

The Transformation ▲ Readiness Index

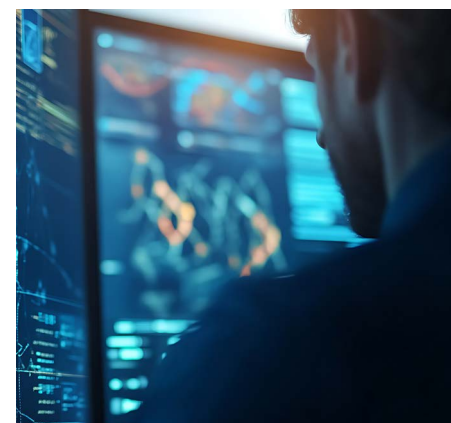
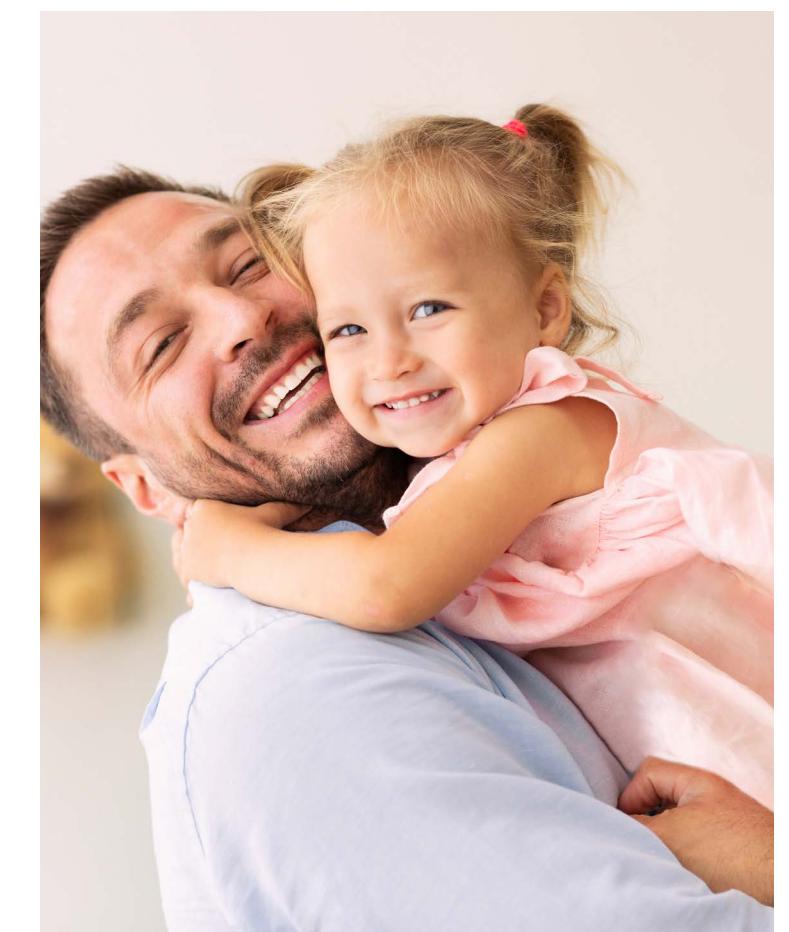
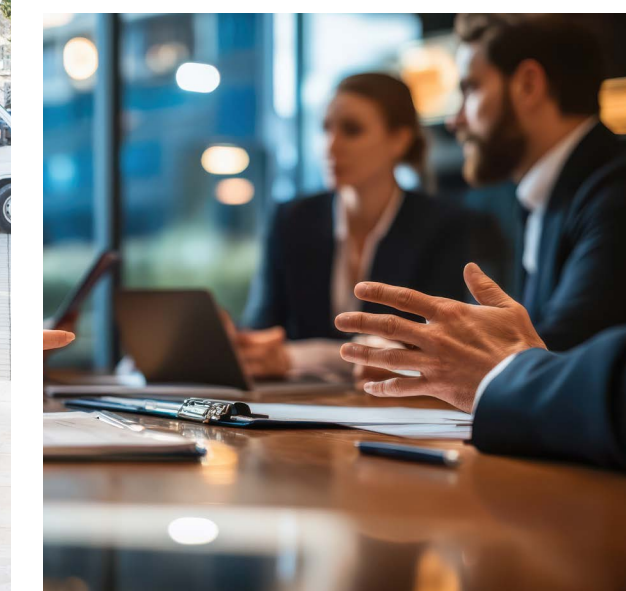
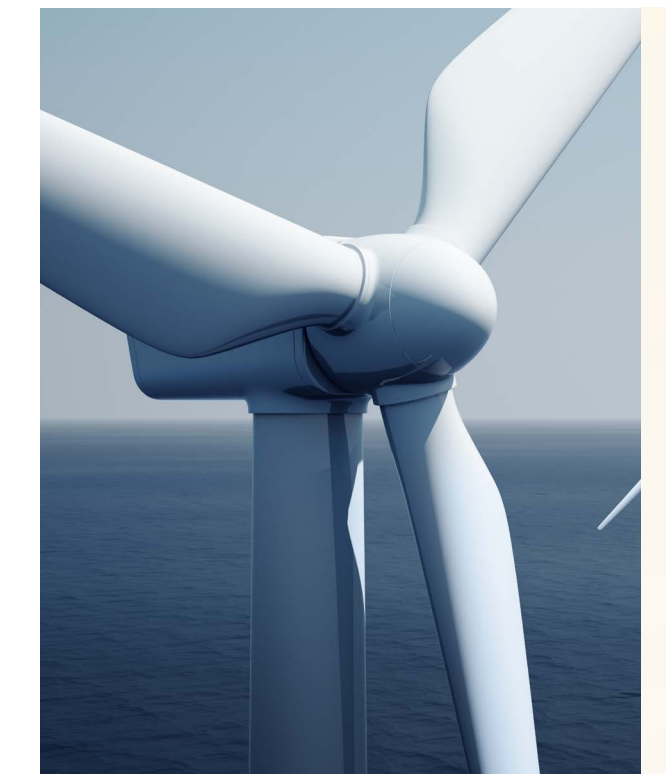
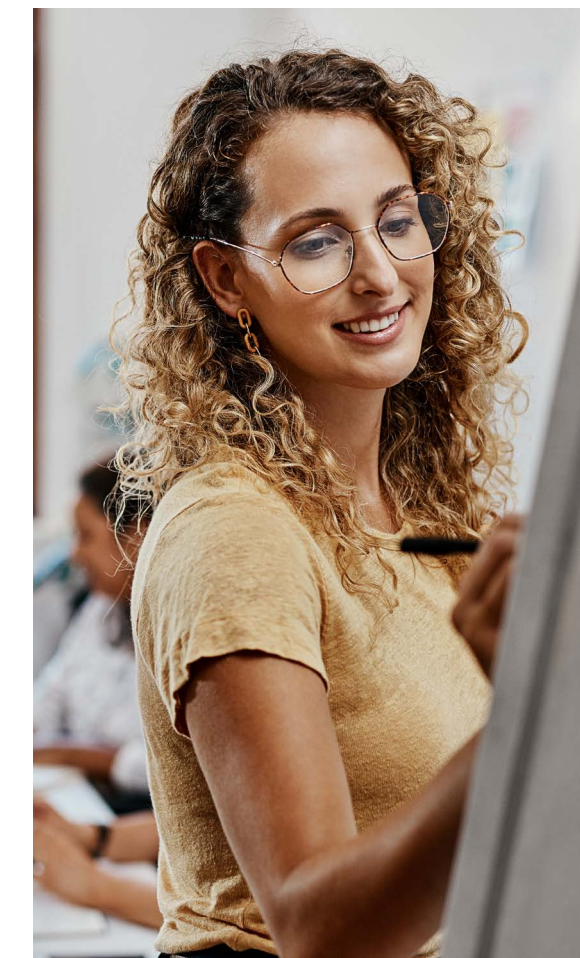
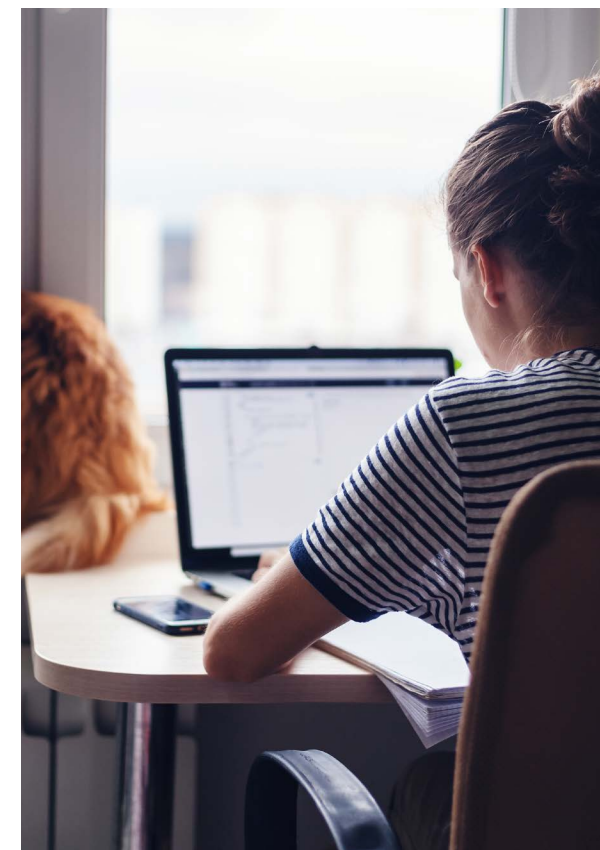
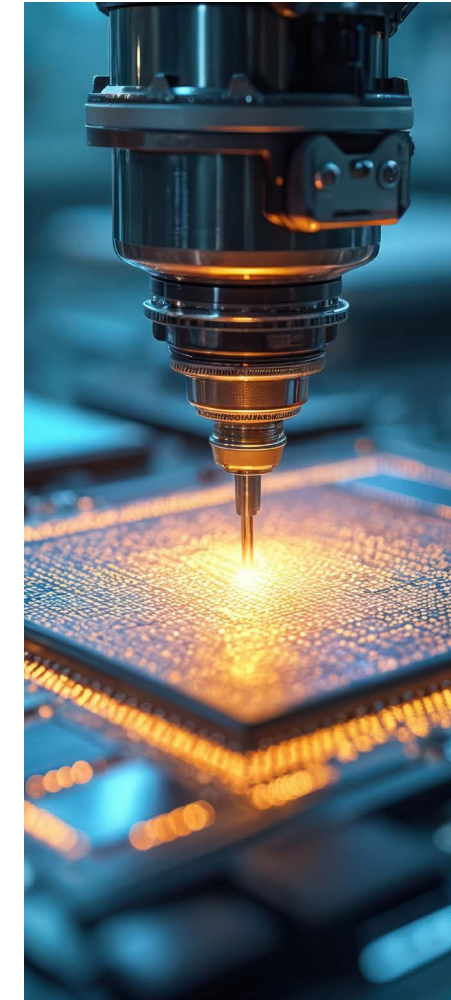
AN INTERNATIONAL BENCHMARK STUDY ON THE
ROLE OF COMMUNICATION IN BUSINESS CHANGE

2025

The 2025 PROI Transformation Readiness Index benchmarks how effectively organizations lead and communicate through transformation.

Based on insights from 675 leaders across 30 countries, it reveals best practices across four pillars – Planning, Leadership, Engagement, and Monitoring.

This report offers valuable insights and actionable guidance for driving successful transformation through communication.



This report is a publication of PROI
Worldwide – the global network uniting
world’s leading Communication firms.

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Agencies

164 ————— Offices
in 138 Cities

89000+ ————— Consultants
and Experts

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Transformation is no longer the exception — *it's the new norm.*

In today's business environment, disruption is constant. Geopolitics, regulations, AI revolution, climate pressures, shifting workforces and global trade tensions are reshaping how organizations operate and compete. Transformation is not a one-time effort. It's ongoing, unpredictable, and often comes with high-stakes.

Yet while transformation is necessary, it's also risky. When it fails, the costs are real: lost momentum, damaged trust, wasted investment. Too often, the problem isn't the strategy – it's how the change is communicated.

At PROI Worldwide, we believe communication is the difference between change that sticks and change that stumbles. It's what turns plans into progress, brings people along, and builds resilience when uncertainty strikes.

That's why we launched this global study – spanning 675 senior leaders across 30+ countries. The PROI Transformation Readiness Index doesn't just benchmark performance; it uncovers what works. It identi-

fies where communication drives success; across planning, leadership, engagement, and monitoring.

This report is not a theory piece. Input from hundreds of transformation leaders has led to an actionable guide. Whether you're driving change, preparing for it, or recovering from it, we hope these insights serve as a roadmap, and a reminder: in transformation, communication isn't a support function. It's a success factor.

Dirk Aarts

CEO & Founding Partner,
24/7Communication, Poland



Research *methodology*

Conducted in April–May 2025, the Transformation Research combines both quantitative and qualitative data:

- **650 business professionals** from 30+ countries completed an online survey
- **25 senior transformation experts** were interviewed in-depth across 22 countries

The research aimed to assess how business professionals evaluate their organization's transformation readiness and to identify the key factors that drive transformation success.

Participants—decision-makers with direct experience in major transformations over the past decade—were invited to complete a survey consisting of 20 statements across four dimensions: Planning, Leadership, Engagement, and Monitoring.

By combining open-ended survey responses with expert interviews, the study provides deep insight into real-world challenges and best

practices. The result is an actionable guide to help companies align messaging, benchmark performance, and manage transformation more effectively.

Responses were gathered through PROI agencies' client networks and the Cint Global Panel.

Panu Erola

Strategic Research Consultant
Vastakaiku, Finland

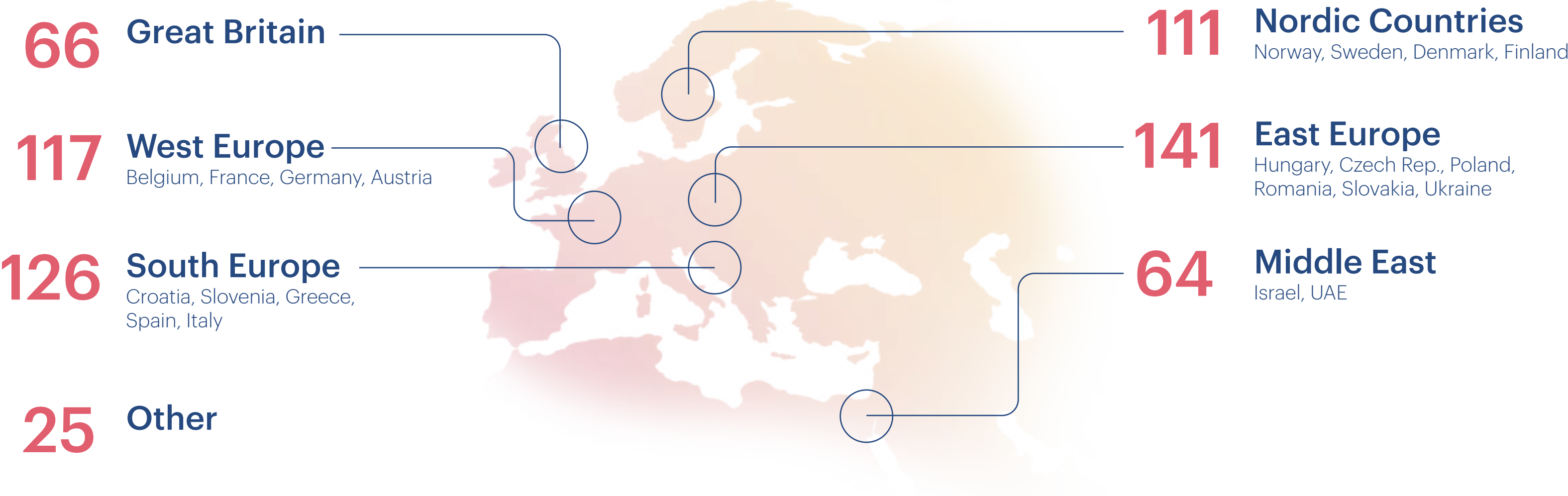


An international study on transformations within companies and organizations.

