

2016

# QuickBase Digital Transformation Survey

A look at the current state and progress of digital transformation, and insights for forward-thinking leaders aiming to stay ahead of the curve.

QuickBase

# Introduction

*“Our digital transformation is going great—we’re way ahead of the curve.”*

If you’re involved in digital transformation for your organization, no matter its size or industry, you might have heard this sentiment echoing around the hallways lately at work. But do you really believe it?

We at QuickBase, Inc. a low-code application development platform provider, set out to survey organizations about their digital transformation efforts. We wanted to get a better sense of where organizations ranked the initiative on their list of IT priorities and take an accurate read on progress. Which departments and functions had started the process of transforming? Which were already

beginning to reap the benefits of business performance, transparency, efficiency, speed and agility? Which had yet to be touched by the wave of new technology? And, critically, what role were citizen developers (line of business employees with the power to build their own apps) playing in the process?

The survey’s findings confirmed that digital transformation is on everyone’s minds this year: a majority (68 percent) of senior management rated it as a top organizational priority. This figure only increased with C-level executives, who agreed almost unanimously (97 percent) that digital transformation was at or near the top of their to-do list.

But it’s what we found next that surprised us.

# Progress Makes Perfect?

Digital transformation is enabling a faster and more seamless workplace, and brings previously disparate, siloed business functions closer together. It is, by nature, a perpetual work-in-progress, with new technological advances happening constantly. This means those responsible for bringing the latest digital solutions into their organizations need to remain ever-vigilant—they don't have the luxury of resting on their laurels.

Our survey, however, found that among the 300+ IT and operations decision-makers surveyed, 4 out of 5 said digital transformation was going great and they were just about done transforming. Another 14 percent said they'd be done within 3 years.

Could this be right? After all we'd heard and read about, was digital transformation really proving this straightforward?

## ACROSS EVERY BUSINESS FUNCTION SURVEYED:



Digital transformation is underway or complete



Will transform within 3 years



Have no foreseeable plans to transform

## THE TOP 3 REASONS BUSINESSES PURSUE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION:



# The “Curve”, or, Staying Ahead of It

Our survey then went on to ask respondents to rate their digital transformation progress relative to that of their industry peers. That’s where things got interesting. Almost one-third (30 percent) of managers below the C-level said their organizations were “ahead of the curve” or “way ahead of the curve.” Meanwhile, the top brass expressed even greater confidence: 70 percent of C-level executives felt they were ahead or way ahead of their peers.

This isn’t terribly surprising considering it is typically the C-suite who champions the transformation goals for the business. However, for all the C-level enthusiasm about being ahead of the game, it’s important to understand where organizations are making the actual day-to-day decisions around digital transformation. Nearly half (47 percent) said Central/Corporate IT was calling the shots

on their organizations’ efforts, while the rest identified Central/Corporate Operations (30 percent) and Business Unit IT (21 percent) as the project leaders.

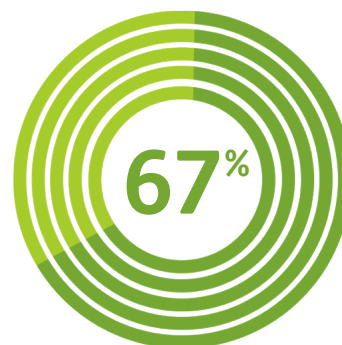
A similar pattern emerged in respondents’ answers to how applications were being developed specifically for the purpose of digitally transforming operations. Again, traditional IT staff took the lead, with two-thirds (67 percent) of respondents reporting that IT app developers were developing the applications. Collaboration with non-technical business staff happened only a minority (33 percent) of the time. Non-technical business staff developed apps on their own even less frequently.

A group that needs a seat at the table: citizen developers, those in the line of business or operations who have the power

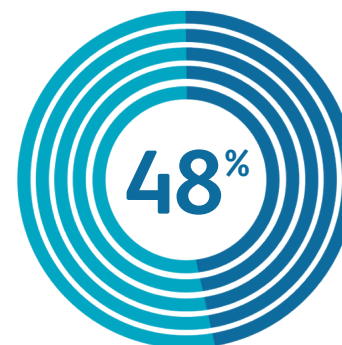
to help transform their organizations from the bottoms up. These are the people who are closest to the work, but are often passed over in favor of more traditional IT leadership. The survey showed that only 23 percent of non-IT staff in operations are developing the apps they need to make digital transformation in their departments a reality. Do they fail to consider the rise of no-code app development? Today, without writing a line of code, line-of-business employees can create the apps they need to solve the problems they’re closest to. Forrester predicts the market for these low and no-code tools will be worth \$15 billion by 2020, a significant jump from its \$1.7 billion value in 2015.

Taken together, these are signs there may be much more to getting digital transformation right than those at the very top expect.

