

# 2025 Global Service Dynamics Report

AI's Defining Moment for Services and the Strategies  
High-performing Firms Use to Navigate Change

certinia

salesforce

AI is redefining  
how firms deploy  
talent, streamline  
operations, and align  
financial strategy...

...But its biggest value  
is only unlocked when  
people, work, and data are  
optimally **connected**.



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# Foreword



The global services economy is shifting fast. AI is moving from hype to impact, reshaping how services are sold, delivered, and expanded. Meanwhile, economic pressure, talent shortages, and compliance complexity test every organization's agility. The ability to deliver customer value with certainty is critical for businesses to survive and grow.

This 2025 Global Service Dynamics Report, based on data from a comprehensive survey of 1,003 professional services executives and practitioners globally, examines these influential currents. It explores how organizations are scaling AI from pilots to production, bridging silos across the customer journey—sales, delivery, and customer success—and turning operational efficiency into a profit engine.

The findings reveal an industry leaning into innovation, but still facing headwinds. AI's potential is widely acknowledged, and adoption is accelerating. But realizing its full value means tackling real challenges: persistent skills gaps, compliance demands, and uneven data readiness.

What's also clear is a widening performance gap. Leaders are investing in unified platforms, building agile teams, and applying AI with purpose—and it's paying off. Meanwhile, those clinging to fragmented systems and reactive strategies are lagging. For services leaders, this report offers a roadmap to build smarter, more predictable, and customer-focused organizations in a time of accelerating change.

Our hope is that these findings spark impactful discussions within your own teams on your journey to higher profitability and growth. Certinia is committed to leading this conversation, and we invite you to join us in defining the future of the services economy.

**DJ Paoni**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**Certinia**

# Survey Methodology

## Research Goals

The primary research goal was to understand top external and internal challenges facing companies over the next 12 months and their strategies to mitigate those issues. The research also investigated the strategic value of professional services organizations and how those organizations are adopting AI and deploying tools to drive higher profits and team utilization, while increasing customer value.

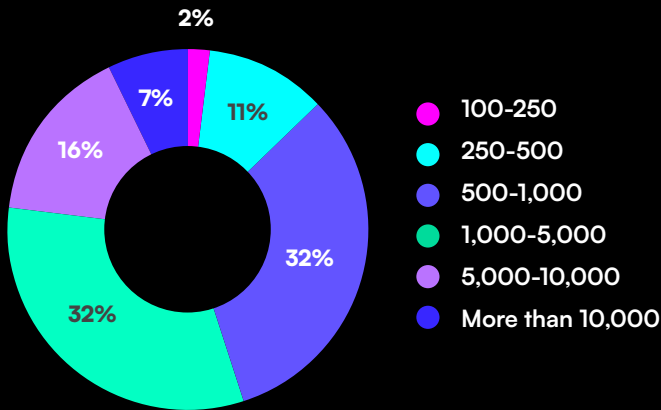
## Methodology

Certinia commissioned Dimensional Research to conduct an independent survey from April to May 2025 to gather feedback from executives and services professionals on their company’s key challenges and professional services strategies and practices. The survey was administered electronically, and participants were offered a token compensation for their participation.

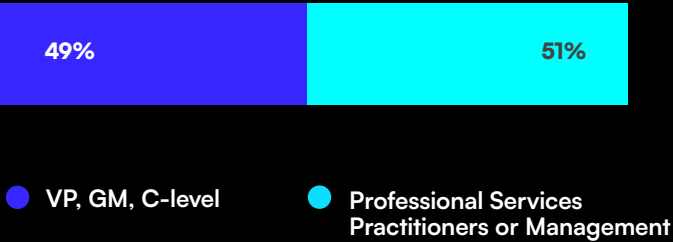
## Participants

A total of 1,003 qualified participants across IT, Technology Services, and Independent Professional Services firms completed the survey. All participants had professional services responsibilities.

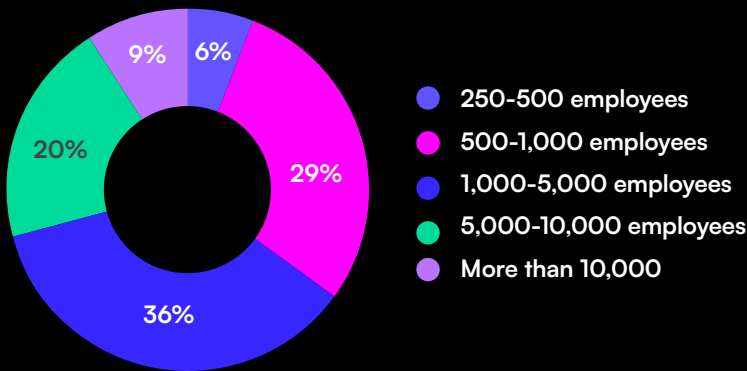
Professional Services Organization Size



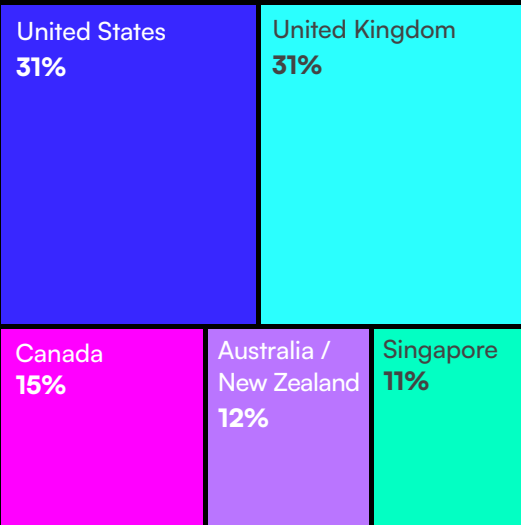
Participant roles



Company Size



Location



# Executive Summary

## Efficiency and strategic AI adoption are key differentiators that transform Professional Services (PS) into a scalable revenue engine.

Organizations that strategically deploy AI to boost efficiency and revenue impact in professional services (PS) are finding that this approach increasingly sets them apart as leaders, driving superior operational and financial performance. While 30% of organizations see PS driving 16-20% of company revenue, this impact escalates for professional services organizations (PSOs) that are both highly efficient and strategically AI-driven. For instance, when it comes to leveraging AI for critical functions like sophisticated resource management (including staff assignment), 66% of highly profitable firms do so or plan to, a significantly higher rate than the 45% average reported across all firms surveyed. It's precisely such AI-forward organizations that achieve 81%+ utilization, and nearly a quarter of them see PS exceeding 40% of total revenue.

## AI adoption is quickly accelerating, but realizing its full potential is often gated by critical skills and compliance challenges.

When it comes to mitigating external business challenges, organizations are prioritizing AI-driven solutions: 47% plan to hire talent with AI skillsets, 45% will utilize commercial software with AI capabilities, and 42% intend to develop their own AI solutions or models. This AI focus is especially evident in advanced areas like Agentic AI, where adoption is notably progressing: 44% of firms report they have already started the process of using it and another 39% plan deployment within the next 12 months. But realizing AI's full potential is often gated by critical skills and compliance challenges, with a lack of internal AI skills and compliance issues each cited as top obstacles.



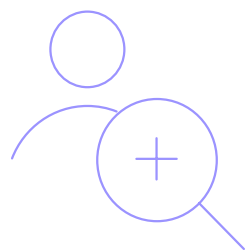


# Executive Summary



## Talent development and AI-optimized resource management provide dual levers for people-focused growth and differentiation.

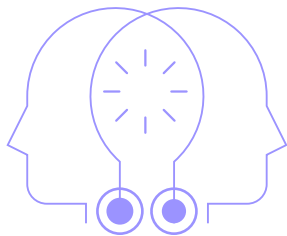
Growing services' team skillsets is a key objective for 46% of PSOs. Simultaneously, the rising cost of labor (48%) and the market-wide scarcity of advanced AI expertise create significant hurdles to achieving key talent and innovation objectives. To overcome these challenges, 47% of firms are actively hiring AI-adept talent; critically, leading PSOs are also increasingly leveraging AI for resource management to ensure valuable skills are deployed with maximum impact.



46%

of PSOs' key objectives are growing services' team skillsets

## Strategic technology choices are widening the profitability gap between leading PSOs and their competitors.



53%

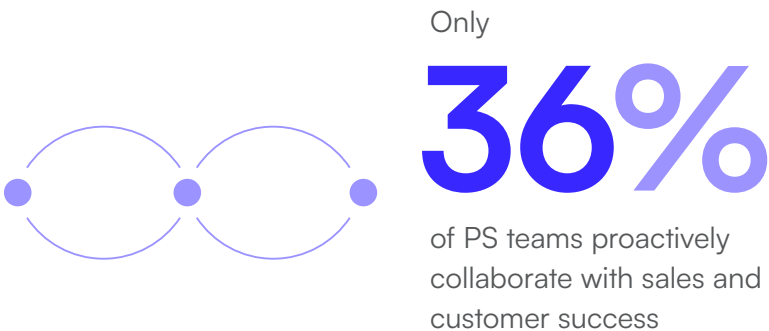
of these highly profitable firms develop their own AI models

While 66% of all PSOs are viewed as profit centers, the most successful ones achieve this status through astute technology adoption and a disciplined focus on operational efficiency. PSOs with the highest profitability and utilization rates are pursuing multiple AI strategies and report higher near-term adoption rates; for instance, 53% of these highly profitable firms develop their own AI models, compared to just 42% of PSOs overall. These organizations are substantially more likely to utilize commercial PSA software for managing resource allocation, financials, and project execution.

# Executive Summary

**A critical execution gap in unifying service delivery is hindering optimal customer experiences and financial outcomes.**

While 69% of companies have distinct Customer Success (CS) teams, and leaders anticipate improved retention (59%) and margins (61%) from aligning PS, CS, and Sales, a critical execution gap remains. Only 36% of PS teams proactively collaborate across these functions, signaling a major area for technological and process improvement for a unified customer experience.



**Success hinges on dismantling silos and embedding strategic AI as a core enabler of efficiency, insight, and customer value.**

The report's findings highlight four pivotal actions to achieve a state of high-performance service delivery:

- Investing in a unified PSA platform to create the core operational foundation, enabling end-to-end data synergy and establishing an essential framework for strategic AI adoption.
- Strategically leveraging AI capabilities, both those native to modern PSA systems and those integrated externally, understanding that their optimal effectiveness and insight generation rely on deep connection to the PSA's data core.
- Fostering continuous skill development, equipping teams with the evolving expertise required to meet market demands and effectively harness AI-augmented work.
- Strengthening PS/CS organizational alignment to forge a unified customer journey that enhances retention and fuels expansion.





