

Growth, Pressure, and the Future of Technical Reporting

What technical report-driven firms told us
about 2025 — and what it means for 2026.



Table of Contents

Introduction 03

2025 in Review 05

2026 Outlook 08

The Pain Premium 09

AI in Technical Reporting 11

Defining 2026 13

Introduction



From Growth to Pressure

2025 was a strong year by most measures: more work, more reports, more revenue. But growth didn't resolve underlying constraints. It exposed them.

As volume increased, so did pressure on staffing, workflows, and margins. It's becoming clear that how the work gets done is just as important as how much work there is.

Our Vantage Point

Quire has processed more than 1.5 million technical reports across AEC, environmental consulting, and commercial real estate, giving us a direct view into how technical reporting actually gets done, where workflows break down, and how firms adapt as demand shifts.

This report combines that platform intelligence with direct input from firm leaders and the professionals doing the work day to day.

This year's report covers:

- How firms performed in 2025, and the pressures that grew with the workload
- The structural inefficiencies compounding behind strong top-line performance
- What firms expect from volume, revenue, and staffing in 2026
- The real state of AI adoption: interest, hesitation, and where it's working
- The operational moves separating high-performing firms from the rest

A note on methodology

This report draws on two survey populations: Quire customer firms and independent contractors who produce deliverables on the Quire platform. Business environment and organizational questions (growth outlook, staffing challenges, and margins) reflect the customer firm data set. Reporting workflow, AI adoption, and production process questions incorporate both populations where applicable.

By the Numbers

The sharpest signals from this year's survey

90%

of firms reported growth in 2025

88%

expect report volume to increase in 2026

80%

of firm leaders are optimistic or better

69%

report capacity constraints

85%

find talent acquisition challenging

65%

see no measurable AI benefit

Key Findings at a Glance

■ Not a Single Firm Expects a Decline

Nearly 9 in 10 firms reported growth in 2025. Report volume is expected to rise for the second consecutive year, and not a single firm expects a decrease.

■ Demand is Compounding

Nearly half of firms produced 1,000+ technical reports in 2025. For 18%, that number exceeded 10,000. With 88% expecting volume to climb again, the pressure on production workflows is compounding.

■ Firms Can't Hire Fast Enough

Staffing pressure reversed sharply. 85% of firms find talent acquisition challenging, up from 48% in the prior year. A growth year made it worse, not better.

■ Most See No Measurable AI Benefit (Yet)

AI adoption is accelerating but ROI isn't. 65% of firms have seen no measurable benefit yet. The tools firms trust most are grounded in their own verified report libraries — not the open internet.



> 80%
of firms reported
growth in 2025

2025 IN REVIEW

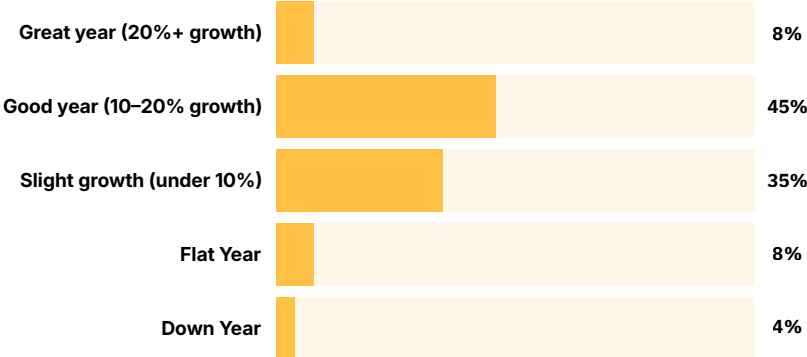
The Work Came Back. So Did the Pressure.

2025 delivered what the industry had been waiting for. Demand returned. More than 80% of firms reported growth, and report volume surged across the board.

But growth didn't resolve underlying constraints. It exposed them.

As volume increased, so did pressure on staffing, workflows, and margins, revealing a widening gap between what firms produce and how efficiently they do so.

