

Revolutionizing Document Workflows With AI

Transforming Efficiency And Driving Business Impact

A FORRESTER CONSULTING THOUGHT LEADERSHIP PAPER COMMISSIONED BY FOXIT, DECEMBER 2023

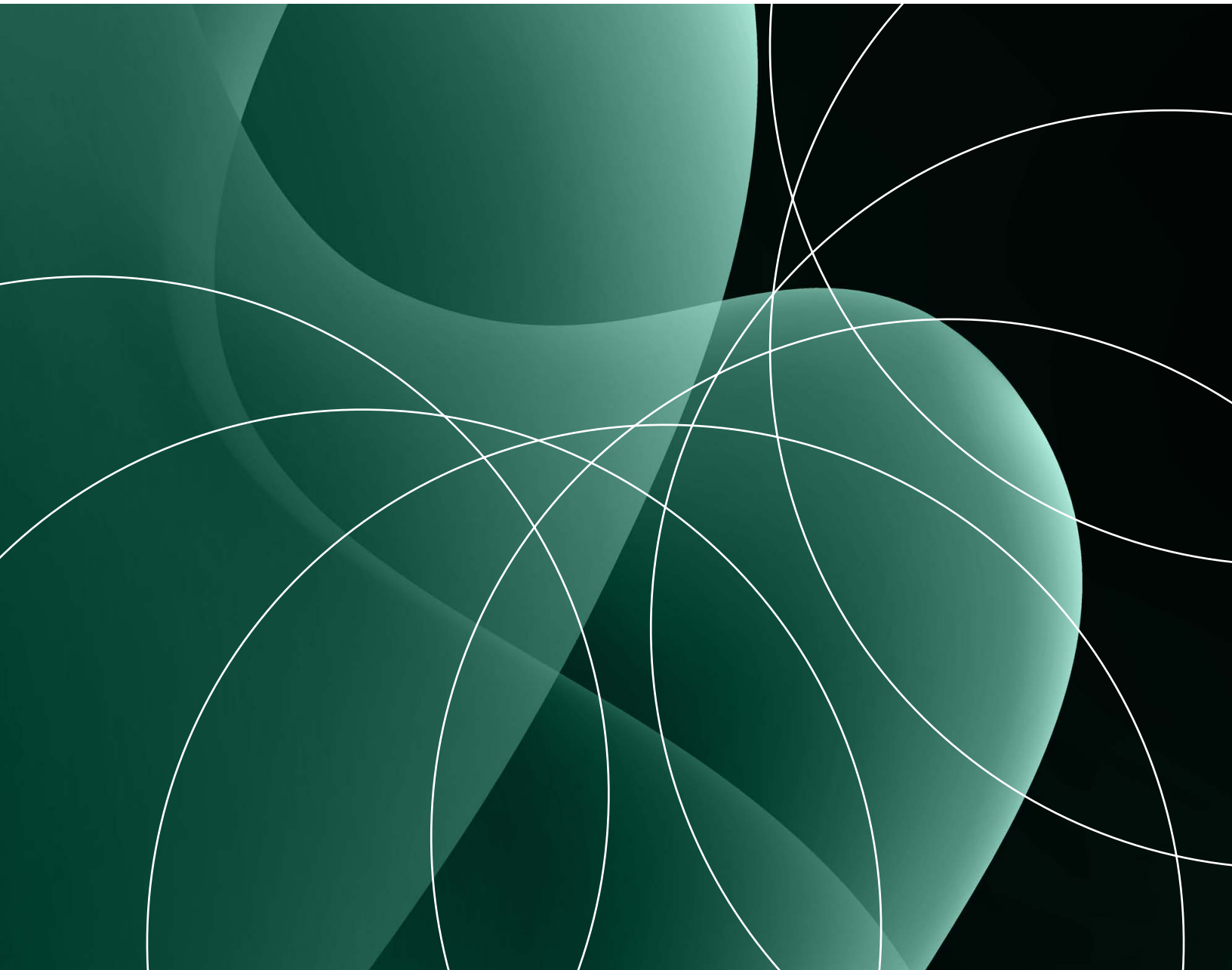


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Project Team:

Kate Pesa,
Market Impact Consultant

Emily Stutzman,
Associate Market Impact Consultant

Contributing Research:

Forrester's [Technology Architecture & Delivery](#)
research group

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Executive Summary

It seems like every organization today is looking to implement AI within its business, with most organizations particularly interested in external client-facing tools that more clearly connect to the customer experience and bottom line, including generative AI. However, often-overlooked areas like document and PDF processes are where AI can have transformative potential. Organizations that leverage AI for their PDF and document tools see higher levels of employee satisfaction; less time wasted on tedious, manual work; and myriad business impacts like revenue gain and a better customer experience.