CHAPTER ONE

# AI in Professional Services

Adoption Trends, Strategic Ambitions,  
and Competitive Advantages

## Strategic AI adoption is a prerequisite for competitive advantage.

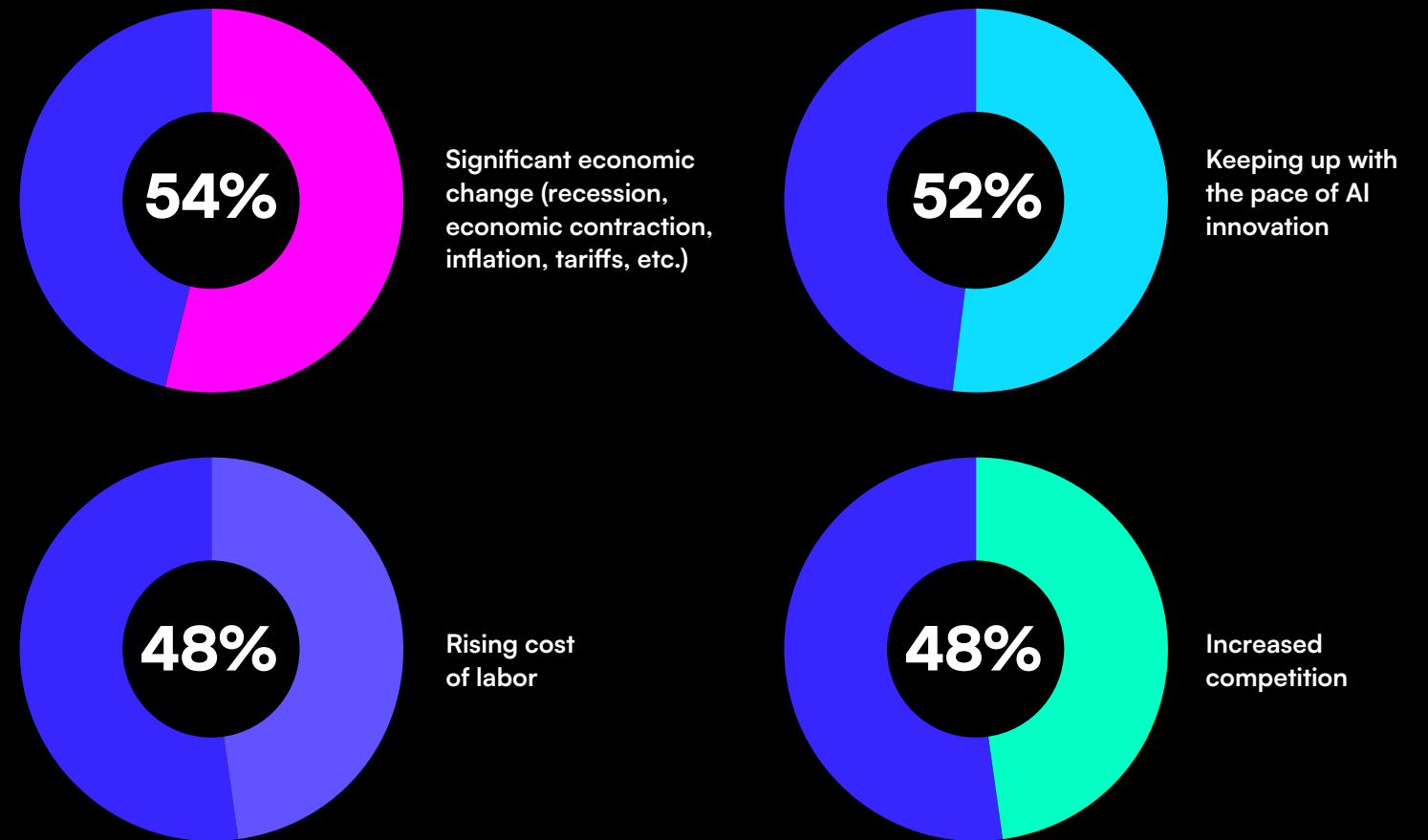
PSOs are under pressure from many directions. Leaders identified significant economic change, the pace of AI innovation, rising labor costs, and increased competition as top external threats over the next 12 months. To navigate these, organizations are broadly turning to AI-centric strategies, including talent acquisition, technology adoption, and internal innovation—approaches that, as this chapter will explore, are particularly pronounced among high-performing firms.

It's clear from the data that AI is no longer a supplemental technology for the services industry. It is actively reshaping operational methods, approaches to value creation, and competitive strategies.

Services organizations find themselves at various points on the AI maturity curve, and adoption patterns differ significantly across specific AI capabilities. While a majority (55%) of PSOs plan to increase AI usage as one of their key objectives for 2025, a closer examination of the data reveals a nuanced, multi-layered strategy toward AI implementation.

This chapter examines current AI adoption levels, the strategic ambitions guiding its integration, and how leading organizations leverage AI's potential to gain a distinct advantage. **A consistent theme appears: strategic, outcome-driven AI adoption is increasingly becoming a prerequisite for success in the modern services economy.**

## What are the top external challenges that your company anticipates over the next 12 months?





Predictive AI is viewed as a lever for enhancing foresight and operational control.

Predictive AI capabilities offer a foundational toolset for many PSOs, enabling them to anticipate operational challenges and optimize resource deployment more effectively. Survey data indicates significant activity in deploying or planning to deploy these tools within the next year for several critical functions, including capacity planning, financial forecasting, margin improvement, and talent deployment.

Beyond these broad adoption trends, the strategic application of Predictive AI becomes particularly evident when examining high-performing organizations. For instance, when it comes to assigning the right staff to projects and improving project margins, organizations demonstrating higher profitability place a greater emphasis on these AI applications.

Notably, 66% of PSOs with 40%+ profitability utilize or plan to use Predictive AI for assigning appropriate staff, compared to a 45% average across all firms surveyed. Similarly, 62% of these high-profit firms employ or plan to employ predictive insights for project margins, versus a 51% overall average. This suggests a more strategic application of these tools among market leaders to directly influence positive business outcomes.

Which of the following Predictive AI capabilities for the professional services team have you deployed or plan to deploy in the next 12 months?



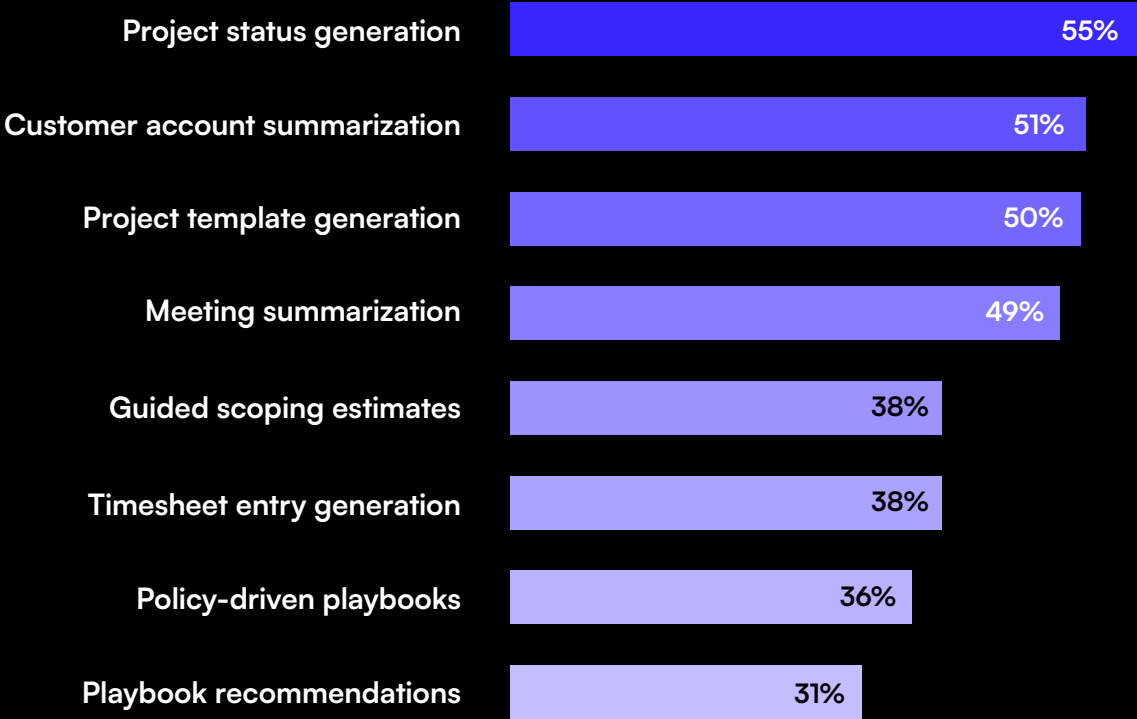
Generative AI applications are focused on augmenting productivity and services innovation.

Unsurprisingly, Generative AI (GenAI) has quickly gained significant traction in the services sector, with leaders identifying valuable applications primarily aimed at boosting operational efficiency and enhancing service quality. The chart pictured details the GenAI applications PSOs find most valuable, revealing a strong focus on automating routine communication, documentation, and knowledge synthesis tasks.

This strategic focus on automating these time-intensive activities is driven by the pursuit of crucial operational benefits; key among these is the opportunity to free skilled professionals for higher-value strategic work and complex problem-solving. Moreover, leveraging GenAI for these tasks can enhance the consistency and quality of both client communications and internal documentation.

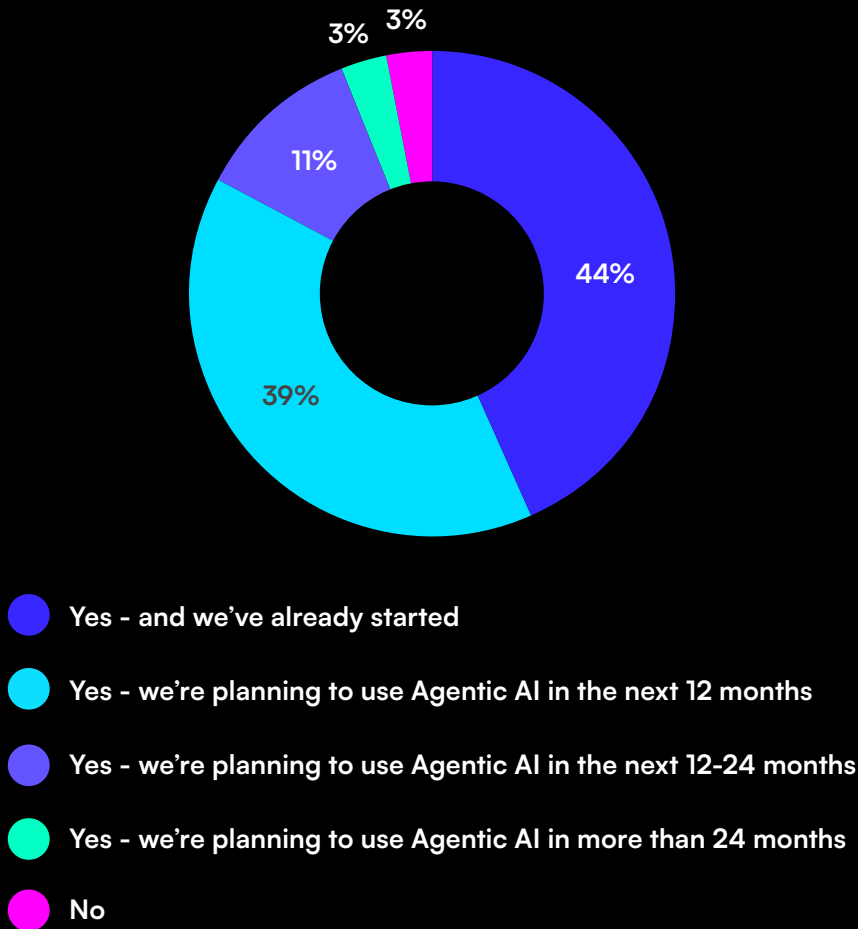
Ultimately, the perceived value in these GenAI applications underscores a broader industry push to augment human capabilities, increase team productivity, and elevate operational aspects of service delivery.

