nexthink

IT in the Evolving Workplace

IT's coming of age story is happening at just the right time

Introduction

You've probably heard this narrative before, maybe at your university graduation or from a work colleague. It goes something like this: *in a few years' time, you'll find yourself working in a job that doesn't even exist today*. Meaning, if you were to search for this position in LinkedIn or Indeed, you wouldn't find it.

The Enterprise IT sector is no exception. Countless positions have come to the fore in the last few years alone – Digital Experience Officer, Digital Architect, Remote Work Trainer – just to name a few.

- It **seems** like more and more IT professionals are taking on historically non-IT related projects.

- It **feels** like IT leaders are starting to view the employees they support with the same user experience mentality that they take towards customers.

- It **looks** like many companies have realized they can, or at least they should, offer more than just the traditional brick-and-mortar work environment (remote, in-office, hybrid) to help keep people engaged and connected and motivated.

Perceptions and feelings are important, but what does the data say? What do IT professionals really think about their job roles and the future of work? Is there a common thread that best defines what IT might look like in the near future?

In this survey, we look to answer those questions and more. Teaming up with independent research firm, Vanson Bourne, we asked 1,000 IT leaders across four key markets to share their thoughts about the changing nature of technology and work culture.

We hope you'll find this research useful.

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Data Highlights

## 98%

think that the IT department plays a critical or important role in facilitating a successful work-place flow in their organization.

94%
agree

"The roles and responsibilities of my job have moved away from just **provisioning** IT equipment, and focused more on **providing solutions** which promote employee collaboration and productivity since the COVID-19 pandemic"

8%
Brick-and-mortar buildings

48%
Mainly Virtual

44%
Brick-and-mortar buildings and virtual
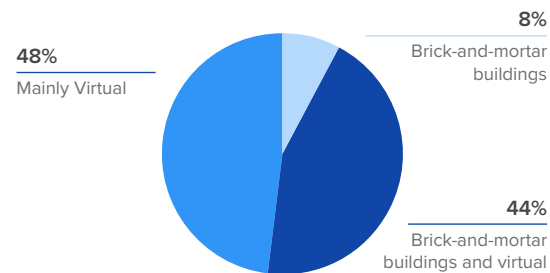
In five years' time only 8% think a workplace will be brick-and-mortar with 48% who expect it to be mainly virtual with technological infrastructure that allows employees to work and collaborate from anywhere in the world.
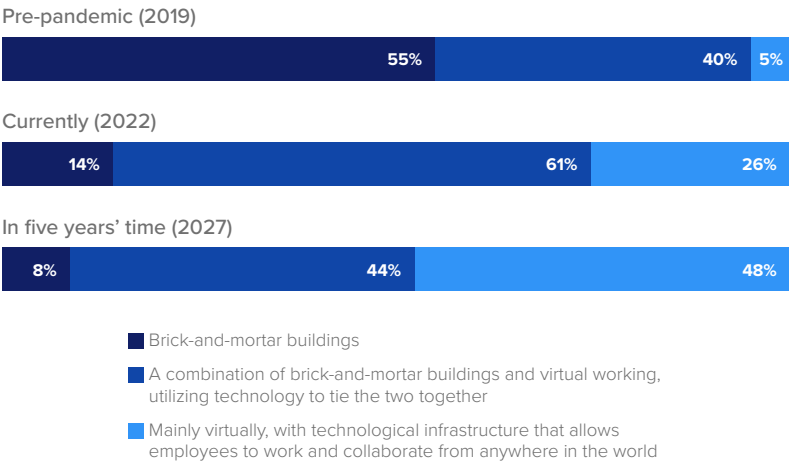
Embracing the Inevitable

In-person, remote, hybrid – who's responsible for cultivating work culture?

The precedent set by the pandemic and its influence on work culture seems so obvious in hindsight. Many companies figured out a way to save big on real estate costs by quickly transitioning to a remote or hybrid work model that fit the needs of their employees.

Of course, some companies have also experienced the negative side effects of remote work – the isolation, the disengagement, the lack of energy and motivation among employees. Enterprise IT has been cast into the role of supporting our digital work experience and ultimately, influencing these outcomes. And it's they who in this survey report that our understanding of the traditional, brick-and-mortar workplace is changing. The trend seems almost… *inevitable*.

How would you define what 'a workplace' is, was or will be in the following timeframes?

