aws marketplace

Alation Data Catalog

Reviews, tips, and advice from real users
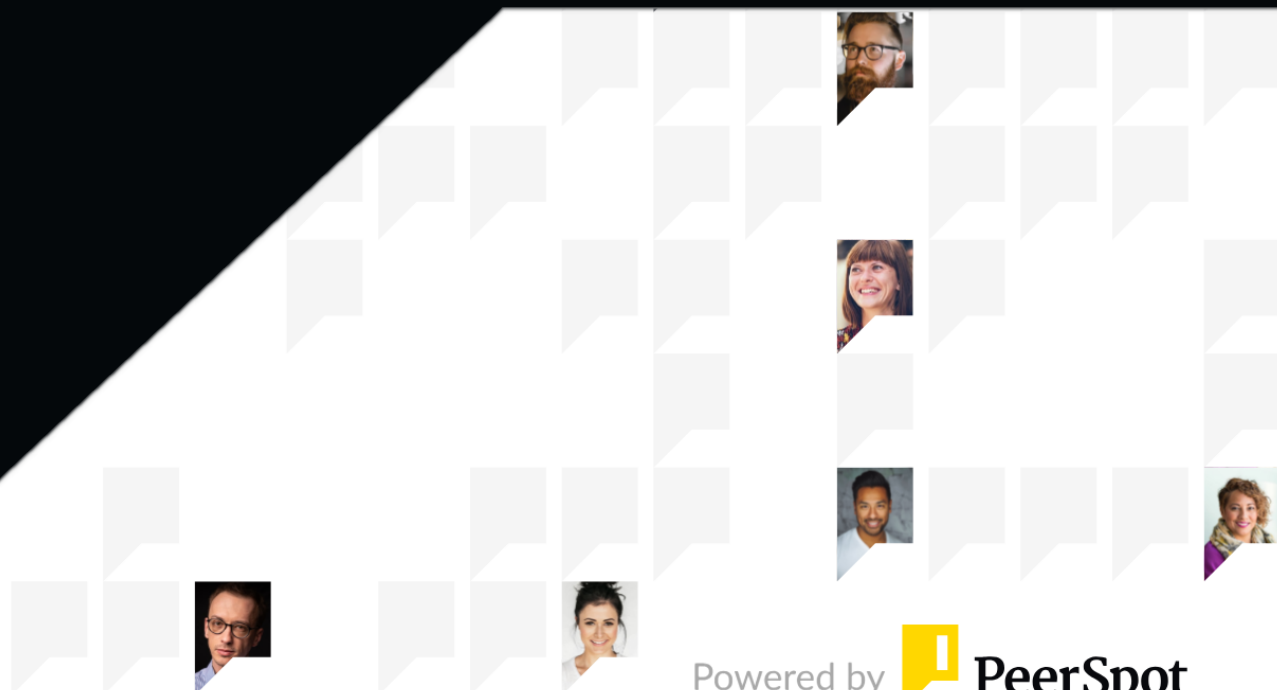
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Product Recap

Alation Data Catalog

Alation Data Catalog Recap

Alation pioneered the data catalog market and is now leading its evolution into a platform for a broad range of data intelligence solutions including data search & discovery, data governance, lineage, stewardship, analytics, and digital transformation.

Thanks to its powerful Behavioral Analysis Engine, inbuilt collaboration capabilities, and open interfaces, Alation combines machine learning with human insight to successfully tackle even the most demanding challenges in data and metadata management. With Alation, analysts are empowered to search, query and collaborate on their data to achieve faster, more accurate insights.

Trusted by 400+ enterprises worldwide like Salesforce, Nasdaq, LinkedIn, Finnair, and Cisco.

Valuable Features

Excerpts from real customer reviews on PeerSpot:

✔ "Alation Data Catalog was very useful for sharing SQL queries easily in a platform."

Hariprasath-Thiyagaraj
Senior Data Governance at a university with 51-200 employees

✔ "The most valuable feature is cloud integration."

Verified user
Vice President at a computer software company with 10,001+ employees

✔ "Alation Data Catalog provides a nice interface for connecting to the database, querying the data, and working on it."

Sivagurunathan Ranganathan
Chief Architect at Tata Consultancy

✔ "The tool's metadata cataloging is the most valuable feature."