How Firms Characterized 2025 Performance



Addressing Key Industry Challenges

1 Staffing pressure didn't ease. It intensified.

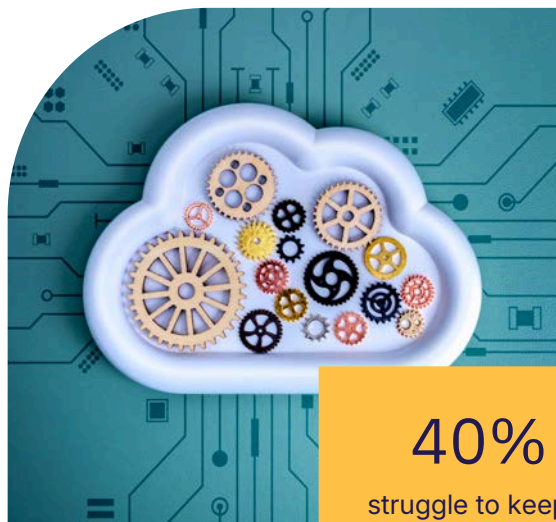
85% of firm leaders rated finding and retaining talent as at least moderately challenging in 2025, up sharply from 48% in our prior survey, when staffing concerns had appeared to be easing. A growth year didn't help; it accelerated the problem.

The issue runs deeper than headcount. Every departure carries institutional knowledge that most firms have no reliable way to retain: site histories, project context, proven language from hundreds of prior reports.

85%
report talent
challenges



“Staffing and efficiency will be our greatest challenge in 2026.”



40%

struggle to keep
up with demand

2 More volume exposed more friction in the workflow.

Technical reporting is collaborative by nature. Field observations, analysis, documentation, review, revision: any friction in that chain compounds quickly when a firm is producing hundreds of reports a year. The firms absorbing volume best aren't the ones with the most staff. They're the ones whose systems reduce the overhead behind each report.

“Meeting shortened timelines, including onsite and report delivery requests.”

3 Margins stayed under pressure even as revenue grew.

Nearly three-quarters of firms said protecting margins was at least moderately challenging in 2025. Clients expect faster turnaround. Competition keeps fees tight. And team capacity doesn't scale the same way a good year's pipeline does.

"Our biggest challenge is fostering growth while maintaining profitability."

KEY TAKEAWAY

The story of 2025 isn't just that demand returned. It's that the return of demand made visible the limits of how most firms operate.

The Contractor Perspective

When firms can't hire fast enough, independent contractors absorb the overflow — and this year's contractor survey confirms they're feeling the demand. 78% of contractors reported growth in 2025, and none hold a pessimistic outlook for 2026.

These aren't casual freelancers. 96% have been supporting technical reporting projects for three or more years, and on average, 68% of their deliverables are produced in Quire.

They're embedded in the workflow, and they're hungry for better tools: contractors report even higher interest in AI-powered capabilities than customer firms, yet half aren't using AI in their report workflow at all.

As the talent gap widens, contractors are an increasingly critical part of the production equation — and their efficiency is the firm's efficiency.



72%
feel pressure
on margins

Confidence Is High. Expectations Are Higher.

Industry confidence heading into 2026 is as strong as we've seen. **80% of firm leaders describe their outlook as optimistic or better.** And for the second year running, not a single firm expects a decrease in report volume.

Open-ended responses tell the same story across every firm, regardless of size or service line: more reports, faster timelines, the same margin expectations.

88%

of firms expect **report volume to increase** in 2026 (up from 79% last year)

0%

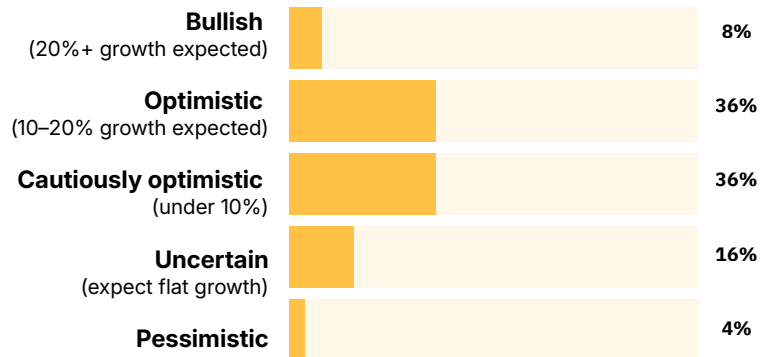
of firms expect a decrease in report volume **for the second consecutive year**

“Maintaining quality with tighter turnaround times.”

