



INSIGHT REPORT

State of Voice of the Customer Programs, 2017

**SEVENTH ANNUAL BENCHMARK OF VOC COMPETENCY &
MATURITY AT LARGE ORGANIZATIONS**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For the seventh straight year, Temkin Group has benchmarked the competency and maturity levels of voice of the customer (VoC) programs within large organizations. This year we surveyed close to 200 large companies and asked them to complete Temkin Group's *VoC Competency and Maturity Assessment*, which evaluates their capabilities across what we call the "Six Ds:" *Detect, Disseminate, Diagnose, Discuss, Design, and Deploy*. This report also includes data from these companies' responses to help you benchmark your own company's VoC efforts. We compared this year's results with those from previous years and found that:

- While most companies think that their VoC efforts are successful, less than one-quarter of companies consider themselves good at making changes to the business based on the insights.
- Companies find their VoC programs to be most valuable for "identifying and fixing quick-hit operational issues" and least valuable for "identifying innovative product and service ideas."
- Companies expect technology will continue to heavily impact their VoC programs in the future, especially for integrating survey data with CRM and operational data.
- In the future, companies expect the most important source of insights to be customer interaction history and the least important source to be multiple-choice questions.
- The most common activity for VoC teams is defining customer experience metrics for their companies, and this activity became even more popular over the past year.
- Only 14% of companies have reached the two highest levels of VoC maturity (out of six levels), while 46% remain in the bottom two levels.
- When we compared higher-scoring VoC programs with lower-scoring programs, we found that companies with mature programs are more successful, technology-focused, and mobile-oriented and have more full-time staff and more involved senior executives.
- Companies with more mature VoC programs identified "integration across systems" as the most common obstacle they face, while less mature VoC programs struggle the most with "cooperation across the organization."

VOC PROGRAMS ARE SUCCESSFUL, BUT HAVE ROOM TO IMPROVE

Voice of the customer (VoC) programs form the cornerstone of most companies' customer experience efforts. So to understand how these programs have advanced in recent years, we

surveyed 186 large organizations with VoC programs and compared the results to similar studies we've conducted over the previous few years.¹ Our analysis shows that:

- **Most VoC programs deliver results.** Almost three-quarters of the companies we surveyed report that their VoC programs are either “somewhat” or “very” successful, while only 8% of respondents rate their VoC efforts as “unsuccessful” (see Figure 1). This is a slightly less bullish view than we found last year.
- **Organizations are struggling to make changes to their businesses.** While 63% of respondents think they are “good” or “very good” at soliciting customer feedback, only about one-quarter feel equally as confident about their ability to make changes to their business based on those insights or about their ability to review implications that cut across the organization (see Figure 2). Compared to last year, companies feel less positively about their performance across every area of their VoC efforts.
- **The most value comes from quick hits.** When we asked the respondents about how their VoC program has helped their organization, 56% said that it helped them to “identify and fix quick-hit operational issues,” the most frequently selected area (see Figure 3). We also found a severe drop in the percentage of companies that say their VoC program provides value by helping them “identify and fix process issues” and “fuel a continuous improvement process.”
- **Technology is playing an increasingly important role.** We asked companies to predict how important different technologies will be to their VoC programs in the upcoming months. In each of the areas, the percentage of respondents who think that the technology will become more important in the coming year dwarfs the percentage of those who think it will become less important (see Figure 4). At the top of the list, 74% believe that “integration of survey data with CRM and operational data” will become more important over the next year.
- **Multiple-choice surveys will continue to decline in significance.** When we asked companies to estimate how important different sources of customer insights will be three years down the road, 78% indicated that customer interaction history would be more important (see Figure 5). Meanwhile, at the bottom of the list, only 33% of respondents believe that multiple-choice questions will increase in importance.
- **Most surveys work in mobile browsers.** How do companies collect feedback through mobile devices? Fifty-six percent of companies use mobile browsers to gather insights, while only 2% look at user-generated photos or video (see Figure 6).
- **Most firms have a full-time VoC staff.** Eighty-four percent of respondents have at least one full-time employee dedicated to their VoC program, and more than 60% have three or more employees on their VoC team (see Figure 7). Despite these numbers, this year significantly fewer respondents said that their voice of the customer efforts are driven by a centralized VoC group compared to last year.
- **VoC teams most frequently define CX metrics.** More than two-thirds of VoC teams have the responsibility of “defining customer experience metrics for the company” (see Figure 8). This area of focus increased the most since last year.

¹ Temkin Group surveyed 186 organizations with \$500 million or more in annual revenues during September 2017.

- **Executive involvement remains about the same.** We provided respondents with five statements describing different ways in which their senior executive team could participate in VoC efforts, and then we asked them which of the statements applied to their company (see Figure 9). We found that executives are most likely to get updates about the overall VoC program and are least likely to use VoC insights to guide their own decisions.
- **Integration remains a serious problem.** Two-thirds of the companies identified “integration across systems” as a significant obstacle to their VoC efforts (see Figure 10). The second most common obstacle, with 63%, is “cooperation across the organization.” This obstacle grew more than any other over the past year.

ASSESSING THE MATURITY OF VOC PROGRAMS

To create a leading-edge voice of the customer program, companies must have what we call the “Six Ds” of a closed-loop VoC program (see Figure 11):

1. **Detect:** Monitor the right feedback at the right time from the right customers and combine it with other key data sources.
2. **Disseminate:** Put information in the hands of the right people at the right time in the right form so that they can act upon it.
3. **Diagnose:** Gain a deeper understanding of problems or opportunities that the feedback uncovers.
4. **Discuss:** Get the right people from the right organizations reviewing the right information to understand what’s affecting customers.
5. **Design:** Follow user-centric approaches for identifying changes that will improve the customer experience.
6. **Deploy:** Make ongoing changes to the experiences and the processes for monitoring those changes.

Five Levels of VoC Maturity – From Novices to Transformers

As companies master the Six Ds, they evolve through five levels of maturity, moving from “Novices” through to “Transformers” (see Figure 12). To pinpoint where companies fall on the scale of VoC maturity, we created Temkin Group’s *VoC Competency and Maturity Assessment* (see Figures 13 and 14). We examined the results from respondents who completed the assessment, and we found that:

- **VoC specialists are the best area of performance.** We looked at the percentage of companies that regularly exhibit each of the thirty VoC characteristics and compared the data to last year’s responses (see Figure 15). The most prevalent VoC capability is “having an identified group of employees across the company that are specialists in analyzing and applying customer insights.” The least common activity is “following a repeatable process for redesigning experiences that require changes across multiple organizations” (see Figure 16).

- **New offerings gain more customer insights.** The percentage of companies that say “customer feedback goals are a core element of the requirements for new products and services” has increased more than any other VoC capability in the past year (see Figure 17). Meanwhile, the percentage of companies that say “customer interactions with the contact center are analyzed as part of the voice of the customer program” has decreased the most since last year (see Figure 18).
- **There is a lot of room for improvement.** Only 14% of companies have reached the top two levels of VoC maturity. This lack of maturity is exemplified by the fact that *Discuss* has the highest competency level of any of the 6 Ds, and yet only 20% of companies received at least a “good” rating for it (see Figure 19).
- **Companies’ VoC programs aren’t maturing.** The percentage of companies in the top three levels of VoC maturity dropped a bit from 57% last year to 54% this year (see Figure 20). Only two of the six competencies improved since last year, *Deploy* and *Design*.

ANATOMY OF SUCCESSFUL VOC PROGRAMS

Based on their overall scores in the VoC assessment, we split the companies into two groups and compared the top half of the companies (with more mature VoC programs) to the bottom half of the companies (with less mature VoC programs). We compared these two and found that more mature VoC programs:

- **Enjoy more success.** Ninety-four percent of VoC leaders report operating successful VoC programs, compared with only 53% of VoC laggards (see Figure 21). And while VoC leaders claim significantly higher success across every area we examined, leaders and laggards differ most significantly when it comes to how effectively they develop actionable insights from the data.
- **Will focus more on integration, analytics, and customer communities.** Compared to VoC laggards, VoC leaders see data integration across systems and predictive analytics as much more likely to increase in importance over the next 12 months (see Figure 22). These leading firms are also more bullish about online customer communities as a source of insights, but less bullish about the future of content center interactions.
- **Are more mobile-oriented.** Mature VoC programs are much more likely to use almost every mobile collection mechanism we listed (see Figure 23). This is especially true for surveying through a mobile app.
- **Help their companies, especially strategically.** The mature VoC programs report helping their companies in each of the 13 potential areas we listed more frequently than their less mature counterparts (see Figure 24). The largest gap between VoC leaders and VoC laggards occurs when it comes to “making strategic decisions more customer-centric.”
- **Benefit from more staff and more coordinated efforts.** Fifty percent of more mature VoC programs are staffed with at least six full-time employees, compared with only 31% of less mature programs (see Figure 25). These leaders are also much more

likely to have VoC programs that are significantly coordinated across their organizations.

- **Have VoC teams with more responsibilities.** Companies with more mature VoC programs are more likely to have their VoC teams handle all 10 of the responsibilities we listed (see Figure 26).
- **Benefit from significantly more engaged executives.** One of the most dramatic differences between these two groups of companies is the level of involvement from their executive teams; senior executive teams are significantly more involved in mature VoC efforts across every single area we examined (see Figure 27). Executives at companies with more mature VoC programs are more than 25 percentage-points more likely to do all of the activities we listed.
- **Are facing fewer significant obstacles.** Companies with more mature VoC programs are less likely to run into almost all of the problems we listed, with the exception of “funding levels” and “sample sizes of feedback” (see Figure 28). The top issue for mature VoC programs is “integration across systems,” while the top obstacle for less mature VoC programs is “cooperation across the organization.” The areas where these two groups differ most are “cooperation across the organization” and “clear objectives for the VoC program.”

PROPEL YOUR VOC PROGRAM TO THE NEXT GENERATION

Here's what we recommend for propelling your VoC program to the next level:

- **Benchmark your VoC maturity.** Complete the VoC assessment and compare your results for each competency, as well as your overall maturity score, with those of other large companies (see Figure 29).
- **Discuss the results.** Share your findings with colleagues, and then discuss the implications of your scores and talk about any differences between your assessments.
- **Identify areas of weakness.** Using the results from the assessment, determine which of the Six Ds needs the most work. Be sure to look at the individual questions to spot potential areas for improvement.
- **Set plans for improvement.** Identify a few specific areas to focus on and then put plans and measurements in place for improving your VoC program.

