

**Future Proofing Your Association:
It's not that you can't see the solution; you
can't see the problem.**

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Our research finds that more than half of Associations surveyed believe digital is strategic to their future yet the majority don't believe they will be very successful.

Why the disconnect?



**It's not that you can't see the solution;
you can't see the problem.**
– *G.K. Chesterton*

Future Proofing Defined

- ✓ Future-proofing is the process of anticipating the future and developing methods of minimizing the effects of shocks and stresses of future events.
- ✓ The term "future-proof" refers to the ability of something to continue to be of value into the near and distant future; that the item does not become obsolete.
- ✓ Future proofing ensures sustained Competitive Advantage.
- ✓ Future proofing can be applied to narrow segments (e.g. product lines), specific needs (e.g. attracting new or different buyer audiences) or large issues (e.g. loss of market share). The baseline discovery research and analysis lays the foundation for specific areas of application per your needs.
- ✓ The principles of future-proofing are extracted from other industries and codified as a system for approaching an intervention.

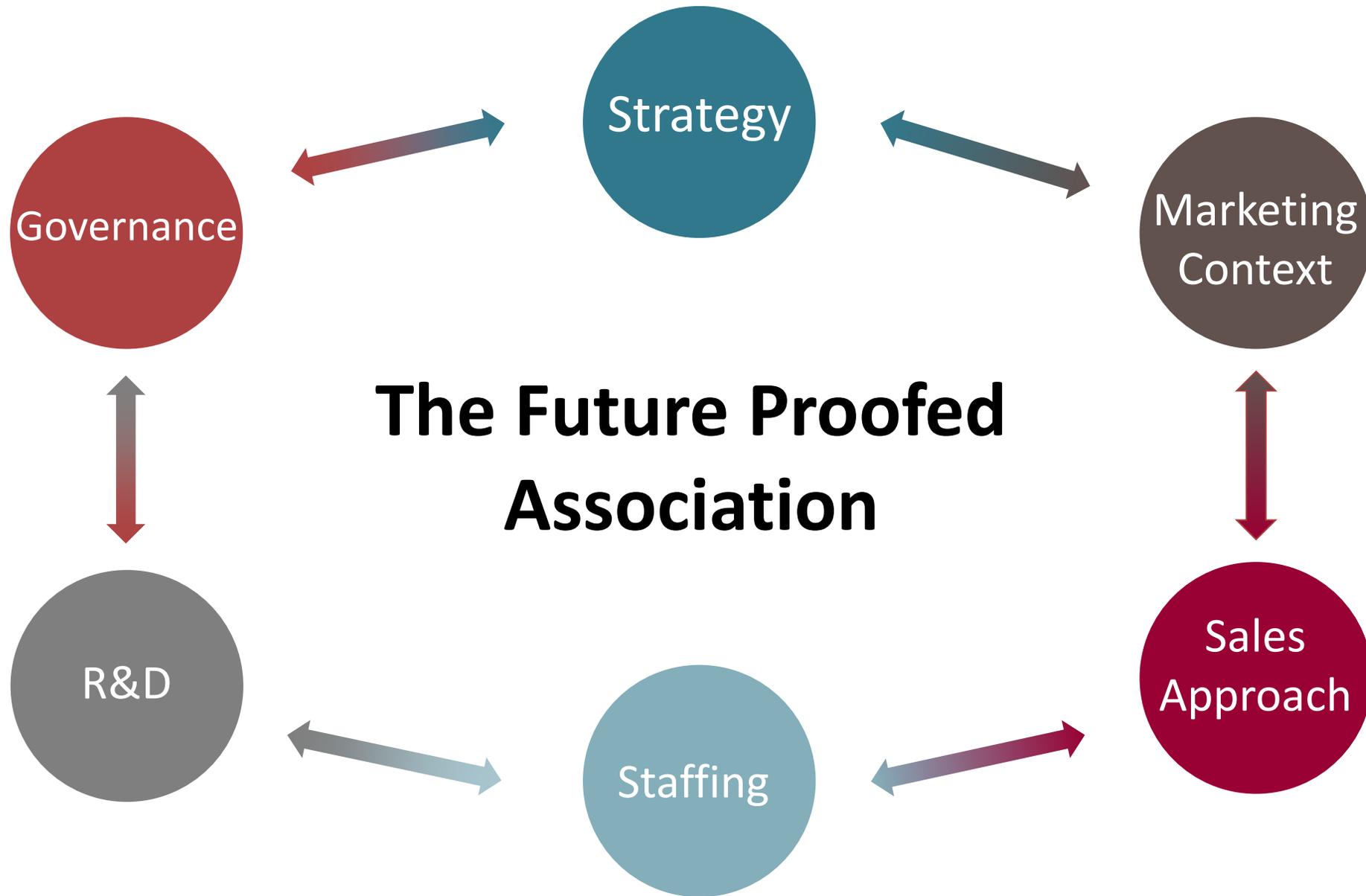
The Three Truths

1. You can't predict the future
2. Markets will change
3. No one is fully prepared





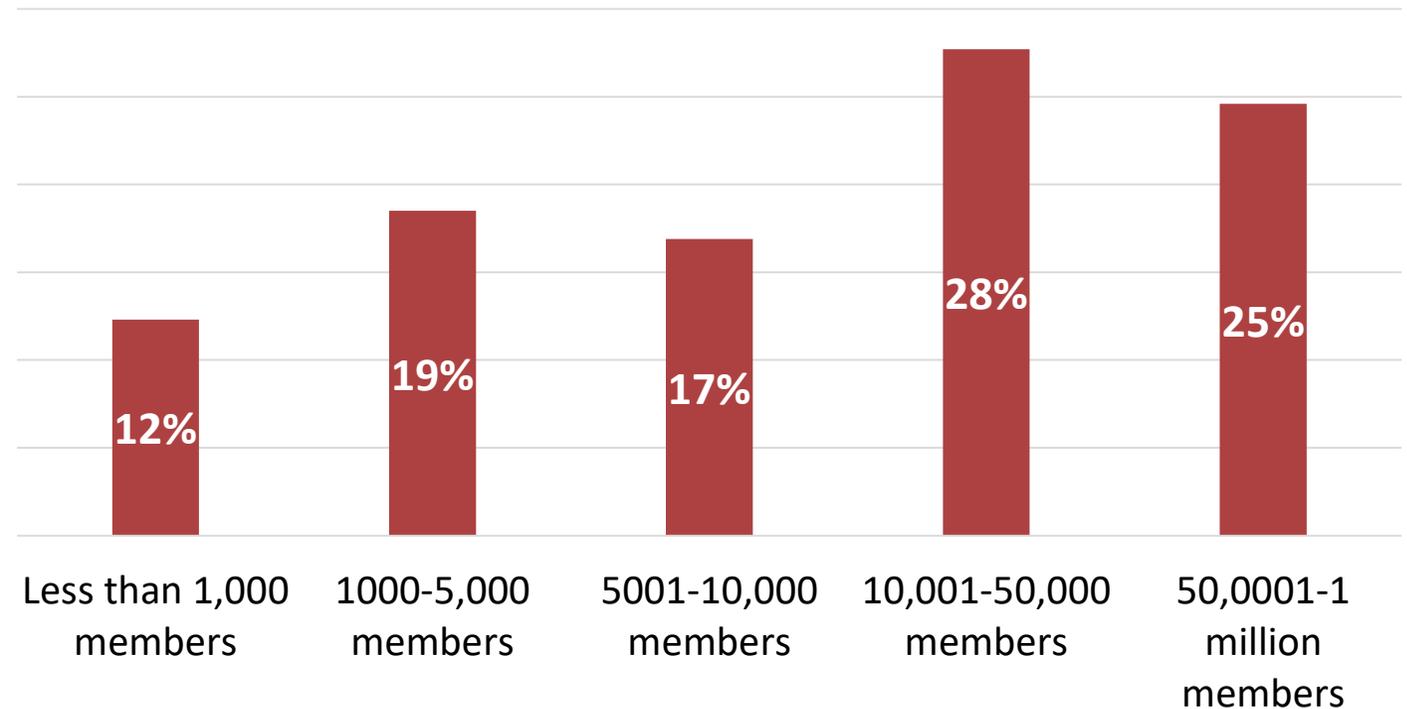
**The way to win is to ask the
right questions.**



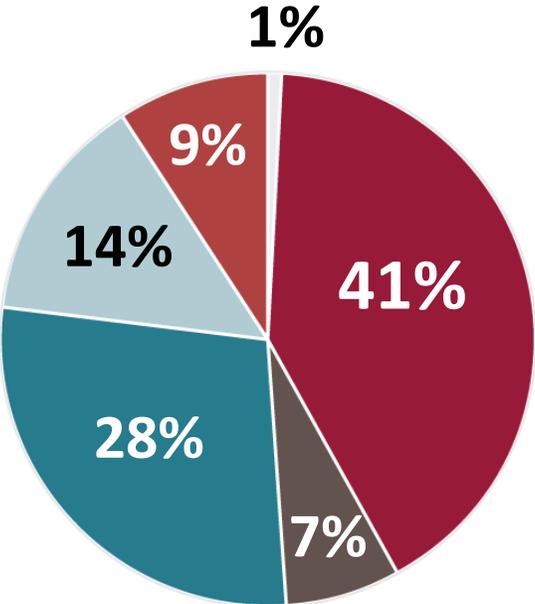
About This Study: The Future Proofed Association

- In March, 2017 Leader Networks and Fusion Productions invited Association Executives to participate in this industry study.
- 85 Association leaders participated in the survey
- We analyzed the data by association size (larger vs smaller) and anticipated outcomes (very successful vs. all other options)

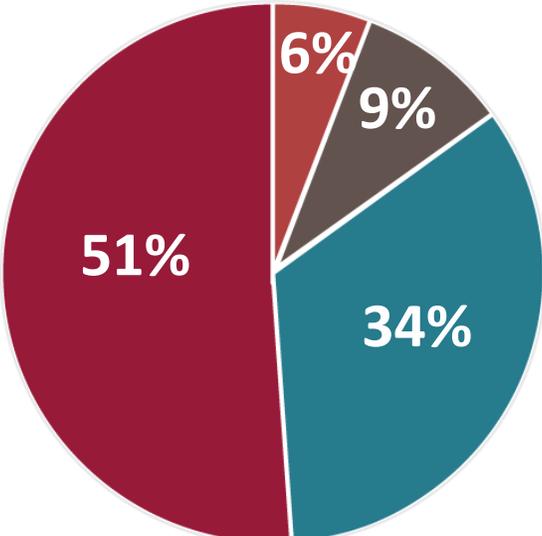
Approximately how many members does your Association have?



