



A WHITEPAPER
FROM MITEL

| SPECIAL REPORT

The State of Workforce Communication in the AI Era

Why closing the gap between IT investment
and worker experience is a security and
business imperative

Foreword

Every organization we speak with is investing in business communication. New platforms, integrated hybrid and cloud migrations, AI capabilities, modernization roadmaps. The intent is clear and the investment is real.

And yet, **more than half of workers report that their tools fail them** at precisely the moments that matter most.

That disconnect is what this research set out to understand. **We surveyed 2,000 IT decision-makers (ITDM), desk workers, and frontline workers across North America, the UK, Germany, and France,** and what they told us challenges some of the assumptions organizations are making about how well their communication investments are actually landing.

The findings are direct. **Workers are not struggling because they lack tools.** Most have too many. **They are struggling because the tools they have weren't designed for the conditions they work in** — the fast-moving, high-pressure, often mobile environments where the quality of communication in a given moment can determine the quality of a service, a decision, or an outcome. The gap between what IT leaders believe they are delivering and what workers experience every day has measurable consequences for productivity, service quality, safety, and security.

What struck us most, however, is a finding that runs through every section of this research: the organizations treating IT control and worker experience as competing priorities are making a strategic error. **When workers can't get what they need from approved tools, they find other ways.** Those workarounds actively erode the visibility and governance IT teams are working to maintain. Improving workforce experience is how organizations reclaim control.

The path forward requires three things to come together: communication tools built for the real conditions of work, understanding hybrid infrastructure as a durable operating model rather than a temporary state, and AI introduced deliberately through the workforce, not around it.

This research won't tell you what technology to buy. What it will tell you is where the gap is, why it persists, and what it costs to leave it unaddressed. **The organizations that close the gap will build the operational foundation that makes everything else — innovation, agility, growth — possible on their terms.**



Eric Hanson
Chief Marketing Officer
Mitel

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INTRODUCTION

The Current State of Workplace Communications

Eight in ten (**80%**) of the global workforce are in frontline roles, yet many communication tools have been designed with desk-based workers in mind. Adding to the complexity, workers' roles have become more varied, with both desk-based and frontline workers expecting simplicity from their work-based communication tools.

Organizations are also under pressure to modernize in response to these evolving demands. IT leaders are being asked to update available tools to support a wider range of worker needs and expectations, keeping pace with rapid advances such as artificial intelligence (AI) while maintaining security, governance, and architectural control in environments that are growing more complex, not less.

As workforces become more distributed and the number of communication tools multiplies, the attack surface for security risk expands alongside it. IT leaders are trying to modernize without losing the visibility and control that keep their organizations protected.

Despite this investment across all three fronts, workers report that their day-to-day experience with communication tools has not meaningfully improved. For many, it remains inconsistent at best and actively obstructive at worst: a gap that widens the longer the fundamentals go unaddressed.

This research explores the current state of workplace communication, looking to understand worker expectations and reality with their current communication tools, compared to the experience IT leaders intend to deliver. It also focuses on how AI is changing the way desk and frontline employees communicate.

We surveyed 2,000 respondents across North America (USA and Canada), UK, France and Germany, all from organizations with 500 or more employees. Here is what they told us about how communications are really working in their organizations:

63% of desk and frontline workers feel pressured to "make it work" even when systems are not designed for their needs

76% of desk and frontline workers are using non-approved communication tools for work-related purposes

79% of desk and frontline workers prefer voice communications when an issue needs rapid action

87% of IT leaders say their organization adopts a hybrid approach (mix of on-prem and cloud) to host their workforce communications

51% of IT leaders say they support workers "very well" with AI, but only **30%** of workers agree

These results highlight a clear tension. Organizations are investing in communication tools and AI, yet the experience for many workers is not satisfactory. This gap between investment and experience is becoming harder to ignore.

SECTION 1

Communication Tools are Failing a Mobile, Frontline Workforce

Communication tools are the backbone of how people work, shaping how teams connect and share information, do work, and support customers. Getting this 'right' is essential, especially as workforces become more distributed.

IT leaders recognize the strategic importance of communication tools (**93%**), yet many also acknowledge that some parts of the workforce are better served by communication tools than others (**89%**). This points to a gap between intention and reality, where communication tools are important in principle, but are not always designed to meet the varying needs of a diverse workforce.

93%

of ITDMs say workforce communication tools are considered **strategically critical** at all times¹

But they
recognize...

89%

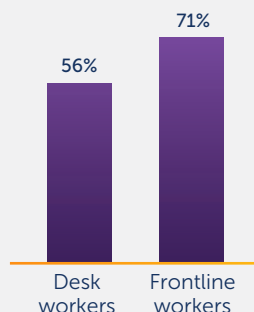
Some parts of the workforce are **better served by workforce communication** tools than others¹

Workers are forced to use communication systems that don't fit their needs

This gap between intention and reality is reflected in the day-to-day experience of desk and frontline workers. Over six in ten (**63%**) feel pressured to "make it work" even when communication systems are not designed for their needs. This pressure is felt more among frontline workers (those working directly with customers and patients in the field), likely because their roles are more dependent on real-time coordination, leaving less room for delays or workarounds.

63%

of workers feel **pressured to "make it work"** even when communication systems are not designed for their needs²



The consequence of this gap is evident in how workers rate their communication tools. Only **34%** deeming them very effective in helping them to get their daily jobs done. Communication tools should enable seamless collaboration and real-time decision-making, yet for many workers, it is creating friction instead.

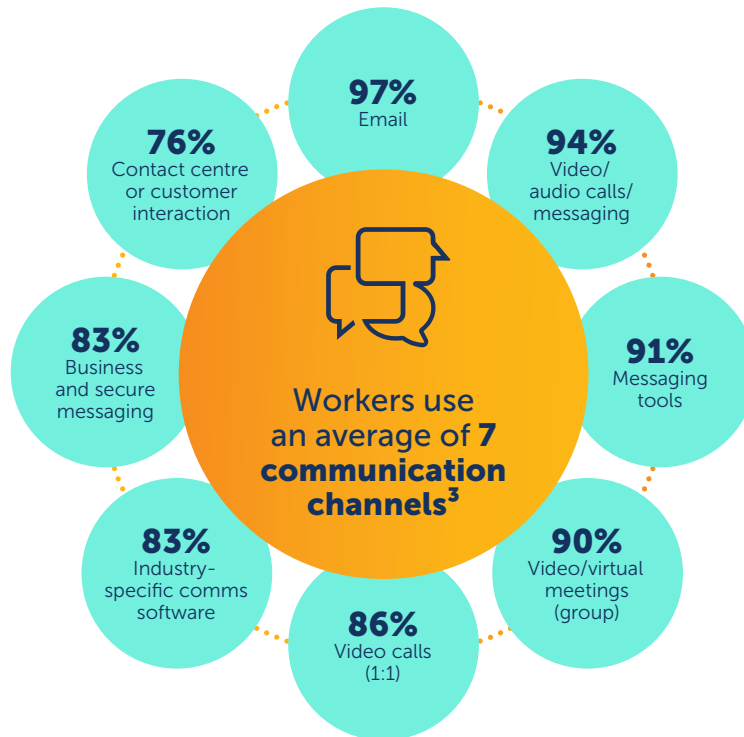
¹To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Some parts of the workforce are better serviced by our communication tools than others. Communication tools are considered strategically critical at all times. Base: Asked to IT respondents only [n=607]

