

From Complexity to Capability

Integrating Systems, People, and Partnerships for Future-Ready Packaging Operations



{ Business
Intelligence

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BOTTOM LINE

- ✓ The summit's central message was not that the industry needs more technology for its own sake. It needs simpler technology, stronger workforce enablement, cleaner data, clearer standards, and earlier and longer OEM-CPG collaboration.
- ✓ Productivity and reliability now share the same agenda. The lines that perform best are easier to run, easier to maintain, easier to change over, and easier to scale.
- ✓ The highest-value near-term moves are standardization, digital work guidance, targeted automation of repetitive tasks, lifecycle and obsolescence planning, and joint governance around data, startup support, and issue resolution.

Publication Date: May 2026

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Executive Summary

The conversations at Top to Top did not begin with technology. They began with pressure. Executives described a packaging and processing environment shaped by persistent uncertainty, workforce turnover, rising system complexity, and less predictable demand. Plants are being asked to commercialize faster, run broader portfolios, recover quicker from disruptions, and protect margins at the same time. In that environment, the familiar playbook of ‘add automation and the line will perform’ is no longer sufficient.

The polling quantified that shift. Productivity remained the leading priority (70%), but automation (42%), operational resilience (41%), and equipment flexibility (32%) sat immediately behind it. The biggest expected drags on productivity were workforce knowledge loss (79%), obsolescence and training challenges (53%), SKU proliferation (43%), and rising technical complexity (36%). Just as important, the room’s preferred responses were not maximum automation. Leaders favored simpler operator-level technology (47%), workforce upskilling (41%), removing silos between functions and partners (31%), line designs that favor flexibility over peak speed (29%), and better partnership and data accessibility (28% each).

That combination of pressures and responses explains the core finding of this report: the industry’s central challenge is no longer automation by itself. It is integration across systems, people, and partners. Advanced tools still matter, but participants repeatedly returned to the same operating test: does the line become easier to run, easier to learn, easier to recover, and easier to upgrade? The most future-ready operations will be the ones that connect equipment design, data access, workforce support, and supplier relationships into one coherent operating model.

Pillar	Executive Perspective	What it requires now
1. Future-Proofing (Resilience)	Build operations that can absorb regulatory, supply-chain, labor, and portfolio volatility without chronic disruption.	Change-ready culture, scenario planning, lifecycle visibility, modular architecture, infrastructure readiness, and succession depth.
2. Scaling Smart (Execution)	Grow output without adding uncontrolled complexity or locking in the wrong level of automation too early.	Stage-gated scaling, process stability before automation, startup support, modular design, and TCO-based capital decisions.
3. People, Performance & Progress (Workforce Enablement)	Shorten the path from hire to independent performance and reduce dependence on tribal knowledge.	Digital work guidance, intuitive HMIs, automation of repetitive tasks, AI-enabled knowledge support, and joint training.
4. Stronger Together (Collaboration & Data)	Treat CPG-OEM collaboration, shared context, and data accessibility as direct productivity tools.	Earlier scoping, common success metrics, data transparency, aligned procurement-engineering cadence, and shared lifecycle accountability.



We just have to keep it simple. Sometimes we're our own worst enemies, so the more we can keep the business simple, the more capacity we create to manage the unknown."

For me, it's people, it's people and workforce. So many of the things we're doing are really about compensating for skills and lack of resources."

Priority move	What CPGs should do	What OEMs should do
Standardize the operating base	Define common HMI, alarm, changeover, and data conventions across repeat asset families so each new project reduces variation rather than adding to it.	Design for simplicity, maintainability, and upgradeability; offer standard option menus and machine-state models that fit plant standards.
Digitize frontline work	Convert the highest-loss operator, sanitation, changeover, and maintenance tasks into digital, point-of-work guidance with role-based training paths.	Package machines with searchable manuals, guided troubleshooting, short videos, and remote support that remain useful after startup.
Manage lifecycle and obsolescence proactively	Build an installed-base register and treat controls age, critical electronics, and spare-part exposure as a strategic reliability program.	Provide refresh paths, obsolescence notices, parts visibility, and candid retrofit-versus-replace guidance.
Scale in stages	Use semi-automatic or constrained-scope pilots when demand, process stability, or workforce capability is still uncertain.	Support phased automation pathways and stay engaged through startup stabilization, not only installation.
Run joint governance on value	Align operations, engineering, procurement, IT/OT, and OEM partners around a common problem statement, business case, and KPI set.	Contribute to problem-first scoping, transparent lifecycle assumptions, and quarterly performance reviews tied to outcomes.

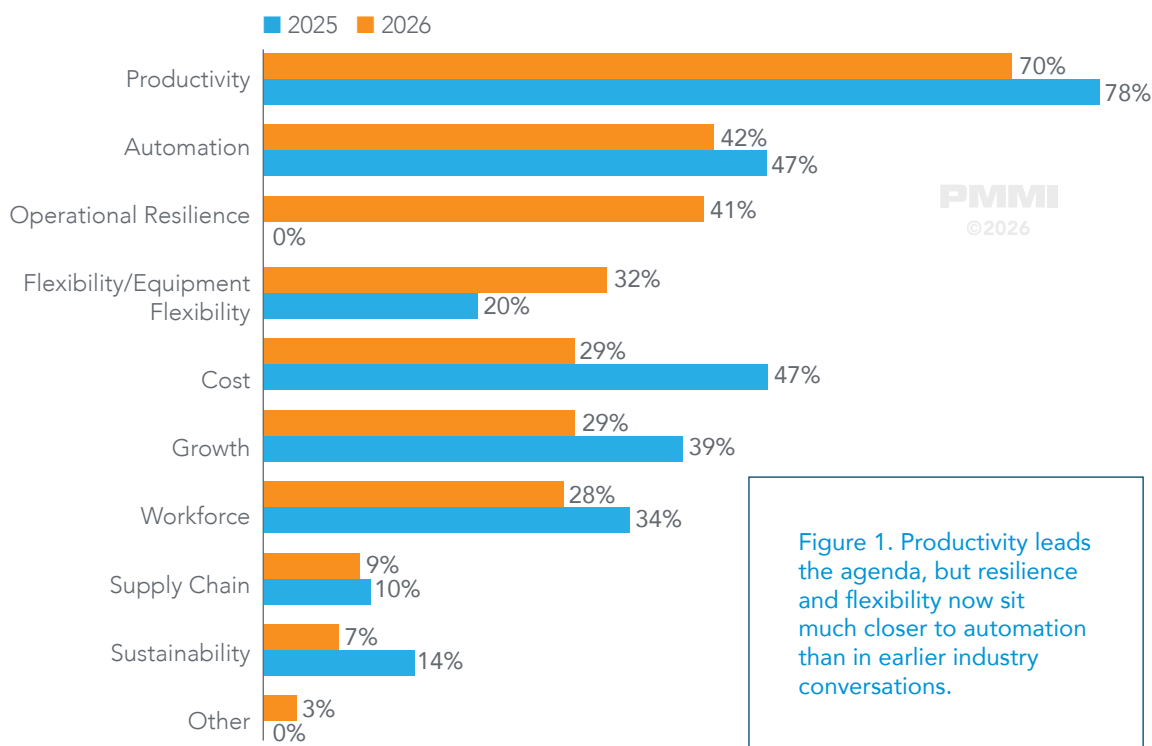
Measure with: *mix-adjusted throughput attainment, changeover time, time to operator independence, startup stabilization time, % critical assets with an obsolescence plan, issue-closure cycle time.*

For CPGs, the implication is to invest more deliberately in standardization, digital frontline enablement, lifecycle visibility, and stage-gated capital governance. For OEMs, the implication is to design for usability and upgradeability, package knowledge with the machine, open data in context, and stay engaged after shipment. When those two agendas are connected, productivity and reliability improve together rather than competing for resources, and the conversation shifts from buying equipment to building capability.