Which of the following Generative AI benefits for the professional services team would be valuable to your company?





# Is your PSO considering using Agentic AI with your commercial professional services automation (PSA) software?



## Agentic AI adoption signals a swift shift towards autonomous capabilities.

Agentic AI—intelligent systems capable of independently performing complex tasks and making decisions—holds considerable transformative potential for the services industry. Interest and planning in this advanced area are accelerating, indicating a strong industry desire to integrate these capabilities with core Professional Services Automation (PSA) software.

The rapid pace of engagement is striking: 44% of firms report they have already started the process of deploying Agentic AI, and another 39% plan deployment within the next 12 months. This significant early commitment is particularly noteworthy given that the market for fully mature, off-the-shelf Agentic AI solutions is still developing.

Such proactive exploration and near-term planning, well ahead of widespread solution maturity, underscore a profound industry belief in Agentic AI's potential to fundamentally reshape service delivery and establish new operational paradigms.



**AI agents will soon reshape how services work is performed, decisions are formulated, and value is delivered.**

This disruption will favor organizations built on a strong data foundation that provides a unified, real-time view to empower the emerging human-agent and agent-to-agent collaboration models. Having that seamless visibility, from initial client engagement through project execution and into ongoing success, is the new prerequisite for industry leadership.



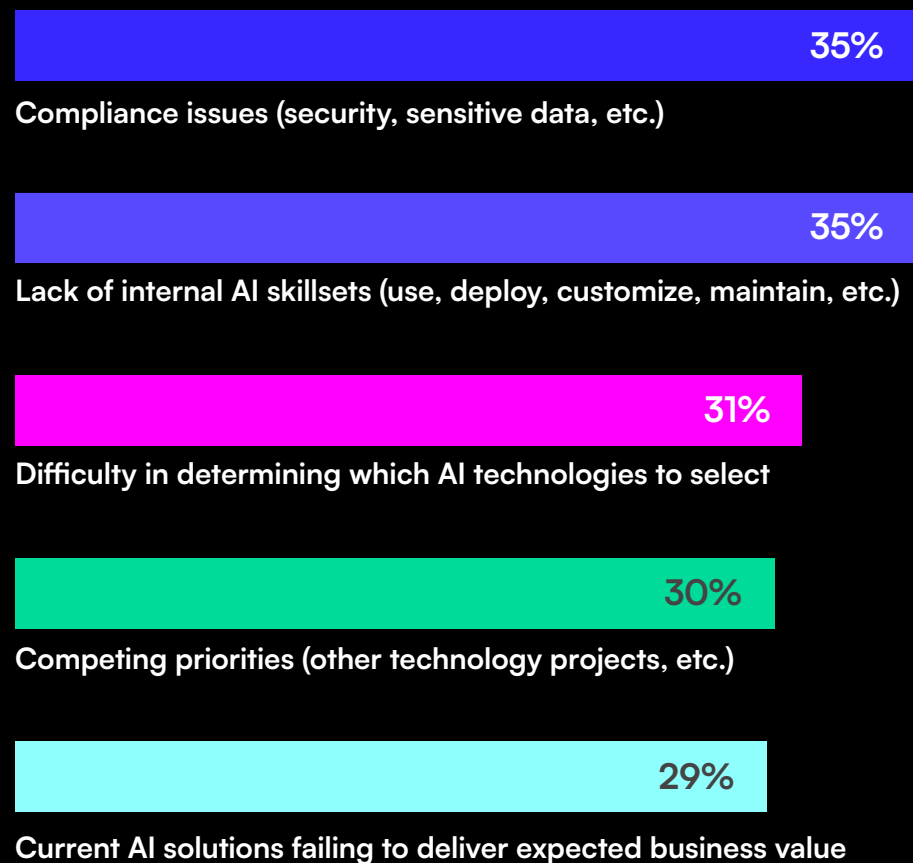
**Raju Malhotra**  
Chief Product & Technology Officer  
Certinia



## AI implementation faces significant obstacles, especially around skills and compliance.

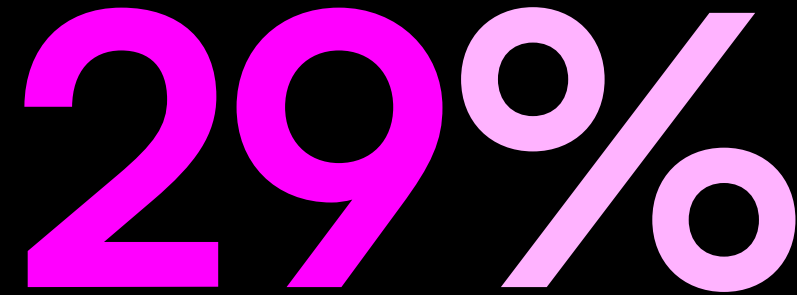
Despite clear momentum and evident enthusiasm for AI, its integration into service operations presents a range of challenges that organizations must proactively identify and manage to unlock its full potential. Effectively implementing AI is not without significant roadblocks, broadly stemming from complex interplays across talent availability, appropriate technology selection, organizational trust, and foundational data readiness.

## What obstacles does your organization face as it seeks to utilize AI?



The primary hurdles, such as navigating complex compliance issues and addressing the critical lack of internal AI skillsets, underscore that AI adoption extends far beyond technological deployment. Difficulty in selecting the optimal AI technologies from a rapidly changing marketplace, managing competing organizational priorities for resources, and ensuring that AI investments deliver tangible business value further shape the strategic approach PSOs must take. These leading challenges emphasize the need for a holistic strategy that addresses not only technology but also people, processes, and governance to fully harness the transformative power of AI.

Notably, compliance becomes an even more pronounced consideration as organizations mature their AI strategies and usage. An interesting pattern emerges when examining high-performing organizations: PSOs achieving the highest levels of profitability are more inclined to identify “compliance issues” as a significant obstacle to their AI efforts (47% vs. the 35% overall average). As these organizations advance into more sophisticated AI use—especially with sensitive client or proprietary project data—they face sharper governance and regulatory scrutiny. This heightened awareness among leaders may reflect a mature and responsible engagement with the practicalities of deploying AI at scale, rather than a fundamental deterrent to adoption.

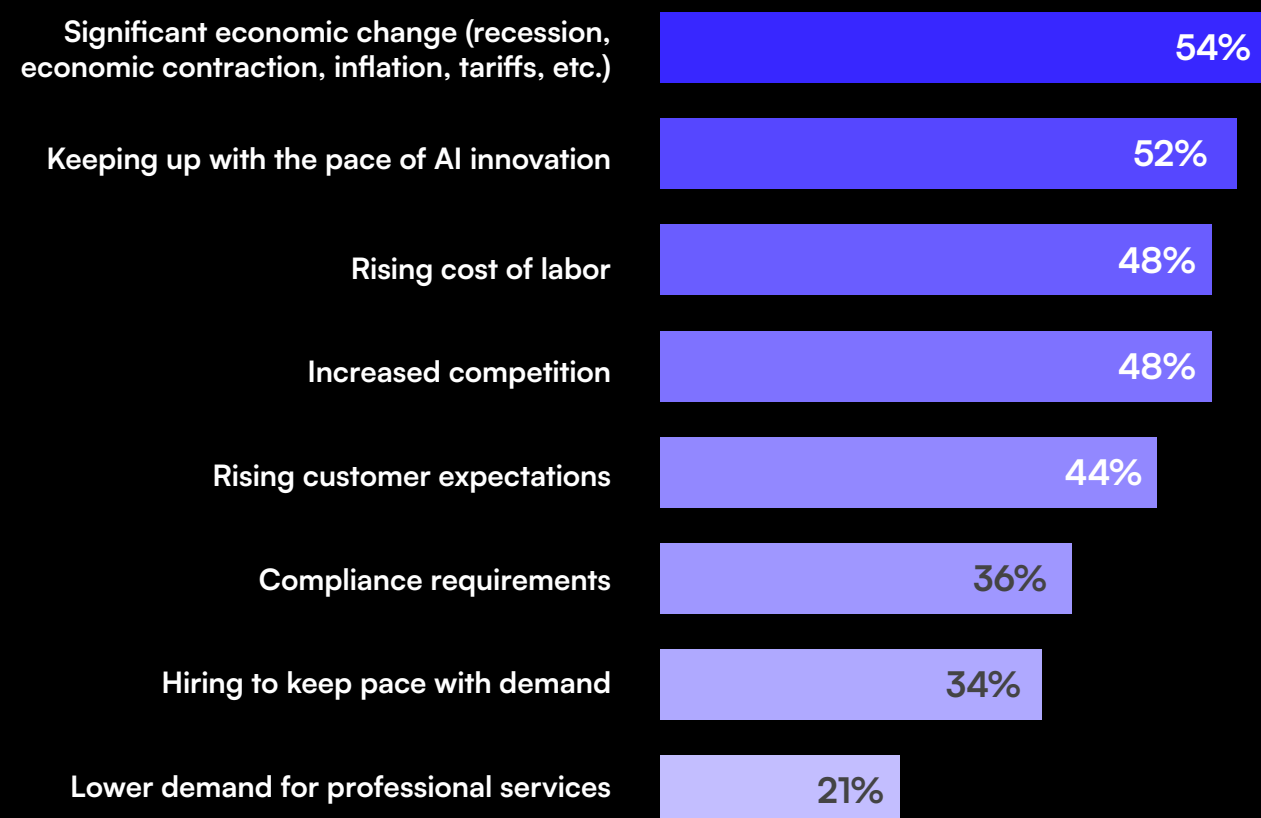


of current AI solutions are failing to deliver the expected business value



of organizations surveyed said they experience difficulty in determining which AI technologies to select

## What are the top external challenges that your company anticipates over the next 12 months?



## High-performing organizations differentiate through strategic AI application.

Forward-looking PSOs are not adopting AI in an ad-hoc manner. Their initiatives are closely tied to core business objectives and well-defined strategies for navigating a demanding external economic and technological environment.