²To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? - I feel pressured to "make it work" even when systems are not designed for my needs. Base: Asked to Desk / Frontline workers [n=1,393]

This challenge is particularly acute in the UK (**30%**) and France (**22%**), and most severe among frontline healthcare workers (**14%**). This shows that greatest gaps are appearing in high-stakes environments like healthcare, where communication is most critical and the lack of it can carry direct implications for service delivery and patient outcomes.

Tool overload is driving inefficiency and missed communication

A key driver of communication friction is tool overload. **Desk and frontline workers are juggling an average of seven different communication channels**, from email and messaging tools to video and industry-specific systems. While each channel serves a purpose individually, together they can create a fragmented experience that is difficult to manage.



³Thinking about the communication channels you use at work, how do you feel about each of the following? Base: Asked to Desk/Frontline workers [n=1,393]

66

"I dislike having to use so many different platforms and tools just to do the different things I need to get done. I wish there were only 2 or 3 tools where I can do everything on"

- Desk worker,
North America

This overload of communication tools is resulting in two key issues: time is lost switching between communication tools and messages being missed because they are dispersed through different channels. Instead of enabling seamless communication, this creates a fragmented, reactive environment where delays and duplication become more likely.

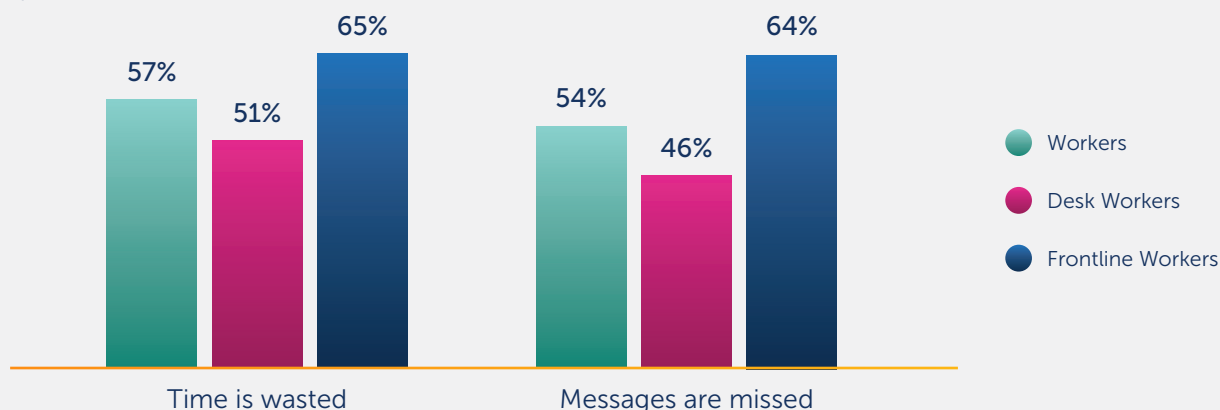
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"What really annoys me is that information is scattered across different communication channels, and you have to click through all the options to access it. Sometimes I miss information because I wasn't looking in the right place"

- Frontline worker, France

This challenge is even more pronounced for frontline workers, who operate in fast-paced, time-critical environments where missing a message or switching between tools is not just inefficient, but can directly impact service delivery, safety, and outcomes.

Key Issues Workers Experience⁴



What do workers expect from their communication tools?

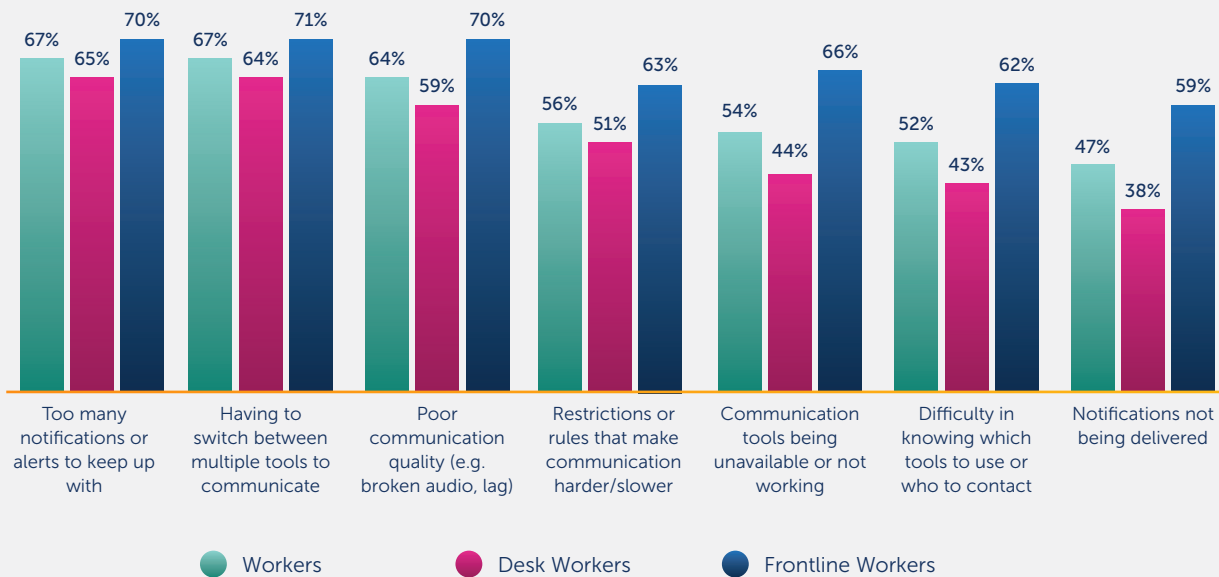
Despite juggling multiple tools and channels, desk and frontline workers are not asking for advanced features. They are asking for the fundamentals to work. Reliability during critical moments (**97%**), seamless performance across locations and devices (**96%**), ease of use (**95%**), and strong security (**95%**) are considered essential. Clear audio (**94%**) and reduced silos (**87%**) are also extremely important to most.

