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CONSULTING

WHY THE BEST **CEOS** DON'T FEEL OVERWHELMED

CEO Study
Spring 2020



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PURPOSE

Most CEOs are frenzied, frazzled, and frustrated by constant firefighting and the overwhelming demands on their time.

The goal of this research project is to help you escape your current leadership dynamic, and free up time for the critical, strategic thinking your company needs to thrive.

Can we identify any characteristics or techniques to help you be the CEO you strive to be?



BACKGROUND



Online survey of 72 CEOs.



Firms vary in size from small (\$5M) to large (\$900M).



Variety of industries covered: manufacturing, healthcare, services, and software.



01. How often do you feel overwhelmed by the demands on your time?

02. How important to you is it to improve the current situation—to be less overwhelmed, work fewer hours, reduce firefighting, have more time for strategic thinking?

03. How have you dealt with the struggle to accomplish all of your work?

04. How effective have those steps in Question 3 been?

05. What does a “win” look like for you in terms of time and workload management?

BACKGROUND

FIVE QUESTIONS



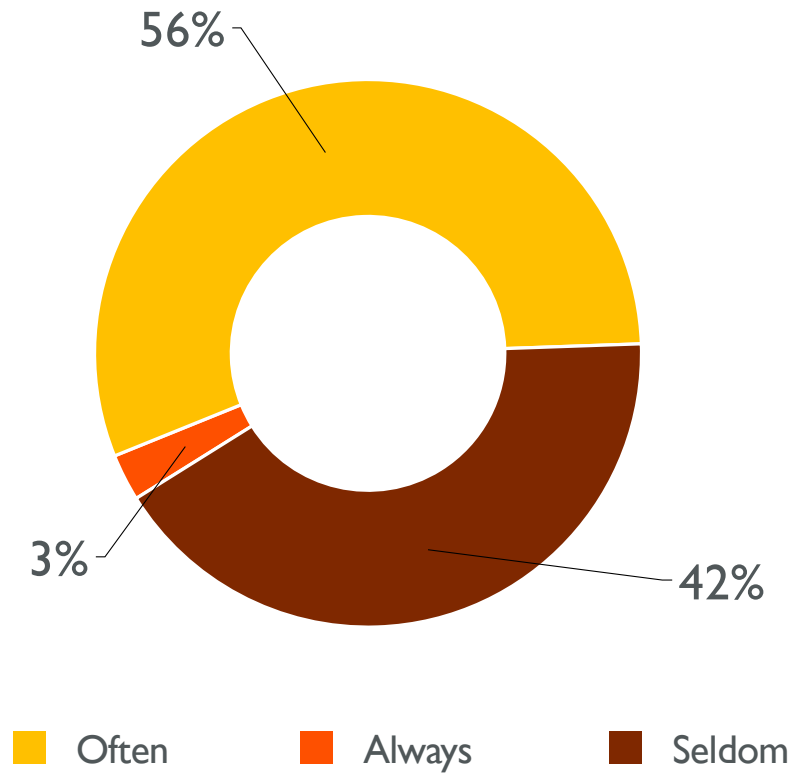
RESULTS

RESULTS

You're not alone: nearly 60% of CEOs feel overwhelmed.

This hurts their ability to think strategically, coach their teams, and have personal time for their family.

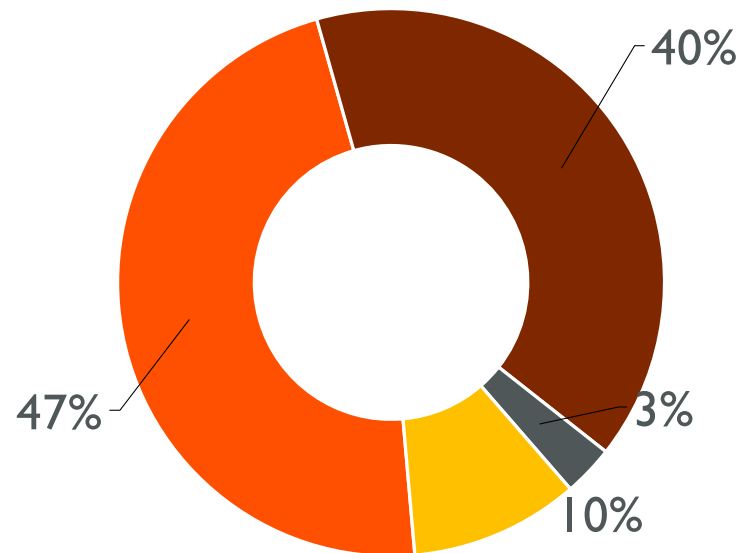
How often do you feel overwhelmed by the demands on your time?