Pre-pandemic (2019)

| 55% | 40% | 5% |

Currently (2022)

| 14% | 61% | 26% |

In five years' time (2027)

| 8% | 44% | 48% |

■ Brick-and-mortar buildings

■ A combination of brick-and-mortar buildings and virtual working, utilizing technology to tie the two together

■ Mainly virtually, with technological infrastructure that allows employees to work and collaborate from anywhere in the world

The logical conclusion then is that IT will have to create and monitor this virtual workspace. They're the only ones equipped for the job – not HR, not Finance or Marketing, etc.

In the next section we explore what this work entails and what new IT roles might emerge in the coming years.

Since COVID-19, there is an accelerated push towards a virtual workplace, which looks set to stay, and even increase, over the next five years.

Pre-pandemic
55% of IT professionals would have defined a workplace as a brick-and-mortar building, with only 5% considering it to be mainly virtual.

Right now
Only 14% consider a workplace to be brick-and-mortar, with 61% considering it to be a combination of brick-and-mortar buildings and virtual working, utilizing technology to tie the two together.

In five years' time
Only 8% think a workplace will be brick-and-mortar with 48% who expect it to be mainly virtual with technological infrastructure that allows employees to work and collaborate from anywhere in the world.
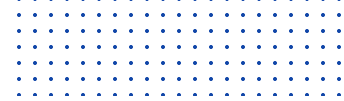
IT Workers Take on New Identity: The Architects of Flow

What will IT look like in the near future?

94% of the IT professionals in our survey agreed that the roles and responsibilities of their job has moved away from simply provisioning IT equipment and is now focused more on providing solutions which promote employee collaboration and productivity since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Even before the pandemic though, IT roles were changing.

In fact, 99% of respondents have seen new tasks come into their role in the past five years, including developing working from home practices and training (41%), supporting employee communication platforms (39%) and developing sustainability projects and policies (48%).

On average, IT professionals spend a quarter of their day on tasks directly relating to DEX, a third on strategy (including sustainability), and the remaining on day-to-day, traditional IT tasks (software development, responding to tickets, etc.).

Average Proportion of Working Day Spent on the Following Tasks

23.69%
DEX Tasks

33.77%
Strategic Tasks

2.19%
Other Areas

40.35%
Keeping the Lights On
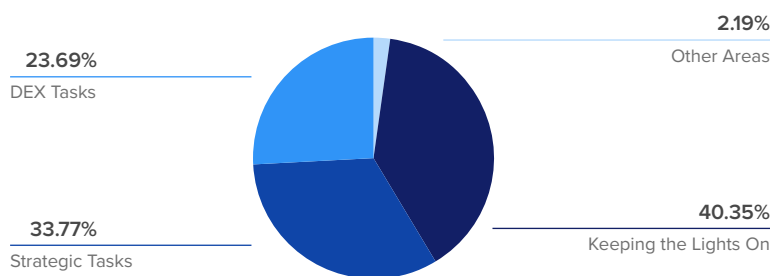
DEX Tasks
Working from home practices, supporting employee communications platforms, customizing digital work setups.

Strategic Tasks
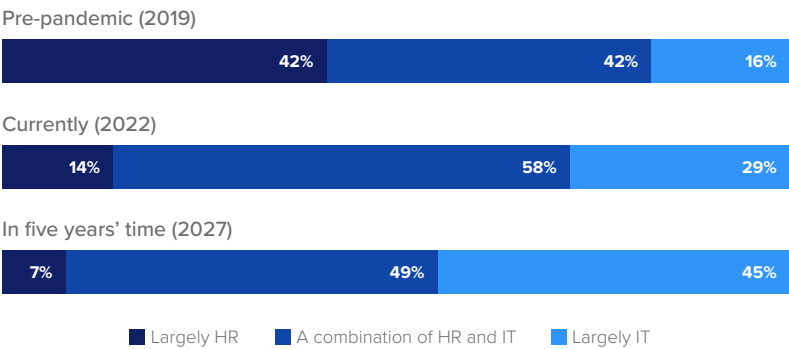Collaborating with HR, Green IT projects, future IT strategies, developing other organizational policies.

Keeping the Lights On
Software development, upgrading IT infrastructure, troubleshooting and ad-hoc requests, other areas.

