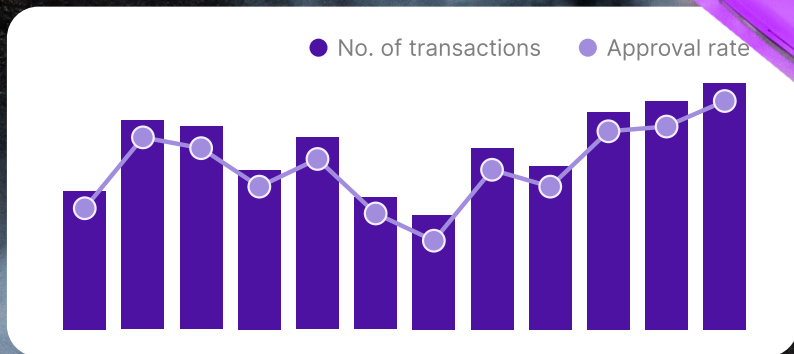
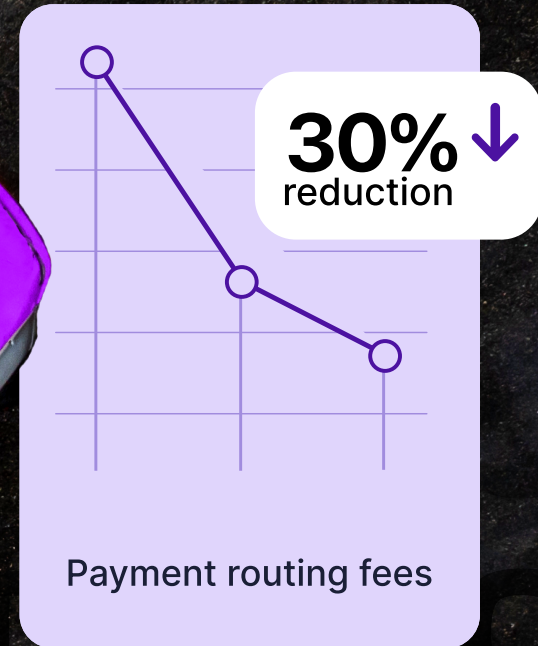


Merchant Insider Report 2026

The cost



of friction

How payment experiences are redefining platform loyalty

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Introduction

From expectation to imperative

Key numbers at a glance:

43%

of businesses say payment capabilities are extremely important to their management software solution.

99%

say embedded finance capabilities are important.

82%

of businesses are likely to switch platforms for the ability to accept all the types of payments the business wants.

The Merchant Insider report offers a glimpse into the minds of merchants, equipping platforms with up-to-date insights on this evolving audience.

This year, we're seeing some subtle but important shifts, with growing business complexity increasing the need for software that can help streamline operations. This is reflected in the 85% of users who say their management software is more important to their business today than it was three to five years ago.

Within the software ecosystem, embedded payments and financial services are increasingly essential for merchants. Accelerating digital workflows and the expectation that financial services should sit seamlessly inside the software experience means tolerance for friction, workarounds and partial solutions has all but disappeared.

With 82% of businesses likely to switch platforms for better payment capabilities, the competition is on to provide the best experiences.

By understanding the merchant perspective, platforms can make more informed decisions about how to evolve their payments and financial capabilities to strengthen trust, reduce churn and stay ahead.

Lifting the lid on how merchants experience their platforms day to day, this report looks at what builds confidence and where expectations are no longer being met.

Inside you'll discover:

- Where platforms are winning – and where they're leaving value on the table.
- How payments and financial services can be tools to grow your business.
- Actionable strategies to improve in-platform financial capabilities.

Methodology

We surveyed 1,542 businesses across Australia, the UK and the US that use **business management software**.

Respondent characteristics:



Senior finance
and technology
decision-makers



Responsible for
software adoption
and investment



Representative of
a broad cross-section
of SMBs



Annual business
revenues between
\$500K and \$500M

The new retention conversation

In the not-so-distant past, software providers differentiated themselves through features, user experience and breadth of functionality. That is not the case in 2026.

Today, retention is increasingly determined by how well payments function within the platform experience. If payment flows are fast and reliable it anchors loyalty. Friction, however, can undermine trust across the platform.

