2025 State of Design & Make

Spotlight on Consumer Products

Insights from leaders across consumer products on digital transformation, AI, sustainability, and the future of work.

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About the *Spotlight on Consumer Products*

The State of Design & Make: Spotlight on Consumer Products report features consumer products industry data from the *2025 Autodesk State of Design & Make* survey. From the consumer products industry, Autodesk surveyed 505 leaders and experts from 23 countries.

In this report, “digitally mature” companies are defined as those that are approaching the goal or have achieved the goal of their digital transformation journey. “Less digitally mature” companies are defined as those that are in the early stages or right in the middle of their digital transformation journey.

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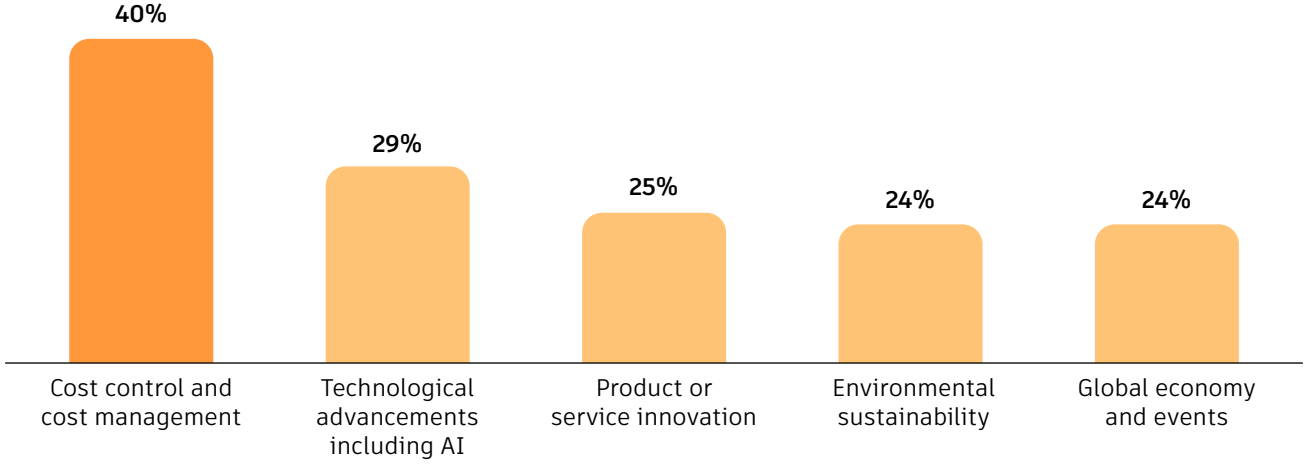
SECTION 1

Introduction

Leaders in the consumer products industry report they are facing significant organizational hurdles, from increased geo- and macro-economic pressures to a widening labor and skills gap, and the rapid advancement of data-enabled technologies like artificial intelligence (AI). But amid disruption, organizations are seeing the benefits of digital transformation and its potential to reshape the way consumer products are created and manufactured, from concept through product launch and beyond.

Top challenges for consumer products leaders

Cost control and management are the leading challenge



Survey question: What are the top three challenges your company or organization faces today? Select up to three. 12 response options.

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State of Design & Make: Spotlight on Consumer Products key findings

The consumer products industry is currently confronting a host of challenges that span the entire product lifecycle, from design to manufacturing and customer experience.

Cost control remains top of mind for organizations amid continued inflation and increasing supply-chain fragility and disruption. Implementation of AI and emerging technologies is the second most-cited challenge, one that is compounded by cost and current geo- and macro-economic uncertainty, and product innovation is a challenge in an industry constantly pressured to create new, more advanced products.

Despite this uncertainty, leaders are still feeling bullish in some areas as they identify opportunity amid disruption:

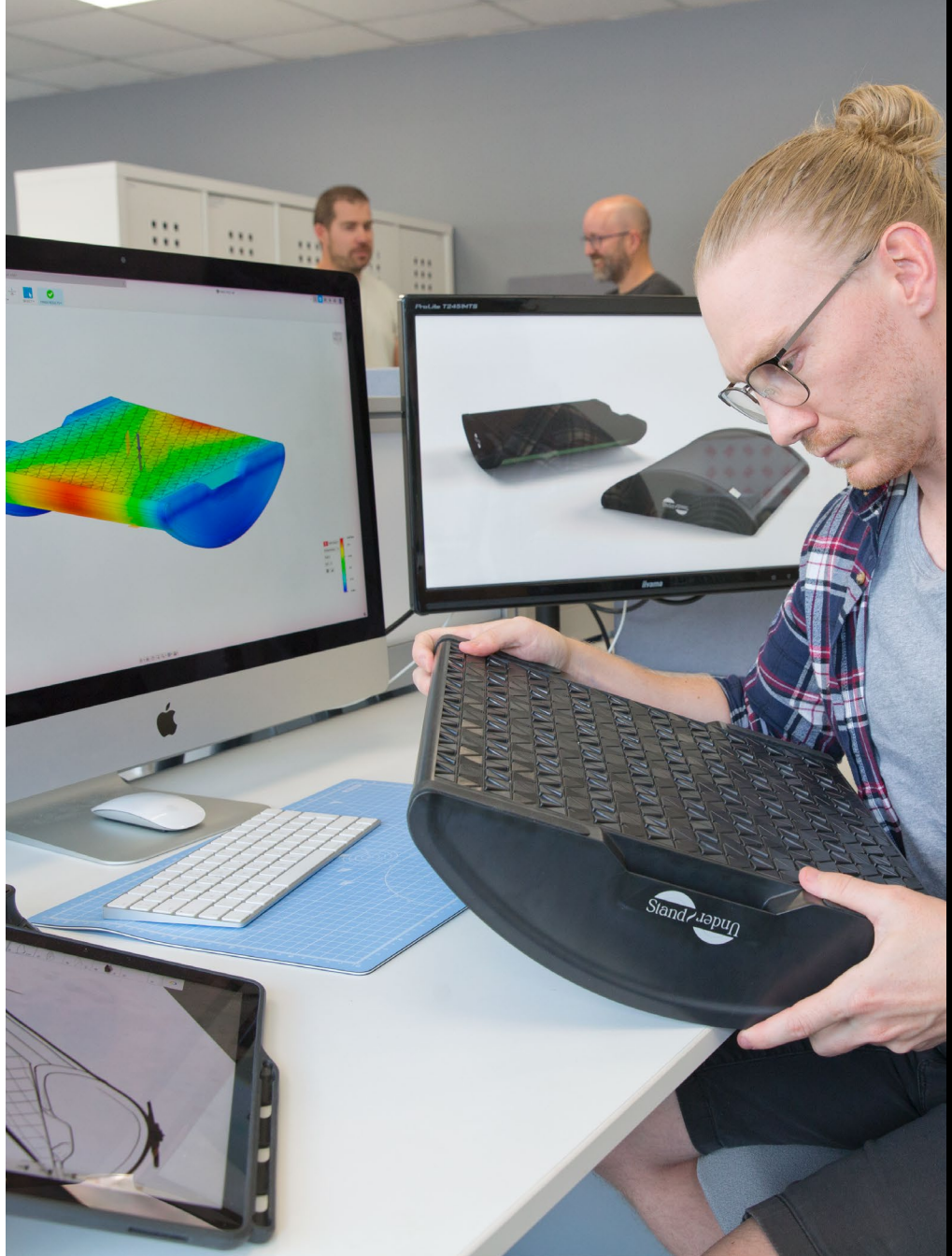
- Although overall investments are down year-over-year, nearly two-thirds of leaders say they will increase overall future investments.
- Sustainability is experiencing a surge of optimism, with nearly all leaders saying their organizations are taking steps to be more sustainable.
- AI is making inroads across consumer products organizations, with applications from product design and inventory to customer satisfaction and innovation. AI is now also the top sustainability enabler for consumer products.

