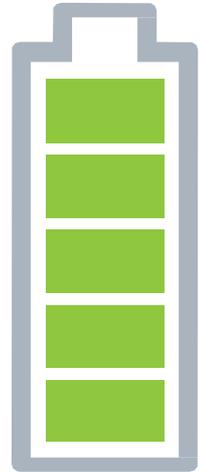




# Borderless Benchmark Study on Organizational Vitality

*Are your batteries charged?*





1. [Purpose of this study](#)
2. [Demographics of respondents](#)
3. [Executive Summary](#)
  1. [Key survey outcomes](#)
  2. [Observations](#)
  3. [Recommendations](#)
4. [The 5S model for organizational vitality](#)
5. [Detailed outcomes, observations and recommendations for each of the 5S](#)
6. [Insights \(generations, job levels, regions, size of organizations\)](#)
7. [Next steps: Implementing the 5S model for organizational vitality](#)
8. [Meet the team](#)



## **Most people fight stress. Tapping into energy sources is far more effective.**

*The purpose of this report is to examine the state of organizational vitality within global organizations, as perceived by the executives who work there. This benchmark will help you identify opportunities for you and your organization to tap into specific energy sources that increase vitality.*

*Increased vitality produces tangible benefits in revenue, productivity, innovation and engagement. By focusing on just five vital functions, specific energy sources and stress factors can be measured. Focused, comprehensive action can be taken, and progress monitored.*



# Demographics of respondents



Over 400 global executives responded to a series of quantitative and qualitative questions in an online survey.



**RESPONSE**  
403 respondents



**DATE**  
H1 2017

REGION		
Asia	10	2%
Central & Eastern Europe	28	7%
Middle East Africa	16	3%
North America	85	21%
South America	9	2%
Western Europe	255	63%

COMPANY SIZE (EMPLOYEES)		
<1,000	157	39%
1,000 – 5,000	60	15%
5,000 – 10,000	40	10%
10,000 – 25,000	55	14%
> 25,000	91	23%

POSITION		
Top level management	221	55%
Middle – Lower mngmt	182	45%

AGE GROUP		
18 – 25 year	2	0.5%
26 – 35 year	21	5%
36 – 45 year	105	26%
46 – 55 year	187	46%
56 – 65 year	75	19%
> 65 years	13	3%

TYPE OF INDUSTRY		
Chemical & Process Industries	147	36%
Food & Drink	30	7%
Life Sciences	88	22%
Other	138	34%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>403</b>	<b>100%</b>



The topic of vitality is **relevant** for most respondents, however the level of organizational vitality is described as **very low**. Managing vitality and energy is an **unfamiliar subject** for most respondents.

**Top level managers** report that they are **mostly in good shape** and perceive their personal vitality as excellent. This positive finding is in **strong contrast** with the vitality of middle and lower management.

Top level managers, however, have a **low level of confidence** in their ability to deal effectively with the low levels of vitality within their organization.



The **perceptions and needs of respondents over and under 45 differ greatly**. Younger generations perceive a lower level of organizational vitality than older generations. Also, **younger generations score lower on individual vitality** than older generations. As for energy sources, respondents under 45 lack emotional support and positive feedback, while respondents over 45 lack practical support, guidance and coaching from their superiors.

# Key outcomes



One of the **main energy drains** for all respondents is **the division of tasks and cooperation among functions.**

**Stress factor!**

Respondents also value **meeting effectiveness as extremely low** and see it as a substantial energy drain. Respondents under 45 score particularly low on this factor.

**Stress factor!**

Respondents report a **lack of support from superiors**, and the general absence of a culture of support and constructive feedback. Responding managers seem to **underestimate the impact of their own role as leaders and coaches** to establish a positive working climate and maintain the right energy level within the organization.

**Stress factor!**

# Our observations



Much managerial effort is currently spent on fighting sources of stress. Recognizing and understanding the **energy sources** of an organization and creating the **conditions to tap into them**, offers a constructive alternative.

Companies adjust to changing circumstances by changing their strategy and their structure. The agility of organizations would benefit more from improving the support to individuals and the cooperation between different functions.

