

The State Of The Retail Workforce: Strategies For Building Stronger, More Engaged Teams

Brian Kilcourse and Steve Rowen, Managing Partners

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LOGILE Run Great Stores with Confidence

About This Research

This year's research is a 3-part story:

- Part 1 is a survey of 97 retail executives (C-level, VP and Director level) to get their perspective
  - 100% US-based, 19% also operate stores in UK, 20% in EU
  - 44% Apparel & Specialty, 22% Hard Goods, 18% GM, 16% FMCG
- Part 2 is a similar survey of in-store front-line workers to compare/contrast the associates' POV
  - 125 retail associates (90% full time, 6% part time, 4% contract workers)
  - 44% GM, 23% Apparel & Specialty, 22% FMCG, 11% Hard Goods
- Part 3 is a survey of 1K+ US-based consumers incorporating shoppers' POV
  - Ages 18+
- The full report provides a true 360 view of the in-store experience:
  - Have retailers finally begun to evolve in their thinking about the role and treatment of associates?
  - What do associates say?
  - Have customers noticed?
- An evolution of our true (and widely-published) desire to see the in-store experience improve

Key Takeaways

Retail's Workforce Model Is Broken

- Nearly **75% of store associates feel underpaid and overworked**, with little control over schedules
- Only **41% believe their employer offers real career advancement**
- High turnover is undermining training, consistency, and service quality

Retailers And Consumers See Stores Very Differently

- **49% of retailers believe customers "love" browsing stores**, but only **25% of consumers agree**
- Retailers overestimate the store's appeal and underestimate how digital-first shopping has become

Customers Are More Impatient, Informed, And Demanding

- **74% of associates say customers are less patient and less polite**
- Theft, returns, omnichannel complexity, and price sensitivity are all rising
- **Grocery and FMCG workers face the harshest conditions**

More Highlights

Biggest Operational Challenges

- Store execution and productivity is inconsistent
- Customers expect higher service than retailers can deliver
- Employees are leaving before they can be fully trained

Retail Winners Think Differently, And Act Faster

- High-performing retailers ("Retail Winners") are far more likely to:
  - Recognize that **customers want different store experiences** (73% vs. 45%)
  - Invest in **employee-facing technology**, mobile POS, and fulfillment tools
  - Experiment with new formats (store-within-a-store, in-aisle checkout, automation)

Empowerment = Visibility + Communication

- Retailers define true associate empowerment as:
  - **360-degree visibility into customer activity across channels**
  - **Real-time communication with other employees**
- The combination of these two improvements improves customer satisfaction, associate confidence, and sales outcomes

Summing It All Up

Technology Is No Longer Optional

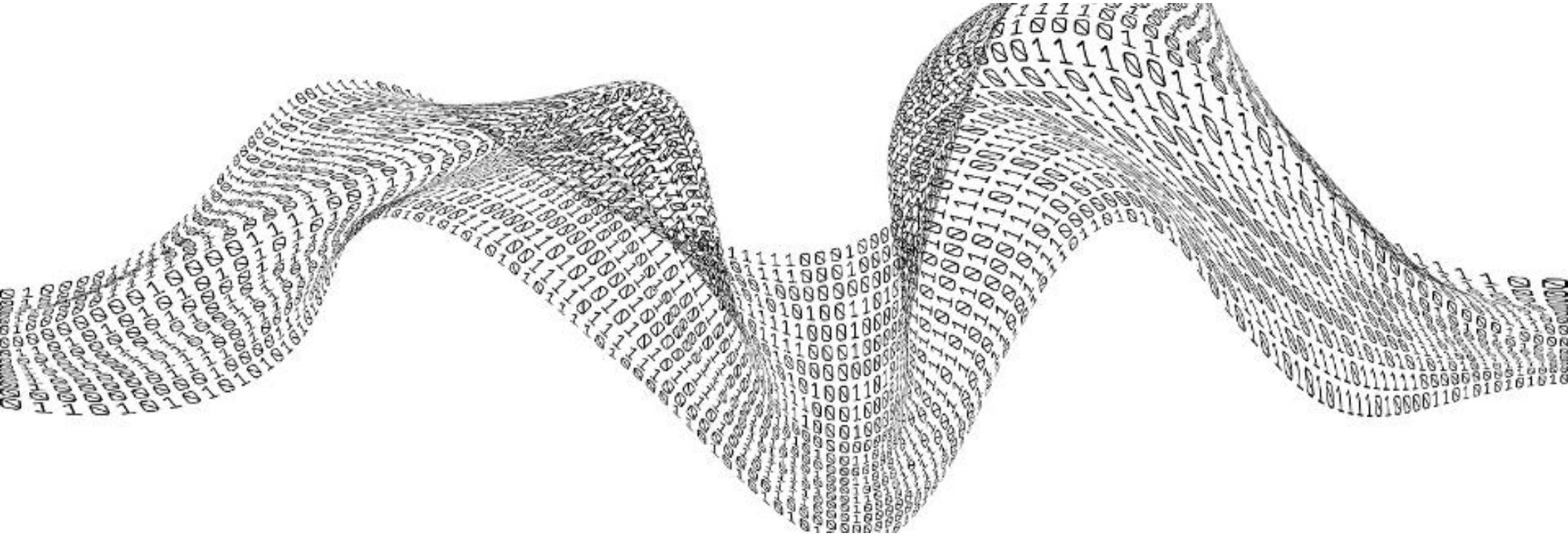
- Top technology priorities include:
  - In-store Wi-Fi
  - Real-time inventory visibility
  - Mobile POS
  - Just-in-time training
  - Omnichannel fulfillment tools
- Many Winners now view tech investment as “the cost of doing business,” not an ROI debate

Small Retailers See Opportunity

- Smaller and mid-sized retailers are more likely to:
  - Emphasize **helpfulness and brand ambassadorship**
  - Differentiate through **better service**, not just efficiency
  - Move faster in adopting and abandoning technologies

The Bottom Line

- The future store is **phygital** (physical + digital), but execution is lagging
- Retail success depends on **empowered associates**, not just cost control
- Winners invest in tools, training, and trust- laggards remain stuck debating ROI

