

IT LEADER EDITION

Action for Growth

Strategies for IT leaders to overcome challenges and accelerate growth



Introduction

IT leaders are grappling with multiple challenges, from defending against growing cyber threats to ensuring safe and effective tech implementations, according to our [2025 global survey](#). Increasing geopolitical uncertainty and risky economic conditions make these tests even harder.

In response, IT chiefs are embracing artificial intelligence (AI) and starting to reap the benefits, including enhanced operational efficiency and data insights. But they now have an opportunity to focus on AI initiatives that also help generate revenue.

In IT strategy, leaders plan to harness the benefits of specialist vendors and plug-and-play solutions. They see collaboration with finance teams as key in driving digital transformation further.

This whitepaper **draws on data from 350 finance leaders, 115 HR leaders and 115 IT leaders** to explore how IT executives are approaching these and other challenges in 2025 – and how they can take action to help their organizations grow.

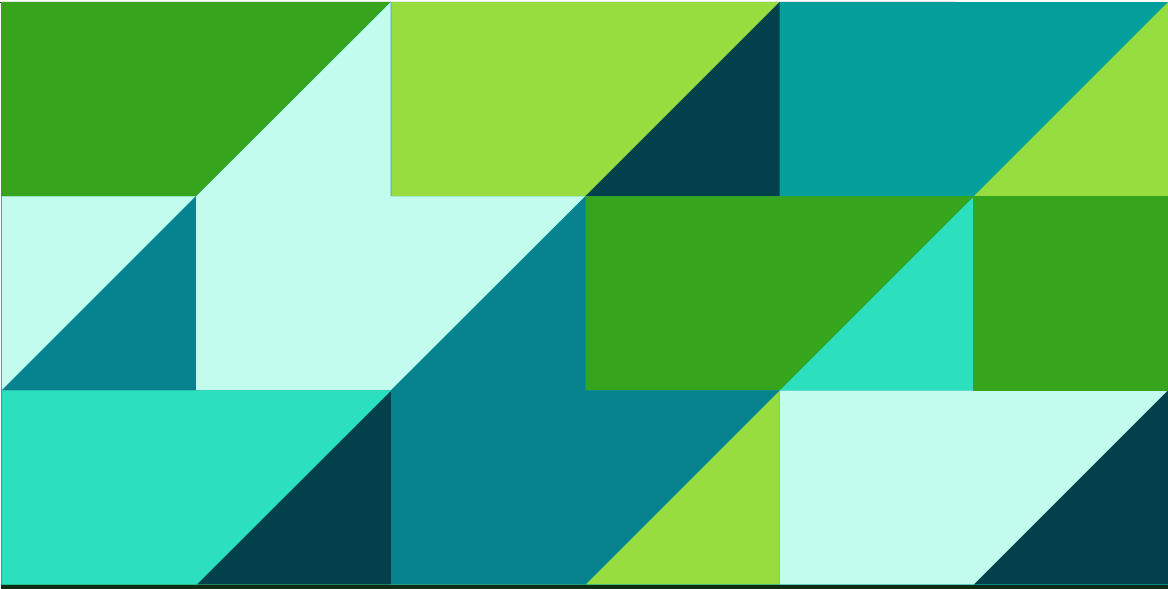
Leaders lack full confidence in cybersecurity, with employees the biggest risk

The cost of cybercrime worldwide is skyrocketing. Research firm Statista predicts that, from 2025 to 2029, it will surge 69% to \$15.6 trillion.¹

In response, IT leaders are only moderately confident in their organizations' security. Seventy-one percent feel "somewhat prepared" to respond to an increased cyberattack risk, but just 26% say they are "very prepared." The remaining 3% say they are "unprepared." Clearly, many still face a challenge to keep their cyber-defenses bulletproof.

Identifying weak spots is essential – 43% of IT leaders rank phishing and social engineering attacks as a top-three vulnerability for their business. This is followed by inadequate employee cybersecurity training and insufficient endpoint security (protecting devices connected to the company network), at 29% each. These findings confirm that human elements are often the biggest weaknesses.

IT heads are looking for finance leaders' help, mainly through increased investment. IT chiefs say they want finance to prioritize cybersecurity in financial planning (57%) and increase budgets for security measures (51%).



Action items

- 1 Assess the risks human factors pose to cybersecurity and data privacy.
- 2 Focus on cooperating with finance to boost investments in security infrastructure and training programs, including regular simulations.
- 3 Foster a culture that encourages users to report phishing attempts. Share detailed information about how and where attacks happen, highlighting how even the sharpest colleagues can be duped by sophisticated social engineering schemes.

