



**Sherlock**  
waste

BENCHMARKING  
REPORT

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**2021**

# EMPLOYEE SUGGESTION AND INNOVATION SYSTEMS

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Best practices to involve employees  
in company improvement



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# Introduction

**Employee Ideas Programme** (also known as "Employee Suggestion" or "Kaizen") is a process, initiated in many organisations, for submitting, evaluating and often rewarding improvement ideas. In this paper, we will use the terms Employee Idea Programme and Employee Suggestion Programme, as well as Idea/Suggestion interchangeably.

Organisers of modern Employee Suggestion Schemes most often assume the simultaneous realisation of two goals. The first one is the benefit for the company in the form of **constant elimination of problems**. An appropriately tailored Employee Ideas Programme can also support the organisation's current goals. The second objective is related to employees. Their **involvement in improvement** makes them feel more valued. They also respond better to change, as they initiate it themselves. For this reason, modern Employee Suggestion Schemes are designed to involve as many employees as possible. Emphasis is also placed on the fact that these should primarily be line employees. Smaller ideas and suggestions are often promoted and implemented at low cost - also a relatively new approach. In the past, bigger, innovative ideas involving management rather than ordinary employees were most important.



## Objectives of the study

Summary study based on the 250 questionnaires is intended as a benchmark for all those interested in Employee Resource Systems. It will therefore be made available free of charge, first to the participants of the survey and then to all interested parties. We would like to thank all the participants of the survey as well as those who recommended it to companies and organisations using the Employee Suggestion System. The survey was organised and carried out by Bartosz Długokęcki from Sherlock Waste, a company that supplies, among other things, the Mobile System of the Employee Suggestions in the form of an application. The development of the results was undertaken by Grażyna Potwora, a Lean Management consultant who has been working with Lean Systems for over 20 years.

# Our survey

The survey was conducted via online channels between February and May 2021. We tried to reach the widest and most diverse range of respondents possible. We reached people through social media advertising and personal contacts of consultants associated with the Leanpassion and Sherlock Waste group of companies.

We asked the participants 35 questions of which 30 related to the Employee Ideas System and 5 related to the participants' metric. There were 250 participants in the survey, but not all of them answered all the questions. On average, 182 respondents answered each question. The largest number of participants, 233, answered the first 10 questions, generally characterizing the Suggestion System and the metric questions.

Interestingly, the two questions about the objectives of the Suggestion System for employees and managers proved to be a real challenge. Despite that, the participants evaluated the merits of the questions well, giving them a score of 4.4 on a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 means insufficient merit, and 5 means high merit of the question).

## Breakdown of participants by industry

In terms of industry, the participants were divided in half:

- 54% are representatives of manufacturing companies,
- 46% are broad services.



## Size of companies participating in the survey

We checked the size of the companies surveyed. Most responses came from medium-sized companies and organisations. Almost 20% of the respondents were companies with 500 to 999 employees; 18% were SMEs with 250 to 499 employees; 16% were small companies with 100 to 249 employees; giants with 2,000 or more employees accounted for 15%, and 13% were large companies with 1,000 to 2,000 employees. Finally, 11% of responses belong to micro companies with 1 to 49 employees. Most of the respondents are managers (70.8%), 40% of them managing larger structures (director, manager, board), but there is also the voice of employees and specialists (29.2%). Interestingly, as many as 51% of the survey participants are Lean professionals and other people involved in process improvement processes.

# About the author



## Grażyna Potwora

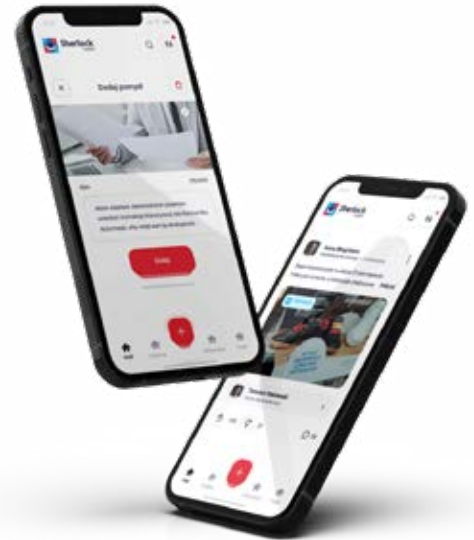
She graduated from Psychology at the University of Silesia. She is a Lean Management consultant with many years of experience. For almost 22 years, she has worked as a Project Manager and Senior Expert in the transformation of production and service processes. Since 2010 she has been associated with Leanpassion. Previously, for 10 years, she ran her own consulting company: Polskie Centrum Produktyności Sp. z o.o. She specialises in Lean tools and soft elements of Lean transformation.

Many years of **professional experience** are confirmed by work for many companies: Pipe Life, Arcelor Mittal; Spomlek, Indykpol, Wavin, Stomil Sanok, MWiK Bydgoszcz, Solaris, Adamed, Ichem, Hochland, Saint Gobain Group, Pfeiderer, Sweedwood Poland, Bongrain Group, Lajkonik Snacks - Bhalsen, Heinz Polska, PZU, Herbapol Lublin; Norma Polska, Liberty Direct, Forte; Maspex/Lubella, PSA Finance Polska, Thermoplast, Essillor Optical Laboratory, TCL Operations Polska, Humax Polska, DB Schenker; Metinvest (Ukraine), Synthos, Ponar, Proama, Iglotex.

# Sherlock Waste

## Turn frustration into innovation!

Sherlock Waste is a unique combination of **innovative technology** in the form of applications and the best **consulting**. It involves employees in improving the company by coming up with ideas, implementing improvements and solving problems together.



## Application capabilities

Sherlock Waste is an app where users can:

- report areas for improvement and problems within the company,
- observe others' reports and react if they have the same problem,
- add your own ideas for solutions to any requests from across the company,
- vote for the best ideas,
- join in the discussions via comments at any time to check the status of your submissions,
- participate in positive gamification through scoring and rankings,
- continuously monitor activity and business effects from deployments.

*Thanks to the application, customers achieve **immediate results** in increased efficiency and long-term changes in the corporate culture organizacyjnej.*

If you want to know the details of the offer, call **+48 798 269 377** or write to us at **m.pobuta@sherlockwaste.com**

**www.sherlockwaste.com**

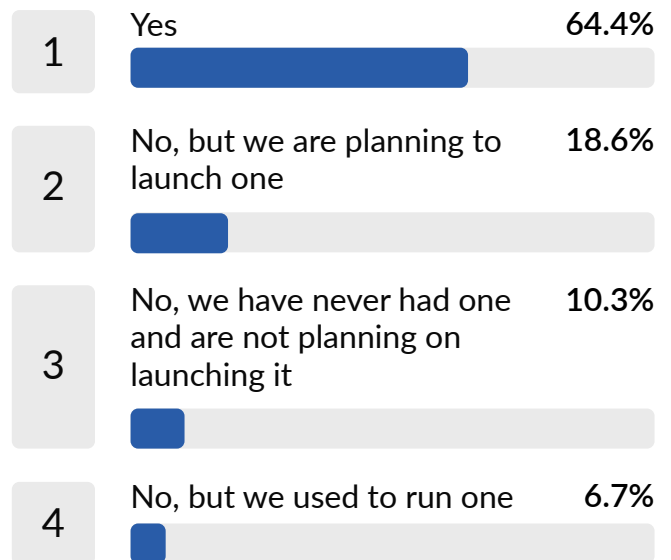
## QUESTION 1

# Does your company currently have an Employee Suggestion System?

All answered the question about the presence of an Employee Suggestion System in the company. Suggestion systems are a frequently used tool in Poland. **64.4% are well functioning systems** and 18.6% are planning to launch them. 10.3% are not planning a system and in 6.7% the system was, but is no longer working.

An interesting fact is that the history of the said system in Poland goes back to pre-transformation times. Already in 60's and especially the 70's of the last century, the so-called Systems of Rationalizing Ideas were functioning. They were more inclined for innovation and big ideas. They Often encountered some deviations associated strictly with them. The employee's idea was signed by a whole group of his superiors, taking of course huge portions of the financial reward.

It sometimes happened that the real creator of the idea had little left. Hence nowadays many exclusions from the System exist, including the most important thing - the possibility of exclusion the whole management staff from submitting ideas. It often applies to other groups of employees, for who creating innovation and improvement is an obligation (e.g. technologist, maintenance department, or Leaner). Instead, leaders are being prepared to support and encourage subordinates to write petitions.





It is mainly visible in the companies that use Lean management. An example of an employee support system, a typical element of Lean is Gemba Coaching. It is all about the avoidance of giving “dry” orders to the employees – directives. Instead the leader observes the employee, writes down the observed problem and then leads an employee to discovering the said problem for themselves by asking questions. Next the leader leads the employee towards finding the solution also by asking questions. The Kaizen conclusion is one of the possible as well as desired outcomes of Gemba Coaching.

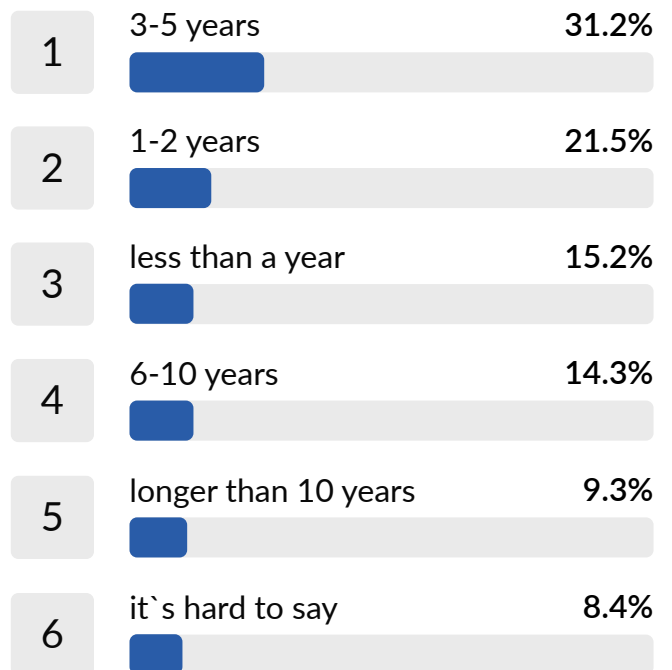


## QUESTION 2

# How long has your Suggestion System been in place?

The Employee Idea System is mostly young. 15.2% of the systems have just been established, 21.5% of the cases are not yet 2 years old and 31.2% (71 responses) are 3-5 years old systems.

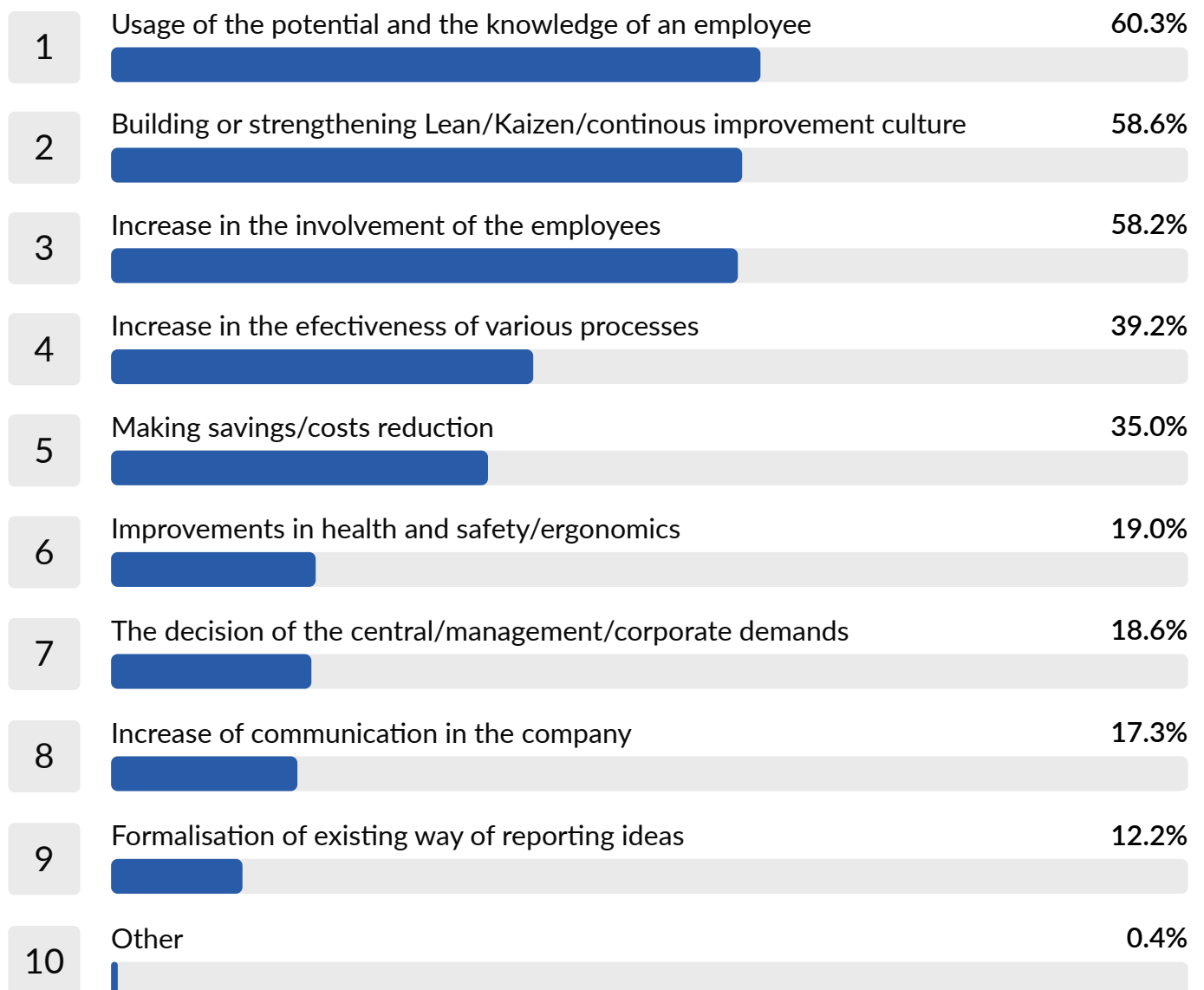
It is worth knowing that the Employee Suggestion System can be a part of Lean Management, but often is a tool which works independently. It is being used even in companies which have never even heard of Lean. That is why it is not always followed by other cultural factors connected with Lean. To examine it further we asked the following question.