As PDFs are a vehicle for information used throughout the whole organization, ensuring that they have correct and properly edited content in an efficient manner is critical. By adopting a single tool that leverages AI for PDF and document needs, organizations can expect improved accuracy, better collaboration, and more productive employees.

In November 2023, Foxit commissioned Forrester Consulting to evaluate how organizations are enabling their employees with PDF and related document tools. Forrester conducted an online survey with 402 PDF and document tool users and 116 decision-makers with responsibility for document editing tools at their organization. We found that decision-makers and users alike agreed that a single tool leveraging AI and process automation enables users to do their best, most efficient work. However, many users are still struggling with too many — and mostly outdated — document tools.



Key Findings

The current PDF and document tool landscape features too many and woefully outdated tools. On average, respondents are using eight tools for their PDF and document needs, leaving many decision-makers stating that they use too many point solutions. These eight tools are also often outdated, lack any process automation, and integrate poorly within the application ecosystem.



Today's PDF and document tools mean a lot of wasted time for users. Users spend their days doing overly manual and repetitive work as a result of today's overly complex and dated tool landscape, on average spending one workday a week on this sort of labor.



Users and decision-makers alike see the value of an all-in-one PDF platform. Adopting a single platform that leverages AI for all PDF needs is extremely appealing for both users and decision-makers. In fact, an all-in-one platform is seen as valuable or extremely valuable for 80% of respondents, as it means less time spent on manual work, better collaboration, and improved PDF accuracy.



Employee Experience Is Being Neglected

Organizations today are constantly looking for ways to improve the bottom line. Increasing revenue, keeping customers happy, and reducing costs are among the top goals of practically every organization on the planet. And in fact, our surveyed respondents echoed this sentiment stating that the top priority for decision-makers in the coming 12 months is, unsurprisingly, improving the experience of customers. Among the other top priorities: reducing costs and growing revenue. What many organizations frequently fail to realize, however, is that the means to achieving these goals, such as optimizing workflows, incorporating AI into business processes, improving innovation, and improving the employee experience — which typically fall to the bottom of the priority list — need to be the focus to drive the organization toward improving the bottom line and growth.

This failure to provide employees with the means to be more productive, enabling them to spend more time on primary work and optimizing collaboration and workflows, manifests itself in outdated tools, too many point solutions, and overly manual and tedious work. No one area of the organization is more susceptible to this conundrum than PDF and related document tools, where employees are stuck using many point solutions and outdated tools but stand to gain significantly in time savings, cost savings, accuracy, and revenue increases if properly addressed. Furthermore, PDFs are a transport for information used throughout the entire organization, and it's critical to ensure that they have the right content and that it's edited properly and efficiently with help from tools that enable those processes.

TOO MANY TOOLS, TOO LITTLE PROCESS AUTOMATION

Organizations today support many different PDF and related document features and abilities. This is expected as organizations must accommodate everything from legally binding e-signature to document archiving. Within our study, we looked at 14 PDF and related document capabilities (such as data extraction, integration with other tools, document archiving, and e-signature), and in order to accommodate these varied capabilities,

respondents stated that their organization leverages eight tools on average for their PDF and document needs. Unsurprisingly, more than 60% of decision-makers said their organization uses too many point solutions for individual tasks. Worse yet, we found that these eight PDF and related document tools typically:

- **Lack proper integration with the rest of the ecosystem.** Eight tools just for PDF and document needs mean that users must spend time learning how to use each one and understand how they work with one another just to do their work. For example, users might have one or more tools just for e-signature, another tool just to edit PDFs, a third tool for document scanning, and yet another to collaborate on the documents — all of which have their own interface and functionality. This often slows down their work and hampers productivity. What makes things even more difficult for users is that these eight tools are seldom properly integrated not only with one another but also with the rest of the ecosystem. Sixty-three percent of PDF users stated that their organization’s document processes are not well integrated with the rest of their enterprise applications.
- **Are often too outdated.** The PDF and document tools provided to employees are often outdated, lacking any process automation, leaving employees to spend too much time on repeatable and tedious work. Sixty-nine percent of user respondents said that the technology they use is too outdated. And nearly half of surveyed users indicated that their organization has not yet leveraged tech to automate repeatable administrative tasks, such as automatically extracting data from forms and populating it into databases, leaving employees to do the work manually, wasting time and opening up the opportunity for human error. Nearly 70% of respondents found that operational processes supporting document tasks at their organization are very manual.
- **Lead to a lot of wasted employee time.** The eight tools that employees must use for their PDF and document needs each typically require a lot of manual inputs and work. Nearly 60% of users agree that this means they waste a lot of time on manual and repetitive document related tasks, and

