breezeway

Annual report





2026

State of Work in the Short-Term Rental Industry

ONE
INDUSTRY-WIDE
SNAPSHOT



There's still a difference between a booking and a stay.

Introduction

In 2026, the short-term rental industry is no less complex than it was a year ago.

Margins are tighter, labor markets haven't loosened, and guests and owners expect more for the same price. What has changed is how specific operators have become about technology. A year ago, AI was a category operators had opinions about. This year, they are even more specific about a shortlist of jobs they want AI to do.

This year's survey drew responses from more than 200 hospitality professionals. The themes are familiar: staffing, communication, proving your value to owners, but the details reveal an industry in a more mature, more discerning relationship with automation than it was in 2025. Operators aren't chasing the newest AI feature; they want solutions to their most pressing problems.

This report is a snapshot of where the industry stands today: the operational grind behind every guest stay, the technology reshaping (and sometimes frustrating) that work, the people who make it happen, and the widening gap between what owners and guests expect and what operators feel equipped to deliver.

Every year, this survey tells us the same essential thing in a hundred different ways:

Hospitality doesn't happen on its own, and it doesn't happen without the right information reaching the right person at the right moment.

That's the exact problem we built Breezeway to solve, and it's why we've invested so heavily around AI agents and automation this year. Concierge is the AI agent that answers routine questions instantly, without pulling a team member away from the property-level work only a person can do. Controller exists so nothing falls through the cracks between the field and the office — so a task gets assigned to the right person, tracked to completion, and made visible to the owner trusting you with their home. Neither is meant to replace the judgment and hospitality instinct this industry runs on. We aren't building software to replace humans, but make them more efficient and free up time to truly deliver 5-star hospitality. Agents and agentic features are meant to clear everything else out of the way so that instinct has room to work.



Jeremy Gall
Founder and CEO, Breezeway

Methodology

Breezeway surveyed hospitality professionals, from solo hosts to property management companies running large portfolios.

Two things are worth keeping in mind when interpreting the findings below. The sample tilts toward larger operations: half of respondents manage 100+ properties, so these findings likely understate the chaos smaller, thinner-staffed teams are managing with even less infrastructure. And the near-universal hybrid staffing model means almost every finding about quality control, training, and accountability has to work across two different employment relationships at once, not one, a structural reality that resurfaces throughout this report.

Respondent snapshot

Primary role	% of respondents
Property Manager	19.1%
Operations Manager/Director	18.1%
Company or Property Owner	14.9%
Other	13.5%
General Manager	10.2%
Head of Housekeeping	8.5%
Inspector	5.6%
Guest Services Manager	4.7%
Cleaner/Housekeeper	3.3%
Maintenance Technician	1.9%

Properties managed	% of respondents
200+	29.8%
40-99	26.0%
100-199	20.5%
15-39	12.6%
1-14	10.7%

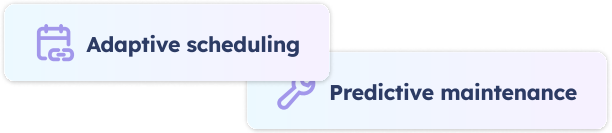
Just over half of respondents (52.1%) now run on a hybrid model of in-house staff and contracted vendors, a reminder that for most of the industry, quality control means managing performance across two very different workforces at once, not just one.

Five findings from this year's survey.

1

Operators want AI to run the operation, not the guest relationship.

Adaptive scheduling is the most requested AI capability (65.7% of respondents), ahead of predictive maintenance (56.8%) and well ahead of guest messaging (42.0%). The top concern runs the other way: 54.4% worry about AI errors reaching a guest.



2

The highest-value work in the industry is the least automated.

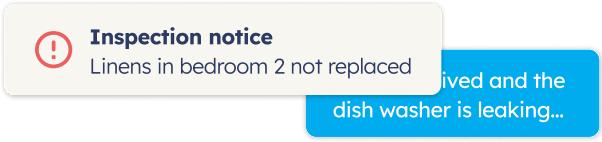
Four in five operators say proving operational performance won or kept them owner contracts. Only 11.8% have automated any part of owner reporting. No other finding shows this much revenue sitting behind this much manual work.



3

Inspections, not the guest, are the industry's safety net.

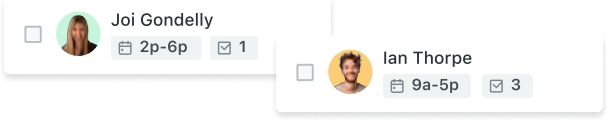
More than half of all missed or incomplete work is caught by an inspector. A guest finds it 22.5% of the time. That gap is the difference between a problem that costs a phone call and one that costs a public review.



4

Team recognition is eroding while retention gets harder.

A third of respondents now have no formal recognition program at all, up from 18.4% last year. Staffing and retention is simultaneously the industry's most-named operational challenge, and staffing difficulty is flat across every portfolio size.



5

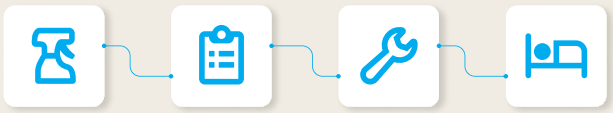
There is no slack left in the day.

The median turnover is four distinct tasks completed in a two-to-five-hour window, and 37.3% of bookings run 51–75% back-to-back. The hard work of hospitality isn't getting any easier.

The Work Behind the Welcome

Every clean, inspection, and repair behind a 5-star stay is really a small operation of its own. This year's survey dug into the mechanics of that operation: how many discrete tasks a turnover involves, how tight the turnaround is, and how often plans shift at the last minute.

The following numbers aren't really about cleaning schedules, they're about how much room for error the industry is operating with, and it turns out to be very little. Turnovers average four tasks across two to five hours, and over a third are back-to-back, leaving little room for anything to go wrong. That's the backdrop every other finding in this report has to be read against.



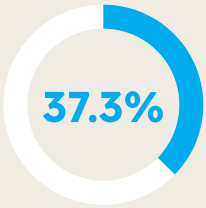
A standard turnover involves a median of 4 distinct tasks (cleaning, inspection, restocking, maintenance check, linen delivery, etc.); 22.3% of operators say 3 tasks, 18.6% say 4, and outliers run well past a dozen for larger or full-service operators.

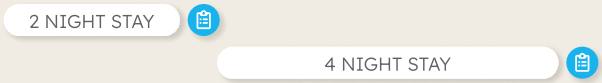
41.4% of respondents complete a standard turnover in

2–3 hours

and a further 33.7% take 3–5 hours; most of the industry is working within a half-day window between guests.

37.3% of bookings run 51–75% back-to-back, meaning same-day turnovers are the norm rather than the exception for most operators.





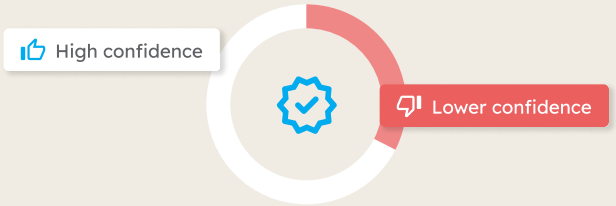
60.9% of respondents conduct a formal inspection between every single stay. This is the dominant quality-control model in the industry, while 26.6% inspect only periodically (weekly/monthly).



