

The State of Customer Onboarding 2023

Top goals

Top challenges

2023 trends



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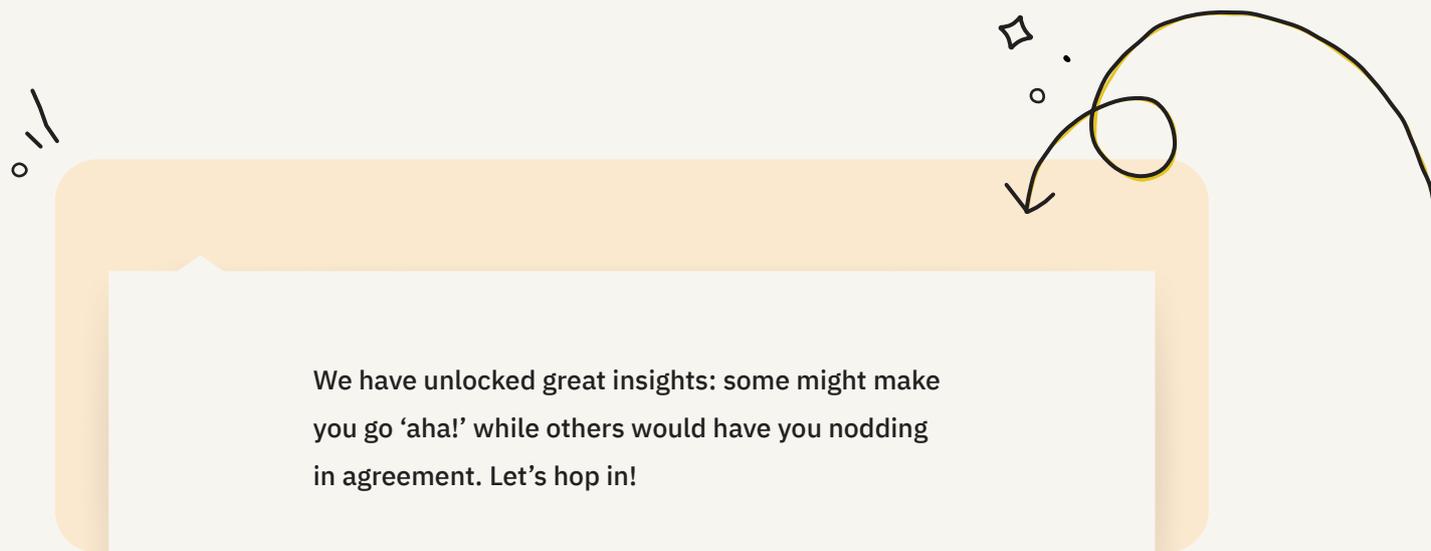
Introduction

For as long as there have been businesses selling products and services, customer onboarding and post-sales functions have existed. In the last decade, customer onboarding has become a tangible function – proof of how important that first impression is for your business.

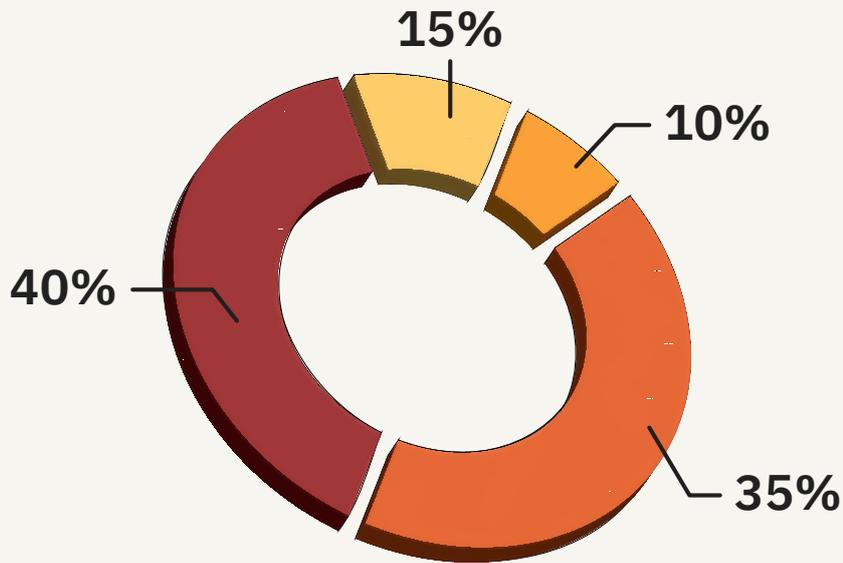
It is no secret that customer retention is as important ([if not more](#)) than customer acquisition. And the customer experience during the onboarding phase can make or break their decision to renew with you.

Significant as it is, we realized there wasn't enough learning resources available for practitioners in the customer onboarding space when we started building Rocketlane. We decided to fill this gap ourselves. Our State of Customer Onboarding surveys are a significant component of the resources we create for professionals in this field.

Our [inaugural report in 2022](#) established the importance of the customer onboarding process and function. This report, our installment for 2023, adds a layer of trends on top of reporting on the current landscape of customer onboarding. This time, we surveyed 300 professionals across different industries, verticals, and organization sizes.