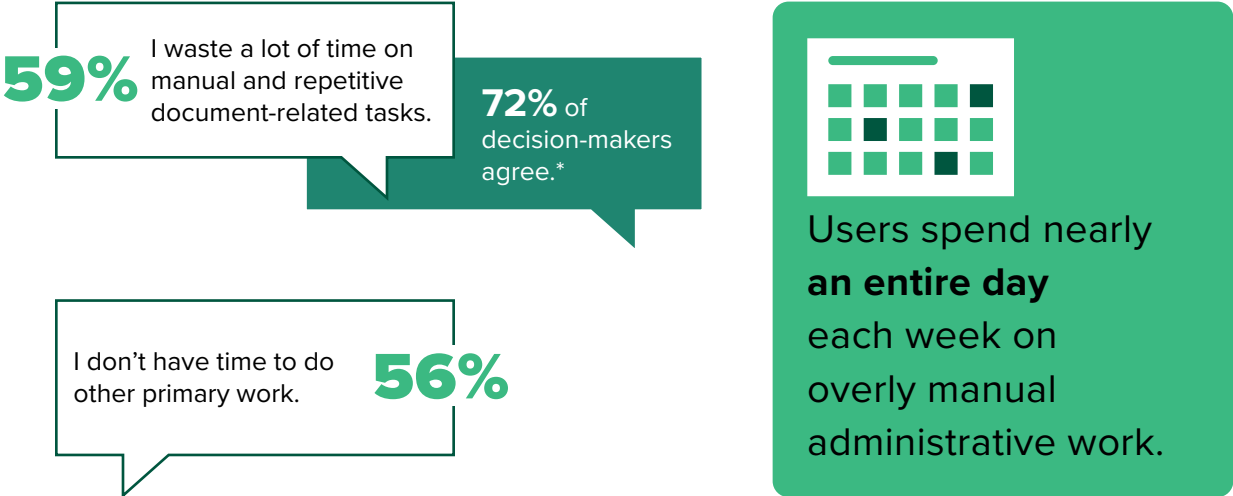
as a result, the average user spends nearly an entire day each week on overly manual administrative work. A further 56% agree that as a result, they don't have time to do other primary work (see Figure 1).

Respondents indicated that, on average, they use **eight tools** for their PDF and document needs.

FIGURE 1

USERS

Users Spend A Lot Of Time On Repetitive Work



Base: 402 knowledge workers who use PDF editing tools at their organization
*Base: 116 managers and directors with responsibility for PDF editing tool decisions at their organization
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Foxit, December 2023

AI ADOPTION FOR PDF AND DOCUMENT NEEDS REMAINS LOW

In order to address the issue of employee time being wasted on manual tasks, decision-makers are increasingly using AI, which has the potential to significantly enhance employee productivity and efficiency. According to our survey, a majority of decision-makers (61%) view improved employee productivity as the primary motivation for leveraging AI alongside PDF tools. Other top drivers include reduced operating costs (50%), improved

employee experience (47%), and improved operational efficiency and effectiveness (46%) (see Figure 2). Despite the understanding of the potential improvements that come with AI, decision makers are still slow to adopt, and we found that most PDF processes do not leverage AI today, even though nearly all PDF processes would benefit from some form of AI intervention. Some examples of overly manual PDF and document processes that would benefit from AI intervention include:

- **Data extraction.** Eighty percent of data extraction is done either completely or somewhat manually today. This means that an employee must be physically looking at a document, extracting fields themselves, and entering that information into another application.
- **Document redaction.** Similarly, 80% of document redaction is done at least somewhat manually today, meaning that an employee must spend precious time manually searching a document and redacting sensitive information such as healthcare information, PII, credit card information, account numbers, etc. The stakes for human error here are high, with potential compliance problems and penalties resulting from any missed information.
- **PDF document editing.** For nearly 70% of respondents, their organization requires them to go into their PDF documents and manually locate errors and inconsistencies and fix them. If someone fills out a form and in one area states they are married and in another checks that

FIGURE 2

DECISION-MAKERS

“What are the top drivers for leveraging AI with your organization’s PDF editing tool?”



