

PULSE REPORT FOR HUMAN RESOURCES

Virtual Assistant Strategies for Today's Hybrid Workforce

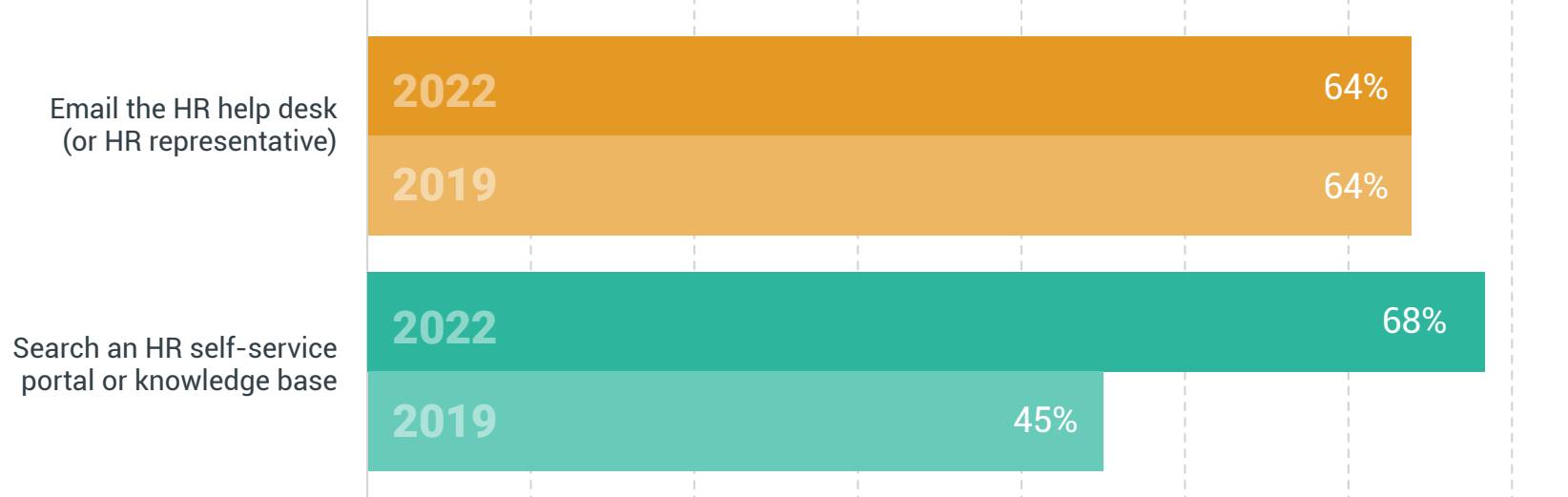
In "Gartner Predicts 2021: Artificial Intelligence in Enterprise Applications" published in December 2020, Gartner included a strategic planning assumption that by 2023, three-quarters of HR service management inquiries will be initiated through conversational platforms. That makes sense in a hybrid world where employees need answers 24/7 and where they expect consumer-like apps to provide them with the help that they need. The pandemic created a hybrid workforce that is here to stay, accelerating the need for delivering automated self-help experiences to improve both employee productivity and satisfaction.

Espressivo was curious how far HR has gone in automating employee self-help, and so we teamed with Gatepoint Research to survey senior human resources decision makers across a broad range of industries to find out.

Despite the increased demands of the hybrid workforce for getting immediate help, employees are still using traditional channels to reach HR – even more so in 2022 vs. 2019.

