

The Power of Professional Certification

An AXELOS publication



Foreword

Why is certification important?
Do organizations still value certification?
What about practitioners?

At AXELOS, our mission is to co-create quality best practice, and to ensure our communities understand what we've created and can apply it in their working environments. We believe that the value we create is increased when the knowledge is quantified.

Traditionally, the best way to quantify knowledge is to ask the learner to pass an exam, and to award them a certificate that shows they understand what they learned.

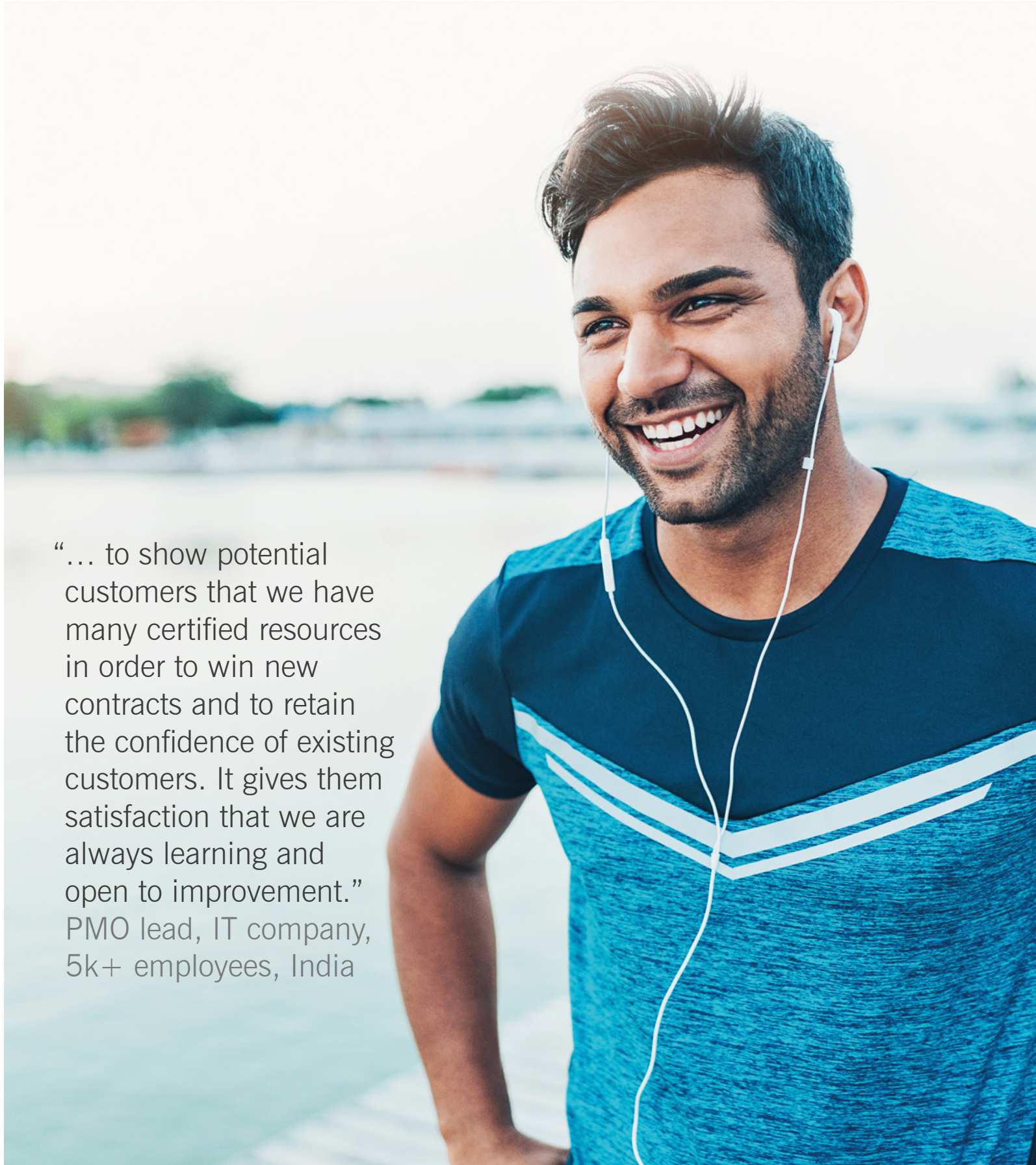
But is that still the case? Is certification still a valuable indicator of the assimilation of knowledge? Do organizations and individuals still value a piece of paper (or digital badge) as a sign that the individual can do a job? Is certification still a significant waymark on the path to learning?

These are the questions we sought answers to. And here's the spoiler: yes, certification is still important.

This report explains why.