Know our respondents



43
Founder and Director Level

100
Customer Success/Onboarding Lead

30
Vice president

117
Customer Success/Onboarding Manager



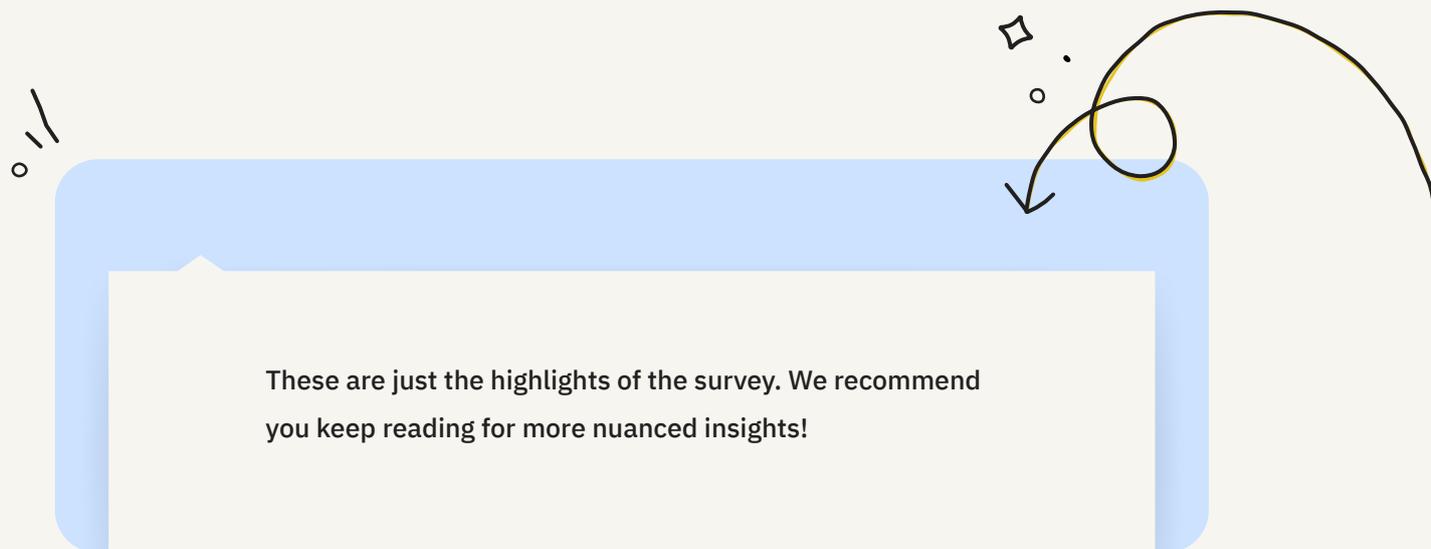


Key Findings

Rocketlane's survey reveals key trends around the current state of affairs regarding B2B customer onboarding. In this year's survey, we dug into the responsibilities, workload, strategies, processes, and tools used.

If the end of 2022 is anything to go by, we see more of the following changes making their way to the foreground in 2023:

- ◆ Organizations increasingly recognize customer onboarding as a function in itself: 42% of respondents indicated that onboarding is an independent function in their organization.
- ◆ More companies will charge for onboarding and implementation - the number is already growing – 40% of our respondents told us they charge for implementing their offering. 20% of respondents have monetizing implementations as a top goal for 2023.
- ◆ The roles and responsibilities of customer onboarding professionals are [evolving](#). Businesses will add more people to their customer onboarding teams to meet the growth.
- ◆ Improving customer experience remains the top goal for 2023 (78%).



