Introduction

Today, every organisation recognises the central role digital technology plays in business strategy. But who should IT managers listen to when trying to identify the technology that will support organisational strategy and boost performance?

New independent research commissioned by Computacenter helps answer this question. The survey of both employees and IT managers highlights the importance of catering to two distinct groups within the modern workforce: digital natives and digital novices.

**Digital Native** – a person who has been familiar with computers, the internet and other digital technology from a young age

**Digital Novice** – typically Baby Boomers (born 1946 to 1964) or Generation Xers (born 1964 to 1980), who have grown up without digital technology, encountering it at a later stage of life.

Digital natives are highly knowledgeable about technology. They’re more demanding about their digital needs, and they expect access to technology that helps them work more efficiently. They see inadequate technology as limiting their potential value to companies, and are increasingly frustrated about a lack of flexibility in working practices. This is borne out by the fact that two-thirds (64%) of IT managers say employees are too demanding when it comes to technology.

In contrast, digital novices are more tech-hesitant. The demands they place on IT managers will be for greater support, rather than for more progressive technologies or processes.

The research shows employees and IT managers have differing attitudes and expectations around workplace technology, and it exposes the key points of tension. For example, 70% of IT managers believe their departments are proactive with current technology trends – but just 37% of employees agree.

There is much common ground however. The focus on both sides is on always-on connectivity, intuitive technologies at work, and tools that can increase collaboration across organisations – boosting commitment, engagement and productivity. Seamless transition between applications is important, as are rapid updates to further drive productivity and performance.

For IT managers, organisational success will not come solely through implementing the most advanced technology to facilitate productive working. It will also require careful consideration of the impact of new technology on digital novices. Nearly three-quarters (74%) of IT managers believe ensuring digital novices don’t get left behind with technology is a bigger challenge than allowing people to work from home.
The consequences of failing to accommodate the technology needs of all employees are set out in this report. These include a reduction in productivity and serious risks to staff retention – with 41% indicating they would start signing up for job alerts if companies fail to keep up with their technology expectations.

That’s why implementing the correct strategy for technology implementation is so important. Companies might do well to find a balance between the needs of organisation, and the expectations of both the digital novices and natives within their workforce. This can be described as the Goldilocks point.

The Goldilocks Point: Where the expectations of businesses and employees are perfectly balanced

This report sets out the results of the research, which provide a raft of contextual information that could help companies ensure the needs of their digital natives are met, without digital novices being left behind. Conditions would then be in place to implement a future-proof digital strategy that leads to ongoing commercial success.
The Methodology

Computacenter, Europe’s leading provider of IT infrastructure services, commissioned an independent study among employees and IT decision makers. This study was conducted by Loudhouse – a research agency based in London.

The Employees
A total of 1,000 UK employees were surveyed. Respondents came from a range of company sizes and departments.

79% of employees say all organisations must become technology companies if they are to survive.

The IT Managers
200 UK IT decision makers responsible for purchasing IT solutions and software for their organisations were also surveyed. As with the employees, respondents came from a variety of sectors and company sizes.

82% of IT managers echo this sentiment.
The research reveals...

A surprising number of respondents see themselves as digital natives.

Specifically, 41% of employees believe they know as much about technology as IT managers in their organisation – a view echoed by 76% of the IT managers themselves. And 60% of employees also believe their IT at home is better than the IT at work, in terms of how fast, up to date and user friendly it is.

A resounding 83% of employees realise the importance of digital technology to the future success of their company. And 79% say all organisations must become technology companies if they are to survive. This is a sentiment echoed by 82% of IT managers.

Not only are employees becoming more knowledgeable about IT, they also seem to be becoming more demanding, regardless of age and experience. In fact, 86% of IT managers believe employees of all ages are demanding more of their technology at work. Yet the desires of employees aren’t always met. For example, a significant number (39%) say their organisation doesn’t support the use of any personal devices / applications at work.