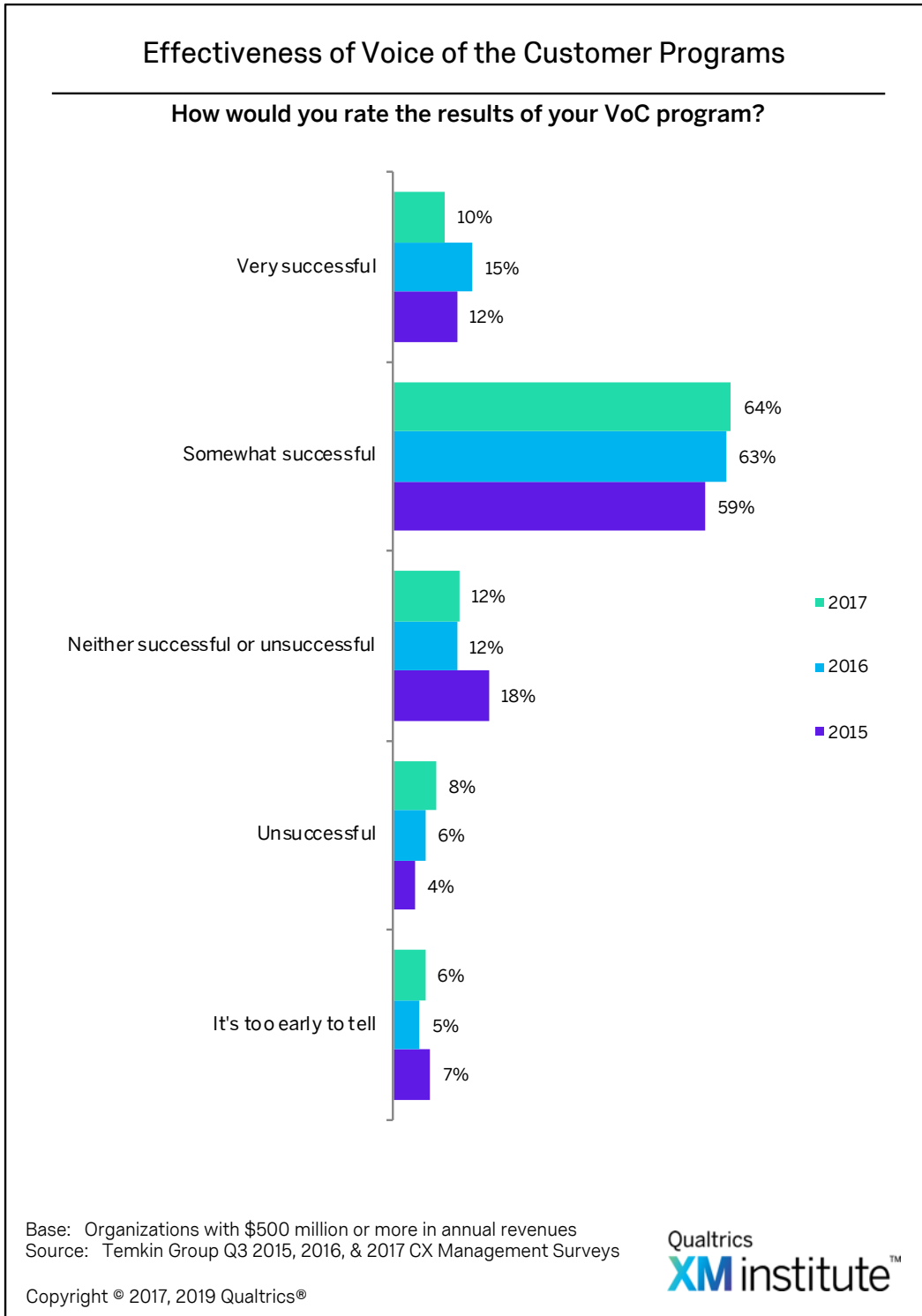


Figure 1

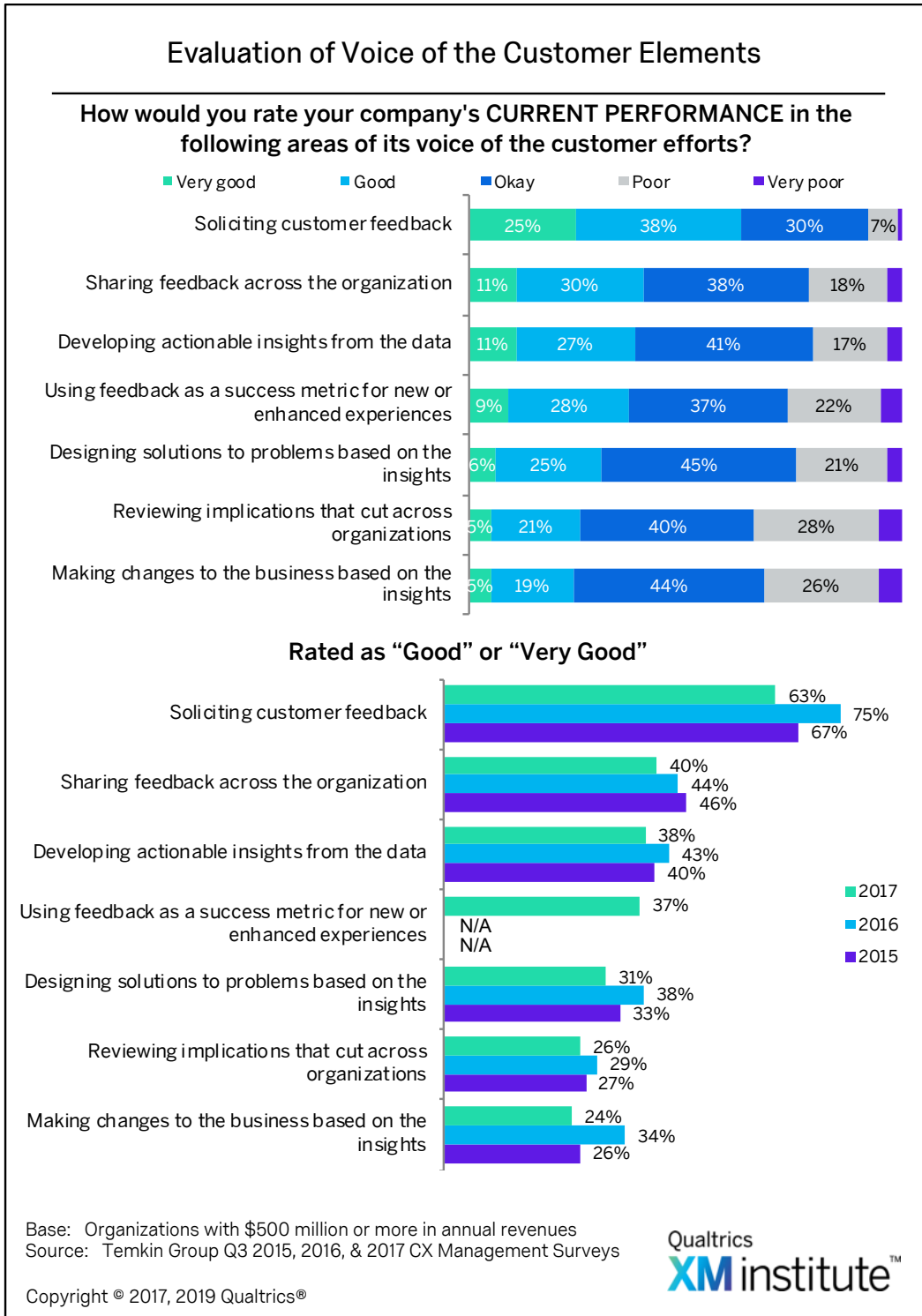


Figure 2

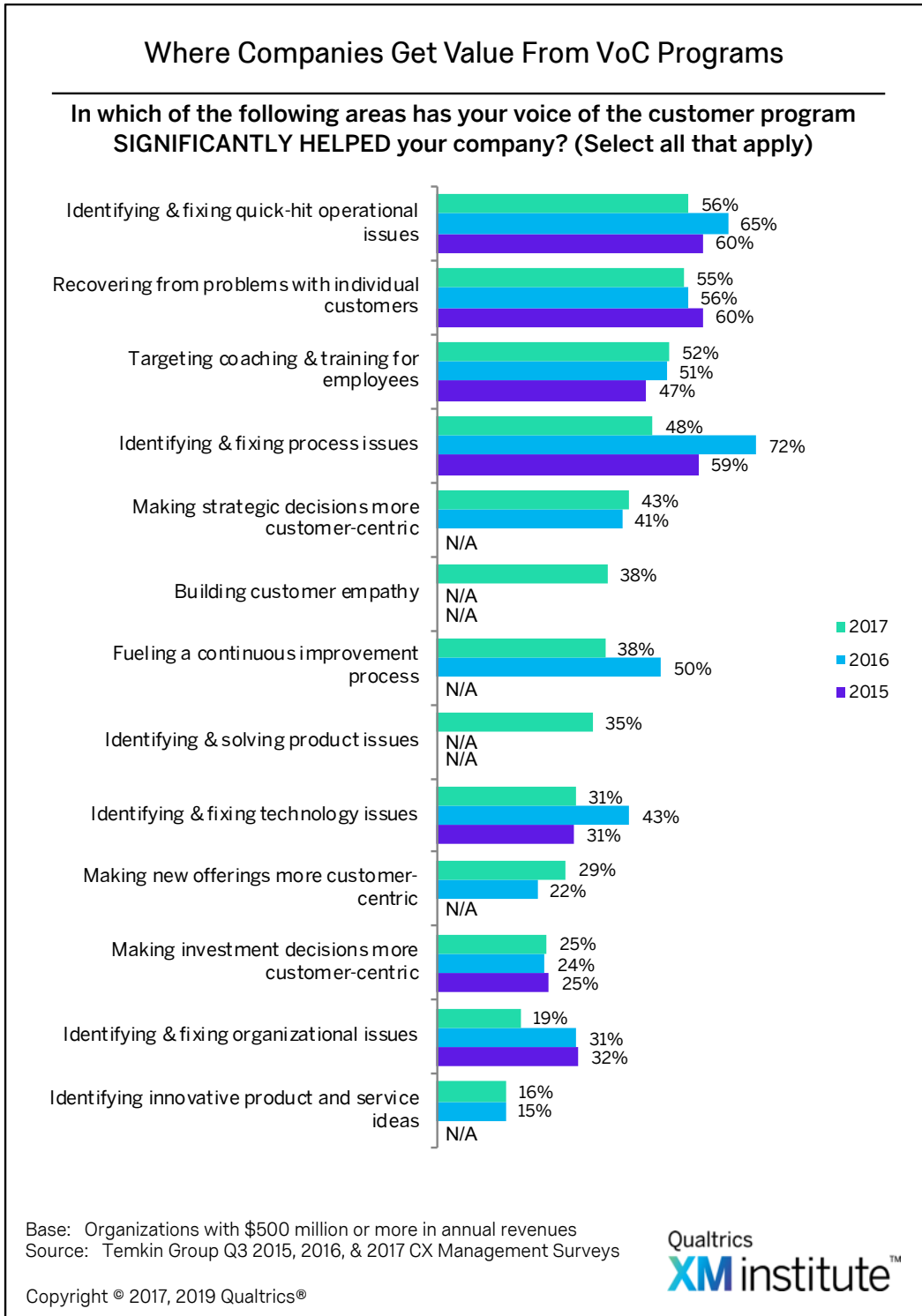


Figure 3

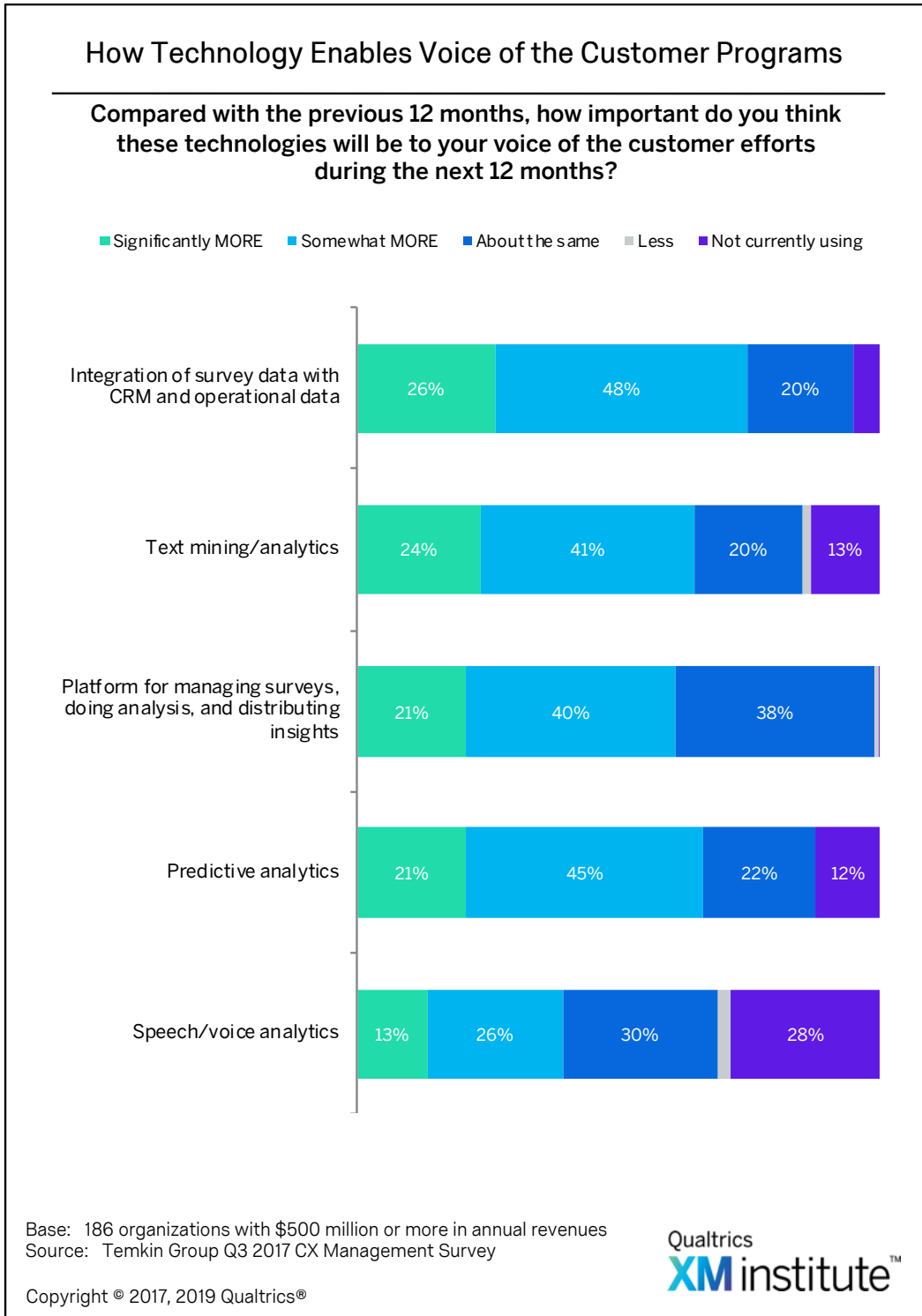


Figure 4

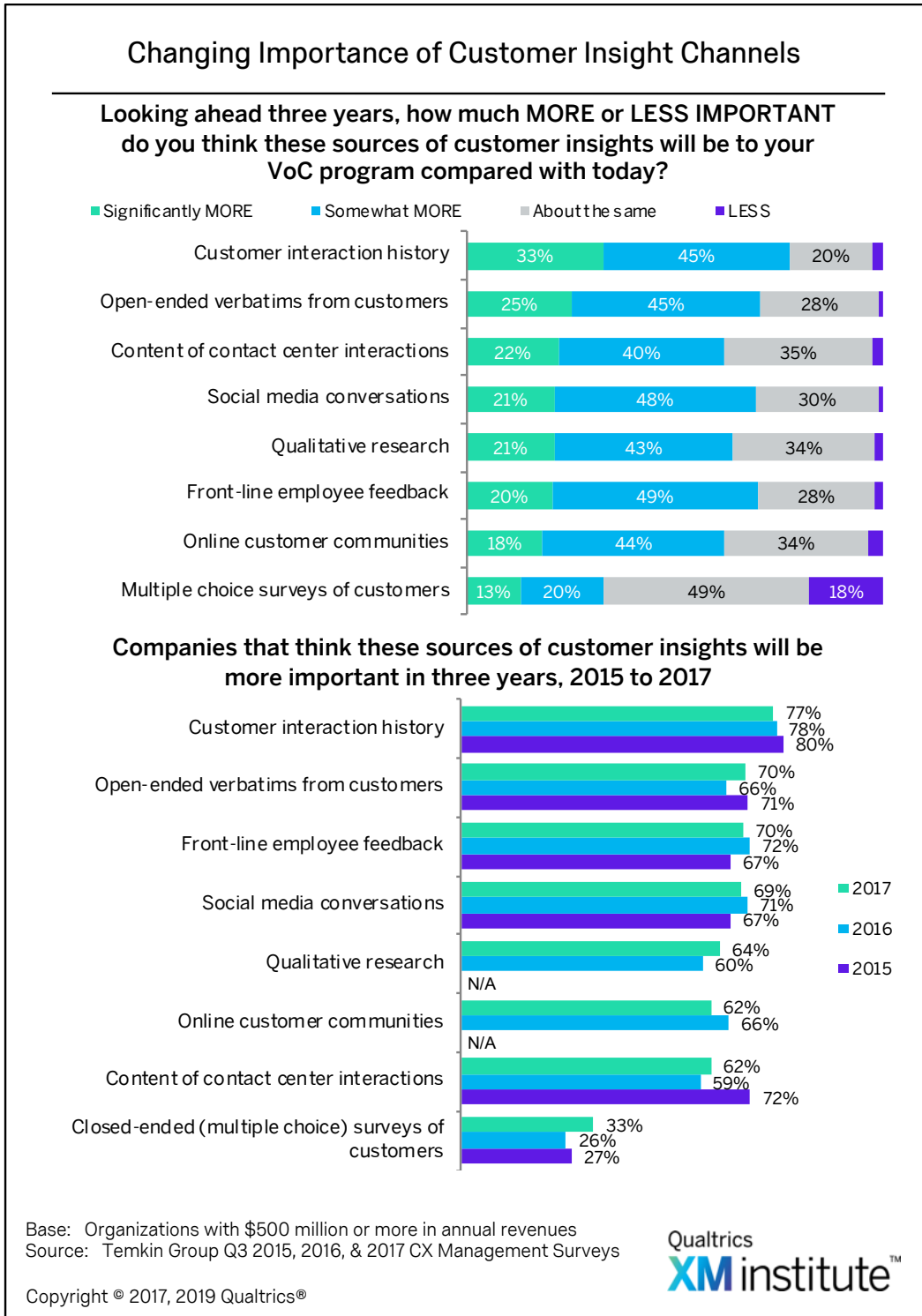


Figure 5

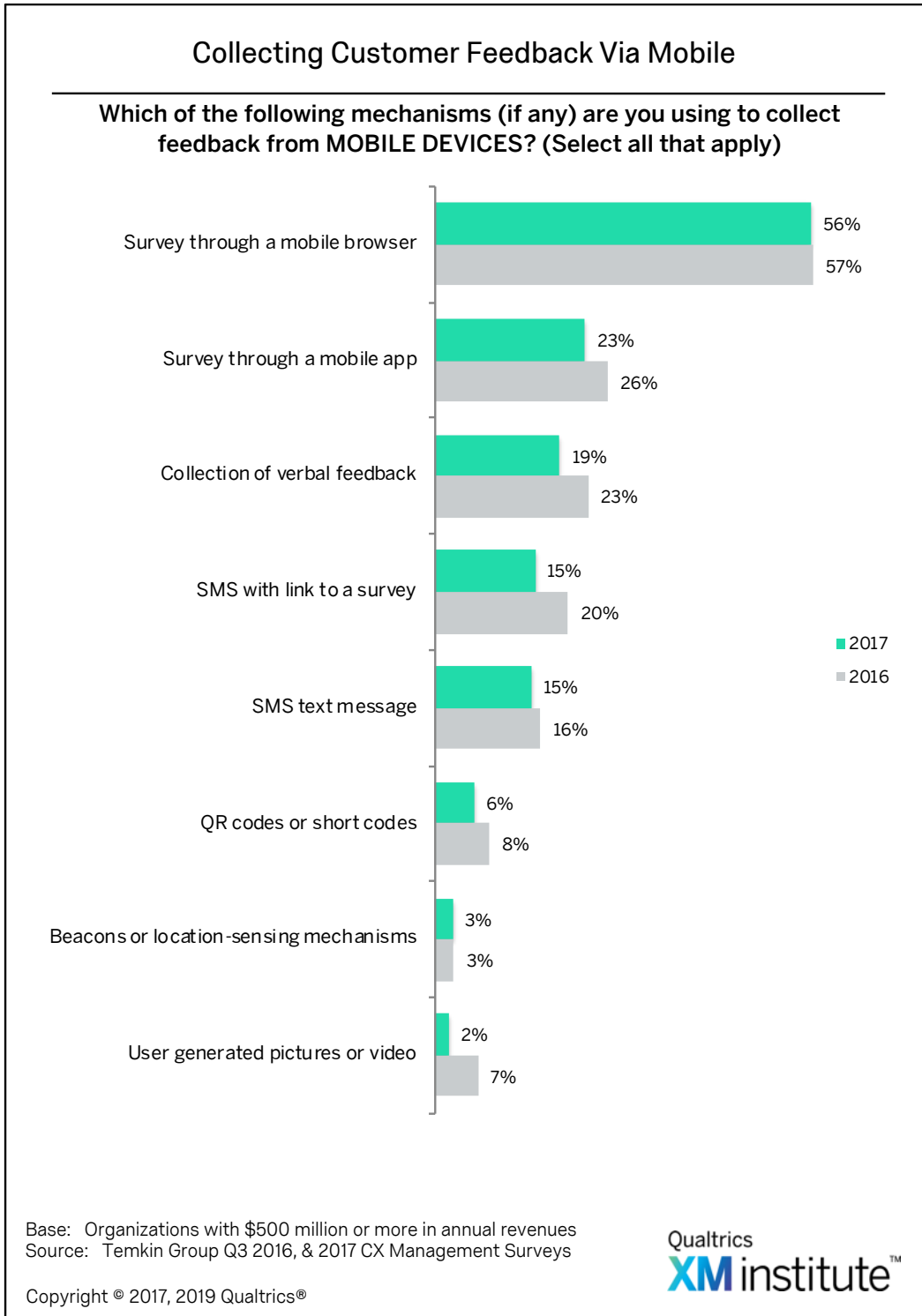


Figure 6

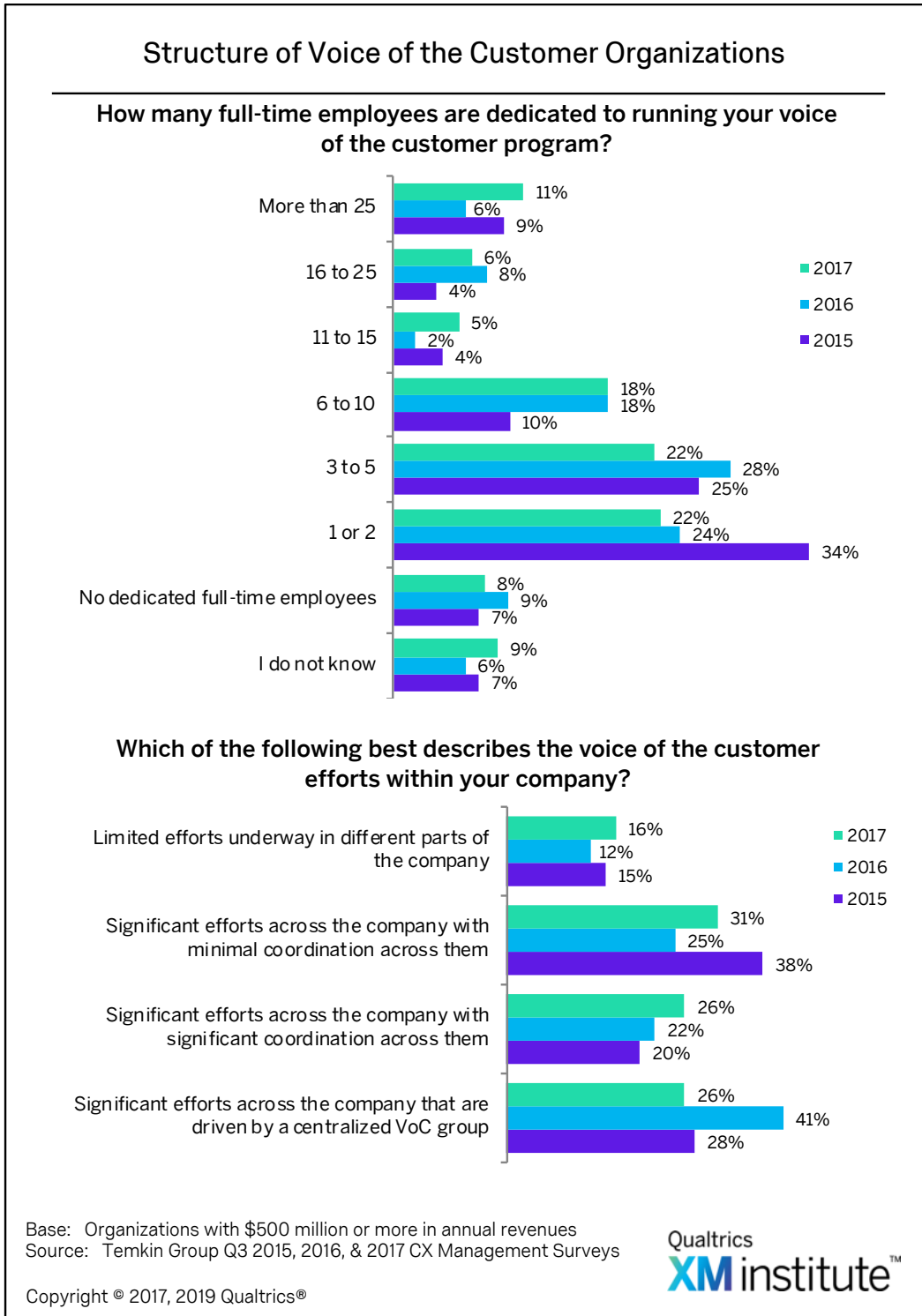


Figure 7

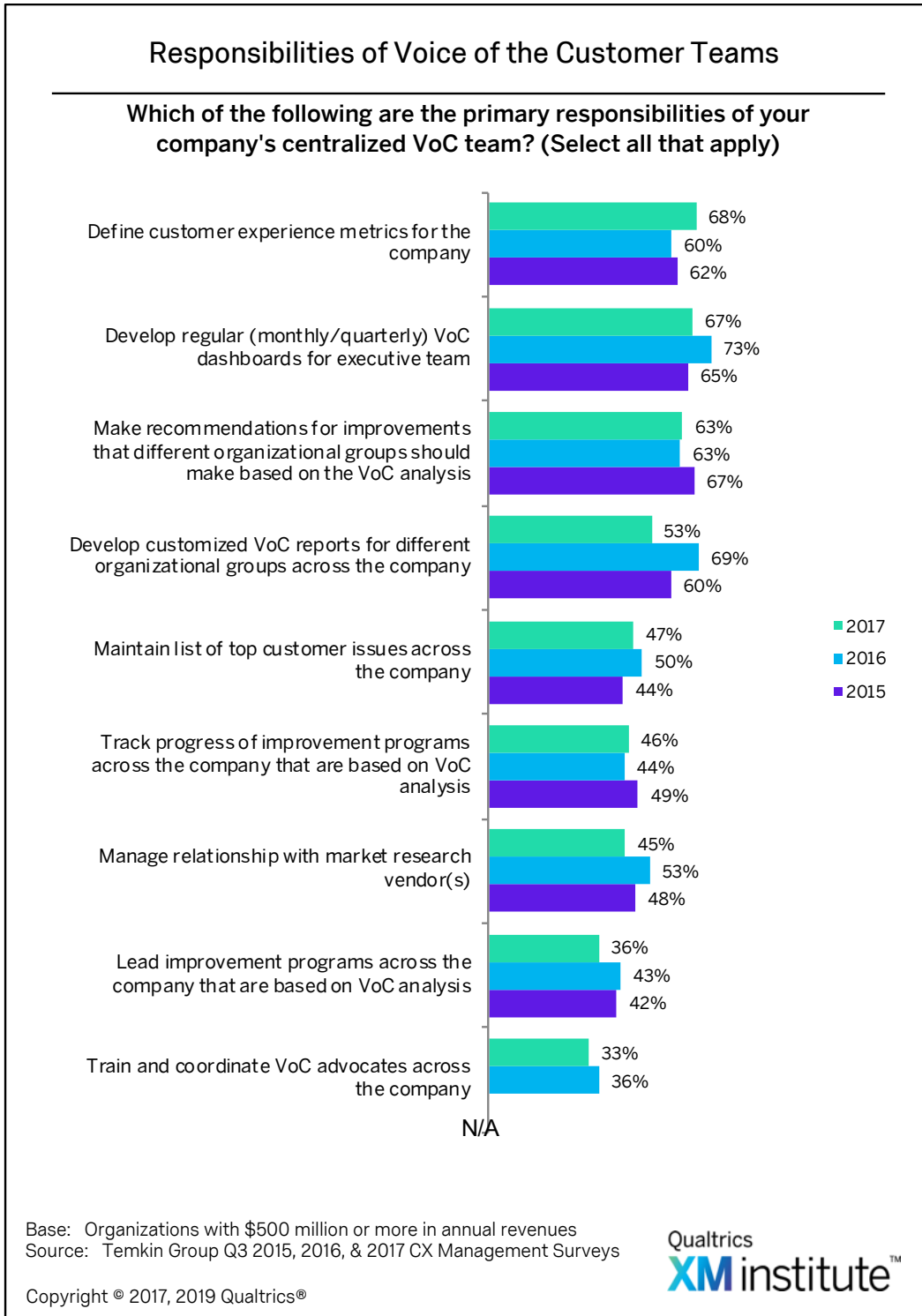


Figure 8

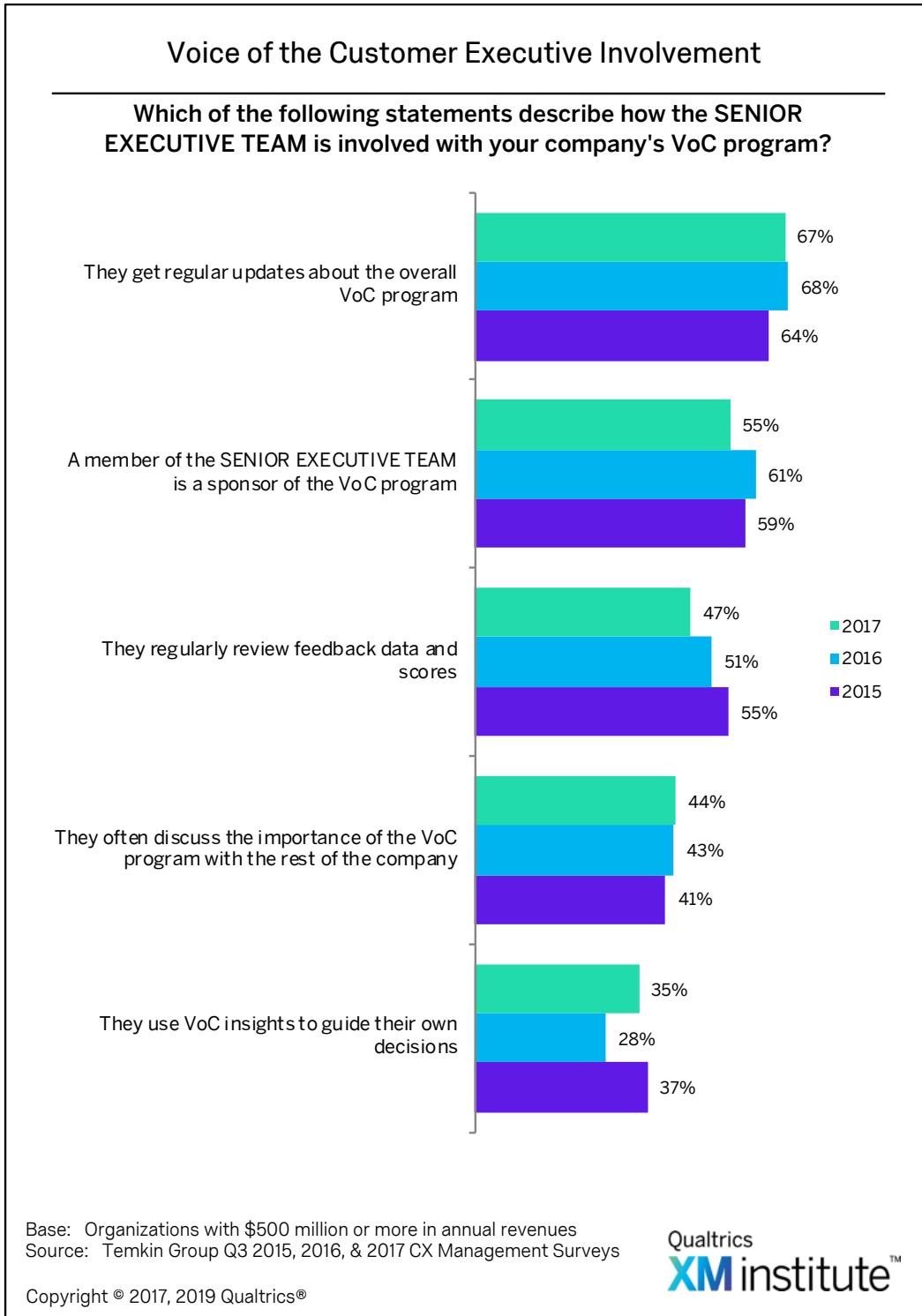


Figure 9

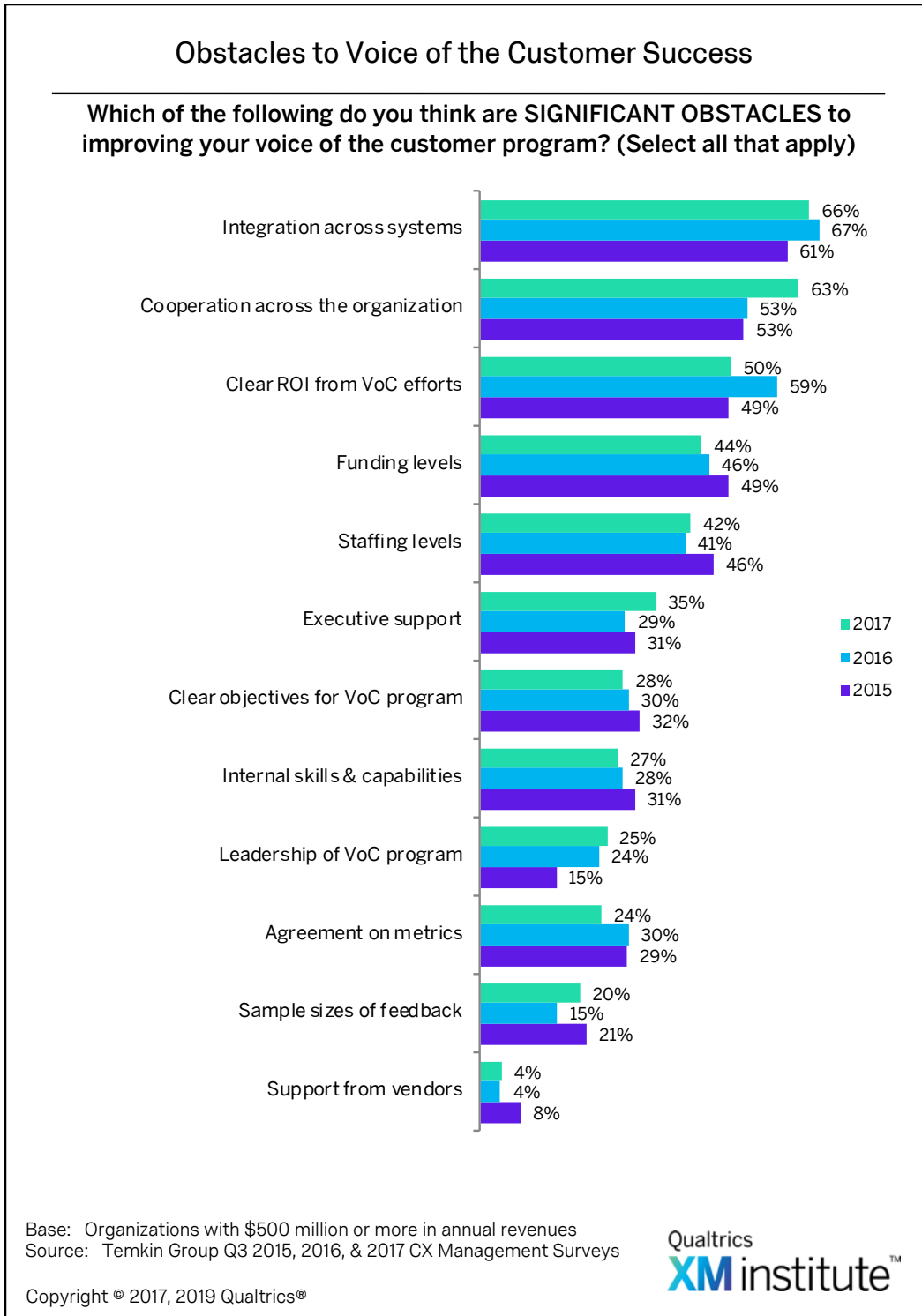


Figure 10

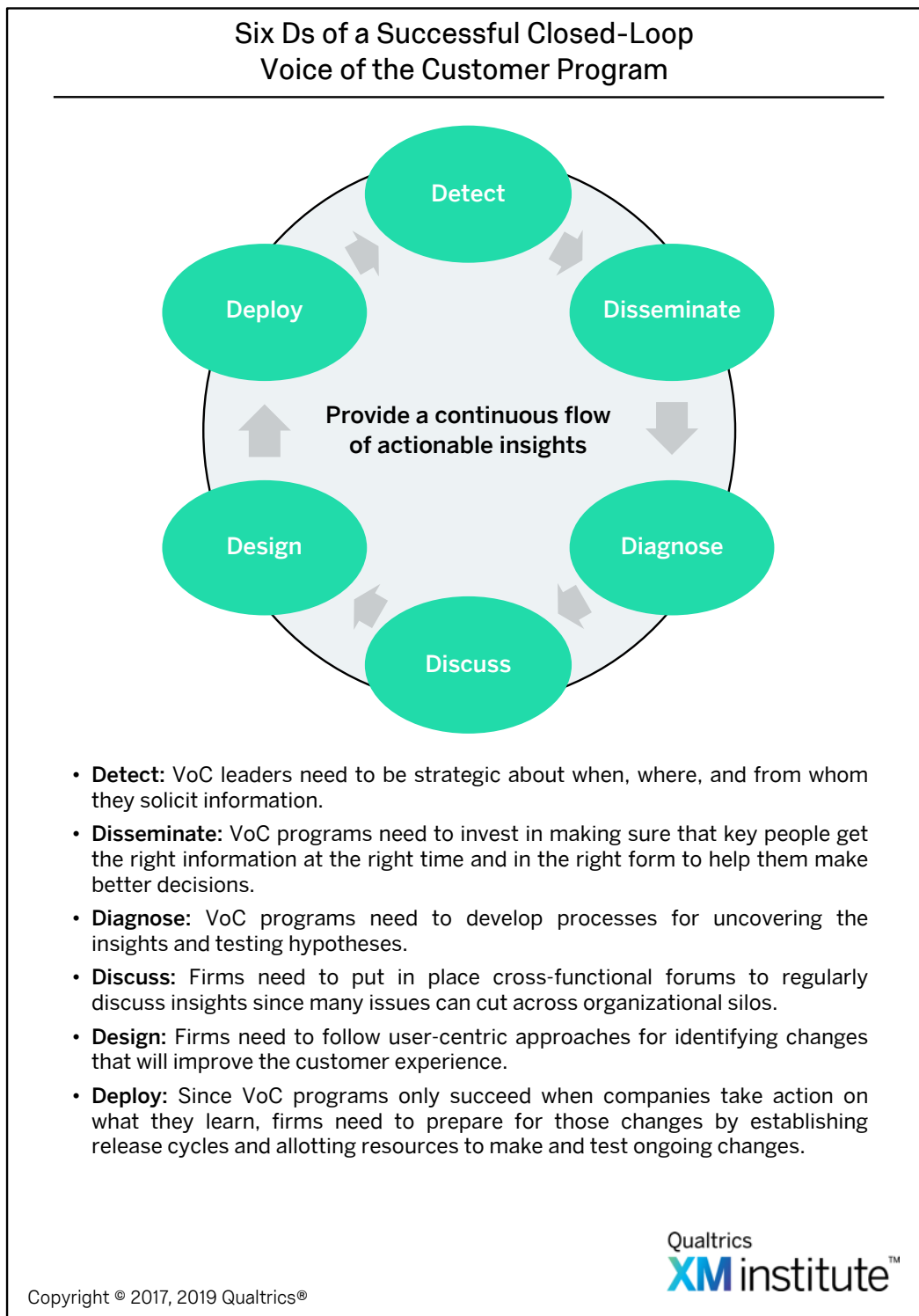


Figure 11

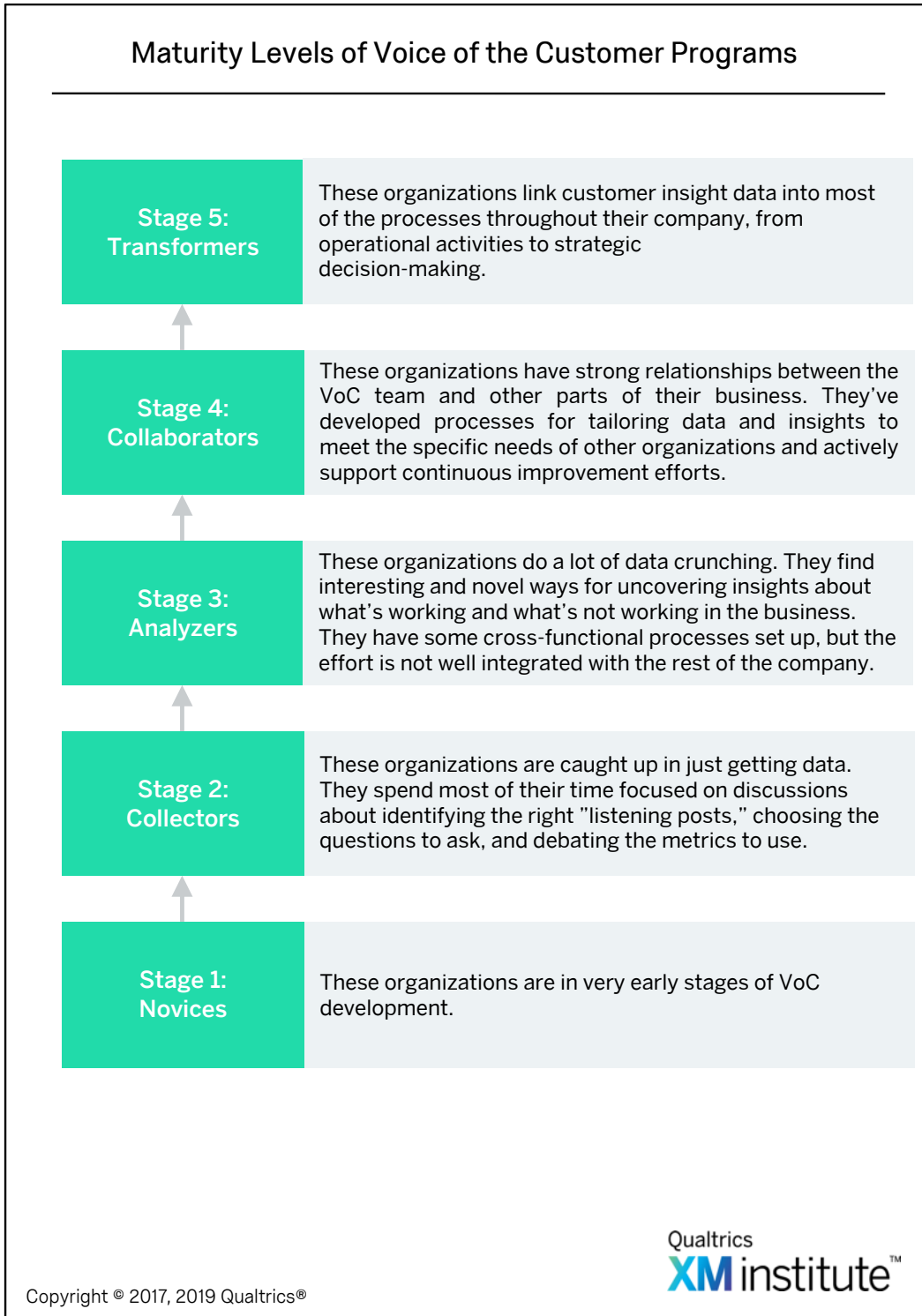


Figure 12

| Temkin Group's Voice of the Customer Program Competency and Maturity Assessment (Page 1 of 2) | |
|--|--|
| 1 = Never 2 = Periodically 3 = Usually 4 = Almost always 5 = Always | |
| 1. Monitoring social media channels is integrated with monitoring of feedback in other channels | |
| 2. Customer interactions with the contact center are analyzed as part of the voice of the customer program | |
| 3. Feedback from front-line employees about customer problems and opportunities is actively solicited and acted upon | |
| 4. Text analytics tools are used to automate the analysis of sentiments and topics in unstructured data sources | |
| 5. Feedback is disproportionately solicited from customers in key segments and from important interactions (moments of truth) | |
| DETECT total | |
| 6. Operating groups across the company are provided with support to help them understand and apply customer insights into their organizations | |
| 7. Customer insights are delivered to employees in formats that are tailored to their individual roles and responsibilities | |