36.7% of respondents say more than 20% of their inspections surface an issue that needs a work order. Inspections are clearly catching real problems, not just checking a box.

When work is missed or incomplete, 55% of respondents find out because an inspector catches it first, versus 22.5% who find out from a guest during their stay, and a concerning 9.5% who "often don't find out until it's too late to address."

Nearly a third of respondents (32.5%) aren't fully confident (rating below 4 of 5) that every property meets their quality standard before a guest arrives. The rest, 67.5%, report high confidence, but that still leaves a meaningful share of the industry without full assurance every single time.



Maintenance work skews proactive:

44.4% of respondents describe their maintenance as more or mostly proactive (caught in inspections before arrival), versus 19.5% who lean reactive (caught by guests), and 36.1% call it a roughly even split.

That gap matters: an inspector is more than twice as likely to catch a problem as a guest is. It's the difference between a quality issue that costs a phone call and one that costs a public review, and it's the clearest evidence in this year's data that inspection isn't a checkbox exercise.

It's quietly doing the job guest reviews get credit for.

Operators who feel most in control are the ones with a formal inspection cadence between every stay. Inspections are functioning as the industry's real safety net: more than half of all "missed work" is caught by an inspector, not a guest, and operators who inspect every stay report meaningfully higher confidence that properties are guest-ready.

Resolution speed is fast for most:

39.1% of respondents resolve an in-stay maintenance issue in 1–3 hours, and a further 33.1% in 3–6 hours. Only 4.1% say resolution doesn't happen until the next day or after.

Chapter 2

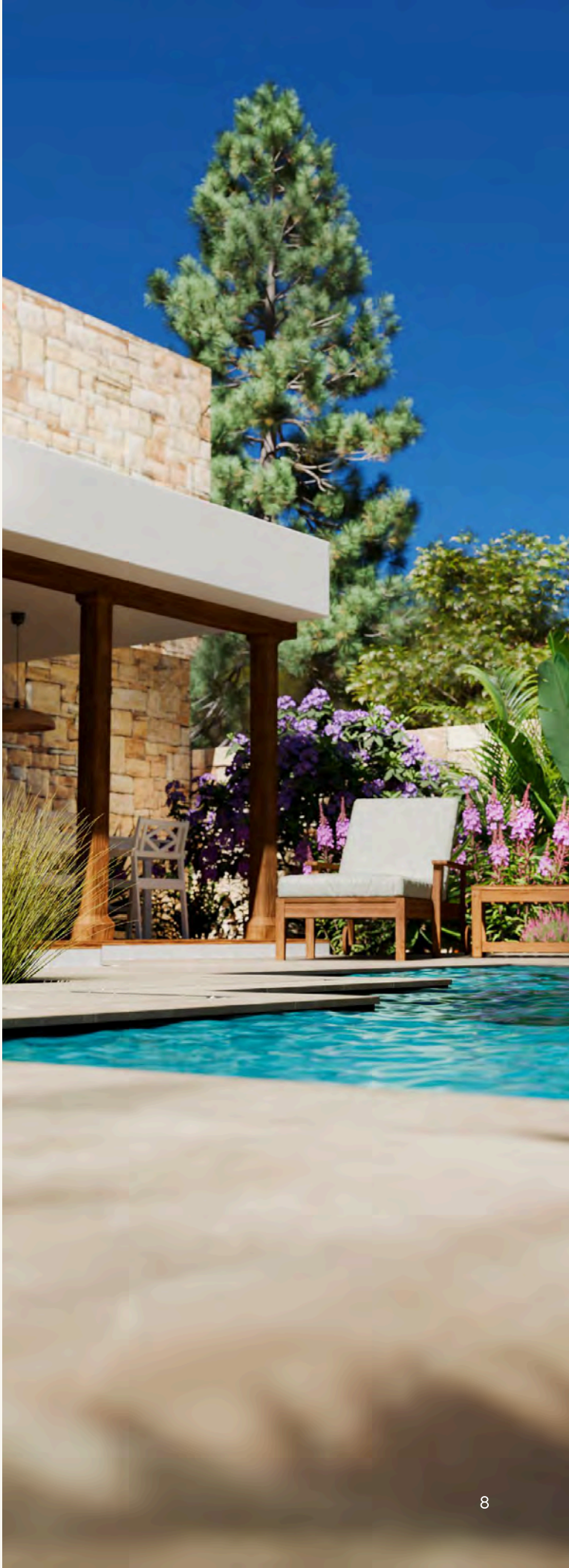
Scaling Success

As in 2025, the complexity of the job scales with portfolio size, but not every metric moves the way you'd expect. It's tempting to assume bigger operators have this figured out: more properties should mean more resources and more process maturity. The data agrees, but only selectively. Scale buys better inspection infrastructure and a real shot at upsell revenue. It does not buy an easier time finding and keeping staff, and it doesn't buy fewer last-minute disruptions. If anything, more properties just means more chances for something to change at the last minute.

3.00 Average disruption frequency, 200+ property operators (1-5 scale)

2.24 Same, for operators under 40 properties

~3.5 Staffing difficulty — flat across every size tier



Last-minute disruptions climb steadily with scale:

on a 1–5 frequency scale, operators managing 200+ properties average 3.00, compared to 2.24 for operators under 40 properties.

Larger operators lean more heavily on formal inspection between every stay:

56.8% of the 100–199 property tier and 53.1% of the 200+ tier inspect every stay, versus 39.3–43.1% for operators under 100 properties.

Staffing difficulty, by contrast, is essentially flat across every size tier:

roughly 3.4–3.5 out of 5 regardless of portfolio size. This signifies a market-wide labor problem, not something operators simply outgrow.

The single biggest named operational challenge shifts with scale:

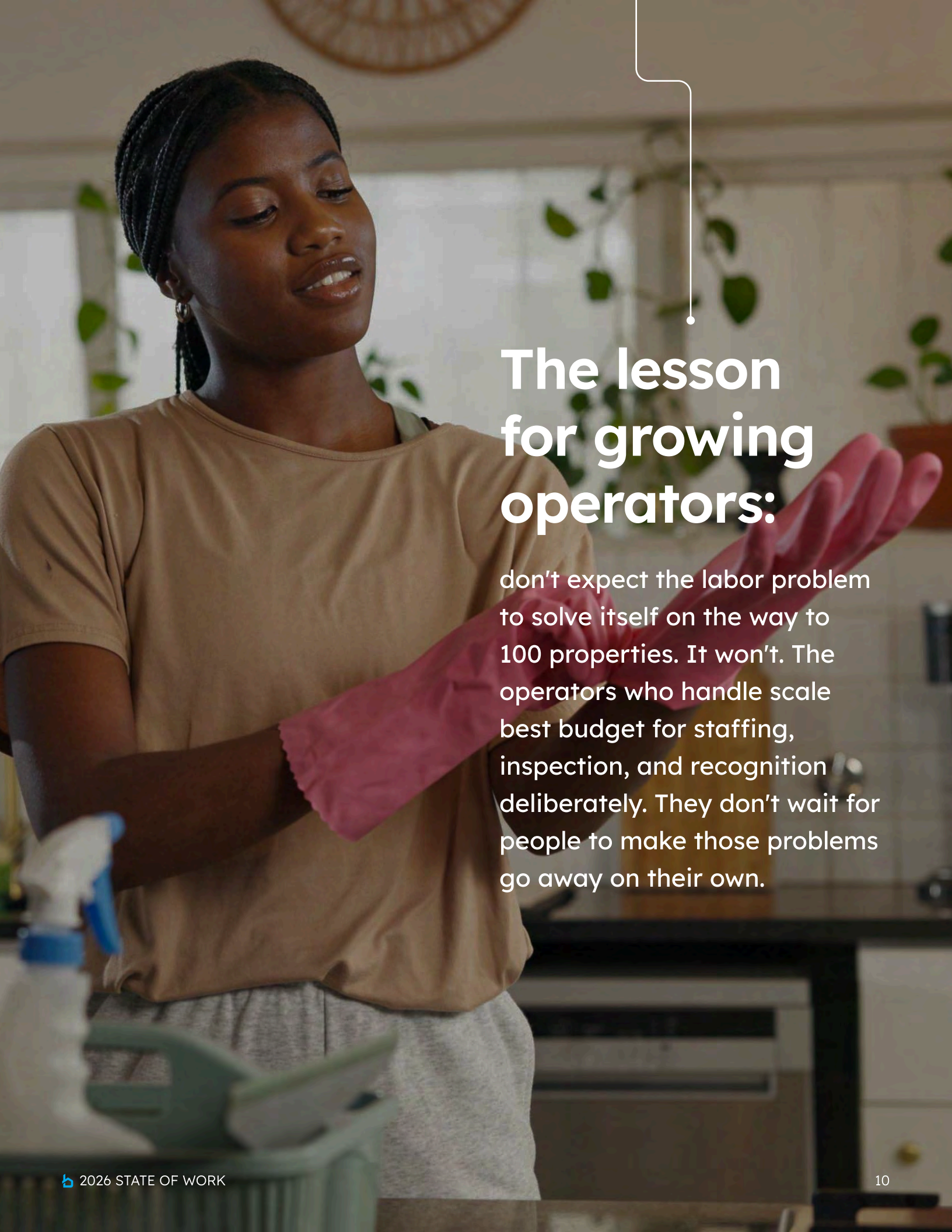
staffing/retention tops the list for every tier of 40+ properties, while operators under 40 properties are more likely to name maintenance and vendor reliability as their top pain point (21%). This makes sense, as many may not have the demand to hire full-time staff and rely more heavily on contractors.

Concierge and hospitality upsells are clearly a scale-unlocked opportunity:

27.3% of the 100–199 property tier and 25.0% of the 200+ tier already treat it as a meaningful revenue stream, versus just 11.8–12.5% of operators under 100 properties.

Formal recognition programs are also more common at scale:

only 18.2% of the 100–199 tier report having no formal recognition program at all, compared to 35.3% of operators under 40 properties. Smaller operators are the least likely to have built structured recognition into the business.



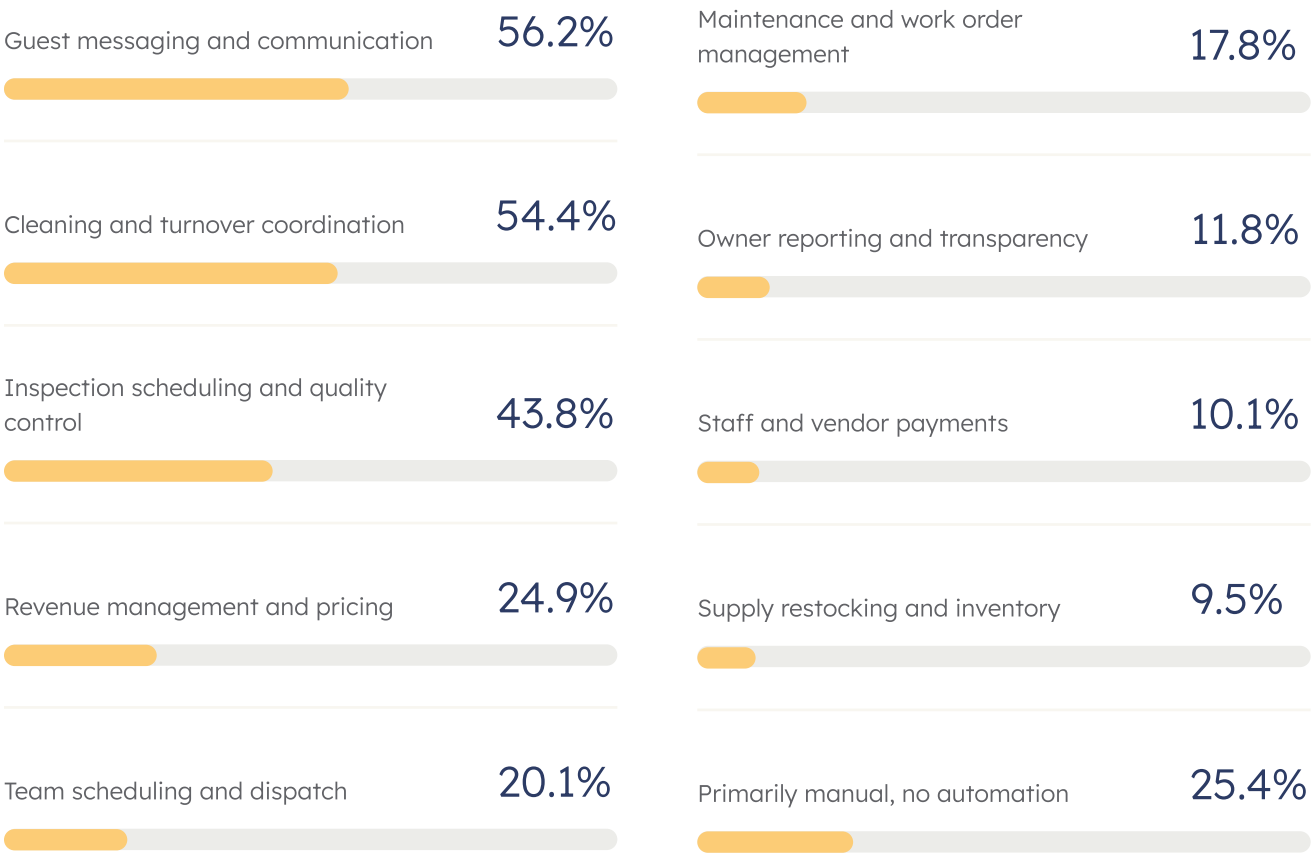
The lesson for growing operators:

don't expect the labor problem to solve itself on the way to 100 properties. It won't. The operators who handle scale best budget for staffing, inspection, and recognition deliberately. They don't wait for people to make those problems go away on their own.

Tech in the Toolkit

Operators aren't chasing automation for its own sake. They're automating where it clearly pays off, and staying hands-on everywhere else.