> ***"While the financial risk for us is not very high, we still feel the destabilization of the global supply chain because that destabilization goes a lot further than just your dollar. Certain things get scarce, certain industries get overstretched. Those delays in the supply chain add costs, and we feel the ramifications of that."***
>
> **DAVID EVANS**
> Head of Product, Zenbooth, a manufacturer of soundproof office booths and privacy pods

One notable theme across consumer products sectors is the difference in performance and perception at digitally mature organizations compared to their less-mature counterparts. For example, 78% of leaders at digitally mature companies feel they are prepared for change compared to 46% at less mature organizations. They are also more likely to enter new markets and increase their investment into acquisitions.

Most organizations benefiting from digital transformation are seeing more than 50% improvements in categories such as customer satisfaction, innovation, and productivity. This performance gap underscores a competitive advantage for organizations that prioritize digitization.

This prioritization is being reflected through the lens of organizational budgets. AI is now a top area for future investment, despite increased concerns about industry destabilization, and more than half of organizations are increasing investment in technology to increase positive outcomes.



The digital maturity difference

In consumer products, respondents from digitally mature companies are more likely than their peers to report that they …

+26%
… have experienced “above average” or “exceptional” **performance**

+37%
… have “increased” or “strongly increased” **investment** in the past three years

+32%
… “agree” they **are prepared** for the future

+24%
… have kept up “very well” with **change in the industry**

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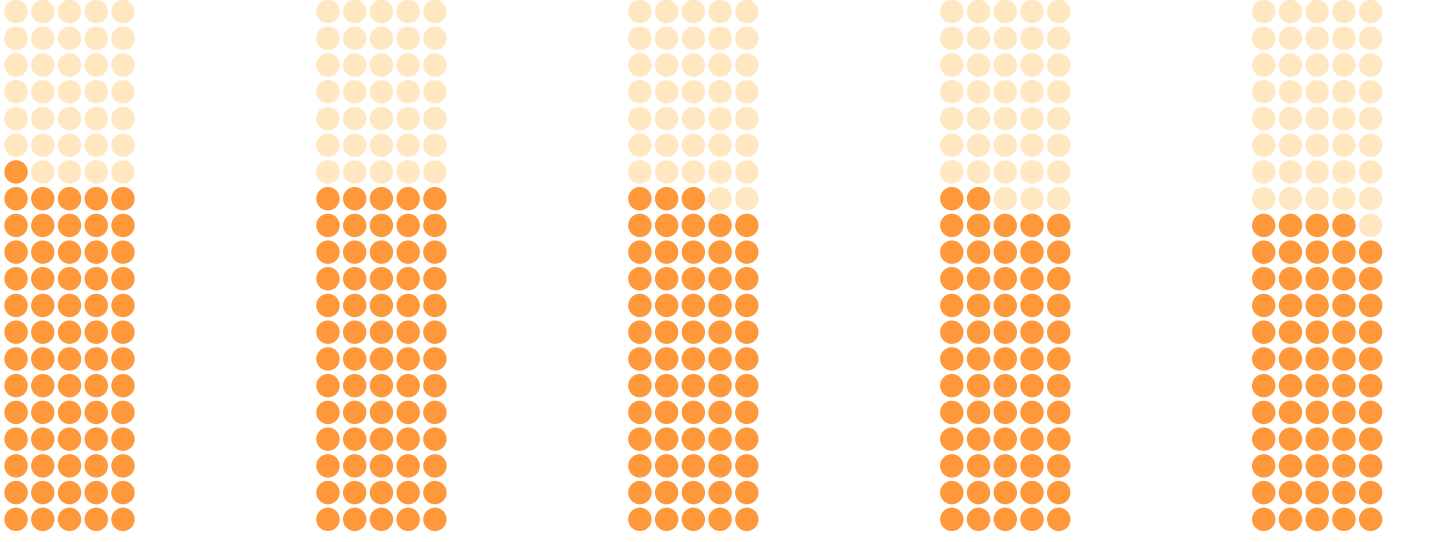
Budgets reflect priorities for leaders in consumer products



66%
Artificial intelligence

65%
Developing new products and/or services

63%
Improved processes and operations

62%
Environmental sustainability

59%
Technology to deliver improved project outcomes

Survey question: How do you think your company or organization's investment in the following will shift in the next 3 years?
5-point scale. Top two = "it will increase" or "it will strongly increase".

Digitally mature companies tend to invest more heavily in technology—73% will increase investment into AI and 67% in technology compared to 62% and 54%, respectively, at less-mature organizations—and those investments are now paying dividends during the current period of uncertainty. And organizations that are positioning themselves to thrive are investing in technology that will improve resilience and take advantage of the full benefits of digitization from concept through product launch.