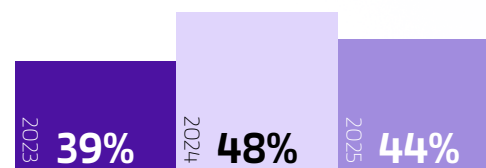
Satisfaction with payments capabilities is the

#1 reason

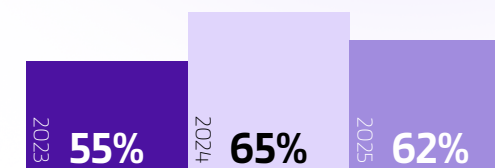
businesses are unlikely to switch software providers.

This year's merchant survey highlights that payments satisfaction is the top reason businesses will stick with their current software.

The number of businesses staying put because they are happy with their payment solution, by year:



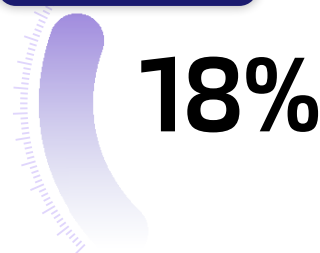
The number of businesses with an appetite for switching, by year:



An appetite to invest

As well as considering new platforms, businesses across markets are keen to invest in their software. This year, as with last, the data reveals that **more than half** plan to increase their software budget with only a small drop in spend vs. last year.

Average increase in software spend by year:



The switching point

Why merchants are ready to move

Businesses are clear about why they would leave their current management platforms. Most drivers relate to stagnation, poor integration or subpar customer experiences. This strengthens the evidence that businesses will no longer tolerate friction around software payments.

Many respondents noted that newer, more innovative options are now available, that existing integrations can be unreliable, or that their merchants had poor experiences while using the payment features within their software.

Others are motivated simply by the need to improve their payment capabilities. This is reflected in the fact that across Australia, the UK and the US, a top-five pain point for likely switchers is the ability to better manage outgoing payments. As alternative providers deliver more seamless, end-to-end financial capabilities, the bar for retention has risen significantly.

32%

of businesses likely to switch cite newer, more innovative software availability as a factor.

25%

of those looking to switch mention that their customers have had bad experiences using the payment capabilities.

Why merchants are switching - by region



Australia

1. More innovative solutions available
2. Too much time spent managing solution
3. Integration improvements are needed



UK

1. There are better solutions for the industry
2. More innovative solutions available
3. Too much time spent managing solution



US

1. More innovative solutions available
2. Integration improvements are needed
3. Bad customer payment experience within the software

If innovation is all talk, merchants may walk

The bad news for incumbent platforms that don't keep pace with innovation is that there is a tempting array of vertical SaaS providers out there who already deliver great payment experiences. Many merchants are realizing they no longer have to settle for their existing platforms.

Top 5 reasons merchants will switch:

32%

We have been using this software a long time and there are newer, more innovative options.

28%

We want a provider that is better suited to our industry.