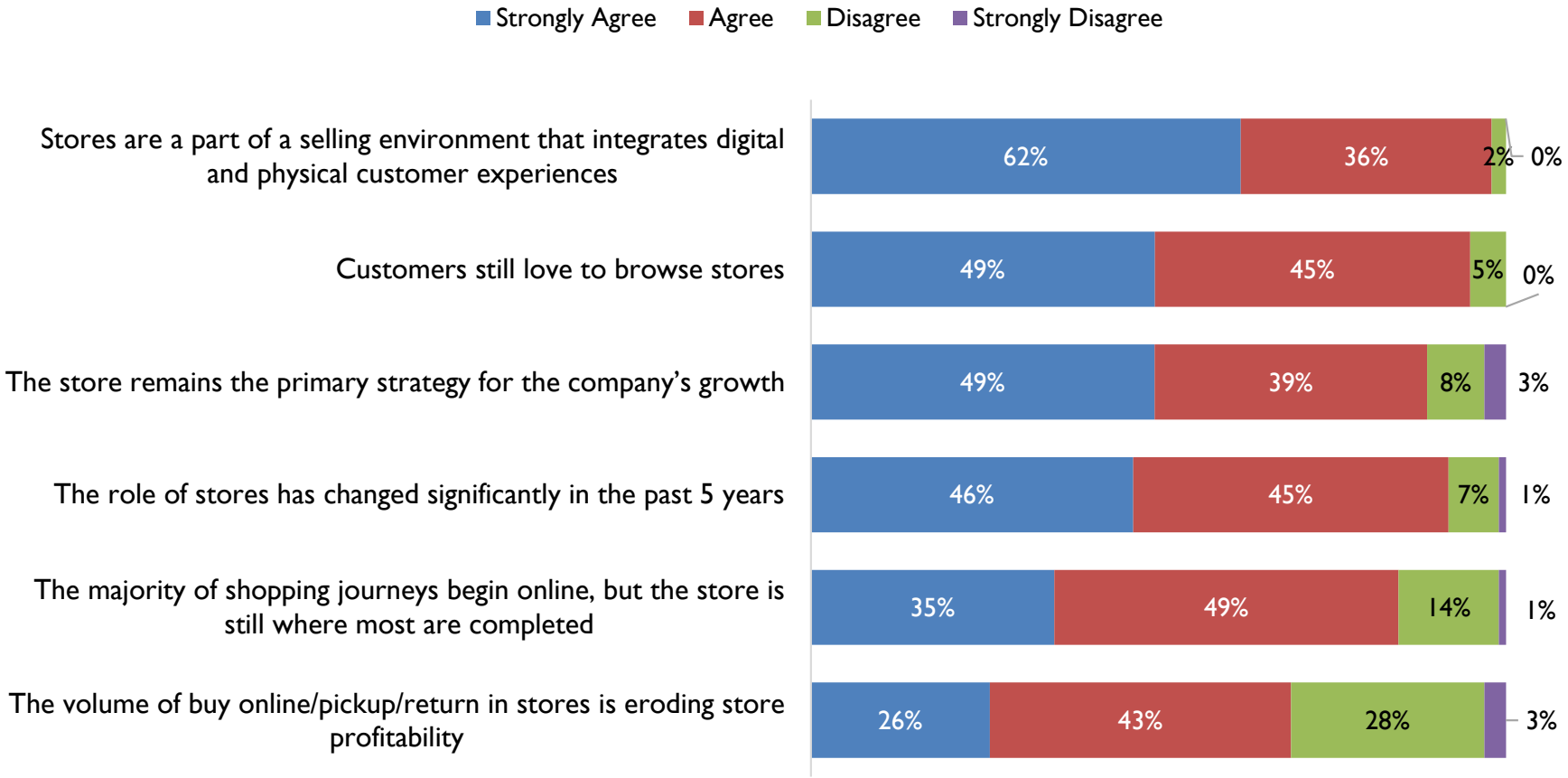


Topline Data

The Big Picture

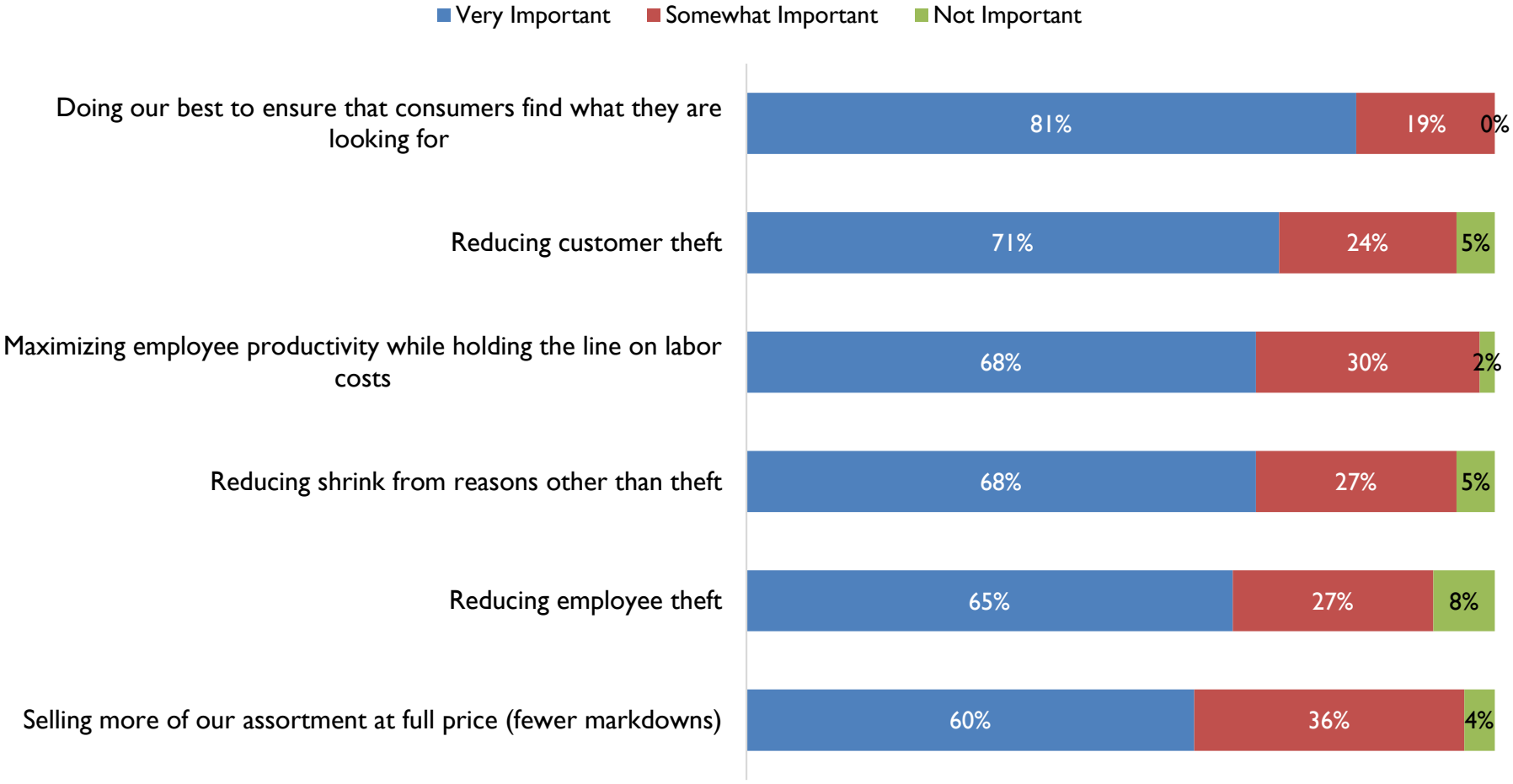
The Future Will Be Phygital

Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about the STORE:

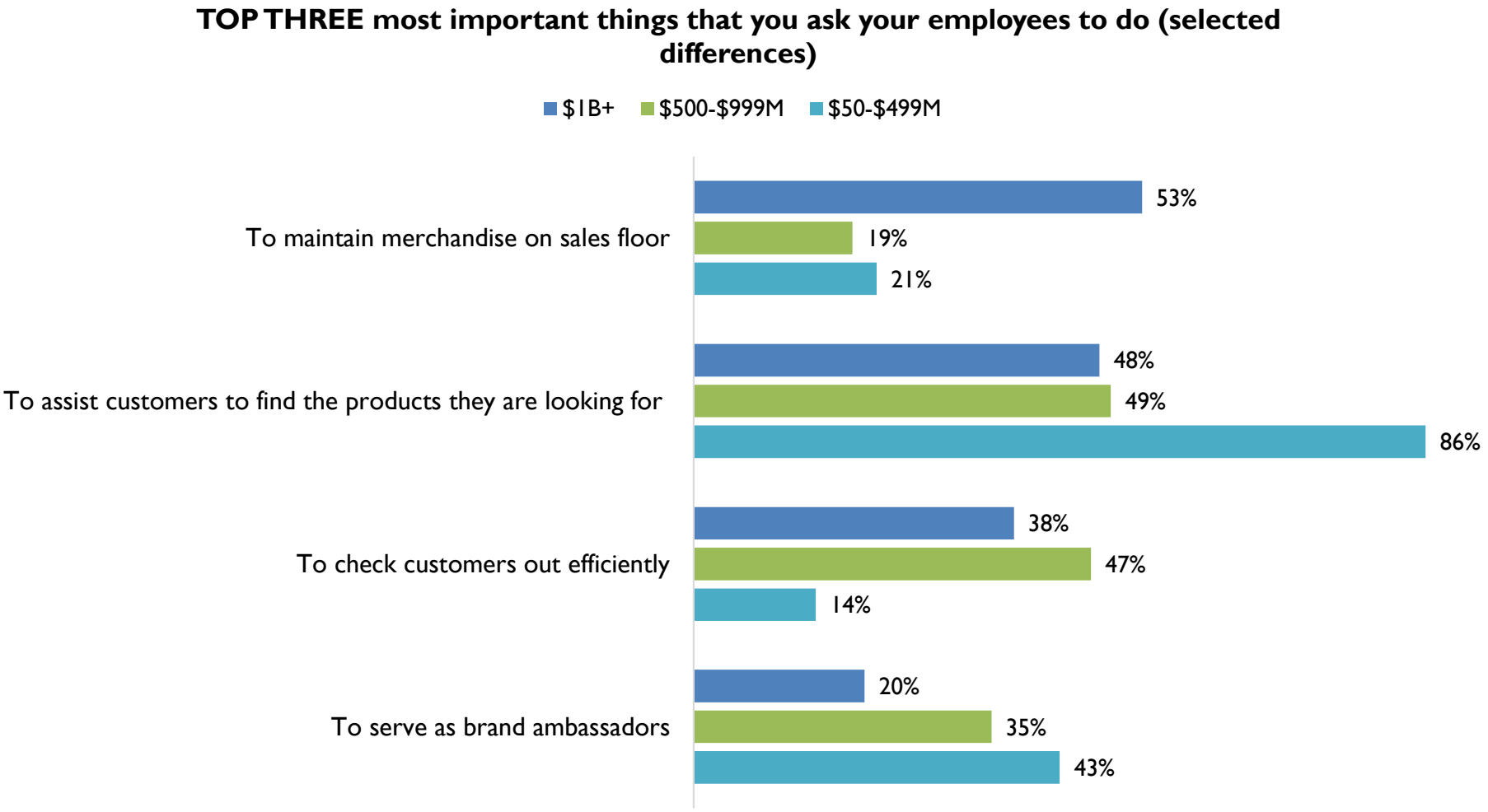


What Matters Most?

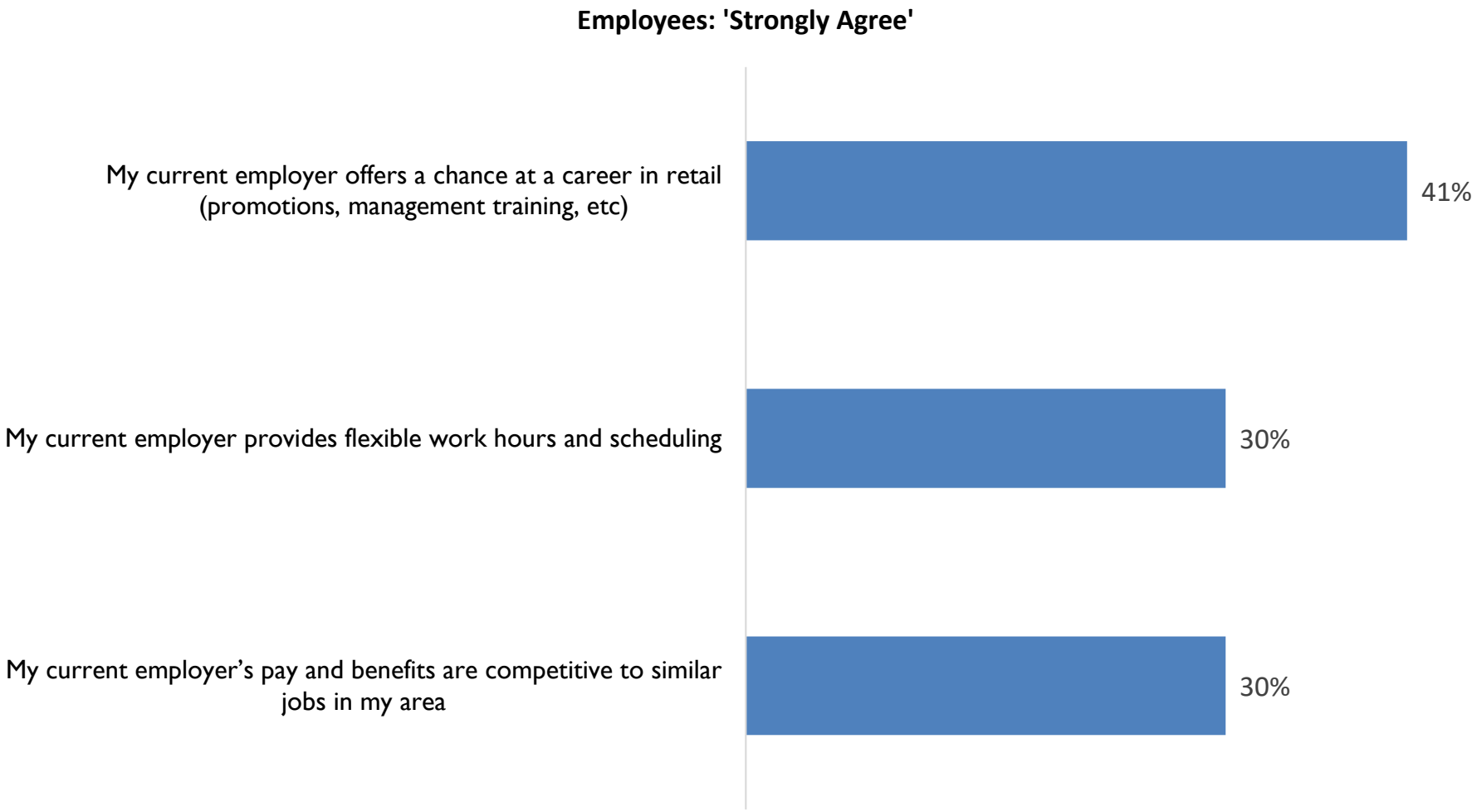
How important are the following to maximize store profitability?



