nexthink

IT's New Mandate: The Science of Productivity Report

PART 1

Transformation: Driving Adoption, Productivity, and Change in the AI Era

How do 1,100 IT leaders feel about navigating AI transformation and turning technology into measurable business value?

SURVEY CONDUCTED BY VANSON BOURNE

Introduction

A seismic shift is underway in IT. No longer just the domain of infrastructure and support, IT is evolving into a discipline that directly shapes how employees work, collaborate, and succeed. This transformation—driven by AI, digital adoption, and the rise of digital employee experience (DEX)—is redefining IT as the science of productivity.

To stay competitive amidst this backdrop of change, IT is going to have to rewire its strategy.

In this unique 2-part report, we'll investigate the problems that 1,100 Senior IT Leaders are facing in the digital workplace. And then with concrete examples, we'll demonstrate how you can fix those same issues with a DEX-first strategy.

Inside This Report

The Science of Productivity Defined

Productivity as a concept isn't novel to IT nor to the business. But our survey data reveals a different understanding of work productivity that we haven't seen before.

Instead of focusing solely on the traditional ways of IT management—like answering tickets and keeping systems running—respondents want to optimize how people use their technology. They don't want IT to just support the business, they want to define its success.

97%

Agree that **improving digital productivity** is a **key mission** of the IT department.

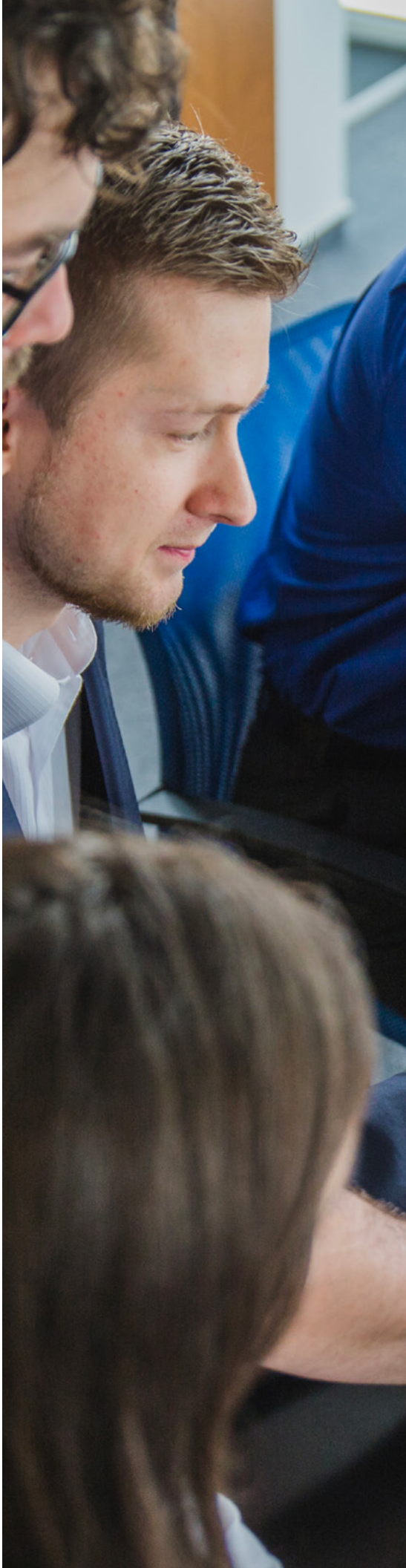
96%

Agree that **improving productivity** will be the biggest competitive differentiator in the new wave of digital transformation.

At the center of this reframing is Digital Employee Experience (DEX), a field dedicated to improving workplace technology and ensuring people can use their tech effectively. IT leaders see **DEX** and **Digital Adoption** as vital components of productivity and business competitiveness.

95% agree that DEX is directly correlated with enterprise productivity.

And while the goals seem clear, the data shows a monumental change is coming that will disrupt and overwhelm those organizations who aren't prepared. AI isn't just another wave of transformation—it will be a tidal shift in the way we work.



AI: The Catalyst for IT's Reinvention

An overwhelming majority of respondents told us that AI is accelerating IT's transformation into this science of productivity. In fact, it's very likely that in the next three years, organizations will experience the most intense period of **AI Transformation** ever witnessed. This shift puts IT in the driver's seat and gives them strategic influence over the success of the business.