The **workplace** has evolved to serve the needs of generations over 45 and may **need to be adapted** to ensure the engagement of younger generations.

Potential  
Energy  
Source!

Organizations focus effort on establishing shared values and a sense of belonging based on a well-defined corporate identity. Given their reactions, respondents would benefit more from **practical and moral support** from their leaders and peers.

Potential  
Energy  
Source!

# Our recommendations



Make sure **organizational vitality is on the radar** by demonstrating its impact on business results and engagement, and its consequent potential to yield **competitive advantage**

Educate leaders on the **importance of their roles as facilitators and coaches**, and their likely impact on the agility of the organization.

Potential  
Energy  
Source!

Develop organizational initiatives for **cross-functional cooperation**, preferably around key projects that have strategic relevance.

Potential  
Energy  
Source!

# Our recommendations



Develop **organizational initiatives on support for individual employees** that allow different approaches for different generations.

Potential  
Energy  
Source!

Invest in meeting effectiveness by **developing the facilitation skills of leaders** within your organization.

Potential  
Energy  
Source!



## Extensive research confirms that five essential functions determine your vitality in an organizational context



Strategy



Structure



Synergy



Support



Self

# The benchmark is based on 5S model for organizational vitality



Do your plans provide clarity,  
direction and inspiration?



**Strategy**



**Structure**



**Synergy**



**Support**



**Self**

# The benchmark is based on 5S model for organizational vitality



Are reporting lines, decision making and information management well organized?



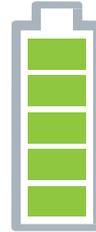
**Strategy**



**Structure**



**Synergy**



**Support**



**Self**

# The benchmark is based on 5S model for organizational vitality

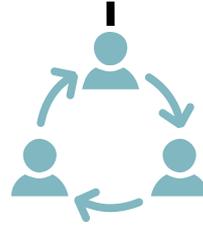
Is the cooperation/interaction between individuals and teams effective?



**Strategy**



**Structure**



**Synergy**



**Support**



**Self**

# The benchmark is based on 5S model for organizational vitality

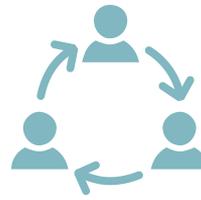
Do individuals have the mandate, and practical and emotional support to take ownership?



**Strategy**



**Structure**



**Synergy**



**Support**



**Self**

# The benchmark is based on 5S model for organizational vitality



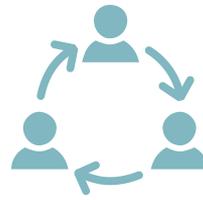
Are individuals capable of inspiring themselves and others, and do they cope with setbacks in an effective way?