| 8. Individuals get immediate alerts when there is significant customer feedback about their areas of focus | |
| 9. Customer feedback data can be viewed within customer management applications (CRM) alongside other information about customers | |
| 10. There is an identified group of employees across the company who are specialists in analyzing and applying customer insights | |
| DISSEMINATE total | |
| 11. Feedback is analyzed and tracked for individual customer segments and for critical customer interactions (moments of truth) | |
| 12. There is capacity available in upcoming surveys to add questions for digging deeper into issues uncovered during analysis of customer feedback | |
| 13. Employees across the company can see specific feedback and verbatims from individual customers | |
| 14. Analysis identifies specific operational activities that result in positive and negative feedback | |
| 15. Data about customers' previous interactions with the company is integrated with analysis of customer feedback | |
| DIAGNOSE total | |
| 16. Cross-functional teams regularly meet to review customer insights and assign action items | |
| 17. Progress on projects that come from analysis of customer feedback analysis is formally tracked and reported on | |
| 18. Executives regularly review and discuss results from analyzing customer feedback | |
| 19. Customer feedback is used for immediate coaching of front-line employees | |
| 20. Executives hold their teams accountable for taking actions based on analysis of customer feedback | |
| DISCUSS total | |



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Figure 13

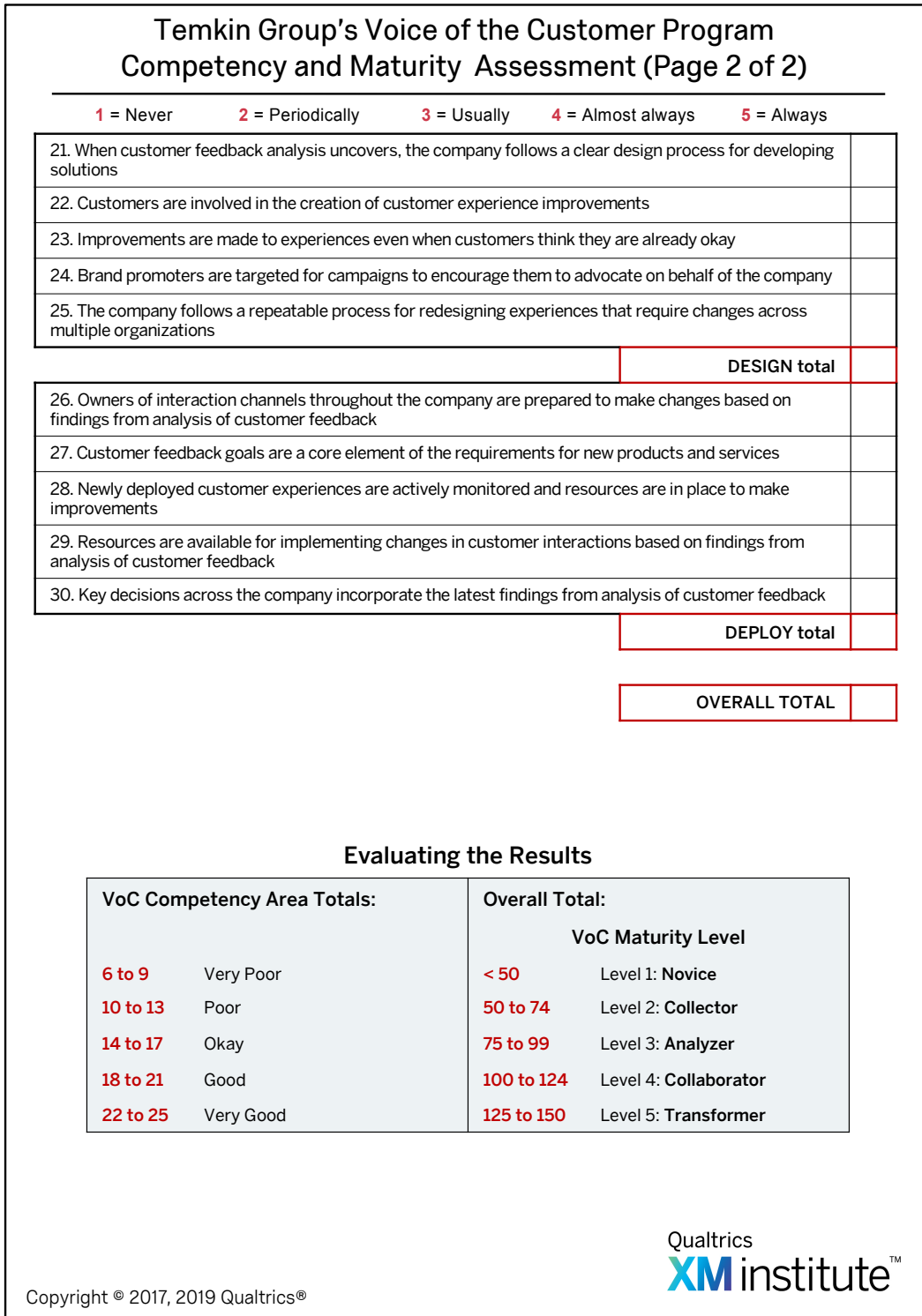


Figure 14

| 10 Highest Scoring Competency Questions | | |
|--|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| Percentage of "Always" or "Almost Always" | | |
| VoC Capability | Competency | "Always" or "Almost Always" |
| There is an identified group of employees across the company that are specialists in analyzing and applying customer insights | Disseminate | 46% |
| There is capacity available in upcoming surveys to add questions for digging deeper into issues uncovered during analysis of customer feedback | Diagnose | 39% |
| Individuals get immediate alerts when there is significant customer feedback about their area of focus | Disseminate | 33% |
| Feedback is analyzed and tracked for individual customer segments and for critical customer interactions (moments of truth) | Diagnose | 33% |
| Customer interactions with the contact center are analyzed as part of the voice of the customer program | Detect | 32% |
| Employees across the company can see specific feedback and verbatims from individual customers | Diagnose | 32% |
| Executives regularly review and discuss results from analyzing customer feedback | Discuss | 32% |
| Analysis identifies specific operational activities that result in positive and negative feedback | Diagnose | 30% |
| Progress on projects that come from analysis of customer feedback analysis is formally tracked and reported on | Discuss | 28% |
| Customer feedback is used for immediate coaching of front-line employees | Discuss | 27% |

Base: 186 organizations with \$500 million or more in annual revenues
 Source: Temkin Group Q3 2017 CX Management Survey

