

artwork flow
by BIZONGO

THE STATE OF PACKAGING REVIEWS IN 2024



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Introduction

2024 is a year like no other.

Consumer demands for sustainability, transparency, and ecommerce compatibility have skyrocketed. Regulatory requirements, too, are more intricate than ever. To have a leg up over the competition, brands not only need to ensure their packaging is visually appealing, but also embody the values that today's consumers prioritize:

- Sustainability through eco-friendly materials and responsible sourcing.
- Transparency by clearly communicating product information.

Are packaging teams keeping up?

The 2024 packaging landscape is fierce and competitive. It demands speed, accuracy, transparency, and strict adherence to regulations.

The cost of inefficiency, after all, is very high. A workflow mired with outdated processes and manual reviews can create delays in product launches, causing brands to lose out to competition.

The financial impact of delayed GTM is also no secret. Delays in product launches due to a small hold-up in the packaging workflow can lead to lost sales opportunities, wasted marketing spend, and potential storage costs.

Inefficient workflows can also trigger labeling errors and recalls, further increasing the financial burden on brands through additional costs like product retrieval, disposal, re-labeling, potential fines, and reputational damage.



94.9%

of the packaging professionals surveyed admit to having faced a recall in their careers.

It definitely wouldn't be an oversimplification to say that an efficient workflow is the key to reap the rewards of **faster time-to-market** and a **healthier bottom line**.



About this report

This report attempts to understand the state of packaging reviews to see if brands around the world are rising to meet these challenges. We surveyed over one hundred NPD, packaging innovation, and regulatory professionals from top companies like Abbott, Unilever, Dr. Reddy's Laboratories, and more. We then studied each of their answers to collate all our insights into the following key areas:

- ▶ The **intricate web of teams involved** in packaging reviews.
- ▶ The **packaging process of today** and the limitations of outdated methods.
- ▶ **Ensuring compliance in a dynamic regulatory environment** and the potential consequences of non-compliance.
- ▶ **The power of technology** to revolutionize workflows, compliance, communication, and collaboration.

Packaging in 2024: A Process Overview

Stakeholders, reviews, and approvals

Chapter 1

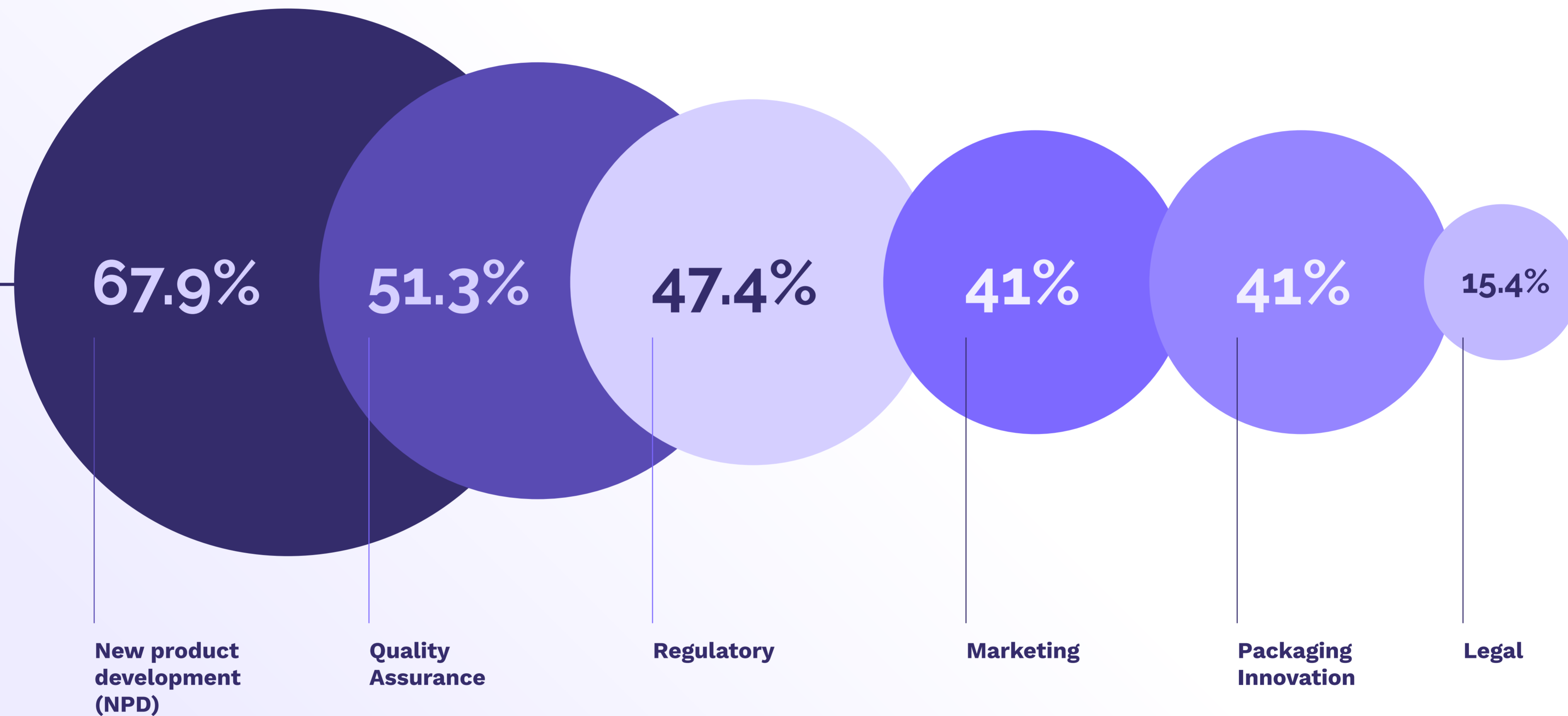
Our survey revealed that packaging is no one-team-job. It definitely takes a village.

A packaging design file involves several moving parts. Starting from the copy and design to ensuring the right ingredient information, branding, and regulatory information, several tiny things need to work together harmoniously to achieve a ready-for-market packaging design.

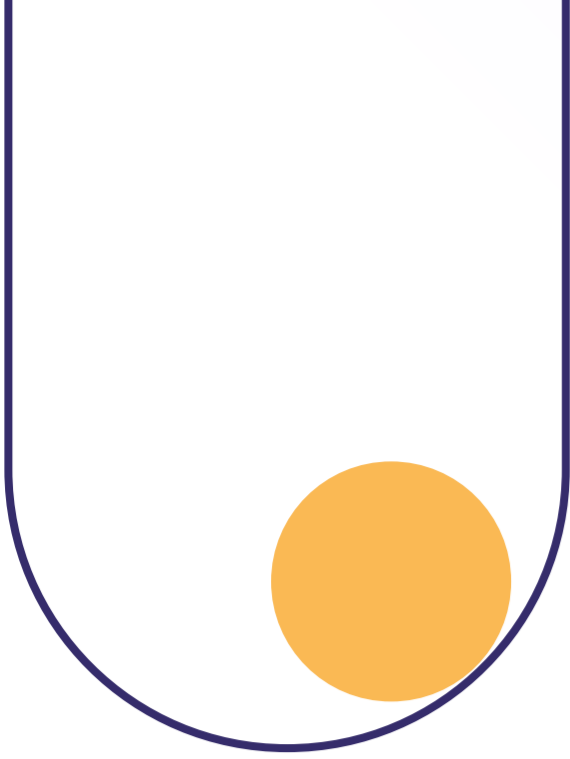
In this chapter, we will look at how our respondents approach their packaging review processes.

Packaging is a multi-team effort

Packaging assets go through several hoops and hands before they evolve into their final form with shelf appeal. From procurement to purchasing, here are all the teams majorly involved in getting a product on the shelf.

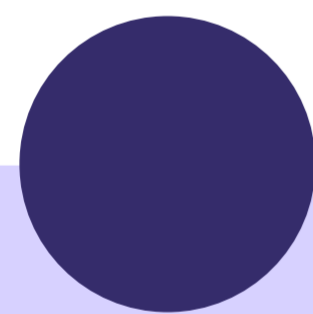


As expected, the NPD team has a major role to play, with nearly 68% of our respondents involving this team in their review process. NPD is closely followed by Quality Assurance (QA) at 51.3% and Regulatory Affairs at 47.4%.



