HubSpot Mole Street

The State of Financial Services Growth

Exploring insights from financial services leaders on current priorities, challenges, where AI fits into their strategy, and what separates leaders from the rest

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The client is always right, but is your client experience?

The organizations that win and keep clients prioritize the trifecta of data, personalization, and client service.

Zappos shares email reminders letting parents know when it's time to size up their kids' shoes. State Farm recently equipped agents with an AI-powered intelligence tool to support more personalized client conversations and tailored product recommendations.

We are living in the age of the customer, and financial services firms don't get a hall pass.

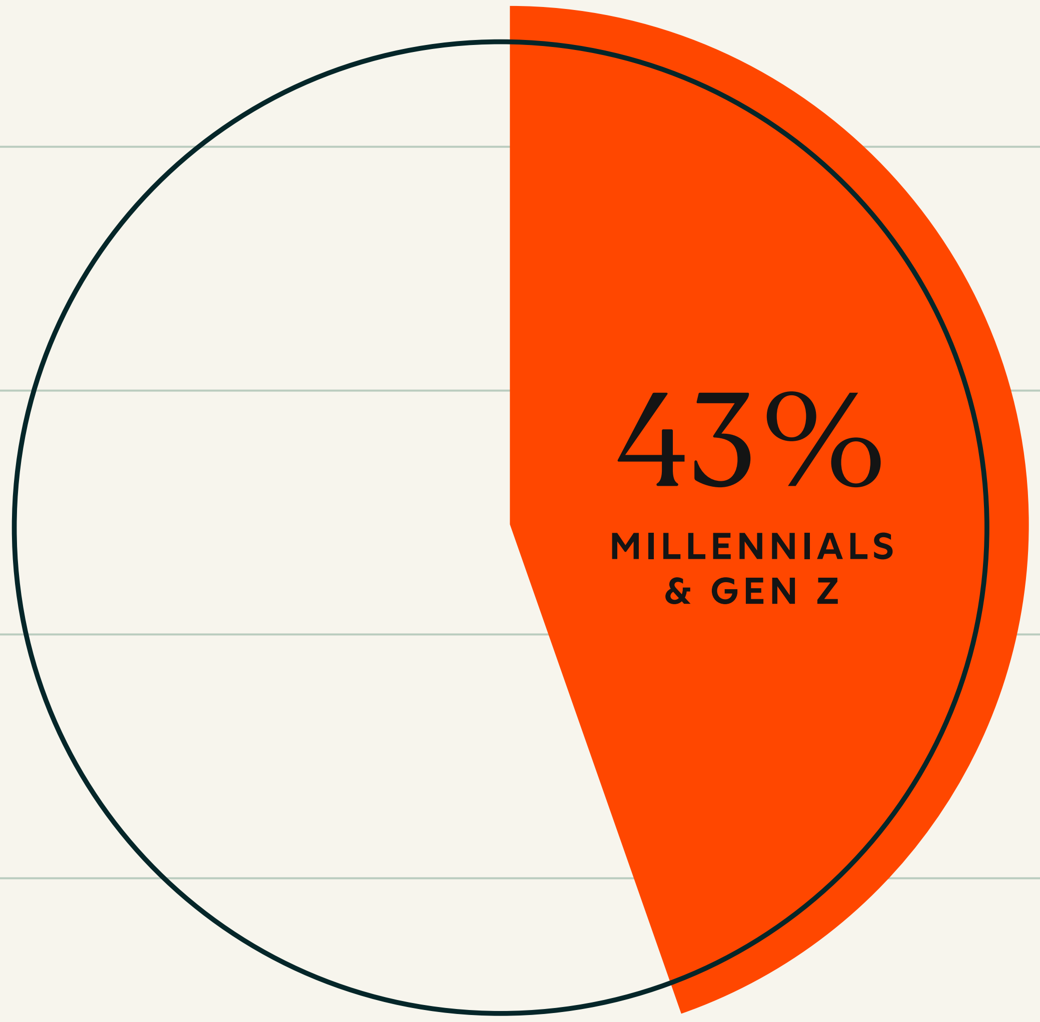
Today, poor client experiences are the #1 reason people leave their banks, per FICO research. We're already seeing consumers "soft switch" their primary banking and investment accounts to newer, digital-first fintech brands. This trend will likely accelerate over the next few years (see graph).

Mid-market financial institutions are being held to a higher bar. Today's (and tomorrow's) clients want more than transactional relationships with the brands they choose. This puts more pressure on teams to deliver fintech-level experiences, even with smaller teams and tighter constraints.

As this research demonstrates, financial services firms' internal operations, teams, and technology can either be your biggest weakness or your strongest differentiator. To land and keep your best clients, all three need to be in sync.

Brian LaPann
Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Mole Street, Elite HubSpot Solutions Partner

RETAIL BANKING REVENUE DEMOGRAPHICS IN 2035



Millennials and Gen Z are expected to account for 43% of retail banking revenue by 2035, up from 32% in 2023, according to McKinsey.

The barriers to growth are coming from inside your firm

Regulatory changes and compliance requirements have always shouldered the blame for financial services firms' operational challenges. And while compliance is still a real constraint, it's no longer the dominant obstacle.

The financial services sector (made up of accounting firms, banks/neobanks, fintechs, wealth management firms, credit unions, and investment firms) doesn't simply compete against industry peers. They compete against consumers' growing demands for convenience and trust, from all of the service providers they do business with.

HubSpot and Mole Street surveyed 270 US financial services leaders to understand their organizations' priorities for the year ahead, what truly stands in the way of success, and what separates the fastest-growing firms from the rest.

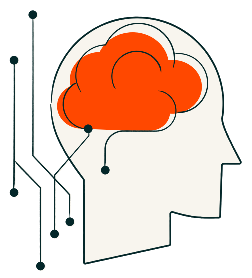
Attribution and data quality are top growth barriers

Difficulty proving the ROI of martech tools and fragmented, poor quality data are the biggest barriers to achieving growth.

Clients expect personalized communication

Personalized recommendations and communications are most commonly the hardest client expectations to meet.

Most firms are already using AI or will soon



97% are using AI now or plan to in the future.

Retention and acquisition are running neck and neck

Retention priorities (41%) slightly edge out acquisition (40%) in a tough economic climate.

Data challenges make it harder to deliver a good client experience

78% say firm-wide silos, disconnected systems, and incomplete data make it hard to deliver a modern CX.

AI/automation support client service and marketing

Firms mainly use AI/automation for client service (42%), content (40%), and marketing personalization (35%).

Financial services firms are banking on growth through client retention and expansion

For 2026 and beyond, client retention and expansion is financial services leaders' top business priority, only slightly edging out client acquisition. Both outrank other priorities like improving the client experience, modernizing technology, and market expansion. Firms are in a challenging growth environment. Consumers' **optimism about the economic environment** is at a low point, and inflation is up, which can contribute to fewer financial management decisions (besides the decision to stay the course).

Attracting new clients is expensive, regardless of industry. Financial services leaders' emphasis on nurturing existing clients makes sense, given that expanding client relationships is currently their primary revenue growth driver.

Retention is the dominant focus across most of the industry (e.g., 53% of credit unions are prioritizing it), but accounting and advisory firms are the exception. 54% plan to focus on acquisition compared to 40% of firms overall.

TOP BUSINESS PRIORITIES OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

Retaining and growing existing client or member relationships	41%
Acquiring new clients or members	40%
Improving client or member experience	31%
Modernizing internal operations or technology	28%
Increasing operational efficiency or reducing costs	24%
Expanding into new markets or customer segments	18%
Strengthening data infrastructure and analytics capabilities	18%
Improving regulatory and compliance capabilities	7%
Developing new products or services	4%

AI overtakes the economy in shaping firms' growth agenda

It's impossible to escape headlines about how AI is transforming financial services.

