

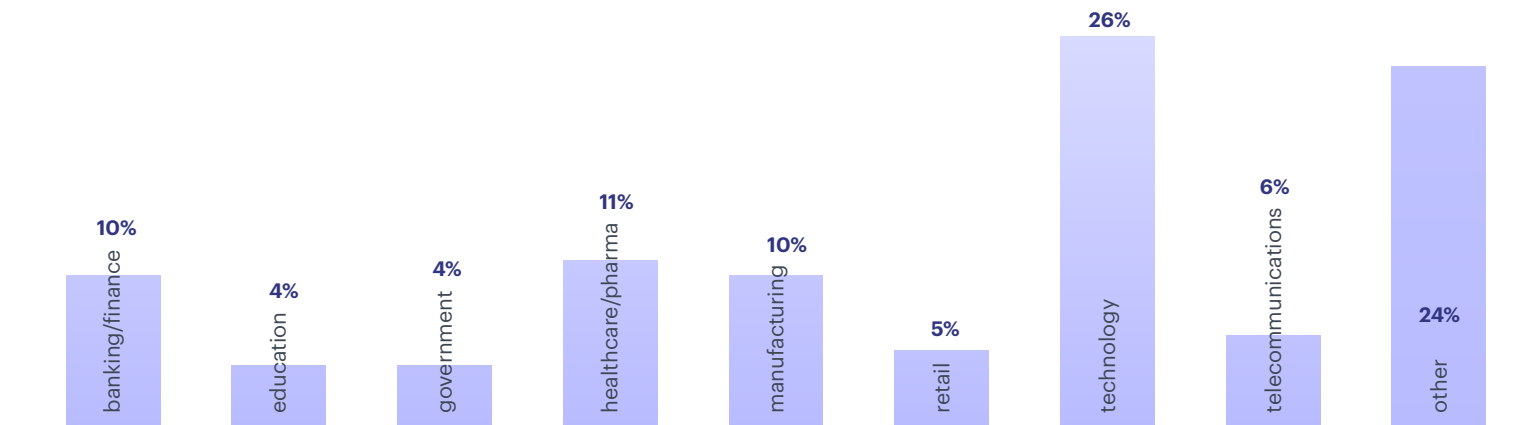
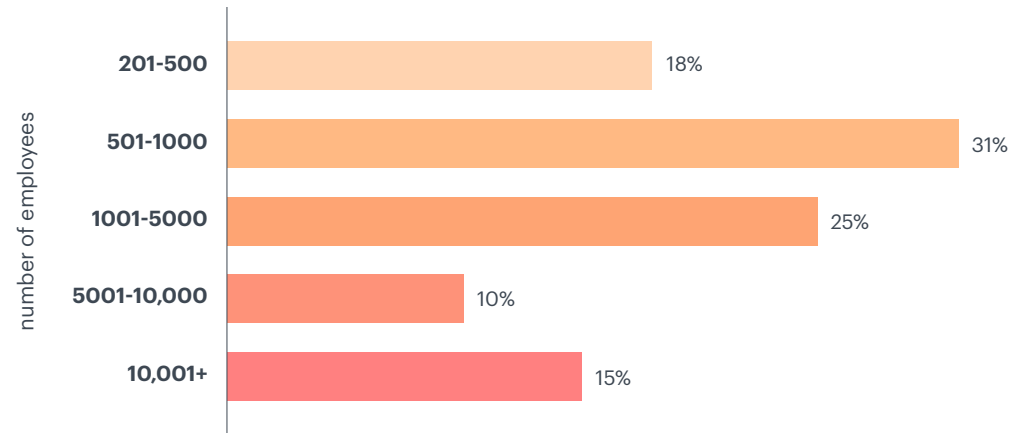
2019 IT Report

Solving the Challenges of an Evolving Workplace



Introduction

The following report is based on a survey, conducted in August 2018, that included 305 professionals ranging from C-Suite to individual contributors at organizations with 200 or more employees and 25% of respondents at organizations with more than 5,000 employees. The respondents are involved in the evaluating, purchasing, and supporting of a new software, application, or tool at their organizations. The research provides insights about IT challenges, initiatives, and shifts in the workplace and about how companies research, purchase, roll out, and support new software, applications, or tools at their organizations.



