Collaboration Unleashed: Research Study
Empowering individuals to work together from anywhere

Fall 2017
Introduction

Collaboration is critical to the growth and advancement of all organizations.

Bringing individuals together with varying disciplines, perspectives and experience generates fresh thinking and innovative results. It benefits the business when employees learn from one another by bringing their collective knowledge to bear on a single goal.

Collaboration technology, when applied right, enhances the productivity of the group, and creates better connectivity among collaborators regardless of geography. As technology continues to enhance and integrate how we collaborate, office employees increasingly demand the freedom to collaborate from wherever and whenever they do their best work.

Softchoice, a leading North American IT solution and managed service provider, commissioned a study to explore trends in employee productivity and collaboration, including the use of office automation tools, remote work flexibility, and how well organizations equip their people with the technology they need to be productive.

One thousand full-time North American office workers, who use a computer or mobile device for the majority of their workday, were surveyed.
Study Highlights

94% of North American office workers rely on collaboration to fulfill their job duties.

83% use technology to collaborate in real time with people in different locations.

78% of workers who use collaboration technology frequently experience technical difficulties.

85% feel it’s important for their employer to provide technology that enables them to work remotely.

74% would quit their jobs to work for a different organization that allows them to work remotely more often, even if their salary stayed the same.

24% feel their job is in danger of being replaced entirely by technology within five years.
Section 1: Collaboration

Collaboration

Noun / col·lab·o·ra·tion /

A joint effort of multiple individuals or work groups to accomplish a task or project. Within an organization, collaboration typically involves the ability of two or more people to view and contribute to documents or other content over a network.
Almost all North American office workers rely on collaboration:

- 94% need to collaborate with others to fulfill their job duties
- 50% spend at least 10 hours per week collaborating with others
- 37% are “very dependent” on collaboration
- 25% spend at least 20 hours per week collaborating with others

Most office workers use technology to facilitate collaboration:

- 83% use technology to collaborate with others who are not physically in the same room or office
- 24% “often” or “always” have a remote participant in meetings
Among office workers who rely on collaboration technology, however, 3-in-4 run into frequent technical difficulties that impact the collaborative experience:

- **78%** “frequently” experience technical difficulties
- **43%** take at least five minutes to get the collaboration session started

**Technical difficulties experienced by employees in the last month alone:**

- **31%** someone had trouble joining the meeting
- **28%** someone got dropped from the meeting
- **29%** the meeting had connection quality issues
- **21%** someone had trouble executing a feature (ie. screen sharing)
- **33%** other delays and technical difficulties
In addition to technical problems detracting from collaboration, most office workers feel the business does a poor job understanding their business needs BEFORE technology is implemented:

**IT engagement by business size:**

- **Employees who don’t have a say in technology decisions:**
  - Overall .......... 57%
  - Small ............. 52%
  - Mid-size .......... 51%
  - Enterprise ........ 68%

- **Employees who don’t get consulted after a new technology is implemented:**
  - Overall .......... 39%
  - Small ............. 36%
  - Mid-size .......... 33%
  - Enterprise ........ 47%

- **Employees who don’t have a say in technology decisions, but wish they did:**
  - Overall .......... 27%
  - Small ............. 26%
  - Mid-size .......... 24%
  - Enterprise ........ 31%
Even if the technology does work, too many office workers receive inadequate training on the features and functionality of collaboration tools:

- 29% get little or no training on new technology
- 22% get 1-3 hours
- 28% get 30 minutes to an hour
- 15% get 3+ hours

According to office workers, who is most responsible for technology training and adoption?

- IT: 19%
- Direct Managers: 31%
- Human Resources: 50%
Whether it’s inadequate technology, training or consultation, most office workers admit to bringing their personal devices in to work to complete tasks:

55% of North American office workers have brought a personal device into the office to use instead of a similar device provided by their employer.

What was the reason?

- 37% “My personal device is better suited for a specific task”
- 30% “I am more efficient working on my device”
- 14% “My work device is outdated”
- 11% “I used an app my employer does not provide”
- 8% “I used an app that is better than the one my employer provides”
Section 2: Mobility

**Mobility**

Noun / mo•bil•i•ty /

The trend toward a shift in work habits, with more employees working out of the office and using mobile devices and cloud services to perform business tasks.
Most office workers expect to be provided with technology that enables them to work away from the office. At best, half are issued the tools to make it happen.

85% say it’s important their organization provides the technology support to work from home.

