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GUIDECX presents:
The State of Onboarding 2022

Introduction

Over the past several years the client onboarding landscape has changed significantly. Onboarding that previously took place between two businesses or organizations is now a matter of interacting with multiple individuals across multiple timezones, within a single corporation. This complicates all but the most basic of onboarding procedures.

As workers are changing how and when they work, onboarding has become a more complicated procedure. In response to this, client success managers and account managers have had to be creative. Project management software and other similar tools have gained popularity as a way to keep everyone on the same page.

Onboarding specialists are becoming more aware of the necessity of quick communication and operational clarity when there are so many different individuals and processes involved in the onboarding process. A large portion of onboarding specialists believe that responding to emails, messages, texts, etc. should occur within 8 hours, or a single business day. This process can be facilitated by using a central project or onboarding management platform that has built in notification, email, and chat features that automates messaging and takes the difficulty out of routine communication.

Onboarding best practices and expectations are changing rapidly. Companies that haven't taken a second look at their onboarding procedures over the last year or two are at risk of leaving clients frustrated and looking for better solutions elsewhere.

The State of Onboarding report is a snapshot of the key developments and innovations within the client onboarding industry.

Utilizing 2000+ data points reported by over 100 individuals in the client onboarding industry, this first edition of the State of Onboarding report explores recent industry changes, how these changes impacted the client onboarding process, and how companies adapted to the altered client onboarding landscape.

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Trend #1: Client Experience is Becoming More of a Focus During the Onboarding Process.

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40%

Response Times

As project management software becomes mainstream, responding to client needs has become easier. This may be why over **40%** of respondents reported that a response time of fewer than 8 hours is most acceptable, with only **12%** saying 48 hours is an acceptable response time.
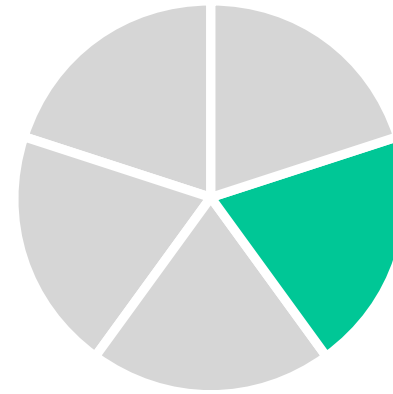
Reducing Customer Churn

Customer churn is a significant problem, especially in the SaaS industry. Based on responses, respondents didn't seem to have a clear strategy to reduce customer churn. Daily contact and using project management software were the top responses, but almost one-fifth of respondents consider customer churn to be inevitable.

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End-goal Clarity

44% **26%** **17%**
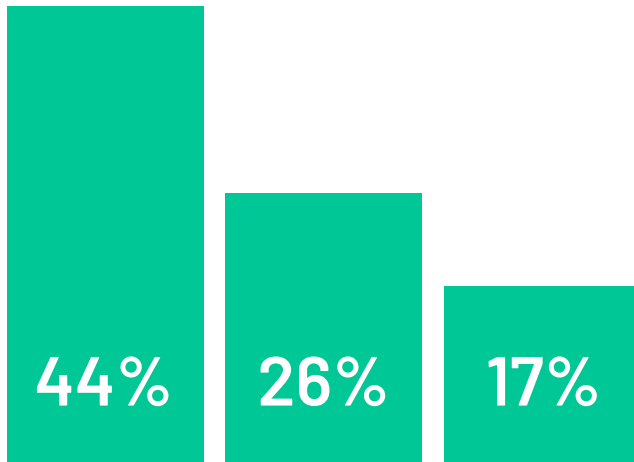
Everyone would agree that starting the onboarding process with a clear understanding of the end goal is ideal, but how often does it really happen? **44%** of respondents reported that they always or regularly begin with the end goal in mind. Another **26%** say that they sometimes have an end goal when onboarding clients. **17%** rarely, if ever, start the onboarding process with an end goal in mind. This may be due to poor planning or operating procedures, but may also indicate difficulty getting all stakeholders on the same page.