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Figure 15

| 10 Lowest Scoring Competency Questions | | |
|--|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| Percentage of "Always" or "Almost Always" | | |
| VoC Capability | Competency | "Always" or "Almost Always" |
| Text analytics tools are used to automate the analysis of sentiment and topics in unstructured data sources | Detect | 18% |
| Monitoring social media channels is integrated with monitoring of feedback in other channels | Detect | 17% |
| Improvements are made to experiences even when customers think they are already okay | Design | 16% |
| Resources are available for implementing changes in customer interactions based on findings from analysis of customer feedback | Deploy | 16% |
| Customers are involved in the creation of customer experience improvements | Design | 15% |
| Customer feedback data can be viewed within customer management applications (CRM) alongside other information about customers | Disseminate | 13% |
| When customer feedback analysis uncovers a problem, the company follows a clear design process for developing solutions | Design | 13% |
| Data about customers' previous interactions with the company is integrated with analysis of customer feedback | Diagnose | 12% |
| Brand promoters are targeted for campaigns to encourage them to advocate on behalf of the company | Design | 12% |
| The company follows a repeatable process for redesigning experiences that require changes across multiple organizations | Design | 12% |

Base: 186 organizations with \$500 million or more in annual revenues
 Source: Temkin Group Q3 2017 CX Management Survey