RESULTS

87% of CEOs want to reduce feelings of overwhelm so that they can better focus on critical issues.

How important to you is it to improve the current situation?



■ Critical ■ Very ■ A little ■ Not at all

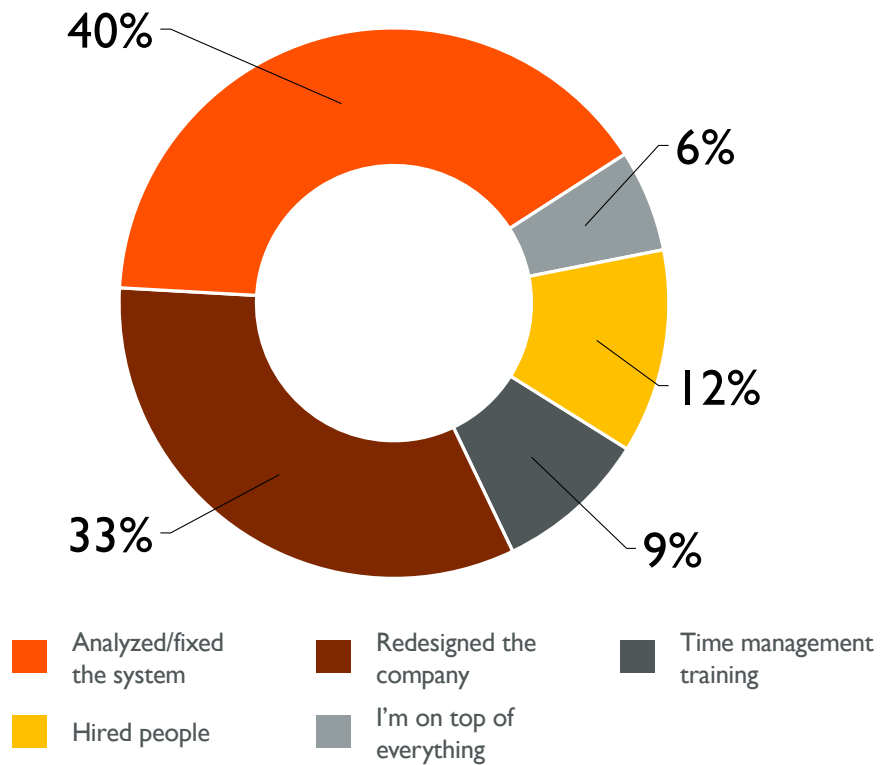


RESULTS

CEOs address overwhelm with different strategies.

As you'll soon see, some approaches work much better than others.

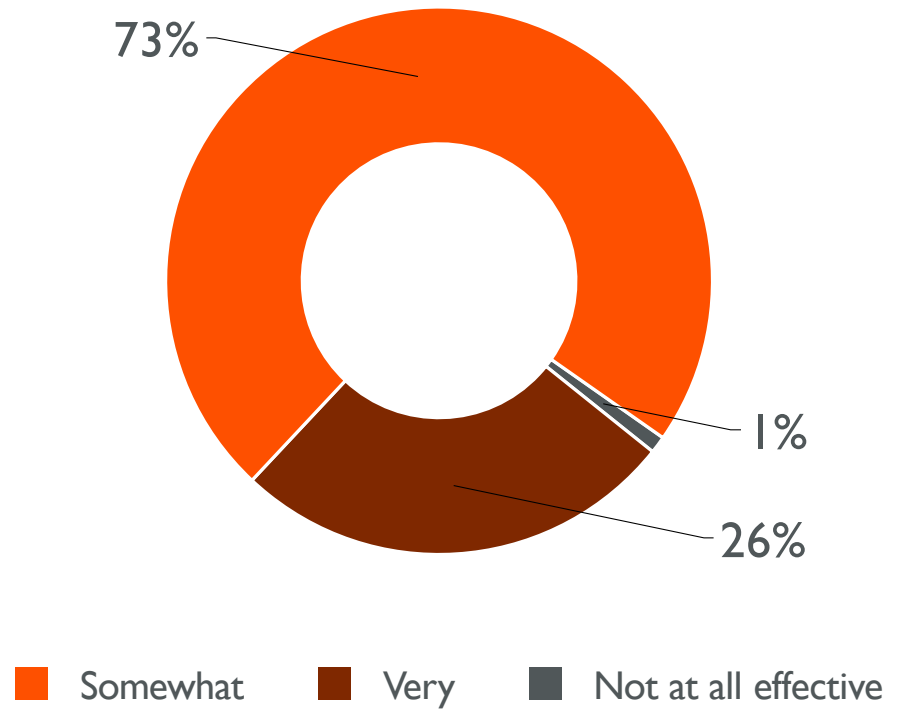
How have you dealt with the struggle to accomplish all of your work?