Mark Basham,
CEO, AXELOS

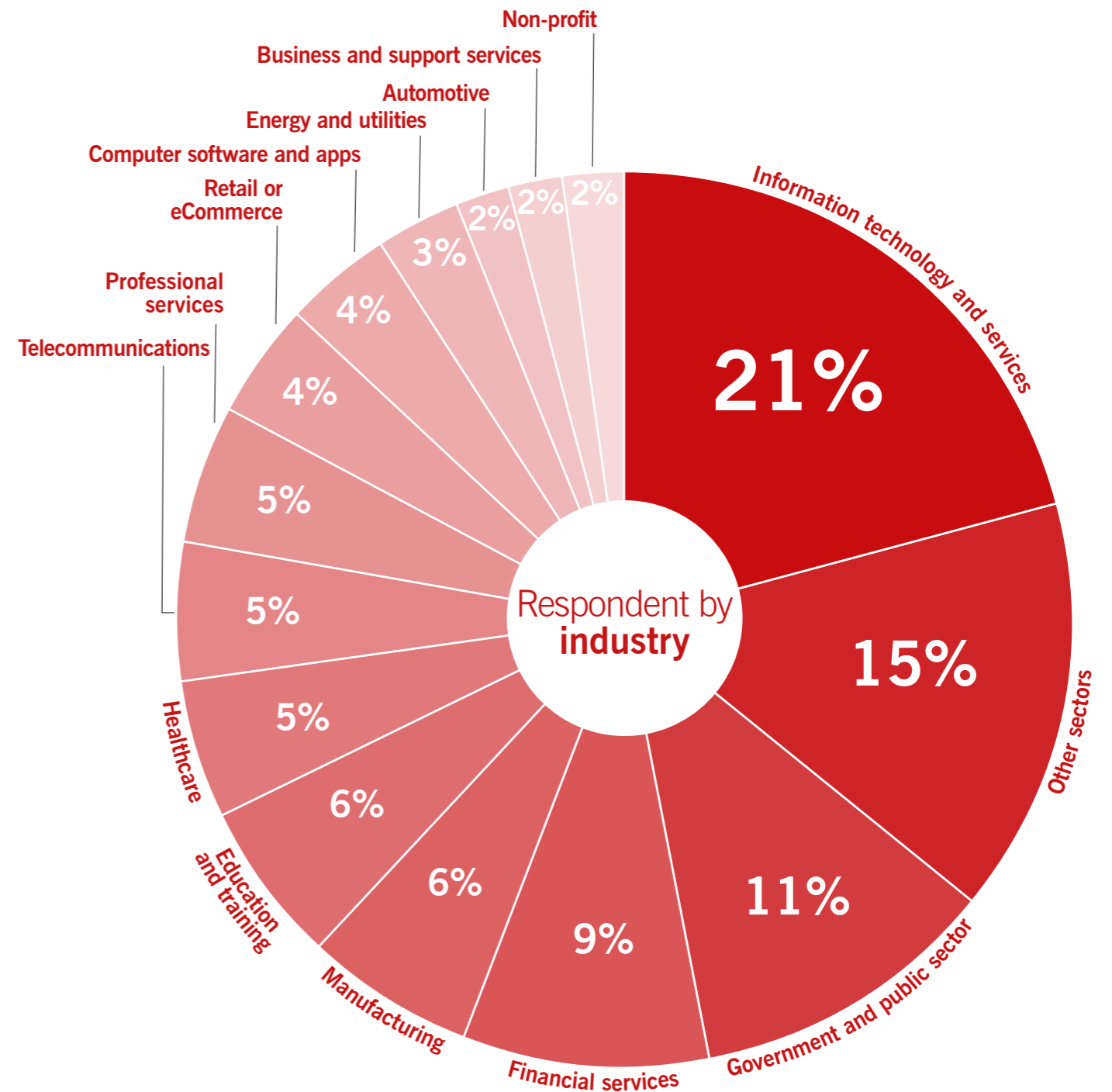
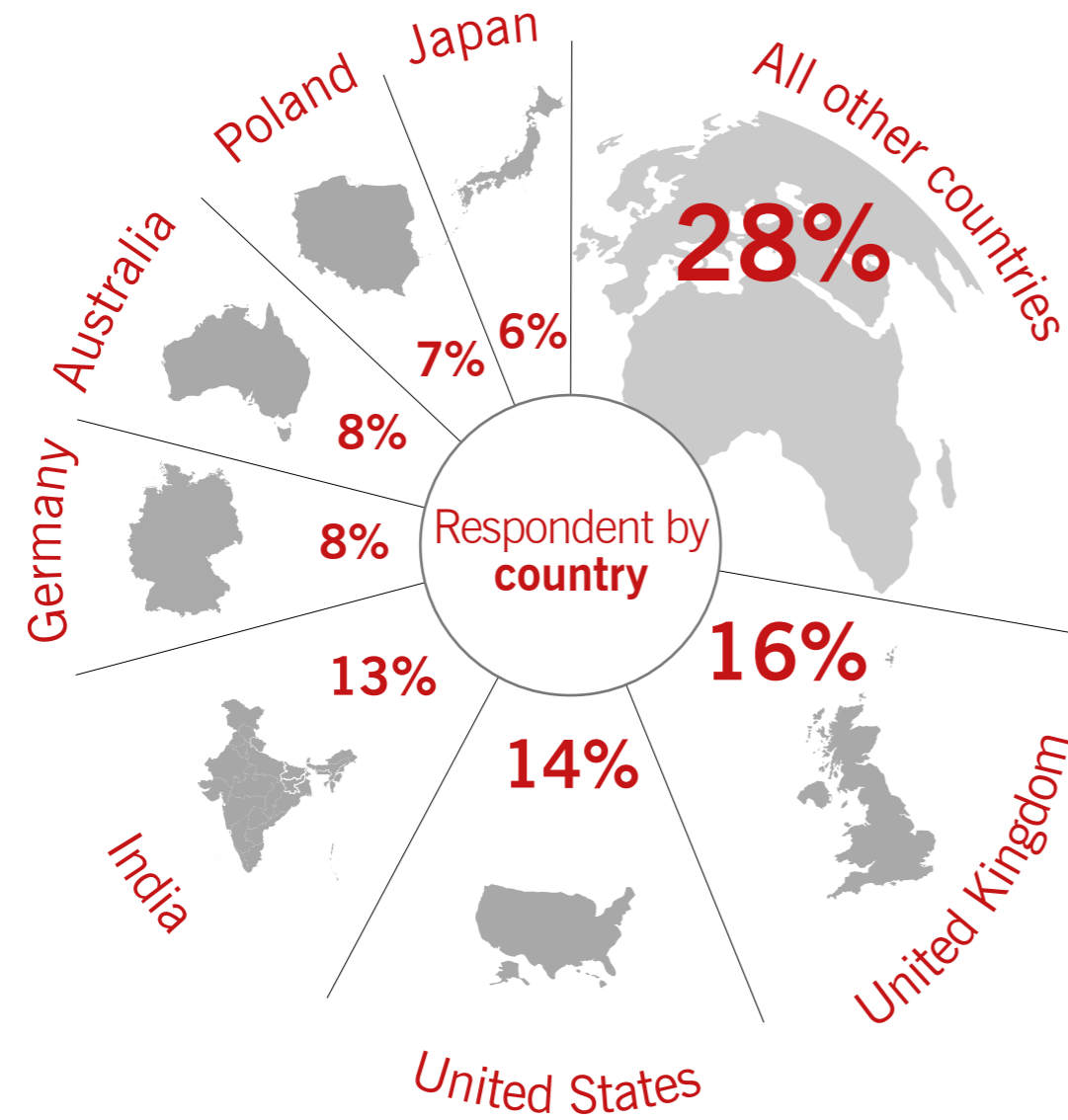


“... to show potential customers that we have many certified resources in order to win new contracts and to retain the confidence of existing customers. It gives them satisfaction that we are always learning and open to improvement.”
PMO lead, IT company, 5k+ employees, India

Who responded?

Summary of survey respondents

1,870 respondents from 91 countries and 24 industries



Almost **50%** of respondents are **manager level** or above, with **13%** at **director level**

The highest number of respondents were from **IT**

Note | Nearly 60% of respondents are not certified in any AXELOS products

What this survey tells us...

Impact

97% of decision-makers and **84%** of individuals say certification has a positive impact, bringing higher efficiency and employee satisfaction

Reasons

Decision-makers sponsor certification to meet organization/industry requirements (**58%**), keep pace with changing technology (**54%**), and improve productivity (**54%**)

The majority of **individuals** pursue certification to build new skills (**66%**) and gain confidence in professional skills (**52%**)

Subjects

Decision-makers and individuals both place **high value** on PPM and ITSM certification

Future

ITSM and traditional PPM certification are expected to be in **high demand** over the next two years and beyond...



Understanding

Introduction

Understanding the need for professional certification

Lifelong learning and professional development are vital components of our growth as human beings. We take examinations to benchmark our learning. For example, we take a proficiency test so we can drive safely on the road.

In a professional setting, qualifications endorse our knowledge and validate our suitability for a given role, allowing employers to see proof that we know what we say we know.

How does the business world regard certification? Do they see its value, or is it a nice-to-have, rather than a must-have?

Collaboration sits at the heart of what AXELOS does. Our core guidance is an amalgamation of industry best practice as experienced by thousands of organizations around the world. In that spirit, we wanted to engage with communities from IT service management, project and program management, and other communities such as Agile and DevOps to understand how they feel about certification. We commissioned Lawless Research to speak to these communities to ascertain what certification means to them.

This included enterprise decision-makers who have:

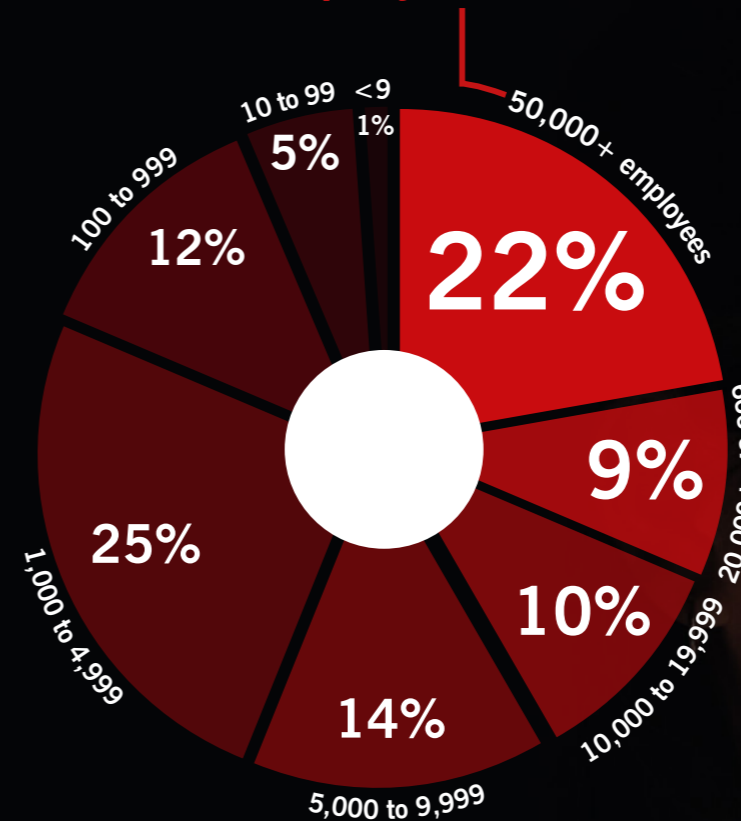
- set or allocated learning and development (L&D) training budgets at organizational and departmental levels
- chosen specific courses, methods and frameworks to adopt within their organizations.

