



# The experience of work

The role of technology in  
productivity and engagement

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## Contents

- 2** About the report
- 3** Executive summary
- 5** 1. Understanding the employee experience
- 10** 2. The digital dimension
- 15** 3. A cross-function endeavour
- 18** Conclusion

## About the report

*The experience of work: the role of technology in productivity and engagement* is an Economist Intelligence Unit report, sponsored by Citrix, that explores how companies are managing the employee experience, and the role of technology in shaping it.

The analysis in the report is based on a survey of 1,145 business executives conducted in March and April 2019. The respondents hail from eight countries (the US, UK, Germany, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, China and Brazil) and work in six sectors (automotive, energy/oil & gas, financial services, healthcare, manufacturing and retail). They have senior roles in their organisations, just under half (49%) being C-level executives and the remainder being directors, business unit or department heads, and senior managers. The vast majority of them (81%) work in businesses employing more than 500 people, and nearly half (48%) employing more than 5,000.

Additional insights were obtained from in-depth interviews conducted with senior HR and IT leaders in organisations. Our thanks are due to the following individuals:

- Mukta Arya, head of human resources, South-east Asia and head of people and talent development, Asia-Pacific, Société Générale
- David Gill, assistant vice-president, employee experience, Northwell Health
- José Antonio Güereque, innovation director and chief information officer, Arca Continental
- Valerie Hughes-D'Aeth, chief human resources officer, BBC
- Art Mazor, principal partner and HR transformation global practice leader, Deloitte Consulting
- Elina Petrillo, assistant vice-president, HR technology, Northwell Health
- Florian Wies, regional lead, country integration, Merck
- Jerry Zhang, chief information officer, Coca-Cola Greater China & Korea

This report was written by Denis McCauley and edited by Pete Swabey. For more insight on technology and the employee experience, visit [theexperienceofwork.economist.com](http://theexperienceofwork.economist.com).

## Executive summary

The more engaged employees are in their work, previous research suggests, the likelier it is that they will contribute to the success of an organisation. They will be more productive than less engaged colleagues, as well as more innovative and self-starting—critical attributes when business models and the competitive environment are changing rapidly.<sup>1</sup> But what specifically fosters such attributes? In recent years a consensus has formed around the idea that, rather than one or two individual factors, it is the totality of an employee's involvement with the organisation—the “employee experience”—that ultimately influences their contribution to success.

Today, the employee experience is firmly on the senior management agenda of the vast majority of firms, judging by the results of a survey conducted by The Economist Intelligence Unit. The research also makes clear that nothing influences the employee experience more than the quality of the organisation's leadership. But technology is also an important contributor, and especially so at firms whose employees are, according to respondents, more engaged and more productive than their rivals (termed “high performers” in this report). The same is true at organisations that are further along in their digital transformation than others (termed “digitally more mature” organisations). Perceived improvement in the employee experience has also been greater at these groups than in the rest of the sample.

The clear conclusion is that business leaders have several technology levers they can pull to brighten their employees' journey through the organisation, from the time they are recruited to their departure and even later. The challenges to doing this well are numerous, above all getting IT and HR to collaborate effectively toward this end, but companies featured in this report are finding ways to meet them.

Other key findings of the research are:

### **Responsibility for improving the employee experience is often blurred.**

Shaping the employee experience tends to be a shared responsibility among multiple senior executives. This can, however, often signal a lack of leadership clarity and lead to a vacuum. The risk of this is apparent in the survey, as little more than one third of C-suite respondents strongly agree that they take full responsibility for it across the organisation. Only a few more say they take full responsibility for it even within their own teams. As companies mature digitally, C-level executives, including the CIO, take on more of a leadership role in this area.

### **Access to information breeds engagement and empowerment.**

Having ready access to the data and insights they need to do their jobs, wherever they are located, does more to influence employee engagement and productivity, and ultimately their overall experience, than other technology factors.

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Hay Group, *Engaging Hearts and Minds: Preparing for a Changing World*, 2015, [http://info.haygroupupdate.com/rs/494-VUC-482/images/Hay\\_Group\\_Engaging\\_Hearts\\_and\\_Minds\\_Report.pdf?aliid=105813088](http://info.haygroupupdate.com/rs/494-VUC-482/images/Hay_Group_Engaging_Hearts_and_Minds_Report.pdf?aliid=105813088); Susan Sorensen (Gallup), “How Employee Engagement Drives Growth”, June 20th 2013, <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/236927/employee-engagement-drives-growth.aspx>; and V Kumar and P Wilton (Chartered Management Institute), “Briefing note for the MacLeod Review”, 2008, cited in David MacLeod and Nita Clarke, *Engaging for success: enhancing performance through employee engagement*, 2009, <https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/1810/1/file52215.pdf>

For many companies, that translates into “mobile first” policies and efforts to perfect their use of collaboration tools, the digitisation of onboarding, training and other employee-development activities, and efforts to recreate the consumer experience at work to the extent possible.

**IT and HR may not be natural partners, but bridges are being built.** In the survey, the two functions appear to feel they have a joint stake in improving the employee experience. For example, similar numbers of IT and HR respondents say they feel personally responsible for this within their team or more widely. At high performers and digitally more mature organisations, a large proportion of both IT and HR executives say the objective is part of the strategy

of their function. To overcome the lack of understanding that hampers collaboration, many firms are taking practical measures such as employing specialists with knowledge of both disciplines and developing common metrics.

**Companies struggle to measure improvement in the employee experience.**

Although virtually all companies in the survey measure employee engagement and productivity, and most are striving to devise suitable metrics to capture improvements in the employee experience, not many are as yet registering success. Less than one-third, for example, “strongly” confirm that they can quantify such improvements in financial terms. A higher proportion of high performers, however, are able to do this.

## 1. Understanding the employee experience

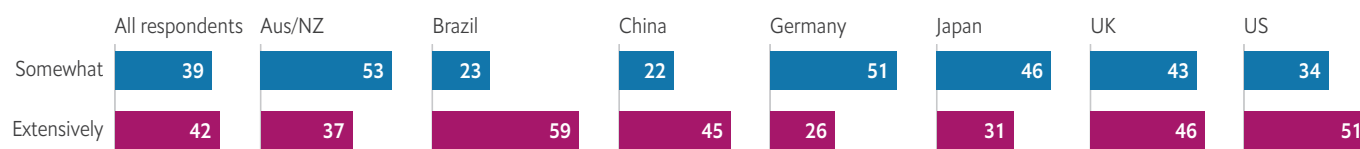
In 2011 the polling organisation Gallup published research suggesting that a staggering 89% of employees worldwide were not engaged in their work. This meant, the firm said, that most employees are “emotionally detached and likely to be doing little more than is necessary to keep their jobs”.<sup>2</sup> It was around that time that the concept of employee experience began to attract the attention of senior HR and other business managers. They wanted to understand what levers they could pull to boost employee motivation and engagement. The concept provided them with something more, however: an understanding that the contribution of employees to the success of the organisation is influenced by their subjective experience of interacting with it, from the first steps of recruitment, through

their day-to-day experience at work, right up to their departure from the organisation and beyond.

Since then, the employee experience has been squarely on the management radar in large businesses. It remains so today across most sectors, according to executives interviewed for this study, being a matter of senior management discussion at the vast majority (81%) of firms represented in our survey (although not to the same degree in all parts of the world: for example, the discussion is “extensive” at more than half of US firms, but at far fewer in Germany and Japan). Several organisations interviewed for this research have established management roles with explicit responsibilities in this area (and the exact term in the title).<sup>3</sup>

**Figure 1: On the agenda**

Where the employee experience is a topic of senior management discussion  
(% of respondents)



Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit.

<sup>2</sup> Gallup, *State of the Global Workplace 2011*, <https://www.gallup.com/services/177083/state-global-workplace-2011.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> See also “HR Jobs of the Future: Chief Employee Experience Officer”, *HR Tech News*, August 24th 2018, <https://www.hrtechnologynews.com/news/workforce-management/hr-jobs-of-the-future-chief-employee-experience-officer/109668>; and “The Workplace As An Experience: Three New HR Roles Emerge”, *Forbes*, May 13th 2016, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jeannemeister/2016/05/13/the-workplace-as-an-experience-three-new-hr-roles-emerge/#6ff758c728ca>

## Emerging from the crowd

Our analysis revealed two groups of respondent organisations that appear to prioritise improvement of the employee experience more than, and in some respects manage these efforts differently from, other groups in the survey:

- **High performers in employee engagement and productivity** are organisations whose respondents deem their employees to be both more engaged and more productive in their work than at industry peers. High performers agree “strongly” on both counts; middle performers agree “strongly” or “somewhat” on both; low performers do not agree on either

count. High performers are 13% of the overall survey sample of 1,145 respondents, and low performers are 14%.

- **Digitally more mature organisations** are those that have been implementing a digital transformation strategy for more than two years. They are compared with “digitally less mature” organisations, where strategy has yet to be developed. Both groups are 23% of the survey sample.

In the discussion to follow, we will highlight the areas where these groups stand out most strikingly from the rest.

