

Survey Summary

Risk is everywhere: Global trends and insights in Risk & Compliance



Executive summary

Professionals working in Risk & Compliance across legal and consulting face a unique set of challenges. You are navigating a complex and evolving regulatory landscape in a disruptive age in which modern technologies have become essential to maintaining compliance and providing exceptional client service.

As a technology provider in this important sector, iManage is deeply invested in how you are thinking about technology's potential to help you negotiate this challenge. To learn more, iManage conducted an online survey among iManage customers — Risk & Compliance professionals in organizations across the globe — including law firms, consulting firms, and corporations. The opportunity for us to learn more about projects and priorities that address the concerns of this audience has been invaluable.

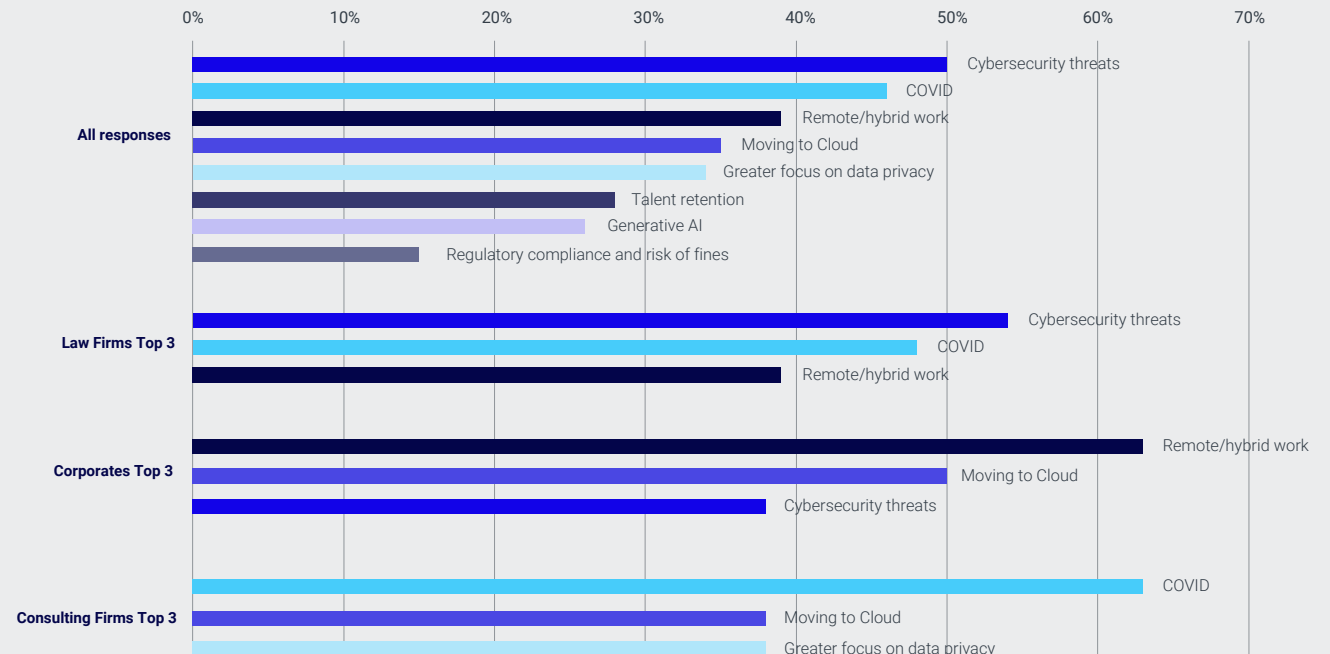
Looking back

2021 to 2024 were uncommonly eventful years, both from a business and a technology perspective. According to Accenture, disruptive technology risks have risen nine percentage points since 2021, to 29 percent, while regulatory and compliance risk went up eight percentage points, to 27 percent. It's worth sharing this passage from "[Risk is everywhere: Hyper-disruption demands constant reinvention.](#)"

"Companies need to think differently about mitigating and navigating risk. In part, this means modernizing the risk function's skills and technologies. But it also means establishing a risk mindset across the entire organization so that every function and employee has the tools and capabilities to detect and mitigate threats. In today's digital world, risk is everyone's business because risk is everywhere."

If you're a Risk & Compliance professional, we know that goes without saying. So let's dig in.

What disruptions did your organization face in the past three years?



Remember COVID-19?

According to our respondents, the most disruptive trends over the last three years were cybersecurity threats, COVID-19, remote working, and moving to the cloud — which are all arguably related — but their perceived significance varied by sector.

COVID-19 and the sudden transition to remote working posed both logistical and risk-related challenges for many organizations, with cybersecurity threats and their implications kicking into high gear.

Cybersecurity threats earned first place at 54 percent in law firms, while our corporate respondents relegated the cyberthreat to third place, at 38 percent. The biggest disruptor in corporate was remote working, at 63 percent. In consultancy firms, the pandemic caused the most mayhem, also at 63 percent.

Law firms did rank COVID-19 in their top three, but slightly lower, at 48 percent, while remote working captured third place at 39 percent.