“Accelerating sales, implementing technology.”

“Continued delivery of on-time reports.”

2026 Business Outlook



KEY TAKEAWAY

The question heading into 2026 isn't whether the work will be there. **It's whether the systems behind it can keep up.**

The Pain Premium

An Industry View: Findings from the Broader Market

The survey findings in this report reflect the Quire customer and contractor community. But to understand the full picture, we also conducted a **separate study of more than 200 technical report-driven firms that do not use Quire** to see how the broader market experiences the same pressures our respondents described.

The results were striking. Across these firms, there is a persistent gap between the quality of the work they deliver and the efficiency of the process behind it. We call this the ***Pain Premium***.

The Pain Premium: Paying More to Stay in Place

When asked to rate their own performance, firms outside the Quire ecosystem consistently scored their deliverable quality higher than their production process — meaning they're absorbing extra time, effort, and cost just to maintain the standard of their output.

The Quality-Process Gap



93.5% of firms in the broader study experience this gap.

Only **6.5%** achieve quality-process parity.

MARKET SNAPSHOT

What's Driving the Pain Premium?

77%

Knowledge Reuse Friction

Finding and reusing prior report language is slow, inconsistent, and dependent on individual memory. It creates bottlenecks with senior staff and redundant work at every level.

66%

Formatting Friction

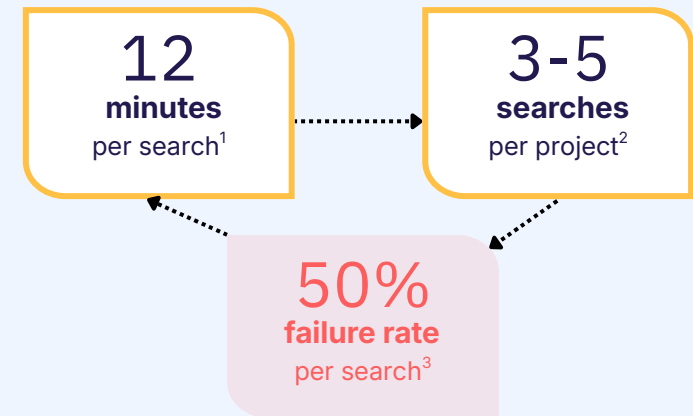
Time spent on photos, tables, and references instead of engineering. These aren't technical problems. They're system problems.

56%

Consistency Gaps

Output varies by writer, team, and office. In multi-office firms this creates review overhead at scale and exposes firms to quality variation in client deliverables.

How the Pain Premium Compounds:



Sources:

- ¹AIIM (Association for Information and Image Management) Survey (2019);
- ²DC White Paper, "The High Cost of Not Finding Information" (2018);
- ³Google Research, "Patterns of Query Reformulation" (2009)

The firms that have closed the gap share three characteristics:

- ✓ A standardized starting point for every report
- ✓ A culture that treats process quality as seriously as output quality
- ✓ Investment in purpose-built tools that connect all stakeholders in the production workflow

KEY TAKEAWAY

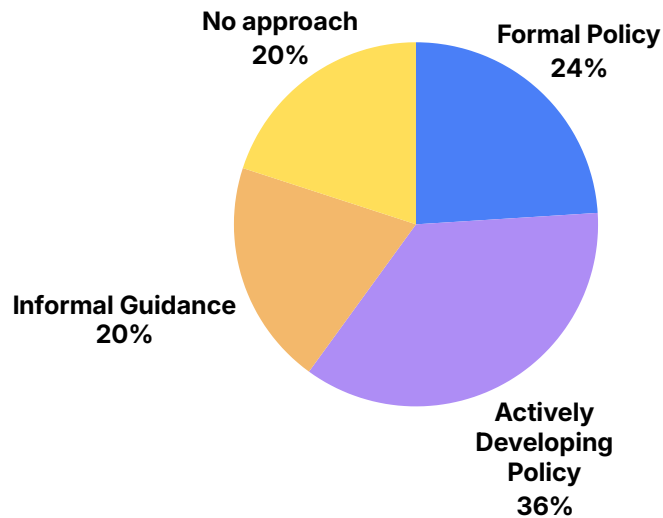
In a year when report volumes are expected to climb again, these inefficiencies don't stay static. They scale with the work.