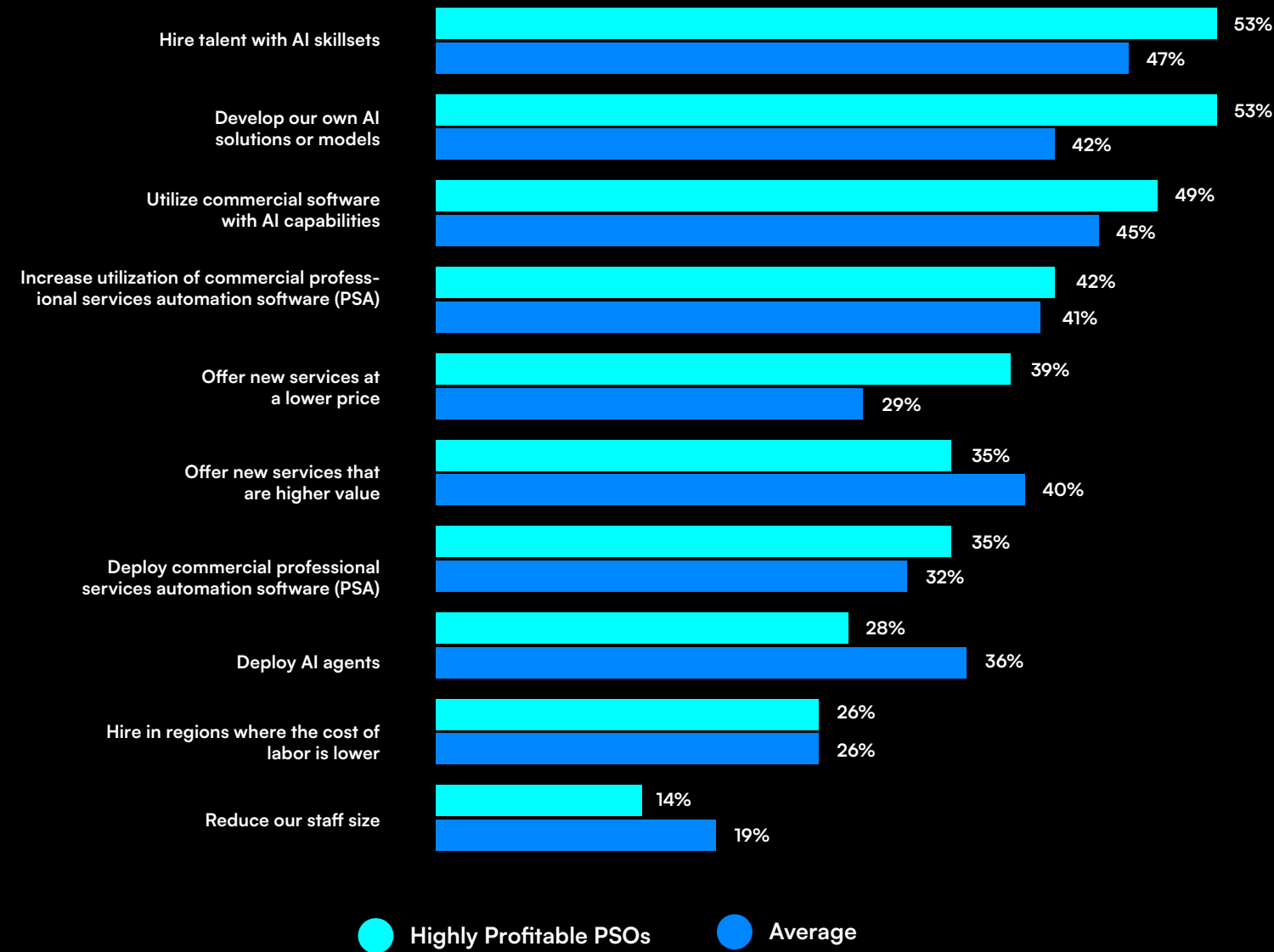
PSOs currently identify several key external challenges significantly shaping their strategy: major economic change is a top concern, followed closely by the relentless pace of AI innovation and the rising cost of labor.

In response to these pressures, organizations are planning a range of specific AI-related mitigation actions. These commonly include acquiring specialized AI talent, leveraging commercial software with embedded AI capabilities, developing proprietary AI solutions, and exploring the deployment of AI Agents to automate tasks.

While these actions indicate a broad industry movement towards AI, a closer look reveals that highly profitable PSOs (those with 40%+ profitability) distinguish themselves not just by their willingness to adopt AI, but by the strategic nature and intensity of their focus.



# How does your business plan to mitigate the external challenges it anticipates over the next 12 months?



Leading organizations demonstrate a more assertive, multi-faceted approach:



They are more inclined to invest in developing their own AI models



There's a greater emphasis on hiring talent with specialized AI skillsets



They show a greater propensity to utilize commercial software with AI capabilities

This balanced strategy—encompassing building, buying, and hiring for AI—suggests a sophisticated and integrated approach aimed at deeply embedding intelligence across their operations. Critically, their enhanced focus on AI applications is often geared towards improving project margins and optimizing staff assignments, directly and positively influencing financial performance.

PS leaders are actively involved in AI strategy at their organizations.

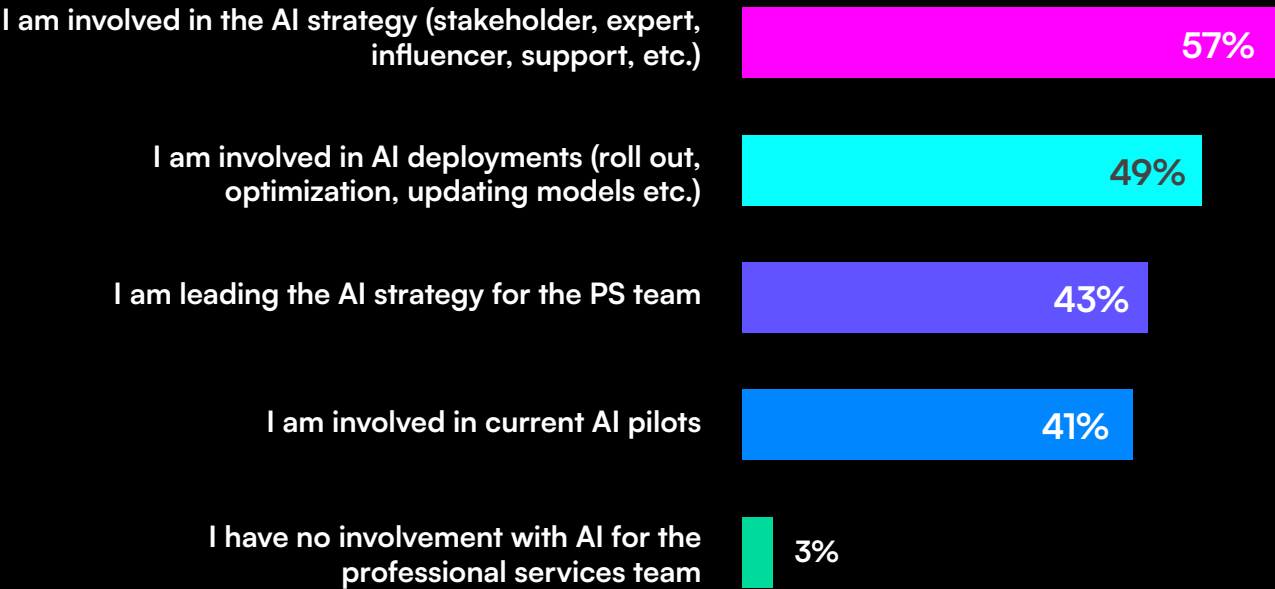
Professional services leaders are demonstrating significant and direct involvement in shaping their organization’s AI trajectory. A clear majority actively participate in overall AI strategy development, with substantial numbers also taking the helm of AI strategy specifically for their PS teams and engaging deeply in the practical aspects of AI deployment.

This hands-on executive engagement is crucial. It ensures that AI initiatives are tightly aligned with core business requirements and client service objectives, rather than being siloed technical pursuits. Furthermore, such direct leadership is vital for championing the necessary organizational adaptations, fostering a culture receptive to AI-driven change, and navigating the complexities of embedding these new technologies into established service delivery workflows.

AI is undeniably a central force in the ongoing transformation of professional services. The findings in this chapter highlight a dual reality: immense enthusiasm and rapid adoption of AI capabilities, juxtaposed with significant challenges that require strategic navigation.

For PSOs, effectively harnessing AI by moving from aspiration to integrated, outcome-driven application is essential for future success and market leadership.

What is your level of involvement in AI for the professional services team?





**This report validates the services industry’s swift advance towards autonomous AI. ‘Business-aware’ AI agents will undertake strategic tasks with deep customer understanding, much like experienced professionals**

—and this future is materializing quickly, making the human-AI collaborative model increasingly central. The key is a unified AI powered customer platform. When every service team draws from one connected customer view, from initial engagement to long-term value, AI can deliver its most transformative end-to-end service experiences.



**Alice Steinglass**  
EVP and GM, Salesforce Platform  
Salesforce



CHAPTER TWO

# Health and Operational Realities of Today's Professional Services Organizations

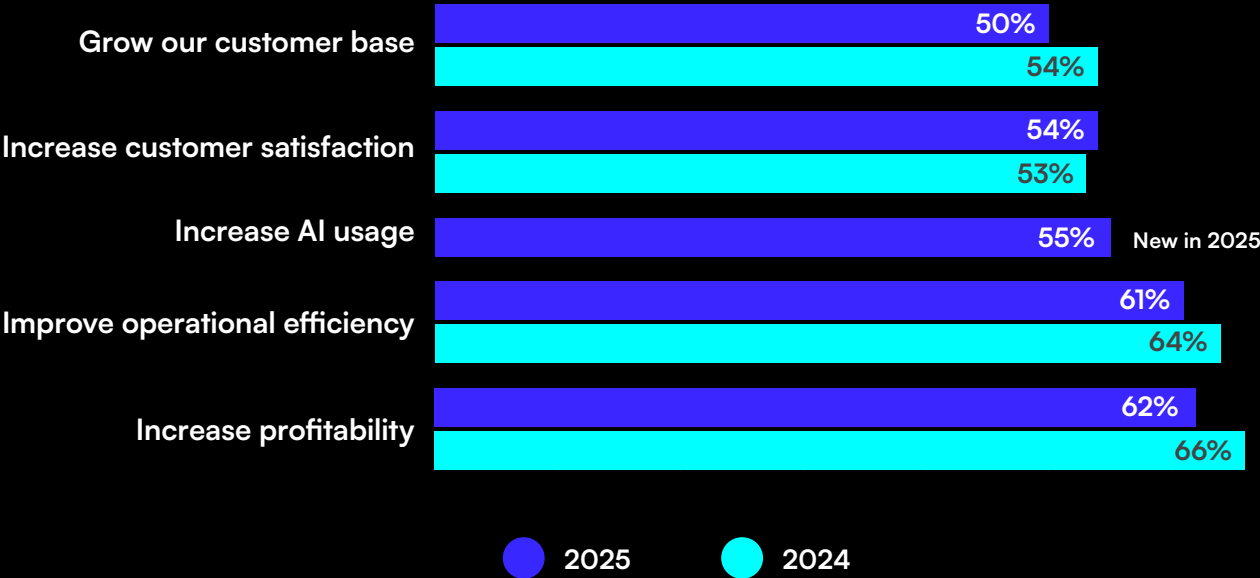
**Profitability Levers, People Strategies,  
and Platform Modernization**

Beyond the immediate and transformative influence of AI discussed previously, broader evolutionary trends continue to reshape the professional services sector. Achieving and maintaining high profitability demands strategic financial oversight, prudent investment in enabling technologies, and a persistent, disciplined focus on operational efficiency across every facet of service delivery.