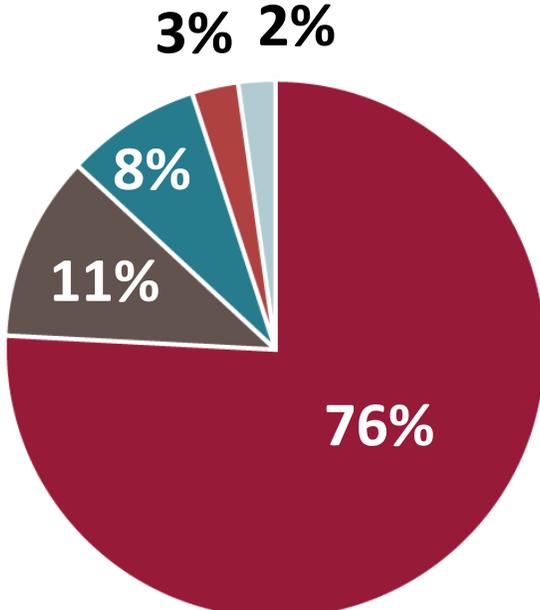
Demographics



- Executive, CEO, Executive Director, President
- Chief Operating Officer (COO)
- Vice President, "C" Suite
- Director
- Manager
- Volunteer Leader



- Local
- Regional
- National
- International

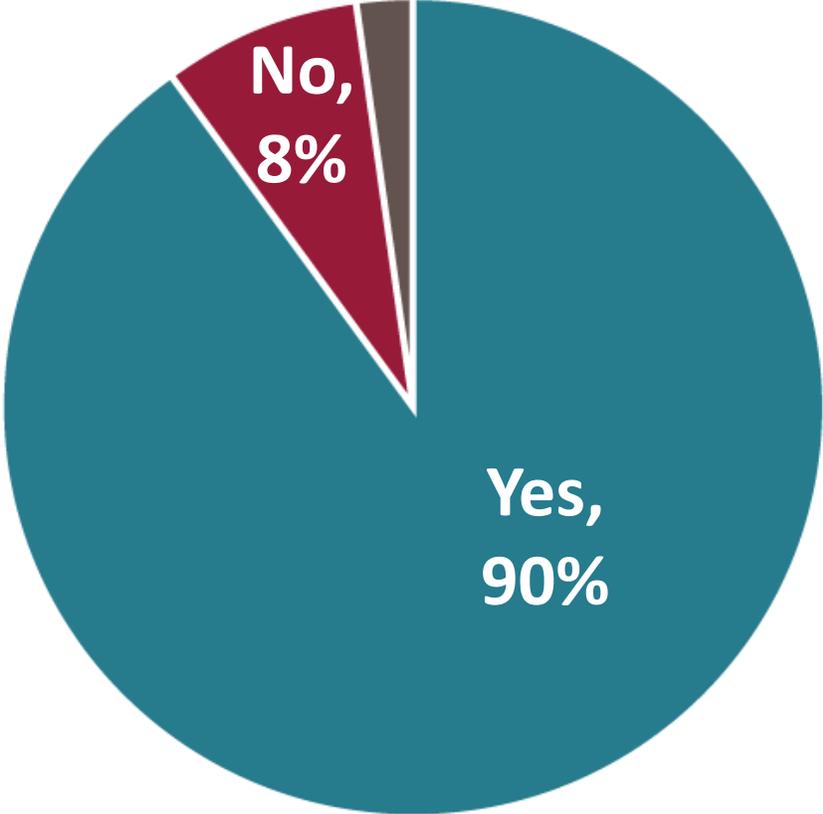


- Individual Membership Org (IMO) or Professional Society
- Trade Org (Advocacy)
- Corporate Membership Org (no advocacy)
- Philanthropic Org
- Other

Key Strategic Questions To Ask

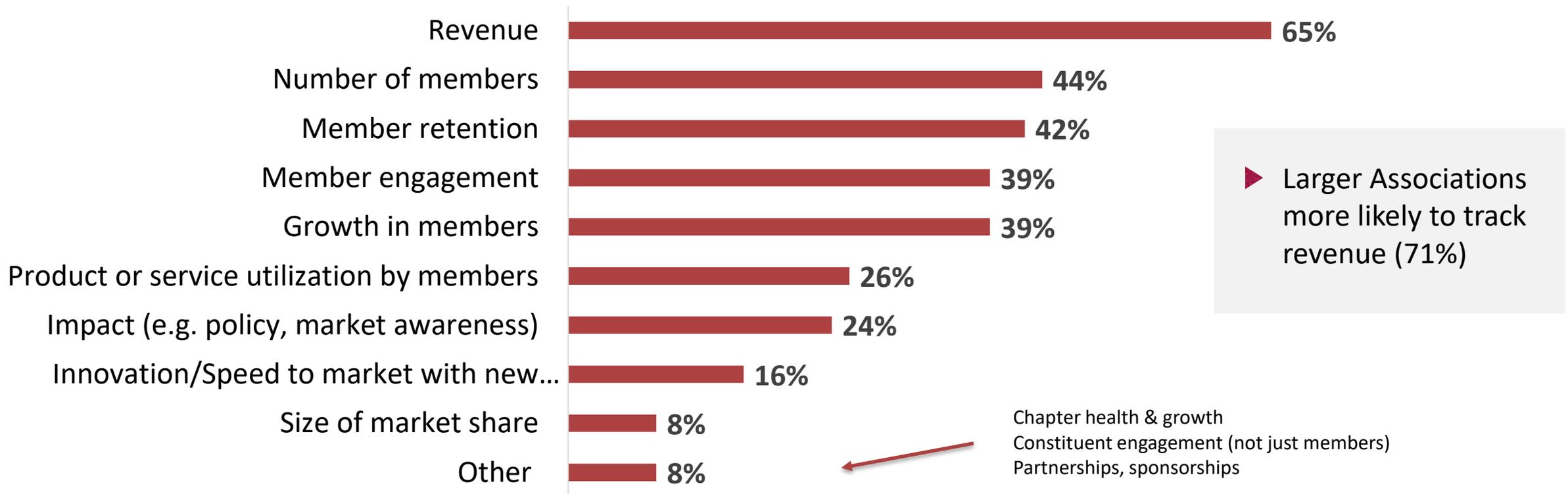
- ▶ **Does the Association have a clear strategy?**
- ▶ **Is the strategy well understood by employees, volunteer leadership and partners?**
- ▶ **Do all lines of business participate in the strategic planning process?**
- ▶ **And do they execute against the strategy with clearly defined success measures that roll upwards?**
- ▶ **Does your member experience reflect your strategic goals and customer needs?**