Client Experience

41% **59%**
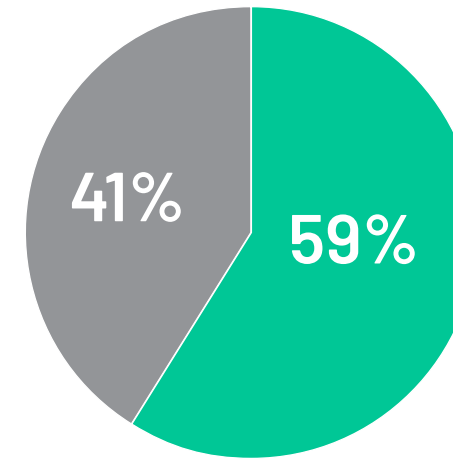
It's clear that there needs to be a greater emphasis on the client experience during onboarding. There's no shortage of companies willing and able to help clients during the onboarding process if certain companies fail to offer an acceptable level of support. Yet only **41%** report that the client experience during onboarding is very important. The other 59% of respondents either have yet to implement changes to improve client experience or do not believe it is all that important, at least not for every client.

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Acceptable response times

- < or = 4 hours (**10%**)
- < or = 8 hours (**31.6%**)
- **24 hrs (37%)**
- 48 hrs (**12%**)

29% **29%** **17%** **15%**
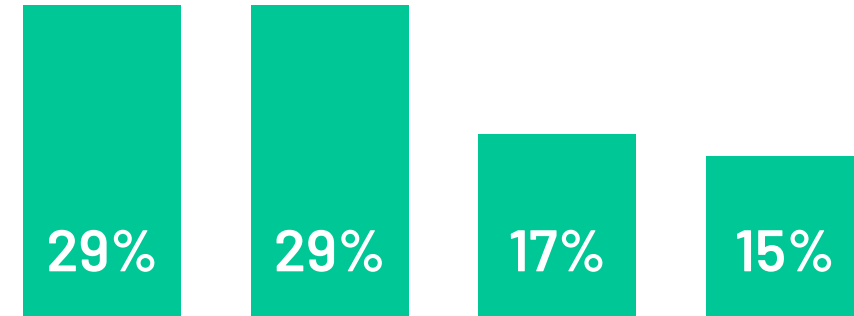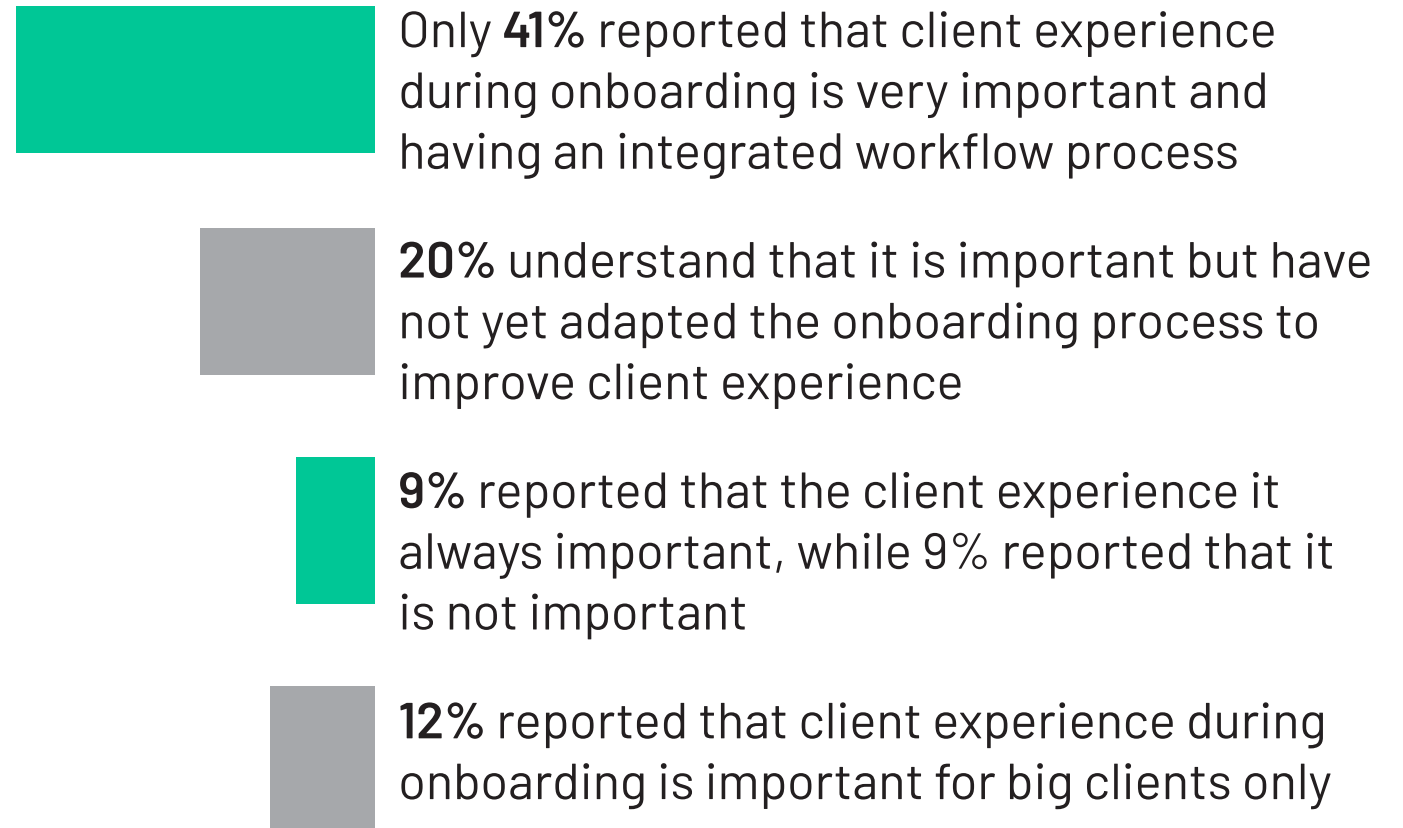
Strategies to reduce customer churn