1. Statista (2024), Annual cost of cybercrime worldwide 2018-2029



IT leaders adopt a mix of approaches to technology investment

48%

of IT leaders plan to take a hybrid approach to technology investment, consolidating core systems when possible and using plug-and-play solutions for specialized needs



Organizations are adopting diverse models when it comes to technology investment. Around half of IT leaders say they manage their strategy in-house, with internal teams deciding how the organization will allocate resources. Fifteen percent outsource to managed service providers (MSPs), while 36% mix MSPs and internal management.

IT leaders are also exploring various technology investment strategies. Just 5% plan to prioritize in-house technology development and 1 in 10 intend to consolidate their solutions and use fewer vendors. In contrast, 37% plan to use a plug-and-play approach with multiple specialist vendors. Forty-eight percent say they will aim to combine these approaches.

As technology becomes ever more complex and embedded in organizational strategies, specialist vendors can provide advanced solutions that in-house teams may not have the funds, time, or expertise to develop. Outsourcing can help businesses respond quickly to tech developments and free teams to focus on their core strategies. MSPs in particular can help reduce the cost of maintaining IT systems and personnel, while allowing access to cutting-edge expertise for a predictable cost.

Action items

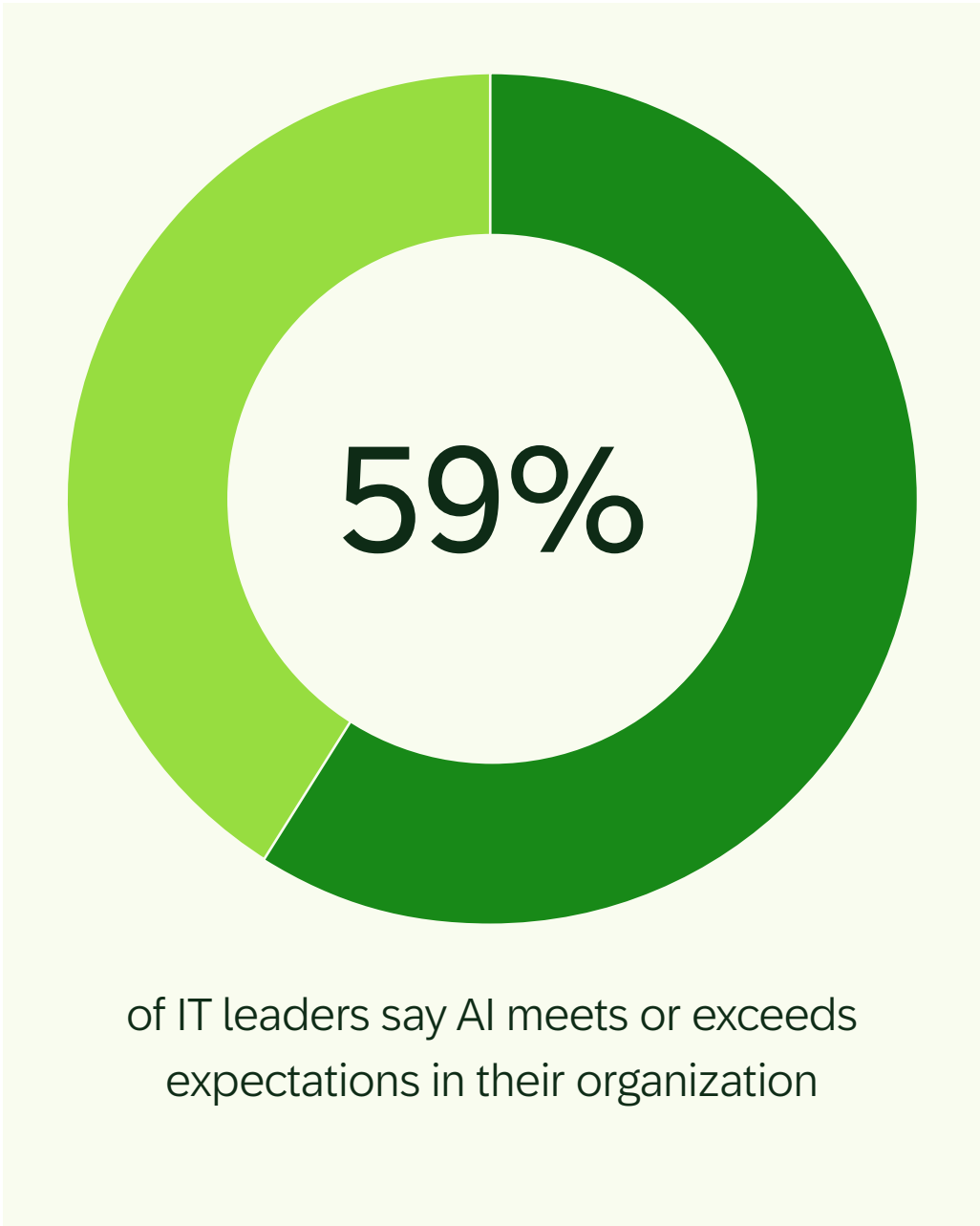
- 1 Review your technology investment strategy regularly to ensure it aligns with organizational goals. Involve other leaders, such as the chief financial officer (CFO), in these reviews.
- 2 Assess your MSPs, third-party, and in-house solutions to maximize return on investment.
- 3 Prioritize ongoing enablement and training to ensure end users and administrators are getting the most value from your technologies.