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Figure 16

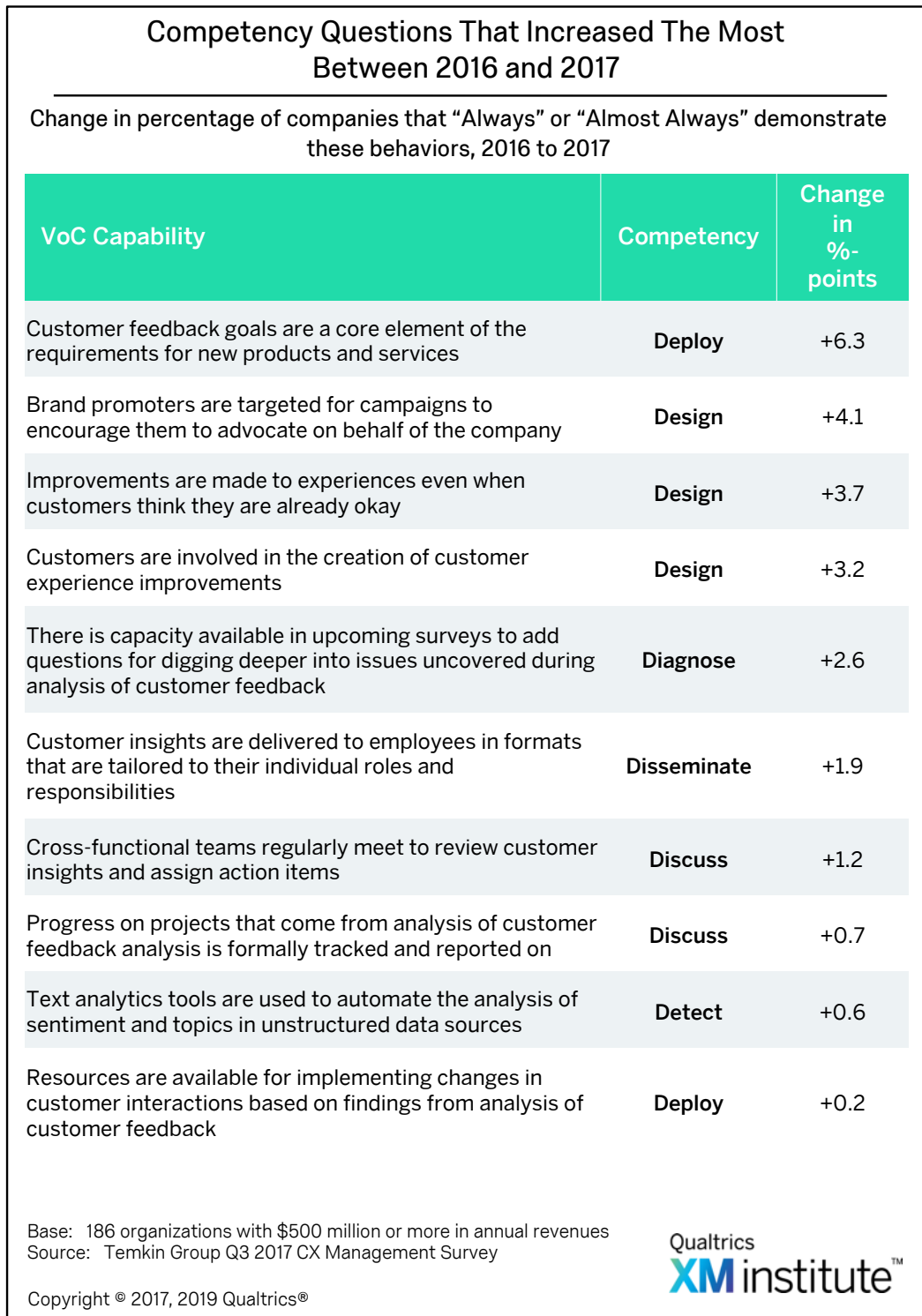


Figure 17



Figure 18

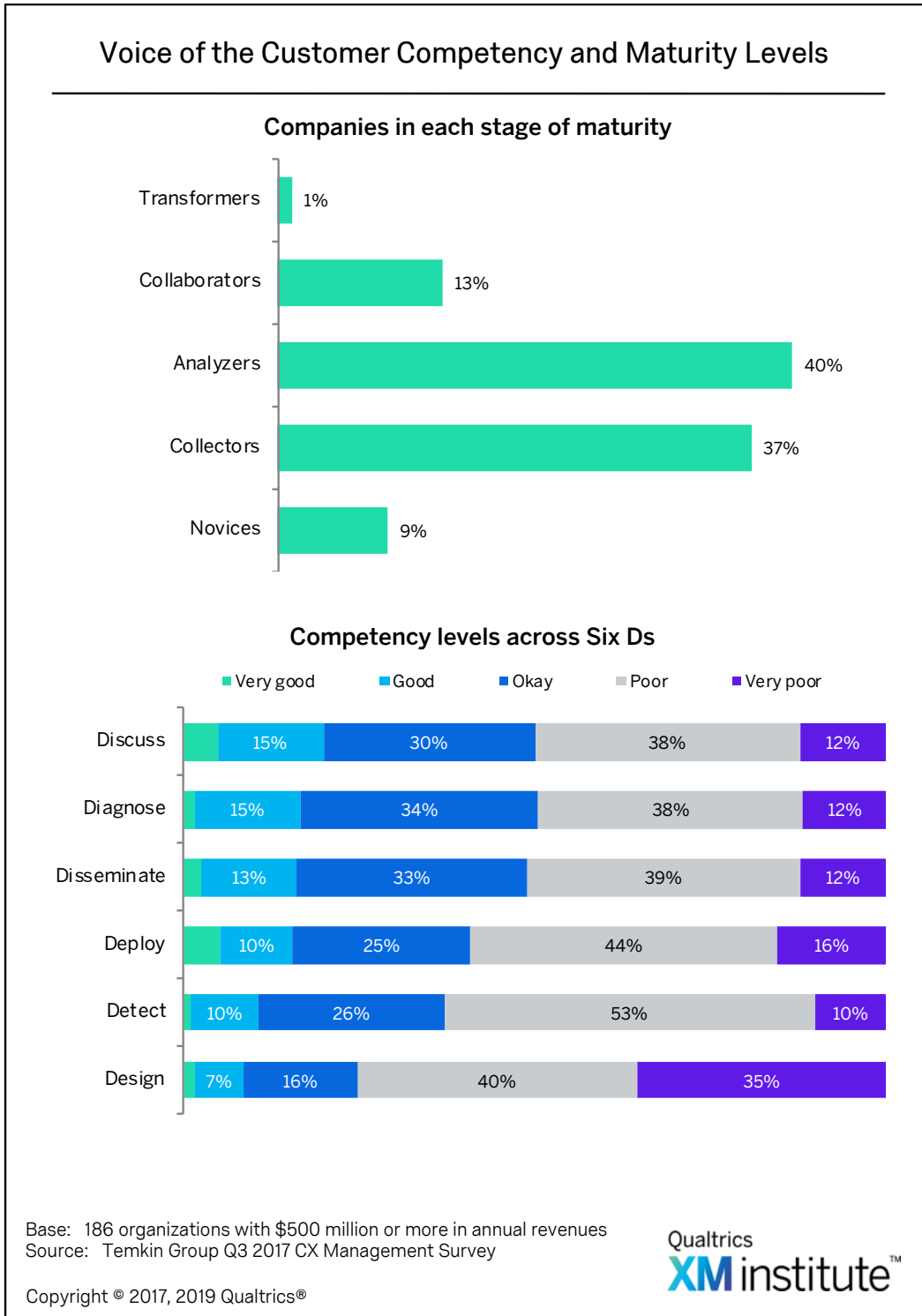


Figure 19

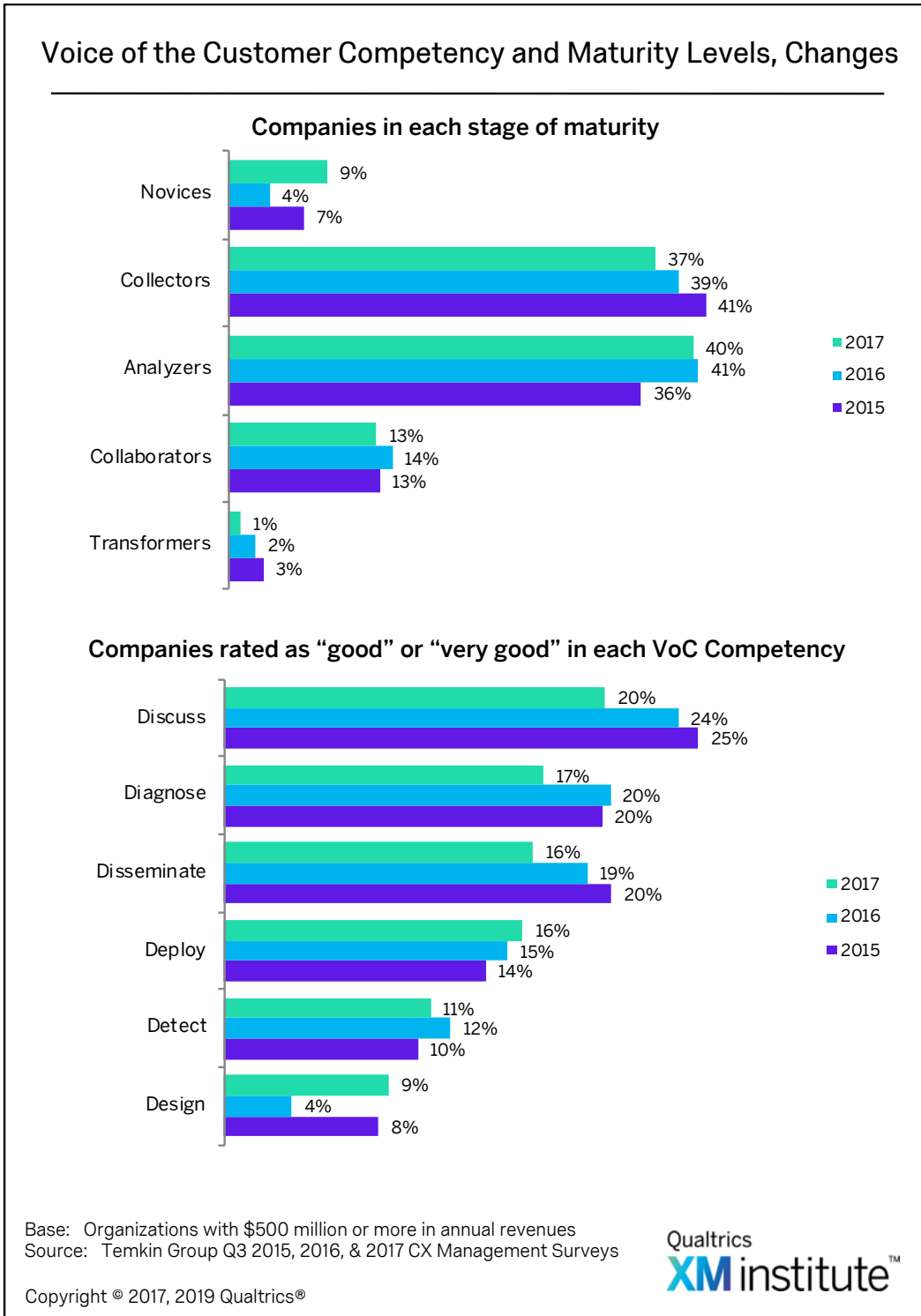


Figure 20

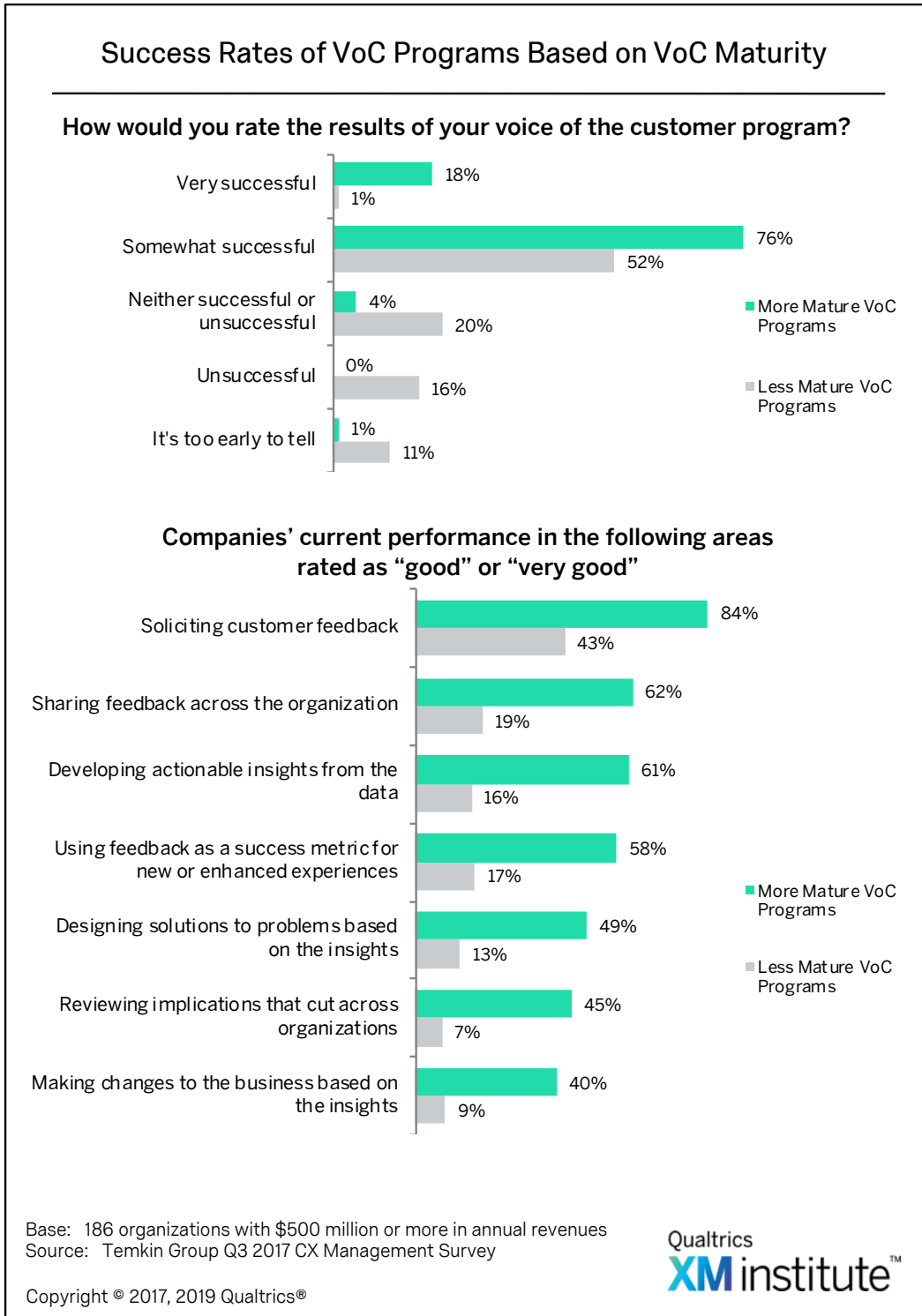


Figure 21