The business outcomes that companies seek from improving their employee experience typically include greater employee productivity and engagement. Some, however, have bigger goals in mind. According to Art Mazor, principal partner and HR transformation global practice leader at Deloitte, a consultancy, “Many now see the ultimate objective [of enhancing employee experience] to be the creation of new value in the market, by improving the customer experience and creating new opportunities for growth.” Research conducted by the MIT Sloan Center, published in 2017, supports this view. It found that companies with “great employee experience” had higher levels of customer satisfaction than others and were also more innovative and profitable.<sup>4</sup>

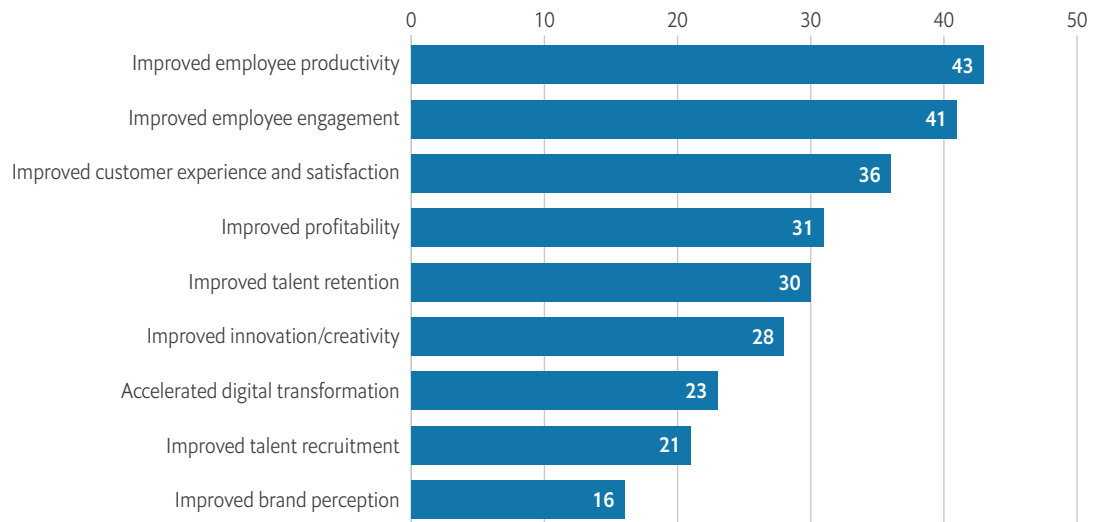
In our survey, more than one-third of respondents’ companies are seeing, or expect to see, better customer experience and satisfaction as a result of their efforts to improve the employee experience. (Respondents from service industries—retail, financial services and healthcare—are more likely than those from others to cite this outcome.) Thirty-one percent are seeing higher levels of profitability.

Organisations struggle to find ways of measuring the employee experience, a difficulty confirmed by several of the HR and IT executives interviewed. Current methods are typically based on existing engagement surveys and other measures. “But we’re starting to think about what other factors play

<sup>4</sup> MIT Center for Information Systems Research, *Building Business Value with Employee Experience*, June 6th 2017, [https://cisr.mit.edu/blog/documents/2017/06/15/2017\\_0601\\_employeeexperience\\_derysebastian.pdf](https://cisr.mit.edu/blog/documents/2017/06/15/2017_0601_employeeexperience_derysebastian.pdf). For the authors, a “great employee experience” consisted of a low complexity of work (employees find it easy to get their work done) and “strong behavioural norms for collaboration, creativity and empowerment”.

**Figure 2: The benefits of experience**

Business outcomes obtained or expected from an improved employee experience  
(% of respondents)



Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit.

into a more holistic view of experience, such as career mobility,” says David Gill, assistant vice-president of employee experience at Northwell Health, a US-based health services provider.

Nearly all organisations in the survey measure employee engagement and productivity. Less than one-third (29%), however, “strongly” agree that they’re able to quantify employee experience improvements in financial terms. High performers, where engagement and productivity levels are deemed to be higher than at rivals, are an exception: 44% offer strong confirmation that they can do this, more than triple the number of low performers (12%).

The exact relationships between experience, engagement and productivity are not uniformly clear, but the survey results indicate that they are linked: more than half of high performers (52%) report a clear improvement

in the employee experience in the past two years; only one in ten of low performers can say the same. Digitally more mature firms—those implementing a digital transformation strategy for longer than two years—are also more likely than less mature firms to report such improvement.

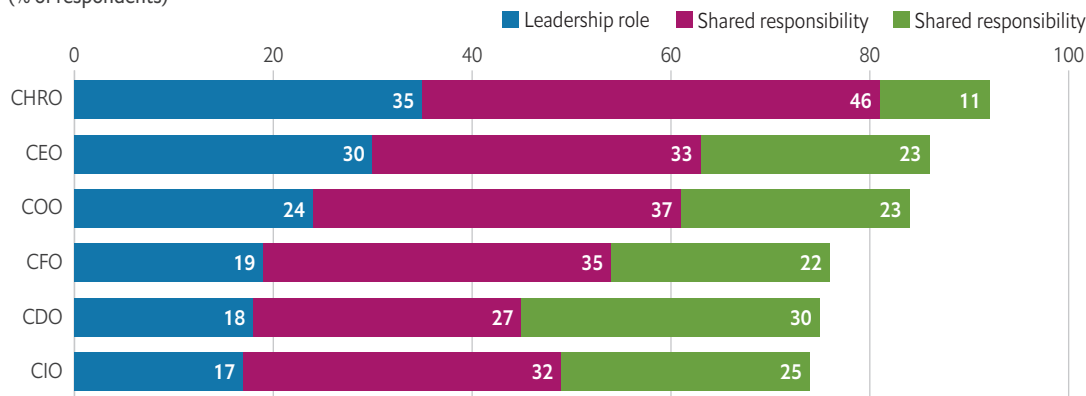
### Who’s in charge?

By its holistic nature, the employee experience cuts across every facet of an organisation’s activity. This may explain why shaping the employee experience is more often a shared responsibility among multiple senior executives rather than the ownership of one. When the latter is the case, the chief human resources officer (CHRO) is more likely to take the lead than other C-level peers. It is worth noting, however, that as companies mature digitally, other C-level executives, including the CIO, take on more leadership in this area. The CIO takes the lead in 20% of digitally more mature



**Figure 3: Who's in charge?**

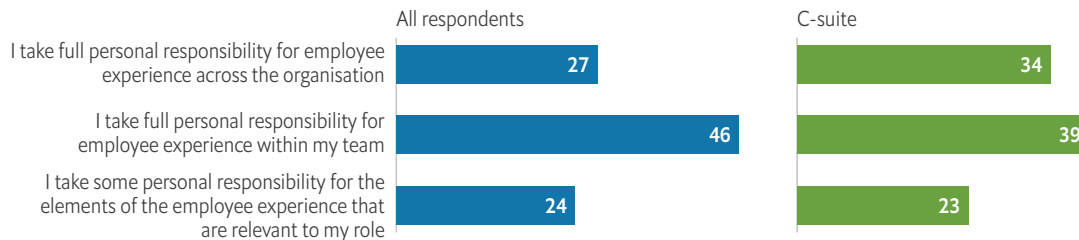
Senior management roles in shaping the employee experience  
(% of respondents)



Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit.

**Figure 4: Who feels responsible?**

Personal responsibility for the employee experience  
(% of respondents)



Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit.

firms versus 15% of less mature ones; the analogous figures for the CEO are 29% versus 25%; for the COO, it's 29% versus 17%; for the CFO, 23% versus 16%; and for the CDO (chief digital officer), 22% versus 13%.

Shared responsibility can often result in a vacuum, however. The risk of this among the surveyed companies becomes apparent when executives are asked about the extent of their responsibility. Little more than one-third (34%) of C-suite respondents say they take full responsibility for it across the organisation. Only a handful more (39%) say they take full responsibility for it even within their own teams. (High performers in the survey are

more likely than others to say that they take organisation-wide responsibility.)

"All C-suite executives and their teams need to come together and rise to the challenge of improving the employee experience," says Mr Mazor. "The problem is, you can't have an initiative led by everyone. Someone has to be, if not the leader, then the orchestrator or curator."

### Building a better experience

It is difficult to overstate the role that strong leadership plays in outcomes associated with an improved employee experience. Among

the contributing factors, leadership and management far outstrips others, including pay, in importance.

The technology available to employees is also considered by respondents to be an important factor, akin in significance to organisational purpose and culture. There are some regional differences on this front: in China, for example, technology is a vitally important factor to employees, according to Jerry Zhang, chief information officer at Coca-Cola Greater China & Korea. “Leveraging digital technologies is a key competitive weapon for our company in attracting and retaining talent and improving our employees’ experience,” he says.