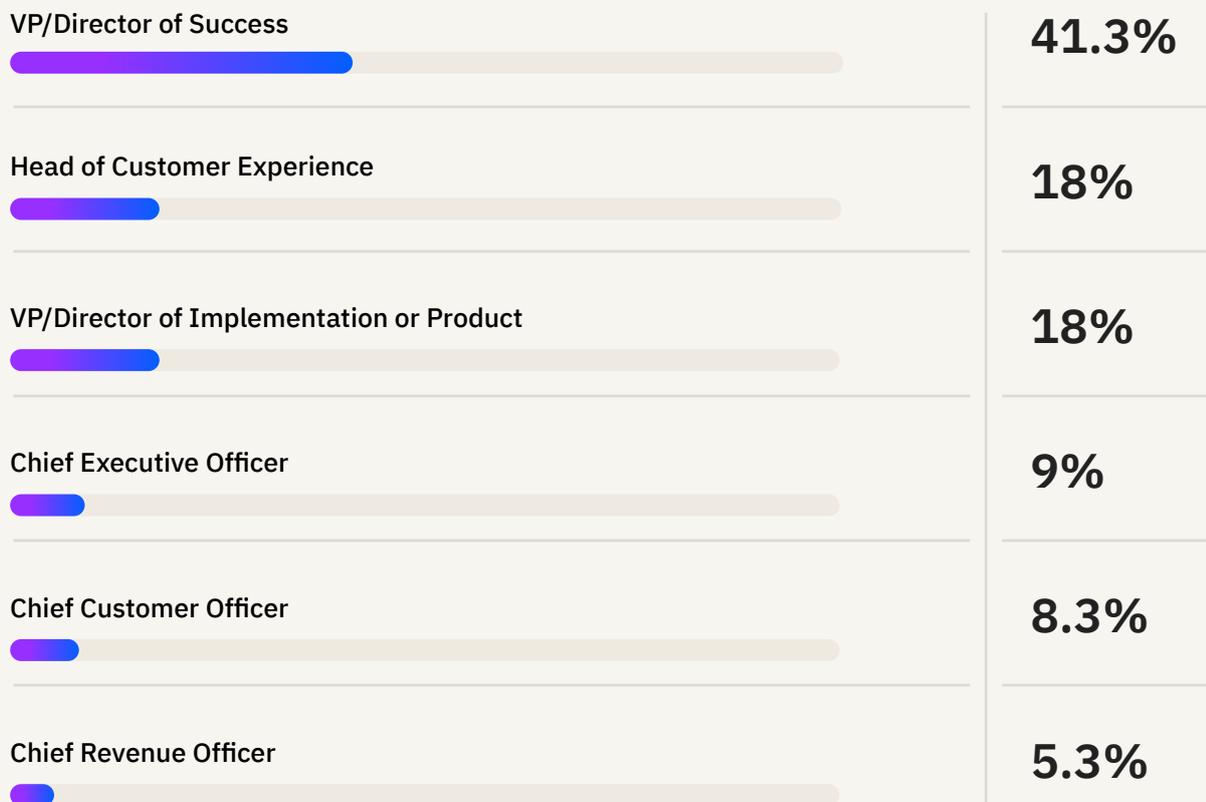


People, Roles, and Organization

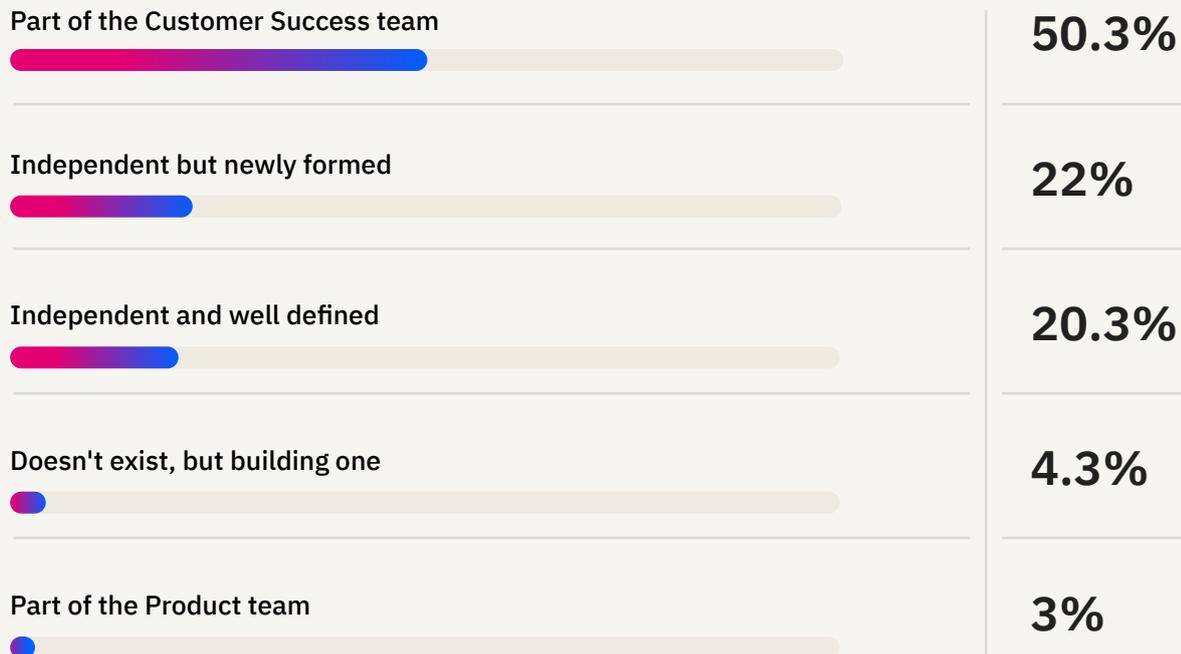
At the end of the day, every business is made up of human beings, as are their functions. So we decided to delve into how customer onboarding teams are organized.

While customer onboarding is still seen as a sub-function of Customer Success at the organizations of most of our respondents, we see a growing trend towards it becoming an independent function in itself (42%):

Who does customer onboarding report to?

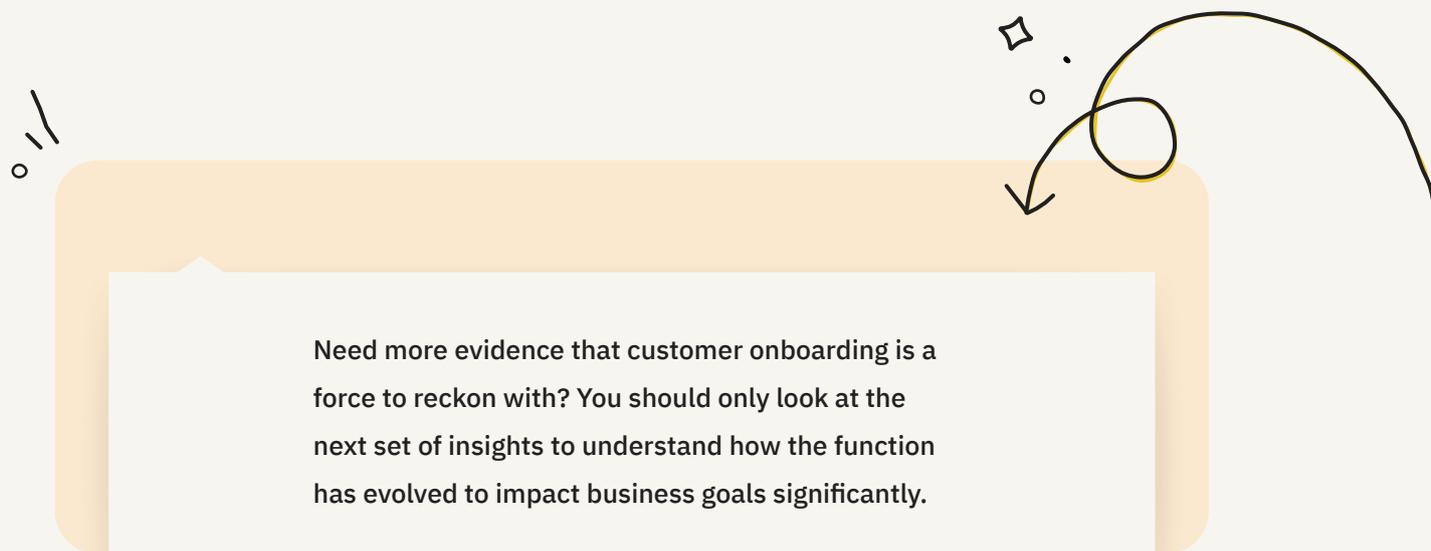


How mature is the customer onboarding function at your organization?



Onboarders are doing... a lot

Post-sales teams are doing more than just the actual onboarding and implementation, they are managing multiple projects (sometimes more than a handful), and they would benefit from additional people to manage the load. However, if you are trying to keep a lean team, it's a great idea to invest in a tool to automate repeatable processes. This way, you free up bandwidth for your team so they can focus on creating customer delight.



How big is your customer onboarding team?