Unfortunately, these basic needs are often unmet, with around six in ten workers (**60%**) experiencing a range of communication issues that disrupt their work at least once a week. Workers are dealing with multiple points of friction, from notification overload to unreliable connectivity and constant tool switching. It is the accumulation of these small failures over time that undermines productivity, service delivery, and safety in some cases.

7 ⁴To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? 'I waste time switching between multiple communication tools to complete basic tasks'. Base asked to Desk/ Frontline workers [n=1,393]

Frontline workers are 1.6 times more likely, when compared to desk workers, to experience disruption from these communication issues [see below]. This highlights how fragile communication environments are in frontline conditions and reinforces the need for tools that are reliable and fit for purpose. It also shows how multiple communication issues can quickly compound, particularly in roles where timing and coordination are critical.

Communication Issues that Disrupt Workers at Least Once a Week⁵

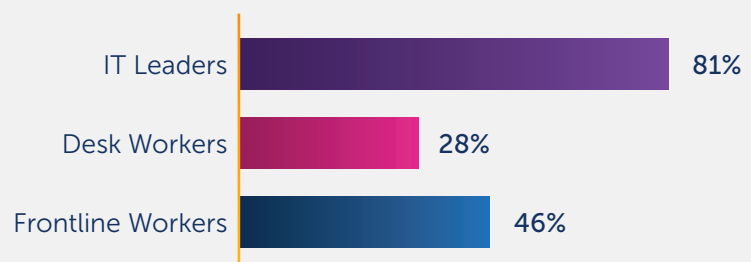


Meeting the communication needs of the workforce

Communication tools that meet employee needs are essential for enabling productivity, supporting faster decision-making, improving employee experience, and maintaining service quality. Over eight in ten (**81%**) IT leaders say they consider the needs of workers when making decisions about their workforce communication tools. However, worker perceptions tell a different story, with a minority who feel that their needs are being considered.

This 'consideration' gap is even wider for workers in the **UK (27%)** and **France (29%)** and most acute for frontline workers in the **healthcare sector (17%)**.

IT Considers the Needs of Workers When Decisions are Made About Workforce Communication Tools⁶



⁵How often do the following communication issues disrupt your work? Base: Asked to Desk/ Frontline workers [n=1,393]

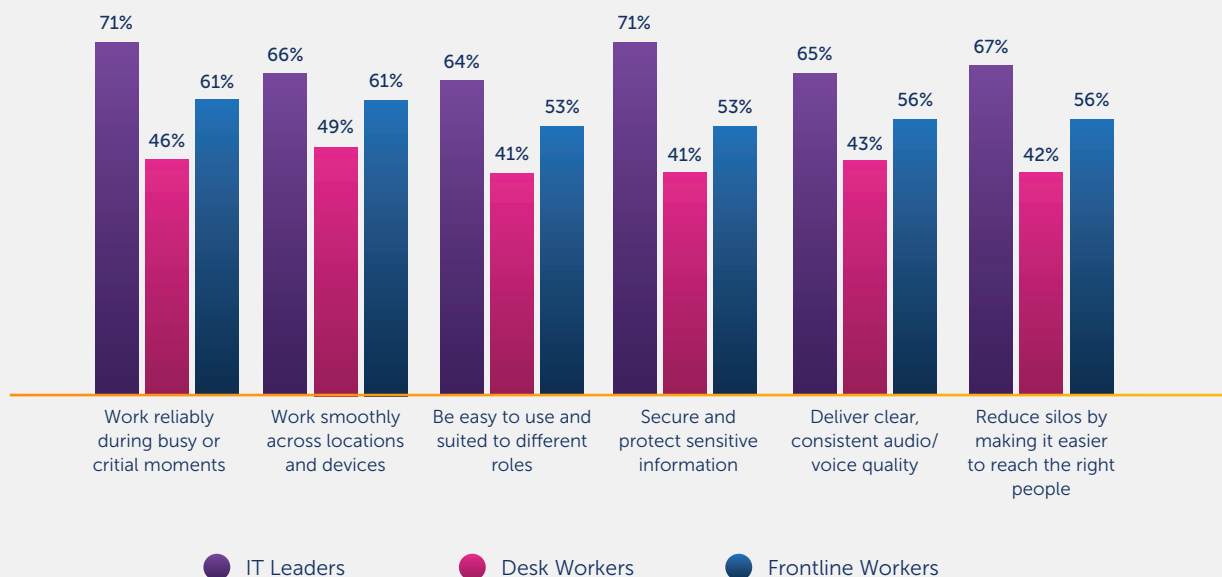
8 ⁶How well do you feel you/your IT department considers the needs of your employees (i.e. office and customer-facing workers) when decisions are made about workforce communication tools? Base: asked to IT decision makers [n=607]. How well do you feel your needs are considered when decisions are made about workforce communication tools? Base: asked to Desk/ Frontline workers [n=1,393]

IT leaders believe they are focused on supporting workers when choosing communication tools, but this is not always experienced by the workers in their day-to-day work. This highlights a gap between how tools are designed and how they are used in practice. Communication tools may therefore feel less tailored to their role, presenting an opportunity to better connect these decisions with the realities of how people work.

Improvements to communication tools

IT leaders recognize the need for improvement in communication tools, particularly around reliability under pressure and the protection of sensitive information. Workers also see the need for improvement, but their priorities are more grounded in day-to-day experience. Frontline workers, in particular, place greater emphasis on reliability and tools working smoothly in real-world conditions.

Improvements Needed to Communication Tools⁹



While there is alignment between IT and employees on the need for change, delivering improvements to workforce communication is not straightforward. IT teams must address fundamental issues while managing growing complexity, rising security demands, and pressures to modernize, all while managing wider resource constraints. Delivering this change will require a more practical, user-led approach, reflecting how work happens across different roles and environments.

9 ⁹Thinking about the communication tools your organization provides to employees, how much improvement is needed in each of the following areas? Base: asked to IT decision makers [n=607] How well do you feel your needs are considered when decisions are made about workforce communication tools? Base: asked to Desk/Frontline workers [n=1,393]

SECTION 2

Poor Communication Impacts Performance, Service, and Security

The communication issues identified in Section 1 go beyond the tools themselves. These barriers can affect individual performance and well-being, service delivery, and how organizations manage risk. Communication has always been critical to how work gets done and even small issues can have a big impact.

