IDC

Transforming Document Workflows for Growth and Innovation in Future-Forward Small and Midsize Businesses

RESEARCH BY:

Holly Muscolino
Research Vice President, Content Strategies and the Future of Work, IDC

Navigating This InfoBrief

Click on titles or page numbers below to navigate to each.

Executive Summary

The recent global health crisis drove organizations to fully digitize document workflows that still had manual and/or paper-based steps, simply to ensure business continuity.

Technologies that were previously nice-to-haves—including eSignature—suddenly became mission critical.

As we continue to advance into recovery, organizations of all sizes must evaluate how digital technology can be optimally and proactively applied to transform business processes and lay a foundation for future growth, innovation, and agility.

A New Definition of Resiliency Is Required for the Post-Pandemic Era

Business Resiliency

The ability for an organization to rapidly respond to disruptions and restore business operations in a timely fashion.
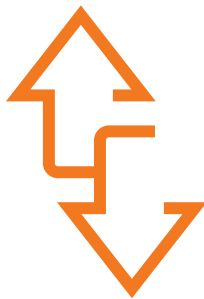
Digital Resiliency

The ability for an organization to rapidly adapt to disruptions by leveraging digital capabilities to not only restore business operations but also capitalize on the changed conditions.

Source: *A Digital Resiliency Framework for the Future Enterprise,* IDC, #US47483421, February 2021

Plans for Resiliency

Q: Which of the following best describes your organization's resiliency objectives in 2021–2022?

7%	13%	43%	29%	8%
None No resiliency plans in place and no intention to invest	**Business Continuity Plan** Plans in place prior to COVID-19 and no plans to expand	**Business Continuity Plan+** Expanded resiliency plans to support the requirements of a pandemic but no/ little intention to go beyond these	**Resiliency** Expanded resiliency plans to support the requirements of a pandemic and expanding initiatives to respond to future business disruption	**Digital resiliency** Making investments in digital capabilities to rapidly adapt to the current crisis and capitalize on changed conditions

Only 1/3 of midsize businesses plan to leverage technology for innovation and competitive advantage.

Source: *Future Enterprise Resiliency & Spending Survey,* IDC, May 2021

The Hybrid Workforce Is the New Reality

The 21st century economy requires that workers can engage as dynamic and reconfigurable teams able to quickly adapt to business demands and new market requirements.

Organizations must be more agile, refocusing on employee engagement and cross-functional collaboration.

They must develop the technology, policies, and processes to support a workforce that is hybrid by design, rather than driven by circumstance.

We Will Not Return to 2019 Work Models

Worldwide Work Locations Over Time
% of Respondents

Q: What percent of your company's workforce was, is, or is expected to be, in each of the following categories?

(Steady state means that your organization has reached a relatively stable condition that does not change significantly over time.)

38% increase in remote work from pre-pandemic to "steady state"

97% increase in work from home

30% decrease in work from home

	Before	July 2021	Steady State
Primarily work in the field	9.31%	7.82%	9.17%
Primarily work in a physical facility	83.57%	78.11%	81.02%
Primarily work from home	7.1%	14.1%	9.8%