1-5



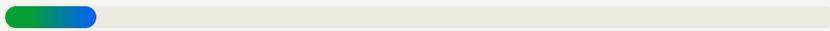
52.3%

6-10



21.7%

11-20



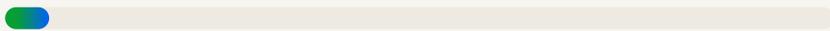
11%

> 30



9.7%

21-30



5.3%

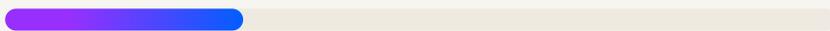
How many accounts do you oversee at a time?

More than 15



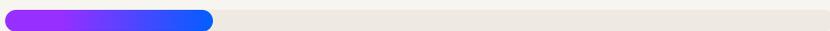
31.7%

Between 5 and 10



28.7%

Less than 5



25%

Between 11 and 15



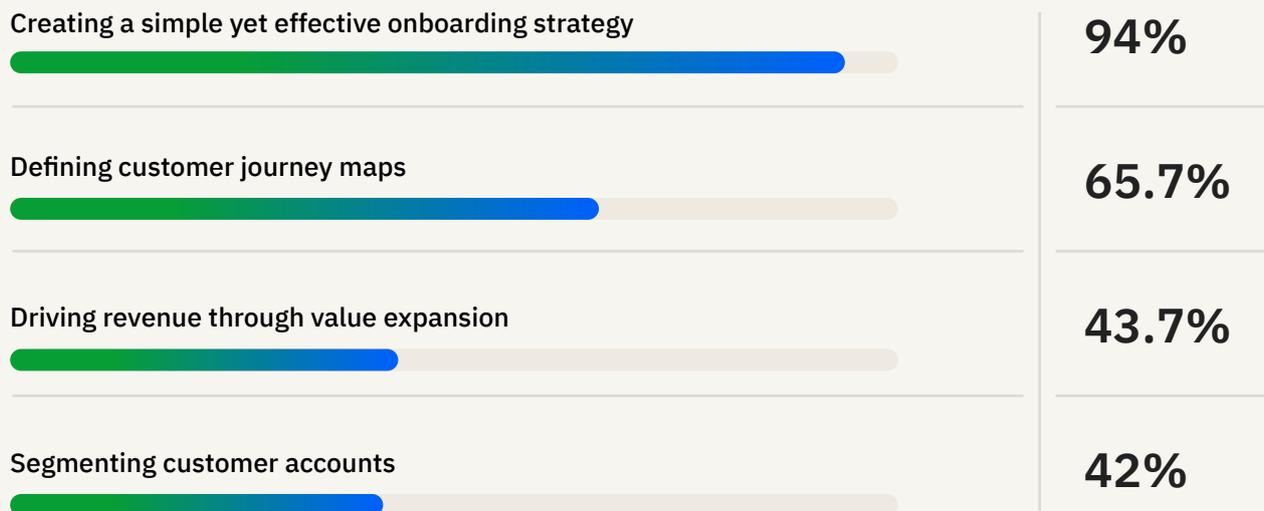
14.7%



In our survey from 2022, 5-10 was the highest number of projects handled per person. The workload has clearly increased, with 31.7% saying they handle more than 15 at a time.

We'd hazard a guess that onboarding professionals are overworked! While the high number of projects handled per onboarding specialist is a positive indicator of business health, it can also point to a need for better resource management practices. We say this because apart from the actual onboarding project itself, these teams are cramming other responsibilities into their work day.

What other responsibilities fall under the customer onboarding charter?



The role and contribution of onboarding professionals to the business are definitely appreciated!

Do you feel your role is valued in your organization?

Yes



88.7%

No



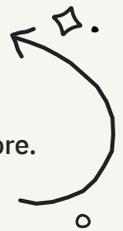
11.3%

Learning in public propels onboarding careers

We asked our respondents an open-ended question: What has accelerated your career progression?

✓ An overwhelming majority answered they learn in public! If you want to keep learning in 2023 in an intimate environment, Rocketlane offers an exclusive Slack community for post-sale folks: [Preflight](#).

We also provide webinars, workshops, mentorship, city-based cohorts, and more. We'd be happy to have you join bright minds in the space!



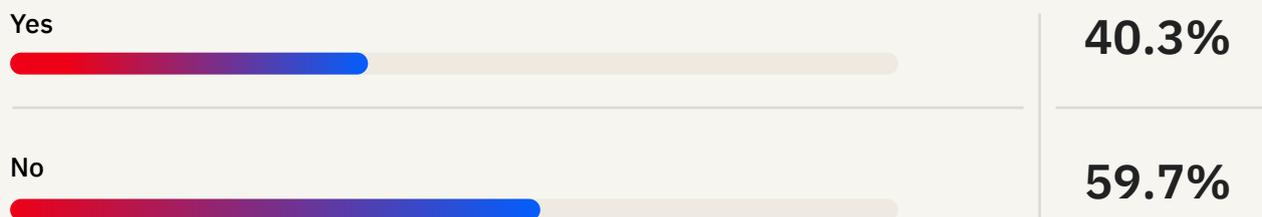
Apart from public learning, respondents said self-advocacy and managing up have been career boosters.



More businesses charge for implementations

A few years ago, charging for implementation wasn't an industry practice. While most of our respondents tended towards a 'no' when asked if they charged for implementations, the small margin of difference makes us believe there is a decisive movement towards charging for implementations and/or onboardings.

Do you package and charge for your onboarding and implementations?



Popular pricing formats are:

- ◆ Flat fee
- ◆ One-off charges
- ◆ Including the fee as part of the subscription/purchase
- ◆ Charging only premium/enterprise customers
- ◆ Charges based on customer goals (milestone-based pricing)

This also indicates a mindset change on the part of consumers: it makes sense for them to invest in good implementation and onboarding.

As the vendor, when you charge for implementations:

- ◆ Customers are more likely to stick to agreed timelines
- ◆ Customers help you execute faster if they pay
- ◆ You invest more resources into implementation and onboarding activities to ensure better success and outcomes for the customer and yourself—a win-win situation



Codat is a developer-led, API-first tool; our clients are responsible for the majority of the work involved in implementing our product. So we offer implementation consultancy as a premium service alongside other self-serve options.