Key takeaways

1. The evolving workplace requires IT to take action.

IT professionals indicated the need to respond to three major shifts happening in the modern workplace: an increased number of remote workers (currently 45% of their workforce), device policies that result in multiple operating systems and devices (48% using BYOD or CYOD), and an increased number of office locations (only 12% with a single location).

2. IT's number-one priority is workplace collaboration.

70% of IT organizations have initiatives to support workplace collaboration in order to combat challenges associated with workplace changes and meet their company needs.

3. IT organizations are realizing the benefits of moving to the cloud.

In order to facilitate workplace collaboration, IT organizations are adopting more cloud-based software—58% of respondents have an initiative to transition to the cloud.

4. Moving to the cloud can bring its own set of challenges.

IT professionals face significant challenges in moving to the cloud, including security concerns (82% agree that security has been an issue), employee adoption (72% report employees wanting to keep legacy products as a challenge), and the need for increased IT support (51% of professionals spend at least 13 hours/week supporting software). However, proper preparation, support, and use of cloud-based integrations can help companies transition smoothly and collaborate more effectively.



58%

of respondents have an initiative to transition to the cloud.

IT challenges in the modern workplace

Many who work in IT have responsibilities such as resolving tickets, tracking and ordering inventory, keeping up with employee requests, setting up software and hardware for new employees, building and managing office networks ... the list goes on.

All of these tasks serve one primary goal: supporting the workplace.

But supporting the workplace means keeping up with the ever-evolving challenges that face it. IT professionals indicated the need to adapt in response to the major shifts happening in the modern workplace and revealed three such shifts that IT faces today (Fig. 1):

1. **Companies are seeing an influx in the number of remote workers.**
2. **Businesses must support multiple operating systems and devices.**
3. **Organizations are expanding to include more office locations than ever before.**

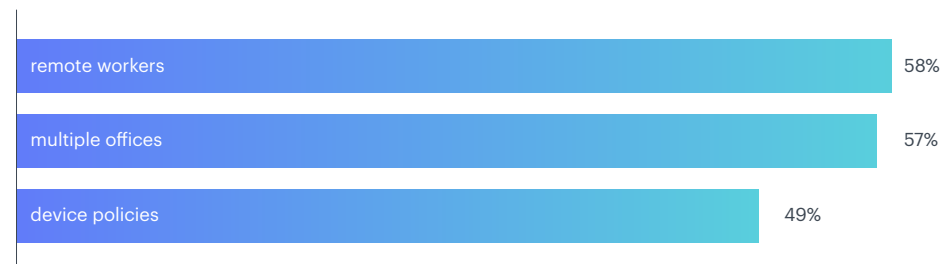
Fittingly, the survey revealed that remote workers, device policies, and multiple offices are also three of the top challenges faced by IT organizations today. While these changes are largely inevitable and do offer new and exciting opportunities to

employees and organizations, they pose difficulties as well, especially for IT. But those difficulties are not without possible solutions.

Many organizations have chosen to solve these problems in the same way—by transitioning to the cloud.

This report dives into the challenges that these workplace shifts present and explains how transitioning to the cloud can help. It also uncovers how, although making that move to the cloud is not an easy path, it's a worthwhile and necessary one.

Fig. 1: Which of these create challenges for your IT organization?

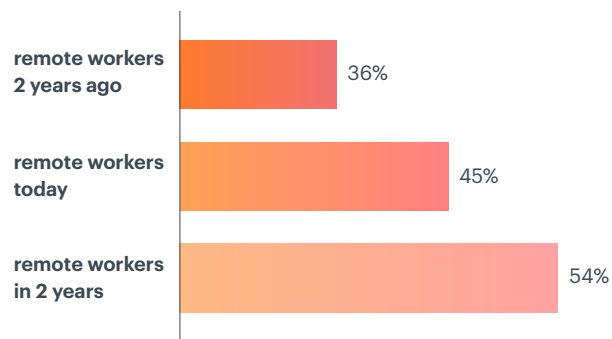


Remote workers

Survey respondents reported that two years ago, just 36% of employees at their organizations were remote workers. Today, that number has jumped to 45%, and it is expected to reach 54% in the next two years (Fig. 2). This increased ability to work remotely has provided more flexible opportunities for employees and helps companies attract top talent, but it doesn't come without complications.