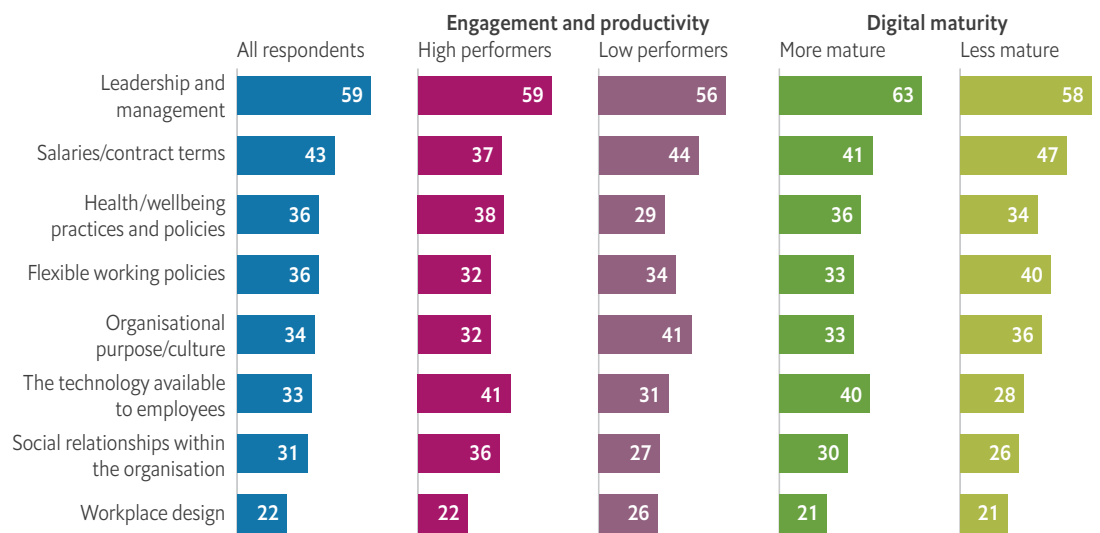
José Antonio Güereque, CIO at Arca Continental, a Mexico-based beverages producer, says that digital technology is vital

to employee retention: “Once people are hired, if they become uncomfortable with the tools they use to do the job, they may very well leave.” (In the survey, 30% of respondents cite higher employee retention as an outcome they’ve seen, or expect, from a better employee experience.)

The high performers and digitally more mature survey groups assign much more weight to the contribution of technology to the employee experience than do other respondents. Given the aforementioned improvement in employee experience registered by this group in the past two years, the high performers have plainly done much to meet their employees’ expectations for technology. In the next part of our discussion, we examine how some companies are doing this.

**Figure 5: The burden of leadership**

The factors perceived to contribute most to an improved employee experience (% of respondents who rank each factor 1st, 2nd or 3rd)



Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit.

## 2. The digital dimension

“A positive employee experience requires removing friction from work,” says Mr Mazor, “and digital technology has a big part to play in that. Can I collaborate with people faster? Can I access information more rapidly? Can I engage in the work that I have to do and get it done faster?”

There are two important ways that technology does this, in the view of survey respondents. One is by facilitating employees’ access to the information needed to do their jobs. Such information may be previously siloed internal data that APIs (application programming interfaces) surface for members of different teams. It may take the form of insights, about existing customers, for example, that come from advanced analytics tools. Increasingly it may be predictions—for instance, about customer behaviour, supplier performance or maintenance requirements for production equipment—that AI (artificial intelligence) algorithms generate.

Such information should also be available to employees wherever they are. The ability to work from anywhere is nearly as important a driver of engagement to respondents as easy access to information, and is the most important one for high performers. “Information should be accessible via your mobile device, your laptop or your PC, and wherever you’re located,” agrees Mr Gill.

The BBC, the UK’s national broadcaster, follows a “mobile first” principle for employees, says Valerie Hughes-D’Aeth, its CHRO. “Mobile technology is integral to our efforts to encourage more employees to adopt flexible working,” she says. As part of this, BBC employees can enter and track their expenses on a smartphone app, for example, and can use other self-service systems online (with many also accessible via mobile devices) for viewing and changing HR-related information. This includes allowing employees to see their

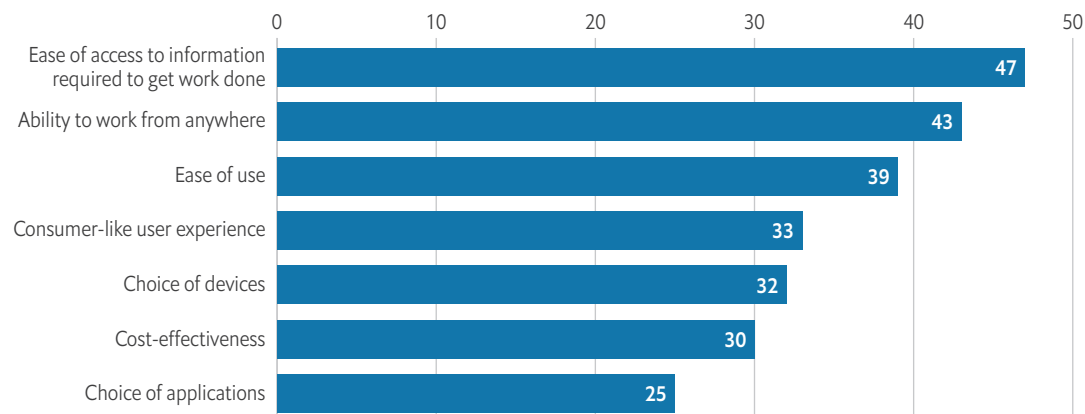


“A positive employee experience requires removing friction from work.”

Arthur Mazor,  
partner, HR strategy,  
Deloitte

**Figure 6: Technology's contribution**

The top technology enablers of stronger employee engagement  
(% of respondents)



Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit.

## Creating a warm digital welcome

It takes much more than a welcoming and efficient onboarding experience to ensure that employees are engaged and productive throughout their time with a company. A bad experience, however, can sour a new hire's outlook, creating negative first impressions that can be difficult to dislodge. "New hires need to feel that they made the right decision by joining the company," says Florian Wies, regional lead for country integration at Merck, a science and technology company. The firm aims to "wow" its new employees with a highly digitised onboarding process that smooths their way in and gives them a solid head start. To this end, technology formed a key part of a two-year initiative, called "From now to WOW", to streamline the entire onboarding process. (It was completed in 2018.)

Part of this involved the creation of a virtual welcome centre where, a few weeks before starting, new hires can access not just HR documents but also

information about their new roles, departments, as well as their future colleagues and managers. In parallel, the IT team gets the individual's hardware and software up and running, a process that at some companies takes a week or more to complete. "Now we start that process well in advance of their start date," says Mr Wies, "so they can be ready to begin the on-site onboarding process as soon as they arrive."

None of this can start before an employment contract is signed. In the past, says Mr Wies, doing it with a paper document normally took around seven days. His team's solution was to digitise the entire contract process, including the signature. "Now it takes no more than half a day," he says.

This is all part of a broader effort to digitise the company's processes and simplify employees' lives, says Mr Wies. "We need them to focus on where they can add the most value to the business."

salary history and broadly compare their pay to that of peers elsewhere in the same role.

In China, says Mr Zhang, "everything has to be mobile". In his view, however, mobility only works in employees' favour if it enhances collaboration and information sharing. Collaboration tools are therefore a vital set of technologies in the context of employee engagement and productivity, and thus experience. For this reason, his team at Coca-Cola has been striving to consolidate the various collaboration tools it has been supporting and to move employees onto one

or two that integrate video, chat, data sharing and other functionalities, and that can be used inside and outside the enterprise.

The key technology roles in improving engagement vary by country. UK respondents, for example, cite ease of use more frequently than other enablers; in Japan and Brazil, most important is the ability to work anywhere. Executives in China and Brazil, meanwhile, place much greater emphasis on the cost-effectiveness of technology (37% in both countries) than their peers elsewhere (under 30% in all other countries).

## Consumers at work

Most surveyed executives agree (46% of high performers and 41% of digitally more mature organisations agree strongly) that the applications and devices their organisation provides make a positive contribution to their employees’ working experience. This is an especially strongly held view among respondents in Brazil and China.

The belief at many organisations is that enabling employees to choose applications and devices will help to achieve that better experience. (This sentiment is considerably stronger in China than in more developed markets such as the UK and US, perhaps reflecting the high adoption and use of smartphones in the country<sup>5</sup>). At some firms, including at those interviewed for this study, the broader objective is to try and replicate the consumer experience at work.

One such firm is Merck. Florian Wies explains the logic of this approach: “Employees are, after all, consumers. Creating our digital tools in a way that’s intuitive and familiar for them will improve their experience, and it will also help us save on training and support needs. We need to see what’s out there in the

end-user market and mirror it in our business applications.”

For Mr Wies this approach is part of a broader effort at his and other firms to apply the precepts of design thinking—a user-centric approach to product design—to internal users of technology as well as to customers. “In the past, IT developed solutions that accorded with its own understanding of needs but with little focus on actual user friendliness or the user experience. Today the latter are prioritised,” he says, based on more thorough research of user needs and closer interaction with HR and other departments.

“Reducing technology complexity for employees is impossible without the help of user experience professionals,” according to Mr Güereque. His firm employs such specialists within IT with this goal in mind. Coca-Cola is planning to do the same, according to Mr Zhang, in order to create a more consumer-like technology experience for employees.

