



**SURVEY**

# **THE STATE OF AGENCY- CLIENT COLLABORATION**

2012



# Relationships are hard.

It's no secret that there has long been friction between agencies and clients. For those of you who work in marketing on either side of the equation, we've grappled with this for years. And while many of us think we know the problem, no one has solved it.

So we set out to answer the following questions:

- What are the biggest challenges facing agencies and clients in working together?
- How important are collaboration tools to agencies and brands?
- How do collaboration technologies benefit internal operations and the agency-client relationship?

This report is based on data collected in our survey, "The State of Agency-Client Collaboration," from May 10 to June 4, 2012. More than 800 people were surveyed, of which 570 were qualified respondents working at marketing agencies or working with agencies from the client side.

So what did we learn?



# Agencies are being pressured to improve the way they work with clients.

The main **agency** takeaways from the survey revealed the following:

- Agencies' biggest day-to-day headaches include:
  - Too-heavy workload and time management challenges
  - Dealing with clients
  - Working with internal team members
  - Communication woes
  - Administrative tasks
  - Keeping track of project status
  - Finding new business
- **41%** have had a client or prospect require them to have a collaboration system to keep or win a major account
- **54%** consider it very or extremely beneficial if the various collaboration tools they use are housed in one platform with one login
- The top three benefits experienced since implementing existing collaboration tools include:
  1. Improved project management processes (**50%**)
  2. Faster project completion (**42%**)
  3. Improved client service and satisfaction (**40%**)





# Clients want better communication, and they're tying dollars to it.

Clients are getting more vocal about how they want agencies to interact with them:

- Clients' biggest day-to-day headaches include:
  - Communication challenges
  - Lack of agency expertise in the client business or industry
  - Agency turnaround times
  - File-sharing and management
  - Quality of deliverables
  - Implementation of client feedback
  - Keeping track of project status
  - Quality of services
- **38%** have not awarded business to an agency for lack of adequate tools for managing work and communications on the account
- **71%** consider it a competitive differentiator over other agencies if an agency has a single collaboration system to manage project work online
- **55%** surveyed consider it “very (**36%**) or extremely (**19%**) important” that an agency have an online collaboration system to work on projects and campaigns with them
- **24%** have required an agency to have a collaboration system for keeping or winning an account
- **23%** have asked – but not required – an agency to have a collaboration system
- The top three benefits on the brand side experienced since implementing existing collaboration tools are:
  1. Improved project management processes (**60%**)
  2. Faster project completion (**53%**)
  3. Decreased time spent reporting and providing progress reports (**44%**)





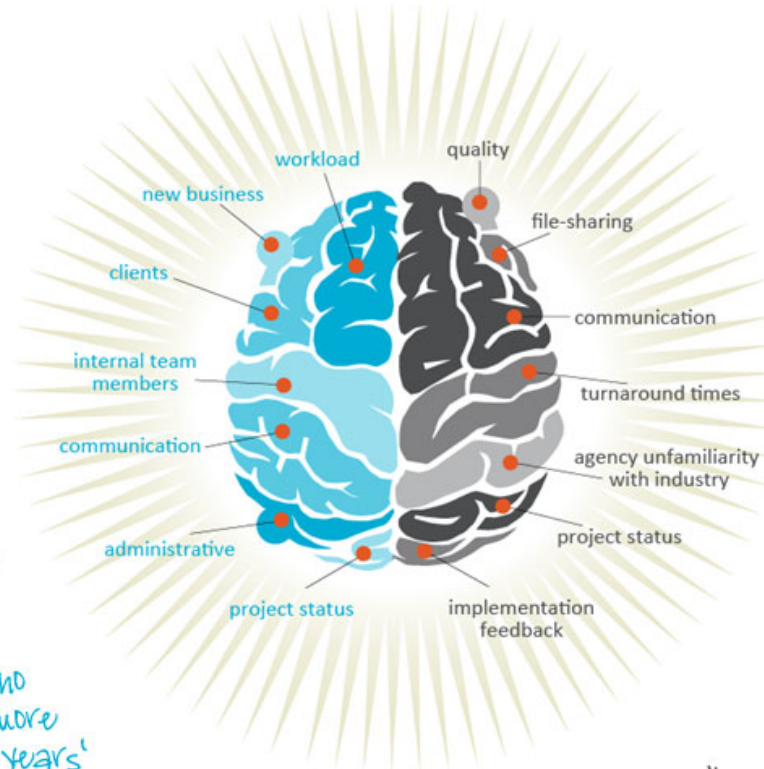
# Biggest headaches



"The never-ending list of tasks from multiple clients - and trying to manage their completion across various teams internally."