As respondents expect the workplace to become less physical and more virtual, they also expect IT to play a bigger part in managing it.
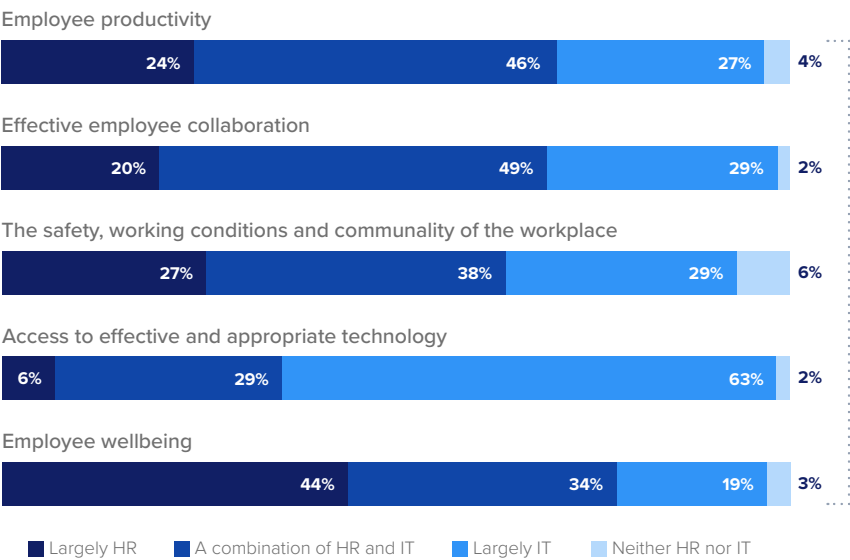
Pre-pandemic, only 16% would say IT was largely responsible for the workplace. But in five years' time, 45% expect IT to be largely responsible. Right now, the biggest proportion (58%) believe that HR and IT are responsible for the workplace in equal measure.

Who is or would be responsible for 'the workplace' in your organization in the following timeframes?

Pre-pandemic (2019)

| 42% | 42% | 16% |

Currently (2022)

| 14% | 58% | 29% |

In five years' time (2027)

| 7% | 49% | 45% |

■ Largely HR   ■ A combination of HR and IT   ■ Largely IT

As the typical workplace has moved away from physical locations to a virtual environment the responsibility of managing it has moved (or is expected to move) from HR to IT.

Who is primarily responsible for the following in your organization?

Employee productivity

| 24% | 46% | 27% | 4% |

Effective employee collaboration

| 20% | 49% | 29% | 2% |

The safety, working conditions and communality of the workplace

| 27% | 38% | 29% | 6% |

Access to effective and appropriate technology

| 6% | 29% | 63% | 2% |

Employee wellbeing

| 44% | 34% | 19% | 3% |

■ Largely HR   ■ A combination of HR and IT   ■ Largely IT   ■ Neither HR nor IT
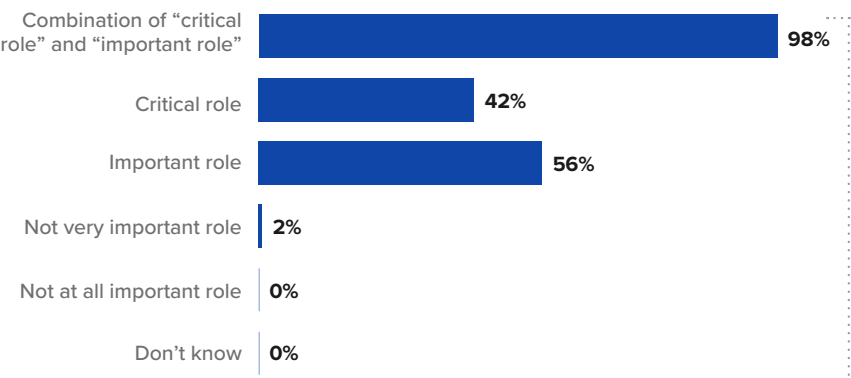
There is significant IT involvement in all areas of the workplace, even ones which were traditionally more HR/people-focused.

It became apparent in our study then that many IT leaders view themselves as shaping or architecting many of the outcomes that are shared with HR, like employee engagement, workflow, and productivity.

In fact, almost all respondents (98%) believe that the IT department plays an important or critical role in facilitating a successful work-place flow in their organization.

What role do you think the IT department plays in facilitating a successful workplace flow in your organization?

Category	Value
Combination of "critical role" and "important role"	98%
Critical role	42%
Important role	56%
Not very important role	2%
Not at all important role	0%
Don't know	0%

98% think that the IT department plays a critical or important role in facilitating a successful workplace flow in their organization.

With their new identity as *work experience architects*, we next wanted to ask IT leaders whether or not they felt they were receiving appropriate training for the task at hand.

The results were interesting to say the least...

