

# The State of Collaboration

IT leadership perspectives



2019/20

A global, independent survey  
of IT and business leaders



# Introduction

**While technology has been the enabler in creating a more collaborative working culture that encourages innovation, it has also added greater complexity—for individuals, teams, and the IT department.**

Why? Because we keep adding new tools into the workplace, without retiring the old ones. In fact, on average employees are now switching between as many as **35 tools per day**. This is negatively impacting productivity, job satisfaction, and innovation.

Rather than being part of one team, your employees are operating in many teams simultaneously. This means you have to deliver solutions that allow them to work in different countries, in different time zones, whilst encouraging the adoption of tools that help your employees innovate and get work done faster.

So, how do you take back control of this technology ecosystem, declutter it, and work with employees and department leads to explain the business benefits of doing so?

Well, to help you answer that question, we've worked with Vanson Bourne to survey 2,500 business and IT decision makers to better understand:

1. The impact a complex tool ecosystem has on business productivity
2. The role of IT (and business leads) in fixing the broken workplace
3. How a more collaborative approach to working could improve productivity, innovation and customer satisfaction
4. Top tips for IT leaders wanting to create a connected workplace

Read on to find out how other information technology leaders are turning to a more collaborative culture and the tools that supplement this shift, in order to drive productivity and innovation at their company.



# Section one:

# How technology is breaking the workplace



# It is often said that a happy workforce leads to happy customers. But how do you make your workforce happier?

Bigger salaries? More paid holiday? Workplace perks such as on-site cafés or maybe a gym membership?

Most of the above would appeal to many employees, but others would be happy if they could just do their job, unhindered. And, responsibility for the latter falls at least partly on IT.

On average, the business decision makers we surveyed are wasting 29% of their working day on tasks that do not add critical value to the organisation. This wasted time – which amounts to over a week each month – leads to demoralised and demotivated teams.

These teams are spending a substantial amount of time on tasks such as meetings, email administration, and using communication tools to reach people.

With such a complex technology ecosystem at play, your employees are switching between as many as 35 tools per day at work. This not only poses a challenge for employees - who are becoming less productive as a result - but for the IT leads responsible for keeping sensitive company data secure across all these apps.

IT leaders recognise they have a role to play in unscrambling this broken workplace and giving employees time back to refocus on business-critical tasks like strategy, planning and innovation. From the variety of priorities highlighted by IT leads over the next 12 months, implementing emerging technologies, simplifying the technology ecosystem, improving collaboration, and information security are among the most common.



←  
**On average, business decision makers are wasting 29% of their working day on tasks that do not add critical value to the organisation - IT leaders have a role to play in unscrambling this broken workplace and giving employees time back to refocus on business-critical tasks**

# Section two:

# Leading the collaborative revolution



With IT and business leaders agreeing that enabling collaborative working is one of their main business priorities, you'd be forgiven for thinking steps have already been taken to bridge the collaboration gap.

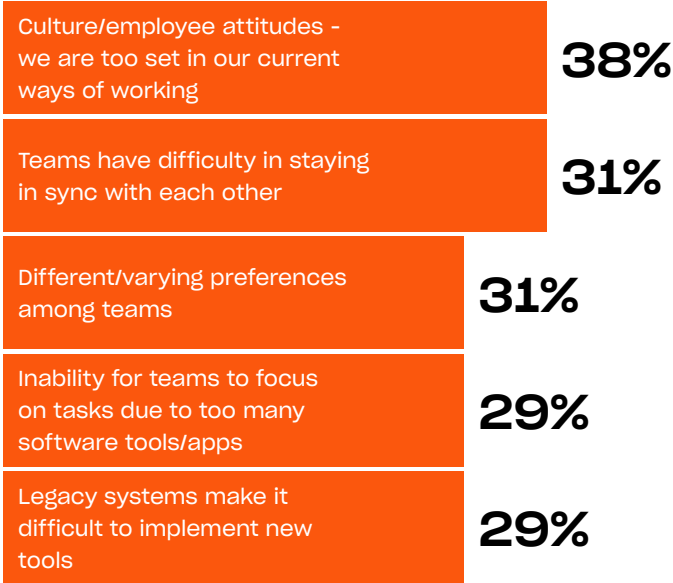


But, six in ten (62%) IT leaders admit significant or large improvements are still required when it comes to collaborative working in their organisation, with three barriers cited as the main blockers, on average. Culture and employee attitude are cited as the most common (38%), followed by teams struggling to stay in sync (31%), and the differing tool preferences among teams (31%). These barriers are not unique to any single industry or country, which just goes to show the size of the task in front of IT leaders.