Base: 116 managers and directors with responsibility for PDF editing tool decisions at their organization
 Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Foxit, December 2023

they are single, an employee must compare documents and identify that problem, rather than leveraging AI for it.

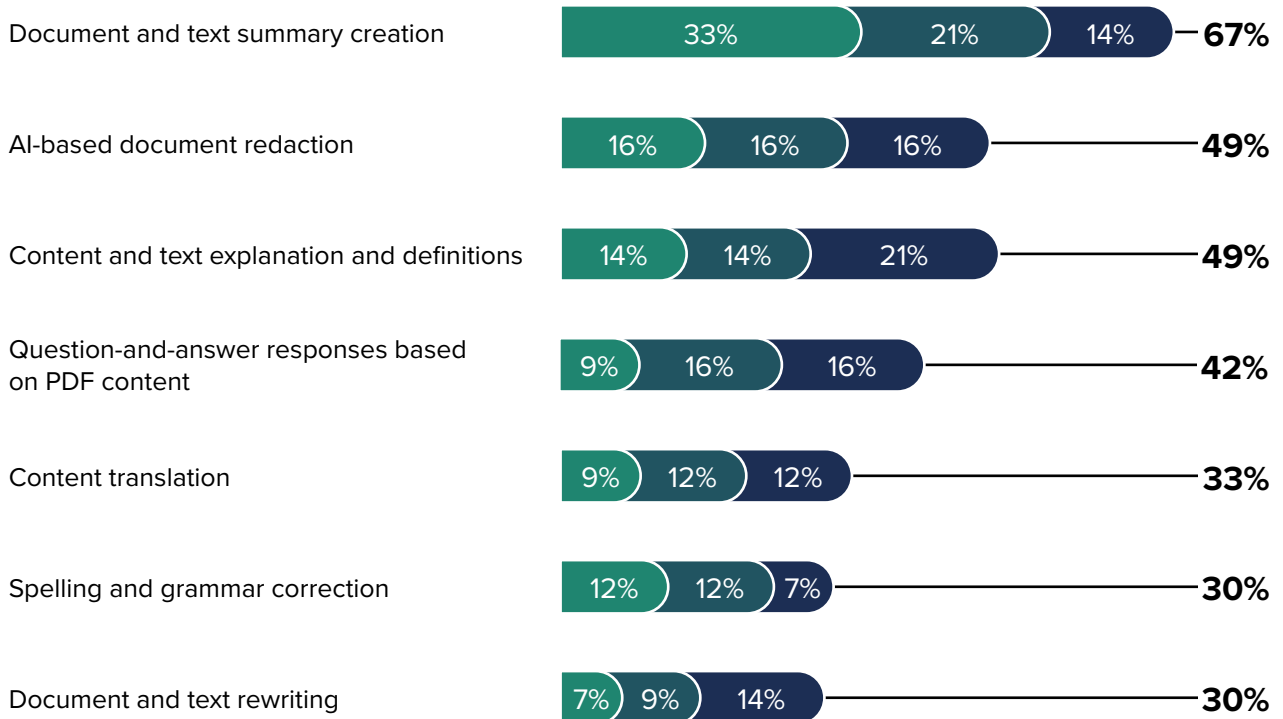
While AI isn't fully incorporated into PDF and document processes just yet, decision-makers do understand the potential value of it. When asked what the most valuable ways a PDF tool could leverage AI are, two-thirds of decision-makers identified document and text summary creation as the most valuable, followed by AI-based document redaction (49%), and content and text explanation and definitions (49%) (see Figure 3).

FIGURE 3

DECISION-MAKERS

“Which of the following would be the most valuable for your organization’s PDF editing tool?”

● Rank 1 ● Rank 2 ● Rank 3



Base: 43 managers and directors who haven't yet leveraged AI with responsibility for PDF editing tool decisions at their organization

Note: Total percentages may not equal separate values due to rounding.

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Foxit, December 2023

Using The Wrong Tools Means Wasted Time And Effort

Lack of process automation and AI for PDF and document tasks mean that employees spend a lot of time on overly manual and tedious administrative tasks. But what specifically within these processes and tools are employees most wasting their time on? We found that:

- **Users spend a lot of time summarizing, transcribing, and translating PDF documents.**

More specifically, 70% of users indicated that summarizing PDF documents and extracting valuable information is tedious. A further 60% stated they spend a lot of time rewriting documents and text, and 56% said translating PDF documents takes a long time and is a lot of work (see Figure 4).