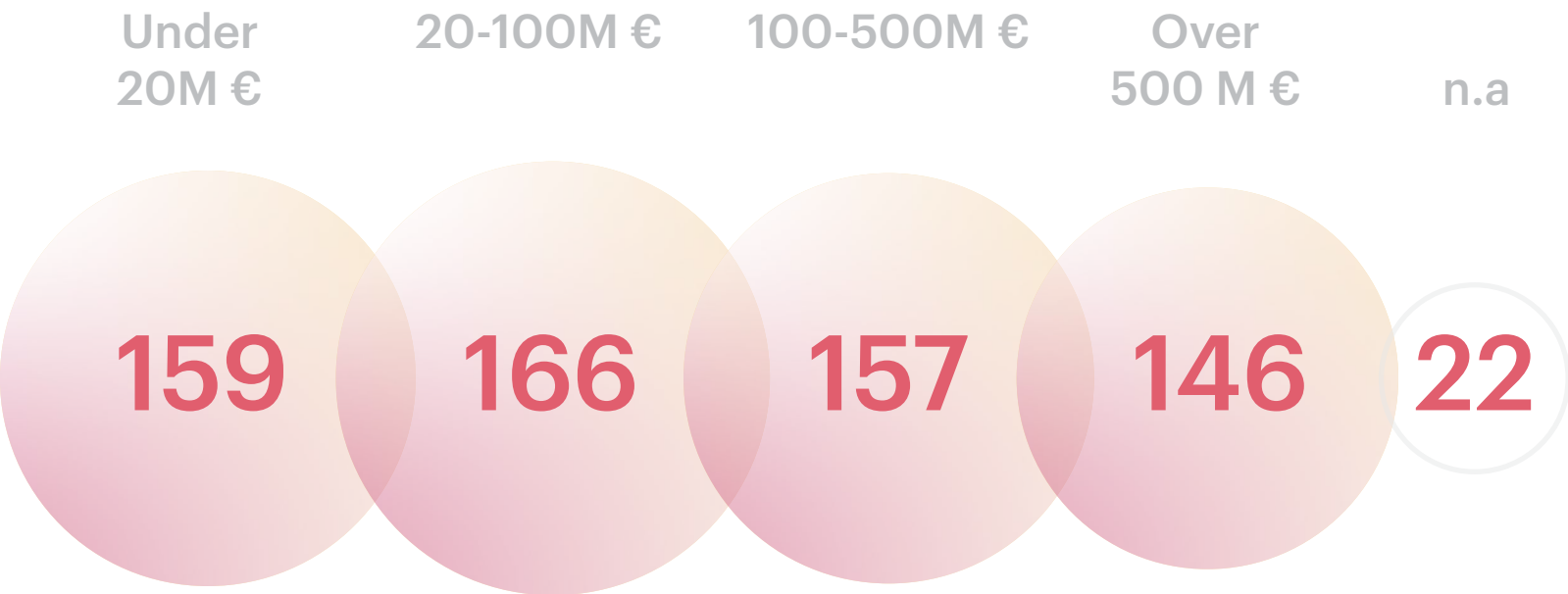
650 survey respondents:
Corporate executives and change consultants who have been involved in change and transformation processes.

25 in-depth interviews:
Top level transformation consultants from 22 countries.

GEOGRAPHICAL REGION



COMPANY SIZE



ORGANIZATION TYPE

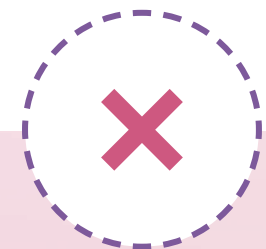


Key *outcomes* ▶

Snapshot

Transformation
Readiness Index

73



In case of transformations
considered 'unsuccessful'
the Readiness Index is

58



In case of transformations
considered 'successful'
the Readiness Index is

83

23%

of transformations
are evaluated by
the respondents as
'unsuccessful'.

78%

of leaders rate
communication as
"extremely important" to
transformation success.

One in three

transformations starts without a clear communication strategy.

ONLY 50%

of Communication
leaders thinks that middle
management communicates
transformation goals
effectively.

ONLY 56%

of employees are
involved early in
transformation processes.

Key conclusions

01

Communication is valued, but too poorly executed.

Top management places a high value on communication as a key driver of transformation success (97 % important). However, many companies still struggle with effective implementation. Only 27% consider their transformations truly successful, while 23% rate them as unsuccessful.

02

Private firms are best prepared for transformations.

Listed companies show the lowest transformation readiness index compared to public organizations and private companies. Their scores are particularly weak in engagement and monitoring. Private companies perform significantly better in engagement, while public organizations lead in monitoring.

03

Internally focused transformations engage less.

Transformation paradox. Transformations with an internal focus (e.g. personnel and culture) receive the lowest scores in internal employee engagement and involvement. Conversely, transformations with an external focus (e.g. customer experience) score significantly higher in internal engagement areas.

04

Middle Management: An underused communication asset.

Leaders are often effective in their roles, clearly articulating transformation goals and maintaining transparency. However, support for middle management and their communication effectiveness remain weak. Shifting more focus here would enable more successful transformations in the future.

05

Human factors are often the missing link.

On one hand, typical issues like weak leadership, poor engagement, and inadequate planning play a role. On the other, this research highlights the importance of trust, empathy, and sensitivity to cultural differences, critical human elements often overlooked.

06

Transformation success factors are known by professionals.

The 675 business professionals in this study clearly identified three key enablers: (1) leadership alignment, stakeholder mapping, and engagement; (2) a two-way strategy supported by a multichannel approach; and (3) a clear, compelling narrative aligned with organizational structures.

07

Communication matters. Strategy often is missing.

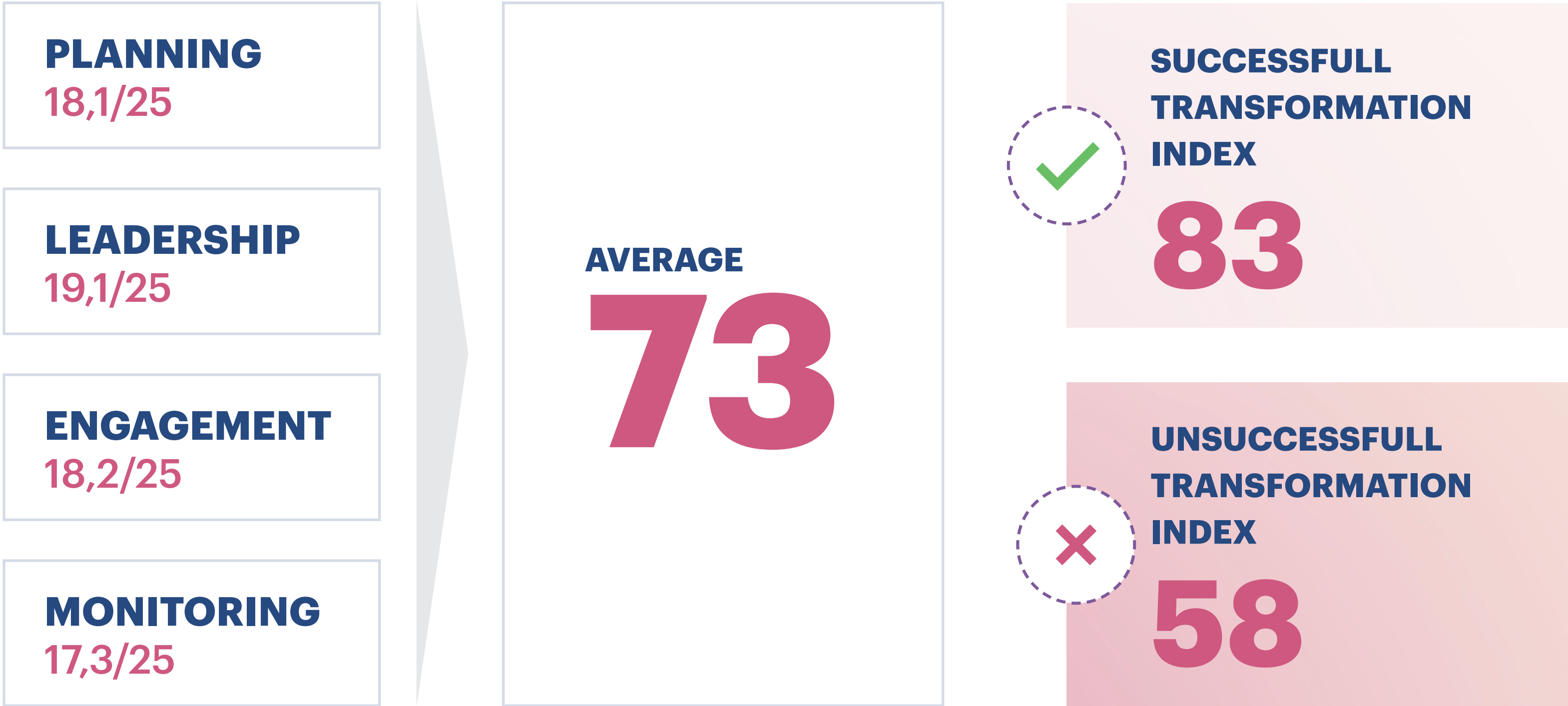
Top management places a high value on communication as a key driver of transformation success (97 % important). However, many companies still struggle with effective implementation. Only 27% consider their transformations truly successful, while 23% rate them as unsuccessful.

Transformation *readiness index*

How transformation-ready are organizations?

Based on 20 key statements from 650 organization and communication leaders, the average Transformation Readiness Score is **73** out of **100**.

The Transformation Readiness Index has been evaluated through four areas: Planning, Leadership, Engagement and Monitoring. Each area is divided into five success factors critical to transformation success – each scoring maximum 5 points.



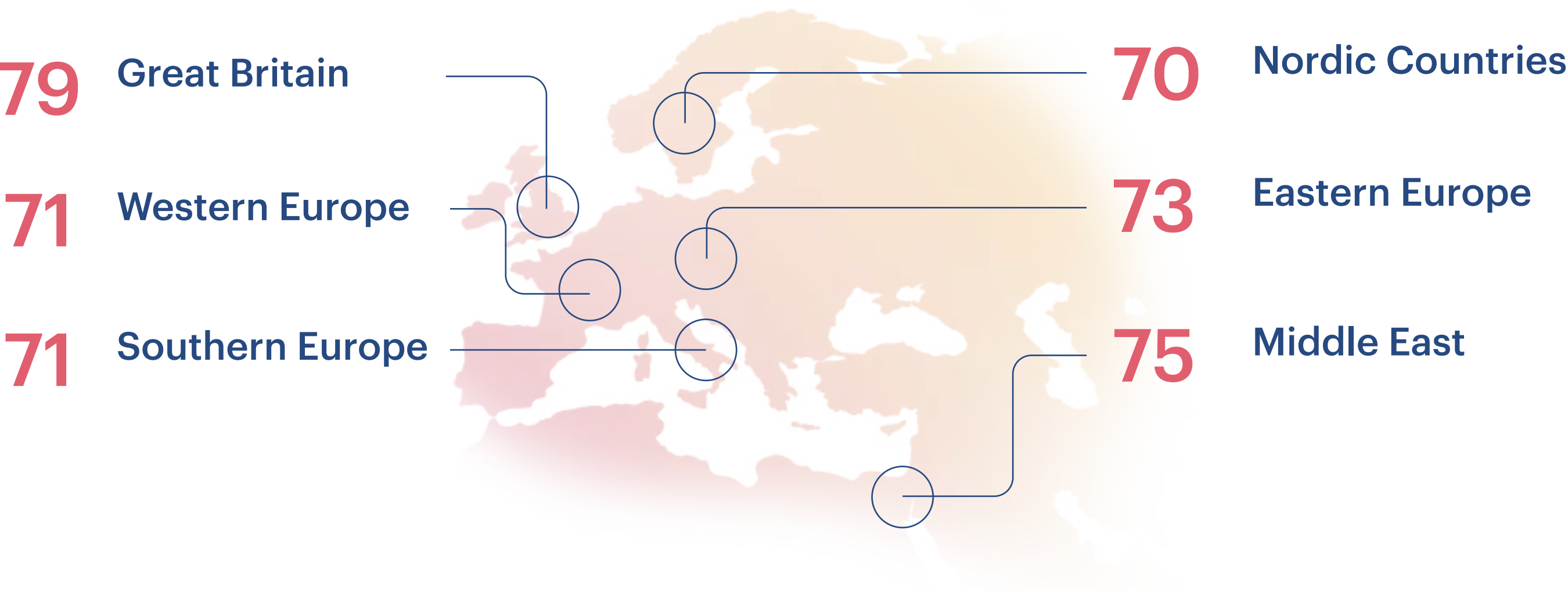
Transformations rated unsuccessful* (23%) were compared to those rated successful* (27%). The analysis reveals a clear link between high Transformation Readiness Index scores and overall transformation success.

* Unsuccessful: Transformation impact “negative/neutral”
** Successful transformation impact “strongly positive”