We feel that the best practice guidance, specialist product expertise and close support is a worthwhile investment that ensures a high-quality implementation and overall reduction in time-to-value."

Rob Marcall

Implementation Lead

Solutions | Codat

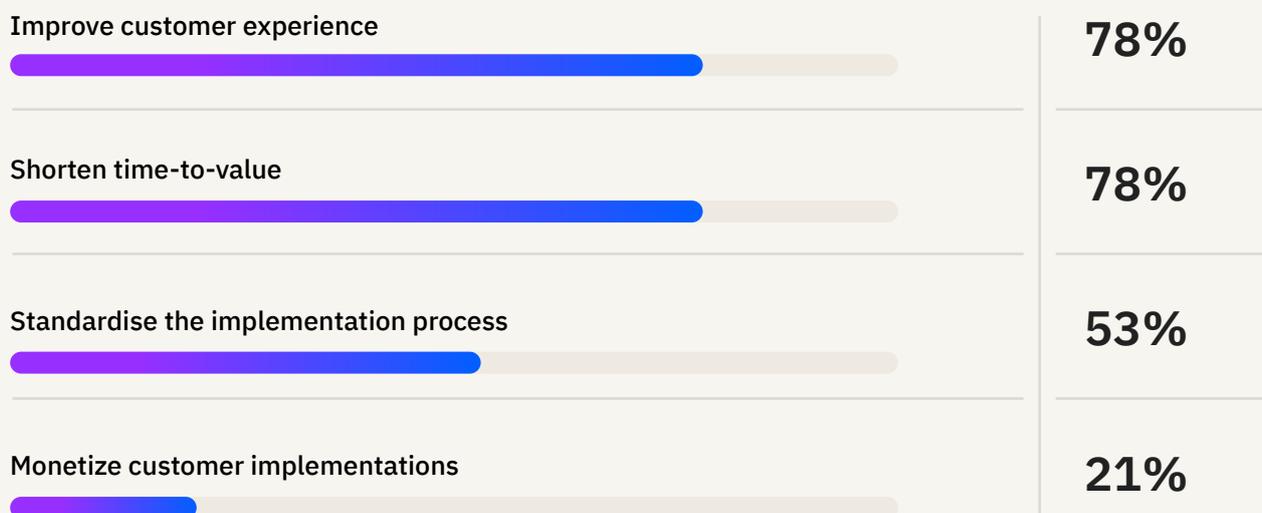


Goals and challenges

Your social feed was probably filled with people reviewing their year—the hits and misses and what they will do differently in 2023. We gave it a post-sales spin and got our respondents thinking about what they want for themselves, workwise, this year.

What are your top goals for 2023?

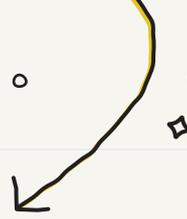
Customer experience [remains](#) a top priority for onboarders, with shortening time to value (TTV) taking a higher priority this year (last year, the second place went to standardizing processes).



Adoption and usage are top KPIs

This is pretty straightforward: the success of customer onboarding is directly reflected in how well your product or service has been adopted by users at the customer's end.

Side note: That customer onboarding teams have defined KPIs is yet another indicator of the function coming into its own.



KPIs that customer onboarding teams are measured on

Adoption and usage



68.3%

Time to launch



53%

Time to first value



50.3%

CSAT or NPS



46%

Customer effort score



17.3%

What are your top challenges with onboarding new customers?

Another challenge that [follows](#) onboarders into 2023 is holding customers accountable for their components of onboarding. Expectation management, too, is a close second this time around.

Making them equally accountable for work



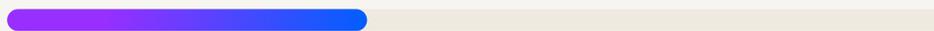
74.7%

Expectation management



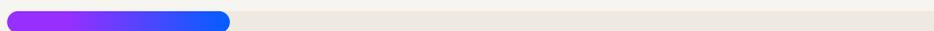
69.7%

Understanding customer sentiments during onboarding



38.3%

Establishing transparency



23.7%

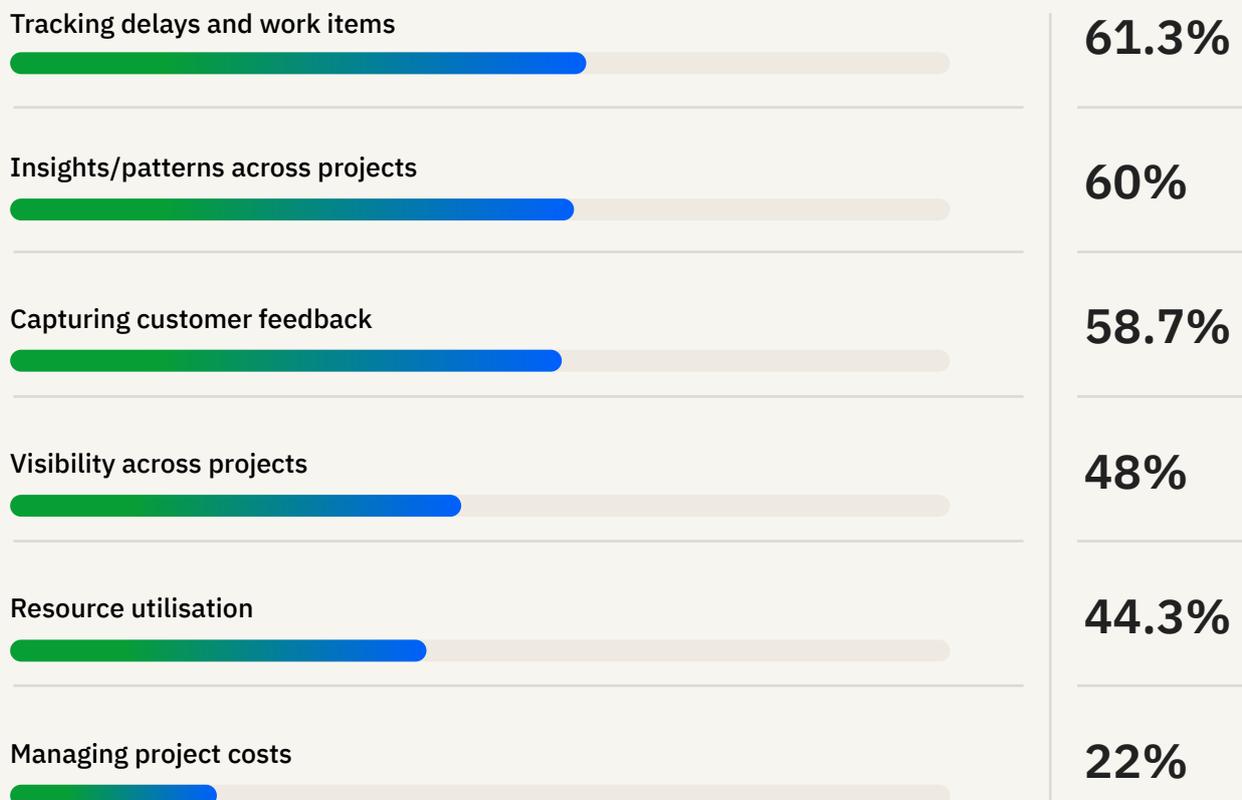
Rocketlane is built to solve onboarding challenges. We've explained how at the [end of the report!](#)