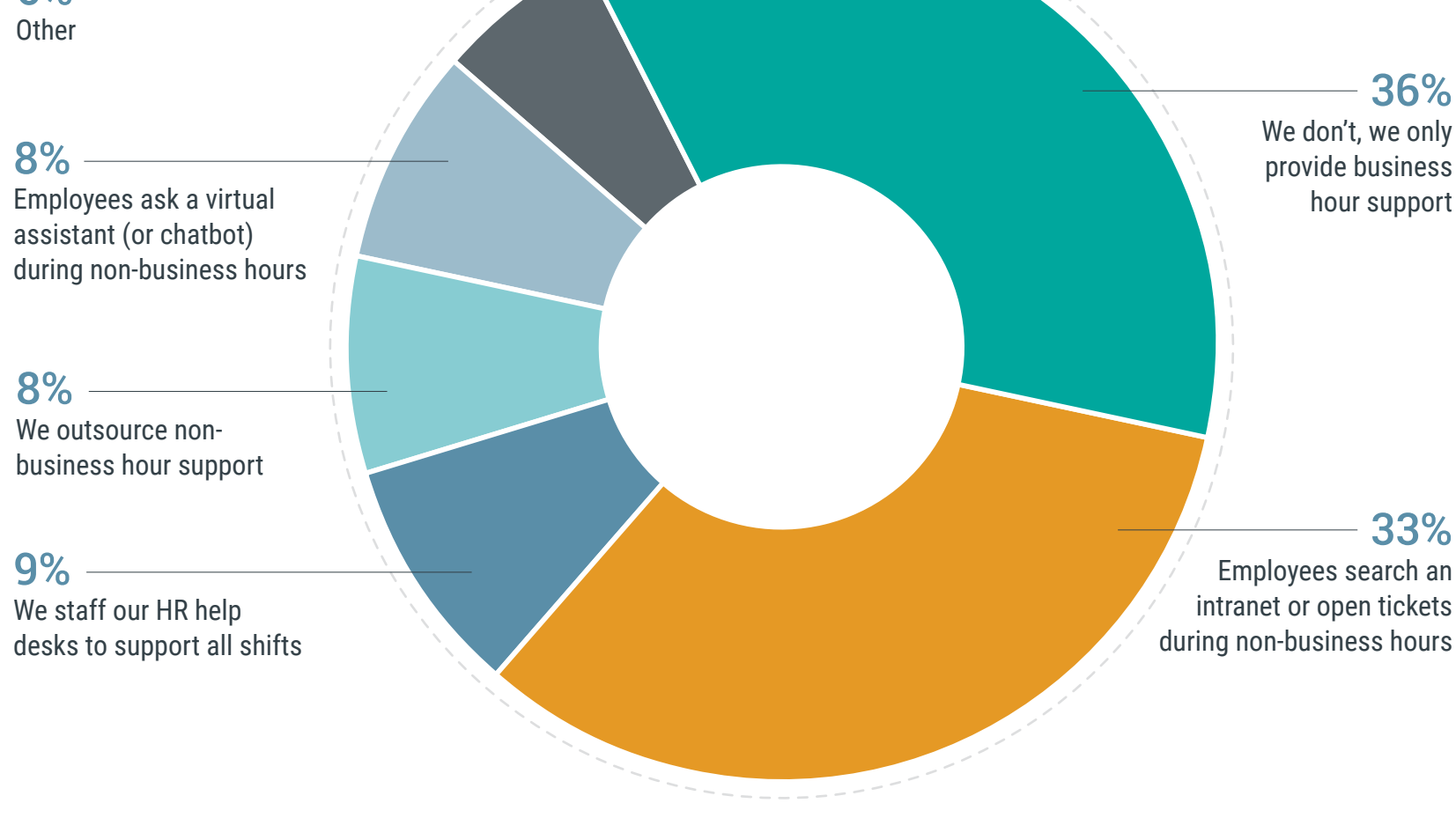
The top three channels used by employees to get HR help hasn't changed in the past three years – employees still call, search a portal, or send an email. While the channels remain the same, there was a dramatic shift with portal usage going from 45% to 68%. This shift in dependance on HR portals puts an added burden on HR subject matter experts to continuously write and update knowledge articles.

How do employees get answers to HR questions today?



The trend toward portal usage is likely being driven by remote employees who must balance their personal and work lives, so they often work outside of traditional business hours. According to the survey, 69% of organizations don't provide off hours support, leaving employees to search a portal or wait for the next business day.