The big question is – how do IT managers satisfy the increasing expectations of digital natives?

The Three S’s – Speed, Security and Simplicity

According to the research, 88% of IT managers believe that keeping up with employees’ technology expectations is important if their business is to succeed. Employees choose what technology to use based on:

1. Speed (95%)
2. Security (of data: 92%, of network: 91%)
3. Simplicity of use (91%)

Encouragingly, IT managers’ view of what employees look for in technology correlates with employees’ responses.

1. Speed (99%)
2. Security (95%)
3. Simplicity (95%)
The three S’s, should clearly be front of mind for IT managers when purchasing technology solutions and software for their organisations. But other factors are also crucial.

![Bar Chart]

**Fig 4.** Employees – Most important factors in choosing how to work
Technology Frustrations

A range of views from both IT departments and employees are revealed in the research. These centre around the current state of technology at work and the digital challenges being faced.

More than three-quarters of employees (77%) are frustrated with the technology in their workplace. The biggest issues are network downtime (32%), outdated hardware (26%) and outdated software and apps (24%), alongside poor wireless connections with their network (22%). Each of these impacts upon at least one of the three S’s.

Interestingly, only one in five employees think their employer is great at providing access to technology to do their job well. Three-quarters (75%) of IT managers appear to agree with employees to some extent, saying technology is a limiting factor in what employees can achieve at work. However, nearly two-thirds (64%) of these IT managers say employees are too demanding when it comes to technology.

![Fig 5. Biggest technology frustrations](image-url)
Is Workplace Management Culture Keeping Up With Technology?

Employees feel a quarter of their work-time would be more productive if they could work remotely. Yet only 11% of them currently do so. Surprisingly, employees only expect this to increase to 16% in two years’ time. IT experts predict a similarly small increase – from 17% to 19%.

The statistics suggest organisations should start examining whether their work environments reflect their culture. For example, do employees have the freedom to collaborate and work in ways which suit them, or ways that suit the specific tasks they have to carry out? In practice this means ensuring each employee has access to technology that maximises their productivity. The research shows that half of employees (53%) are frustrated by the lack of flexibility in working practices at their organisations, and cite technology as a limiting factor in what they can achieve. It seems employees don’t have faith that their organisations will implement technology and practices that will free them to reach their potential.

Despite such a small percentage of employees working flexibly, an average of 46% say their customers, and colleagues expect them to be available outside office hours. If employees are always expected to be “on” and available, they will in turn expect – and need – their organisation’s technology to be the same.
A Digital Future

The vast majority (83%) of employees believe that digital technology is critical to the future success of their company. Yet a similarly large number (80%) state that there are barriers preventing them from getting more out of their office technology. One of the biggest of these barriers is considered to be a lack of investment / development in IT infrastructure (32%).

![Bar chart showing the biggest barriers to getting more value from technology at work.](chart.png)

Perhaps even more revealing is that 90% of IT managers and 79% of employees agree that their organisation should invest more money in technology services, solutions and applications in the next 12 months. The key areas that both groups see as important to driving productivity and performance include total connectivity, intuitive technologies, seamless transition between applications, and rapid updates via the cloud.
Don’t Leave The Novices Behind

By 2020, it is estimated that more than half of employees (53%) will still be either baby boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) or members of Generation X (born between 1964 and 1980). Among this demographic there are likely to be many in the tech-unsure or tech-adverse camp.

In fact, a sizeable section of the workforce is in this camp. Although the research finds the majority of employees (61%) consider themselves to be technology leaders or followers, the rest don’t. Trying to accommodate digital natives’ demands for increased and more advanced technology may be difficult. But 74% of IT heads say the bigger challenge is to ensure digital novices don’t get left behind with technology.

