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# THE MODERN WORKPLACE

How UK businesses are driving workplace transformation through technology

Gold  
Microsoft Partner



# Introduction

In order to compete in the age of disruption, enterprises need to innovate, work collaboratively and attract the best talent. However, traditional businesses are struggling to appeal to and facilitate the expectation of employees of all ages, who now come to expect flexible working with seamless access to IT. Even though Millennials are often thought to be the primary drivers of change in the workplace, the data suggests that employees of all ages are adopting new working patterns.

Companies that embrace flexible and collaborative working achieve a high level of productivity, employee satisfaction, business continuity, reduced business travel and agile infrastructure that meets today's business demands. Simultaneously, organisations that leverage the knowledge and expertise of all their employees regardless of their location will be able to remain competitive in their industries.

Although businesses increasingly recognise the benefits of collaborative and flexible working practices, and many businesses are progressing along that path and adjusting their IT strategies accordingly, it has proven a challenge for a sizeable contingent of UK plc. There's an element of "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" here, with IT leaders preferring to stick to the tried-and-tested ways of managing their technology needs, attempting to balance risk mitigation, compliance management, legacy systems and operating costs. But the fact is that these old ways are broken and won't help businesses succeed in the age of disruption we find ourselves in.

However, even when businesses recognise the need to change, many IT leaders simply don't know where to start, inhibiting both the rate of change and limiting the success of transformation projects. The channel has a critical role in facilitating this change, but it too has some progress to make with regards to next generation technologies.

The democratisation of technology, driven in large part by cloud computing, means that employees wield an unprecedented level of power and influence when it comes to the applications they expect. This power is manifesting itself in the phenomenon that is shadow IT, which bring its own challenges, with security being chief among them. The starting point for any technology strategy must therefore be people: understanding the tools and applications they need and want to do their jobs.

Ingram Micro UK, in collaboration with Microsoft, commissioned this research project to find out what employees want from their employers in regards to technology and how well businesses are meeting these demands. From this we have been able to make a series of strategic recommendations aimed at both organisations and the channel to enable them to meet these requirements and take the lead in transformation and drive better business outcomes with technology.

# Methodology

In collaboration with Microsoft, Ingram Micro UK commissioned market research firm YouGov to survey 1,000 workers employed by small and mid-size businesses with 50 to 250 employees in the UK, to understand what they want from the modern workplace and how well-placed businesses are to satisfying their requirements.

In order to provide a comparison between different employees, the survey sampled an equal proportion of male and female employees from Traditionalists/Silent Generation (1945 or earlier), Baby Boomers (1946-1964), Generation X (1965-1976), Millennials (1977-1995) and Centennials (1996 or later) generations.



**EVOLUTION**

# The 'modern workplace'

The workplace is the frontline in the battle of talent management, employee engagement and productivity, and is crucial in helping businesses thrive in a competitive and global environment. The rise in technology in the past few decades has transformed how employees work and the expectation of those from younger generations who are joining the workforce.

As a result, the workplace has been forced to revise and transform what it should look like in order to deal with evolving business needs, distributed teams, and an increasingly complex threat environment. The ideal modern workplace is now built for teams and networks. Employees want to work in places that have access to new ideas which accelerate their learning, increase innovation and ease collaboration with their teams.

## CONNECTION



## Here are the key findings of the research:

- **Millennials are out with email and in with Cloud**

Almost 50 per cent of Millennials use Cloud-based collaborative, file hosting and sharing tools even when their employer does not provide it.

- **The future of work is AI**

Over a quarter of employees expect AI and machine learning to make the biggest impact in the workplace in the next five years. 88 per cent of employees don't feel threatened by AI, automation and robotics but expect these technologies to enhance their jobs in the next ten years.

- **Big Data will continue to play a vital role in the future of work**

A quarter of employees think Big Data will transform the way they work in the next five years, which is expected to enhance productivity across teams. As a result, we will see more seamless and easy-to-use analytic tools being adapted in the workforce.

- **Employees underwhelmed with the tech investment their company makes**

Although most employees feel AI and machine learning will make the biggest impact in the next five years, over a quarter of (38 per cent) employees feel that their employers don't invest enough in technology that will benefit the business.

- **The future of work is remote and flexible**

The workplace in the next five to ten years will take an employee-first approach. Work life will revolve around individuals' needs to encourage employee satisfaction and increase productivity. The survey shows 76 per cent of employees who want flexible working hours, with almost half of the UK's workforce without an option to work from home.

- **The future of work is innovative**

Only a quarter of employees find innovation in a workplace easy. 53 per cent of under-35s cite team dynamics and senior management as a barrier to innovation; businesses need to move towards accommodating innovation to retain and attract the best talent.