96%

Agree that **AI will significantly** transform how their company operates and does business within the next three years.

82%

Agree that **failure to invest appropriately in AI** will cause organizations to **fall behind competitors.**

96%

Believe this wave of AI-driven digital transformation will be the **most intensive and impactful yet.**

94%

Believe that **AI's rise makes tailored DEX insights more essential than ever.**

The survey data also revealed that according to the vast majority of leaders, they think their organization's competitiveness is largely contingent upon the successful adaptation of AI.

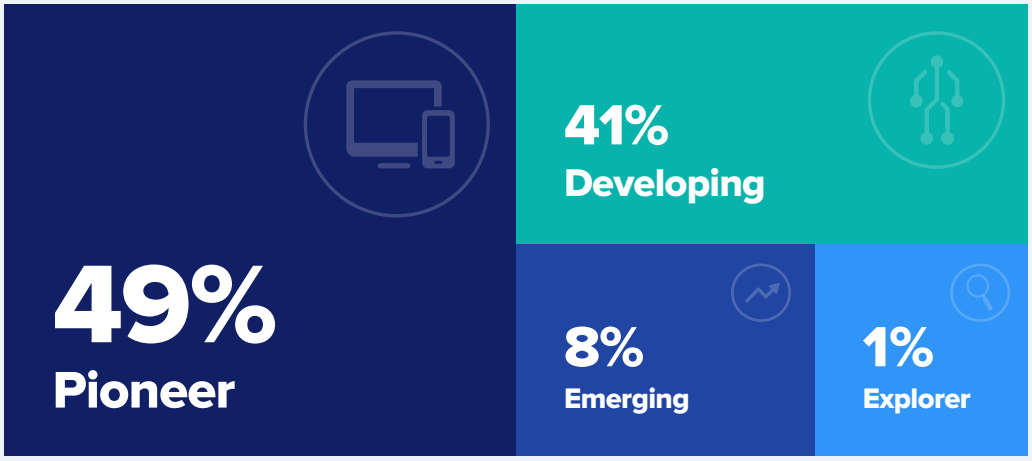
94% agree that their organization's success across the next three years will be highly contingent upon its ability to effectively utilize AI technologies.

With so much change on the horizon, this begs the question, 'are organizations ready?'. That depends on where you look.

Ranking Digital Transformation Maturity

Most organizations say their digital transformation journey is well underway. In fact, an overwhelming majority rank themselves as either a digital-first organization (49% - 'pioneer') or a close second (41% - 'developing').

Organizations Self-Reported Digital Transformation Maturity



- Digital-first and **continuously evolving** transformation efforts to stay ahead.
- Have integrated digital transformation into operations and **are** seeing measurable benefits.
- Actively implementing digital transformation projects but **not yet** started to see measurable benefits.
- In the **early stages** of planning and exploring digital transformation.

But saying you're ready for change is different than demonstrating it. A key piece to change has to do with Digital Dexterity—i.e. an individual or group's ability to adapt to new technology.

The Key Lynchpin: Digital Dexterity

New technologies are only beneficial if employees use them. And as simple as that sounds, many IT leaders admit they can't entirely solve this part of the equation.

Respondents told us that if their organizations can improve the digital dexterity of employees over the next 12 months, faster adoption of digital transformation would be the biggest and most logical outcome. Taking this a step further, it's evident that DEX and Digital Adoption can serve as vital parts of IT's ability to deliver AI transformation at scale.

95%

Agree that digital dexterity will be essential to organizational success in the coming three years.

96%

Say enhanced digital adoption support will be critical for helping employees adapt to AI.

94%

Believe that AI's rise makes tailored DEX insights more essential than ever.

And while there is real excitement for AI, and interest to improve technology adoption and DEX, we uncovered a number of obstacles and misconceptions reported by respondents.

IT's Challenges

Digital Friction & Barriers to Adoption

Overall, IT leaders expect more tension and pressure to come as AI technologies are introduced in the next few years.

91%

Expect an increase in digital friction as AI transformation accelerates.

Many barriers can get in the way of employee digital dexterity, and respondents pointed to three in particular:

68%

IT's lack of proven record to get buy-in from other parts of the business.