Some of the biggest challenges with remote workers center around security, collaboration, and teamwork. With workers assigned to the same projects but spread around the globe, organizations need to provide new ways for employees to collaborate and remain a cohesive team without being in the same physical location. They also need to ensure that proprietary company data remains safe and secure while allowing employees to access it outside the office.

Fig. 2: What percentage of employees at your organization work remotely?



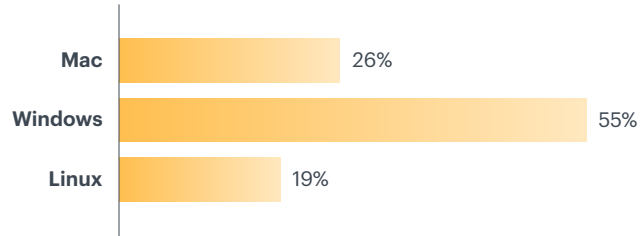
Device policies

While it would be simpler if entire organizations used the same operating system, that is no longer a workplace reality. Survey respondents reported that on average, 26% of their employees use Mac, 55% use Windows, and 19% use Linux (Fig. 3). And this mix of operating systems is happening within a single organization—half of the respondents have at least 20% Mac users and 20% Windows users at their companies. In addition, 48% of organizations use BYOD (bring your own device) or CYOD (choose your own device) policies, which is likely driving the use of multiple operating systems within the same organization.

As a result, organizations must support multiple operating systems and devices—which is a nice accommodation for employees—but is taxing for IT organizations. Professionals reported some of the challenges associated with these device policies include:

- Resolving compatibility issues to allow for effective workplace collaboration
- Staying on top of different software updates
- Training staff on multiple systems
- Maintaining top-notch security

Fig. 3: What percentage of employees use the following operating systems?