Lloyds is bringing on a chief data and AI officer. **BMO** established its own AI institute. **Bank of America's** AI-powered client assistant managed 700 million interactions in 2025 alone.

This breakneck innovation explains why industry leaders are most likely to cite AI and automation as the #1 external force shaping their growth strategy. **Inflation and economic uncertainty**, interest rates, and regulatory shifts are, to some extent, known quantities for financial services firms. A proactive, realistic approach to AI can become a competitive moat, and a shield against broader market volatility.

AI/Automation is the #1 external force shaping business growth strategy

Your ideal clients want a more personalized touch

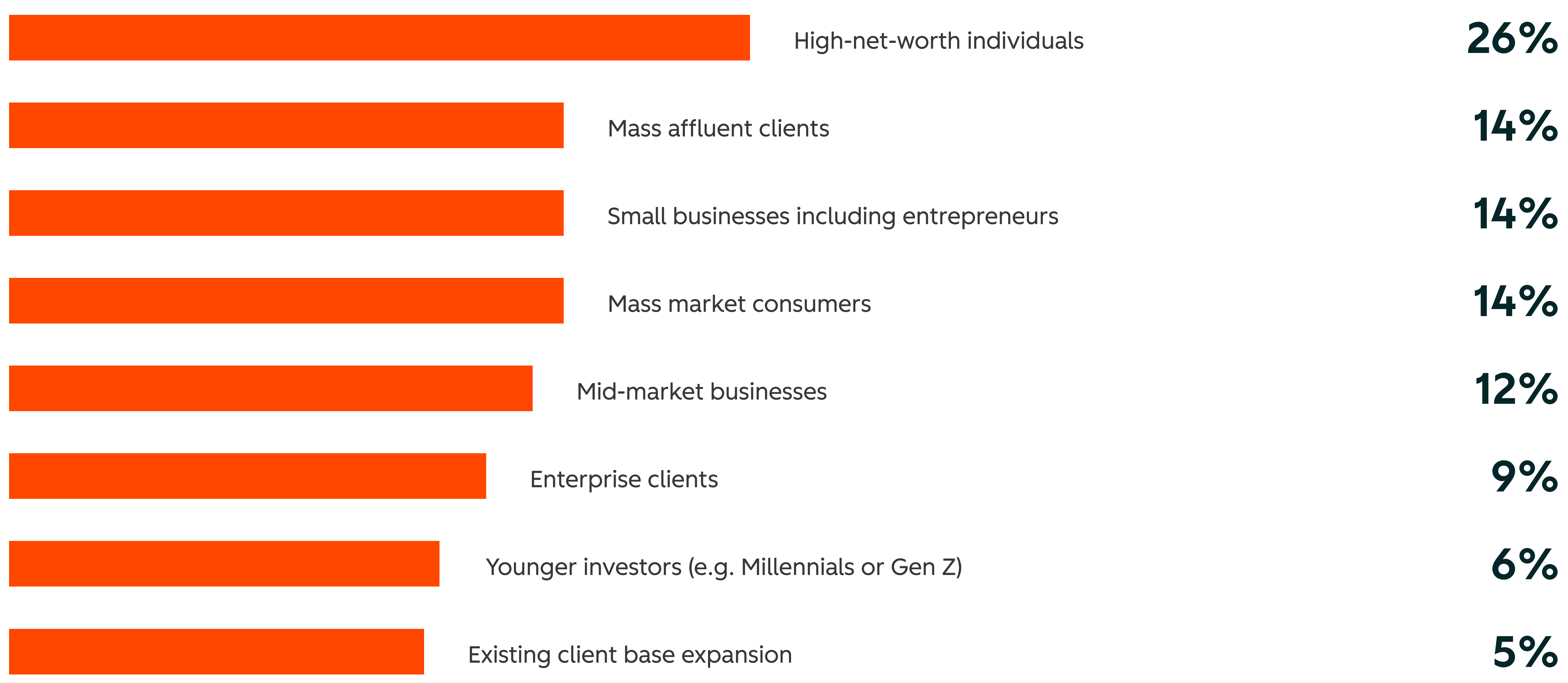
Client expectations may not be the leading force shaping financial services firms' growth strategies, but ignoring them is not an option.

Leaders most commonly identify high-net-worth individuals as their firms' greatest growth opportunity over the next 12 months—clients who are more likely to have high expectations for white-glove service. From the client's perspective, speed isn't the only thing that matters.

Hardest client expectations to meet

1. Personalized recommendations or communication
2. Faster response times
3. Seamless digital experiences
4. Proactive communication
5. 24/7 availability

GREATEST GROWTH OPPORTUNITY



Hitting retention goals will depend on firms' ability to deliver timely 1:1 experiences.

NQM FUNDING LLC

NQM Funding scales from regional player to $4B national lender

NQM Funding specializes in non-qualified mortgage loans in the US. As the company looked to grow its national reputation in this nuanced space, they needed a better way of developing and maintaining broker relationships.

For years the firm struggled with a fragmented view of broker communications and marketing efforts that were disconnected from sales activities. After moving to HubSpot and integrating it across their loan origination platform and other communication tools, everything changed.

With direct visibility into broker and loan data, NQM Funding can automatically manage and personalize broker outreach down to the individual level.

Over four years, the firm scaled its broker engagement by 10X, growing its active network from 5,000 to 50,000 contacts, which helped fuel their expansion from a <$5 million regional lender to a national leader with $4 billion in annual funding.