WHERE AUTOMATION ALREADY LIVES

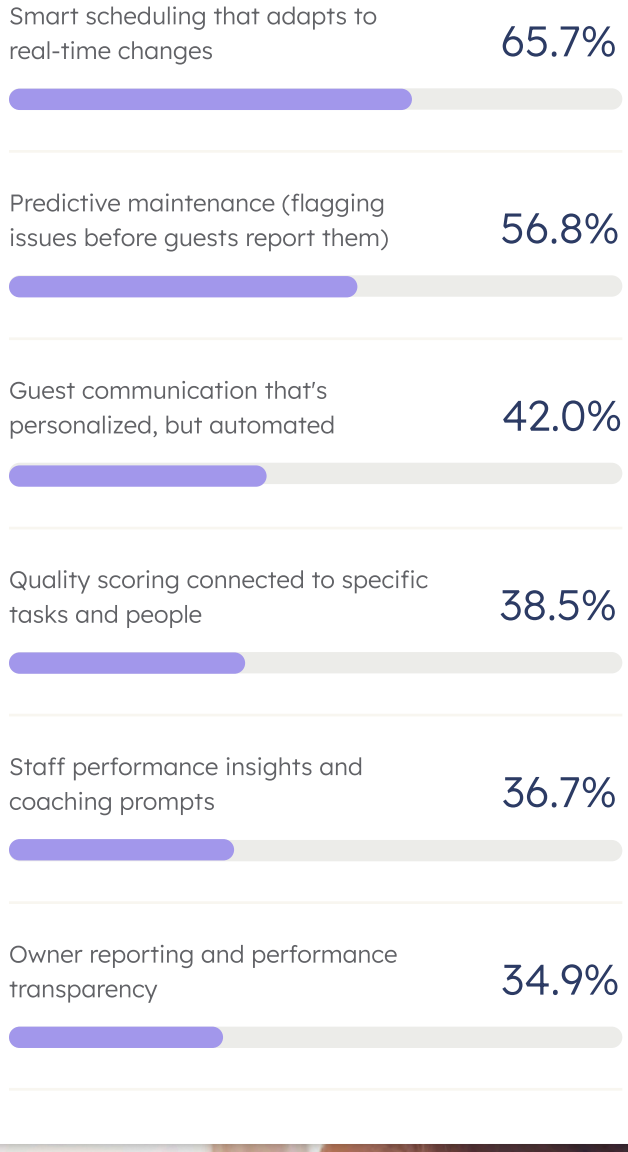


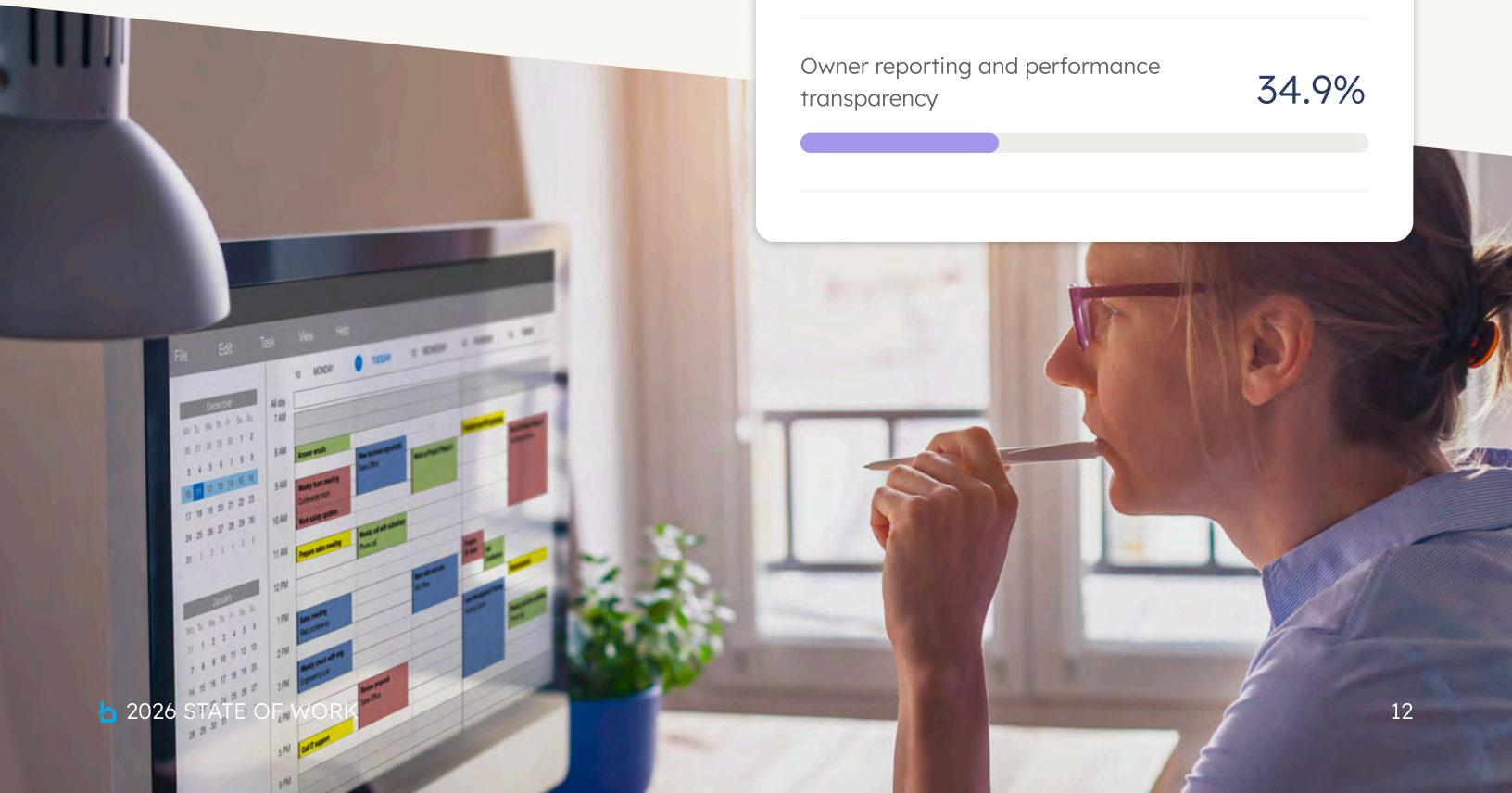
The pattern is intuitive: operators have automated the highest-volume, most repeatable work first, guest messaging, turnover coordination, and left the lowest-volume, highest-judgment work almost entirely manual. That's not operators being behind; its operators being rational. The remaining manual areas are exactly the ones where a mistake is expensive and judgment is hard to codify.

Of the operators who quantified their overall automation coverage, 28.6% say more than half of their operations are automated, while 14.3% remain almost entirely manual (under 10% automated).

Guest messaging is by far the area operators say has seen the biggest positive impact from technology in the last 12 months (43.7%), followed distantly by cleaning/ turnover coordination (14.3%) and team scheduling (11.9%).

WHAT OPERATORS WANT AI TO DO NEXT





Where the friction is

Not everyone has hit a wall: 21.9% of respondents say they haven't experienced significant friction with their tools or AI, and 18.9% have no real concerns about it at all. For the rest, two problems dominate — errors that reach the guest, and tools that don't talk to each other.



FRICTION OR CONCERN

AI making errors that damage the guest experience	54.4%
Losing the personal, human touch with guests	52.1%
Integrations not working across existing tools	32.0%
Tools that don't integrate, creating duplicate work	31.4%
Guest messaging that feels impersonal or mistimed	20.7%
Automated scheduling ignoring real-world constraints	20.1%
AI suggestions requiring too much manual review	20.1%
Staff feeling replaced or devalued	18.3%
Staff resistance or low adoption of new tools	13.6%

There's a paradox here: guest messaging is simultaneously the most automated function in the industry and the single biggest source of AI-related friction. That's not a contradiction, it's a maturity signal. The operators who automated first are also the ones who've hit the ceiling of what naive automation can do, and are discovering that trigger logic matters as much as the message itself. Operators earlier in the automation curve should expect the same lesson, just later.