### QUESTION 3

# Why did the company decide to implement the Suggestion System?

The answers to the question about the reasons for implementing the subsystem are interesting. Respondents could choose more than one answer. We observe a **shift in the centre of gravity**.



Less than in previous years, respondents focus less on the needs of the organisation and more on **the employee.**

In our survey, the three significant employee choices are: **realising potential** (60.3%); **increasing commitment** (58.2%), **improving health, safety and ergonomics** (19%).

A whole new factor is emerging. This is **the strengthening of the Lean/Kaizen culture.** This is the answer chosen by 58% of respondents. Increasing process efficiency has dominated in other previous surveys. Now it is only in fourth place.

For balance, we also have new factors: 'headquarters ordered'. 18.4% of the respondents were given a top command. Another novelty: 12.4% of the organisations have a system... initiated from the bottom up: "People come up with ideas anyway, so you have to embrace it".

Masaaki Imai in "Gemba Kaizen" notes that: "While the American system emphasises economic benefits and the introduction of financial incentives, the Japanese-style system emphasises **the benefits of employee involvement** raising moral. (...) Japanese management is willing to follow change if it contributes to even one of the goals listed below:

- facilitating work,
- reduction of effort during work,
- removing inconveniences during work,
- improving safety at work,
- improving productivity,
- improving the quality of the product,
- saving time or expense.



## QUESTION 4

# What is or has been the biggest challenge in implementing and maintaining the Suggestion System?

The biggest challenge of the Suggestion System (probably in the eyes of the organisers and managers) is the **low involvement of employees**. This is stated by 43.2% of the respondents.

Rather, **low employee engagement is the result** of almost all the other factors mentioned by respondents. These are mainly:

- 41%** long response time when it comes to reported ideas
- 34%** lack of the ability to evaluate and implement ideas
- 33%** lack of both involvement and support from the management

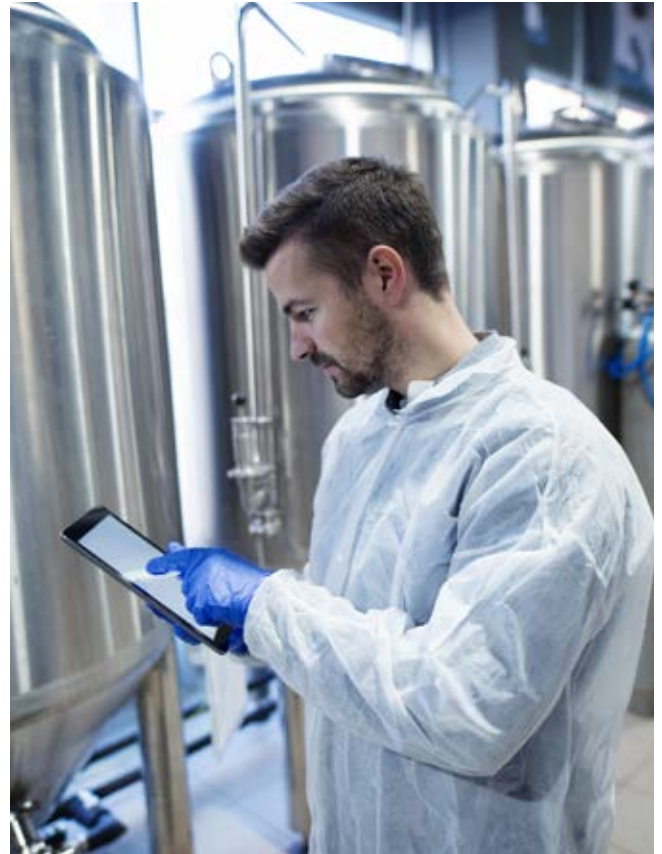
There are also elements relating to communication and company culture, and issues of financial uncertainty. All the reasons can be seen in the table below. Recently, most companies wishing to maintain an interest in the scheme have been trying to nip in the bud the reasons for the delay in taking a decision on an application.

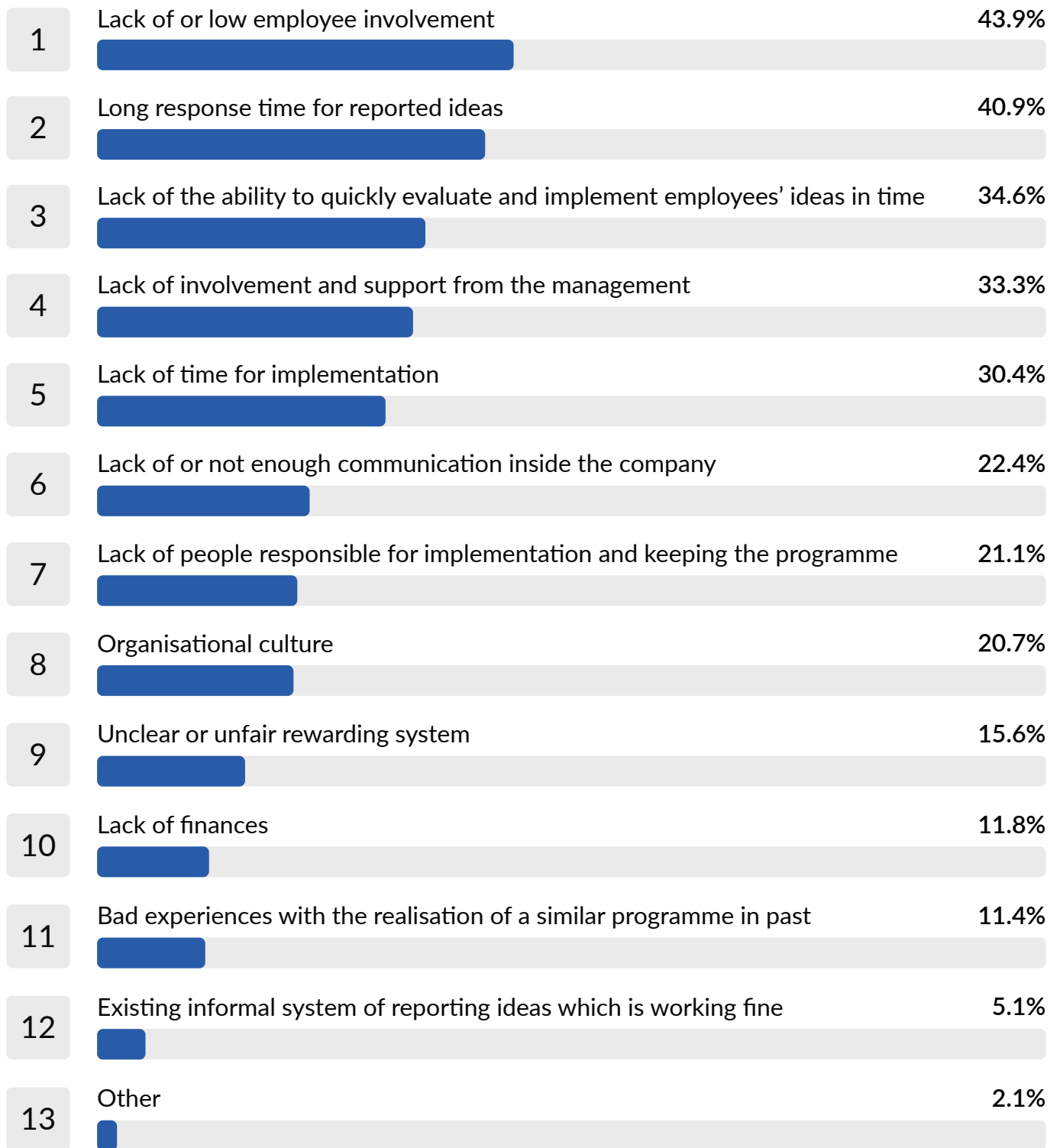
Above all, applications for employees are being simplified as much as possible. They contain only a few essential fields. The minimum necessary is the data of the applicant or applicants, a description of the problem and a description of the solution.



### Forms of application

Increasingly, it is also possible to submit and complete applications electronically. In the office environment this is already the norm. Not always in production. Here, there are often boxes for ideas submitted on paper. But we don't stand a chance in production either. The introduction of an electronic system in production is also possible. Sometimes there are kiosks, i.e. computer workstations with the possibility of entering data into the system. These are increasingly being replaced by smartphone and tablet applications. However, one must always take into account the group of production workers (usually older ones) who are not able to use electronic solutions. Therefore, the paper option is usually left.





## QUESTION 5

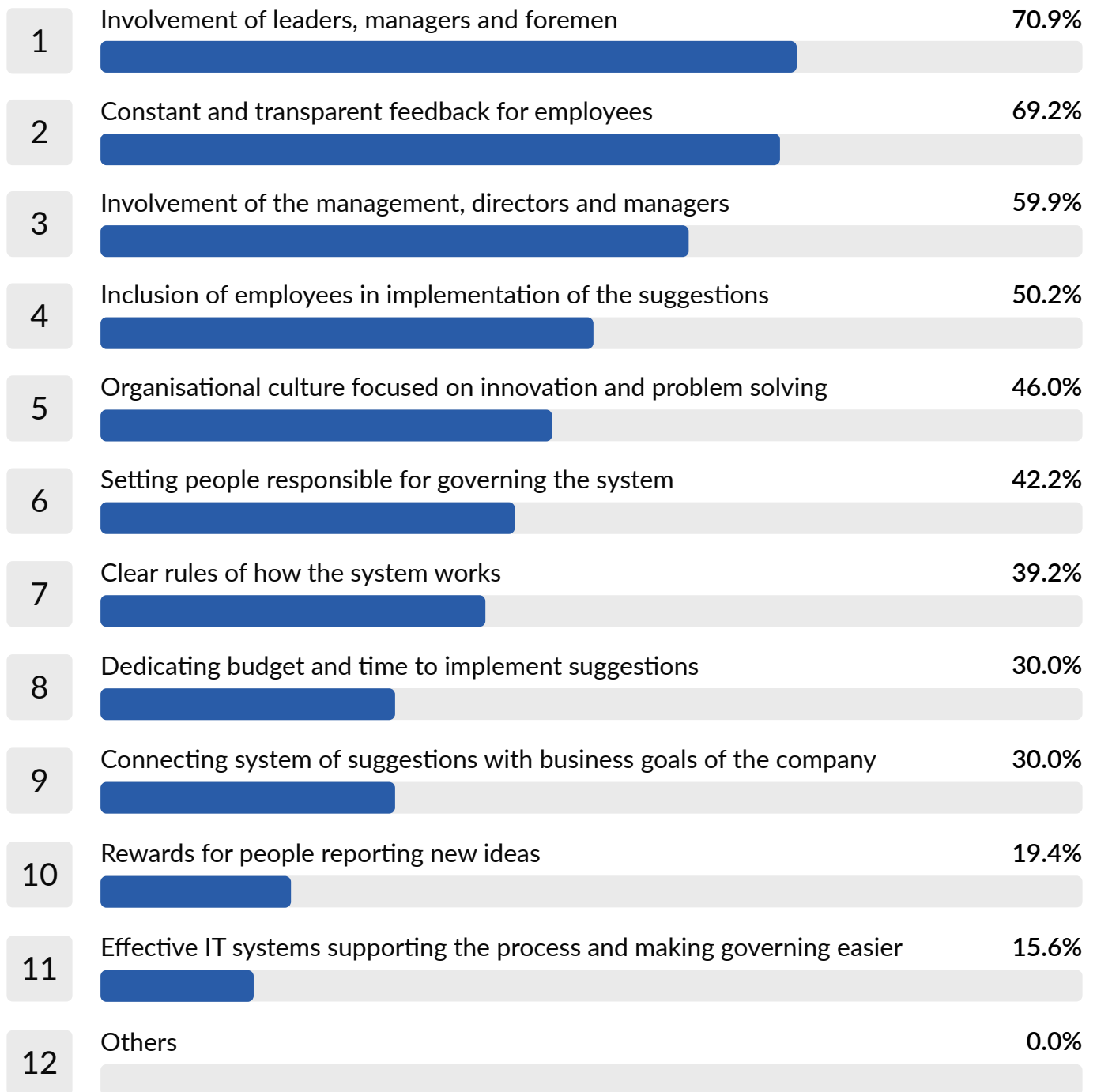
# What factors do you consider critical to ensure the long-term success of the Suggestion System?

The Employee Suggestion System is rather easy to establish but proves to be hard to keep on a constantly high level for a longer period of time. Part of the systems are merely existing rather than functioning properly and a few percent of them are being closed.

We asked about the most important factors to guarantee a success of the Suggestion System. With almost the same score comes **the involvement of the middle tier management** (71%) and the constant and transparent **feedback given to the employees** (69%). A slightly less important role proves to be the organisational factors: management involvement (60%) and the proper organisational culture (46%). From the answers you can clearly see that the error is both bringing the System in a briefcase (i.e. by a representative of the central or consultant), as well as entrusting the system to one person such as the Lean Manager or the application evaluation committee.