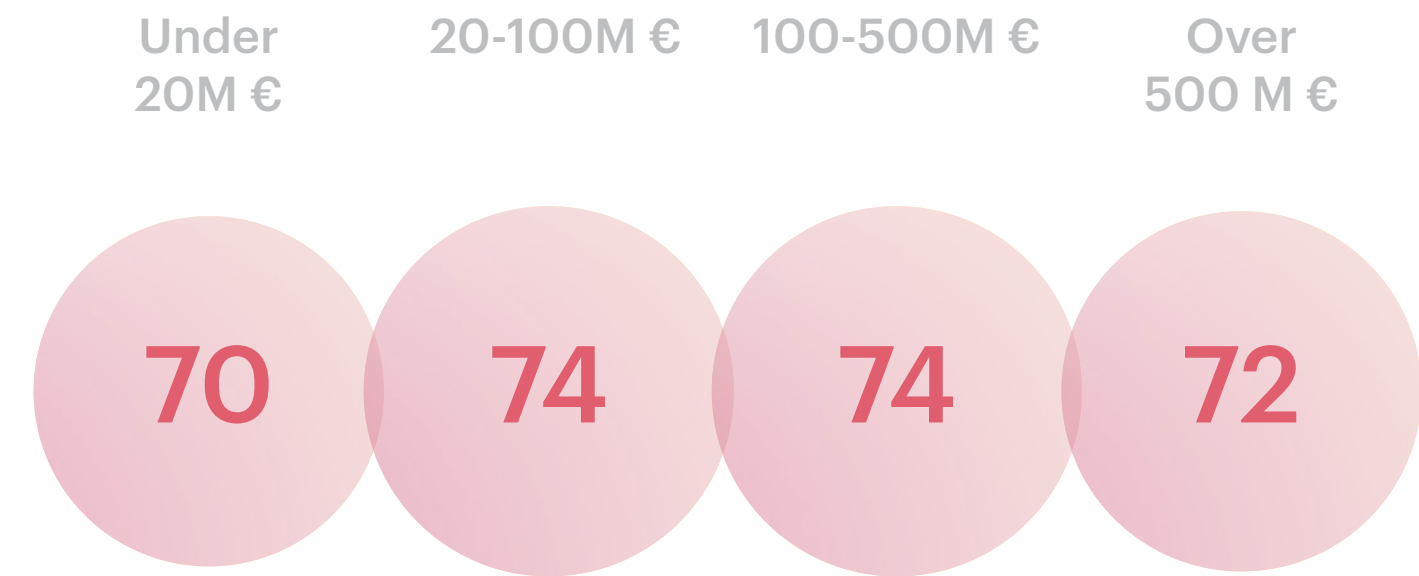
Transformation *readiness index*

How transformation-ready are organizations

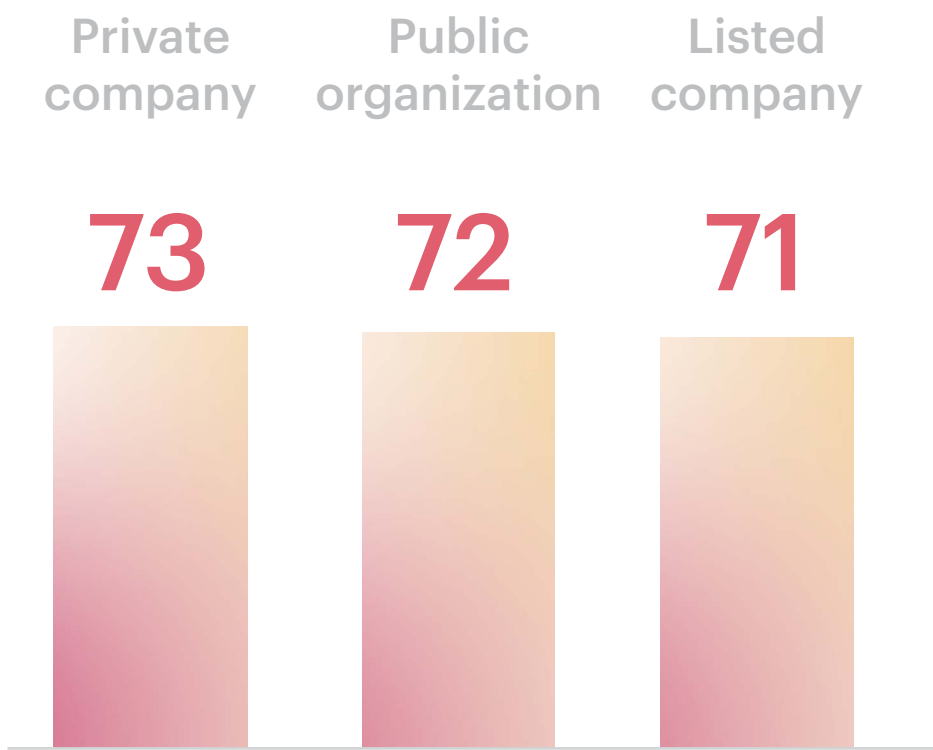
GEOGRAPHICAL REGION



COMPANY SIZE



ORGANIZATION TYPE



SECTION 1

Planning

► **Timing and**

way of communicating

Planning for impact: *How leading organizations navigate change*

Planning emerged as a key differentiator between successful and unsuccessful transformation efforts. Insights from the Transformation Study show that how leaders prepare and engage their organizations from the start has a direct impact on outcomes.

In particular, four themes stood out across successful cases: early involvement of people, clarity of direction, leadership visibility, and attention to timing. These factors consistently shaped whether organizations built momentum or met resistance.

Respondents emphasized the importance of bringing employees into the process early on. While leaders may view the initial phase as internal or preparatory, for others in the organization,

this is the start of their journey. When people are left out too long, they feel disconnected – and their support is harder to regain.

This supports established transformation models that stress the importance of inclusion and early engagement. Here, “early” refers not just to the calendar but to sequence: involving people before plans are finalized, not just before implementation begins.

The most effective transformations were built on a simple, shared narrative. Clear reasoning behind the change and a consistent view of the future helped align teams and reduce uncertainty. In contrast, vague goals or shifting messages led to confusion and mistrust.

This shared understanding acted as the backbone of the process, guiding decisions and actions across the organiza-

tion. When this was missing, alignment suffered—and so did progress.

A recurring issue was the timing mismatch between leaders and the rest of the organization. Leaders often work on transformation initiatives for months before others hear about them. For employees, this can feel sudden—disruptive rather than intentional.

Successful organizations planned from the perspective of those affected. They shared early signals, provided space for feedback, and allowed time for people to absorb and respond. Empathy in timing, not just efficiency, proved essential.

Where leaders remained actively involved—answering questions, sharing progress, and facing challenges openly—confidence remained high. This visibility helped translate strategy into action and kept the organization grounded through uncertainty.

By contrast, where leadership became less present after launch, momentum often dropped. Trust waned. Presence and consistency made a measurable difference.

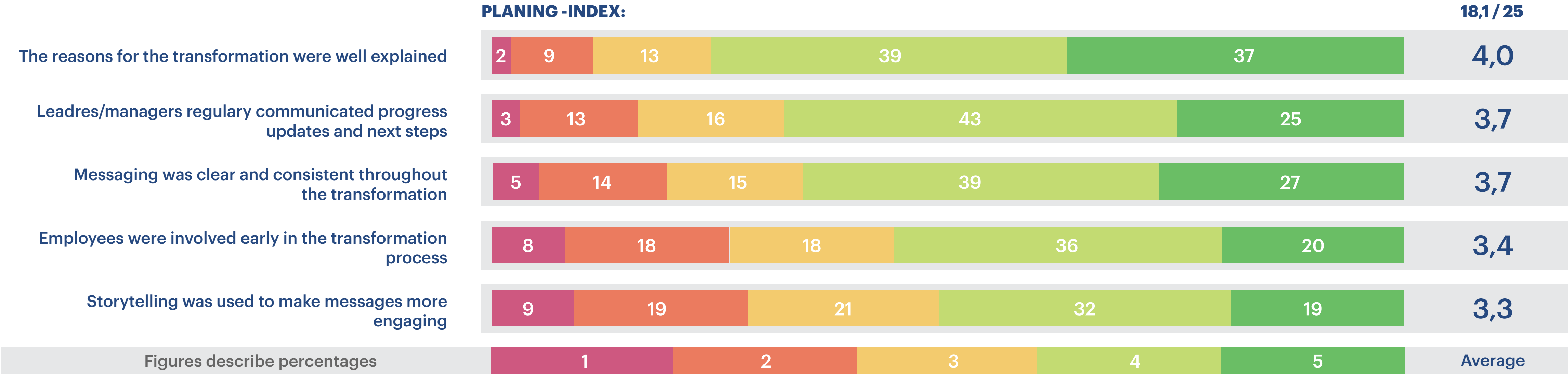
Effective transformation requires more than structural change or bold ambition.

It requires planning that is inclusive, clear, well-timed, and grounded in leadership that stays engaged. While many moving parts contribute to success, these human-centered planning practices consistently set high-performing transformations apart. They create the conditions for progress to take root—and endure.

Leadership communicates well, *but engagement and storytelling lag*

Leaders are accustomed to explaining the rationale behind transformations but often fall short in involving employees early or crafting compelling transformation narratives.

While a majority of leaders report that they communicate the reasons for change (76%), provide regular updates (68%), and plan for clear and consistent messaging (66%), fewer succeed in engaging employees early in the process (56%) or leveraging storytelling to build emotional connection and clarity (51%). These gaps highlight key opportunities to strengthen leadership communication during transformation.



Evaluate the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5; 1= Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree

Planning for impact: *most remarkable differences*

The smallest companies show the greatest gaps in planning.

Mid-sized companies excel in providing regular updates, maintaining clear and consistent messaging, and involving employees early in the process.

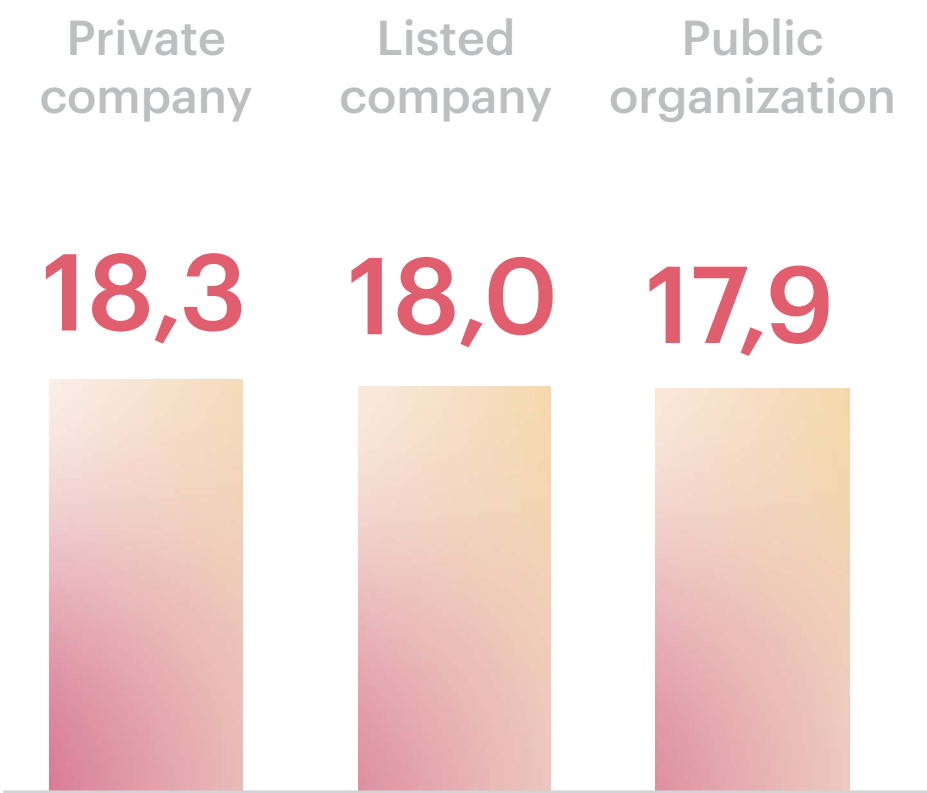


AVERAGE

18,1

Private companies demonstrate moderately stronger scores in planning.

They particularly distinguish themselves from listed companies and public organizations by involving employees earlier in transformation processes.



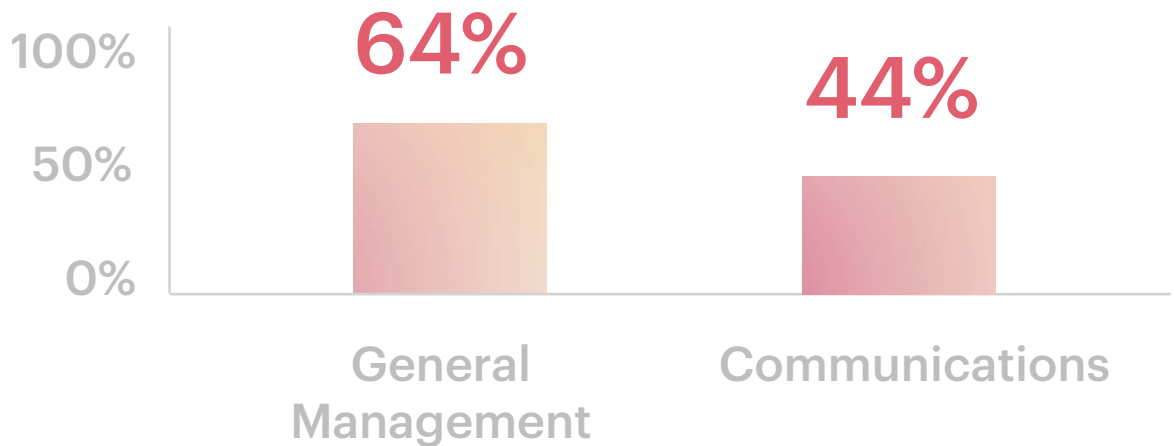
AVERAGE

18,1

There is a disconnect between the views of Communication and General Management.

Nearly two-thirds of General Management believe that employees are involved early in transformation processes, while only 44% of those in Communication roles agree.

Employees were effectively engaged in the transformation process



1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree

Planning for impact: *Collective Best Practices from the study*

Start early and communicate continuously to maintain momentum

Begin communication during the planning phase of the transformation. Involve stakeholders early to build trust and reduce resistance. Maintain a consistent rhythm of updates throughout the process to keep people informed and engaged.

Phase communication strategically to manage expectations

Align communication milestones with key business events. Start with high-level overviews and gradually provide more detailed updates as the transformation progresses. This helps manage expectations and ensures clarity at each stage.

Be proactive, not reactive, especially when delivering difficult news

Anticipate challenges and communicate before issues escalate. Prepare messaging for potential setbacks and be transparent when things don't go as planned. This builds credibility and helps maintain control of the narrative.

Avoid information gaps, not giving rumors time to escalate

Ensure all stakeholders receive updates at the same time to prevent confusion. Communicate regularly to avoid rumors and misinformation. Assign clear responsibilities for communication to maintain consistency.

Use authentic, clear and jargon-free language

Emphasize clarity and simplicity. Be honest about what is known and unknown, transparency builds credibility. Avoid over-polishing; authenticity and empathy matter more than perfection.

Utilize storytelling and visualization effectively

Create narratives that explain the purpose and journey of the transformation. Support messages with visuals like infographics and videos. A strong project name and visual identity can unify and inspire. In addition, use real-life examples and success stories to make the change relatable.

Use multi-channel and creative formats

Use a variety of channels such as face-to-face meetings, intranet posts, videos, and newsletters. Include creative formats like storytelling videos and CEO cafés. Consider using AR, VR, or AI tools to enhance engagement.

Prefer face-to-face and personal communication when possible

In-person meetings, town halls, and workshops are more impactful than digital-only communication. Leaders should be visible and accessible, engaging in direct dialogue. Follow up with recap emails and Q&A responses.

Remember to adapt and localize

Tailor communication to local cultures, languages, and contexts. Allow local teams to adapt messages while staying aligned with core principles. Avoid rigid templates—flexibility increases relevance. Use small group discussions, multilingual materials, and localized strategies when needed.

Empower change ambassadors and informal influencers

Identify ambassadors from different levels and backgrounds to support the transformation. Train them to model desired behaviors and share key messages. Use their influence to build trust and spread engagement.

What experts say about *planning of transformation*

WHAT PROI EXPERT ADVISORY SAY:

Early and continuous communication is essential. Internal and external messaging must be aligned, with internal communication maintaining integrity to support the external narrative.

From the moment a major transformation begins, everyone should be included. At the very least, initial information should be shared immediately—covering the purpose, timeline, and expectations—followed by regular updates throughout the process.

Jane Kroese
KISS, UK

The real bottleneck is a lack of understanding of the psychological position of your target audience. If you speak from your own mental framework without considering theirs, you’re likely to fail.

You need to think like them, act like them, and most importantly, treat them as subjects, not objects. **Transformation is not something you do to people; it’s something you do with them.**

Nissim Douek
Founder & Owner, Unik Public Image, Israel

WHAT RESPONDENTS SAY:

Planning for dialogue, not just information. Talk less, listen more.

Top Management, Private company, 20-100 M €,
Transportation and Logistics, Sweden

By focusing on communicating early, strategically, through multiple channels, with clear and empathetic messaging, and by empowering leaders to be effective communicators, future transformations can be navigated with greater understanding, engagement, and ultimately, success. It’s about creating a continuous conversation, not just broadcasting information.

Board member, Private company, 100-500M €, Technology, UK

Communication is inherently a difficult sport, as early notification may also cause uncertainty if all decisions have not yet been made.

Middle Management, Listed company,
Over 500 M €, Transportation and Logistics, Finland

SECTION 2

Leadership

► **Management and**
leadership communication

How the Leadership's voice *impacts transformation outcomes*

One of the strongest insights from the PROI 2025 Transformation Study was the central role of leadership in determining whether change efforts succeed or stall. While strategy, planning, and systems all matter, the way leadership shows up – especially in how it engages, listens, and supports – proves decisive time and again.

In the most effective transformations, leaders at every level understood that their role was not only to set direction but to make it understandable and actionable for others. Clarity of goals was a recurring theme in positive examples. People knew what the transformation was about, why it was hap-

pening, and how it connected to their daily work. Middle managers played a critical role here. When well-supported, they became credible messengers and problem-solvers. When left out or under-informed, they became points of friction.

Respondents noted that real alignment required more than sending out talking points. Top leaders needed to engage with the middle—not just once, but throughout. That support was practical: time, access, visibility. In organizations where top management actively backed their managers—through briefings, presence, and flexibility—employees reported more trust and stronger engagement.

