

The Signals of

Trust

B2B Technology Purchase Decision Study

October 2019



ROB ROY
CONSULTING

Where does **trust** impact B2B tech purchasing?



Tech industry's crisis of trust

Hewlett-Packard admits \$8.8 billion accounting scandal at British unit

Facebook again refuses to ban political ads, even false ones

Twitter's Problem Isn't the Like Button
The platform's design encourages negativity, abuse and harassment. That needs to change.



facebook



amazon

wework

LinkedIn

Google

LinkedIn Co-Founder Apologizes for Funding Misinformation Campaign Against Roy Moore

'Go back to work': outcry over deaths on Amazon's warehouse floor

"YOU DON'T BRING BAD NEWS TO THE CULT LEADER":
INSIDE THE FALL OF WEWORK

How Google's search algorithm spreads false information with a rightwing bias



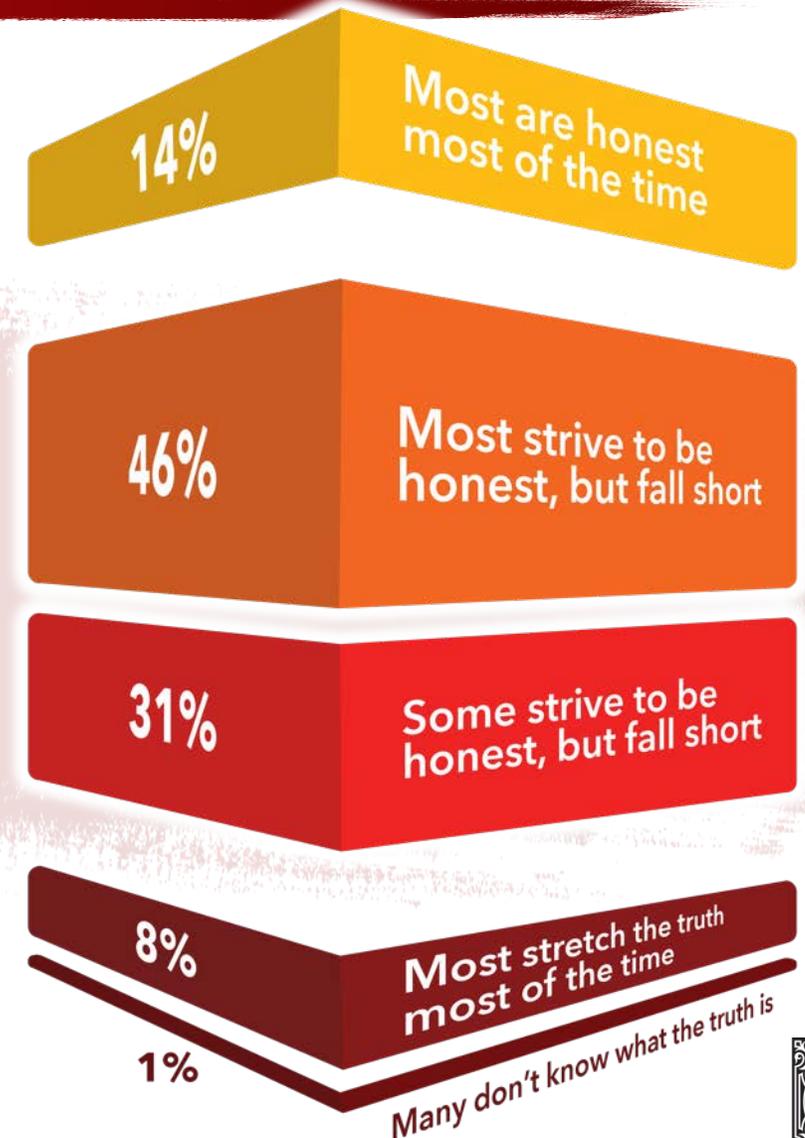
Guilty until proven innocent

We asked: *"To what extent do you feel technology vendors are being honest with you?"*

A staggering

77%

believe that while some (or even most) tech vendors strive to be honest, they fall short.

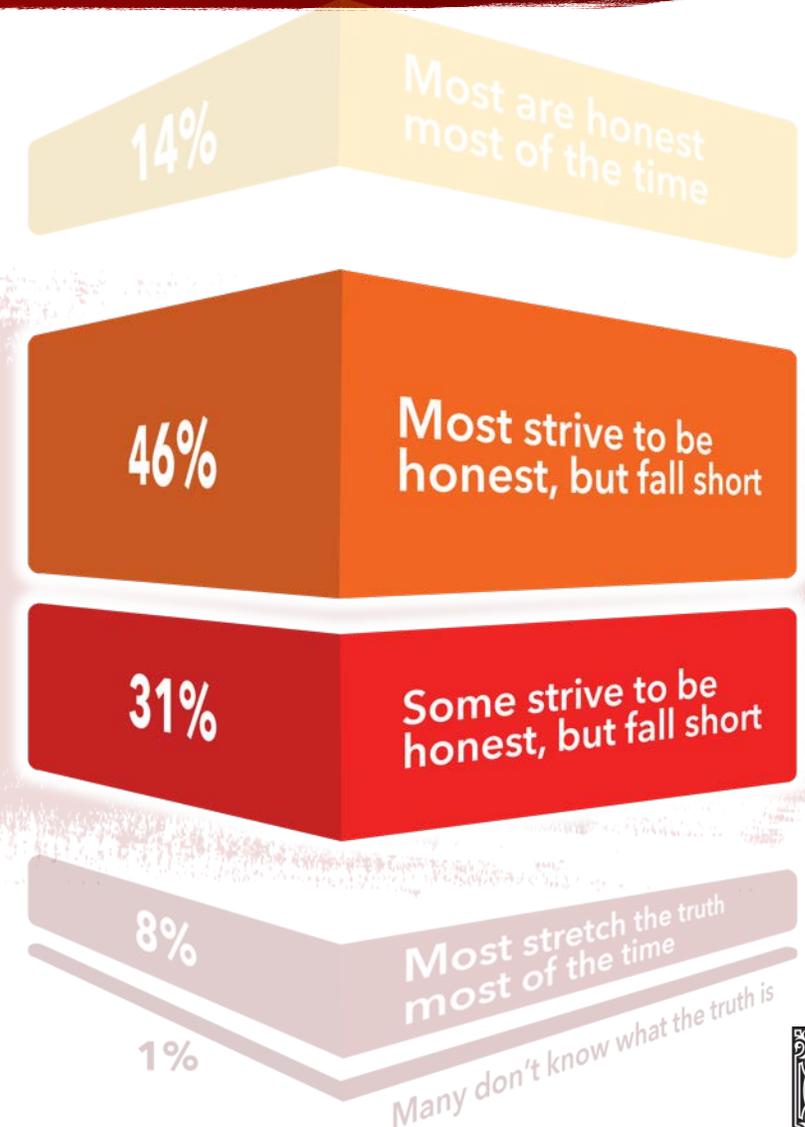


Honesty = competitive advantage

Technology vendors have an opportunity.

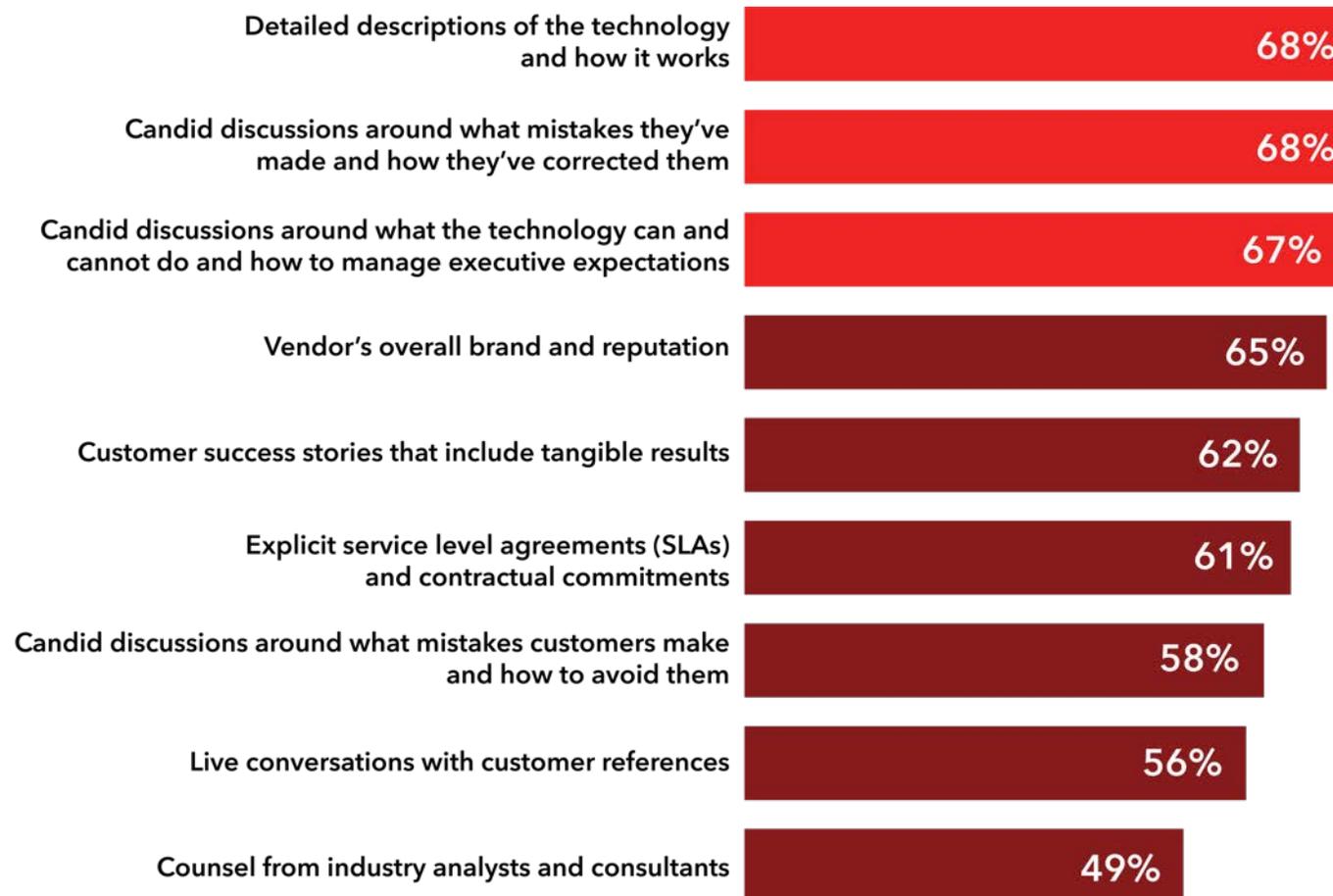
These **77%** are willing to give you a chance to be honest.

So, what do you do?



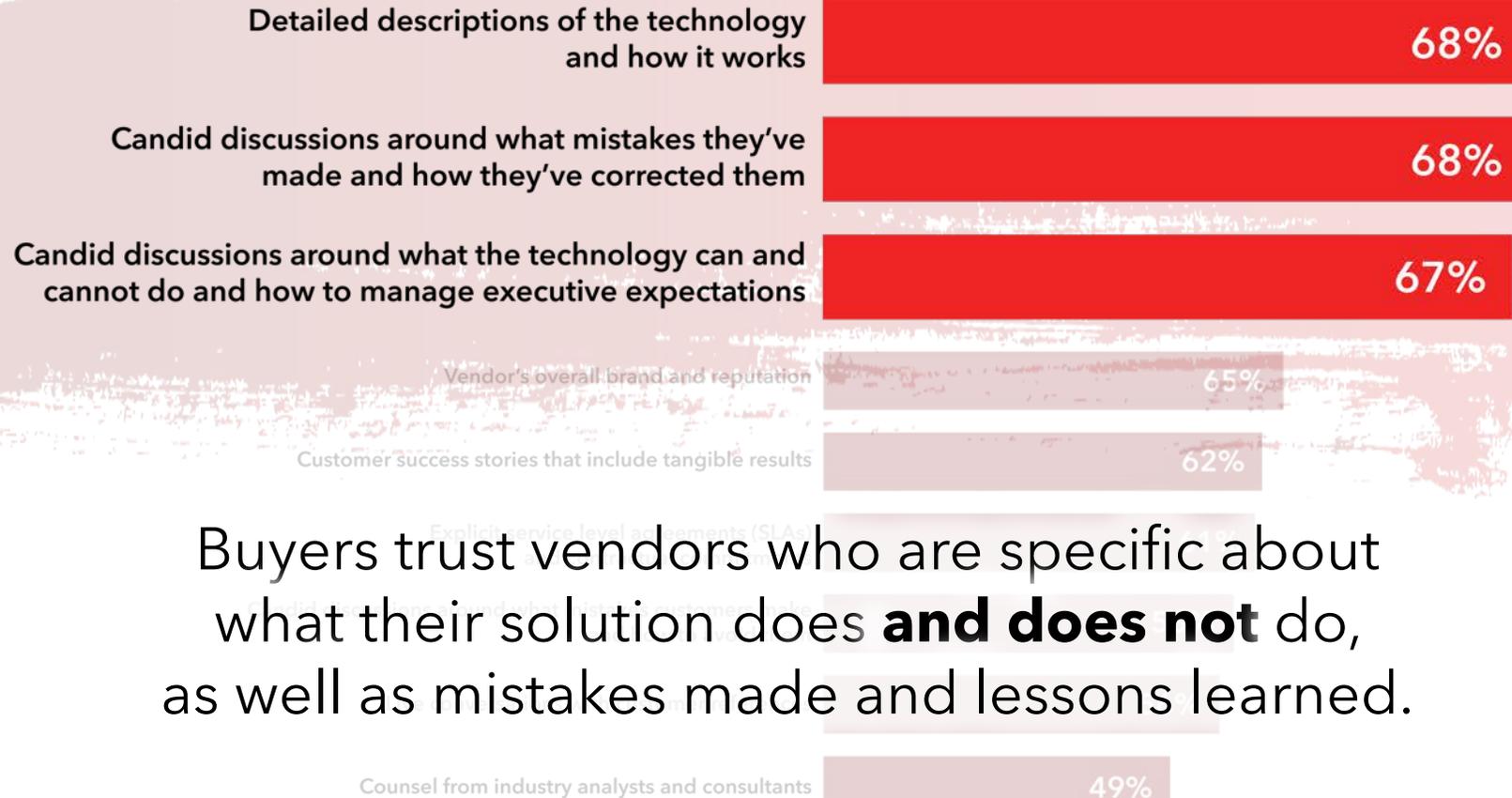
Candor and transparency

“How likely are each of the following to convince you a vendor is being honest with you?”



Candor and transparency

"How likely are each of the following to convince you a vendor is being honest with you?"



Buyers trust vendors who are specific about what their solution does **and does not** do, as well as mistakes made and lessons learned.

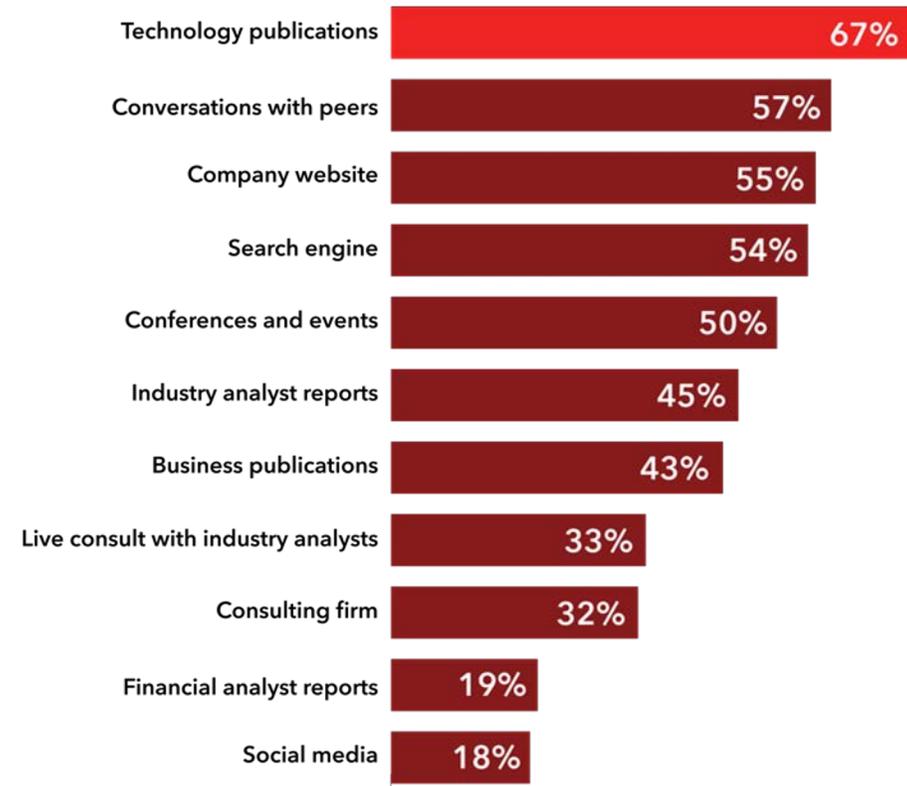


Whom do B2B tech buyers trust to shape their decisions?