SECTION 2

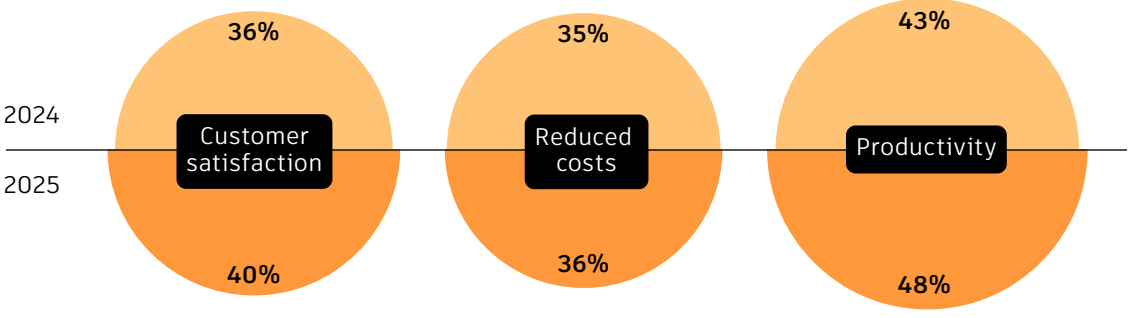
Innovation through technology, data, and AI

The consumer products industry has always been at the forefront of adapting to shifts in technology. From the first assembly lines at the start of the 20th century to e-commerce at the tail end—and now the rapid rise of AI technology—it's an industry that's aways in a state of evolution.

While earlier technological advancements in the industry primarily focused on improving efficiency and streamlining operations, the rise of big data, the cloud, and AI are allowing companies to rethink how they do business all the way from product development over to supply chains and up to spotting new consumer trends. Digital transformation and AI are no longer nice-to-haves; instead, they are central to how companies drive growth, sustainability, and innovation.

Most consumer products organizations are benefitting from digital transformation in some way, and the number of leaders who say they benefit is increasing year-over-year. Nearly half (48%) of leaders say they experience productivity benefits from digital transformation, a five-point increase over 2024.

More organizations in Consumer Products are seeing the benefits of digital transformation



Survey question: Has your company or organization experienced any of the following benefits of digital transformation? Select all that apply. 15 response options.

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While digital transformation is a journey that offers undeniable benefits, the road is often paved with obstacles. These hurdles span out across a complex value chain, including concept design, engineering, manufacturing, and a large partner ecosystem, where disconnected workflows and fragmented systems can slow progress.

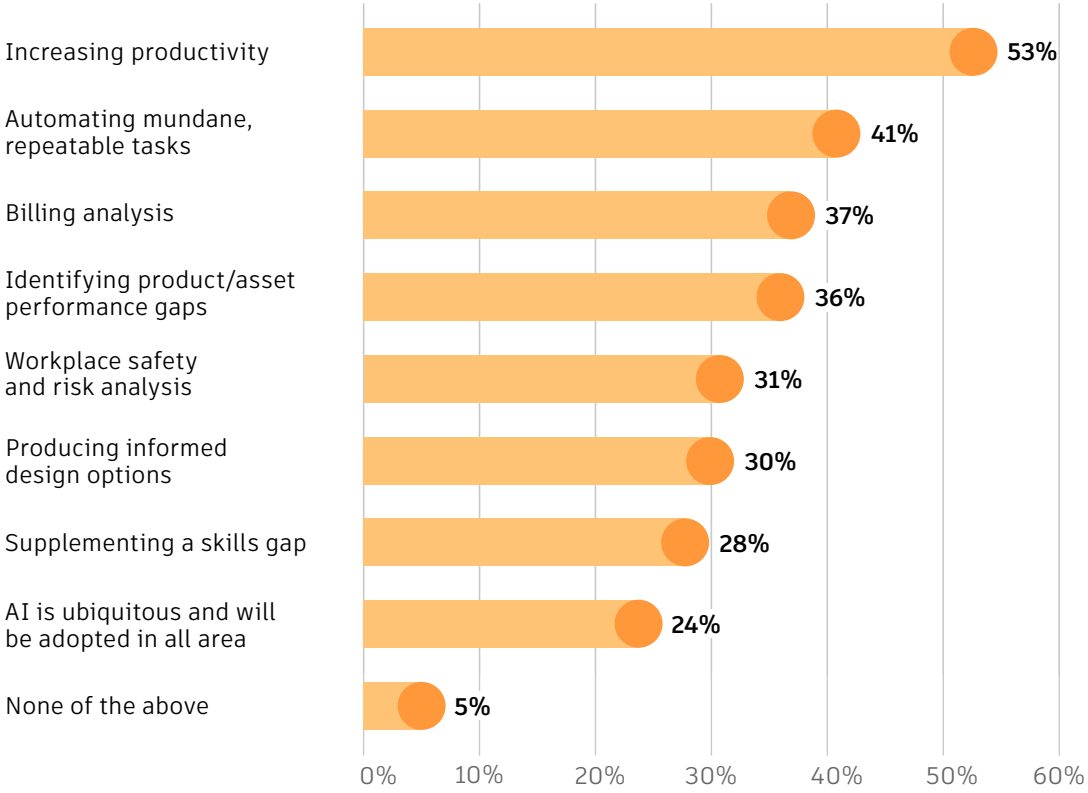
For consumer products, the biggest challenges are practical, perennial, and connected—cost is by far the largest concern, cited by 51% of leaders as a top challenge, followed by time to implement technology (34%), and a lack of skilled talent (33%). To solve these issues, organizations are increasingly turning to more technology. AI is gaining momentum in consumer products as leaders start to realize the benefits of big data.

Nearly all (92%) leaders consider AI useful or essential for their business, and 70% believe AI will enhance their sector, a clear signal that AI is here to stay. AI's ability to turn mountains of data into actionable insights has leaders exploring ways the technology can create better outcomes across the organization.

> ***"Digital transformation and AI transformation happens so fast, and we have to catch up so quickly. Generally, we are very open minded, and we always look at the different tools that we can use in our daily workflow. As a product development team and as creatives, AI tools have been a big help. So, we are definitely trying to leverage those tools for our workflow not only for design, but also other areas of the organization."***
>
> **SETER WU**
> Senior Manager, Industrial Design, Logitech, a manufacturer of computer peripherals and software

From billing to design, AI is making an impact

AI use cases across consumer products



Survey question: What are the use cases for artificial intelligence (AI) in your company or organization? Select all that apply. 10 response options.

Solution spotlight: Using AI to increase productivity at boAt

Since its inception in 2016, boAt Lifestyle has quickly become a prominent player in the consumer electronics market in India, focusing on high-quality, affordable audio products and accessories. Using advanced tools for 3D modeling, simulation, and electronics product development, the company was able to transition its design process in-house, which had significant impact on boosting production.

AI-driven features facilitate rapid prototyping and iteration, resulting in reduced time-to-market for new products. Moreover, the ability to simulate product performance and optimize designs virtually has led to cost savings and enhanced product reliability. As a result, boAt Lifestyle has managed to sustain its competitive edge in the crowded consumer electronics market, while continuously meeting the evolving demands of its tech-savvy customer base.