Change is necessary, change is hard

Half of the corporate group chose “moving to the cloud” as their biggest cause for dissension, putting its significance squarely between remote work at the high end and cybersecurity threats at the low end.

Moving to cloud captured some attention in consultancies, as well. It ran neck and neck with an increased focus on data privacy at 38 percent.

The same concerns rise to the top when viewing

the responses by region, albeit with different prioritization. Here half of North American respondents cite cybersecurity threats as the biggest disruptor to their organization over the three-year period, while slightly less than half (47%) cite COVID-19. A solid majority (64%) of EMEA respondents identify COVID-19 as the biggest disruptor, while a lesser number call out regulatory compliance (45%).

APAC respondents cite cybersecurity threats even more strongly than North Americans at 60 percent but also count both data privacy and talent retention as quite disruptive at 50 percent.

AI not yet a cause for anxiety

In the fall of 2021, generative AI was in its infancy. By late 2024 it was widely known, but not yet well understood or universally applied.

Takeaways

It stood out to us that moving to cloud appeared to challenge corporations and consulting firms more than law firms. We wondered if we could attribute this to the unhurried pace law firms typically embrace in adopting new technologies. Did that reduce the emphasis on the cloud transition over the last three years in that sector? Or, for those who embraced it, was the transition smooth enough to be perceived as less disruptive than higher-ranked options?

We do know that, uncharacteristically, law firms are keen to embrace AI, and not at a sluggish pace, either. While users in all segments seek ways to be more productive, firms are actively engaging with tech vendors to develop a sustainable, secure, ethical approach to respond to this demand.

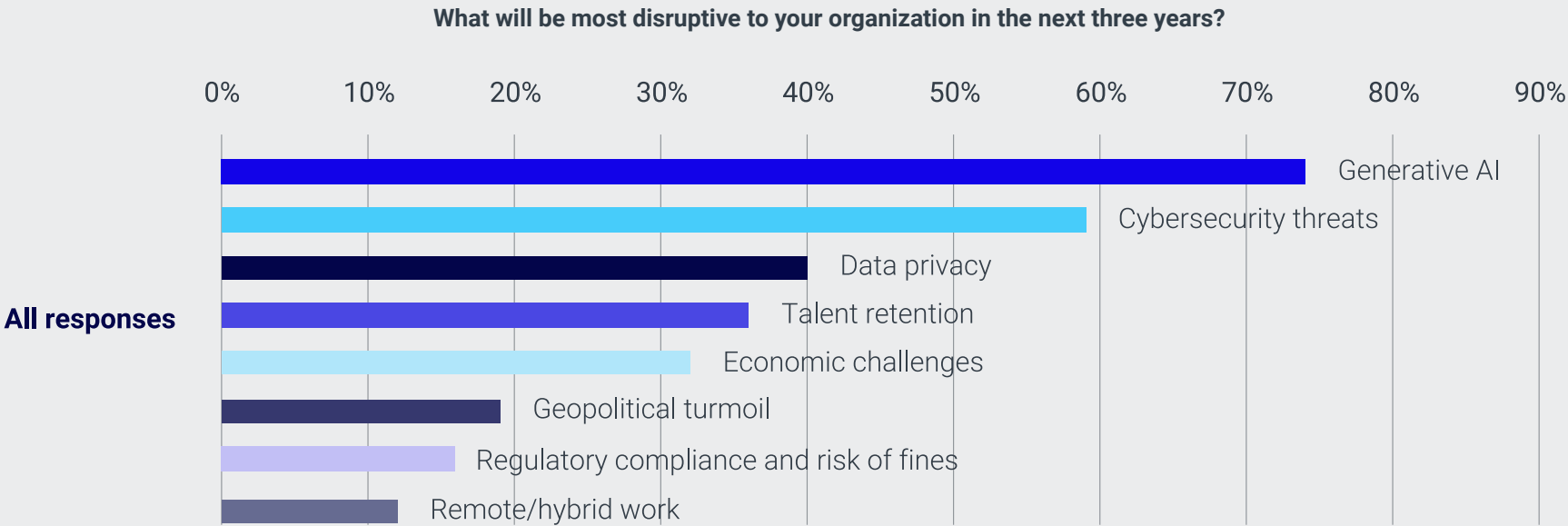


Looking ahead

Our survey respondents take a progressive view of the future. The role of artificial intelligence is evolving, but the potential is inarguable. Generative AI, increased automation from AI, and even agentic AI are predicted for the coming years, along with a more comprehensive approach to the disciplines that occupy this space. New technology, talent, upskilling, and resilience will be critical. Adapting at the speed of a rapidly evolving environment is key.

Unsurprisingly, 74 percent of all respondents anticipate generative AI being the most disruptive trend to their organization over the coming three years. Along with gen AI, cybersecurity threats maintain a high profile at 59 percent, and data privacy moves up to the top three overall at 40 percent.

Remote or hybrid work falls precipitously, now even less of a concern than regulatory compliance, which is table stakes in this sector. Some organizations have invested significant effort in building a culture that supports remote working, including training, technology, and tools. In contrast, those not deeply invested in that change are starting to require staff to return to the office. So, on balance, people no longer see this as a big disruptor.