- **Any current automation that PDF tools do leverage is lacking.** The ways in which automation and AI are currently integrated with PDF and document processes aren't always the most efficient. For example, nearly 60% of users agree that the autofill recommendations offered by their PDF editor aren't very relevant.

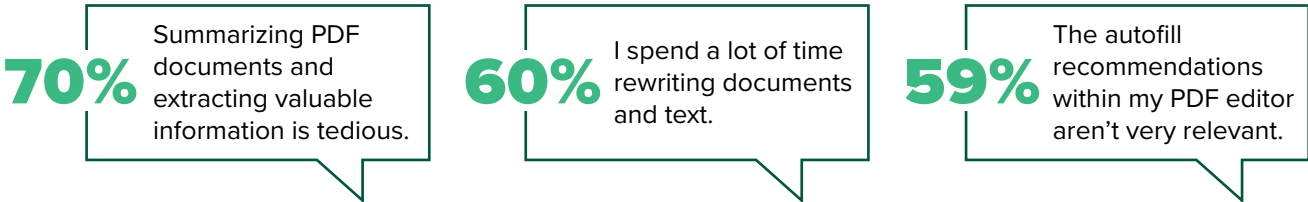
80%

of users surveyed agree that automated functionality within the tools they use would help them accomplish their work faster.

FIGURE 4

USERS

Users' PDF And Document Tools Lack Automation



Base: 402 knowledge workers who use PDF editing tools at their organization
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Foxit, December 2023

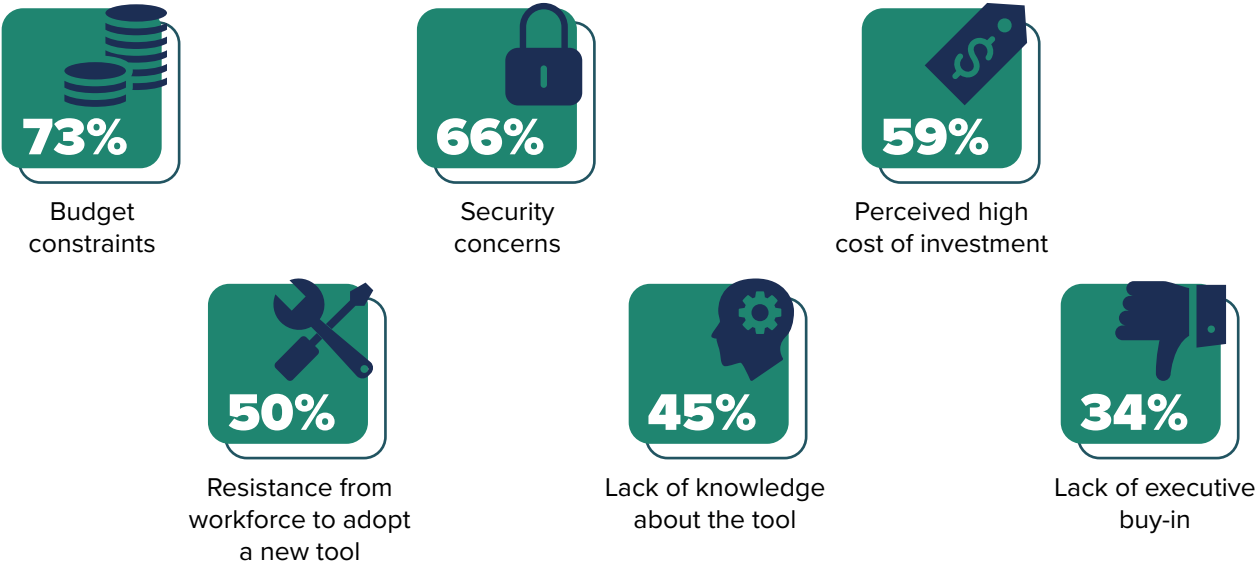
Overall, 80% of users agree that automated functionality within the tools they use would help them accomplish their work faster, and for most of users’ specific pain points, leveraging AI technology would directly alleviate that challenge. And decision-makers understand this, knowing that not providing their employees with the right tools that leverage the necessary automation means bad things for their business. When asked about the downstream negative business impacts of not supporting employees with these types of tools, decision-makers noted potential reduced employee time spent on primary work (66%), damage to the customer experience (62%), and negative impacts to brand reputation due to document errors (56%).

While decision-makers do see the value of these tools and of AI, cost and security concerns stand as top barriers to adoption of these technologies. Specifically, respondents identified budget constraints (73%) as the top barrier to adopting PDF support and related document tools that leverage AI, followed by security concerns (66%) and perceived high cost of investment (59%) (see Figure 5).

