

# Industry Report



# Continuous Improvement Survey Report 2018

in association with Cltric Cube

## Executive summary

Over the past two decades, the world has embraced Lean management thinking, with continuous improvement (CI) strengthening many organizations’ capabilities and performance. What was once the preserve of the manufacturing industry, has now been employed by almost every sector, from healthcare to financial services.

Just as technology has driven the workplace to become more dynamic, it is also revolutionizing the speed, accuracy and transparency of continuous improvement performance.

To assess the status of technology-enabled continuous improvement, Leading Edge Group collaborated with sister company, *Cltric Cube*, to survey continuous improvement professionals in both the private and public sector. Using data provided by CI Managers, Lean Leaders and Operational Excellence professionals across North America, EMEA and APAC, this report provides a snapshot of the current CI landscape.

Results highlight the gap between continuous improvement maturity and the adoption of new technologies to power rapid and effective improvement. The report also shines a spotlight on challenges to adoption, looking at the changes that are pre-requisite to technology being fully embraced and embedded at the core of organizational continuous improvement strategy.

## Methodology

Survey participation was promoted to CI professionals on LinkedIn, at trade events and to Leading Edge Group’s global community via email and social channels. Participants received priority access to the findings, with Leading Edge Group making a €3 donation per submission to UNICEF, as a further incentive.

## Respondent profiles

64% of survey respondents stated they were from Europe; 18% from North America; 8% from Australia and the remaining 10% from other countries.

50% of all respondents said they worked within the Manufacturing sector; 35% within the Services sector (including the Public Sector) and the remaining across Supply Chain, IT and Financial sectors.

Over 50% of all organizations surveyed undertook more than 10 CI projects in a 12-month period; 87% had two or more full time staff working in CI and 60% of respondents said company-wide CI had been in place for over 4 years with 36% operating CI programs for more than 7 years.

Data from CI Managers, Lean Leaders and Operational Excellence Professionals informs the report

## Outdated systems

In a world where change is both inevitable and rapid, even successful and CI mature organizations can find

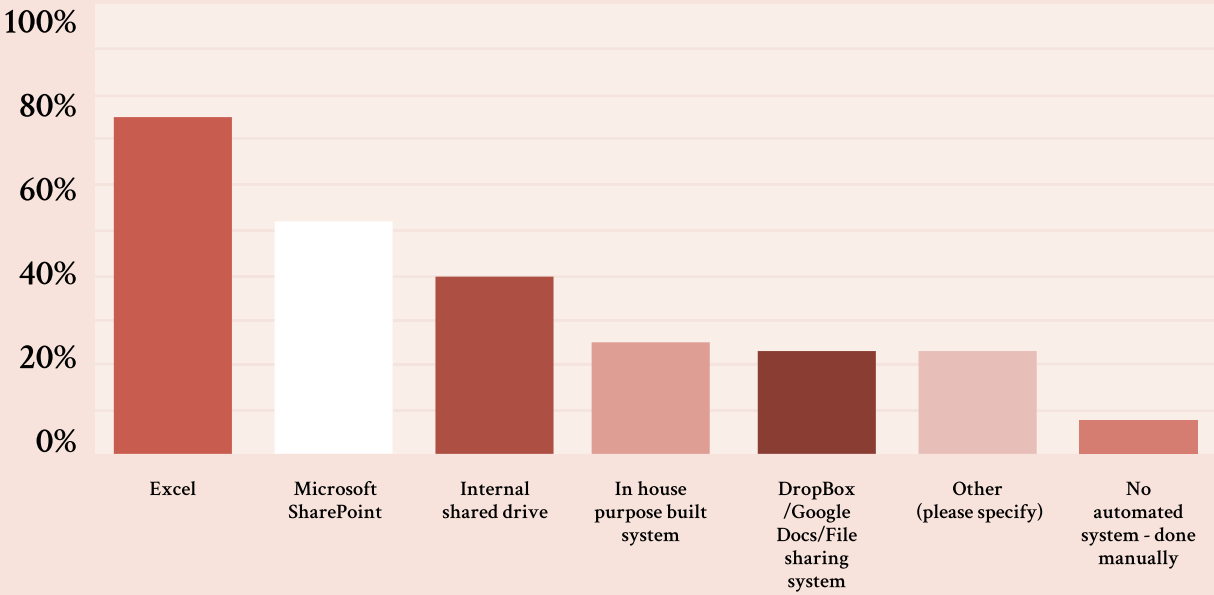


Figure 1  
Which systems or electronic tools do you use to help you manage your CI activities?

it difficult to realize a culture of continuous improvement. This survey goes some way towards explaining why, revealing how most organizations are using a variety of measures to structure and manage improvement initiatives.

A mammoth 74% of organizations surveyed still use spreadsheets - specifically Microsoft Excel to manage, track and report on global, organization-wide CI activities and performance.