These impacts are being felt across three key areas:

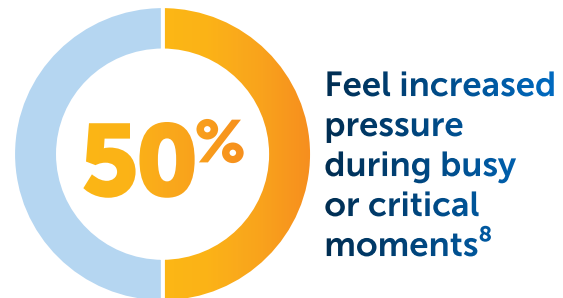
- > **Employee productivity and wellbeing**
- > **Service delivery**
- > **Security risks**

Productivity and wellbeing

Frontline workers

For frontline workers, these impacts are immediate. Over half (**54%**) say communication issues delay them in completing tasks or responding to situations. This is particularly pronounced in healthcare (**66%**), where delays can have serious consequences, potentially affecting patient care and overall outcomes, increasing both operational risks and emotional strain on workers.

A similar proportion (**50%**) of frontline workers report increased pressure during busy or critical moments (the very moments when communication needs to work without fail).



Feeling increased pressure during busy or critical moments is highest for the **hospitality (57%)** and **healthcare (55%)** sectors, where even small communication failures can escalate quickly, amplifying stress and making already demanding roles harder to perform.

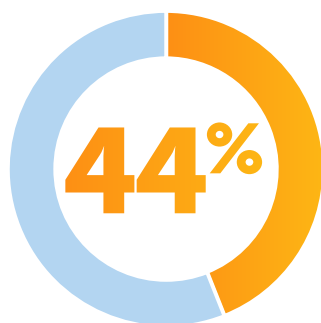
⁸When communication issues occur, how do they impact your ability to do your job effectively? Combination of responses ranked first, second and third. Base: Frontline workers who experience communication issues that disrupt their work [n=606]



Desk workers

While the impact is more immediate for frontline workers, desk workers face a different set of challenges. Desk workers are expected to operate in increasingly fast-paced digital environments, making it critical that communication enables productivity. But for many, it is often a barrier, with **63%** who lose time due to inefficient communication. This isn't caused by a lack of communication tools, but by switching tools and chasing information from different sources.

For **46%** of desk workers, productivity or the ability to focus on higher-value work is reduced. Organizations with communication tools that enhance productivity will be better positioned to drive efficiency and gain a competitive advantage through faster decision-making and improved outputs from their desk workers.



Feel increased stress or frustrations in the workday when communications issues occur⁹

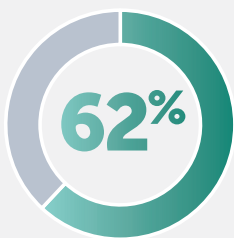
Both the youngest (Gen Z) and oldest (Baby Boomers) workers are more likely to feel increased stress and frustration (**52%** and **51%** respectively). This may reflect different pressures, with Gen Z adjusting to the workplace, while Baby Boomers are adapting to changing tools and ways of working.

The impact of these communication issues goes beyond efficiency, with **44%** of desk workers reporting increased stress and frustration during the working day. This has a direct impact on productivity and can hinder a worker's ability to do their job effectively. Over time, this could lead to a more reactive, less focused culture, where desk workers are responding to issues instead of delivering meaningful, high-value outcomes.

Service delivery

The communication issues desk and frontline workers face do not stay contained within the workforce. Instead, they directly affect the quality of service being delivered.

Over six in ten (**62%**) workers say complex or unreliable communication tools make it harder to provide the best possible support to customers, patients or clients. This rises to **70%** among frontline workers and highlights a clear link between internal communication and external outcomes – when communication breaks down, service quality follows.



Of workers say complex or unreliable communication tools make it **harder to provide the best possible customer/ patient/ client support¹⁰**



Desk workers



Frontline workers

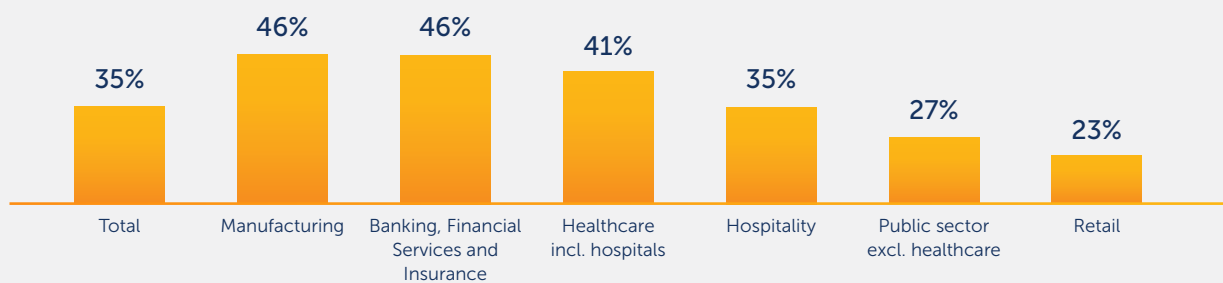
⁹When communication issues occur, how do they impact your ability to do your job effectively? Combination of responses ranked first, second and third. Base: Desk workers who experience communication issues that disrupt their work [n=760]

¹⁰To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? 'Complex or unreliable communication tools make it harder for me to provide the best possible customer/ patient/ client support' Base: Asked to workers [n=1,393]

This extends even further to safety risks, with **35%** of frontline workers saying communication problems create safety risks for customers, patients or staff. This is a critical warning sign. Left unaddressed, this could turn routine communication problems into points of failure across the entire organization and significantly impact customers or patients.

These safety risks are particularly high in manufacturing, financial services, and healthcare. For manufacturing, breakdowns in communication could directly impact on-site safety of staff and customers. In financial services, failures can compromise compliance and security, increasing exposure to regulatory and operational risk. The stakes are even higher in healthcare, with communication breakdowns having a direct impact on patient safety and quality of care.

"When communication issues occur, it creates a safety risk for customers, patients, or staff"¹¹



Communication is fundamental to service quality and safety, and the impact of these issues goes far beyond productivity. It directly shapes customer and patient outcomes. In high-risk environments like healthcare, the consequences can be life-critical, making it essential for organizations to have communication environments that are reliable and fit for purpose.

Security risks through shadow IT

When workers are faced with these communication issues, they are not waiting for systems to improve. They are taking matters into their own hands, not by preference, and are finding their own solutions to keep work moving.