FIGURE 5

DECISION-MAKERS

“What are the top barriers to adopting PDF support and related document tools that leverage AI?”



Base: 116 managers and directors with responsibility for PDF editing tool decisions at their organization
 Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Foxit, December 2023

TOO MANY TOOLS CREATE AN OVERLY COMPLEX ECOSYSTEM

Limited automation isn't the only problem facing employees today; using too many tools for PDF and document tasks also significantly hampers employee productivity. Using eight tools could mean that e-signatures might take place in one or more tools, PDF editing takes place in another, and document sharing and collaboration takes place in a third. When asked about the challenges of working with myriad tools for PDF and document needs, respondents noted that:

- **Too many tools inhibit effective collaboration.** Using an array of tools to accomplish PDF and document tasks means that users are unsure of how to best collaborate when working together. This ineffective collaboration might include using an altogether separate tool to comment about a document instead of being able to work together directly on it, or one user leaving their comments and feedback in one tool while another is using a completely different platform. Understandably, half of users agree that using too many tools inhibits collaboration.
- **Switching between tools creates fragmented work.** Switching between applications can create a lot of wasted time for employees, as 65% of decision-makers point out. This constant switching not only means time is wasted but also that the work is fragmented. Fifty-six percent of users noted that switching between tools makes their work feel disjointed. This is especially exacerbated at many organizations where these tools are poorly integrated, only adding to the wasted time and manual work.

Leverage One AI-Enabled PDF Tool Instead

By adopting PDF tools that leverage AI, organizations can not only improve employee efficiency and reduce time waste but also drive revenue growth, enhance customer experience, and bolster their reputation. And according to our study, there is not one PDF or document process that would not benefit from AI involvement. Data extraction would have the most positive impact from AI, with 82% of decision-makers agreeing, followed by the ability to create PDF documents from other files or the web (78%), document scanning (76%), and document editing (72%).

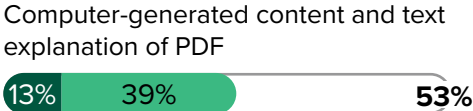
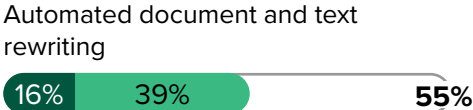
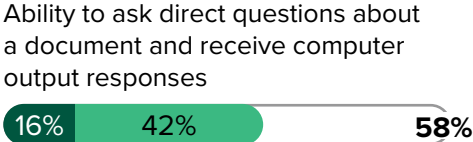
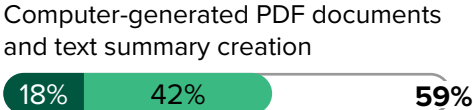
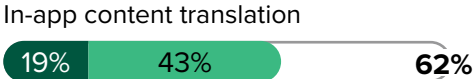
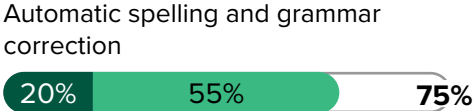
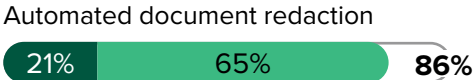
By enabling employees in this way and focusing on improving workflows, collaboration, and productivity, organizations can expect to deliver on their top business priorities for the next 12 months. Specifically, decision-makers should focus on what users want: automated document redaction (86%), automatic spelling and grammar correction (75%), and computer-generated PDF summary creation (59%) (see Figure 6). By focusing on what the user needs, decision-makers can realize the benefits that AI-enabled PDF tools can bring such as:

- **Benefits for employees.** Decision-makers that integrate AI with their PDF tools can expect increased productivity, increased employee collaboration, decreased time spent on administrative and repeatable tasks, and decreased errors in PDF

FIGURE 6 **USERS**

“How valuable would the following be for next-generation PDF capabilities?”

● Extremely valuable ● Valuable



Base: 402 knowledge workers who use PDF editing tools at their organization
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Foxit, December 2023

documents (see Figure 7). These benefits directly address many of the top challenges employees face when using the slew of PDF and document tools at their disposal.

FIGURE 7

“What benefits would you expect from using a PDF tool that leverages AI?”