Fig 7. Employees – Attitude towards technology

- Tech leader – first to adopt latest technology trends (18%)
- Tech follower – follow technology trends quickly after they emerge (43%)
- Tech unsure – do eventually follow technology trends but only after they are established (36%)
- Tech averse – reluctant to use technology unless I have to (3%)

Fig 8. Employees – Biggest challenge in supporting technology that people are used to

- Ensuring digital novices don’t get left behind with technology (e.g. by offering reverse mentoring by younger, more technologically savvy employees) (56%)
- Offering a workplace that allows people to work in ways they are accustomed to in their personal lives (44%)

Fig 9. IT – Biggest challenge in supporting technology that people are used to

- Ensuring digital novices don’t get left behind with technology (e.g. by offering reverse mentoring by younger, more technologically savvy employees) (74%)
- Offering a workplace that allows people to work in ways they are accustomed to in their personal lives (26%)
Differences of Opinion

Although there's consensus between employees and IT that digital technology is critical to their organisation's future success, there are some differences of opinion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of disconnect</th>
<th>% of employees that agree</th>
<th>% of IT managers that agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IT department is “proactive” with current tech trends</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely satisfied with digital strategy and progress of the organisation</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation is great at providing access to technology to help employees do their job well, regardless of location</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A company culture that embraces the latest tech is extremely important when it comes to an employee’s decision to work for an employer</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Concerns and Consequences

When an organisation doesn't offer the best technology to employees who consider themselves digitally expert, there are likely to be business repercussions. If their organisation fails to keep up with their technology expectations, 57% of employees say they're likely to become less productive at work. And a worrying 41% indicate that they would start signing up for job alerts.

IT managers also foresee a reduction in employee productivity as a main consequence of failing to improve tech. This is followed by a decrease in engagement and an increase in the likelihood of data loss. And the consequences don't stop there. More than two-thirds (68%) of employees think that the failure to modernise IT will lead to a failure to attract the best candidates in the industry. This is a feeling echoed by 73% of IT managers.

**Fig 10. IT – Biggest consequences of failing to keep up with technology expectations**
Conclusion

Making sure IT departments cater to the needs of digital natives is essential in the modern digital economy. But in a world where the latest app or piece of time-saving software is just around the corner, it’s also essential to keep digital novices up to speed.

Many employees believe they know as much about technology as the IT managers in their organisation. And this view is accepted by 76% of the IT managers themselves. They realise that the right workplace technology enables employees to work to the best of their abilities, collaborate more effectively, and increase productivity.

The research shows IT departments recognise they need to be progressive and proactive in their policies if they are to attract the best people. If they don’t keep up with employees’ technology expectations, there are likely to be further business repercussions, including lost productivity, lower engagement and people leaving the company altogether.

To avoid these consequences, organisations must find the right balance between the expectations of both employees and IT managers. Both groups have differing views on technology implementation and strategy, but they do agree on many issues. These include the importance of speed, security and simplicity of their technology. More specifically, both IT managers and employees believe companies should focus on intuitive technologies at work and cloud technologies.

The research has shown both IT departments and employees recognise that the future of their businesses depends on digital strategy. As part of this strategy, technology must be implemented that balances the needs of both digital native and novice employees.

IT managers recognise this. But the findings suggest that, rather than being mere technology users, employees should play an even greater role in the implementation of their organisation’s digital strategy. After all, they are key stakeholders. And they are more integrated with, and interested in, IT than ever before.

So, with the support of all organisational stakeholders, organisations can ensure workplace technology frees employees and organisations to become more productive and collaborative – long into the future.

MORE INFORMATION:

To understand how Computacenter can help you develop your digital workplace strategy contact your Account Manager, email: workplace@computacenter.com or visit us at: www.enablingusers.com/digitalnatives
Computacenter is a leading independent provider of IT infrastructure services and solutions. From desktop to datacenter, we help our customers minimise the cost and maximise the value of IT to their businesses. We can advise organisations on IT strategy, implement the most appropriate technology, optimise its performance, and manage elements of our customers' infrastructure on their behalf.

Computacenter operates in the UK, Germany, France and the Benelux countries, as well as providing transnational services across the globe.