The Vast Majority Of Associations Have A Formal Strategic Planning Process



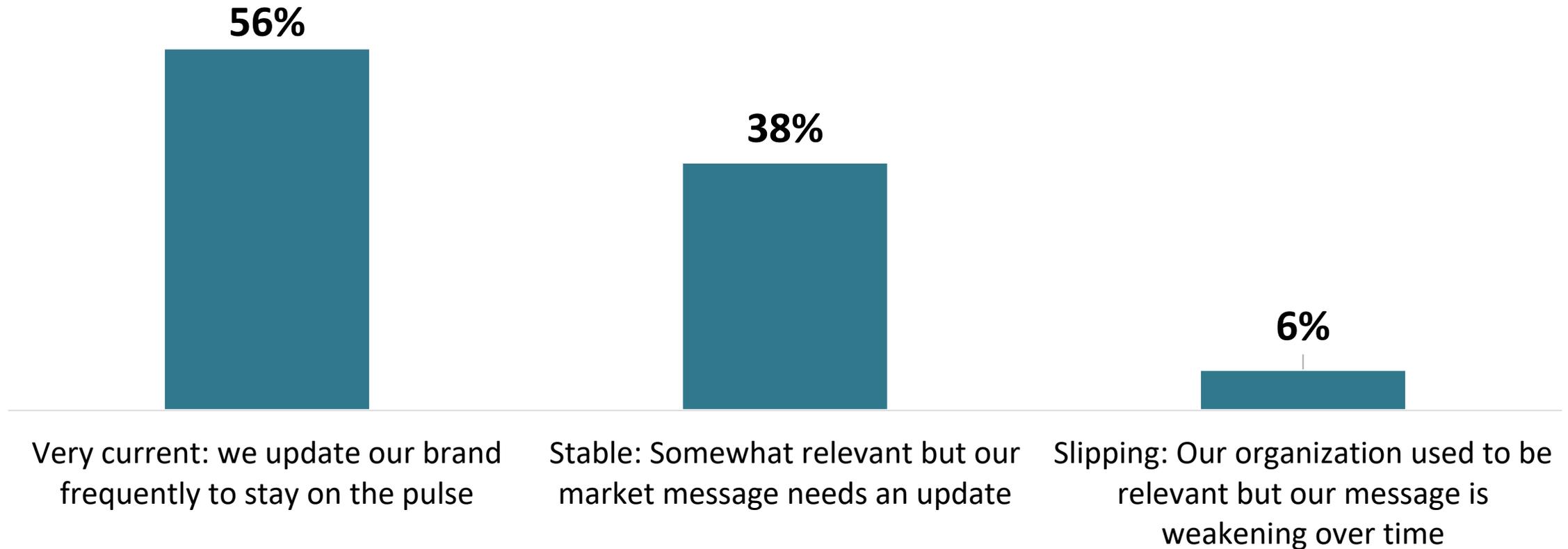
Revenue and Memberships are Top Success Measures for Associations

What are the most important measures your Association uses to track its success (select up to three)?



About Half Of Leaders Believe Their Association Brand is Current

How current is your Association's branding (what your organization does or stands for)?



More than Half Believe Digital is Strategic To Their Marketing and Communications Efforts

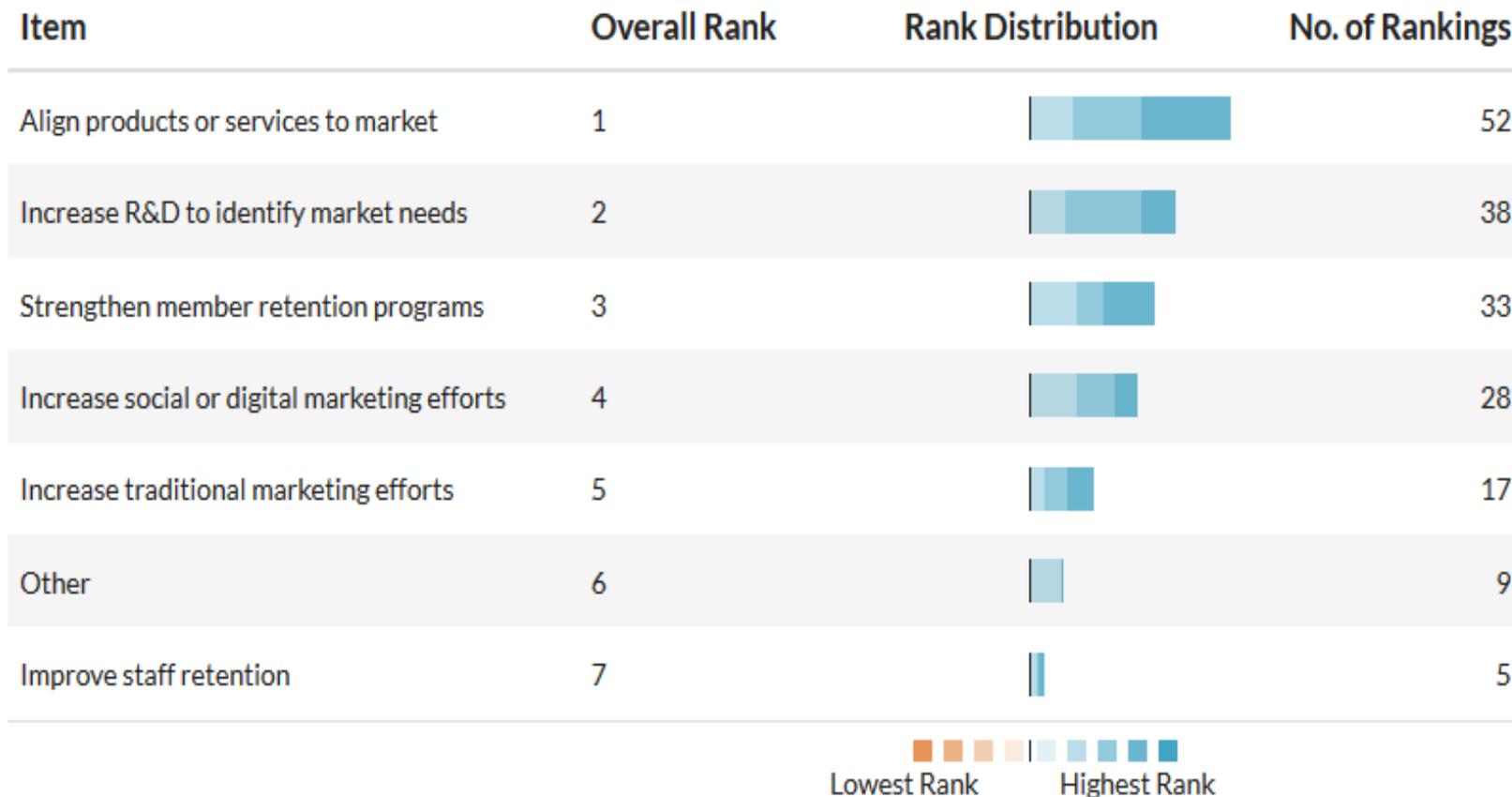
How does your Association respond to the needs of the digital audience/buyer?