Breaking it out

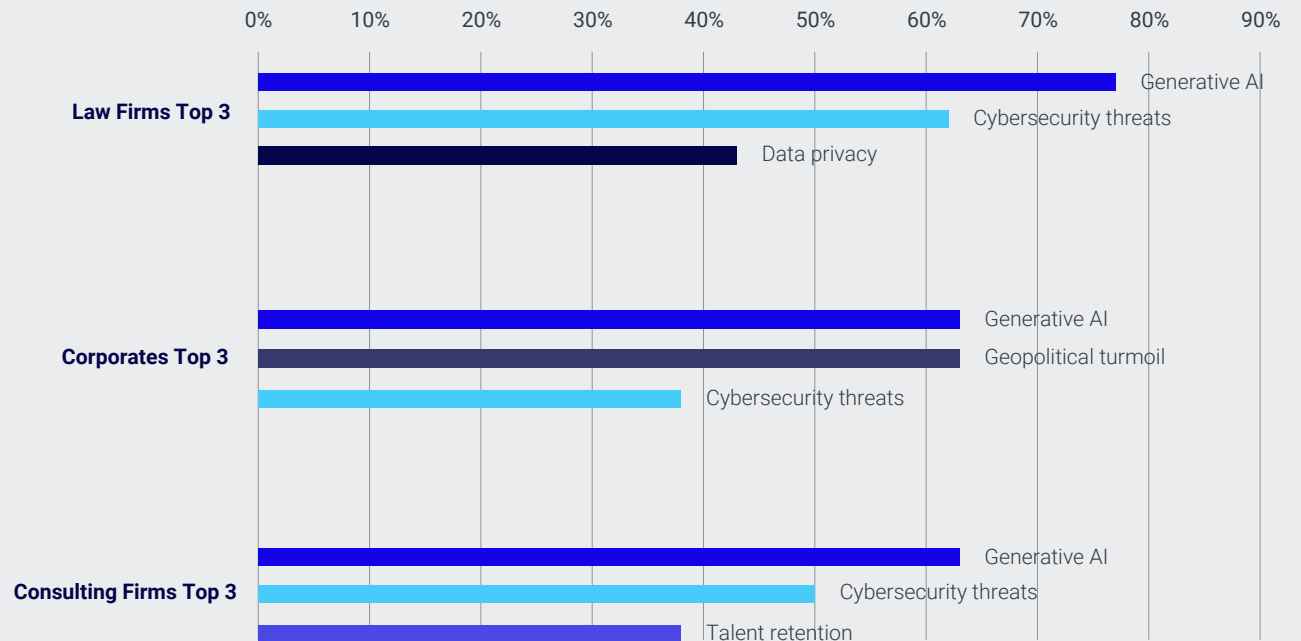
The numbers for law firms track with the overall responses as to the question of future disruption, slightly higher but otherwise on trend. Corporate responses, however, rank geopolitical turmoil together with generative AI at 63 percent. Consulting firms, too, echo the sentiment that generative AI will be the top disruptor, while projecting rising concerns around cybersecurity threats (50%) and bringing talent retention into the top three (38%).

Regionally, North American and EMEA respondents agree with the overall positioning of generative AI and cybersecurity threats as the biggest disruptors to their organizations. APAC is in sync with the disruptive potential of gen AI but cites geopolitical turmoil as the next strongest disruptor for their region.

Takeaways

Ethical, responsible adoption of generative AI into legal work practices is proving to be a significant challenge for all types of knowledge organizations. We expect that the more regulated the area of focus and expertise, and the more sensitive the information, the more important it will become for these organizations to get this right without much trial and error.