Training is an area where companies are using technology to create new experiences with the goal of enhancing the learning process. An example can be found in the US, where

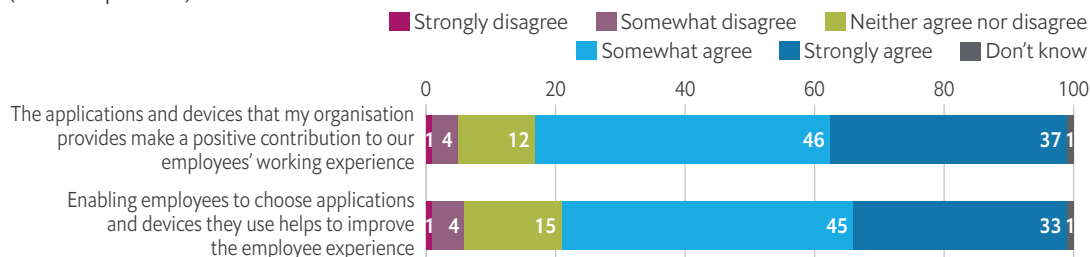


**“Reducing technology complexity for employees is impossible without the help of user experience professionals.”**

*José Antonio Güereque, innovation director and CIO, Arca Continental*

**Figure 7: Applications and devices**

Perspectives on their contribution to the employee experience (% of all respondents)



Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/cn/Documents/technology-media-telecommunications/deloitte-cn-2018-mobile-consumer-survey-en-190121.pdf>

Walmart, a retailer, is training new and existing employees at its US stores with the help of virtual reality (VR) headsets. The VR-assisted training is particularly aimed at improving employees' customer interaction skills.<sup>6</sup>

### Getting it right

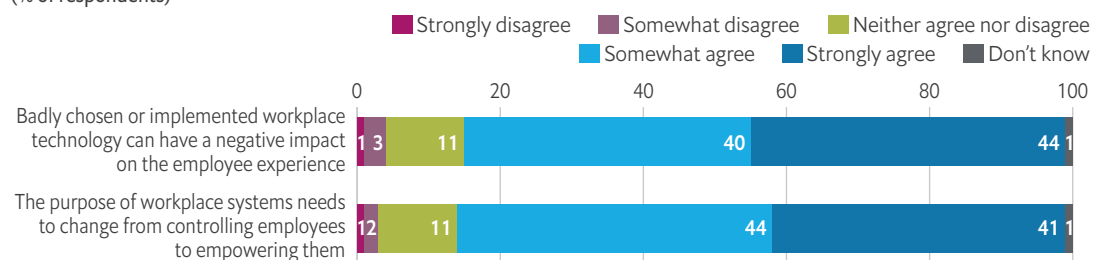
Of course, poorly conceived or managed technology initiatives can undermine an organisation's best efforts to improve the employee experience, a view supported by most of the survey respondents (and particularly strongly by those in Brazil

and Germany). This is usually the result of workplace deployments that fail to pay sufficient attention to change management, believes Mr Zhang.

In some instances, employees perceive top-down technology initiatives as efforts to closely monitor or control. Four in ten respondents (41%) strongly agree (another 44% somewhat agree) that the purpose of workplace systems needs to change from controlling to empowering employees.

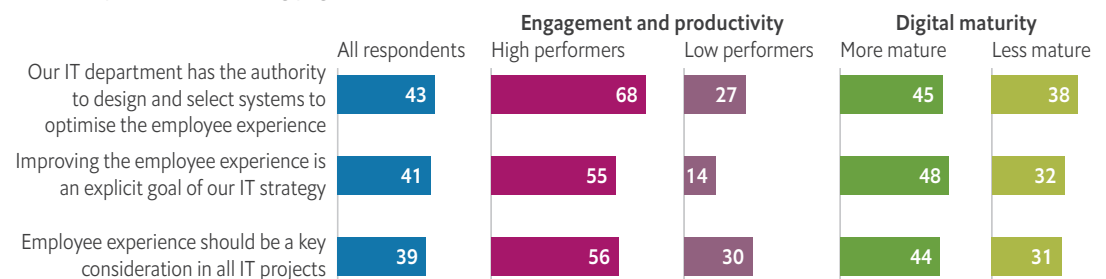
In other instances, employees may sense a shift from face-to-face interactions towards

**Figure 8: Managing the negative impact**  
Perspectives on technology's potential to deteriorate from the employee experience  
(% of respondents)



Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit.

**Figure 9: Employee experience on the IT agenda**  
IT perspectives on the employee experience  
(% of IT respondents who "strongly agree")



Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit.

<sup>6</sup> "Walmart is putting 17,000 VR headsets in its US stores for training", *The Verge*, September 20th 2018, <https://www.theverge.com/2018/9/20/17882504/walmart-strivr-vr-oculus-go-headset-training-shipments>

fully digitised processes is happening too rapidly. “We can automate a lot of things, but is it always worth it?” asks Mukta Arya, head of human resources, South-east Asia and head of people and talent development, Asia-Pacific at Société Générale, a financial services company. “Maintaining the human touch when automating is a fine balance we have to ensure when dealing with employees throughout their journey in the organisation.”

For all the above reasons, improving the employee experience should be much more than an afterthought for the IT function. In Mr Zhang’s view, it should be an explicit part of IT strategy. That view is shared by the survey respondents, and particularly so by the high performer and digitally more mature groups, half or more of whom confirm that it is already the case at their firms.

### 3. A cross-function endeavour

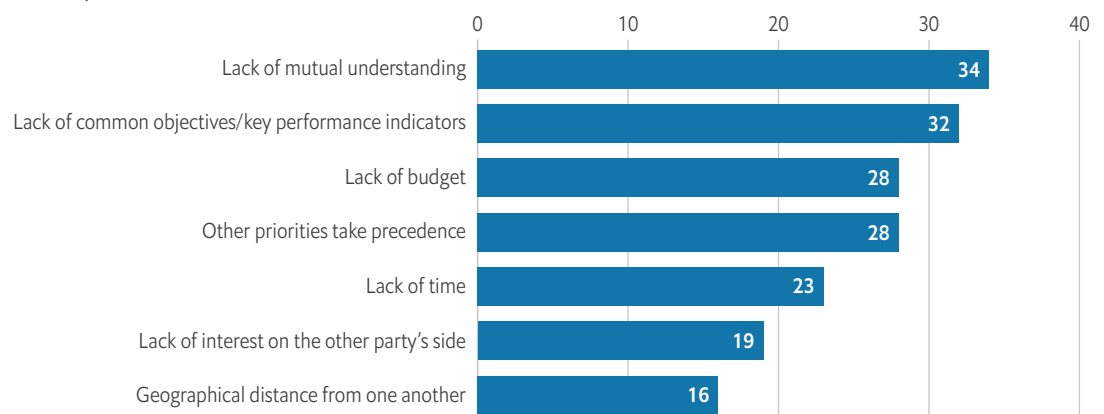
“IT and HR might be different functions with different responsibilities, but they have a joint stake in delivering a high-quality employee experience,” says Valerie Hughes-D’Aeth of the BBC. The IT and HR executives in the survey appear to share that view, as virtually identical numbers of each (74% and 75% respectively) feel personally responsible for improving it, either in their own team or more widely.

It’s not just IT strategy that needs to prioritise the employee experience. The technology dimensions of improving it should also be recognised in the strategy of the HR function, as most such initiatives will involve digital technology in one way or another. This is

yet another attribute separating the high performers and digitally more mature groups from the rest of the survey sample: whereas just under one-third of HR respondents overall affirm that this is the case at their firms, about 40% in both of the more advanced groups affirm it.

Beyond a recognition in strategy, however, bringing about closer IT and HR collaboration in this endeavour is no straightforward matter. Formidable barriers stand in the way, paramount among which are familiar features of large, siloed organisations: a lack of mutual understanding and absence of common objectives.

**Figure 10: The need for common ground**  
The toughest barriers to effective HR-IT collaboration  
(% of respondents)



Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit.



## Dismantling barriers

Such barriers cannot easily be overcome, but many organisations are finding ways to build bridges. It helps when CIOs and CHROs view digital transformation as a shared project, as 45% of high performers and 38% of the digitally mature group clearly do. (This view is more common in China and Brazil than in the US or UK, suggesting greater comfort with a collaborative approach where traditional approaches to managing IT are less entrenched.) But practical measures are also required.

To foster collaboration at the BBC, says Ms Hughes-D'Aeth, a small team of HR

data and systems specialists with a strong understanding of the function's strategic objectives work closely with the design and engineering team, which includes the BBC's IT function. At Northwell Health, IT professionals are embedded in the HR department where they work in tight-knit fashion with the team responsible for the employee experience (see "Bridging the gap between IT and HR".)

Several of the surveyed organisations are pursuing similar approaches. For example, 40% of high performers and 33% of digitally more mature businesses strongly agree they are developing specialists with combined HR and IT expertise in order to reduce barriers between the two functions.

## Bridging the gap between IT and HR

The surveyed organisations that employ experts with HR and IT experience to bridge the two functions probably have someone like Elina Petrillo working for them. She is assistant vice-president for HR technology at Northwell Health. A large part of her role is that of liaison between the HR and IT functions, although she sits squarely within the former. "Ultimately, my boss is the CHRO," says Ms Petrillo. "He determines the strategy for HR. I have to tell him what's possible from a technology perspective and provide him with solutions."

Modernising the HR team's technology platforms is one facet of Ms Petrillo's activity. She also supports the work of David Gill, who is assistant VP for employee experience. Both sets of activities overlap to a large degree. This has involved digitising several aspects of recruitment and onboarding, such as enabling job-seekers to lodge applications using a smartphone and allowing new hires to access information through self-service portals.

A greater ease in using technology contributes to a better employee experience, says Ms Petrillo. Her team uses YouTube videos to help staff in HR and other functions become familiar with new technologies or processes the firm is rolling out. "We see that team members want to learn on their own time," she says, "and want to use the YouTube channel to do that at home."