"My client's and coworkers' unwillingness to put their thinking on paper with such discipline and clarity that they cannot be misunderstood."

"Dealing with so many people who believe they know so much more than I do...trumping my 15 years' experience with their expertise at Twitter and Angry Birds."



"Keeping the dialog active after initial contact."

"Turnaround time for specific information. Of course, I want it now, and that really isn't a fair scenario."

"Having agencies understand our business, our products and our customers. It is difficult to find people who can develop assets that meet the unique requirements of our business."

"When too many minions try to act as contact. Give me the office mail person, but give me the same person consistently."



# If AGENCIES could change one thing about working internally and with clients...

... it would be to **improve communication.**

In an open-text question, we asked agencies what one thing they would change about working with team members internally and with clients. In parsing out the top 75 words in terms of frequency, communication was a major theme. That includes more face-to-face time and phone conversations, fewer places to keep information, more effective communication and more organization around projects.



"More people sharing notes and action items from meetings and calls. Everyone is running so fast communication frequently lags."

"I would love a tool that we could use to collaborate on the creative process with clients. Managing production and internal processes is a hassle, but I believe collaboration with clients is the key to creating deeper ongoing relationships."



# If BRANDS could change one thing about working internally and with agencies...

... it would *also* be to **improve communication**.

In an open-text question, we asked marketing clients what one thing they would change about working with team members internally and working with agencies. In parsing out the top 75 words in terms of frequency, communication was again the clear theme.



"I would find a way to integrate all members of the project so that communication didn't get lost in the shuffle."

"Less email communication, more managed in collaboration tools."

"Increase meaningful communication, without assumptions."



## Clients are penalizing agencies without the right tools.

And they're doing so in real dollars. Nearly **40%** of respondents on the client side reported that they **have not awarded business** to an agency because the agency did not have adequate tools for managing work and communications on the account.



**4** out of **10**

companies have taken their business elsewhere because they didn't feel an agency had the right tools for managing work and communications





## Brands are getting vocal about collaboration.

Clients are starting to apply the pressure when it comes to how agencies work with them. Just over **24%** of internal marketers have required an agency to have a collaboration system for keeping (11%) or winning (14%) an account with another **23%** asking an agency to get a collaboration system for the account.

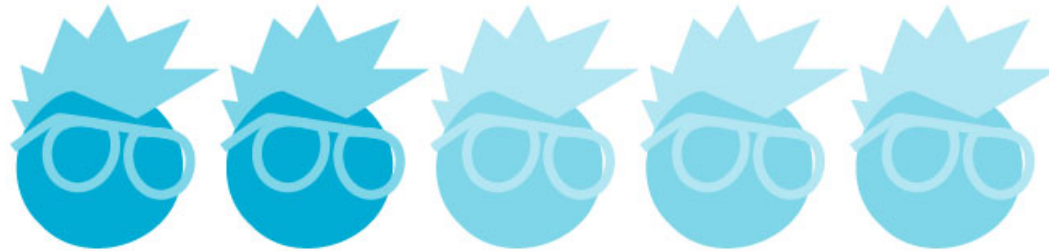


companies have required or asked an agency to get a collaboration system to keep or win the account



## Agencies are feeling the pressure.

Agencies are getting the message loud and clear from clients. More than **41%** of agency respondents report that a client or prospect has required them to have a collaboration system as a stipulation for keeping (24%) or winning (17%) a major account. Another 24% of agencies have been asked, but not required, to have a collaboration system to service a major account.



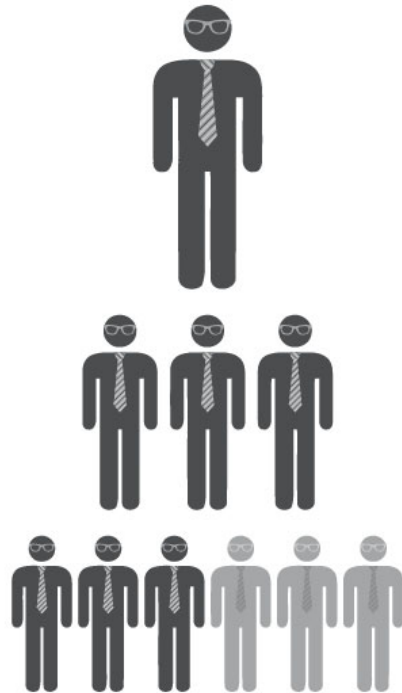
**2** out of **5**

agencies have had to get a collaboration system to avoid losing a major account or to win a major account



## Collaboration systems make agencies more appealing in competitive situations.

Competition for new business in the agency world is fierce. Agencies are judged not only by their big ideas, well-known successes (and failures) and quality of their creative, but also by a myriad of other criteria ranging from chemistry with the client to core competencies to office locations and everything in between. In this survey, **71%** of client-side respondents reported that they view a single collaboration system as a competitive differentiator for an agency over competing agencies.