Size Dramatically Affects What Employers Prioritize

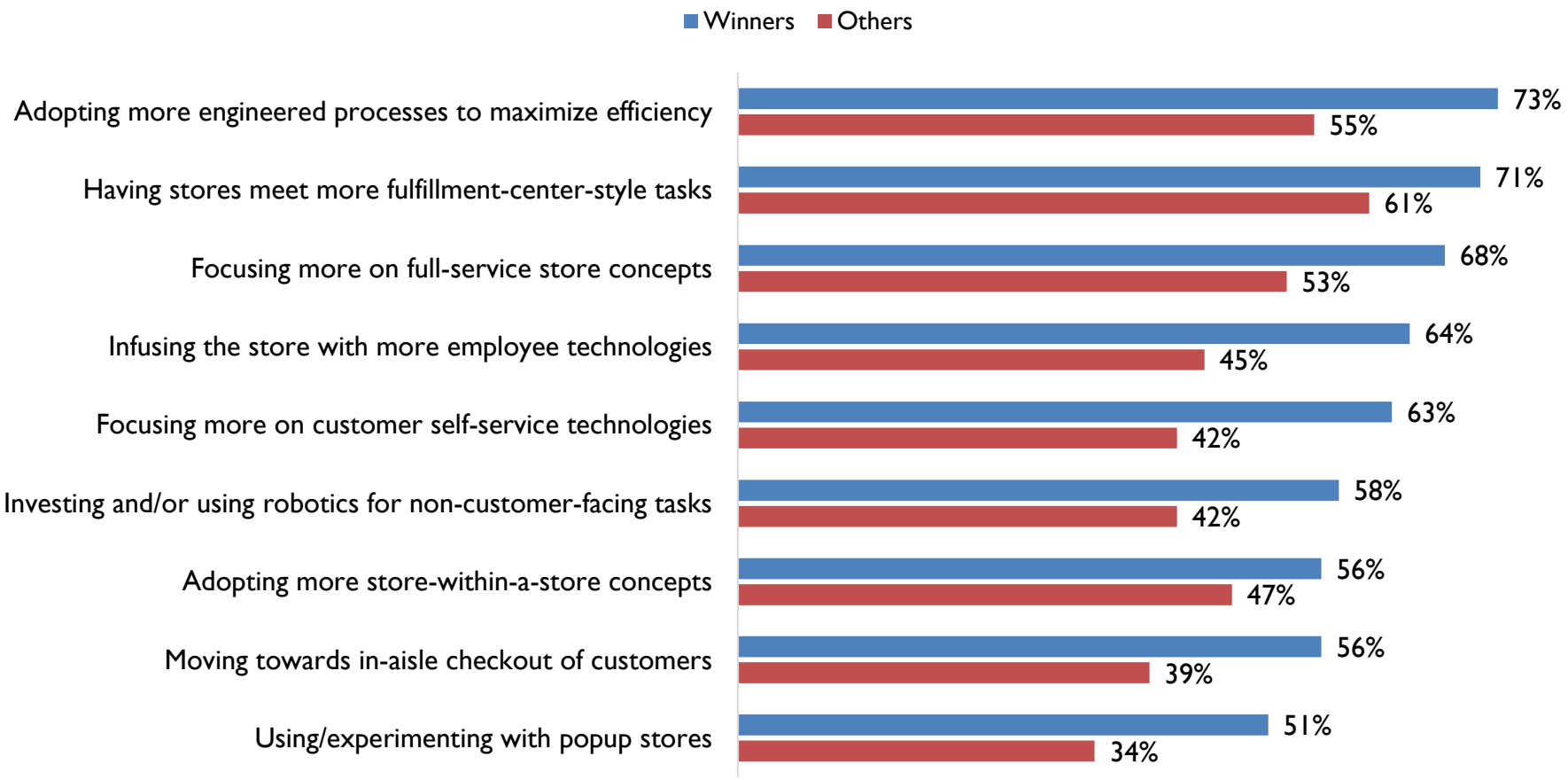


Associates Are *Far* From Hopeful For The Future

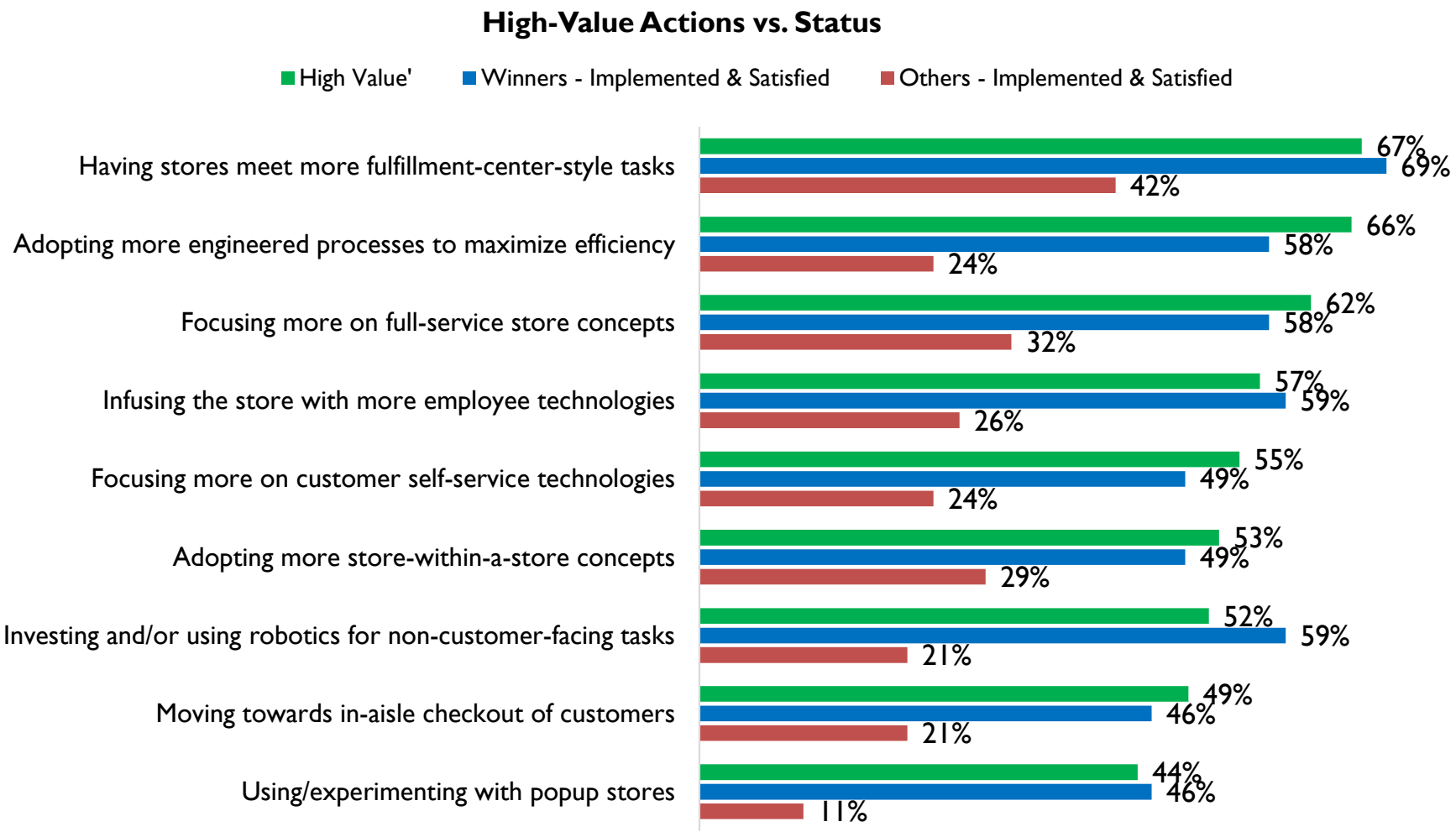


Winners Are Reliably Reliable

What is the value of each of the following actions to your company?
('High Value')



The Chart Of The Year (So Far)



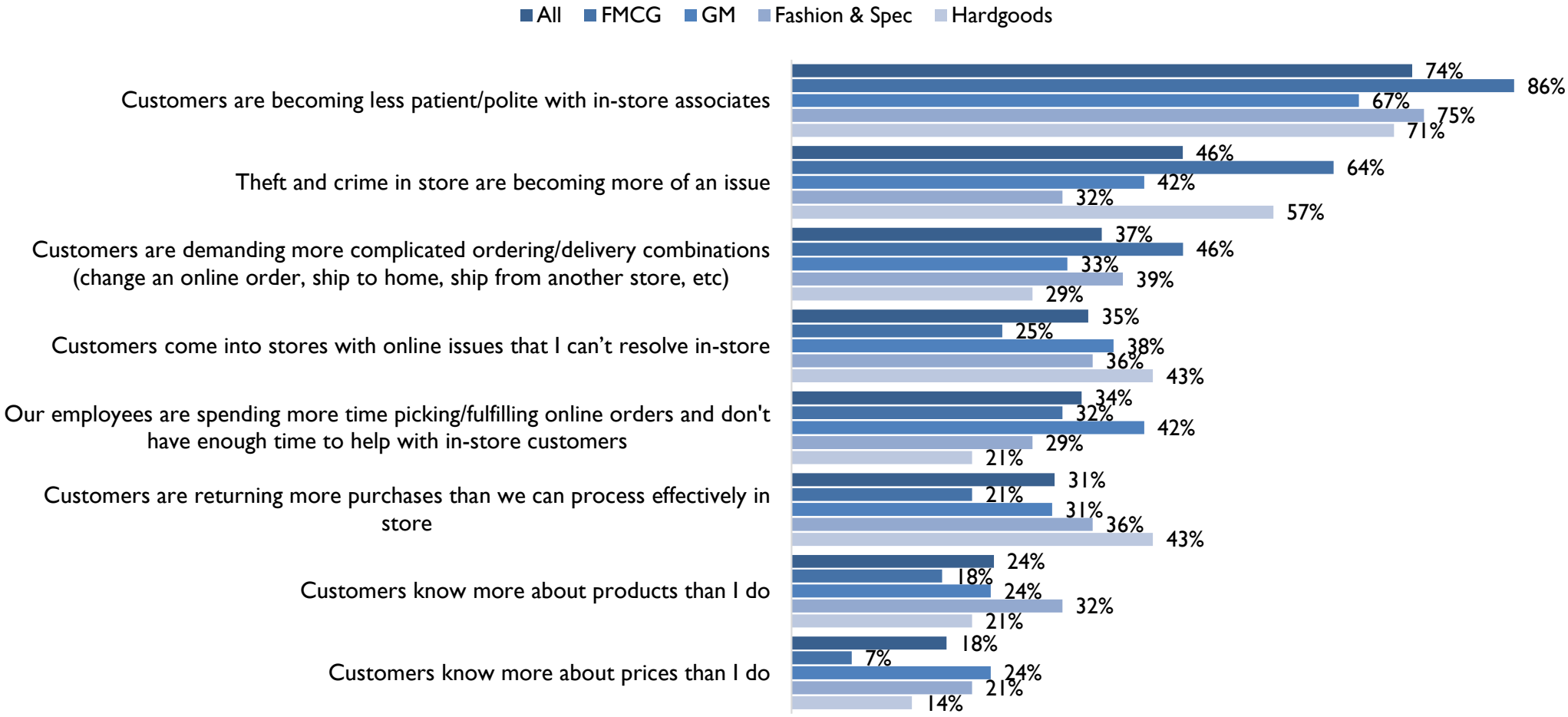


Business Challenges

For Retailers AND Their Frontline Associates

An Increasingly Hostile Environment

Employees: What are the TOP THREE (3) challenges you face daily on the store floor?