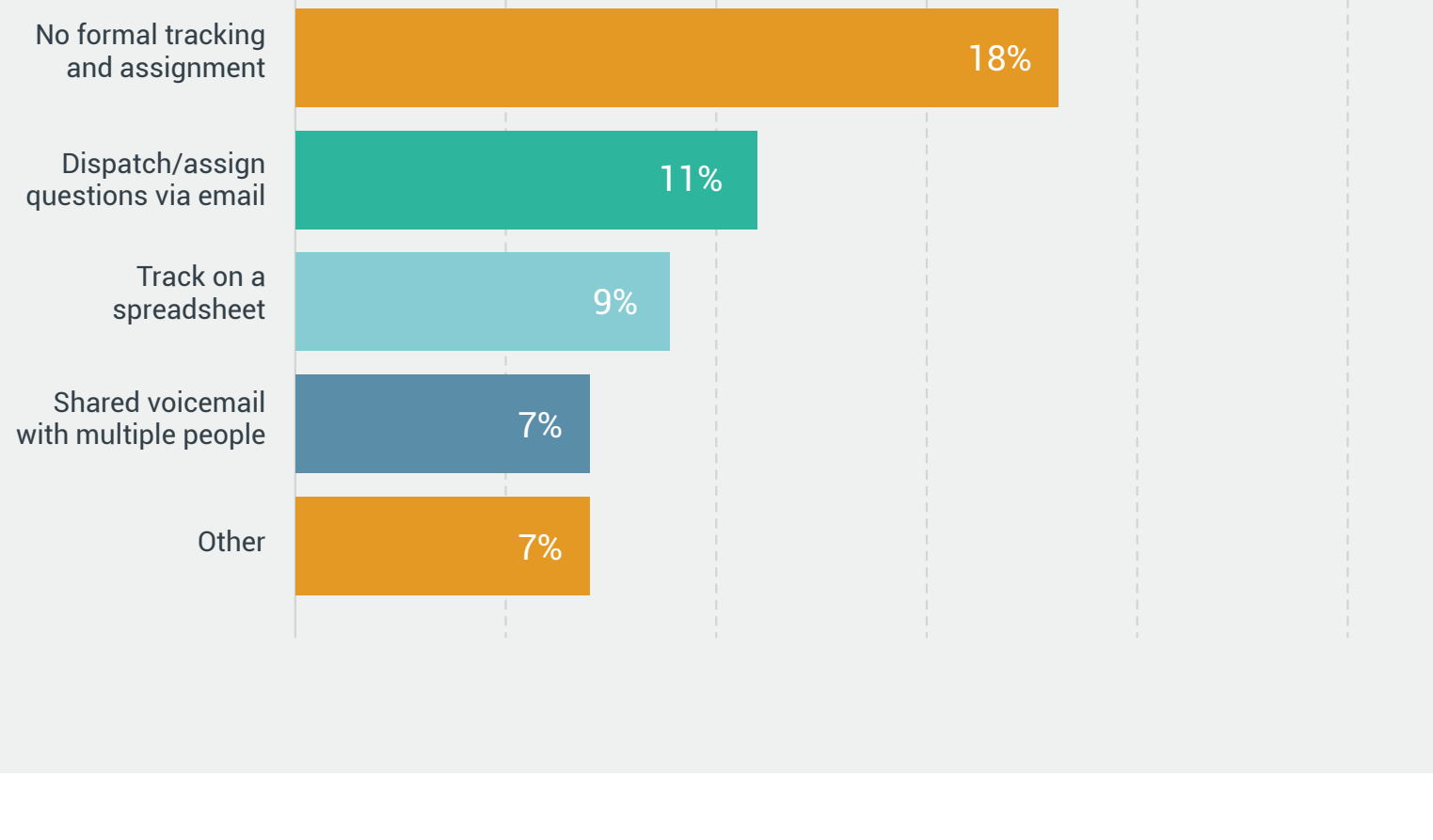
How are you providing 24/7 HR support?