Despite this, those IT leaders we surveyed are still committed to improving workplace collaboration, with almost 4 in 10 (38%) saying collaboration tools are among their biggest investment priorities for the next 12-24 months, only sitting behind information security, and developing new products and services.



**“Which of the following are barriers to improving collaborative working in your organisation?”** asked to all IT decision maker respondents (500), showing the five most commonly selected





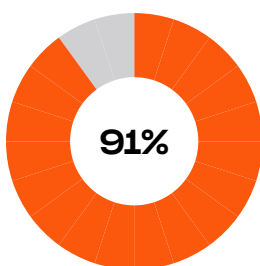


## Working with business leads to bridge the collaboration gap

There's acknowledgement amongst IT leaders that the overall success of their organisation depends on reinventing the way teams collaborate (91%), and they recognise they can't do it alone!

The challenges felt in every corner of the business are largely out of sight for IT leaders, who need to rely on business leaders to bring these challenges to light, to highlight needs and offer solutions. 91% of IT leaders agree that streamlining tool and app usage will help employees work smarter, quicker and easier, with slightly fewer (83%) business leads also believing this to be the case. Both leaderships are broadly aligned on this point, which is shown in their agreement that the effective sharing of files and content on live projects is integral to employee productivity in their organisation (90% and 83% respectively).

Despite this agreement in the challenges and how to solve them, what is concerning is that business leads don't seem to validate the role of IT in enabling and delivering this collaborative workplace. 37% believe the operations team are in part responsible for this, and 35% think the board/C-suite are involved – both more commonly reported than the IT department which sits in joint third place on the respondents' list at 33%, alongside HR.



←  
**91% agree that overall success of their organisation depends on them reinventing the way that teams collaborate both internally and externally**



# Section three:

## The case for a connected workspace - it couldn't be clearer!





## The overwhelming support for a more connected workspace within the organisation from IT and business leaders shows that aligning will be powerful for the business as a whole.

To enable the IT team to own, design and deliver this, the rest of the leadership team needs to first identify the challenges faced. The success of this aspect is heavily reliant on all areas of the business staying in touch and identifying the challenges on behalf of the IT team, who cannot see into the depths of each team or individual's way of working.

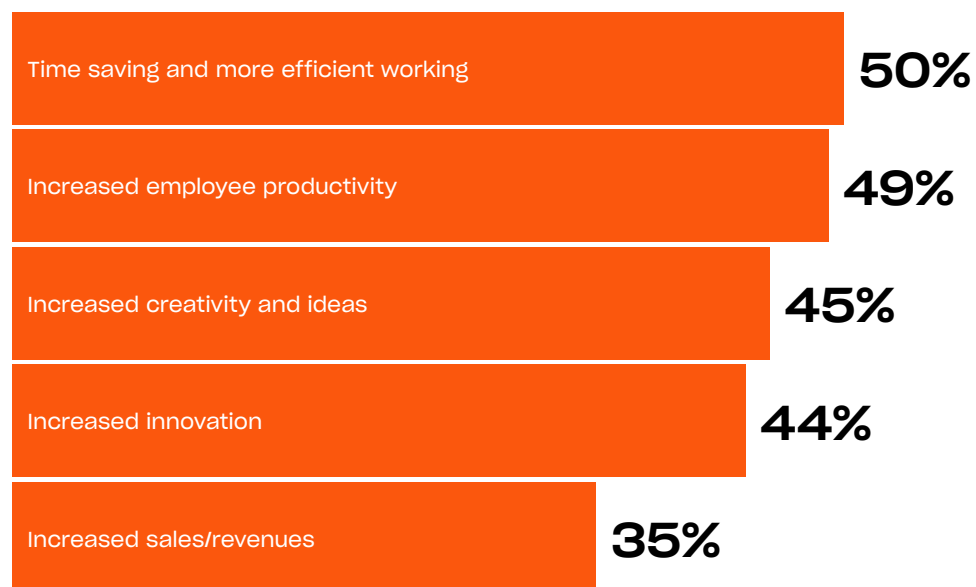
The IT team can also jump into the driving seat to analyse the business in a more coordinated manner - both approaches are known to work, depending on the nature and size of the organisation, and the amount of information required for decision-making.