28%

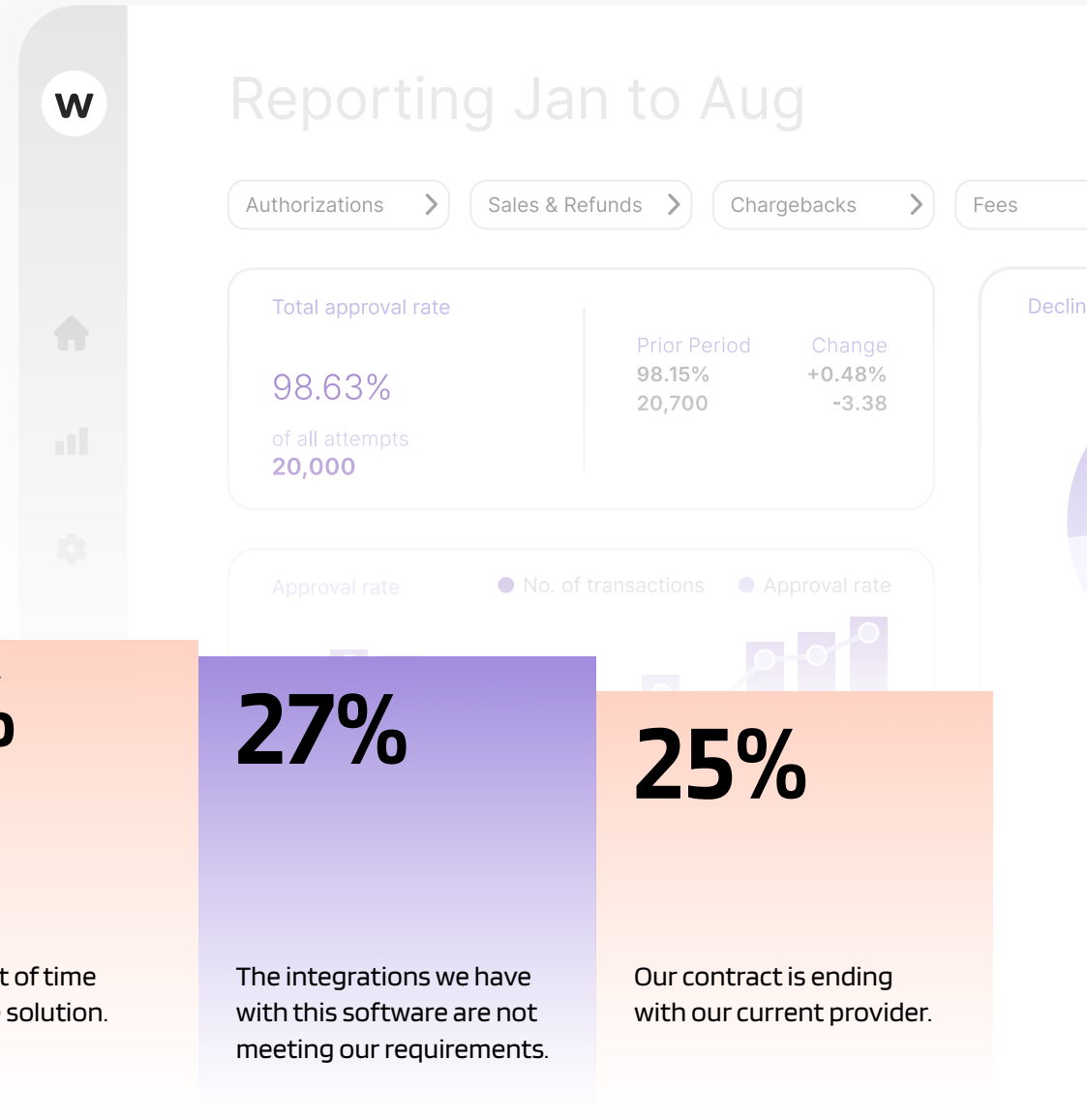
We spend a lot of time managing the solution.

27%

The integrations we have with this software are not meeting our requirements.

25%

Our contract is ending with our current provider.



Embedded finance

What businesses actually want



Although the embedded finance ecosystem continues to expand with new features, tools and possibilities, what businesses say they want is refreshingly consistent: control, visibility and speed.

Financial capabilities are no longer viewed as a back-office function but have become a core operational capability, shaping everything from cash flow to customer experience.

Many businesses expect their platform providers to help them to accept the right payment types, keep a close eye on their financial position and provide them with the opportunity to access working capital quickly when needed.

Despite the fintech innovations capturing headlines such as AI-powered reconciliation and real-time risk modelling, the sentiment from merchants remains practical. When we asked how likely merchants would be to switch platforms for specific financial capabilities, large majorities – often over 80% – said they would seriously consider moving systems for improvements in these areas:

Capability	% of businesses likely to switch
Cash flow visibility and forecasting	83%
Ability to accept all payment types	82%
Ability to manage outgoing payments	81%
Faster access to funds (within 24 hours)	81%
Integrated lending or capital tools	79%

This shopping list reveals merchants will no longer tolerate integrations that only partially support payment types or delay access to funds. They want hardworking tools and they want them now.

The hidden gap

Capability without confidence

Main barriers to deeper engagement with embedded finance:

35%

are still learning how to use embedded finance solutions effectively.

23%

say they have not received enough guidance on how to use these solutions effectively.

29%

cite integration challenges with existing systems.

There is clear appetite for everything that embedded finance can offer – whether that's payments, insurance, lending or card issuing. Capabilities don't always match expectations, though.

Many businesses report that they are still struggling to learn how to use their platform's embedded finance tools effectively, while others have faced frustrating integration challenges or don't have the support they need to get up to speed.

This points to an education and onboarding gap. As embedded payments and financial capabilities become more central and complex, businesses may need more than access to financial technology. Ongoing personalized support can help them to build resilience and grow.

This may include supporting businesses to successfully launch and scale embedded financial products to users alongside their core software offering. Success increasingly requires a combination of intuitive technology, expert guidance and the operational capabilities to support adoption as usage, volume and risk grows.