AI focus turns to revenue creation

Hard work in AI development is paying off for many organizations. Fifty-nine percent of IT leaders report that their AI implementations have met or exceeded expectations, while only 1% say AI tools have fallen short. However, for the remaining 40%, these tools only partially met expectations, suggesting many have an opportunity to enhance how they leverage AI technologies through targeted improvements.

The main benefits observed from AI include increased operational efficiency (46%), better data insights and analytics (42%), and improved decision-making (38%). IT leaders report AI has been less effective in boosting employee morale (10%) or increasing revenue generation (21%).

Yet finance leaders say one of their biggest actions for driving growth in 2025 is investing in AI (58%), second only to optimizing costs at 69%. This suggests that, although AI has not yet emerged as a major revenue creator, it presents exciting new possibilities in that area, and IT can work with finance to develop this potential.



of IT leaders say AI meets or exceeds expectations in their organization

Action items

- 1 Work with other leaders, such as the CFO and chief human resources officer (CHRO), to identify emerging opportunities for AI in your organization. Roll out successful experiments quickly and securely using cloud platforms.
- 2 Review AI solutions regularly to ensure they meet expectations and adapt your approach where needed.
- 3 Implement robust data security, privacy, and governance measures to protect company data, maintain ethical and regulatory standards, and ensure high-quality, consistent data is being used in AI models.

IT leaders look to collaborate with finance

58% of IT leaders would like to establish regular cross-functional meetings



50% want to create cross-functional working groups



IT heads say they value support from their CFOs, particularly on digital transformation (54%) and establishing metrics to evaluate the return on investment (ROI) and performance of IT initiatives (43%). These priorities rank higher than funding new technology (35%) or budget allocations (40%), so it's not just about asking finance for more money.

Technology leaders also want to cooperate with finance leaders in expense management and reduction (52%), investment in tools and technology (50%), and budgeting and financial planning (39%).

But there are barriers to cooperation: IT chiefs cite conflicting departmental priorities (57%) and lack of clear roles and responsibilities (49%). This suggests they may not feel they're on the same page with finance. Less common obstacles include lack of time for regular meetings, insufficient data sharing (47% each), and tech limitations (42%), indicating that hardware and software are less of a sticking point than human factors.

IT leaders want to break these barriers with regular cross-functional meetings (58%), flexible budgets for collaborative projects (56%), and integrated technology platforms (54%). In addition to supporting closer working, these initiatives can help improve data sharing.

Action items

- 1 Work with your finance leaders to set up regular meetings and working groups.
- 2 Allocate flexible budgets for collaboration and prioritize implementation of integrated platforms.