- Daily contact using the client's preferred communication (**29%**)
- Using project management software **(29%)**
- Customer church is inevitable (**17%**)
- Offer discounts (**15%**)

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**Clarity regarding end-goal when onboarding client**

- Almost half always or regularly begin client onboarding with a clear understanding of the end goals (**44%**)

- **26%** only achieve this clarity 'sometimes'

- **17%** rarely or never start client onboarding with a clear understanding of end goals

Client experience during onboarding process

Only **41%** reported that client experience during onboarding is very important and having an integrated workflow process

20% understand that it is important but have not yet adapted the onboarding process to improve client experience

9% reported that the client experience it always important, while 9% reported that it is not important

12% reported that client experience during onboarding is important for big clients only

**Trend #2:** More and More Communication is Being Done Through Remote Means.

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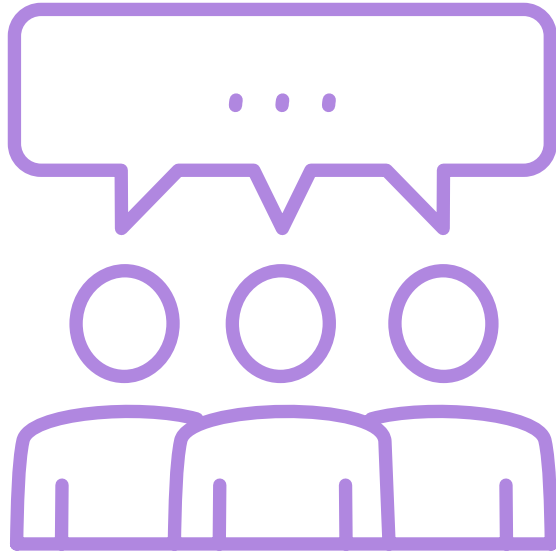
With the rise in remote work and hybrid schedules, it should come as no surprise that many respondents communicate with team members primarily through technology such as messaging tools, phone/text, and email. However, there are teams that rely on in-person meetings to communicate as much as they do on remote communication. Another small percentage of respondents still rely on in-person meetings more than they do on remote communication.