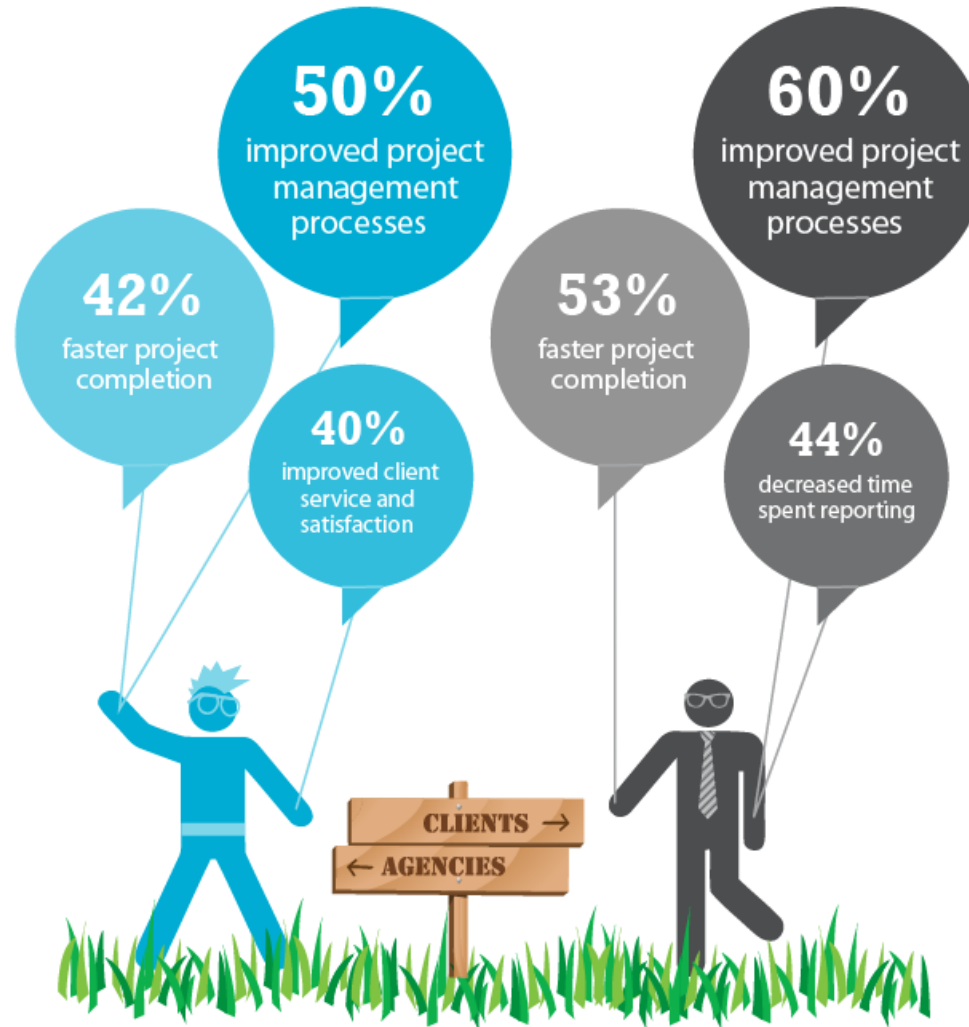


# 71%

of companies view a single collaboration system as a competitive differentiator for an agency