Transparency was another defining feature. Leaders who were open about progress and honest about setbacks earned credibility. It was not about having all the answers, but about being present

and responsive. Staff valued leaders who admitted when plans changed and who explained why. Where this openness was missing, speculation and resistance grew quickly.

What stood out most, however, was not just what leaders said, but how they listened. The strongest cases showed two-way dialogue. Leaders asked for input, responded to concerns, and adjusted course when needed. This wasn't just symbolic—it shaped decisions. Employees felt heard, not managed.

Finally, successful organizations showed consistency. Leaders spoke with one voice across the hierarchy. They repeated the same goals and values over time, reinforcing stability and direction. When messaging diverged or weakened, so did momentum.

In short, transformation requires more than strategic clarity—it needs leadership that communicates with intention, listens with purpose, and supports the organization from the inside out.

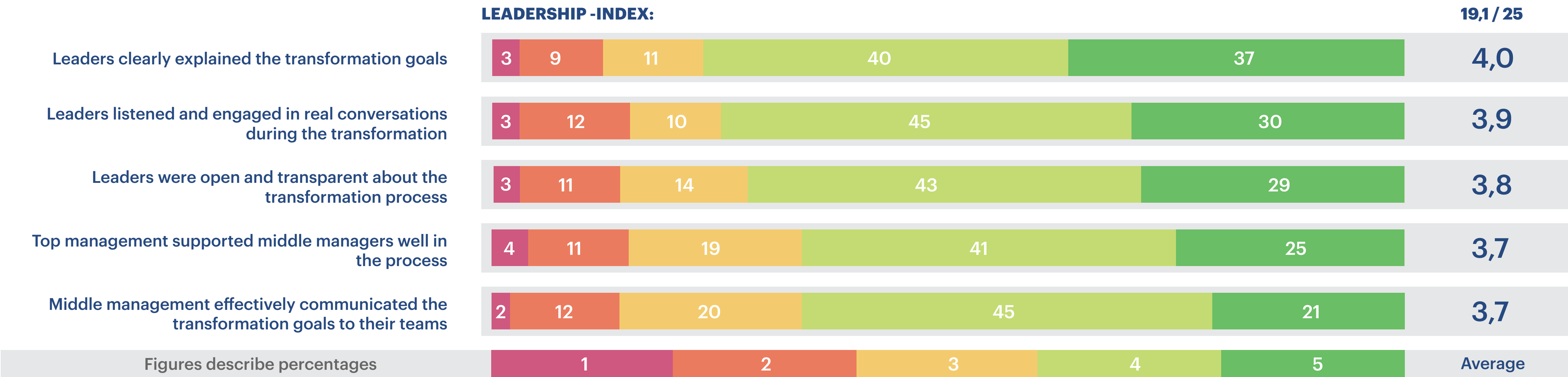
Where that leadership is visible, honest, and aligned, change has room to succeed. Where it isn't, even the best plans lose their power.

Leadership involvement:

Middle Management is the missing link in transformations

While overall leadership performance is relatively strong, middle management remains underutilized and insufficiently supported.

Leaders are generally effective in articulating transformation goals (77%), engaging in dialogue (75%), and demonstrating openness and transparency (72%). However, support for middle management (56%) and the effectiveness of their communication (56%) lag behind. Strengthening these areas is essential to enabling more successful transformations in the future.

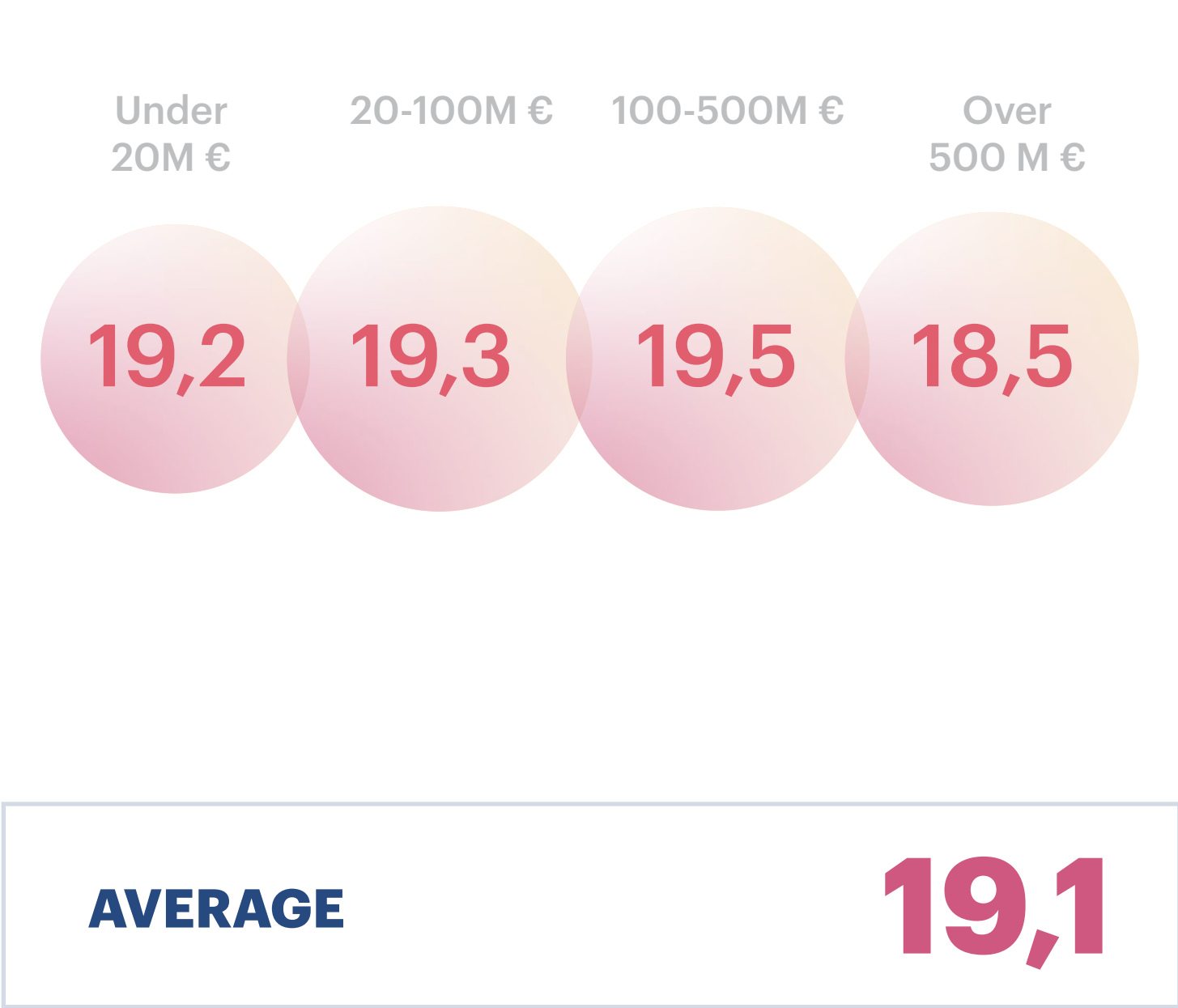


Evaluate the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5; 1= Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree

Leadership involvement: *most remarkable differences*

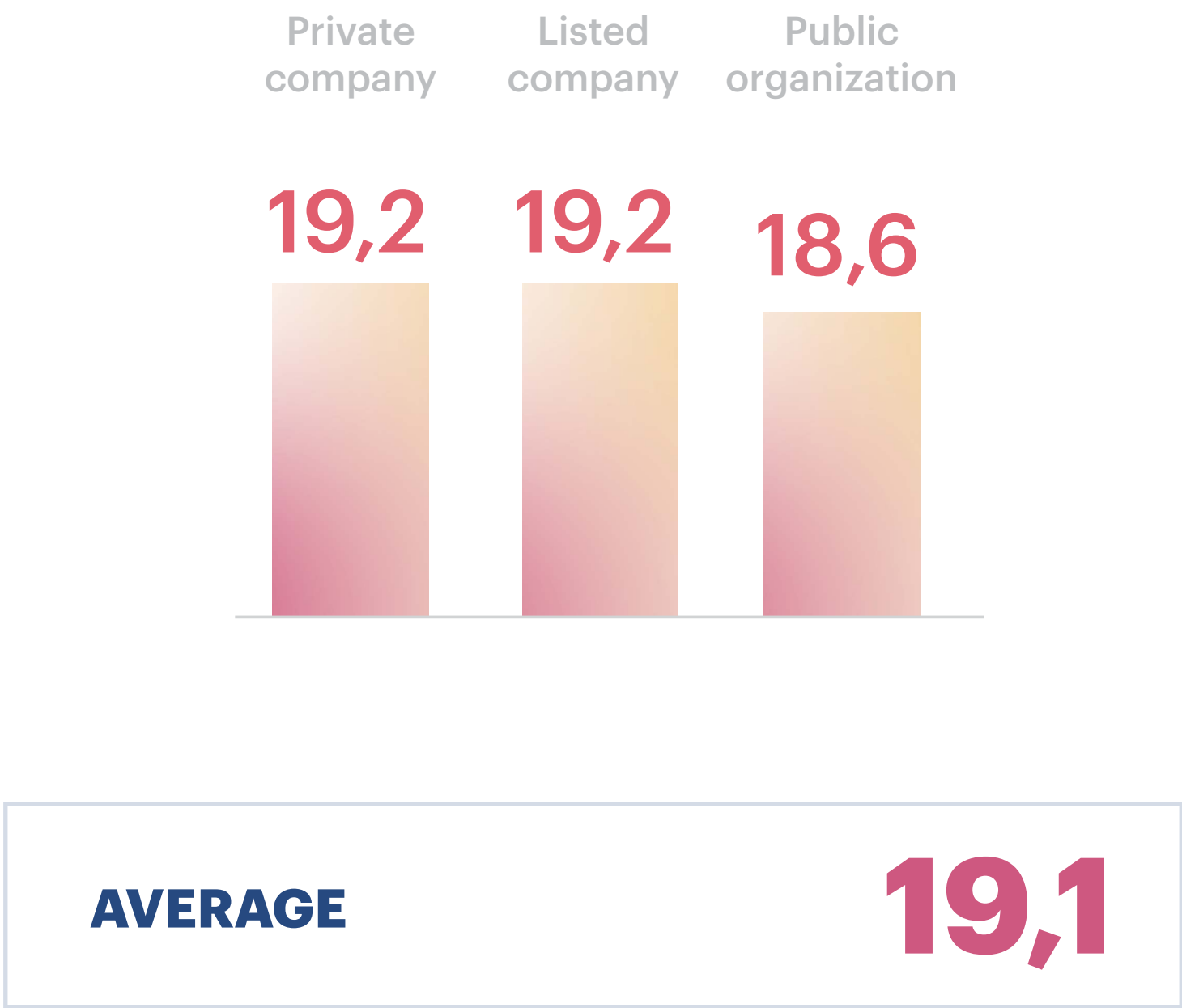
The largest companies receive the lowest scores in leadership.

Compared to others, they fall short in transparency, communication from Middle Management, and the support provided to Middle Management.



Public organizations receive the lowest scores in leadership.

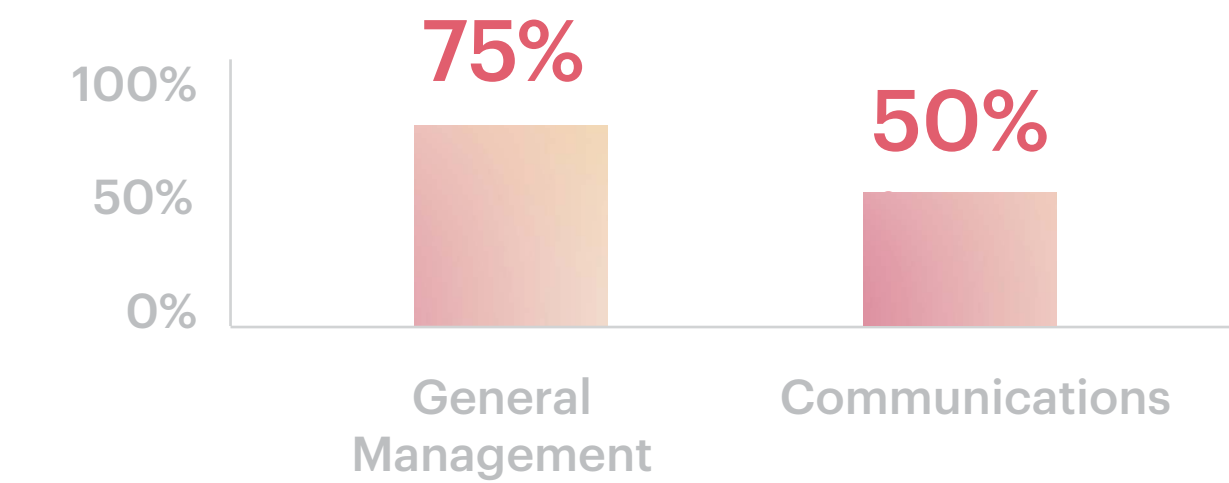
Compared to others, they lag in articulating transformation goals, fostering leaders’ listening and engagement, and ensuring Top Management provides adequate support to Middle Management



The Communication function disagrees with General Management on Middle Management’s capabilities.

While 75% of General Management believe that Middle Management communicates transformation goals effectively, only 50% of those in Communication roles share that view.

Middle management effectively communicated the transformation goals to their teams



1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree

Leadership involvement: *Collective Best Practices from the study*

Strategic planning and early involvement of communication team

Communication should be planned from the start of the transformation process. This includes identifying key stakeholders, preparing materials (e.g., Q&As, narratives), and managing timelines. The communications team should be involved early as strategic partners, not just executors.

Purpose-driven storytelling

Clearly communicate the “why,” “where,” and “how” of the change. People remember stories more than facts. A compelling narrative helps employees understand the “why” behind the change. A shared story fosters alignment and motivation.

Leadership visibility and authenticity

Leaders must be visible, present, and engaged throughout the transformation, not just at the beginning. Authenticity is critical. Employees can sense when leaders are not genuine or do not believe in the change. Leaders must embody the change and act as role models.

Empathy, emotional intelligence and building trust

Acknowledging emotional responses such as fear, resistance, or uncertainty is vital. Empathetic communication builds psychological safety and trust. Leaders should create space for dialogue, listen actively, and respond with compassion. Trust is reinforced through openness, consistency, and follow-through.

Consistency, clarity and simplicity in messaging

Messages must be clear, consistent, and aligned across all levels of leadership. Mixed messages or sudden shifts in narrative create confusion and erode trust. Simple, jargon-free language is more effective than overly technical or abstract communication.

Two-way communication and dialogue

Effective change communication is not one-way. Leaders must foster dialogue, invite feedback, and create opportunities for employees to voice concerns and contribute ideas. Understanding generational, cultural, and role-based differences in communication preferences enhances inclusivity and engagement.

The crucial role of middle management

Middle managers are often the most trusted communicators for employees. They need training, tools, and authority to communicate effectively and lead discussions. Their role is critical in translating strategic messages into operational reality and maintaining momentum on the ground.

Training and support for Leaders

Not all leaders are natural communicators. Providing training, coaching, and ready-to-use materials (e.g., FAQs, talking points) helps them fulfill their communication responsibilities effectively. Leaders must also understand their role in cascading information, motivating teams, and fostering open dialogue.

What experts say about *leadership engagement*

WHAT PROI EXPERT ADVISORY SAY:

Transformation in the 21st century increasingly demands speed and flexibility. Therefore, relying solely on traditional hierarchical communication is no longer effective.

Organizations must adopt a **dual structure** that combines the **stability of hierarchy** with the **agility of networks**. While hierarchies are suited for clear direction and control, networks enable faster, peer-to-peer communication and adaptability.

This dual approach requires different leadership styles, delegation in hierarchies and inspiration in networks, and a shift from top-down messaging to co-created narratives that engage people at all

Dr. Georg Kolb, Partner, Klenk & Hoursch
Partner, Klenk & Hoursch Consultancy, Germany

One of the biggest challenges is patience.