It is also wrong to treat this requirement on the basis of: "It is what it is." It is not! Already during the preparation of the system we involve selected leaders and managers for the team design. We plan in detail the roles of the various levels of management. We prepare training and communication for those not invited to the design team. Higher rank initiation is an invitation to create the employee representative system. They can be trade unionists or representatives of works council or just active employees who make suggestions even without suggestion system. You can trust them some preparatory tasks, e.g. a meeting among employees of the award proposal material or opinions about the proposed solutions.

The system should involve  
leaders, managers and employees  
**at the same time.**





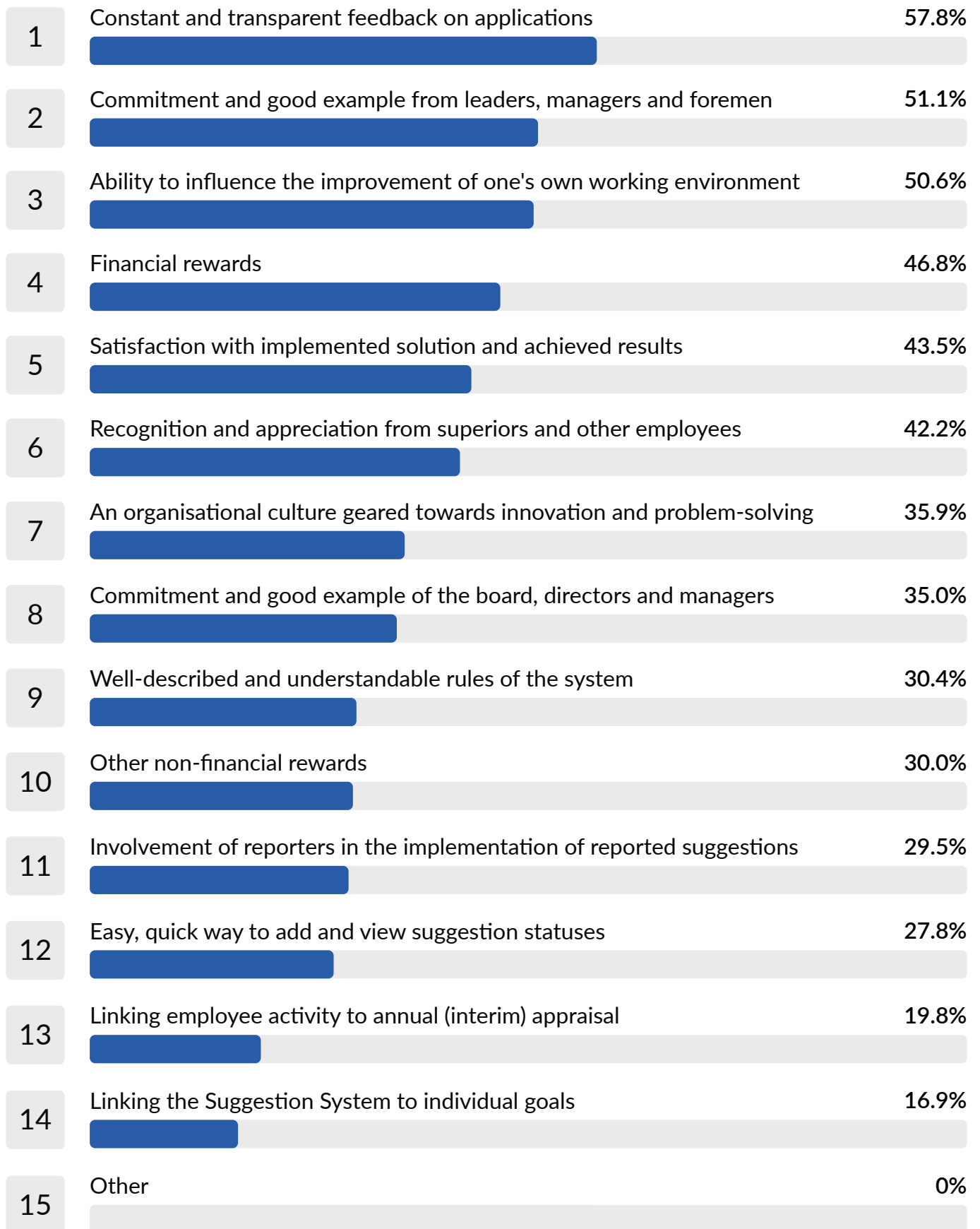
## QUESTION 6

# What do you think is the best motivator for employees to get involved in the Suggestion System?

Referring to the biggest challenge of the Employee Idea System: what motivates employees the most. The main reason for participation in them is connected with **constant and transparent communication about the submitted ideas**. This is the opinion of 57.8% of the respondents.

It appears that financial reward not only does not take first place, but is not even on the podium. Second and third place are respectively commitment and good example from leaders, managers and foremen (51.3%) and the opportunity to influence the improvement of one's own working environment (50.9%). Rewards were chosen by 47.4%. This is followed by motivators from higher levels of Maslow's pyramid: satisfaction with the implemented solution and the achieved results (42.7%) and recognition and appreciation from superiors and other employees (41.9%). I wonder if the same would the employees to whom the system is addressed respond in the same way. However, 70% of our survey group were managers. All these motivational factors can be seen in the chart.



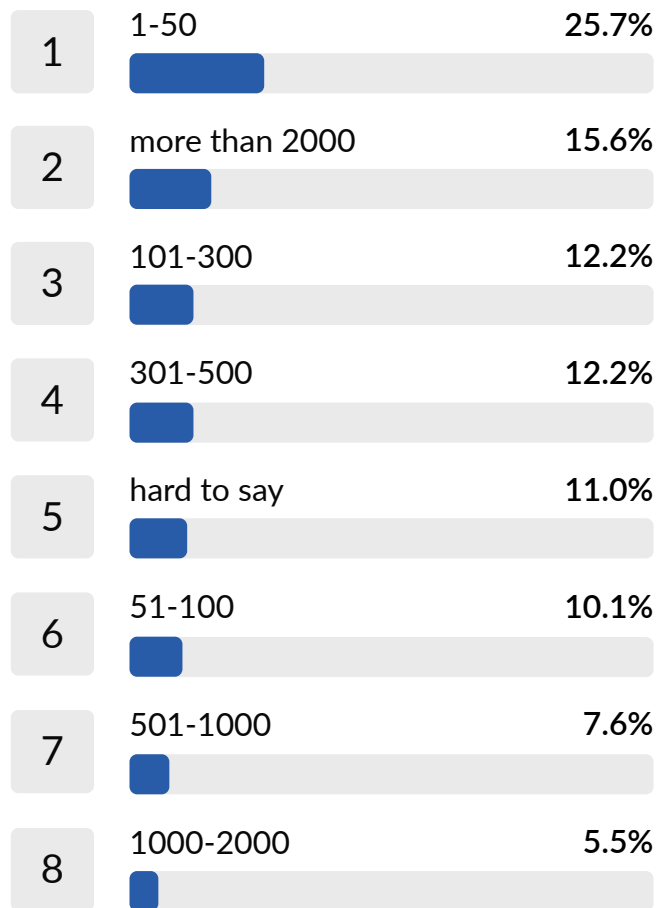


QUESTION 7

# How many suggestions have been made since the beginning of the System?

The information obtained is not optimistic. The most frequent answer (25.7%) was: **1 to 50 ideas**. Such quantities are more reminiscent of a one-off competition rather than a system of employee ideas.

If you are afraid of a tsunami of ideas after launching the Suggestion System, you probably don't need it. Of course, this may be the result of a deliberate strategy, whereby systems are created which do not go for quantity. One in which accepted ideas are more than just a suggestion to move a soapbox from left to right. But it may be that the system takes off with a bang and then comes to a halt when it encounters the usual obstacles. There are, however, organisations with an impressive score of over 2000 ideas (15.6%). So it is possible!

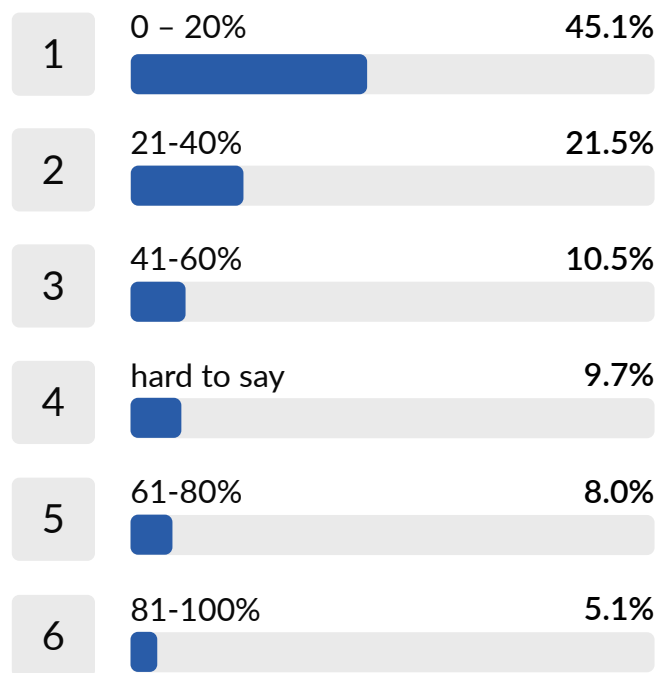


## QUESTION 8

# What percentage of employees have submitted at least one idea since the start of the Suggestion System?

On average, 29.2% of employees have submitted at least one idea since the start of the System. This is 7% less than in similar surveys conducted nearly a decade ago. It seems that **interest in submitting ideas is slightly waning.**

This time let's stick to communication for a while. We are using all possible channels: town hall meetings with questions and answers, a competition for the name of the System, posters and stickers, leaflets, gadgets, etc. We remember the captivating vision of the System, the simple language, the transparent principles. Superiors clarify any doubts immediately after the superiors clarify any doubts immediately after the general communication. If necessary, they help to fill in the first application. During staff briefings, ideas become a fixed point. Authors are honoured and praised. If there is a Problem Solving system in place, we also plan how to transfer PS solutions to the Employee Suggestion System.



Good preparation and good communication of the Scheme play a key role. The already mentioned **active role of superiors** is also important.



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## QUESTION 9

# What is the percentage of implemented suggestions?

We implement suggestions less effectively than before. On average, 40% of the ideas submitted are implemented. This is as much as 20% less than a few years ago.

The highest percentage, 19.4% of respondents, was below 10%. And yet **pride in an implemented idea** is one of the most important motivators for people to come up with others. The second most selected range was 51% to 60% of implemented ideas, but only 12.7% of respondents said so.

Analizując większość problemów możemy policzyć tracony czas.  
Czas możemy przeliczyć na **pieniądze**.



### Cost of a non-implemented idea

We also remember that 1/3 of the respondents considered the lack of implementations as the biggest challenge of the Suggestion System. Implementation means time, effort and cost. Of course, non-implemented ideas are an effect, which has its cause. And the reason may be that we are not able to quickly and reliably value the proposal when accepting it. We are able to do this if we properly describe the problem before the idea.

## Templates

A very useful practice is to prepare so called "ready-to-use" files when starting the system. For example:

- how much does it cost a company to have an hourly employee at this level?
- How much does a minute of production line downtime cost?
- how much will it benefit to increase sales by 1 unit?

These are just a few examples. It is worth making such calculations before launching the system in cooperation with controlling or finance departments.

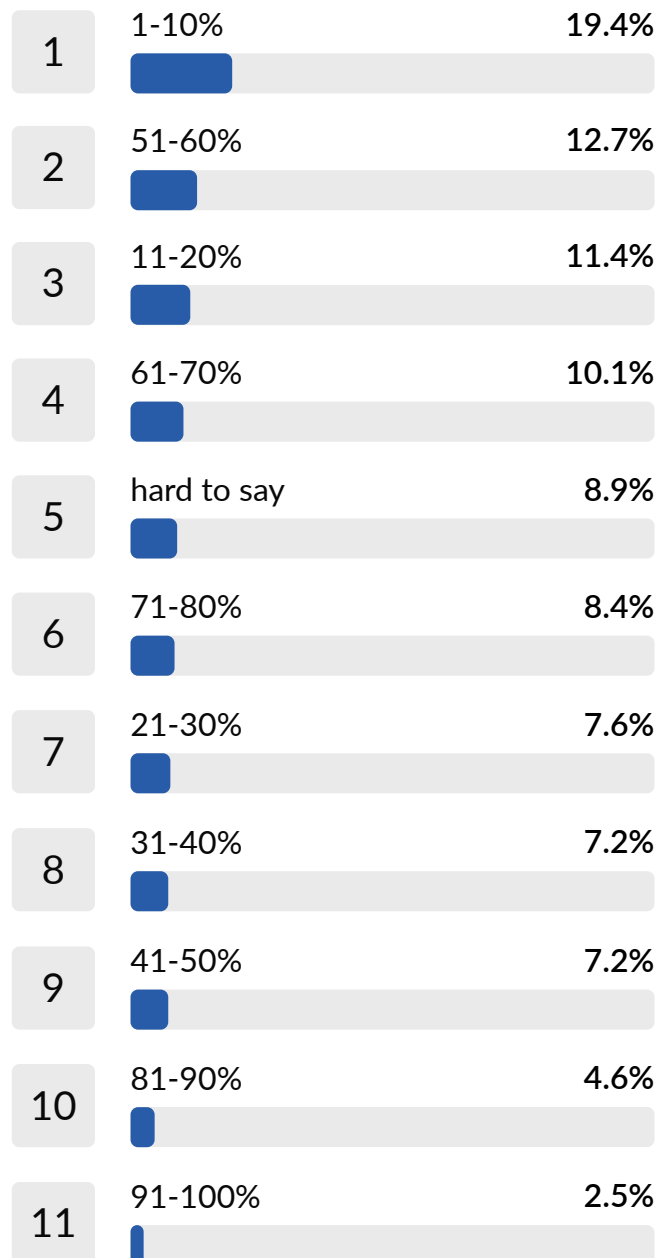


## Who is to count it?

Sometimes the applicant is able to do this, but it complicates the application, so you have to be careful. In many companies, especially manufacturing companies, cost-benefit calculations are done in turn:

- managers (simpler cases)
- specialists supporting them (evaluation of equipment, materials, systems, IT work).