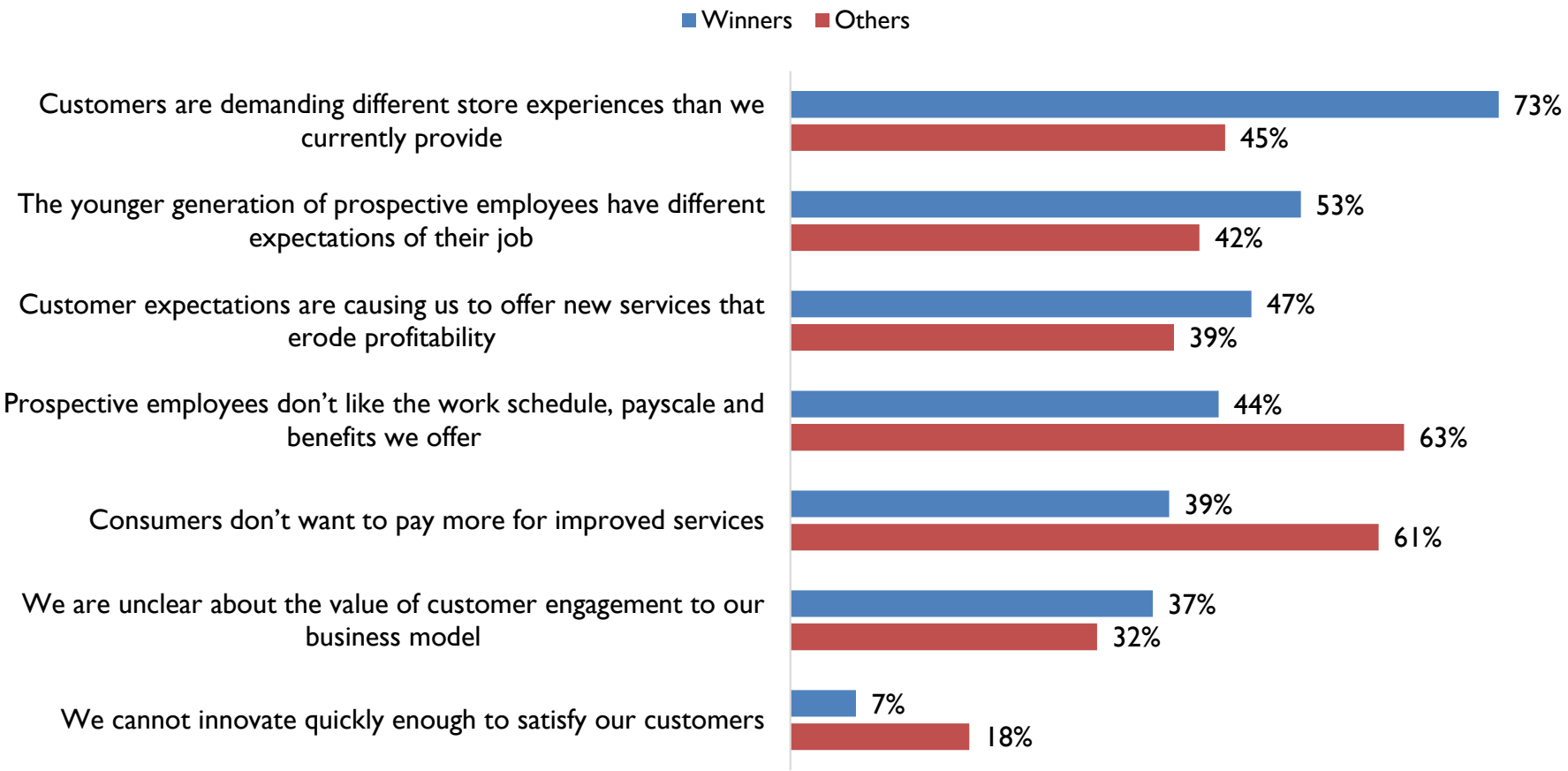
No One Is Happy About Prices... But Also…

Please identify the TOP THREE (3) external BUSINESS CHALLENGES you face in your retail stores:



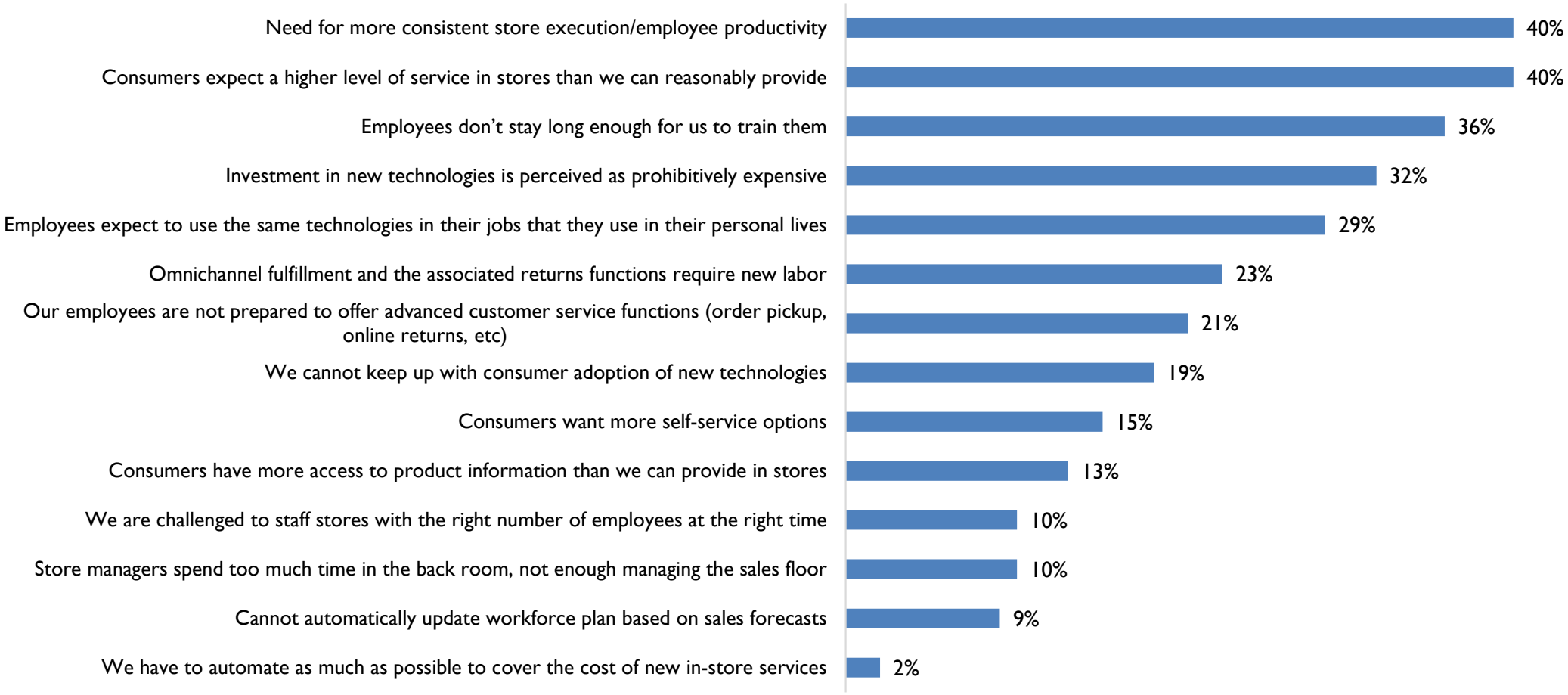
A Performance-Based View Of The Biggest Challenge In Store

What are the TOP THREE (3) BUSINESS CHALLENGES driving you to improve how the company manages its sales workforce?



More Is Needed On Both Sides

Please identify the TOP THREE (3) OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES to managing your store employees:



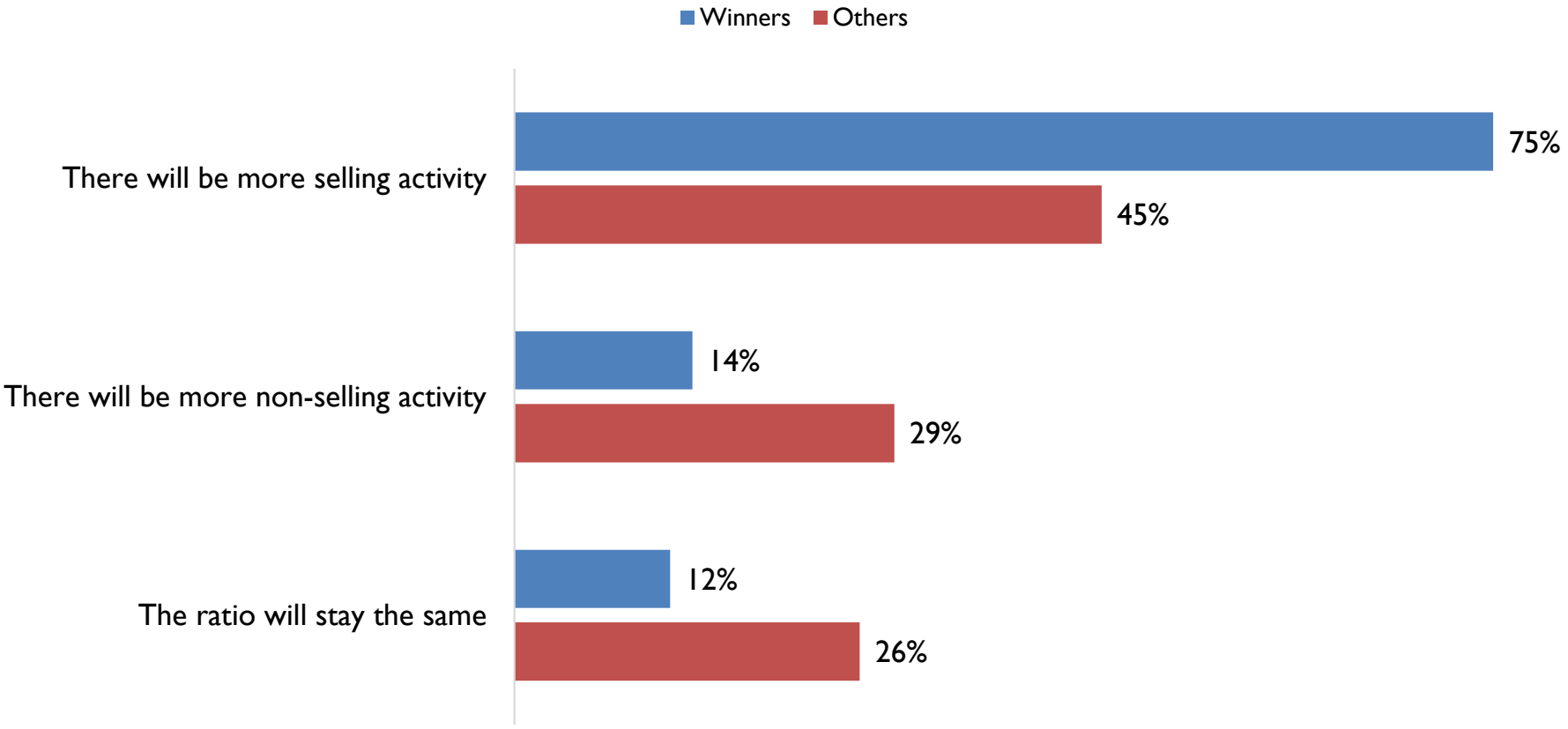


Opportunities

The Flip Side Of Business Challenges

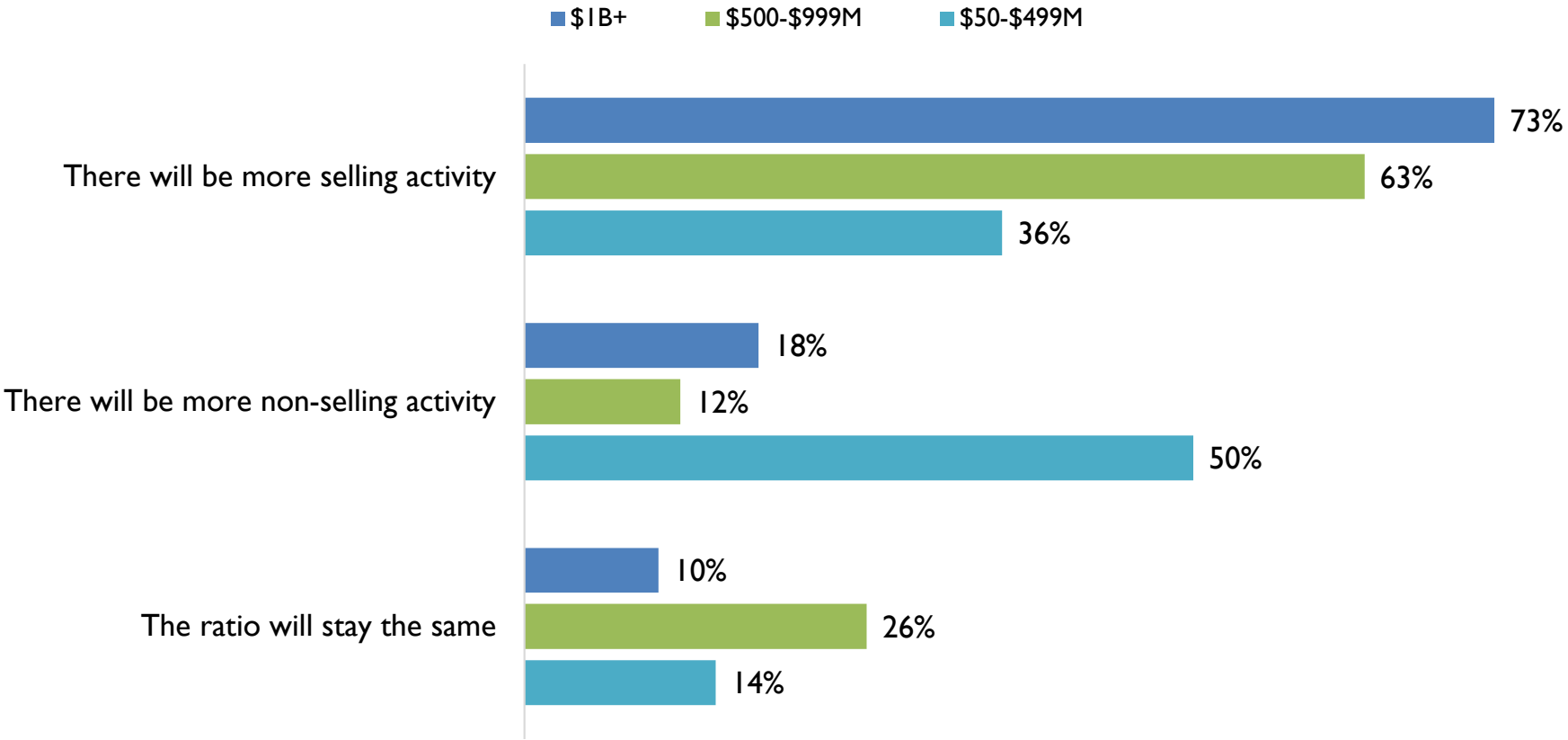
Winners More Hopeful

How do you expect the ratio between your selling (customer-facing) and non-selling employee activities (including fulfillment, returns, merchandising tasks, etc.) to change in the next 2 years?



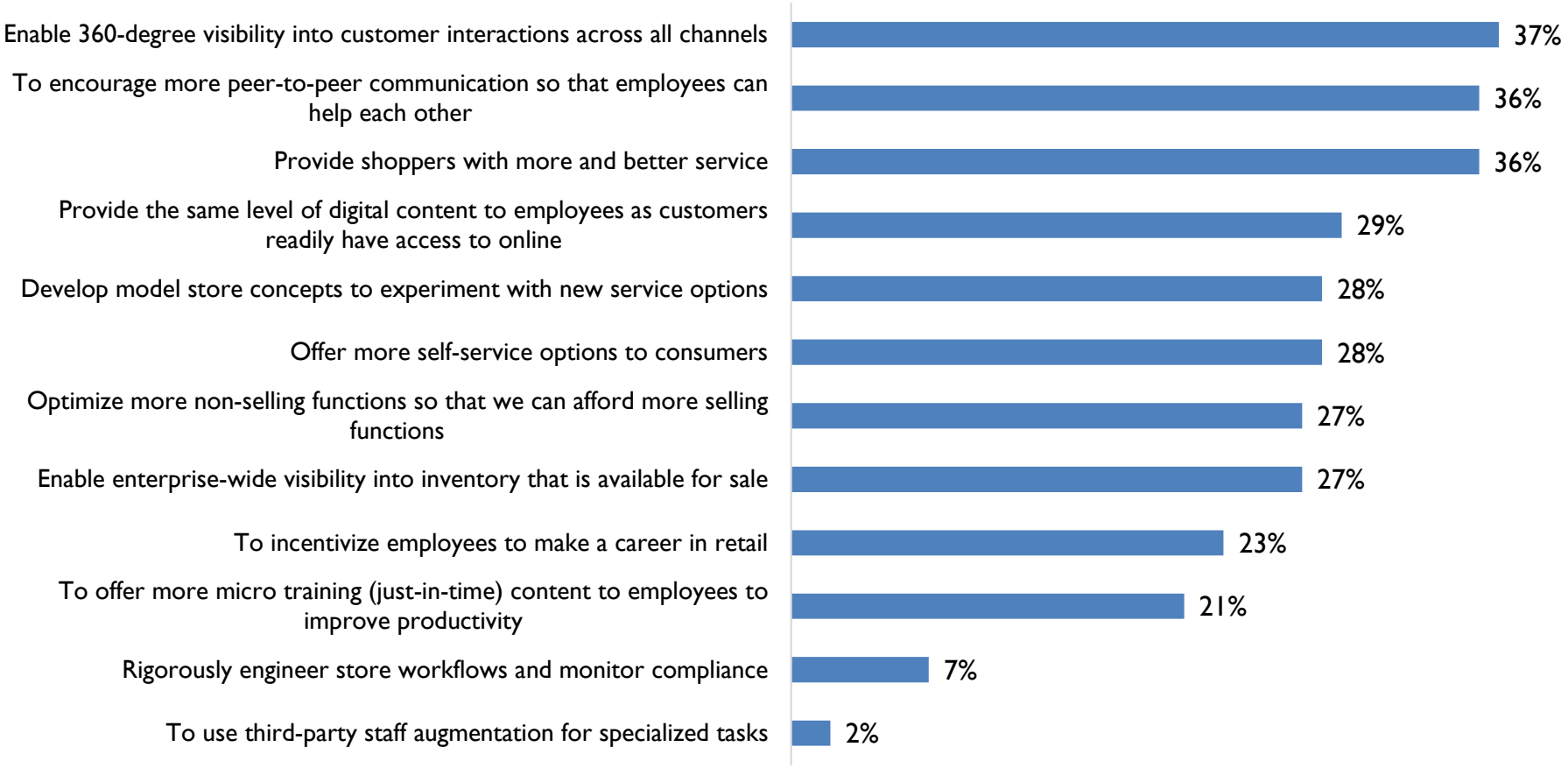
Tomorrow's Strategy Depends On Today's Market Share

How do you expect the ratio between your selling (customer-facing) and non-selling employee activities (including fulfillment, returns, merchandising tasks, etc.) to change in the next 2 years?