As leaders, we often forget that we’ve been part of the loop for a long time, working on the business case and planning the change. By the time we reach the communication phase, it feels like we’re nearing the end. But for most others, it’s just the beginning.

We need to recognize that others are just starting their journey, and they need time, clarity, and support to catch up.

Marianne Hjaltelin
CEO & Partner, Lead Agency, Denmark

WHAT RESPONDENTS SAY:

You must have the skills to make your employees understand about the current transformation and change with your company. Leaders must have the ability also to listen to their employees and hear their thoughts about the changes for the better communication of each parties.

Top Management, Private company, 100-500 M €, Fashion and Clothing, UAE

I learnt that transparency, build trust and reduce resistance, consistency matters a lot. Two-way communication is paramount and there should be high level of empathy.

Top Management, Private company, Over 500 M €, Construction, UK

Be honest and upfront: Clearly articulate the reasons for the change, the vision for the future, and the expected impact on individuals and the organization. Avoid jargon and corporate speak.

Middle Management, Private company, 100-500 M €, Manufacturing, Norway

SECTION 3

Engagement

▶ **Engaging employees and
*other stakeholders***

Engagement Matters: *Building Momentum Through Stakeholder Involvement*

One of the most consistent patterns across the PROI 2025 Transformation Study is the role of active engagement in determining whether transformation takes hold — or remains abstract.

Organizations that succeeded in embedding change into their culture and operations did so by involving employees and external stakeholders early, consistently, and credibly.

Effective engagement began with clarity. Respondents pointed out that people are more likely to commit when they understand not just the “what,” but the “why.” The data shows that in successful cases, the purpose of the transformation was explained in accessible terms—often through stories,

examples, and personal dialogue. This was not just a communication exercise, but a cultural one: aligning meaning across the organization.

Employees who felt involved in shaping or responding to the process showed stronger ownership. Where organizations created forums for feedback, used interactive formats like live Q&As, or gave space for local teams to interpret the change, buy-in was notably higher. Several responses underlined the emotional dimension of engagement — recognizing people’s fears and giving them agency reduced resistance and unlocked energy.

External stakeholders, including customers, partners, and suppliers, were also part of the picture. Their trust—and continued collaboration—often depended on how transparently and directly they were included. The strongest

examples showed cross-boundary alignment, where transformation was seen as a shared journey, not a closed-door restructuring.

New technologies and tools played a role, but not automatically. Tools were most effective when they enabled conversation, not just information sharing. For example, apps that allowed real-time updates, digital feedback loops, or internal social platforms helped keep engagement alive across geographies and roles. Without a plan for how tools would support dialogue, they were underused or ignored.

Culture, too, emerged as a decisive factor. Organizations that had already nurtured openness and participation were better positioned to involve people meaningfully. In these contexts, transformation wasn’t seen as an interruption—it was seen as evolution.

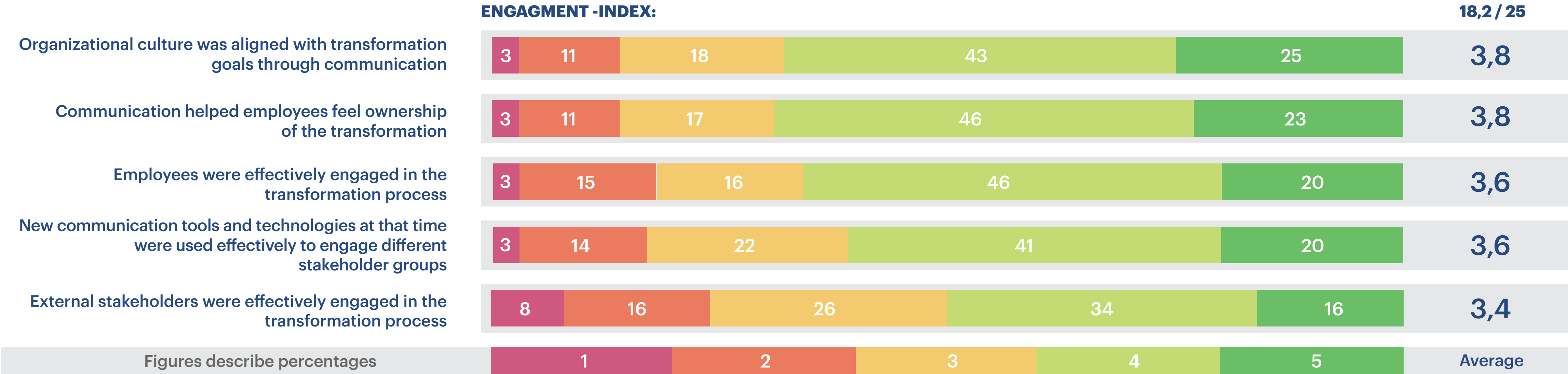
In contrast, where culture was more hierarchical or siloed, attempts to involve others often fell flat.

The findings are clear: successful transformation is not imposed. It’s co-created. Organizations that take the time to involve people across roles and boundaries — from the early stages — build deeper commitment, more trust, and better outcomes. Engagement is not a side track to execution. It is execution.

The engagement factor: *Strong internal alignment, but external engagement falls short*

There is a solid foundation for building transformations on organizational culture and employee ownership, though sometimes at the expense of external stakeholder engagement.

Organizational culture is often well-aligned with transformation goals (68%), and communication effectively fosters a sense of ownership among employees (69%). However, engagement with external stakeholders remains limited (50%), and there is room to better leverage new communication tools and technologies (61%).

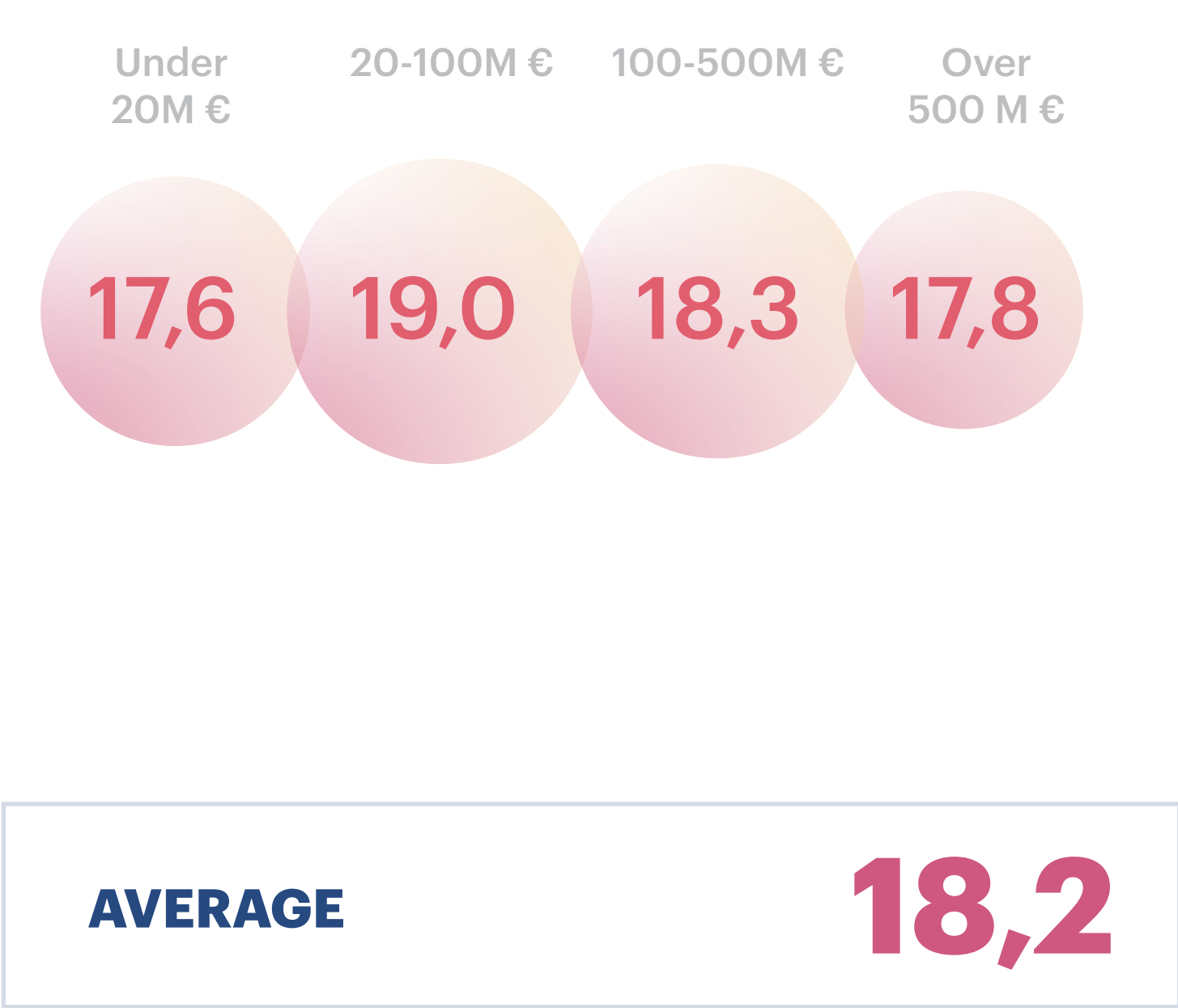


Evaluate the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5; 1= Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree

The engagement factor: *most remarkable differences*

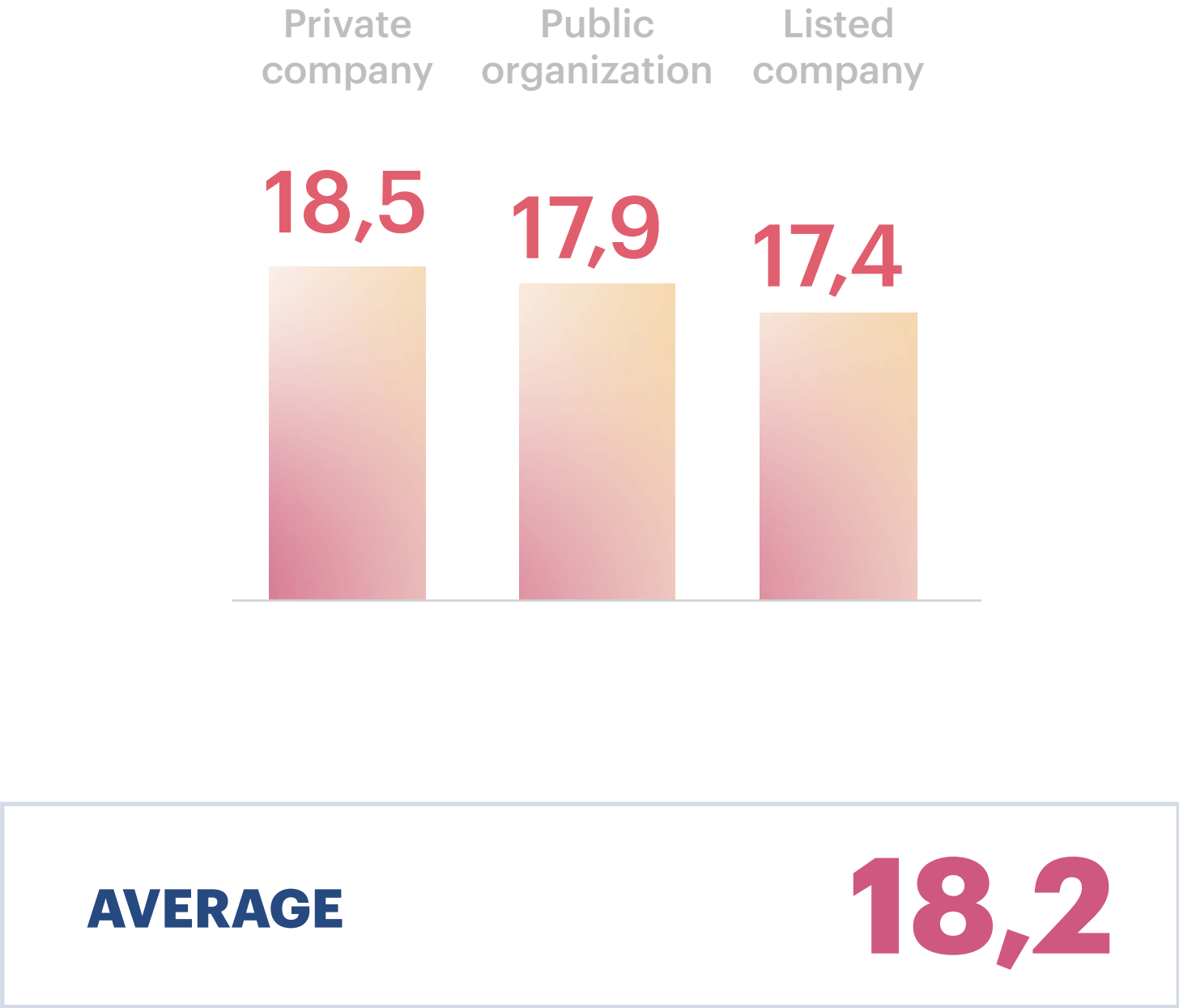
The smallest and largest companies receive the lowest engagement scores.

Mid-sized companies engage employees most effectively and align their organizational culture with transformation goals, while the smallest and largest companies lag behind in these areas.



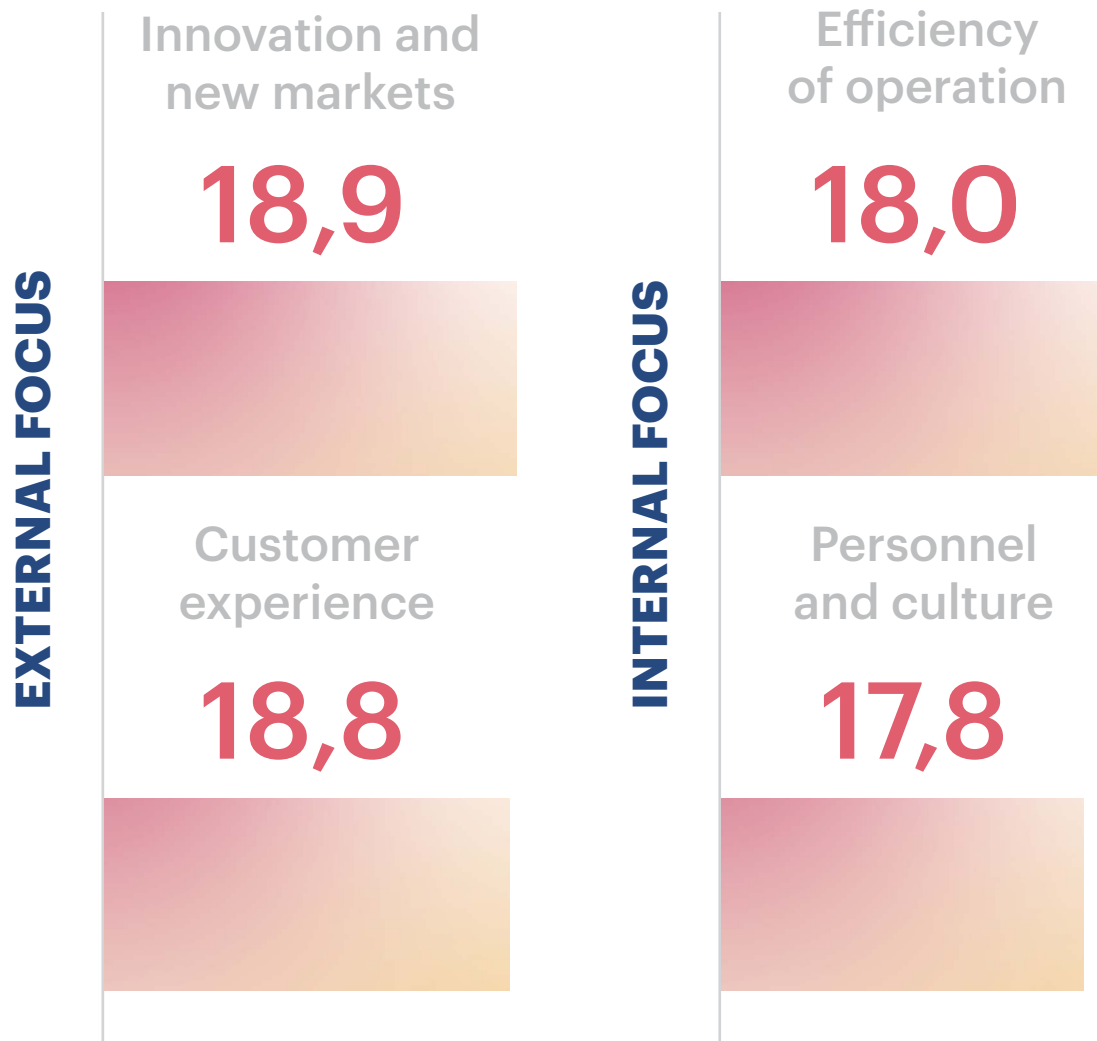
Private companies lead clearly in employee engagement, while listed companies perform the weakest.