Tracking work items and delays across tools is a thorn in the side

A whopping 61.3% said they could do with some improvements around tracking delays and work items.

53.7% agree that it is the biggest time sink at work.

Where do you feel reporting for customer onboarding projects can be improved?



What is your biggest time sink at work?

Follow ups with internal and external team members



67%

Tracking work and statuses across tools and documents



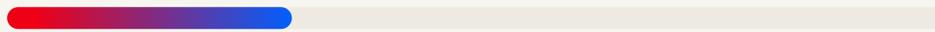
53.7%

Chasing customers for approvals



37%

Creating reports and presentations



30.3%

Other



7%

Follow-ups and reminders are a huge pain point

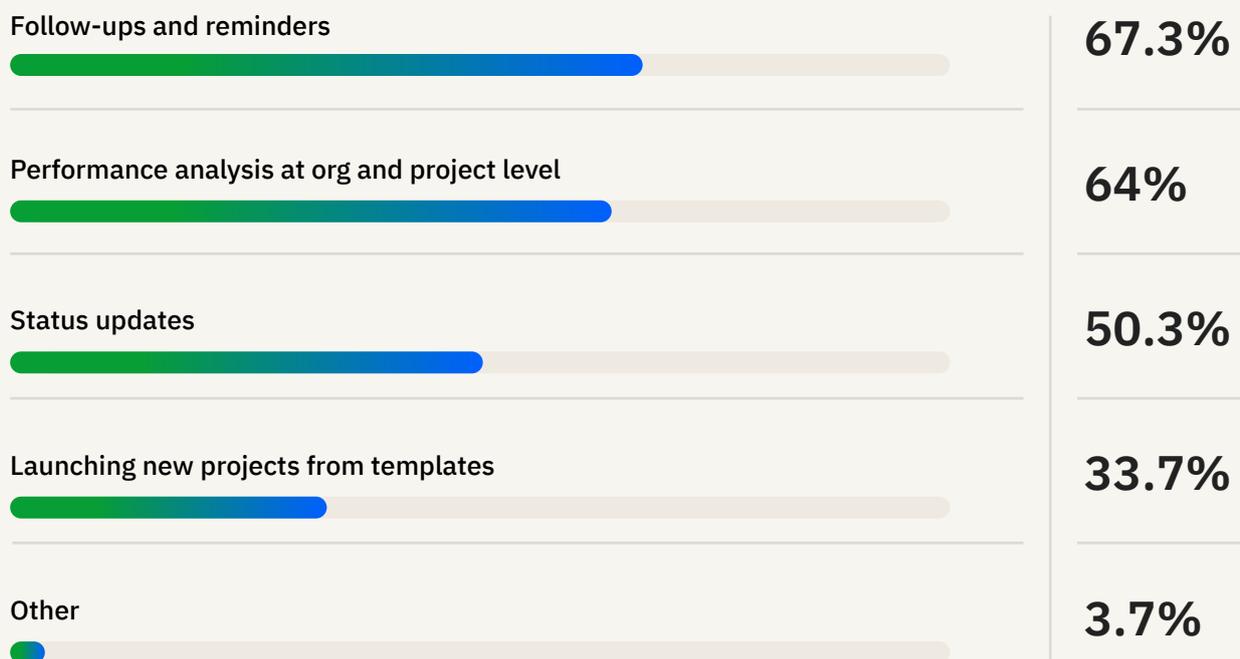
57% of our respondents said they spent anywhere from 2 to 5 hours just following up with customers and project stakeholders! The majority (67%) say it's also their biggest time sink at work (refer to the previous section). It's also the activity that most of them (67% again) want to automate.

This seems to correlate directly with how 74% of respondents said holding customers accountable for their part of the project was a challenge.

How much time in a week do you spend on follow-ups and reminders?



What would you like to automate with your tools?



👉 Rocketlane helps you automate all the grunt work so you can focus on customer delight. We tell you how [here](#).

Project data visibility needs attention

Here are the stats with regards to reporting and insights.