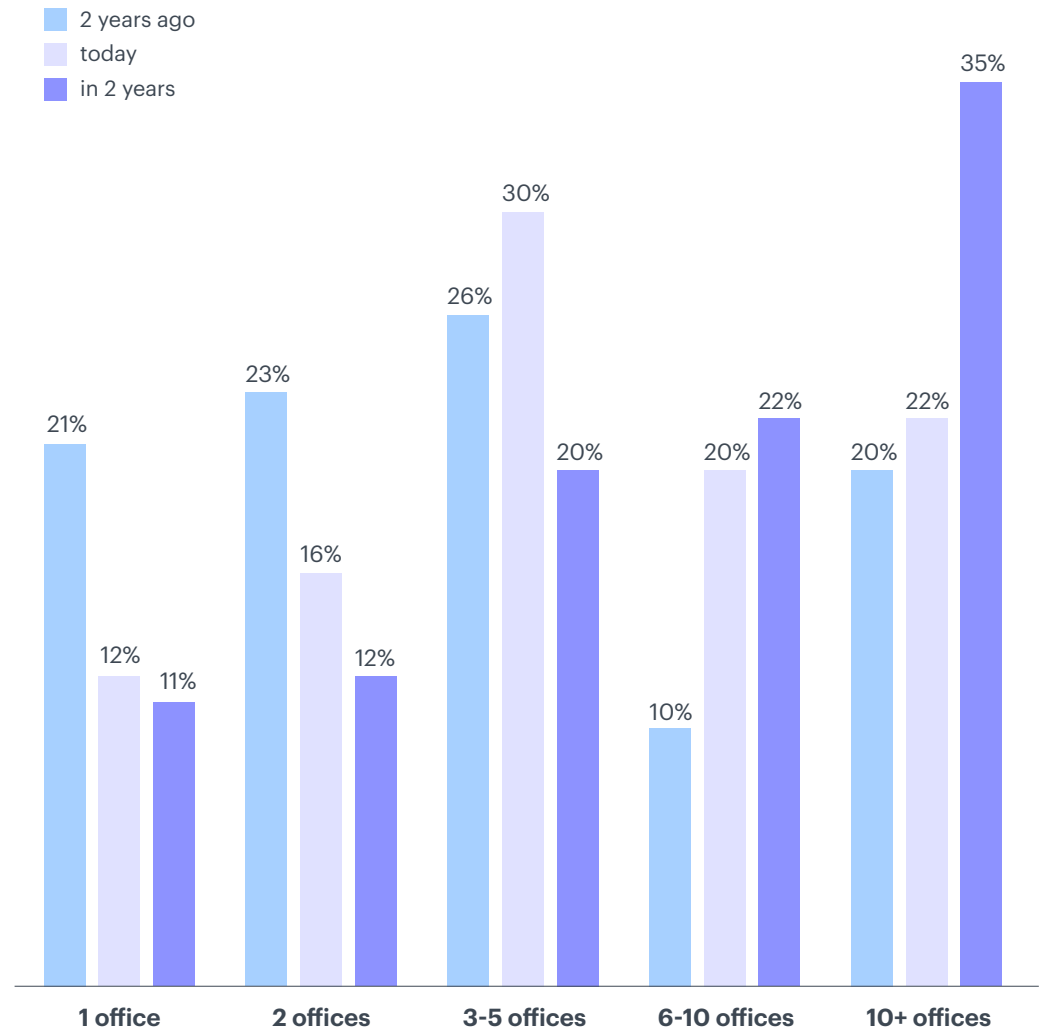
Multiple office locations

Companies are expanding, opening offices in locations around the globe. Two years ago, 20% of companies had 10+ offices, and that number is expected to grow to 35% in the next two years. This trend is occurring on a smaller scale as well. Two years ago, 21% of organizations had only one office location, and that number has now dropped to 12% (Fig. 4).

But the benefits of expansion come at a cost. Communication and collaboration are hindered when employees are no longer in the same location or time zone. As they strive to service multiple office locations, IT professionals are faced with many challenges, including:

- Establishing and maintaining effective channels of communication
- Keeping all employees on the same page
- Sharing information effectively
- Maintaining consistency across all locations
- Ensuring data security

Fig. 4: How many office locations does your organization have?



IT initiatives to support shifts in the workplace

As the workplace adapts to these shifts, IT organizations have rallied around one common initiative to meet the challenges they face: workforce collaboration. As respondents shared some of their objectives and initiatives around enabling a more productive and efficient workforce, many responses were about improving communication and collaboration:

- Share transparent information so employees can work together better.
- Make sure data is stored, secure, and transferable.
- Integrate across all platforms.
- Keep communication pathways open.
- Be transparent at every level of the organization.
- Constantly improve collaboration technologies to better enable remote collaboration and relationship building.

In addition, research proves that encouraging collaboration in the workplace increases performance levels. A recent study between the Institute for Corporate Productivity and Rob Cross, Professor

of Global Business at Babson College¹, found that companies promoting collaboration were five times as likely to be high performing. A Stanford study² found that even the perception of working collectively on a task can improve performance—research participants primed to collaborate stayed with their task 64% longer than their peers working alone, and they also reported higher engagement, less fatigue, and higher success rates.

There's good reason for communication and collaboration improvements to be top of mind—but now IT organizations need the strategies and solutions to support and promote collaborative working.



70%

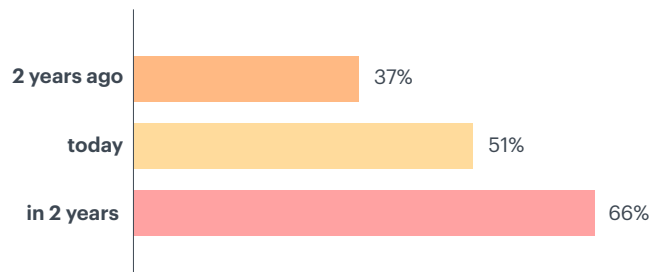
of IT organizations have an initiative around workforce collaboration.

Cloud-based solutions for better collaboration

As part of their efforts to facilitate better workplace communication, many IT organizations have decided to adopt more cloud-based software—in fact, 58% of respondents have an initiative to transition to the cloud.