This chapter explores the current health and operational realities of professional services organizations. We examine key business performance indicators, explore how leading PSOs are achieving superior results by strategically employing effective profitability levers, implementing forward-thinking people strategies suited for an AI-influenced world, and driving essential platform modernization to unify service delivery and enhance overall operational strength.

In 2025, PSOs remain focused on improving margins and driving additional efficiencies. And strategies to drive those improvements are crystallizing. **Key priorities for the year identified by PSOs include: increasing profitability (62%), improving operational efficiency (61%), and increasing AI usage (55%), as well as increasing customer satisfaction (54%).**

What are your company’s key objectives for the professional services organization in 2025?



PSOs are increasingly recognized as a strategic contributor to profitability.

The internal perception of the professional services function continues to underscore its growing strategic importance and its shift towards a profit-driven identity. This year’s data reveals a clear positive trend: a significant 66% of companies now primarily regard their PSO as a profit center, an increase from 63% in 2024.

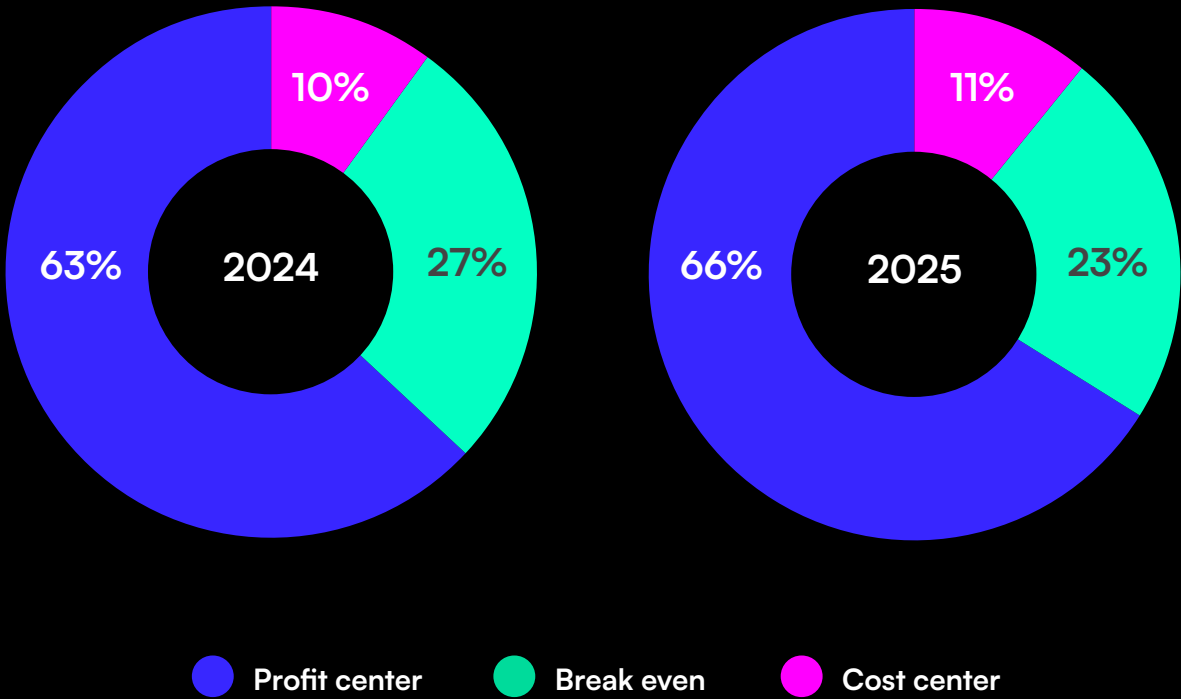
This upward movement is complemented by a decrease in PSOs identified as break-even operations, dropping from 27% in 2024 to 23% in 2025. While the percentage of PSOs viewed as cost centers saw a marginal shift (11% in 2025 compared to 10% in 2024), the overall trajectory confirms a strengthening profit-centric view across the industry.

This mindset is reflected in their financial ambitions for the coming year, as organizations are targeting higher profit margins in 2025 relative to their 2024 performance.

The survey data on profit margin targets reveals a striking upward trajectory. Most notably, the segment of PSOs aiming for elite margins greater than 40% is set to more than double, from 10% achieving this in 2024 to 23% targeting this benchmark in 2025.

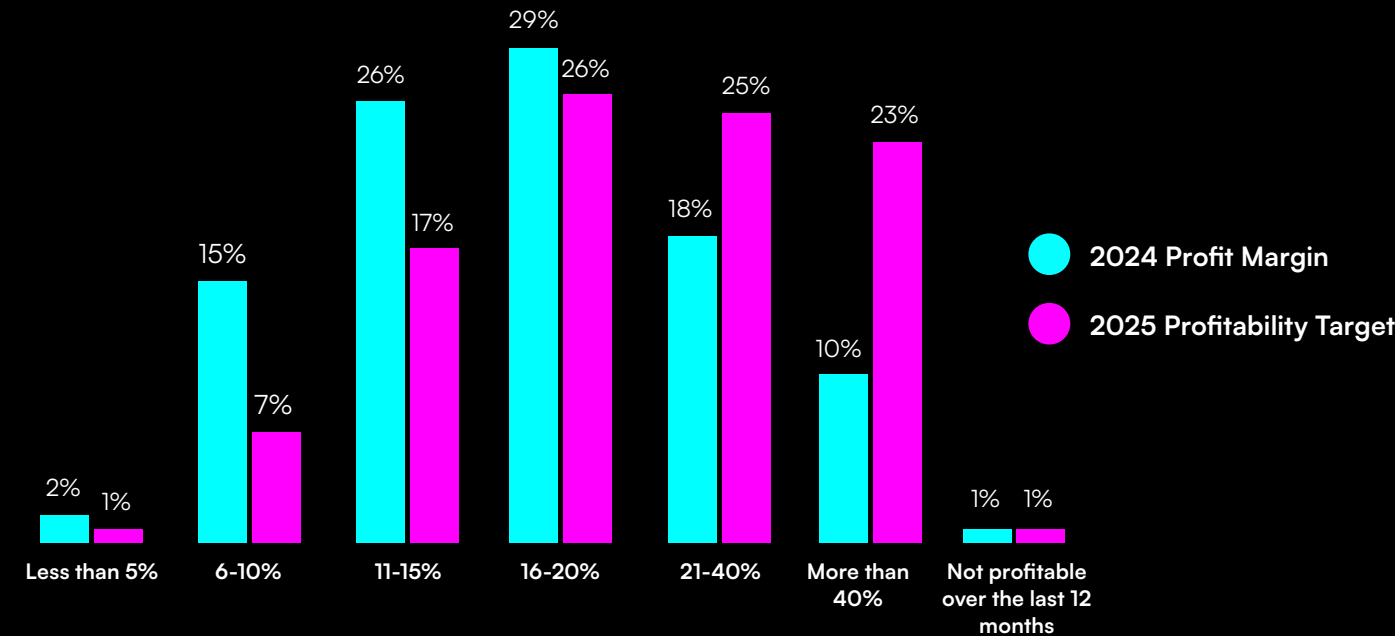
Similarly, there’s a significant surge towards the healthy 21-40% margin band, with 25% of PSOs targeting this for 2025, up from 18% in 2024. This ambition for higher returns coincides with a strategic shift away from mid-to-lower margin categories; for instance, the portion of firms targeting the 11-15% profit margin band is expected to decrease from 26% in 2024 to 17% in 2025.

Which of the following best describes how your company views its professional services organization financially?





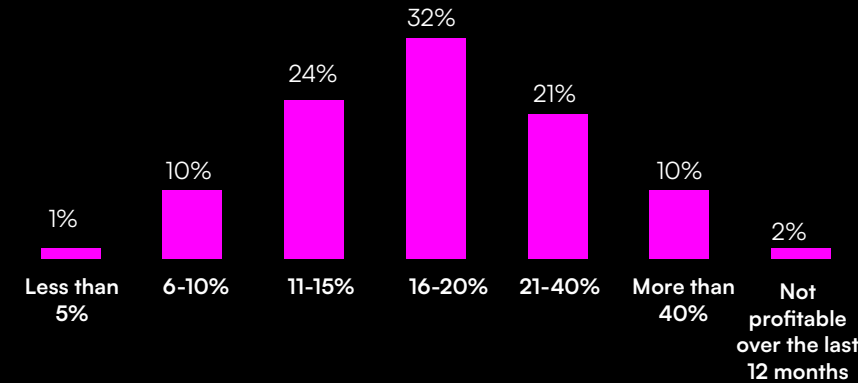
What was the profit margin of your professional services team in 2024 and what is your profitability target for 2025?



These pronounced shifts in financial targets signal a professional services market with increased performance expectations. The collective aspiration for healthier to elite margins suggests that PSOs are responding to pressures to enhance their financial contributions, potentially leveraging new efficiencies or value propositions, like those enabled by AI.

This may also point towards a widening performance gap, as organizations aggressively pursue strategies to elevate their profitability and solidify their role as key engines of overall business growth and financial stability.

What was your company's profit (EBITDA %) over the last 12 months?