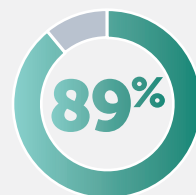
This behavior is even more pronounced among younger employees. Gen Z are more likely (**90%**) to use non-approved channels frequently, suggesting a lower tolerance for friction and a stronger preference for fast, intuitive tools that suit their ways of working.



Workers that use non-approved channels to communicate for work-related purposes¹²



Desk workers



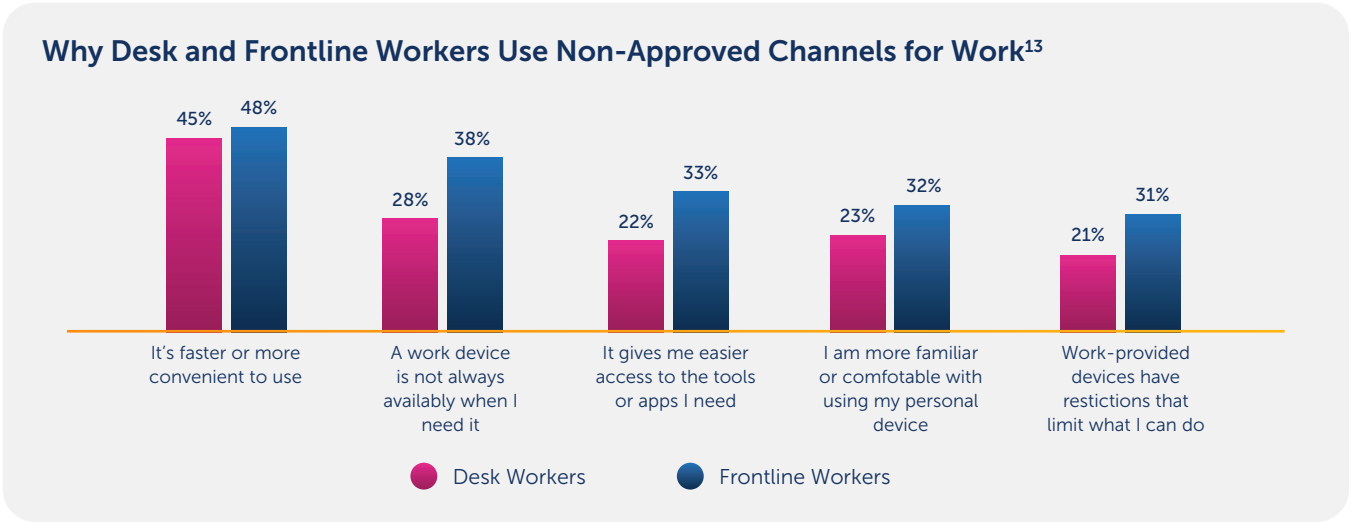
Frontline workers

¹¹When communication issues occur, how do they impact your ability to do your job effectively? Combination of responses ranked first, second and third. Only showing 'I cannot meet service quality standards for my customers or patients' and 'It creates safety risks for customers, patients or staff'. Base: Frontline workers who experience communication issues that disrupt their work (n=606) [Banking, Financial Services and Insurance is also referred to as BFSI]

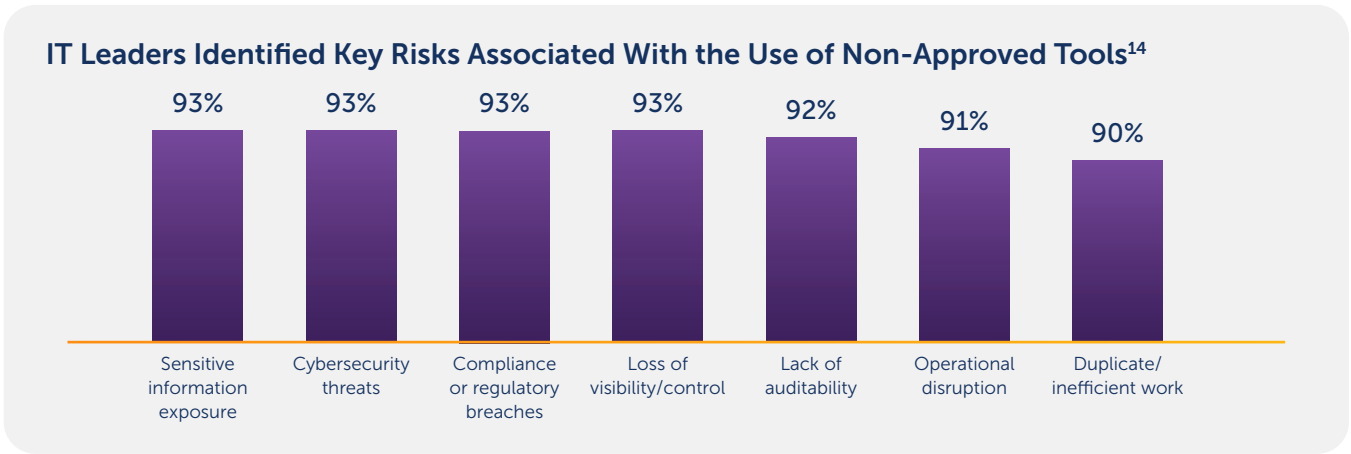
¹²How often do you use non-approved communication channels to communicate for work-related purposes, if at all? Base: Asked to Desk/Frontline workers (n=1,393)

Over three quarters (**76%**) of workers are using non-approved communication channels for work-related purposes, despite **68%** of IT leaders saying these are discouraged or strictly prohibited. This highlights a gap between policy and reality, where the demands of the job are outweighing governance.

This behaviour is even more pronounced among frontline workers, who are over twice as likely to use non-approved tools often, at least several times a week (desk workers: **25%**, frontline workers: **53%**). They are also more likely to cite practical reasons for doing so – non-approved communication tools are faster, more accessible, and in some cases, the only option when work devices are unavailable. Speed and accessibility are non-negotiable in frontline roles. When approved communication tools fall short, workers are forced to rely on whatever enables them to respond to their customers and patients quickly and effectively.



These workarounds introduce significant security risks to organizations. Over **90%** of IT leaders identify risks such as data exposure, compliance breaches, cybersecurity threats, and a loss of visibility and control as a direct result. It suggests an urgent need to improve employees' communication experience to minimize creating environments where the need to get work done and the need to stay secure are constantly in conflict.



13 Why do you sometimes use a non-approved channel for work? Base: Asked to workers who use and know what personal or non-approved channels they use for communication about work, [Desk workers n=511, Frontline workers n=551]

14 To what extent does employees use of non-approved communication channels for work purposes increase your organization's risk in the following areas? [Base: IT decision makers n=607]

SECTION 3

Voice-first Communication, Hybrid Flexibility, and AI

Organizations need communication tools that can adapt to different situations, supporting all worker types and roles, while also giving IT the right level of control.