Beyond these core teams, the survey also revealed a broader spectrum of stakeholders involved in the packaging review process, depending on the company structure and product complexity. These additional teams may include operations, procurement, corporate branding, manufacturing, R&D, and purchasing.

This diversity highlights the lack of a one-size-fits-all approach to packaging reviews. The specific teams involved in each company's packaging process likely depends on factors such as internal expertise, product category, and regulatory requirements.



This diversity extends beyond the teams involved to the very assets reviewed. While a majority of respondents focus on packaging materials, the review process can also include deliverables such as product specifications and marketing collateral like flyers and banners.

89.7%

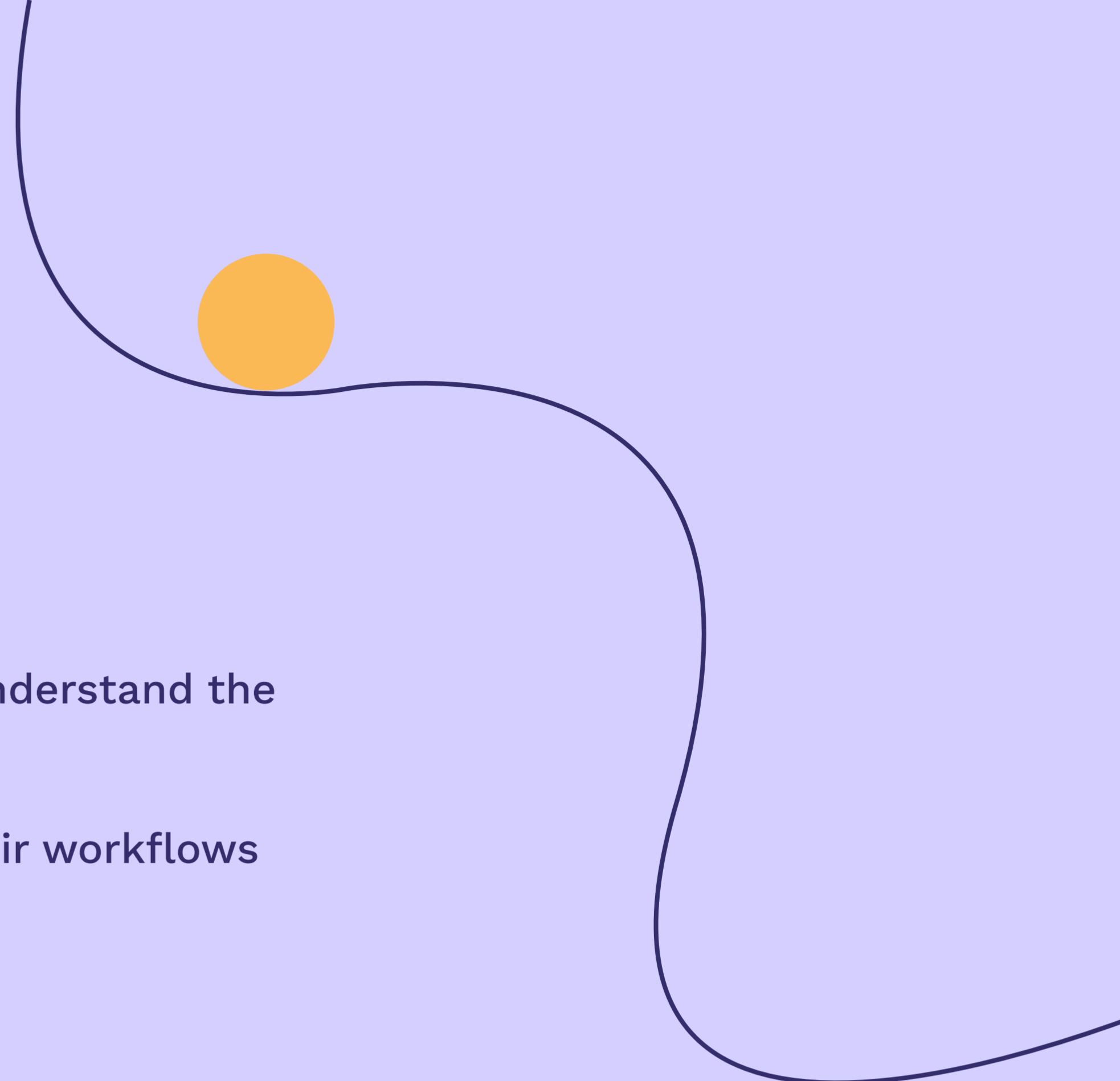
Packaging and labels

75.6%

Product specifications

23.1%

Marketing collateral (flyers, banners, etc.)



Does work really flow?

We also surveyed these packaging professionals about their day-to-day workflows to clearly understand the structure, efficiency, and potential challenges involved in packaging reviews globally.

Considering the diverse list of packaging professionals we surveyed, the way they structure their workflows is just as varying.

Each respondent had an almost equal split between linear, parallel, and hybrid workflows.

35.9%

Linear, with sequential approvals from each department

33.3%

Hybrid, with a combination of linear and parallel steps

30.8%

Parallel, with simultaneous reviews by multiple departments

Primary methods of reviewing

Despite variations in workflow structures, the respondents were almost unanimous in their reliance on manual methods for reviewing packaging assets. A staggering majority (60.3%) still depends on shared documents and physical samples to review packaging assets. Nearly half of the respondents also prefer the back and forth of email to get an artwork reviewed and approved.

However, there is a glimmer of hope. 43% of these packaging professionals also use online review platforms to collaborate on artwork. This adoption, although not yet a majority, suggests a growing openness to digital solutions.



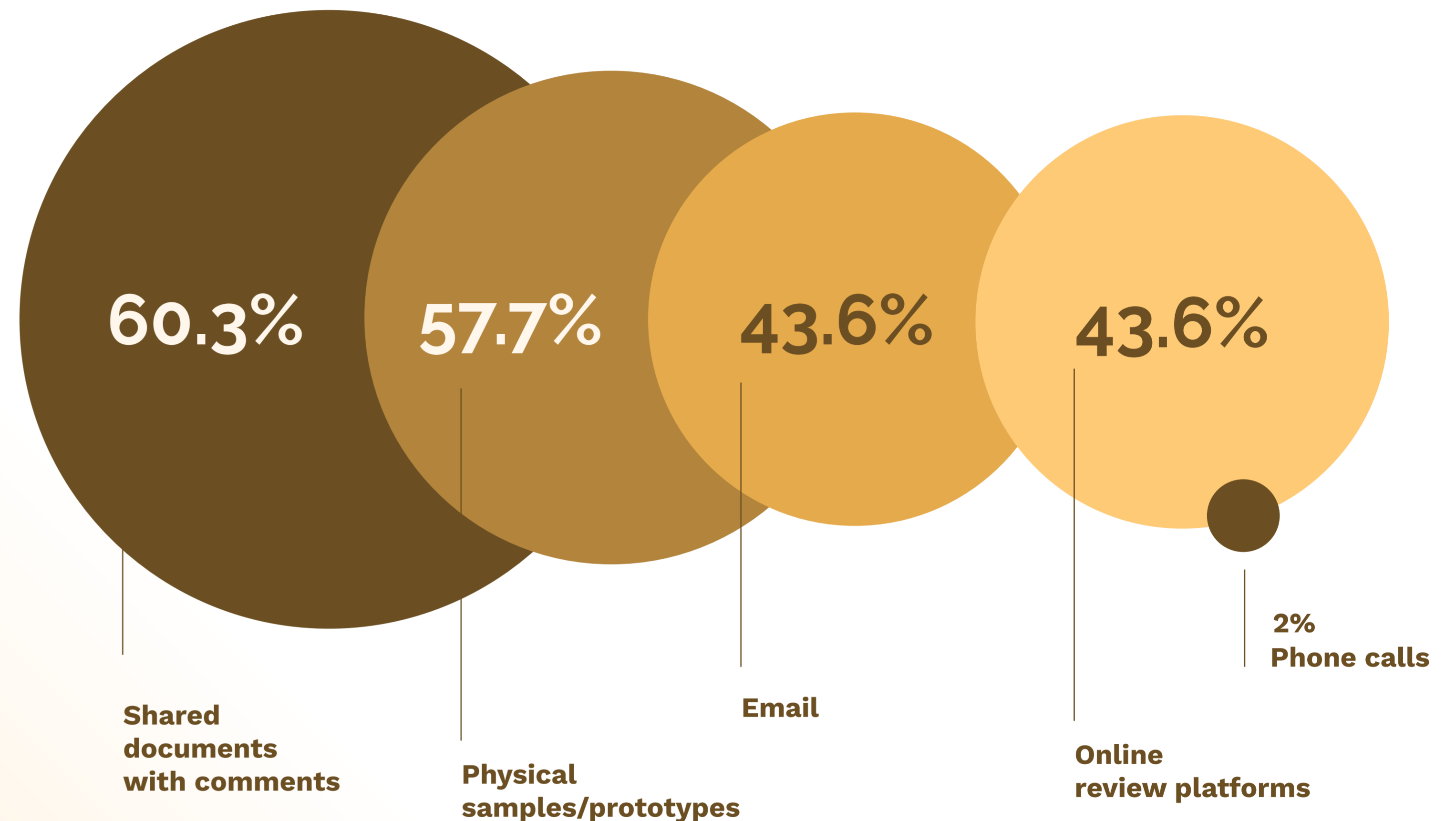
“Food & Beverage packaging touches a lot of hands in an organization and is a huge interdepartmental effort. Brand, marketing, regulatory, product and operations, to name a few, optimize packaging against various rubrics and when communication isn't clear and linear, especially in a time crunch, changes can occur that jeopardize the integrity of the package. It's incredibly important to have a structured and visible review process to get the best packaging in a timely manner and avoid finished product surprises!”