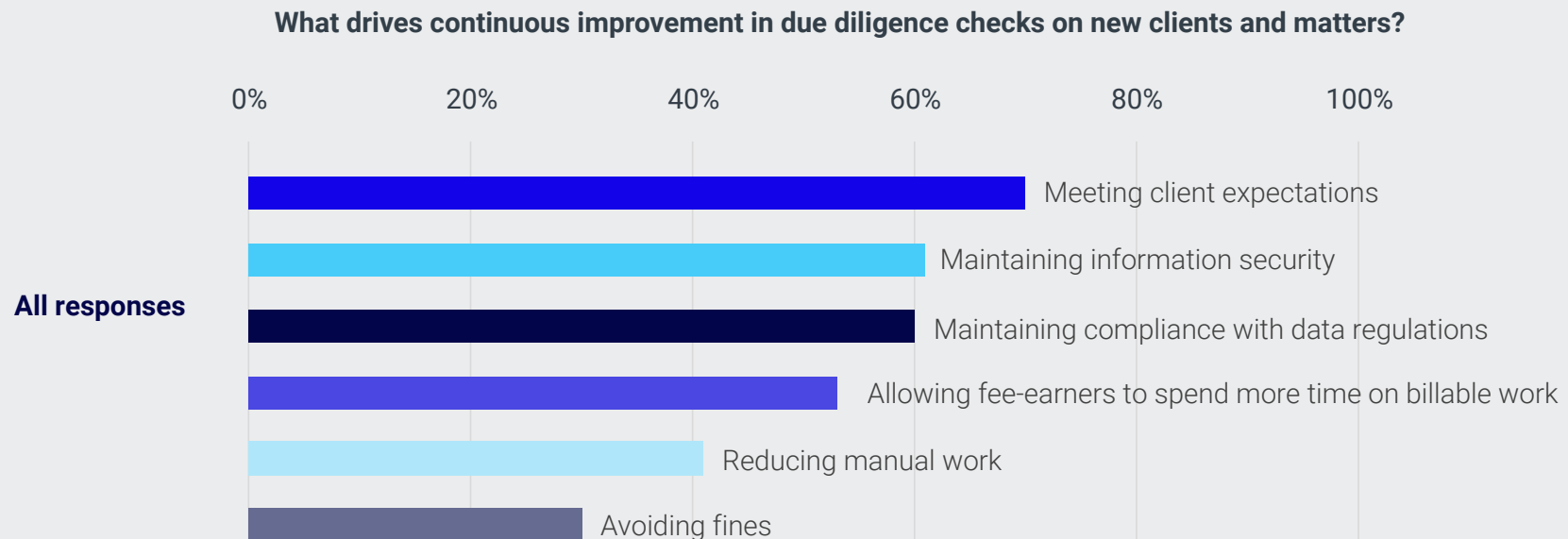
What will be most disruptive to your organization in the next three years?



What motivates continuous improvement in Risk & Compliance?

The continuous improvement principle asserts that you can streamline and enhance any process without compromising quality. As a systematic approach, it relies on everyone adopting the mindset of continuous improvement and identifying opportunities to optimize processes, including setting goals, implementing initiatives, and evaluating the results. We asked what our respondents saw as the drivers of this activity for client due diligence and onboarding.

Meeting client expectations is what drives the lion's share (70%) of respondents to keep improving their organization's client and business onboarding processes. Maintaining information security (61%) and compliance with data protection regulations (60%) are important motivators, as well.



Breaking it out

Client expectations rule for due diligence at law firms, too, at 71 percent, but – while both remain significant – the sector places somewhat greater emphasis on compliance with data regulations (59%) than on maintaining information security (56%).

Corporate respondents prioritize maintaining information security at our first 100 percent. Meeting client expectations falls a bit lower for this sector – which isn’t surprising, given that their “clients” are likely to be internal. This, and maintaining compliance with data regulations, both drew 63 percent.

Our consulting firms round out the results with a trifecta of 75 percent responses, choosing all three of the favored drivers in equal measure.

When we look at what drives continuous improvement of client due diligence, we see that North America follows the general pattern, while allowing fee-earners to spend more time on billable work is a consideration for 53 percent. In EMEA, compliance with GDPR and other data regulations commands greater focus. In APAC, information security is viewed as a higher priority due to rapid digital growth without commensurate cybersecurity skills and infrastructure, making them vulnerable to increasing attacks from cybercriminals.

Takeaways

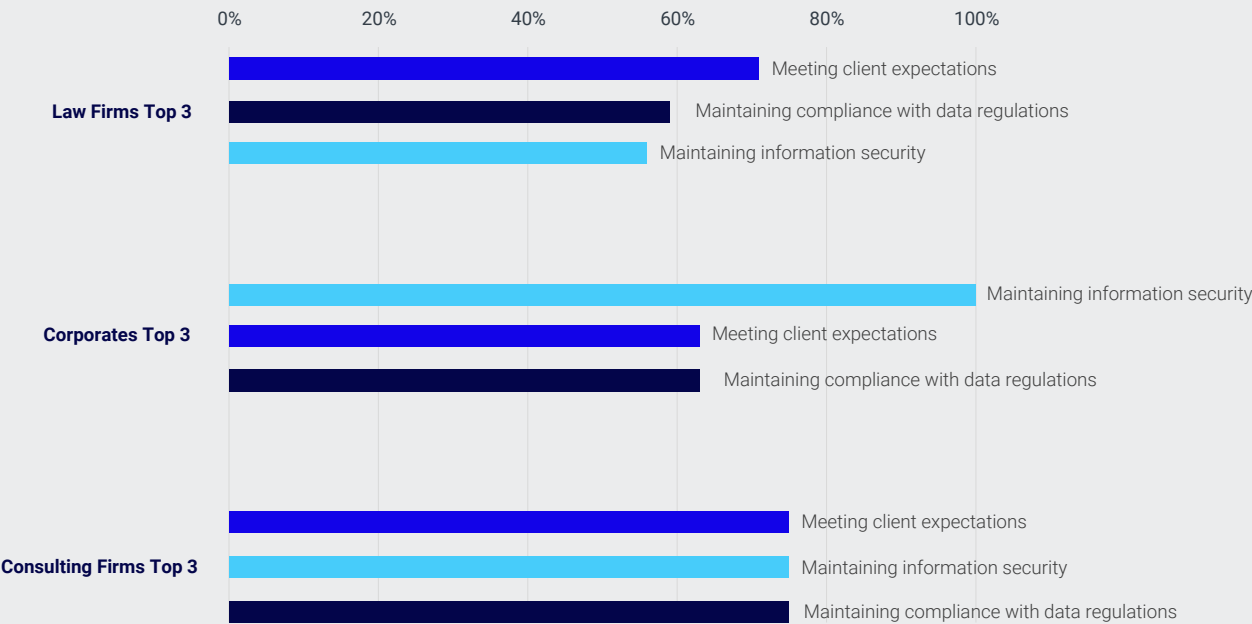
In a highly competitive sector where the only way to attract and retain clients is by providing a seamless experience throughout the onboarding process, it is no surprise that meeting client expectations ranks high in survey responses.