■ Primarily work from home   ■ Primarily work in a physical facility   ■ Primarily work in the field
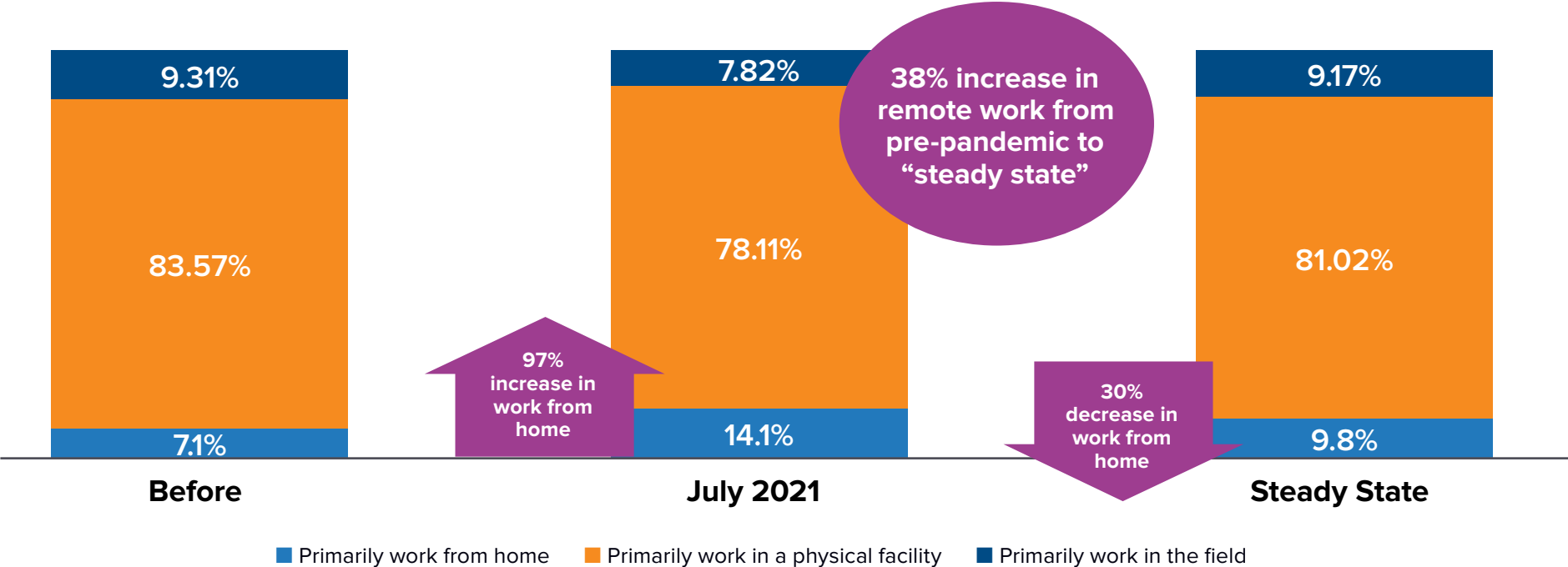
Source: *Future Enterprise Resiliency & Spending Survey,* IDC, July 2021, 500-999 employees, N=350

Future-Forward Organizations: Hybrid Work Models, Intelligent Workspaces, and Automation