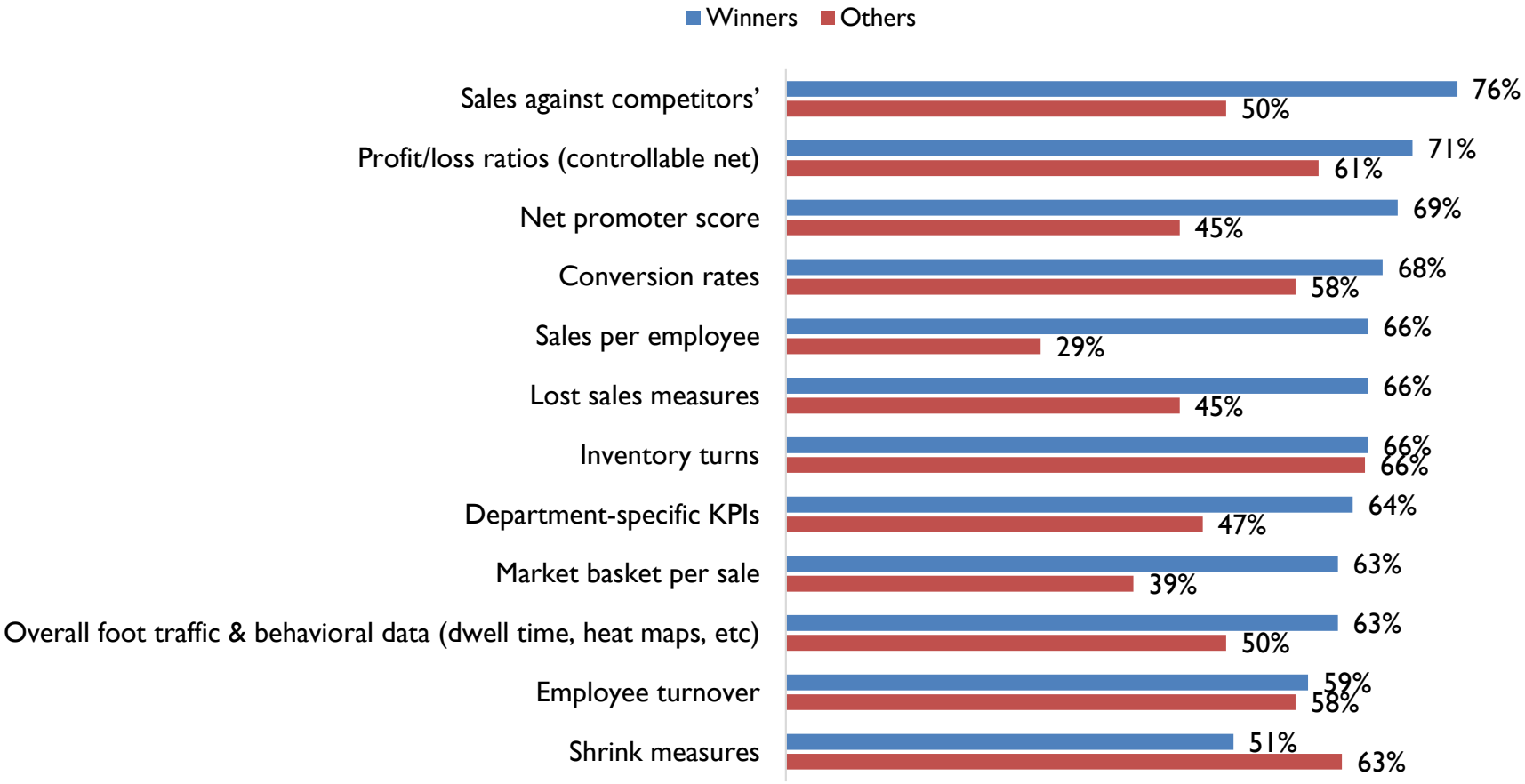
‘Empowerment’ Defined

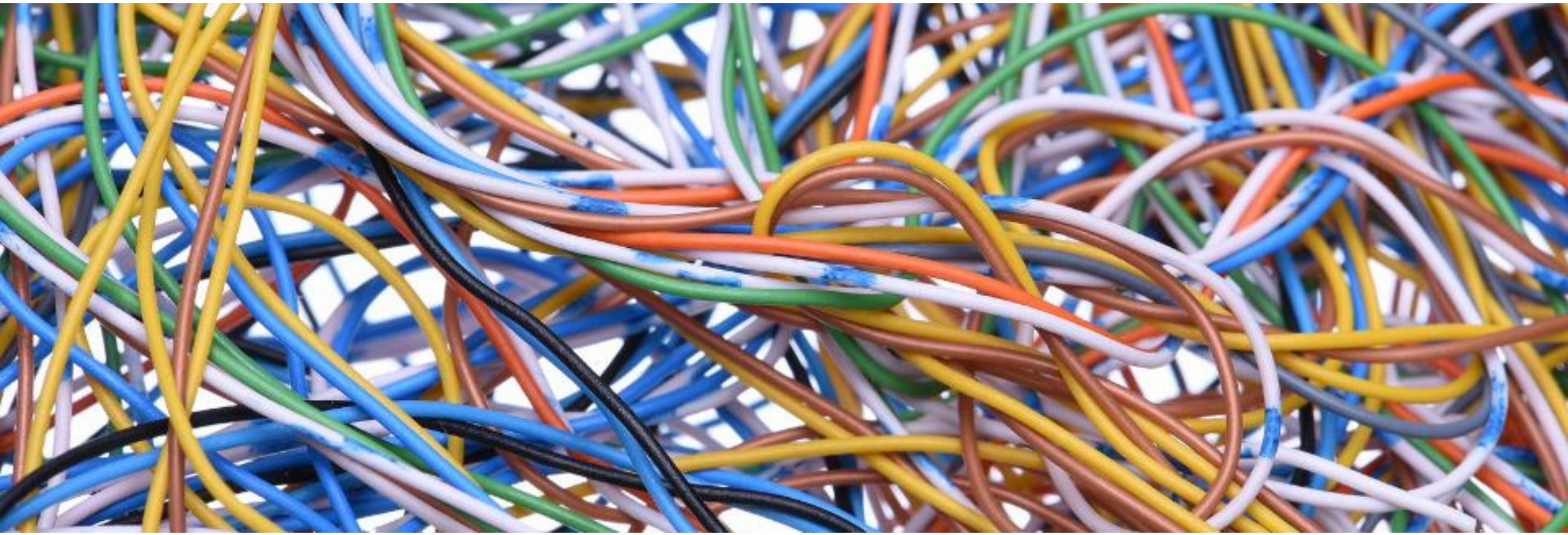
What are the TOP THREE (3) most important OPPORTUNITIES to improve store employee performance?



What Winning Looks Like

Beyond sales, how valuable are the following metrics to evaluate store performance? ('High Value')



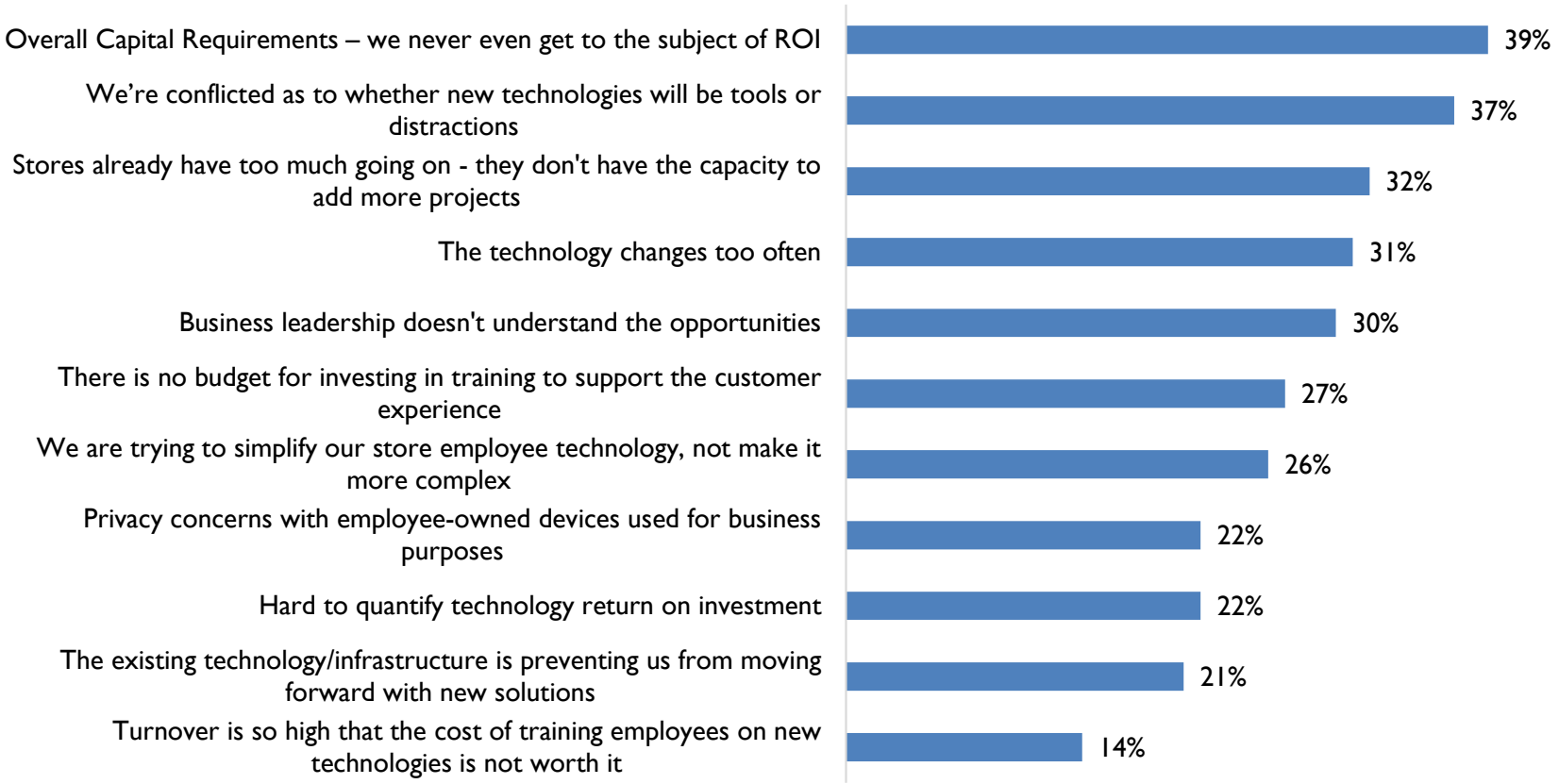


Organizational Inhibitors

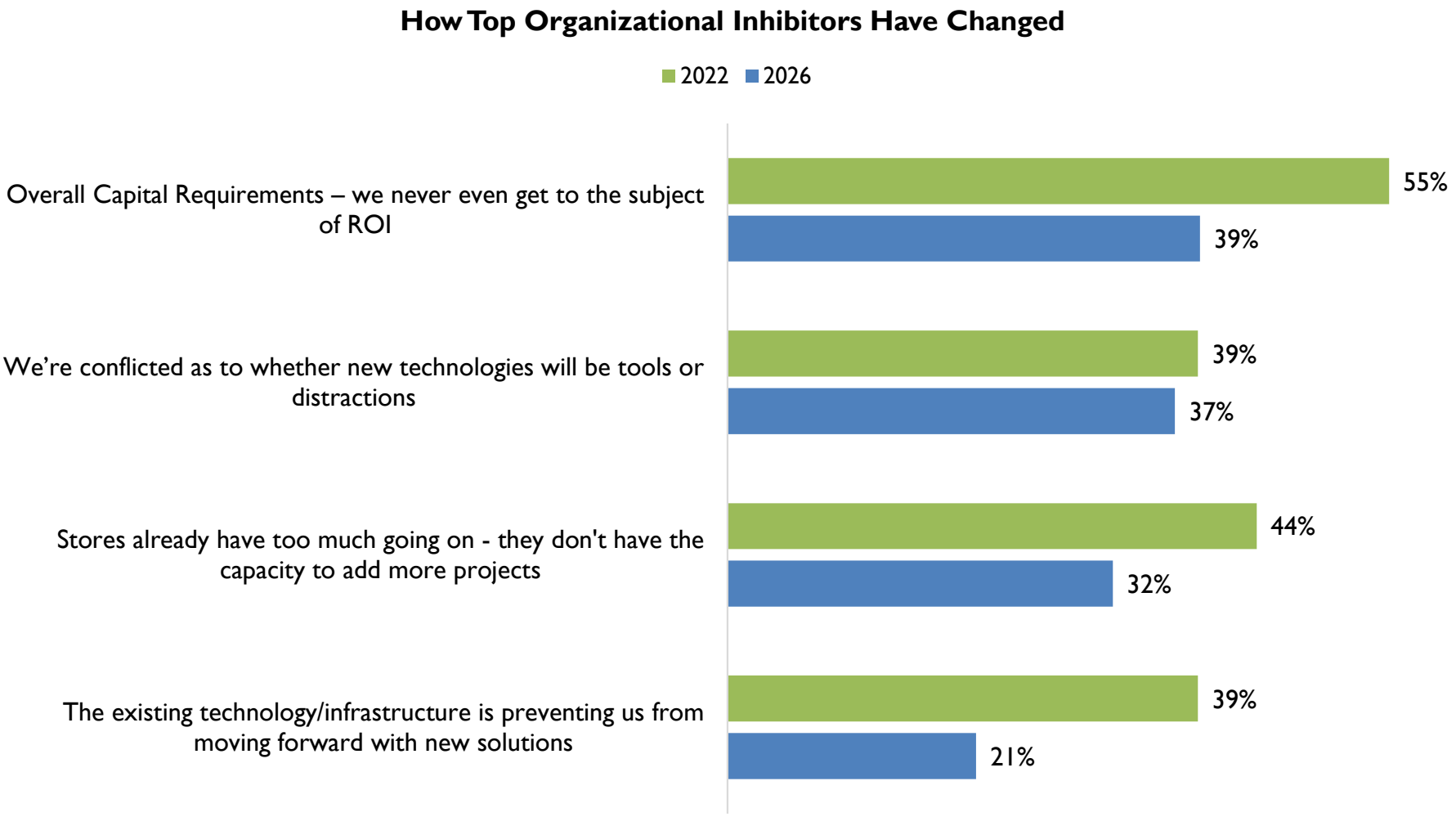
What Stands In The Way Of Progress?