- **The future of work is people-centric security**

As more personal and employee data becomes available, security will be a natural part of work environments. The modern workplace will focus on people-centric security – with a focus on empowering people without compromising compliance and productivity.

# The state of ‘workplace’

Due to the digital disruption and evolving technology, the workplace is almost unrecognisable from what it was five years ago. However, traditional organisations are still struggling to adapt. To achieve the optimal level of productivity, companies are now at a turning point to make much-needed changes to accommodate the needs of their employees or face being left behind by their competitors.

Advancements in mobile devices, IoT, cloud and workplace collaborative tools means that it won't be long before the workplace completely changes again to accommodate workers from the Centennials and Millennials generations, who grew up with technology, and Generation X and Baby Boomers who are to stay in the workforce longer than expected due to economic and external changes.

**Employees of all ages now expect flexible working with seamless access to IT**



## MOBILE

Employees of all ages now expect flexible working with seamless access to IT, therefore those that provide flexible and collaborative working achieve a high level of productivity, employee satisfaction, business continuity, reduced business travel and agile infrastructure that meets today's business demands. Therefore, businesses need to provide seamless communication through the use of multi-devices to bring teams together, drive productivity and support digital transformation.

Using the data from the survey, we gauge employees' attitudes towards the workplace and review what the current workplace looks like. The section is broken down into five parts that look at key areas such as innovation, flexible working, collaboration, security and next-generation technology.

## 1. Flexible working

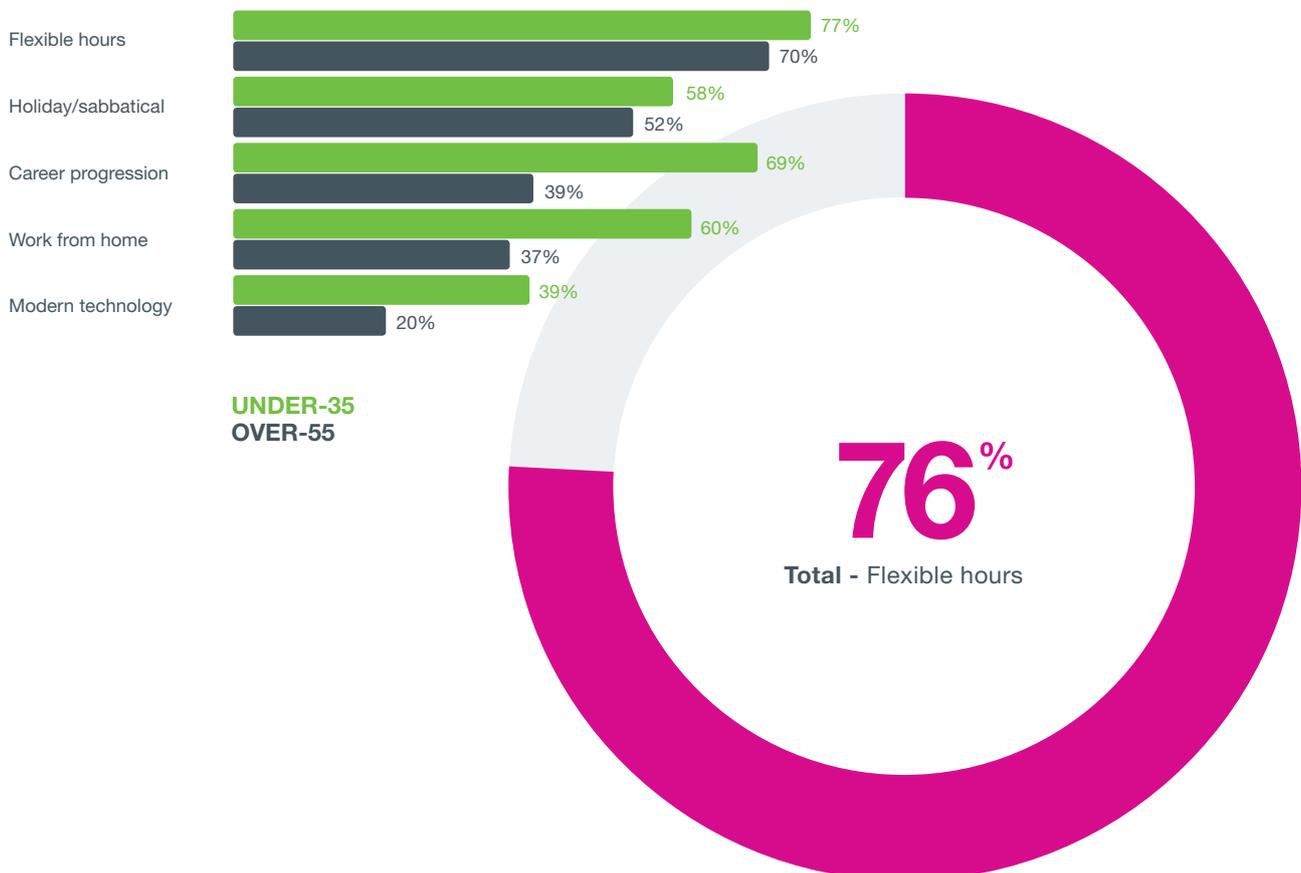
Even though flexible working has been recognised to enhance employee engagement and productivity, the survey shows that almost half of the UK's workforce don't have the option to work from home. Moreover, 76 per cent of employees say that they would like flexible work to be available to them with 52 per cent preferring the chance to work from home.