Changes Spurred by the Pandemic

Q. Which work practices and technology advances emerging from the pandemic are most likely to endure?

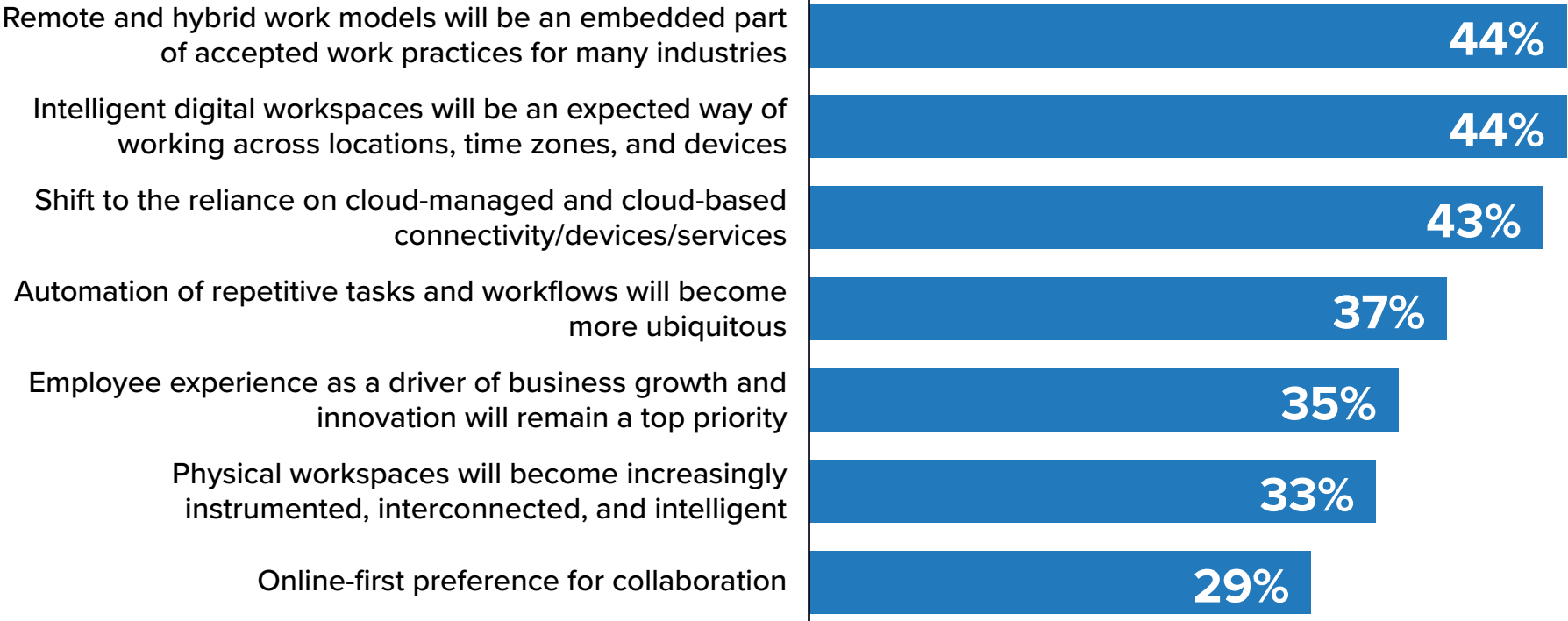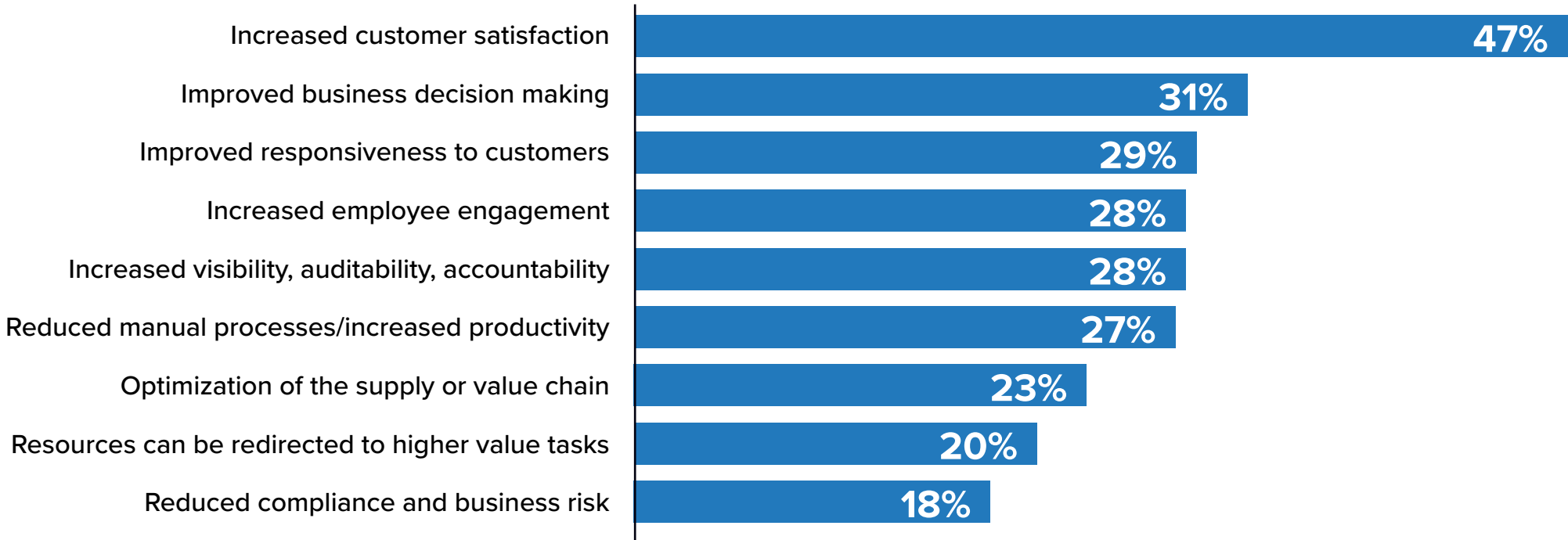| Category	%
Remote and hybrid work models will be an embedded part of accepted work practices for many industries	44%
Intelligent digital workspaces will be an expected way of working across locations, time zones, and devices	44%
Shift to the reliance on cloud-managed and cloud-based connectivity/devices/services	43%
Automation of repetitive tasks and workflows will become more ubiquitous	37%
Employee experience as a driver of business growth and innovation will remain a top priority	35%
Physical workspaces will become increasingly instrumented, interconnected, and intelligent	33%
Online-first preference for collaboration	29%

46% OF MIDMARKET RESPONDENTS said that workplace transformation programs will be a priority technology investment over the next two years to ensure long-term resilience.