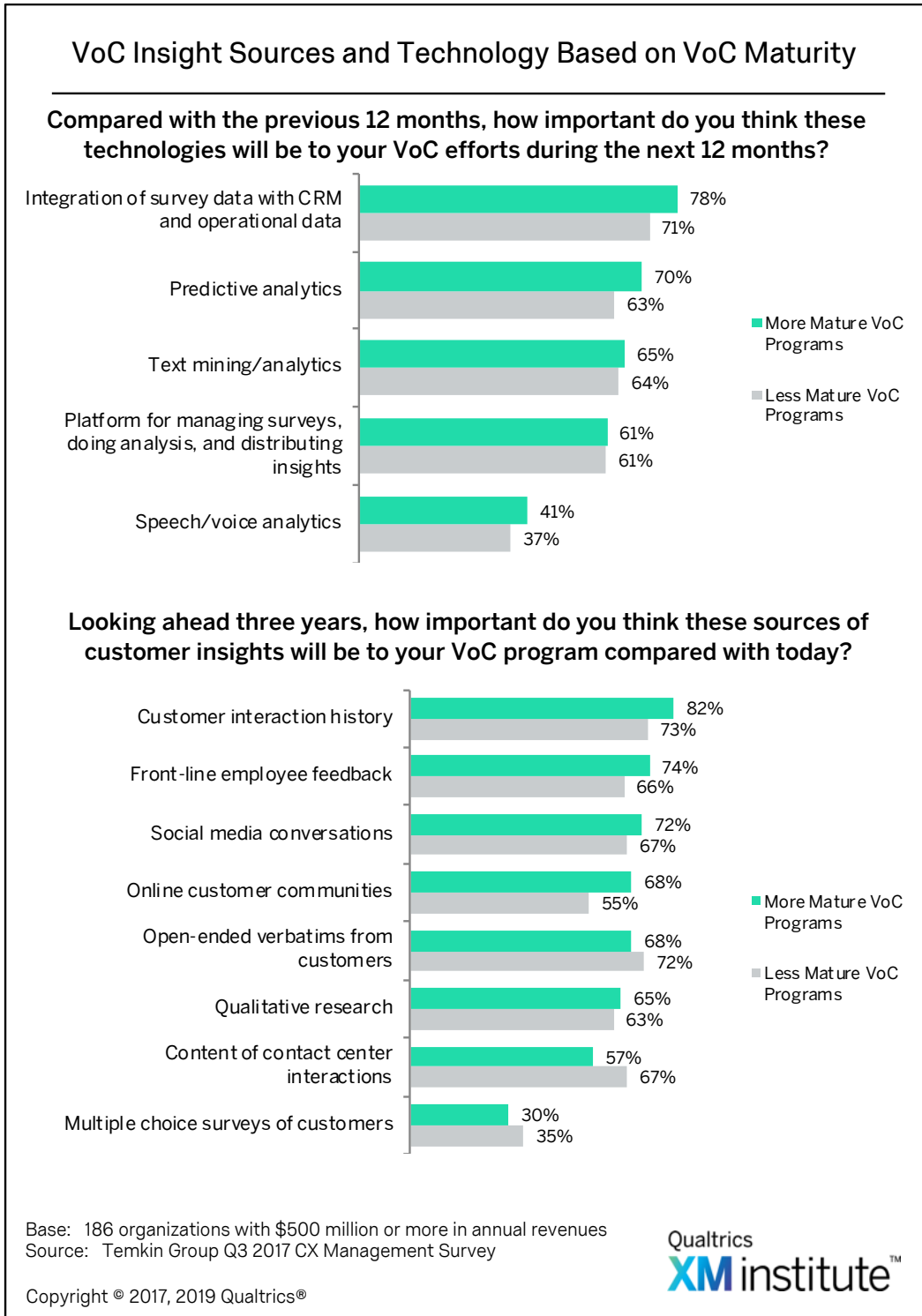


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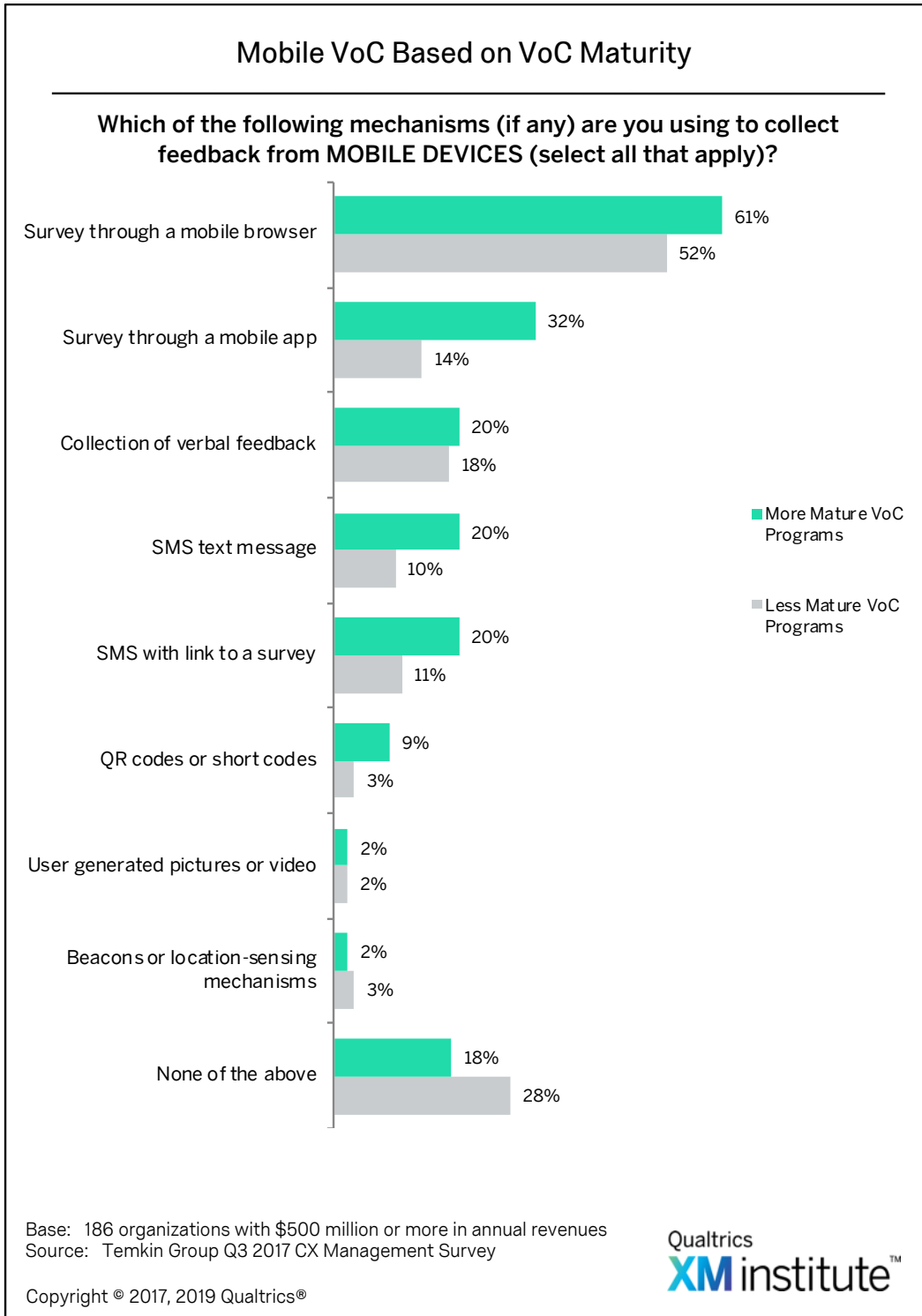


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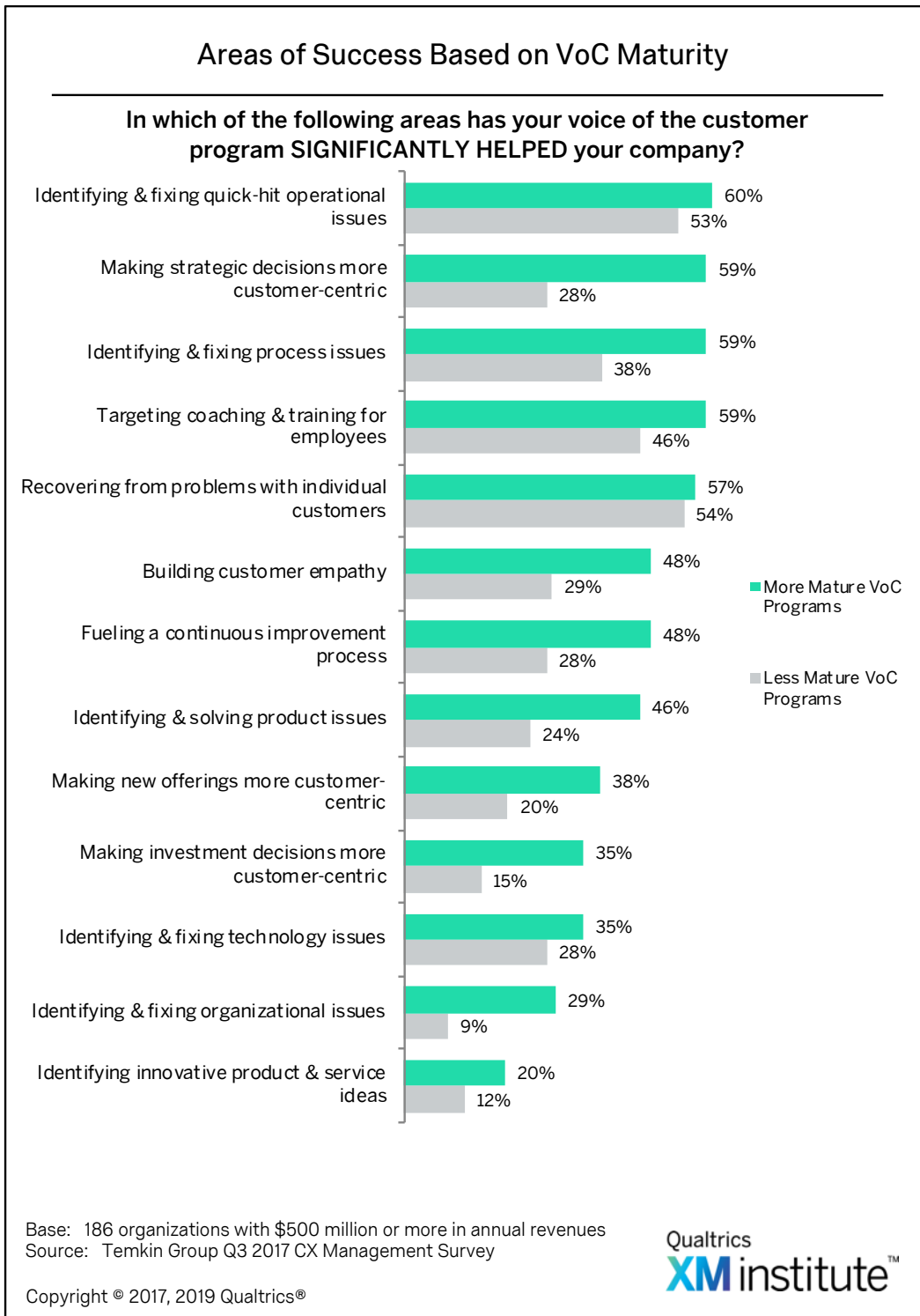


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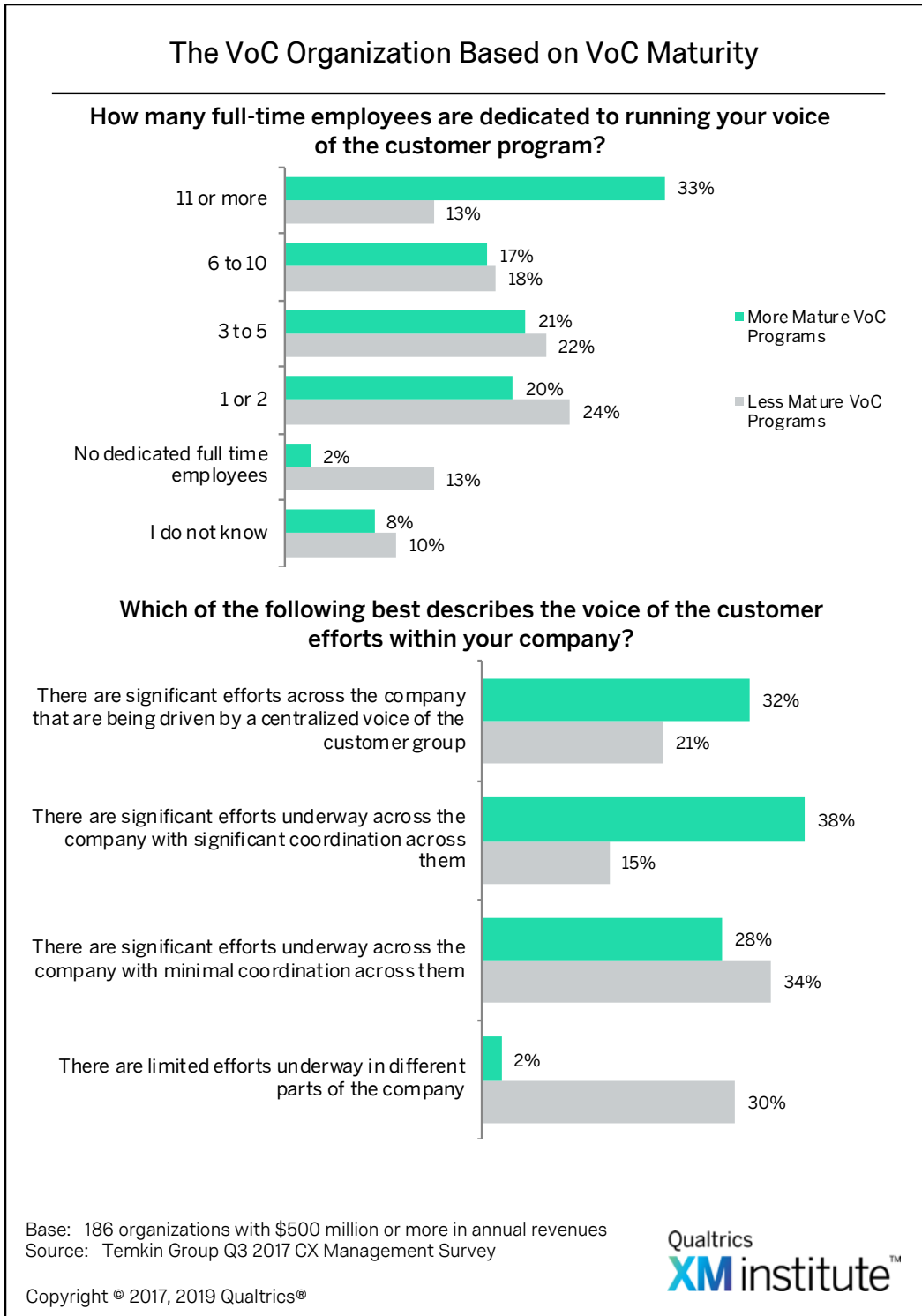