We Need to Talk About "Professional Training" in IT

IT pros have access to more training than ever before, but is it helpful?

IT training methods have become so popular over the years that you can find evidence of them in other industries like Marketing and HR. Agile, for example, no longer belongs exclusively to product developers, you can find its ethos in design agencies or even the legal field.
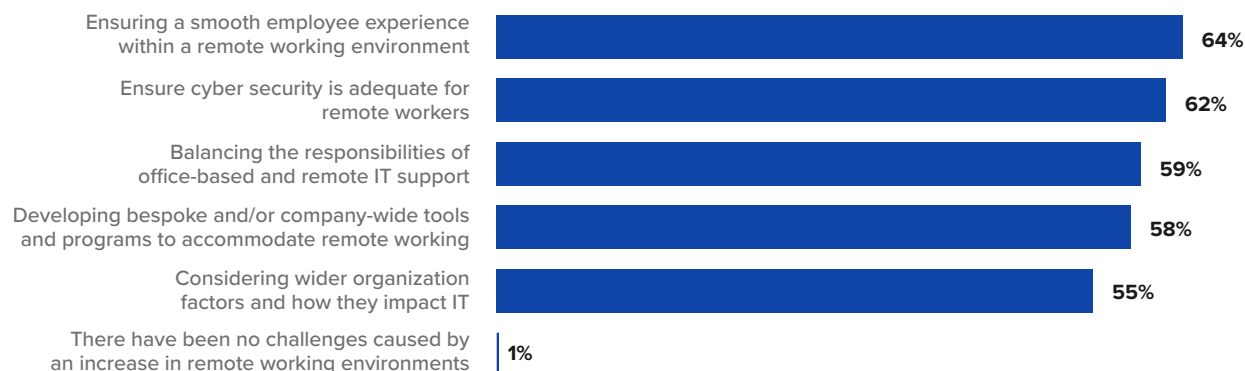
But we found that just because there are more IT training programs in market than ever before, that doesn't necessarily mean IT professionals are satisfied with their teachings. The increase in remote working has brought about distinct challenges to overcome, with employee experience the most common. 79% of respondents agreed that the impact of IT failures are more significant following the migration to remote and hybrid working environments.

Most IT professionals feel lukewarm at best about what they've been taught. In fact, many respondents still encounter remote work problems that they don't know how to solve.

Around two thirds of respondents are challenged by ensuring a smooth employee experience within a remote working environment (64%) and ensuring cyber security is adequate for remote workers (62%).

Which of the following do you believe are the biggest challenges created by an increase in remote working environments?

Challenge	%
Ensuring a smooth employee experience within a remote working environment	64%
Ensure cyber security is adequate for remote workers	62%
Balancing the responsibilities of office-based and remote IT support	59%
Developing bespoke and/or company-wide tools and programs to accommodate remote working	58%
Considering wider organization factors and how they impact IT	55%
There have been no challenges caused by an increase in remote working environments	1%

Most (90%) have received additional training from their organization to support them in their role since the pandemic began, and even more (95%) have received access to additional tools or software.

However, 99% report that there are things that they could have or do which would help them excel as an IT professional in a remote/hybrid working world. Most commonly, this would be greater recognition of their roles and responsibilities (57%), followed by additional tools/software (55%), better leadership/guidance (53%) and additional time for certain tasks (47%).

Which of the following would assist you to excel in the future as an IT professional in remote and hybrid workplaces?

Category	Percentage
Greater recognition of my roles and responsibilities	57%
Additional tools and/or software	55%
Better leadership/guidance	53%
Additional time for certain tasks	47%
Additional training	45%
More resources of a different kind	0%
Nothing would assist me to excel in remote and hybrid workplaces	1%

99% report that there are things that they could have or do which would help them excel as an IT professional in a remote/hybrid working world.

In addition to the need for better training, we also think there are some things that IT can start doing today to help them tackle their companies' digital and remote experience problems. In the next section we share 5 practical tips to get you started.

How You Can Start Architecting the Type of Workplace You Want

You're not alone. We recommend these 5 tips to kickstart your transition.

1. **Expand Visibility to Help Reduce IT Costs and Drive Value for the Organization**

   IT leaders often find themselves caught between the needs of employees and the expectations of their executive leaders. Employees want to experience less productivity-killing issues and use the best technology possible, while executives want to avoid sinking more and more money into ineffective IT initiatives.

   You can alleviate pressure from both sides by using an end-to-end solution like Nexthink Experience. Our customers unlock real-time visibility into their devices, network servers, applications, and employee sentiment.