The most frequently used embedded finance capabilities:

81% Fraud detection and risk management

80% Accounts receivables/payables

78% Banking and treasury services

77% Financial reporting and analytics

70% Cross-border payment solutions

69% Capital management

69% Tax compliance and filing

68% Card issuing

67% Finance and lending

Trust as a merchant driver

Fraud has entered the chat

As payments become more deeply woven into the everyday fabric of business workflows, the stakes rise. When financial activity sits inside the platform businesses rely on every day, security becomes integral.

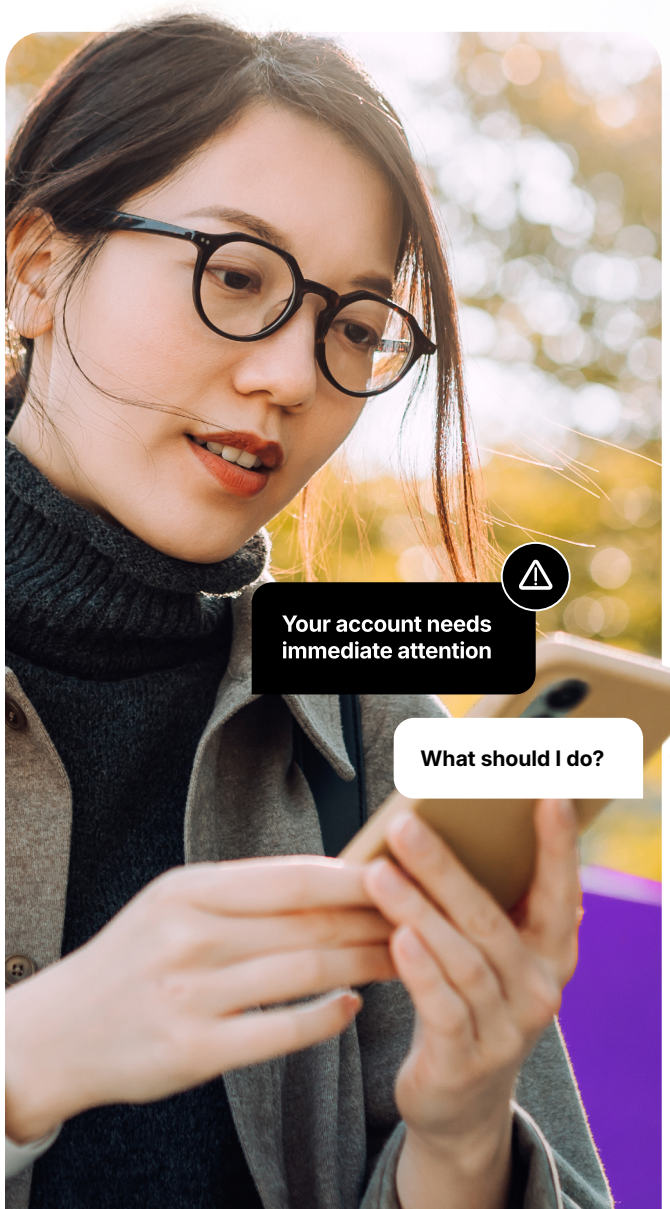
**That shift shows up clearly in
the 2025 survey data:**

#1 embedded finance challenge globally:

Ensuring security against fraud and protecting data.

#1 in Australia, #3 in UK, #4 in US

Security and data protection rank among the top regional drivers of software choice.



Across global markets, businesses consistently highlight fraud prevention and data protection as their biggest concerns. Speed and convenience still matter, but not at the expense of trust.

This is where balance becomes critical. Platforms need to deliver great payment experiences while making security visible and reassuring. Strong fraud prevention can build confidence and loyalty, but done poorly, can quickly undermine both.

Security isn't just about compliance or risk mitigation anymore. It's part of the software experience itself, and increasingly, part of how businesses decide which platforms they trust to grow with them.