RESULTS

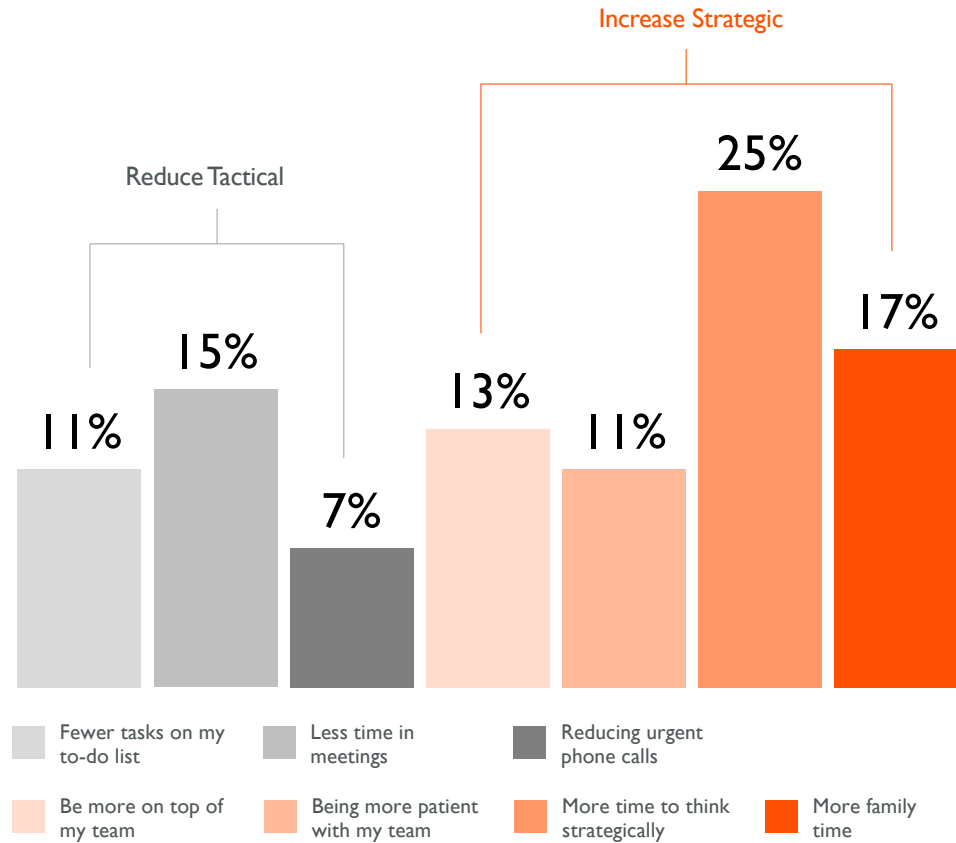
74% of countermeasures are ineffective in reducing overwhelm.

How effective have your countermeasures been in reducing overwhelm?



RESULTS

CEOs want more time for strategic work.



What does a “win” look like for you in terms of time and workload management?



**Q: What differentiates CEOs
who don't feel overwhelmed
from those who do?**

—

Answer: Lean thinking

Dividing the responders into two groups — CEOs who deploy lean production principles in their company and apply it to their own work, and “typical” CEOs — reveals important differences:



“Lean” CEOs who adopt lean principles are far better at dealing with overwhelm than “typical” CEOs who are not familiar with lean thinking.



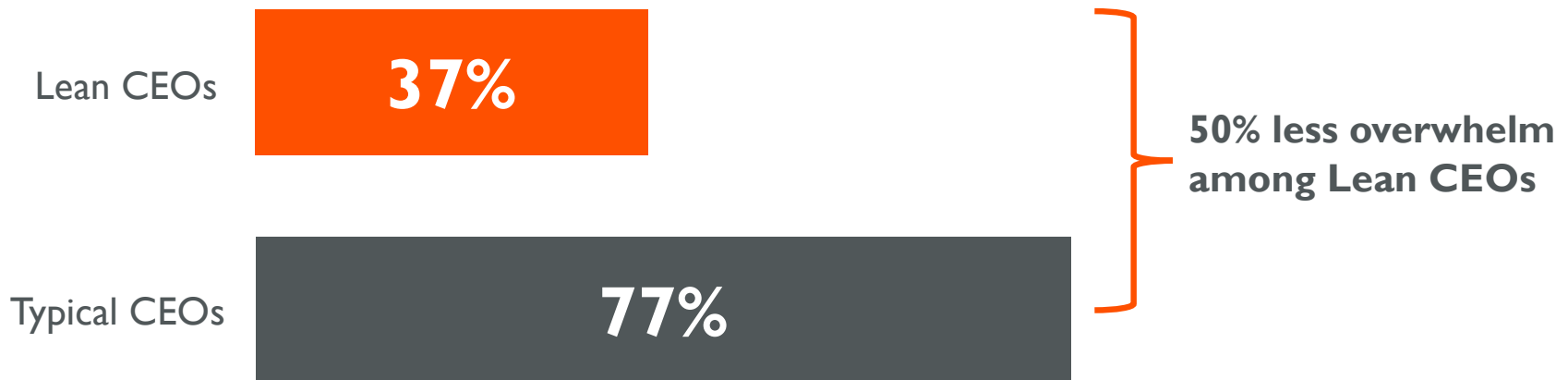
Lean CEOs are much less likely to spend money on hiring support staff than typical CEOs, but are much more effective at reducing overburden.