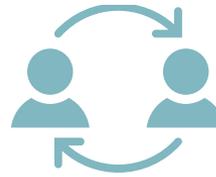
**Strategy**



**Structure**



**Synergy**

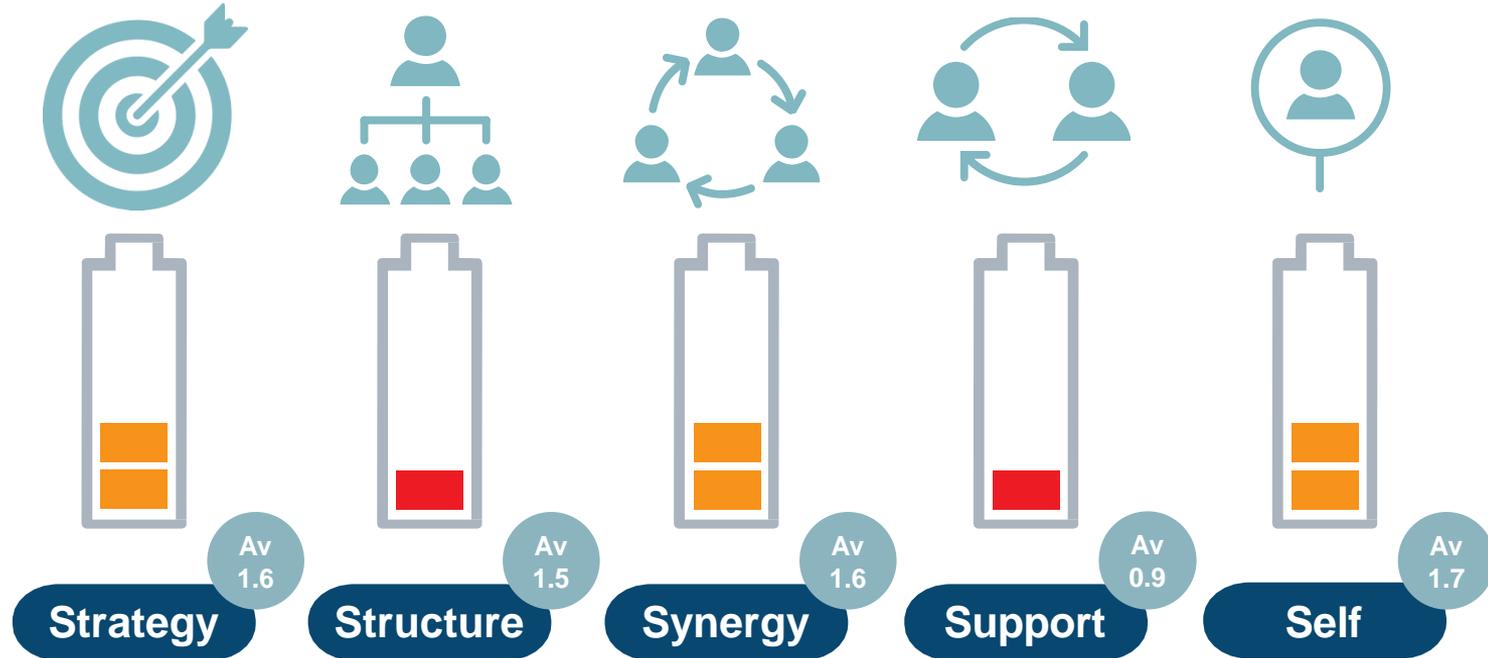


**Support**



**Self**

# Overall scores of the survey on each of the 5S



# How to interpret the results



## Stress factors



## Neutral factors



## Energy sources



Averages have been calculated by mediating participant scores ranging from -5 to +5. The overall average of all participants scores is 1.38



# Strategy – main outcomes



**Q13**

How clear is the organizational strategy to you?

Av  
1.8



**Q14**

How attractive is the organizational strategy to you?

Av  
1.6



**Q15**

On a scale from -5 to +5, How defensive (working AGAINST something) or offensive (working TOWARDS something) is the organizational strategy to you?

Av  
1.3



**Q16**

To what extent can you connect your own work and objectives to the organizational strategy?

Av  
2.2



The positive impact on individual vitality of the topics of questions 13, 14 and 16 is three times higher than the impact of the topic of question 15



Av  
1.6

Strategy



# Strategy – our observations and recommendations



**An attractive strategy seems to be largely absent for most respondents.** Not a real stress factor but definitely not perceived as an energy source!

Senior management seems to be unaware of the importance of this aspect.

Understanding and embracing a 'winning' organizational strategy can be an important factor for individual commitment.

Start with a clear, engaging story on strategy and increase awareness and involvement of senior management.

In our experience, an excessive focus on numbers, data and KPIs ignores that these factors rarely inspire people. They are essential to measuring the quality and quantity of output.

Engaging individuals through an inspiring scenario requires visionary leadership and the ability to connect with different audiences.

**Potential  
Energy  
Source!**



# Structure – main outcomes



**Q17** To what extent is it clear for you who to turn to for decision making?

Av  
2.3



**Q18** How clear is the division of tasks between different departments and functions within your organization?

Av  
0.7



**Q19** How clear is the annual planning & control cycle for your department?

Av  
1.2



**Q20** To what extent do you have access to all the information you need to work properly?

Av  
1.7



The positive impact on individual vitality is much higher for decision making (2.3) and access to information (1.7) than division of tasks (0.7) and annual planning & control (1.2)



Structure

Av  
1.5



# Structure – our observations and recommendations



It is important to ensure that clarity in decision making is maintained. This has a high impact on vitality levels. This energy source should be nurtured.

