



[WWW.THEAGENCYCOLLECTIVE.CO.UK](http://WWW.THEAGENCYCOLLECTIVE.CO.UK)

# THE STATE OF AGENCIES

**(PHASE 1)**

March 2020

# PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

Since the start of March we received an overwhelming amount of messages from agency owners in distress.

We needed to understand the situation. This research is meant to shed a light.

The report will also share plenty of positive steps agency owners are taking through this challenging period.

***Please note:*** *We are not oblivious to the current economic climate. But our take is: In tough times, having the clarity for good ideas on how to adapt and to make the right changes that are in your control, can be the difference between surviving and seizing opportunities.*

# WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH, THE TOUGH STICK TOGETHER

The Agency Collective has been an incredible peer support community for agency owners.

It is well known that being in a group in tough situations gives you a psychological advantage - compared to being on your own. In a group you can motivate each other to continue and work through the challenges.

## **More advantages:**

- You obtain more knowledge
- More ideas and solutions to problems
- Companionship - you are not alone 🦊
- Sharing work load and exchanging resources
- New long term relationships

The key is that The Agency Collective is run by an optimistic and informed team who will fight with you for your survival. We will make sure we have the knowledge, tools and advice to give you the confidence to lead your agency through this. We can cut through the noise and highlight what matters most.



# YOUR AC TEAM IS BEHIND YOU

[WWW.THEAGENCYCOLLECTIVE.CO.UK](http://WWW.THEAGENCYCOLLECTIVE.CO.UK)



**DANIEL "DANTE AGENCYMAN" DE LA CRUZ**  
[daniel@theagencycollective.co.uk](mailto:daniel@theagencycollective.co.uk)

Need guidance about anything agency related.  
Hit Daniel up with an email.



**ELLIE HALE**  
[ellie@theagencycollective.co.uk](mailto:ellie@theagencycollective.co.uk)

Already a member? Need specific support right now.  
Give Ellie a shout.



**ANNE HARLOW**  
[anne@theagencycollective.co.uk](mailto:anne@theagencycollective.co.uk)

Looking to become a member of our super supportive community?  
Anne can help

# WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH, THE TOUGH STICK TOGETHER

We're doing all we can to support you and your agency with all your challenges everyday. Some of the action points we've taken to help you so far:

- Regular Zoom calls with specific topics (remote working, finance Q&A, project agility, etc.) to give you practical tips and help you feel united
- There are specific channels on our Slack to navigate the situation #covid19, #wfh-with-kids, #remote-teams, finance, legal, HR, partnerships, etc.
- Spare Supplier Club: Exchange of spare resources
- Team Purple: We support each other to boost our reach on LinkedIn, so that the marketing engine can continue.
- The Wow financial knowledge hub: A central place for all need to know info on finance
- Individual support calls with us to discuss private matters