## Agencies and clients who have implemented collaboration tools are enjoying the benefits.



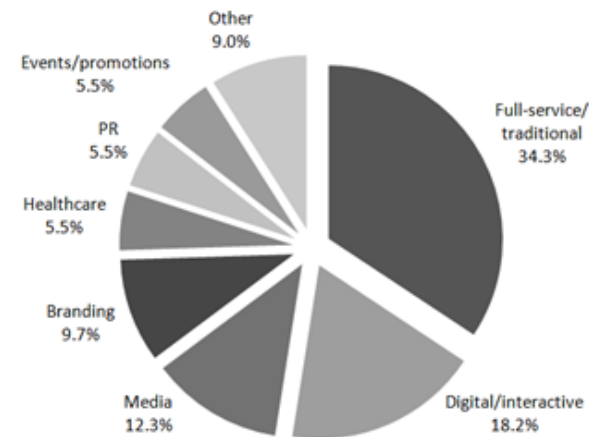


## RESPONDENTS

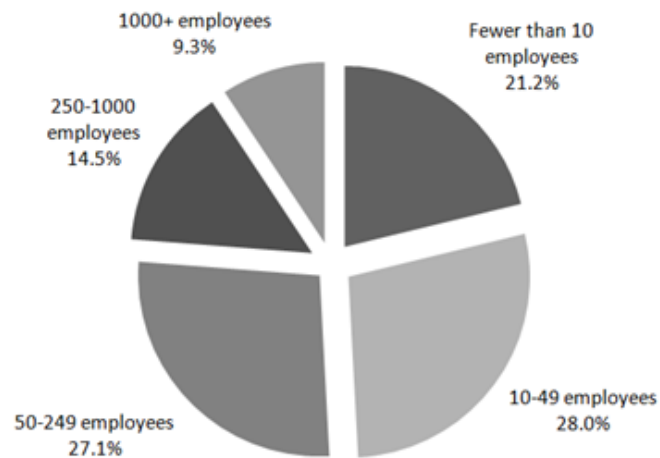
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marketing agencies

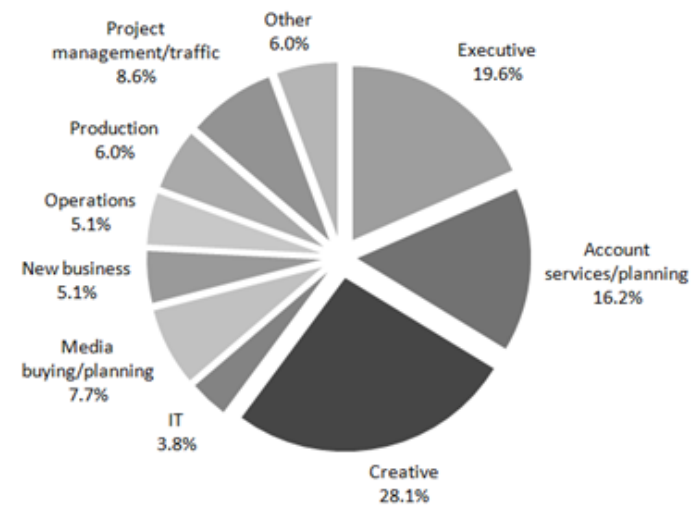
### by type



### by size



### by role



4.9% of agency respondents are Central Desktop customers.

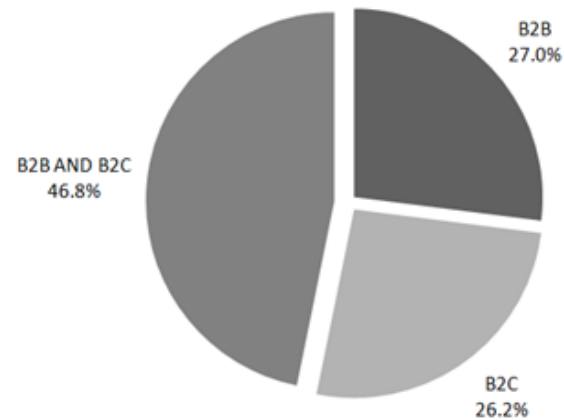


## RESPONDENTS

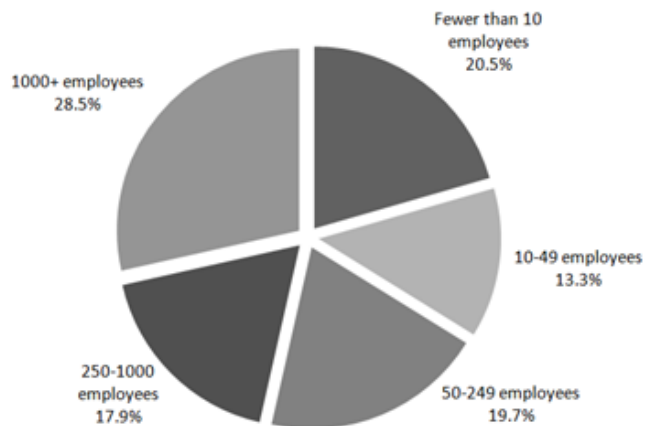
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brands +  
internal  
marketers