The research shows that most organizations are already progressing towards this goal. To achieve this, there are three key elements organizations must deliver:

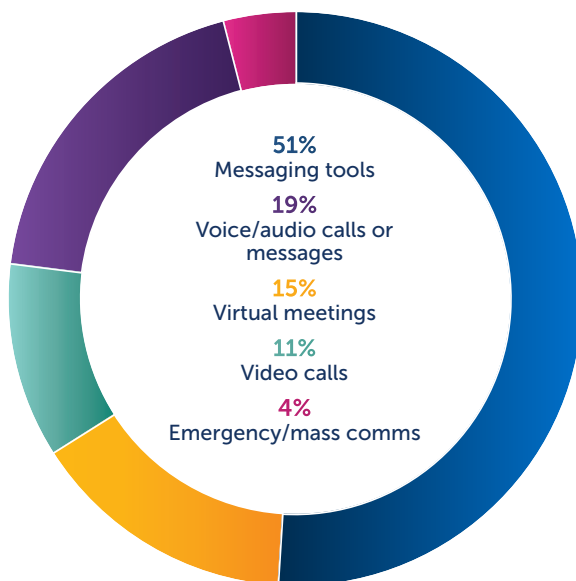
- Ensuring workers have flexibility to choose how they communicate depending on the situation
- Finding the right balance between control and flexibility to modernize communications in the workplace
- Closing the gap between AI investment and AI impact

To tackle this, organizations are shifting to hybrid environments, making it easier to roll out more modern communication tools without sacrificing control and security.

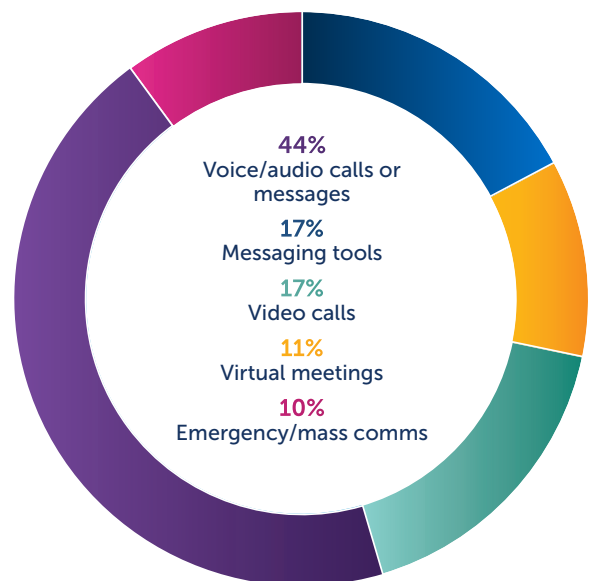
Ensuring workers have communications flexibility for any situation

While communication tools are widely available, ensuring workers have access to the right tools for their role remains a challenge. Especially as communication needs vary by situation – some calling for a rapid response, others requiring asynchronous collaboration, etc.

For routine communication, messaging tools such as Microsoft Teams, Slack, or email are typically preferred. But during urgent or time-critical situations, voice becomes the primary channel, ahead of messaging and video. This is especially true for healthcare workers, where communication speed can directly impact outcomes, with over half (**56%**) relying on voice-first in urgent situations.



For routine coordination
e.g. non-urgent updates¹⁵



For urgent or time critical situations¹⁵

This preference of voice-first communication tools in high-stakes situations is reinforced by **79%** of workers who rely on voice when rapid action is needed, using it to align quickly before following up through other channels if required. It suggests that workers are instinctively turning to faster, more direct and trusted forms of communication when immediate communication or action is needed.

For organizations, this means success is not about standardizing on a single communication channel but enabling the right mix for different moments. Those that provide this flexibility will be positioned to support faster decision-making, improve collaboration, and enable employees to work more effectively.

Hybrid helps ensure IT has the flexibility to modernize communications while maintaining control

The need for flexibility is not only felt by workers, but also by IT teams.

IT leaders are under pressure to modernize communication tools, including embedding AI to improve productivity and workflows, while ensuring their core communication channels such as email or messaging apps remain reliable, secure and effective for all to use.

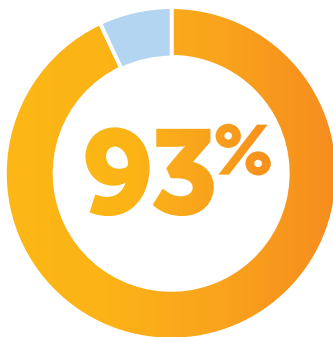
Yet to be able to do this, organizations need to rely on a hybrid environment.

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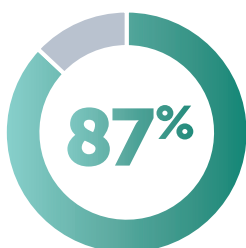
"Improve the flexibility of communication tools to better support the diverse needs of employees everywhere"

- IT decision-maker, France

Already, **87%** of IT leaders say they are using more than one model to support their communication tools, combining cloud and on-premises environments, rather than relying on a single approach. In fact, **72%** of organizations say no one model dominates. This highlights how hybrid environments are the norm for communication tools in organizations today, especially as the pressure to modernize increasingly grows.



Of hybrid organizations agree that a hybrid model gives their team the control and flexibility they need, without unmanageable complexities¹⁶

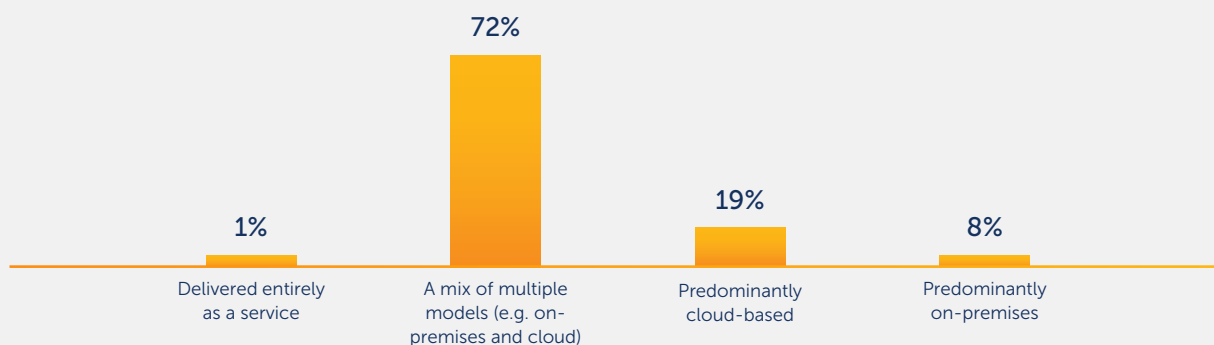


Of IT leaders say their organization is using more than one model for their business communication tools¹⁷

Nearly all IT leaders in **Canada and the US (95% respectively)** reported that their business is using a hybrid model for their business communication tools. As these markets also report the highest pressure to modernize, the overlap is notable: hybrid environments are often the most practical way to evolve communication tools, allowing organizations to introduce new capabilities without disrupting existing systems.