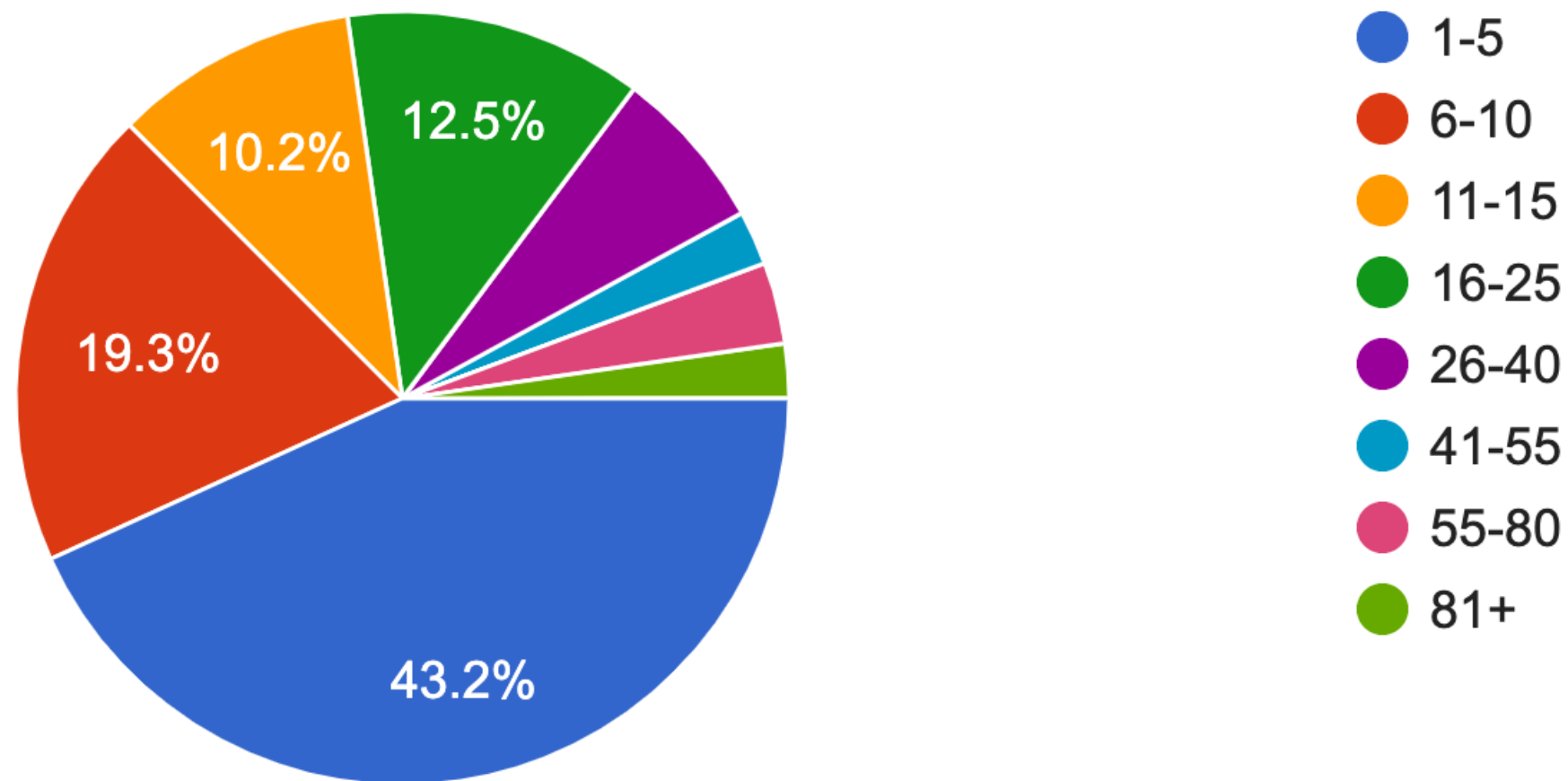


# WHO COMPLETED THE SURVEY

## SIZE OF AGENCIES

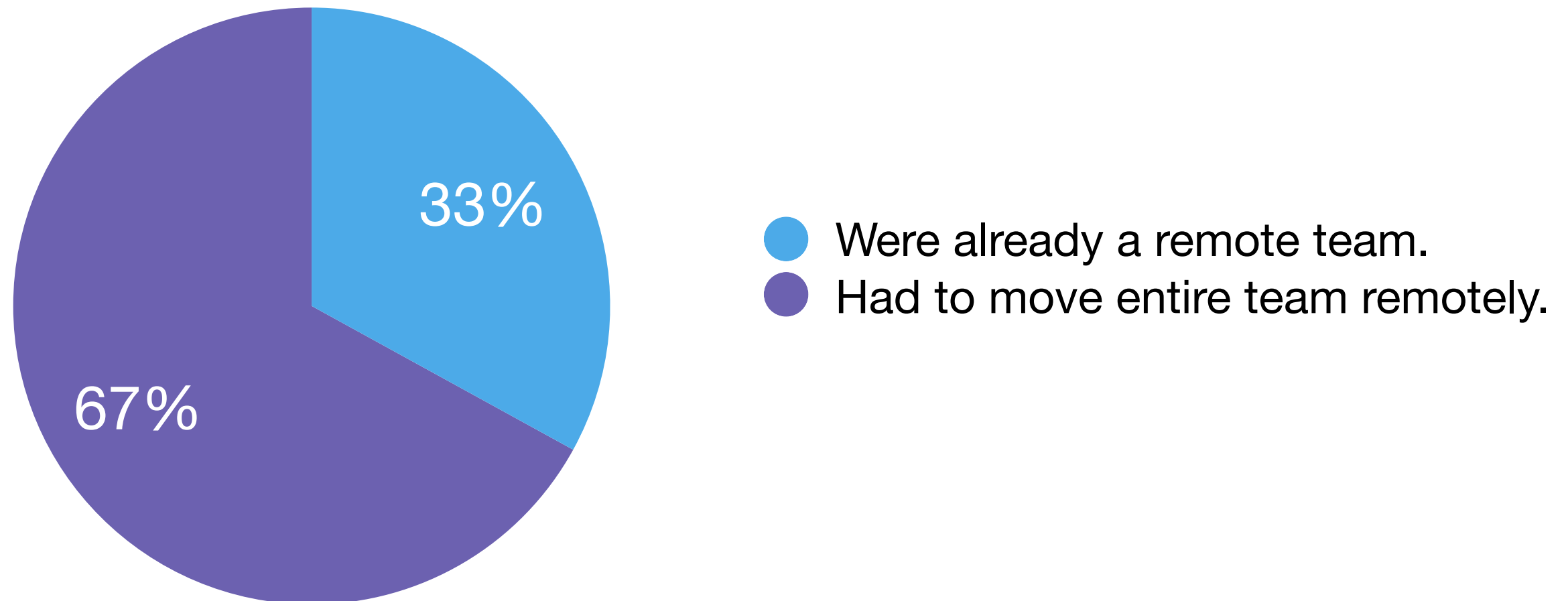
(BY NUMBER OF FULL TIME EMPLOYEES)

BASE 86 AGENCIES



# WHO COMPLETED THE SURVEY

## REMOTE WORKING



# AGENCIES THAT HAVE BEEN HIT THE HARDEST TO DATE...

1. Experiential / Events agencies
2. Video production agencies



# AGENCIES THAT HAVE BEEN HIT THE LEAST TO DATE...

**Technical development agencies** stated they had on average 3 or less projects pulled on them since 1 March - compared to 7+ projects pulled on average in the case of video production agencies.

We suspect that a lot of agencies who provide deep technological expertise are working on business critical projects that require completion.

The key for those agencies is **NOT TO GET COMPLACENT**. Up your communication with clients, continue seeking out opportunities and be diligent about credit control.

# 🤗 A LITTLE TIP FOR YOU...

Find agencies that are doing well right now. Find out why they are doing well. What their clients value most right now. See how your services could potentially fit into that or how you could help those agencies sell into your clients. The support you give to others now will be worth so much more further down the line.

*If you'd like introductions to other members of The Agency Collective, get in touch with our community heroine [ellie@theagencycollective.co.uk](mailto:ellie@theagencycollective.co.uk)*

# SECTORS THAT HAVE PULLED PROJECTS ON AGENCIES...

1. Travel & Tourism
2. Retail (mainly 'high street')
3. Entertainment

# POSITIVE CLIENT STORIES SINCE 1 MARCH 2020

Won a new project for a conference (in 2021) for lung health. Quite apt for now.

Working with the WHO to help fight COVID-19

With video, people are starting to create more online content - one client in particular who has had to cancel 10+ events has commissioned us to do a fully online event for them - it will be great fun.

New business from major Pharma client - even more need for excellent employee comms during this turbulent time

The way our network is supporting each other. Not all clients are equal and some sectors are responding well.

We produced an emergency public information film for one of our clients at Bristol Children's Hospital in response to COVID-19

Our supermarket clients are experiencing Xmas like sales. They are hastily re-shaping their marketing plans and expect there to be a much higher volume of advertising content required in a few weeks time.

One of our exhibition clients came to us asking for a 'virtual solution' for an impending event being shut down. We're now in final talks with them in digitising the whole event - ranging from talks, resources, analytics, plus 80+ exhibitors.

A client has given us a major 5+ month social media campaign that directly combats their competition.

Client saw revenues shifting within the business units as a result of the pandemic, so accelerated a new business initiative and brought forward the start date of a project (from "next month some time, probably" to "start now!")