Figure 25

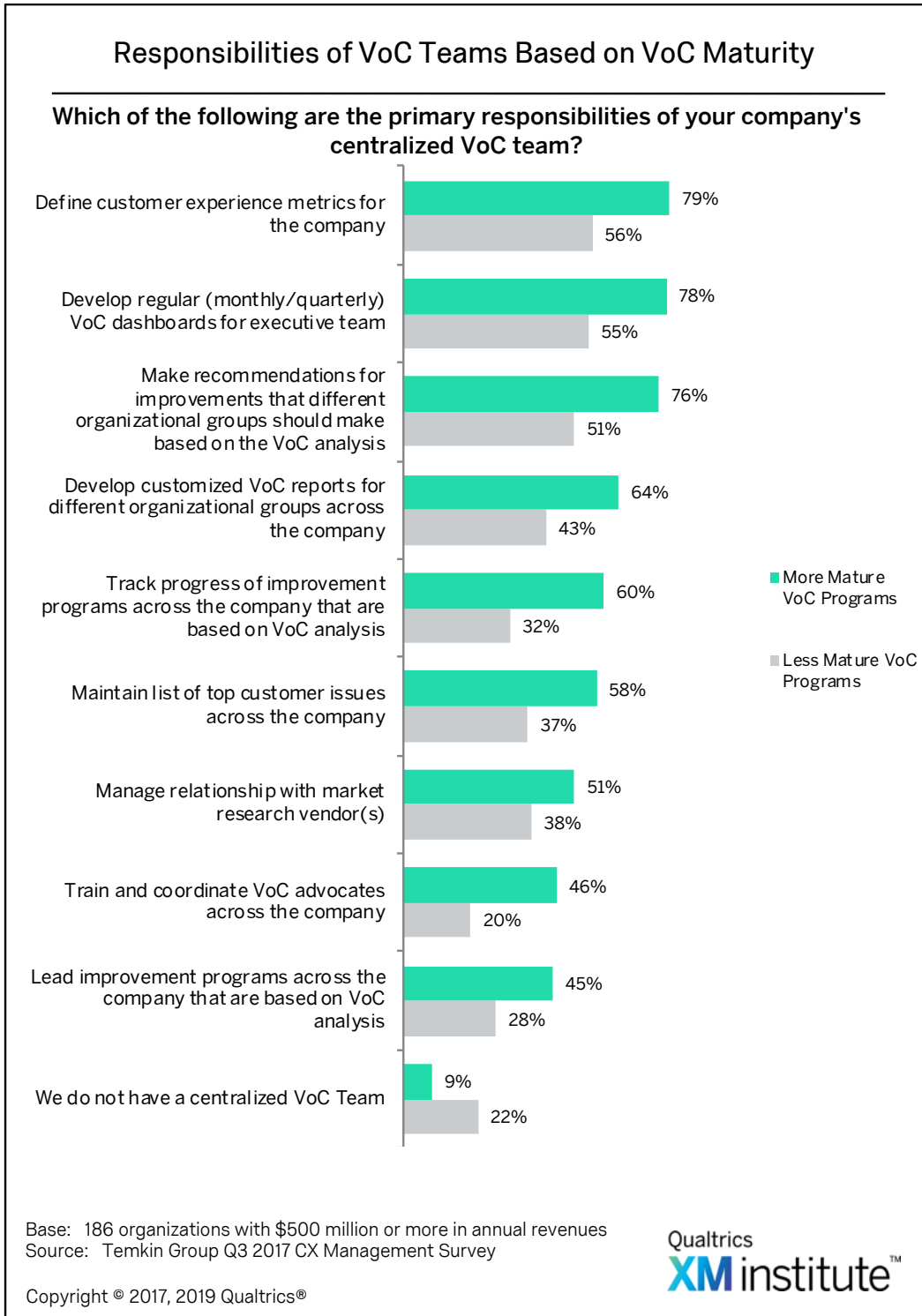


Figure 26

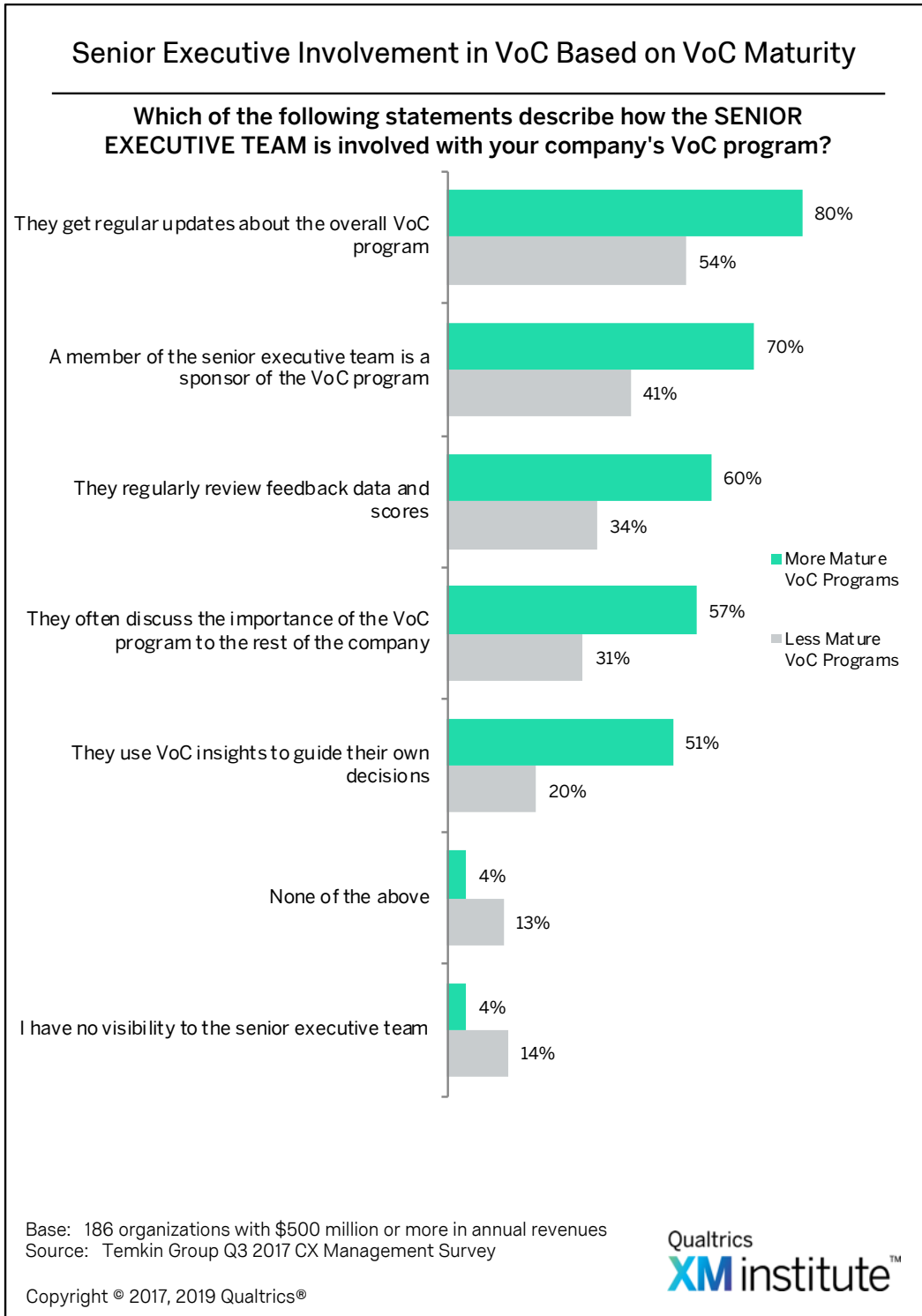


Figure 27

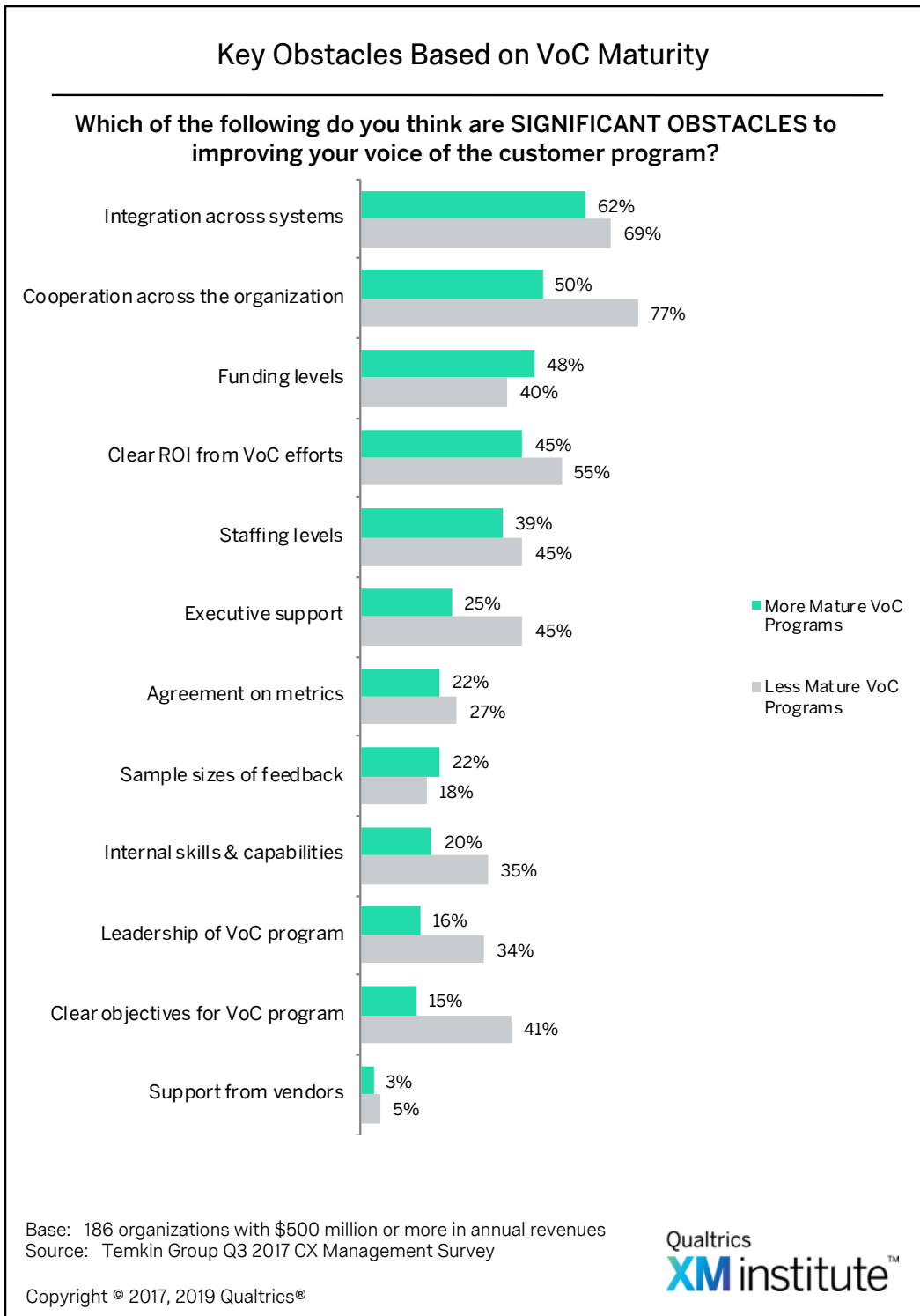


Figure 28

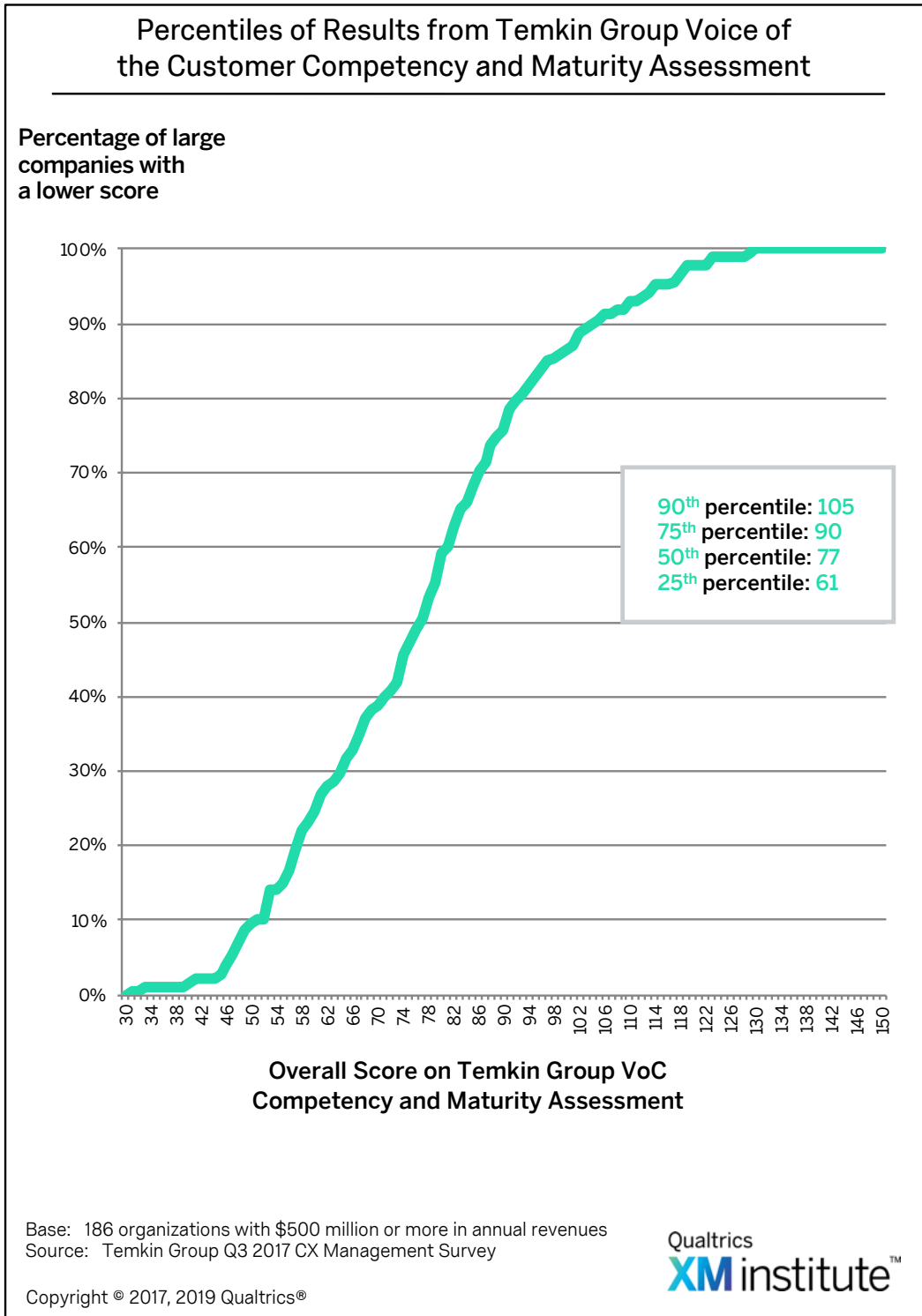


Figure 29