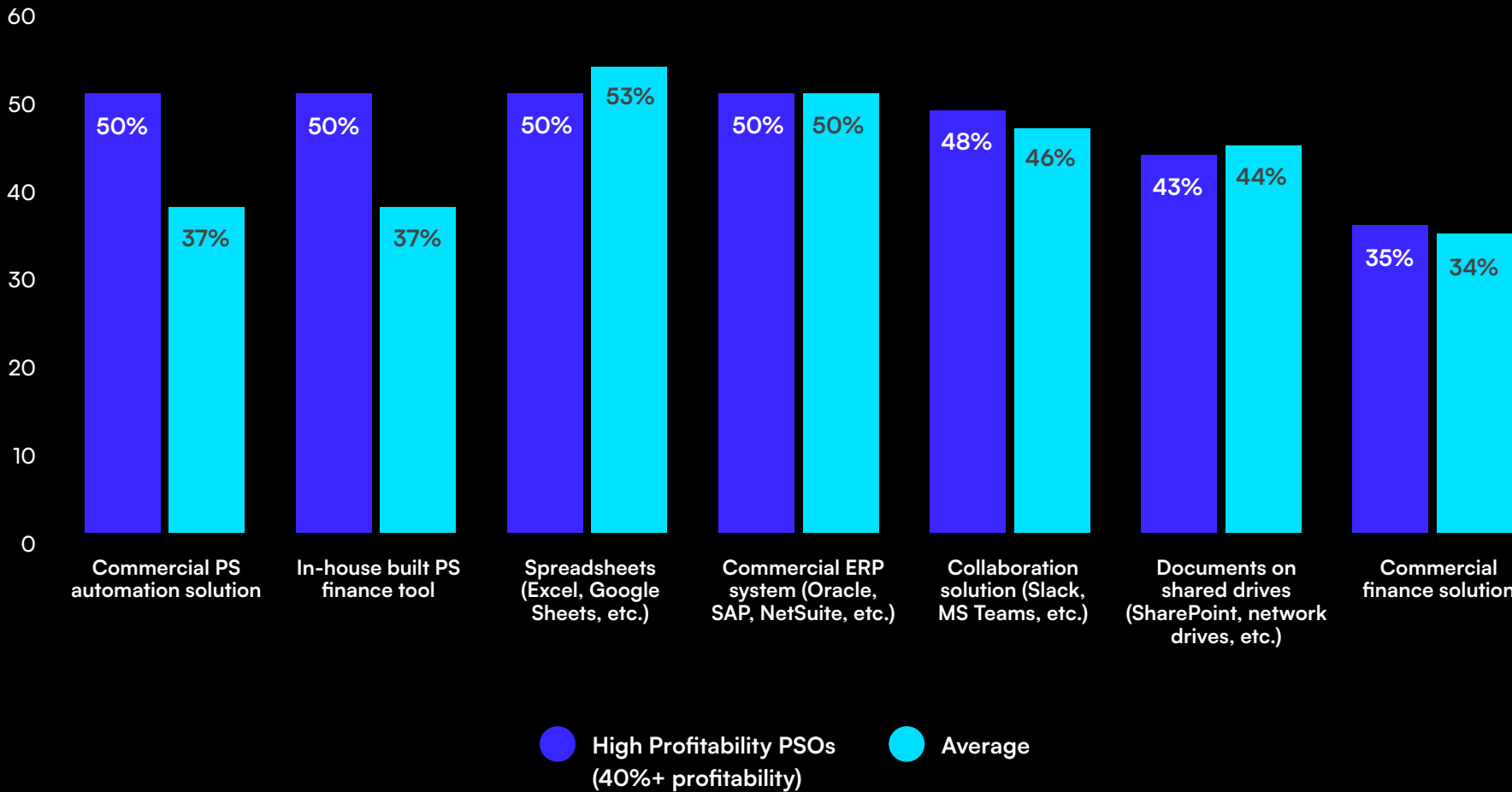


Commercial PSA solutions play a crucial role in driving profitability.

Strategic tool selection is a key differentiator for profitable PSOs. While the broader industry shows heavy reliance on spreadsheets for resource allocation (54%), financials (53%), and project management (51%), high-profitability PSOs exhibit distinct technology adoption patterns that drive their financial success. Notably, these top-performing firms make significantly greater strategic investments in specialized systems.

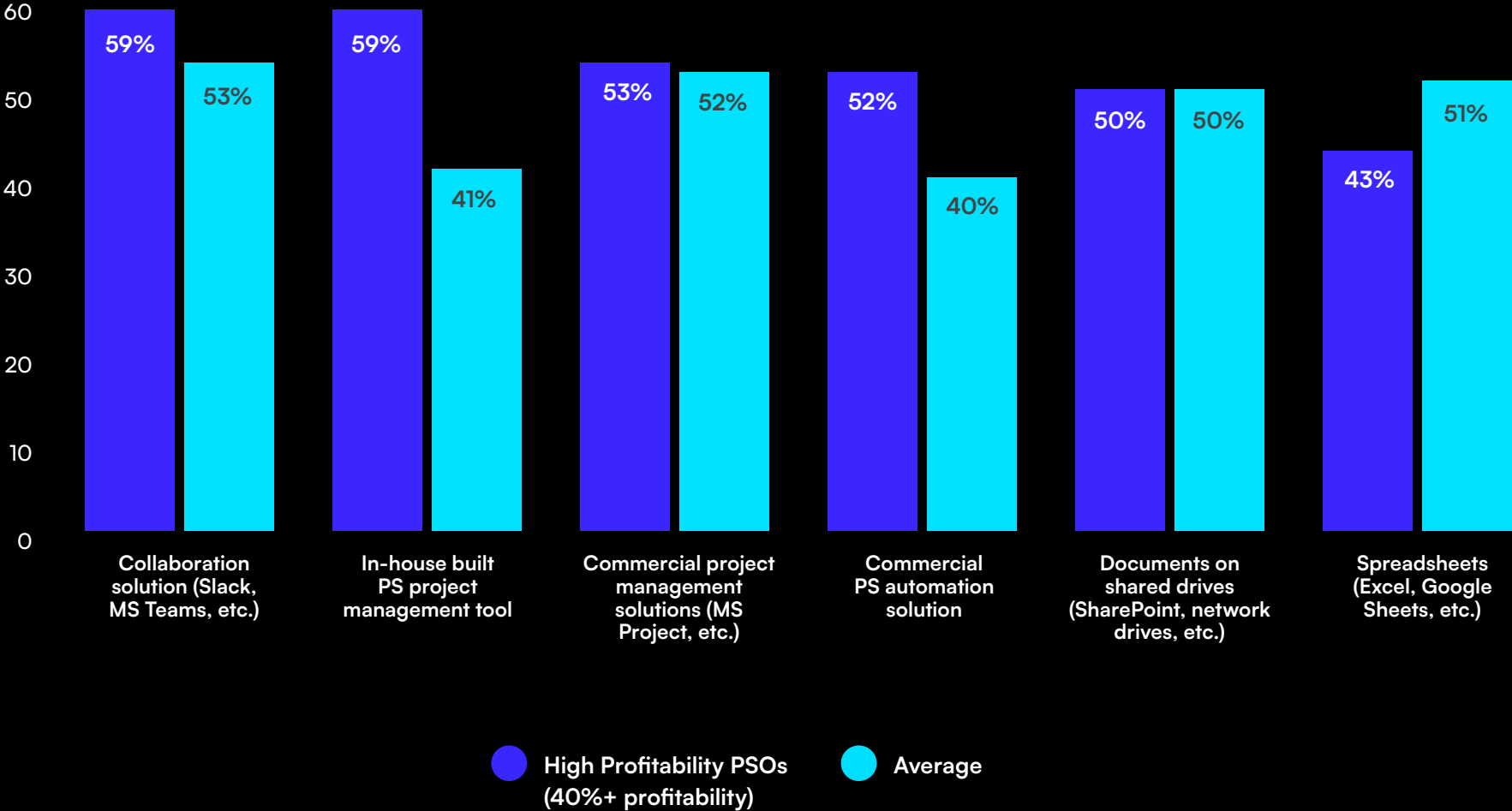
For PS team financials, 50% of high-profitability PSOs utilize commercial PSA solutions and/or in-house built finance tools, compared to a 37% industry average for each, while their reliance on spreadsheets is slightly lower (50% vs. 53% average).

What tools does your company use to manage your professional services team’s financials?



In project management (PM) efficiency, high-profitability PSOs show markedly higher adoption of commercial PSA solutions (52% vs. 40% average) and in-house built PM tools (59% vs. 41% average), coupled with a reduced dependency on spreadsheets (43% vs. 51% average).

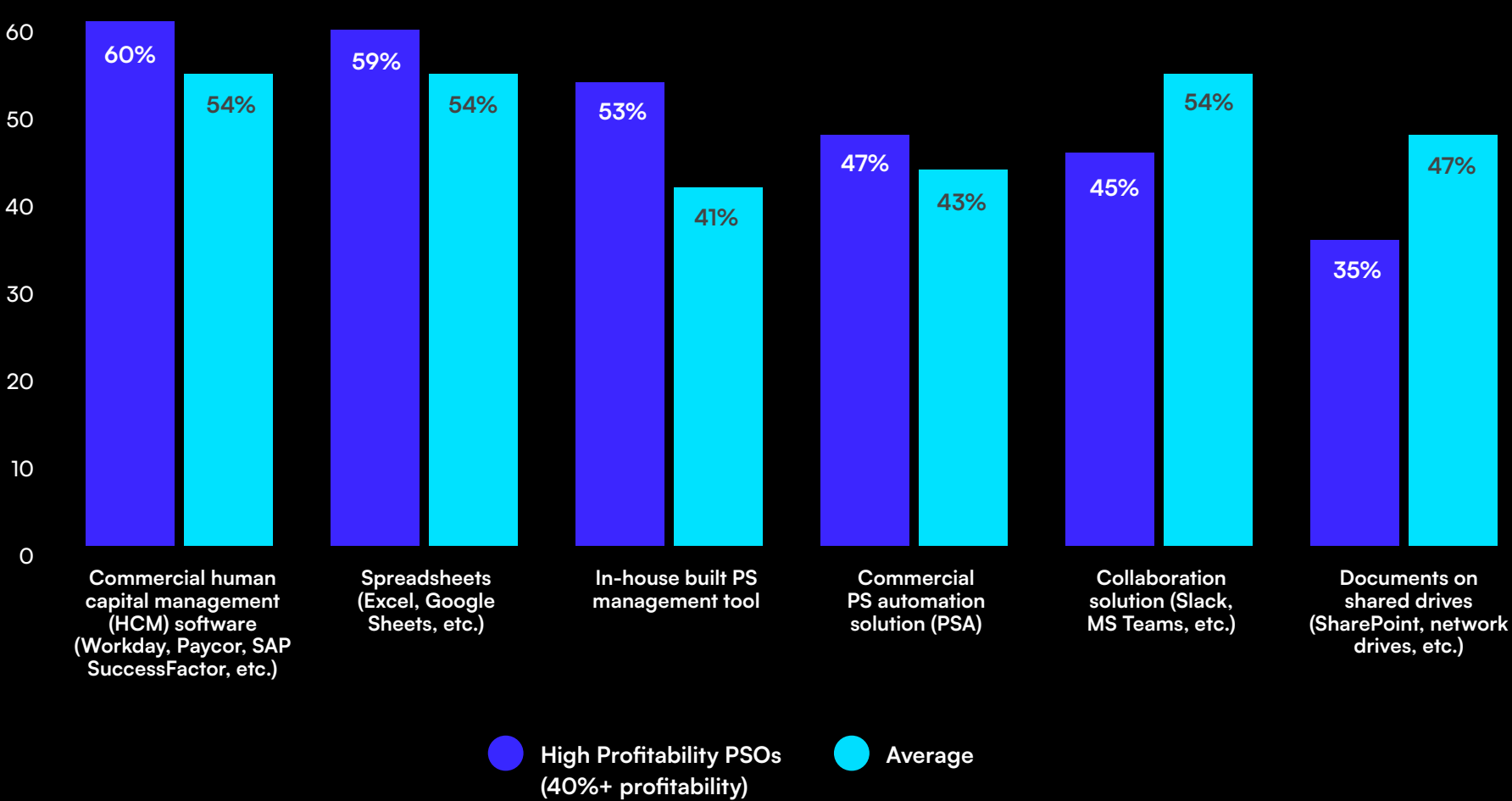
What tools does your company use to manage and measure the efficiency of your professional services team for project management?