► Larger associations more likely to report that digital is an important aspect of the Marcom strategy (71%) than smaller associations.

Product/Services Alignment #1 Priority For 2017

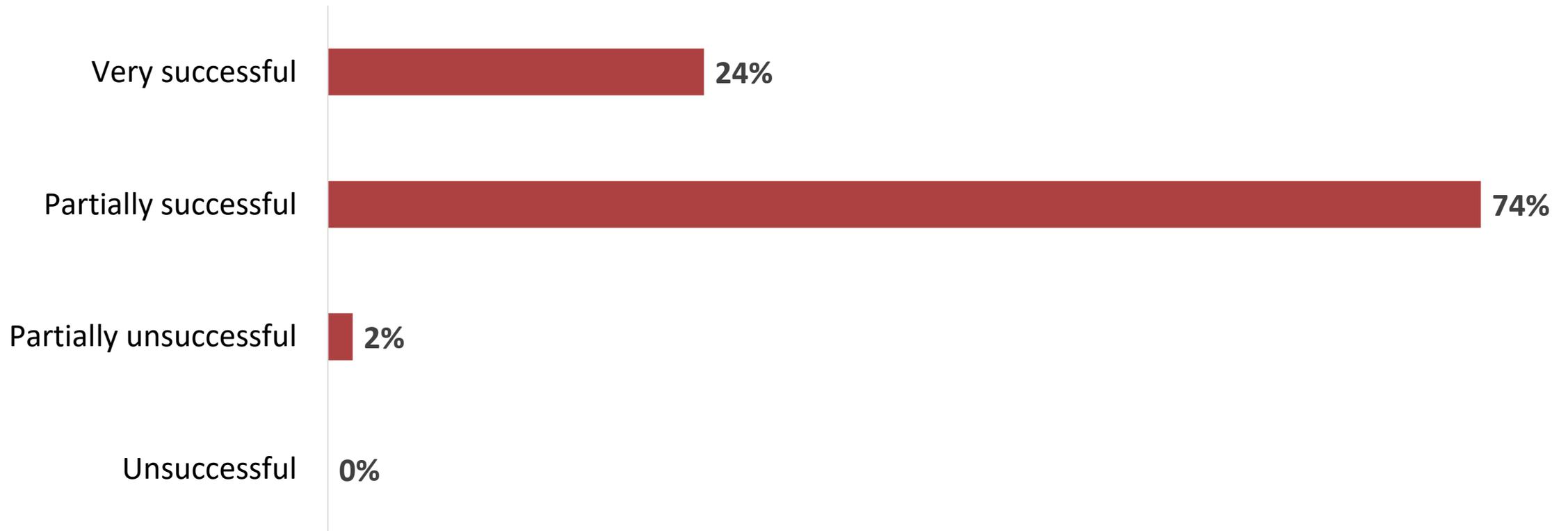
What are the most important activities your Association is doing this year to prepare for the future needs of your members? (select up to three and rank them)



- ▶ 83% selected align products or services to market
- ▶ 61% increase R&D
- ▶ 53% Strengthen member retention programs