Matthew Held

Director of R&D, MUD/WTR



Manual methods have the most takers, even if a significant percentage of respondents use online review platforms.



Challenges in the packaging review process

Stuck in slo-mo: The roadblocks
to efficiency



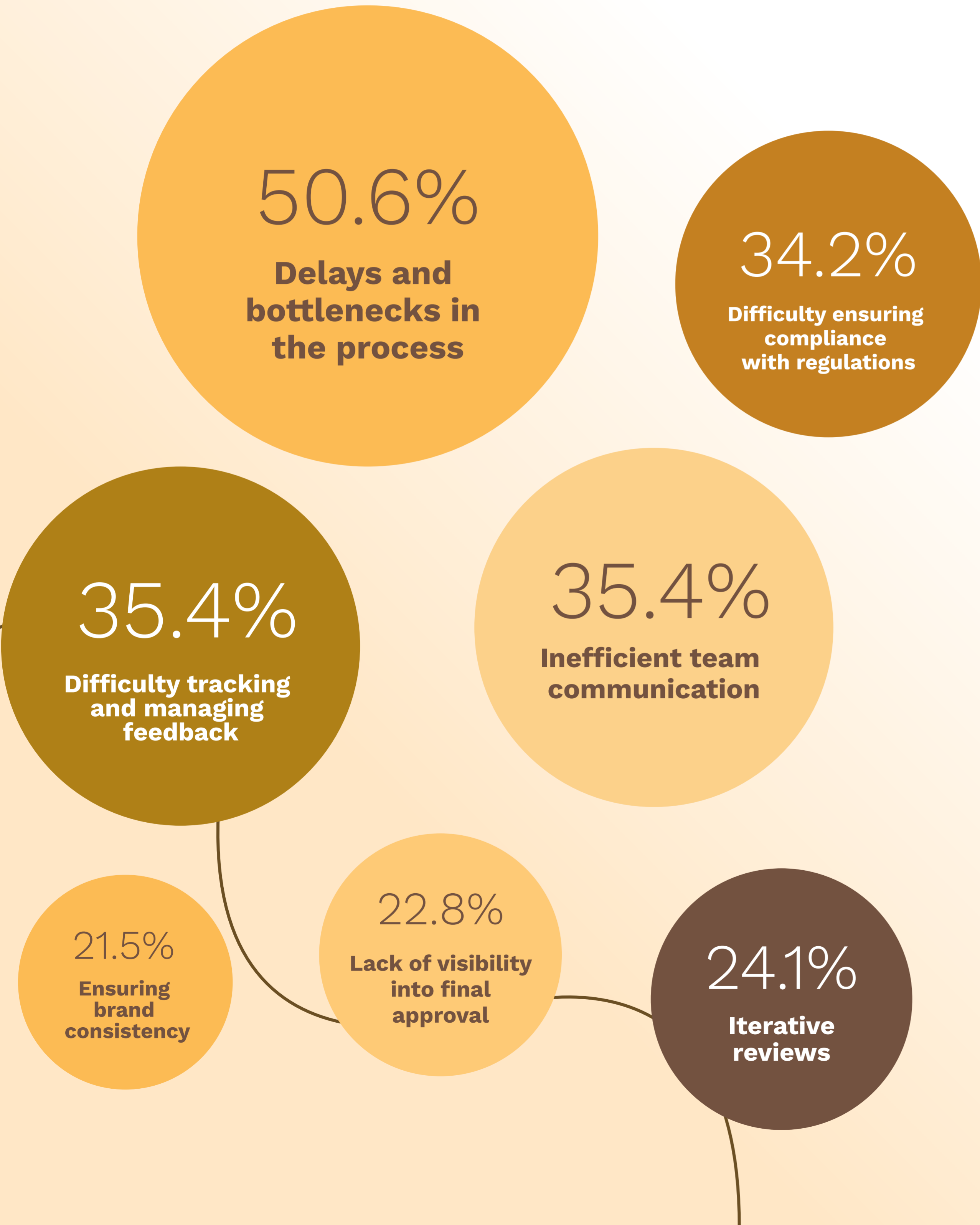
Chapter 2

Only 21.5% of our respondents believe that their current review and approval process works well and without challenges.

Despite vast improvements in AI and automation, and the diverse types of workflows our respondents employ, the packaging process still remains susceptible to delays and bottlenecks. This significantly impacts the time-to-market, with half of our respondents (50.6%) struggling with hold-ups and delays in their current workflows, leading to postponed product launches.

Compounding these delays is also the struggle of tracking and managing feedback. The back and forth of email can cause crucial comments to slip through the cracks, contributing to issues ranging from delayed launches to major recalls.

This difficulty in tracking feedback — further exacerbated by siloed team structures — breeds an environment prone to communication errors. **35.4% of our respondents confirmed this with inefficient team communication being their top challenge in the review process.**



These challenges coupled with compliance issues, iterative reviews, and more contribute to an increased risk of missing information and errors on packaging labels.

In a competitive landscape, timely launches are critical to stand out. These issues add a significant drag on progress, delaying products from reaching store shelves.



“Even with physical prototypes the review is very prone to errors because it is done manually and there are always chances something gets missed out.

The review solely relies on the attention to detail of the reviewer. It is not a skill that can be passed on or taught. To KT this process, one can create a checklist but still the quality of the review might vary with the reviewer.”