Learning about innovation

*“When you’re looking for information about technology, what sources of information do you go to **first**?”*



Learning about innovation

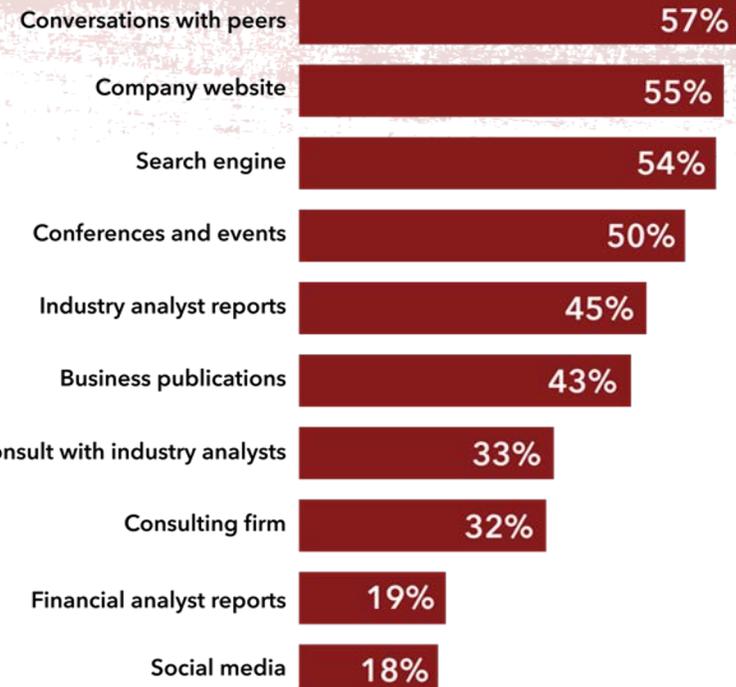
*“When you’re looking for information about technology, what sources of information do you go to **first**?”*

Technology publications

67%

Buyers go to tech pubs **first** for info about new tech, before going to peers, websites or search engines.

Vendors who drive thought leadership in tech pubs can **set the agenda** for their technology category.



Keeping current on innovations and issues

***“How frequently** do you access the following sources of information to stay educated on key issues and innovations in your sector?”*

Percent reporting **a few times per week or more often**



Buyers go to search engines and peers **most frequently** to keep current with innovation and industry issues.

Vendors who shape what they're **searching for** and **talking about** can gain a competitive edge.



Impacting business priorities

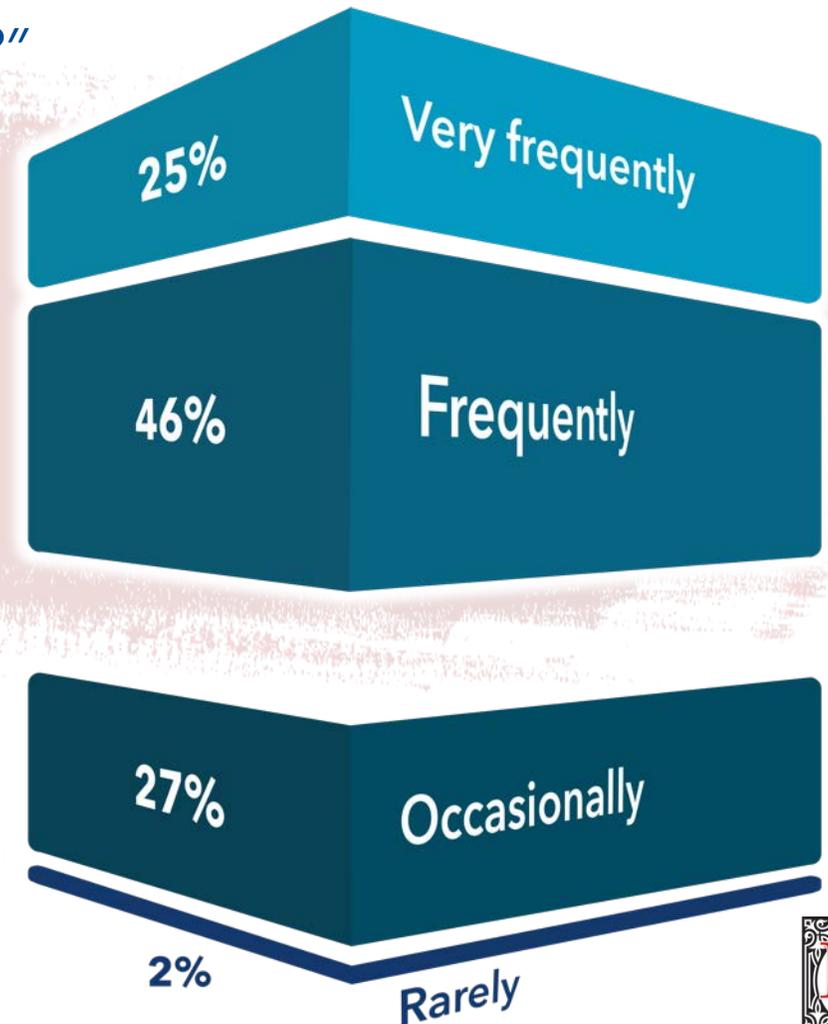
“How often does word-of-mouth from people like yourself impact how you set your business priorities?”

71%

said word-of-mouth will affect the categories of what kind of technology they buy, and what business priorities they spend money on

Buyers trust **advice from peers** to shape business priorities and budgets.

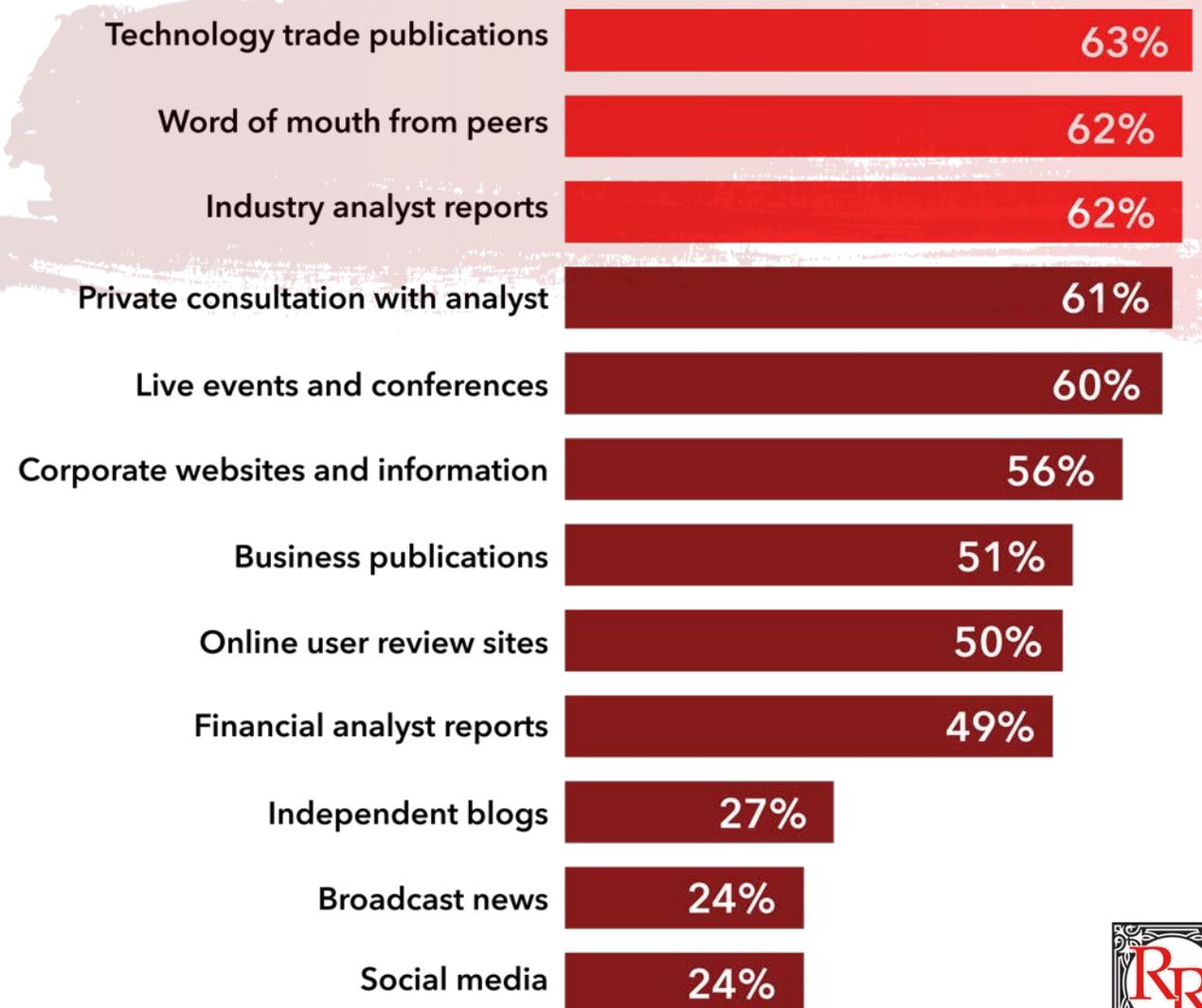
Vendors can shape RFPs and budgets by **engineering peer discussions.**



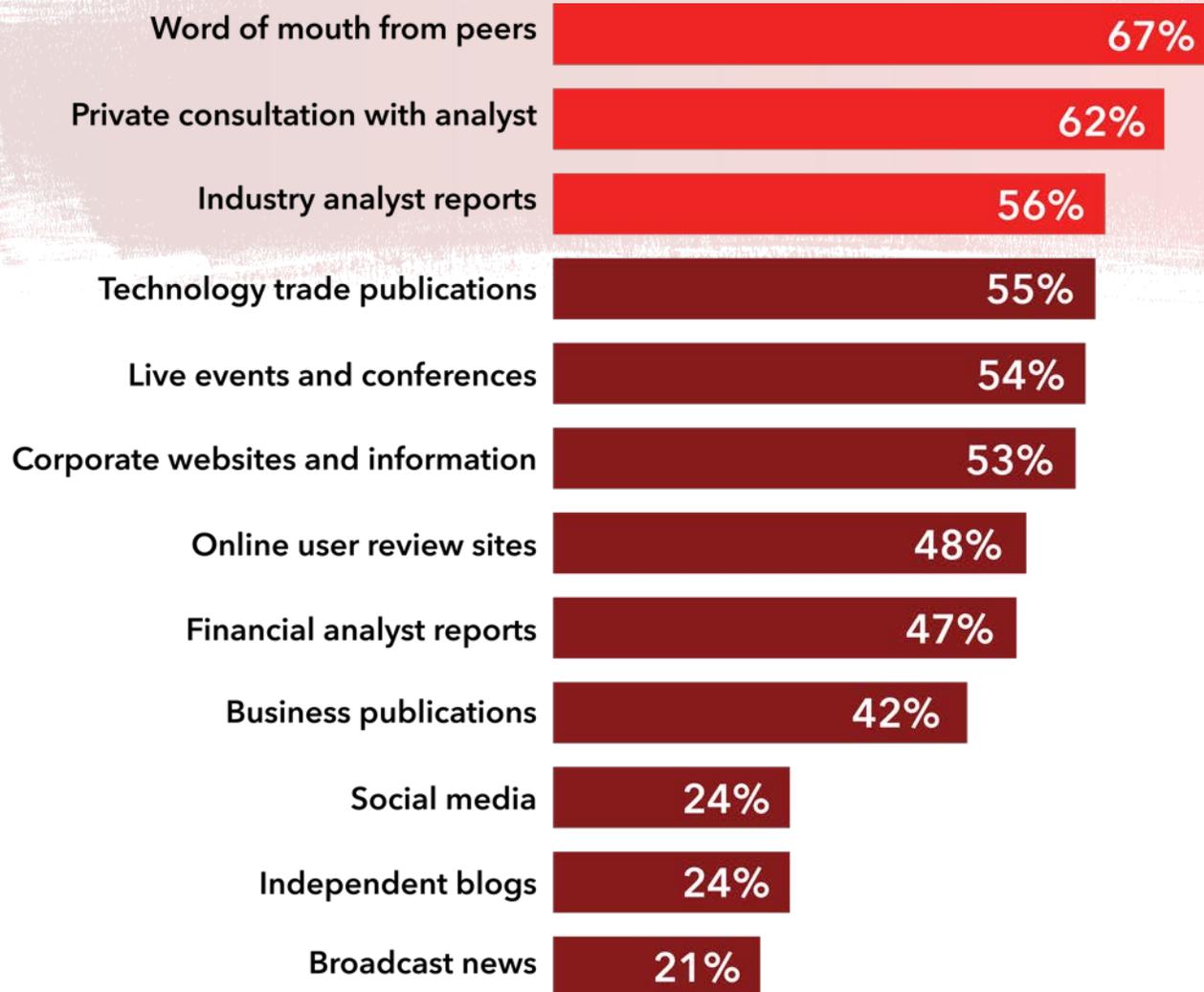
Getting into the RFP

*“When considering a large B2B purchase, how valuable do you find the following sources of information in determining which vendors you will include in a request for proposal (RFP) or product pitch?”
(Extremely/Very valuable)*

Tech pubs, peers and analysts are the most trusted sources for influencing **who’s invited to pitch.**



Winning the business



*“When considering a large B2B purchase, how valuable do you find the following sources of information in determining which vendors you will ultimately select?”
(Extremely/Very valuable)*

When it comes to **final decisions**, peers and analysts are the most trusted sources of information.

So ... how can vendors generate positive word-of-mouth?