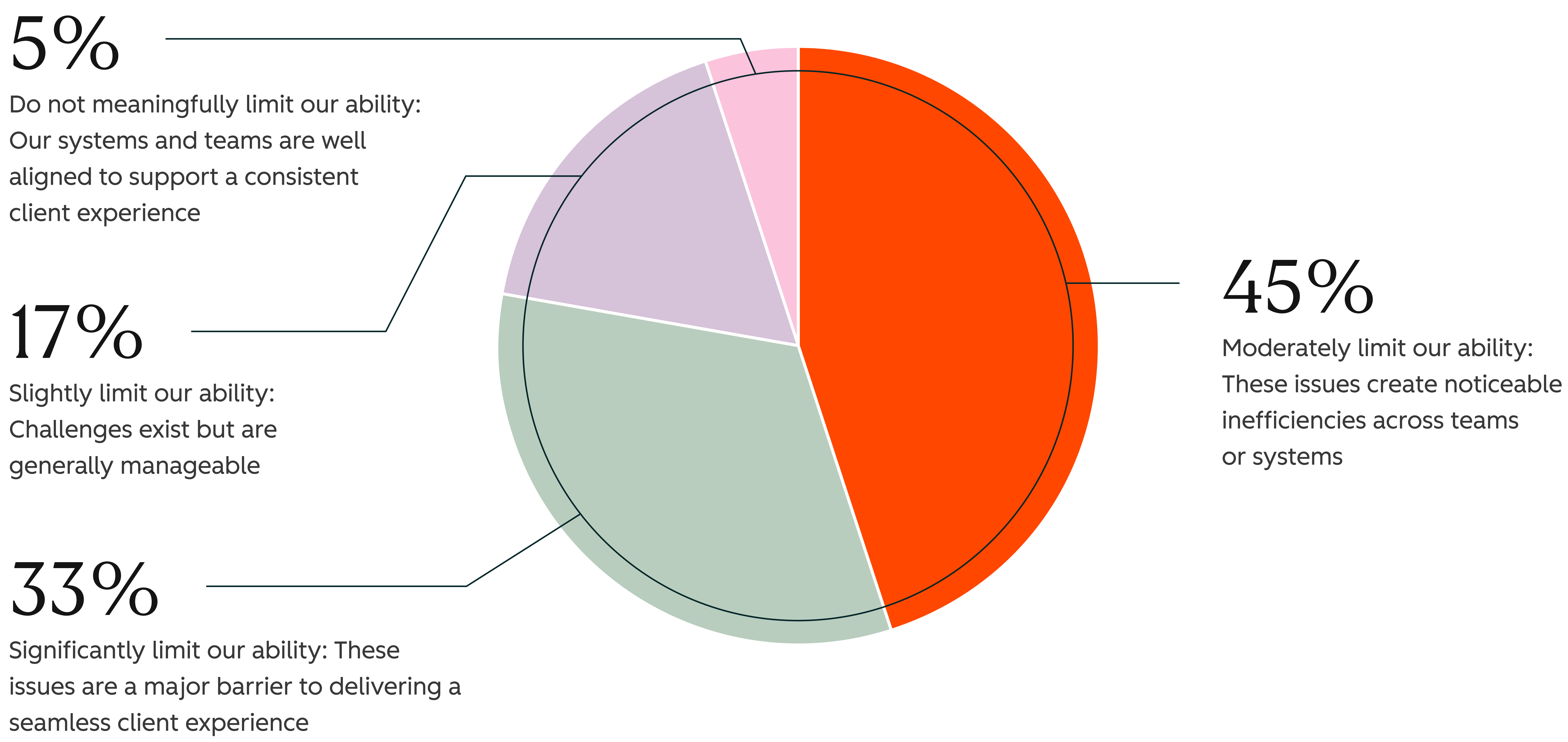
Read the story

Internal silos stand in the way of delivering a superior client experience

As mentioned earlier, the strongest client experience starts with aligned teams, technology, and information. Few firms have mastered all three.

78% of respondents say organizational silos, disconnected systems, and incomplete client data limit their ability to deliver a modern client experience. Retail and commercial banks report the highest rate of significant limitations at 41%, suggesting legacy infrastructure challenges are most acute for traditional banks.

CLIENT EXPERIENCE ORGANIZATION LIMITATIONS



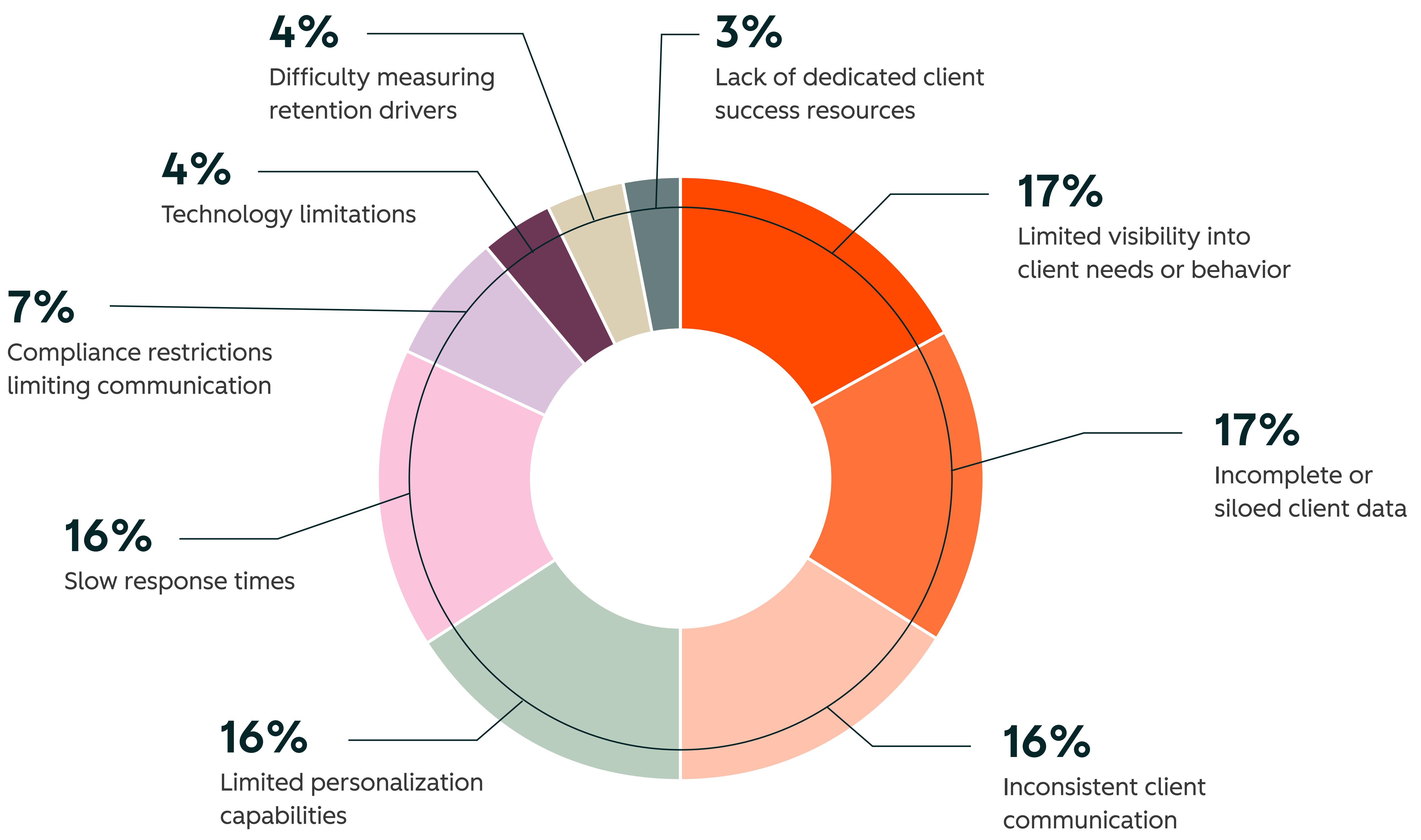
You need to know your clients to keep them

Fragmented data creates a fragmented client experience, which gives clients even more motivation to take their business elsewhere.

Financial services leaders cite incomplete, siloed data and limited visibility into client needs as the top challenges holding their firms back from improving retention, which is a top growth priority. Visibility is a larger issue for retail banks (24%), and accounting firms are more likely to struggle with personalization (24%).

Despite these differences, firms that can seamlessly collect, access, and analyze client data stand the best chance of expanding their relationships.