Key Priorities in Processing and Packaging Operations

The key priorities comparison 2025 – 2026, shows that while productivity remained the top operating priority in both years, the 2026 profile became notably broader and more balanced. In 2025, priorities were concentrated around traditional performance levers—productivity (78%), cost (47%), automation (47%), growth (39%), and workforce (34%)—reflecting a strong emphasis on efficiency, scale, and capital-enabled improvement. In 2026, productivity (70%) still led, but it was followed much more closely by automation (42%), operational resilience (41%), flexibility/equipment (32%), cost (29%), growth (29%), and workforce (28%). **This pattern indicates that executives are no longer treating performance as primarily a speed-and-efficiency challenge; instead, they are redefining operational success around the ability to sustain output, recover from disruption, and adapt more effectively to volatility.** The addition of operational resilience as a stand-alone priority is especially significant because it signals a shift in mindset: resilience has moved from being an implicit concern to an explicit management priority. That change likely reflects a combination of ongoing labor constraints, higher system complexity, SKU proliferation, asset obsolescence, supply uncertainty, and pressure to maintain uptime under less predictable conditions. In practical terms, the move from 2025 to 2026 suggests that packaging and processing leaders increasingly see productivity as the result of a more integrated operating model—one that combines resilient systems, adaptable equipment, workforce readiness, and closer CPG–OEM collaboration.

Operating Priorities: 2025 vs. 2026



This shift matters because it changes what counts as a strong investment case. Projects that reduce changeover loss, simplify operating decisions, stabilize startup, or make assets easier to support can create more value than projects that only lift theoretical top speed.

The sections that follow trace the story executives told in the room. Stronger Together explains why collaboration and data now sit inside the productivity agenda. People, Performance & Progress shows why workforce enablement is one of the fastest routes to more reliable execution. Scaling Smart shows how to grow without locking in the wrong complexity. Future-Proofing then expands the frame from isolated projects to long-term resilience.

Stronger Together: Collaboration and Data as Productivity Tools

Section takeaway

- ✓ Executives defined productivity as a system outcome, not a speed number. The biggest losses now come from knowledge loss, obsolescence, SKU complexity, unclear data, and weak alignment across functions and partners.
- ✓ The most valuable productivity levers were simplification, workforce upskilling, flexibility over speed, partnership quality, and better data accessibility - not an automation-at-any-cost model.

The summit's Stronger Together discussion showed how the industry's definition of productivity is changing. Leaders no longer described productivity as a simple line-rate issue. They described it as the ability to sustain output across more frequent changeovers, more customized packs, faster product introductions, more variable labor capability, and tighter reliability expectations. In that setting, collaboration and data stop being support functions and become direct operating levers.

What leaders expect to slow productivity over the next 3-5 years

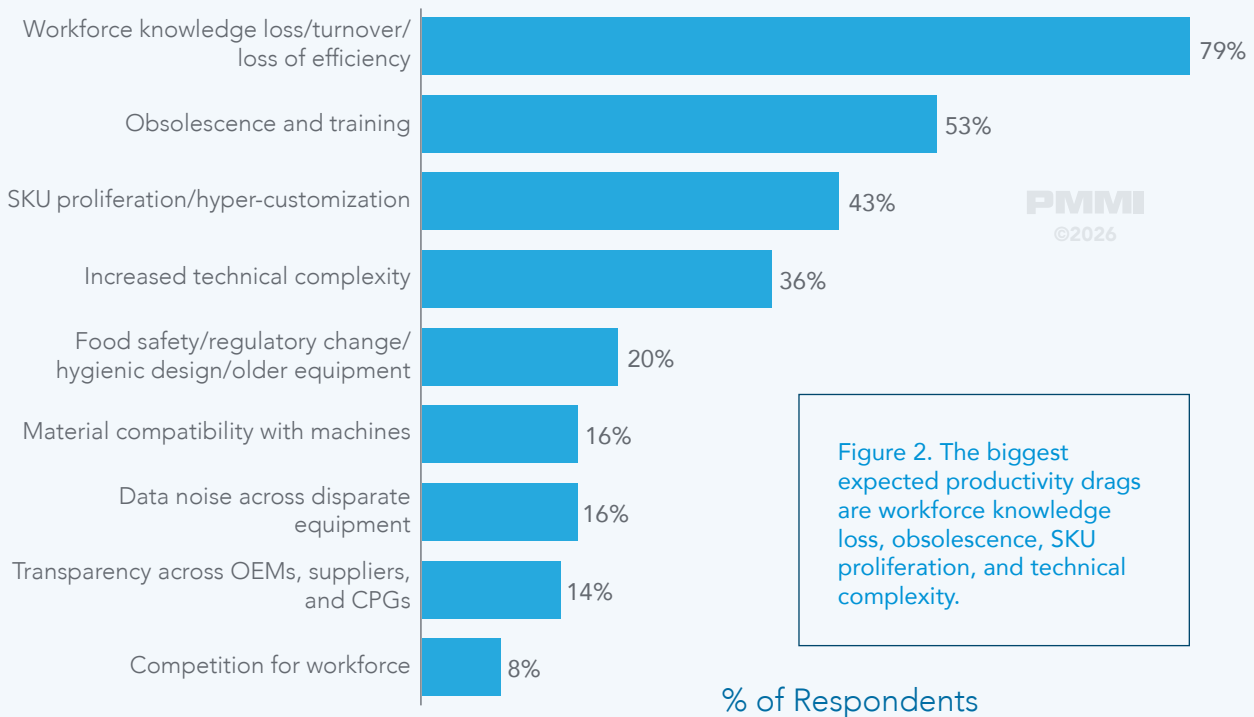
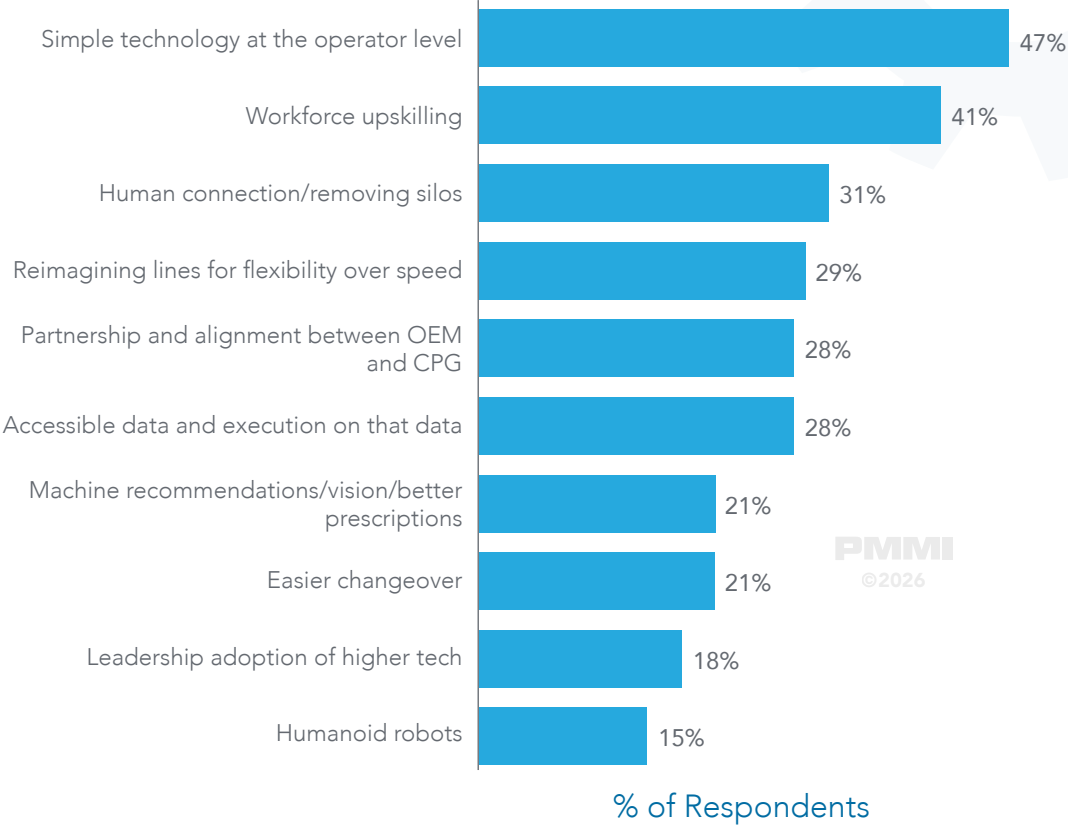


Figure 2. The biggest expected productivity drags are workforce knowledge loss, obsolescence, SKU proliferation, and technical complexity.