Source: *Future Enterprise Resiliency & Spending Survey,* IDC, July 2021, 500-999 employees, N=297

Workplace Technology Investments Must Include Funding for Transforming Document Workflows

Benefits of Transforming Document Workflows

Q: Which work practices and technology advances emerging from the pandemic are most likely to endure?

Increased customer satisfaction	47%
Improved business decision making	31%
Improved responsiveness to customers	29%
Increased employee engagement	28%
Increased visibility, auditability, accountability	28%
Reduced manual processes/increased productivity	27%
Optimization of the supply or value chain	23%
Resources can be redirected to higher value tasks	20%
Reduced compliance and business risk	18%

Source: *U.S. Enterprise Content Strategies – Use Cases Survey,* IDC, December 2020, N=376

eSignatures — At the Heart of Transformed Document Workflows

For signatures and documents to be digital, the relevant content workflows must also be digital.

This means that eSignature software must be deployed as part of a broader digitization and integration initiative.

That effort must be methodical and thoughtful — and truly transformational — to avoid the risk of building existing inefficiencies into automated processes.

"A good amount of our processes had been digitized, automated across the board. We did not see any disruption whatsoever in the business even though everyone was working remotely."
—Senior Director, Enterprise Application Solutions, Medical Device Company

eSignature software: Software and cloud-service solutions that issue an encrypted, signed document from a sender, transport it via a secure communications channel, present the document to one or more signers, record the signers' actions, re-encrypt the document, and return it to the originator via secured communications.

Top eSignature Use Cases in Small and Midsize Businesses

Sales
- Contracts
- Sales order
- Quotations
- Sales support
- Work orders/field service

Legal
- Contracts
- Court orders
- Intellectual property licensing
- Licensing and permits
- Internal compliance
- Non-disclosure agreements

Procurement
- Contracts
- Purchase order
- Invoice approval/ processing
- RFP sign off
- Supplier compliance
- Non-disclosure agreements
- Statement of works

HR
- Contracts
- Timesheets
- Expenses submission
- Staff benefits applications
- Vacation request
- New hire forms
- Policy agreements
- Incidence reporting

Beyond Digitization to Workflows That Are Truly Transformational

For signatures and documents to be digital, the relevant content workflows must also be digital.

This means that eSignature software must be deployed as part of a broader digitization and integration initiative.

That effort must be methodical and thoughtful — and truly transformational — to avoid the risk of building existing inefficiencies into automated processes.
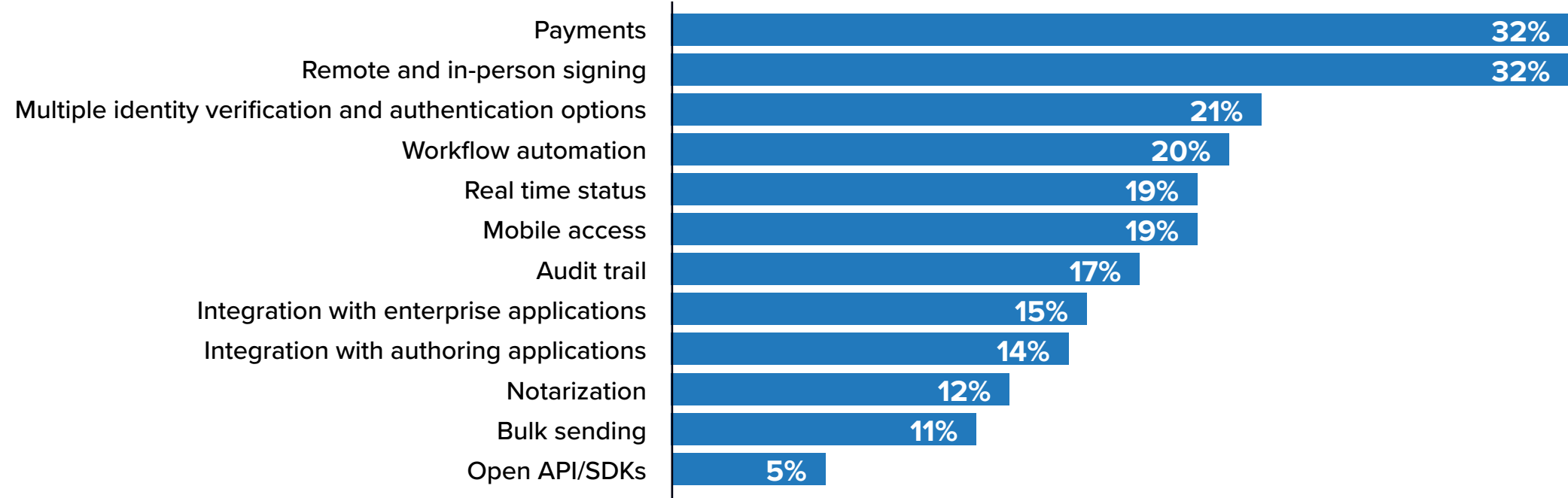
"If we just did the document [automation] without the transformation, then we would have just digitized the document flow without really solving the bigger problem."

