



The digital revolution – transforming lives inside and outside the workplace

An era of instant gratification

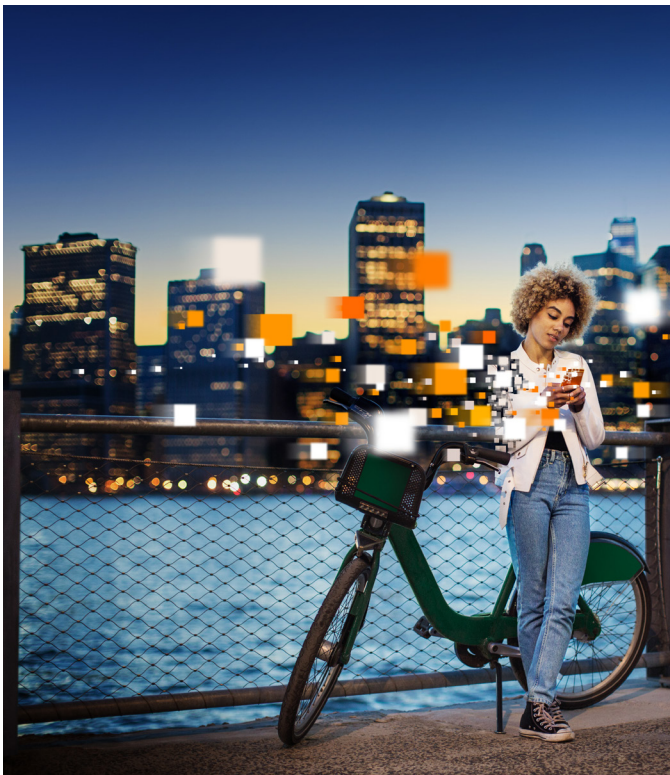
Over the past five years, pioneering tech companies have transformed the lifestyles of millions of consumers by providing personal convenience and instant gratification of needs. Social media networks instantly connect individuals and groups anywhere. Taxis can be hailed to exact locations in seconds. Any TV boxset can be binge-watched on the move. And with one tap, consumer goods can be delivered to doorsteps within a day. These innovations only scratch the surface of the technological opportunities being afforded to populations by ever-developing hardware and cloud technology.

And yet, despite a similar proliferation of digital workplace technologies, professional lives have yet to be revolutionised in quite the same way. In fact, employee expectations of workplace technology are fast overtaking the potential provided by organisations' infrastructures. As more Millennials and members of Generation Z enter the workforce, expectations will rise further still.

New research commissioned by Avanade shows that many UK employees are perceiving their IT infrastructure as a limiting, rather than enabling, influence. But companies are preparing to act. **The Avanade Digital Workplace survey** reveals a growing realisation that UK companies must fulfil their potential in the digital age

by **enabling creative, energetic work environments.**

This e-article reviews and analyses the research, highlighting the challenges UK organisations face, and comparing UK attitudes with those in Germany and the US.



Methodology

The Avanade Survey was conducted by Wakefield Research (www.wakefieldresearch.com) as an online survey to 500 C-level executives and IT decision makers in the following countries: Australia, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, Singapore, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The survey was conducted between May 14 and May 28, 2015 using an email invitation and an online survey.

The end of the traditional office

Nearly three-quarters (72%) of IT decision-makers think the traditional office as we know it will someday become obsolete. It's a view shared in the US (69%) and to a lesser extent in Germany (64%). A new type of work environment is emerging, driven by developing communication technologies and the evolving needs and expectations of both employers and employees.

The research reveals 74% of UK respondents believe the workers of the future will expect increased mobile connectivity and accessibility. But that still means a quarter of UK businesses are unaware of these expectations. Or worse yet, they don't see how greater workplace connectivity and accessibility benefits employees and employers alike. The small minority yet to be sold on this will rapidly dwindle in the coming years.

A social environment

In many respects, people in UK organisations seem more attuned to the expectations of the future workforce. A significant majority (60%) believe employees will expect to manage tasks through automation. It's a view shared by 53% of American respondents and only 40% of those in Germany. Around four in ten respondents in all three countries also expect more social collaboration at work.