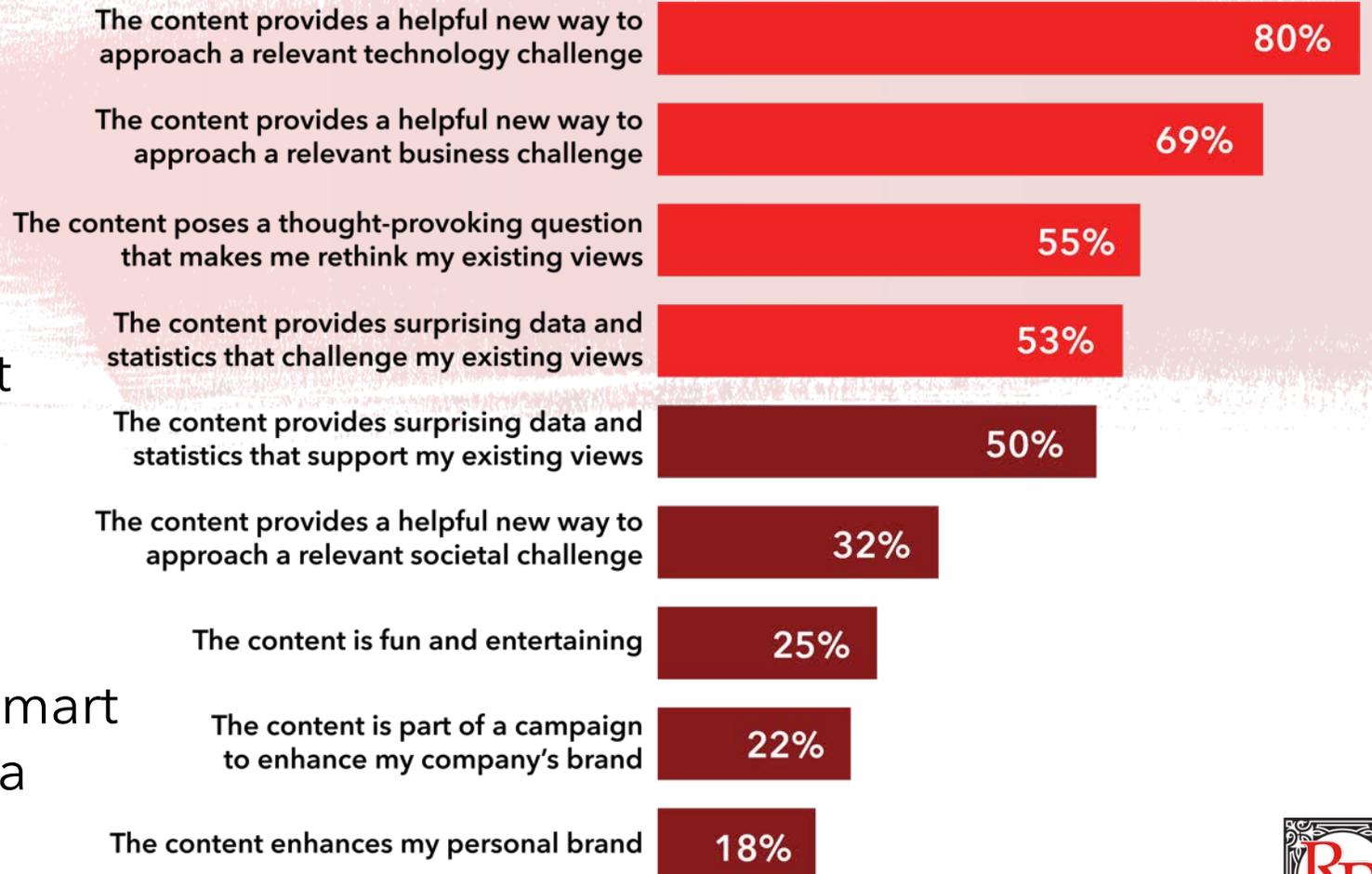


Generating word-of-mouth

“What motivates you to share relevant content with your peers?”

Buyers engage and share content with peers when it:

- **Provides new approaches** to tech or business challenges
- **Provokes new thinking** with smart questions and unexpected data



Shaping viral questions

Q What are some early lessons learned in enterprise AI?

SEARCH

Q What are the mistakes to avoid in human-machine interface?

SEARCH

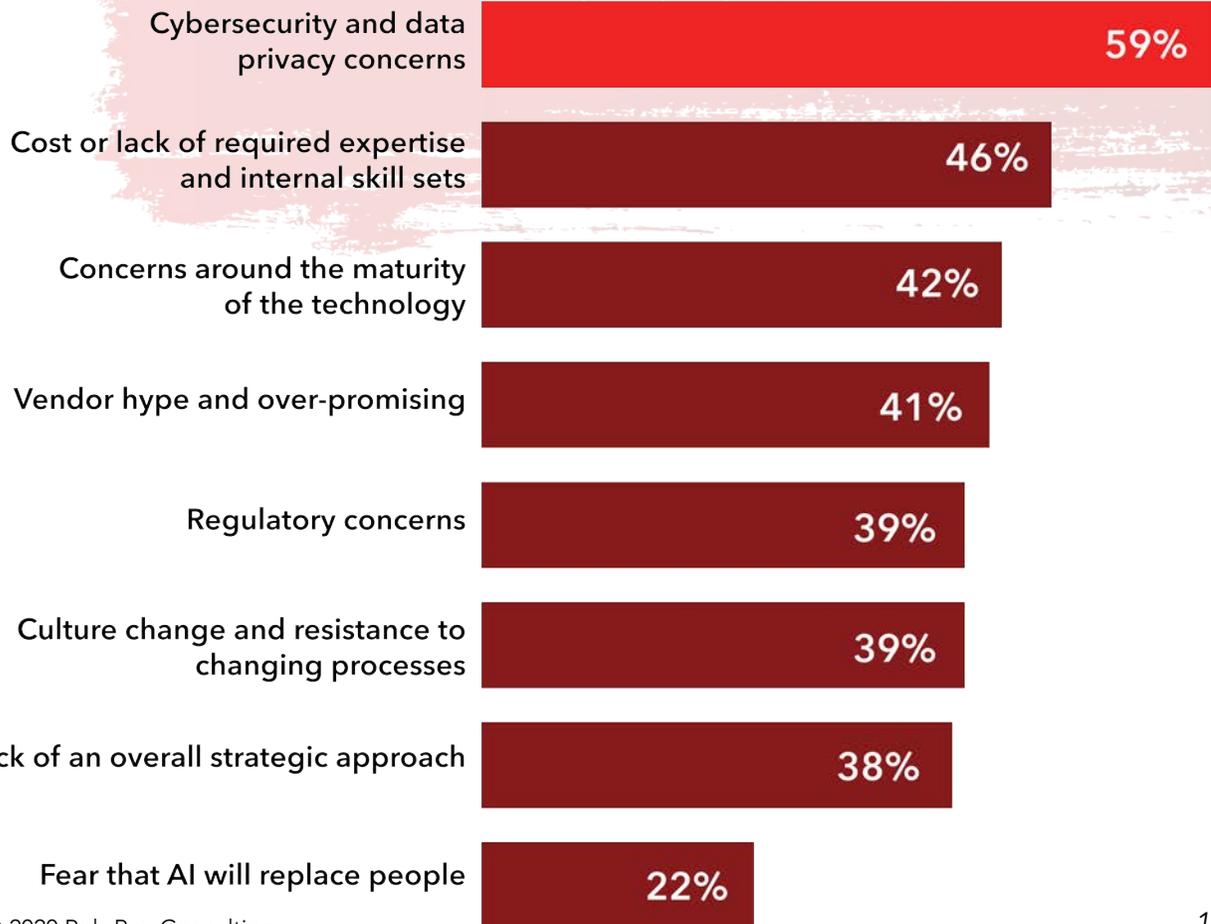


Other considerations



Innovation risk

"To what extent are each of the following a barrier to adopting AI solutions?"
(Extremely big/Big barrier)



Biggest concern is "I don't know the new rules about all this data."

Customers **don't trust themselves** to generate results with AI.

Uncertainty around regulations, skill sets and vendor hype get in the way.

Fear of AI replacing people is the **least** of their concerns.



Environmental reputation risk

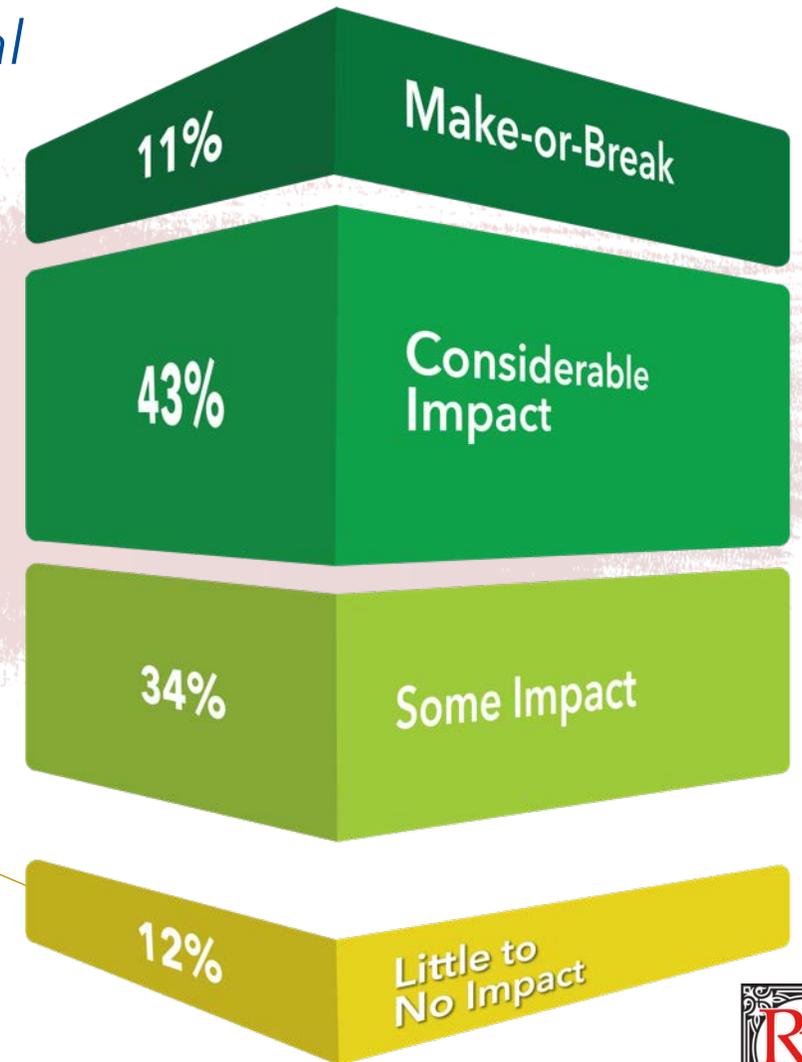
“How much do your technology vendor’s environmental sustainability practices impact your final decision to purchase a solution from them?”

88% say that environmental reputation has an impact

11% say that it’s a deal-breaker

Only **12%** say it has no impact

Vendors **cannot** afford to discount environmental reputation as a factor.

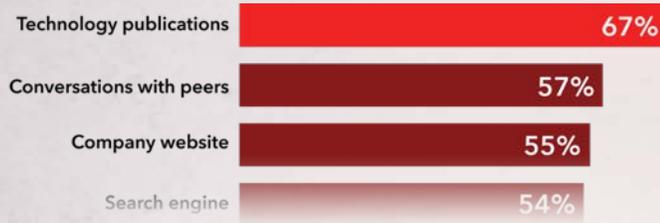


So where does trust impact
B2B tech purchasing?



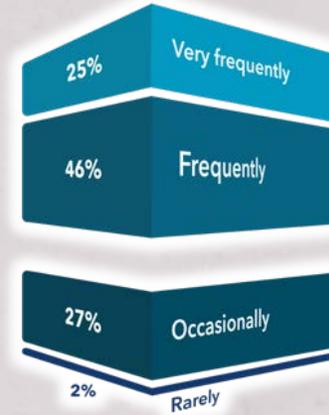
1. Whom do I trust to keep me current on new innovations? Technology publications.

"When you're looking for information about technology, what sources of information do you go to first?"



2. Whom do I trust to guide how I set my business priorities? My peers.

"How often does word-of-mouth your peers impact your business priorities?"



3. Who influences which vendors I invite to pitch? Tech pubs, analysts & peers.

"How valuable do you find the following sources of information in determining which vendors you will include in a product pitch?"



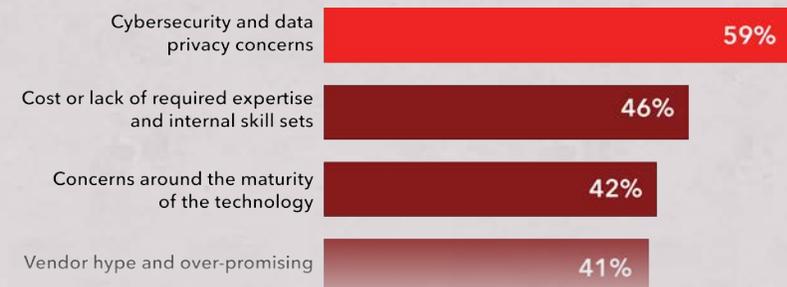
4. Who influences my final purchase decision? Peers first, then analysts & tech pubs.

"When considering a large B2B purchase, how valuable do you find the following sources of information?"



5. What keeps me from trusting and using new innovations, like AI? Not knowing what I'm allowed to do with it.

"To what extent are each of the following a barrier to adopting AI solutions?"



The Traditional Trust Equation

The old trust model remains useful, but was grounded in self-oriented considerations of “What am I doing, what value am I providing, and what am I innovating?”

$$\text{Trust} = \left(\begin{array}{l} \text{Credibility} + \\ \text{Reliability} + \\ \text{Intimacy} \end{array} \right) \div \text{Self-Orientation}$$



The **Emerging** Trust Equation

The emerging trust model is more inclusive and focuses on **other**-oriented considerations of “How are **we** connecting, what are **we** learning, and what are we **co-creating**?”

$$\text{Trust} = \left(\begin{array}{l} \text{Curiosity} + \\ \text{Integrity} + \\ \text{Empathy} \end{array} \right) \div \text{Fear of Failure}$$



Recommendations and reflections

1. Be transparent

*What mistakes made and lessons learned could **you** talk about to earn trust?*

2. Be the voice of reason

*Which industry myths and overhyped promises could **you** challenge?*

3. Engage in inclusive innovation

*How could **you** move from selling products to co-creating trusted solutions?*

4. Pose viral questions

Which discussions would generate word of mouth, shape RFPs, and shift budgets?

5. Rethink marketing channels as conduits of trust

*Where is a lack of trust creating friction in **your** business? Which channels could help most?*

6. Turn honesty into a competitive advantage

*What are the unspoken truths of **your** industry, and which ones are most useful to address?*



Methodology



Population

An initial study was piloted in 2012 with a second wave conducted in 2015. The most recent survey was fielded by **Cambia Information Group** in the U.S. September 26 – October 9, 2019.

A total of 500 US B2B technology decision-makers were surveyed.

For the purposes of this study, B2B technology decision-makers were defined as those who are:

1. **Solely responsible** or with **final-decision making authority** over technology purchases for their company, or
2. The **head of the team** responsible for making these decisions, or
3. A **member of the team** responsible for making these decisions.

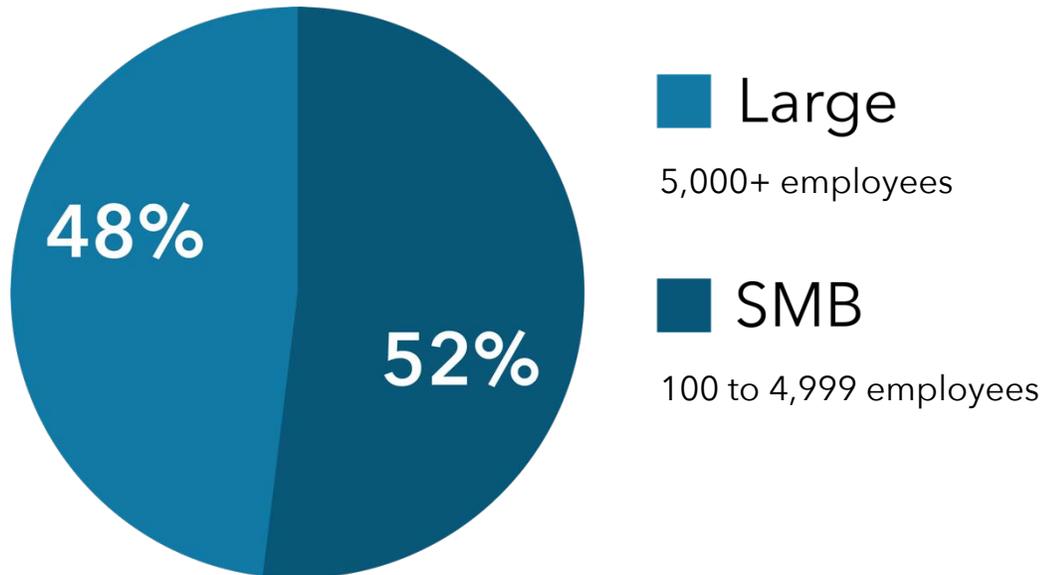
Additionally, respondents were required to work in companies with 100+ employees and an annual IT budget of \$50,000+.