→ **READ MORE** about boAt Lifestyle

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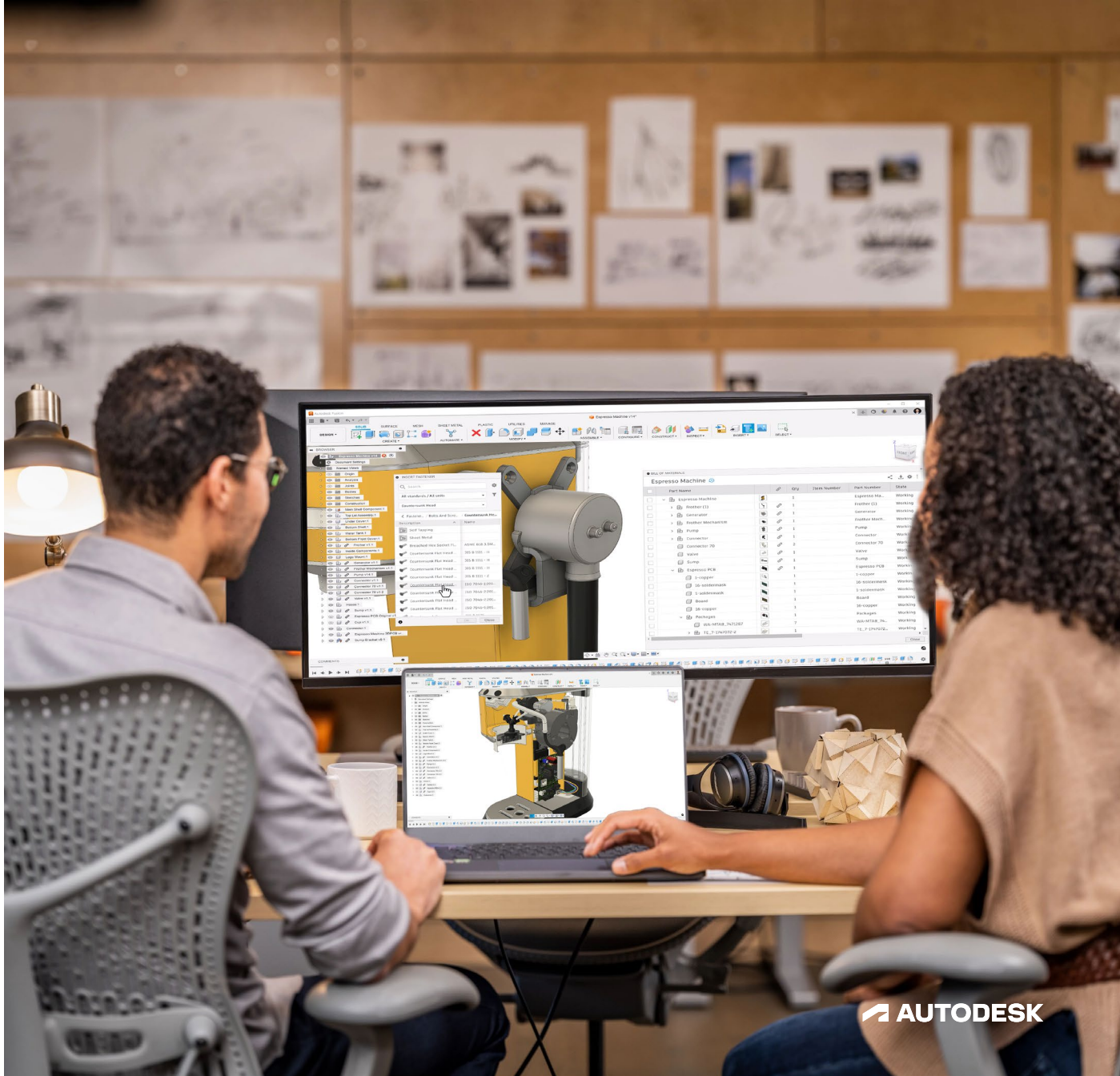
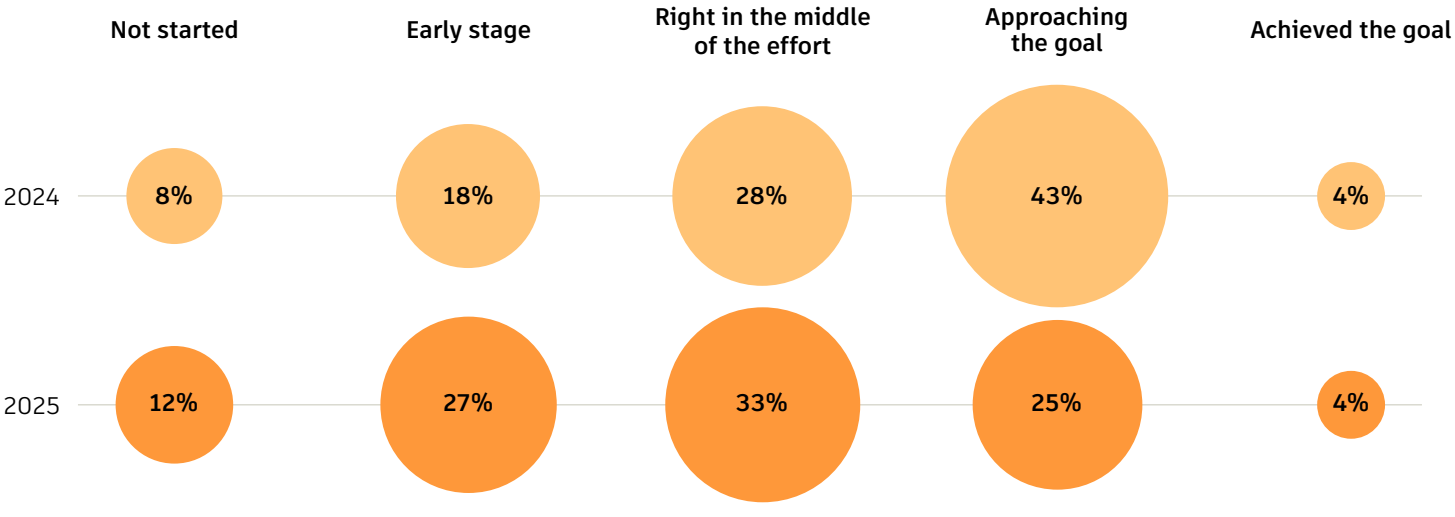
SECTION 2 | INNOVATION THROUGH TECHNOLOGY, DATA, AND AI

“One product can have a variation of four to five types,” says Ayush Singh Patel, associate director of industrial design at Noise, a consumer wearables company. “And it’’s a lot if you think about it from a manufacturing and resource standpoint. The old process was much more hands-on and involved a lot of prototyping and sketching. Now that process has become completely 3D-dominated, and it’’s easy to design within manufacturing constraints from the beginning of product conception. What originally was taking two to three months is now done in about a week.”