Listed companies receive the lowest scores across nearly all engagement areas. Public organizations, in particular, score lowest in helping employees feel a sense of ownership in the transformation.



Transformations with an internal focus receive the lowest scores in internal employee engagement,

particularly in fostering ownership and effectively involving employees in the process. Conversely, transformations with an external focus score significantly higher in these internal engagement areas.



The engagement factor: *Collective Best Practices from the study*

Begin with stakeholder mapping and segmentation

Begin by identifying all relevant internal and external stakeholder groups such as employees, unions, customers, regulators, communities, and partners. Use tools like stakeholder matrices to assess their influence, interest, and potential impact. Tailor engagement strategies to each group's specific needs, expectations, and communication preferences.

Utilize clear purpose as motivation to engage

Clearly articulate the “why,” “where,” and “how” of the transformation. Define specific goals and benefits for each stakeholder group, emphasizing what's in it for them. A shared purpose builds relevance, motivation, and engagement.

Bring early and real involvement to foster ownership

Engage people from the planning and goal-setting stages through co-creation, task forces, and cross-functional teams builds trust and reduces resistance. Avoid symbolic involvement; genuine participation is what drives alignment and momentum.

Empower Middle Management as facilitators of engagement

Middle management play a pivotal role in engagement and should be empowered as facilitators, not just messengers. Provide them with training, tools, and consistent messaging to lead local engagement efforts effectively. A train-the-trainer model can help cascade engagement throughout the organization.

Enable strategic engagement of external stakeholders

Include external stakeholders such as customers, partners, and communities through proactive outreach such as public meetings, briefings, and tailored communication. Engagement should be continuous and not limited to crisis response or late-stage updates.

Foster two-way dialogue and feedback loops

Create mechanisms for listening, such as surveys, Q&A sessions, workshops and feedback channels. Use dashboards to monitor sentiment and engagement. Celebrate small wins, recognize contributions and act on feedback. These all reinforce trust and helps to build momentum.

Utilize technology and tools deliberately to support engagement

Leverage digital tools like Slack, Teams, dashboards, and project management platforms to enhance transparency and coordination. However, ensure these tools support, not replace, human connection and dialogue.

What experts say about *engaging stakeholders*

WHAT PROI EXPERT ADVISORY SAY:

When it comes to external stakeholder groups, one of the most common examples is **engaging the local community**.
If the change will significantly impact the community, it’s essential to start early, especially to address major questions and concerns.

Kristina Laco
Managing Partner, Communications Office Colić, Laco & Partners, Croatia

Co-creation is also important whenever possible. Even small moments of involvement can foster a sense of ownership and reduce resistance. These may seem like small gestures, but they can significantly ease tensions.
It’s also essential to identify local allies, such as managers or other visible and trusted individuals, who can act as advocates for the change, especially when the transformation has a major impact on the local area.

Damir Biukic
Managing Director, Mailander Srl, Italy

WHAT RESPONDENTS SAY:

The most important steps to increase the engagement of various stakeholder groups were: building relationships and trust, engaging at an early stage and tailoring communication.

Top Management, Private company,
20-100 M €, Technology, Poland

Regular question and answer sessions with personnel.

Top Management, Listed company,
Over 500 M €, Energy, UK

If you want to involve people, you need to have a strong “why” and meaning in the beginning and be able to explain why this is more valuable for me and us. this way.

Top Management, Private company,
Over 500 M €, Biotechnology, Italy

SECTION 4

Monitoring

▶ **Monitoring and *adaptability***

Staying on Course: *The Role of Monitoring and steering in Transformation processes*

Successful transformations are rarely linear. Even the best-laid plans must evolve. What distinguished high-performing organizations in the PROI 2025 Transformation Study was not only how they launched change, but how they continuously assessed, adapted, and improved along the way.

Regular monitoring emerged as a defining feature of effective transformations. Organizations that embedded feedback loops into the process—through pulse surveys, internal feedback tools, performance dashboards, or town hall questions—gained a real-time view of sentiment, engagement, and progress. This visibility allowed leaders to respond early to friction points and recalibrate

before problems escalated. In contrast, organizations that lacked structured mechanisms for feedback often operated on assumptions—and paid the price later in resistance, misalignment, or loss of momentum.

Respondents noted that where feedback was gathered, it had to be acted upon. Engagement tools created expectations; when issues surfaced but were not addressed, trust eroded. The best examples from the study showed a dynamic loop: listening, adjusting, and communicating back what had changed. This iterative rhythm helped organizations remain responsive to evolving needs while reinforcing the idea that the transformation was a shared journey.

Adaptability also played a crucial role in keeping communication strategies relevant. Some organizations initially overestimated how much information

people could absorb. Others found that digital tools introduced to support communication—platforms, apps, internal chat systems—needed time to embed. In effective cases, these tools were not abandoned but adjusted: simplified, repositioned, or better aligned with teams' daily workflows.

Several participants highlighted the need to steer tone and messaging over time. Early phases of transformation required clarity and conviction; later phases benefited from dialogue and openness to critique. This evolution wasn't accidental—it was the result of leadership teams staying close to how the organization was reacting and adjusting their approach accordingly.

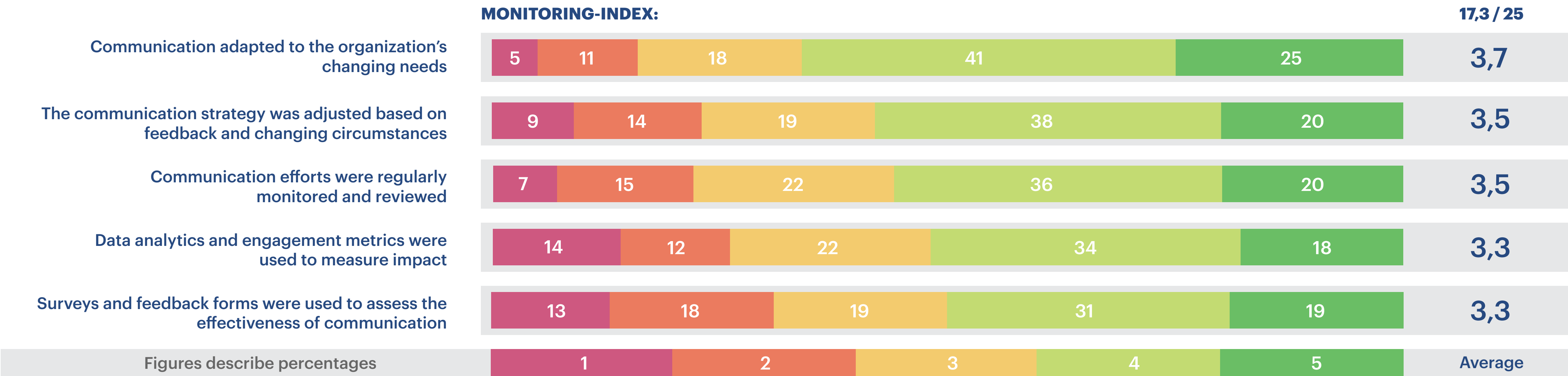
In short, what set strong transformations apart was not perfection at launch, but the capacity to learn and respond. Feedback wasn't treated as

commentary—it was treated as input to steer the course. Strategies were monitored not just for compliance but for actual effect. And leaders showed that they were willing to adapt, not out of weakness, but as a signal of awareness and responsiveness. In a landscape where change is constant, this ability to adjust in motion is not a luxury—it's a requirement.

The essence of Feedback: *Communication monitoring and metrics underused*

Low Scores in monitoring reveal gaps especially in feedback and engagement technology utilization.

While communication is fairly well adapted to the organization’s changing needs during transformations (66%), it is less frequently monitored and reviewed on a regular basis (56%). In particular, the use of data analytics and engagement metrics (52%), as well as surveys and feedback forms (50%), remains underutilized, highlighting a missed opportunity to measure effectiveness and refine communication strategies accordingly.

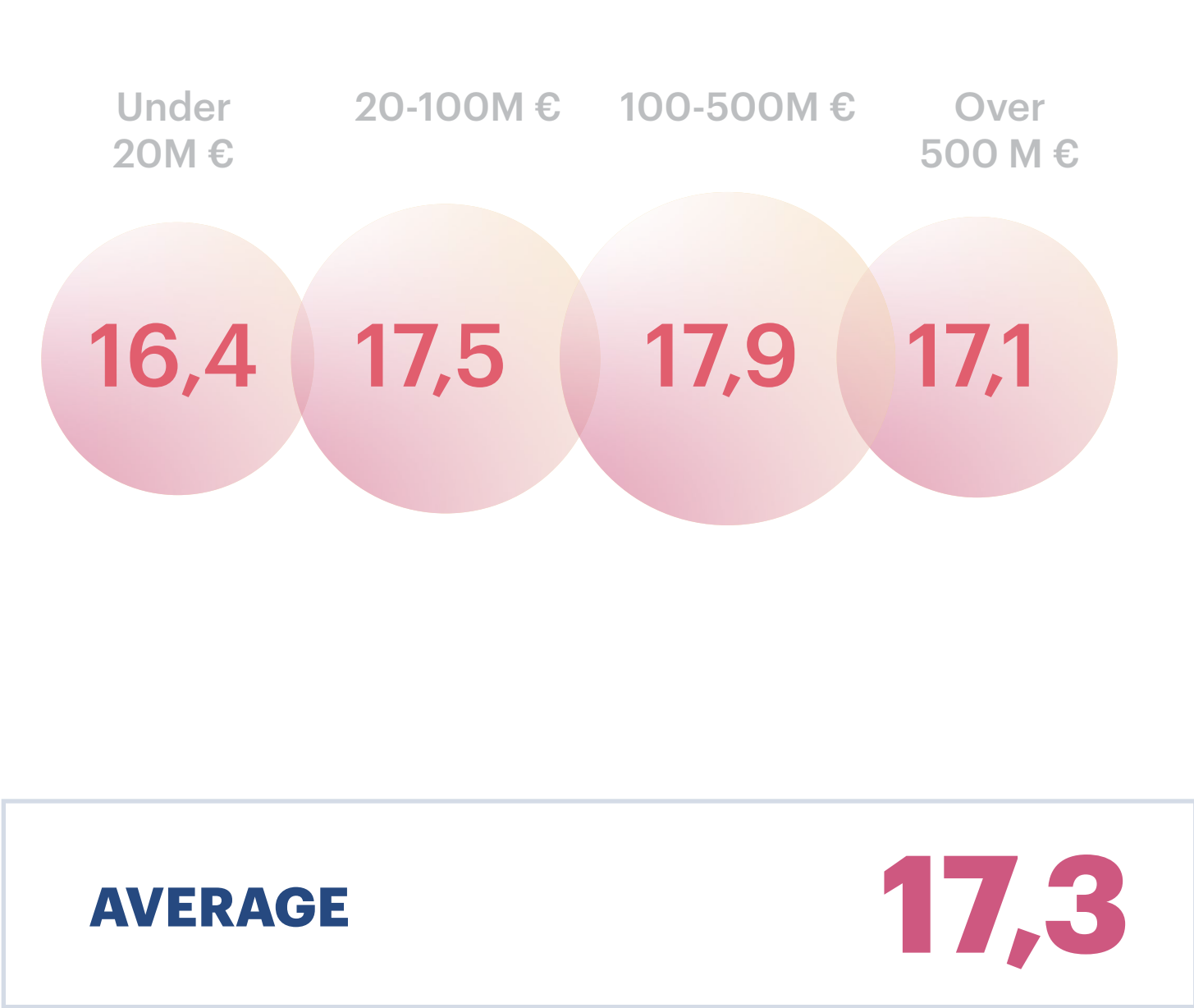


Evaluate the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5; 1= Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree

The essence of feedback: *most remarkable differences*

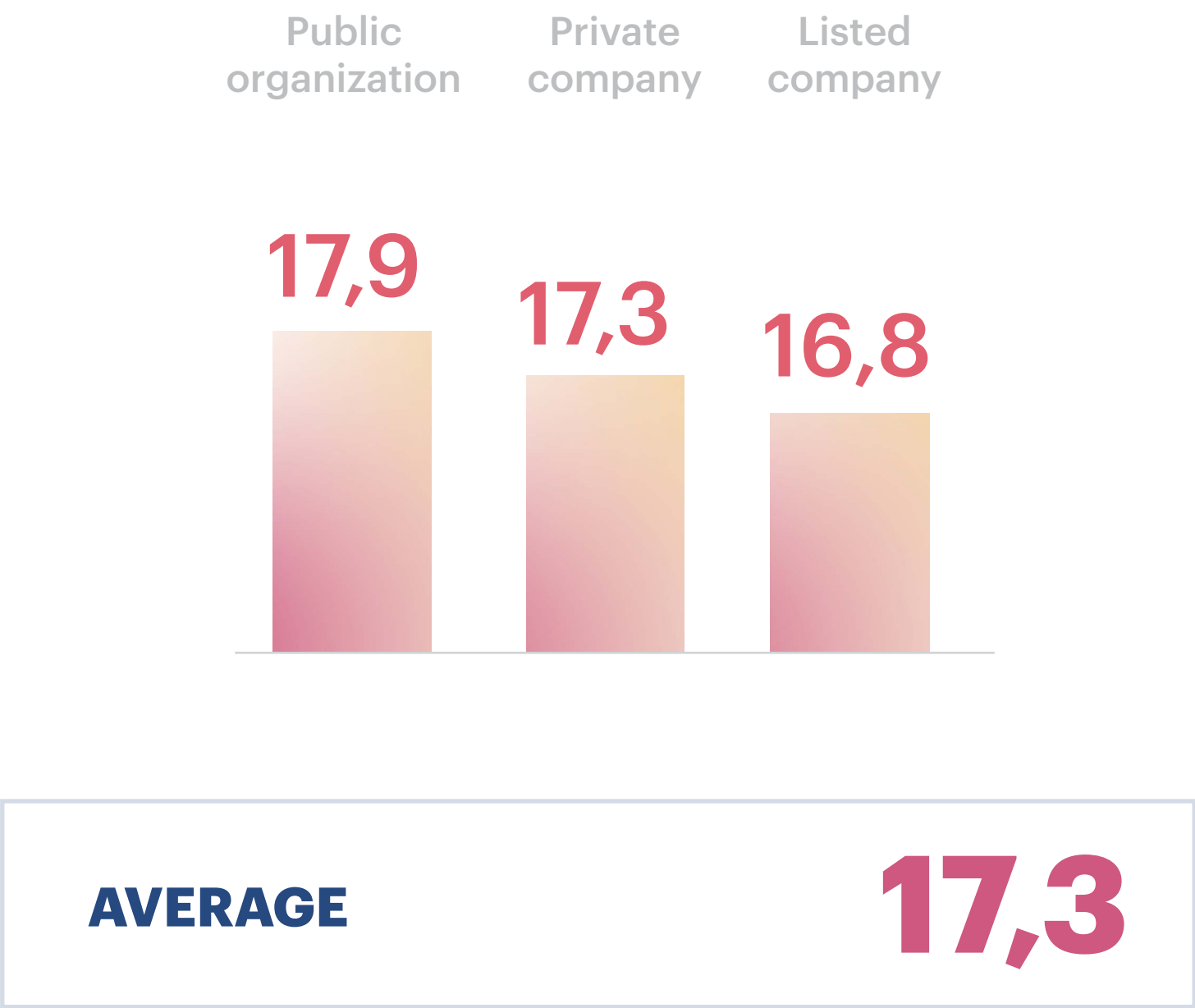
Mid-sized companies score highest in monitoring, while the smallest companies score the lowest.