As illustrated by the survey responses, the majority of team communication happens remotely via technology, but the wide variety of different tools and options could create friction between teams and members trying to communicate in a smooth and timely manner.
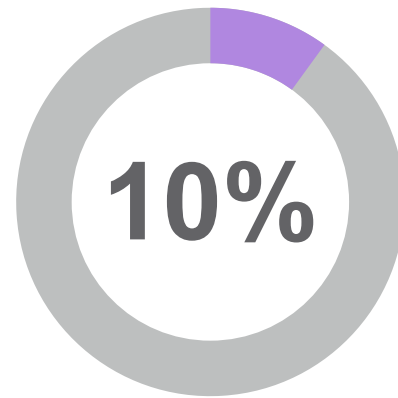
During onboarding projects, most teams meet weekly, with some teams meeting daily. The daily meetings usually happen via project management software of some sort. There's another group of respondents that rely solely on email for onboarding projects. This group of respondents may prefer to use email or may not know or want to pay for some of the tools available to improve the onboarding experience.
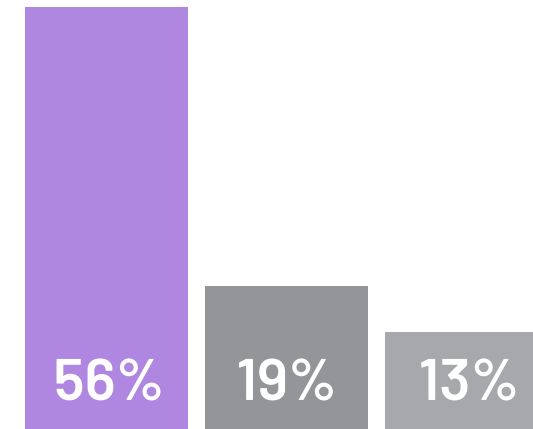
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67%
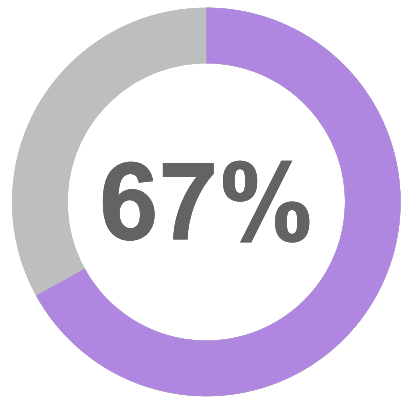
- **67%** communicate primarily through **messaging tools, phone/text, or email**

10%
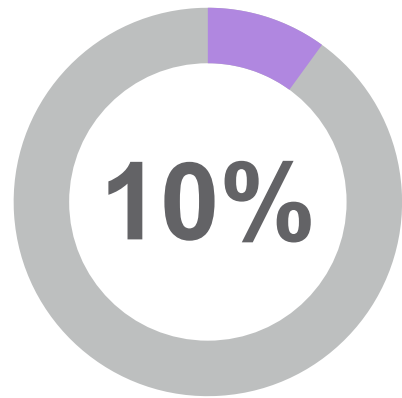
- Small minority communicate most **through in-person communication** (**10%**)

10%

- Minority communicate equally **online and in-person** (**10%**)

56% | 19% | 13%

- During client onboarding, most teams meet weekly (**56%**), while some meet daily using project management software or video tools (**19%**), and a minority rely solely on email (**13%**)

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Trend #3: More People Are Adopting Project Management Software, but Training and Education Aren't Keeping Up.

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85%
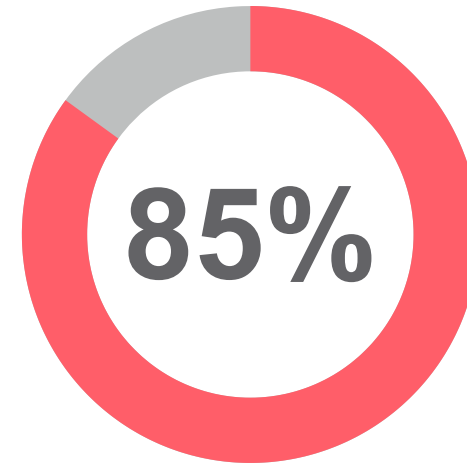
Similar to the explosive growth of Zoom at the beginning of the pandemic, companies such as Monday.com, Trello, and Slack have become household names. **85%** of respondents reported regularly using project management and communication platforms.