AI in Technical Reporting

Interest Is Real. Progress Is Measured.

AI has become the most discussed topic in engineering firm leadership conversations, and survey data shows adoption accelerating meaningfully. Two years ago, fewer than 1 in 4 firms had experimented with AI at all. Today, the picture looks very different.

AI Policy Adoption



Adoption Is Moving. Results Are Not Keeping Pace.

While more firms than ever are using AI, 65% of respondents say they haven't yet seen measurable benefits, and two-thirds say it's too early to evaluate time savings or output quality.

+148%

Increase from 2025
in reported AI usage

0%

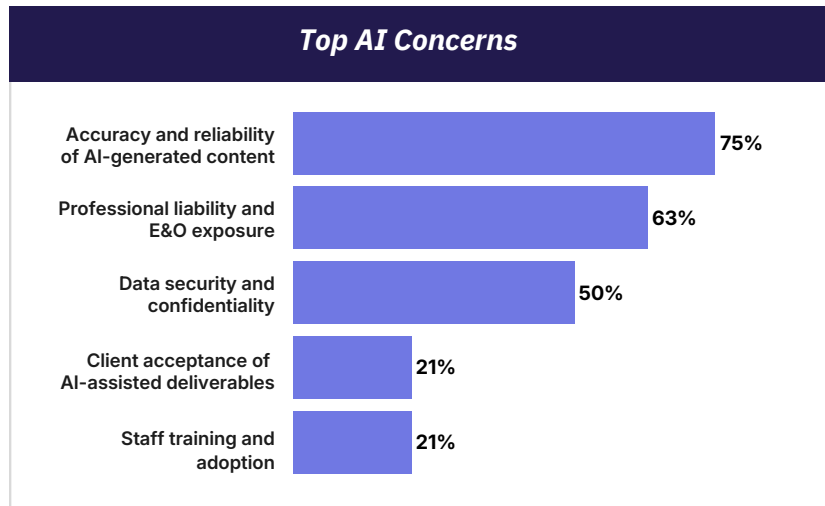
Report strong time savings
with reliable output quality

This Isn't Reluctance. It's Precision.

Engineering deliverables require accuracy, traceability, and defensibility. Tools that generate content without reliable source grounding don't just underperform in this environment. They introduce risk.

The Concerns That Matter Most

The top concerns aren't about cost or change management. They're about professional accountability:



These concerns reflect exactly the right instincts. General-purpose AI — trained on the open internet, disconnected from a firm's own verified work — was not built for professional deliverables with regulatory, financial, and legal weight. The question isn't whether AI belongs in technical reporting. It's whether the AI is grounded in something your firm can stand behind.

KEY TAKEAWAY

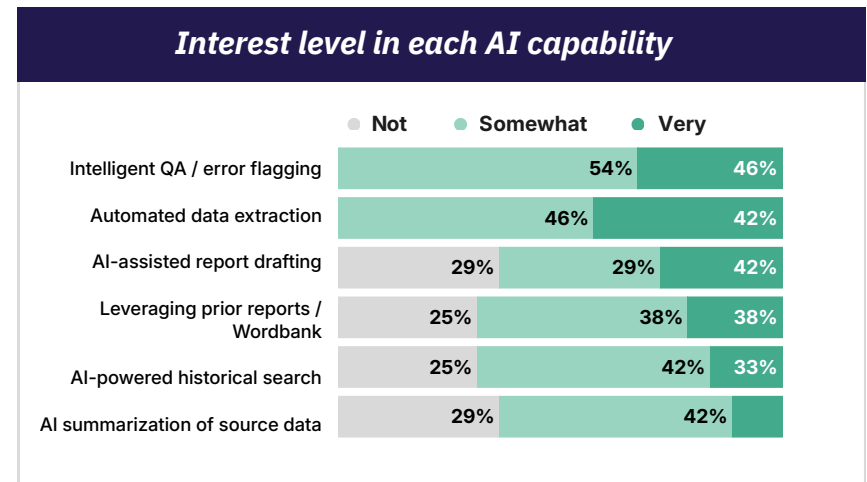
The pattern is clear. Firms don't want AI that writes reports for them. They want AI that makes every report faster to produce, harder to get wrong, and easier to build on the next time.