The issue with employees calling and emailing HR for help is the large number of resources required to handle inquiries, compounded by the fact that many HR teams do not have an efficient way to manage inquiries via a formal ticketing tool.

While 56% of respondents stated they have a formal ticketing tool (such as ServiceNow, Freshdesk, or MyHR) to track and assign employee questions, 44% do not. That group manages inquiries using a combination of shared email and voicemail inboxes, tracking on spreadsheets, and assigning questions via email.

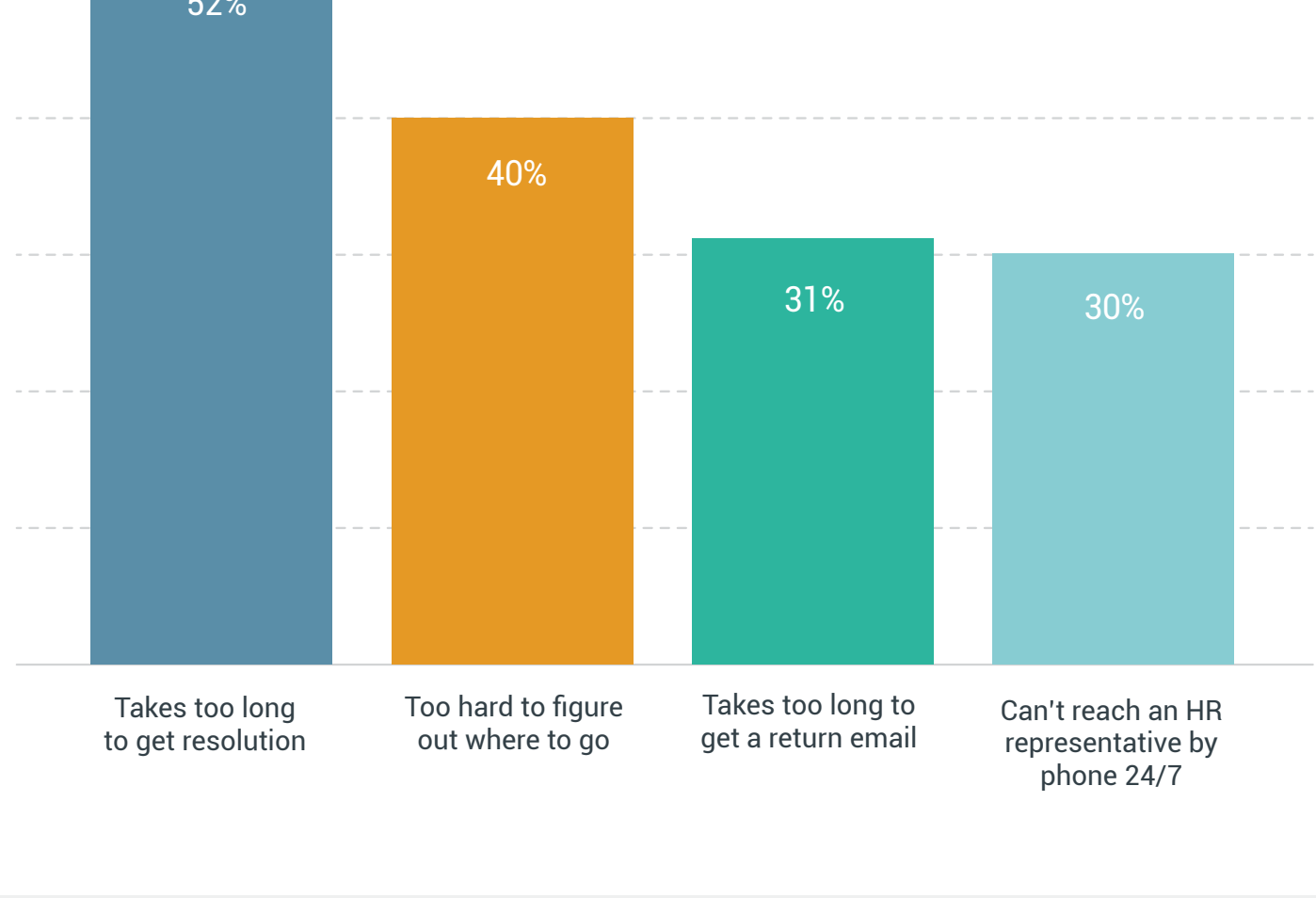
If you do not use a formal ticketing tool, how do you track and assign employee questions and requests?