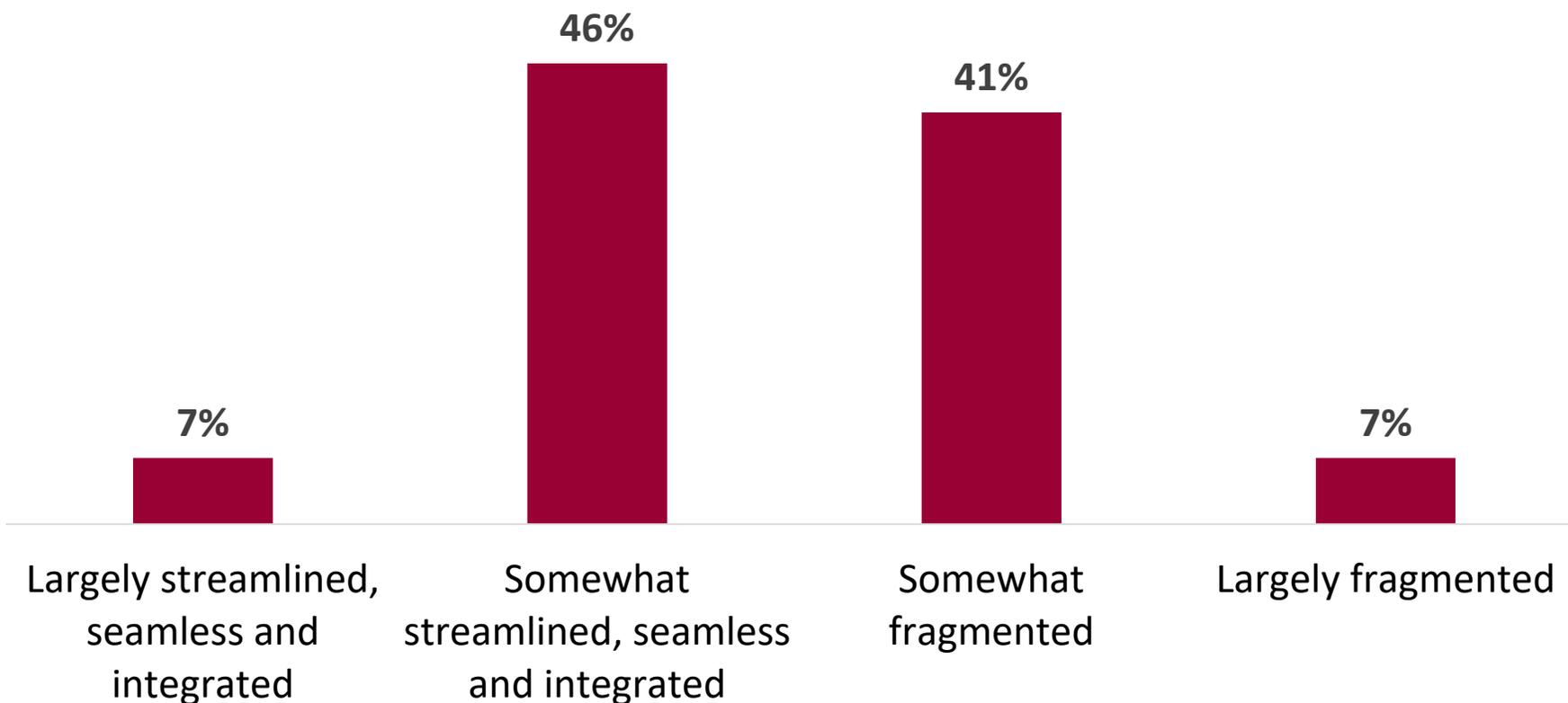
But The Vast Majority Do Not Believe They Will Be Very Successful

How successful do you believe the outcomes of the activities identified in the previous question will be?



Less than 10% Report a Seamless Member Experience

How would you characterize your member experience (including online and offline)?



► Larger associations are less likely to have a seamless and integrated strategy than smaller associations (38% are somewhat streamlined, 50% somewhat fragmented).

Market Forces, Internal Culture and Unreliable Data Mitigate Success

Key themes from open ended responses....

- ▶ **Will we have the staff?** Increased market competition for attention and resources
 - ▶ Staff need to be strategic, responsive and nimble
 - ▶ Volunteer leadership needs to be in alignment
- ▶ **Can we manage the change?** Culture change needed to successfully prioritize and evolve
 - ▶ Lack of time and resources to execute well
 - ▶ Need to increase calculated risk taking to succeed
- ▶ **Do we have the right information?** Reliable data/ market research to base decisions

How Members Of Highly Successful Associations Would Describe Their Experiences

- ▶ Responses from Associations that said they will **definitely succeed....**
- ▶ Shift from being smartest to being most responsive.



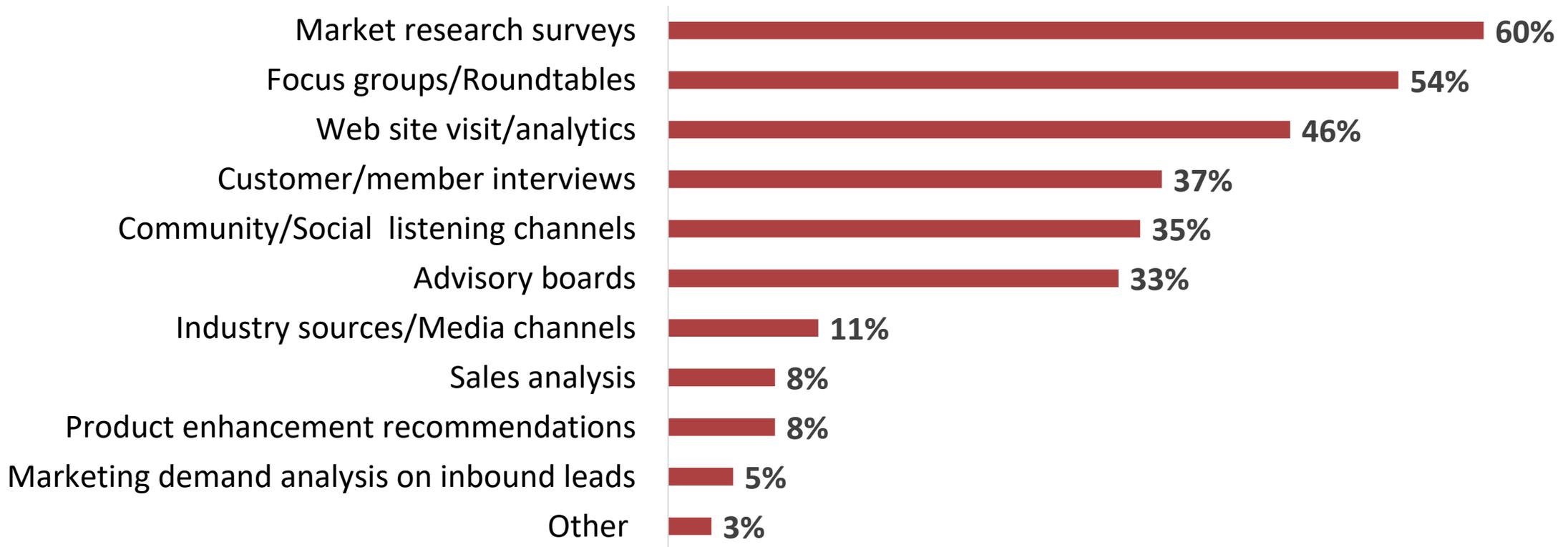
A word cloud of terms describing association experiences. The words are arranged in a cluster, with 'Engaging' and 'Responsive' being the largest. Other prominent words include 'Customer-Centric', 'Educational', 'Relevant', 'Trusted', 'Friendly', 'Reliable', 'Positive', 'Knowledgeable', and 'Impactful'.