Innovation expectations

Always on, not once a year

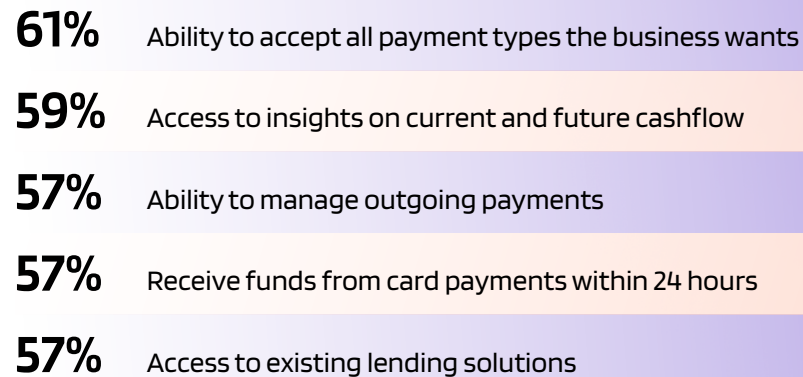
Payment innovation isn't slowing down and businesses know it. From AI-driven cash flow tools to more intelligent financial automation, the next wave is already taking shape.

How businesses think about technological progress is changing, however.

Based on the survey results, it's clear that businesses no longer expect occasional upgrades but steady, visible improvements that keep pace with how they work.

With new entrants waiting in the wings with agile tech stacks and modern roadmaps, platform providers may want to not only build new features but use their existing data advantage proactively to tell users about new offerings that address their business needs. Personalization is key, here.

Proportion of businesses highly likely to switch for the following capabilities:



No more "big reveal" upgrades

26%

of businesses expect continuous innovation and upgrades in payments and financial capabilities.

40%

businesses expect at least annual upgrades, up from 16% last year.

93%

of businesses find proactive communication about new embedded finance features appealing, similar to last year's 94%.

The payments imperative

How to win in 2026

The survey findings paint a clear picture. Payments and financial capabilities shape how merchants think about their software partnerships. Here's how platforms can get ahead with their users:

Make payments central to the experience. Reliability, breadth of capabilities and easy integration matter more than ever. Satisfaction with payments is one of the strongest predictors of platform loyalty.

Close the confidence gap. Many businesses are still learning how to use embedded finance effectively. Onboarding, guidance and ongoing support, such as Worldpay for Platforms' go-to-market resources, help turn capabilities into real value.

Treat trust as part of the product. Security, fraud prevention and data protection increasingly shape platform choice. Visible safeguards can build confidence, and confidence builds retention.

Keep innovation visible. Payments are no longer a "set and forget" capability. Continuous improvement, paired with clear communication, reassures users that their platform is evolving alongside their needs.

Stay close to industry realities. Regional differences and vertical-specific needs continue to shape expectations. Platforms that tailor their approach, rather than offering one-size-fits-all solutions, may be more likely to stay relevant to customers as well as attract new ones.

Platforms that succeed in 2026 are likely to be those that treat payments as a core experience, supported by expert guidance, reinforced by trust and continuously improved.

Getting payments right can strengthen loyalty, deepen engagement and support longer-term customer relationships.

#1 driver of choice by region:



Australia

Security/data protection capabilities



UK

Ability to integrate with other business software



US

Ability to oversee CRM

The payments imperative

How to win in 2026

Three critical data signals from this year's survey:



A lack of education limits product engagement and usage depth



Both security and fraud prevention directly influence provider choice



Payment satisfaction correlates directly with retention



How could the business management software be better suited towards your industry?

1

Greater integration with other finance software we use such as banking, accounting or payments

2

Better ability to manage our outgoing payments

3

Higher level of data and analytics into time spent per customer

4

Improved tracking of incoming payments over the past year

5

Increased ability to manage our business across markets

Conclusion

A roadmap to platform loyalty

Payments and embedded finance sit firmly at the center of platform loyalty.

Businesses want payment experiences that are fast and reliable, supported by strong fraud protection, with clear financial visibility and continuous innovation. Increasingly, it's the overall experience, not just the functionality, that determines whether a platform can retain customers.

Success, though, increasingly depends on how payments are brought to market. Payment providers and software platforms are partnering more closely to align product, enablement, onboarding and go-to-market execution. When payments are rolled out as part of a coordinated strategy, adoption accelerates and revenue potential expands. When they are treated as a standalone feature, value often goes unrealized.

Platforms that meet the payments imperative – technologically and strategically – may not only retain customers but attract them away from competitors.

The opportunity for platforms now is to move beyond capability and deliver confident, embedded payment experiences that their merchants can depend on.



Unleash your payments potential

Embedded payments and finance are
the language of platform growth.

If payments could be working harder for your software,
it's time to power what's possible.

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Worldpay combined with Global Payments in January 2026 to create a leading payments
technology and software company that powers commerce for businesses of all sizes worldwide
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