2. **Leverage Smart Automations, Remote Actions, and Self-Help Healing So You Can Spend Less Time Trouble-shooting and More Time Innovating**

   Some interventions can be done automatically, some might require a one or two-step action, and others can be done entirely in the "background" of what an employee experiences on his or her device.

   Nexthink Experience offers a growing catalogue of 100+ out-of-the-box Remote Actions to tackle common issues, as well as a powerful scripting integration to solve more complex challenges with custom actions. Whether executed by IT manually, employees with self-help campaigns or pre-defined events, Nexthink's Remote Actions can easily be scaled across the enterprise to streamline and automate the incident management process.

NEXTHINK EXPERIENCE

Save Money

Reclaim Time

Effortless Scalability
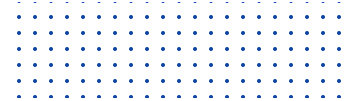
3. Establish XLAs to Fill the Gaps that SLAs Can't

Many service teams reach their KPIs and solve issues efficiently, yet employees still continue to suffer from poor digital experiences. The answer is that solving issues is just one small piece of the DEX puzzle. Proactive IT teams can prioritize issues and focus on areas that significantly impact their employees' experiences.

SLAs set important standards for metrics like incident response time – but they offer little in the way of addressing what employees are actually experiencing on a day-to-day basis. XLAs, on the other hand, enable IT leaders to establish goals based on the quality of experience they're delivering to employees.
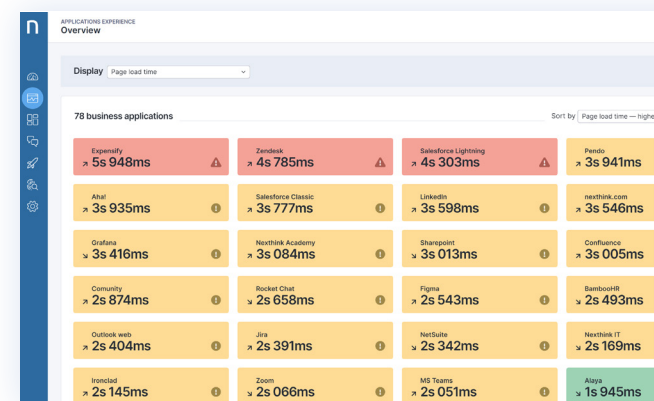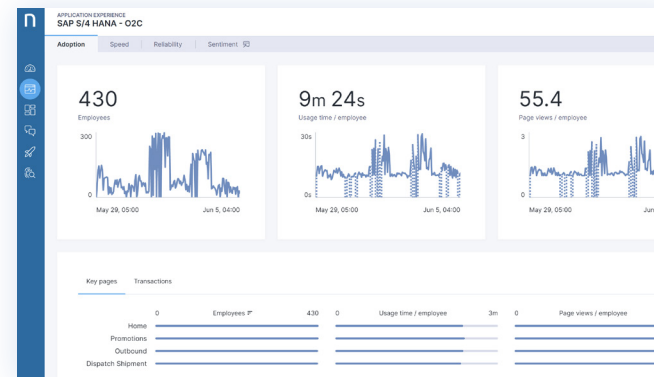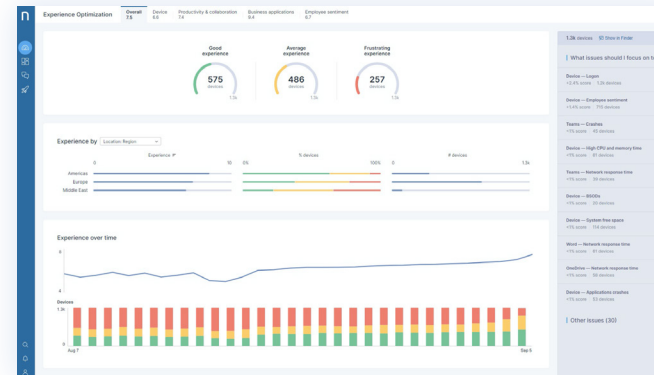
Do you have a way to measure and track XLAs? You should build a dashboard to track DEX progress; rank recommendations from employees to solve high priority issues; and leverage a two-way technology tool that garners real-time employee feedback.