ANALYSIS

Lean CEOs feel significantly less overwhelmed than typical CEOs. This is due to better, more efficient systems within the company that enable problem solving at the lowest possible level.

% of CEOs who are always/often overwhelmed:



ANALYSIS

There is 50% less overwhelm for Lean CEOs than typical CEOs.

This is likely due to better, more efficient systems within the company that enable problem solving at the lowest possible level.

Lean CEOs



Typical CEOs



Often Seldom Always

How often do you feel overwhelmed by the demands on your time?

ANALYSIS

Two major differences between Typical CEOs and Lean CEOs:
(1) Typical CEOs are more than twice as likely to hire additional people, and
(2) Lean CEOs combat overwhelm differently...and more effectively.



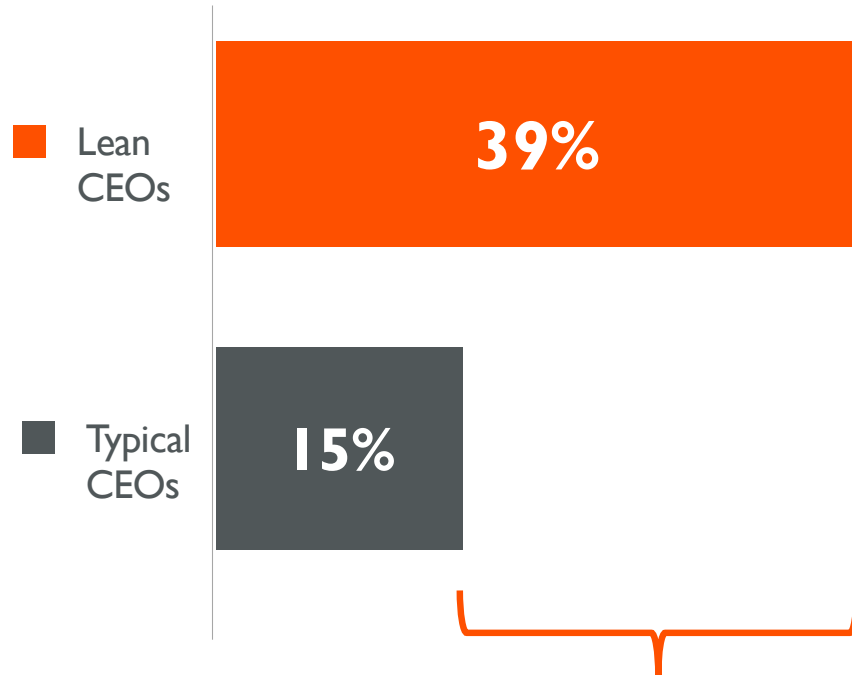
How have you dealt with the struggle to accomplish all of your work?

ANALYSIS

Lean principles are much more effective in helping CEOs cope with overwhelm than individual time management coaching and hiring more staff.

How effective have your countermeasures been in reducing overwhelm?

% CEOs with Very Effective Countermeasures



Lean CEO countermeasures are over 2x as effective

IMPLICATIONS



Lean principles are a powerful method for reducing the managerial burden on CEOs and other leaders.



CEOs who use systems thinking and lean production principles have more bandwidth for strategic thinking and coaching subordinates.



Individual countermeasures such as time management training and hiring additional support staff are comparatively ineffective.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Apply these lean tactics to reduce overwhelm.



Assess your project list and eliminate anything that doesn't contribute to your top three outcomes for the year.



Create "leader standard work" for yourself—a regular and predictable cadence for critical activities. Cementing them in your schedule accelerates progress and reduces chaos.



Institute a system of tiered daily huddles throughout the organization, with an escalation sequence for all problems. The huddles will surface and address problems quickly, and at the lowest possible level.



Look for the root causes in the problems that make it to your level. Those problems typically reflect organizational maladaptation.



CONTACT

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Want help implementing Lean principles to reduce your overwhelm? Contact us.

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