Segments

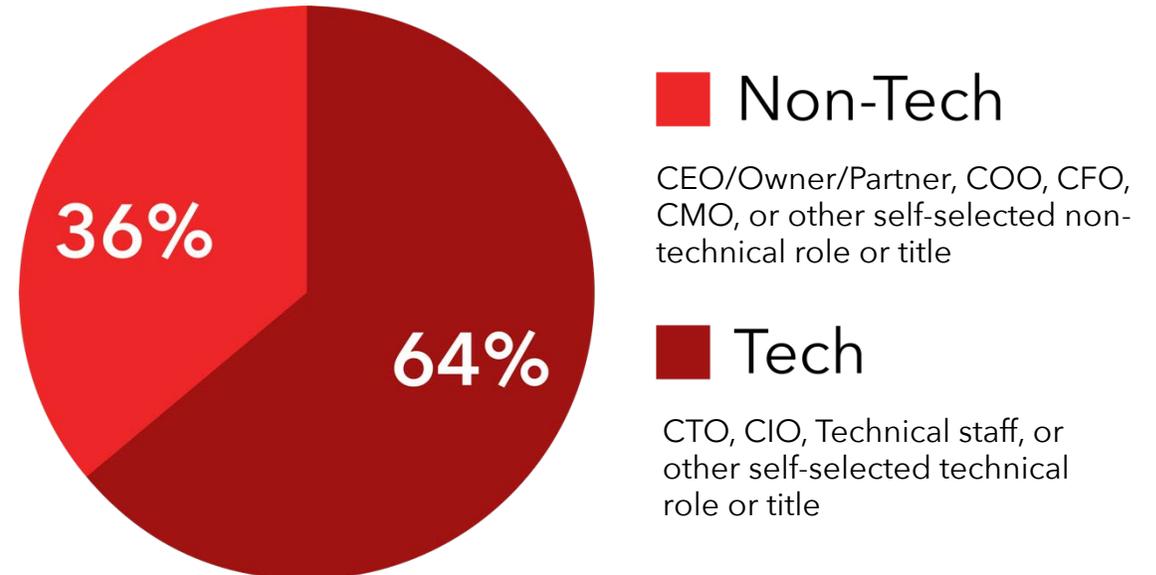
Two audience sub-groups are highlighted in this report:

Company Size



IT Professionals

(based on title)



N=500

We talked to people of all backgrounds in the technology field, not just tech-specific roles



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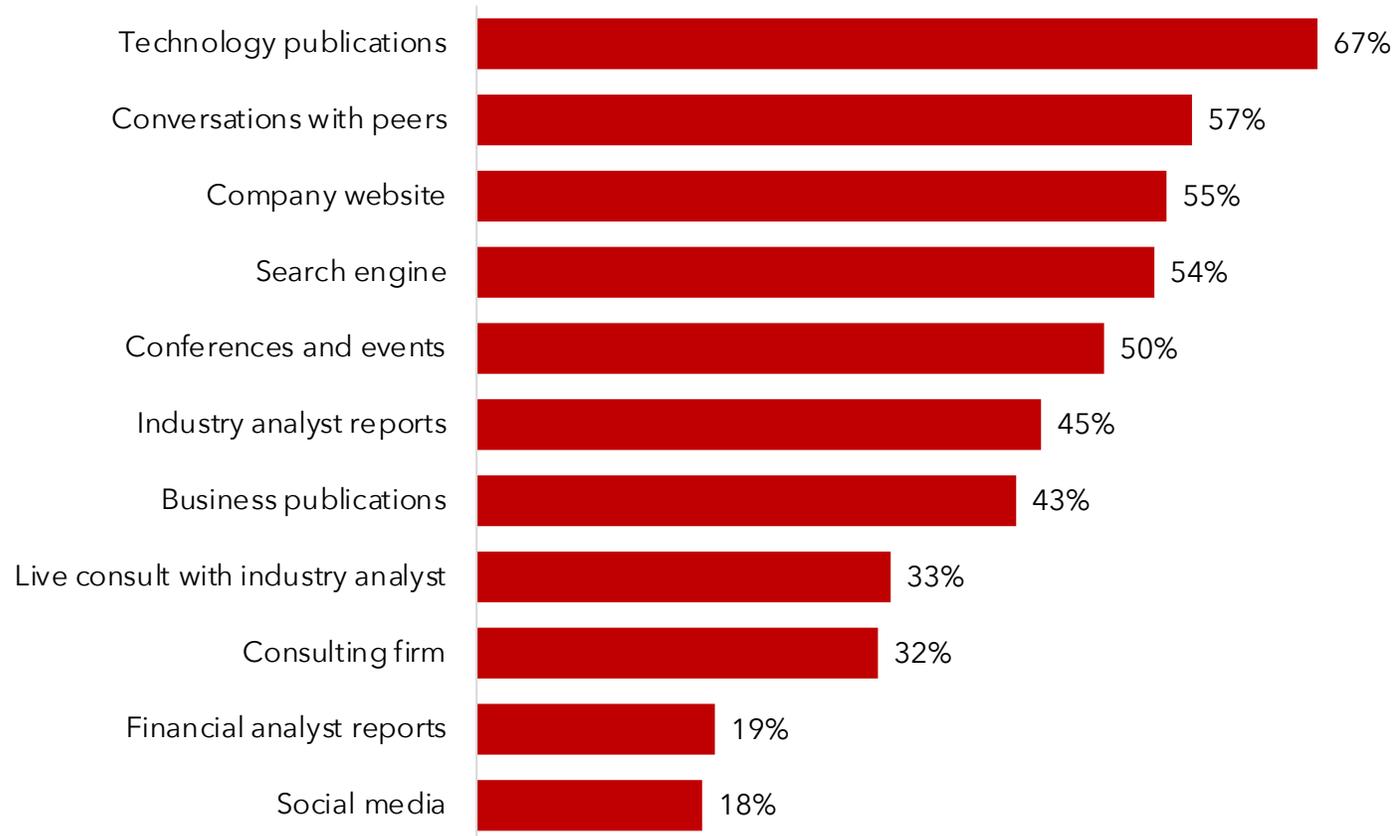
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Appendix: Data Breakouts



Information access

When you're looking for information about technology, what sources of information do you go to first? (Select all.)



Total (n=500)

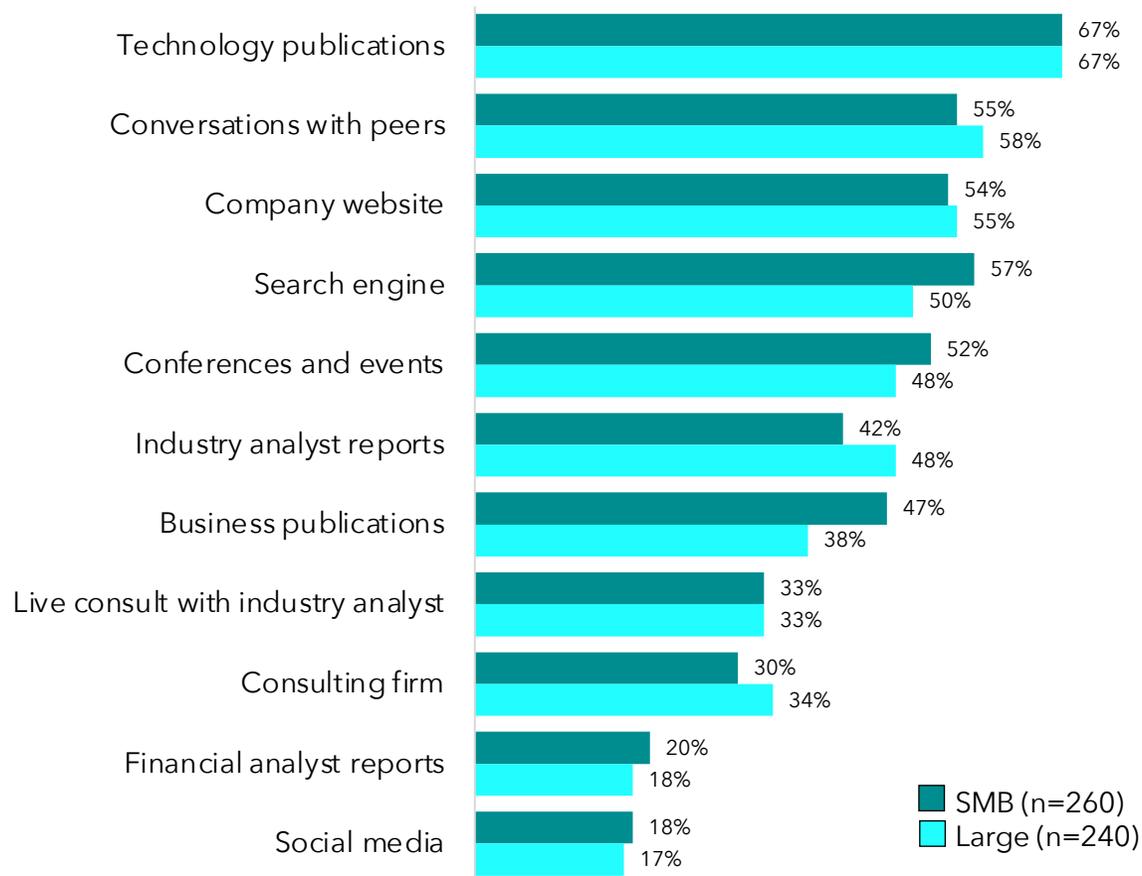
- Most respondents consult multiple sources of information when looking for information about technology.
- Two-thirds consult tech publications, while over half rely on discussions with peers, company websites, and online search engines.



Information access by company size

When you're looking for information about technology, what sources of information do you go to first? (Select all.)

Ranked by Total



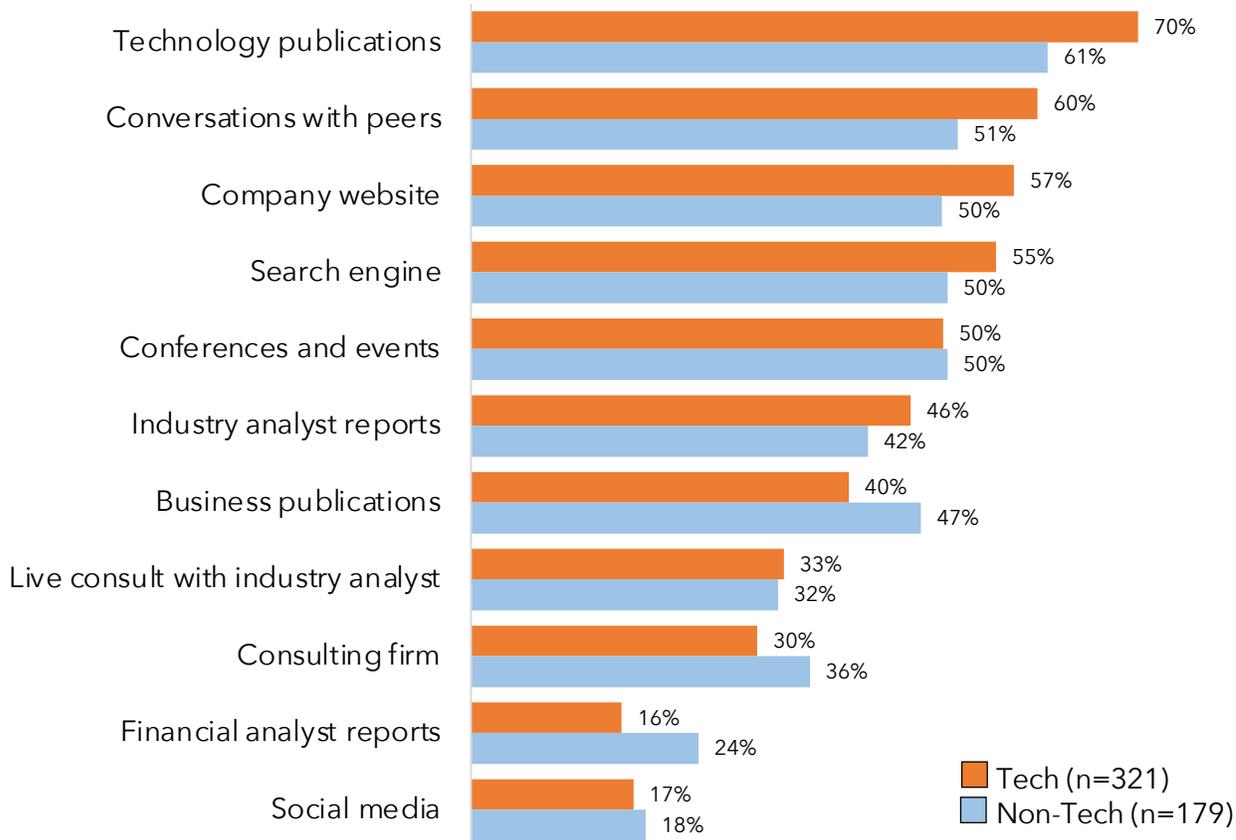
- Small/medium and large businesses are mostly similar on the information sources used, with technology publications being the most commonly utilized.
- Small/medium businesses are more likely than large to use online search engines and business publications, while large businesses are more likely than small/medium to use industry analyst reports.



Information access by professional type

When you're looking for information about technology, what sources of information do you go to first? (Select all.)

Ranked by Total



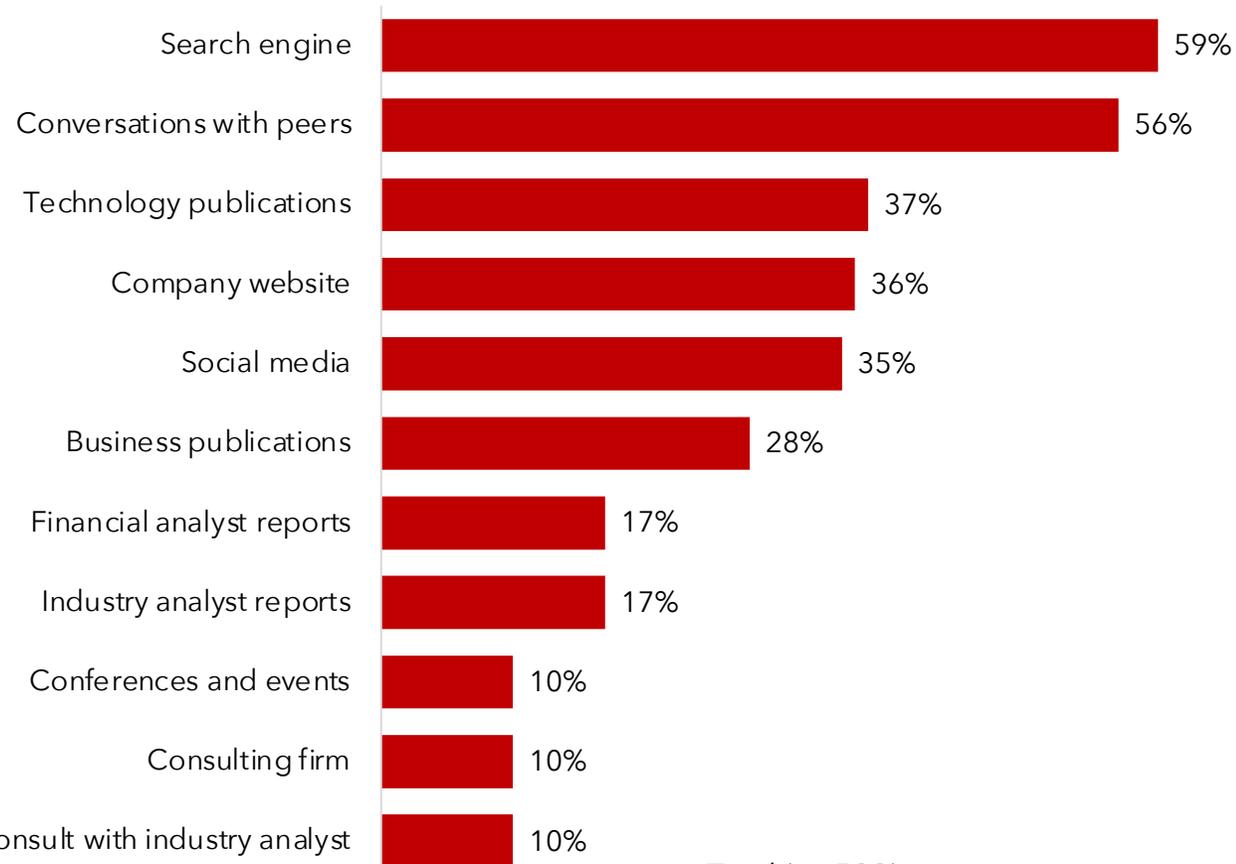
- Both tech and non-tech professionals use technology publications as their main source of information, although tech professionals are even more likely than non-tech professionals to use this source.
- Tech professionals are also more likely to rely on conversations with peers, websites, and search engines than non-tech, while non-tech professionals are more likely than tech to use business publications, consulting firms and financial analyst reports.