**76 per cent of employees say that they would like flexible work to be available to them**

Looking at different age groups, Millennials' key priority is evident as 60 per cent say that they prefer the ability to work from home over generous holiday allowance while over a quarter of over-55s see working from home as a primary choice. As a result, organisations must provide flexible working to meet the needs of the coming generation who are taking over and dominating the global workforce.

**52 per cent prefer the chance to work from home**

*As an employee, which of the following do you think are important to have in the modern workplace?*

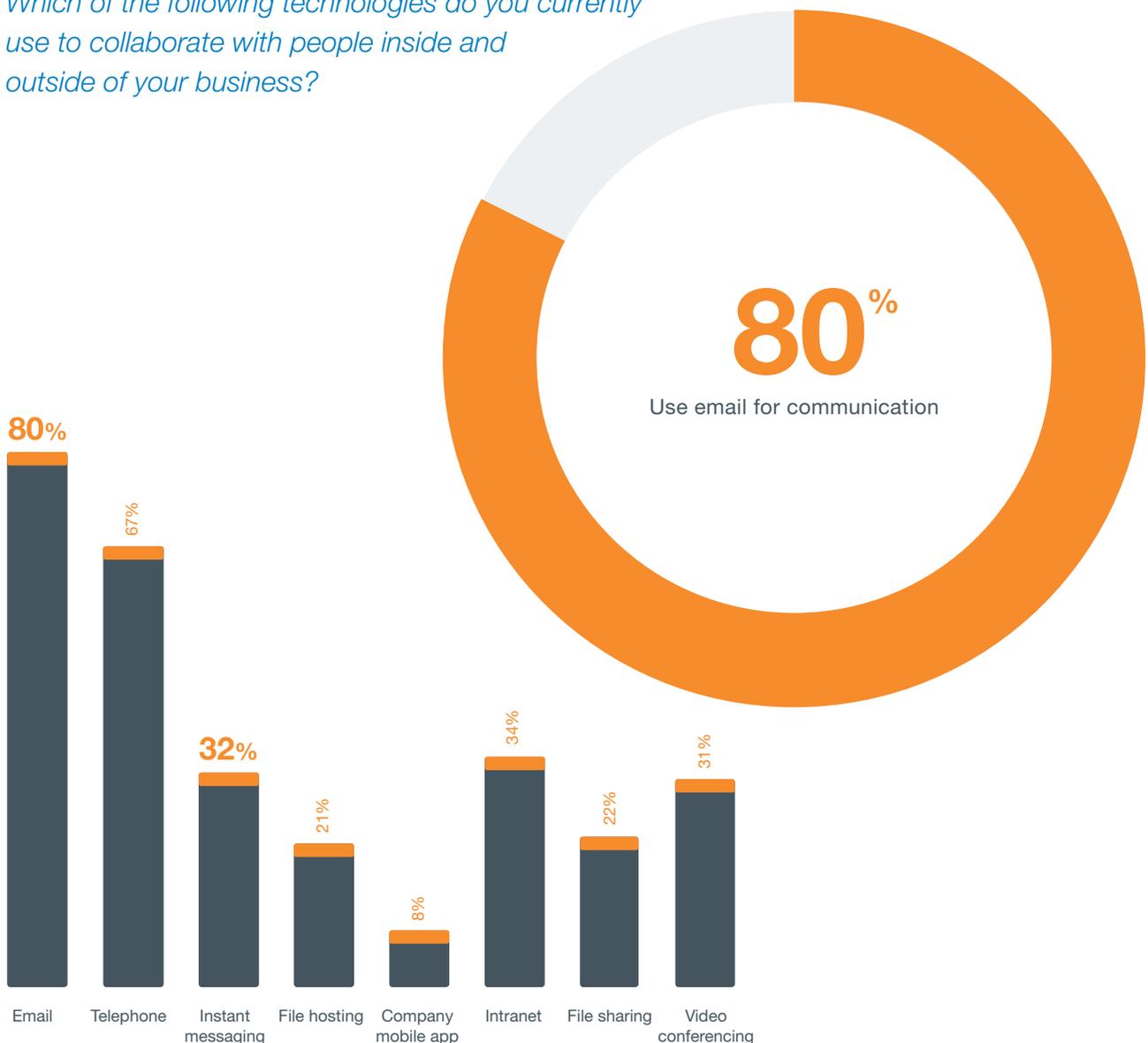


## 2. Collaborative working

Collaborative working is the catalyst that promotes a creative and innovative culture and enables businesses to compete in a disruptive environment. However, 80 per cent of respondents (below) say that they utilise email as a communication and collaborative tool as it's easy to use, despite it often not being fully optimised for collaboration. The survey also shows that 32 per cent of respondents express their need for modern tools such as Skype and instant messaging apps.

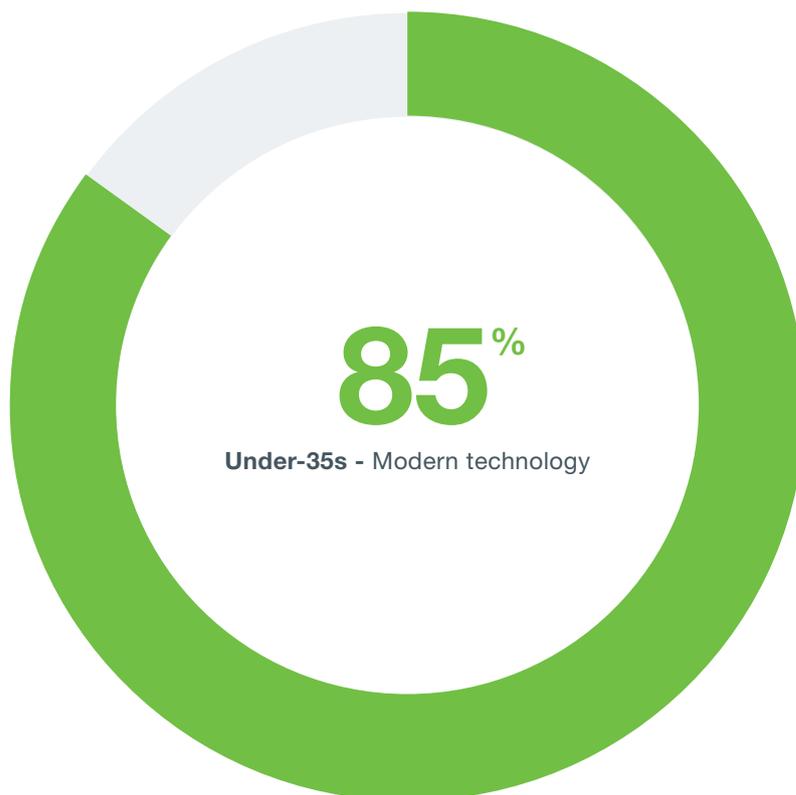
**32 per cent of respondents express their need for modern tools such as Skype and instant messaging apps**

*Which of the following technologies do you currently use to collaborate with people inside and outside of your business?*



However, this is due to the lack of access to modern technology provided by employers as 85 per cent (below) of Millennials admit to using workplace technology such as instant messaging, Skype, file hosting and sharing tools that aren't supported or provided by their employer, raising major security issues. Additionally, this is a significant sign that Millennials are falling out of love with email in favour of modern tools such as video conferencing. Over 66 per cent of Millennials using tools such as Skype, Dropbox or cloud file sharing say that they chose those services due to ease of use, value for money and ability to save time.

*Which of the following technologies do you currently use to collaborate with people inside and outside of your business that aren't supplied by your business?*



Millennials admit to using workplace technology such as instant messaging, Skype, file hosting and sharing tools that aren't supported or provided by their employer

**Key to graphs:**

- **File sharing in the cloud** - Dropbox Business etc.
- **File hosting** - Google Docs
- **Video conferencing** - Skype etc.
- **Instant messaging** - Lync etc.
- **"To-do" board** - Trello or Slack etc.