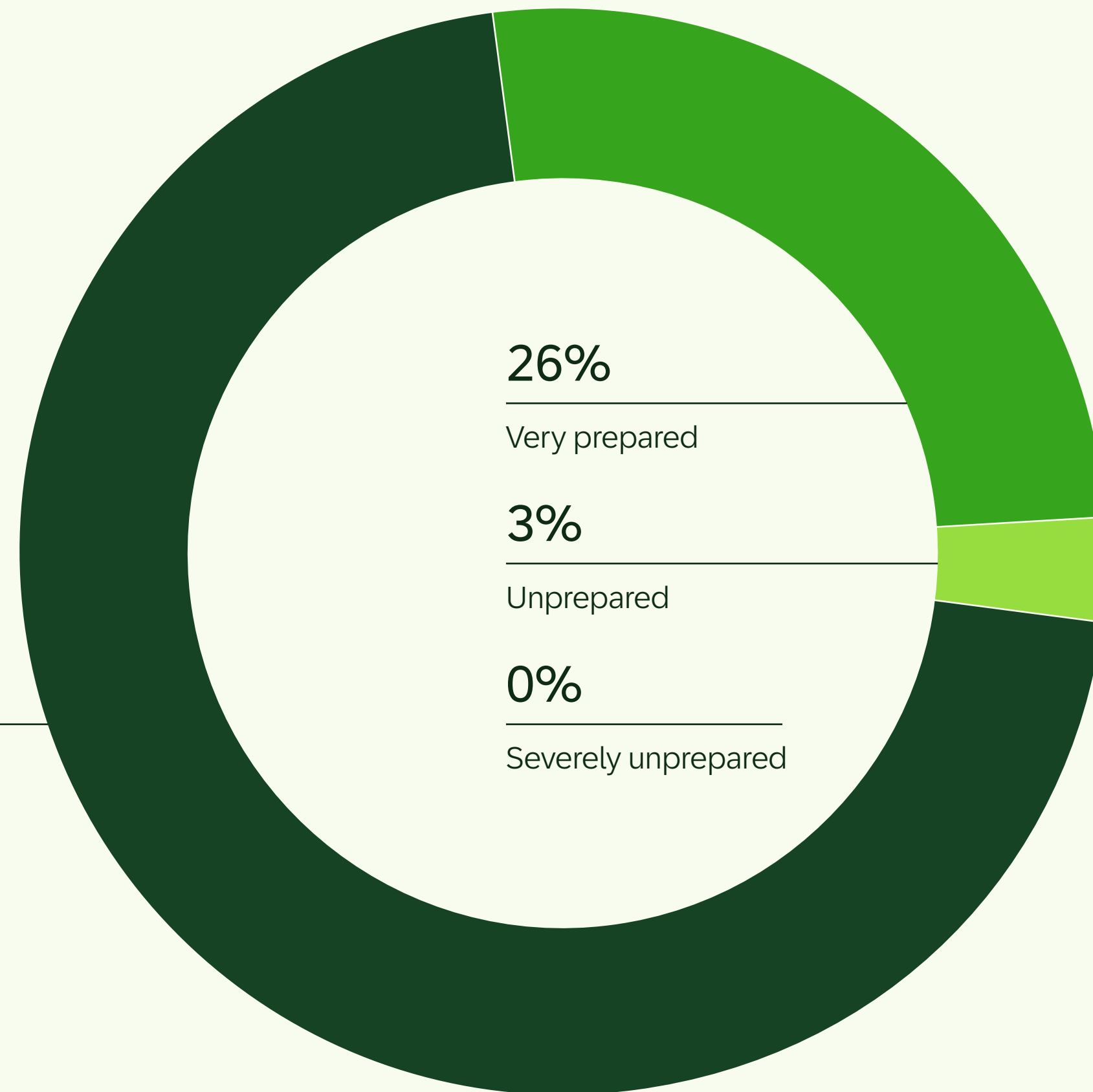
Cybersecurity, AI and other top IT trends in 2025

IT leaders are reasonably confident about cybersecurity

How prepared do IT leaders feel their organization is to respond to an increased threat of cyberattacks?