The other recurring complaint is integration, not automation itself. Nearly a third of operators say their tools don't talk to each other, and that same complaint shows up twice in the data: once as broken integrations, once as the duplicate work they create. Together, they make integration friction the second major theme in this section, right behind concerns about guest-facing errors.

Looking ahead, 58% of respondents believe AI will meaningfully change their job in some way (40.8% "certain tasks," 14.8% "completely," 2.4% "worried it will replace me"), while 20.1% say it's too early to tell and 21.9% are skeptical AI will matter much for work they see as fundamentally hands-on.

The goal shouldn’t be to automate the highest possible percentage of your operation. Some work benefits enormously from speed and consistency; other moments are where judgment, experience and trust matter most. The ROI comes from knowing the difference, and using the capacity AI creates to give your people more time for the guest, owner and business decisions where they create the most value.”



Vered Raviv-Schwarz
President & COO, Guesty

The Rising Bar

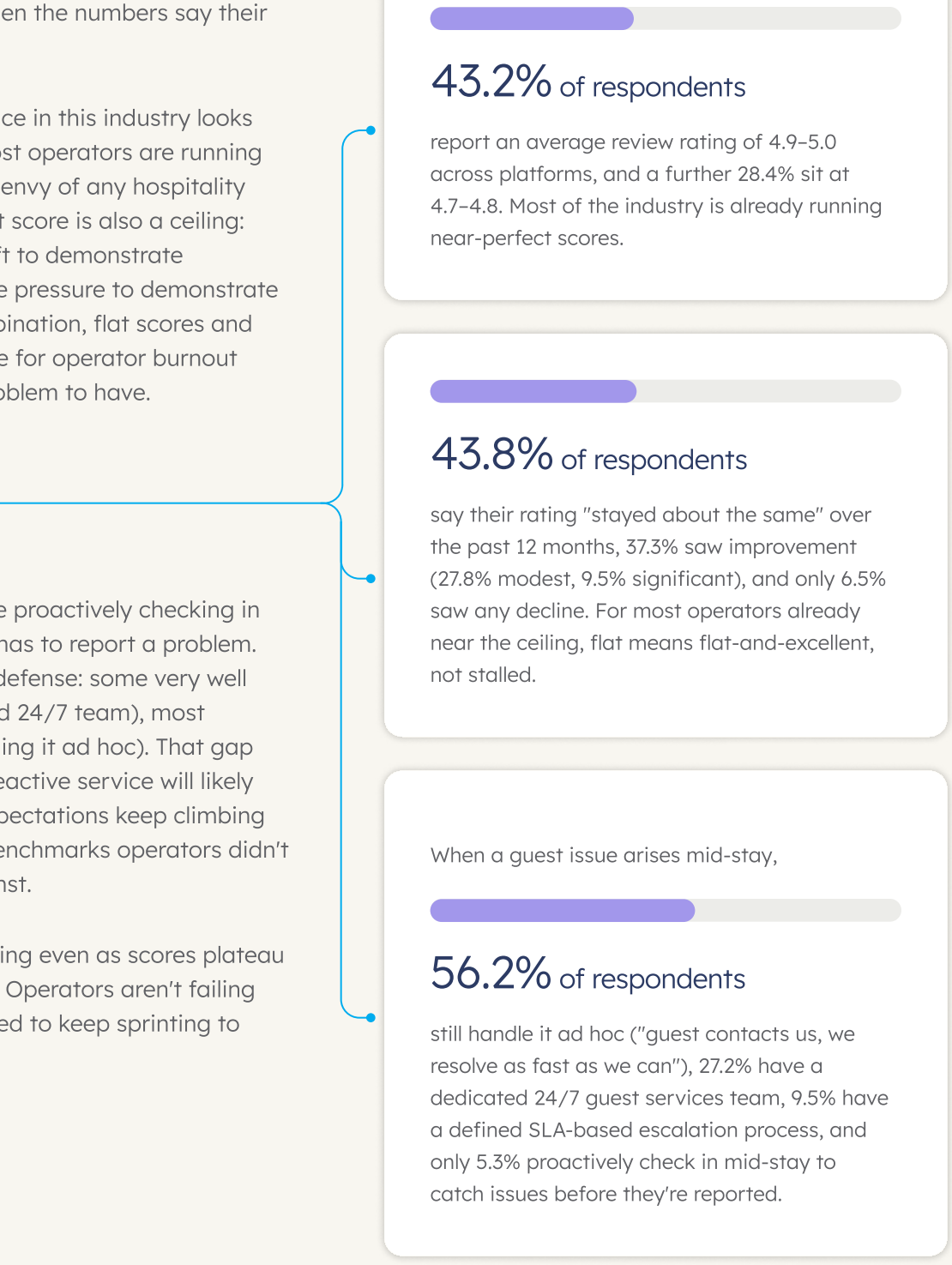
Guest expectations haven't eased up, and operators feel it, even when the numbers say their reviews are excellent.

On paper, guest experience in this industry looks like a solved problem. Most operators are running scores that would be the envy of any hospitality brand. But a near-perfect score is also a ceiling: there's very little room left to demonstrate improvement, even as the pressure to demonstrate it keeps rising. That combination, flat scores and rising pressure, is a recipe for operator burnout dressed up as a good problem to have.

KEY STATS

Only 1 in 20 operators are proactively checking in mid-stay before a guest has to report a problem. Everyone else is playing defense: some very well (the 27% with a dedicated 24/7 team), most reactively (the 56% handling it ad hoc). That gap between proactive and reactive service will likely matter more as guest expectations keep climbing toward hotel-standard benchmarks operators didn't sign up to compete against.

Pressure to improve is rising even as scores plateau near the top of the scale. Operators aren't failing guests, they're being asked to keep sprinting to stay in the same place.



43.2% of respondents

report an average review rating of 4.9–5.0 across platforms, and a further 28.4% sit at 4.7–4.8. Most of the industry is already running near-perfect scores.