And that's not just a lofty goal—organizations have already started this transition in the past few years. On average, respondents said that 38% of their company's software, applications, and tools were cloud-based two years ago. That number jumps to 52% of software today, and respondents expected that 68% of software would be cloud-based two years from now (Fig. 5). A 2018 report from CompTIA³ explains that many companies are ready to completely commit to the cloud, "moving into full production mode where there are few if any

Fig. 5: What percentage of your organization's software, applications, and tools are cloud-based?



restrictions on the type of application that can live in the cloud."

The reasons behind this switch become clear when considering the potential benefits of cloud-based software. The majority of respondents ranked the following factors as "extremely important" as they move software, applications, and tools to the cloud:

- Is easier to support and manage (62%)
- Provides easier access for traveling and remote workers (55%)
- Supports multiple devices (54%)
- Integrates with tech stack (50%)
- Reduces cost (47%)

On top of all these benefits, many cloud-based platforms allow users to work on projects together in real time, no matter their location, and prevent versioning issues. For example, according to Reuters⁴, many businesses have traded in Microsoft Office for G Suite—since 2016, the number of organizations paying for G Suite has doubled to more than four million. With applications such as Google Docs, Slides, and Sheets, multiple participants can edit a document or spreadsheet and always have access to up-to-date materials.

Challenges with moving to the cloud

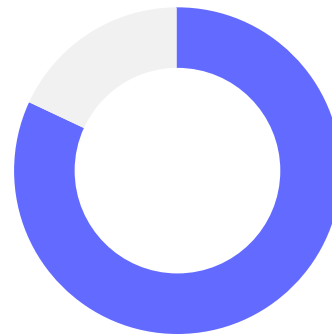
If organizations stand to gain better support and solve challenges related to remote workers and device policies, all while saving money, why haven't more companies taken the leap?

Security and privacy concerns

The top factor preventing organizations from moving to the cloud is security and privacy concerns, with 82% of professionals answering that they somewhat or strongly agree that security has been an issue.

However, many cloud-based applications, software, and tools offer enterprise-level features to ensure that company data stays private. For example, many businesses have turned to platforms like Okta, an identity management software that provides secure access and single sign-on to any application and allows admins to easily provision and deprovision employees with the software they need.

Features like these allow companies to transfer safely to the cloud. In fact, according to RapidScale⁵, 94% of businesses saw an improvement in security after switching to the cloud, and 91% said the cloud makes it easier to meet government compliance requirements.



82%

of IT professionals somewhat or strongly agree that security has been an issue with moving to the cloud.

Adoption

Employees have also proved to be a hurdle that prevents a transition to the cloud. Many IT departments have experienced difficulty as they try to convince employees to adopt new software, with 72% of respondents somewhat or strongly agreeing that their employees wanting to keep legacy products was a challenge.

Additionally, many IT departments found these scenarios to be challenging to some degree (moderately to extremely challenging) while distributing a new software, application, or tool (Fig. 6):