# POSITIVE CLIENT STORIES SINCE 1 MARCH 2020

One of our clients is a subscription based business and they have reported that they're seeing an increase in revenue. We're helping them scale their operations.

We rushed out a marketing initiative for an e-learning client to help them seize this rare opportunity.

One of our FTSE100 clients just did an internal referral and we start on another division next month.

We work with Monkey Music a baby and toddler music franchise whose way of working has been totally changed since March. We are helping them to organise video sessions from their 52 franchisees that can be accessed online by members. This came from a proactive email asking if we could help in anyway

Won a couple of quick turn-around pitches for emergency comms

One of our major clients in the food and drink industry has seen 250% accelerated growth and are going into a crowdfund to raise 1.2m - of which they have already secured £680k pre-launch



# POSITIVE CLIENT STORIES SINCE 1 MARCH 2020

Client saw revenues shifting within the business units as a result of the pandemic, so accelerated a new business initiative and brought forward the start date of a project (from "next month some time, probably" to "start now!")

An old contact got in touch to ask about running a media training, so that colleagues could speak to the press in her absence.

Client using the lull in BAU business activity to double down on projects so that they're ready to 'Win' in the market when things normalise.

Now that people have time to think, things have slowed down a little and people want to talk through things more.

One of my clients has been working (with us) for 9 years to sell an eco and user friendly range of products that kill germs and viruses aimed at Hospital trusts. They have finally hit the jackpot!!

...and so many more great stories were mentioned 🦊

**WHAT IS SOMETHING YOU'VE NEVER DONE  
BEFORE, AS A RESULT OF THE CRISIS?**

**“Using an ironing  
board as a desk.”**



# WHAT IS SOMETHING YOU'VE NEVER DONE BEFORE, AS A RESULT OF THE CRISIS?

Set up webinars with JV partners, create surveys, an informational website for clients

Be ruthless with clients payments - and be very nice about it.

Delivered remote workshops.

Posting on LinkedIn every day.

Actually getting round to doing our disaster recovery and mitigation planning.

We've shared information and resources with our competitors a lot more than we would usually do.

Call our clients to ask how they are doing and offer support to help them through this difficult time.

**Working  
remotely!!**

Crisis strategy with 3 scenarios (optimistic, expected, pessimistic).

Very fast turn around of specific messages for each client, without their prompt. We wanted to offer them a solution before they asked and that is what we have done

Reach out more to industry peers and partners

We've always done a top level review of our finances but never a brutal review - it feels good to question everything. We've decided individuals, local business, small business, big business in that priority order. We're paying all individuals immediately.

## 😊 A LITTLE TIP FOR YOU...

**Working remotely** has clearly been the biggest change for most agencies. Something that more than 60% have never done before.

Tom Willmot founder of Human Made (80 person remote team from day 1) recently joined us for a Zoom call. He shared some valuable insights - **see his top tips here**.

# WHAT IS THE BIGGEST CHANGE IN THE BUSINESS YOU ARE PLANNING TO MAKE AS A RESULT OF THE SITUATION?

Would also consider a smaller office space if people don't come in every day all together, though that's still important.

Give our own brand some TLC and maybe even rebrand.

Company Restructure

Make time for strategy and development.

Be ruthless with clients payments - and be very nice about it.

Really understanding financing options.

Launch out new behavioural model.

Reflect, refine strategy, reposition

**Drastically focussing  
on cashflow, and taking  
some significant  
actions.**

Changing processes to make sure all info is accessible online to team.

Reduction in hours for staff.

Take advantage of tax breaks.

Move most of our post-production facilities off-site.

Step up marketing into hyperdrive.

Improve communication throughout the whole company, staff, customers, suppliers etc.

Divert new business staff to help with existing clients. Revenue protection is priority number one.

Learning how to pitch online.



## 😊 A LITTLE TIP FOR YOU...

**Watch our cash flow.** According to the latest BenchPress report (the UK's largest benchmarking survey of independent agency), 50% of agencies (under £1M turnover) and 36% of agencies (above £1M turnover) have less than 3 months of cash in the bank.

It's not surprising that agency owners are only now looking after their cash flow when times are tough. However, making this a priority, even when things are back to normal will be the key to your survival.