43.8% of respondents

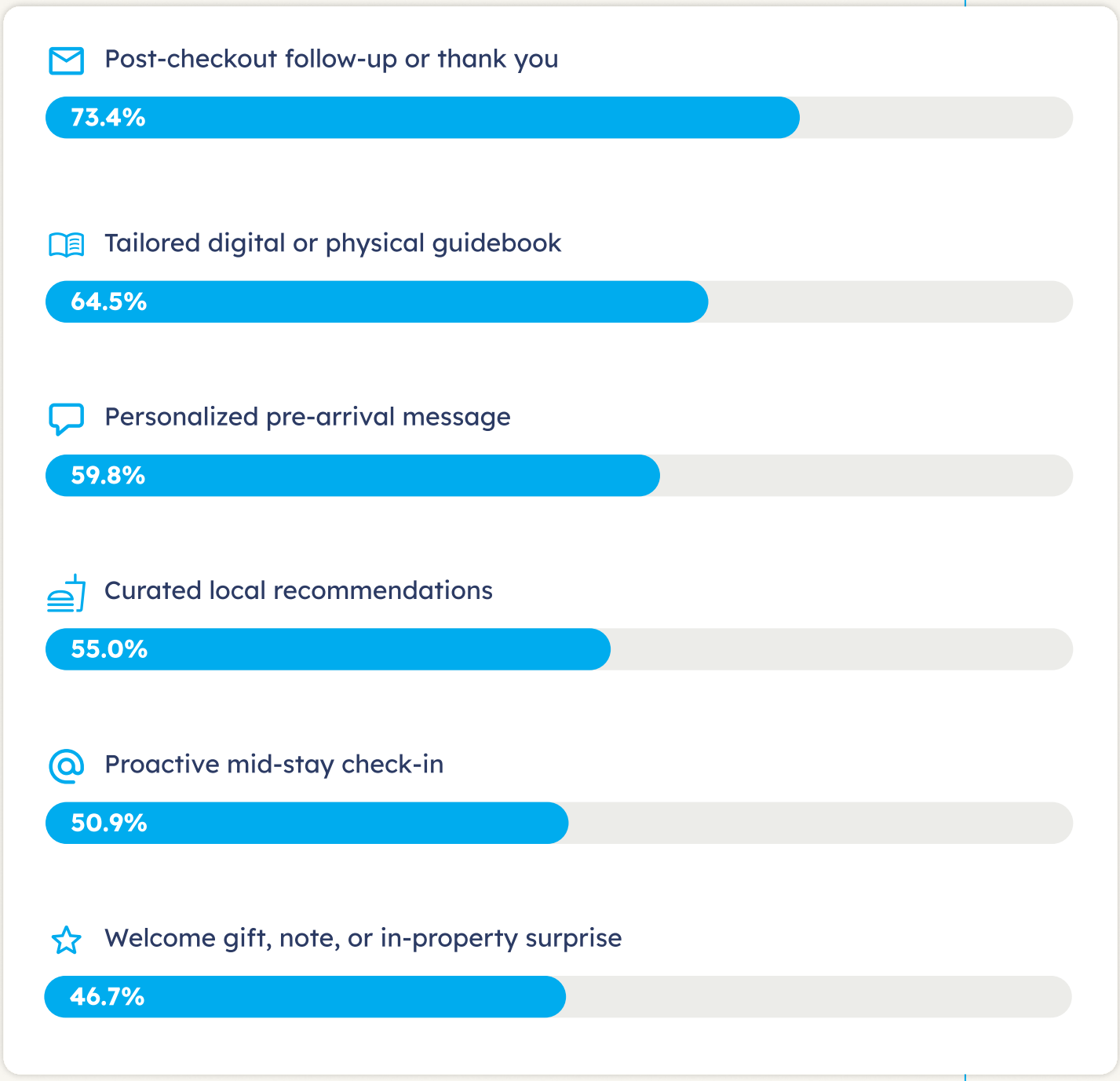
say their rating "stayed about the same" over the past 12 months, 37.3% saw improvement (27.8% modest, 9.5% significant), and only 6.5% saw any decline. For most operators already near the ceiling, flat means flat-and-excellent, not stalled.

When a guest issue arises mid-stay,

56.2% of respondents

still handle it ad hoc ("guest contacts us, we resolve as fast as we can"), 27.2% have a dedicated 24/7 guest services team, 9.5% have a defined SLA-based escalation process, and only 5.3% proactively check in mid-stay to catch issues before they're reported.

HOW OPERATORS ARE LAYERING HOSPITALITY ON TOP OF OPERATIONS



Only 6% of respondents say they focus purely on operational quality with none of these touches. The large majority are already trying to build hospitality moments on top of the mechanical work, even under time and staffing pressure.

The Upsell Opportunity

More than half of operators offer nothing beyond the standard stay: no concierge services, no upsells, no add-ons. Whether that's a real opportunity being left on the table or a reasonable response to an already-thin operation depends entirely on how much bandwidth an operator has to spare, and this year's data splits cleanly along exactly that line.

53.3% of respondents don't offer any concierge or guest services beyond the standard stay. 26.0% offer them as a nice-to-have, 11.8% are planning to add them in the next 12 months, and just 8.9% currently treat them as a core, meaningful revenue stream.

Where concierge services do exist, grocery/supply pre-stocking, activity booking, and in-stay chef or catering are the most common offerings. Restaurant reservations and event planning follow closely behind. Pet services and spa/wellness are the least common.

Perceived opportunity is real, but not universal: 26.6% of respondents call the revenue opportunity "meaningful" or a "major, strategic priority" for 2026, while 36.1% see it as limited or not significant ("guests just want a clean, functional home").

Scale clearly unlocks this: operators with 100+ properties are more than twice as likely to already monetize concierge services (25–27%) as operators under 100 properties (12–13%).

Upsell revenue isn't unevenly distributed because smaller operators don't see the opportunity:

26.6% of the whole sample call it meaningful or strategic. It's unevenly captured because building and coordinating extra services on top of an already-thin operation takes exactly the kind of bandwidth most operators don't have to spare. Concierge is less a strategy decision than a capacity decision.

Concierge and hospitality upsells are a genuine, underexploited opportunity, but only for operators with the bandwidth to build them out. For smaller operators already stretched thin on staffing, it's a lower priority than the operational fundamentals.

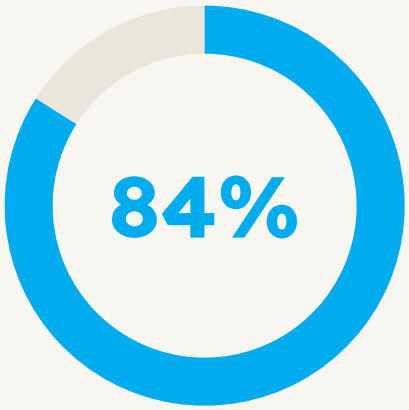
Chapter 6

Powered by People

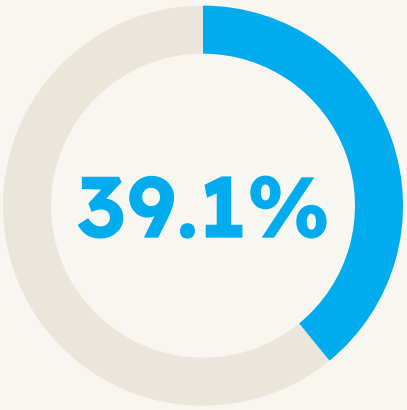


Hospitality is still, at its core, a people business, and this year's data suggests the industry may be under-investing in the people doing the work at exactly the moment it can least afford to.

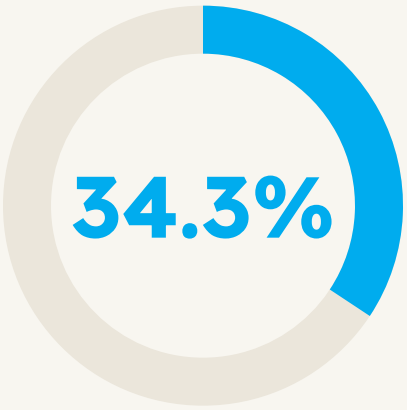
The industry runs on people who are hard to find, hard to keep, and, by this year's numbers, increasingly under-recognized. That's happening at the exact moment operators are asking more of them, scaling operations around them, and asking AI to pick up more of the coordination work. Something has to give, and the recognition data suggests it already has.



of respondents call it moderately-to-very difficult (3–5 on a 5-point scale) to find and retain reliable cleaning and maintenance staff in their market. This holds essentially flat across every portfolio size.