BIGGEST ORGANIZATIONAL BARRIERS PREVENTING IMPROVEMENT IN CLIENT OR MEMBER RETENTION

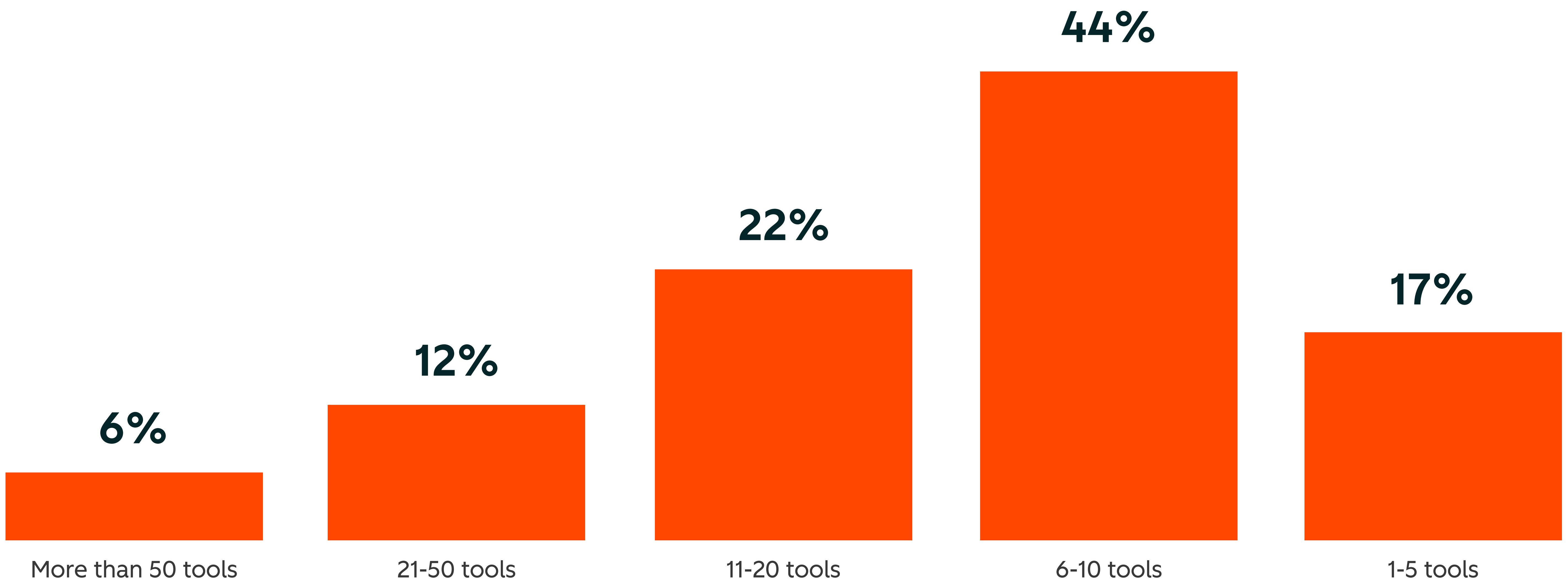


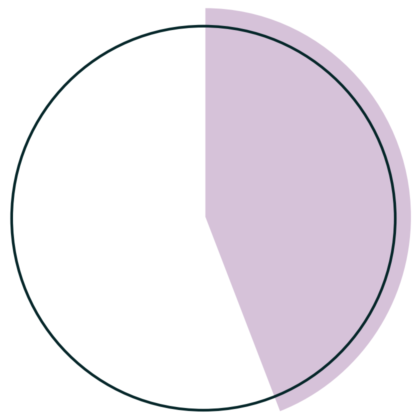
More tech doesn't equal more growth

The number of tools financial services firms use doesn't always equate to revenue or growth.

Almost half (44%) of all leaders say their organization uses 6-10 tools across marketing, sales, and CX. Mid-large firms ($500M-$999M) are twice as likely as average to use 21-50 tools (25%), suggesting tool sprawl peaks at this size.

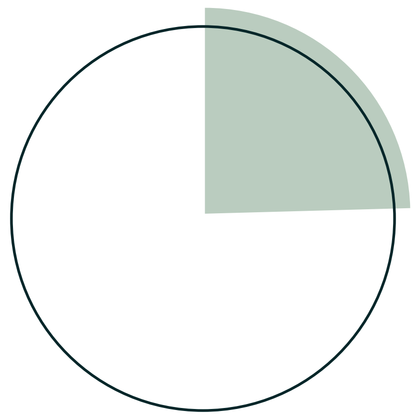
HOW MANY TOOLS ORGANIZATIONS USE ACROSS MARKETING, SALES, AND CLIENT EXPERIENCE FUNCTIONS





44%

of leaders say their organization uses 6-10 tools across marketing, sales, and CX



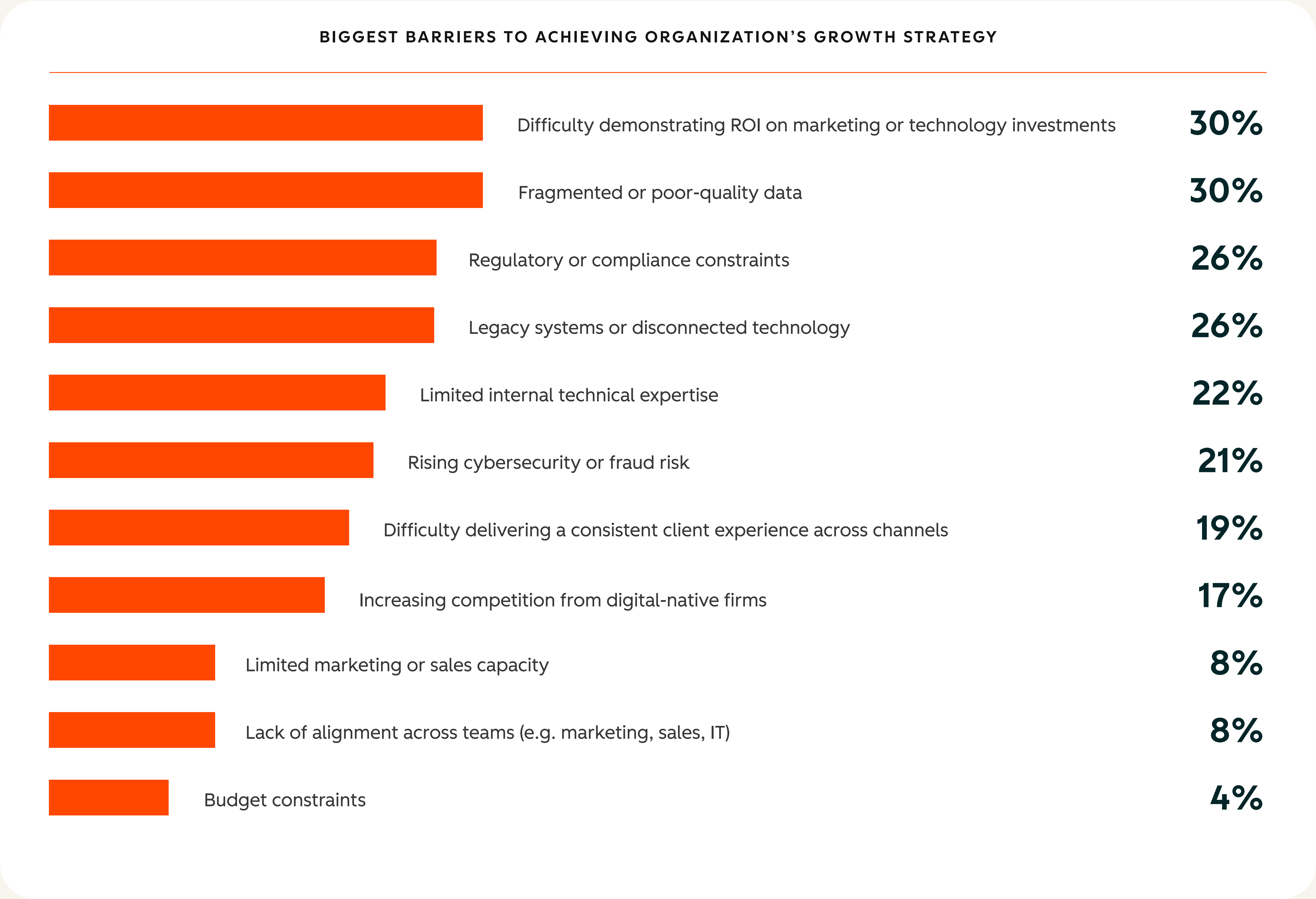
25%

of mid-large firms use 21–50 tools, twice the average

Financial services firms struggle to prove the ROI of their tech investments

As firms have tacked on tool after tool to try to get a clear picture of their marketing performance, they've found that difficulty proving the ROI of martech tools and fragmented, poor quality data are tied as the biggest barriers to financial services firms' growth.