**Potential  
Energy  
Source!**

Both the division of tasks and the effectiveness of the cooperation between different functions score low. This is perceived as a stress factor. Improving clarity here should be a top priority for senior managers since they are not only accountable but also the people responsible for ensuring effectiveness.

**Stress  
factor!**

The planning and control cycle scores low in terms of clarity and impact on vitality and constitutes a stress factor. Based on our experience, managing the planning & control cycle is experienced more as an obligation than as an effective tool to manage the business. Simplifying and focusing on a limited set of key KPIs can change this perception.

**Stress  
factor!**

Senior management and older respondents score significantly higher on the clarity of the planning & control cycle. This group has a role to play in communicating differently and finding alternative ways to manage performance that appeal more to other job levels and generations.

**Potential  
Energy  
Source!**



# Synergy – main outcomes



**Q22**

To what extent is the cooperation between functions/departments effective?

Av  
0.6



**Q23**

To what extent are the meetings you attend within your organization effective?

Av  
0.3



**Q24**

Within your team, to what extent do people stick to agreements, commitments and deadlines?

Av  
1.8



**Q25**

Describe the quality of the cooperation within your own team.

Av  
2.1



**The positive impact on individual vitality of cooperation within team (2.1) is higher than other factors (0.6/Q22), (0.3/Q23), (1.8/Q24)**



Av  
1.6

Synergy



# Synergy – our observations and recommendations



**Effective cooperation between functions depends on structure:** for communication/cooperation to be effective without a clear division of tasks, requires exceptional skills. Understanding each other is an essential start and calls for dialogue on the differences in focus, output and values between functions and professional disciplines. Indirect communication, emails and so on may support the process, but are insufficient to improve vitality and effectiveness.

Ineffective meetings have been cited as an energy drain for many years. Effective meetings require the right combination of preparation, facilitation and ownership. Our results show that leaders overestimate their skills in this context and their direct reports suffer as a consequence. Our experience confirms that the time and effort required for effective meetings is also underestimated. Meetings require at least half of their expected duration for preparation and follow-up.

**Stress  
factor!**



# Support – main outcomes



**Q27**

To what extent do you have the mandate and autonomy to do your work properly?

Av  
2.5



**Q28**

To what extent do you receive practical support, guidance and coaching from your superiors?

Av  
0.1



**Q29**

To what extent is giving and receiving emotional support (appreciation and other types of positive feedback) part of your organizational culture?

Av  
0.2



**Q30**

To what extent is giving and receiving constructive feedback on performance and behaviors part of your organizational culture?

Av  
0.7



The positive impact on individual vitality of mandate and autonomy (2.5) is much higher than other factors (0.1/Q28, 0.2/Q29 and 0.7/Q30)



Av  
0.9

Support



# Support – our observations and recommendations



All scores except that of mandate are very low. We note that **while people are held to be fully accountable, rarely do they receive the support required to accept full responsibility** and feel exposed as a consequence.

Most leaders see themselves as managers of resources, processes and results. If output and vitality are both to be managed effectively, managers must develop as coaches and also support their people with practical and emotional guidance.

A coaching leadership style is not a new phenomenon. However, implementing it effectively requires a redefinition of what leadership means. Leadership must include pro-actively managing vitality. It also requires incorporating vitality management in development programs for leaders. In addition, managers must dedicate time in their daily schedules to vitality management.

Potential  
Energy  
Source!



# Self – main outcomes



Personal energy levels of respondents are directly **influenced by the type of work they do and by their own levels of authenticity and confidence.**

Personal energy levels of respondents are **less impacted by the amount of hours they work** and by the organization they work for.

Respondents state they have a well-rounded repertoire to stay in shape and deal with obstacles.

45% of respondents report that are experiencing stress at work; around 40% are negatively impacted by the high volume and variety of activities and obligations.

**Stress factor!**



Self

Av  
1.7



# Self – our observations and recommendations



Overall scores on self are high. The topic of autonomy (evaluated under support) may have a positive impact here.

Energy Source!