62%

An inability to demonstrate value of new technology.

55%

A lack of training/resources.

What does 'digital friction' mean exactly?

Think of digital friction as the unnecessary effort and time an employee spends trying to use data or technology at work. Alternatively, a digitally dexterous workforce is one that experiences little to no digital friction because they're agile, adept, supported, and open to new tools.

Employee Tech Skills Shortages

If the average organization were to implement the newest AI technologies today, less than half of its employees would be capable of handling the transition.

What percentage of employees in your organization do you believe have the requisite digital dexterity to adapt to the next wave of technologies (e.g. generative AI or quantum computing)?

47%

Weak AI Adoption Support

The burden is also felt by IT support. A significant majority of leaders say their existing digital adoption efforts need a boost to match demand and help employees adapt.

96%

Digital adoption support needs a boost–96% of organizations agree they need to **enhance their digital adoption** support to help employees adapt to AI.

Exorbitant Adoption Costs

And surprisingly, we learned that many leaders feel obligated to stick with certain SaaS providers because the cost of adopting to a new technology is so high – suggesting that organizations might be keeping inefficient or misaligned software simply because the cost of switching to a better solution outweighs the perceived benefits.

69%

Agree they would definitely change SaaS providers more often if the cost of adoption were lower.

Perceived IT Staffing Problems

There's also a perception in IT that there are too many employees to support and grant a proper digital adoption experience. In the next section, we will show how AI and Nexthink's Infinity platform can flip this perceived problem on its head.

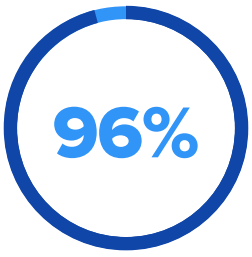
61%

Agree there are too many users in our organization for IT to provide adequate adoption support for everyone.

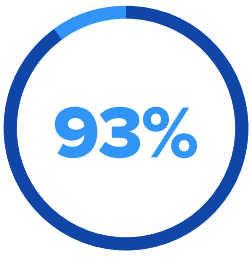
IT's 'False Confidence' with Investments

Oddly, while a majority of IT leaders felt confident they could prove the value of new technology purchases, they didn't feel the same when it came to identifying underperforming investments.

If put on the spot, we would be able to confidently and accurately communicate the value of our digital transformation investments to senior leadership.



We are able to accurately determine the exact productivity gains a new technology brings our organization.



We need to improve our ability to confidently identify underperforming investments more effectively than we do now.

Struggling with AI's True Monetary ROI

For all its excitement and promise, many leaders reported disappointment, or at the very least, confusion with AI.

Mainly, respondents say they struggle to demonstrate and understand AI's financial ROI, business value, user adoption, and performance benefits.

Examples of where organizations struggled to demonstrate the value of an AI Investment:

- **AI Model Performance and Integration**
- **Proving Business Value**
- **Time and Cost Challenges**
- **Customer and User Adoption**

54%

Agree their organization struggles to put an exact/ accurate monetary value (i.e. return on investment) on each of their AI investments.

Miscalculating DEX

We also learned that while many leaders believe their organization has a good DEX, confusingly they cite serious productivity challenges, and the inability to monitor and improve said DEX.

What does this misalignment mean for these organizations?

It means many leaders are overestimating their DEX and basing decisions and budgets on inaccurate information. The most dangerous thing a management team can do is operate on assumptions and not sound data.

Of the 'pioneer' organizations who said they offer above average DEX:

48%

Do not strongly agree they have an effective DEX solution to monitor and improve employee digital experience.

46%

Do not strongly agree they have the right data to clearly identify the biggest digital blockers to employee productivity.

Strategic Advice

Let's unpack each and every one of the challenges and misconceptions from the survey data and address what your organization can do.

Removing Digital Friction & Barriers to Adoption

While digital friction stems from an array of issues, the respondents in our survey pointed to three principal barriers:

1. Collaboration (getting buy-in from other parts of the business)
2. Demonstrating value
3. A lack of training/resources

With the right DEX platform, IT teams can gain deep visibility into how employees interact with their applications, which makes for straightforward insights that translate into any departmental KPI.