Data and attribution issues are even more prevalent than regulatory and compliance constraints.



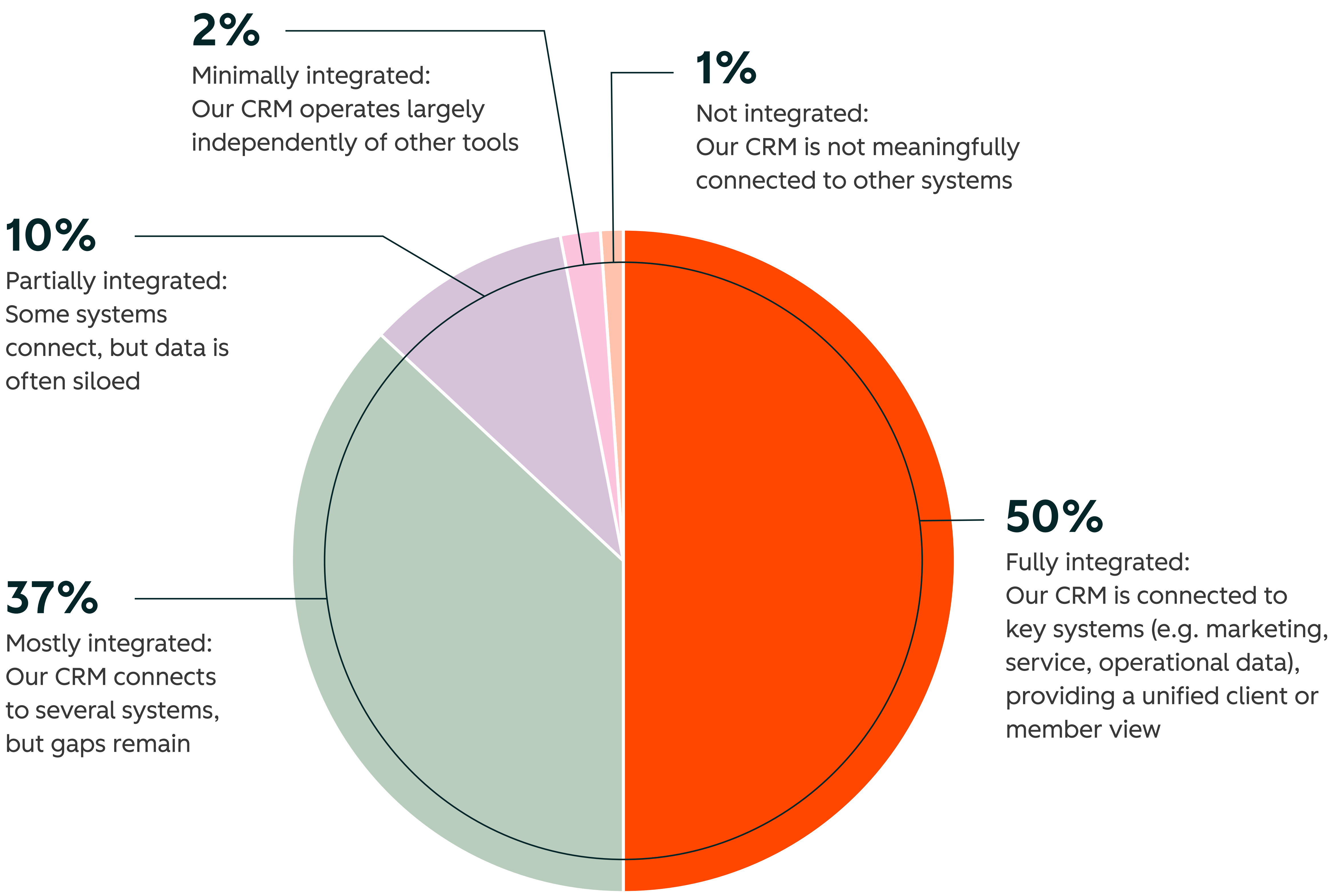
The divide between client data and relationship management

Client data has multiple homes within financial services tech stacks. In many firms, client data lives across several platforms including core banking systems, CRMs, and data warehouses, which furthers their client intelligence silos.

In and beyond the financial sectors, CRMs are typically an organization’s primary client data hub. But only half of financial services firms’ CRMs are fully integrated into other key marketing, service, or operational systems.

When the data in your CRM only tells you how to contact clients (but nothing about their actual behavior or preferences), it limits your ability to cross-sell and wastes your marketing budget on generic outreach.

CURRENT STATE OF CRM INTEGRATION



HBK®

Hill, Barth & King unifies its CRM to scale 20,000+ client relationships

Hill, Barth & King LLC (HBK) is a Top 100 CPA and consulting firm that serves more than 20,000 clients with audit, tax, consulting, and advisory services.

Though the firm had been using a CRM, it was misaligned with their practice management platform, creating data integrity risks, overcomplicating internal processes, and inhibiting their growth goals.

In 2023, HBK partnered with Mole Street to rebuild their HubSpot CRM into a unified system that reflected the firm's real internal workflows.

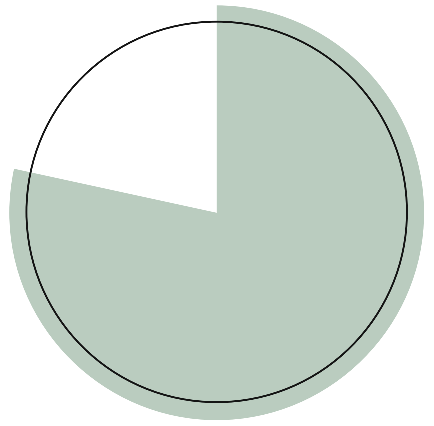
Today, data for more than 20,000 clients syncs automatically, ensuring HBK's marketing efforts are always rooted in real-time, consistent insights (and eliminating the need for manual data entry).

Read the story

Financial leaders are bullish on AI's potential

Most leaders are optimistic about AI's role in their firm's future, but adoption maturity varies widely. 78% deploy AI for (at least) limited use cases today, and another 19% are piloting it or have a defined strategy.