Akanksha Goyal
NPD Manager, Indian D2C personal care brands

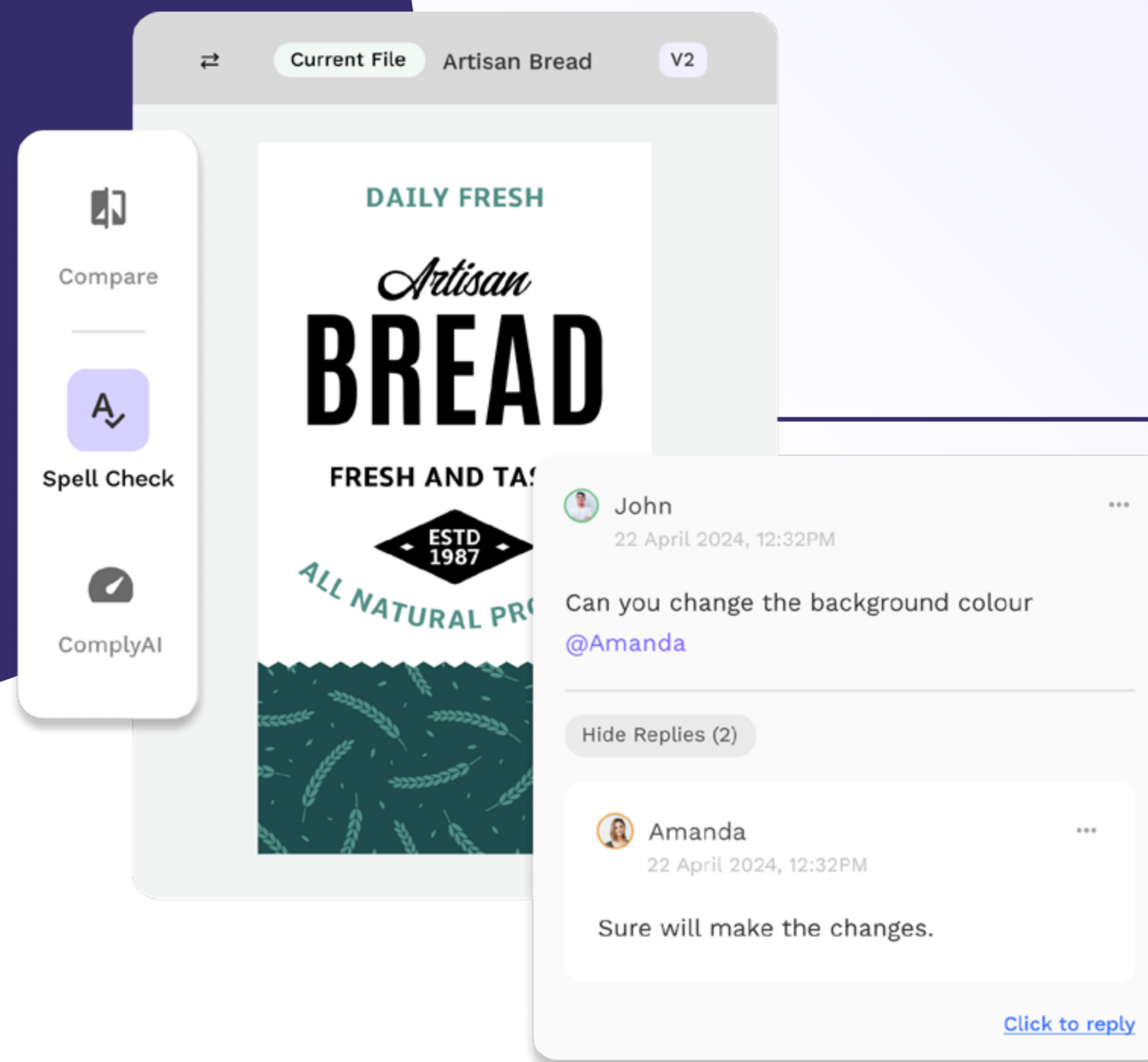


The packaging industry thrives on creativity and innovation. Yet, as we demonstrated in the previous chapter, there's a surprising disconnect between cutting-edge packaging designs and the review and approval processes that bring them to market.

In 2024, a year defined by rapid technological advancements, this reliance on manual review processes is a paradox, especially when we have several cloud-based solutions and real-time collaboration platforms like Artwork Flow as compelling alternatives.

Technology adoption in packaging workflows

Current use and opportunities



This chapter explores technology’s potential to transform the packaging review and approval process and how today’s packaging professionals are relying on it to get their products to market.



“The question is not whether technology can revolutionize packaging reviews, but rather, how quickly the industry will start using it to go beyond traditional workflows to embrace context-aware, AI-driven processes to get on the shelves faster.”

Ankit Tomar
CEO, Artwork Flow



The digital divide

There is moderate adoption of technology to manage reviews and approvals in today’s packaging teams. However, there is still room for growth with over 40% of our respondents still resorting to manual methods to review packaging assets.

55.7%
use technology

44.3%
do not use technology

There’s also the added question of what kind of technology brands use for packaging reviews. A project management software, for instance, may not lend itself to the same flexible review process as a specialized artwork management software like Artwork Flow.

The means through which packaging professionals track workflow progress also skews towards the manual.

48.7%

Rely on email threads for packaging reviews.

32.1%

Use manual methods such as spreadsheets and offline documentation.

There is quite the persistence in manual methods both to review packaging assets and to project manage workflows, highlighting the need for solutions that are user-friendly and effective enough to replace outdated review practices.

Reluctance towards specialization

Another concerning trend is the limited use of specialized tools for artwork management and workflow automation. While tools for label management and online proofing have specially designed features to handle packaging workflows, they are used only by 30.8% and 24.4% of our respondents respectively.

We don't use any of these

39.7%

Online proofing tools

30.8%

Label management software

24.4%

Project management software

20.5%

Digital asset management software

19.2%

Of those packaging professionals who do use technology to combat review challenges, a significant number (44.9%) are neutral about the tool they use, with 22% even expressing some level of dissatisfaction. This suggests a need for improvement in available solutions even for those using current specialized tools in the market.