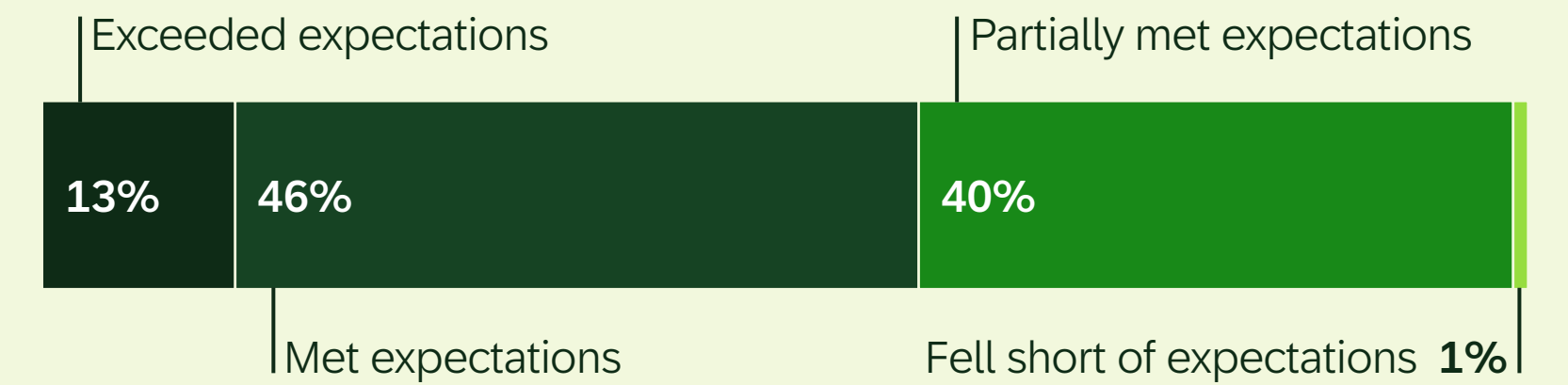
71%

Somewhat prepared

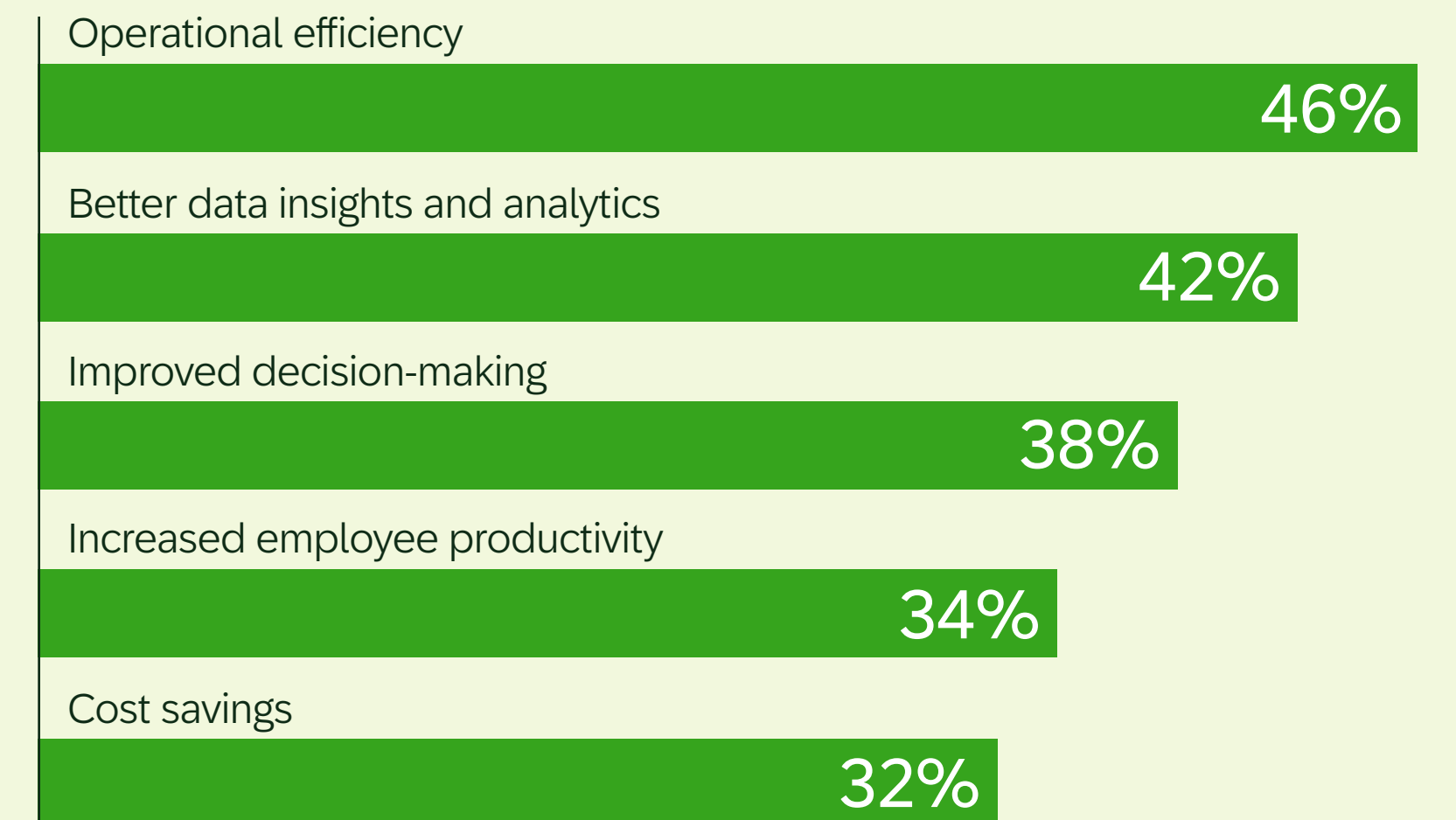


They're also optimistic about the benefits of AI

How do IT leaders perceive the overall benefits of AI to their organization so far?