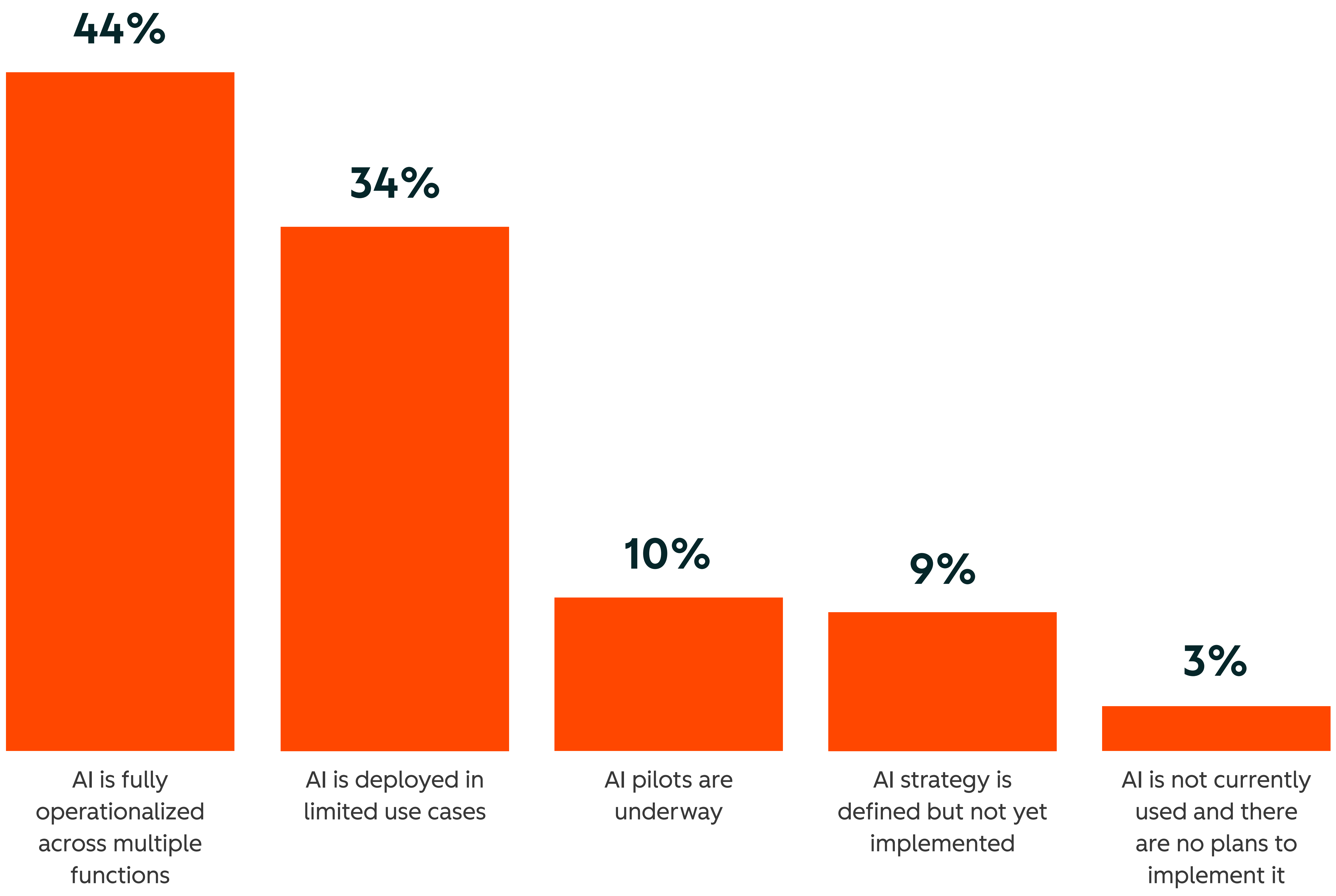
Less than half of firms (44%) have AI fully operationalized across multiple functions. This increases among wealth management (58%) and accounting firms (51%), nodding again to retail banks' entrenched legacy systems.



78%

of leaders deploy AI for (at least) limited use cases today

ORGANIZATION'S CURRENT STAGE OF AI ADOPTION



There's a divide between how firms use AI and where they see the impact

Financial services firms primarily use AI today for marketing and client-facing operations including client service, content creation, and personalization. This speaks to the main goal of retaining existing clients and delivering great experiences.

But there is a disconnect between firms' leading use cases and where they see AI having the largest impact.

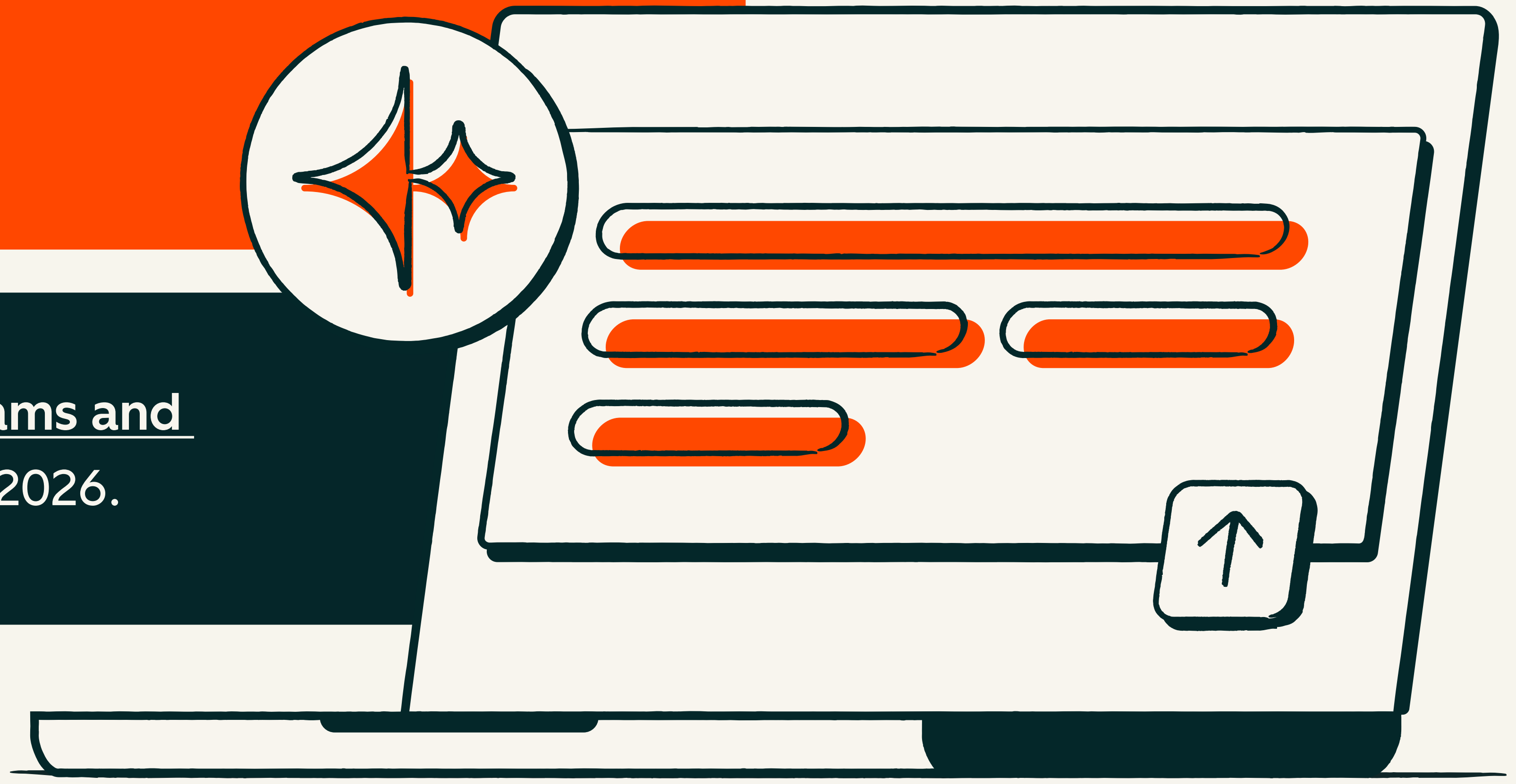
AI is currently most effective for backend operations

Despite firms' top AI applications, leaders say the technology has had the most impact on fraud prevention/risk management and operational efficiency to date.

Financial services firms are responding to industry trends and consumer demands.

In 2024, Americans lost $135B to fraud, nearly $100B of which wasn't recoverable.

And in the last two years, the risk of consumer financial scams and fraud has increased, and it's expected to rise even more in 2026.