44%
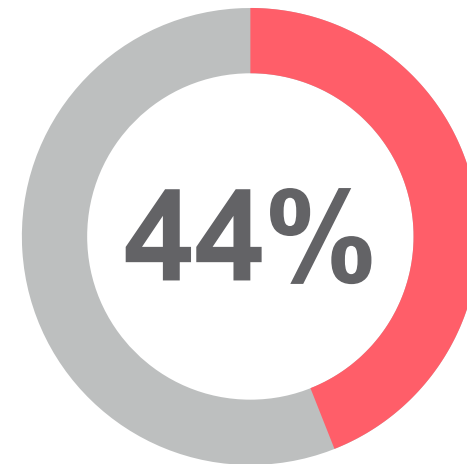
The fact that **44%** of respondents reported that their software isn't user friendly or they haven't been properly trained to use it hints that perhaps this widespread and rapid adoption may be leaving users with less than ideal access to support and training.

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An unexpected number of respondents reported that remote workers don't have access to these platforms or that they are only used in the office. This would make it difficult to truly collaborate with remote workers and may be one of the reasons that many companies are calling for a return to the office.

85%

- **85%** reported using project management software.

44%

- However, **44%** have software that is not user-friendly or have not been properly trained to use their software.

59%

- **59%** reported that their software makes it easy or fairly easy to connect with team members for task updates and checking on client onboarding status

40%

- **40%** reported that remote workers do not have access to these tools or that these tools are only used in the office.

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Trend #4: Companies are increasingly transitioning to hybrid and paperless work environments.
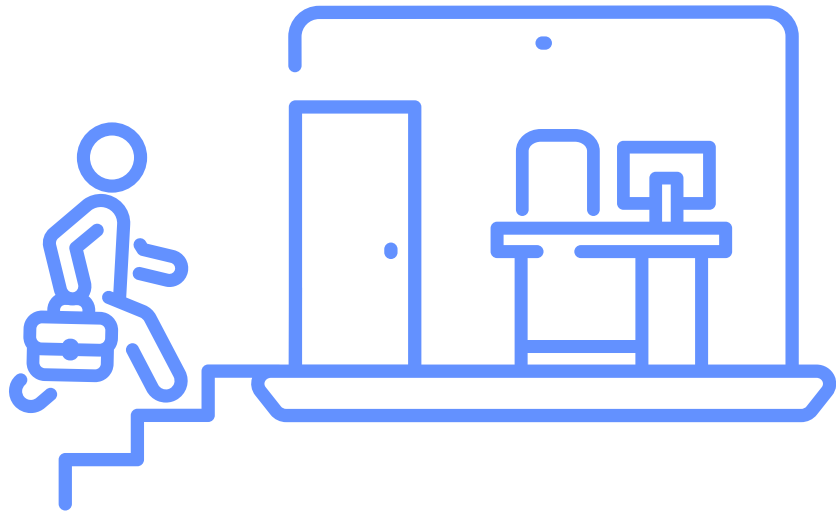
Over the past several years, companies have decreased their reliance on hard-copy documents while transitioning to hybrid workspaces. COVID-19 only accelerated this trend, leading many companies to implement hybrid workspaces. As companies have transitioned to hybrid and online workspaces, their reliance on hard copy documents has decreased significantly.
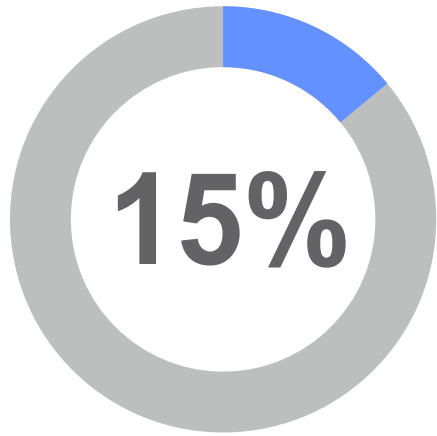
15%

The State of Onboarding survey found that among companies that relied on hard-copy documents before launching a hybrid workspace, **15%** have gone entirely paperless.