The Stronger Together discussion gave those results more context. Executives repeatedly linked performance loss to multilingual and less-tenured workforces, inconsistent line-to-line standards, difficulty interpreting machine data, and a higher mix of short runs and promotional SKUs. Several participants argued that assets designed for yesterday's long runs and stable formats can no longer be judged only by peak speed. What matters more is how they perform over a week of real mix, real changeovers, and real staffing constraints.

What leaders believe will most increase productivity

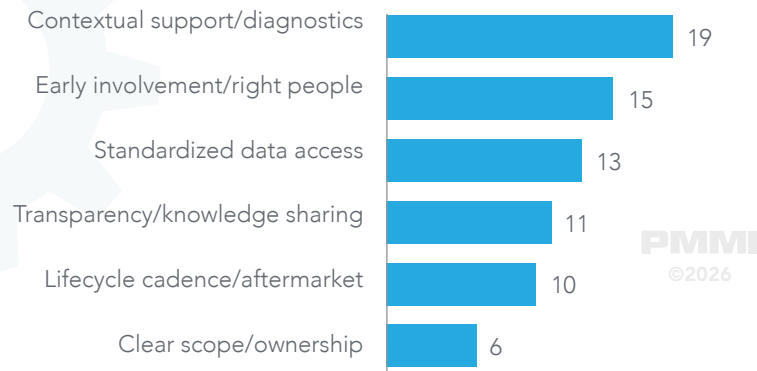


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Figure 3. Leaders expect the next productivity gains to come from simplification, workforce capability, flexibility, partnership, and usable data.

The room's preferred countermeasures reinforce the same point. Simpler technology at the base operator level outranked every other productivity lever, followed by workforce upskilling and removal of organizational silos. Line designs that favor flexibility over peak speed also ranked ahead of more radical labor-replacement concepts. The message is practical: productivity rises when plants are easier to run and easier to recover, not only when they are more automated.

What collaboration capabilities surfaced most often in the summit dialogue



Theme mentions based on qualitative coding

Figure 4. Collaboration conversations clustered around contextual support, transparency, standardized data access, early involvement, and clear ownership.

That coding mirrors how executives described the work. Data initiatives were valuable when they helped someone diagnose a fault, execute a changeover, shorten issue-resolution time, or understand why a line was unstable. Collaboration was valuable when the right people were involved before scope hardened, when ownership was clear on complex lines, and when aftermarket support continued as part of the operating model rather than as a reactive service call.

Several remarks went further and described a practical architecture for collaboration. Participants asked for standardized machine profiles and APIs so data can be exposed consistently, digital documentation that operators can actually access at the point of work, and safe data-sharing models that allow OEMs to see how assets behave after startup. In that model, the OEM is not just a machine builder; it becomes a lifecycle knowledge partner.



We want to be able to get information out of our machines in a standard way, consistently, so that it's easy for us to understand."

Let's work together to standardize on the stuff we want, standardize on how we want to engage."

One of the most important things we need to work on collectively ... is transparency, not holding your cards so tight."

Action priorities for collaboration and data

Priority move	What CPGs should do	What OEMs should do
Problem-first scoping	Write project charters around the operational loss to be removed - downtime, startup delay, changeover variability, skill dependency, or spare-parts exposure - rather than around a technology wish list.	Enter the conversation at the problem-definition stage, not after the spec is fixed; pressure-test whether the proposed automation level fits the site and the likely future portfolio.
Common KPI definitions	Use one shared view of changeover time, startup stabilization, availability loss, and issue-closure status across operations, engineering, procurement, and OEM partners.	Provide machine-state models, event definitions, and fault logic that fit into the plant KPI layer instead of creating another isolated reporting stack.
Aligned governance	Bring operations, engineering, procurement, IT/OT, and business stakeholders into the same steering rhythm before capital is committed and again through startup.	Maintain one accountable commercial and technical interface to keep scope, after-sales support, and escalation clear.
Context-rich data access	Prioritize contextualized data that helps teams act faster: guided troubleshooting, line-state context, and diagnostics tied to the job being done.	Open data dictionaries, APIs, manuals, and diagnostic context early so plant teams can embed machine information into their workflows.
Partnership cadence	Run quarterly reviews on the installed base, startup performance, recurring faults, and future requirements instead of treating the relationship as a one-time purchase.	Treat installed-base performance, aftermarket communication, and lifecycle guidance as part of the value proposition, not an optional add-on.

Measure with: mix-adjusted throughput attainment, changeover time, issue-closure cycle time, startup-to-stable-state days, % assets with contextualized machine data available to plant workflows.

People, Performance & Progress: Workforce Enablement as a Performance Lever

Section takeaway

- ✓ The people and workforce session was the summit's most actionable topic by a wide margin. Leaders are trying to shorten the path from hire to independent performance and reduce dependence on tribal knowledge.
- ✓ The highest-priority solutions were simple guided tools, automation of repetitive tasks, prescriptive data, centralized context, and stronger CPG-OEM collaboration around training and knowledge sharing.

Which summit topic looked most actionable

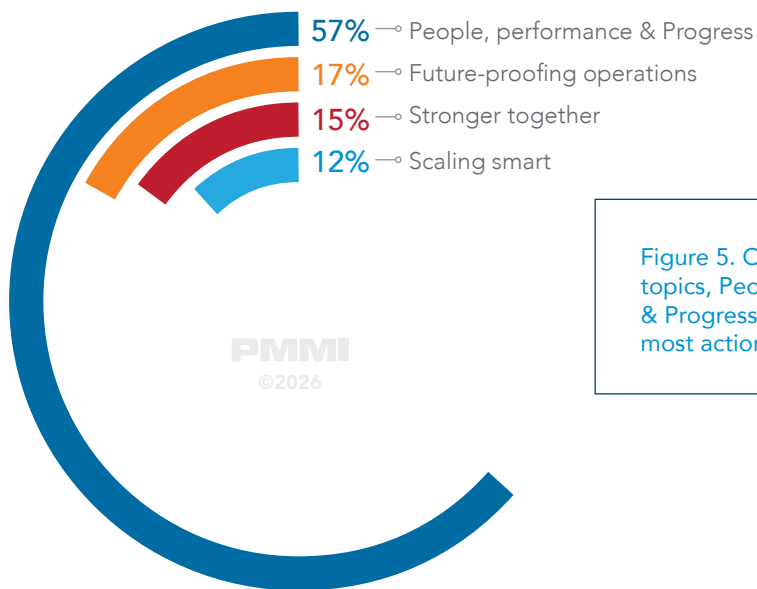
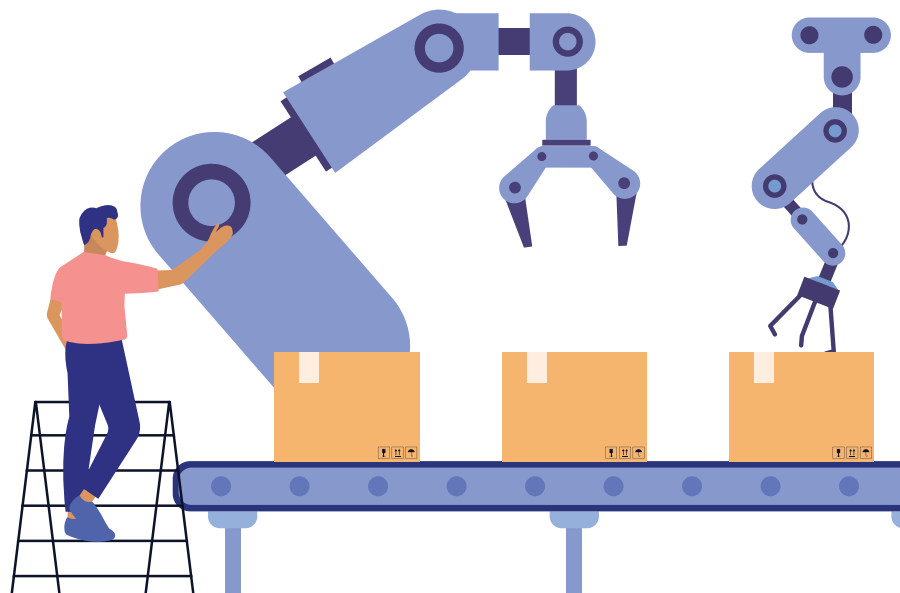


Figure 5. Of the summit topics, People, Performance & Progress stood out as the most actionable.