Employees are used to apps in their consumer lives that make it easy to get help, and they expect that experience at work too. When they don't get it, they are frustrated and lose productivity.

Over half of employees complain that it takes too long to get resolution, followed by 40% that can't figure out where to go for help. Their complaints reveal that email, portals, and phone support are not meeting their needs.

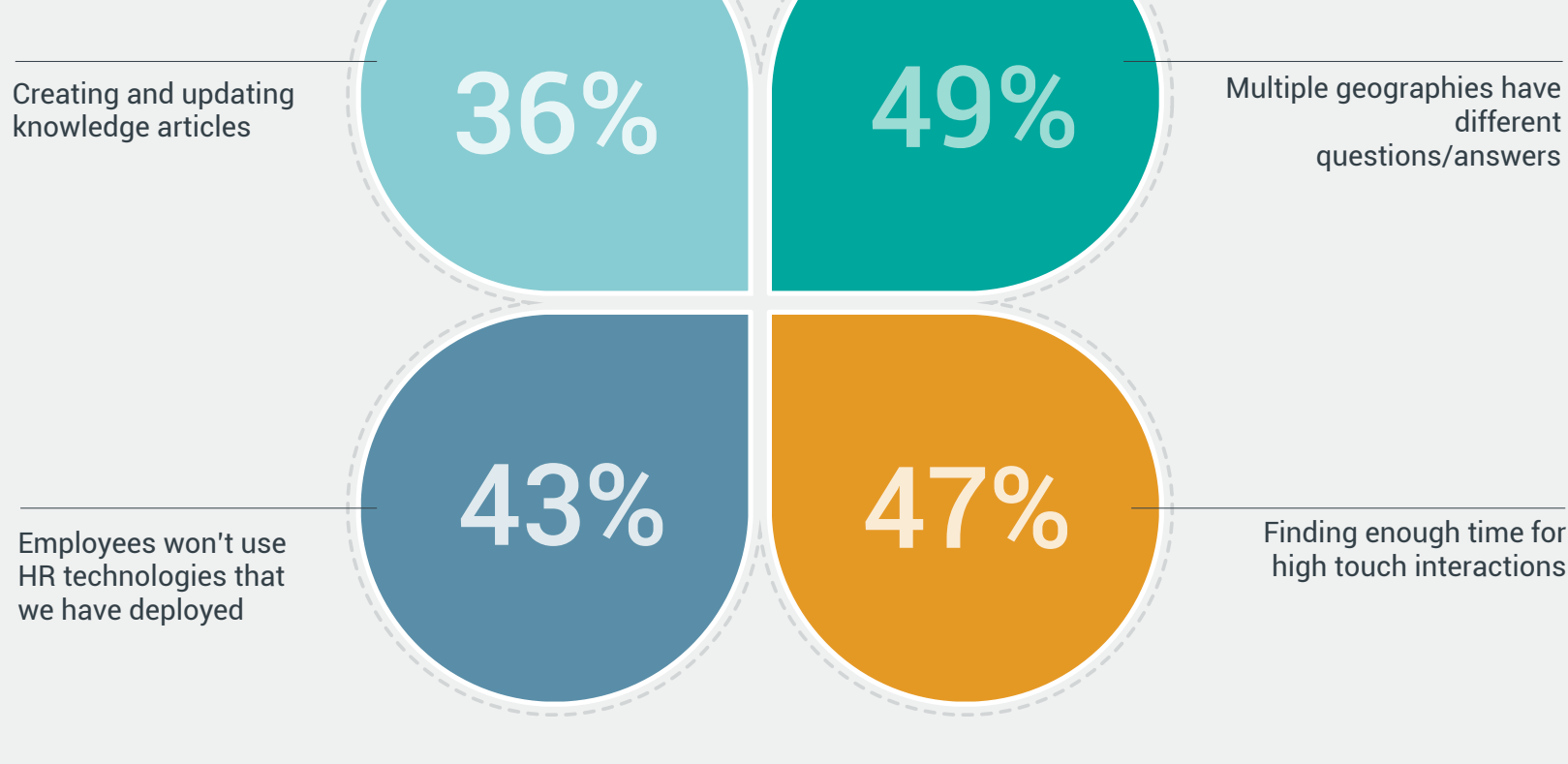
What are the biggest complaints you hear from employees about getting HR support?



