



Working from Anywhere: The Importance of a Consolidated Approach to Workforce Technologies

The 451 Take

This year is a pivotal one for businesses in how they think about, invest in and organize their mix of workforce tools and technologies:

- 451 Research’s Voice of the Enterprise: Digital Pulse, Coronavirus Flash Survey October 2020 found that 64% of US businesses have made permanent the expanded remote work policies they put in place as a result of the pandemic.
- With new policies and new technologies, it’s no surprise that 35% of businesses are significantly rethinking their longer-term workforce technology strategies, according to a recent 451 Research custom survey.
- According to our June Coronavirus Flash Survey, the top areas where IT is increasing spending are communication and collaboration technologies (50%), employee devices and services (43%) and information security tools (42%).
- Budgets are, however, under pressure. Adjusting for seasonality, almost double the number of businesses (25%) said they will not spend at all or plan to decrease spending in the fourth quarter as those increasing their spending (14%), according to our September Macroeconomic Outlook, Corporate IT Spending, IT & Cloud Spending survey.

A Pivotal Year for Workforce Tools

Source: 451 Research

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- Employee devices and services **43%**
- Information security tools **42%**

As businesses carefully weigh budgets and new demands from the workforce, there is an opportunity to address challenges that have long plagued employees and IT. Improving the workforce’s productivity and collaboration experience was already moving up the digital transformation priority list pre-pandemic. There is greater awareness that the pervasive friction employees experience across a growing sprawl of niche tools – learning curves, basic problems in finding and sharing information, context switching, a lack of useful automation and workflow capabilities, and tools generally not working well together – can aggregate into significant operational challenges that affect how businesses execute on their strategic initiatives.

These challenges created by tool sprawl can compound the difficulties many IT departments face by creating additional burdens: financially with new tool licenses, procedurally with change management, and technologically in terms of scaling new tools across more employees and securing the data and information accessible in those tools. Slightly more than a third (34%) of respondents to our Voice of the Enterprise: Workforce Productivity & Collaboration, Work Execution Goals and Challenges May 2020 survey said their IT teams are struggling with technology fragmentation, and 52% think the situation will worsen over the next 12 months.

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The 451 Take (continued)

Businesses need to be careful not to exacerbate the problem as they support a seismic shift toward remote work. This year, we've seen employees struggle to focus and keep aligned with their colleagues, which can impact productivity and morale. Many workforces now have to do more with less, and priorities may well have changed as businesses adjust to the new environment. Reducing the amount of frustration employees experience with their tools while balancing budgets and not overloading IT is paramount for businesses to be more operationally agile and turn this year's disruption into clear direction going forward.

Business Impact

FROM REACTING TO REIMAGINING. Seven months on from the initial lockdown, technology decision-makers have established the basis for mass remote work with investments in communications, collaboration and other productivity tools. They are now looking more concertedly at their technology ecosystem and how they can mitigate the stresses and optimize the positives of the remote work shift. High up on that agenda will be bringing more coherence across their technologies and not adding to existing silos and friction.

AGILE MANAGEMENT OF THEIR ESTATE. As more businesses embrace not only remote work but also the parallel trends of cross-functional work and internal and external collaboration, IT needs to provide employees with a more seamless and efficient interface for remote access to their tools, IT support and workflows across tools. The traditional strategy of choosing functionally 'best of breed' applications will likely be supplemented by one that considers tool combinations that are easier to manage together and thus can provide benefits to both IT and end-user employees.

PRIORITIZING WORKFORCE TRANSFORMATION. Our Voice of the Enterprise: Workforce Productivity & Collaboration, Employee Lifecycle 2019 survey showed that improving the workforce experience was the most mentioned transformation initiative led by IT. We anticipate this to continue and, in fact, accelerate because of this year's events. More businesses will take a strategic look at how they equip and support their workforce. In an age where it's critical for businesses to respond quickly to disruptions, technology and business leaders need to pay more attention to mitigating employees' daily friction, which is frustrating strategic company goals.

Looking Ahead

With remote work likely to normalize over the coming years, there are both opportunities and challenges. Businesses need to ensure that the greater flexibility around working styles doesn't create more fragmentation. There will be a bigger emphasis on partnering with trusted vendors that can provide secure, frictionless experiences as well as efficient and accessible customer support. Businesses will hope that in the process, they can tame the damaging friction that's arisen in recent years and institute more agility into both how IT manages technologies and how employees execute on their work.



Does your company have the right technology investment strategy for the future of remote work? Take LogMeIn's [remote readiness quiz](#) to see how you stack up – and unlock special free offers of their industry-leading remote work tools.