The workforce problem described at the summit was less about absolute headcount than about skill compression. Plants can no longer assume deep tenure, stable technical depth, or one-language teams. Several participants described thinner maintenance benches than even a few years ago, changing what a high-performing asset looks like. It must be easier to understand, easier to reset, easier to troubleshoot, and easier to train against with less dependence on undocumented tribal knowledge.



Technology solutions most likely to improve workforce productivity

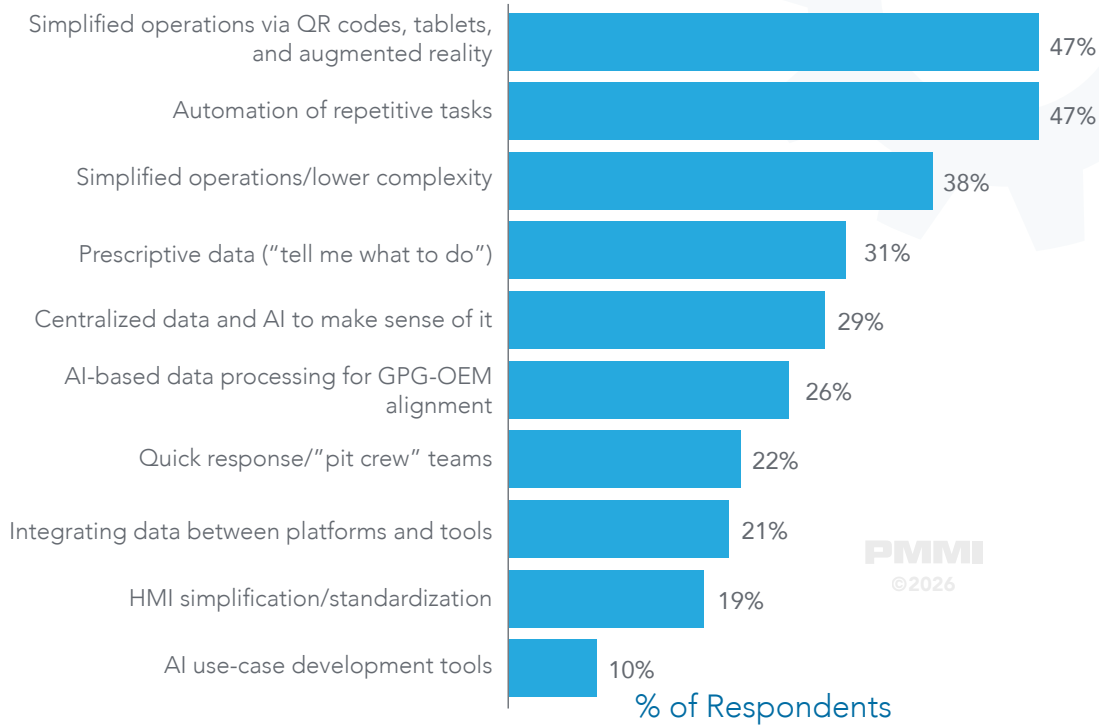
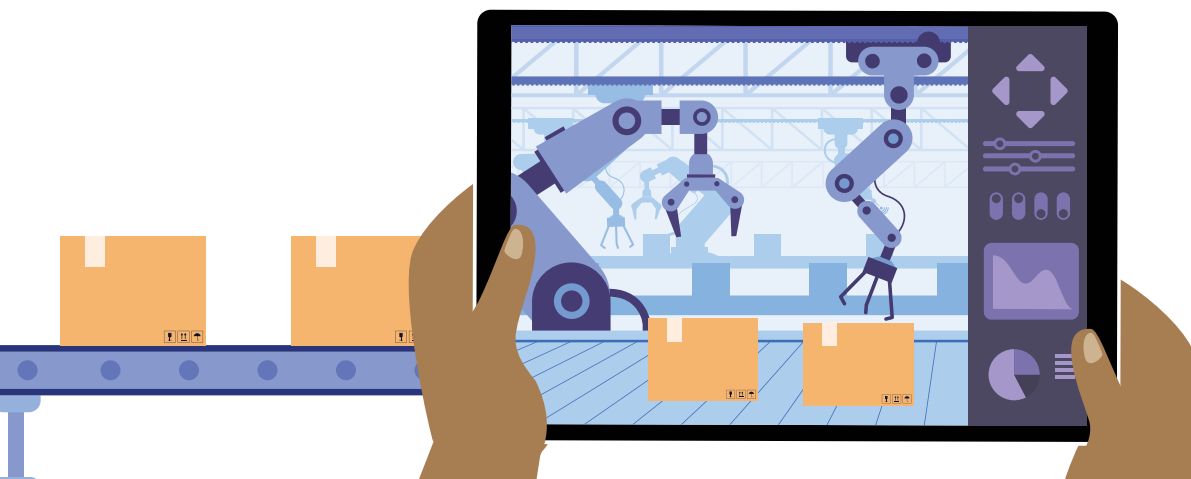


Figure 6. Leaders favor simple frontline-ready technologies and automation of repetitive work over abstract AI adoption.

That is why the most likely workforce productivity tools were simple guided technologies such as QR-enabled instructions, tablets, and augmented reality, alongside automation of repetitive tasks and prescriptive data. The discussion translated those categories into concrete examples: searchable manuals, agentic AI for operators and technicians, role-based digital work instructions, remote expert support, digital twins that aid training, and visual work guidance embedded at the machine. Participants also described separating installation and training responsibilities during startup, and exposing operators to new technology before or during FATs so the learning curve begins earlier.



What CPG-OEM collaboration is needed to make workforce solutions stick

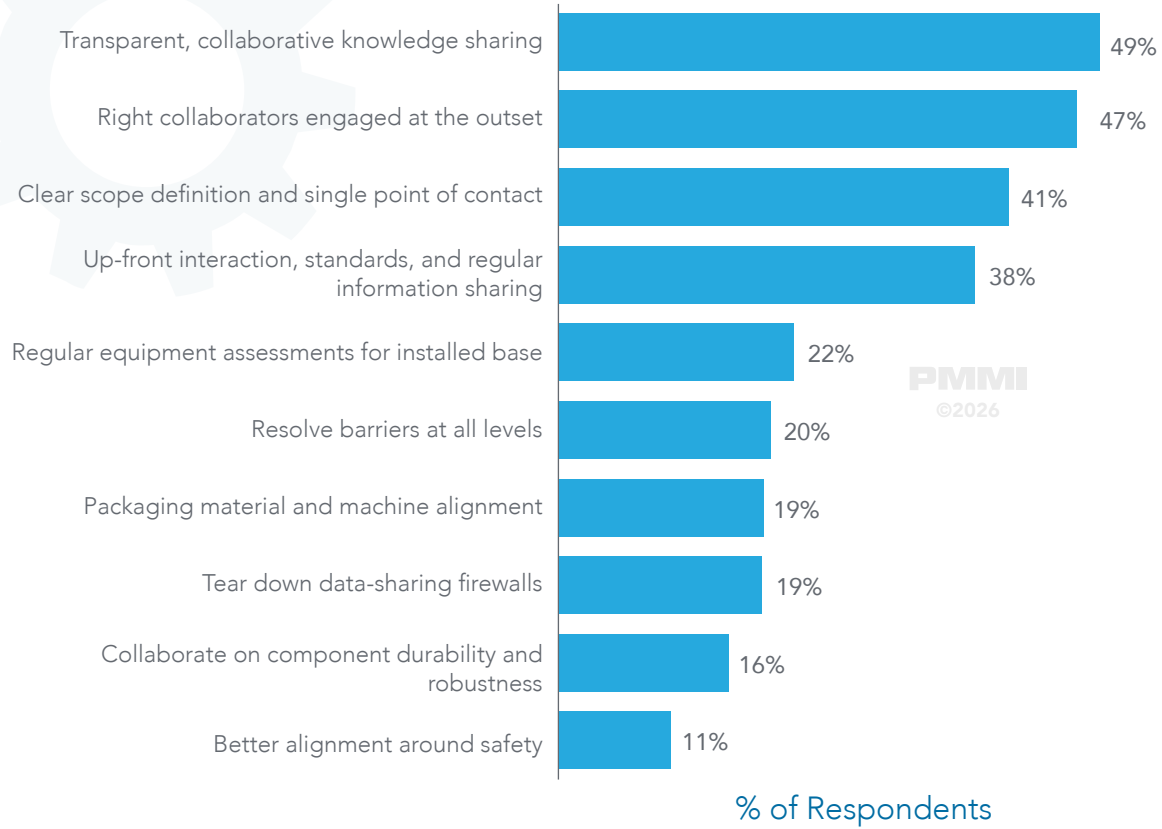


Figure 7. Workforce tools only scale when OEMs and CPGs share knowledge transparently, align early, and keep scope explicit.