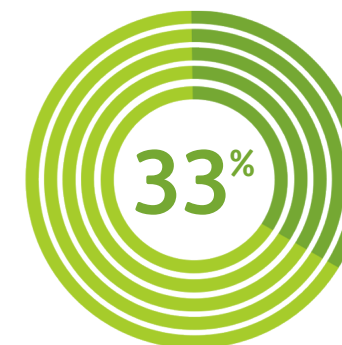
## HOW APPLICATIONS ARE CURRENTLY DEVELOPED IN ORGANIZATIONS FOR DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN OPERATIONS:



IT app developers



Third party IT consultants



Non-technical business staff work with IT

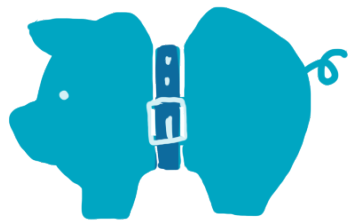


Non-technical business staff on their own

# Room for Improvement

Our survey's findings about the strides organizations have made toward digital transformation were nothing short of enthusiastic, but our respondents acknowledged there's definitely room for improvement. They identified three key barriers preventing them from making additional progress, with lack of budget most frequently chosen as the No. 1 barrier (33 percent):

## TOP 3 BARRIERS TO ADOPTION OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION SOLUTIONS:



Lack of budget



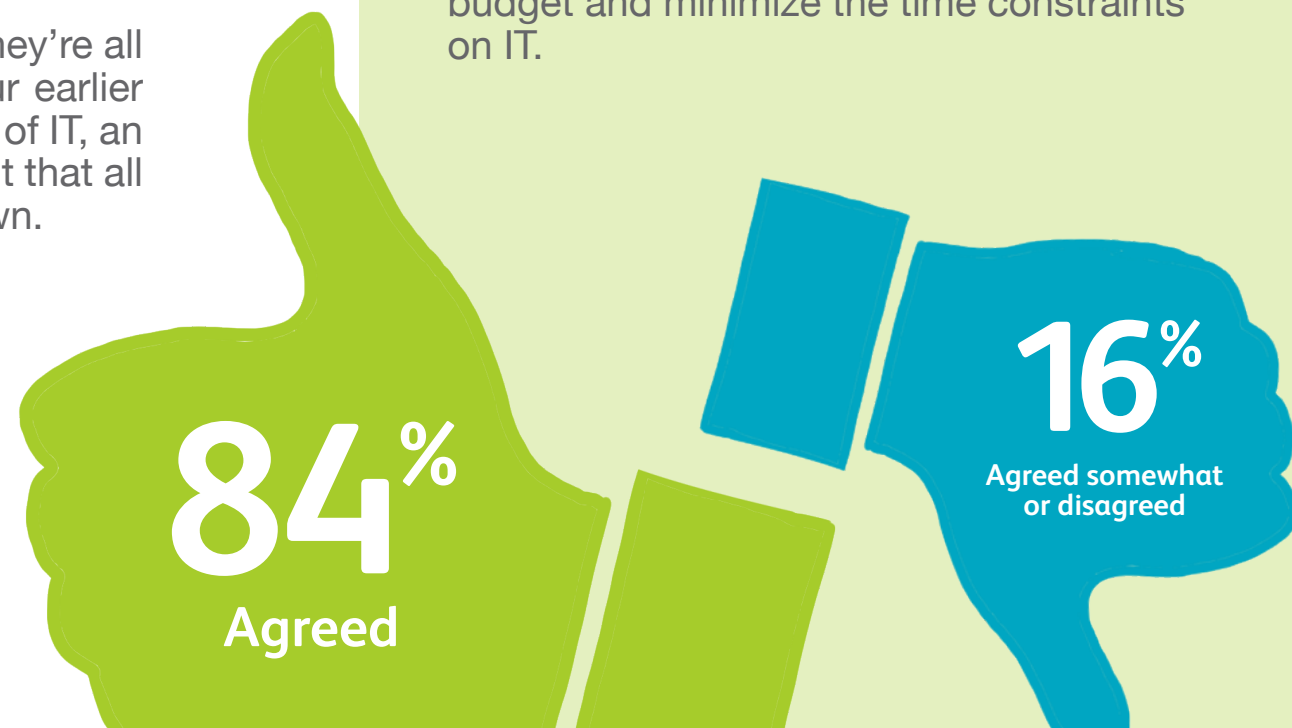
Management resistance



IT staff unavailable

These obstacles don't exist in a vacuum—they're all interconnected, and they're all addressable. But it seems our respondents already know this: despite our earlier finding that app development is still taking place largely within the confines of IT, an overwhelming majority (84 percent) of our respondents agreed it's important that all employees be granted the freedom to start using tech solutions on their own.

## WHEN ASKED IF IT'S IMPORTANT FOR EMPLOYEES TO HAVE THE ABILITY TO START USING SOLUTIONS ON THEIR OWN:



## Here's what organizations stand to gain:

- **Financial savings** that would have otherwise been put toward expensive developer talent by distributing digital transformation responsibilities across a greater subset of their workforce. This is especially critical for organizations with limited IT budgets.
- **Relief from the pressure placed on IT departments** as a result of corporate over-reliance. Free IT staff to serve as strategic resources and focus on mission-critical initiatives such as security and governance.
- **Support from senior management**, who see the potential to maximize the use of budget and minimize the time constraints on IT.



# Conclusion

IT and executive decision-makers have been laser-focused on achieving digital transformation this year, but they're approaching the problem with the wrong mindset. It's not just the IT department that needs to shoulder the workload: citizen developers in a diverse array of business and central operations functions are ready to digitally transform their organizations from the ground up.

Forward-thinking leaders who aspire to truly stay ahead of the curve should focus on finding a way to let them, because true digital transformation remains a work-in-progress.

# Methodology

The survey was conducted on behalf of QuickBase by Market Cube between February 25 and March 3, 2016. The 301 respondents were employees from U.S.-based companies who indicated at least some involvement in their employer's digital transformation efforts. Respondents were drawn from diverse industries including finance, manufacturing, software, retail and healthcare, with roles spanning business operations, IT and management, and ranging in seniority from manager-level through the C-suite. The margin of error is 5.6 percent.