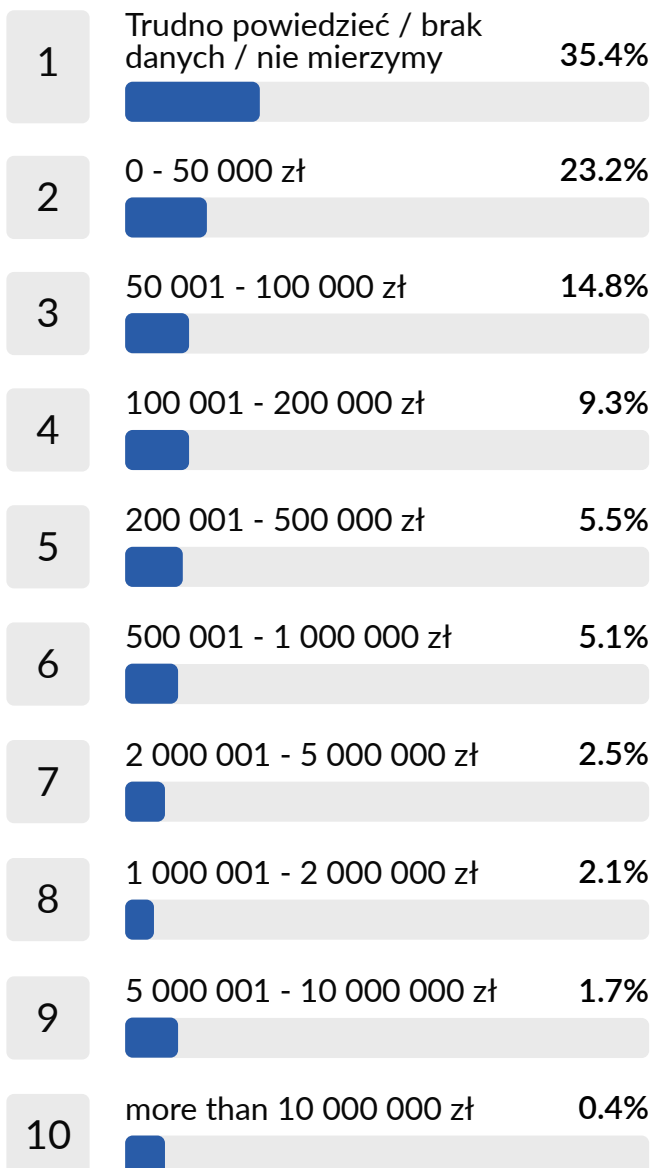
In more difficult cases, even managers or finance departments are involved. It is important to plan this before launching the system.



## QUESTION 10

# What level of savings or additional revenue does the Suggestion System generate each year?

It turns out that over a third of respondents found it difficult to answer this question. Here savings and benefits are not measured!



Fortunately, the others measure, and 38% of them estimated the annual benefits in the lower ranges, i.e. up to PLN 100,000.00. There are also organizations with benefits exceeding one million zlotys. Such is it 6.7%.

### Golden thoughts

Summarizing the thread of measuring costs and benefits should be quoted golden thoughts two classics:

*If you can't measure something then you cannot improve it.*

Peter Drucker

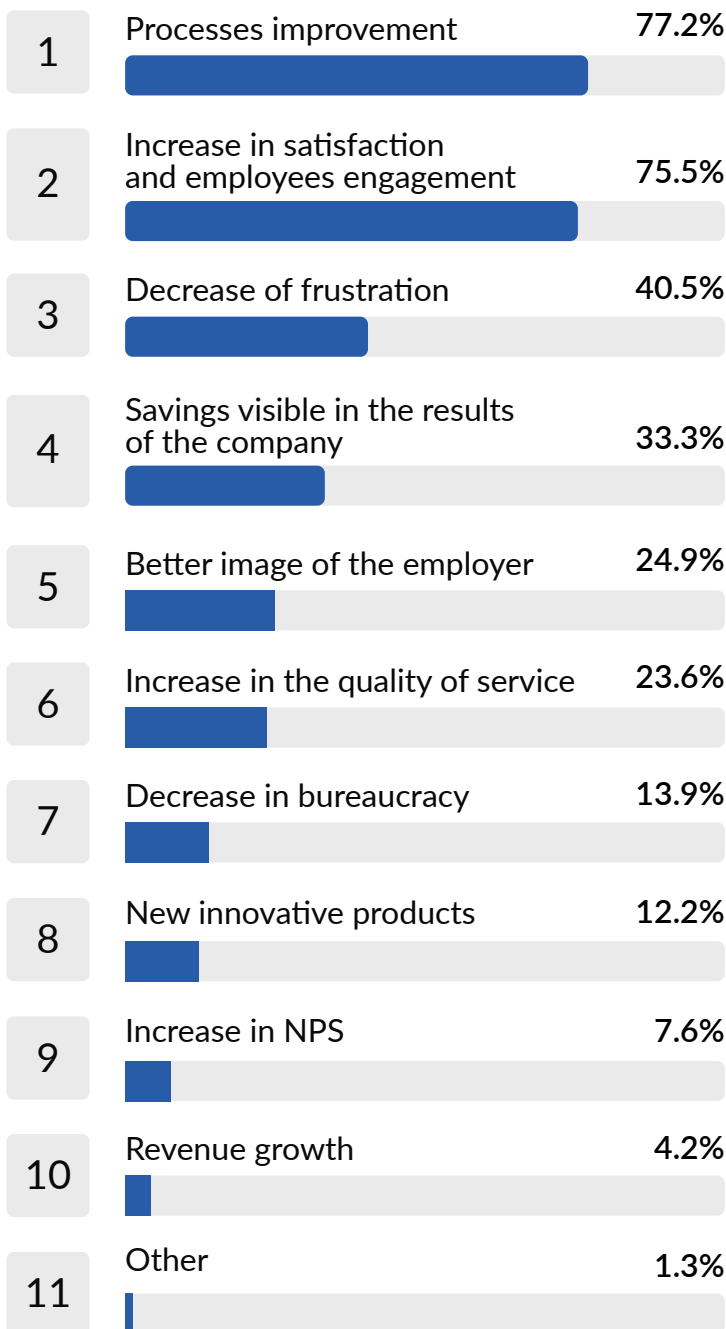
*To manage something you have to measure it.*

prof. Robert S. Kaplan



QUESTION 11

# What do you see as the biggest benefit of implementing the Suggestion System?



The comparison between the original reasons for implementation Suggestion System and the benefits we found afterwards is interesting. Answering the question for the reasons for implementing the System, at highest positions there are reasons related with employees. It was about their potential and commitment.

But when we asked about **the actual benefits** of the Suggestion System - the most, being 77.2% of the respondents indicated the improvement processes. In a second then there is an increase in satisfaction and employee involvement (75.5%) and reducing their frustration (40.5%).



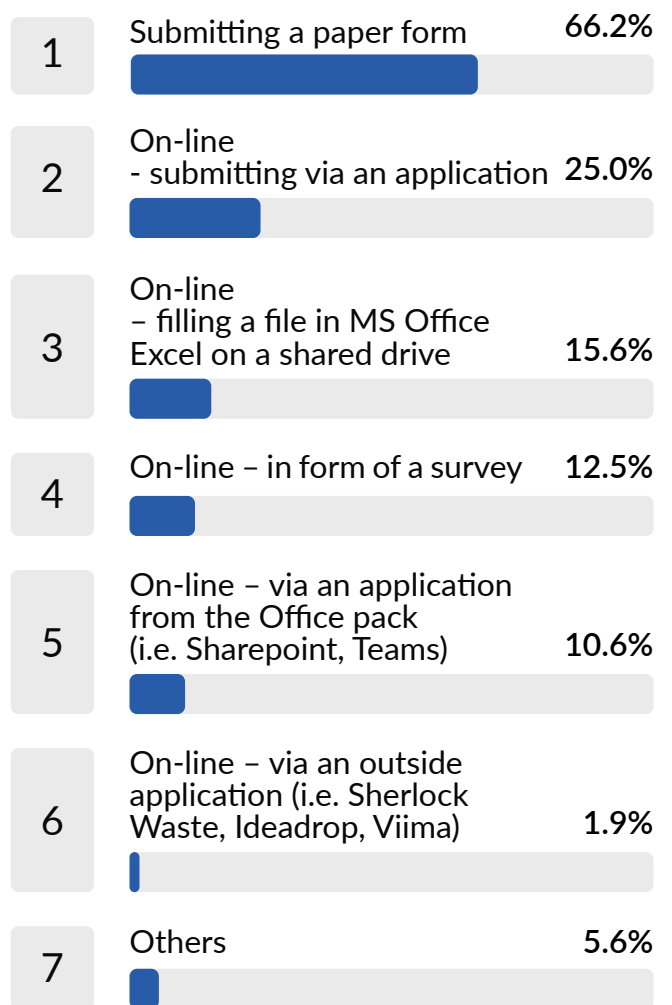
QUESTION 12

# How can an employee report suggestions?

It is time to address the technical issues surrounding the submission of suggestions.

Several answers could be chosen for this question answers. The results show that the paper form still dominates (66.2%), but on the other hand 64% of participants indicated a variety of forms of online applications - both in the form of internal applications as well as using the Office package.

It can be assumed that the paper form is still difficult to replace in some environments. Professional external applications have also emerged. professional external applications have also appeared. For now, it is a drop in the ocean - only 1.9%.



*The next few years will see a big leap in the development of **smartphone applications** with an accompanying dashboard to assist in the processing of applications.*



### **Idea boxes**

Only a decade ago the Suggestion System was associated with idea boxes. It was said that the effectiveness of a system was measured by whether those boxes were dusty and empty. Electronic submissions were used as an innovation or as a timid proposal to improve the operation of the system. Today, electronic filing has almost reached parity with paper filing and the trend of the former is increasing.



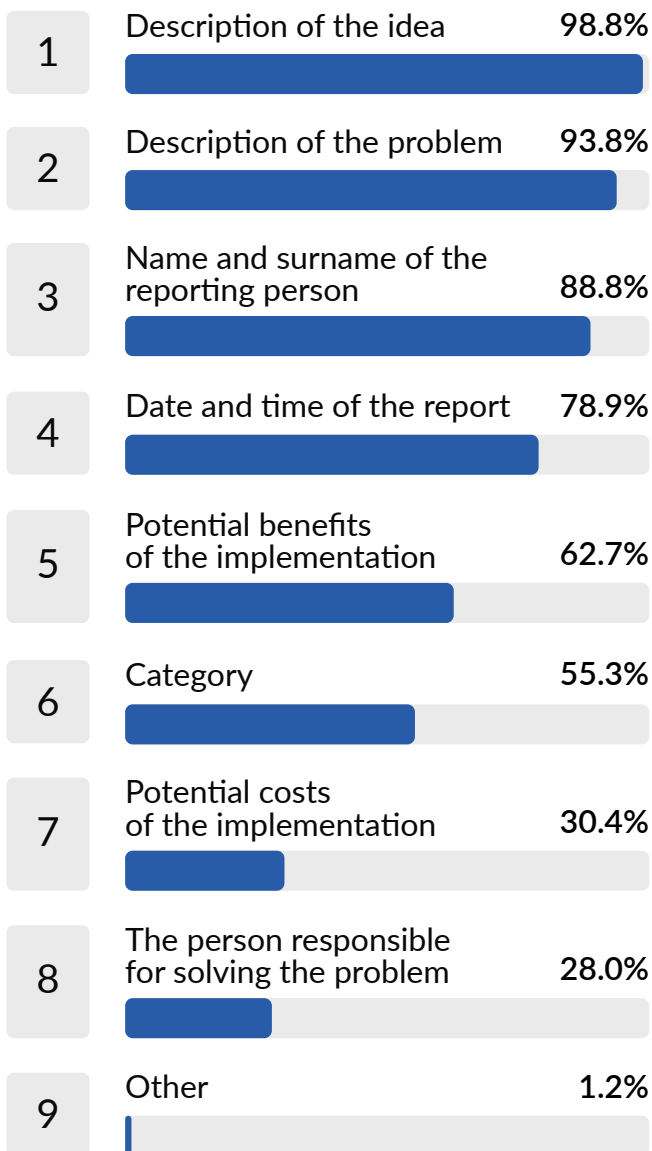
### **Development of new technologies**

The importance of electronic company systems and applications is likely to increase. This will be caused by the smartphone generation entering the labour market and retiring employees who are not computer savvy.

QUESTION 13

# What fields does the employee suggestion sheet contain?

The sheets used are very simple. This is good news, because the more complicated ones can be discouraging to fill in.



Most of the sheets of the respondents include a description of the problem and the idea (93.8% and 98.8%), the details of the reporter and the date of the report. 62.7% have space for a de-scription of the potential benefits of implementation. 55.3% of the sheets categorise the ideas and 30.4% look for information on the potential costs of implementation.