The live collaboration vote made another point just as clearly. Respondents do not see workforce tools as a software-only issue. They want transparency, early alignment on who needs to be involved, clear scope definition, regular information sharing, and data-sharing models that do not get trapped behind organizational firewalls. In other words, the workforce solution is operational and relational at the same time.



How respondents framed workforce enablement

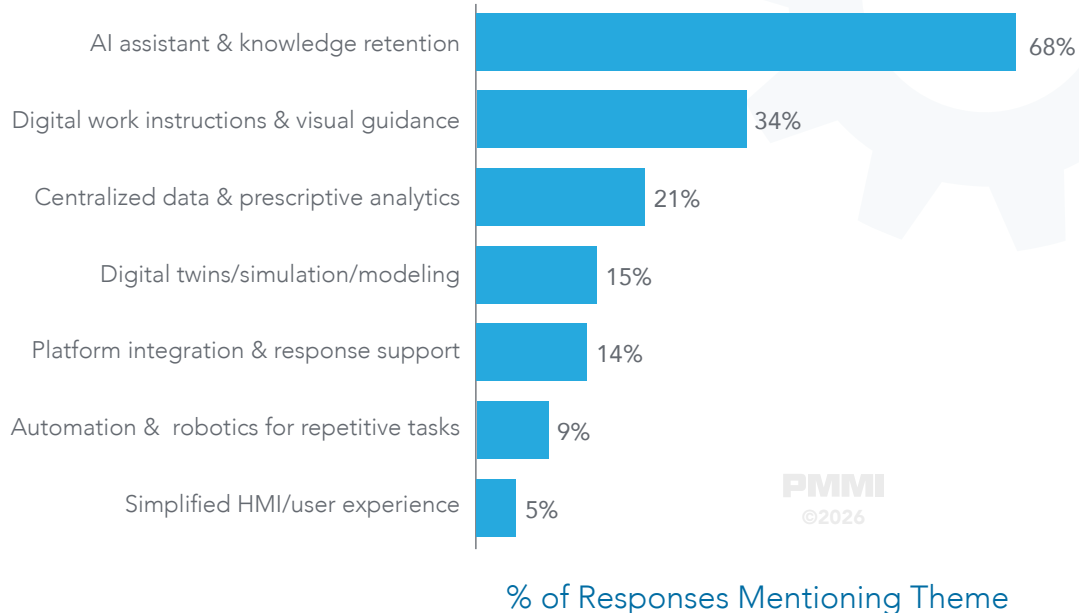


Figure 8. Poll responses also centered workforce enablement around AI-assisted knowledge retention, digital work guidance, and prescriptive analytics.

Poll responses reinforce that framing AI-enabled knowledge retention concepts appeared most often, followed by digital work guidance, prescriptive analytics, digital twins, and platform integration. In the live discussion, AI was consistently treated as a wrapper around good documentation rather than a substitute for it. Participants were clear that if SOPs, one-point lessons, manuals, and maintenance plans are not already usable, AI will only expose that weakness faster.

This is why the workforce discussion repeatedly connected usability to reliability. The moment of truth is not when a line passes acceptance; it is a month later, when a less-experienced operator or technician sees a recurring fault on second shift. Reusable training assets, remote expert access, visual guidance, and embedded troubleshooting therefore serve both workforce enablement and OEE improvement.



We have to think less about the words and make things more visual.”

There is a kind of a golden hour for post-installation training ... after people have worked the line and experienced the problems.”

We love technology, but we want technology that’s intuitive.”

Action priorities for workforce enablement

Priority move	What CPGs should do	What OEMs should do
Digitize the highest-loss work	Convert the most failure-prone operator, sanitation, changeover, and maintenance tasks into digital standard work with role-based learning paths and usage tracking.	Package machines with searchable manuals, short troubleshooting videos, guided procedures, and remote technical support that remain usable after handover.
Simplify the operator experience	Standardize HMI conventions, alarm philosophy, and common responses so operators moving across lines do not relearn basics each time.	Design for intuitive navigation, visual guidance, and fault isolation; reduce text-heavy interaction and assume thinner experience profiles.
Automate repetitive and risky tasks	Target tasks that create ergonomic strain, quality risk, or low-value repetition first - material loading, repetitive handling, and other manually intense steps.	Offer modular automation steps that can be added without forcing the customer into a fully automated architecture too early.
Make data prescriptive	Prioritize contextual data that tells operators and technicians what to do next, not another dashboard that merely confirms a problem exists.	Provide machine data in a form that supports prescriptive use cases, role-based diagnostics, and integration into plant systems.
Run joint adoption reviews	Track whether new tools are actually reducing time-to-productivity, restart loss, and troubleshooting time; close the loop with OEMs during the first months of operation.	Stay engaged through adoption and stabilization; use early operating patterns to improve documentation, training, and support content.

Measure with: time to operator independence, time to technician independence, restart loss after changeover, digital work-instruction usage rate, repetitive-task injury risk, first-pass troubleshooting resolution.

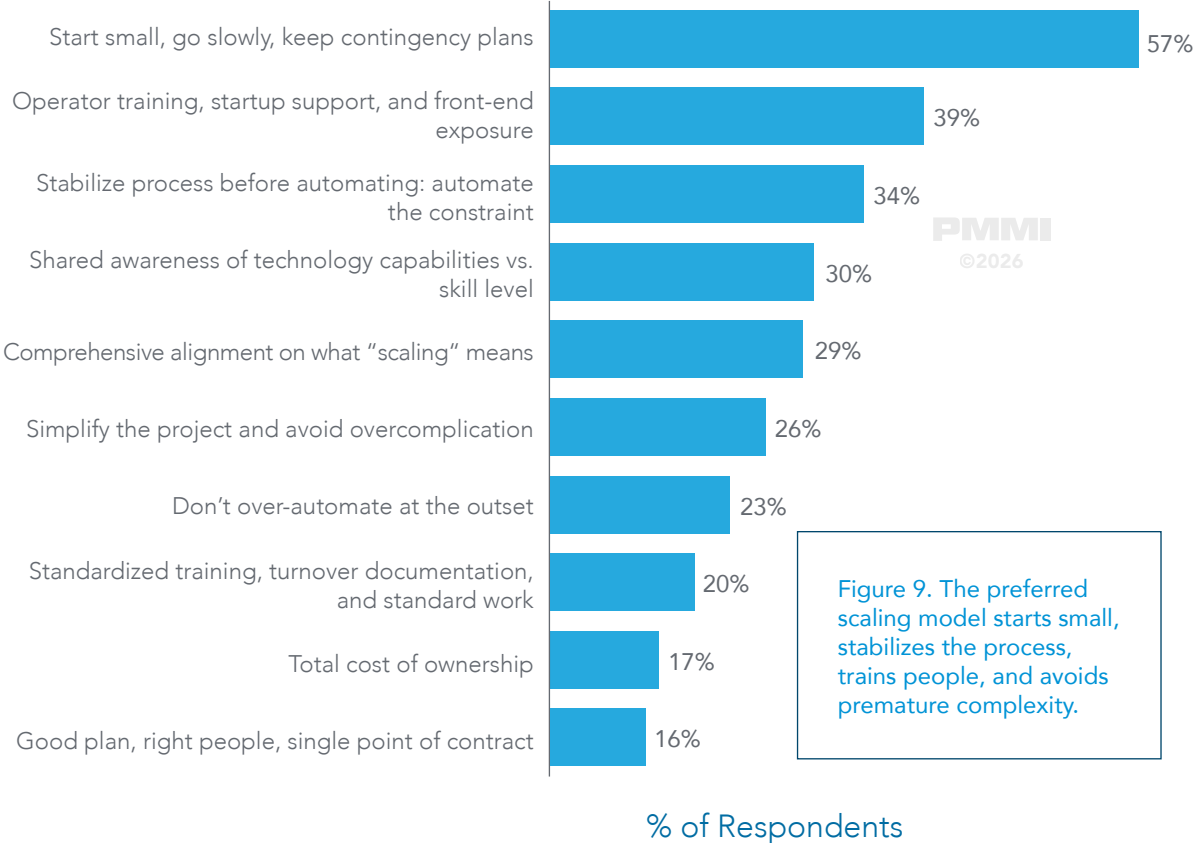
Scaling Smart: Execution Discipline Before Complexity

Section takeaway

- ✓ Executives overwhelmingly favored phased scaling, stronger startup support, process stabilization before automation, and alignment on what scaling really means.
- ✓ Polling results add a second warning: balancing people and technology resources matters even more than digital services or third-party support.