Where It's Working

AI applications currently used by firms in technical reporting are targeted, focusing on **accelerating existing work** rather than generating content from scratch. This approach is seen as a defensible and promising use of AI in this field. The most common applications include **drafting sections of report narratives (41%)**, **searching historical reports (38%)**, and **quality review and editing (33%)**.

What Most Firms Want from AI

Every capability on the list has a majority interest, but the highest demand is for AI that catches errors and eliminates manual data handling. Firms aren't looking for a content generator. They're looking for a safety net and a time saver.



Three Moves That Will Define 2026

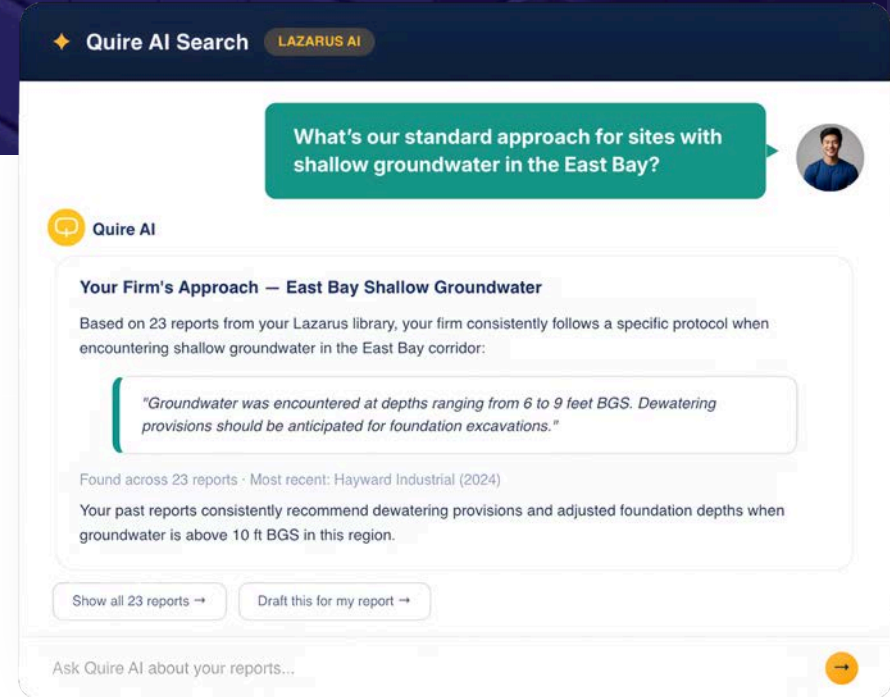
The firms that come out ahead won't necessarily be the biggest or most aggressive in pursuing new work. They'll be the ones whose operations can absorb volume without absorbing the Pain Premium that comes with it.

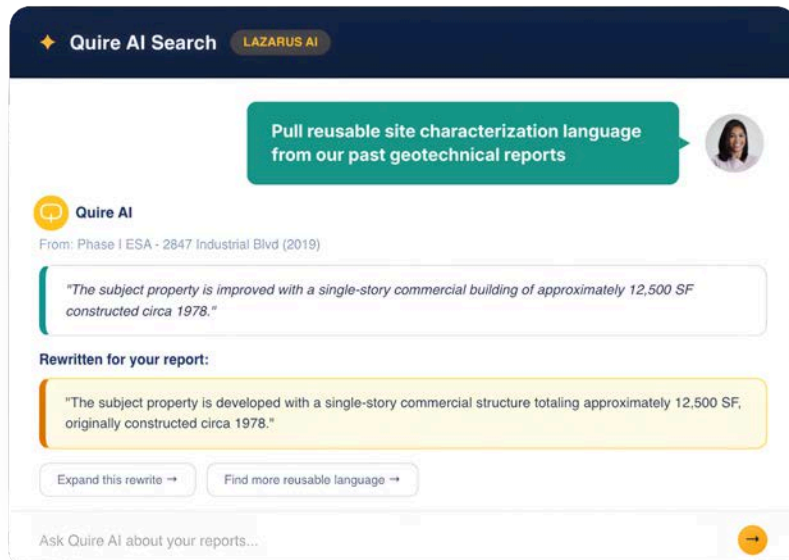
Based on this year's data, three operational shifts separate the firms positioned for sustainable growth from those likely to hit a ceiling.