[See the full BenchPress report here](#) (under £1M turnover)

[See the full BenchPress report here](#) (over £1M turnover)

# WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE YOU HAVE RECEIVED SO FAR?

Look at all your costs, put in payment plans, defer non-essential payments. And keep focussing on marketing. But most of look after yourself and staff - stay well

Let people find new habits - It may be they work better flexibly from home e.g 12 - 9pm instead of 9 - 5pm.

Do more marketing!

Follow up on sales leads for clients in sectors not immediately at risk. Don't give up!

Spread or defer your HMRC payments - vat, CT, PAYE

Sales is all about relationships.

To have cash reserves. And to keep a sense of humour (Judi Dench)!

Look at loans and grants, ask for a rent reduction.

Don't dwell, keep moving forward and count your blessings.

Don't make a knee jerk decisions.

Sort out the cashflow for 3 months and look after the morale of your people.

Take ownership of the situation.

Always take timeout in your day.

See the opportunities, act quickly and see things from clients viewpoint.

# WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE YOU HAVE RECEIVED SO FAR?

Be smart about client comms  
and be honest with your  
business.

Adapt, innovate, create. Adapt to  
your environment, innovate to  
provide the same or a better  
service, and create consistent  
processes and procedures to  
guarantee consistency of  
deliverables.

Keep marketing and help others.

Limit the amount of times you're  
checking the news to remain  
positive and have a daily routine  
to help you have a sense of  
control.

Now's not the time to make  
profit. Now's the time to build  
relationships.

Today will be clouds, tomorrow  
will be clouds, but the day after  
tomorrow will be sunshine -- Jack  
Ma

Bring your staff with you. Don't  
over stress them with worrying  
information but also don't not tell  
them anything.

Make space for your team to deal  
with their own issues alongside  
client work.

# A LIST OF THE RESOURCES AGENCIES RECOMMEND...

## Top resources

[Wow's COVID-19 Support Hub](#)

[ESPHR - Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme – Q&A for employers](#)

[SwindleHurst Consulting - Job Retention Scheme Details](#)

[Seedtable's overview of opportunities that arise in sectors](#)

# A LIST OF THE RESOURCES AGENCIES RECOMMEND...

Data to support why marketing activity shouldn't be put on hold from our friends at Fountain Partnership:  
<https://sites.google.com/fountainpartnership.co.uk/respondingtocv19/marketing/research?authuser=0>

David C Baker: <https://vimeo.com/397809463/42a2d7af49>

<https://www.winwithoutpitching.com/three-steps-to-surviving-and-thriving-in-a-crisis/>

<https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/risk/our-insights/covid-19-implications-for-business-campaignlive.co.uk/article/marketing-lessons-past-recessions/874625>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications>