Frequency of access

How **frequently** do you access the following sources of information to stay educated on key issues and innovations in your sector?

Percent reporting a few times per week or more often



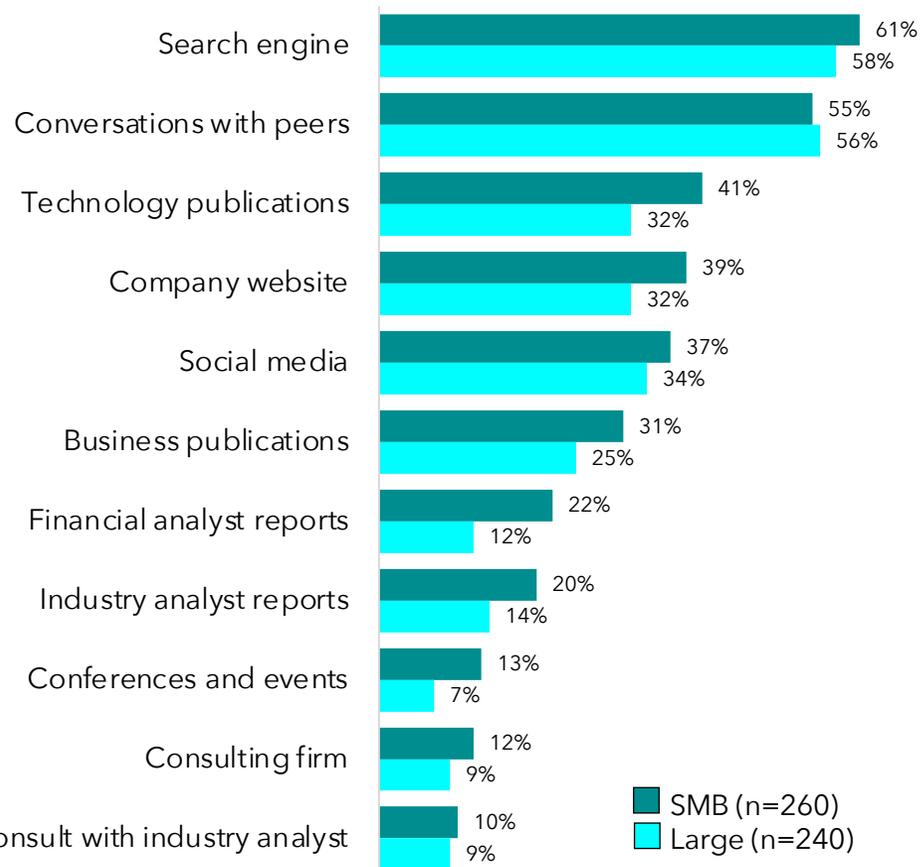
- Over half of respondents say they use a search engine or talk with their peers a few times a week or more to stay educated on key issues and innovations in their sector.



Frequency of access by company size

How **frequently** do you access the following sources of information to stay educated on key issues and innovations in your sector?

Percent reporting a **few times per week or more often**
Ranked by Total



- Small/medium and large business respondents are similar in frequency of using search engines and conversations with peers to stay informed.
- Small/medium businesses are more likely to say they frequently use all other sources listed.

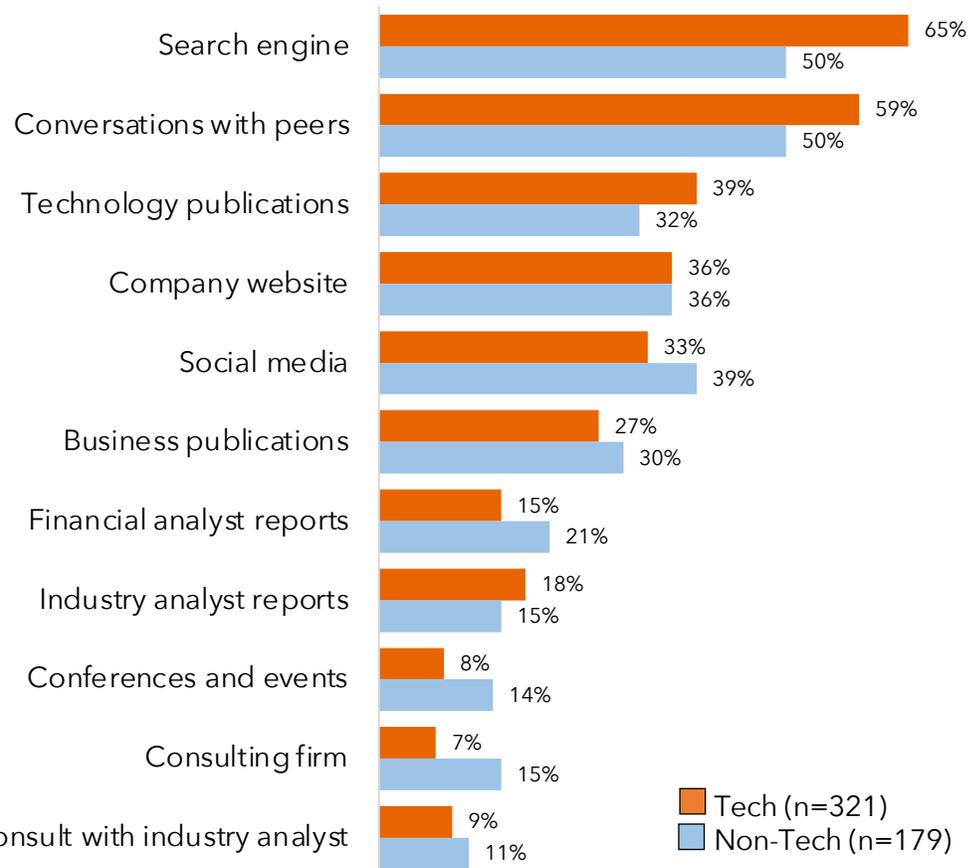


Frequency of access by professional type

How **frequently** do you access the following sources of information to stay educated on key issues and innovations in your sector?

Percent reporting a **few times per week or more often**

Ranked by Total

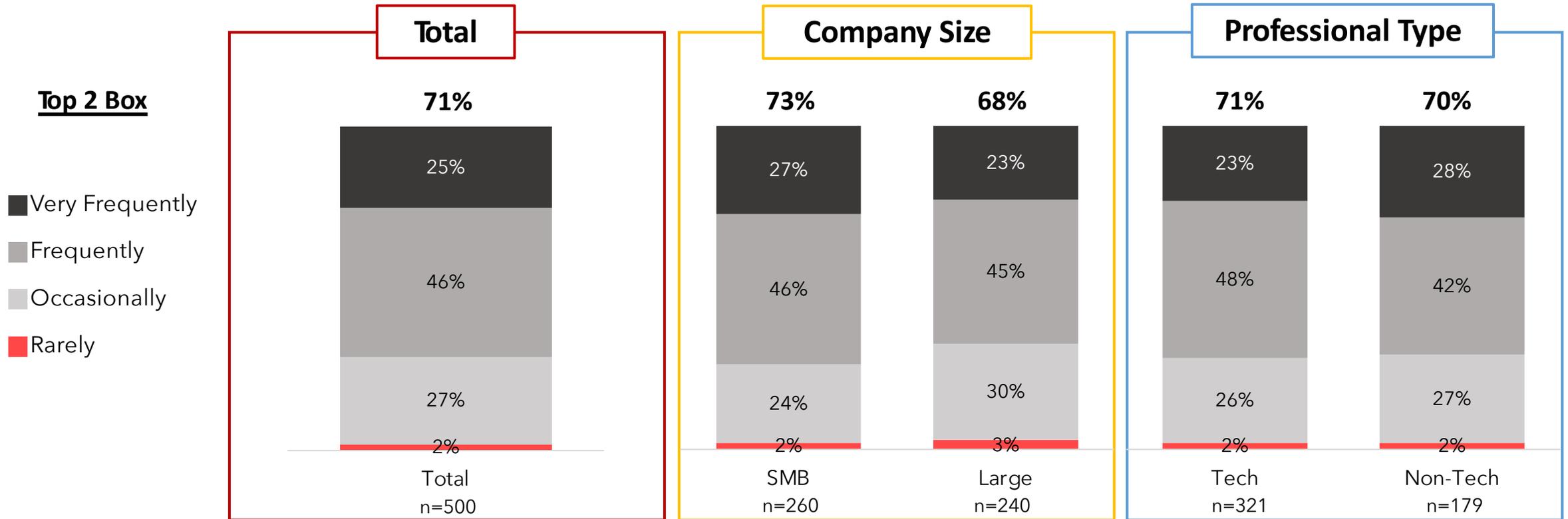


- Half or more of tech and non-tech professionals report frequently using search engines and conversations with peers to stay informed.
- Tech professionals are more frequently using tech publications and industry analyst reports than non-tech professionals.



Word of mouth

How often does word-of-mouth from people like yourself impact how you set your business priorities?



- More than two-thirds of respondents from both large and small/medium companies and either professional type say word of mouth from their peers frequently impacts how they set business priorities.



Reasons for sharing relevant content

What motivates you to share relevant content with your peers? (Select all.)



- Respondents are most likely to share relevant content with their peers if it provides a helpful new way to approach a relevant technology (80%), or business (69%) challenge.
- Over half are motivated to share content that poses a thought-provoking question or surprising data that challenges existing views.

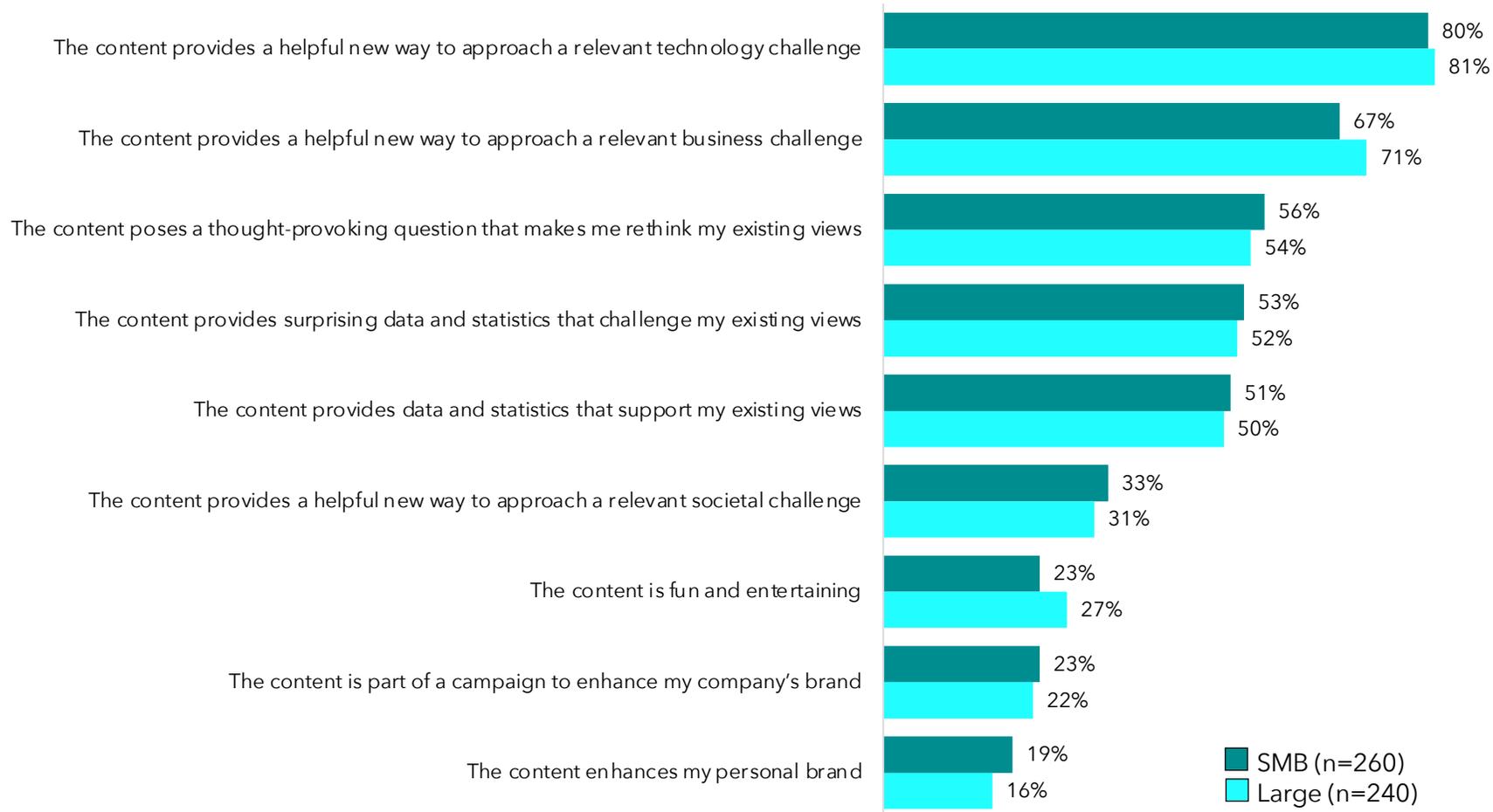
Total (n=500)



Reasons for sharing relevant content by company size

What motivates you to share relevant content with your peers? (Select all.)

Ranked by Total



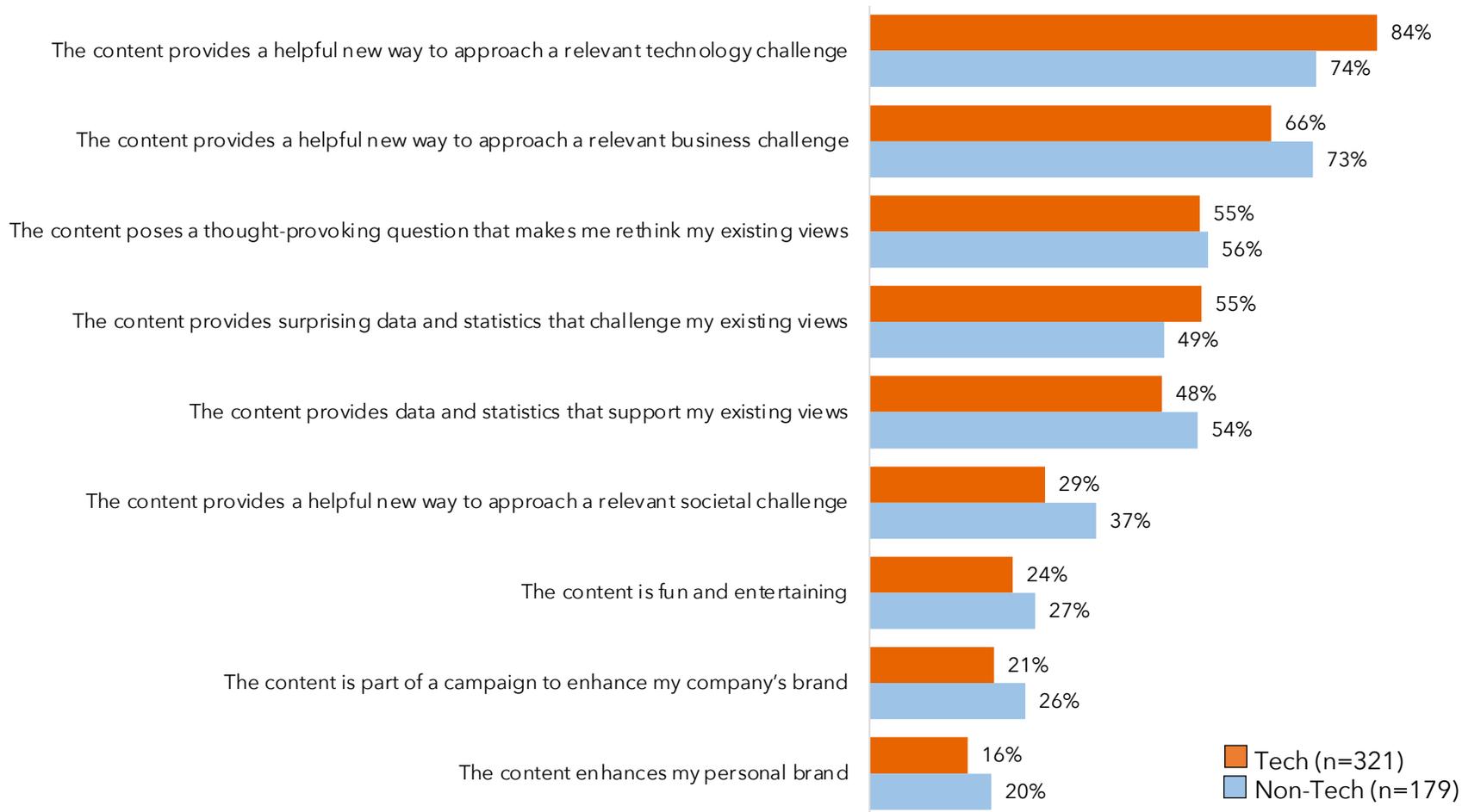
- Respondents from small/medium and large companies are similarly motivated to share content with their peers.
- Large business respondents are slightly more motivated to share new ways to approach a business challenge or content that is fun and entertaining.



