of these; we don't expect any benefits	1%

Base: 501 global decision makers of sales tools, technology, and processes

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