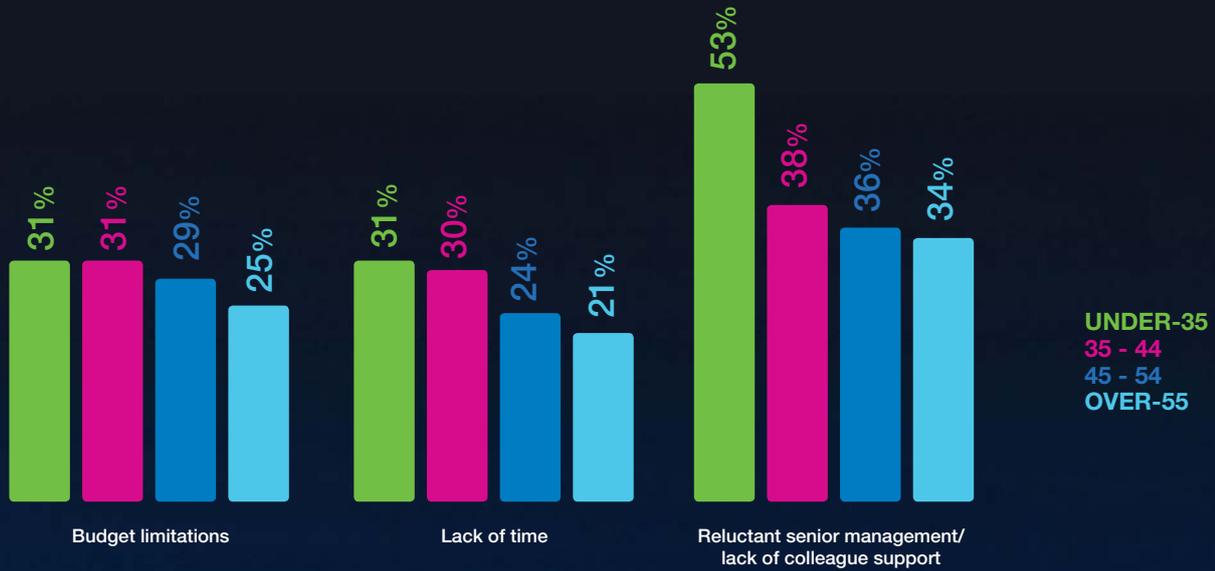
### 3. Innovation

Even at a time of fierce global competition where technology is disrupting and transforming every single industry, companies aren't innovating at a speed they should be. Innovation is essential for every business today, and digital disruption means that companies cannot afford to stand still. Nonetheless, innovation needs to come from all parts of the business, empowering staff, young and old, to find solutions to business challenges.

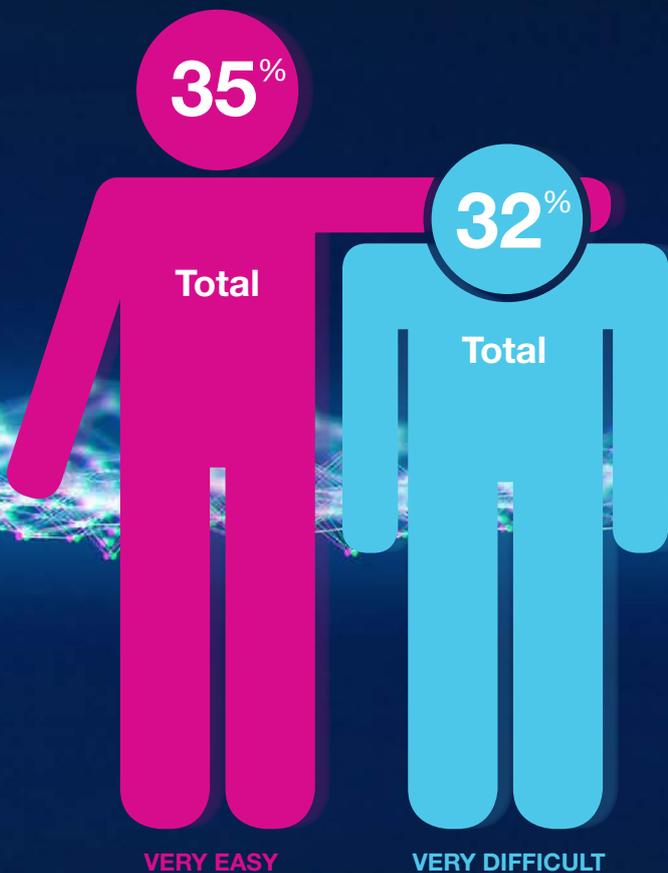
Enabling teams to innovate is one of the many challenges companies face, with only a quarter of employees (35 per cent) finding innovation in a workplace is easy. Meanwhile, 80 per cent of employees face barriers such as lack of "time" and "limited budget" as a limiting factor that stops them from innovating. On the contrary, 53 per cent of under-35s blame team dynamics and senior management as a barrier to innovation, even though only 34 per cent of over-55s find convincing senior management as the factor that keeps teams away from innovating. This reflects on the younger generation who have been known to seek roles that drive business outcomes and make an instant impact while the older generation seems to be more confident in senior management's ability to drive innovation than Millennials.