But, at the same time, nearly half of leaders (42%) believe that AI will destabilize their industry—a significant increase from 31% in 2024—and while most leaders trust AI for their industry (60%), this sentiment is also down from 2024. This apparent contradiction highlights the need for careful and informed AI implementation to harness its benefits while mitigating potential disruptions.



AI journeys implementation realities



Survey question: Where is your company or organization in incorporating artificial intelligence (AI) technology? 5 point scale.

One interesting finding from the *2025 State of Design & Make* report is the shift in how consumer products organizations view their AI implementation journeys. Only 29% of leaders report they are nearing or have achieved their AI goals, a significant 18-point drop from 2024. This signals that, while organizations are confident in the use of their current AI tools, they may be facing challenges when it comes to fully integrating the new tech at every level of the organization.

> *"Just within the last 12 months, we've started to experiment to see where artificial intelligence is going to impact design and UX. And we're already using it. We've identified its strengths and weaknesses and we're keeping a very close eye on how it develops, but we're already integrating it into our process, which is saving us a lot of time."*
>
> **CHRIS GIDWELL**
> Vice President, Group Design, Groupe SEB, a manufacturer of small domestic appliances and cookware

Image courtesy of Zenbooth

Solution spotlight: Combining digital and physical systems at Zenbooth

Zenbooth, a soundproof office booths and pods manufacturer, has transformed inventory management with its innovative Kanban system. This system uses physical laminated cards, each embedded with a QR code and barcode, strategically distributed throughout the factory. These cards provide comprehensive details such as component and material specifications, purchasing information, critical dimensions, lead times, and quantities to order. As part of the process, workers draw from a primary bin until it is depleted and then access a secondary bin gated by these cards. Once a card is removed, it is placed on a calendar peg labeled “replenish,” signaling the buyer to reorder these items. The buyer collects these cards weekly, processes purchase orders using Fusion Operations, and communicates with vendors. Expected arrival dates are marked on the calendar to keep the receiving team organized and proactive about overdue items.

This hybrid approach enhances visibility, accountability, and operational efficiency while simplifying training—eliminating the complexity and higher error rates of purely digital systems and the time-consuming and laborious nature of purely physical systems. By leveraging the strengths of both physical and digital systems, Zenbooth ensures smooth inventory management and consistent workflow across the factory.

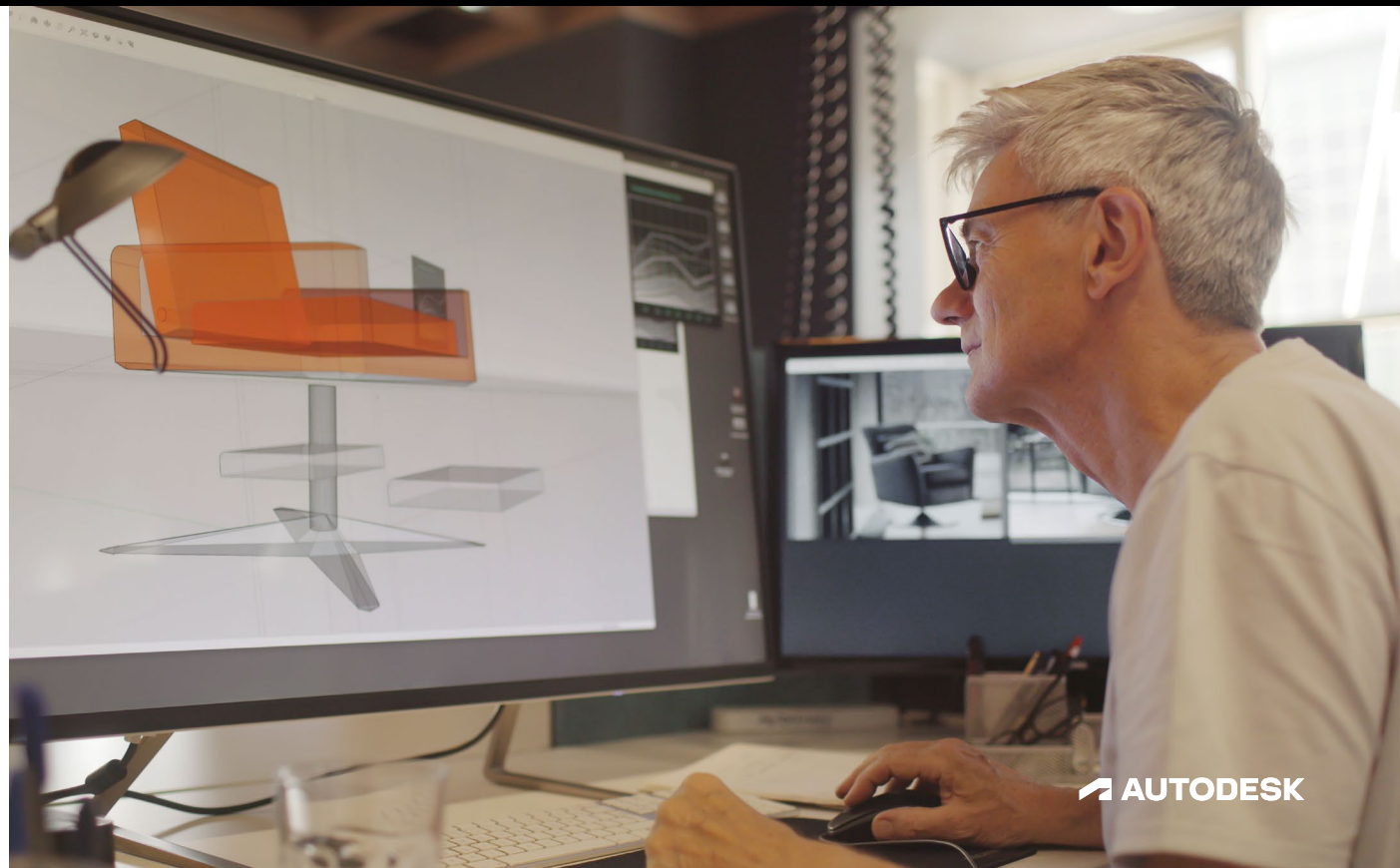
“There is still a place for physical systems,” says Zenbooth Head of Product David Evans. “In particular, physical systems that are designed to work with our digital systems in a very seamless way that reduces the amount of data entry that we have to do but increases the likelihood that process will be successful.”

SECTION 3

Supporting talent as a growth driver

Technology is only half the equation for digital transformation; talent determines how fast and how far you get with that technology. New platforms, AI, and connected data can only create value when teams know how to use them in their everyday work.