—Senior Director, Enterprise Application Solutions, Medical Device Company

Support for Payments as well as Remote and In-Person Signing Are Most Important eSignature Features for Small and Midmarket Companies

Top eSignature Features

Q: Which of the following features are most important in the electronic signature solutions used for documents that originate in your area?
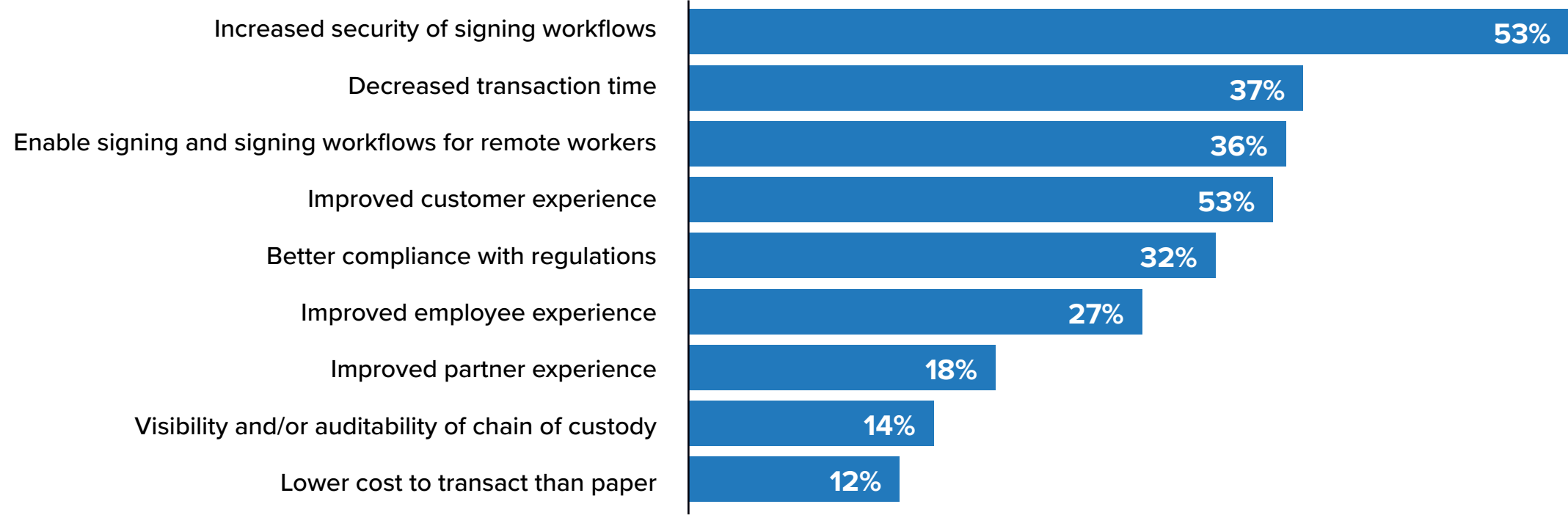
Feature	Percentage
Payments	32%
Remote and in-person signing	32%
Multiple identity verification and authentication options	21%
Workflow automation	20%
Real time status	19%
Mobile access	19%
Audit trail	17%
Integration with enterprise applications	15%
Integration with authoring applications	14%
Notarization	12%
Bulk sending	11%
Open API/SDKs	5%

Source: *Global eSignature Opportunity Assessment Survey,* IDC, October 2020, N=957

Increased Security Is the Top eSignature Benefit for Small and Midmarket Companies

Top eSignature Benefits

Q: Which of the following benefits of electronic signature solutions are most important to your area?