Brahma Lam
Developer at CVS Health

✔ "Given the relatively low level of maturity, Alation's most relevant feature at the moment is a user interface that's easy to navigate, which helps us find and understand the data. So while Alation has a lot more functionality, our pain point right now is being able to easily find, understand, and trust the information to use it."

John Gilbert
Data Governance Manager at Cbus

✔ "The solution's most valuable feature is the ALLIE AI feature."

PawanpreetSangari
data engineer at a computer software company with 51-200 employees

✔ "The platform's most valuable features are workflow automation, automated business metadata tagging, technical metadata tagging, and data integration with data quality tools or platforms."

Verified user
Vice President at a financial services firm with 1,001-5,000 employees

What users had to say about valuable features:

I found Alation Data Catalog very useful for sharing SQL queries easily in a platform. Additionally, the platform is beneficial for technical users. For me, it was the only data catalog tool where I could save and even create SQL queries.

Hariprasath-Thiyagaraj
Senior Data Governance at a university with 51-200 employees

Read full review ↗

"The most valuable feature is cloud integration. It can automatically crawl and index various data sources on-prem or in the cloud. With 70 to 80 percent of enterprises operating in the cloud, the automatic crawling feature has proven to be one of the best.."

Verified user
Vice President at a computer software company with 10,001+ employees

Read full review ↗

"The solution's most valuable feature is the ALLIE AI feature. The features are generally the same across all data governance tools I've had experience with, including OpenMetadata, Alation, and Collibra.."

PawanpreetSangari
data engineer at a computer software company with 51-200 employees

Read full review ↗

"We can use the tool to put additional information about things. People can go through articles and get detailed knowledge. We can also create queries. We can customize templates based on our use cases. We can use API. We can create forms for the user.."

Verified user   Read full review ↗

Senior Business Intelligence Consultant at a tech services company with 11-50 employees

"The most valuable features of Alation Data Catalog are the simplicity in onboarding data sources, the security in securing the data sources, and the way the various users of Alation Data Catalog communicate with each other through a messenger.."

Arobinda Saha   Read full review ↗

Data Governance Specialist at Nestle

"It has a really great capability to connect pieces of information and people to build out a graph or an ecosystem of the data that's being used; whether it's the system, the people, or the artifacts that are being generated with the data.

It's important to us because one of our key pain points for our data scientist is understanding the context and the data. It builds that context natively into the tool so that's served up to you. You don't have to go looking for that contextual information that you need about data.

Alation's active data governance, as opposed to command and control style data governance, is the way of the future. That's the approach that we have shifted to over the past few years, really trying to use a more adaptive governance approach. Where we're reacting to what the business is telling us we need, instead of trying to dictate how things should be done. It sits nicely with their analyst-focused product.."

Verified user   Read full review ↗
Senior Data Governance Specialist at a insurance company with 10,001+
employees

Other Solutions Considered

I changed the platform from Alation Data Catalog to Collibra because Alation was not beneficial for my company as it primarily consists of business users. Collibra was more user-friendly for business users.

Hariprasath-Thiyagaraj   Read full review ↗

Senior Data Governance at a university with 51-200 employees

"I have previously worked with OpenMetadata and Collibra. From my reading and research knowledge, Collibra seems to be more stable on the connectors and security side. I still have to explore Collibra's federation part. Collibra is already FedRAMP certified, whereas Alation Data Catalog is in the process of attaining its FedRAMP certification.."

PawanpreetSangari   Read full review ↗

data engineer at a computer software company with 51-200 employees

"We also looked at Waterline and Informatica Enterprise Information Catalog.

Waterline wasn't quite as mature at the time. It was a newer company. Informatica was really advanced and technically sound but there seemed to be a need to be within the Informatica family of tools to get the most out of it. But it also didn't have the same interactive experience for end-users, where they could easily communicate with each other and share information with each other.

We didn't see significant differences between them in terms of cost. When it really came down to it, we were looking at Informatica and Alation. They were, at the time, fairly similar.."

Verified user   Read full review [↗]
Senior Data Governance Specialist at a insurance company with 10,001+ employees

"I used OvalEdge two years ago. A non-technical person also can use OvalEdge quite easily. It enables users to connect to a database, crawl, and extract the metadata. It was not quite easy to do the same in Alation Data Catalog. OvalEdge is quite user-friendly. We can create rules behind the data and add data dictionaries and glossaries.