The place for the description of the problem is also to be welcomed. The problem is always the starting point. If we know the problem, and especially if we measure it, we can determine the root causes and generate more accurate solutions. It is not without significance it is also im-portant that by knowing the problem we give a chance for alternative solutions. If only the solu-tion is known, it is difficult to argue with it.

## QUESTION 14

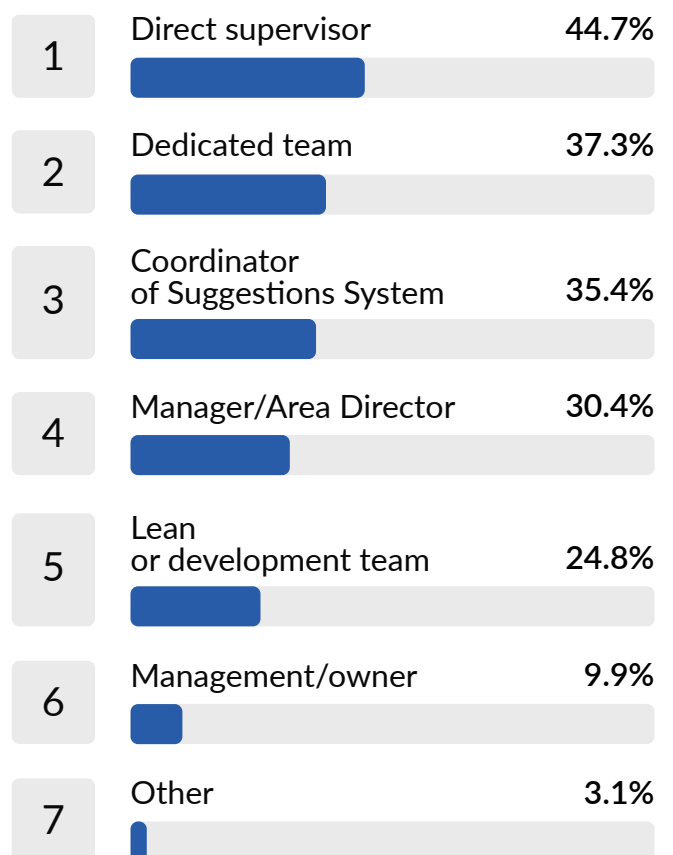
# Who evaluates ideas for implementation?

Przeanalizujemy wyniki badania dotyczącego osób odpowiedzialnych za ocenę pomysłów w Systemie Sugestii.

Ideas are most often evaluated by the immediate supervisor (44.7%). This spreads the administrative burden and allows for a better look at local solutions. More complex suggestions are evaluated by the Suggestion System Coordinator or the Lean or Improvement Coordinator (60.2%). Less frequently, a special team is assembled (37.3%). There are also organisations where this task is undertaken by a manager or even a board member or owner (30% and 9% respectively). Most often, these are smaller companies, where the managers also receive ideas which are costly or affect the activity of the entire organisation.

### Special team

It sounds rather enigmatic here: 'special team'. What is it? In some organisations it is simply the representatives, managers or executives of the most important parts of the organisational structure. Its purpose is **to periodically exchange information** on some of the proposals that have been submitted, and **to consult on the evaluation and chances of implementation** for ideas involving more departments or locations.



There is also another type of "special team". This is a group of specialists set up to help evaluate the costs of implementing ideas. Sometimes they help to estimate whether their implementation is feasible and reasonable. An example of such a specialist in service companies is an IT specialist. In production companies - maintenance or technologist. Sometimes there is also a process engineer, quality manager, safety manager or finance manager. This team is rare and is rather a list of specialists who have reserved time to deal with the requests coming from the Suggestion System.



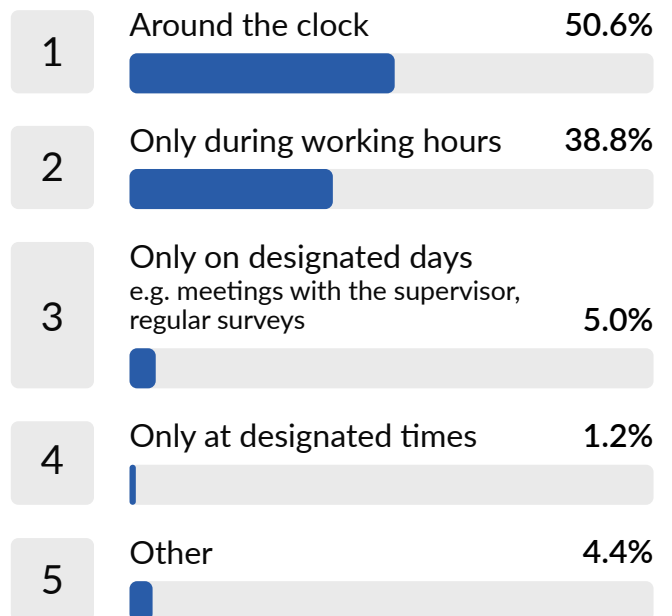
QUESTION 15

# When does an employee have the opportunity to report and view the Suggestion System?

Companies do not restrict employees' access to reports. The register can be consulted around the clock (50.6%) or during working hours (38.8%).

### Restriction of access

One might ask, why limit? There may be one argument in favour of limiting. It may be a desire to hide ideas that have already been submitted but not yet evaluated, so that someone does not submit them as their own. In transparent organisations this type of action is very rare, or almost never. This is because they have a value system that is understood by all.



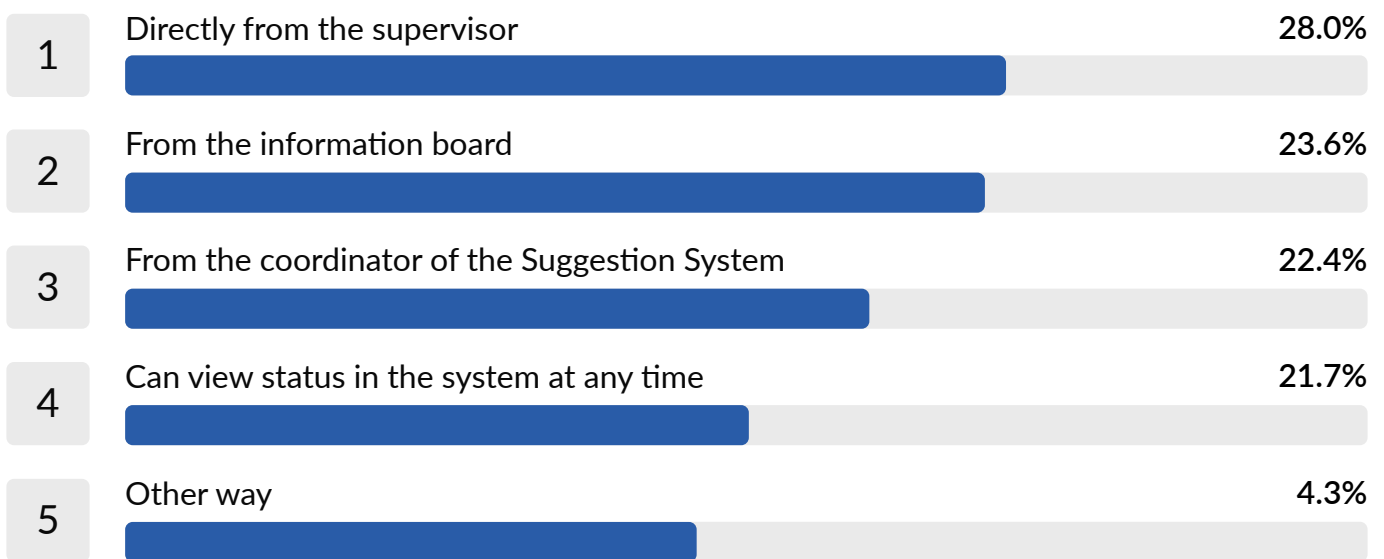
### Free access

The benefits of open access are much greater. These include the opportunity to be inspired, to extend the scope or content of ideas already submitted, or even to support teamwork on a given problem by suggesting new solutions to complement those already given.

## QUESTION 16

# How is the employee informed of the status of the suggestion?

The submitted ideas are usually communicated in conversations: with your supervisor or the Suggestion System coordinator.



The most common way to communicate ideas is **to talk to a supervisor** (28%), to look at a **notice board** (23.6%) or **to talk to the Suggestion System coordinator** (22.4%).

A well-conducted interview gives the person submitting the idea an opportunity to obtain additional comment or guidance. It is therefore advisable in the case of a negative response. However, we do not always have the time or the physical opportunity to talk to every proposer.

In this case, there are still only two possibilities. Checking the system at any time is extremely convenient, but not for everyone, especially in production organisations. The information on the board is available to everyone in the location, but is usually not updated daily, and in the case of a response to a request, time is of the essence and determines satisfaction with the Suggestion System.



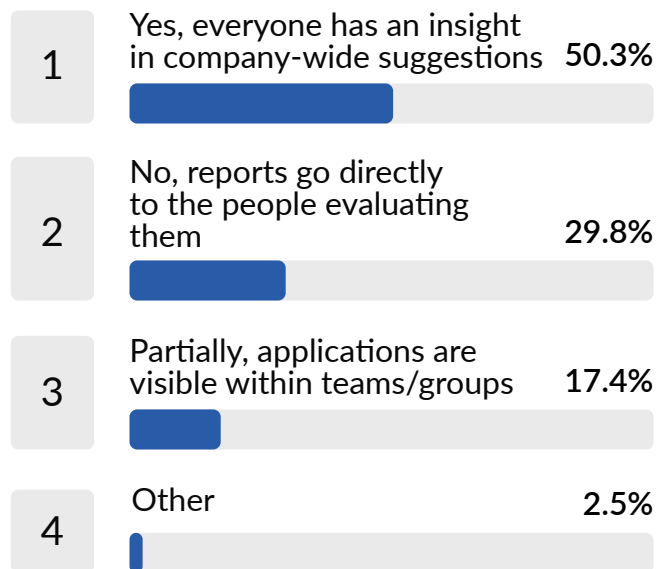
QUESTION 17

# Are the suggestions made by employees visible to others in the company?

Why do we not restrict access? One reason is to eliminate reporting ideas that have already been reported.

Such situations, and the related dilemmas such as who to award the prize to, are often the cause of disagreements surrounding Suggestion Systems. Seeing the suggestions and getting inspired if there is a similar problem.

On the other hand, there is the dilemma of whether to show the ideas before they are evaluated. Some organisations are afraid that someone might unknowingly submit the same idea on the same day and claim the prize. Therefore, where we do not measure the exact date and time of submission, ideas often go straight to the evaluator.



### How to deal with a lot of ideas?

When there are many ideas, for example several hundred, difficulties can arise. It is then worth tagging them with keywords and making it possible to sort them by process or department. It is important to think about it in advance. Tagging a few thousand ideas existing in the base is not a pleasure.

## QUESTION 18

# By what criteria are suggestions evaluated?

Let's analyse the answers concerning the evaluation of ideas submitted by employees.

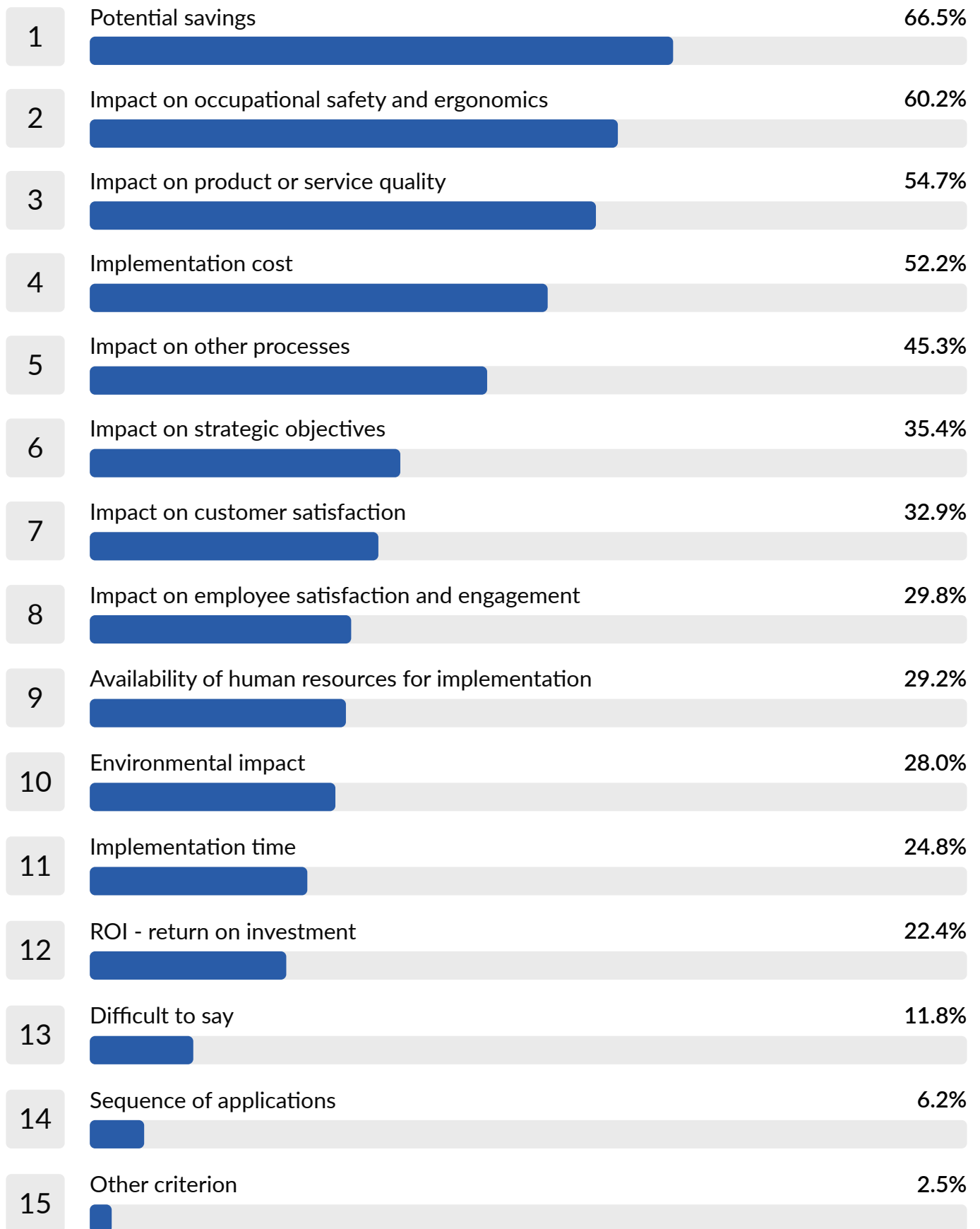
Which ideas have the greatest chance of being positively evaluated? As the results show, it is rarely a single criterion.