This report summarises the survey, and offers insights on following issues:

- What is the global demand for certification such as ITIL® and PRINCE2®?
- What are the drivers for individuals seeking certification?
- How does certification support the organization from a management perspective?

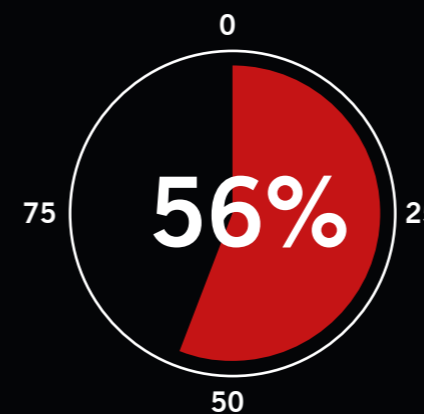
We are proud to present the Power of Professional Certification. We hope you find it useful.

Distribution by company size

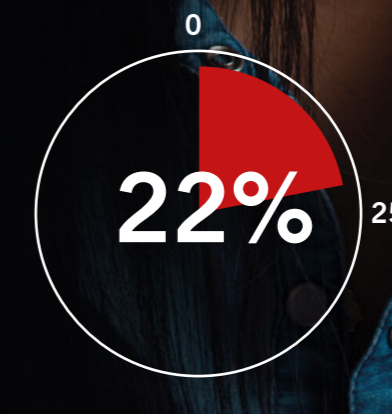


About the respondents

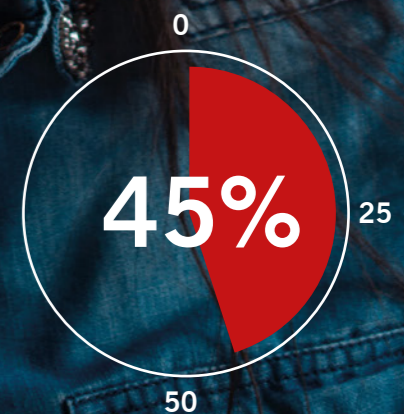
56% respondents are from organizations with 5,000+ employees



22% represent organizations of 50,000 employees or more



45% of respondents are from outside IT service management and project management, AXELOS' field of expertise



Demand

Demand for ITSM and PPM

What is the global demand for certification in IT service management and project and programme management?

Are project management and IT service management still important to the modern organization? Do ITIL and PRINCE2 still provide value to the organization and their customers?

The organization's decision-makers take a wide view of the organization's goals and understand the need to deliver projects in a timely fashion and to a clearly defined scope. They value quality project management as the skill that enables the organization's capabilities. While Agile delivery of projects sits alongside more traditional modes of delivery, projects still need to be delivered consistently and rigorously using a tried and tested set of processes and practices, with everyone's work aligned to the organization's goals.

"I understand the intricacies of my role better and how other departments fit into our processes."
Analyst,
financial services,
1k+ employees, UK

Poor communication is a primary cause of project failure. An advantage of adopting a framework or a method such as ITIL or PRINCE2 is that they provide a common language that makes it easier to communicate among the team. As they settle on clearly defined terminology which is understood by stakeholders inside and outside the organization, the team eliminates misunderstandings.

Certification demonstrates a thorough knowledge of the common language and benchmarks what the holder knows. This allows colleagues and managers to make reliable assumptions about the level of discussion appropriate for the team, which brings efficiency to their work practices.

Organizations

Organizations are looking for new ways to deliver their products and services to the end customer. They are adopting new technologies and development techniques to improve their time to market and to explore additional functionality that could bring a competitive advantage or an increased efficiency. Many organizations are embracing agile ways of working. Cloud and DevOps have become the tools of choice for the iterative delivery of products.

ITIL is the global go-to framework for the delivery of IT enabled products and services in the digital world. ITIL 4 has been developed to better enable digital transformation and work well with Agile and DevOps. We are confident that, should we commission this survey again next year, the response for ITIL will be even more positive.

PRINCE2® is the most valued method for delivering projects. With the introduction of PRINCE2 Agile® and the release of AgileSHIFT®, the AXELOS portfolio is geared up for faster development and delivery cycles in line with methods such as continual integration and continual deployment.

People

Only 40% of respondents are certified in AXELOS products. This was a deliberate choice on our part, as it was important for the survey to reach beyond our own bubble to ensure the report is representative of the market as a whole.



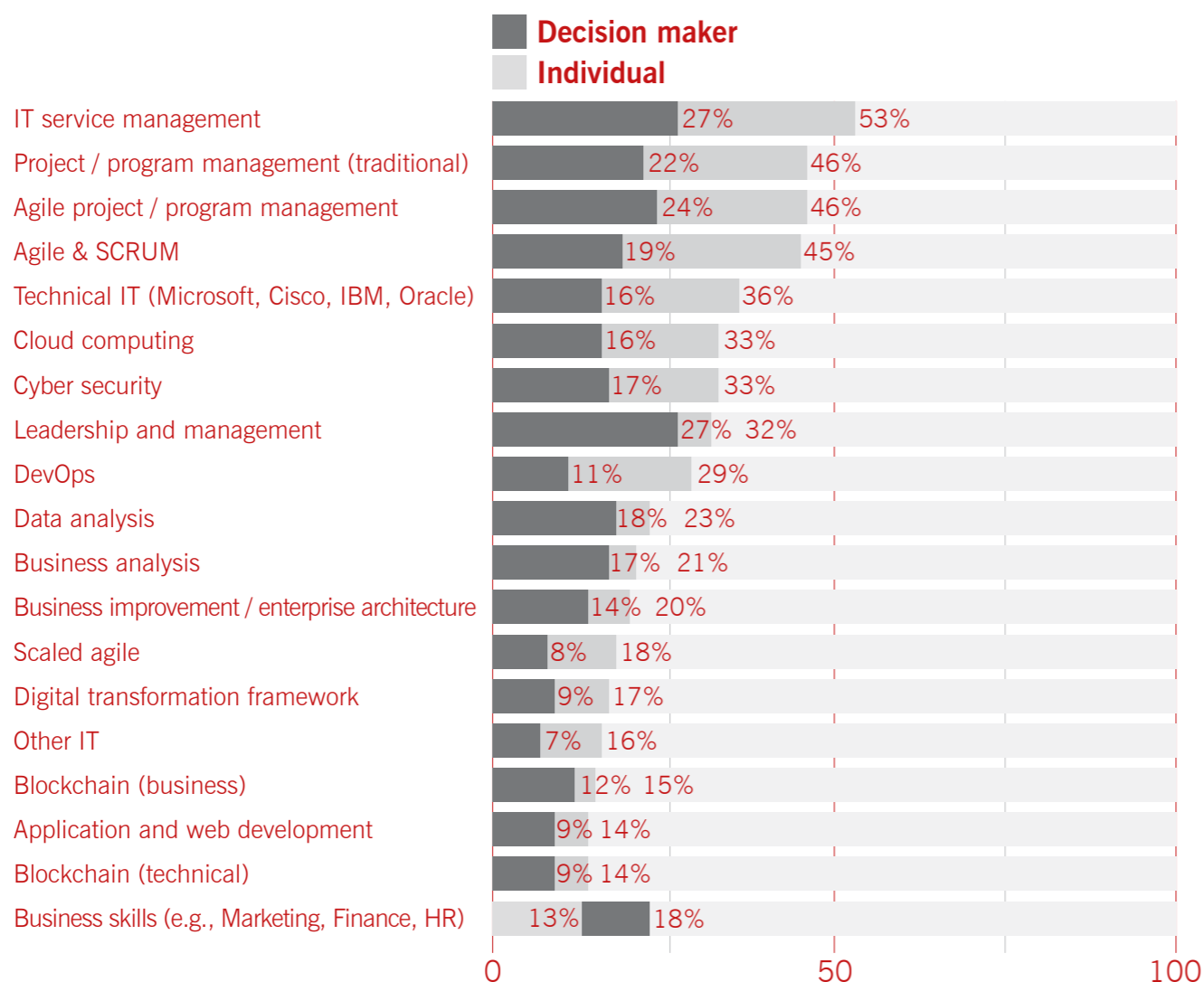
How things stand

- Both ITSM and traditional PPM certification are expected to be in high demand for the next two years and beyond.
- Leadership and management are likely to be the second most popular topics for individuals, which reflects the senior respondent base, where 50% are manager level or above.
- Cyber security sits behind only ITSM, project management and technical IT in the list of desirable topics.