The scaling discussion made clear that growth does not have to mean uncontrolled complexity. The dominant message from both the live poll and the transcripts was to start small, preserve options, and build confidence before fully automating. Leaders distinguished between scaling demand and scaling a system. They want contingency plans, operator training, startup support, process stabilization, and clear agreement on the definition of scaling before they expand a line or plant architecture.

How executives want to balance people and technology when scaling operations





Discussions sharpened the operational reason for this caution. Participants pointed out that floor space, buffers, sanitation, line interaction, material readiness, and workforce capability can determine whether extra capacity creates actual output. Semi-automatic systems can be the right bridge when a new product or format still carries market uncertainty. In that setting, peak automation can be less valuable than a scalable architecture with a credible path to later expansion.

How OEMs and CPGs can collaborate to scale successfully

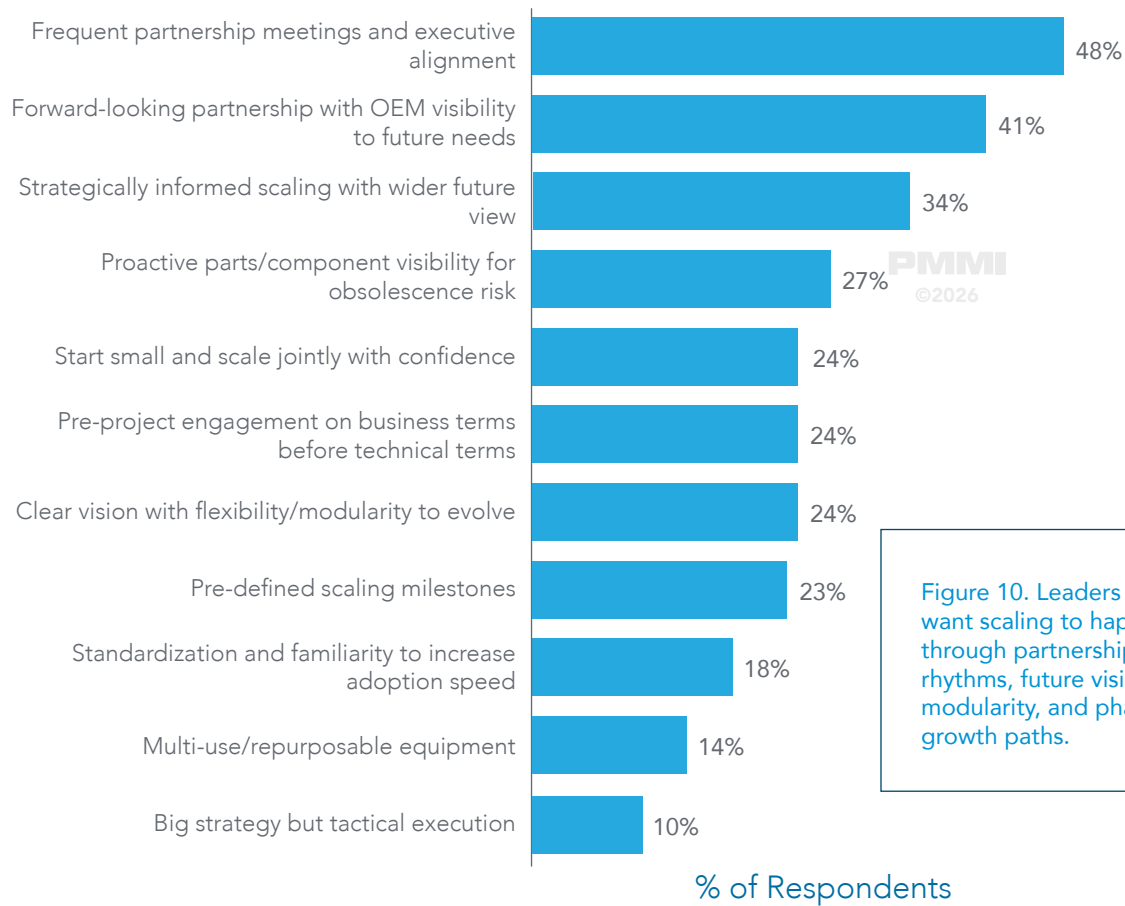


Figure 10. Leaders want scaling to happen through partnership rhythms, future visibility, modularity, and phased growth paths.

The collaboration poll shows that respondents do not want scaling treated as a machine quote exercise. They want frequent partnership meetings, forward-looking visibility into future needs, pre-project discussion of business drivers, explicit scaling milestones, and modular designs that can evolve. This is one of the clearest places where partnership quality directly influences technical performance.

What balancing cost and growth requires

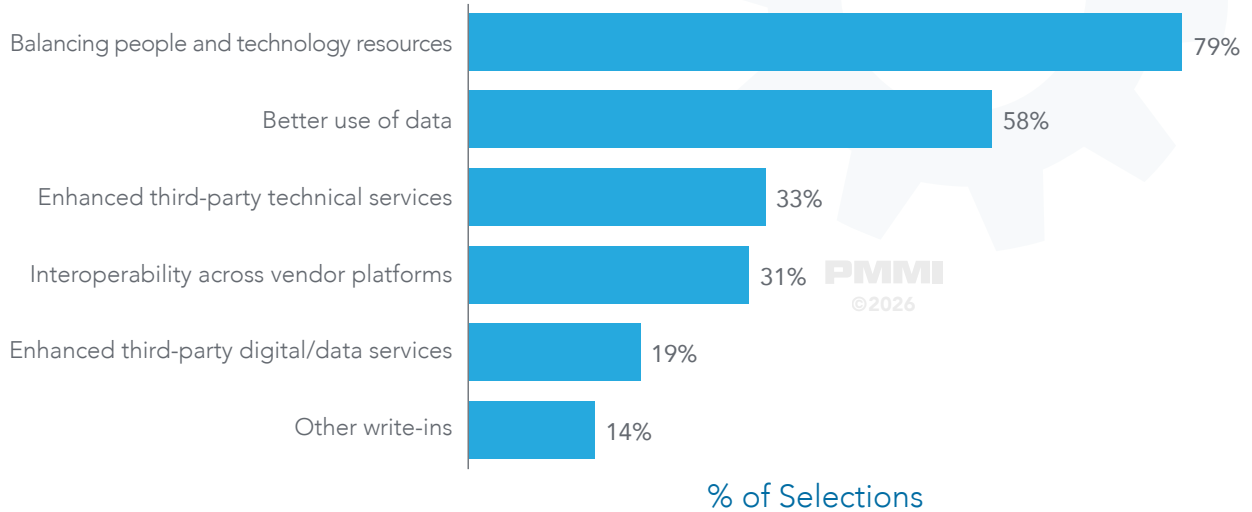


Figure 11. The scaling poll highlights people-technology balance and better use of data as the biggest practical issues to solve.

Poll selections add one more insight. Respondents chose balancing people and technology resources and better use of data far more often than third-party digital services or other write-ins. That is a strong signal that scale is being understood as a whole-system issue, not as a standalone automation purchase.

Another thread ran through the conversation: startup support is part of the capital case, not an afterthought. Participants advocated bringing operators and technicians into FATs and early build reviews, exposing them to new technology before launch, and budgeting support beyond site acceptance. In their experience, many of the hardest OEE losses surface after handover, when the equipment is technically accepted but the operating system around it is not yet stable.



The forecast is always wrong. You just don't know which direction and how far off."

You're not scaling a machine. You have to scale the system."

Stabilize process before introducing automation ... automate the constraint."

Start small, scale with confidence ... leave space in there so you can automate in the future."