Customer-Centric Engaging
Responsive
Trusted Educational Friendly
Reliable Positive Knowledgeable Impactful
Relevant

What Three Words Would Your Members Use To Describe Their Experiences With Your Association?

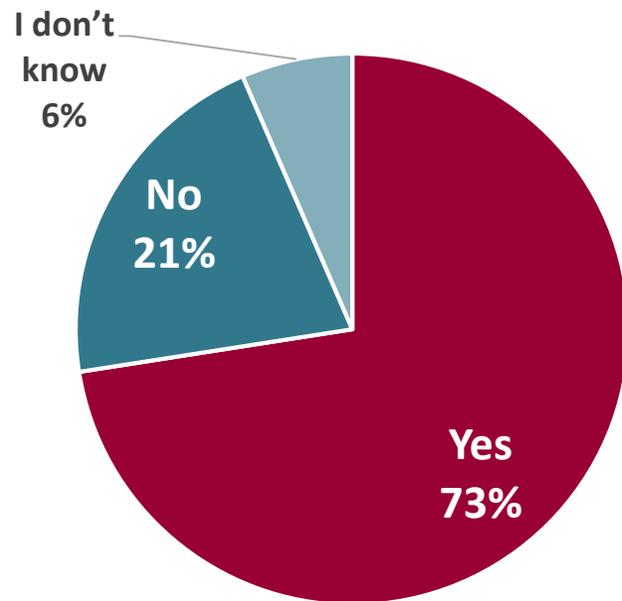
“Traditional” R&D Methods Are Preferred

What are the top three ways your Association learns about the needs of its market/audience?
(Select up to 3)



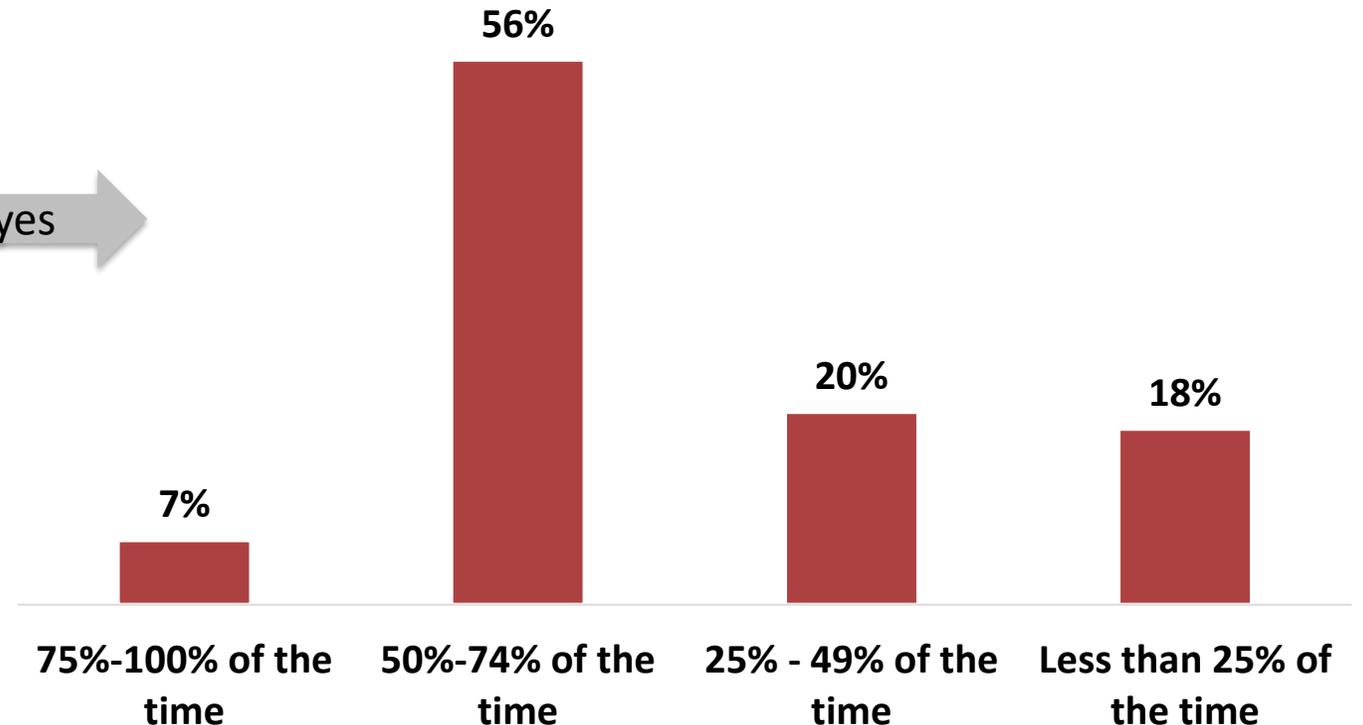
Most Associations Collect Member Experience Data, Some Apply It To Core Offerings

Does your organization regularly collect data about member experience?