Demand for ITSM and PPM

An overview of services, skills, and products

Desired certification: decision-maker vs. individual



Base decision-maker: 511; Base individual: 1,359

What IT service management and / or DevOps professional certification do you personally have?

ITIL® AII (AXELOS)	88%
ITIL® Foundation (AXELOS)	74%
ITIL® Intermediate (AXELOS)	33%
ITIL® Expert (AXELOS)	20%
ITIL® Practitioner (AXELOS)	17%
COBIT 5 (ISACA)	15%
ISO/IEC 20000	15%
Six Sigma (ASQ)	12%
DOI (DevOps Institute)	12%
DASA (DevOps Agile Skills Association)	11%
Lean IT Association	10%
Lean Six Sigma (APMG / IASSC)	10%
IT4ITM (The Open Group)	9%
TOGAF® (The Open Group)	7%
EXIN DevOps	6%
Scaled Agile Framework® (SAFe®)	6%
SIAM (BCS, EXIN, Scopism)	4%
VeriSMTM	3%
Other 1	5%
Other 2	1%
None of the above	3%

Base: 409 individuals with certification in ITSM/DevOps

What Agile or project / program management professional certifications do you personally have?

PRINCE2 (AXELOS)	52%
PMP® (PMI Project Management Professional)	23%
AgilePM® (Agile Project Management; APMG)	14%
CSM® (Certified ScrumMaster; ScrumAlliance)	14%
MSP® (Managing Successful Programmes; AXELOS)	13%
AgilePgM® (Agile Programme Management; APMG)	11%
PRINCE2 Agile (AXELOS)	11%
CAPM® (Certified Associate in Project Management)	10%
MoP® / MoR® / MoV® (AXELOS)	9%
PSM® (Professional Scrum Master; Scrum.org)	9%
Scaled Agile Framework® (SAFe®)	8%
CSPO® (Certified Scrum Product Owner; ScrumAlliance)	8%
PMI-ACP® (PMI Agile Certified Practitioner)	7%
AgileBA® (Agile Business Analyst; APMG)	7%
PMI-PBA® (PMI Professional in Business Analysis)	6%
DAD (Disciplined Agile Delivery)	6%
PgMP® (PMI Program Management Professional)	5%
LeSS® (Large-Scale Scrum®)	5%
PSPO® (Professional Scrum Product Owner; Scrum.org)	5%
PMI other	4%
Scrum.org other	4%
Praxis® (APMG)	3%
ScrumAlliance other	3%
Other 1	12%
Other 2	3%
None of the above	10%

Base: 464 individuals with certification in Agile / project management

Value of professional certification

There is a transparency in holding a certificate. Employers, employees, and colleagues alike know what the certificate represents, what it took to attain, and the path that led to its attainment. The organization's partners can see the skill level of the workforce, which gives them confidence that the organization has the institutional ability to do everything it claims to be able to do.

Many courses offer a certificate of attendance, rather than a certificate for passing an examination. A certificate of attendance is useful, but it doesn't quantify the engagement of the candidate with the course, nor validate the candidate's level of understanding.

Just one in twenty decision-makers think non-certification courses are more important than qualifications courses, and less than one in ten individuals.

- 84% of individuals and decision-makers feel that certification has a positive impact on their career and organization
- 91% individuals and 95% decision-makers place equal or higher value on certification training than on non-certification training.

The real-world experience of the course trainer matters to the candidate and decision-maker alike; they do not value a trainer who has memorized a book and only speaks in theory.

Do certificates have a positive impact?

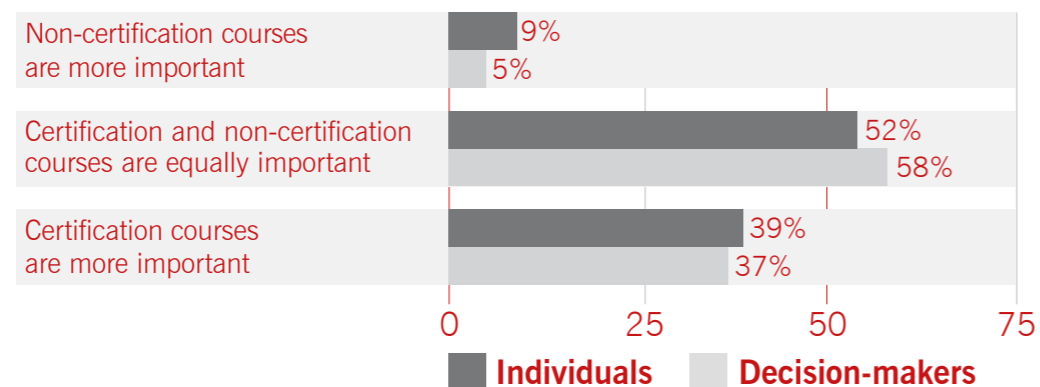
Decision-makers



Individuals

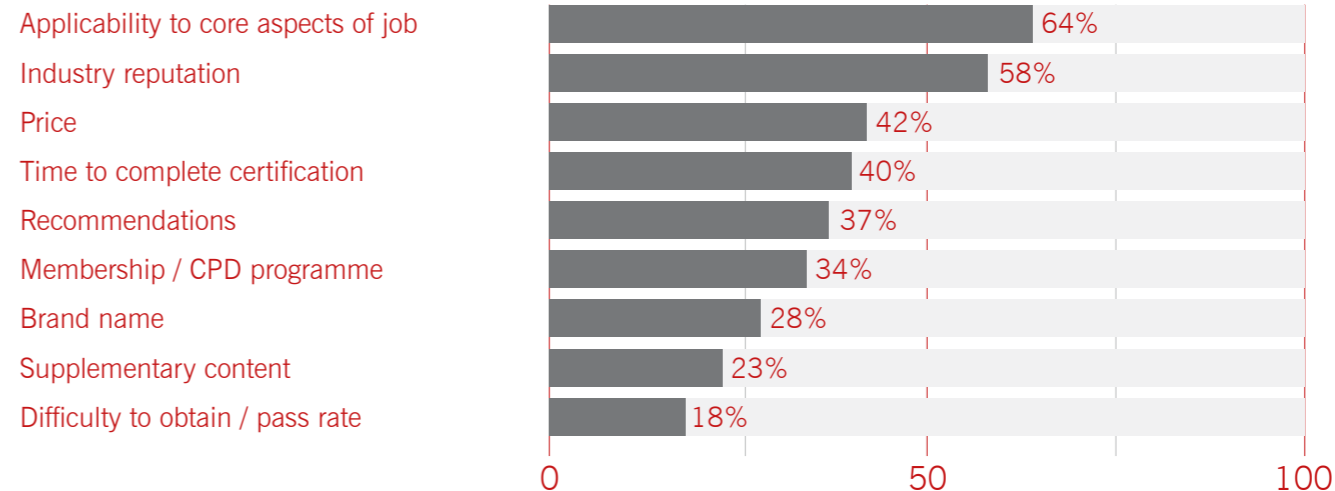


Importance of certification vs. non-certification professional training

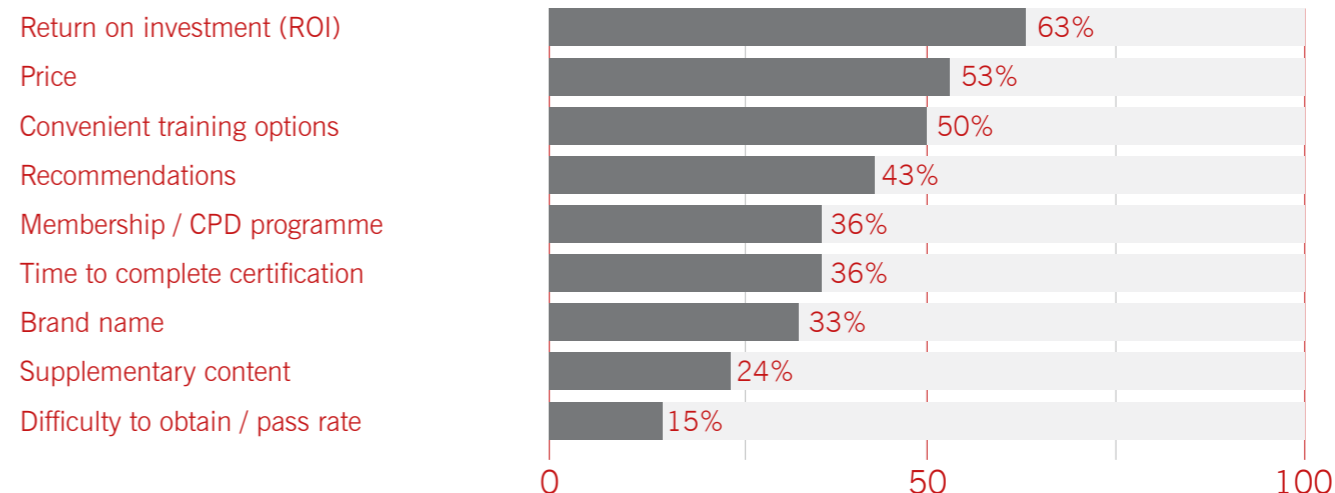


Which of the following is most important to you when selecting a new professional certification?