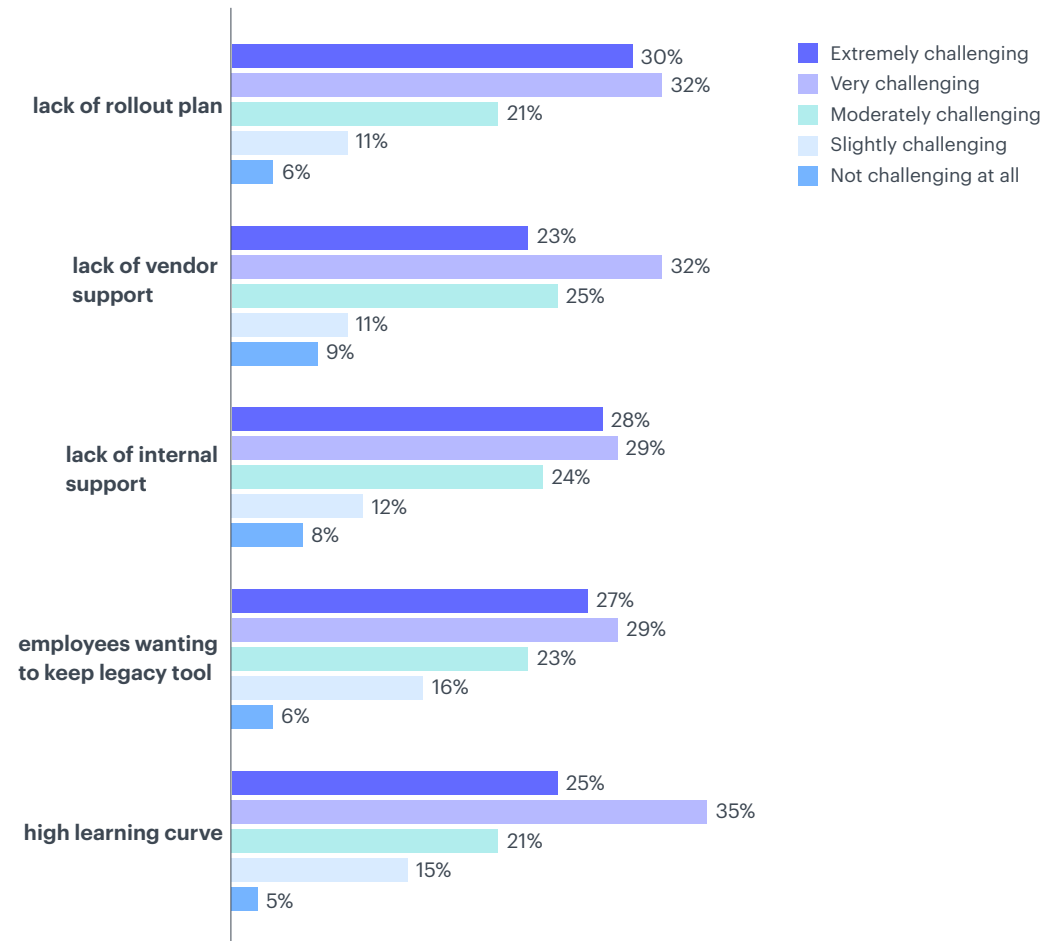
- Lack of rollout plan (83%)
- Lack of vendor support (80%)
- Lack of internal support (80%)
- High learning curve (80%)

One respondent noted:

“Employees [are] very resistant to change. They want to keep the old ways and do not want to learn anything new.”

Employees are reluctant to give up familiar tools, but they might be more willing to change if they clearly understood how the software would make their jobs easier and how to set up and use the software. Michael C. Mankins, partner at Bain & Company, told the Harvard Business Review⁶, “If your goal is a high adoption rate within the organization, make sure you’re choosing the most approachable, most intuitive system possible.” As you

Fig. 6: How challenging is it to distribute a new software, application, or tool to your organization in the following scenarios?



evaluate cloud-based solutions, look for intuitive software with a minimal learning curve and great customer support.

Survey respondents found these vendor support options to be very or extremely important as they search for cloud-based solutions for their organizations (Fig. 7):

- Help Center (83%)
- Live online technical support (80%)
- Dedicated customer success manager (78%)
- Live phone support (75%)