But the consumer products industry is facing a growing talent gap, and the implications are significant. Twenty percent of leaders name talent as a top organizational challenge, and 56% say that a lack of skilled talent is a barrier to growth, up 10 points from 2024. Compounding this issue, 54% of leaders say their workforce is rapidly aging, creating a massive loss of institutional knowledge. These pressures could lead to slower innovation, longer time to market, and uneven adoption of new tools, decreasing their positive impact.



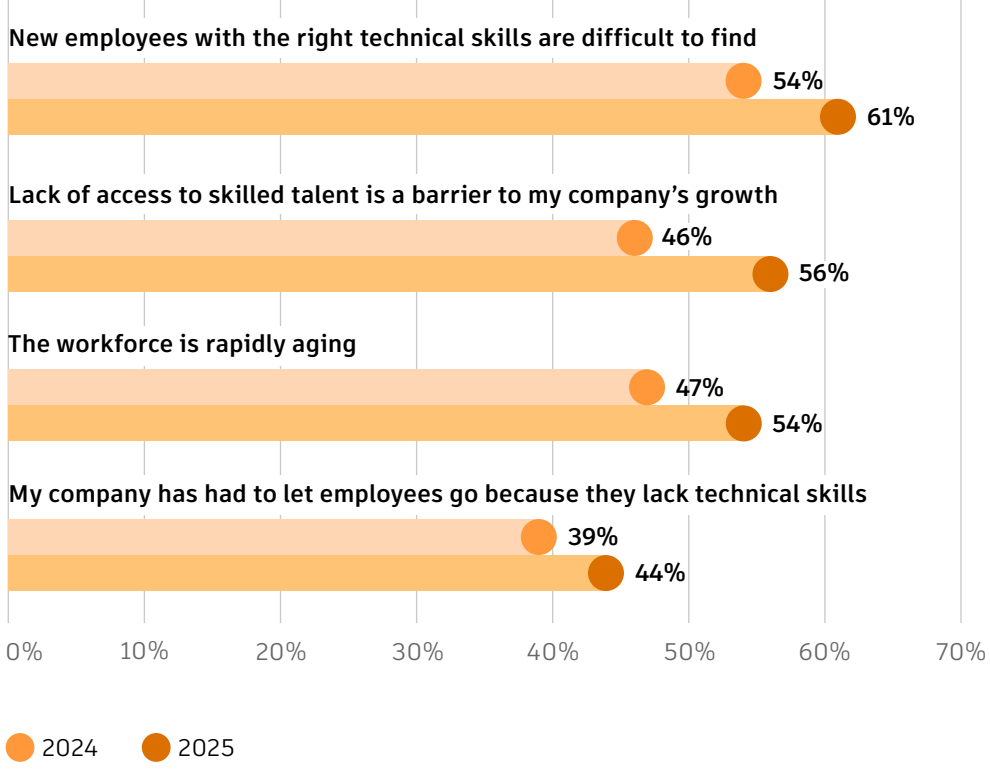
Many companies lack the right framework to bridge the skills gap—39% of leaders say they don't have the resources to design internal programs, and 46% of leaders say the external programs they do use don't meet their needs. Considering that 44% of leaders also say they have had to let employees go for insufficient technical skills, ineffective training and upskilling seems to be a double-edged sword for consumer products organizations.

Here again, digital maturity can be a differentiator. Seventy-one percent of leaders at digitally mature companies say digital transformation has improved talent acquisition and retention compared to 51% of their counterparts. Digitally mature organizations are also at an advantage when it comes to training, with 72% implementing continuous learning programs and 80% investing more in digital training, compared to 55% and 61% at less mature organizations, respectively. Over time, this performance gap could result in weaker hiring pipelines and slower technology adoption, further hindering progress and slowing growth.

Unable to support training programs internally, organizations in search of tech talent are looking outside the organization. The ability to work with and implement AI is the top hiring priority across consumer products sectors indicating that, despite its current challenges, leaders are investing in the promise of an AI-powered workforce to build the foundation for their organization's future.

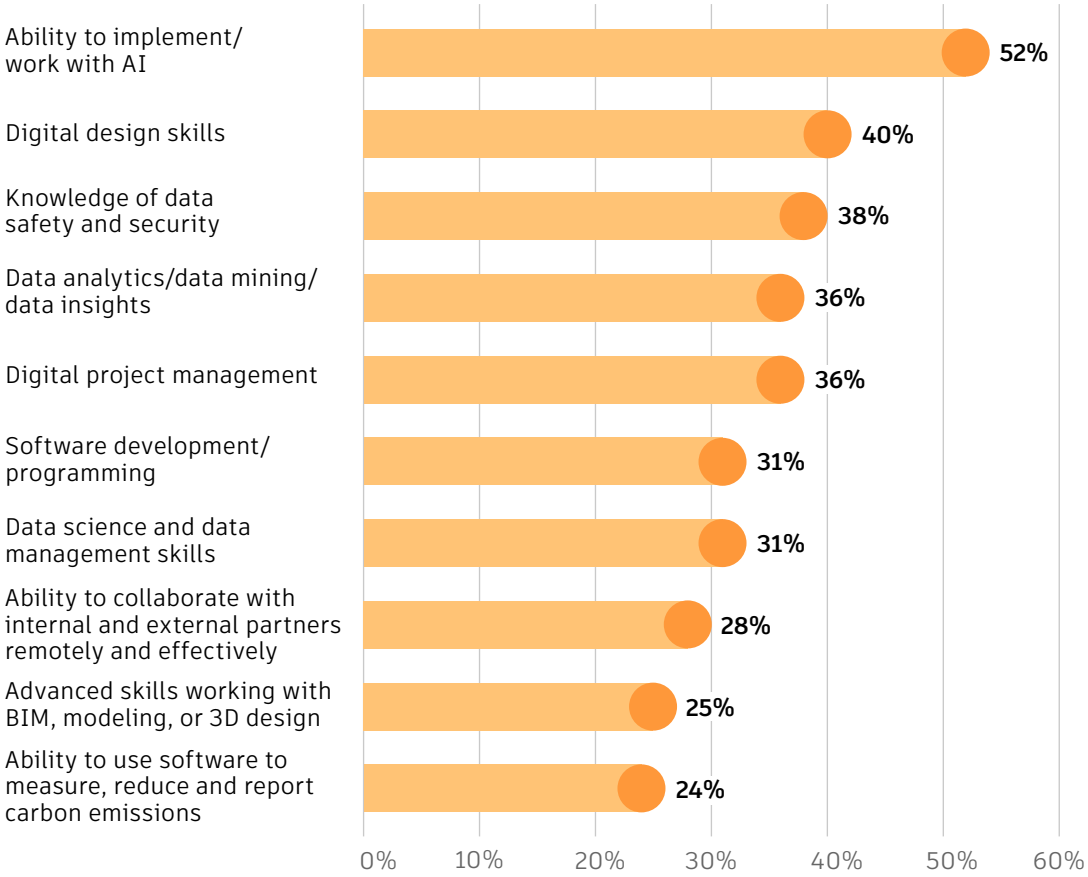
"Getting the right skills, at the right time, in the right place is the challenge," says Vice President of Group Design at Groupe SEB Chris Gidwell. "I think the risk is AI being used by the wrong people who aren't trained to spot what's good and what isn't."