Which of the following do you think are barriers to innovation in your business?



How easy or difficult do you find it to innovate at work?



Enabling teams to innovate is one of the many challenges companies face, with only a quarter of employees (35 per cent) finding innovation in a workplace is easy and 32 per cent find it difficult

## 4. Security

Security is the foundation of business transformation and businesses must take every precaution to ensure that their data remains safe, and that they comply with regulations such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

However, British businesses do not appear to be keeping pace and adopting new security practices as they should, as the survey shows that 72 per cent of workers state that their organisation only uses usernames and passwords to keep their IT operations secure due to their simplicity of use. At this stage, only seven per cent of employees have started to use highly sophisticated technologies such as facial recognition and fingerprint biometric tools for security purposes, which serves as an indication of where security is going in the next decade.

Looking at employees' confidence around how their employer handles cybersecurity, over 60 per cent of workers believe that their employer does more than enough to adequately secure its IT operations. This is despite admitting that usernames and passwords are the main security measures taken by their employers to protect their IT systems.

This shows an overconfident workforce with a low level of awareness when it comes to cybersecurity issues. Yet, it is essential to recognise that the choice of security measures is due to largely to their simplicity and ease of use.

Since IT has always prioritised protecting corporate assets and networks, the shift towards using intelligent cloud will highlight the need for people-centric security. Security will have a substantial focus on empowering people without compromising compliance and productivity, while striking the right balance between ease of use and security on and off the cloud, on any devices with comprehensive enterprise security.

72%

Only use username and password to keep IT safe

66%

Believe that employer does enough to secure IT

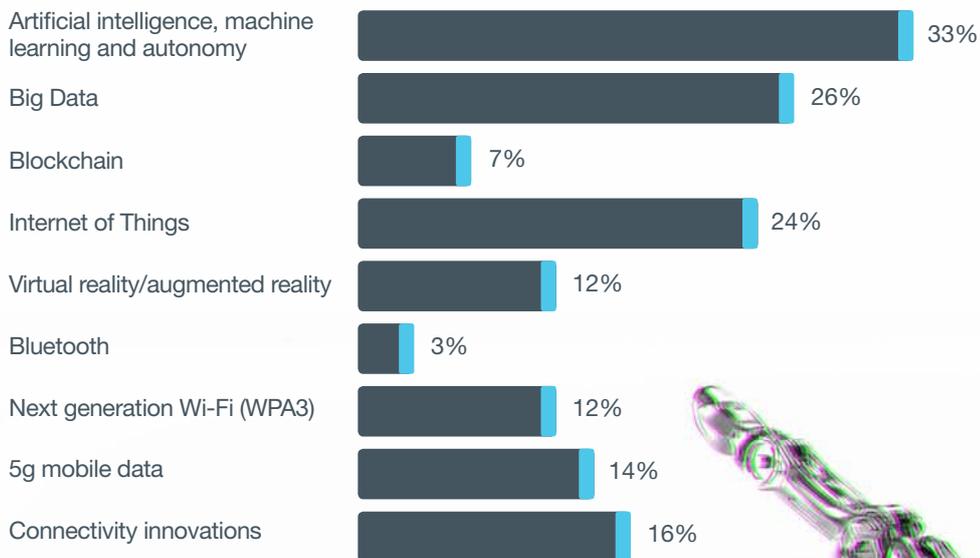
72%

Employees find company's cyber security easy to use

## 5. Next generation technology

With the fourth industrial revolution already upon us, the advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI), machine learning, 3D printing and IoT has created growing concerns around a changing global employment landscape. Even with the level of media speculation covering the possibility of robots stealing peoples' jobs, employees are optimistic about the role of next generation technology. As the survey shows, 33 per cent of employees feel that the application of AI and machine learning will make the most significant impact in the workplace, while 26 per cent think that Big Data will transform the way they work in the next five years.

*Which of the following technologies do you think will have the biggest impact on workplaces in the next five years?*



For many successful businesses, the ability to project the future of their industry and equipping employees with the next-generation technology will set them apart from other contenders in the market. However, 38 per cent of employees feel that their employers don't invest enough in technology that benefits the business and therefore enhances business outcomes.