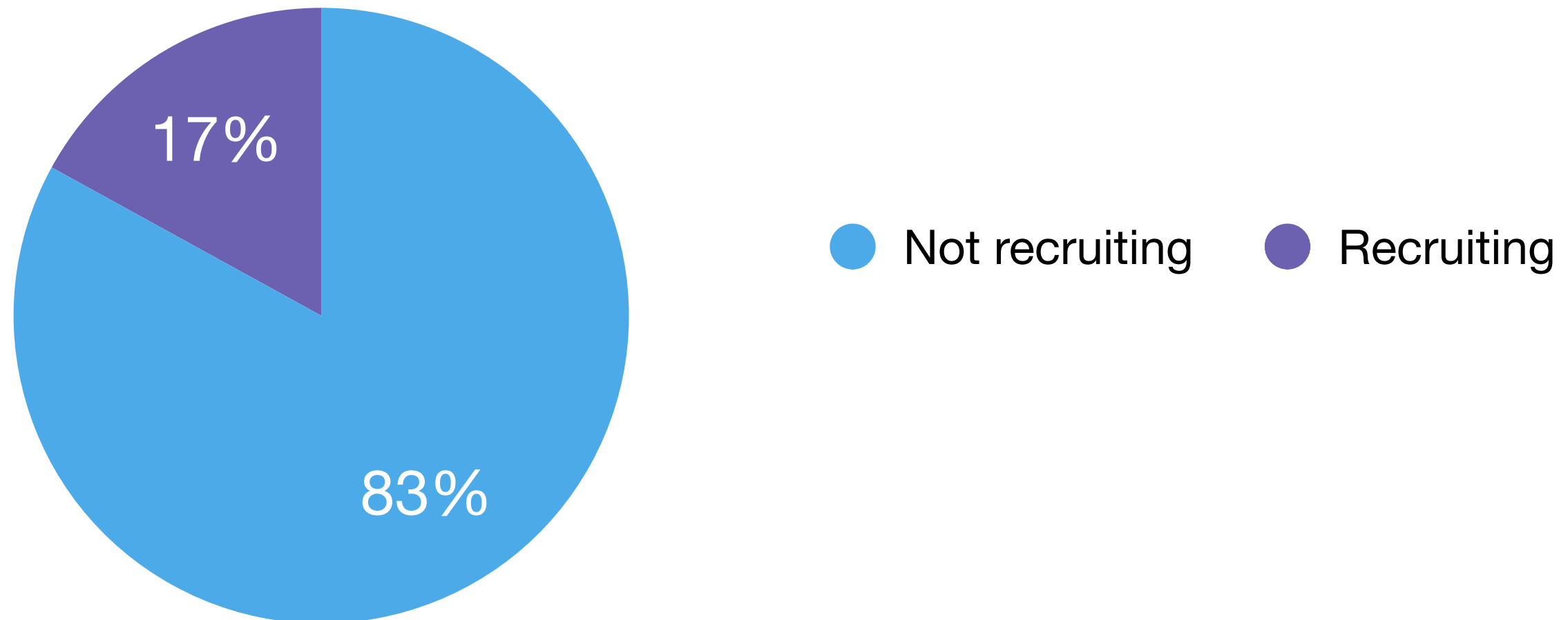
The Agency Collective Slack Group - thank you!

<https://www.mckinsey.com/Business-Functions/McKinsey-Accelerate/Our-Insights/Adapting-workplace-learning-in-the-time-of-coronavirus?cid=other-eml-alt-mip-mck&hlkid=6d80e7f537d64531b896f5b88b11c63e&hctky=11848646&hdpid=3759252f-a6da-4e4f-85e7-6103bc53a9a9>