Either way though, educating the business is key to gathering insight, and building the solution.

Increasing investment in a workspace that connects content, tools and teams is one of the key priorities for IT teams over the next 12 months, with 90% admitting that it is a critical path to successful innovation in the business.

A considered approach will ultimately lead to a raft of benefits – with most IT respondents (92%) believing a connected workspace will improve business results and the way that teams work across their organisation. While substantial proportions cite specific benefits such as time savings and work efficiencies (50%), increased employee productivity (49%), creativity and ideas (45%), innovation (44%), and/or sales and revenues (35%)

→  
“Which of the following benefits do you believe a unified workspace – that connects your content/tools/teams - would have for your organisation?” asked to IT decision maker respondents who believe that a unified workspace would improve business results and the way they/teams work (459), omitting some options





# Conclusion

IT leaders recognise that it's their responsibility to equip employees with the tools they need to be more productive at work, the challenge is identifying what these tools are, how to roll them out, and how to secure buy in for them.

While IT teams and business leads do not agree on everything, one thing they do both agree on is that a connected workspace – which connects content, tools and teams – will help fix the broken workplace, improve productivity and innovation.

Improving the way your organisation collaborates is crucial if you want to keep up with the competition, retain employee talent, and deliver a more creative environment for teams. And, a unified workspace is a good step towards achieving this, helping you bring all of your resources and people together:

→ **Bringing content together:** Ensuring you and your teams have everything in one place - now your PowerPoints and PDFs can live next to your Google Docs and Airtables

→ **Bringing tools together:** Connecting your content to the tools you use every day like Slack, Zoom, Atlassian, Google, Microsoft Office 365 and many more

→ **Bringing people together:** Enabling you and your teams to see everything that's going on, all the context and conversations, all in the same workspace

With IT leads having worked independently from business leads in the past, now's the time to work together to create a more collaborative approach to tool selection. An approach that will enable a more secure environment for collaboration in your organisation. This means working with business leads to better understand what a unified workspace looks like for their teams and department, and how it could improve employee productivity, satisfaction and business results.

If you're nodding in agreement and want to begin making improvements in your organisation, then here are eight steps to get you started on your journey to positive, collaborative change.



# Eight steps to success





1

## Identify your business objectives

As with any project, the fundamental first step is establishing your objectives; outlining what the business is trying to achieve through greater collaborative working practices. By setting these out early, you'll be able to orientate everything you implement around these core goals, keep progress on track and measure against them to ensure any new practices or technologies you adopt continue to work for your teams as the needs of the business develop.

2

## Understand your workflows and the tools your teams want to use

With your core business objectives outlined, you now need to know what you're working with. Spend time with different teams to understand their current processes and workflows, and talk to your employees about their technology wants and needs. What workflows can be automated or streamlined, and what tech solutions could address this? Are they looking for features common in a communication, project management, sales, content management or CRM tool? What will ultimately help your employees to do their job to the best of their ability? By asking these questions, you'll soon identify the core requirements of each team, and be able to pinpoint one or two solutions that fit the bill for everyone and simplify the tech ecosystem – paving the way for a more connected, collaborative environment.

3

## Evaluate your current technology portfolio

Now you have a clearer picture of team workflows and needs, it's essential to understand the technology, tools and apps your teams are already using on a day-to-day basis, and how this differs across the business. Survey your employees to identify what these are, and how productive they feel. A thorough audit is likely to uncover a host of programs which are helping employees individually, but perhaps hindering your team's ability to work collaboratively, or with other departments and external suppliers. If your workforce is sharing information across multiple applications, you could end up duplicating efforts, losing files and wasting valuable time – all of which will impact productivity. Note everything down and you'll soon have an accurate picture of your current technology portfolio, and how work flows (or doesn't) between it.