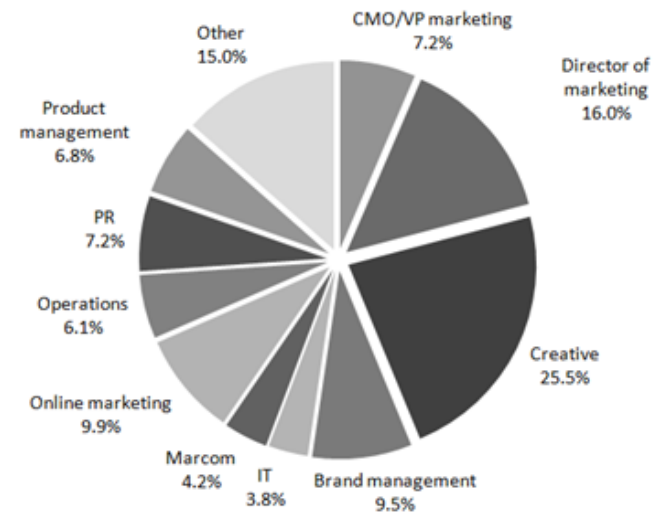
### by type



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### by role



2.3% of client-side respondents are Central Desktop customers.



## Online collaboration as defined in the survey

**online collaboration system:** web-based system that enables secure file-sharing with internal and external team members, project and task management, light process automation, and the ability to conduct discussions and communicate online



# About Central Desktop

Central Desktop helps people work together in ways they never imagined possible.

Our SocialBridge collaboration platform connects people and information in the cloud, making it possible to share files, combine knowledge, inspire ideas, manage projects and more.

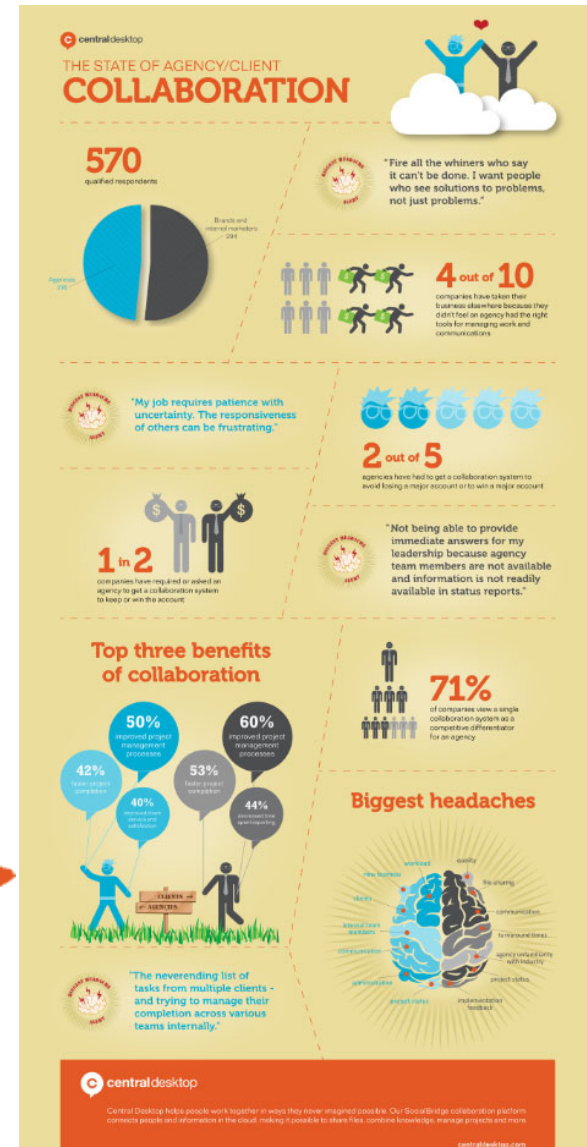
Central Desktop serves half a million users worldwide. Key Central Desktop customers include CBS, Resource Interactive, SicolaMartin, M80, SK+G Advertising, Rhea + Kaiser, Javelin and Upshot.

Founded in 2005, Central Desktop is a privately-held company with headquarters in Pasadena, California.

Click here to get the infographic.



(c'mon. you know you want to click it!)



Contact us.  
We don't bite.

866.692.1649  
www.centraldesktop.com