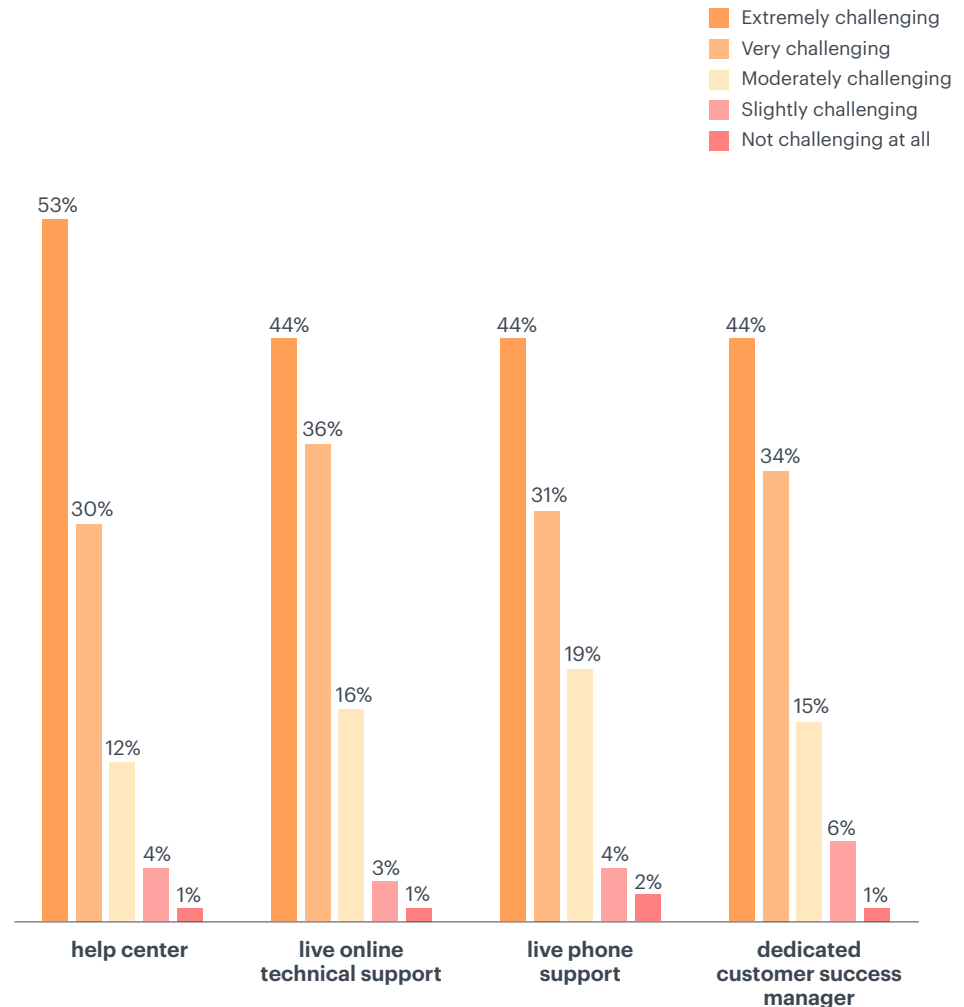
Customer education increases adoption—according to a poll conducted by the Technology Services Industry Association⁷, 68% of employees who participated in product training were able to use the product more and 87% of these employees worked more independently.

As previously mentioned, 50% of survey respondents consider integration with their company’s tech stack to be a very or even extremely important factor in finding new software—and integrations also encourage adoption amongst employees as it will help them double-down on software they already use. For example, Lucidchart has seen its users share 25% more Lucidchart documents when they integrate the visual productivity platform with G Suite.

Slack—a cloud-based collaboration hub where employees can message individual co-workers or groups—integrates with Google Drive, Zendesk,

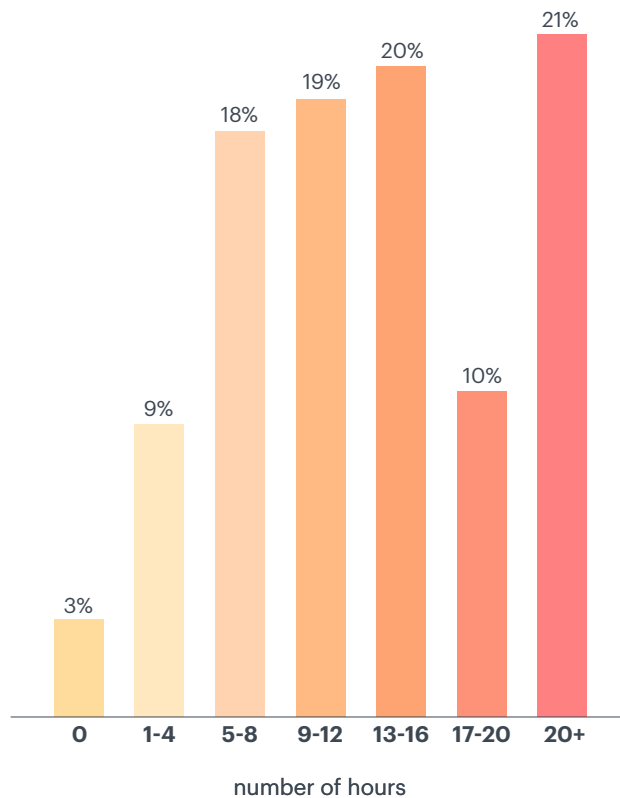
Lucidchart, GitHub, Salesforce, Dropbox, Trello, Asana, Envoy, and other leading apps. Because Slack users can easily set up alerts or pull in

Fig. 7: How important is it for vendors to provide the following support options?



information from other programs, they can automate processes, increase transparency, and create more seamless workflows—and these benefits keep them coming back to the platform.