Action priorities for scaling execution

Priority move	What CPGs should do	What OEMs should do
Stage-gate the scaling path	Define what can be proven at pilot scale, what must be true before additional automation is approved, and what signals should trigger expansion or redesign.	Offer phased automation pathways, standard option menus, and front-end engineering support that show how the system can evolve without a full redesign.
Stabilize before you automate the constraint	Prove that upstream process variability, sanitation routines, and staffing models are stable enough to support added complexity.	Help identify the true production constraint and avoid selling automation that merely adds complexity around an unstable process.
Budget for startup and ramp	Treat startup coaching, line acceptance, digital training content, and early issue resolution as part of the investment case, not discretionary extras.	Stay engaged through vertical startup, stabilization, and the first months of operation; use recurring issues to refine settings, training, and support.
Design for modular growth	Specify modular buffers, utilities, controls architecture, and footprint logic so future formats or volume moves do not require a full line rebuild.	Design upgrade kits, modular subassemblies, and flexibility options that can be added in stages as the business case strengthens.
Align procurement with TCO	Use one evaluation matrix that includes changeover, startup, training burden, lifecycle cost, and upgradeability instead of first cost alone.	Support TCO discussions with transparent assumptions on spares, service, obsolescence, controls migration, and expected ramp-to-stable-state.

Measure with: time to stable-state after startup, pilot-to-scale cycle time, capital redeployment avoided, throughput gained per added labor hour, % projects approved with a TCO-based evaluation template.

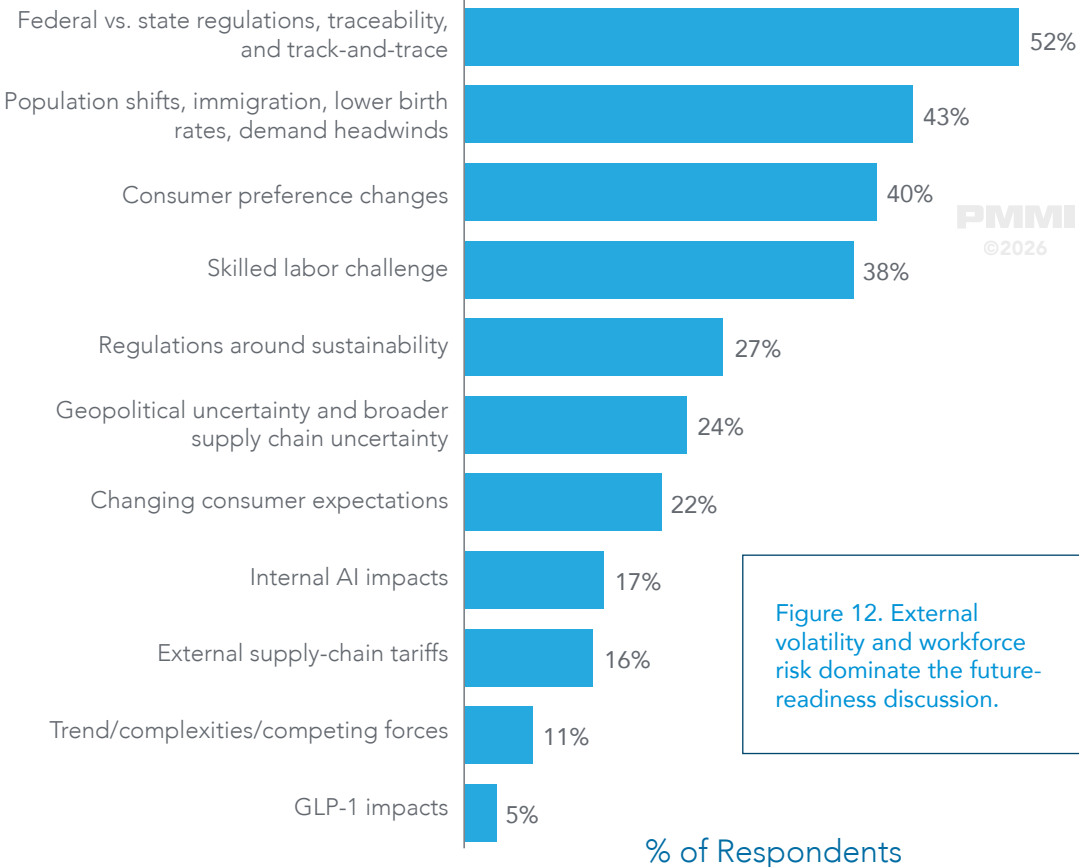
Future-Ready: Building Resilience Instead of Predicting Every Shock

Section takeaway

- ✓ The summit repeatedly reframed future-proofing as future readiness. Leaders do not believe they can predict every disruption, but they do believe they can build architectures, organizations, and partnerships that respond faster when shocks occur.
- ✓ Regulatory complexity, demand shifts, skilled labor, sustainability pressure, and geopolitical uncertainty now sit alongside traditional reliability concerns.

Future-ready was one of the clearest examples of how the summit’s language evolved. Participants explicitly pushed back on the Future-Proof idea that operations can be designed once and protected from every future event. What they wanted instead was readiness: the ability to pivot faster when regulations shift, demand changes, critical components become obsolete, labor tightens, or supply-chain conditions change.

Operational uncertainties shaping the next 3-5 years



Resilience is not a narrow supply-chain concept. Regulatory fragmentation and traceability pressures ranked highest, followed by demographic and demand shifts, consumer-preference change, skilled-labor constraints, sustainability rules, and geopolitical uncertainty. Several transcript exchanges extended that picture to country-of-origin visibility, tariff exposure, total-cost pressure, and the need for better transparency around parts and component sourcing.

What will make operations more future-ready?

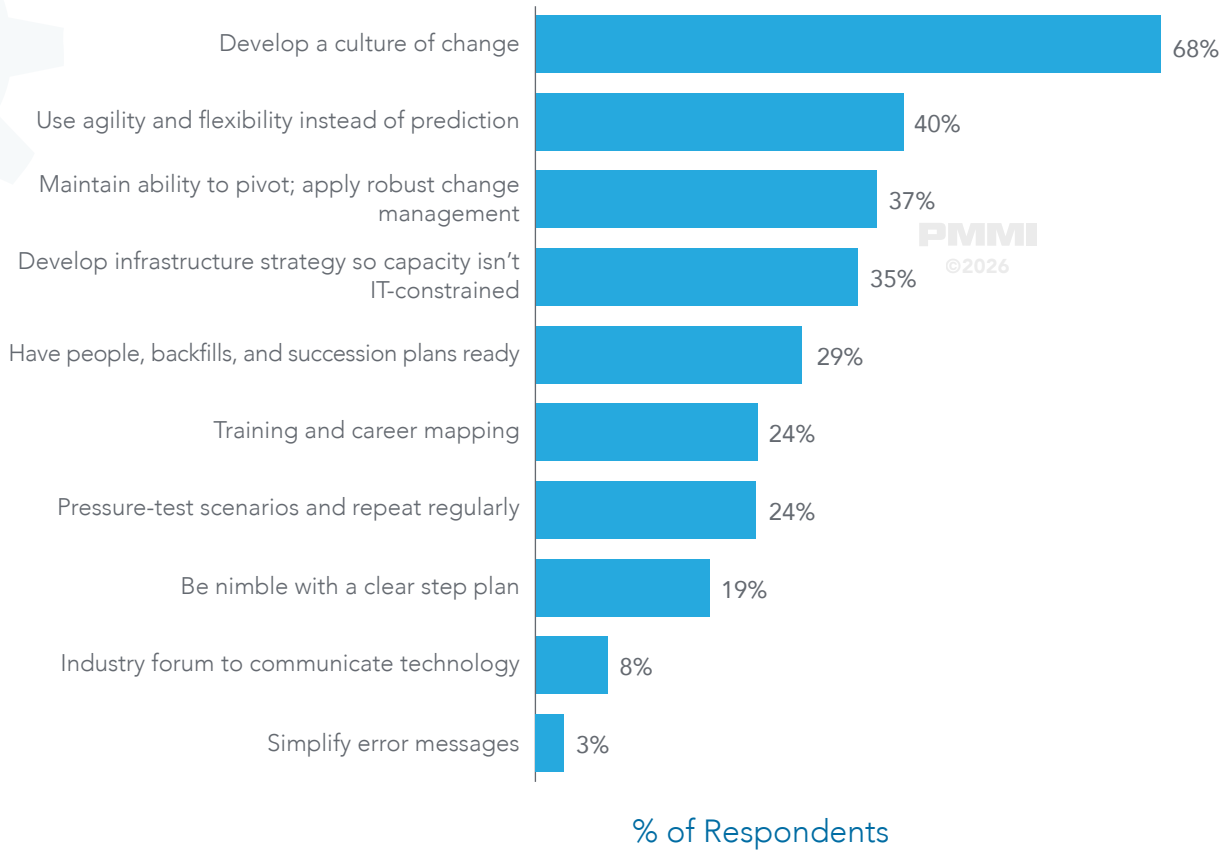


Figure 13. Leaders define future-ready operations around change culture, agility, infrastructure readiness, and talent depth.