Neutral

44.9%

Somewhat satisfied

20.5%

Somewhat dissatisfied

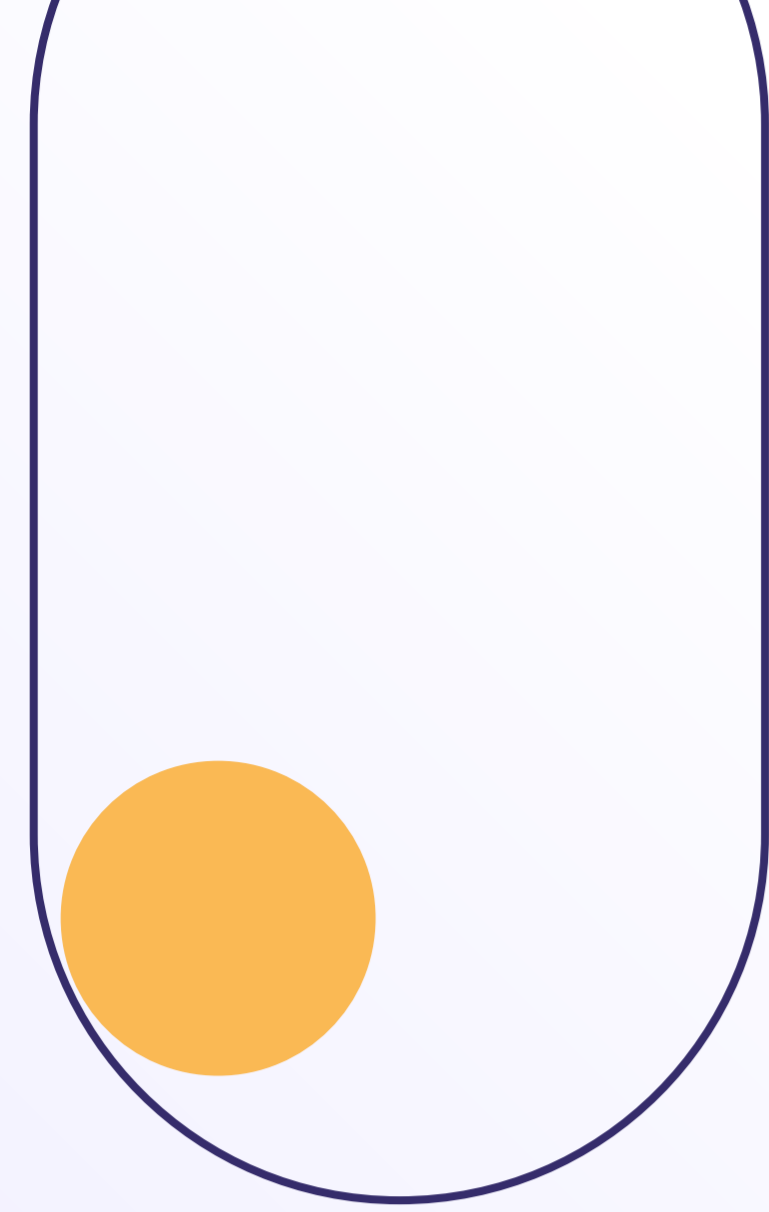
12.8%

Very satisfied

12.8%

Very dissatisfied

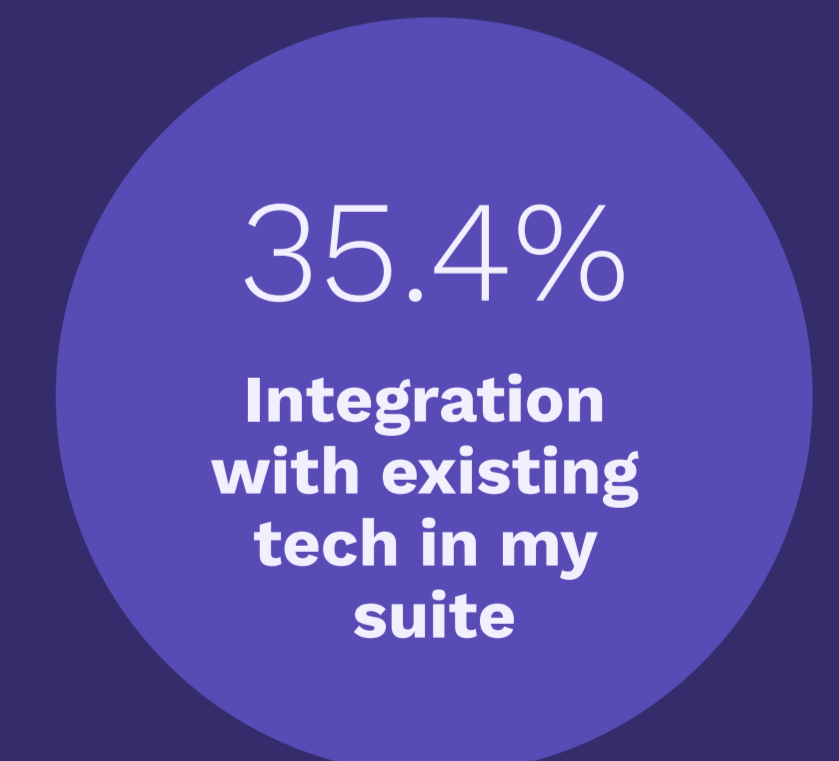
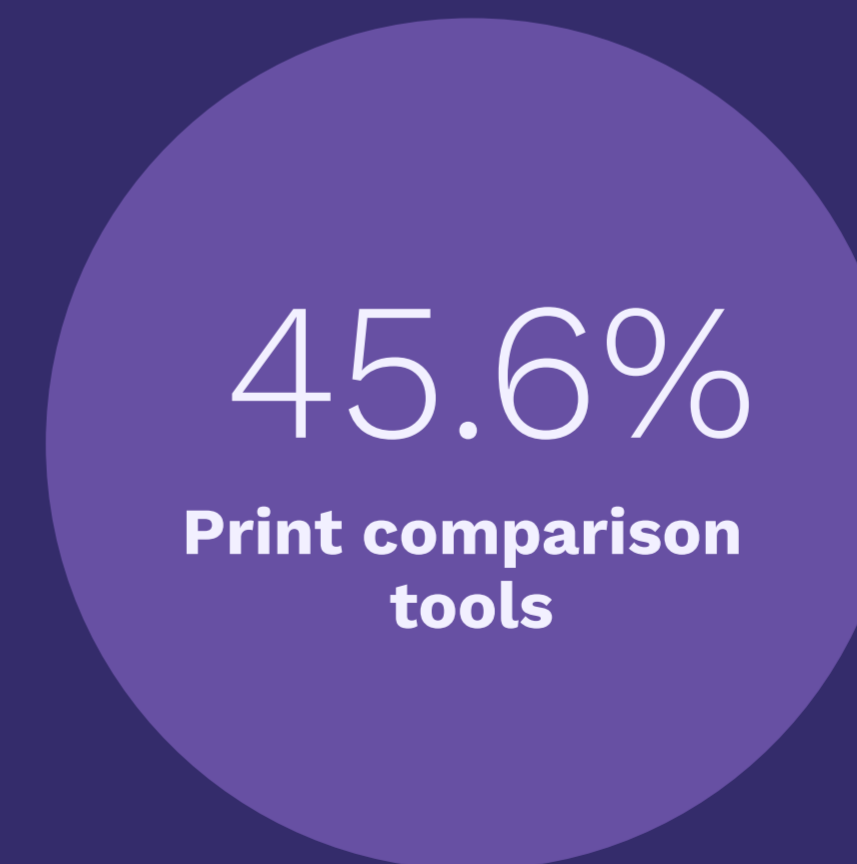
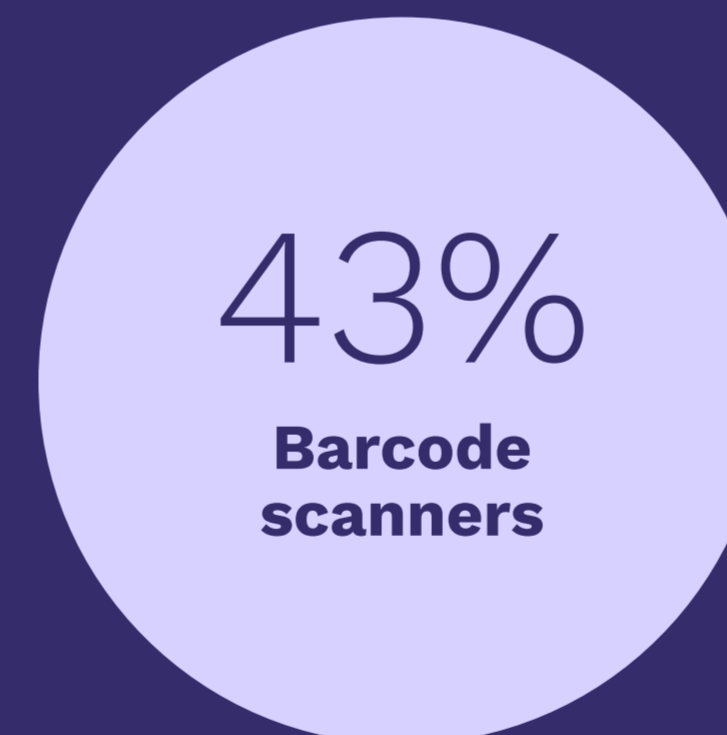
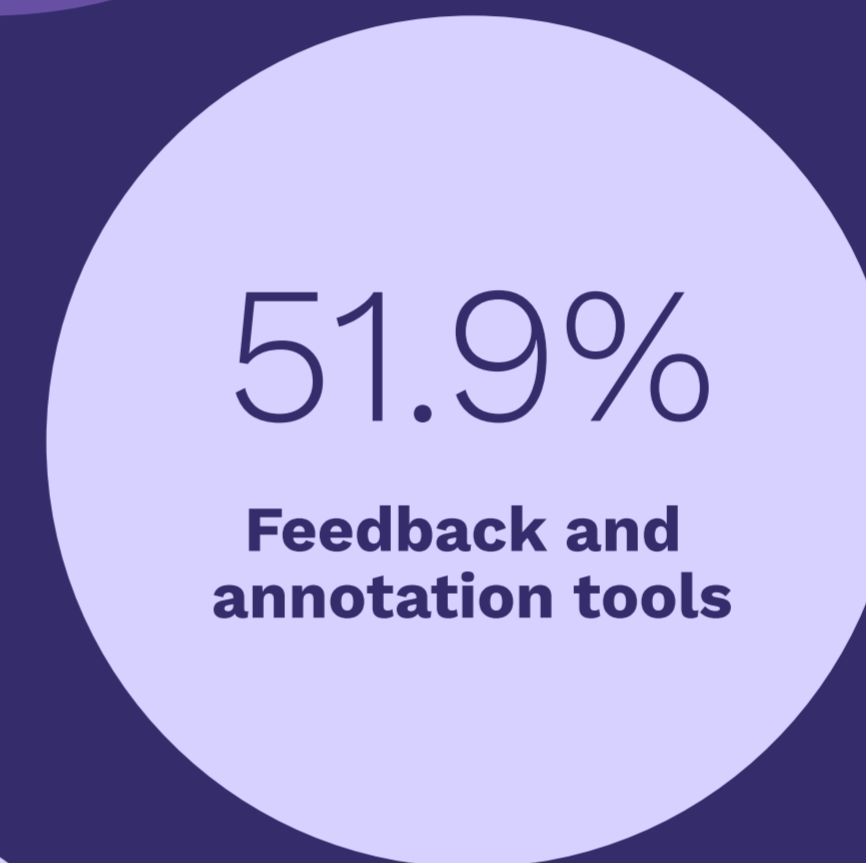
9%



Auto-buy features for packaging teams

The main features the packaging teams of today look for in specialized artwork management tools are ones that directly address their challenges with streamlining workflows, shortening turnaround times, and enhancing communication.