Rather than focusing on lifestyle choices, individuals should focus on the importance of staying in control to maintain vitality, and on what the individual can influence rather than on what he or she can not.

Potential Energy Source!

The type of work, authenticity and self confidence have greater impact on vitality than the organization for which respondents work. It makes sense to invest more in personal development than in culture and 'belonging' programs.

Potential Energy Source!

Work-related stress is an issue for 45% of respondents. Work hours or working hard, by themselves do not. However, a lack of support may be an important cause of loss of vitality. Improving support provides opportunity for growth.

Stress factor!

Participants state that they use a wide repertoire of lifestyle choices to stay energized. Based on this, unhealthy lifestyles are not the problem; even so personal scores on vitality are low.

# Insights – different generations



Respondents under 45 score about half as high as respondents over 45 across the board.

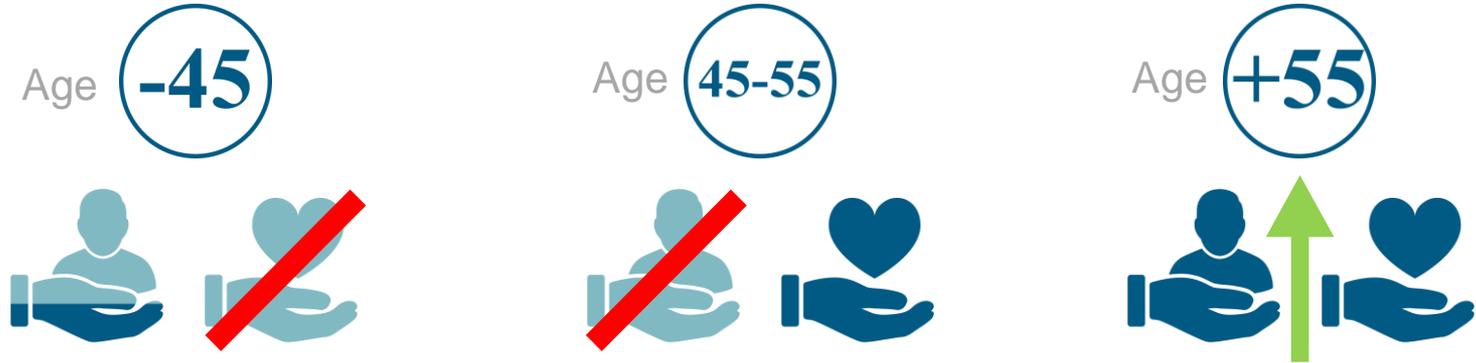


This suggests that, in their opinion, the state of vitality across the organization is significantly lower.

# Insights – different generations



Respondents under 45 report some level of practical support and the absence of emotional support. Respondents age 45-55 report the opposite (emotional support but no practical support).



**Respondents over 55 are 'off the chart' in terms of how positively they see things.**

# Insights – different generations



Around one in four respondents below 45 scores very low on meeting effectiveness, compared to less than one in ten for those above 45.



Meeting Effectiveness

**-45**  
Age



**1 in 4 scores very low  
on meeting effectiveness**

**+45**  
Age



**<1 in 10 scores very low  
on meeting effectiveness**



**Respondents under 45 report a significantly lower level of vitality (average 1.2) compared with respondents over 45 (average 2.0).**



# Insights – different generations



Of the younger generations, 1 in 7 reports alarmingly low vitality levels, compared with 1 in 16 for older generations. Our observation that the workplace has evolved to meet the needs of the over 45s and should be adapted to the needs of younger generations is a possible explanation.