In the overall picture, avoiding fines was less of a consideration, at 30 percent, which may say something about the fines themselves. Are they painful enough to drive more ethical choices, or do they simply become a cost of doing business? If

that is the case, the motivations that consistently ranked higher – meeting client expectations, maintaining information security, and compliance with data protection regulations – may be more effective in driving ethical business practices than the threat of paying fines.

In our view, good security and compliance practices naturally produce better outcomes and fewer, if any, fines, and that explains its weaker emphasis.

What drives continuous improvement in due diligence checks on new clients and matters?



Team coordination at the speed of change

Complexity and information overload, specialization, information silos, and the speed of change have made checks on source of funds and conflicts of interest more challenging than ever. Adopting a centralized approach where all checks and reviews are performed by a dedicated team, can deliver a more resilient, compliant, and efficient process.

It was great to see that 88 percent of respondents have a dedicated team in place and understand the benefits of having a centralized approach to new business onboarding and due diligence checks. Of the 12 percent whose organizations did not have a centralized team, only 42 percent said they were considering or in the process of implementing one.

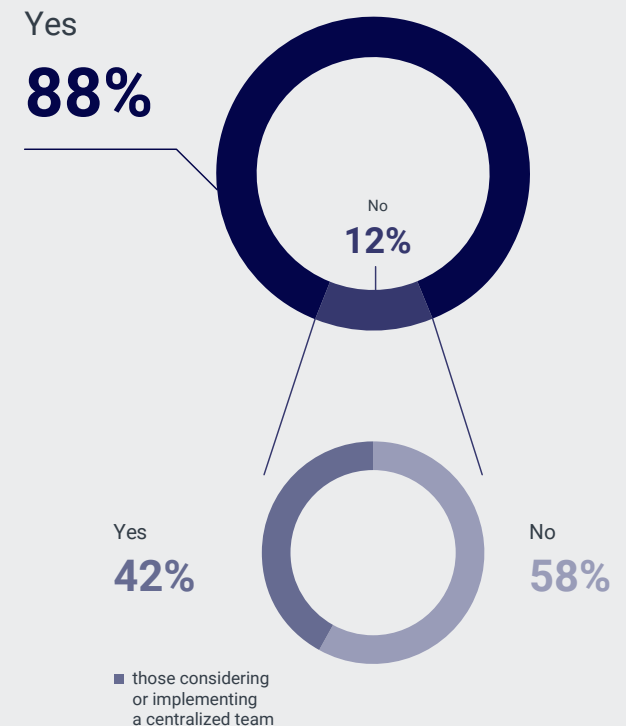
Breaking it out

Ninety-four percent of North American organizations have a dedicated team in place for new business onboarding. The percentage in EMEA is also high, at 91. APAC had the lowest “yes” responses, with only 60 percent of organizations having a dedicated team in place.

Takeaways

In our view, a dedicated team that is responsible for carrying out the onboarding of new business is essential to improving overall efficiency. Modern technology can connect data sources seamlessly to conduct all essential onboarding compliance checks in one place, reducing risk while producing clear results for fast decision making.

Does a dedicated team check and review all new business for your organization? If not, are you considering or in the process of implementing a centralized team to handle all appropriate checks?