Individuals



Decision-makers



What types of job-related training and education did your company sponsor in the past 3 years?



84%
of decision-makers and 59% of individuals stated that their organisations sponsor certifications

Individuals



Individuals

Value of professional certification | Individuals

Building skills and confidence – a look at the drivers for individuals seeking certification

We all manage projects, big or small. We all deliver services, if only to the colleagues around us. Frequently, these are the work activities we enjoy most, as they provide us with an opportunity to collaborate with teams across the organization. They add to our satisfaction and make us look forward to turning up to work on a Monday morning.

Enthusiastic staff are an asset for any company. Enthusiasm comes from engagement with meaningful work and from our confidence that we have the skills and knowledge to cope. The skills we develop allow us to take part in new and interesting projects, which draw upon our creativity, our sense of involvement and our openness to change, which in turn increase our satisfaction at work.

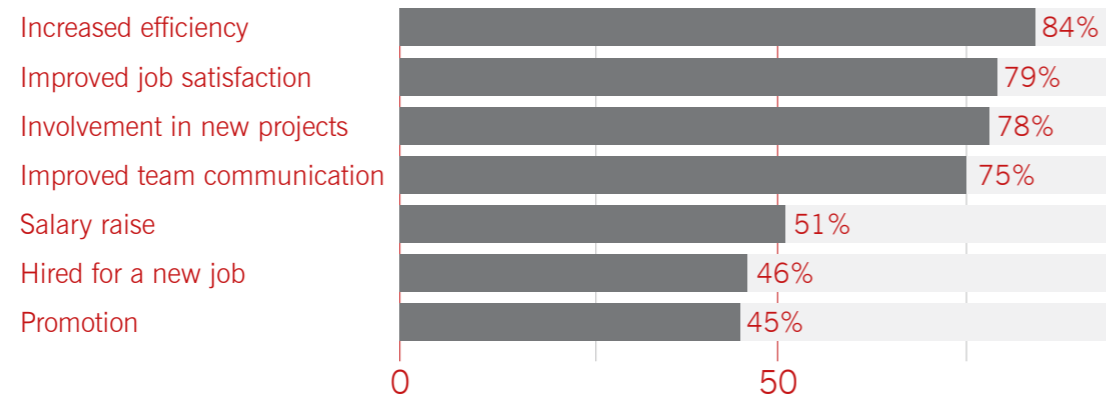
Job satisfaction has more effect on the happiness of employees than a pay rise. It is

brought about in part by good communication with colleagues, which is helped by a common understanding of work practices and a unified vocabulary that describes the work on hand.

Certification is an attainable objective for staff who want to improve their skills and prove their worth. It sets them up for promotion and helps them keep up with changes in technology.

Certification gives each of us the confidence that we have the skills and knowledge to do our jobs. In a world where imposter syndrome is a growing phenomenon, this is no small thing. For young people, fresh from higher education, certification is an assurance that they are fit for the workplace and can make a valuable contribution to the goals of the organization. For more experienced professionals, certification helps them keep their skills and knowledge relevant to the needs of the organization.

Benefits of certification for individuals



Base: 806 individuals with certifications

Certificates per person

- 2.5 certificates on average per person in PPM/Agile
- 2.7 certificates on average per person in ITSM/DevOps
- 18% of respondents hold certification in both groups

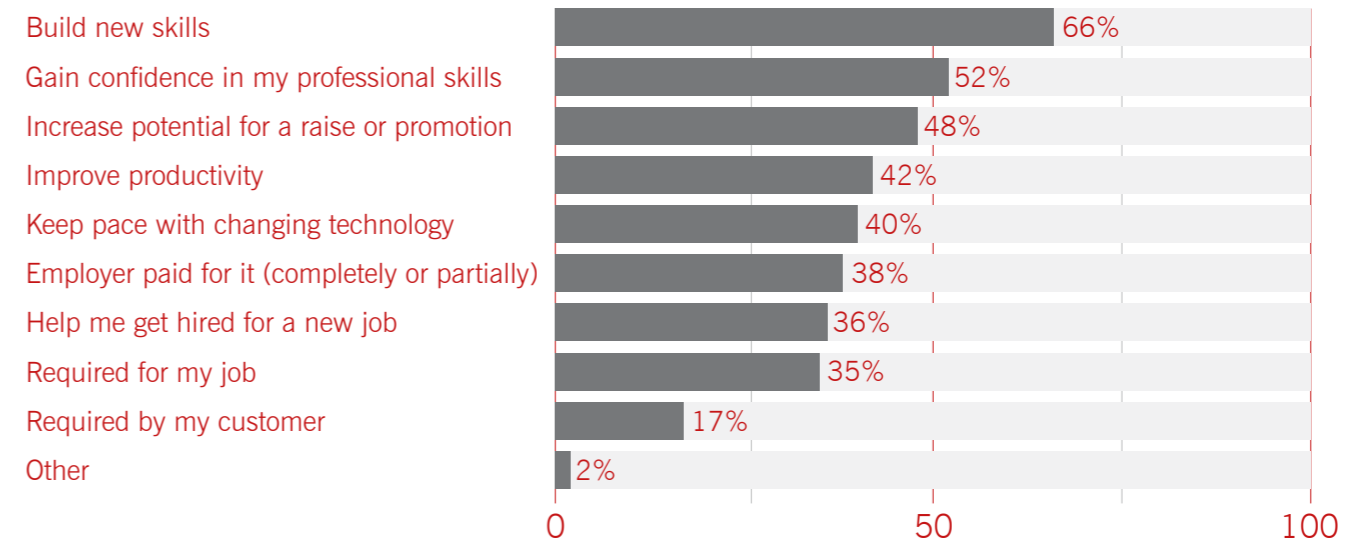
Value in volume

An overwhelming number of respondents agree that certification validates learning.

Top benefits for individuals

- 1 Efficiency **84%**
- 2 Job satisfaction **79%**
- 3 Involvement in new projects **78%**

Reasons for individuals to work towards certification



Base: 956 individuals with certification



Organizations

Organizations

Value of professional certification | Organizations Efficiency and employee engagement – a look at the drivers supporting certification across the organization

Business is about being prepared. Prepared for the challenges of the current business climate and for the opportunities that the future holds. Because the working environment changes at an ever-increasing rate, the one way to ensure the organization can cope is by training staff to handle change.

With a broader view of how the pieces of the organization fit together, decision-makers know the value of ensuring their staff have the tools and training to do their job. They understand that the effect of any delay in the completion of a task increases exponentially as it echoes through the organization, resulting in a delayed end product and, consequently, delayed return on investment.

The organization needs to prepare its staff for the work that will come their way.

“... provides a means to evaluate annual performance and compare employees across the workgroups.”
IT consultant, healthcare company, 20k+ employees, USA

It is important to benchmark the know-how of existing employees and ensure new employees speak the same language as more established members of staff. Beyond that, it is about helping staff to grow into their roles and to take on more responsibility. Training should be targeted at the knowledge gap, focusing on practical and timely courses that help their professional development, complete with a certificate they can strive towards.