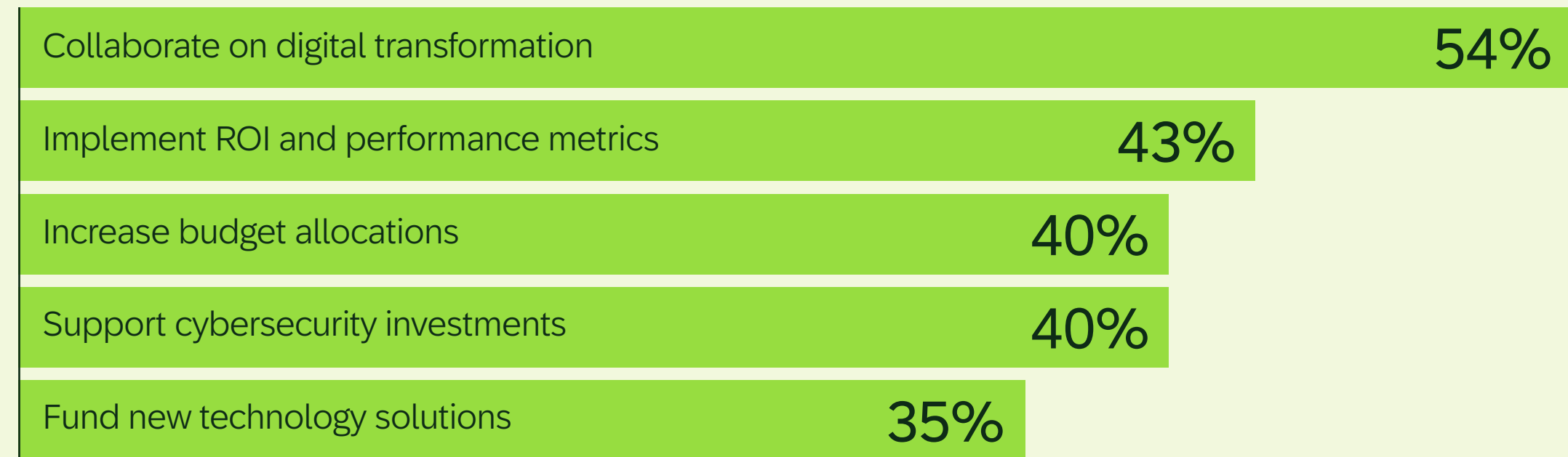


Where have IT leaders seen the biggest impact from AI?



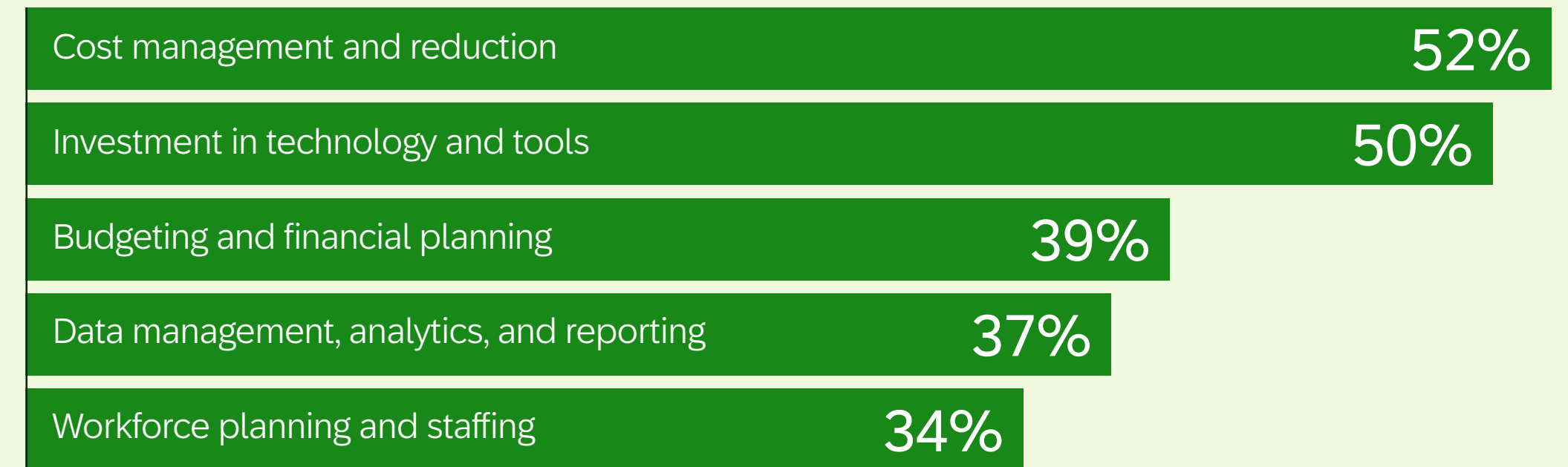
They see collaboration as the key to driving digital transformation further...