Overall, while some packaging teams do use technology, there's a lot of room for improvement on the adoption and functionality fronts. Features like version control and real-time collaboration are what the teams of today need to better their current review and approval processes.



The compliance conundrum

Challenges and opportunities

Chapter 4

Regulatory compliance is the non-negotiable foundation upon which the packaging industry rests. Yet, a process riddled with the challenges we've seen so far can only spell trouble on the regulatory front as well.

Does that mean all our respondents fail to launch and are crumbling under the weight of recalls? Not at all!

However, the survey data does reveal some concerning statistics and highlights areas where technology can play a vital role in mitigating risks and ensuring regulatory compliance.



24.4%

Respondents have frequently faced recalls

38.5%

Respondents have faced recalls once or twice a year

In this chapter, we will take a closer look at compliance reviews and the associated challenges, how technology can address these challenges, and ultimately, how the packaging teams of today can achieve and maintain robust packaging compliance.

It's still manual

Just like the review processes, our respondents show a heavy reliance on manual methods for compliance. A vast majority still rely on internal checklists and processes to ensure compliance with regulatory guidelines.

Only a measly 6% even try automated tools to comply with regulatory standards. In the spirit of transparency, we will reveal that this 6% includes a few Artwork Flow customers.

Internal checklists and processes

82.1%

Training and awareness programs

48.7%

External consultants

34.6%

Automated tools

6.4%

Pro tip: While label compliance software can be valuable, their effectiveness hinges on flexibility and customization. Software like Artwork Flow help you build custom rulebooks for the regulations you need to comply with and let AI take care of compliance, ensuring flexibility and an accelerated review process.

The 'how' and 'why' of non-compliance

Internal checklists and processes, while important, are still susceptible to human error. And our data heavily underscores this vulnerability. More than half of our respondents agree that missing or incorrect regulatory information has been a huge contributing factor to non-compliance.

Missing or incorrect regulatory information

51.3%

Typographical errors leading to non-compliance

50%

Missing text element (allergen, ingredient, etc.)

33.3%

Mislabeling

30.8%

Other (address change, product classification change, etc.)

7.7%

Additionally, we studied all the FDA recalls since 2017 across various industries and our findings mirror those of this survey. In just Food & Beverages and Pharmaceuticals, a majority of the recalls since 2017 were due to undeclared allergens, incorrect dosages, and other missing or typographical errors that could have been avoided with a more robust review process.

Top reasons for recall in Food & Beverages

- Undeclared allergens
- Microbial contamination

Top reasons for recall in Pharmaceuticals

- Incorrect dosages
- Missing information on potential side effects



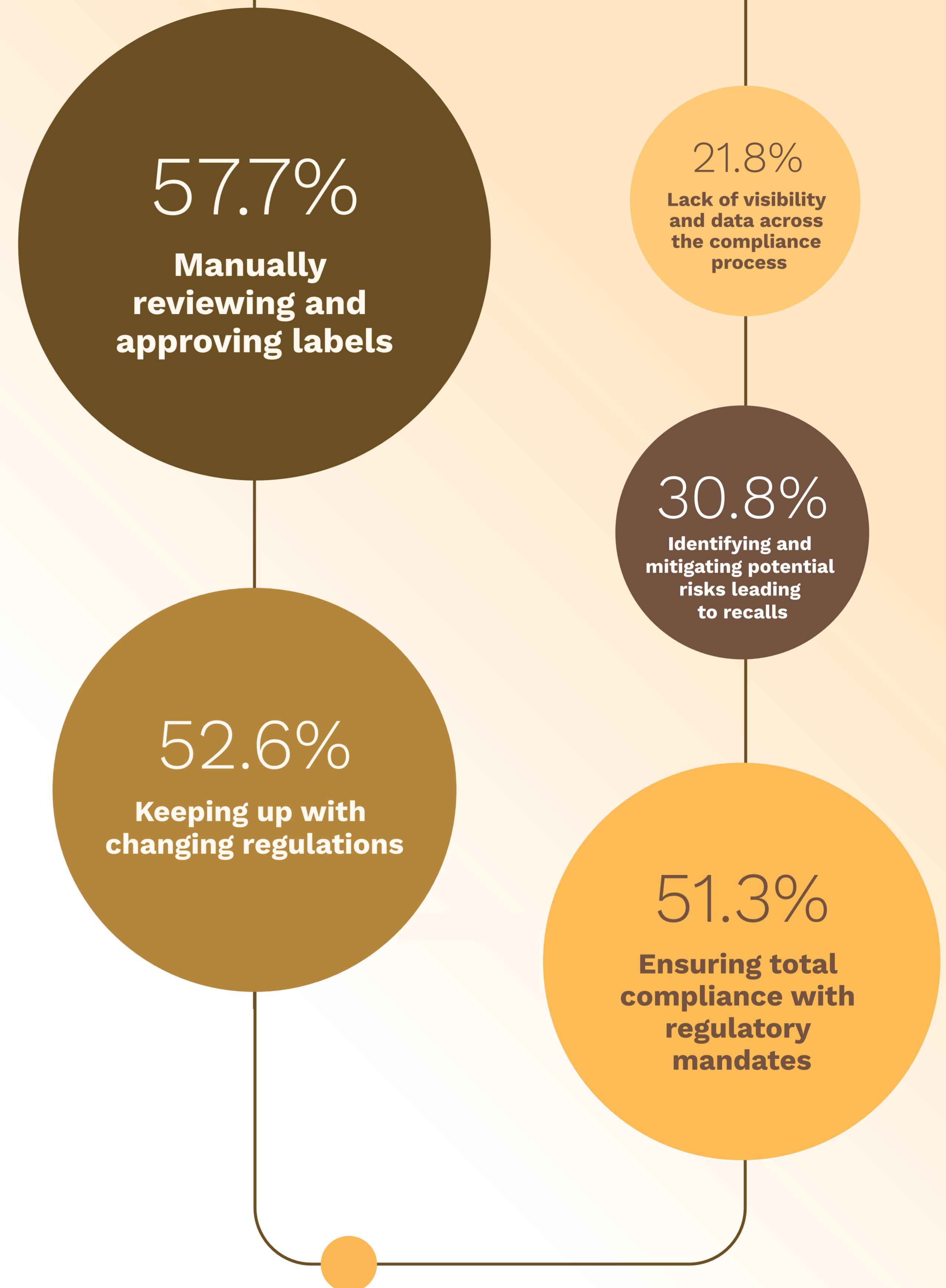
“From a regulatory standpoint, the biggest challenges are in making sure the ingredient listing on packaging is matching the current formulation. Additionally verifying logos such as cruelty free, organic, recyclable materials etc. can be challenging if the artwork information is not updated in the software.”

Shivangi Tandon
Director of Regulatory Affairs, Sol de Janeiro



The packaging teams we surveyed mainly highlighted manually reviewing labels (57.7%) and keeping pace with changing regulations (52.6%) as major hurdles to ensuring total compliance.