28% **17%**
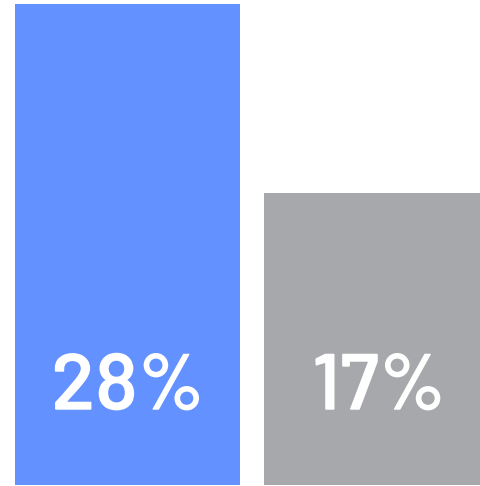
Furthermore, **28%** report greatly reducing their usage of hard-copy documents after the transition, while an additional **17%** report that they 'somewhat reduced' their reliance on hard-copy documents.

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15%

28%
17%

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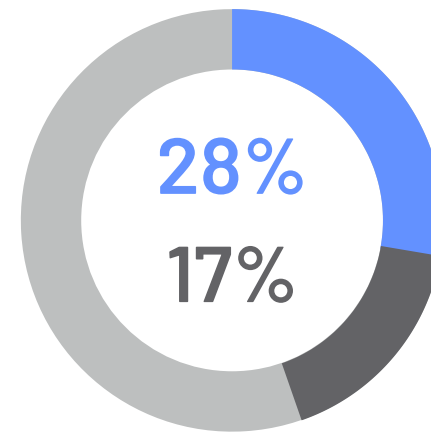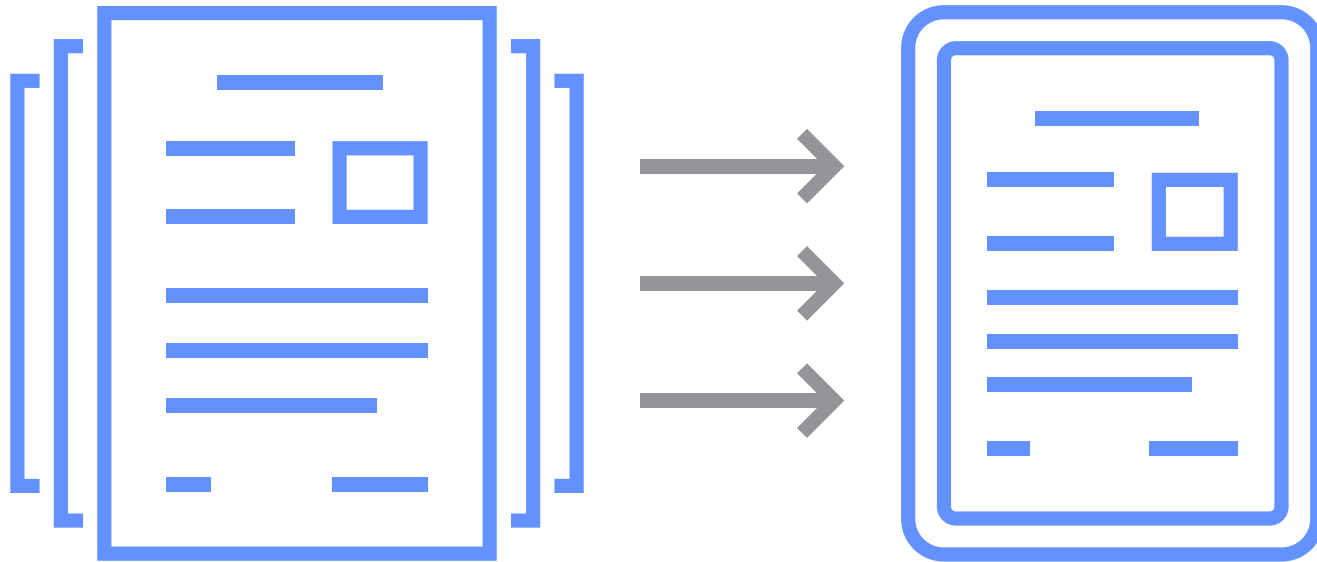
Recent trends toward paperless work have far-reaching implications in several industry areas, including client onboarding. With an inefficient or disorganized paperless system, it can be challenging to ensure that clients receive and complete the required forms. It may be even more difficult to be certain that clients are receiving all the information they need to make important decisions regarding their involvement with the onboarding company. Fortunately, there are a number of powerful and intuitive client onboarding tools that facilitate this process. These onboarding technologies allow for increased document security, decreased costs, and increased accuracy and efficiency, which are vital in an increasingly post-paper world.