Reasons for sharing relevant content by professional type

What motivates you to share relevant content with your peers? (Select all.)

Ranked by Total

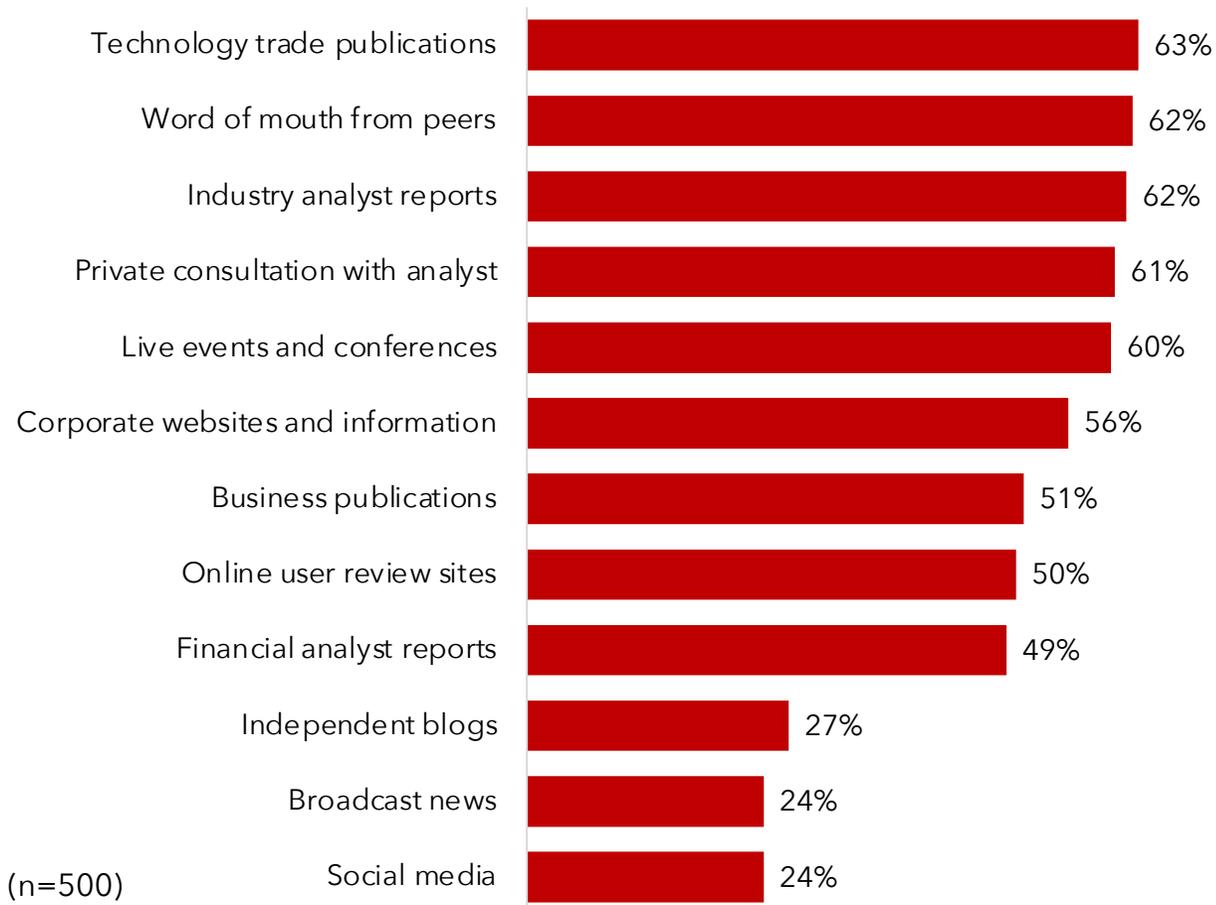


- Both non-tech and tech professionals are most motivated to share a new way to approach a technology or business challenge. Not surprisingly, tech professionals are more likely to share approaches to technology challenges while non-tech are more likely to share approaches to business challenges.
- Non-tech are also more likely to share content with data and statistics to support existing views, a new approach to a relevant societal challenge, content that is fun and entertaining, content that enhances their company's brand or own personal brand.



Sources of information for vendors in RFP

When considering a large business-to-business purchase, how valuable do you find the following sources of information in determining which vendors you will **include in a request for proposal (RFP) or product pitch?**
(Extremely/Very valuable)



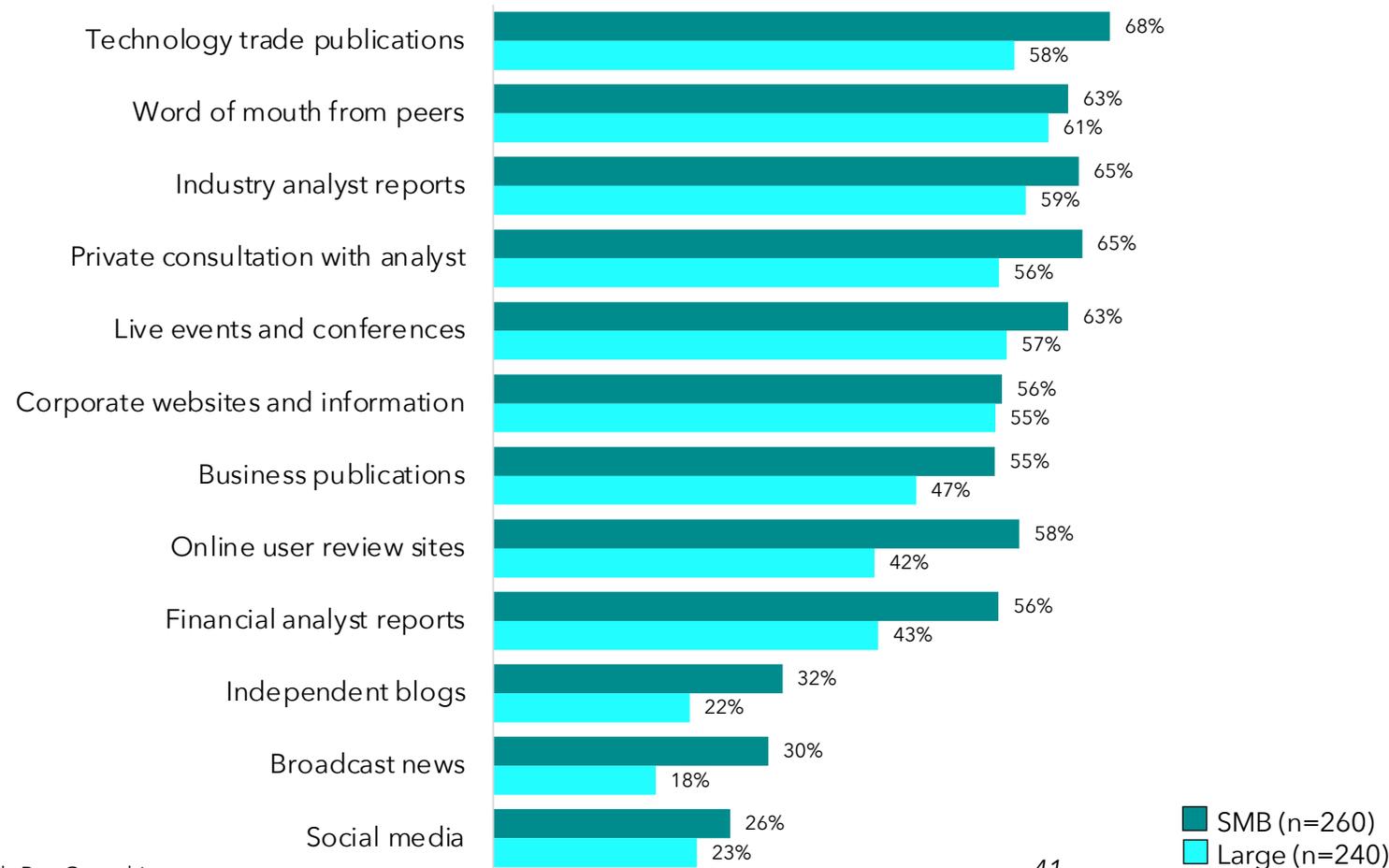
- Roughly half or more of respondents said the majority of sources measured very or extremely valuable in determining who to include in an RFP or product pitch.
- Blogs, broadcast news and social media are the least valuable.

Total (n=500)



Sources of information for vendors in RFP by company size

When considering a large business-to-business purchase, how valuable do you find the following sources of information in determining which vendors you will **include in a request for proposal (RFP) or product pitch?**
 (Extremely/Very valuable – Ranked by Total)



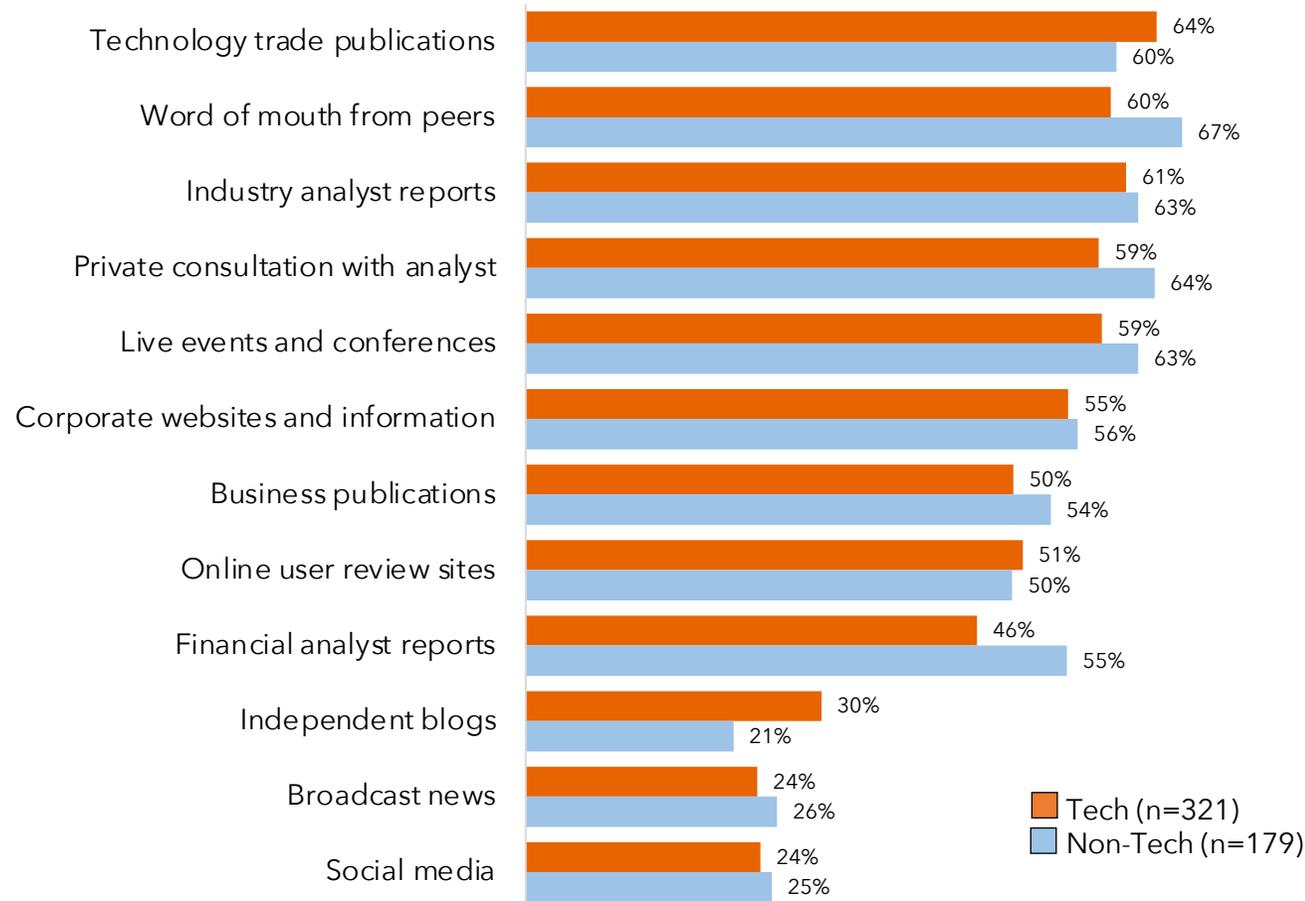
- Small/medium and large business respondents similarly value most information sources.
- Small/medium business respondents are more likely than large business respondents to value all sources of information, but most notably technology pubs, online user review sites and financial analyst reports.



Sources of information for vendors in RFP by professional type

When considering a large business-to-business purchase, how valuable do you find the following sources of information in determining which vendors you will **include in a request for proposal (RFP) or product pitch?**

(Extremely/Very valuable – Ranked by Total)

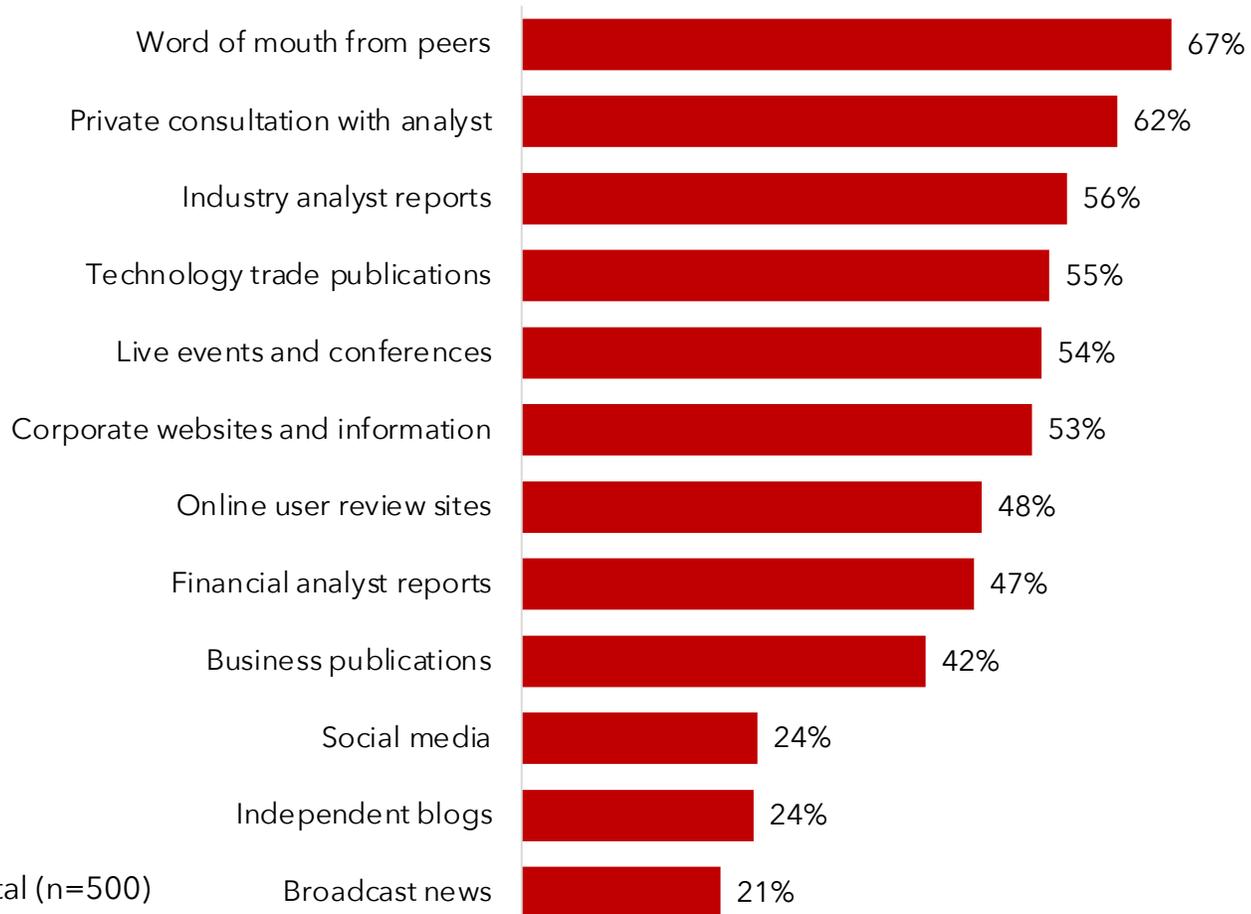


- Non-tech respondents tend to view many of the information sources as more valuable than tech respondents, especially word of mouth and financial analyst reports.
- Tech respondents, as expected, value technology trade publications more than non-tech respondents.