The videos also serve another purpose: tracking employees' comfort with this mode of learning and with the technology or process being demonstrated. "We track how many people are watching the videos and determine if they're watching them in their entirety or in part, and if they return to them. Then we're able to understand how people are using technology and can quantify the response to any initiative." Such tracking is part of a broader effort to develop specific metrics for measuring the employee experience beyond surveys on engagement. This is a work in progress, Ms Petrillo says, but she hopes to unveil the results by the autumn of 2019.

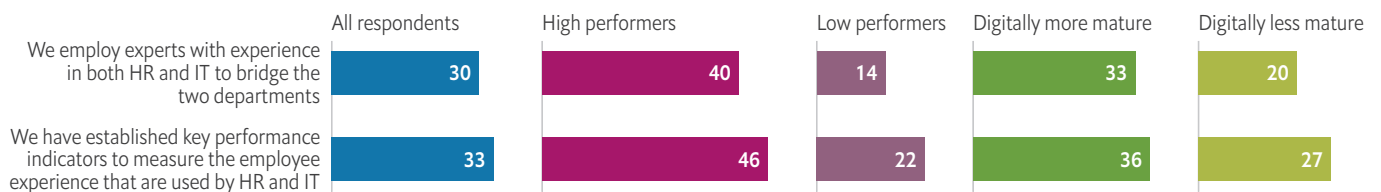
Another practical means of developing a common understanding is developing key performance indicators that both IT and HR can use to measure aspects of the employee experience. As mentioned earlier, developing employee experience metrics has been difficult for most, but 43% of high performers (36% of digitally mature organisations) state categorically that they have managed to develop metrics that are used jointly.

(Here, too, more respondents in China than elsewhere confirm this.)

Florian Wies of Merck believes these and other measures are working, and that understanding between the functions is much better than before. "That's because IT staff are today more business-focused than before, while those in HR and other departments are more aware of what's possible from a technology perspective," he says.

**Figure 11: Crossing the divide**

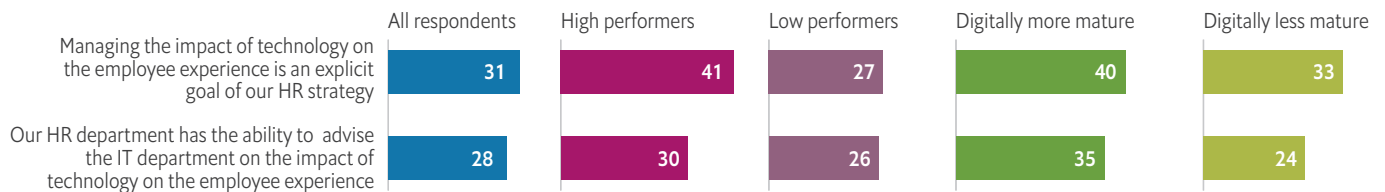
Adoption of HR-IT collaboration strategies  
(% of IT and HR respondents who "strongly agree")



Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit.

**Figure 12: Technology on the HR agenda**

(% of HR respondents who "strongly agree")



Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit.

## Conclusion

When it comes to understanding what truly motivates their employees to be committed and engaged at work, businesses are barely scratching the surface. The concept of the employee experience is a step forward, as it prompts employers to consider the holistic impact of the various ways in which the organisation interacts with workers.

This study has shown that the technology that employers provide for their staff is an important contributor to that experience. But on a broader scale, technology has the potential to turn the employer-worker relationship on its head: how, for example, will employees relate to the changes that AI brings to the nature of work? Will automation enrich workers' lives by freeing them from drudgery, or alternatively impoverish them by making their roles superfluous? Do greater labour mobility and the growth of the "gig economy" make years-long employee loyalty a relic of the past?

Given the gravity of these questions, it seems certain that organisational roles and responsibilities around the employee experience will evolve. In particular, survey respondents agree, human and technology factors cannot be considered in isolation. The notion, for example, that tomorrow's CHROs and other HR leaders will need to have knowledge of technology topics such as AI and analytics is widely accepted by our survey respondents. So is the belief that future CIOs and other IT leaders will need to be experts in human factors such as engagement and well-being.

Their mutual understanding and collective efforts will be needed to ensure that the digital technology used by the organisation serves to empower employees rather than constrain them. Advanced technologies, after all, are often double-edged swords: when misused or mismanaged—witness data privacy breaches or rogue chatbots, for example—employees and customers often suffer, as does the reputation of the organisation. By contrast, when such technologies remove friction, liberate and open new vistas, the boost to employee motivation can be considerable, usually to the benefit of customers and employers.

*For more insight on technology and the employee experience, visit [theexperienceofwork.economist.com](https://theexperienceofwork.economist.com).*

## Appendix

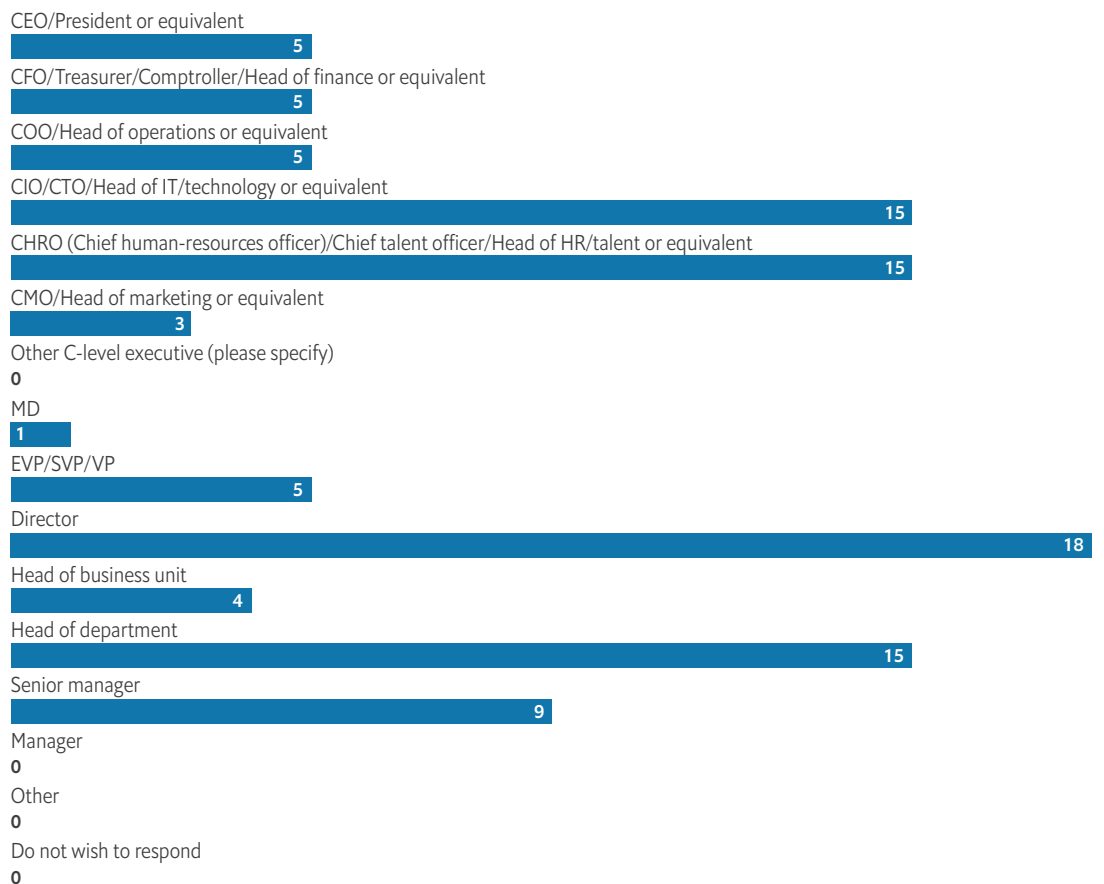
### In which country are you personally located?

(% respondents)



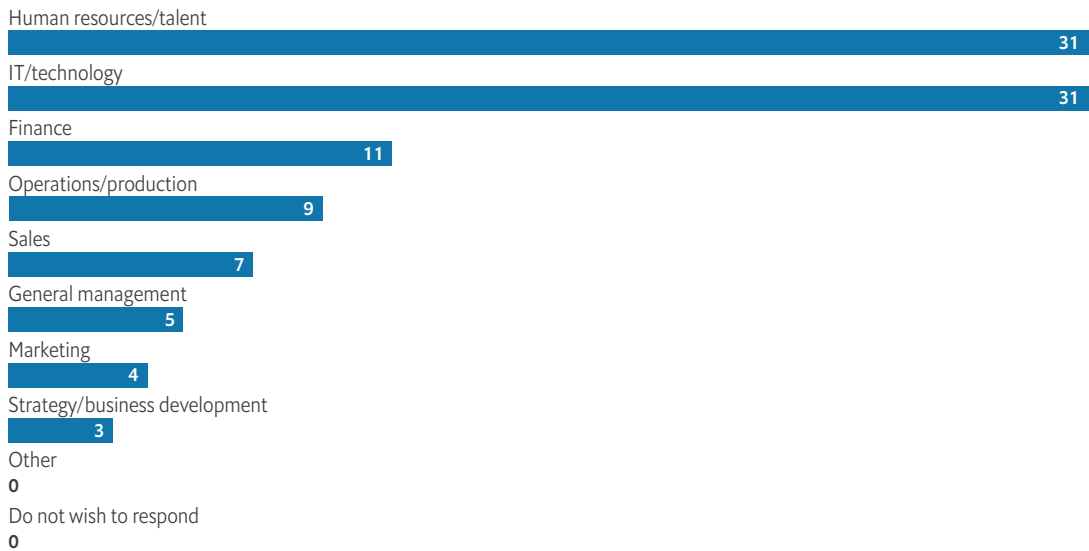
### Which of the following best describes your title?