While there is sometimes a concern that members of staff might bolt for the door brandishing their freshly-attained certification, there is a strong argument that says that this is not the case. Organizations who invest in their staff are respected by their employees, while the employee who doesn't get the chance to take the examination at the end of a course feels cheated.

“... ensures employees working in particular job roles are of the required standard, and maintains employee morale.”
IT manager, energy and utilities company, 1k+ employees, UK



AXELOS products combined with other frameworks and methods to prepare certificate holders for the future. PRINCE2 Agile was created to make explicit how projects could be run in an agile fashion while utilizing the PRINCE2 method. ITIL 4 makes explicit how ITIL can work with new and established technologies such as AI or Cloud, and ways of working such as Agile, Lean or DevOps.

In what ways does your organization support your learning and development needs?

- 61% individuals report their organization allocates days away from work for training
- 53% individuals report they receive funding for training from their employer
- 15% of employees report no organizational support at all

Value of certification to the organization

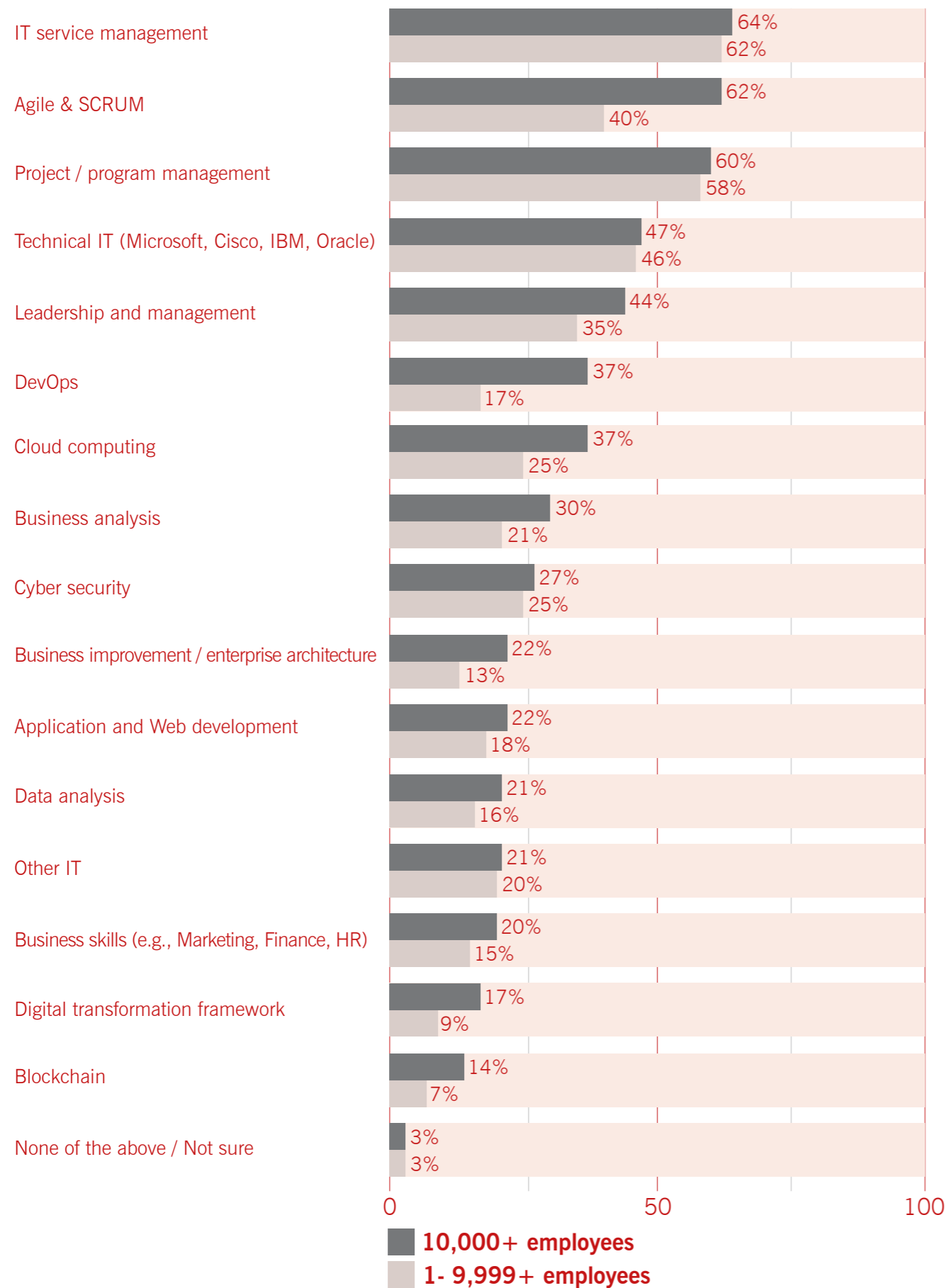
- Job efficiency 83%
- Employee satisfaction 79%
- Team communication 79%
- Business competitiveness 73%

How courses are chosen

Decision-makers look for ROI (63%), price (53%) and convenient training options (50%) when selecting new certification.

Individuals favour applicability to the job (64%), industry reputation (58%), and price (42%).

Sponsorship by company size



■ 10,000+ employees
■ 1- 9,999+ employees

Base: 10,000+ Employee DM: 126; Base 1 to 9,999 Employee DM: 231; * = significant difference at .01 level

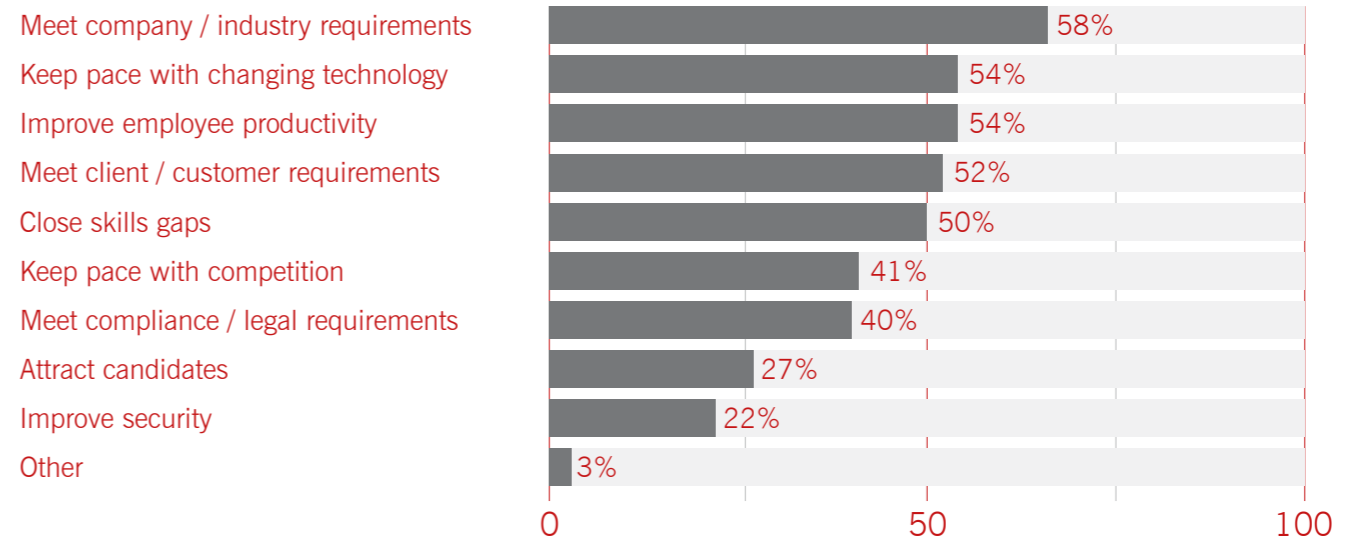
10,000+ employee companies more likely than small companies to sponsor:

- Agile/SCRUM (62% vs. 40%)
- DevOps (37% vs. 17%)

- 58% meet company or industry requirements
- 54% keep pace with changing technology
- 54% improve employee productivity

Decision-makers: meeting company / industry requirements is the top reason for sponsoring certification