Sources of information for vendor selection

When considering a large business-to-business purchase, how valuable do you find the following sources of information in determining which vendors you will **ultimately select**?
(Extremely/Very valuable)



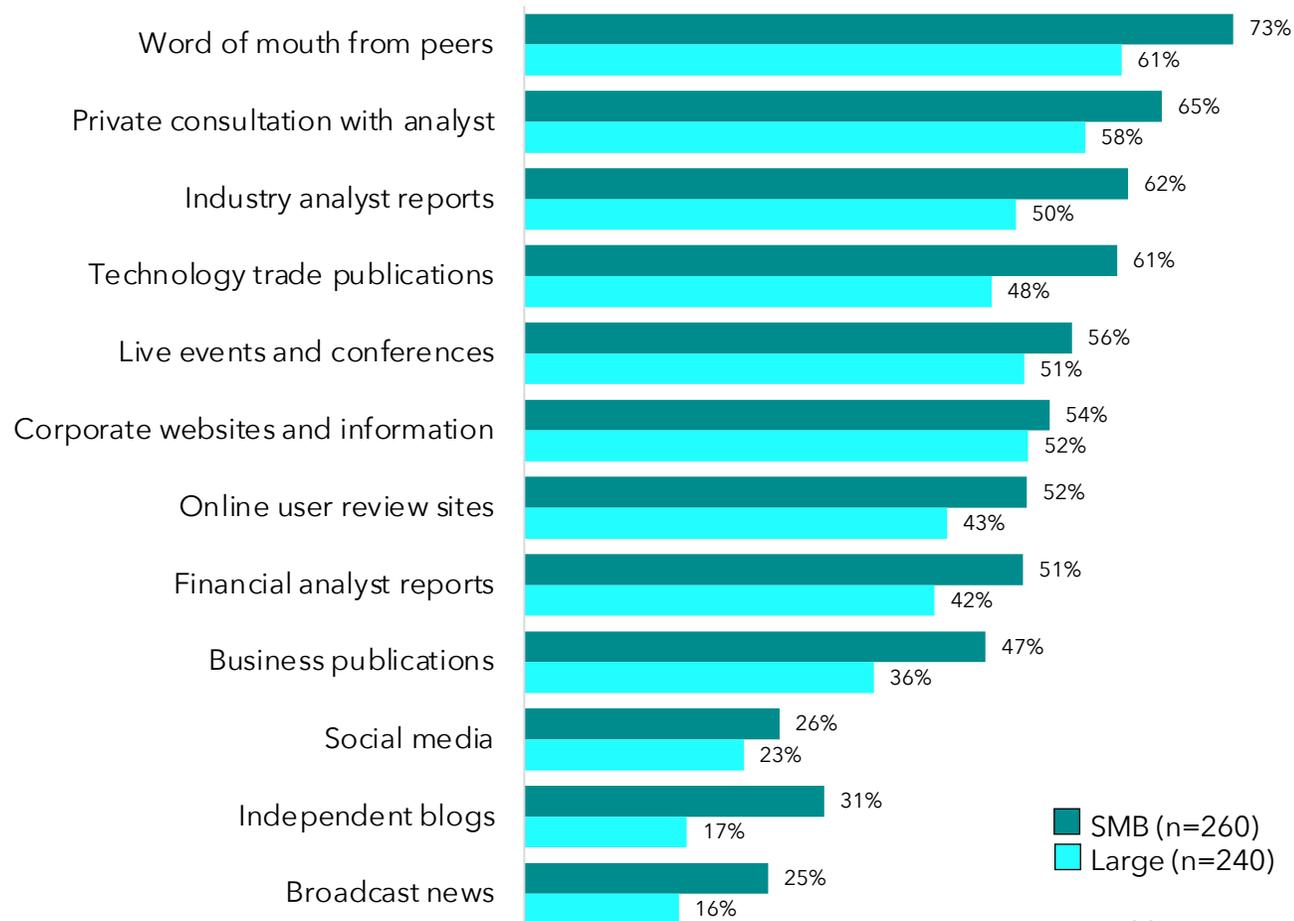
- While multiple information sources are valuable in determining which vendors are ultimately selected, word of mouth is the most valuable followed by a private consultation with an analyst.
- Once again, social media, blogs and broadcast news are considered the least valuable.

Total (n=500)



Sources of information for vendor selection by company size

When considering a large business-to-business purchase, how valuable do you find the following sources of information in determining which vendors you will **ultimately select**?
(Extremely/Very valuable – Ranked by Total)

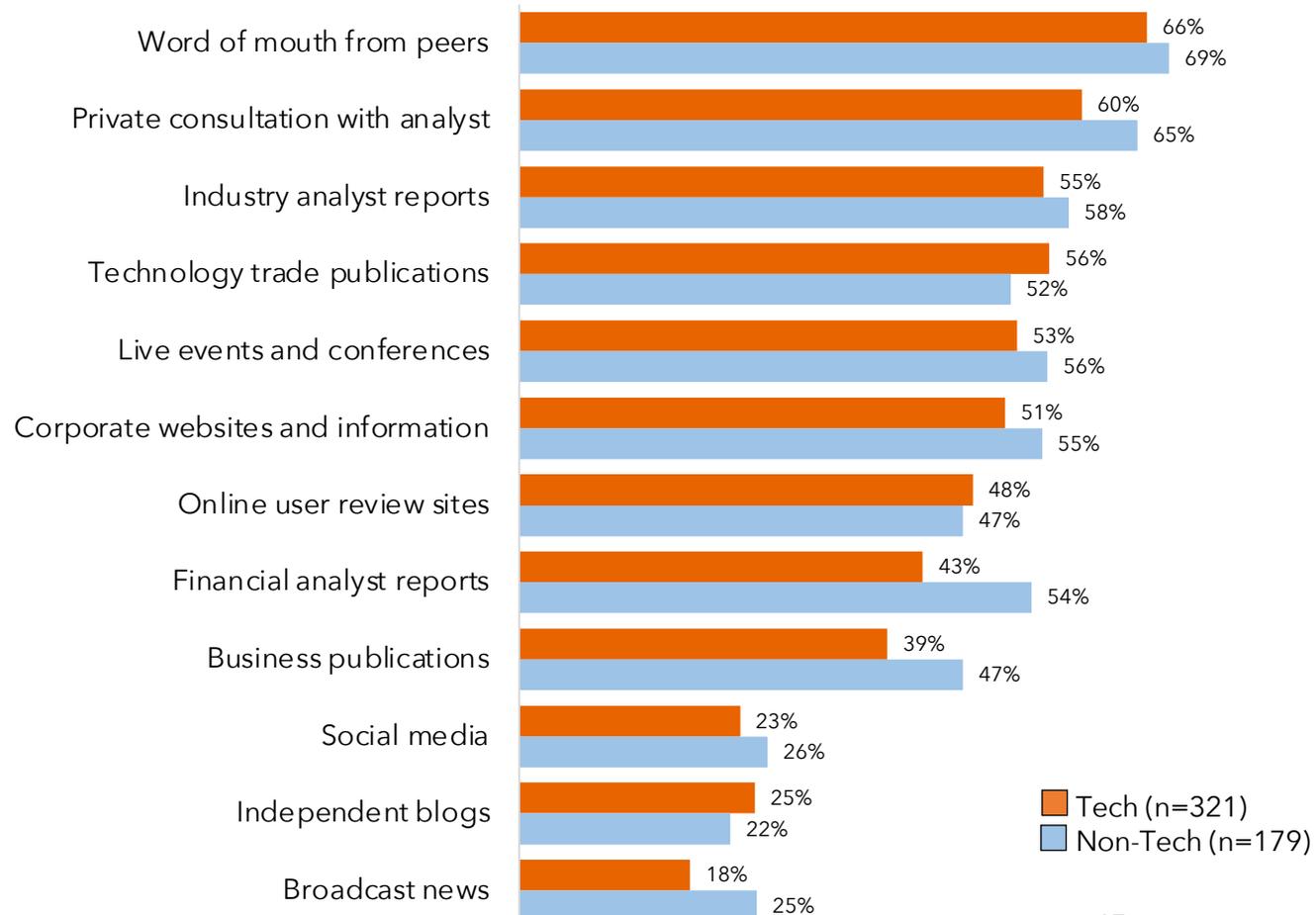


- Small/medium business respondents and large business respondents agree that word of mouth from peers is the most valuable information source when determining which vendors to ultimately select.
- SMB respondents are more likely than large business respondents to value all sources, especially word of mouth, industry analyst reports, and technology and business pubs.



Sources of information for vendor selection by professional type

When considering a large business-to-business purchase, how valuable do you find the following sources of information in determining which vendors you will **ultimately select**?
(Extremely/Very valuable – Ranked by Total)

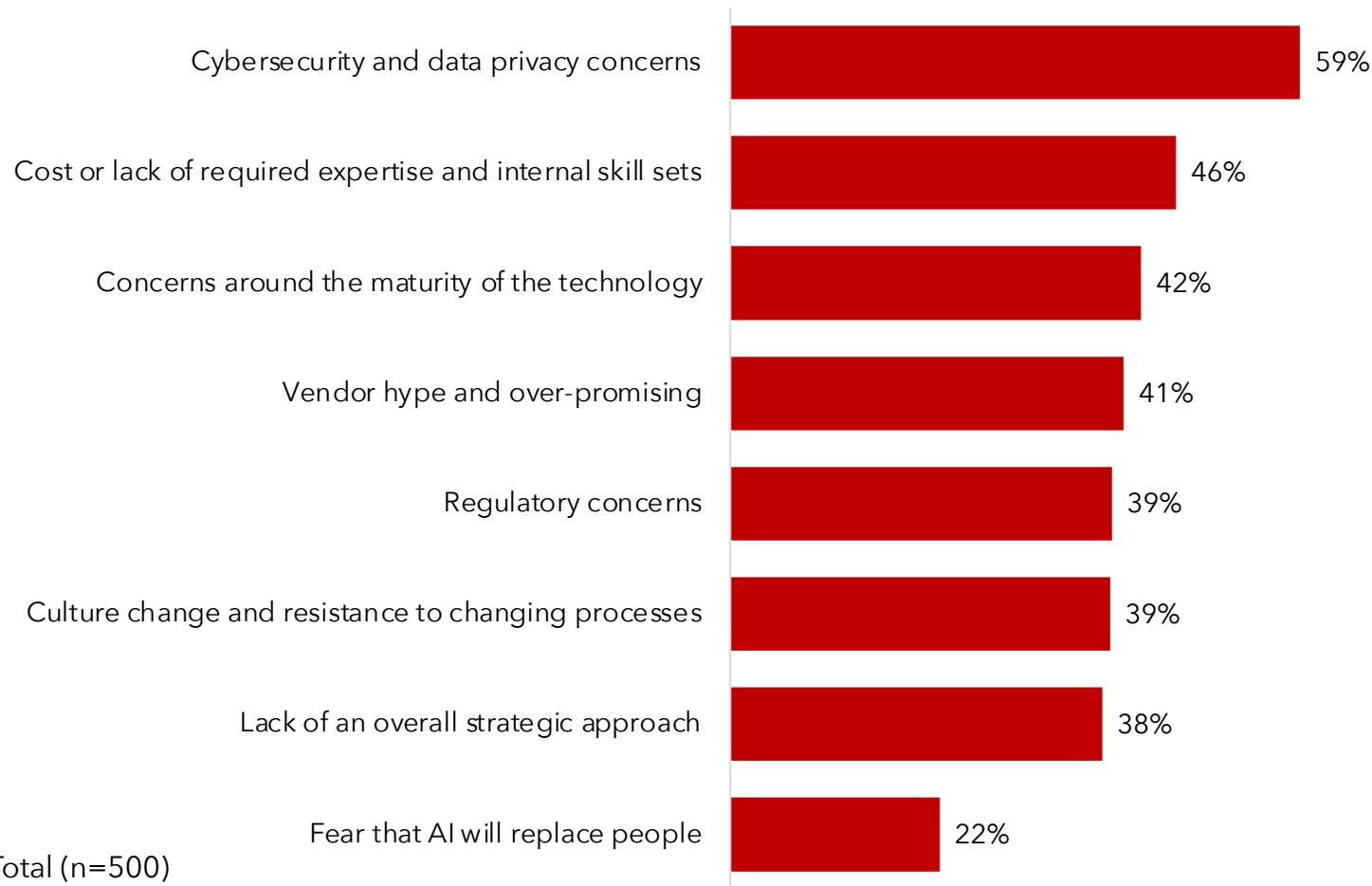


- While tech and non-tech respondents provide a somewhat similar ranking of sources used for vendor selection, non-tech consider financial analyst reports and business publications to be considerably more valuable.



Barriers to AI adoption

Using the scale below, to what extent are each of the following a barrier to adopting AI solutions?
(Extremely big/Big of a barrier)



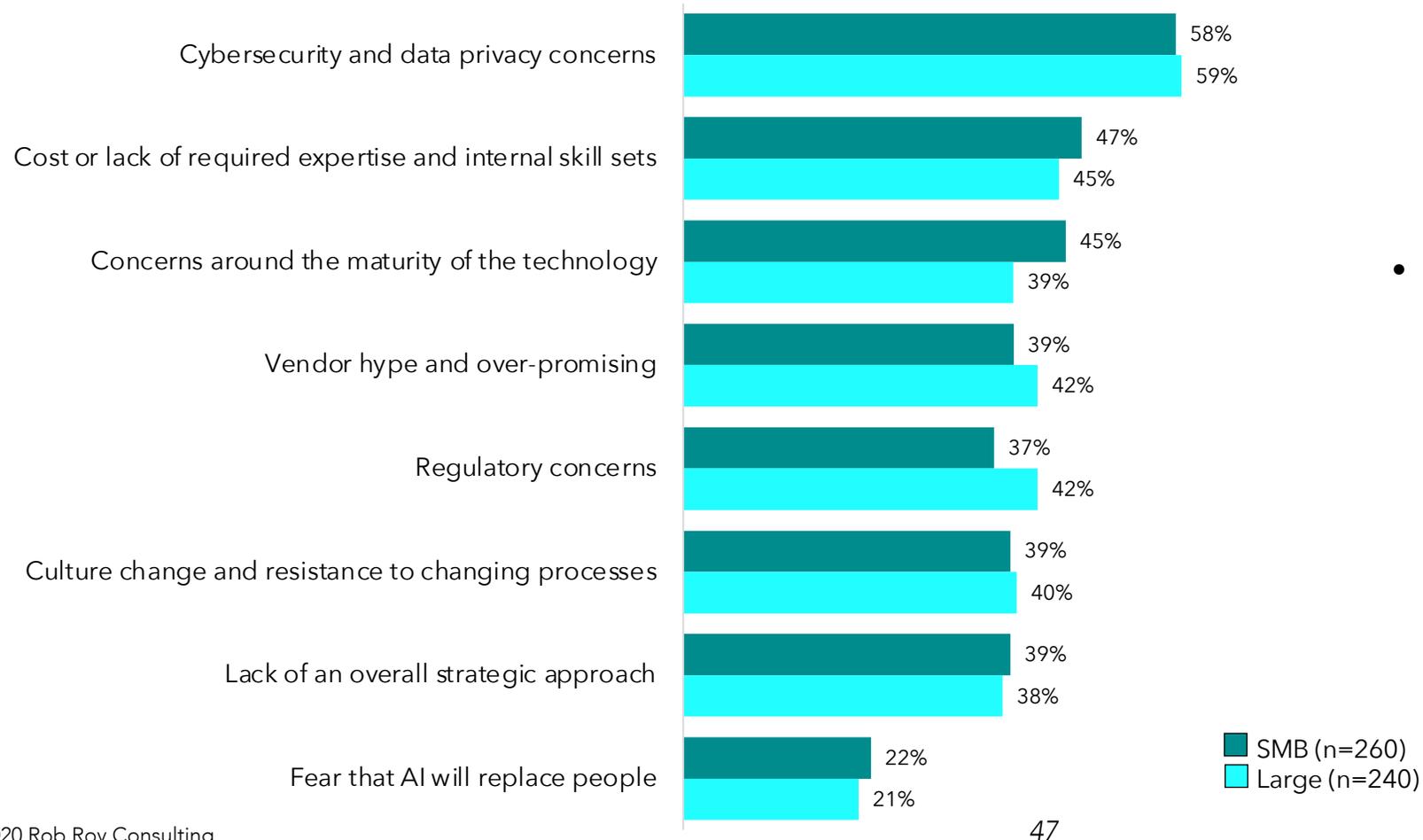
- Cybersecurity is the biggest barrier to AI adoption.
- Fear that AI will replace people is of minimal concern.