Talent scarcity and the growing skills gap



Survey question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements. 5-point scale. Top two: agree.

Future hiring is focused on AI skills



Survey question: What technical or digital skills do you believe your company or organization will be prioritizing when hiring over the next 3 years? Select all that apply. 12 response options.

"At both an individual and a company level, we need to catch up with technology and make sure we don't fall behind. We need to follow where the industry is going and shift to make sure we're developing both products and skills that make sense for this new AI era."

SETER WU
Senior Manager, Industrial Design, Logitech, a manufacturer of computer peripherals and software

SECTION 4

Sustainability shifts from consumer value to business imperative

Image courtesy of Grovemade

The consumer products industry has seen sustainability go from the sidelines to a strategic imperative in the past few decades, as consumers demand more environmentally friendly solutions. In fact, 94% of consumer products organizations are taking steps to be more sustainable, according to *2025 State of Design & Make* data.

Notably, AI is emerging as the engine that turns sustainability ambitions into measurable results. Thirty-eight percent of consumer products organizations are using AI to be more sustainable, up from 35% in 2024 and 24% in 2023, and more than any other action. Digitally mature companies are leading this shift, with 44% using AI for sustainability, compared to 34% at less digitally mature organizations.

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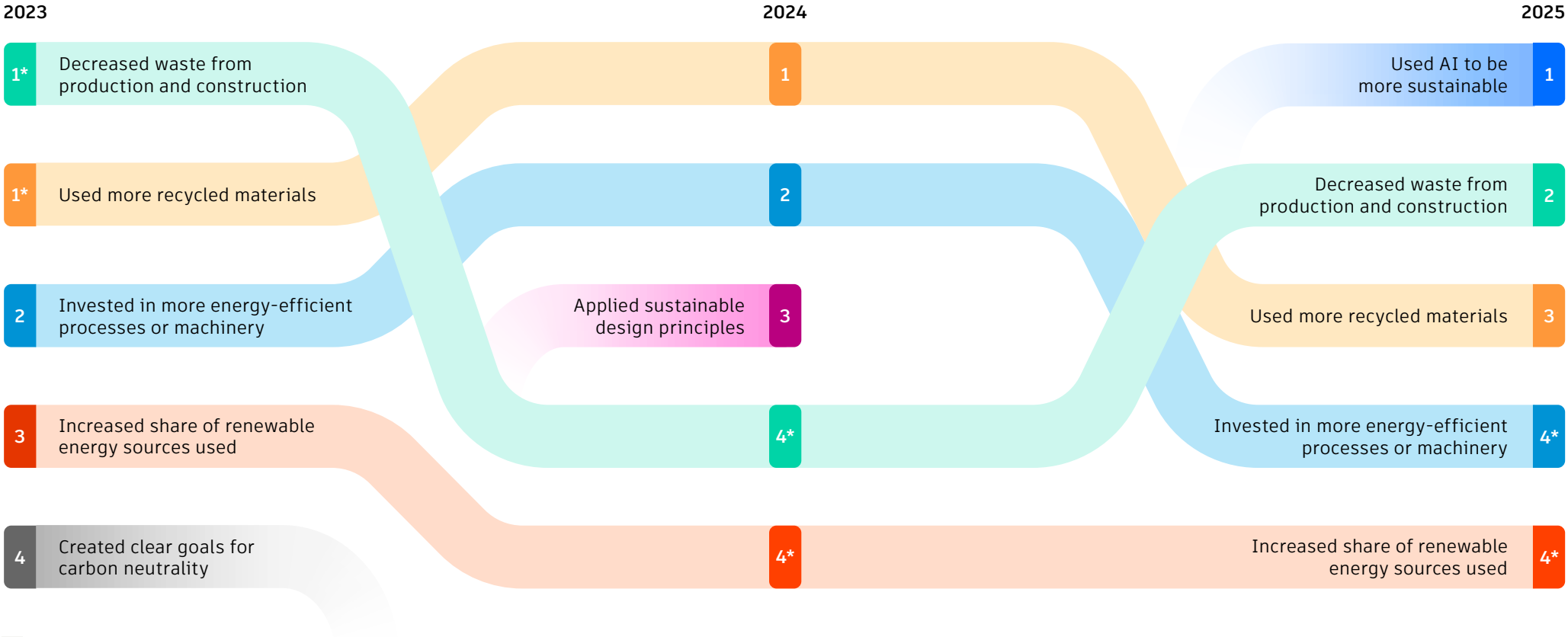
Top sustainability actions across consumer products



Survey question: What changes has your company or organization already made to be more sustainable? Select all that apply. 12 response options.
*Tied rank

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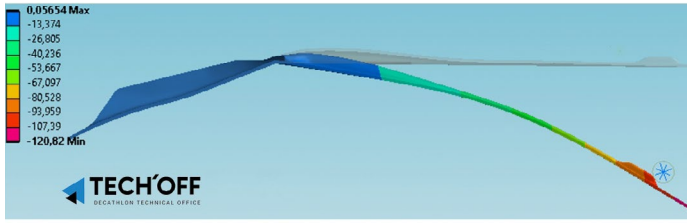
SECTION 4 | SUSTAINABILITY SHIFTS

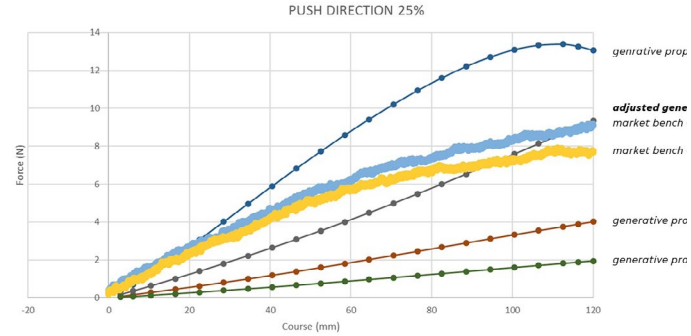
Digitally mature companies also appear to be at an advantage when it comes to reaping sustainability benefits in other areas. Eighty-five percent of digitally mature organizations see long-term benefits from sustainability and 69% see short-term benefits, compared to just 78% and 54%, respectively, at less digitally mature organizations. Sustainability efforts are also easing talent struggles at digitally mature companies, with 74% of leaders reporting their sustainability efforts help attract and retain talent, compared to 57% at less digitally mature companies. Industry interviews conducted for this report reinforce these findings, with leaders saying younger skilled workers want to join organizations that are committed to sustainability.