Fig. 8: How many hours per week do you spend supporting software, applications, or tools?



Ongoing support

Even if employees adopt and receive initial training on new software, IT departments can expect to spend a significant amount of time supporting software, applications, and tools after the initial rollout—another reason that prevents organizations from moving to the cloud.

The survey revealed that 51% of IT professionals spend at least 13 hours a week supporting software, with a staggering 21% spending 20 hours a week or more (Fig. 8). Respondents cited many tasks or problems that take up their time, including:

- Troubleshooting user issues and bugs
- Degrading legacy software
- Tailoring applications to individual users’ needs
- Integrating software with the existing tech stack
- Writing training materials for new hires
- Training the IT support team to understand the application
- Dealing with ongoing complaints about the change

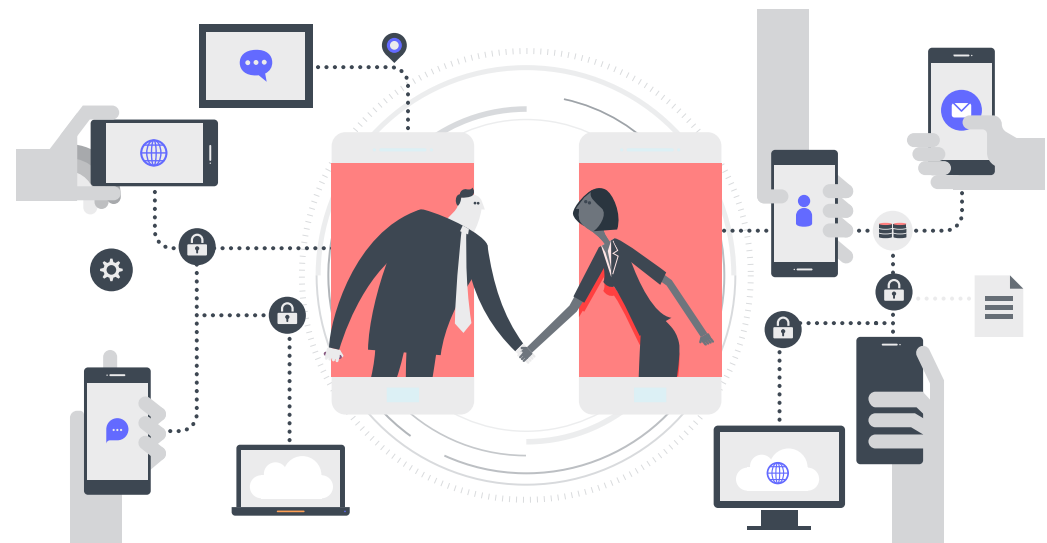
Many software vendors are aware of these challenges and have begun to provide more support resources—even customized training, in some cases—so employees can learn the software on their own. For example, Salesforce users can find a library of tutorial videos to answer their questions or even enroll in a role-based certification course

from Salesforce University. Similarly, Asana's customer success program offers live online trainings, onboarding consultation, and dedicated customer success managers to assist with enterprise deployment.

IT professionals can link to these resources in an internal knowledge base, like Confluence, and decrease the number of support tickets coming in by inviting employees to check the knowledge base first.

Conclusion

Although security concerns and employees' resistance to change can complicate the adoption of cloud-based technology, a transition to the cloud is still the best way for IT professionals to facilitate collaboration and support company needs in the midst of a constantly changing workplace. By preparing well and taking advantage of cloud-based integrations, this inevitable shift can not only be seamless but allow companies to face challenges head on and identify new opportunities.



Sources

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