Levels of vitality



**1 in 7 reports alarmingly low vitality levels**



**1 in 16 reports alarmingly low vitality levels**



**Top level management declares itself to be in good shape** and perceives an excellent level of personal vitality and a good level of organizational vitality



# Insights – different job levels



These positive findings are in strong contrast to the vitality in middle and lower management, scoring 5 times worse: **1 in 7 in middle and lower management perceives themselves as having low or very low vitality.**





One of the main vitality drains in middle and lower management is the **lack of clarity concerning the division of tasks between departments and functions.**

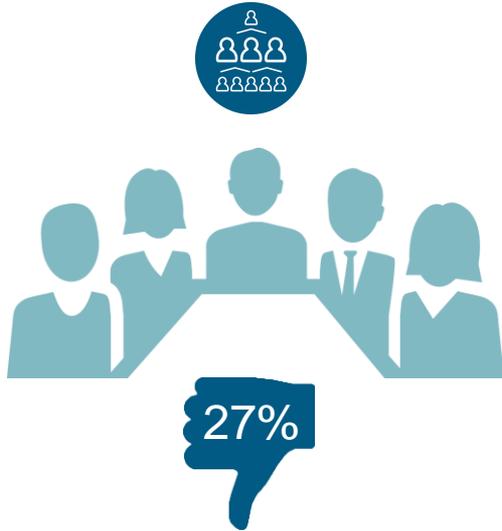


**Only 4 in 10 are positive about this topic.**

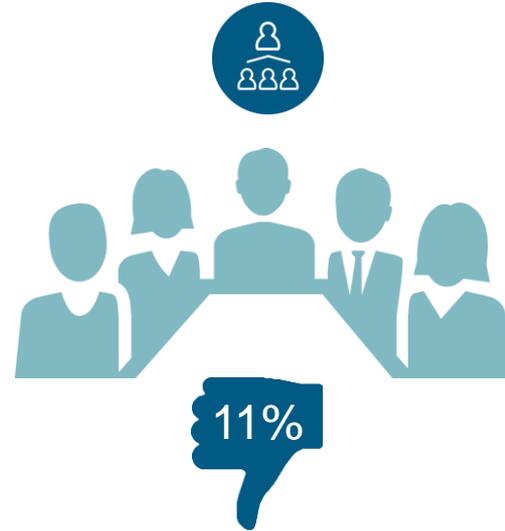
# Insights – different job levels



Increasing the effectiveness of meetings can substantially help to improve vitality: **27%** in middle and lower management compared to **11%** in top management score low or very low on this topic.



Middle Management



Top Management

# Insights – different job levels



In middle and lower management a **lack of support in certain areas is a drain on energy**. A little more than one-third claim inadequate practical support, lack of appreciation from supervisors, and insufficient feedback on performance to be depleting energy.



support



appreciation



feedback



# Insights – different regions



Respondents in organizations headquartered in Europe rate their vitality to be significantly lower than respondents in organizations based in North America.



North America

Europe

# Insights – different regions



This could be related to the effectiveness of cooperation between functions and departments. Organizations headquartered in North America score twice as high on this topic.