15 ¹⁶To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? - A hybrid model (a mix of on-prem and cloud) would/ does give our IT team the control we need, without adding unmanageable complexity Base: Asked to IT decision makers who use a hybrid environment [n=380].

Deployment Model for Communication Tools¹⁷



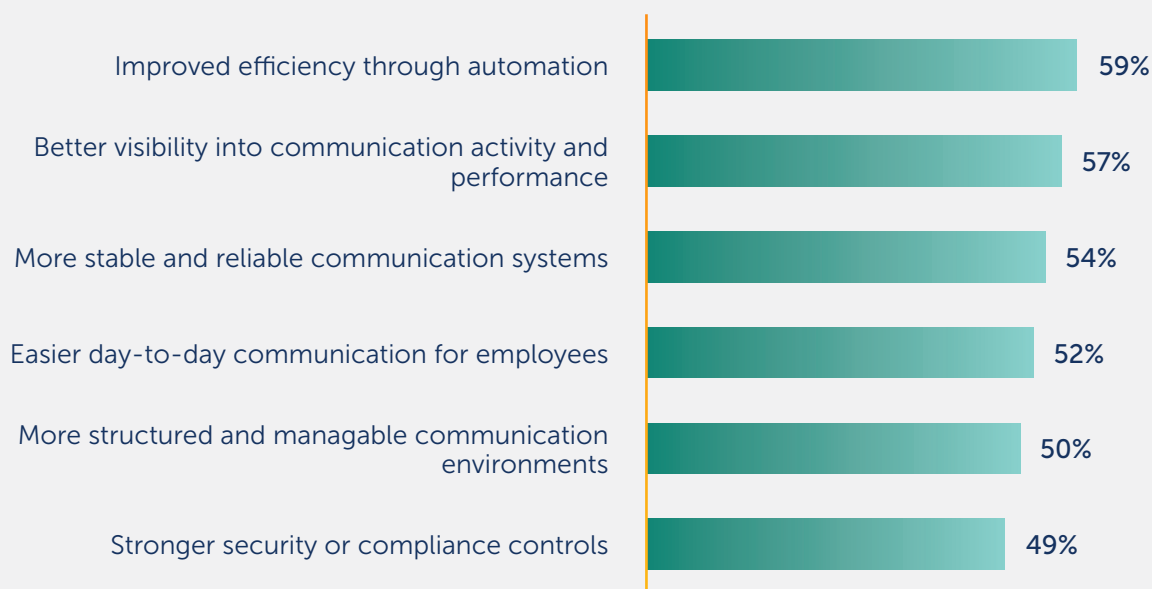
Closing the gap between AI investment and AI impact

Alongside hybrid infrastructure, AI is being adopted quickly across organizations, but it is not yet delivering consistent value for the workforce. Over the next 12 months, **50%** of IT leaders say that investing in new AI features or expanding existing AI capabilities is in their top three priorities.

IT leaders specifically recognize the benefit of improved efficiency through automation, better visibility into activity and performance, and importantly improved stability and reliability, a common challenge most workers are struggling with today.

The Healthcare sector is the most likely to prioritize AI investment (**58% vs. 50% aggregate**), primarily to improve stability and reliability (**67%**).

Specifically, AI Can Influence the Performance of Communication Systems Through...¹⁸



¹⁷Which of the following best describes your organization's primary hosting model? Base: asked to IT leaders who use a hybrid environment [n=530].

¹⁸In what ways has AI influenced, or could AI influence, the performance of your organization's unified communication systems? Base: Asked to IT leaders [n=607]

66

"Everything trying to incorporate AI into it despite how routinely wrong AI keeps being."

- Desk worker, North America

66

"What frustrates me is that I can't specifically use the AI the way I want even though it could be very useful"

- Frontline worker, France

66

"I find there are too many new things to learn, and I sometimes struggle to use them. For example, I waste a lot of time searching for where to find certain information"

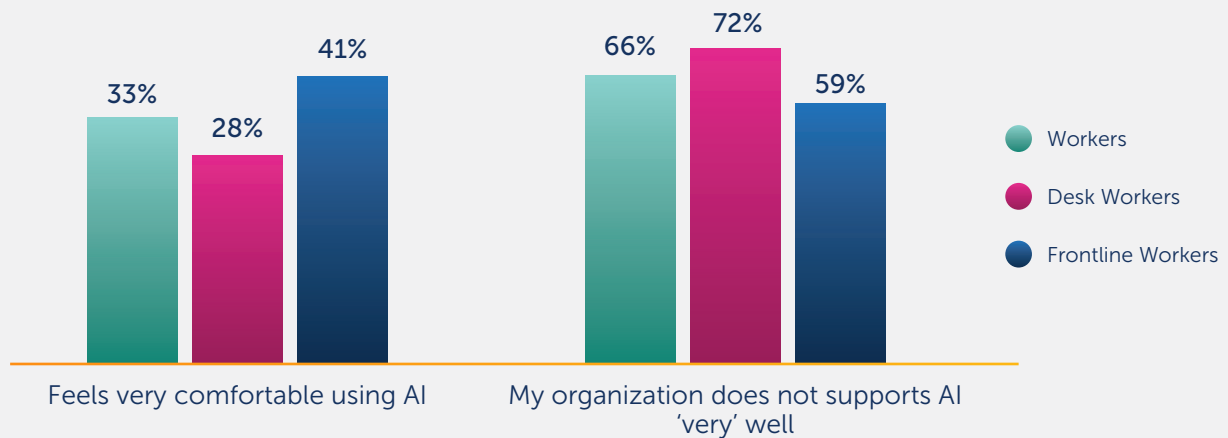
- Frontline worker, France

Confidence in AI's potential is high among IT leaders, with **91%** who say AI will play a vital role in unified communication solutions and should be built into existing workflows.