4. Deploy Two-Way Communications for Employee Feedback

Nexthink Experience offers a two-way communication tool that cuts through the digital workplace noise with attention-grabbing notifications direct to their work device. Our customers are able to rapidly notify direct to the employees device as soon as an incident occurs, and they can scale fixes across all impacted employees with a targeted campaign for greater efficiency. Experience allows them to boost response rates by connecting directly with employees with timed and targeted messages to provide critical information, share a survey, or help them fix problems that matter to them.
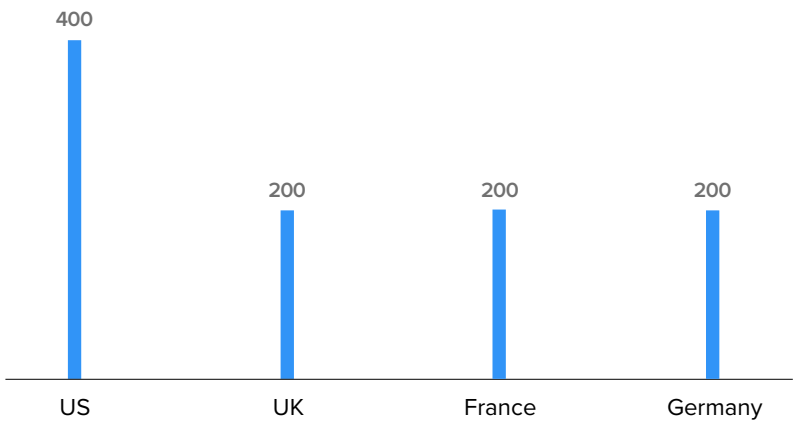
5. Leverage Flexible ITSM Integrations That Inject Accurate Experience Data

Digital Employee Experience is too important to be used in isolation, that's why Nexthink Experience also provides certified prebuilt integrations with any of your preferred IT solutions and chatbots in your IT ecosystem. Combine forces by accessing real-time, end-user intelligence with your existing third-party software solutions, such as PowerBI, Splunk or ServiceNow.
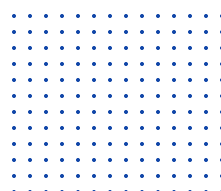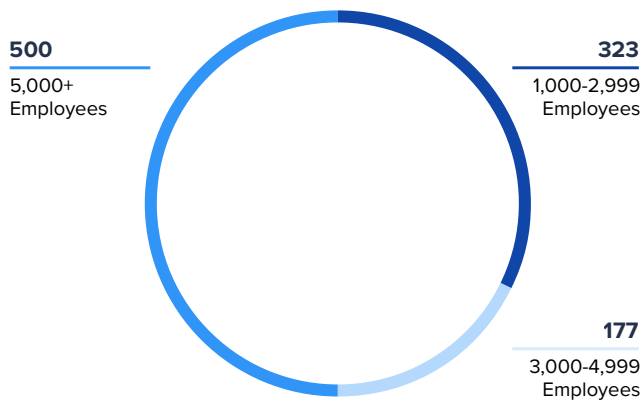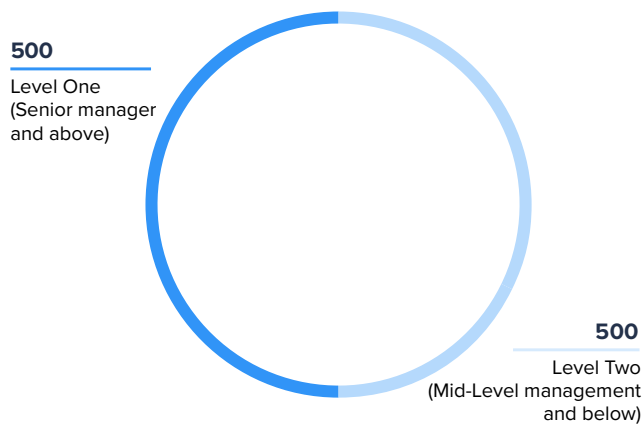
About the Survey

Respondent by Country

400	200	200	200
US	UK	France	Germany

Respondent Company Size

500
5,000+ Employees

323
1,000-2,999 Employees

177
3,000-4,999 Employees

Respondent Position

500
Level One (Senior manager and above)

500
Level Two (Mid-Level management and below)

ABOUT NEXTHINK

Nexthink is the global leader in Digital Employee Experience management. The company's products allow enterprises to create highly productive digital workplaces for their employees by delivering optimal end-user experiences. Through a unique combination of real-time analytics, automation and employee feedback across all endpoints, Nexthink helps IT teams meet the needs of the modern digital workplace.

Have questions about the Nexthink platform?

CONTACT US