HR teams face many challenges with providing answers to employees, yet when HR deploys technologies to try to solve these challenges, many cite that employees won't use them.

Keeping up with different HR issues and questions from one geography to another is what challenges the most respondents at 49%. This is making it hard for 47% of respondents to find enough time for high touch interactions. While 36% find it difficult to create and update knowledge articles, 43% are frustrated because employees won't use the HR technologies they have deployed. This might explain why it appears that HR teams have been slower to adopt conversational platforms than Gartner predicted.

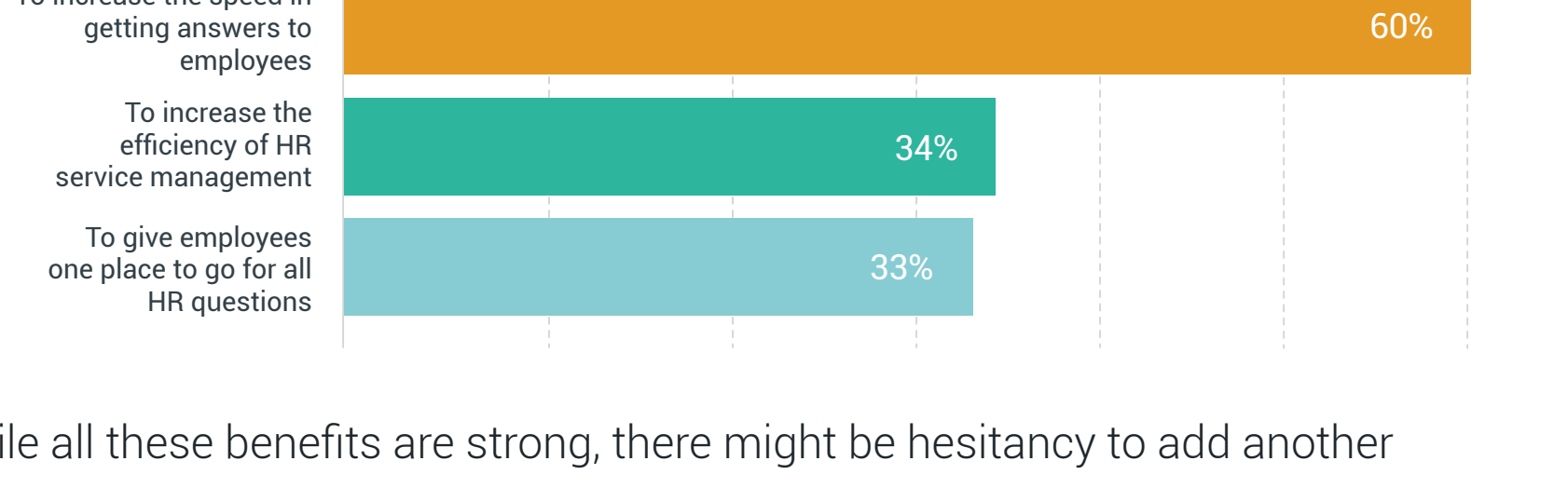
What top challenges do you face providing answers to HR questions?