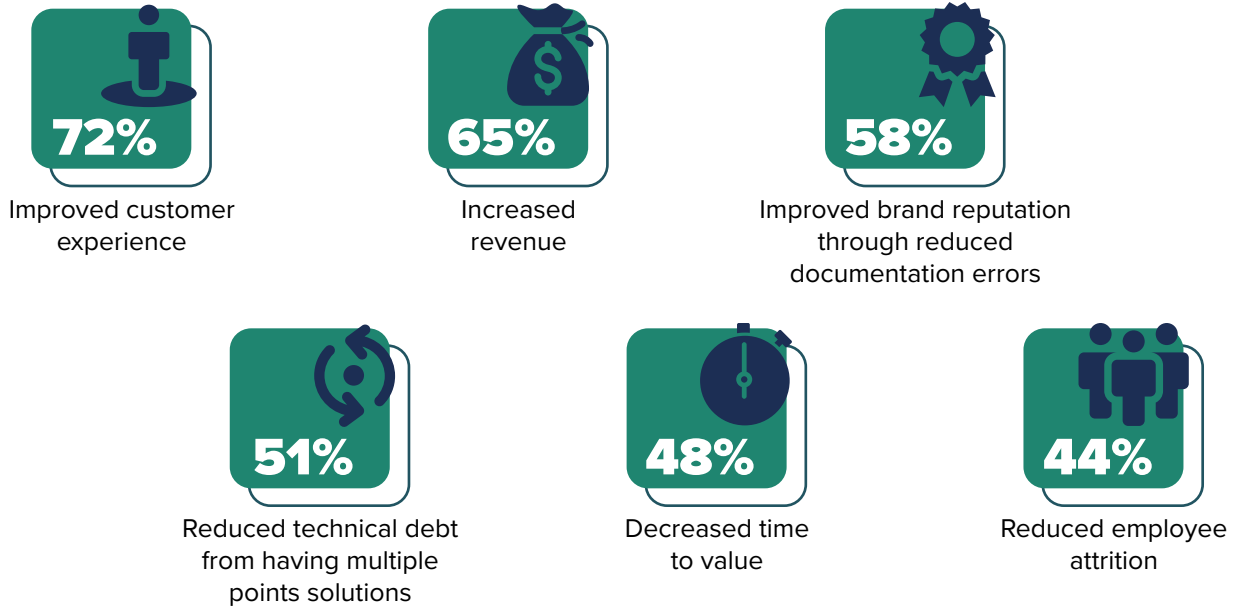


Base: 116 managers and directors with responsibility for PDF editing tool decisions at their organization
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Foxit, December 2023

- **Positive impacts for the business overall.** Unsurprisingly, equipping employees with PDF and document tools that enable them to refocus on more strategic work by automating the more tedious tasks means business benefits. Decision-makers who take this step can expect improved customer experience, increased revenue, improved brand reputation through reduced document errors, and lower technical debt (see Figure 8).

FIGURE 8

“What business impacts would your organization expect from using a PDF tool that leverages AI?”



Base: 116 managers and directors with responsibility for PDF editing tool decisions at their organization
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Foxit, December 2023

THE ALL-IN-ONE PDF PLATFORM

While enabling employees with PDF tools that leverage AI greatly increases employee productivity and limits time waste, it is only half of the equation. Decision-makers must also consider that employees struggle with the eight poorly integrated and limited tools they use for PDF and document tasks and consolidate their tools to one platform, empowered by AI, that enables users to complete all document tasks. In fact, nearly all respondents find some value in using a single platform to complete all PDF tasks, and a further 80% find this type of platform either valuable or extremely valuable.

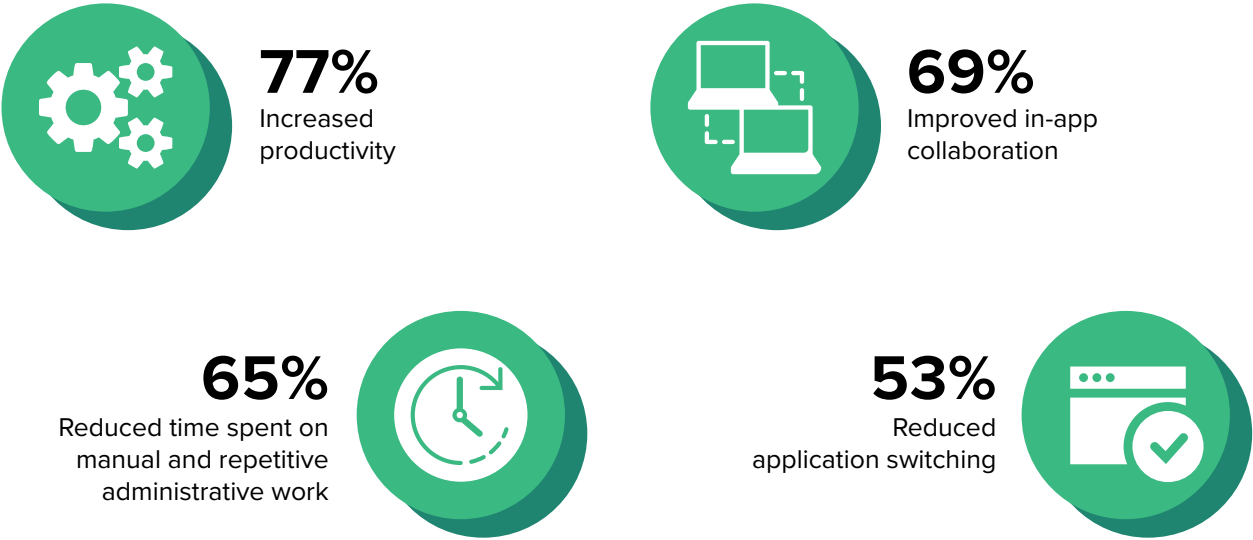
80%
of users and decision-makers agree that an all-in-one platform for all PDF tasks would be valuable.