*Unsurprisingly, the data reveals significant frustration amongst CI professionals regarding the use of existing systems to manage CI projects.*

- The number one hindrance is how time consuming it is to keep current CI systems up to date (42%)
- Second was difficulty in accessing the system remotely from outside work (34%)
- This was followed closely by an inability to quickly find information or documentation on past CI projects or activities (32%)

As continuous improvement matures within an organization, management systems are required to handle more projects across more locations. It’s clear from the data, however, that current CI management systems are not fit for purpose, even at the most CI matured organizations. Faced with an inability to keep up with CI tasks and activities, employee enthusiasm can wane, and organizations run the risk of being unable to sustain CI long term.



**What frustrations do you encounter with your CI management system?**

*“Excessive paperwork and emails”*

*“Only single users can access the system”*

*“Lack of consistency”*

**Enabling technology**

Crucially, the survey indicates that for organizations to truly sustain a culture of continuous improvement, both management and front line staff must be empowered with smart, easy to use and easy to access CI management software. The findings reveal what CI professionals require to effectively manage continuous improvement activities.

**Visibility**

*Almost 80% of CI professionals surveyed want real time project visibility.*

To have real time insight into activities, engagement and impact. To know where help is needed, track progress toward goals, and know who is working on what.

**Dashboard reporting**

*Dashboard reporting is a key requirement cited by 70% of respondents.*

The information to monitor improvement in real time at their fingertips. To ensure everyone has the details required to spread and sustain improvement.

**Project prioritization**

*The third most important feature according to CI professionals is a project prioritization tool.*

To define and prioritize projects and opportunities against organizational goals as projects grow.

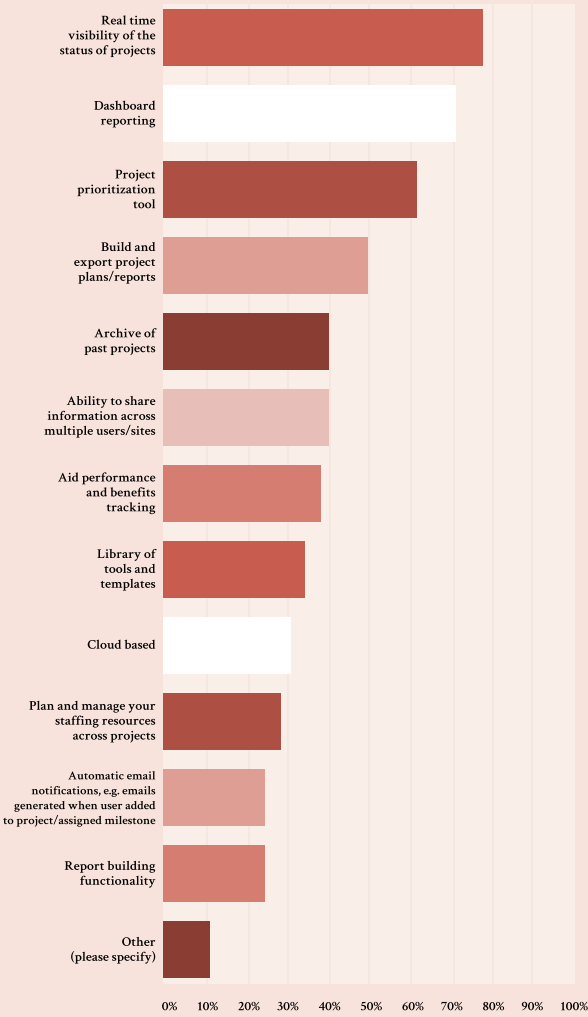
**Sharing**

*40% of respondents cited the ability to share information across multiple users and sites as important.*

To provide insight on team activities, to store all data in one location and to empower cross-functional teams to collaborate regardless of time or distance.

A cloud-based, automated CI management software solution is the obvious answer, yet the data revealed that only a fraction of the organizations surveyed actually use a customized CI application to manage and track CI.

*Figure 2*  
What features of a CI Management software solution would be important to you?



## Adoption challenges

Although it's clear that many organizations would benefit from cloud-based CI management tools, as indicated by almost 60% of respondents, only a few have made the leap to become truly technology enabled. We discovered what is holding CI professionals back from fulfilling this obvious need.

The survey revealed that 'funding constraints' were a key determinant in any decision to procure a customized CI software solution and that support from the C-suite is essential.

- 59% cited general funding constraints as the key barrier to investing in CI management technology, with a further 33% citing that it was not part of the company IT budget.

**So what's next?** Making a clear business case by identifying the benefits and potential returns of deploying such a system is a vital first step. This will require support from the IT department, both at a local and corporate level. The survey also demonstrated that senior management, including the CEO and CFO, would be key players in the decision-making process.



### What internal barriers could you encounter when proposing a specialized CI software solution?

*“Getting corporate wide support”*

*“Buy-in and ownership”*

*“Prioritizing this project over others due to resource constraints”*

## Next generation

Looking to the next-generation of continuous improvement, it's clear that organizations require a more rapid improvement process; one that incorporates real-time visibility, event-driven performance dashboards and analytics.

If embraced correctly, emerging technology represents a major game changer, with the ability to transform the traditional project-based approach to improvement into a living, ever-evolving and real-time improvement culture, as truly continuous as its name implies.

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Leading Edge Group collaborated with sister company, Citric Cube, to produce this survey report. For more information about Citric Cube, visit <https://www.leadingedgegroup.com/services/citric-cube/>