Total (n=500)



Barriers to AI adoption by company size

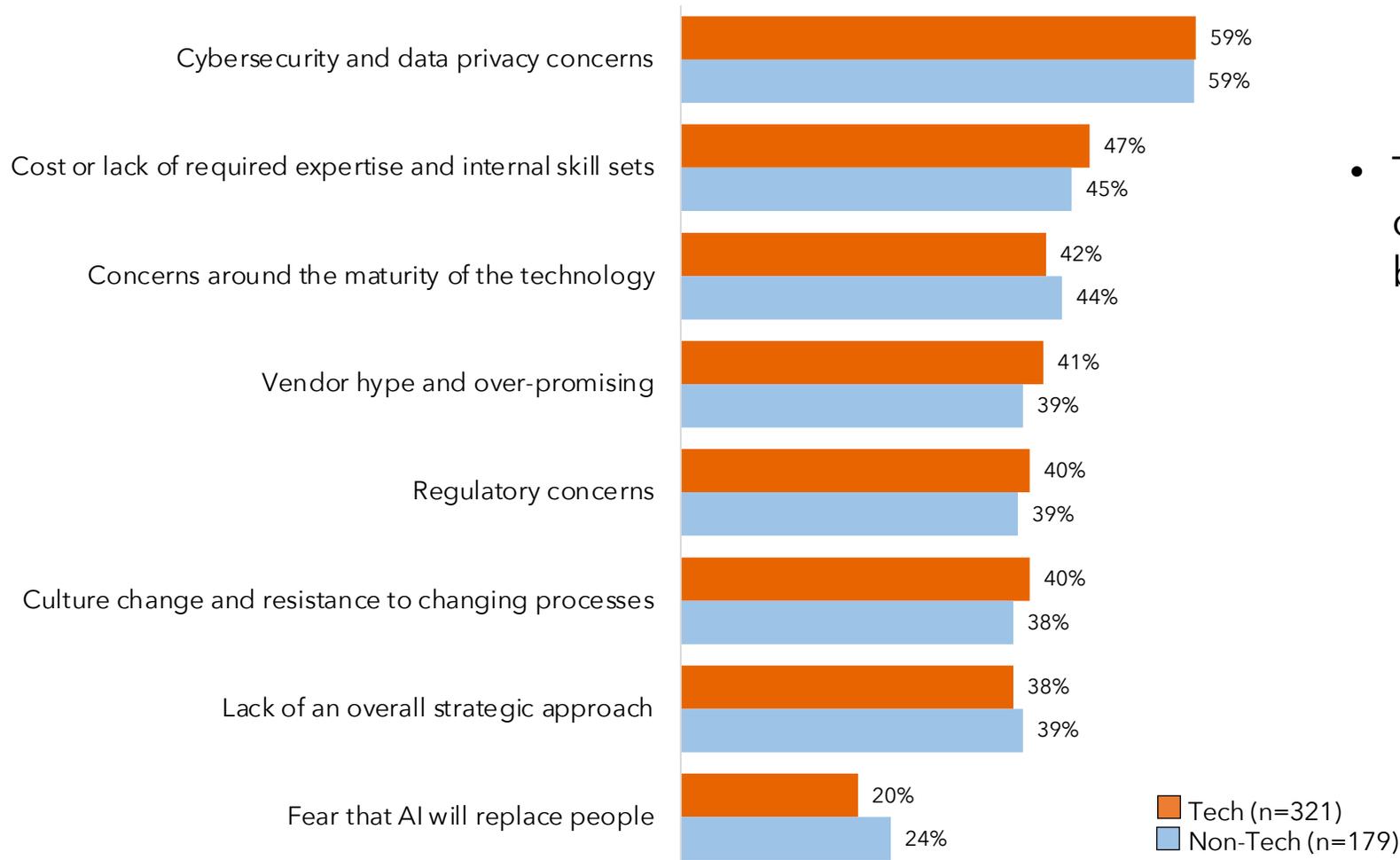
Using the scale below, to what extent are each of the following a barrier to adopting AI solutions?
(Extremely big/Big of a barrier – Ranked by Total)



- Small/medium and large business respondents share similar views on the top barriers to AI adoption - cybersecurity and data privacy concerns.
- Relative to large businesses, SMB tend to consider maturity of the technology more of a barrier while large businesses are more likely to see regulatory concerns as a barrier.

Barriers to AI adoption by professional type

Using the scale below, to what extent are each of the following a barrier to adopting AI solutions?
(Extremely big/Big of a barrier – Ranked by Total)

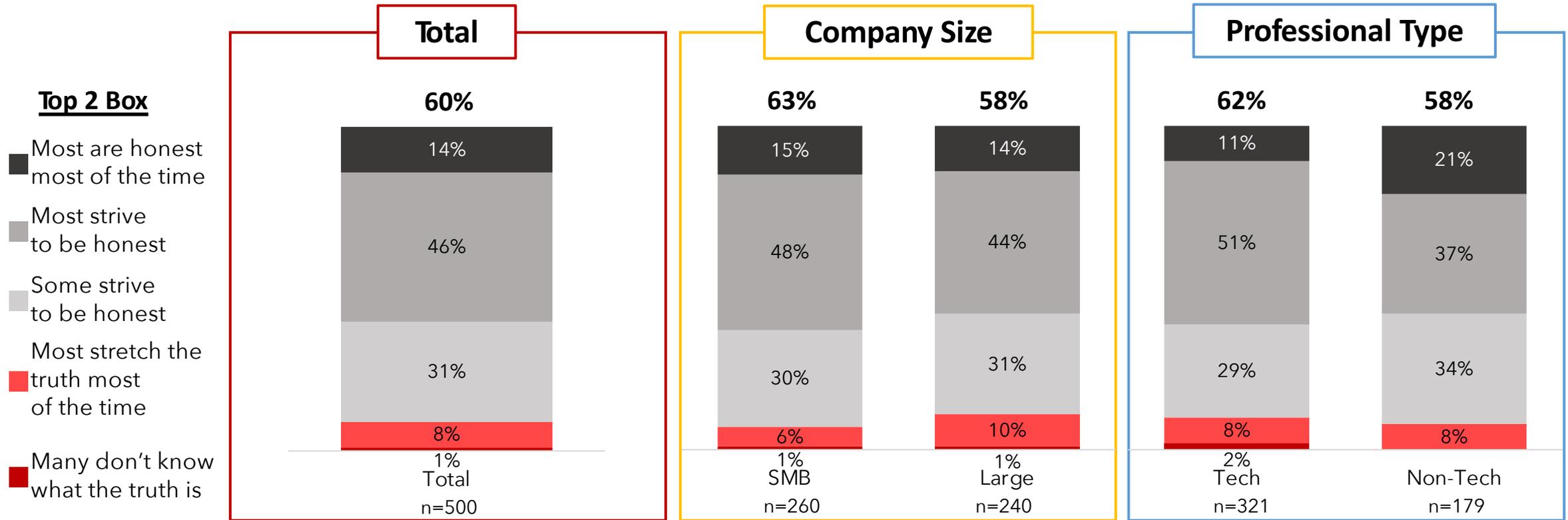


- Tech and non-tech professionals' concerns align across almost all barriers to AI adoption.



Technology vendor honesty

In general, to what extent do you feel technology vendors are being honest with you?



- Over half say that technology vendors at least strive to be honest, although less than 20% say they are honest most of the time.



Honesty proof point

Using the scale below, how likely are each of the following to convince you a vendor is being honest with you?
(Extremely/Very likely)



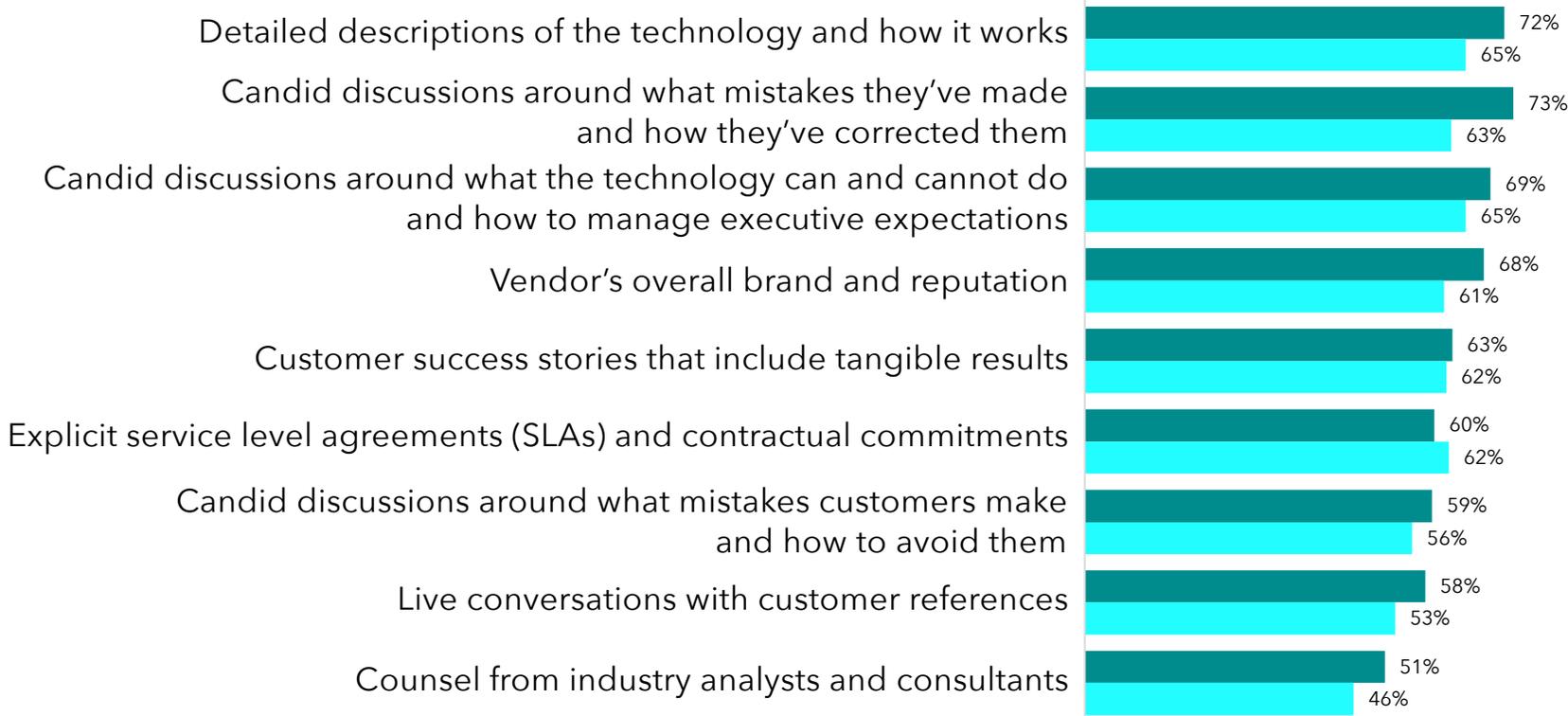
- Details about the technology and how it works, discussions around mistakes made as well as what the technology can/cannot do, and the vendor's reputation are most likely to convince respondents a vendor is being honest.

Total (n=500)



Honesty proof points by company size

Using the scale below, how likely are each of the following to convince you a vendor is being honest with you?
(Extremely/Very likely – Ranked by Total)



- Though similar rank order, small/medium business respondents are more likely than large business respondents to say detailed descriptions about the technology and how it works, discussions around mistakes made, and the vendor's overall brand and reputation would convince them a vendor is being honest.



Honesty proof points by professional type

Using the scale below, how likely are each of the following to convince you a vendor is being honest with you?
(Extremely/Very likely – Ranked by Total)

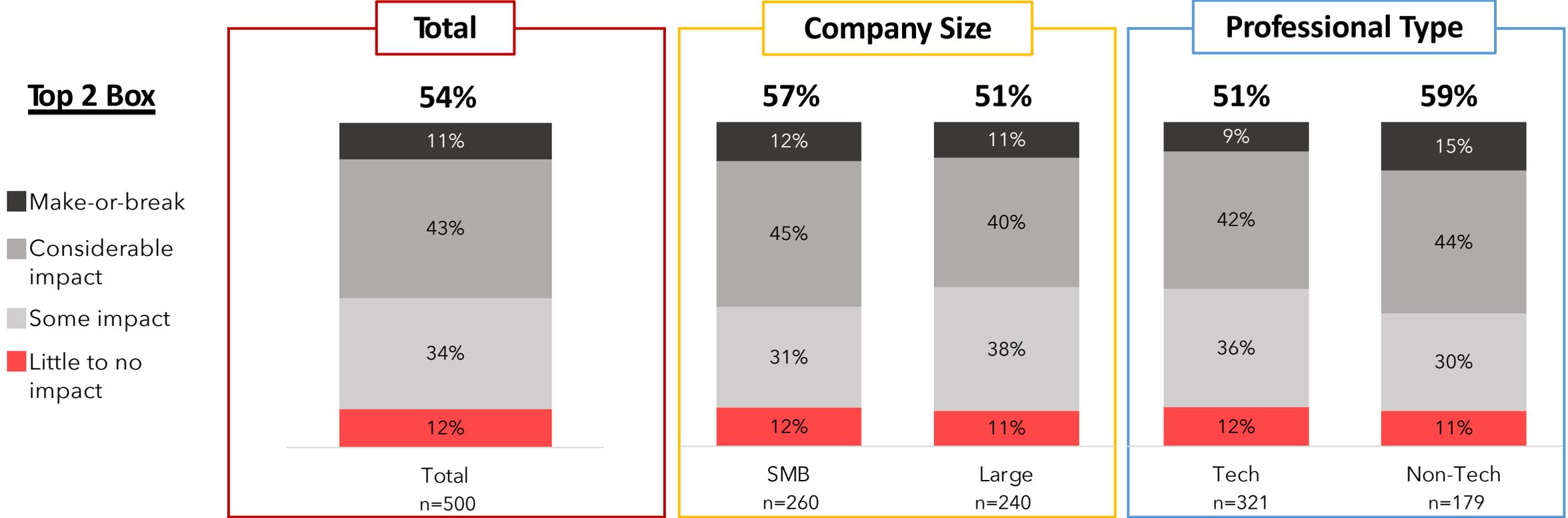


- In most cases, tech and non-tech professionals are similar in their assessment of what would convince them of a vendor's honesty.
- Non-tech professionals are more likely than tech professionals to be convinced of a vendor's honesty by candid discussions around mistakes made and counsel from industry analysts and consultants.



Impact of vendor's environmental sustainability practices on purchase decision

In general, how much do your technology vendor's environmental sustainability practices impact your final decision to purchase a solution from them?



- Over half of all respondents say the vendor's environmental sustainability practices have at least considerable impact on their purchase decision.