(% respondents)



### What is your main functional role?

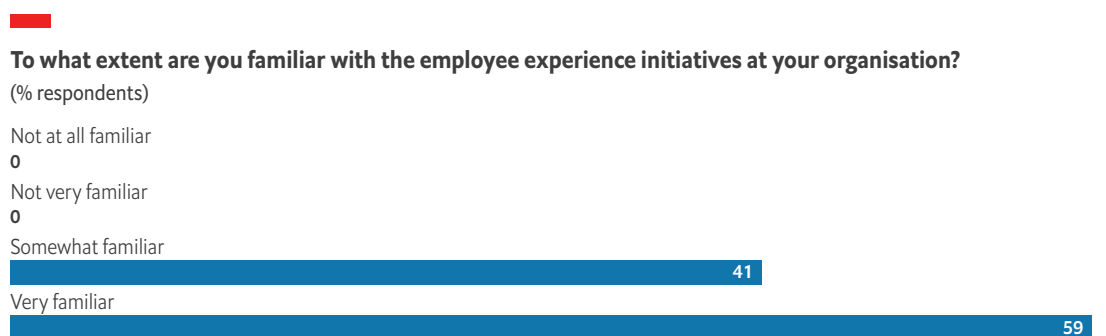
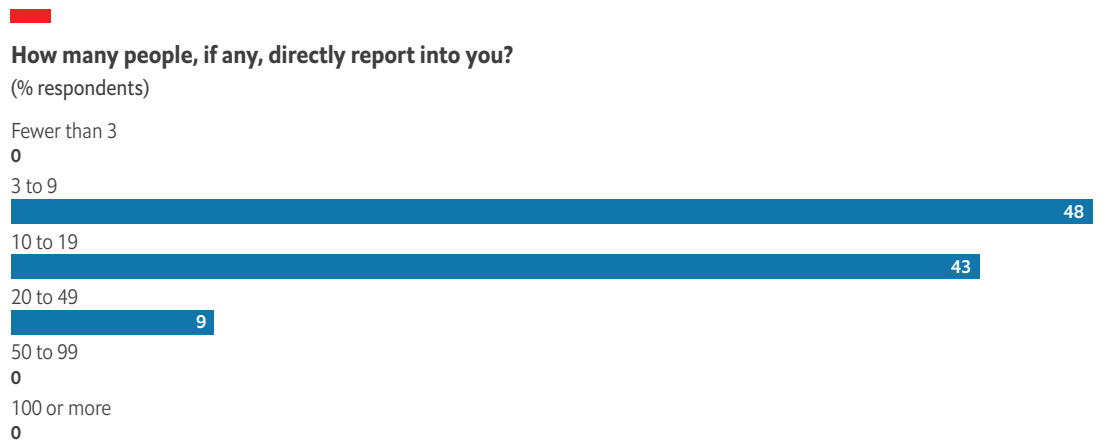
(% respondents)



### What is your organisation's primary industry?

(% respondents)





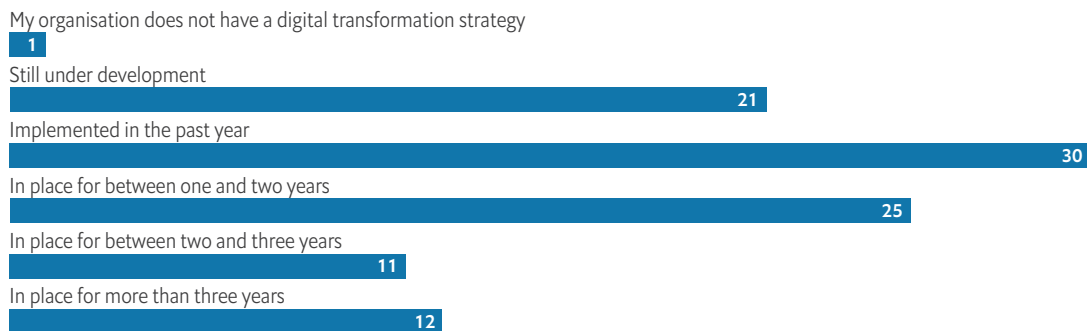
### Thinking about the organisation in which you work, how would you classify the majority of employees?

(% respondents)



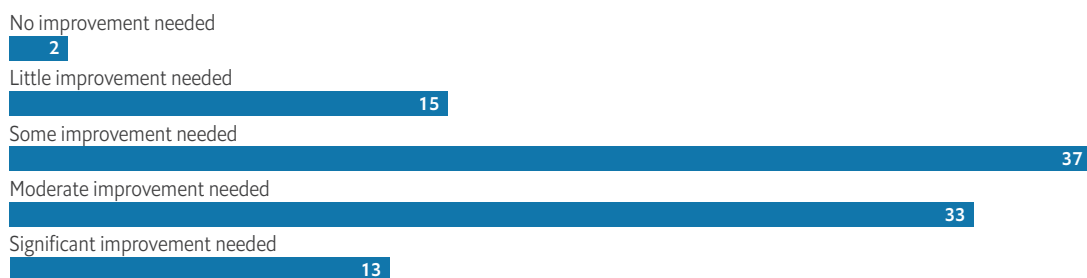
### At what stage of development or implementation is your organisation's digital transformation strategy?

(% respondents)



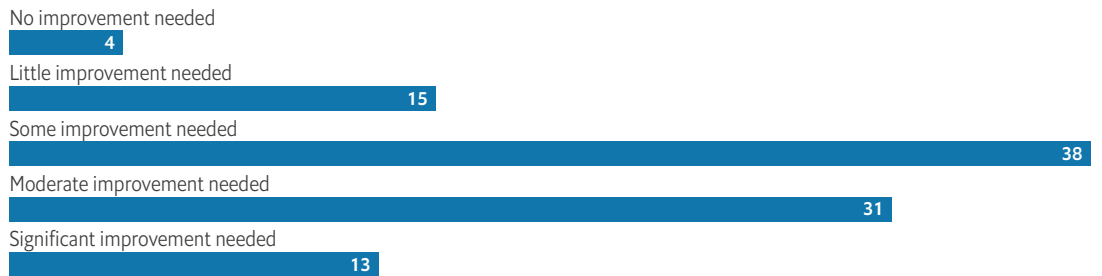
### Compared with peers, to what extent does your company need to improve when it comes to using digital technology to achieve its strategic objectives?

(% respondents)



**Compared with peers, to what extent do your company's C-suite need to improve their ability to drive digital transformation?**

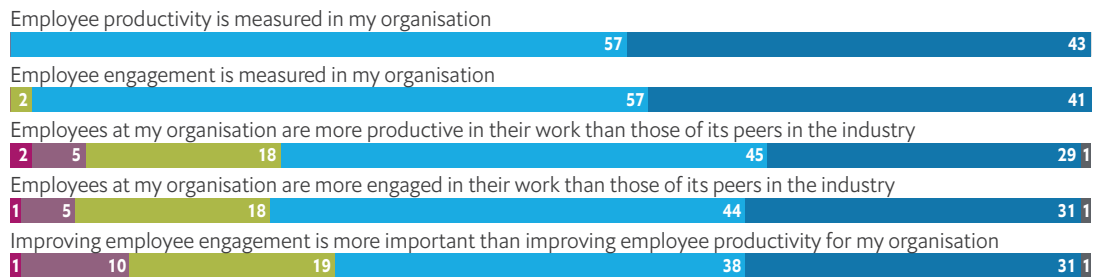
(% respondents)



**To what extent to do you agree with the following statements?**

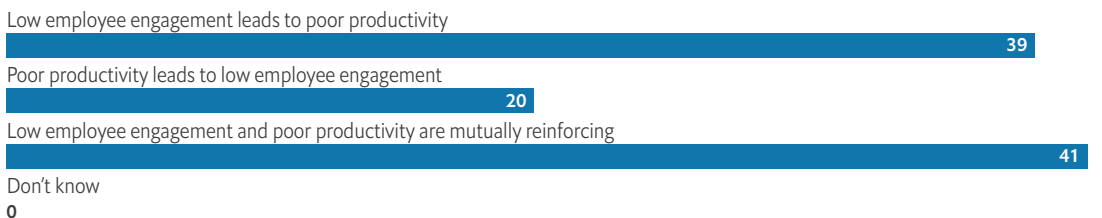
(% respondents)

Strongly disagree   Somewhat disagree   Neither agree nor disagree  
Somewhat agree   Strongly agree   Don't know



**Which of the following best describes the relationship between productivity and engagement in your opinion?**

(% respondents)





### To what extent is the working experience that your organisation provides for its employees discussed by senior management?