*Do you think your business is investing enough in new technology?*

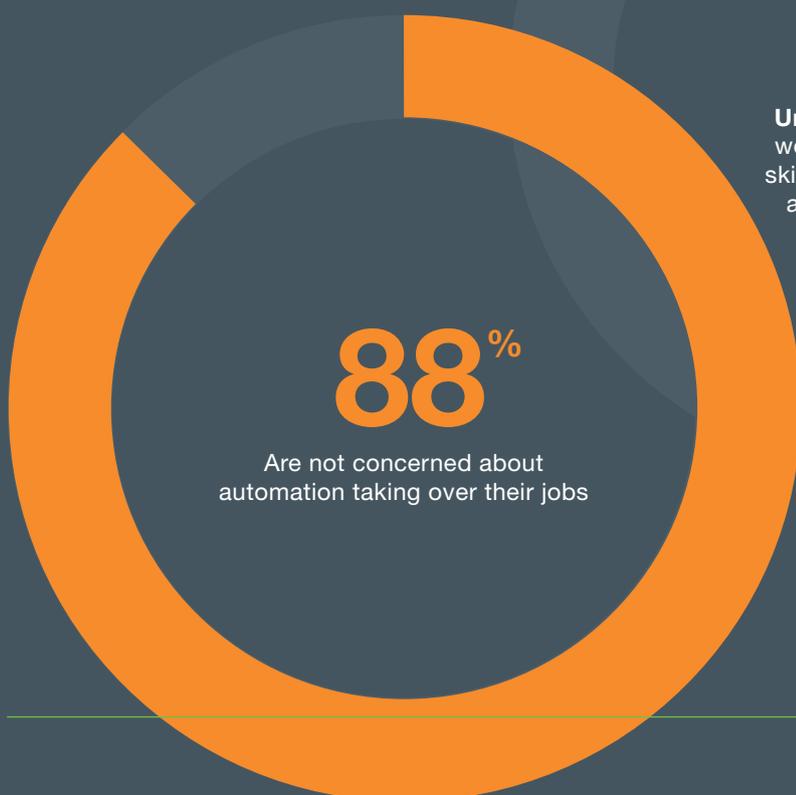
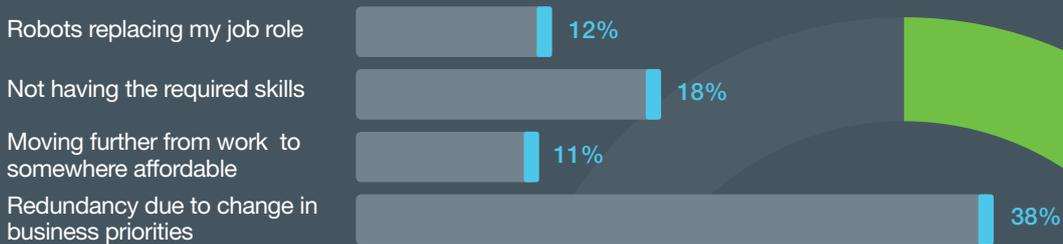


**For many successful businesses, the ability to project the future of their industry and equipping employees with the next-generation technology will set them apart from other contenders in the market**

Even with that in mind, only 38 per cent of the respondents are more worried about being made redundant, over 12 per cent who are concerned about automation and robotics taking over their jobs. This leaves 88 per cent of respondents who are currently not concerned about automation taking over their roles in ten years' time. This becomes apparent when looking at Millennials and Centennials, with 25 per cent saying that they worry more about not having the required skillsets and qualifications to progress in their career as employers adapt advanced technologies which they may not be able to operate. It is a clear indication of how the younger generation is concerned with their ability to utilise next-generation technology implemented in the workplace. As a result, under-35s are more likely to seek employment that will broaden their skillsets and make them future-proof.

**Under-35s are more likely to seek employment that will broaden their skillsets and make them future-proof**

*Which of the following are you concerned about in the next 10 years?*



# Conclusion

## The modern workplace and businesses

Ingram Micro UK commissioned this research in collaboration with Microsoft to understand the state of the modern workplace, what employees look for from their technologies and what the future may hold. And while the fact that the nature of work is changing won't surprise anyone, the rate of change we have seen – or, more accurately, the expectations for change among employees themselves – is more profound than we would have expected.

Millennials and Centennials are often thought to be the driving force behind changing workplace practices – and are often derided in popular discourse for having unreasonable and unrealistic expectations – but we have seen that calls for change are coming from all segments of the workforce. In the pursuit of a better work-life balance, employees are actively seeking out flexible and remote working practices; whether they can find them from their employers is another matter.