What specific actions would IT leaders like to see finance leaders take to support IT initiatives?



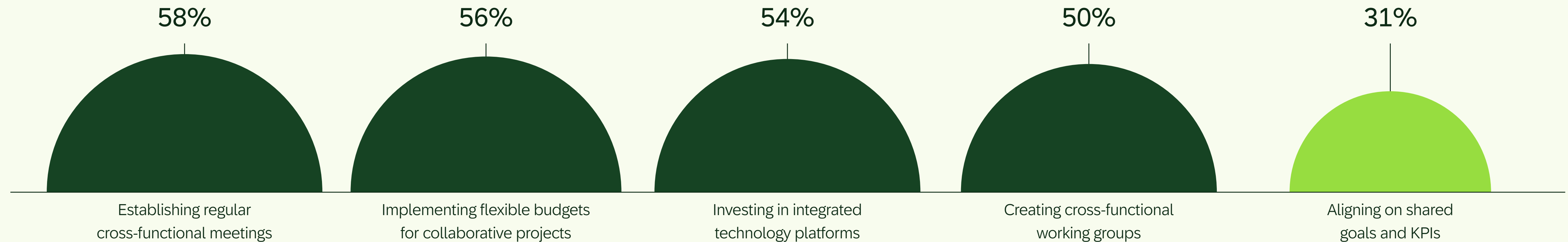
...while also managing costs

In which areas do IT leaders want to work closer with the finance leader?



IT leaders would rather invest in cross-functional work than set collaboration KPIs

What approaches would IT leaders like to see more of to overcome blockers to collaboration?



Most organizations are managing their technology investment strategy in-house

How are IT leaders' technology investment strategies primarily managed?