**What collaboration-enabling devices do employers provide?**

| Employer issued devices: | 55.3% Laptops | 19% Tablets | 31% Smartphones |

**What collaboration-enabling applications do employers provide?**

- 50% Instant Messaging
- 49% Videoconferencing
- 46% Teleconferencing
- 41% Remote Desktops
- 37% Screen Sharing
- 34% Software-based Phone
- 28% Unified Messaging
- 15% Internal Social Media
Since so few workers are supplied with the right technology, it makes sense that so few are allowed to work from home:

“Does your employer allow you to work from home on occasion?”

- 51% Yes
- 49% No

Can you really do it though?

- 73% are still expected to work in office
- 27% can choose for themselves where to work

Why not?

- 60% nature of the job
- 18% lack the technology
- 22% are capable of doing it, but are not allowed

Among North American office workers:

74%

“I would leave my employer for a position that allowed me to work from home more often”
Section 3: Automation

**Automation**

*noun \ au•to•ma•tion \*

The practice of substituting technology for human labor to perform specific tasks or jobs. The term today generally applies to cases in which the technology being deployed replaces knowledge-based tasks or positions, rather than merely replacing manual processes.

Common examples of office automation include leveraging information technology to perform routine processes such as scheduling, payroll, data filing and storage, correspondence, and customer support.
About half of North American office workers leverage some form of office automation to enhance business productivity:

- 45% YES
- 34% NO
- 21% I don’t know

Among those that have it, 69% of employees say automation has positively impacted their productivity.

Generally, North American office workers are split on how much office automation will improve business productivity:

**Do you feel automation will allow you to do your jobs more quickly or effectively?**

- YES 41%
- NO 59%

**Do you feel automation will take mundane tasks off your plate?**

- YES 49%
- NO 51%
Fear of being replaced by technology is moving from the factory floor to the corporate office:

1-in-4 office workers (24 percent) are worried their job will be replaced entirely by technology within five years.

Which jobs do they feel are most at risk?

- Accounting
- Administration
- Sales
- Human Resources
- IT
User Persona: The Millennial Office Worker
Millennials are now the largest demographic in the workforce, and growing. Understanding what is important to them is crucial for organizations to attract and retain top talent.

**Millennials are ahead of the curve**

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<th>Uses technology to collaborate with others</th>
<th>Millennials (ages 18-35)</th>
<th>Overall</th>
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<td>86%</td>
<td>83%</td>
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<th>Believes their employer should equip them with technology to work remotely</th>
<th>Millennials (ages 18-35)</th>
<th>Overall</th>
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<tr>
<td>88%</td>
<td>85%</td>
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<th>Would quit their job for greater autonomy over where and when they work</th>
<th>Millennials (ages 18-35)</th>
<th>Overall</th>
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<td>77%</td>
<td>74%</td>
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**Generation gaps:**

Compared to Baby Boomers, **Millennials are 2x more likely to feel:**

- More productive working at home
- Better equipped to work at home than the office
- Their employer-issued work device is outdated
Conclusions
Collaboration is about people, not technology

Too often organizations treat collaboration projects as technology projects, not business projects.

Most organizations have different collaboration systems that exist in technology silos. The end result is a degraded experience for employees. Before deciding on a technology solution, organizations must first understand how employees work and interact – and how technology can remove barriers to collaboration and support them in achieving their business goals. Understanding employee needs ahead of the implementation will ensure the new technology is integrated into the existing IT architecture in a meaningful way that will drive adoption.
#2 Train and maintain

The technology needs to work and employees need to know how it works.

Employees become disenfranchised with technology if it doesn’t work the way it should. Too many office workers experience technical difficulties with collaboration technology on a monthly basis. The IT team has to make sure technology works when employees need it.

Employees also become disenfranchised if they don’t see the productivity benefit of using collaboration technology. While North American office workers mostly put of the onus for training and adoption on their IT department, managers are also responsible to help their direct reports understand how the technology directly benefits them in their specific role. Before organizations embark on implementing a new business productivity tool, they must first establish stakeholder support across the business, and develop a communication plan to drive adoption.
Mobile access is table stakes, not a perk

Most office workers expect their employers to provide technology that allows them to work from anywhere.

It has never been more challenging, but also more important, for organizations to deliver what employees want. As more organizations turn to mobile devices over desktops, and embrace cloud and collaboration technology, office workers rightly expect more flexibility over their rigid nine-to-five office workday. Organizations that enable a mobile workforce will have an easier time recruiting top talent and retaining their employees for the long term.
Automation is not the apocalypse for office workers

Automation is not the boogeyman that some make it out to be.

While one-in-four office workers are scared they will be replaced by technology within five years, using technology to automate dull and routine tasks gives employees more time to focus on important tasks that drive business results.
Contact Us

Find out how Softchoice unleashes the potential of people and technology at every step of the IT lifecycle.

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