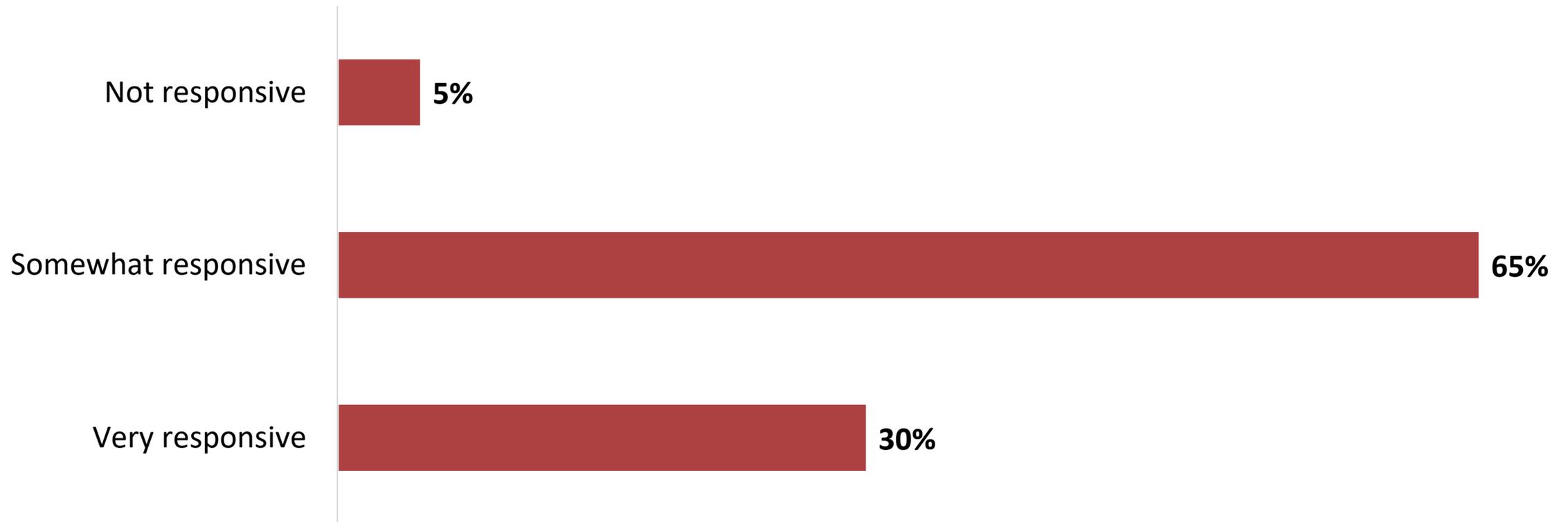
Approximately what percent of the time does your Association use the data you collect to make changes in your offerings?

If yes →



To Become More Digitally Agile, There is Room For Improvement with IT Responsiveness

How responsive is IT to business needs?



So what should associations do to ensure a bright, digital future?

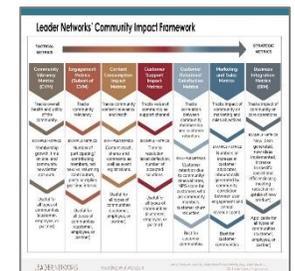
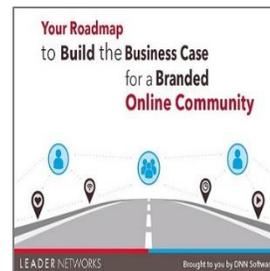
- It's time for association leaders to become digital change agents. They must find ways to "future-proof" their associations so that they continue to deliver value in the digital age. Future proofing ensures sustained competitive advantage. Here are some ways to get started:
- Make improving the member experience and executing on a digital strategy your top priorities. If you don't have the resources to do this in-house, bring in a partner.
- Use stronger R&D methods to more accurately align your products and services with member needs. Move away from old-school methods and start to experiment with digital R&D approaches – including social listening, crowd sourcing, and engaging with members in an ongoing way through an online community.
- Don't overlook cultural change and staff responsiveness – these are important factors that can make or break your digital efforts. Be sure to develop an internal change management strategy in parallel with your member-focused initiatives.
- **Remember: give your members what they want and they will serve you well – now and for years to come!**

About Leader Networks

[Leader Networks](#) is a research and consulting firm that helps companies use digital and social technologies to gain competitive advantage.

We work alongside our clients to develop digital business strategies, launch new digital products and business models, create and grow online communities, and craft social selling campaigns and operations. Our efforts pay off – by enabling organizations to better engage their customers, drive new product and service innovations, reduce costs, and boost shareholder value.

Examples of our
thought leadership



Our Future Proofing Framework

Where you are

- ▶ Products and services
- ▶ GTM plan
- ▶ Customer and partner profiles
- ▶ Starring skills

Where you want to be

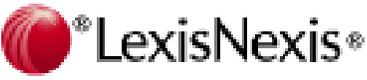
- ▶ Market forces, organizational resilience
- ▶ Responsiveness to needs and changes
- ▶ Alignment with what you want to be known for

Destination Roadmap

- ▶ Where is the low hanging fruit?
- ▶ How can the organizational strengths be leveraged?
- ▶ How can we test the market readiness trajectory for future products and services?

The Power To Keep Moving.... 

Our Clients





**DEAR FUTURE,
I'M READY...**

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