Overcome barriers to a more rigorous Risk & Compliance approach

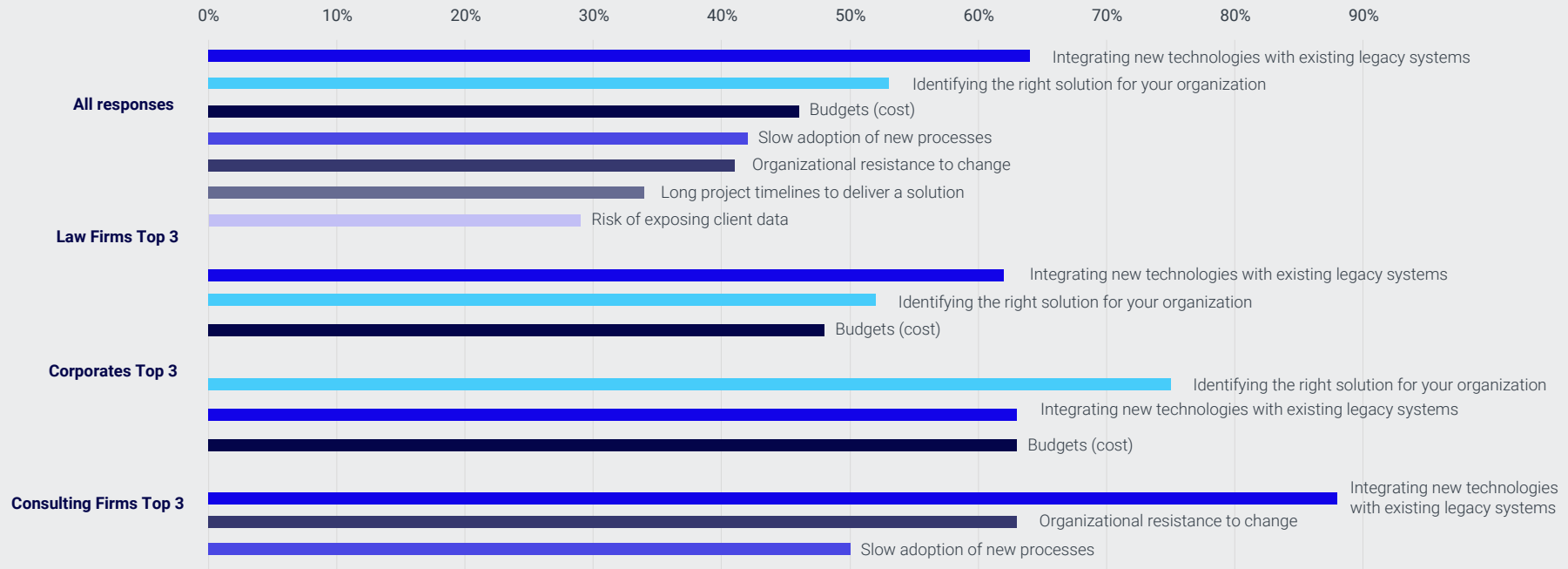
KYC (know your client) involves the process to identify clients, verify their identities, and determine what risk serving those clients might entail. The goal is to understand client background, financial activities, and risk profile.

A rigorous KYC process enables the organization to meet its regulatory requirements and helps it avoid exposure to illicit activities. Our survey asked about the challenges surrounding efforts to centralize their approach.

When looking to centralize their KYC/CDD checks, 64 percent of respondents view integrating new technologies with existing legacy systems as the biggest challenge. More than half of respondents (53%) struggle most with identifying the right solution for their organization. And a substantial number (46%) find the greatest obstacle to be managing budgets or cost.



What are the biggest challenges in centralizing your organization's approach to know your client (KYC)/client due diligence (CDD) checks?



Breaking it out

Law firms mirror the overall results, while corporate respondents prioritize identifying the right solution for their organization (75%) above integrating new technologies with existing legacy systems (63%). Like law firms, consultancies rank integrating new technologies as their number one stumbling block (88%) but depart ways on the second and third big challenges, ranking organizational resistance to change at 63 percent and slow adoption of new processes at 50 percent.

North America responses to the biggest challenges in centralizing their due diligence processes align with the overall numbers. EMEA agrees that integrating new technologies with existing legacy systems is an uphill climb but puts long project timelines to deliver a solution on equal footing.

By contrast, most APAC respondents (90%) rank managing budgets or cost as the most difficult factor, while 80 percent view the prospect of identifying the right solution for their organization nearly as onerous.

Takeaways

We can see from these results that Risk & Compliance professionals and their organizations face myriad challenges in optimizing their approach to KYC or CDD checks. How can these barriers be overcome?

Automation can play a big part in reducing the resource-intensive nature and risk of performing these checks. Partnering with specialized solution providers allows organizations to tap into their expertise and technology, enabling them to stay compliant with internal policies and procedures while freeing up internal resources.

Robust is as robust does

The continuous introduction of new compliance requirements dictates constant updating of even robust processes. Maintenance is endless and can be challenging to manage. Also, assuming that regulatory compliance is a tick-box exercise that involves gathering basic information is a grave mistake. Things are moving so fast that the year ahead, even the months ahead, promise transformative advances in risk management and compliance that might have been unthinkable just a few years ago.

In the modern era, key global trends like sustainability, AI, and a growing demand for transparency are redefining the compliance landscape. We asked our survey group to tell us how well-prepared they feel their organizations are for assessing risk as we contemplate the wild ride ahead.

When asked to evaluate the robustness of current policies and procedures for assessing the risk of taking on new clients and matters, the responses indicate that this is largely a work in progress. A little more than half (56%) of all those surveyed say their processes are very robust, with the remainder (44%) saying they are working on improvements.

Breaking it out

The responses from law firms and consulting firms were very similar to the overall response. Corporate responses were evenly divided, 50/50, between a robust process and a work in progress.