This all-in-one platform also addresses key challenges faced by employees and can greatly help in improving PDF accuracy, efficiency, and collaboration — all while helping decision-makers achieve their business goals. Organizations that implement such a platform can expect increased productivity (77%), improved in-app collaboration (69%), reduced time spent on manual and repetitive work (65%), and reduced application switching (53%) (see Figure 9).

FIGURE 9

BOTH

“What benefits would an all-in-one PDF platform deliver?”



Base: 402 knowledge workers who use PDF editing tools at their organization and 116 managers and directors with responsibility for PDF editing tool decisions at their organization
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Foxit, December 2023

Key Recommendations

Document tasks often do not get the attention they deserve, but they have strong potential to advance enterprise goals. Significant digital transformation will be required, with a strong upside for AI-led process improvement. For document workflows, this can be accomplished in a single AI-enabled platform to maximize employee productivity, accuracy, and collaboration. More specifically, to succeed:

Review and revise the document process before introducing AI based automation.

Automating a bad process is never a good idea but only accelerates inferior execution. In many cases, the process needs to be revised independently of any improvement in document-related functions. First, refine the processes, eliminate unnecessary steps, and standardize where possible, and then determine the best tools rather than starting with tools and trying to fit them in. It is important to break the process into individual tasks that will become automation endpoints: for example, document signing, PDF editing, or extraction and summarization with AI. Automation is still best at these repetitive, rule-based, and time-consuming tasks. Look also for PDF tasks that can be addressed by AI.

Give users autonomy for PDF and document functions.

Users want automation to help with document issues. AI will give them more autonomy to develop automations, redact documents, generate documents, and summarize content to get their work done. Today, these features are only available within disparate platforms. Going forward, consolidation will allow users a single UI for these tasks, reduce training, and allow you to govern the proliferation of tools and their proper use.

Enlist the help of your automation COE.

Most firms have a group focused on digital transformation, often with the goal of scaling and governing automation. Document functions like signature, doc generation, and editing are often not on their radar — they are looking for more transformative projects. But getting their support can be powerful. For example, they can help you design KPIs for customer experience, employee experience, and productivity to measure the success of your process improvement. They can also enlist an enterprise architect to help consolidate diverse document tools and vendors.

Appendix A: Methodology

In this study, Forrester conducted an online survey of 518 global respondents comprising 402 knowledge workers who use PDF editing tools and 116 managers and directors with responsibility for PDF editing tool decisions at their organizations. Questions provided to the participants asked about their opinions, challenges, and benefits of PDF and related document tools. All respondents use a PDF editor. Respondents were offered a small incentive as a thank-you for time spent on the survey. The study began and was completed in November 2023.

Appendix B: Demographics

COUNTRY	
United States	21%
China	16%
Japan	16%
United Kingdom	14%
Canada	13%
France	11%
Germany	8%

DEPARTMENT	
IT	34%
Operations	19%
Finance/accounting	18%
Marketing/advertising	14%
Sales	13%
Human resources/training	2%

INDUSTRY (TOP FIVE SHOWN)	
Healthcare	13%
Financial services and/or insurance	12%
Government	11%
Manufacturing and materials	6%
Retail	6%

COMPANY SIZE	
20,000 or more employees	20%
5,000 to 19,999 employees	26%
1,000 to 4,999 employees	31%
500 to 999 employees	23%

RESPONDENT LEVEL	
Director	11%
Manager	12%
Full-time practitioner	78%

Note: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

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