In light of these expectations, IT heads and Chief Information Officers might want to consider gathering more information about employees' specific digital needs and expectations in a more systematic way. Profiling the types of employees entering businesses could be an important first step. A more strategic approach to technology provision is required in the modern environment.

The research shows technologies and platforms widely used by consumers are expected to become common in the workplace. But many businesses are a long way off. Connectivity and communication tools such as email or video conferencing are widely used by 72% of UK organisations, but only 53% widely use mobile applications and just 37% social collaboration tools.

The research suggests employees aren't enjoying the technology-enabled convenience they have grown used to outside work. They expect instant gratification and intuitive, user-friendly interfaces that respond to requirements. They want a seamless experience across channels and platforms. But it appears that few employers provide this kind of end-to-end digital experience for their employees.



The threat to creativity

Nearly three in ten (29%) IT decision-makers in the UK believe their company's technology diminishes, rather than enables, creative thinking. The situation seems worse in Germany, where 40% of respondents believe the same. The statistics perhaps reflect a sense of disillusionment among those leading digital evolution in companies. Could there also be a sense of fatigue due to the constant and continual digital refreshes they must lead as technology progresses?

Inflexible legacy IT systems prevent companies from realising their creative potential. Nearly two-fifths (42%) of UK businesses experience difficulties with the high cost of maintaining and managing legacy IT systems, significantly over-indexing against those in Germany (25%) and the US (30%). Similarly, 29%

of UK respondents believe these legacy IT systems can't keep pace with new business demands. And another 29% have experienced an inability to implement changes and solutions quickly.

This could be contributing to a sense among employees that, rather than enabling new ways of working, technology actually creates more work. Of the UK decision-makers surveyed, 75% believe that new technologies are leading to new skills and disciplines in the workplace. This compares with 65% of German respondents and 79% of US respondents. It's inevitable that new technology leads to a requirement of new workplace skills. But too often the effort needed to adapt to new technologies isn't commensurate with the reward. Rather than using digital tools to augment or enable new methods of working, the technology is too often leading

companies. Employees have to learn its language, instead of it learning theirs.

Moreover, technological advancements have yet to truly change how people work. Too often employees are working in the same way as decades ago, just using technology to do it faster. Instead of walking over to a colleague to ask for help, an email is sent. Processes have been adapted rather than changed.

Now technology is heralding a different future. Ways of working will be driven by data, algorithms and increasing computing power. Technology tools will help employees make real-time, informed decisions. And these systems will be used in every conceivable aspect of business – from employee recruitment and retention to customer care.



Freeing workforces

To unlock the creative potential of the workforce, it's clear that the IT departments in UK organisations must move away from a keeping-the-lights-on approach. Instead a more evergreen, cloud-based infrastructure that can keep pace with the way people expect to work is needed.

There is an appetite for responsive tools that augment how employees work instead of prescribing their approach. There is an appetite for applications that

work seamlessly across devices so employees are truly mobile and flexible. Similarly, there is an appetite to use data and intelligence to automate working processes.

However, it is not enough to simply invest in new technology. Employees must find any new system easy to use and, crucially, must understand the benefit to them of using it. Strategically, IT decision-makers and HR departments must align their thinking to provide an IT infrastructure that not only delivers against commercial goals, but is built to suit the needs of employees.

And finally, it is up to the senior stakeholders in any business to change their approach to IT procurement. Thinking of digital transformation as a technology problem is outdated. Solutions and platforms are simply tools that enable a business to grow, and the discussion about how to deploy them is a strategic one that should occur at board level.

To learn more about how Avanade can help you transform your business, visit www.avanade.com or call us on 020 7025 1000



About Avanade

Avanade leads in providing innovative digital services, business solutions and design-led experiences for its clients, delivered through the power of people and the Microsoft ecosystem. Our professionals combine technology, business and industry expertise to build and deploy solutions to realize results for clients and their customers. Avanade has 27,000 digitally connected people across 23 countries, bringing clients the best thinking through a collaborative culture that honors diversity and reflects the communities in which we operate. Majority owned by Accenture, Avanade was founded in 2000 by Accenture LLP and Microsoft Corporation. Learn more at www.avanade.com

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