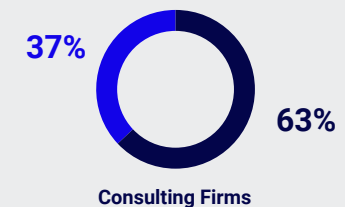
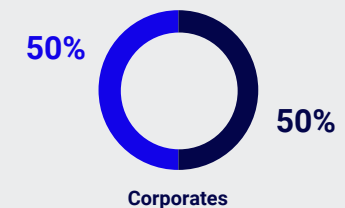
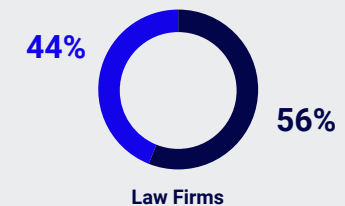
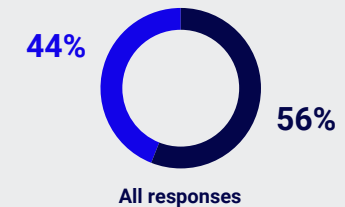
APAC mirrored this 50/50 balance, while a slightly higher percentage of North Americans (54%) claimed its policies and procedures were robust. Among EMEA respondents, the assertion of vigor was much higher, with more than three quarters (82%) stating that their risk procedures were very robust.

Takeaways

These results indicate that although some organizations, particularly the ones in EMEA, appear to be nailing it, many others have found that establishing and maintaining a robust set of processes and procedures is an ongoing project.

Leveraging technology in today's data-driven digital age is key. The right technology can play a crucial role in adding efficiencies to client risk assessments by automating and streamlining the process. Organizations can use data analytics to easily identify patterns that indicate potential risk or automate the process of collecting and verifying client information.

How robust are your current policies and procedures for completing risk assessments for new clients and matters?



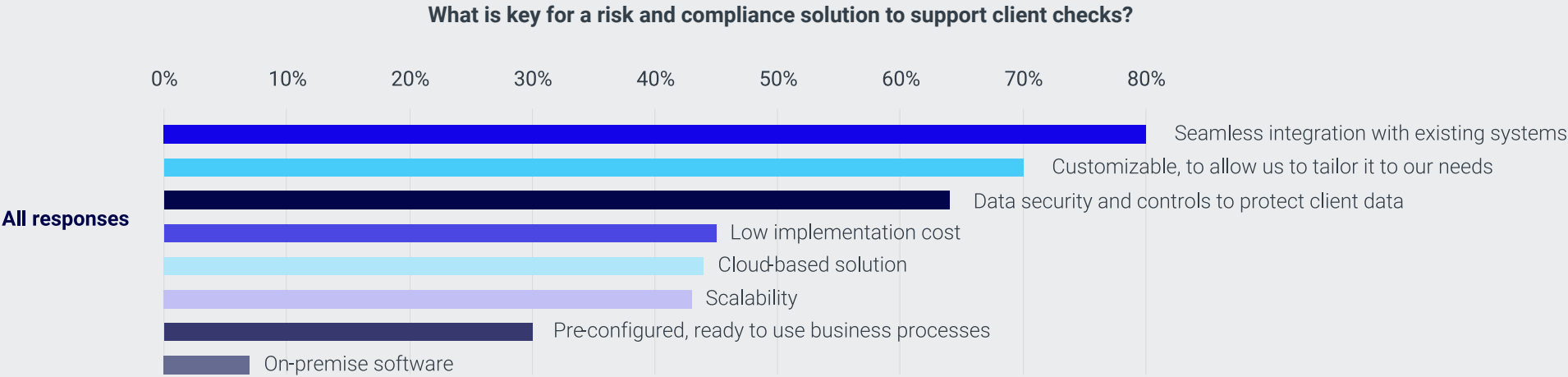
■ Working on improvements ■ Very robust

Coming full circle

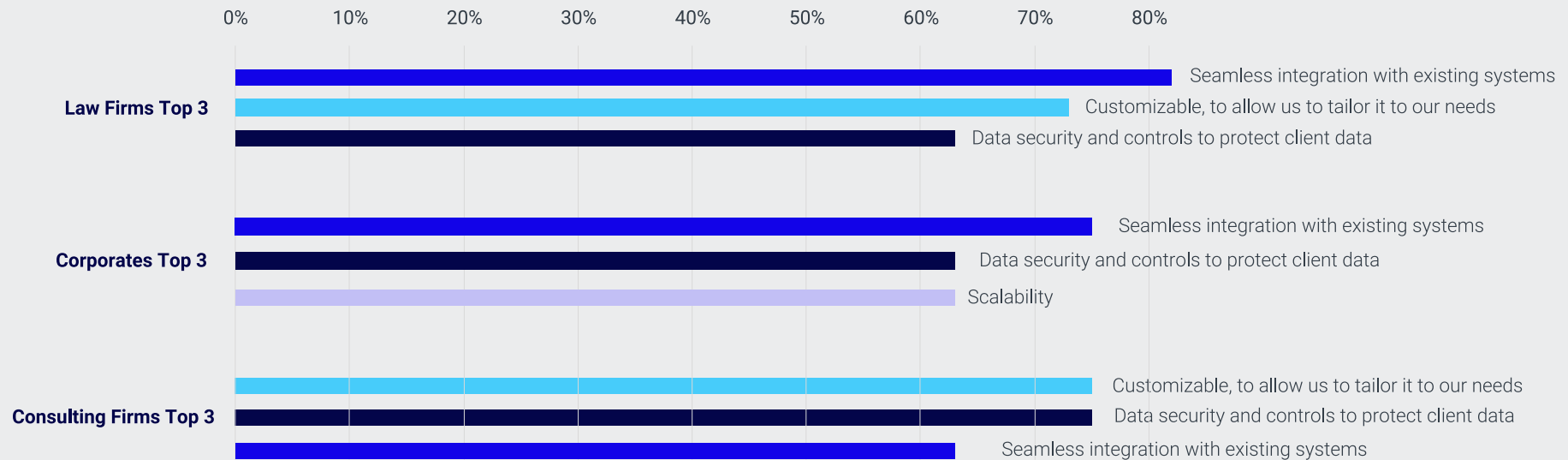
The final question in our survey brings us back to where we started in the opening salvo: How do you think technology can help you navigate this complex and evolving landscape? What would a solution need to do to make your life easier?