For resource allocation efficiency, while spreadsheet use is high across the board (59% for high-profit firms vs. 54% average), these leaders also show greater use of commercial human capital management (HCM) software (60% vs. 54% average), commercial PSA (47% vs. 43% average), and in-house built tools (53% vs. 41% average), relying less on generic collaboration solutions and shared drives for this specific function.

This clear preference among high-profitability PSOs for more integrated, specialized, and structured solutions (such as PSA) over a heavy reliance on manual or general-purpose tools for core functions underpins their ability to achieve enhanced operational visibility, control, and efficiency. Such technological maturity is a critical enabler of their superior financial performance, reducing errors and providing the data-driven insights essential for agile decision-making and sustained profitability.

What tools does your company use to manage and measure the efficiency of your professional services team’s resource allocation?



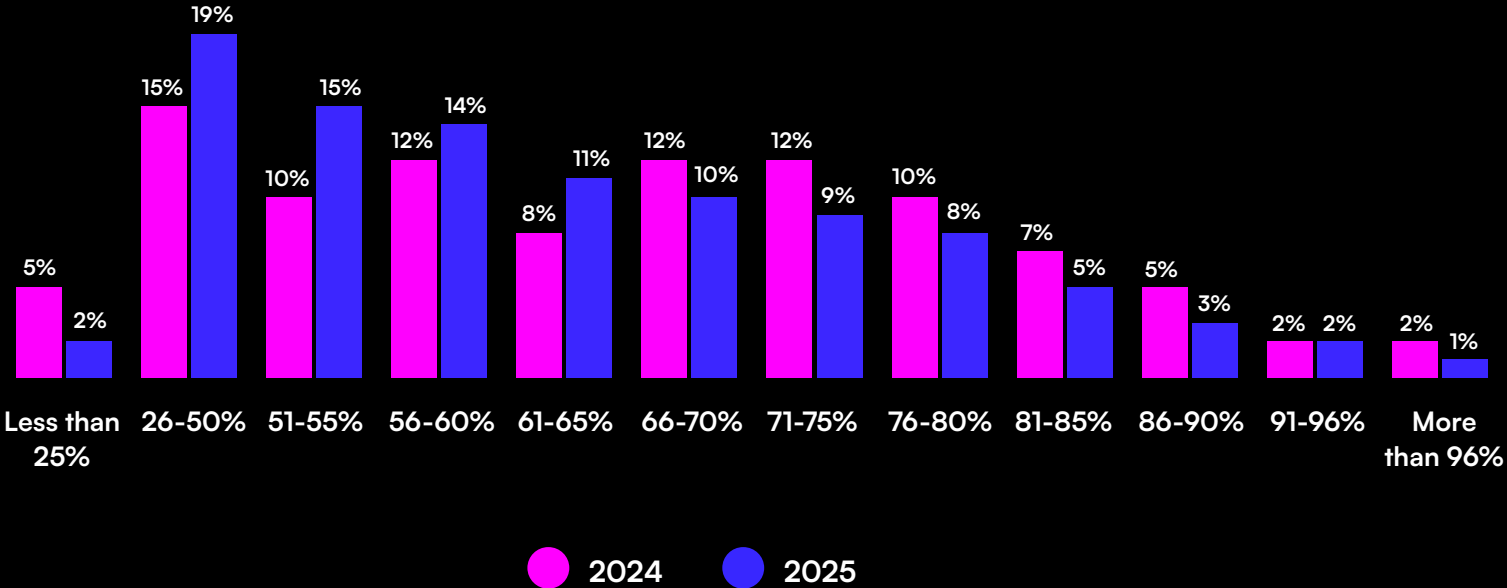


Effective resource utilization is a core driver of financial health.

The efficient utilization of billable staff remains a fundamental principle of PSO profitability. Survey data shows that utilization rates vary considerably across the industry: for instance, 19% of PSOs report rates in the 26-50% range, while around 15% each fall into the 51-55% and 56-60% bands. This represents a decline over 2024, with more companies falling to 60% or lower utilization of staff.

Organizations that consistently achieve higher utilization rates generally also exhibit higher levels of profitability. As an example, 47% of organizations reporting utilization rates of 71% or higher are also among the most profitable PSOs surveyed. This correlation underscores the impact of efficient resource deployment on overall financial outcomes.

For your company, what was the professional services team’s utilization rate over the past 12 months?



## Talent is the most critical asset for PSOs, driving strategic investment in skillset growth and AI expertise.

In the knowledge-intensive professional services sector, talent remains the undisputed cornerstone of success. That success is profoundly influenced by how organizations attract, develop, deploy, and retain their people, especially as AI increasingly reshapes human capabilities and workflows. The accelerating integration of AI, in particular, brings this talent imperative into sharp focus for PSOs.

The industry currently faces persistent and significant talent challenges. Notably, the rising cost of labor (identified as an external concern by 48% of organizations) and a critical lack of internal AI skillsets (cited by 35% as a primary barrier to AI adoption) present major hurdles.

### Key Talent Challenges



**48%**  
rising cost of labor



**35%**  
lack of internal AI  
skillset

In response, PSOs are prioritizing workforce development: growing services' team skillsets is a key strategic objective for 46% of organizations. This reflects a dual imperative. Firstly, there's a push for acquiring new, specialized capabilities, with 47% of firms planning to hire talent with AI expertise. Secondly, and equally crucial, is the commitment to making substantial investments in the continuous professional development, upskilling, and reskilling of existing employees.

These combined efforts are vital to ensure the entire workforce is equipped for the evolving demands and emerging opportunities of an AI-transformed market. The challenge, however, extends beyond finding or training individuals who can build AI systems: a more profound need is emerging for professionals across all levels of a PSO that can effectively utilize sophisticated AI tools, interpret AI-driven insights to inform better decision-making, and manage AI-augmented processes and workflows within the dynamic context of client service delivery.

## Strategic Talent Responses for 2025





Financial resilience starts with operational visibility. Smart leaders know the high cost of revenue leakage and wasted time on finding the right information from disconnected systems.

The Global Service Dynamics Report makes clear that for services firms, the most durable, all-weather businesses are the ones that achieve financial precision by aligning the entire customer journey, from sales and delivery through to customer success. That unified approach has become the defining competitive advantage.



**R “Ray” Wang**  
CEO  
Constellation Research



CHAPTER THREE

# Unifying the Service Delivery Ecosystem

Aligning Sales, Delivery, and Customer Success  
Around Customer Value

Traditional operational silos between Sales, Professional Services (PS), and Customer Success (CS) are increasingly recognized as significant impediments to achieving sustainable growth and delivering optimal customer value in today's market.

As clients increasingly expect seamless experiences and measurable outcomes, leading organizations understand that a fragmented approach is no longer viable. Consequently, they are actively pursuing a more integrated and collaborative model across the entire customer lifecycle—from initial engagement through delivery to long-term value realization.

This chapter examines the components of this unified approach. It explores the strategic role of dedicated Customer Success functions, dissects the persistent gap between the acknowledged benefits of cross-functional collaboration and its real-world execution, and highlights how high-performing PSOs are shifting towards outcome-focused measures of success to drive true customer-centricity and sustained growth.

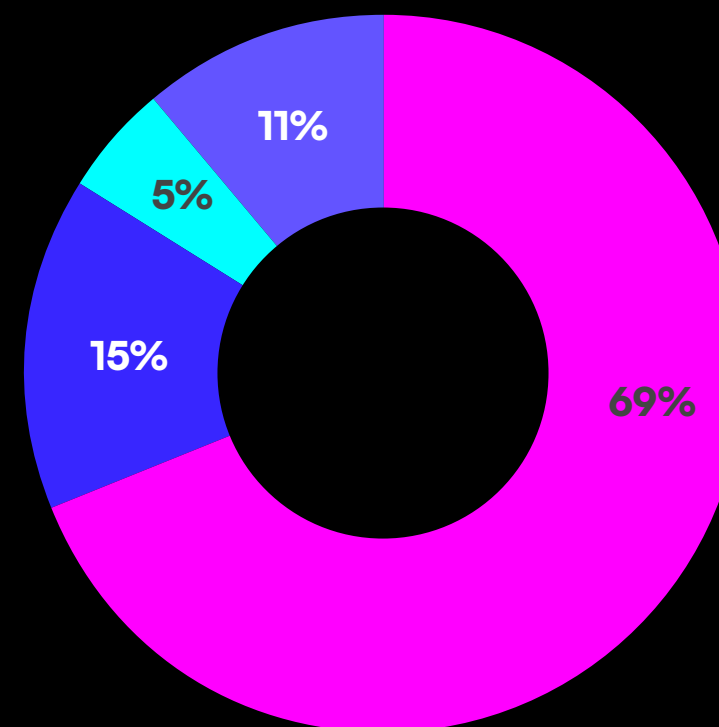


## Customer Success is now recognized as a strategic imperative for growth and retention.

The strategic emphasis on effective post-sale customer engagement is increasingly evident, with 69% of surveyed companies reporting that they have a dedicated Customer Success team that operates distinctly from their traditional sales and customer support functions.

This significant investment in specialized CS resources underscores a broader industry shift towards proactive customer relationship management. This approach is aimed at delivering measurable outcomes, strengthening customer satisfaction, and fostering long-term loyalty—all of which are crucial elements for achieving sustainable revenue growth, particularly within business models that emphasize recurring revenue streams.

Does your company have a customer success team that is distinct from its sales and customer support teams?