Trend #5: Companies and workers are increasing their emphasis on the work-life balance.

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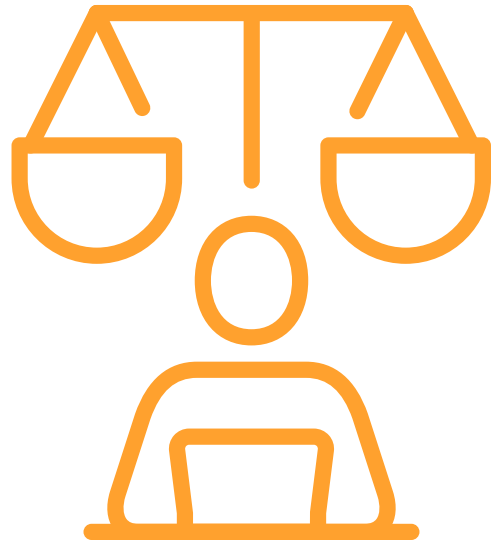
Work-life balance refers to how individuals coordinate their work responsibilities and personal life. The 'work-life balance' has become both an industry buzzword and a workplace mantra, with increasing attention being given to this delicate subject by employers and employees alike.

40 Some recent surveys suggest that over half of working professionals work more than **40 hours** per week (Grand Canyon University, 2020).
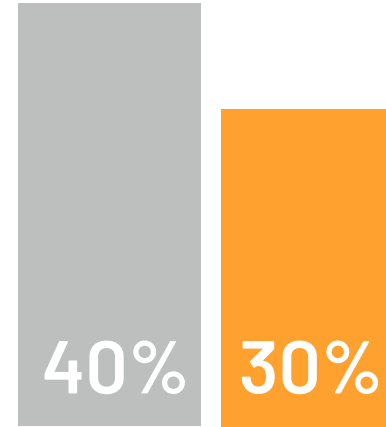
The largest subset of survey respondents reported occasionally working overtime (**40%**), while a slightly smaller proportion of individuals reported rarely or never working overtime since moving to a remote workplace (**30%**).

40% **30%**

Other reports indicate that a small but significant subset (~10%) of workers may work in excess of **50 hours** per week (OECD, 2022).

50 +
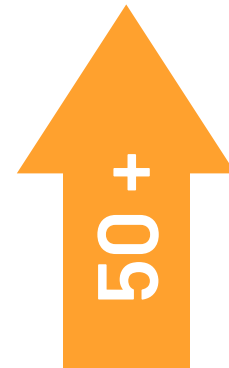
Corroborating these former findings, almost **1/5 of respondents** from the State of Onboarding survey indicated working overtime on a daily basis (**18%**).

18%
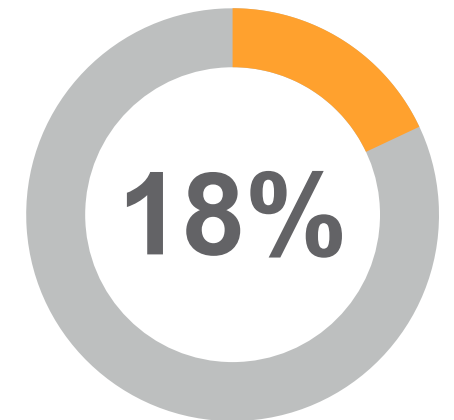
These findings are concerning, as sustained periods of overtime work likely contribute to lower ratings of work-life balance and lower satisfaction with work. However, responses among those in the State of Onboarding survey suggest that not all individuals struggle with the work-life balance, regardless of the amount worked.