For this question, more than one answer could be selected. The most frequently mentioned are **potential savings (66.5%)**. Evaluators also take into account the **cost of implementation or ROI (74.6% in total)**. Ideas are thus converted into financial benefits, but not always. 49% of companies also allow for **non-financial criteria**, while 15.5% do not calculate savings at all. Interestingly, right after financial issues, in the ranking of criteria for evaluation of ideas, occupational health and safety and ergonomics (60,2%). The final criterion is quality (54,7%). From the more exotic results one may be surprised by the fact that for as many as 10 respondents (6.2%) it is the order of applications that matters.

**The grading criteria** is a big field to show off for the creativity of the Suggestion System creators. The easiest way is to just give the same amount of money e.g. PLN 100 for each approved idea, but with this approach we do not use the great potential of the System.



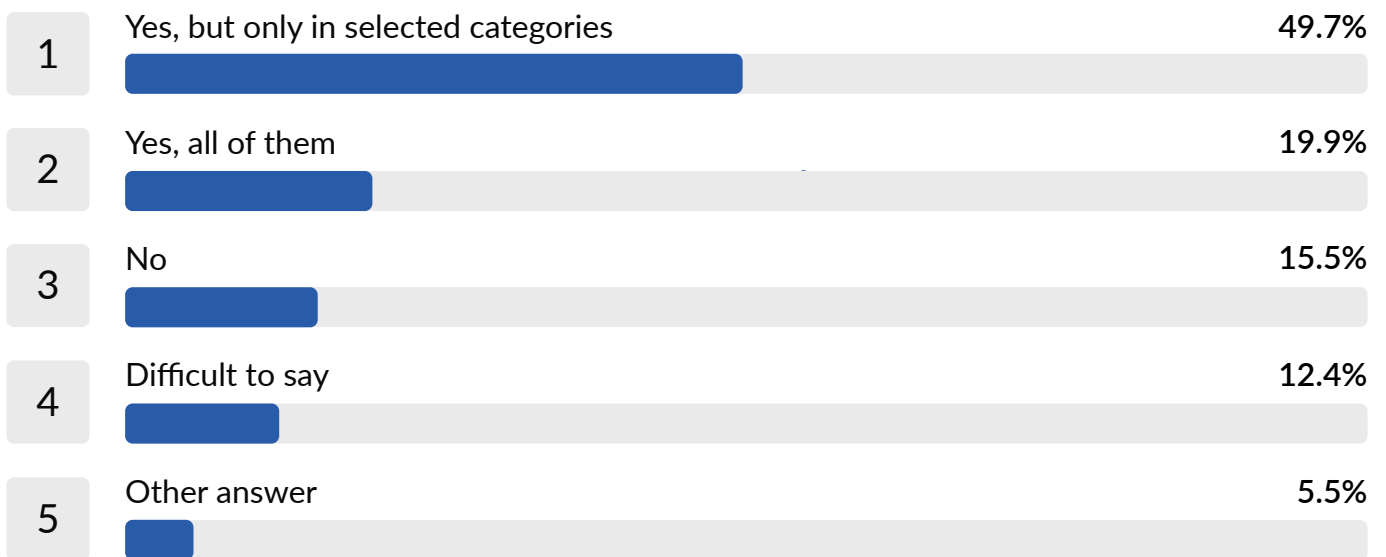
There are many possibilities. By valuing the benefits financial benefits and giving the originator a percentage, we provide a return on investment and a sense of empowerment. It is also possible to combine valuation with the impact of the idea on the current goals of the entire company or process. Then we support business development strategies. You can each month additionally promote a different objective e.g. August with health and safety or September with quality for quality. Then (especially when the goal of the month is announced suddenly) we have a system with suspense! Everyone is waiting for the announcement of the goal of the month. You can finally appreciate team ideas or ideas submitted by representatives of different departments. Such ideas are usually rewarded in a special such as going bowling together. At the same time, we strengthen bonds and fill in ditches between departmental silos. **Sky is the limit!**



QUESTION 19

# Are suggestions converted into financial savings?

Find out how ideas put forward by employees correlate with company savings.



All ideas are converted to finance in only 19.9% of the companies surveyed. The majority allows for no financial conversion. Almost half (49.7%) answered that ideas are converted, but not in all categories. Interestingly, 15% do not recalculate at all. In these cases, ideas are either valued on a discretionary basis or there is a system where, regardless of the idea, every accepted suggestion is rewarded the same.

This saves time on bureaucracy, but makes it impossible to assess whether the scheme is worthwhile for the organisation. In the case of calculating only certain categories, benefits which are difficult to quantify, such as health and safety or increased employee satisfaction, are excluded from the calculation. It is worth noting that even such categories can be estimated, but it is more difficult than, for example, saved working time or increased sales.

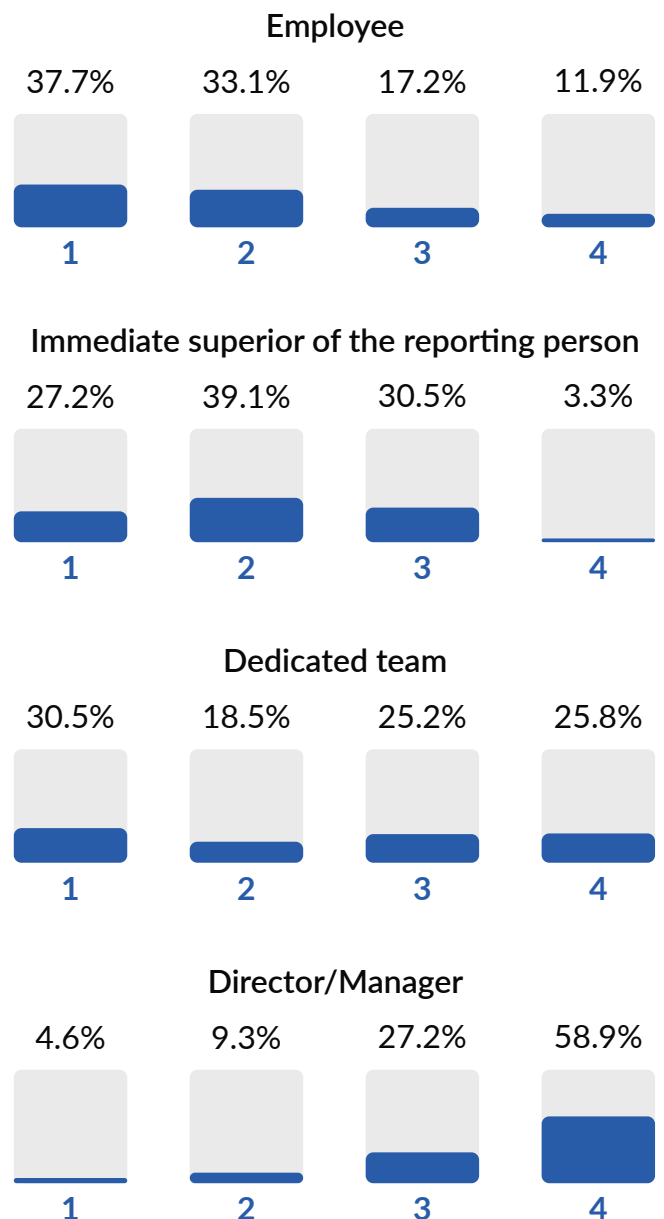
QUESTION 20

# Who is most often responsible for implementing suggestions?

If I were to define the application in two words, I would write "it depends". In almost every organisation, implementation is the responsibility of the employees and their managers.

Many companies have a special cell that is responsible for the implementation of suggestions. It also happens that a manager is responsible for it (especially in case of bigger implementations). Most often it is the employee who is responsible for implementation, often the one who reported the problem. 37% of those surveyed put them in first place and a further 33% of those surveyed put employees in second place - a good sign! The best and most committed implementer is usually the author of the idea. So why not take advantage of this?

However, there are larger implementations that are costly or require cooperation with other departments. Then, naturally, a dedicated team becomes responsible for the Suggestion System (30% of companies usually entrust the implementation to such a team). Alternatively, the responsibility can be delegated to a superior. The originator (27% of companies use this path most often). This probably depends on how much power is attached to the supervisor role in the company.



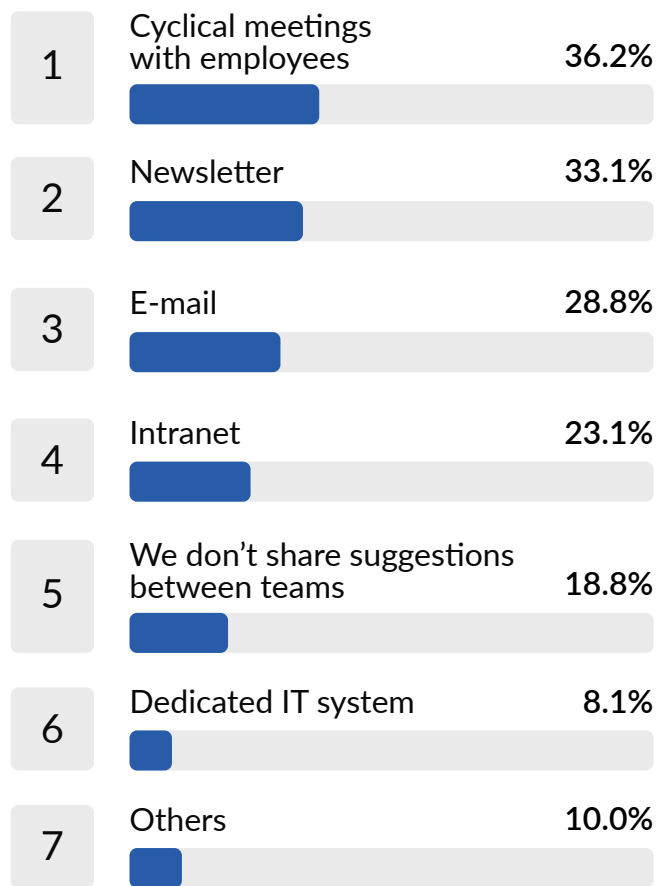
QUESTION 21

# How does the company share its most interesting developments with other employees or departments?

Communication related to the most interesting implementations most often takes place during cyclical meetings (36.2%). Here it was possible to select more than one answer, so we assume that in most companies this takes place in a multitrack way. This is very good information, because...

The use of **many different channels** allows you to reach your audience effectively.

For 33.3% of respondents a newsletter is a good idea and almost 29% send this information by e-mail. Finally, 23% publish their best ideas on their intranet. This is interesting, because one of the most spectacular and emotionally engaging communication campaigns we have seen, was different to all the others.



### Case study

At a chemical company, a green plastic TAG with information about the suggestion and its author hung on a line above each improvement. Employees proudly displayed these tags, talking about their implemented ideas.

What intrigued us most, however, was that 18.8% of the organisations surveyed generally report successful implementations. This is somewhat at odds with the System's stated goals, which focus on employee welfare.

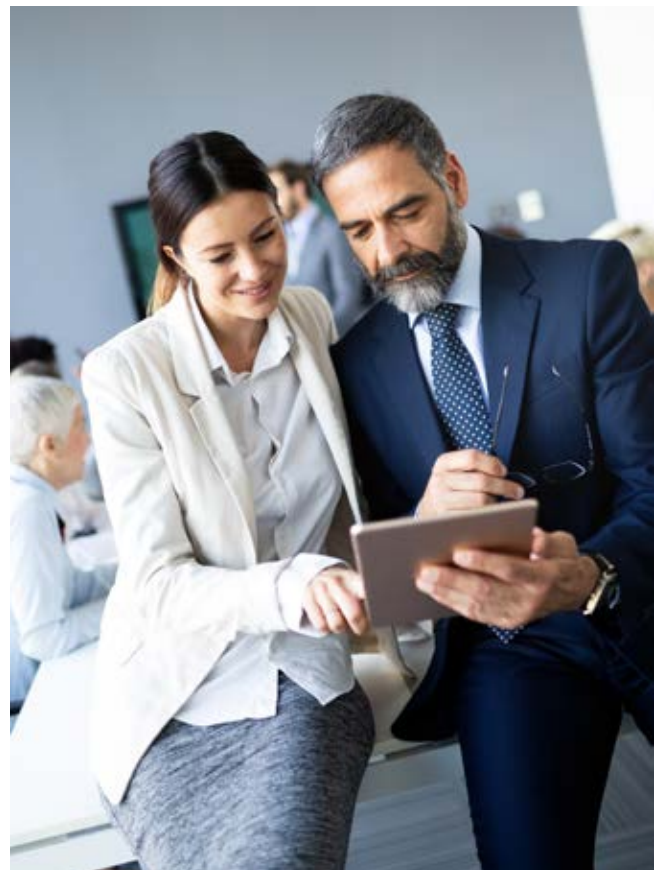
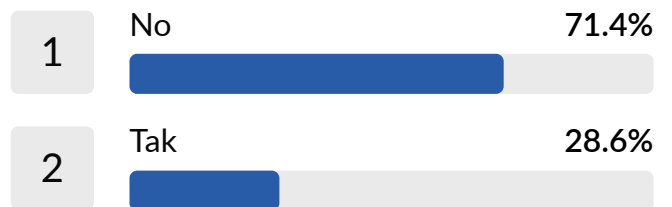


QUESTION 22

# Do employees or/managers have targets for the number of suggestions per year?

As many as 71.4% of systems are not linked to such targets. This level has remained unchanged for years.