1 Standardize the Starting Point

Give every report a shared foundation: consistent formatting, consistent structure, consistent expectations for what a deliverable looks like before a single word of original content is written. The data is clear: firms that have closed the quality-process gap aren't doing it through heroics or overtime. They're doing it through systems that remove variability before it has a chance to compound.

Standardization isn't about rigidity. It's about freeing up your best people to spend time on engineering judgment instead of formatting, photo placement, and version control.





2 Make Institutional Knowledge a System, Not a Person

Most firms sit on thousands of completed reports and can't effectively search them. Prior language, site histories, project context, proven approaches: all locked inside PDFs and folders that only a handful of senior staff know how to navigate. Every departure takes a piece of that knowledge with it.

The firms making the biggest efficiency gains are the ones treating their report archive as a working asset, not a filing cabinet. When any team member can find relevant prior work in minutes instead of hours (or at all), the entire production equation changes.

3 Use AI That's Grounded in Your Own Work

The survey data tells a consistent story: firms aren't skeptical of AI itself. They're skeptical of AI that can't meet the evidentiary standard their work demands. Accuracy, liability, and data security are the top concerns, and those concerns reflect exactly the right instincts.

General-purpose AI trained on the open internet wasn't built for professional deliverables with regulatory, financial, and legal weight. The AI that earns adoption in this industry will be the AI that's grounded in a firm's own verified report library: traceable, defensible, and aligned with how firms actually operate.

That's the difference between AI that introduces risk and AI that removes it.

KEY TAKEAWAY

The firms that thrive in 2026 won't just be the ones that win more work. They'll be the ones that deliver it consistently, efficiently, and at scale — because the systems behind the work were built to keep up.

How Leading Firms Are Pulling Ahead

The pressures outlined in this report aren't temporary. They're structural. More work, tighter timelines, and rising expectations are forcing firms to rethink how technical reports get produced. The firms pulling ahead aren't adding more overhead. They're building systems that make their work more consistent, more efficient, and easier to scale.

Quire TRM™: Built for What's Next

Quire is an AI-powered Technical Report Management (TRM)™ platform built specifically for firms producing high volumes of technical deliverables—bringing structure, consistency, and intelligence to the entire reporting workflow.

And with our latest innovation **Lazarus**, that intelligence can now extend to your firm's entire historical report library — making every past deliverable searchable, reusable, and available to every team member from day one.

Lazarus Library

312 Total Indexed | 12.4 GB Storage | 89%

REPORT NAME	TYPE	SEARCH	CHAT
Phase I ESA - 2847 Industrial Blvd (2019)	Phase I ESA	✓ Ready	✓ Ready
Geotech Investigation - Hillcrest Medical (2018)	Geotechnical	✓ Ready	✓ Ready
PCA - Westfield Town Center (2017)	PCA	✓ Ready	○ Processing
(2020)	Phase II ESA	○ Processing	Queued
	Environmental	Queued	Queued
Foundation Investigation - Bay Bridge (2015)			

- Built for technical reports, not generic documents
- Standardized workflows that eliminate rework
- Knowledge stays with the firm, not with individuals
- AI grounded in your own work, not the open internet
- Past reports become searchable and reusable with Lazarus

The result: more output, less friction—and the ability to scale without adding overhead.

Ready to close the gap between your output quality and the process behind it?

Get A Custom Demo



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