Benefit	Percentage
Increased security of signing workflows	53%
Decreased transaction time	37%
Enable signing and signing workflows for remote workers	36%
Improved customer experience	53%
Better compliance with regulations	32%
Improved employee experience	27%
Improved partner experience	18%
Visibility and/or auditability of chain of custody	14%
Lower cost to transact than paper	12%

Source: *Global eSignature Opportunity Assessment Survey*, IDC, October 2020, N=957

The Document-Centric Business Process Transformation Maturity Model

Neophyte	Apprentice	Practitioner	Expert	Disruptor
Reactive and Ad-hoc	**Isolated Digitization**	**Company-Wide Deployment**	**Holistic Adoption**	**Inherent Intelligence**
Some grass-roots adoption but manual and paper-based.	Digitized versions of paper-based document-centric business processes.	Re-engineered and optimized document-centric processes.	Corporate-wide and external automation of document-centric business processes.	Leveraging AI/ML for full automation and continuous innovation.

This IDC maturity model describes the organizational characteristics at five levels of maturity for document-centric business processes, from a completely ad hoc approach with limited awareness to one in which a document-centric business process transformation strategy is woven into every level of the organization's overall digital transformation strategy.

It is intended to help organizations evaluate current document-centric business process transformation initiatives and identify the steps needed to advance to the next maturity stage.

Transformed processes drive productivity, improve employee and customer experience, and ultimately lay the foundation for growth, innovation, and agility.

Key stakeholders of document-centric business process transformation initiatives include executives, IT leadership, line-of-business managers, employees, partners, and suppliers.

Getting Started with Document Workflow Transformation

▶ **Begin by evaluating existing document workflows:**

- Use the Document-Centric Business Process Transformation Maturity Model as a guide

▶ **Identify use cases with high levels of inefficiencies and stakeholder pain points, then develop a strategy to address those pain points. Specifically, consider:**

- Paper-intensive processes, especially those in which paper is used to bridge the gap between incompatible document formats or systems

- Processes with obvious bottlenecks, location, and/or time constraints

- Processes that present a security and/or or compliance risk

▶ **Involve all stakeholders to obtain buy-in and ensure compliance and continuous improvement.**

▶ **Measure the results to drive the business case:**

- Learn from your experience to develop a set of organization-wide best practices

Methodology

This IDC InfoBrief includes research from several IDC studies:

- IDC's monthly global Future Enterprise Resiliency and Spending Survey (https://www.idc.com/misc/covid19)

- IDC's Global eSignature Opportunity Assessment survey, conducted on behalf of Adobe, October 2020

- IDC's Enterprise Content Strategies Use Case survey, December 2020

- IDC white paper: *eSignatures Drive the Last Mile in Document-Centric Business Process Transformation: A Guide to Resiliency and Efficiency,* IDC #US47812921, sponsored by Adobe, June 2021
  - » While developing the document-centric business process transformation maturity model, IDC spoke with senior decision makers at several organizations to understand their challenges, solutions, and best practices, and to further validate the model.

About the Analyst

Holly Muscolino
Research Vice President, Content Strategies
and the Future of Work, IDC

Holly Muscolino is the Research Vice President, Content and Process Strategies and the Future of Work, responsible for research related to innovation and transformation in content and process solutions, including intelligent process automation and content workflow services. Holly's core coverage also includes the role of technology in driving the Future of Work.

More about Holly Muscolino

Message from the Sponsor

Automate business processes, start to finish, with Adobe Sign, an Adobe Document Cloud solution. It includes a powerful workflow engine that helps you keep documents moving – from your phone, on the web, or in your favorite application. Whether you need to send, sign, track, or archive, rest assumed that Adobe Sign delivers the highest levels of security and compliance. It includes certified document delivery, so you can be certain when your documents and forms are received. And it's the preferred e-signature solution across Microsoft's portfolio.

Learn more about Adobe Sign for business

Learn more about Adobe Sign Plans & Pricing

IDC Custom Solutions

This publication was produced by IDC Custom Solutions. As a premier global provider of market intelligence, advisory services, and events for the information technology, telecommunications, and consumer technology markets, IDC's Custom Solutions group helps clients plan, market, sell and succeed in the global marketplace. We create actionable market intelligence and influential content marketing programs that yield measurable results.

IDC

🐦 @idc   🔗 @idc   idc.com