Questions Remain

What are the TOP THREE (3) ORGANIZATIONAL INHIBITORS standing in the way of taking advantage of those opportunities?

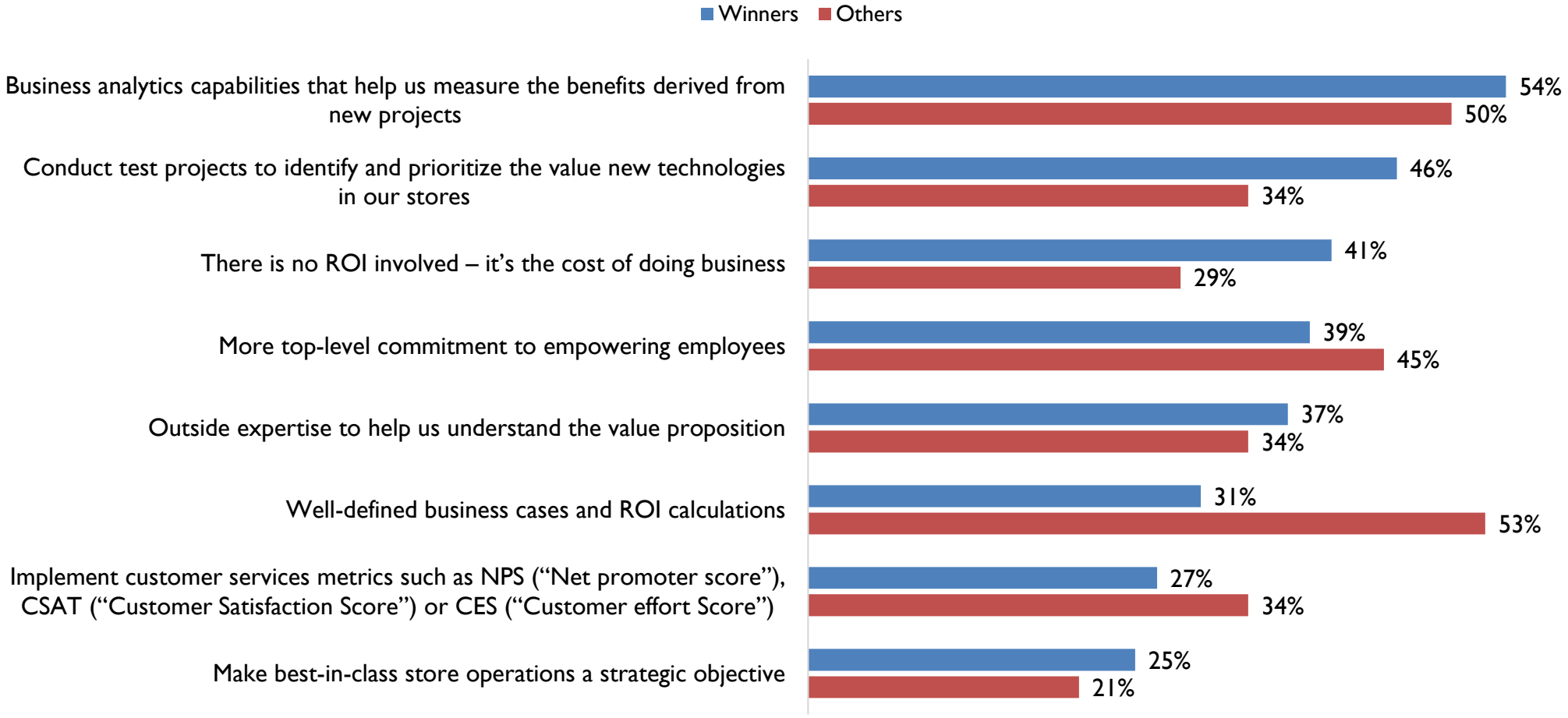


Slowly Coming Around



Trust, But Verify

Please choose the TOP THREE (3) ways to OVERCOME the organizational inhibitors you identified



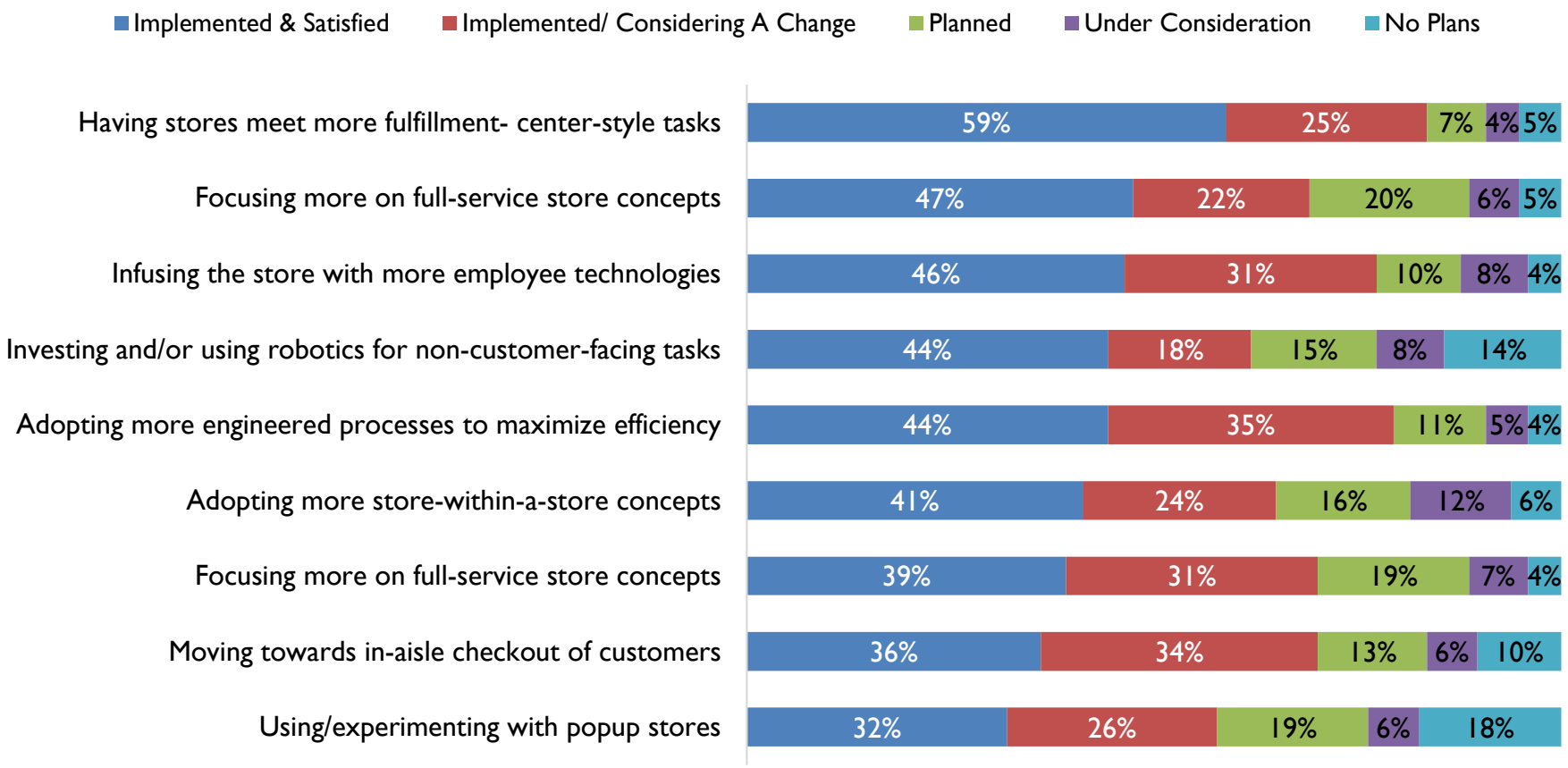


Technology Enablers

What Are The Technologies That Can Help Most?

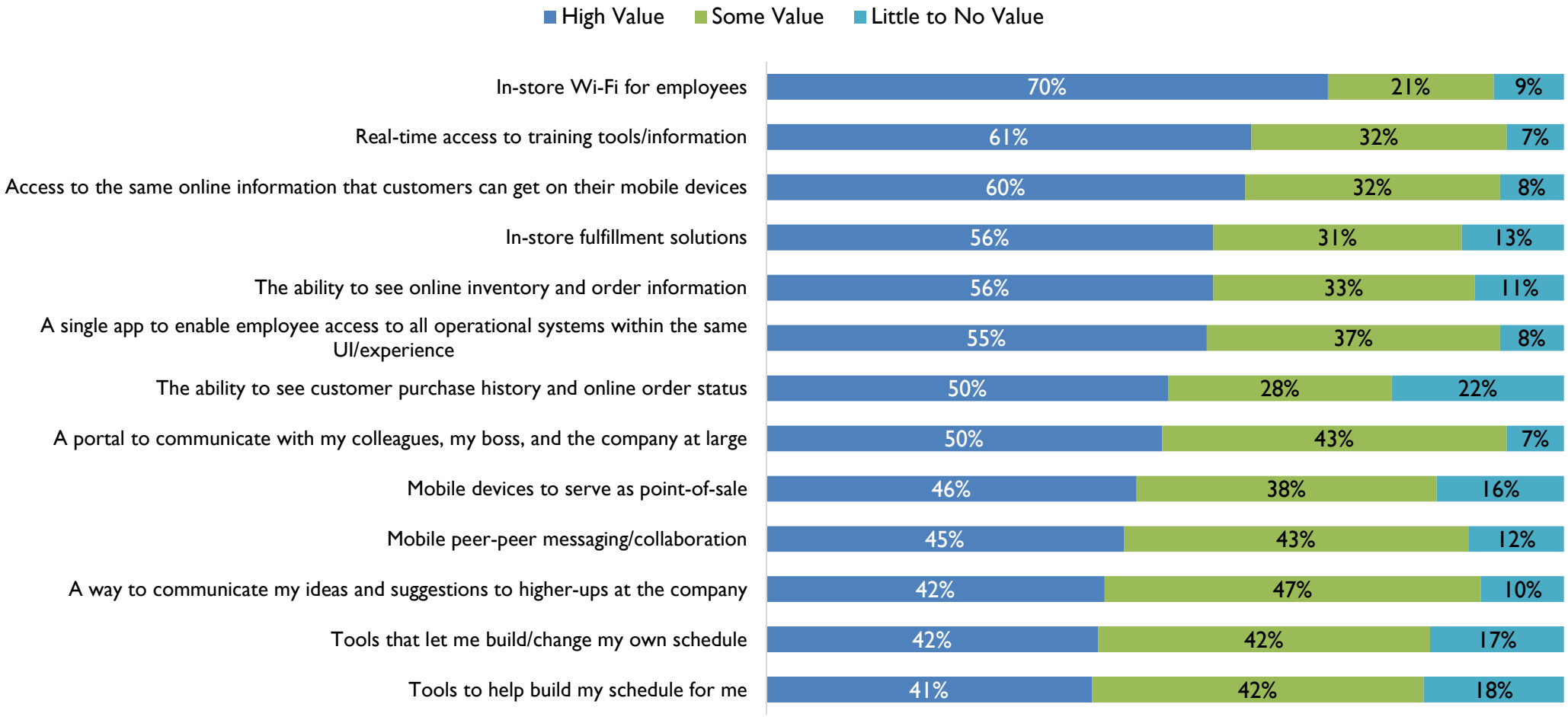
Progress Made – But Much More To Do

Please rate your adoption of the following:

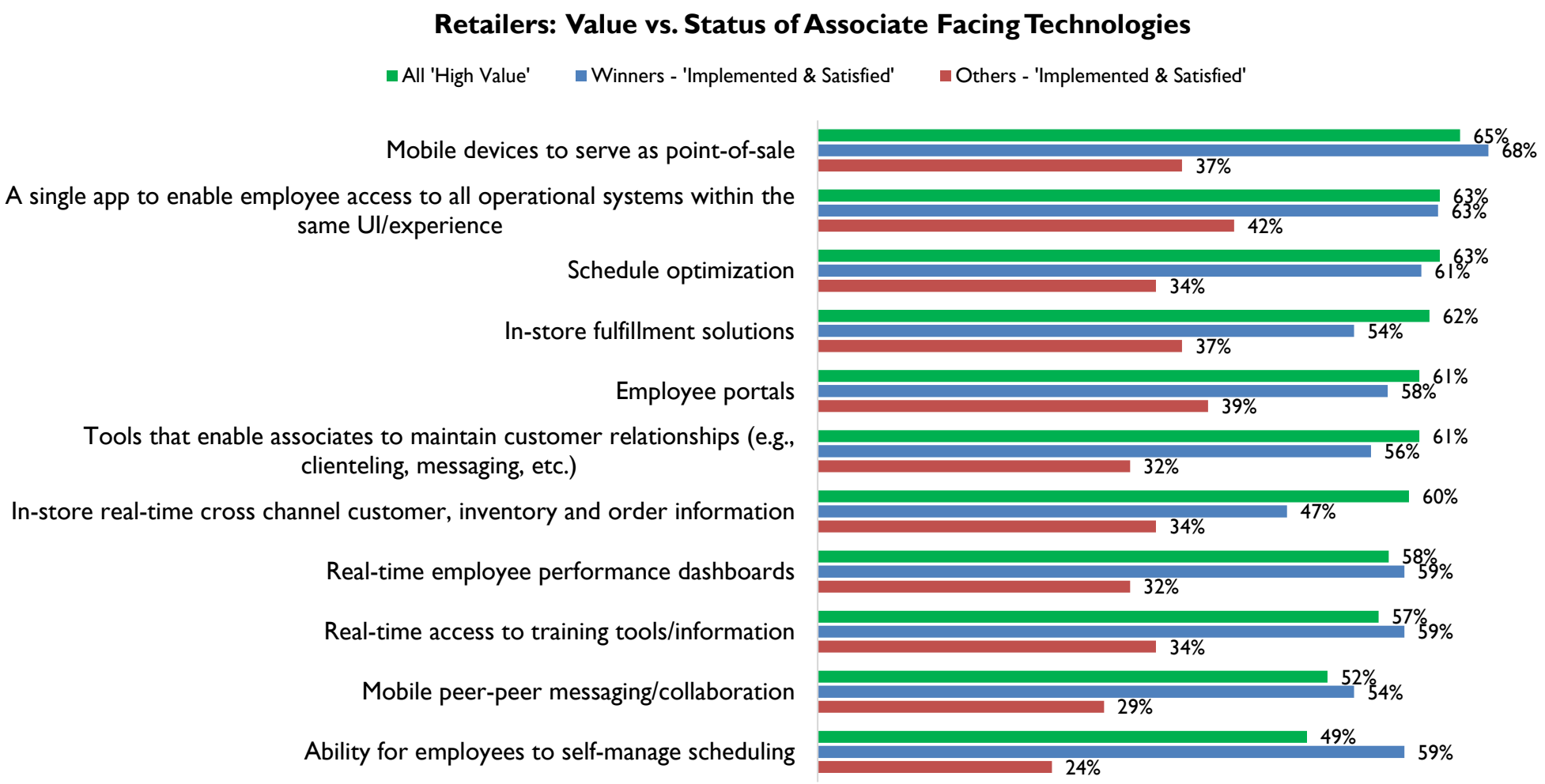


Tell Me What You Want

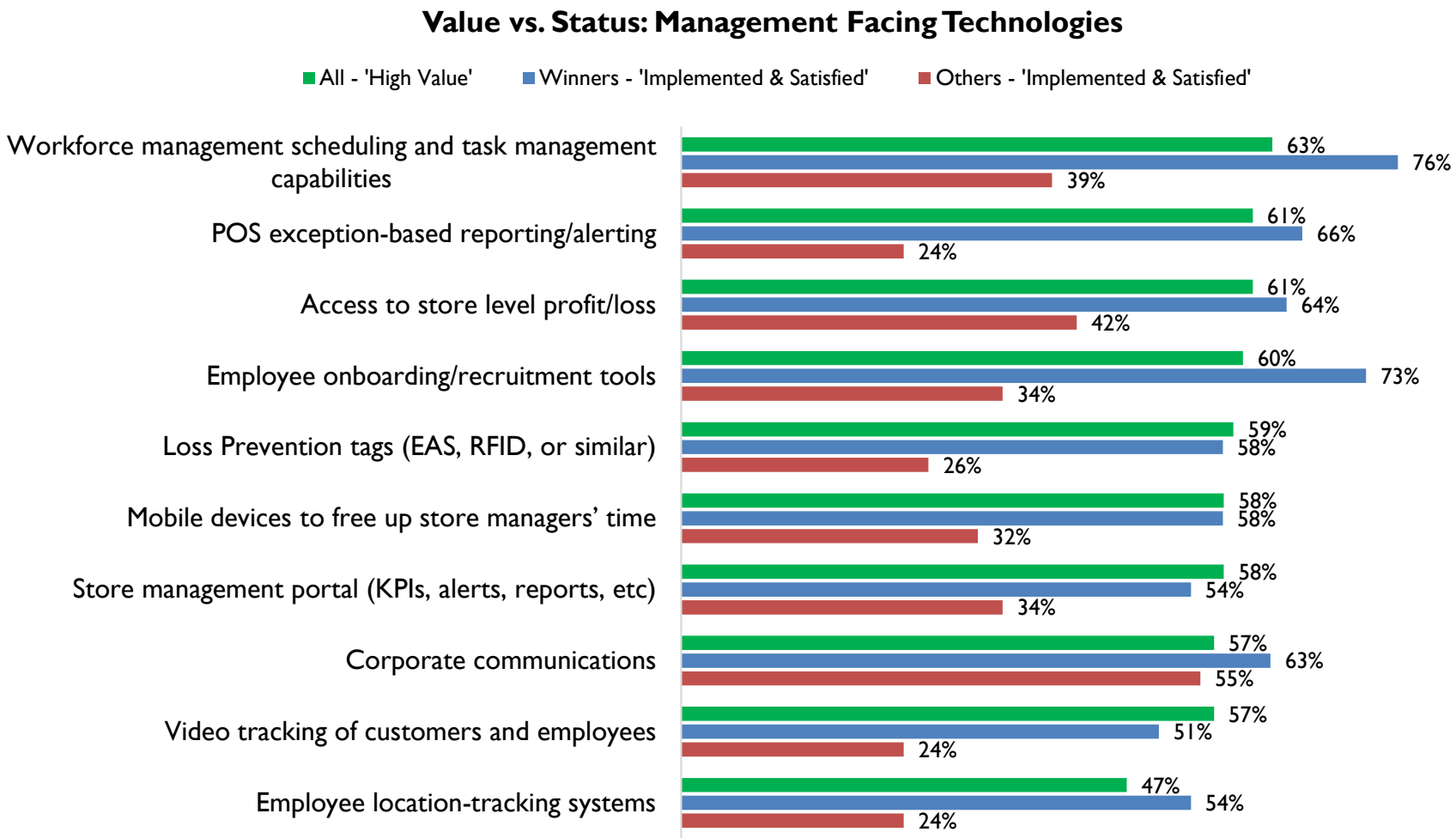
EMPLOYEES: Rate the POTENTIAL value of the following ASSOCIATE-facing technologies:



Top Associate-Facing Technologies



Hyper-Enabling Store Managers





BOOTstrap Recommendations

Baseline Suggestions For Every Retailer Under The Sun

Recommendations

- **Reframe Employees As Strategic Assets (Not Labor Costs)**
  - Shift leadership mindset from “labor optimization” to “associate enablement”
  - Create visible career pathways (management training, certifications, promotions)
  - Improve communication around growth opportunities
  - Tie store success metrics to associate engagement and development

- **Deliver True 360° Customer Visibility In Stores**
  - Implement unified customer profiles accessible in-store
  - Provide real-time cross-channel inventory visibility
  - Enable mobile tools for associates to access online browsing history (where consented)
  - Integrate CRM, POS, and order management into a single interface

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Recommendations (Part 2)

- **Invest In WiFi & Mobile-First Infrastructure**
  - Upgrade in-store WiFi reliability and bandwidth
  - Equip associates with mobile devices (scalable rollout)
  - Consolidate systems into a single associate app/UI
  - Enable mobile POS where appropriate

- **Automate Non-Selling Tasks To Free Up Associates**
  - Improve per-store forecasting and demand planning, and tie store labor plans to anticipated sales
  - Improve real-time inventory accuracy tools
  - Optimize workforce scheduling and task management

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Recommendations (Part 3)

- **Prioritize Service As A Differentiator**
  - Train associates in consultative selling
  - Equip them with product knowledge tools
  - Make service excellence the brand promise
  - Recondition customers to engage associates rather than default to mobile devices
- **Shift Metrics To What Actually Drives Winning**
  - Align KPIs around experience-driven performance
  - Measure empowerment impact
  - Track sales-support vs selling ratios
  - Tie manager incentives to customer and associate outcomes
- **Build a Culture of Experimentation**
  - Establish store-level innovation pilots
  - Budget for experimentation
  - Encourage managers to test new workflows
  - Shorten decision cycles for technology adoption

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info@rsrresearch.com

Thank You

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To read the full report: https://www.rsrresearch.com/research/the-state-of-the-retail-workforce

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