There are significant benefits to deploying a conversational platform for both employees and the HR team. Yet not enough are doing it. Why?

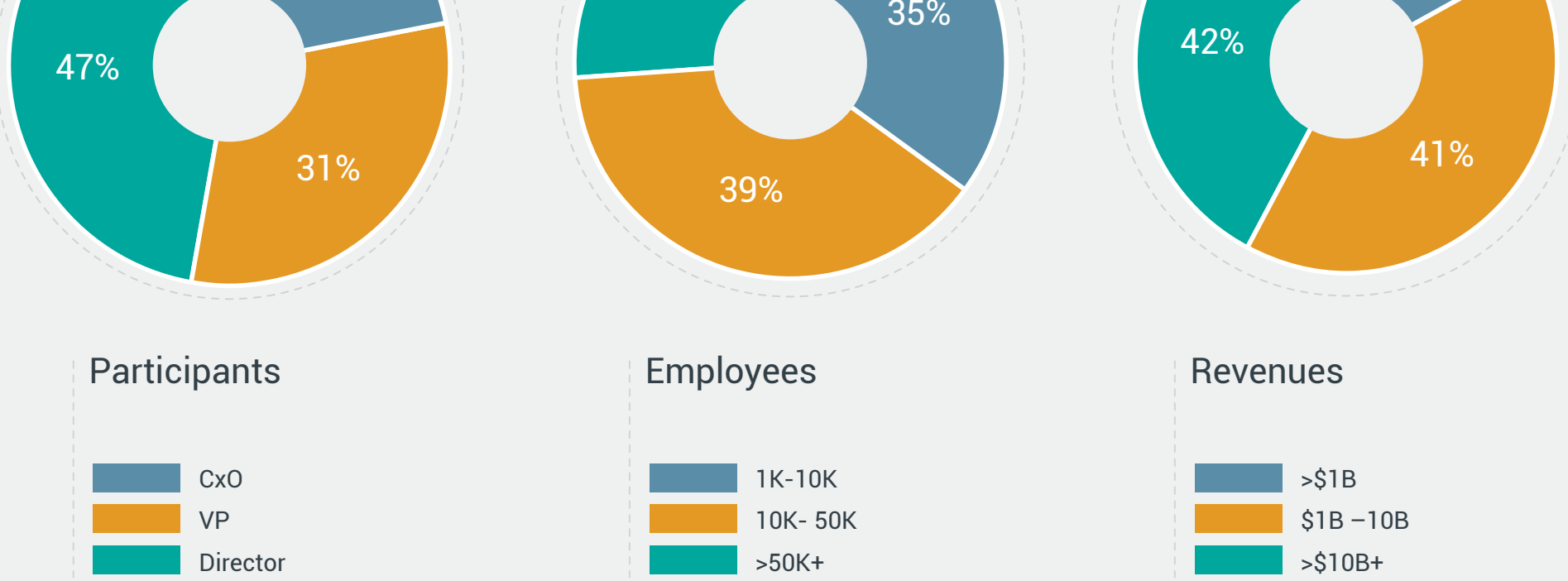
Respondents cite four top benefits to deploying a conversational platform: (1) improved employee experience; (2) increased speed in getting answers to employees; (3) increased service management efficiency; and (4) one place for employees to go for answers.

What are the top reasons that you would consider deploying a virtual assistant.



While all these benefits are strong, there might be hesitancy to add another technology if 43% of employees are not using the ones that are already deployed. The good news is that a virtual employee assistant will improve the use of all HR technology by integrating with those technologies and then providing a single consumer-like interface to employees. This alleviates the concern of employees not knowing where to go for help while delivering an ROI on all HR technology investments. At the same time, a virtual employee assistant will improve employee productivity and satisfaction through their ability to get immediate, personalized answers for HR questions and issues.

Respondent Breakdown



Data collection: Feb-May 2022
 Respondents: Respondents: 101 HR decision makers