48%

of respondents believe that project visibility could use improvement



64%

said they'd like to automate project performance analysis



53.7%

of respondents said tracking work across tools is their biggest time sink at work



60%

believe drawing out insights and patterns is an area of their customer onboarding process that could be improved



58.7%

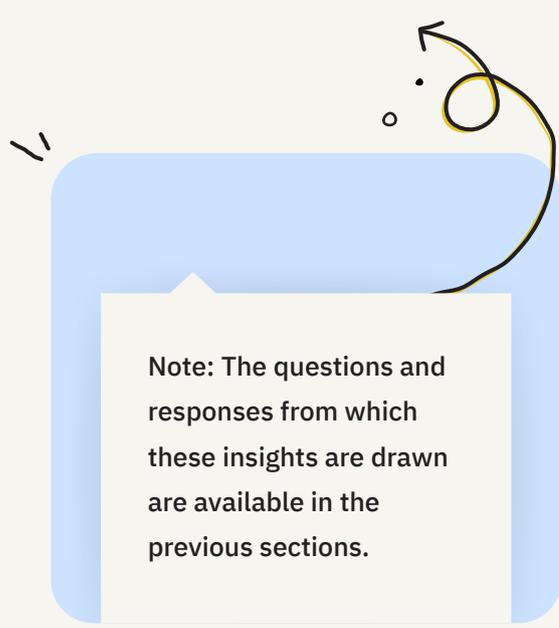
improvements to how customer feedback is captured



30.3%

said it was creating reports and presentations

Poor project visibility can lead to customer dissatisfaction, loss of trust in you, and can overall bring down the customer experience during the onboarding phase. It makes sense to prioritize project visibility, as it so clearly impacts business outcomes.



Note: The questions and responses from which these insights are drawn are available in the previous sections.

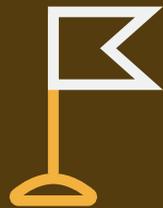


“Since growth happens after the initial sale, customer onboarding is no longer a ‘nice-to-have.’ The State of Customer Onboarding 2023 shows that more companies take customer onboarding seriously.

In order to have a greater impact on customers and their companies, onboarding teams deserve the recognition and investments they deserve.”

Donna Weber

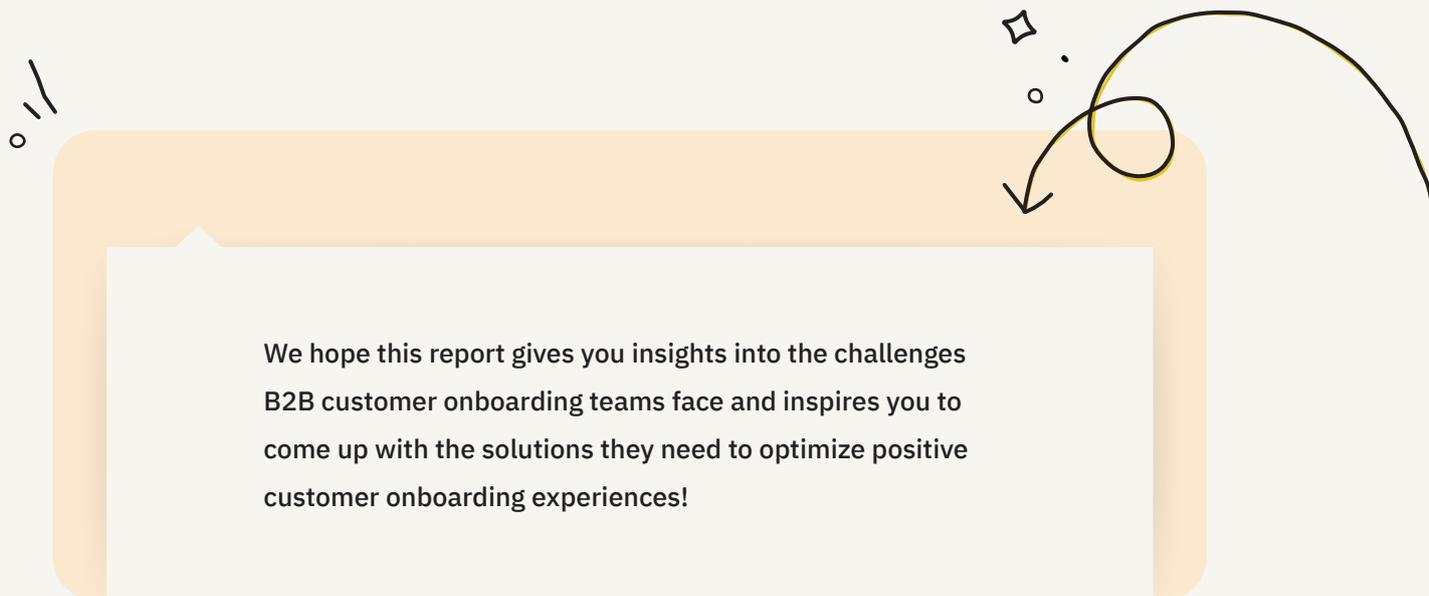
The Customer Onboarding Expert,
Springboard Solutions



The state of customer onboarding (TL;DR)

Here are major themes that stood out to us in the survey results:

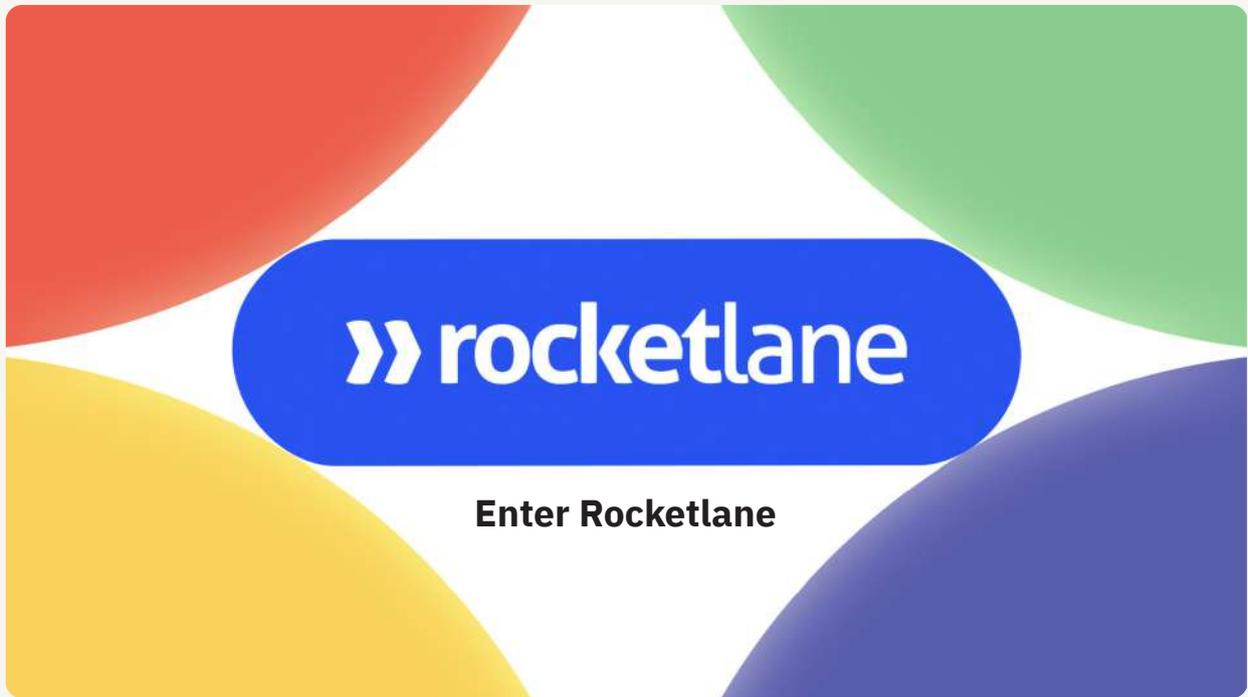
- ◆ Customer onboarding is growing into a distinct, significant function in itself: 40% of respondents said it's a function independent of CS at their organization, onboarding teams count customer journey mapping and revenue expansion among their responsibilities, and onboarding professionals feel valued at their workplaces.
- ◆ Customer onboarding is beginning to be seen as a source of revenue and not a cost center: companies are charging for implementation, and customers are willing to pay.
- ◆ Respondents emphasized the need to automate follow-ups, reminders, and reporting.
- ◆ Improving customer experience is their main goal for the year.
- ◆ The biggest time sink for onboarding teams is following up with project stakeholders, tracking project information and status across the multiple tools they use, and getting customer approvals.
- ◆ Holding customers accountable for tasks assigned to them continues to be a challenge.





What's next?

Our survey highlights onboarding challenges of varying complexities. The good news is: all of them are solvable.



Of course, we were going to plug our product. But in our defense, we're truly the Robin to your Batman.

We'll tell you why.

Rocketlane was built by a team with experience handling customer onboarding and implementations over the years. We have thought about every pain point in the function.

Rocketlane combines communication, collaboration, project management, time tracking, and resource management capabilities to offer a single platform to manage your customer onboarding end-to-end.

Let's briefly look at how you can use Rocketlane to solve the challenges that surfaced in this report.



Have a centralized space to track everything related to your onboarding projects

Rocketlane eliminates the need for spreadsheets, checklists, docs, drives, task management apps, communication apps, and emails.

You can add internal and external stakeholders as project members, offer different levels of access to files and tasks, add comments and have conversations within the app. You won't need to flit between tools to manage projects.

Templatize project plans based on customer segments

Create logical project plans— break them into phases, give them logical names, and arrange them chronologically. You could name each week of the project, for example, based on the theme for the week (kickoff, go-live, etc.). Turn them into templates that can be reused over and over. This reduces the chances of human error and ensures consistency in customer experience.

Additionally, segment your customers based on their business size, org maturity, tech savviness, etc., and create a project template for each segment. This way, even the newest hire on your onboarding team can hit the ground running.

You can create these in a jiffy on Rocketlane. You can also use conditional logic to take more manual work out of project creation—tell Rocketlane what tasks, fields, and resources to include when a project is created for specific project types, and the tool will take care of the entire creation for you.

Rocketlane is built to handle multiple projects, so every onboarding person on your team can oversee and manage many projects at a time with ease.

Use automated reminders and follow-ups

This is a no-brainer; our respondents had themselves said they wanted to automate this part of their work. You could use Rocketlane to configure and schedule reminders and follow-ups. You can also create templates for status updates and schedule them to be sent to all stakeholders at regular intervals.

Prioritize resource planning

In the current economic climate, businesses are focused on doing more with less. It's time to up your resource management game. Rocketlane offers intuitive timesheets, time tracking reports, and resource reports that you can use to get accurate forecasts and insights for planning your projects.

Integrate it with Salesforce, and you'll get a full view of your project pipeline and refine your resource forecasting.

Access data and reports in real time (and in no time)

Rocketlane offers reports and dashboards that work well right away. Track project progress, trends, delays, milestones, etc. Get portfolio insights and drill down to minute details to spot issues.

You can also create dashboards that suit you with our custom charts: view what you want whenever you want to.

Use real-time insights from across projects to refine your customer experience

Rocketlane offers in-built CSAT and forms that you can use to get an idea of customer sentiments in real time. This way, you can catch missteps on time and turn unfavorable situations around. Use project trends to see where your projects face the most delays and rectify problems.

Hold customers accountable

Rocketlane offers no-login, customizable customer portals that you can use to turn your customers into project collaborators: add them to your project, assign tasks, share documents and files, and offer them visibility into your project progress. All they have to do is click a Magic Link, and they'll have access to everything they need.



The #1 Community
for Customer Onboarding



Join 2400+ members who have been there done that and connect with folks who are also solving for the same issues as you are, from around the world!

Preflight is an exclusive tribe of leaders and practitioners offering: insights, personal learnings working in onboarding/implementation, best practices, and thought-provoking conversations

Check out some of the recent communications from the community:

- ◆ Supercharge customer onboarding with a consultative approach
- ◆ What it takes for CS and product teams to collaborate successfully
- ◆ Deep Dives: Balancing the human touch and tech in customer onboarding
- ◆ Samantha Wong on scaling customer onboarding at Front

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