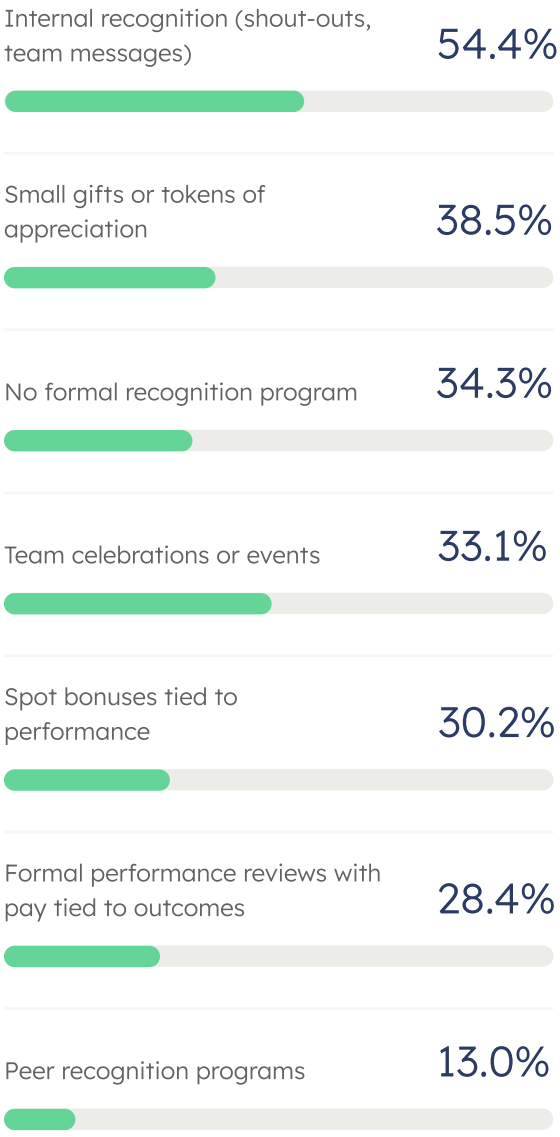


of respondents report annual back-of-house turnover under 10% (healthy), but 39.1% report turnover of 26% or higher — a substantial share of the industry is fighting real, ongoing churn.



of respondents say they have no formal recognition program at all for their team. That last stat is a sharp jump from the 18.4% who said the same in 2025.

HOW TEAMS ARE RECOGNIZED, WHERE THEY HAVE A PROGRAM



WHAT MOTIVATES THE PEOPLE DOING THE WORK

1. Seeing the business grow and succeed
2. Pride in the quality of my own work
3. Delivering a great experience for guests
4. Compensation and financial stability
5. Satisfaction from owner trust and confidence
6. Supporting and building connections with my team
7. Career growth and advancement opportunity

Personal pride and guest experience remain, as in 2025, the top drivers of motivation, this hasn't shifted. What did shift is the apparent thinning of formal recognition infrastructure, even as retention remains the industry's hardest problem to solve.

What didn't move: pride and guest experience are still what people say drives them. What changed is what the business offers back. If recognition keeps eroding while the reasons people stay keep depending on feeling valued, that gap will only deepen.

Owners Expect More

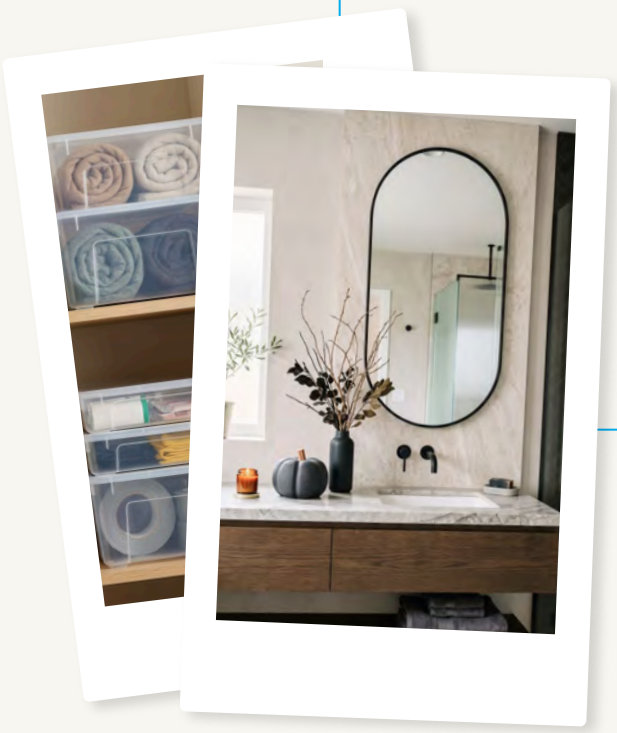
Owner expectations haven't cooled either. They want to see proof their properties are being cared for, not just a revenue report, and the operators who can show it are the ones keeping the business.

HOW OPERATORS COMMUNICATE WITH OWNERS TODAY

Owner portal or dashboard with real-time visibility	46.7%
Ad hoc calls or emails when issues arise	40.2%
Regular written reports (weekly, monthly, or quarterly)	30.8%
Inspection reports shared directly with owners	19.5%
Annual or semi-annual performance review meetings	18.9%
No structured communication cadence	18.9%
Photo or video documentation shared after each stay	10.1%

TOP THREE THINGS OWNERS ACTUALLY WANT TO SEE

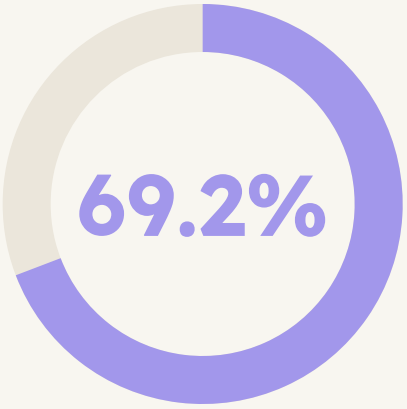
1. Revenue and booking performance
2. Maintenance and property condition
3. Guest review scores and feedback



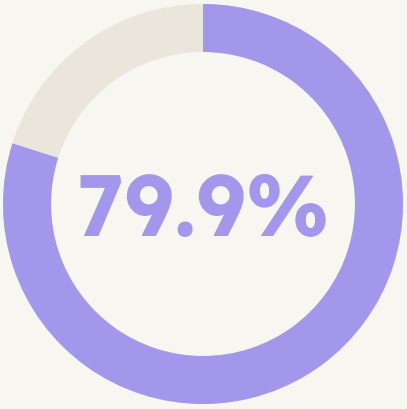
Safety/compliance and speed of issue resolution rank lowest on what owners say they want reported, even though operators put real effort into both. That's a possible under-communication gap: operators may be under-selling work owners would value seeing, simply because it's not what owners think to ask for.

That gap matters because of what's likely driving it. In a market where most short-term rental management looks interchangeable from the outside, the operators who make invisible work visible are giving owners a concrete reason to stay instead of shopping around. Reporting, in other words, isn't overhead — it's the product differentiation this industry has been missing.