<https://www.barrons.com/>



# HOW MANY AGENCIES ARE CURRENTLY RECRUITING?



# REMOTE WORKING TOOLS

## TOP 3.

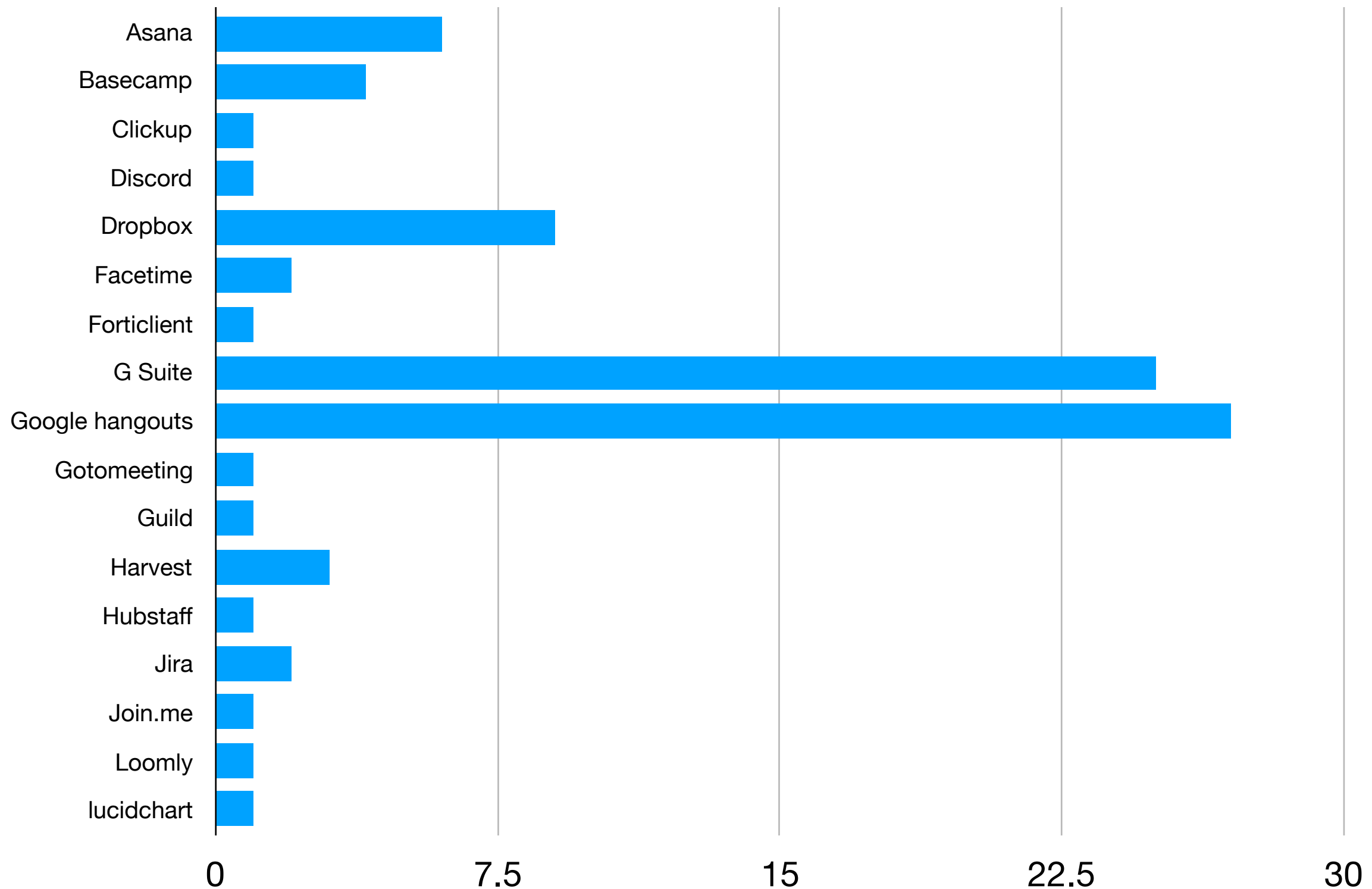
Slack

Zoom

Google Meets / Hangouts

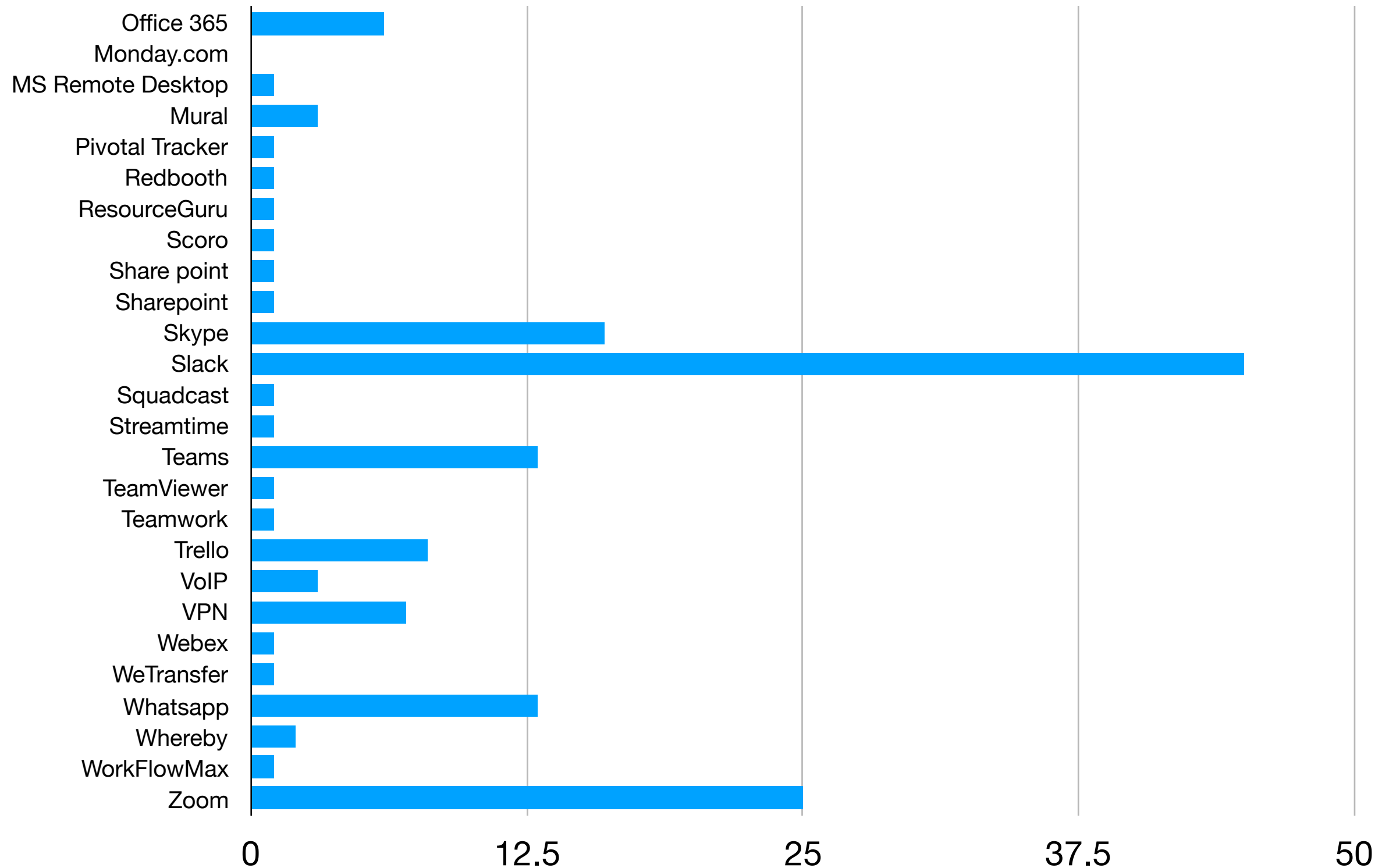
# REMOTE WORKING TOOLS

(#OF MENTIONS)



# REMOTE WORKING TOOLS

(#OF MENTIONS)



# WHAT'S IT LIKE JOINING OUR PEER SUPPORT COMMUNITY?





**Kelly Molson** • 1st

Delivering ambitious visitor attractions remarkable online experiences

2d • 🌐



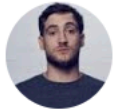
I am truly grateful for the help and support we're surrounded by.

My Monday gratitude post this week is for a collective of brilliant minds that have been sharing advice, support and laughs this past week.

First up, a massive thanks to [The Agency Collective](#) and the amazing members. Without that Slack group last week, I think my head would have exploded. The collective support from other agencies has been priceless. [Daniel "Dan The Agency Man" de la Cruz](#), [Ellie Hale](#), [Anne Harlow](#) - I know you're all working nonstop to support more than 500 agencies right now, and we're really grateful.

Thanks

Inbox x



**Bearded Joe**

Wed, Mar 18, 9:16 PM (7 days ago)



to Ellie, Anne, me ▾

Hey gang,

Just a quick one I think you Three are doing a great job this week it's not going unnoticed.

At a time like this you see who is selfless and who buys a year's worth of toilet roll and I'm glad to know that you are steering the agency ship in this time of need.

It's so interesting to have a group of owners all in the same position and you guys are channeling every value you push out right now.

Everyone I speak to is calm and speaking and sharing knowledge . Big up your selves and keep safe 💪



Today



**Paul Warren** 2:52 PM

Massive shout out to the AC team [@danieldelacruz](#) [@Ellie Hale](#) and of course [@peterczapp](#) for putting on webinars, producing content and generally offering love and support for AC members at this crazy time. 🙌

#wewillgetthroughthis

image.png ▾

**Always take note  
of who supports  
you genuinely.  
Those are the  
people you  
should always  
keep around.**



6 replies Last reply today at 3:54 PM

# BEING PART OF THE AGENCY COLLECTIVE



Would you like to speak to  
someone on our team about the  
specific support we provide?  
No obligation to become a  
member. Just a friendly chat.

[BOOK A CALL WITH ANNE](#)