In Alation, we can write a complete article for a specific object and link it to different tables and columns so the user can easily navigate to a particular object or table. OvalEdge is cheaper, though.."

Verified user   Read full review ↗

Senior Business Intelligence Consultant at a tech services company with 11-50 employees

"We did a quick scan of the market and limited it down to three. There were the market leaders Alation and Collibra, and then there was a local firm called Alex Solutions. We included them because they were local and just wanted to see what they had in the market. There were also several other solutions that our competitors were using. We got them in to do demos and whittled it down to Collibra and Alation.

And through that selection criteria, we chose Alation. There were two reasons: cost and user interface. We thought the user interface was easier to navigate, and Alation came up with more significant cost reductions. While Collibra did reduce their price, they couldn't match Alation.

Alation is easier to use from the perspective of the end-user. They've ensured that the user interface is intuitive, easy to use, and easy to understand, whereas the others come at it from a more technical point of view. They could be quite strong technically, but they might be very hard to use because they haven't focused on that user interface. Alation went the other way around.

They're building out their technical capability, but I've thought they've always had a very good user interface. And coming from our low level of knowledge or maturity, it was critical that our business users could quickly use and trust a tool. Alation allowed them to do that. Collibra probably could have worked, but it was harder to navigate around, and we thought it wasn't quite so intuitive. So we went with Alation. ."

John Gilbert
Data Governance Manager at Cbus

Read full review ↗

ROI

Real user quotes about their ROI:

"We saw a return on investment with Alation Data Catalog on the federation side. We could bring everything to one place for the organization to know about the data assets, and the solution helped us integrate the knowledge.."

PawanpreetSangari   Read full review [↗]
data engineer at a computer software company with 51-200 employees

"We've undoubtedly seen some time savings. We haven't quantified it, and that's probably something I need to focus on. We'll know the exact quantitative benefit at some point, but it's probably saved us time. The analysts spend 80 percent of their time finding the data and 20 percent doing what they're supposed to do. That's been flipped, so finding the data takes 10 to 20 percent of their time, and 80 percent is devoted to analysis.

I can only describe the benefits, but I can't quantify them. The other benefits include cost savings in terms of repositories. You no longer have to create your own data repository every time you need something, irrespective of whether others have it or whether you could work with something else. And there are obviously storage and retrieval costs there. Now, we're starting to decommission all of these repositories of data, which are being replaced with our authoritative sources or trusted copies of data.

We're absolutely seeing a return, but we knew it would take time to get to that point. And we were clear on setting expectations, particularly regarding management. I think that's worked. That's allowed us breathing space to get us to a point where we can actually provide benefits. It's hard to quantify them at this point, but it's something we'll need to do. At some point, we're going to need to relicense. Our three-year license is up next year, and I'll have to convince the CFO that it's worth it.."

John Gilbert
Data Governance Manager at Cbus

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Use Case

I had several use cases for Alation Data Catalog. The number one is metadata management. Additionally, analysts and data analysts were asking how we can share the SQL queries easily in a platform. So it was very much useful because I did not find any other data catalog tool where you can save and even create SQL queries.

Hariprasath-Thiyagaraj   Read full review ⬈
Senior Data Governance at a university with 51-200 employees

"We've recently onboarded the Power BI reports, and the inbuilt connector had an issue wherein it was not scanning the custom pages of Power BI. There's a mandate in our organization that details of the report will be on one of the custom pages. So we onboarded the custom page as well, and we have successfully achieved the task.."

Arobinda Saha   Read full review ⬈
Data Governance Specialist at Nestle

"We do the integration work for our multiple clients. Their problem is that many of their legacy systems lack a defined data or business glossary for their data attributes. First, they want to build a data catalog with a proper business glossary. Second, they aim to establish data lineage to track their data's transformations. Lastly, in some cases, they want to integrate data quality rules or business rules across the platform using Alation. These are the three main use cases they are looking to address.."

Verified user   Read full review ↗
Vice President at a computer software company with 10,001+ employees

"We have one deployment on AWS cloud and our enterprise instances use the Alation cloud.

We use it primarily for supporting our data scientists. We also use it for sharing data governance, document policy information, and data classification information.

Our use cases are for a lot of data literacy and data usability.."