The setting of such indicators is often linked to the compulsory submission of a certain number of ideas and their enforcement e.g. during periodic employee appraisals. Organisations are most likely trying to avoid a flood of frivolous, "mandatory" ideas that add little value and add to the bureaucracy associated with employee idea systems. Such indicators have in the past been dictated by information about the impressive numerical results of Japanese corporations. There was talk of hundreds of thousands of ideas per company per year and dozens to dozens of suggestions per employee. However, it has been forgotten that these numbers are more a result of the management style focused on Gemba Coaching and specific culture of Japanese companies, rather than an indicator of the number of ideas per employee.

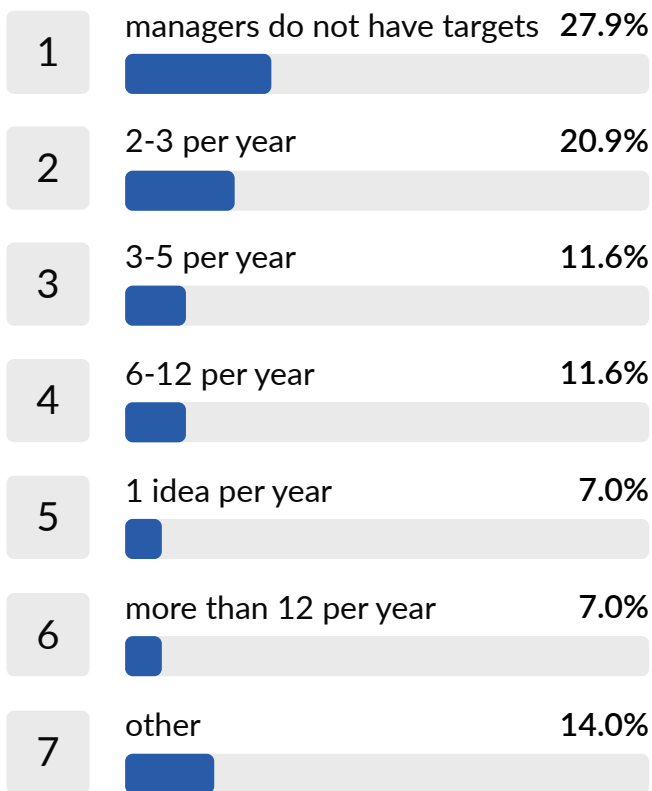




QUESTION 23

# What are the targets set by the managers for submitting suggestions?

Let's find out how many submitted ideas managers are planning for the year.



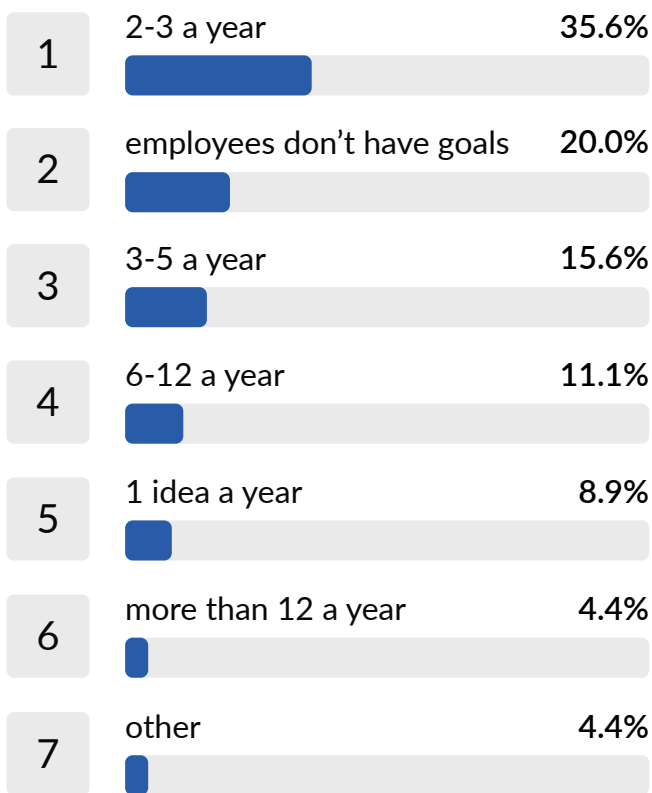
We asked managers who have quantitative targets, at what level are they? Only 23 people answered. Of this group, the majority (20.9%) have goals at the level of 2-3 ideas per year. 5 respondents each indicated a range 3-5% and 6-12%. There were also 3 indicative record holders, ambitiously aiming at more than 12 ideas per year.



QUESTION 24

# What targets do employees have for making suggestions?

Now let's look at the quantitative targets set for workers.

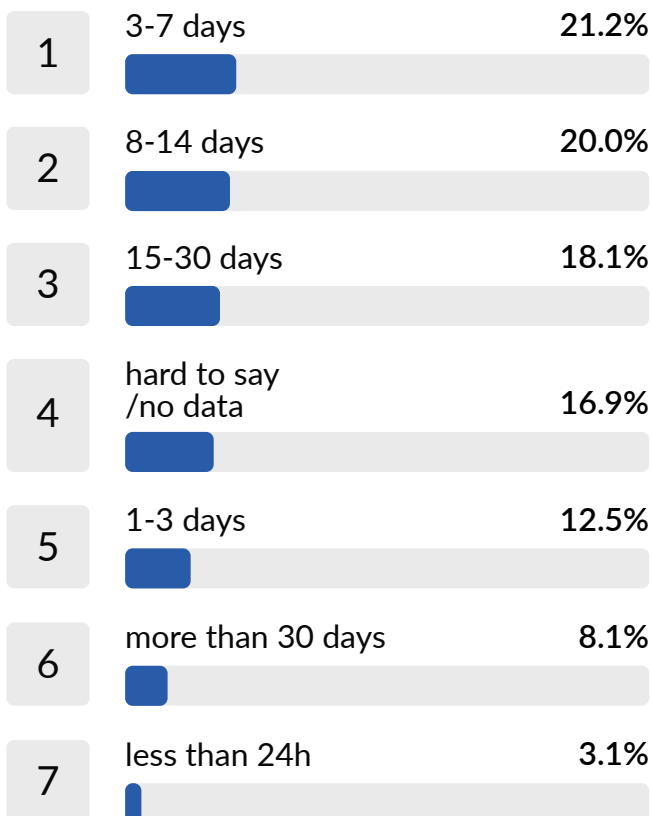


The results show that 32 respondents clarified the objectives of employees in terms of making suggestions. It turns out that **employees are more "indicative"**. 35.6% of this group have goals of 2-3 per year. This is logical, especially since some Systems of Suggestions exclude managers altogether, redirecting their efforts to support employee requests. This is done especially by companies which see the idea systems more as a way to activate employees, than to achieve business goals.

QUESTION 25

# In what time (on average) do employees receive a response to their suggestions?

That is the key question. Why? Because one of the most common reasons for the demise of Employee Suggestion Schemes is that they take **too long to process an application**. It is less about the time it takes to issue the award - more about the time it takes to make and communicate a decision.



The most frequently chosen answer is in line with the employees' expectations - from 3 to 7 days. This answer was given by 21,2% out of 160 respondents who answered this question. Slightly less, 20% said 8-14 days. There are also ambitious people who try to answer within 3 days - such 12.5%. Record-breaking respondents answer within 24 hours. Only 5 surveyed companies can provide feedback so quickly.

One in four companies is processing applications **more than two weeks.**

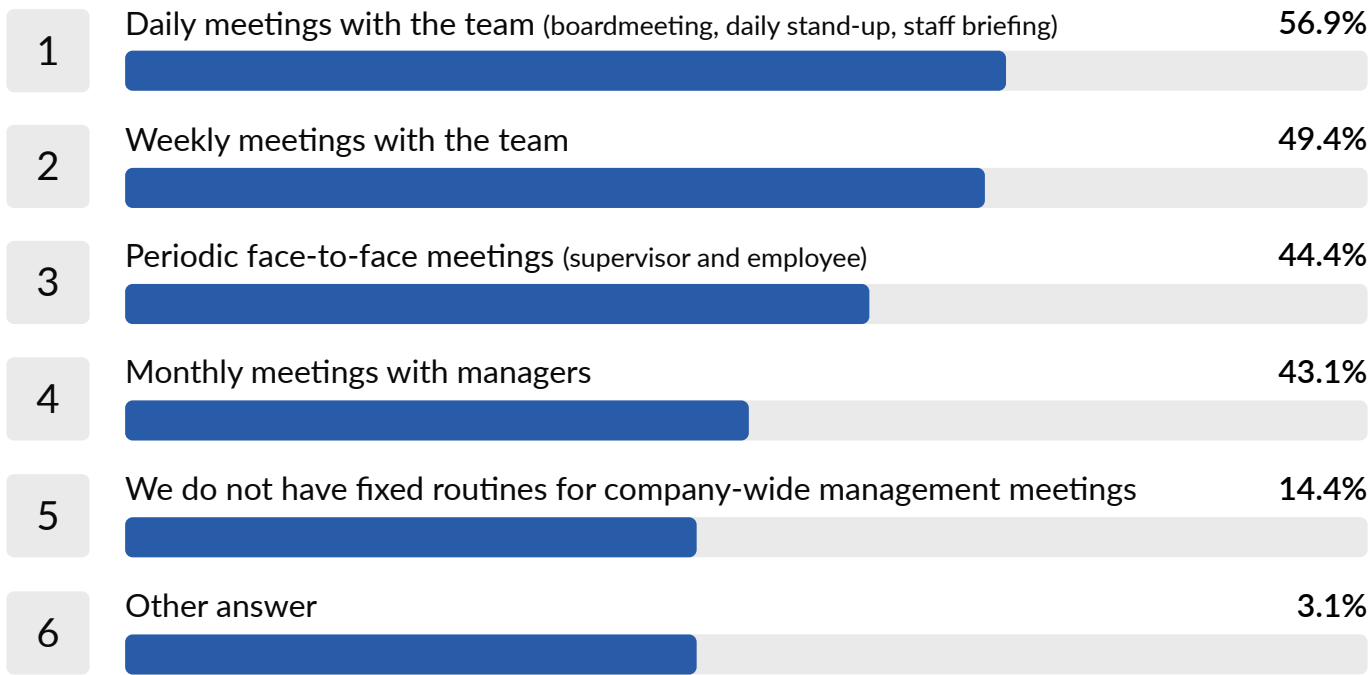
QUESTION 26

# What are the fixed routines of managerial meetings in your company?

Rutynowe spotkania są doskonałą okazją zarówno do zgłaszania, jak i do informowania o pomysłach.

It turns out that over 85% of companies hold management meetings. But only 57% of those surveyed reported that they hold daily meetings to shorten the response time to requests. 49.4% have weekly meetings. 44.4% of supervisors periodically meet with their employees individually.

Over **85%** of companies hold management meetings.



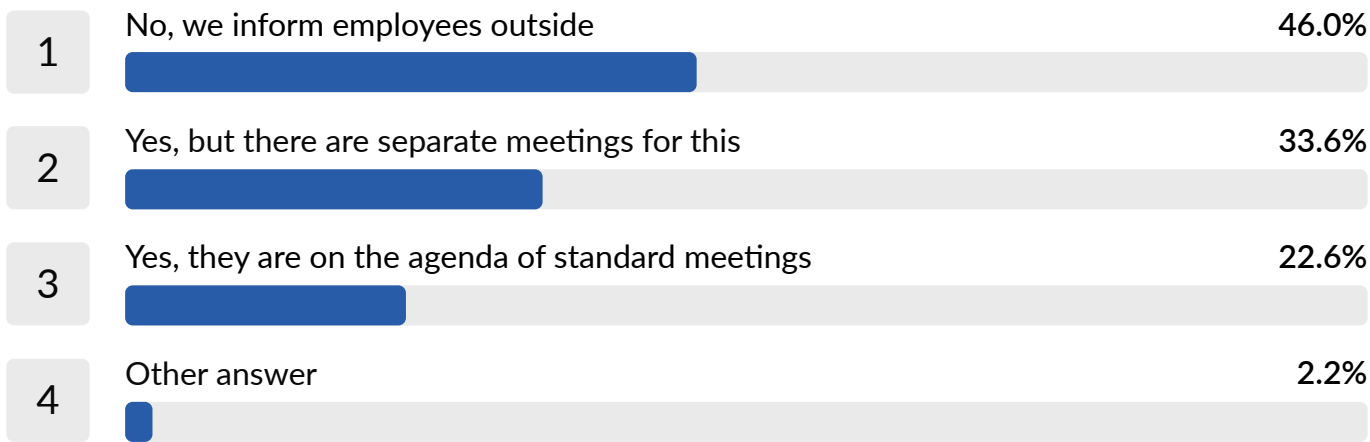
QUESTION 27

# Are suggestions made discussed as part of these routine meetings?

Despite the excellent opportunity to discuss employee suggestions, they tend to be overlooked in routine meetings.