Companies with revenues between €100M and €500M stand out in their use of analytics, engagement metrics, surveys, and feedback tools. In contrast, the smallest companies perform the weakest across all areas.



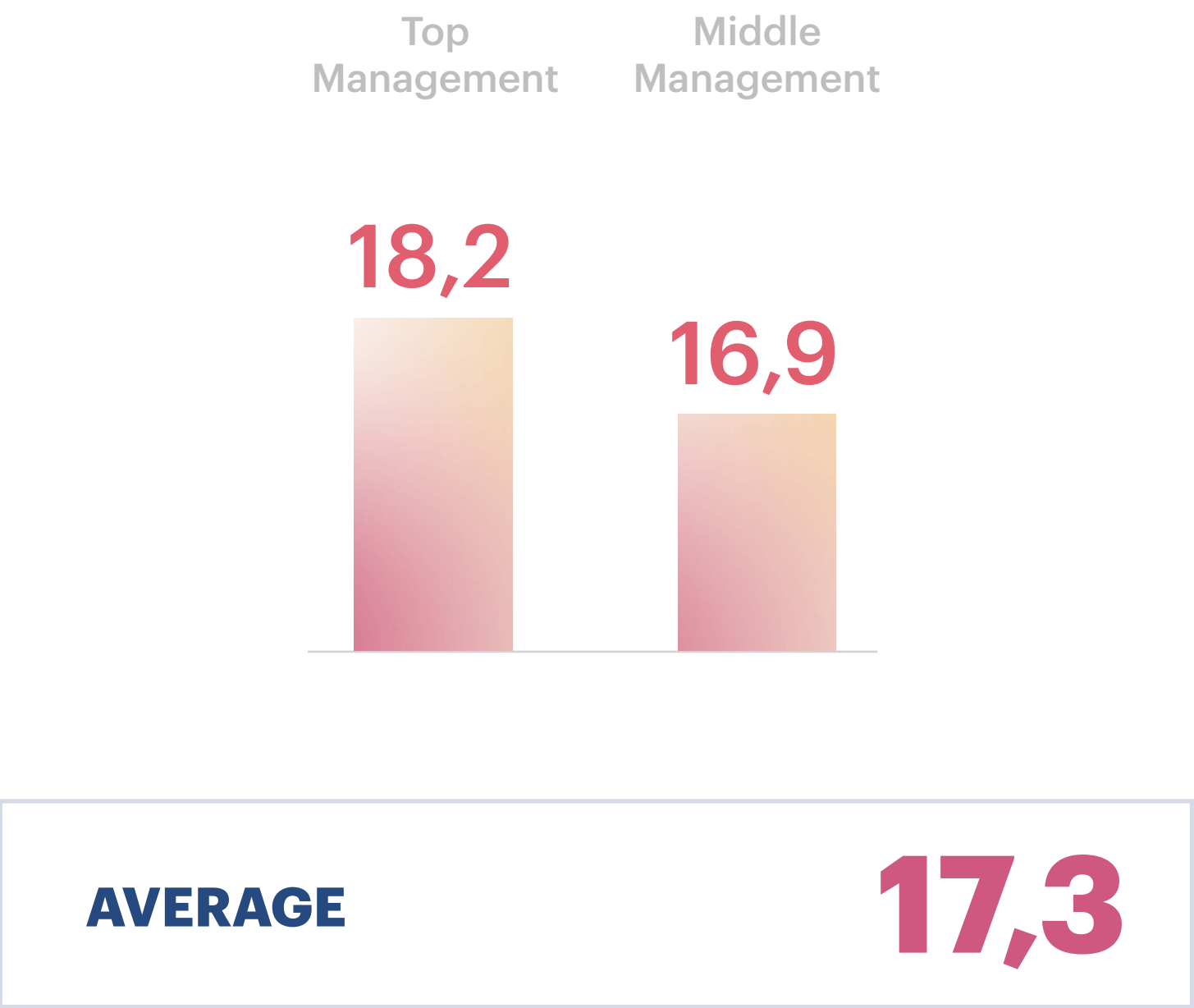
Public organizations score highest in monitoring, while listed companies score the lowest.

Public organizations excel particularly in regularly tracking and reviewing communication efforts. Listed companies receive the lowest scores across all five areas.



Top Management views the monitoring and adjustment of communication much more positively than Middle Management.

Middle Managers show the greatest disagreement with the statement that communication adapts to the organization's changing needs, and they also score lower across all other areas.



The essence of feedback: *Collective Best Practices from the study*

Define clear communication KPIs and objectives

Establish measurable indicators (e.g., engagement rates, feedback volume, message reach, sentiment analysis). Set clear communication goals aligned with transformation milestones. Include both quantitative and qualitative KPIs to assess understanding, readiness, and emotional response.

Establish governance for reviews and adjustments

Create steering committees or communication task forces to oversee monitoring and adaptation. Schedule regular reviews (e.g., monthly or per milestone) to assess progress and recalibrate strategies. Include cross-functional teams to ensure diverse perspectives.

Leverage dynamic and innovative monitoring tools

Use real-time monitoring tools (e.g., Slack, dashboards, AI-based analytics) to track engagement and adapt quickly. Use AI, dashboards, and cloud-based tools to streamline data collection and analysis. Explore interactive formats (e.g., quizzes, gamification) to boost engagement.

Use a mix of quantitative and qualitative feedback

Combine surveys, pulse checks, and dashboards with interviews, focus groups, and informal conversations. Use short, frequent surveys to capture real-time sentiment and understanding. Analyze patterns in feedback to identify emerging issues and opportunities.

Ensure broad participation, segment and localize monitoring

Involve all levels and departments in feedback processes. Encourage anonymous input to surface honest concerns and ideas. However, tailor monitoring efforts to specific teams, regions, or stakeholder groups. Use localized feedback to inform targeted communication adjustments.

Create continuous feedback loops to adjust communication

Build structured mechanisms for collecting and acting on feedback (e.g., feedback platforms, suggestion boxes). Ensure feedback is shared with leadership and visibly used to adjust communication

Value human observation and empower key people to it

Go beyond metrics: observe emotions, behaviors, and informal signals. Build a culture of listening, empathy, and psychological safety. Assign liaisons or ambassadors to gather insights and represent employee voices. Equip middle managers with tools and training to monitor sentiment and escalate concerns.

Maintain transparency when addressing feedback

Communicate openly about what feedback has been received and how it’s being used. Address concerns promptly and respectfully, especially in sensitive situations. Ensure feedback loops are visible and trusted.

What experts say about *monitoring and adapting during the process*

WHAT PROI EXPERT ADVISORY SAY:

It's very important to ensure that communication around change is not one-directional. There must be opportunities to listen, gather feedback, and monitor how messages are being received. This includes understanding the feedback, identifying tensions, and tracking the types of questions that arise.

Based on this input, you can adjust the communication plan accordingly. It's always a team effort. **The team should meet regularly to evaluate the situation, align their strategy, and make necessary adjustments.**

Katarzyna Fabjaniak
Advisory Director, 24/7Communication, Poland

I'm a strong advocate for qualitative methods. While it's common today to rely heavily on quantitative tools, I believe we should continue to use qualitative approaches such as personal interviews, focus groups, and panels. These methods allow us to explore the process, feelings, and sentiments in depth.

Monitoring is a key to success in any communication process, especially in change communication, which is often demanding and emotionally charged. **Having data and monitoring progress is one thing, but being willing to adapt your strategy based on those findings is what truly makes the difference.**

Dimitris Roulias
Managing Partner, Out of the Box, Greece

WHAT RESPONDENTS SAY:

Using real time analysis and regularly reviewing related data.

Top Management, Private company,
100-500 M €, Manufacturing, UAE

Use dashboards and digital tools to track communication metrics in real time, allowing for quicker adjustments when engagement drops or message clarity is lacking.

Middle Management, Public organization,
Under 20 M €, Marketing/TV, Slovakia

Making everything easy and clear to understand even for non-experts, and monitoring the entire improvement/transformation process through impartial external elements to ensure less biased and more objective communication.

Middle Management, Private company,
100-500 M €, Technology, Italy



Transformation

► **Challenges and *Success Factors***

Navigating the Transformation Journey: *Challenges and Enablers*

Every transformation is a test of an organization's ability to evolve – a moment of truth that reveals not only structural readiness but cultural resilience, leadership depth, and the maturity of internal systems.

While transformations are often initiated with a strong sense of urgency and ambition, the path is rarely linear. For most organizations in the research, the experience was marked by moments of friction, resistance, and unexpected turns, as well as breakthroughs and positive momentum. The real story of transformation unfolds in how leaders and teams navigate these highs and lows. The survey participants were clear: transformation is as much a human challenge as it is a strategic one. Success rarely hinges on a single factor.

Instead, it depends on a combination of elements that must come together – vision, leadership, trust, timing, and the ability to engage and mobilize people across functions and levels. Respondents highlighted the importance of securing senior leadership buy-in early on, building trust through transparent communication, and maintaining momentum through consistent internal advocacy and reinforcement.

At the same time, respondents pointed to a range of recurring challenges. Chief among them were internal resistance to change, unclear or inconsistent messaging, limited resources, and the tendency for transformation to become a siloed, top-down initiative without sufficient engagement of middle management or employees. Communication gaps – whether in content, timing, or tone – frequently appeared as risk factors that undermined progress, while

successful initiatives were often rooted in well-thought-out and human-centered communication strategies.

Interestingly, the line between a challenge and a success factor is often thin – it's not the absence of obstacles that leads to success, but the ability to anticipate, acknowledge, and actively manage them. Many leaders reflected on how initial setbacks became turning points once addressed openly and used as learning opportunities. For example, moments of internal pushback or confusion were often turned around through more active listening, adapted messaging, or by involving employees more deeply in shaping the transformation.

The findings also underscore that success in transformation is not only measured by end results but by how the process is experienced internally. Organizations that succeeded were those

that stayed agile and reflective throughout – willing to course-correct, re-engage, and adapt the transformation journey as needed. In this way, transformation becomes not just a program but a capability.

On the following pages, you will find the most commonly cited challenges and success factors named by respondents – distilled from a wide range of perspectives, industries, and experiences. Together, they offer a powerful reflection on what makes transformation work – and where it most often goes wrong.

Challenges: *Top 8 reasons why transformations fail*

Lack of leadership commitment and inconsistency of communication

When top management is disengaged or fails to prioritize communication, it creates confusion and weakens the message. Misalignment across leadership levels and resistance from middle management often result in bottlenecks that hinder the flow of information. Without a unified leadership voice, the organization struggles to maintain credibility and direction.

One-way communication and lack of engagement

When communication flows only from the top down, without opportunities for dialogue or feedback, employees feel excluded. Limited stakeholder involvement in planning and decision-making, along with weak feedback mechanisms, prevents the organization from adjusting its approach based on real concerns and reactions.

Poor communications structure and organization

Many organizations lack a dedicated communication team or fail to allocate sufficient time for communication activities. Internal silos and inefficient structures create gaps, while outdated or inadequate tools limit real-time engagement. These issues prevent timely, coordinated, and effective communication across departments and teams.

Unclear, late and inconsistent communication

Communication that is unclear, delayed, or inconsistent also poses a serious risk. Messages that are overly complex or vague can confuse rather than clarify. Delays in communication allow rumors to spread, while inconsistencies between what is said and what is done damage credibility. These issues make it difficult for employees to understand and align with the change.

Unconvincing vision and unrealistic goals

Transformations that lack a compelling “why” make it hard for employees to understand or support the change. The goals or visions presented are often unrealistic and fail to resonate with the workforce. This disconnect between the stated vision and actual reality ultimately leads to disillusionment and disengagement among employees.

Lack of transparency and trust deficit

Transparency is often lacking, leading to a trust deficit. When leadership actions don’t match their words, or when challenges and risks are hidden, employees may turn to gossip and speculation. This creates an environment of uncertainty and misinformation, further eroding trust and cohesion.

Lack of empathy and failure to address the resistance of change

A lack of empathy and failure to address emotional resistance can further derail change efforts. Without safe spaces for open dialogue, fear, anxiety, and discomfort go unaddressed. Avoiding difficult conversations only amplifies resistance, especially when the rationale behind the change is not clearly understood. Emotional responses must be acknowledged to maintain morale and trust.

Failure of adapting to cultural differences

Failing to adapt communication to cultural differences presents a significant barrier. Deep-rooted habits, biases, and varying cultural norms influence how messages are received and interpreted. When communication methods are not tailored to diverse audiences, especially in multilingual environments, key messages may be misunderstood or ignored. This lack of cultural sensitivity can alienate parts of the workforce and hinder overall engagement.

Challenges – *Transformation pitfalls to avoid*

WHAT PROI EXPERT ADVISORY SAY:

Middle management is often caught between a rock and a hard place during changes, as they face pressure from both directions. They play an extremely important role as messengers, and the authorization given to them is crucial. Middle managers should be equipped with the tools, information, and training needed to engage in meaningful dialogue: not just to communicate decisions, but to facilitate constructive discussions. Without proper authorization or support for them, the entire transformation process is at risk of failure.

Kaija Pohjala
Senior Advisor, Leadership Coach, Partner, Kaiku Group, Finland

Rumors are difficult to prepare for. Of course, you can prepare some Q&A and communication materials in advance. But **when a rumor starts, you need to respond immediately.** That's one of the biggest challenges in transformation processes. The leadership structure must be flexible enough to allow for quick decision-making.

Krisztina Bedy
Managing Director, Premier Hungary Communications

If your plan is too ambitious while people still prefer the old way of doing things, there will be a significant gap between the vision and reality. **When people don't believe in the change, and you fail to gain their engagement and motivation, the momentum is lost.** Without that buy-in, the change effort is unlikely to succeed.

Juraj Caránek
Head of Corporate Team & Partner, Seesame, Slovakia

WHAT RESPONDENTS SAY:

Resistance to change, poor or delayed communication, lack of participation of middle managers and overload of employees. Training for middle managers and continuous measurement would be the things I would do differently

**Board Member, Listed company,
Under 20 M €, Agriculture and Food, Greece**

Poor stakeholder engagement, unclear messaging, and inadequate feedback mechanisms hindered success. Future improvements include regular updates, transparent communication, and adaptive feedback loops.

**Top Management, Private company,
100-500 M €, Financial Services, UK**

The biggest challenge was the resistance to change by the employees, and finding the right message to reassure them.

**Top Management, Private company,
20-100 M €, Technology, France**

Success factors: *7 initiatives that help transformations succeed*

Ensure leadership and middle management are aligned in communication and actively engaged

Leadership should be visible, consistent, and serve as role models throughout the change. Align messaging across all levels of management to maintain coherence and trust. Equip middle managers with the tools and support they need to communicate effectively and lead with a coaching mindset.

Use stakeholder mapping to strategically plan communication and engagement

Identify early who needs to be informed, engaged, or supported throughout the transformation. Consider all relevant stakeholder groups, internal and external. Tailor communication to address the specific needs, expectations, and concerns of each group to build trust and alignment.

Boost engagement by highlighting benefits and empowering change agents

Engage employees and other important stakeholders early and continuously. Emphasize the value of the transformation for employees and stakeholders. Empower individuals to act as change ambassadors.

Communicate clearly and honestly, anchored in a compelling change narrative

Use clear, accessible language to articulate the vision and goals of the transformation. Provide regular updates and communicate both successes and setbacks transparently. Craft a compelling narrative that explains the “why” behind the change to foster understanding and secure buy-in across the organization.