(% respondents)

Not at all

1

To a limited degree

18

Somewhat

39

Extensively

42

Don't know

0

### To what extent do you personally feel responsible for improving the employee experience within your organisation?

(% respondents)

I take full personal responsibility for employee experience across the organisation

27

I take full personal responsibility for employee experience within my team

46

I take some personal responsibility for the elements of the employee experience that are relevant to my role

24

Employee experience is the primary responsibility of other leaders

4

Don't know/not applicable

0

### What role do the following C-Suite positions have in shaping the employee experience within your organisation?

(% respondents)

■ Not involved at all ■ Limited support role ■ Significant support role  
■ Shared responsibility ■ Leadership role ■ Don't know

CHRO or equivalent

2 5 11 46 35 1

CIO or equivalent

5 20 25 32 17 1

CEO or equivalent

3 10 23 33 30

COO or equivalent

4 10 23 37 24 2

CFO or equivalent

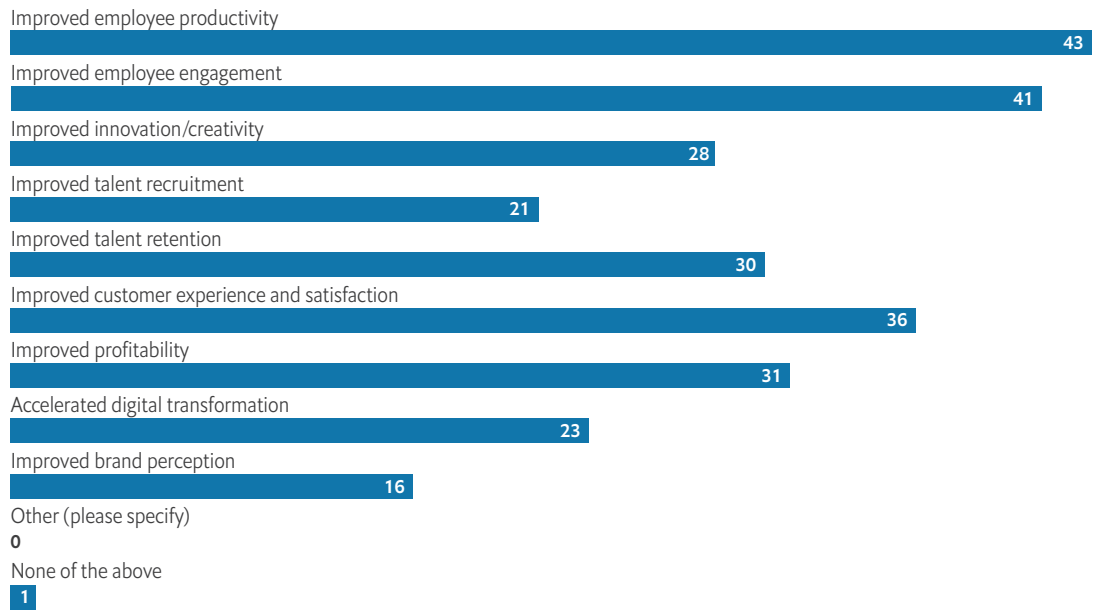
7 15 22 35 19 2

Chief digital officer or equivalent

5 18 30 27 18 2

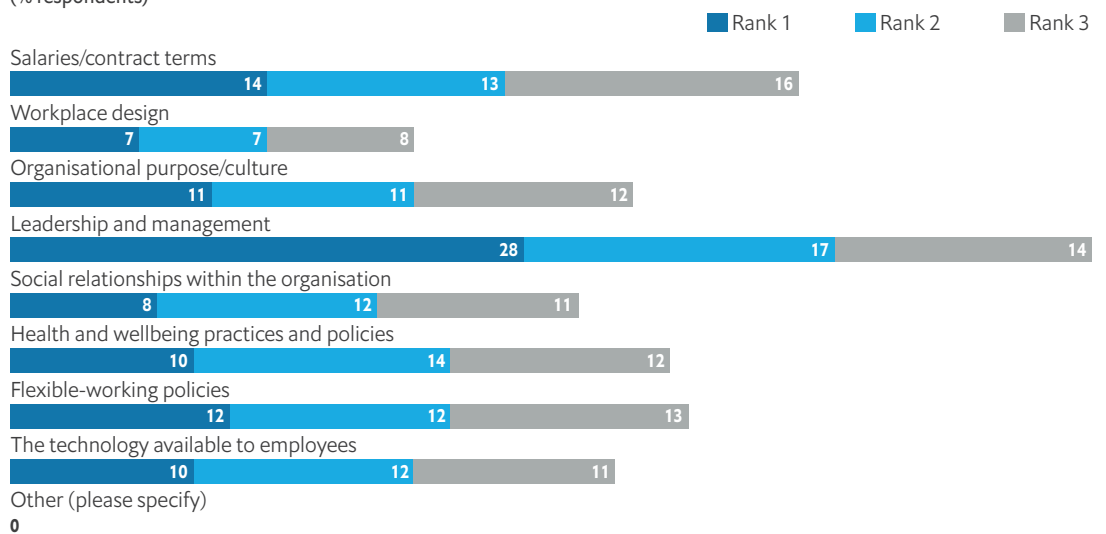
**What are the most significant business outcomes that your organisation has seen or expects to see from its efforts to improve the employee experience?**

(% respondents)



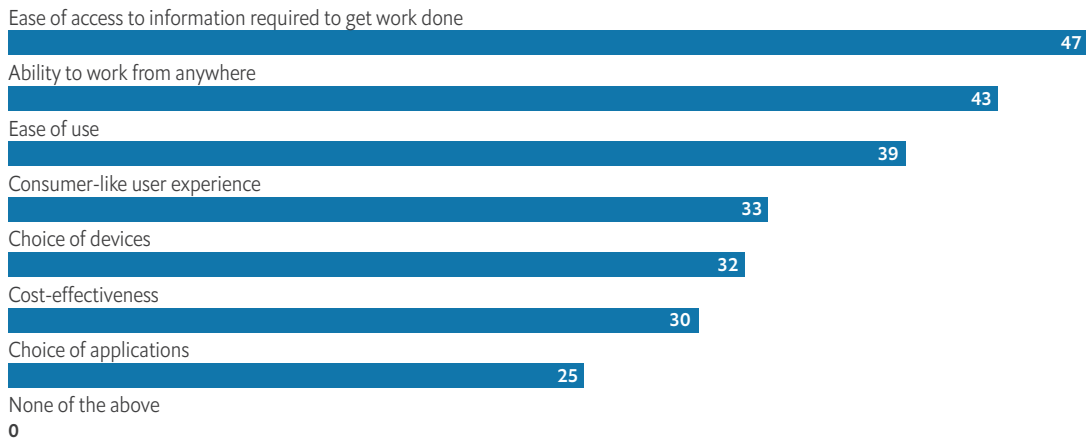
**Which of the following factors do you consider to be the most important in creating an employee experience that delivers these business outcomes?**

(% respondents)



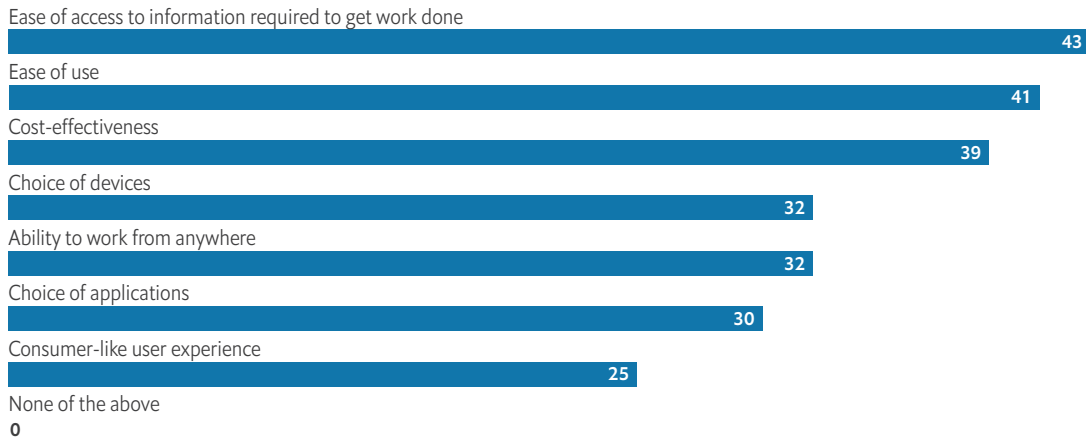
### Which of the following characteristics of workplace technology and related policies make the biggest contribution to employee engagement?

(% respondents)



### Which of the following characteristics of workplace technology and related policies make the biggest contribution to employee productivity?