Unfortunately, the majority (78%) of these meeting agendas do not include a section on employee suggestions. Rather, companies organise separate meetings for this purpose (33.6%) or prefer an individual discussion on the submitted idea (46%).

Only one out of five companies takes employee suggestions in daily meetings.

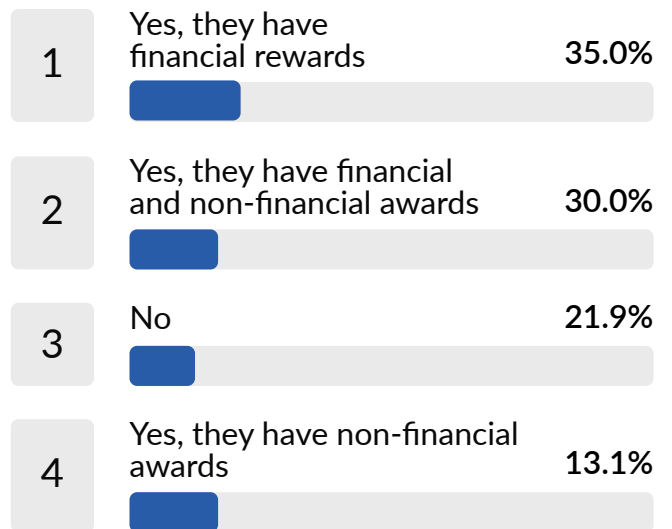


QUESTION 28

# Do employees receive rewards for active participation in the Suggestion System?

The question: to reward or not to reward has long been a source of heated debate.

Proponents of reward argue that alone motivates you to look at good ideas. Especially when salaries in the company are kept low. According to Maslow's pyramid, employees then mainly strive to satisfy the basic needs necessary to a dignified life. Submitting ideas for respect or self-fulfilment remains an unrealistic expectation in this case. Opponents of material rewards argue that this creates a transactional relationship - based on reward rather than genuine commitment to the process. Of the 160 respondents who answered this question, as many as 65% reward materially. Half of them reward not only in cash but also in kind. Another 13.1% focus exclusively on non-financial rewards.



QUESTION 29

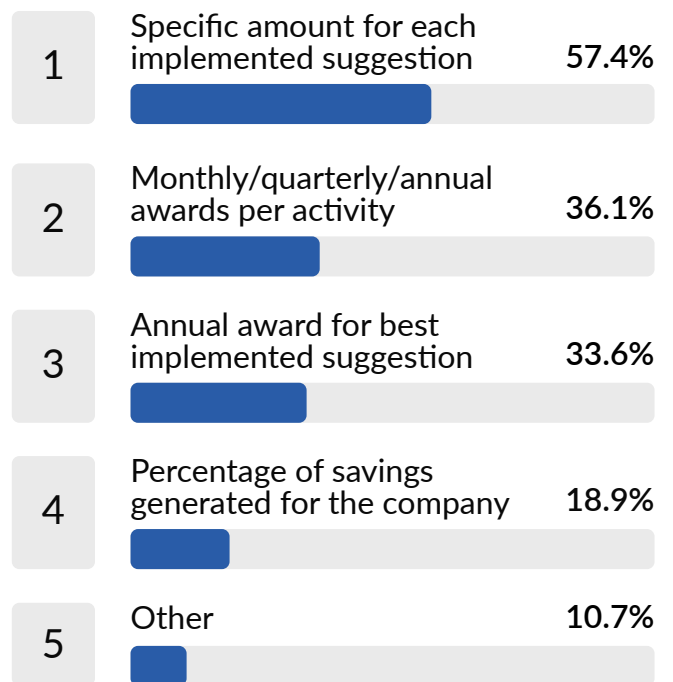
# What financial rewards do employees receive?

We looked at the amount of cash awards for staff ideas.

A financial reward is usually a specific amount for an implemented suggestion. It is less common to simply reward activity on an annual, quarterly or monthly basis (36.1%). Almost the same number of companies organize annual competitions for the best implemented suggestion. Only 10.7% of the surveyed companies face a more difficult, yet fair, way of calculating the awards - giving a percentage of the savings generated by the idea.

At one time it was popular to be rewarded for simply submitting an application. The rewards were usually symbolic, e.g. a company gift, a snack, a small present. They were meant to encourage people to take the first step and submit an idea. It is fair to say that it had the desired effect. There were shoals of applications. But there was also a dark side. The proposals were trivial, and each of them required bureaucratic "processing". The amount of work involved was so great that it slowed down the system and the average decision time was several weeks. Nowadays organisations are less concerned with the quantity and more with the quality of applications.

A reasonable intermediate form could be to reward submissions, but only for a certain period. For example, 4 weeks after the launch of the Suggestion System. If we plan the resources to "work" the shoal well, we have a breakthrough effect, and after a month we avoid further bureaucracy.



QUESTION 30

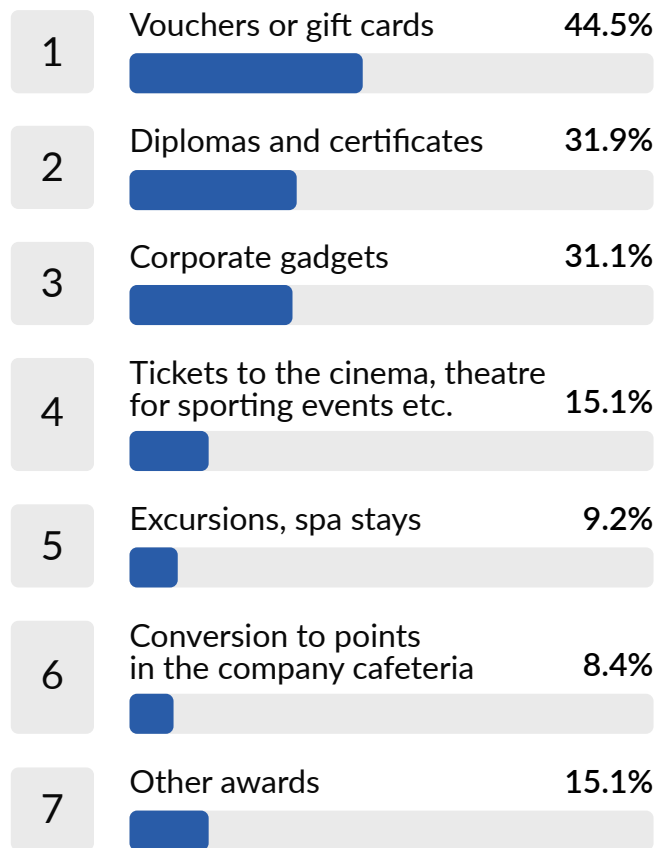
# What non-financial rewards do employees receive?

It turns out that non-financial awards... are not so non-financial!

Almost half of the 119 awarding companies (44.5%) admit to using gift vouchers or gifts which can be exchanged for goods or services of financial value. Some of the organisations surveyed have put more effort into a system with a message. 31.9% award diplomas and certificates, a prestigious award - a souvenir, a document which can be shown years later.

24.3% focus on rewards to be realised together as a team (tickets, trips). The message in the background is integration of employees. Finally, there are 31% of rewards with the company logo printed on them - building organisational affiliation in the background.

Points in a company café or a catalogue of company products, which seemed to be a popular solution, are used by only 8.4% of respondents.





# Conclusions of the study

Discover the 13 most important findings from our survey.

## FINDING 1

The biggest challenge in using Suggestion Systems is the low level of employee engagement. The reason for this, as the report shows, is the long reaction time of decision makers to ideas and the lack of opportunity to actively participate in their implementation.

## FINDING 2

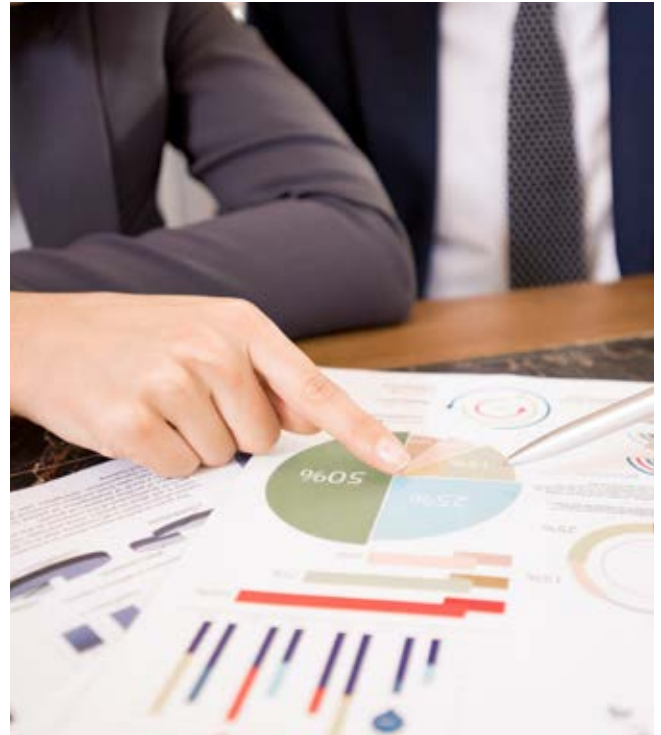
The form and method of submitting suggestions also leaves much to be desired at present. Often, requests are received on paper via so-called "idea boxes" and the form itself contains many unnecessary fields to be filled in. This discourages staff from taking the initiative to make a suggestion.

## FINDING 3

Many organisations found it easy to implement the Suggestion Scheme, but found it difficult to operate it effectively. Above all, there was a lack of an appropriate plan of action, communication, the appointment of people responsible for its operation and the involvement of senior management.

## FINDING 4

The launch of the suggestion system in most companies has not triggered an avalanche of ideas. Self-interest in this form of involvement in organisational improvement has been declining over the years.



## FINDING 5

There is low efficiency in teasing out ideas.

## FINDING 6

More than one third of the companies surveyed do not measure the level of savings or additional revenue that the Suggestion System generates annually. This is related to the lack of appropriate tools for this purpose and to the objectives of the system implementation, which in many companies focus on aspects related to employees (increasing their involvement, use of potential and knowledge) and building or strengthening a culture of continuous improvement.

### **FINDING 7**

If we take into account all possible electronic forms of submitting suggestions, online submissions are still far more popular than paper submissions in many companies. Only 1.9% of respondents currently use an external application for this purpose, but this is expected to grow significantly in the coming years.

### **FINDING 8**

The employee usually learns about the status of their suggestion from the notice board or by talking to their supervisor or the Suggestion Scheme coordinator. This means that a large number of respondents are unable to track the status of their request in real time, and may receive delayed information about the processing of their request, which has a negative impact on the evaluation of the system and their involvement.

### **FINDING 9**

Few companies convert all ideas into financial figures (19.9%). When we know what savings they will bring to the organisation, we are able to assess whether the system is fulfilling its role.

### **FINDING 10**

Employees have more precise quantitative annual targets for reporting suggestions than managers do for implementing them.

### **FINDING 11**

Respondents most often declare that employees receive feedback on their suggestions within 3-7 days. This value is in line with employees' expectations. However, it is worrying that one in four companies takes longer than two weeks to process a request. Such long waiting times can effectively discourage employees from using the Suggestion System.

### **FINDING 12**

In the majority of companies (78%), suggestions are not discussed in daily meetings, despite this being an excellent opportunity to provide information on their status. Only one in five companies includes a section on the Suggestion System in their policy.

### **FINDING 13**

78.1% of the companies reward employees for their active participation in the Suggestion System. 65% of the surveyed companies reward materially, and half of them also reward employee involvement in a non-financial way. The fewest companies, 13.1%, reward only non-financially.





## Danuta Pięta

**Logistics Manager** with Kramp Sp. z o.o. since 2006. She is experienced in managing and supervising the processes of returns and complaints, planning and managing costs according to the set budget. Her main priority is the development of the organisation, therefore, she motivates and inspires teams to continuous improvement through tools such as Kaizen, 5S, Area Readiness. Privately, a happy wife and mother of two adult sons.

### **What are your thoughts on the results of the survey?**

More and more organisations which focus on innovation and rapid development are deciding to implement a Suggestion System for their employees. Employees working in processes are the source of innovation and need to feel a real impact on their working environment and the company as a whole.

### **Did any of the conclusions intrigue or surprise you?**

Conclusion on Question 12: Suggestions on paper as high as 66.2%. In our organisation, the paper Suggestion System existed for 26 months and died a natural death. It was too opaque for the employees and we were looking for a tool to help us develop it further.

### **Do the results presented in the report reflect the situation in your organisation?**

For the most part, yes. Our organisation is based on four pillars: cooperation, commitment, entrepreneurship and the customer. These aspects are inseparable and determine how each employee should think and act. The Suggestion System is therefore a very important part of our strategy.

### **If you had one piece of advice for companies looking to implement or improve their Suggestion System, what would it be?**

Successful implementation of the suggestion system will only be possible when managers and leaders in the organisation are convinced of it. It depends on them how they will present it to their subordinates or employees and how they will work with it. Will they see their employees' suggestions as additional work or as a value for the development of the organisation, and how quickly will they react to the suggestions?

**Could you share an example of an idea that has had the greatest business impact?**

Our organisation has only just begun to measure business results, initially in two indicators: entrepreneurship and safety expressed in RbH.

**Has your company been approached with a potential idea as part of the Suggestion System, but has it not been implemented due to barriers? If yes, what were they?**

Several high-potential applications have so far been implemented due to barriers, e.g. the introduction of vouchers, gift cards, loyalty cards, the installation of loudspeakers in retail shops to broadcast information on newspapers and products, the introduction of returnable containers.



**Sherlock**  
waste

Turn frustration into innovation! 