The tools that employees look for are also changing. The trusty telephone and email server are being gradually phased out by the new breed of cloud-based file sharing and collaboration tools thanks to their anytime, anywhere access and flexibility. And where they're not able to access them through their employers, they are going out to procure them on their own, opening up new security risks and limiting the visibility of IT departments.

Another point of contention revolves around next-generation technologies. In spite of regular articles in the media about the march of the robots and the threat that automation presents to our jobs, employees are optimistic about the role that this technology will play in their lives. They are anxious for this change and want their employers to ramp up their investments in AI, robotics, IoT and Big Data.

Ultimately, although technology has come to dominate every element of our lives, and business success is wholly contingent on IT, people remain just as, if not more, important. This point often gets lost to IT departments but that has to change.

Unless you enable your staff to perform and empower them to work in the way that they want to through technology, productivity, profitability and efficiency will suffer. Only by understanding this can businesses start to lay the foundations for a smarter and more productive future and compete more effectively in the digital age.

## The modern workplace and the channel

The evolution of the workplace presents an opportunity for channel partners to be a voice of reason and advise IT teams that are increasingly overwhelmed with the demands of the modern workplace.

The survey has shown that IT teams no longer have the control and the command they once had when facing the modern workplace, as employees tend to procure their own tools to fill the missing gaps and do their jobs.

The pressure to design, implement and safeguard the infrastructure of the workplace falls under IT departments who no longer have the control, the bandwidth or capabilities to respond to it. For most companies, managing IT systems in-house with the appropriate level of security policies that ensures company data, applications and infrastructure are protected is a gigantic and time-consuming task that burdens and ties up human resources. Therefore, as end users demand grows, channel partners need to move their roles away from being a technology supplier to becoming a trusted consultant.

However, to shift these relationships, partners need to get to the bottom of what end users want and position themselves as providers and facilitators of ongoing IT services that are flexible and robust in the face of a rapidly evolving technology landscape.

Additionally, channel partners need to pick the industries they want to specialise in as a horizontal approach will not work in the modern workplace. Once partners have their chosen industries, it is paramount that they build their credibility in that sector and become experts by developing a deeper understanding of the critical issues that affect them, including regulatory and compliance requirements.

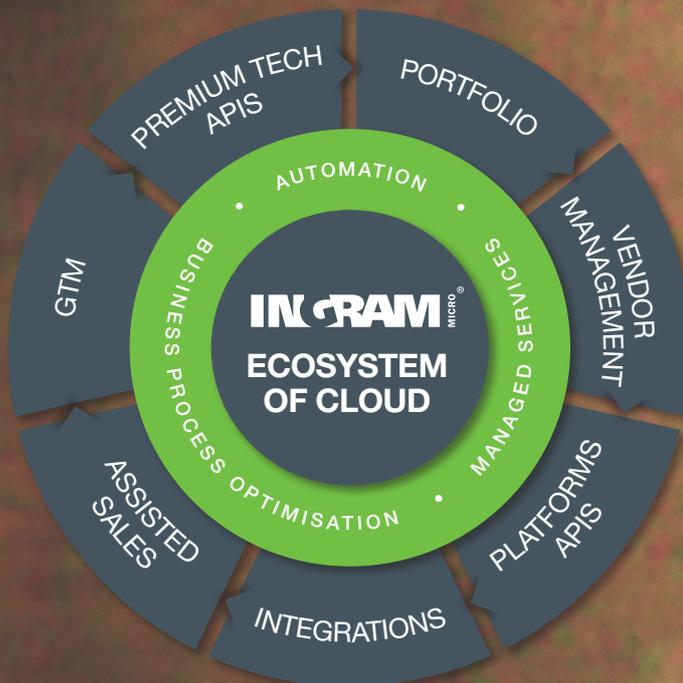
Ultimately, the channel needs to be proactive and stay on top of end users' behaviour to future-proof themselves and become the disruptors, rather than the disrupted. Businesses will continue to seek partnerships that will enhance their productivity and increase business outcomes by leveraging the power of IT solutions and tools that are often out of reach for most organisations.

## Ingram Micro Cloud

Ingram Micro Cloud is a Master Cloud Service Provider (MCSP), offering channel partners and professionals access to a global marketplace, expertise, solutions and enablement programs that empower organisations to configure, provision and manage cloud technologies with confidence and ease. For more information on Ingram Micro Cloud, please visit [www.ingrammicrocloud.co.uk](http://www.ingrammicrocloud.co.uk), telephone 0371 973 3060 or email [cloud@ingrammicro.co.uk](mailto:cloud@ingrammicro.co.uk)

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