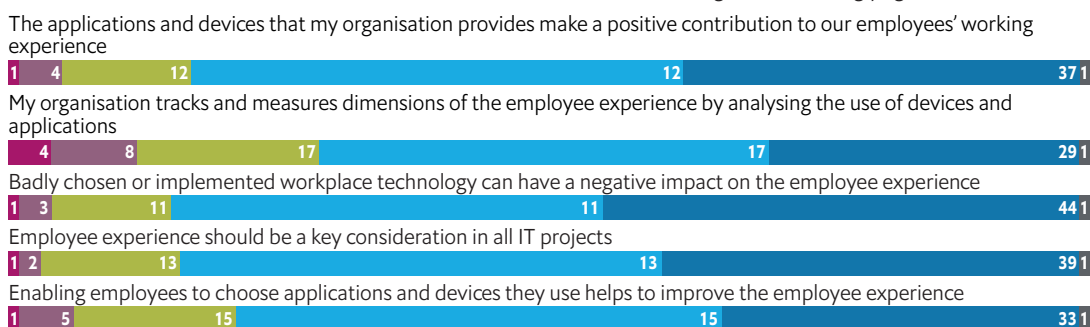
(% respondents)



### To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

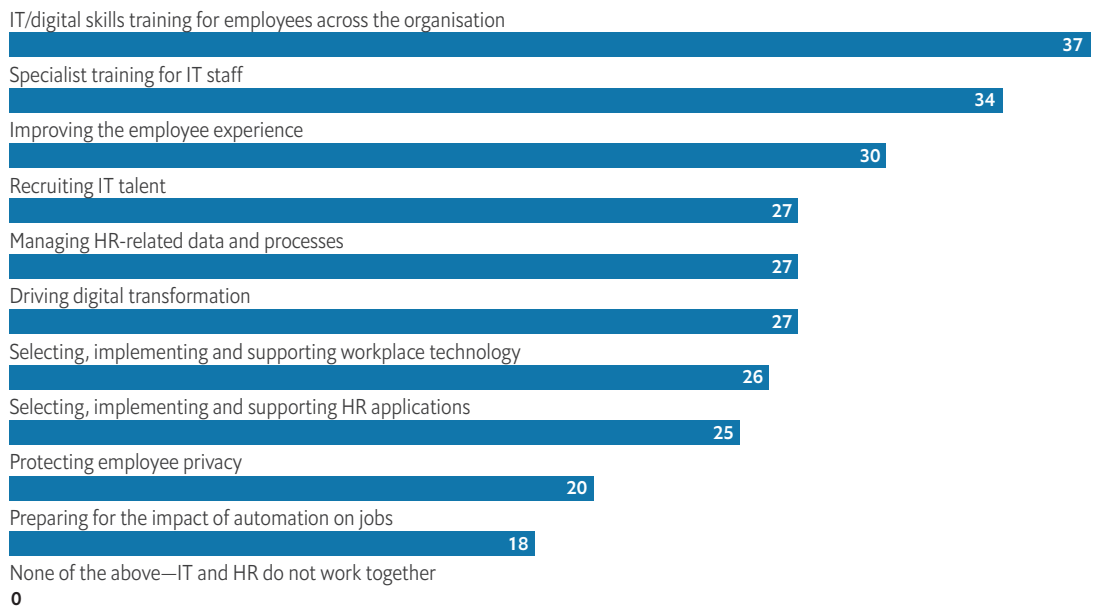
(% respondents)

■ Strongly disagree  
 ■ Somewhat disagree  
 ■ Neither agree nor disagree  
 ■ Somewhat agree  
 ■ Strongly agree  
 ■ Don't know



**Which of the following are the top priorities for collaboration between the IT and HR departments?**

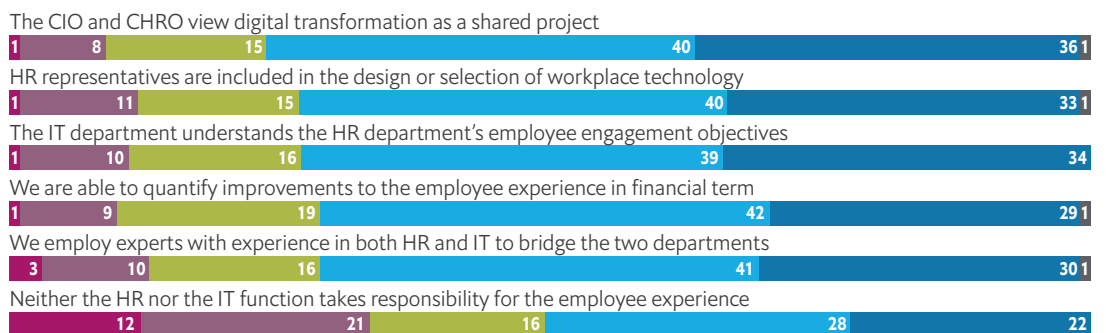
(% of IT and HR respondents)



**To what extent to do you agree with the following statements?**

(% of IT and HR respondents)

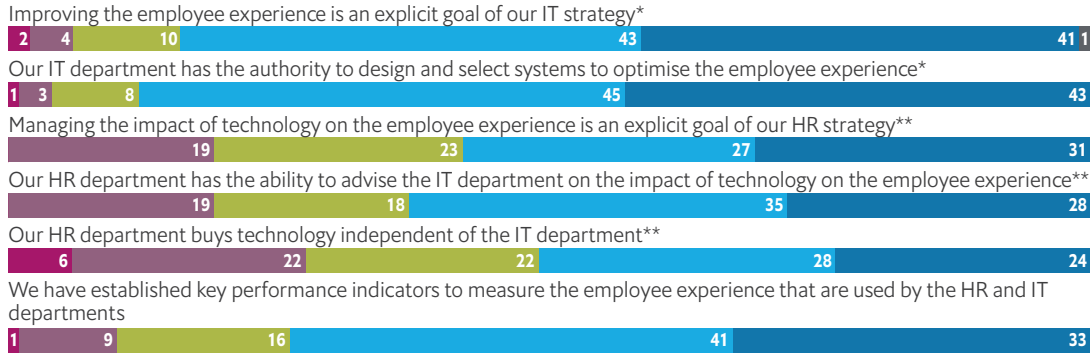
■ Strongly disagree  
 ■ Somewhat disagree  
 ■ Neither agree nor disagree  
 ■ Somewhat agree  
 ■ Strongly agree  
 ■ Don't know



### To what extent do you agree with the following statements, with respect to your organisation?

(% of IT and/or HR respondents)

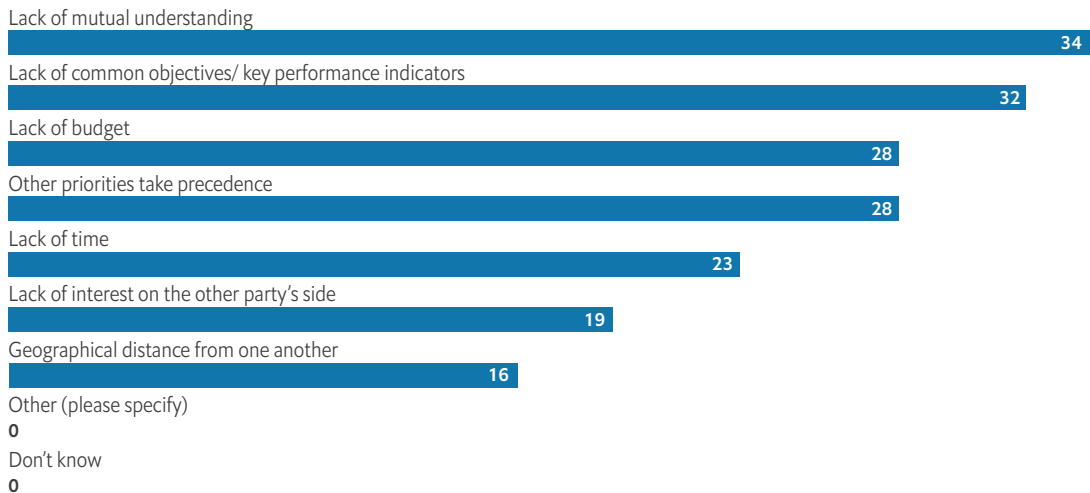
■ Strongly disagree  
 ■ Somewhat disagree  
 ■ Neither agree nor disagree  
■ Somewhat agree  
 ■ Strongly agree  
 ■ Don't know



\*IT respondents only. \*\*HR respondents only.

### What are the primary barriers to more effective collaboration between the HR and IT departments in your organisation?

(% of IT and/or HR respondents)

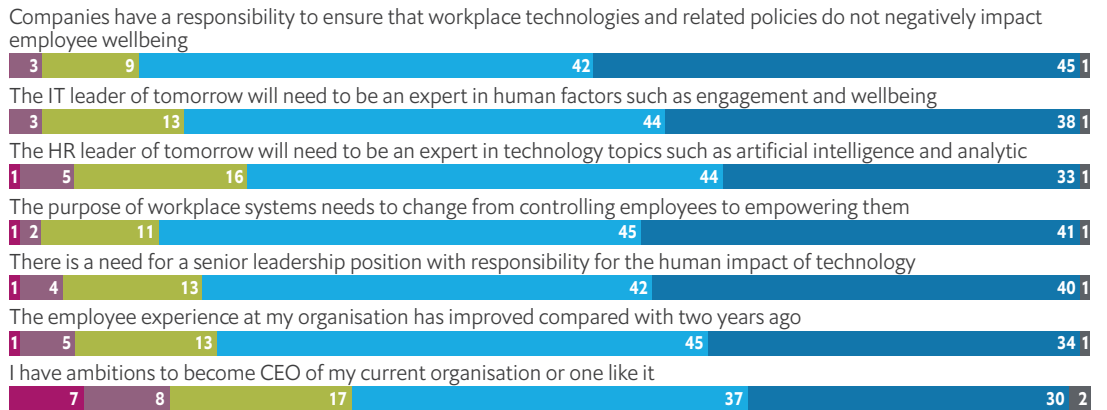




**To what extent do you agree with the following statements, with respect to your organisation?**

(% of IT and/or HR respondents)

■ Strongly disagree  
 ■ Somewhat disagree  
 ■ Neither agree nor disagree  
■ Somewhat agree  
 ■ Strongly agree  
 ■ Don't know



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