

Uplevel survey report: Are CTOs & devs aligned?

CTOs are disconnected from their developers, the 2023 Uplevel Software Engineering Alignment Survey finds.

Historically, software engineering organizations have lacked an established, data-driven way to measure team effectiveness. With little visibility into their engineering efforts, leaders have instead relied on gut feelings to guide decisions and determine impact.

A recent explosion of new metrics, tools, and job descriptions has helped engineering organizations become more thoughtful about how they measure and understand impact. But it has also increased noise across all levels of engineering.

According to a recent survey of over 350 software developers conducted by Uplevel and Atomik Research, there's a disconnect between engineering leaders and their teams.

Questions this report will answer:

- Do CTOs know what their teams are working on?
- How do they measure impact: gut feelings or data/insights?
- Do developers prefer remote and asynchronous work?

The research for this report took place March 22-27, 2023. Respondents included U.S.-based devs/engineers at companies with 100+ employees.



CTOs aren't always aware of what their engineering teams are working on

As reported by 30% of developer respondents, the majority of engineering roadblocks go unnoticed by leadership. This speaks to a larger struggle with visibility and alignment across all levels of engineering. But in general, engineering leaders lack insight into what their teams are working on, which can frustrate the developers.

30% of developers said the majority of engineering roadblocks go unnoticed by leadership.

When CTOs don't know what teams are working on:

- **44% of developers** reported being overworked.
- **51%** said CTOs move people around on projects/tasks without knowing the full implications of doing so.
- **56%** stated CTOs will make significant strategic decisions without realizing how they will negatively affect the rest of the team/project.

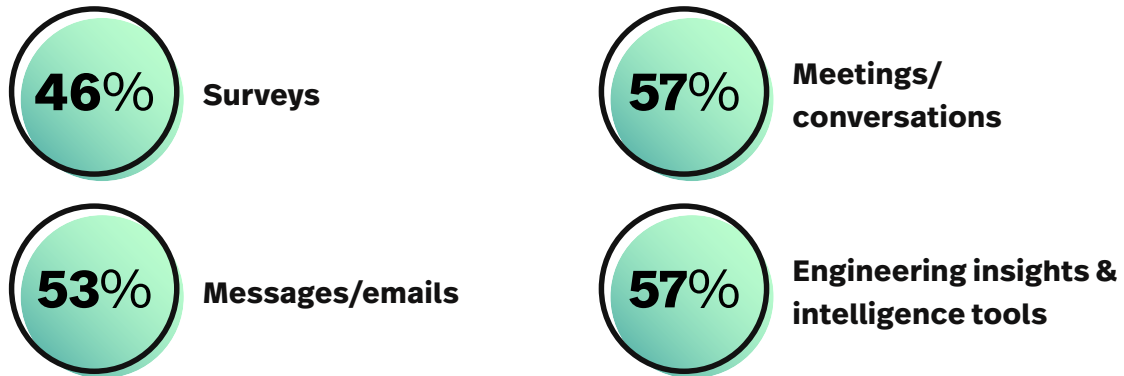
CTOs aren't the only ones who struggle with visibility, as developers often lack insight into how their efforts align with larger business goals. This upward transparency is very important to team success. In fact, 96% of devs said not knowing what leadership is working on can actually be detrimental to the team.

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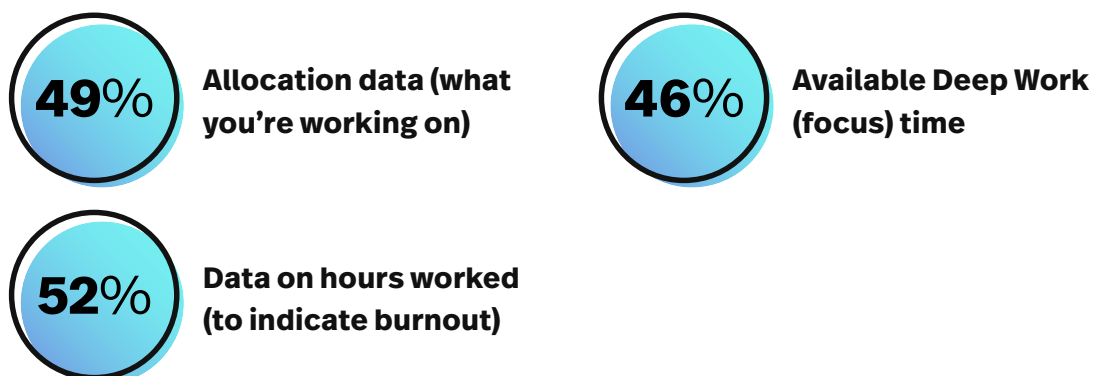
CTOs often lead their organizations on gut feelings

Of the developers surveyed, 30% noted that their engineering leaders rely solely on gut feelings to measure team effectiveness. Additionally, CTOs often use a combination of methods to get visibility into what their engineering teams are working on:



Insights and intelligence tools have helped fill an important information gap, with 88% of respondents finding these tools beneficial and accurate when measuring engineering effectiveness. Despite that, a whopping 91% of devs are unhappy with the actual metrics their leadership teams are measuring.

When engineering insights and intelligence tools are deployed, they don't always track the full picture, including data around developer well-being. Here are the top metrics respondents wish CTOs were measuring to better support their teams:



Is remote, asynchronous work the best for software developers? Apparently not.

With a plethora of articles touting the benefits of remote and asynchronous (i.e., on their own schedule, at different times) work for software developers, it seems like a no-brainer for executives to favor this mode of work.

However, according to our survey results, only 27% of software developers listed async (e.g., Slack, email, Notion) as their preference for communication while 35% prefer synchronous (e.g., real-time communication, meetings, live brainstorming) and 38% prefer a mix of both.

This sentiment has changed over time, with **half of respondents noting that they used to prefer asynchronous communication but now have a preference for synchronous.** Likewise, the other half of respondents said they used to prefer synchronous communication but now prefer asynchronous.

The point is, engineering leaders can't expect to make everyone happy, as there's no one way for developers to work and show impact.

In line with this finding, over half of the respondents (54%) feel more productive in the office – the other half is more productive working remotely or in a hybrid capacity. The point is, engineering leaders can't expect to make everyone happy, as there's no one way for developers to work and show impact.

Are engineering leaders and software developers aligned? While the survey results identify some major gaps, they also surface valuable insight into how work is done across engineering. And with greater transparency and alignment at all levels, engineering organizations can better bridge the disconnect between their leaders and teams.



Uplevel is an Engineering Intelligence Platform that combines machine learning and comprehensive engineering analytics, turning data from standard developer tools into actionable insights for improving organizational health. Using Uplevel, engineering leaders can remove bottlenecks, improve decision-making, and enable more transparent communication up, down, and across the org. Developers get more time to focus on high-impact projects while the business reduces waste, increases revenue, and accelerates impact.

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