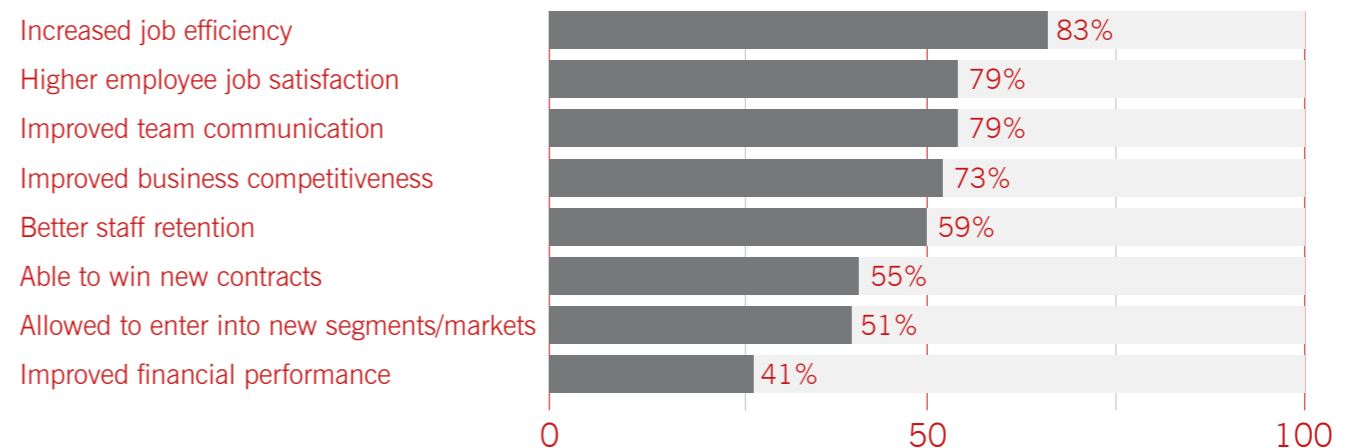
What are the most important reasons for sponsoring professional certification?



Base: 428 Decision-makers who sponsor certifications

Primary organisation benefits: increased efficiency, higher employee satisfaction, improved communication

Did professional certifications have the following impact on your organisation? YES



Base: 360 Decision-makers who sponsor certification. No difference by company size/country

Conclusion

Why professional certification is still important

The findings in this survey demonstrate that the ITSM and PPM communities still value professional certification for individual practitioners, senior decision-makers and the wider organization. Certification is not just a stepping stone in career progression or compliance with industry standards and regulation, vital as those are. It also brings tangible improvements to day-to-day work practices, develops the knowledge and confidence of certified individuals, and contributes to the success of organizations that have embraced professional certification such as ITIL and PRINCE2.

As technology develops at an ever-faster pace and Agile, Cloud and DevOps are adopted in the workplace, organizations know they need to train their staff to be able to make the most of these opportunities. Training increases the knowledge and skill level of employees, and certification validates the training, which in turn promotes market confidence.

Poor communication is a major cause of failure for transformation initiatives. Training and certification provide a common language that allows teams to communicate with major stakeholders across the company and with external partners.

For individual practitioners, the new skills and knowledge give them the confidence to cope with changes in working practices and consequently increase their job satisfaction, which many respondents said was the most important factor in their working lives. Within the PPM and ITSM fields, PRINCE2

and ITIL are significantly the highest valued certification. Twice as many respondents hold a PRINCE2 certificate than its closest project management equivalent, and almost six times as many ITSM practitioners hold an ITIL certificate than any other ITSM training.

This survey dispels any doubt about the continuing value of certification. We encourage organizations and individuals alike to embrace the power of professional certification.



“Increased my self-esteem, improved my confidence in my own abilities and management skills.”

Pharmaceutical company manager, 10k+ employees, UK

“This is an exciting time to get certified: our certification paths reflect today’s cloud-focused jobs, helping you to get hired, get ahead, be productive faster, and to receive the recognition you deserve.”

IT company executive,
50k+ employees, India



AXELOS is renowned for our best practice, specifically in the fields of service management, and project and programme management. For every product we curate, there is an accompanying examination that tests the knowledge of the end-learner, which leads to a certificate that validates the learner’s knowledge and allows them to walk out into the world a certified practitioner in their chosen field.

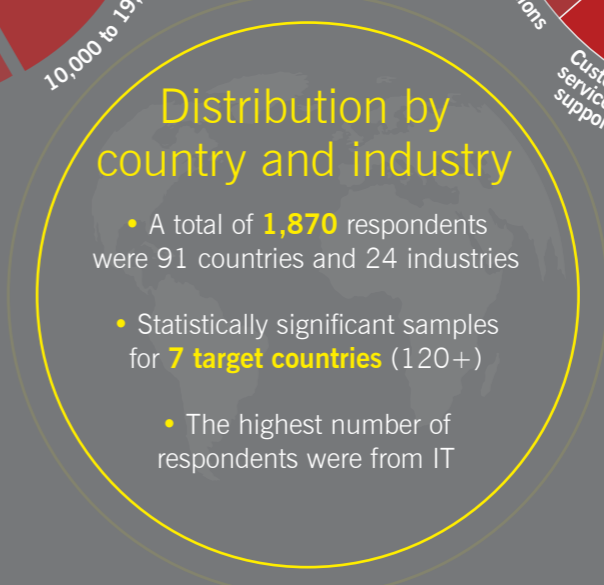
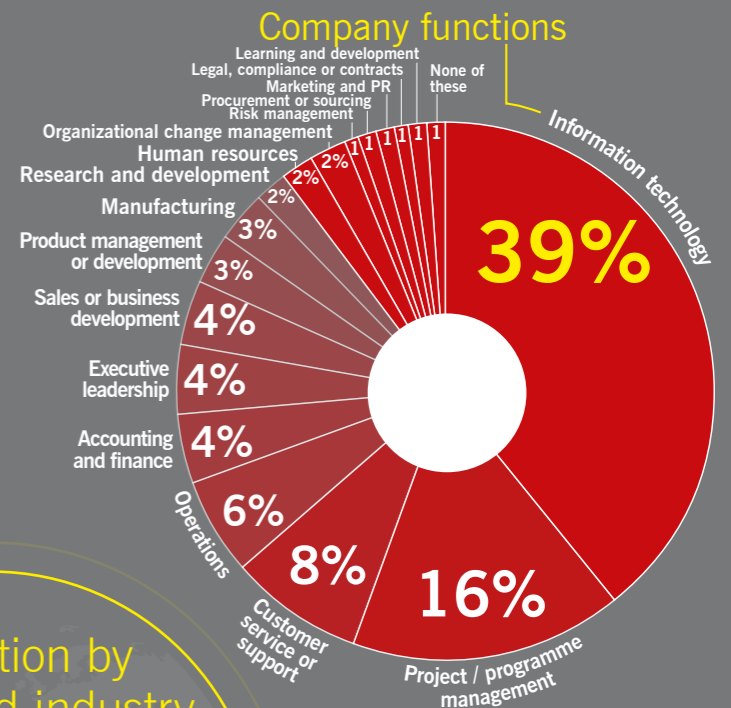
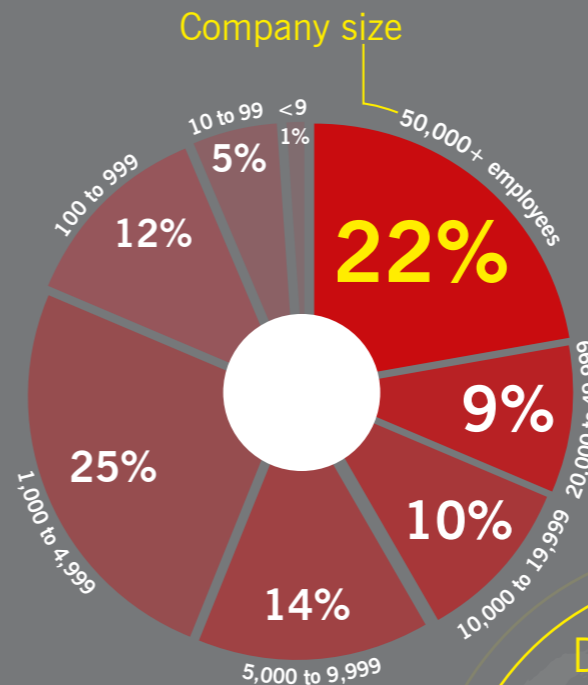
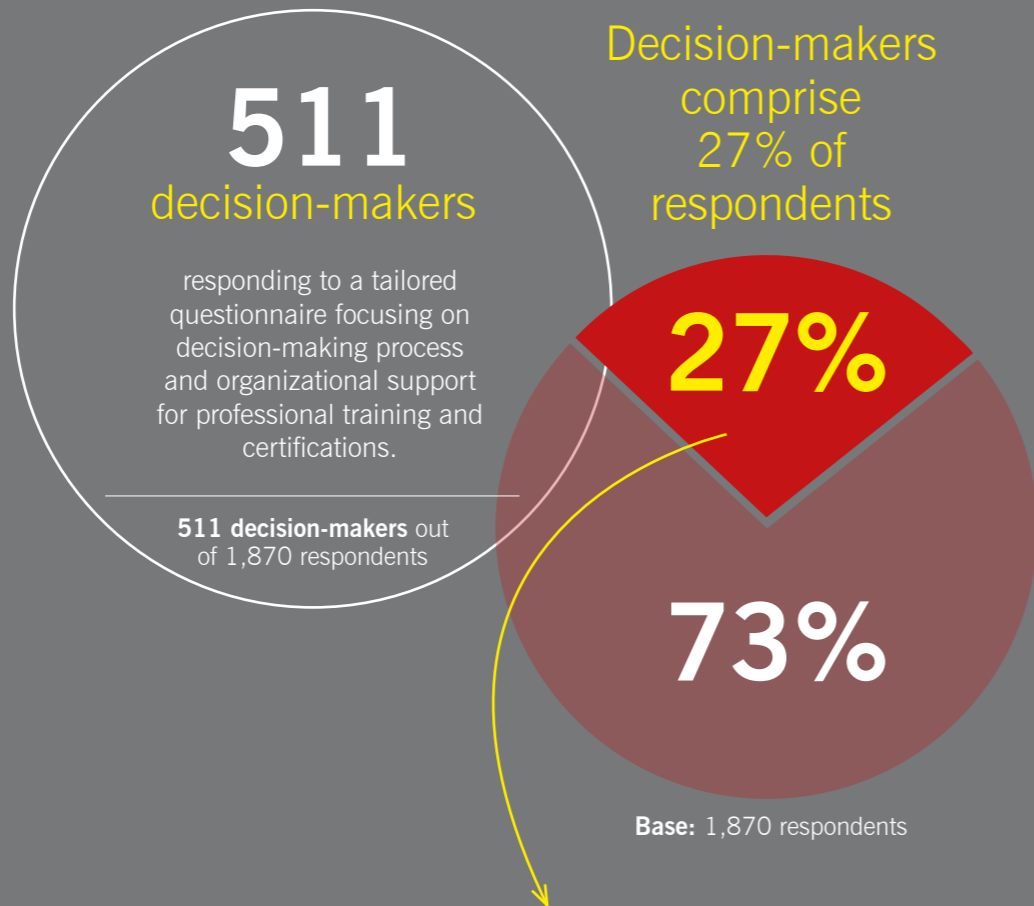
We wanted to challenge our assumptions with regards our understanding of certification. We needed to understand how the individual feels about the qualifications they have attained, and how the organization justifies the expenditure of sending employees off for several weekdays in pursuit of a piece of paper. We commissioned Lawless Research to conduct a survey on our behalf to examine the way individuals and organizations view professional certification.