Verified user   Read full review ↗
Senior Data Governance Specialist at a insurance company with 10,001+ employees

"We're a superannuation organization, so we deal with people's pensions. We invest their money for retirement. Our users are mostly core data management professionals, including business analysts, data analysts, architects, engineers, and BI developers. There's also a handful of consumers who view content.

We're working with a range of stakeholders and data sources, and we haven't covered all of the organization yet. But most of the key ones are embedded into the tool. We've built up the catalog through agile iterations or sprints. We're working with the business to understand the information, curate it, and embed that knowledge into Alation Data Catalog so that it's available to those people to support their data use cases.."

John Gilbert
Data Governance Manager at Cbus

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Setup

The setup process involves configuring and preparing the product or service for use, which may include tasks such as installation, account creation, initial configuration, and troubleshooting any issues that may arise. Below you can find real user quotes about the setup process.

"Alation Data Catalog's initial setup was pretty easy. The solution provides a detailed step-by-step approach to implement and build the solution. The solution is deployed on cloud.."

Arobinda Saha   Read full review ↗
Data Governance Specialist at Nestle

"Alation Data Catalog's deployment is easy. I rate it a nine out of ten. Deployment takes only two to three hours to complete. One to two resources are enough to handle the deployment. ."

Brahma Lam   Read full review ↗
Developer at CVS Health

"The initial setup is easy. If the business rules or governance policies are already drafted, implementing them for one system might take around six weeks.

We work with the data governance team to configure the necessary rules and set up crawlers and workflows.

I rate the initial setup an eight out of ten, where one is difficult and ten is easy.."

Verified user   Read full review ↗

Vice President at a computer software company with 10,001+ employees

"The initial setup was easy and very straightforward.

The actual application itself can be installed and deployed within a few hours. But then there is a process of setting up the data source connection and that really varies from data source to data source, depending on the administrative and infrastructure around each of those different types of sources. The actual setup within the tool itself is very simple and straightforward. It can be done by anybody through the GUI. Any kind of delays come from getting the prerequisites in place kind of on your company side, as far as your security needs and things like that.

We see fast time to value by being simple to implement and manage. We're implementing a new catalog now for our enterprise and we're seeing a lot of quick adoption in people who haven't had access to a tool like that in the past.."

Verified user   Read full review ↗

Senior Data Governance Specialist at a insurance company with 10,001+ employees

"Data Catalog's initial setup was pretty straightforward. With our three-year license, we also purchased the Right Start program, Alation's program to help clients get up and running quickly. It's a hand-holding exercise over several weeks, and we have to do it remotely, which adds to the challenge. Next, we stepped through the various processes to prepare for installation. There's the installation, configuration, and getting our first couple of use cases working.

In total, it was about a three-month process. It's a planned program of work that takes us through different things and gets us to a point where we can prove that the software works in our technology environment. That was very important, and it gave us a bit of an insight into how easy it is to navigate, configure, and set the tool up. It is easy to work with and navigate compared to some of our other tools. It was pretty seamless.

It took more than a quarter, but I didn't mind that. If you get someone there full-time working with it eight hours a day, it's easier. It took longer than it would have taken pre-COVID because we were working remotely across different time zones, and their tech team is in America. But we didn't mind that because it gave us time to sit, think, play around, and research. We took our time doing it, but I think it was time well invested.

We set the expectations that the first six months to a year was really about progress. And the benefits would follow that. So we were very keen not to say we were going to get help from day one.

Maintenance has two components. One is the actual infrastructure — the tech stuff — and our infrastructure team manages that. They're involved with version upgrades, monitoring, alerts, etc. We've got a group of dedicated people to manage all of the applications running on our AWS infrastructure. When we have our quarterly updates, it might take them a couple of days to maintain the software.

But my team handles the maintenance of the catalog itself, and we're working on it full time. Including myself, there are three people on the team. There's one guy full-time on it and another guy who works on it part-time across other tools as

well. We've invested a lot of time getting it to that point. "Maintaining" is perhaps not the word. We're building it out. We're building it to the point where we can maintain it. I don't contribute that much other than planning, prioritization, decision-making, and things like that. And then, there are two other full-time staff members within data governance. ."