This highlights the limitations of manual processes in a dynamic regulatory environment.

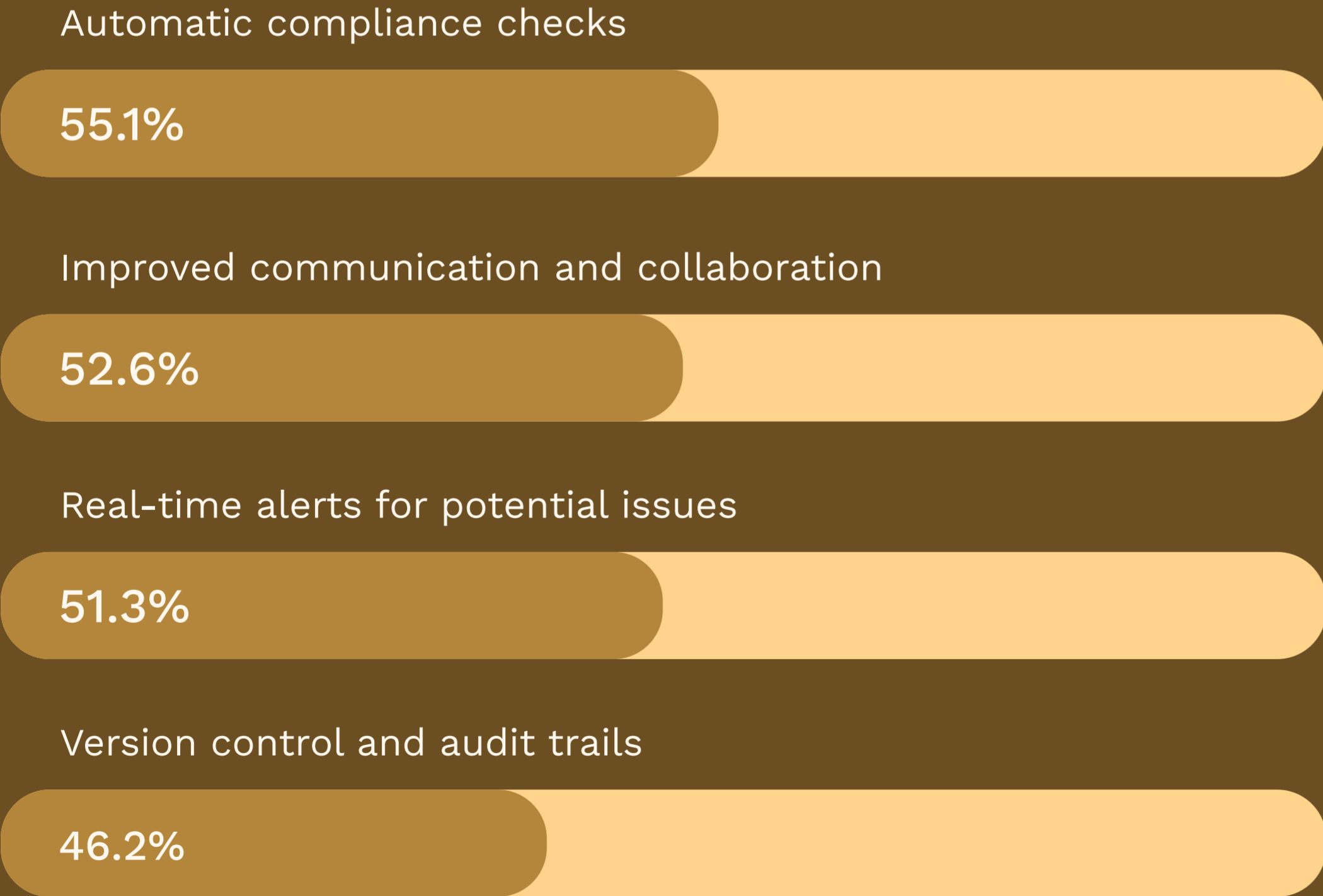


Must-haves for packaging compliance

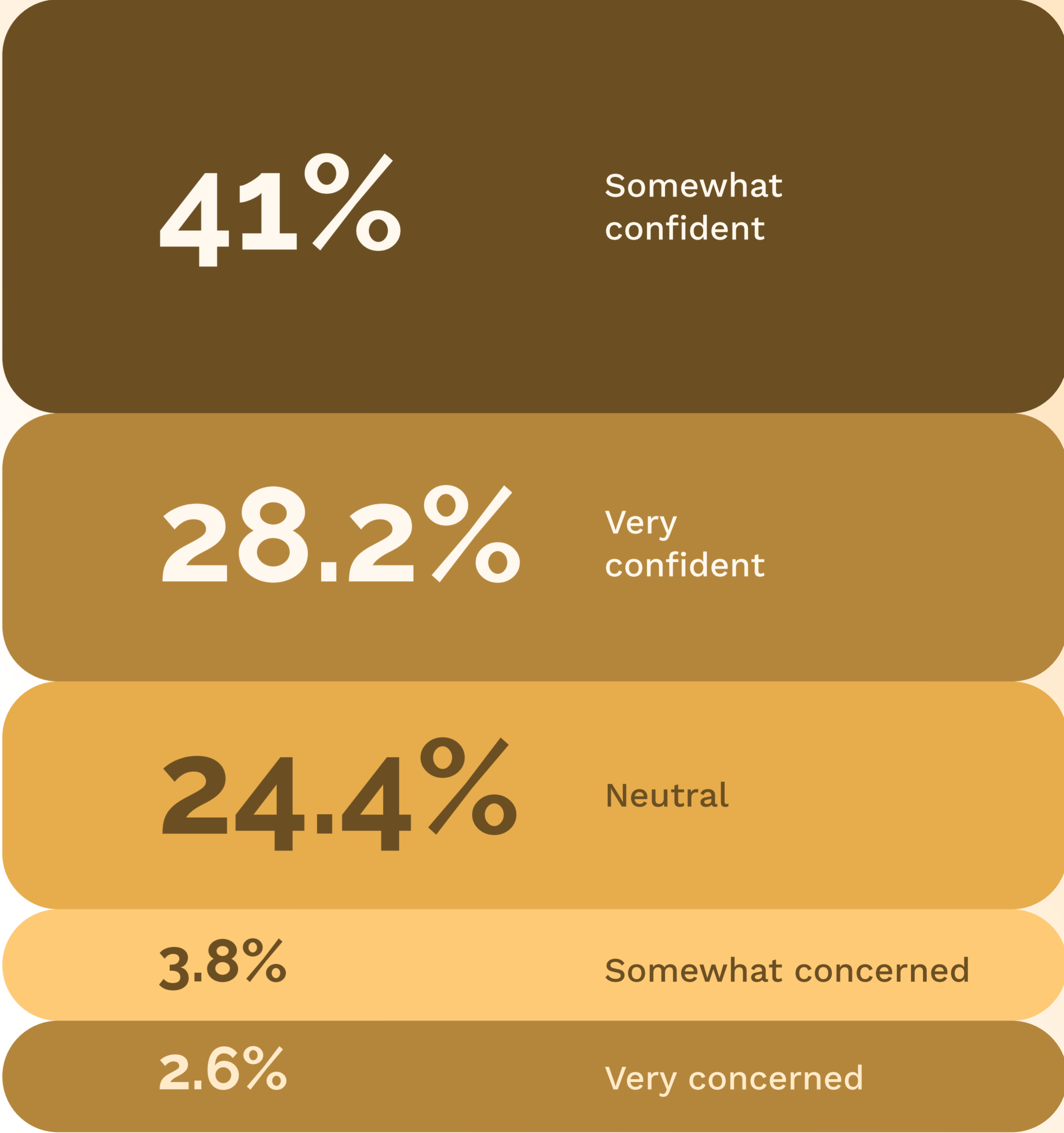
So, what do packaging teams need for 100% compliance?

Over half of our respondents (55.1%) believe automatic compliance checks and improved communication and collaboration are the antidotes to avoiding recalls and ensuring compliance. Real-time alerts and audit trails were close behind as well.