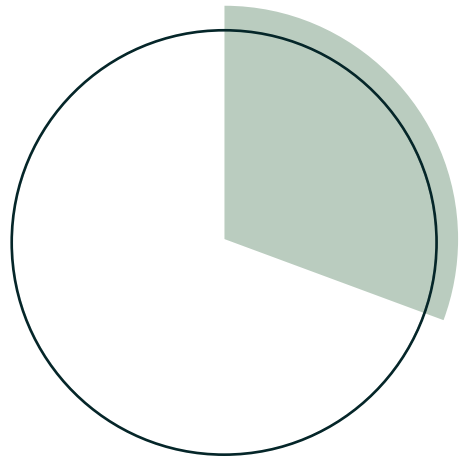
While these backend and operational use cases for AI are proving to be highly effective, there's room to expand use cases towards growth opportunities like acquiring new clients and improving retention.

Innovation is a competitive advantage among advanced AI adopters

The 44% of firms that have fully integrated AI across their teams and operations aren't simply early adopters. They're also well-positioned to meet their growth goals.

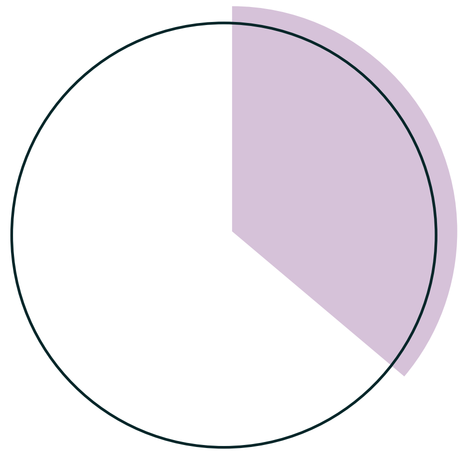
Advanced AI adopters are 68% more likely to report significant client retention improvement over the last 12 months. These results likely create space to refocus on attracting new clients: 52% cite client acquisition as their top business priority, compared to 40% overall.

Firms' AI maturity also correlates with their approach to marketing operations and technology.



31%

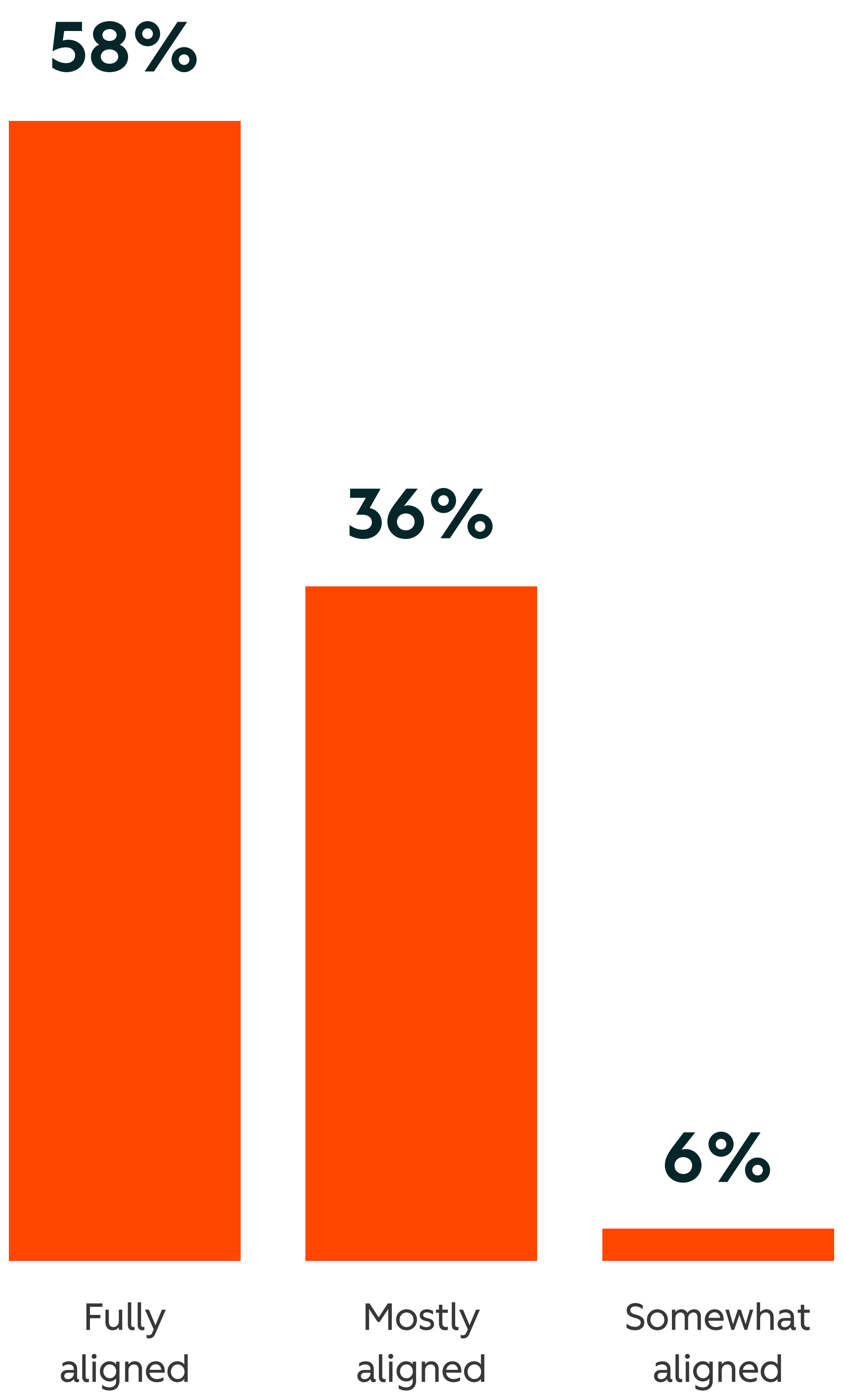
of advanced AI adopters are more likely than average to report full alignment across marketing, sales, and CX (76% vs. 58% overall).



36%

of advanced AI adopters are more likely to have their CRM fully integrated across core systems, and 36% more likely to use HubSpot—suggesting HubSpot correlates with AI-forward organizations.

HOW ALIGNED MARKETING, SALES, AND CLIENT EXPERIENCE TEAMS ARE IN ACHIEVING SHARED REVENUE GOALS



AI + CRM investments together will have a compounding effect

Achieving ambitious retention and acquisition goals requires more than point solutions.

Financial services leaders are most likely to rank AI and CRM tools as the top investments that would improve their organizations' competitive position over the next 12 months.

While AI alone can be powerful, advanced AI adoption paired with the right CRM platform can make it easier for firms to maintain and act on real-time, unified client data. Unlike with marketing- or sales-specific tools, AI and CRMs have the potential to transform the way different teams collaborate, ensuring everyone is working in service of a stronger client experience.

KeeslerFederal

Keesler Federal Credit Union gains full marketing autonomy with HubSpot

Keesler Federal Credit Union, Mississippi's largest credit union, manages more than $5 billion in assets and has 365,000 members. They needed a more modern, efficient marketing operation, which required access to data from Jack Henry Symitar, and to remove IT roadblocks that were limiting their marketing team's independence.

KFCU turned to Mole Street to update their tech stack to HubSpot with the Kinective integration, transforming their marketing and giving them access to customer data that they never had access to before.

Read the Story

"I've been in the space for over 20 years, and I know how hard it is for financial institutions to leverage and operationalize their customer data for marketing use. We didn't have access to our core data, or a CRM. We were unable to deliver those personalized experiences and communications to our members. In 60 days, Kinective was able to connect HubSpot to our core data. Our implementation partner Mole Street has been vital to getting us up and running. We are now fully implemented on HubSpot, we are running campaigns, and we're starting to drive engagement and reach. This is definitely the solution for financial solutions looking to fully operationalize their core customer data."