When asked what to do about that environment, respondents emphasized culture of change, agility over prediction, the ability to pivot through disciplined investments and change management, infrastructure planning, succession readiness, training paths, and repeated scenario planning. Those answers are noteworthy because they place organizational capability on equal footing with technical architecture.

What future-proofing collaboration looks like

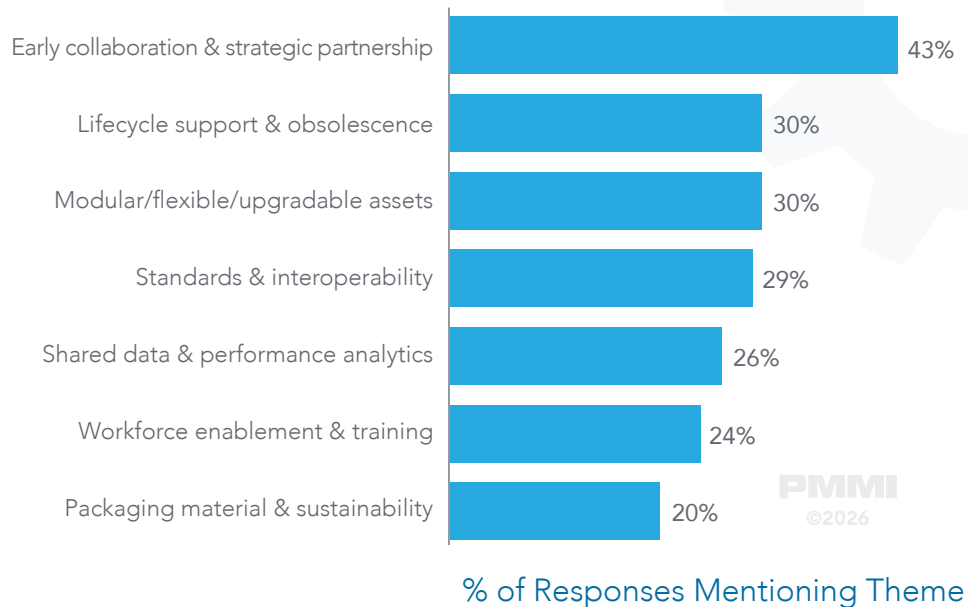


Figure 14. Polling responses linked future-proofing to early collaboration, lifecycle support, modular assets, standards, data, and workforce enablement.

Polling responses show how the partner agenda fits into that view. Future-proofing, or more specifically, “future-readiness”, comments centered on early collaboration and strategic partnership, lifecycle support and obsolescence, modular and upgradeable assets, standards and interoperability, shared data and analytics, and workforce enablement. The discussion amplified the lifecycle point: controls life often ends before mechanical life, which means resilience increasingly depends on obsolescence programs, refurbishment options, refresh paths, and installed-base visibility.

Several comments made the resilience model concrete. Companies are extending capital visibility from 18-month horizons toward three-year plans, running more regular strategic reviews with key OEMs, and looking at refurbishment or interim component substitutions when electronics lead times stretch. In short, future-readiness now includes installed-base intelligence, supplier transparency, and the ability to choose from more than one recovery path.



It’s going to be the ability to weather that storm ... we still need to be just as creative.”

About 80% of our work projects are based on reacting to what’s happening externally ... and we don’t know how resilient our current formats are going to be.”

Action priorities for future-ready operations

Priority move	What CPGs should do	What OEMs should do
Create an installed-base and obsolescence register	Map machine families, controls platforms, firmware, critical electronics, support status, and cybersecurity constraints; use the register to trigger planned interventions instead of emergency replacements.	Provide refresh paths, obsolescence notices, component visibility, upgrade kits, and candid retrofit-versus-replace guidance tied to the installed base.
Standardize for resilience	Adopt standard platforms for HMI philosophy, controls, alarm logic, spare-part families, and data structures so the network can absorb turnover and variation with less friction.	Design modular, interoperable architectures that fit customer standards and preserve future upgrade options.
Build change-ready organizations	Treat leadership communication, career mapping, succession planning, and cross-training as resilience tools, not HR side projects.	Support workforce readiness with role-based training, digital guidance, and honest feedback on capability gaps observed during startup and support.
Run scenario planning regularly	Pressure-test how regulatory shifts, material changes, tariff exposure, labor shocks, or demand swings would affect key asset families and expansion plans.	Join annual or semiannual risk reviews with data on component supply, regional sourcing, upgrade timing, and lifecycle risk.
Strengthen the infrastructure backbone	Ensure utilities, OT/IT access, cybersecurity rules, and data connectivity will not block future capacity moves or digital support models.	Design secure remote-access models, compatible data pathways, and support tools that fit the customer's infrastructure and security environment.



There is an end-to-end enterprise impact of some of these changes ... we need to try not to think about singular events because they are interrelated.”

From Complexity to Capability

Taken together, the summit themes point toward a single operating model. Future-ready performance will not come from one technology category or one corporate function. It will come from a tighter system that links standardization, workforce enablement, lifecycle planning, stage-gated scaling, and joint CPG-OEM governance. The common objective is to reduce dependence on unstable assumptions: stable long runs, stable tenure, stable parts availability, stable regulation, and stable demand.

Seen as a story, the logic is straightforward. Collaboration and data improve the quality of decisions. Workforce enablement reduces the skill burden of execution. Stage-gated scaling keeps growth from adding the wrong complexity. Lifecycle and resilience planning protect that operating base when markets, regulations, or components change. The four pillars reinforce one another; none works at full value in isolation.

Capability shift	What changes in practice	Why it matters now
From line speed to mix-adjusted throughput	Success is judged by output across real SKU mix, changeovers, sanitation, and staffing conditions - not by nameplate speed alone.	This makes flexibility, changeover design, and startup stability central productivity levers.
From expert-only operation to guided execution	Critical work is digitized, visualized, and simplified so plants are less dependent on tribal knowledge and rare skills.	Workforce variability is structural, not temporary; hire-to-productivity must shorten.
From maintenance execution to lifecycle management	Obsolescence, controls age, refresh paths, and installed-base visibility become core reliability disciplines.	Mechanical life often outlasts electronic and controls life, changing how reliability programs must be run.
From fixed automation bets to staged scaling	Companies prove process stability and market fit before locking in the next level of automation.	This protects capital efficiency under demand uncertainty and variable site capability.
From transactional sourcing to operating partnership	CPGs and OEMs align earlier, share more context, and stay connected through startup, support, and future planning.	Partnership quality now influences technical performance, ramp speed, and total cost of ownership.

A practical implementation rule follows from the summit: every digital, automation, reliability, and capital initiative should be tested against the same question - does this make the operation easier to run, easier to maintain, easier to scale, or easier to recover? If the answer is unclear, the initiative may still be interesting, but it is unlikely to become an executive priority under current operating conditions.

“If we’re not in constant communication ... not only for this year and next year, but for five to 10 years from now, we’re going to get behind very quickly.”



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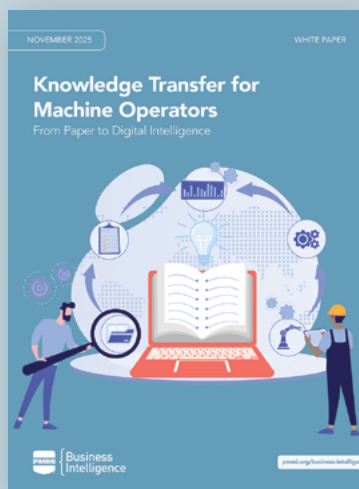
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