North America

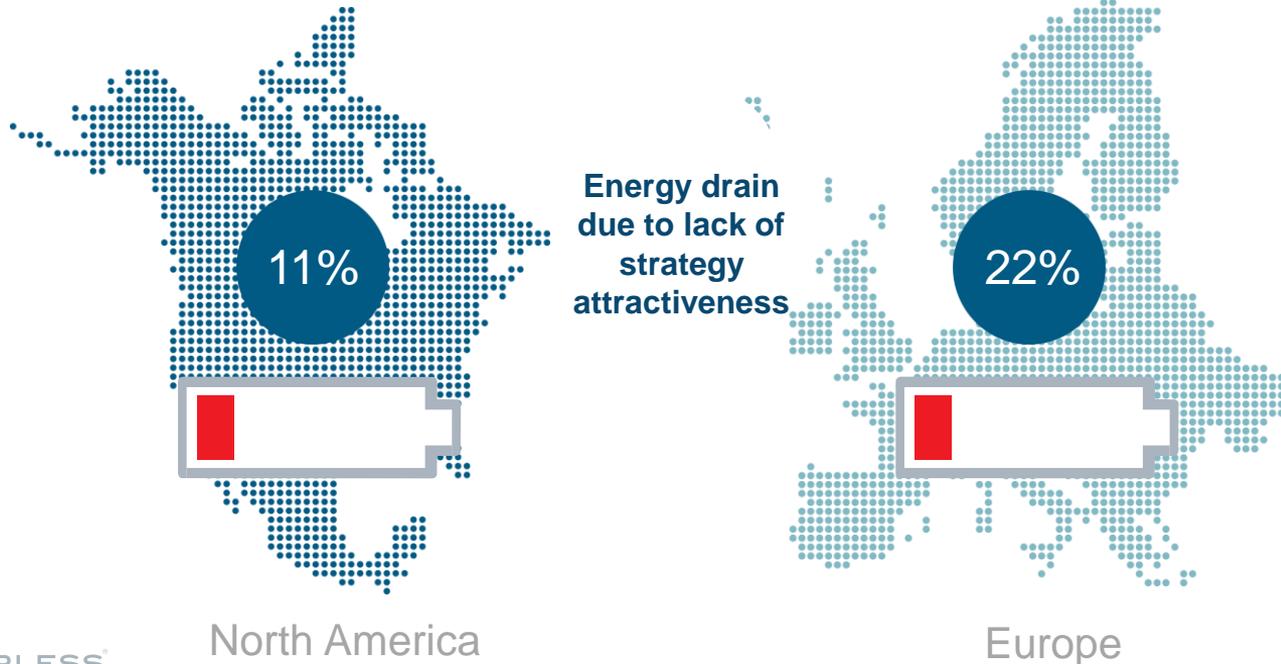


Europe

# Insights – different regions



We note that **respondents from organizations headquartered in Europe score significantly lower on their perception of the attractiveness of their organization's strategy**. This appears as an energy drain for 22% of respondents compared with 11% for those in organizations based in North America.



# Insights – different regions



Respondents from organizations based in North America score more positively on every measure except for support. For example, on practical support, 42% of the American organizations are negative on this item, while those in organizations headquartered in Europe score more positively.





**Small organizations (<1000 employees) score more positively on all aspects.**

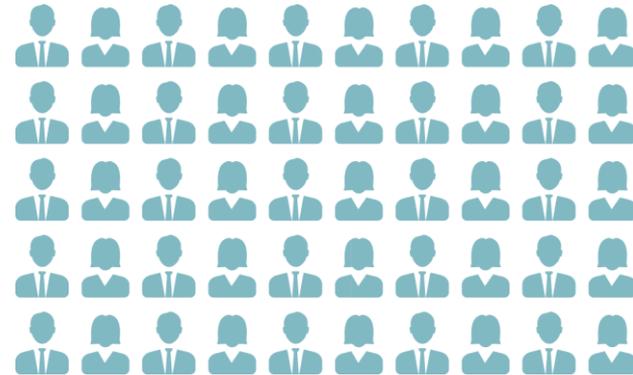


This may have to do with the pace of implementing organizational changes in smaller organizations. It may also reflect that it is more difficult to make an impact as an individual in a larger organization.

# Insights – size of organizations



An expected difference is on mandate and autonomy. 82% in smaller organizations are (very) positive. For large organizations the score is 71%.



# Insights – size of organizations



Another difference is **the lack of clarity of who to turn to for decision making**. In larger organizations there are twice as many respondents who see this as an energy drain, compared with small organizations.

## Small organizations



Respondents experiencing it as an energy drain

Who do I turn to for decisions?

## Large organizations



# Next steps: Implementing the 5S Vitality Model



The 5S model for organizational vitality provides a diagnostic tool as well as a methodology for identifying and implementing focused interventions to improve the level of vitality within your organization. It also enables you to measure your starting point and your progress.

Implementing this model increases awareness and helps leaders recognize that vitality is not just a matter of individual choices, but a key driver for organizational development that can become a competitive differentiator.

# Meet the team



Energy  
Source!

Niels-Peter van Doorn

+31 6 2705 5970

[niels-peter.vandoorn@borderless.net](mailto:niels-peter.vandoorn@borderless.net)

Energy  
Source!

Mijke Ketting

+31 6 5573 6873

[mijke.ketting@borderless.net](mailto:mijke.ketting@borderless.net)

Energy  
Source!

Andrew Kris

+32 475 965 413

[andrew.kris@borderless.net](mailto:andrew.kris@borderless.net)

Borderless has worked on the design, implementation and analysis of this study with renowned researcher and expert on organizational vitality, [Willem Peeters](#)

Energy  
Source!