Yes

No, but we have a customer success team that is part of sales

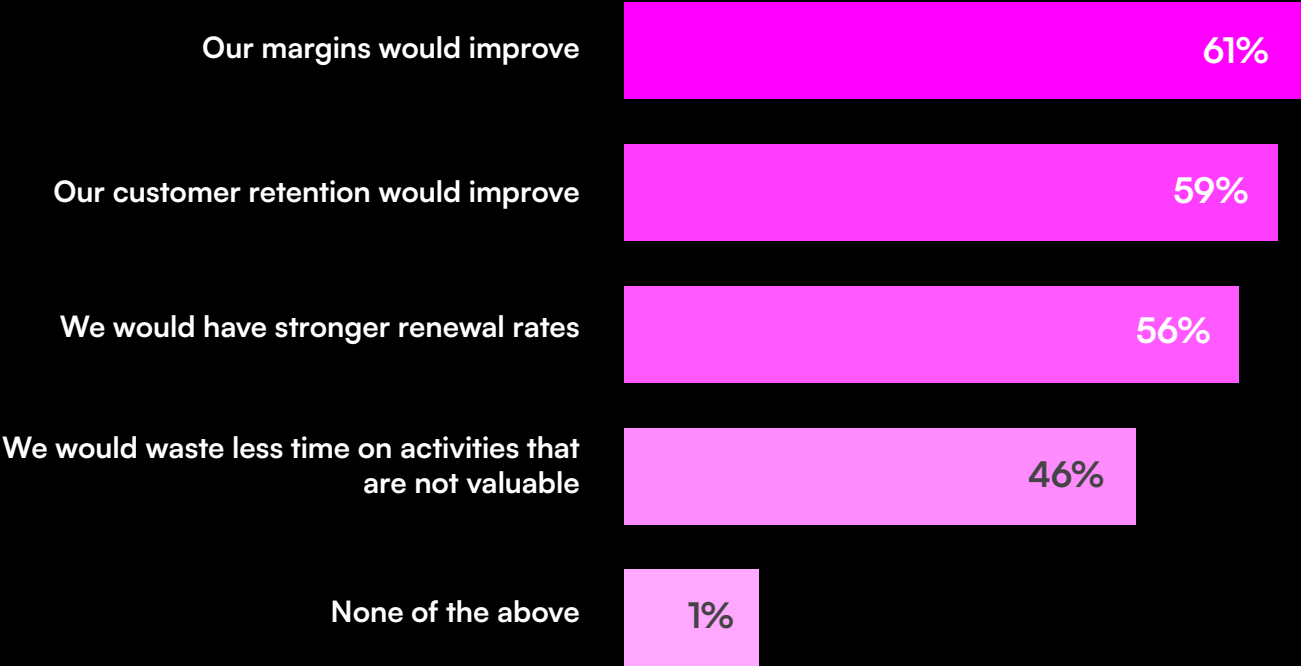
No, but we have a customer success team that is part of customer support

No

The benefits of cross-functional collaboration are acknowledged, but under-executed.

The immense value derived from close, proactive collaboration between PS, CS, and Sales teams is widely recognized. Services leaders anticipate that stronger alignment across these key functions would yield substantial improvements ranging from direct financial gains like enhanced margins, to crucial customer-centric outcomes such as improved retention and renewal rates, alongside significant operational efficiencies.

Which of the following benefits would occur when the customer success, professional services, and sales teams work closely together?





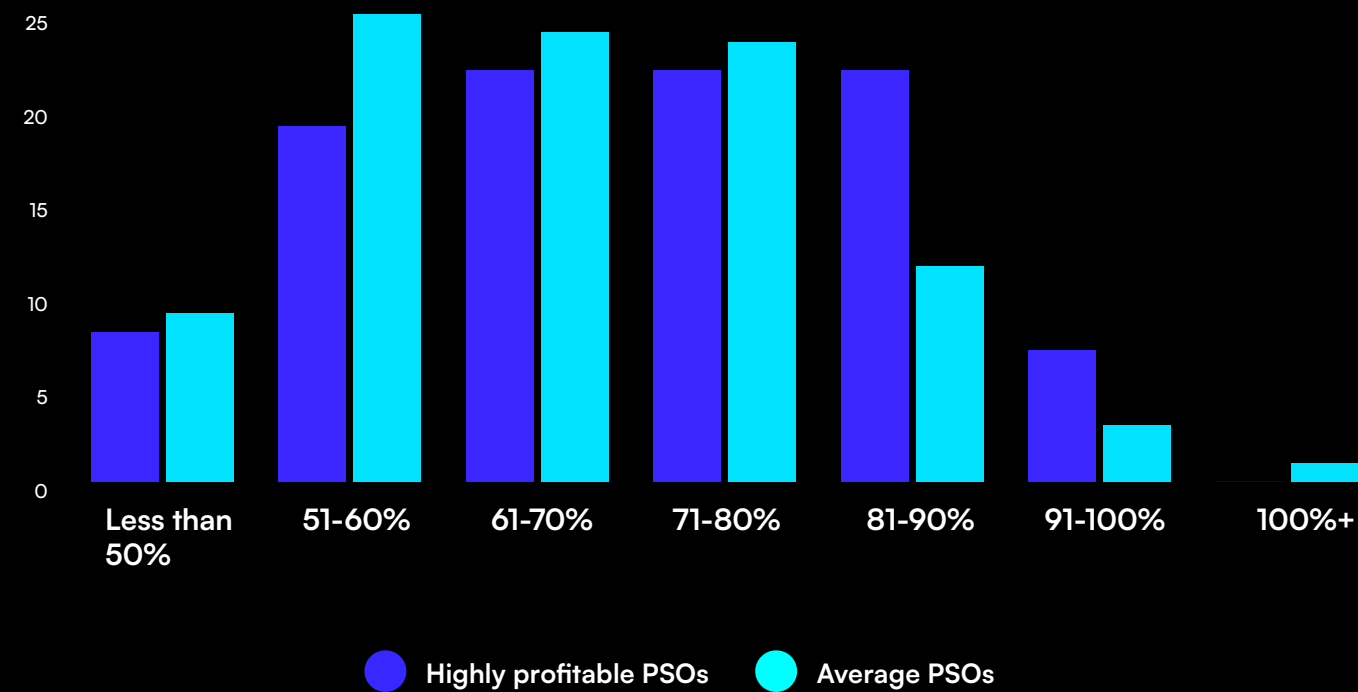
However, despite this clear understanding of the compelling advantages, a significant execution gap remains a persistent challenge for many organizations. The data starkly reveals this disparity: only 36% of professional services teams report that they proactively work with sales and customer success teams.

This gap between acknowledged potential and current practice highlights a critical opportunity for PSOs. Bridging it necessitates a concerted effort to refine internal processes, foster better interdepartmental communication, and strategically implement technologies designed to enable seamless and effective teamwork across these vital customer-facing functions.

Which of the following statements represents how your company’s professional services team operates?



What was your company’s net revenue retention (NRR) rate in 2024?



High-performing PSOs prioritize outcome-focused measures of success.

High-performing and highly profitable PSOs often differentiate themselves by adopting a more holistic and outcome-oriented perspective on measuring success. While traditional metrics like project profitability remain important, these leading organizations increasingly evaluate the success of their PS engagements based on clear indicators of long-term customer value, such as customer expansion and retention.

The impact of this approach is illustrated in the accompanying chart, which highlights how highly profitable PS teams dramatically outperform their less profitable counterparts in achieving high Net Revenue Retention (NRR) rates; a critical outcome-focused metric.

This strategic shift towards prioritizing long-term customer value and tangible outcomes, rather than focusing exclusively on individual project margins, reflects a more mature operational viewpoint. It underscores an understanding that true service success is fundamentally about enabling customers to achieve their own business goals.

Such a customer-centric approach, validated by strong NRR performance, not only fosters deeper client partnerships but also directly cultivates more sustainable revenue streams through repeat business, facilitates greater account expansion, and builds lasting, loyal client relationships.



**Customer Success can't be the department that picks up where others leave off.**

When Sales, Services, and Success are aligned from day one around customer outcomes, we stop playing catch-up and start creating value, faster, deeper, and more predictably. That's how you drive growth that lasts.



**Kristi Faltorusso**

Customer Success Advisor and Thought Leader



CHAPTER FOUR

# Charting the Course Forward

**Building a Resilient, AI-Enabled  
Services Organization**



The 2025 Global Service Dynamics Report outlines a clear path for professional services organizations aiming to achieve sustained success and market leadership in an era of unprecedented technological and economic change.

This journey requires a proactive and strategic approach to AI adoption, an unwavering commitment to operational excellence fueled by modern technology platforms, a forward-looking talent management and development strategy, and an unyielding focus on delivering and expanding customer value.

Based on the comprehensive insights gathered from this year's survey, services leaders should consider prioritizing the following strategic actions:

### Modernize with a Unified Services Platform.

Explicitly acknowledge and address the inherent limitations of relying on spreadsheets and disparate point solutions, particularly as these fragmented systems hinder effective AI adoption and data quality. The survey data shows that highly profitable PSOs are significantly more inclined to leverage integrated commercial PSA software, which provides the essential single source of truth required for effective resource management, financial control, and project execution from initiation to completion. This unified data

layer is not only important for comprehensive operational visibility and data-informed decision-making, but it also establishes the foundation for integrating and effectively deploying AI capabilities across the services lifecycle.

### Redefine Outcome-Oriented Measures of Success.

Expand performance metrics beyond conventional project-specific margins and completion rates. Incorporate robust measures of customer satisfaction, customer retention rates, and Net Revenue Retention (NRR). This broader, more comprehensive view of success directly aligns with the ongoing industry shift towards relationship-based service models and the strategic imperative of maximizing long-term customer lifetime value.

### Adopt AI Strategically and Purposefully.

Move beyond exploratory AI experiments and focus on scaling the use cases that deliver measurable and significant business outcomes. Prioritize AI initiatives that demonstrably enhance operational efficiency, improve the precision of resource allocation, and directly contribute to improved profitability. Address the identified skills gap through a combination of targeted hiring for specialized AI roles and comprehensive internal upskilling and reskilling programs.







## Prioritize Strategic Talent Development and Orchestration.

In an increasingly AI-enhanced professional environment, the value of human expertise, critical thinking, and client relationship skills remains paramount. Focus organizational efforts on growing services' team skillsets, particularly in areas complementary to emerging AI capabilities, such as data analysis, strategic problem-solving, and complex client advisory. Leverage AI-powered tools, where appropriate, for more intelligent and efficient resource management to ensure optimal skills deployment, thereby maximizing both resource utilization and the probability of project success.

## Promote Cross-Functional Collaboration and Data Sharing.

Make concerted efforts to break down traditional operational silos and bridge any existing divides between Sales, Professional

Services, and Customer Success teams. While improved customer retention is a key benefit of such alignment, PS teams aren't adequately engaging in proactive, systematic collaboration. Implement refined processes and enabling technologies that facilitate seamless information sharing and create a more cohesive, unified customer experience across every stage of the services value chain.

## Build Governance around AI and Compliance.

As AI adoption matures and its applications become more deeply embedded in core business processes, it is crucial to develop and implement robust governance frameworks. These frameworks should comprehensively address data security, client privacy, and evolving regulatory requirements to build stakeholder trust, ensure ethical AI use, and effectively mitigate potential risks.



# Deliver Customer Value with Certinia.

Certinia is the world's leading provider of Professional Services Automation (PSA) software. We empower technology and services organizations to deliver customer value with certainty across the entire services value chain. Our solutions connect everything from opportunity to renewal, built natively on Salesforce, the world's #1 CRM platform. Infused with comprehensive predictive, generative, and agentic AI capabilities, we provide services organizations with the fastest, surest path to improved revenue, margins, and resource utilization.

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