Overall, recalls and labeling errors still remain a top-of-mind issue for most brands. If you're on the same boat, keep reading. We just might have the solution for you.



While a significant portion (69.2%) expresses confidence in meeting regulatory requirements, there's a clear need to bolster this confidence by implementing robust compliance solutions.



Efficiency and Compliance With AI

Manual reviews got us here,
technology can help us out

A staggering

74.4%

of our respondents have declared that automatic flagging of potential compliance issues in labels is one of their most appealing features in a software that can help them prevent recalls.



We initiated this survey for the same reason we developed some of the larger features of Artwork Flow — packaging teams of today are still underserved and deserve strong technological support to stand out in a crowded and competitive marketplace.

ComplyAI, our label compliance software lets users review files flexibly with customizable rules for everything from allergen and ingredient information to brand logos and pictorial markings for recycling, sustainability, and more.

Must contain any of ✕

Ingredients ✕ Serving size ✕

Organic ✕ Add +

Must contain none of ✕

Sweeteners ✕ Add +




Enable Font Check

Enable Grammar Check

Enable Barcode Check

Barcodes

✓ Barcode Found (1)

 ID: 100203040585

Most appealing features in software to prevent a recall

Automatic flagging of potential compliance issues in labels

74.4%

Real-time alerts when regulations relevant to our products change

74.4%

Automated verification of materials against industry standards

47.4%

With ComplyAI, packaging teams can set up their entire regulatory framework online and check every label against it with the help of AI. The framework can be further defined with conditional rules and sectional checks to take automated proofing to the next level.

The flexibility of ComplyAI also allows it to be used by regulatory affairs teams of different industries to go to market free of errors and stress.

[Learn more about ComplyAI](#)

Conclusion

Technology to future-proof
your packaging process

Chapter 6

Packaging teams today stand at a crossroads. While the creative spirit of packaging design is thriving, the review and approval processes still remain tangled up in manual methods. These teams face bottlenecks on the regular, hindering their efficiency, accuracy, and speed to market.

One thing is clear to us from this report: The industry is ready for a paradigm shift.



“Accurate and complete label declarations including clear allergen information are the cornerstone of effective communication and signaling with today’s informed consumers.

Zero mislabeling related recalls has evolved into a top-of-mind objective in today’s manufacturing and food safety landscape.

Top management’s buy-in, a culture of food safety, a meticulous quality and compliance workflow, a system of multiple mandatory checkpoints and a final regulatory approval process are indispensable steps to ensure consumer safety, build trust and prevent wasteful and expensive recalls.”

Serena Chakravorty

QA & Regulatory Compliance Manager | SQF Practitioner
Portland Coffee Roasters

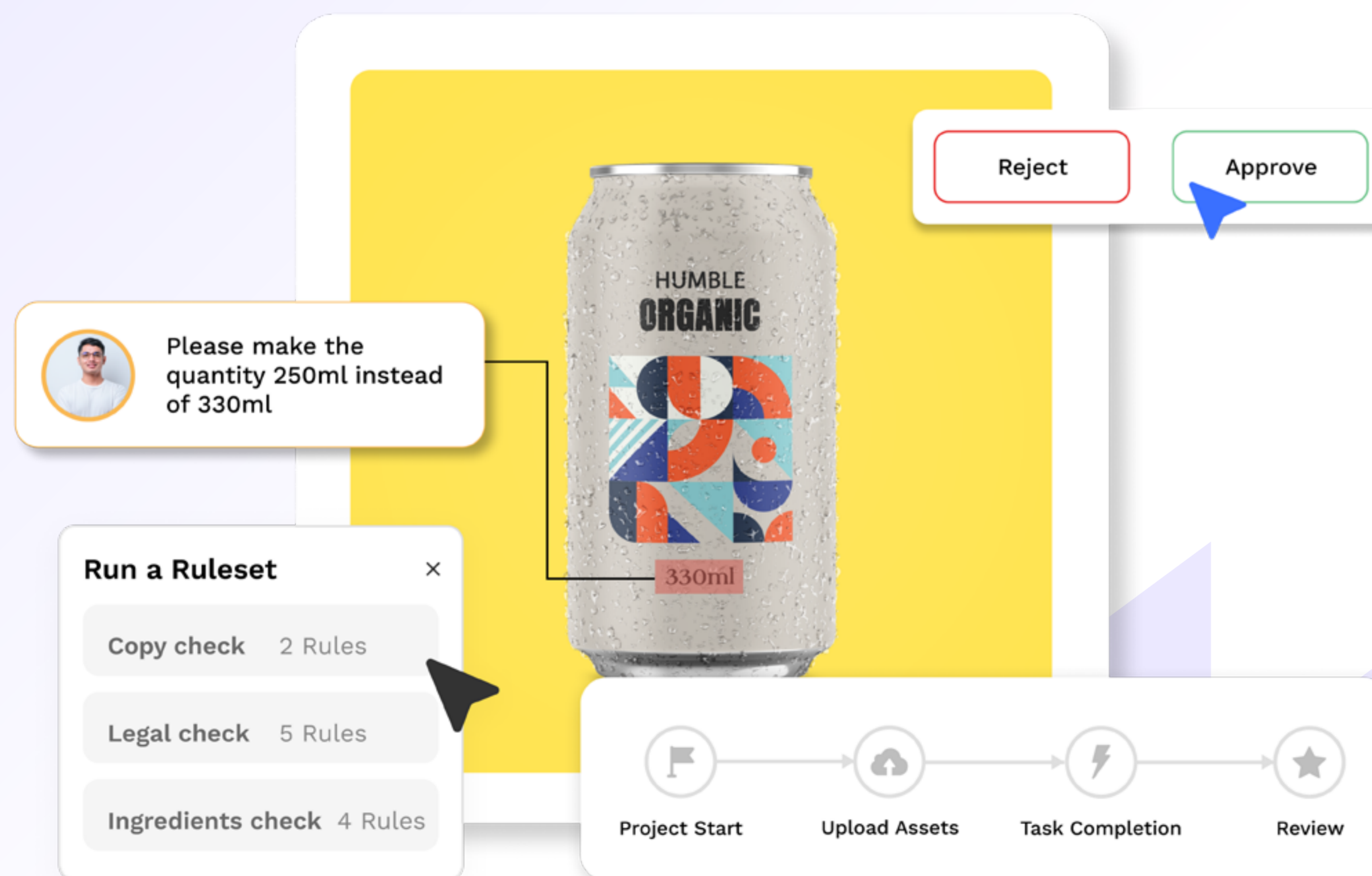


The good news is that there is a wealth of software waiting to be used. From centralized platforms for streamlined collaboration to AI-powered tools for automated compliance checks, technology offers a path forward.

Deploying these solutions can unlock a new era of efficiency, ensuring:

- ▲ **Faster time-to-market:** Workflow automation and real-time communication can help you reduce TATs, getting products onto shelves much faster.
- ▲ **Fewer recalls:** With centralized review systems and automated checks, teams can minimize the risk of errors and omissions, hopefully leading to fewer recalls and improved brand reputation.
- ▲ **Better collaboration:** Software can help teams break down silos and communicate better across departments.
- ▲ **100% compliance:** Teams can also navigate the complexities of regulations much easier with technology that helps them comply much more efficiently.

- ▶ **Ensure 100% compliance** with ComplyAI, our label compliance feature that helps users review files flexibly with customizable rules for everything from allergen and ingredient information to brand logos and pictorial markings for recycling, sustainability, and more.
- ▶ **Build complex packaging workflows** and launch twice as fast with a hyper-flexible workflow builder that gives you automated notifications and helps you identify bottlenecks in a snap.
- ▶ **Fast-track artwork approval** and go to market error free with a rich proofing toolkit including version compare, comments, annotations, spellcheck, and more. Review artwork across 160+ file formats, ranging from label artwork to marketing videos.
- ▶ **Store, find, and share packaging assets** from a central library enhanced with smart features like smart tags and contextual search.



Slash Weeks Off Your Launch Timeline With Artwork Flow

[Learn more about Artwork Flow](#)