John Gilbert
Data Governance Manager at Cbus

Read full review [↗]

Customer Service and Support

Alation's technical support was responsive and heard my issues. However, they followed their own development roadmap. Many of my use cases were only scheduled for development in the future.

Hariprasath-Thiyagaraj   Read full review ↗
Senior Data Governance at a university with 51-200 employees

"The solution's technical support needs to be improved across the board, especially in lineage and other aspects. Sometimes, we find it difficult to identify the people with respective tool knowledge. It's a bit difficult to identify resources for Alation.."

Sivagurunathan Ranganathan   Read full review ↗
Chief Architect at Tata Consultancy

"I have been working with Alation Data Catalog's technical support for many years, and I've had a very good experience working with them. They are very proactive and respond to you on time.."

Arobinda Saha   Read full review ↗
Data Governance Specialist at Nestle

"Their technical support has been good. It's gotten better over the past three years. There were times where it was a little slow, but they've been taking steps in the past year and a half to really improve the turnaround time on their support tickets.."

Verified user
Senior Data Governance Specialist at a insurance company with 10,001+ employees

Read full review ↗

"I rate Alation support nine out of 10. I've had no issues with them, and they've always been able to assist us. They're innovating at a high rate, so we've had several technical problems where we've had to ask questions about the APIs and various other technical things. They've always been reasonably quick to get back to us with solutions or workarounds.

The documentation is also excellent. The only tricky part has been the time zones because we've got some tech folks here in Australia and some in America. It's a matter of just fitting the time zones to get answers. They're timely in their response, though. I've never really had to have conversations with a client manager about the performance of their tech support.."

John Gilbert
Data Governance Manager at Cbus

Read full review ↗

Other Advice

"Alation Data Catalog has improved discovery by addressing and searching particular data, including systems, tables, and columns. However, it could have been more helpful in the data governance aspect. They are about to introduce more features in that area. Its knowledge community is active; I rate it an eight.

I rate the overall product a seven out of ten.."

Verified user   Read full review ↗
Vice President at a financial services firm with 1,001-5,000 employees

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"I haven't explored the solution's data lineage capabilities much. However, I have heard that there are some difficulties with getting the lineage to work, as it doesn't properly pull the information in. The solution provides automation, metadata descriptions, and tags. I would recommend the solution to other users because it's a stable product and an industry leader.

Overall, I rate the solution a seven out of ten.."

PawanpreetSangari   Read full review ↗
data engineer at a computer software company with 51-200 employees

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"Alation Data Catalog is another data catalog product gaining momentum in small and medium financial institutions. The solution's data discovery and enabling the data marketplace improves productivity.

The solution has an AI-based metadata curation model, but I'm unsure how effective it is. I know Alation Data Catalog has some AI functionalities that they're cataloging to leverage.

Overall, I rate the solution an eight out of ten.."

Sivagurunathan Ranganathan
Chief Architect at Tata Consultancy

Read full review ↗

"I'm working with the latest version of Alation Data Catalog.

I have seen many tools, and Alation Data Catalog is far better than other data catalog solutions.

I recommend every user go through the Alation Data Catalog courses. They have very well-defined videos explaining all the features of Alation Data Catalog.

I won't say that Purview has more features than Alation Data Catalog, but customers tend to go for Purview if their platform is on Azure Cloud. Purview won't be expensive if you already have an Azure membership.

Overall, I rate Alation Data Catalog an eight out of ten.."

Arobinda Saha
Data Governance Specialist at Nestle

Read full review ↗

"We had no issues integrating the solution with Redshift. Alation Data Catalog is a good tool for analytics, but we need to go for some other tools for reporting. Alation Data Catalog is mostly a tool for querying. We need to integrate it with other third-party tools for reporting.

Redshift, AWS, and MySQL tools are better than Alation Data Catalog for querying purposes. MySQL and Databricks are visually appealing and faster tools than Alation Data Catalog.

Even though Alation Data Catalog is a free tool, we can check other available tools. If other tools perform well, we can choose them over Alation Data Catalog.

Overall, I rate the solution a six out of ten..''

Girubakaran Velusamy
Data Engineer at GISbiz

Read full review ↗

"The key aspect is ensuring that any policy changes in data governance are translated into rules within Alation. For instance, if a new attribute, such as a private one like SSN, is added to a database, and a policy mandates SSNs be masked for the first eight characters, Alation will enforce that rule uniformly. This ensures that all SSN information columns are properly masked and aligned with the governance policy.