4

## Assess the business impact and ROI of implementing these tools

With a list of potential tools and apps on the table, you'll need to objectively review which are the best fit for your business. Determining what appeals to you and your team (or doesn't) about the apps you want to use is key. Evaluating existing tools to understand how different solutions work together or impact each other is a similarly crucial step. The goal is a frictionless, connected solution so consider functionality, usability and security. How will teams use them? How much time will it save them? How will you prove ROI and business impact? Interoperable technology solutions that integrate with other tools or apps are your best bet, enabling seamless communication and the sharing of information between platforms.



5

## Secure buy-in from decision makers

When it comes to choosing which collaborative tools to roll-out, it's unlikely the decision will be solely in your hands. Once you have your business case you'll likely need to pitch it to those in your business with the decision-making power. Present the findings of your audit, outline your recommendations and – most importantly – how these tools will align staff, reduce friction, remove duplication, improve collaboration and benefit the business. If collaborative change is on their agenda too (which it likely is), buy-in should be forthcoming.

6

## Establish an inter-departmental task force

Now you need a group of people to lead the collaborative charge across the business. You'll want a cross-functional team of people, made up of differing roles, levels and departments, who can work together to develop a comprehensive business transformation strategy. Not only will they be responsible for rolling out any new tools and technologies, but it falls on their shoulders to foster a collaborative culture across the business – devolving single ownership, breaking down organisational silos, fostering communication and sharing creative solutions, for example.

7

## Communicate and support change

With joint ownership comes shared responsibility. You and your task force need to communicate and inspire the collaborative change across the business. Ensure employees understand the new technologies you're implementing, how the tools integrate and can be used together to streamline workflows, and ultimately make their working life easier and more enjoyable. Provide support for anyone struggling to adjust – change is not easy on everyone, so the last thing you want is for individuals to revert to old tools and undermine the collaborative practices you've worked hard to put in place.

8

## Review your collaborative workspace

As with any project, reviewing and evaluating how it's working after implementation is critical to success. Your task force can help. Look at all aspects of your collaborative strategy, identify strengths and weaknesses, early successes and failures, and ask questions. Are teams regularly using the new technologies and working within the shared workspace? Has collaboration between teams, departments, and suppliers improved? How much happier or more productive are employees feeling? Compare the sentiment of your workforce to when you first gathered their thoughts (at step three) – has there been a positive change? Effective collaboration requires continuous monitoring and evolution, ensuring your strategy keeps up with the changing needs of your organisation and its employees. So, while this final step will never be 'complete' it is essential for the overall success of your collaborative business.





# Research methodology and scope



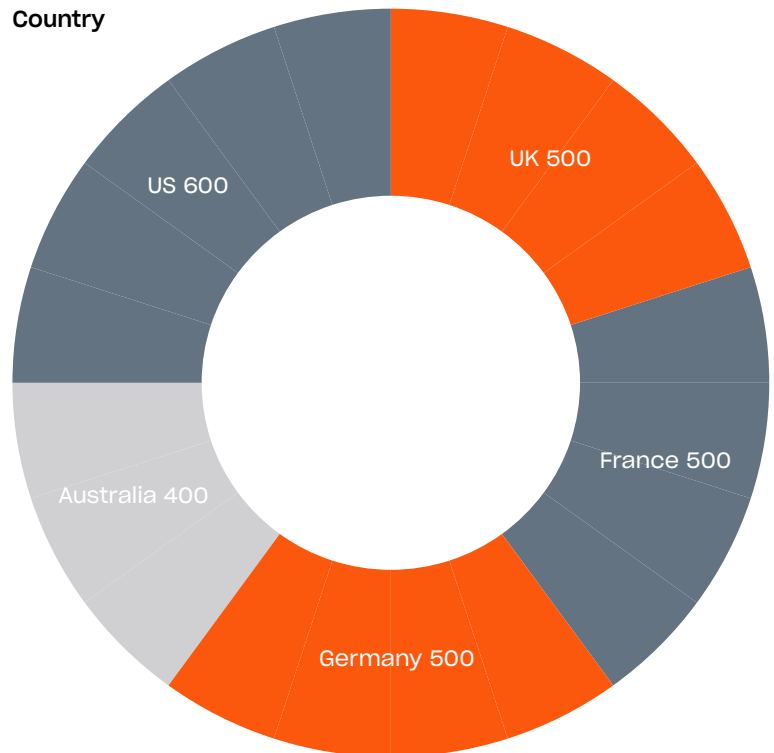
The research included the following number of interviews in each of the below countries and sectors:

Dropbox commissioned independent market research specialist Vanson Bourne to undertake the research upon which this executive summary is based.

A total of 2,500 business and IT decision makers were interviewed during July and August 2019 (2,000 business decision makers and 500 IT decision makers).

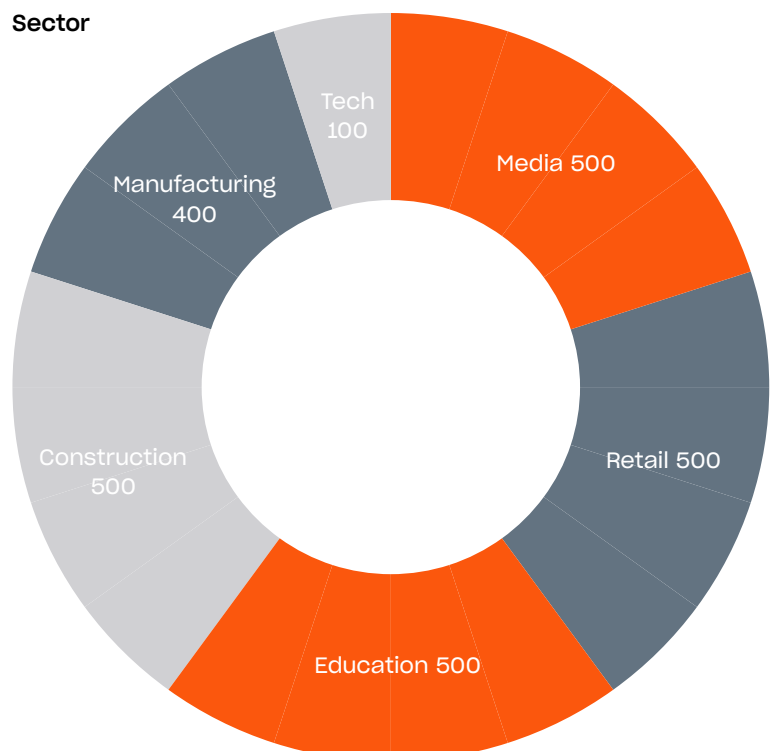
All respondents are from organisations with 250 or more employees, and they must collaborate with at least one person on a daily basis, and also use software and applications to get their work done.

Country



The interviews were conducted using a mixture of online and telephone interviewing, all of which were undertaken using a rigorous multi-level screening process to ensure that only suitable candidates were given the opportunity to participate. Unless otherwise indicated, the results discussed are based on the total sample of ITDM respondents.

Sector





### About Dropbox

Dropbox Business is the world's first smart workspace that helps IT leads create a secure, agile work environment, transforming the way people work together, from the smallest business to the largest enterprise. With more than 600 million registered users across more than 180 countries, our products enable secure collaboration, robust user control and streamlined workflows, which enhance the employee experience, drive innovation and accelerate digital transformation.

Headquartered in San Francisco, CA, Dropbox has 12 offices around the world. For more information on our mission and products, visit [dropbox.com/enterprise](https://dropbox.com/enterprise)

### Vanson Bourne

Vanson Bourne is an independent specialist in market research for the technology sector. Their reputation for robust and credible research-based analysis is founded upon rigorous research principles and their ability to seek the opinions of senior decision makers across technical and business functions, in all business sectors and all major markets. For more information, visit [vansonbourne.com](https://vansonbourne.com)