“Profit, productivity, increase in industry credibility, reduced support expenses, etc.”

IT company lead,
50k+ employees,
Belgium

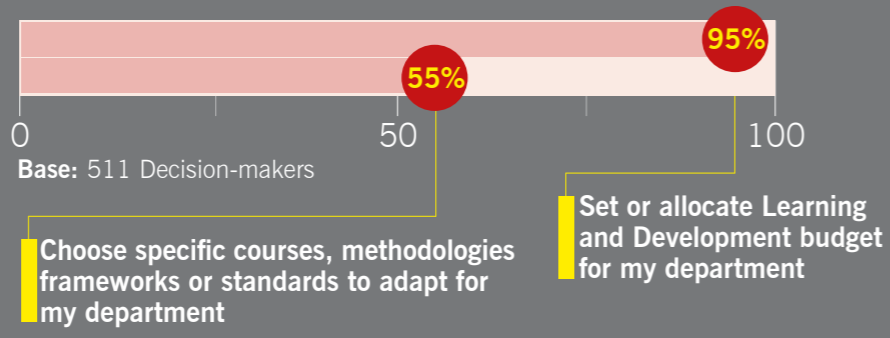
Details of the survey

Who took part and how were they approached...

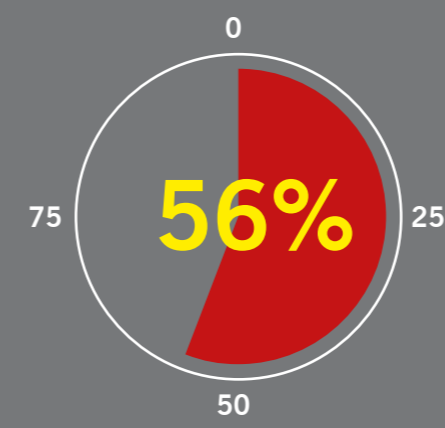


Decision-maker authority

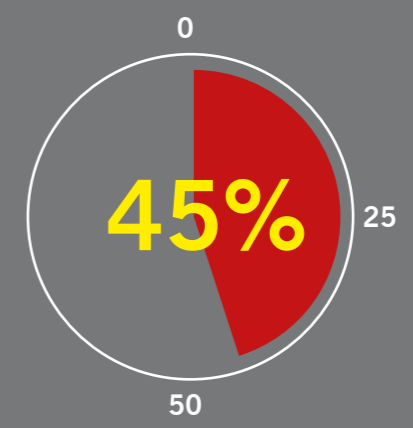
Do you have authority to select or budget for certification courses or non-certification courses in your organization?



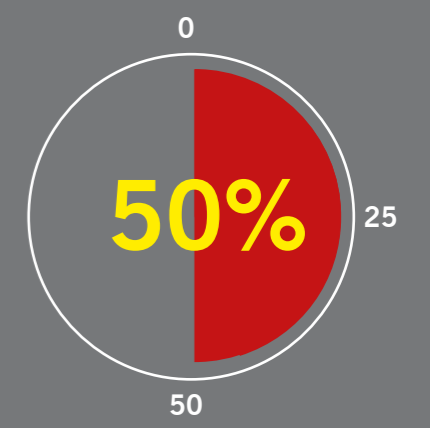
56% respondents are from companies with 5,000+ employees, 22% representing organizations of 50,000 employees or more



45% of respondents are outside of IT and PMO, AXELOS' traditional functions for ITIL and PPM products



Nearly **50%** of respondents are Manager level or above, with 13% Director or higher, representing a senior respondent base



Thank you

This is just the beginning...
A warm thank you to everyone
who took part in our survey.

About AXELOS

AXELOS is a joint venture company, created in 2013 by the Cabinet Office on behalf of Her Majesty's Government (HMG) in the United Kingdom and Capita plc, to manage, develop and grow the Global Best Practice portfolio. AXELOS boasts an already enviable track record and an unmatched portfolio of globally-recognized best practice qualifications.

AXELOS is responsible for developing, enhancing and promoting a number of best practice frameworks and methodologies used globally by professionals working primarily in IT service management, project, programme and portfolio management and cyber resilience.

These methods, including ITIL®, PRINCE2®, MSP® and our collection of cyber resilience best practice products, RESILIA®, are adopted by private, public and voluntary sectors in more than 150 countries to improve employees' skills, knowledge and competence in order to make both individuals and organizations work more effectively.

AXELOS is committed to nurturing best practice communities on a global scale. In addition to our globally-recognized certifications, AXELOS equips professionals with a wide range of content, templates and toolkits through our CPD-aligned My AXELOS subscription service and online community of practitioners and experts.

Visit www.AXELOS.com for the latest news about how AXELOS is 'Making organisations more effective' and registration details to join AXELOS' online community. If you have specific queries, requests, or would like to be added to the AXELOS mailing list please contact Ask@AXELOS.com.

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“Inspired me
to learn more.”
Public sector manager,
30k+ employees,
Australia