Susan Song
Chief Marketing Officer,
Keesler Federal Credit Union

Now, the team has 100% autonomy and full marketing ownership of their data, unlimited segmentation capabilities, attribution across the customer journey, and real-time, automated lead scoring and qualification in HubSpot.

Accelerate growth with better visibility into your current and future clients

Regulatory and macroeconomic conditions have been, and always will be, in flux. But they won’t make or break your firm’s growth.

Mid-market firms in particular earn and maintain loyalty when clients feel like they receive a 1:1, trustworthy experience. Delivering that requires harmony across your teams, technology, and data.

LEADERS CAN HELP THEIR ORGANIZATIONS MEET AND EXCEED THEIR GROWTH GOALS BY RECOGNIZING THAT:

Integrated data is actionable data

Marketing and sales teams need to operate from a unified view of prospects and clients in order to attract new business and expand existing relationships.

Tech stack impact matters more than size

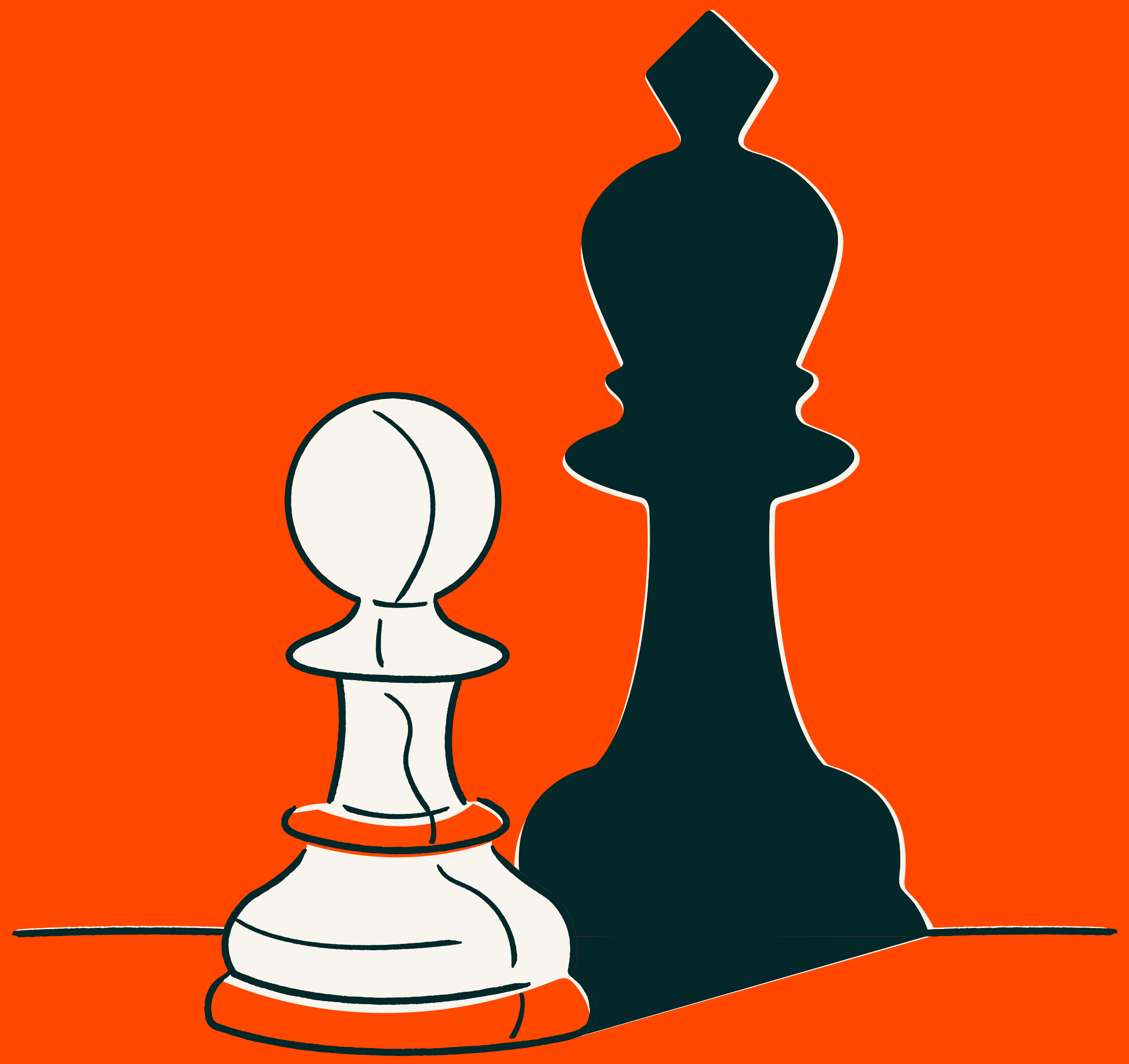
More tools typically create more technical overhead and questionable ROI. The right tools integrate across your client-facing systems and democratize information across your teams.

AI should elevate, not just accelerate your operations

Prioritize AI capabilities that help you zero in on specific client segments and behavioral triggers to personalize the client experience, while also managing backend operational tasks like fraud prevention.

"The system that knows the most about the customer—across every function, every interaction, every stage of the relationship—is the one that produces the best outcomes."

Brendan Walsh
Co-Founder and Chief Revenue Officer
Mole Street



Transform your financial services firm by creating seamless, personalized experiences with HubSpot

Personalize client journeys

Target prospects by financial goals, then automate journeys that convert without manual work. And, connect marketing directly to revenue.

Build trusted relationships

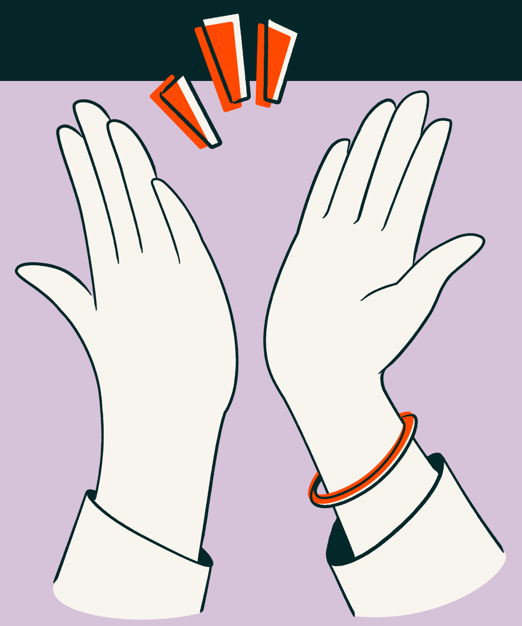
View all relationship data in one dashboard for personalized conversations, and streamline account opening with automated follow-ups.

Enable self-service

Track searches to identify knowledge gaps and suggest new content, and send surveys to measure satisfaction and make improvements.

HubSpot's platform connects your teams with everything they need to delight clients with industry leading experiences.

Learn More | Get a Demo



Unify your teams, data, and processes in HubSpot with Mole Street

Turn your system architecture into a growth engine with a HubSpot implementation that unifies sales, marketing, and service teams.

Learn More

METHODOLOGY

The research in this report was conducted by Datalily via Panoplai,
a market research provider, on behalf of HubSpot and Mole Street.
A 30-question survey was administered to 270 senior decision-makers at select
US-based financial institutions between April 14, 2026 and April 20, 2026.

Report created in collaboration with Datalily.