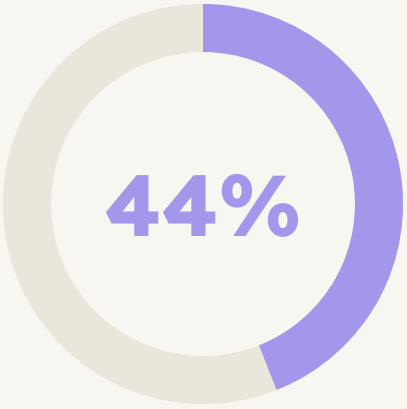
DOES PROVING YOUR VALUE ACTUALLY WORK?



of respondents rate their own confidence in showcasing operational value beyond revenue as high (4 or 5 out of 5).



of respondents say demonstrating operational performance has directly helped them win new owner contracts and/or retain owners who might have left in the past 12 months (32.5% both, 27.8% win only, 19.5% retain only). Only 10.1% say they don't currently use operational performance as a selling point.



of respondents who rate their confidence a 5 out of 5, say demonstrating operational value directly won them new contracts — more than four times the 10% who say the same at confidence level 2.

The operators who feel equipped to prove their operational value are winning and keeping more business because of it. That's a strong, data-backed argument for investing in owner-facing reporting and transparency tools, not as a nice-to-have, but as a demonstrated driver of new and retained business.

Owners are the lifeblood of the short-term rental industry, and trust is what keeps their properties in the program. Property management software lets operators reflect real work—every maintenance visit, every issue resolved, billed or not—directly in the monthly owner statement. That turns invisible care into visible proof, and visible proof is what earns owner loyalty and long-standing partnerships"



Joshua Hoffert
VP, Track Professional Services

In Their Own Words

Operators aren't asking for more tools. They're asking for the tools they already have to talk to each other and close the loop automatically, so nothing falls through the cracks between teams, vendors, owners, and guests.

Finding reliable maintenance personnel for repetitive preventative maintenance tasks at bulk and discounted prices."

Nikki Cabrera
Housekeeping Manager,
Dwell Vacation Rentals



BIGGEST OPERATIONAL CHALLENGE

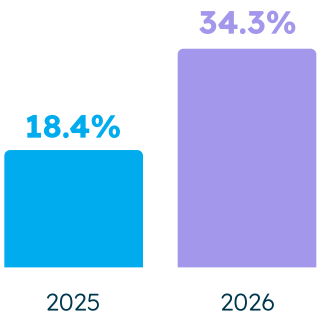
- Staffing, hiring, and retention (22.7%)
- Communication, follow-through, and accountability (16.2%)
- Maintenance and vendor reliability (12.3%)
- Tech and integration friction (11.7%)
- Inventory, laundry, and linen management (8.4%)
- Owner relations (5.8%)
- Guest expectations (5.8%)
- Time and bandwidth pressure (5.8%)
- Scheduling and coordination (5.2%)

What Changed Since Last Year

These three shifts aren't independent. Taken together, they tell one story about where the industry's attention and investment went this year, and it wasn't toward the people doing the work or the AI hype cycle.

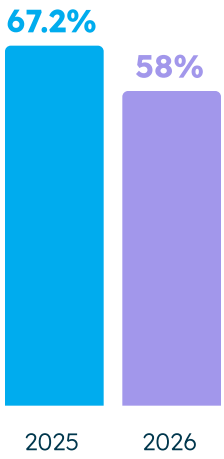
Recognition is eroding.

34.3% of respondents now say they have no formal recognition program at all, up from 18.4% last year, nearly double. Paired with staffing/retention re-emerging as the industry's top named challenge, this looks like one of the clearest year-over-year shifts in the survey.



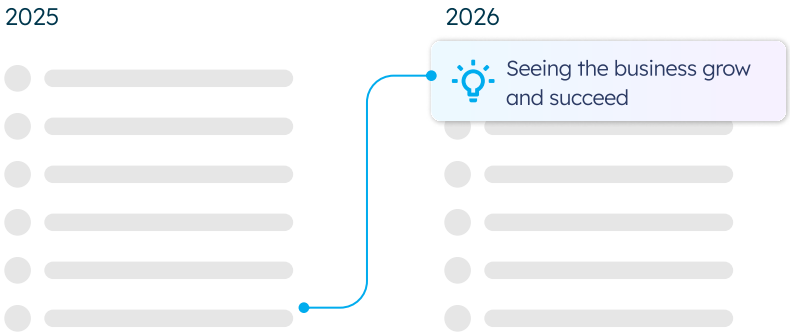
Opinions on AI have shifted, especially among the most bullish

58% of operators believe AI will meaningfully change their job in some way, down from 67.2% in 2025. The drop is concentrated among the most bullish respondents: those saying AI will "completely change how I work" fell from 22.6% to 14.8%, while "too early to tell" grew from 14.2% to 20.1%. This is less backlash about AI and more like initial hype settling into a wait-and-see view.



What motivates people has reshuffled, dramatically.

In 2025, "seeing the business grow and succeed" was the least-cited motivator (8.7%, last of six options). In 2026, it's the most-cited motivator (56.2%). Guest experience and personal pride held steady in the top three both years, so this isn't that fading.





Growth pressure went up, AI expectations got more specific, and the people doing the physical work got less formal recognition for it. If margin pressure really is the thread connecting all three, the risk is that it becomes self-reinforcing: squeezed recognition budgets driving more turnover, which makes an already difficult labor market even harder to navigate next year.

Success in 2027 requires

Closing the visibility gap.

Communication and follow-through, not a shortage of tools, is the connective-tissue problem operators keep naming, echoing 2025's top two frustrations almost exactly. The fix operators want most isn't a new feature; it's automatic follow-up and status visibility across teams, vendors, and owners.

It's clear that AI has and will continue to improve the margins of property managers that have been squeezed by flattening demand and supply with increasing costs. The property managers that adopt AI widely are getting ahead of the competition, our data shows."

Marcus Räder
Founder & CEO,
Hostaway



Using AI to reduce admin burden, not a guest-facing replacement.

Operators want AI to handle scheduling and predictive maintenance first, the unglamorous operational grind, while their biggest AI fear is errors that damage the guest experience. The winning products will be the ones that make the back-office invisible, not the ones that completely automate the guest relationship.

Reinvesting in recognition before retention gets worse.

With 34.3% of respondents now reporting no formal recognition program, up sharply from 18.4% in 2025, and staffing/retention re-emerging as the industry's #1 named challenge, this looks like an area getting squeezed at exactly the wrong time.

Proving operational value to owners, deliberately.

79.9% of respondents say demonstrating operational performance has directly helped them win or keep owner contracts, and confidence in showcasing that value tracks almost perfectly with results. This isn't a soft skill, it's a measurable driver of new and retained business.

Treating upsells as a scale play, not a universal one.

Operators with 100+ properties are about twice as likely to already earn meaningful revenue from concierge services (25–27% vs. 12–13%). The opportunity is real, but it depends on capacity. Get the operational fundamentals stable first, then layer services on top.

About Breezeway

Breezeway is the AI-powered property operations platform for short-term rental and hospitality operators. Breezeway automates the workflows that create 5-star stays, ensuring cleaning, maintenance, property care and service is done right. With embedded AI agents that handle the administrative burden, streamline communication, and control field operations, Breezeway helps teams execute to higher standards and deliver better guest experiences. Powering over 350,000 properties across 90 countries, Breezeway is where hospitality works.

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