Data discovery is best achieved through crawling. If we need to build lineage around it—tracking how data flows from one system to another—some of that is automated.

With Alation in place, from a business user's perspective, if they need to derive a calculated field, the system helps track where the data originates. The entire transformation is captured in the data lineage from the source to the actual KPI value. This often involves multiple systems where the same attribute might change. Lineage becomes especially important during regulatory audits, where you're asked to explain how a KPI was derived. If the lineage is built into Alation, retrieving and providing that information is accessible. Without it, you'd have to analyze how the KPI was calculated each time manually.
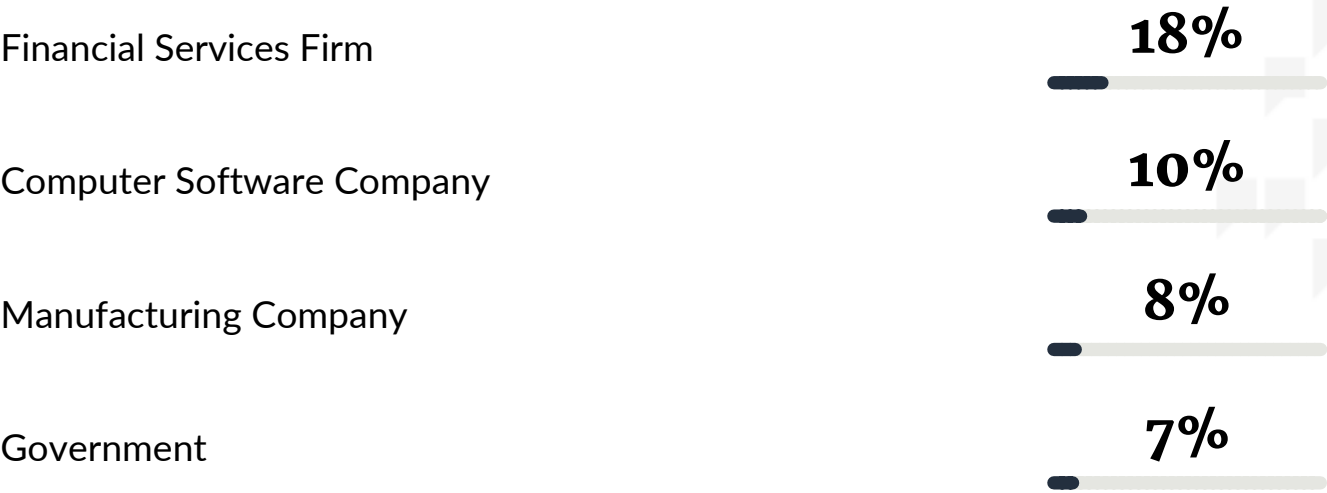
Overall, I rate the solution an eight out of ten.."

Verified user
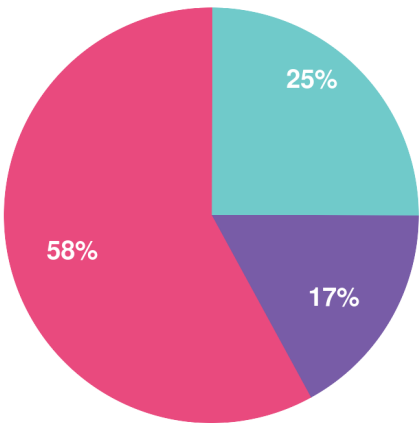Vice President at a computer software company with 10,001+ employees

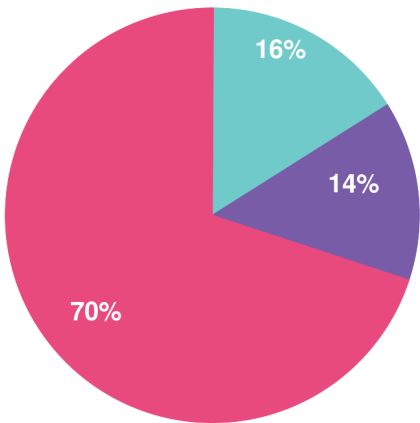Read full review ↗

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58%

16%

14%

70%

●　Large Enterprise　　　　●　Midsize Enterprise　　　　●　Small Business

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