However, worker experience tells a more mixed story as many describe AI as something that adds complexity rather than removing it. Over half (**52%**) of workers report using AI regularly, yet only a third (**33%**) feel very comfortable using AI in their daily work, and many say they are not getting the support they need. In fact, 66% believe their organization does not currently support AI use very well.

This gap is even more visible with desk workers, where confidence in AI use is lowest and the lack of support is highest.

Workers Level of Comfort Using AI and the Support They Receive from Their Organization¹⁹



¹⁹How well do you believe your organization supports you in using AI within your workforce communication tools? Base: Asked to Desk/ Frontline workers who use and know how often they use AI for work-related purposes [n=1,393] / How comfortable are you using AI-powered tools in your day-to-day work? Base: Asked to Desk/ Frontline workers who use and know how often they use AI for work-related purposes [n=1,164]



As a result, workers are finding their own solutions. Half say they use publicly available or free AI tools (often alongside approved tools) to get the job done, but this is not always to the benefit of the organization.

Workers who rely only on non-approved AI tools tend to see lower value across multiple tasks or capabilities. This highlights a key challenge for IT leaders. It is not just about access to AI, but how it is introduced, supported, and applied in a way that delivers real value to the workforce and organizations.

Reliance on non-approved tools is highest in certain sectors, suggesting existing solutions are not fully meeting worker needs to more support is needed. Those sectors who are **more likely to use publicly available or free**

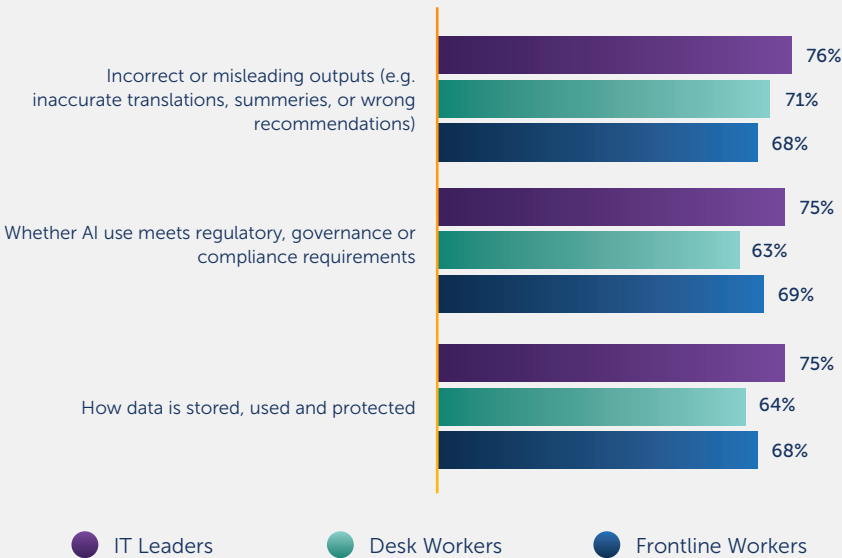
AI tools are:

- > Education: 65%
- > Hospitality: 60%
- > Public Sector: 55%
- > Retail: 53%
- > Healthcare: 50%

At the same time, IT leaders highlight the growing concern around risk when using AI, especially when it's acknowledged so many are using non-approved tools. Around three quarters of IT leaders are concerned around incorrect or misleading outputs (76%), whether AI use meets regulatory or compliance requirements (75%), and how data is stored, used and protected (75%). These concerns are also shared by workers, reinforcing that uncertainty around AI is widespread.

For organizations, this means AI adoption cannot be left to happen organically. Without clear guidance, approved tools, and ongoing support, workers will continue to turn to unapproved solutions, limiting value and increasing risk rather than improving productivity.

Leaders Concerns Around AI Use²⁰



To deliver real value with AI for communication tools, organizations must actively support the use of approved AI tools and embed them into everyday workflows. Without doing so, organizations risk AI becoming another layer of complexity, rather than the solution it promises to be for workers.

18 ²⁰Based on your day-to-day experience in your role, how concerned are you about the following issues when AI is used in the communication tools you rely on for work? Base: Asked to Desk/ Frontline workers [n=1,393]. From your perspective, how concerned are you about the following issues when AI is used within your organization's workforce communication tools? Base: Asked to IT decision makers [n=607]

CONCLUSION

Communication Is the Foundation for a Secure, Productive, Engaged Workforce

IT leaders are investing in modernization and believe they are delivering for their workforce. Workers are adapting, finding workarounds, and making do — not because they lack tools, but because the tools they have weren't built for the conditions they work in. AI is arriving before the basics are stable. And the gap between what organizations believe they are delivering and what workers actually experience is widening.

That gap has real consequences for productivity, service quality, safety, and security exposure. And this research found them to be the norm, not the exception, across geographies, sectors, and workforce types.

Experience and control are not mutually exclusive

Organizations often treat IT control and worker experience as competing priorities. This research suggests that framing is wrong. When workers lack the right tools, they create their own solutions — bypassing security policies, fragmenting communication further, and eroding the visibility IT teams need to manage risk. Poor worker experience doesn't just affect productivity. It actively undermines the control organizations are trying to maintain.

Closing the experience gap is how organizations reclaim that control

Three things have to come together to get there. Communication tools must be fit for the environments where work actually happens: reliable under pressure, simple across devices, and voice-capable when urgency demands it. That is the baseline. Hybrid infrastructure is the operating reality, not a transitional state — it is what makes modernization without disruption possible. And AI must be introduced through the workforce, not around it: approved tools, embedded in real workflows, with the support that helps workers adopt and trust them. The gap between what IT leaders believe they are delivering on AI and what workers experience will not close through investment alone.

The organizations that will gain ground are those that have closed the distance between how their systems are configured and how their people actually work. Communication that functions reliably is the operating condition for everything else the organization is trying to achieve. This research shows clearly how far most organizations still are from that condition, and how much is at stake in closing the distance.





Methodology

This study was conducted by Vanson Bourne on behalf of Mitel, surveying 2,000 respondents across five key global markets. This includes USA and Canada (North America), UK, France and Germany. There were three respondent types: IT decision makers (IT leaders); desk (office) workers; and frontline (customer-facing) workers from organizations with 500 or more employees. These respondents work within a variety of key sectors such as healthcare, manufacturing, financial services and the public sector.

About Mitel

Mitel is a global leader in business communications, helping organizations connect and collaborate more effectively. Mitel supports hybrid environments that combine on-premises and cloud solutions, giving businesses the control and flexibility they need to modernize workforce communications. Mitel works with organizations across multiple industries to simplify communication, support diverse workforce needs and help them get more value from emerging technologies such as AI. For more information, visit www.mitel.com.

About 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 www.vansonbourne.com.