Align organizational structures to support agility and communication during change

Ensure that structures and processes reinforce the transformation. Embed change into daily routines, workflows, and rituals. Combine hierarchical and network-based communication models to enhance responsiveness. Design communication strategies that are flexible and adaptable to evolving circumstances. Embrace continuous transformation as the new normal.

Create a two-way communication strategy that addresses the change with empathy

Establish a communication approach that encourages open dialogue and feedback. Provide safe spaces for questions, concerns, and collaborative problem-solving. Acknowledge the emotional impact of change and provide support to help individuals adapt and build resilience.

Adopt a multichannel approach to ensure reach, provide regular updates and build momentum

Leverage a variety of communication channels, digital platforms, in-person meetings, video content, newsletters, and more, to provide consistent updates and maintain engagement. Ensure inclusivity by reaching stakeholders who may not have access to digital tools. Celebrate milestones and achievements to boost morale and sustain momentum.

Success factors: *Best practices for successful transformations*

WHAT PROI EXPERT ADVISORY SAY:

We live in a world flooded with messages. It's no longer enough to deliver a speech at a town hall and follow up with a few emails. You need to develop creative and engaging communication strategies.

Without effective communication, transformation will not be successful. This **communication must be open, clear, and consistent**. It should create awareness of the change, build a desire to be part of it, and lead to acknowledgment and engagement.

Miroslava Gribova
Managing Director, Be-it Agency, Ukraine

Honesty and being human. It's not just about what you say, it's about how you say it and when you show up. People look to leaders to make sense of change. That's why communication needs to happen early and often.

Change must be anchored in the process, it needs to be wired into how things are done. If leadership hasn't bought into the change, people won't buy into it either.

Louise Mezzina
Managing Partner, Mojo PR, Dubai

Storytelling is essential, because people forget numbers and facts, but they rarely forget a good story.

If management wants to communicate clearly and effectively, they need a narrative: Where are we coming from? Where are we going?

Barbara Saitta Bregendahl
Partner & Client Lead, Lead Agency, Denmark

WHAT RESPONDENTS SAY:

Feedback we continuously received during the process. Collaboration in smaller teams with reporting and dialogues between all teams and exchanges between them. It has been valuable for the workplace culture and implementation.

Board Member, Private company, 20-100 M €, Business Services, Sweden

The key success factors in communication were: 1. Transparency and regularity of communication – constantly informing employees about the goals, stages and progress of the transformation. 2. Two-way communication – creating space for asking questions, sharing concerns and receiving feedback. 3. Support from leaders – active involvement of management in communication, setting an example of openness and engagement.

Top Management, Public organization, 100-500 M €, Financial Services, Poland

Transparency, clarity, two-way communication, engaging stakeholders, and addressing concerns.

Top Management, Public organization, Over 500 M €, Telecommunications, Belgium



Transformation

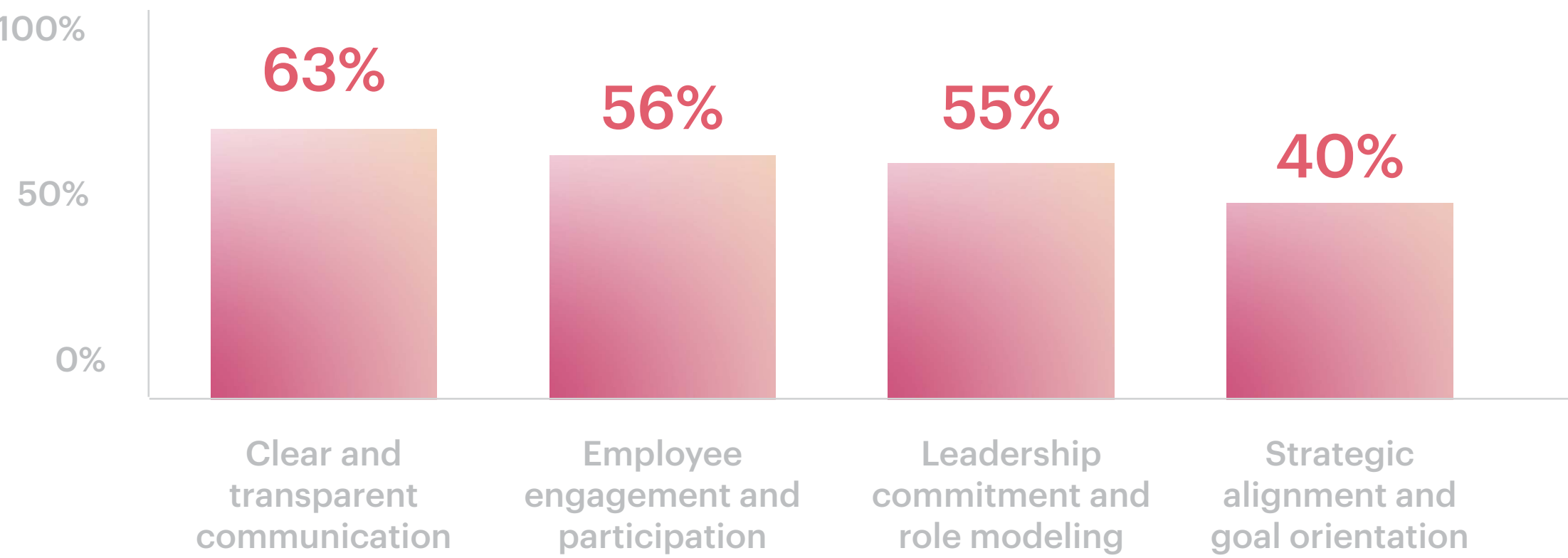
Communication

The most crucial driver of success is clear and transparent communication – *this can only be achieved through multiple well-executed communication efforts*

Most critical success factors in transformation communication.

The top three critical success factors in transformation communication – transparency, engagement, and leadership commitment - are strongly supported by both the open-ended responses and the Transformation Readiness Index analysis. Together, they form the foundation for successful transformation.

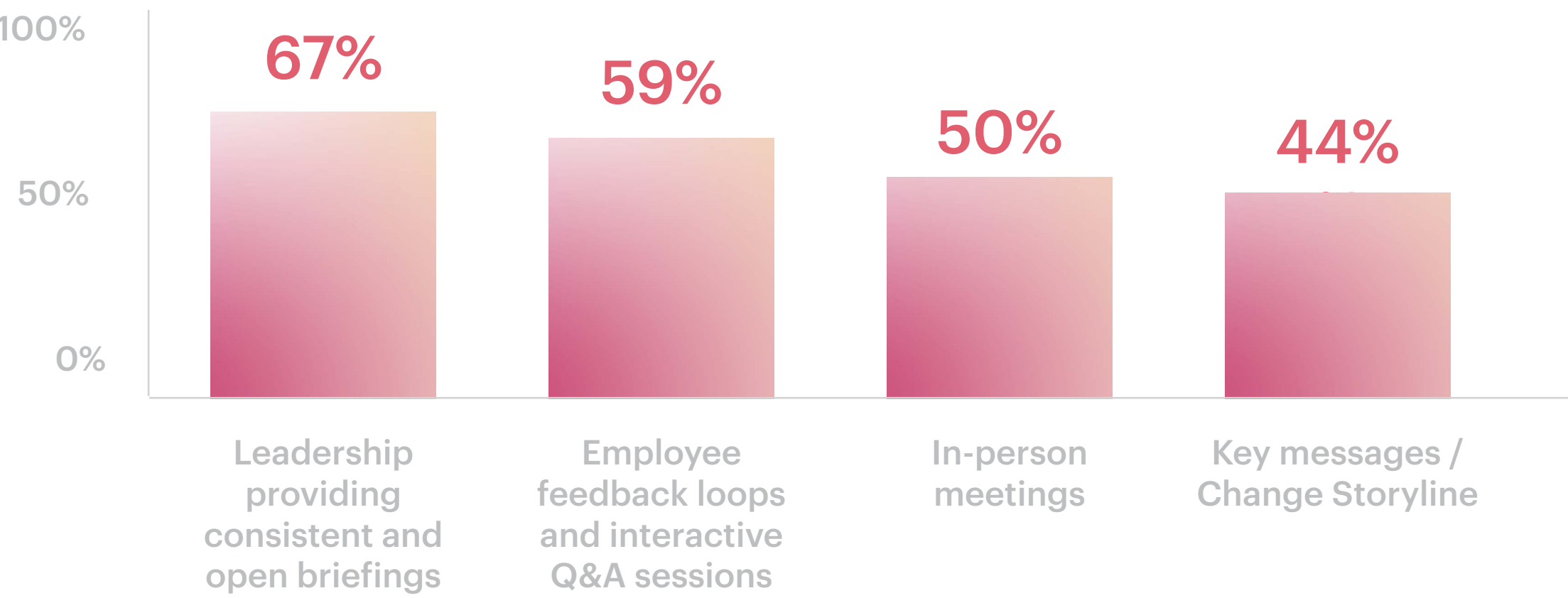
Success factors



Most efficient measures to ensure clear and transparent communication during transformations

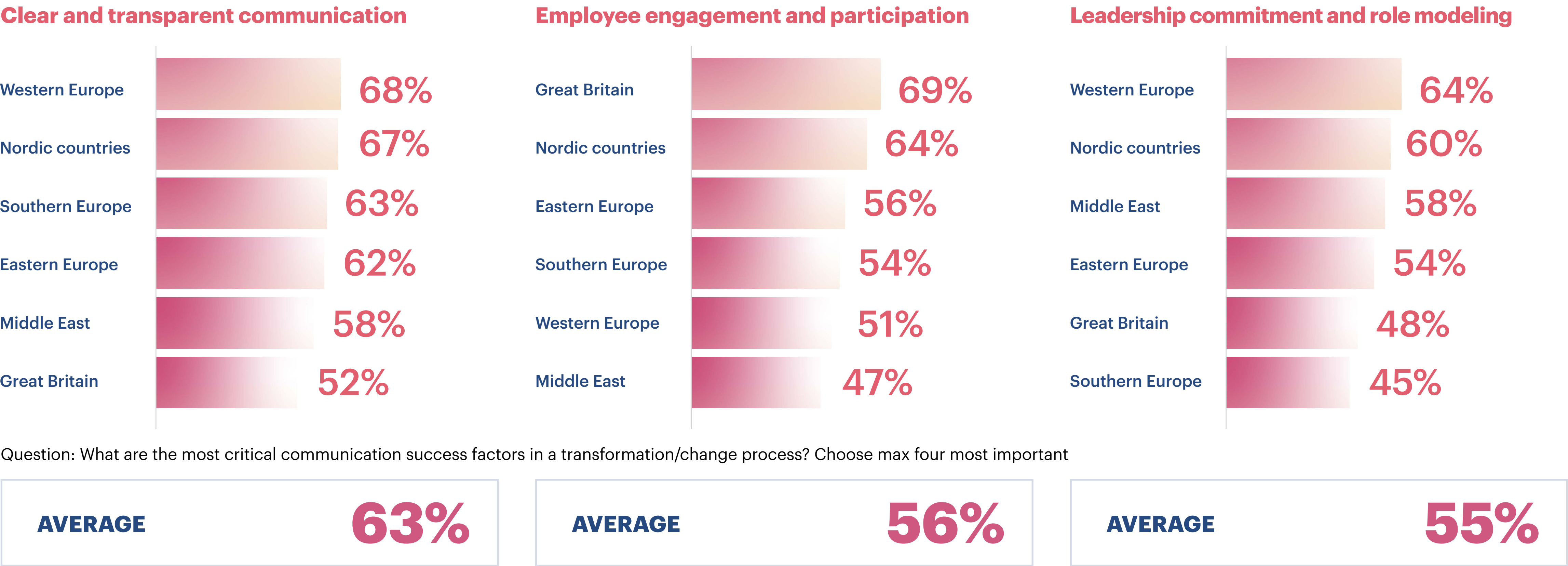
Since clear and transparent communication was identified as the most critical success factor in transformation communication, it's valuable to highlight the key actions that support this objective. As outlined earlier in this report, achieving transparency requires two-way communication, enabled through feedback loops, in-person meetings, and open briefings.

Communication measures



All regions agree on the top three success factors for *transformation communication*

Clear and transparent communication was ranked as the number one factor in all regions except Great Britain, where employee engagement and participation took the top spot. In the Middle East, leadership commitment and role modeling were equally important and shared the number one position. In West Europe, leadership commitment also played a more significant role, ranking second.

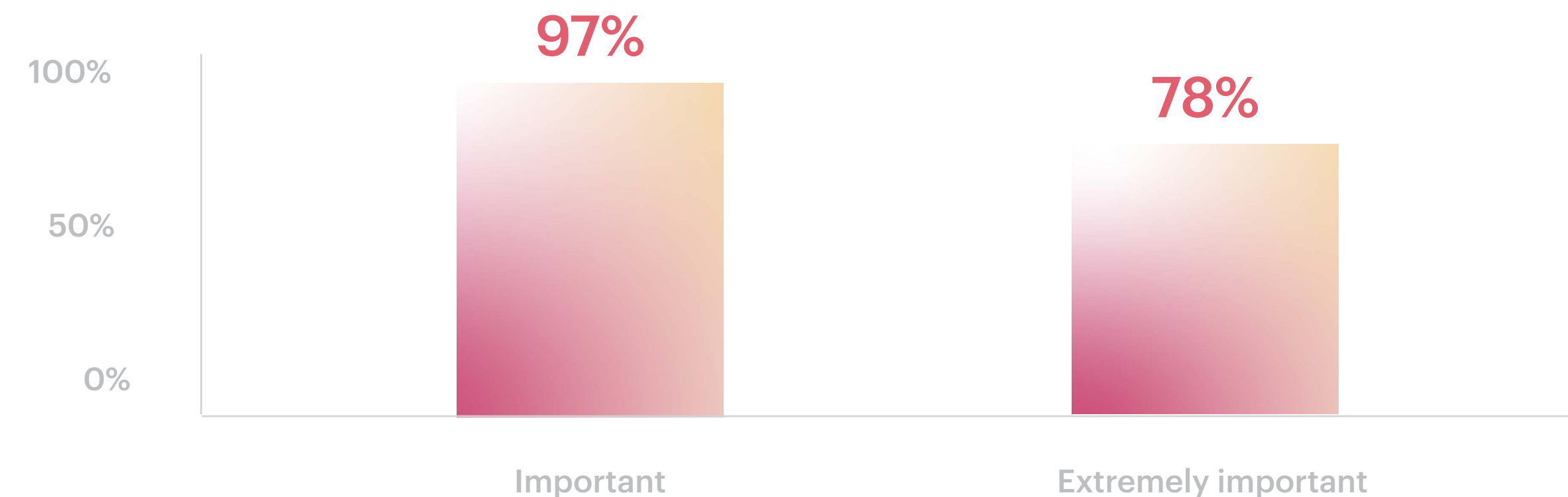


The pace of change is increasing – is your communication *ready for continuous and increasingly digital change?*

Business leaders have clearly stated that communication is a key catalyst for successful transformation.

In the study, all 650 business professionals were asked, 'How important do you consider communication for the success of a transformation?' An overwhelming 97% rated it as important, with 78% considering it extremely important. Notably, the responses from Top Management mirrored these results exactly.

Communication is a catalyst for succesful transformations



650 business professionals in over 30 different countries considered the importance communication for the success of a transformation

When thinking of the changing landscape over the past decades, some things have not changed at all and in some areas everything has changed.

On one hand, organizations have always needed a purpose that is authentic and communication that is transparent. In that sense, nothing has changed.

But in another sense, everything has changed, primarily because of the pace of change. Today, nearly every organization is, in some way, part of the technology industry. If they're not, they risk becoming irrelevant. We now live in a digital world where conversations about organizations happen constantly and publicly, very different from the past.

Tony Langham,
Co-founder and Executive Chair, Lansons Team Farner, UK

Ready to Transform with Confidence?

Connect with your local PROI partner to explore how our expert consultants can guide and support you through every stage of your change journey.

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