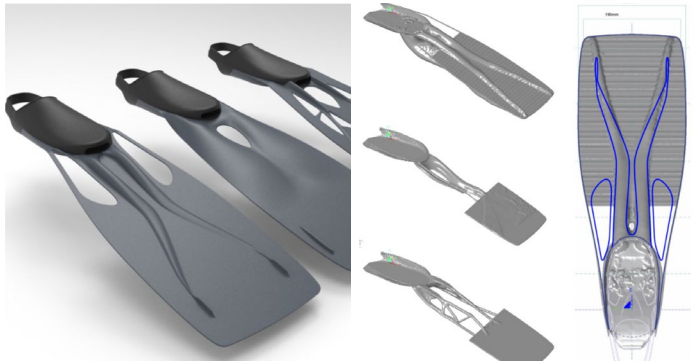
Leaders at digitally mature companies appear to be seeing the transformational potential of sustainability across their organizations and are increasing their budgets to match. Seventy-four percent of leaders say they will increase their investments in environmental sustainability, compared to just 54% at less digitally mature companies.

While this is another example of the digital maturity gap, it's also an opportunity for less mature organizations to invest in areas that will have the most impact, and sustainability initiatives are paying dividends across organizations that are willing to invest.

Images courtesy of Decathalon







Solution spotlight: Reducing carbon footprint by 50% at Decathalon

Decathlon, a leading European sporting goods retailer, faced the challenge of designing a diving fin that met high-performance standards while significantly reducing environmental impact. Traditional manufacturing processes and designs often resulted in products that were heavy and had substantial carbon footprints, not aligning with increasing consumer demand for more sustainable solutions.

To solve this problem, the Decathalon team turned to AI and generative design. The team's approach used AI to explore multiple design alternatives within given constraints, leading to the creation of a product that is not only high-performance but also significantly reduces environmental impact. The new diving fin is half the weight and boasts a carbon footprint that is 50% lower than the industry standard, making it a remarkable achievement in sustainable product design.

This approach helps streamline the design process, leading to optimized materials usage and reduced waste, which are crucial factors in sustainable production.

→ **READ MORE** about Decathalon

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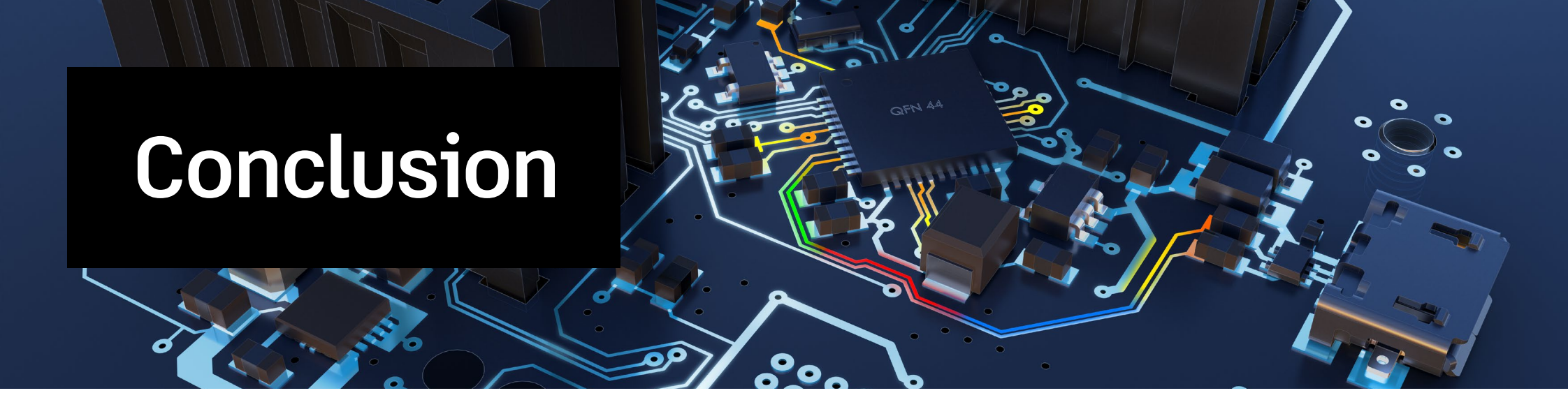

Conclusion

Despite recent instability, leaders in the consumer products industry are optimistic and ready to adapt to another new technology landscape. True to form, the industry is embracing new ways of working to solve today's challenges with an eye on tomorrow's opportunities.

Digital transformation provides a clear advantage when it comes to seizing those opportunities, both internally and externally. A third (35%) of digitally mature companies are using internal data to gain a competitive edge and develop new products (34%), compared to 30% and 25%, respectively, at less mature companies.

Additionally, 80% of digitally mature companies are poised to enter new markets, compared to 61% of their less mature peers. This readiness signifies an enhanced ability to leverage technology, data, and AI for growth opportunities. Investment in acquisitions is also expected to rise among digitally mature companies, with 26% planning to increase spending, compared to just 16% at less mature firms, indicating a strategic eye toward expansion and consolidation.

With AI making inroads into consumer products workstreams everywhere from design to user experience, the performance gap between digitally mature companies and their less mature peers will only continue to grow. Consumer products leaders who want to thrive in this new era need to think about the long-term benefits of investing in digital transformation and emerging tech now—and the cost of falling behind.

Sustainability is also quickly becoming a differentiator in the consumer products industry, and the benefits extend far beyond waste and cost savings. Organizations that want to start realizing the benefits that sustainability offers should approach it as a data problem with a technology solution. The transformative power of technology, particularly AI, offers a robust toolkit to navigate the complexities of implementing sustainable solutions at every stage of product development.

However, technology alone is not enough without a workforce that understands how to wield it. Building a better future starts by supporting those who will design and build it. As the demand for skilled workers in general, and AI skills specifically, grows, leaders should invest in comprehensive training programs that prepare their workforce for today's technology while continuously upskilling them for the skills they will need tomorrow.

About the *State of Design & Make: Spotlight on Consumer Products* report

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The report also features qualitative interviews with leaders and experts from across the consumer products industry.

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