Eighty percent of our survey respondents say seamless integration with existing systems is a key requirement for Risk & Compliance solutions that support client onboarding checks.

The ability to customize the solution also scores high (70%), as do data security and controls to protect client data (64%).



What is key for a risk and compliance solution to support client checks?



Breaking it out

Law firms follow the same pattern in terms of their top 3 as the broader responses. Corporate's top three responses included scalability at 63 percent, while consulting firms viewed data security and controls to protect client data as their top requirement at 75 percent.

Respondents in North America cited seamless integration with existing systems (79%) and customization (71%) as their highest priorities in a Risk & Compliance solution.

Ninety-one percent of EMEA respondents emphasized seamless integration with existing systems, along with data security at 82 percent and a cloud-based solution at 73 percent.

APAC respondents unanimously elevated data security as their top priority (100%), closely followed by seamless integration with existing systems at 90 percent and customization at 70 percent.

Takeaways

Seamless integration with existing systems is a key requirement for Risk & Compliance professionals, understandably. At the same time, delivering on these expectations for frictionless application or context switching is a highly complex undertaking for technology teams and solution partners to coordinate. As in so many situations, turning to an established, trusted partnership pays the greatest ROI, especially when that partner can offer the desired solution as an

integrated component of a platform your team is already using.

An implementation team that has worked with your IT group, is already familiar with your business, and has established rapport with people in your organization is far more likely to provide successful results in the short term and ensure greater satisfaction in the long term.

Disruption is the new normal. Risk is everywhere. Meet the challenge.

If there is one thing we believe our analysis makes clear, it's that disruption is the new normal, and we all need to meet it head-on to prevail. Risk is not going away. Far from it, risk is ubiquitous. Compliance is not getting easier. On the contrary, it's getting more complex all the time. And technology is poised to rocket ahead of us all, if we aren't vigilant and proactive.

How can organizations take the initiative and gain an advantage in these perilous, exciting, and rapidly shifting times? Make a plan. Get a partner. Invest in new and emerging technologies as needed. Unlock your inner resilience. Foster robust capabilities on a flexible architecture, and if it's working, be prepared to scale.

This is our moment of truth and speaks to the larger question, are we the partner to serve your needs? But more than simply serve your needs, to help you pave your best path forward. Yes, to address

your current pain points, but to go beyond that requirement. We want to be the ally helping you continue to meet your goals as the demands of Risk & Compliance increase, technology expands, and your needs change.

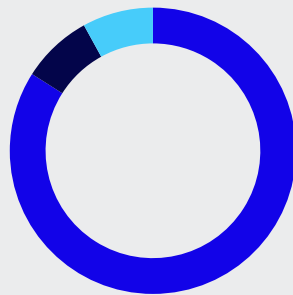
At iManage, we are primed and ready to build a lasting partnership with both existing users who are just learning that iManage can take them beyond document management, and future users. We may not have yet met, but we look forward to it — and to the opportunity to serve your needs — today, tomorrow, for the next quarter century, and beyond.

Book your passage now to reach new heights of greater efficiency, risk mitigation, and regulatory compliance. Just visit [our website](#) to learn more about iManage Risk & Compliance solutions and reach out to us for a [demo](#).

Demographics

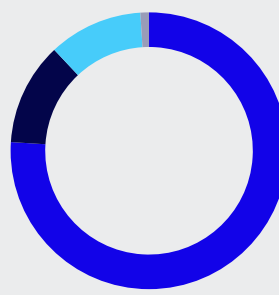
Survey respondents represent Risk & Compliance professionals in legal organizations across the globe using iManage products.

Organization Type



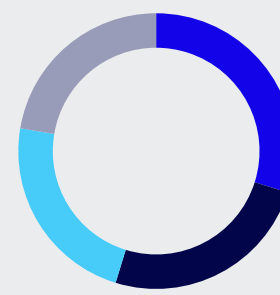
- Law Firm - 84%
- Consulting Firm - 8%
- Corporate - 8%

Region



- NA - 76%
- EMEA - 12%
- APAC - 11%
- LATAM - 1%

Role in selection and purchasing of new solutions



- Influencer/Recommender - 30%
- Key Stakeholder or Member of the decision committee - 25%
- Evaluator - 23%
- User but not involved - 22%

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