50%

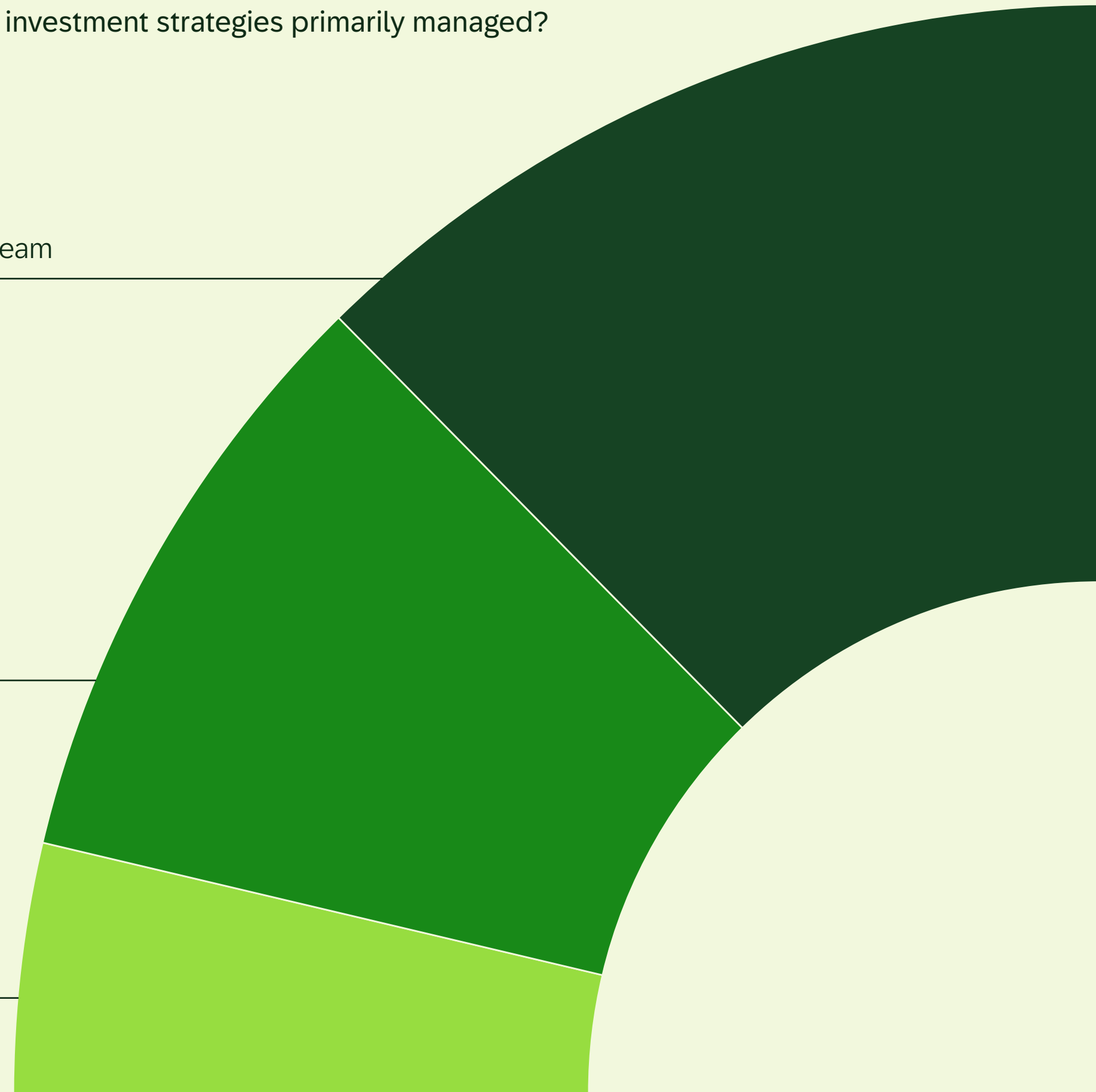
Mostly managed internally by IT team

36%

A balanced mix of Managed Service Providers (MSPs) and internal management

15%

Mostly managed by MSPs



And they plan on a variety of approaches going forward

How are IT leaders planning to evolve their technology investment going forward?

48%

Hybrid approach of consolidation and plug-and-play

37%

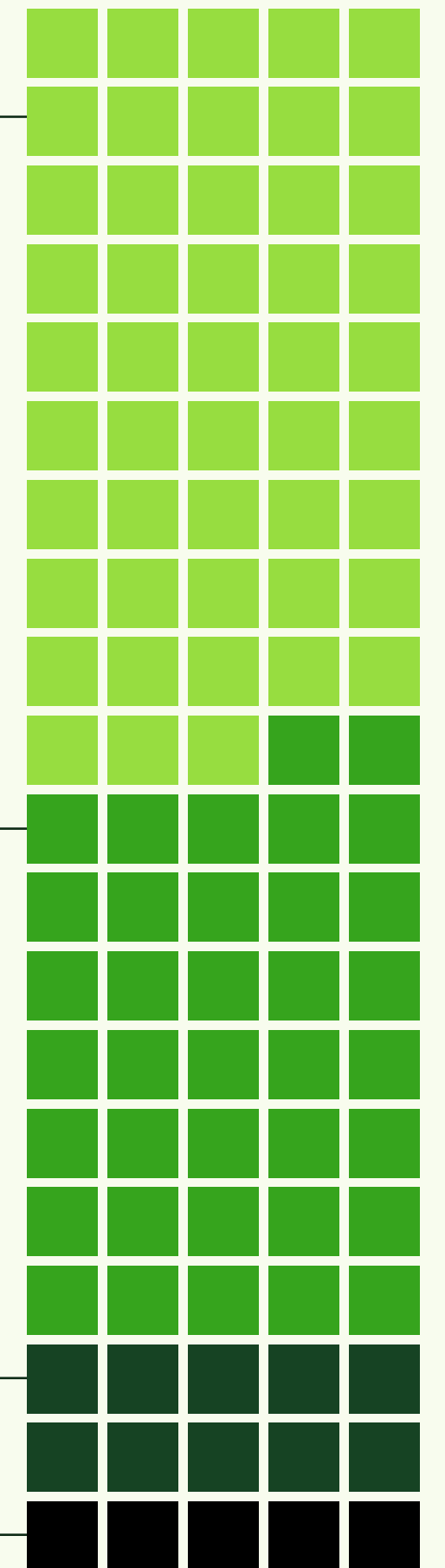
A plug-and-play strategy with multiple vendors

10%

Consolidation, with fewer vendors

5%

In-house technology development



To learn how IT and finance leaders can better collaborate to support business growth and maximize productivity, [read our recent tip sheet](#).

About SAP Concur

SAP® Concur® is the world's leading brand for integrated travel, expense, and invoice management. Driven by a relentless pursuit to simplify and automate everyday processes, the solutions guide employees through business trips, move authorized charges directly into expense reports, and automate invoice approvals. By integrating near real-time data and using AI to analyze transactions, businesses can see what they're spending, improve compliance, and avoid possible blind spots in the budget. SAP Concur is imagining a world where travel and expenses practically manage themselves, helping businesses run at their best every day.

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