There also are plenty of non-technology actions you can take as well, like:

Cross-Functional Committees
Establish a digital transformation committee with representatives from IT and other business units to align goals.

Early Involvement
Involve business leaders early in IT projects to secure buy-in and ensure alignment with company objectives.

Clear KPIs & Metrics
Develop clear, business-oriented metrics (e.g., efficiency gains, cost savings, revenue growth) to show IT's impact.

Quick Wins
Implement small, high-impact projects that deliver immediate value to build trust and momentum.

C-Suite Advocacy
Get executive sponsorship to reinforce IT's strategic importance.

Ongoing Training
Invest in continuous learning opportunities for IT and non-IT employees on new tools and best practices.

Internal Knowledge Hub
Create a centralized repository with guides, FAQs, and trouble-shooting tips.

Dedicated IT Champions
Assign IT ambassadors in different departments to help with adoption and support.

Identifying & Augmenting Employee Tech Skills Shortages

We know that **47% of employees** have the requisite digital dexterity to adapt to new technologies.

But what if there was a smart way to monitor and optimize digital dexterity in real time?

Thanks to products like Experience Central, Workplace Experience, and Adopt, IT teams can identify specific in-app tech skill shortages, detect anomalies, provide employees with contextual guidance, and implement automated fixes within minutes. And beyond the technology, our customers have credited their digital dexterity success to role-specific learning paths, gamification, peer-led training sessions, gradual rollouts, recognition/reward programs, and designated time slots for tech learning.

Strengthening ~~Weak~~ AI Adoption Support

96% of organizations agree they need to **enhance their digital adoption support** to help employees adapt to AI.

There are few simple but powerful steps organizations can take:

Timely Tech & AI Literacy Programs

Offer company-wide training to demystify AI and any new technologies, and help employees understand its capabilities and limitations.

Hands-On Workshops

Provide interactive sessions where employees can experiment with AI tools in a safe environment.

Role-Specific AI Training

Customize AI learning paths based on different job functions to show direct relevance.

Practical Use Cases

Show employees how AI can make their daily tasks easier (e.g., automating reports, enhancing customer interactions).

Executive Endorsement

Ensure leadership actively uses AI tools and promotes their benefits.

AI Champions & Super Users

Identify early adopters within teams to support and mentor colleagues.

On-Demand Learning Resources

Create a knowledge hub with tutorials, FAQs, and step-by-step guides on AI tools.

Regular Feedback Loops

Continuously gather employee input on AI adoption challenges and adjust support accordingly.

Eliminating Exorbitant Adoption Costs

69% agree they would definitely change SaaS providers more often if the cost of adoption were lower.

There are several steps IT can take to reduce the cost of SaaS adoption and make switching providers easier:

1

Lower Your Transition Costs

Vendor Negotiation: Negotiate better migration support, training, or discounted onboarding fees with SaaS providers.

Phased Rollouts: Implement new SaaS solutions gradually to minimize disruption and costs.

Leverage Free Trials: Test new providers with pilot programs before committing to full adoption.

2

Simplify Migration & Integration

Data Portability Standards: Choose SaaS solutions that support easy data exports/imports to avoid lock-in.

API & Integration Readiness: Prioritize SaaS tools that integrate seamlessly with existing tech stacks.

Automated Migration Tools: Use AI-powered or third-party tools to speed up and simplify data migration.

3

Enhancing Internal Adoption & Training

On-Demand Learning: Provide bite-sized training to help employees quickly adapt to new SaaS platforms.

Change Management Support: Implement structured onboarding plans with clear communication to ease transitions.

Internal Champions: Assign power users to help teams transition and reduce reliance on external support.

4

Financial & Strategic Planning

Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) Analysis: Evaluate long-term costs beyond licensing fees to make smarter SaaS decisions.

Subscription Flexibility: Opt for providers that offer month-to-month plans or scalability to avoid long-term commitments.

Benchmarking & Vendor Review Process: Regularly assess SaaS providers to ensure the best value for money. Nexthink's built-in benchmarking dashboards make this a no-brainer for customers.

Rectifying Perceived IT Staffing Problems

61% agree there are too many users in our organization for IT to provide adequate adoption support for everyone.

Based on our survey, there is a perception that too many employees spells trouble for IT. This couldn't be further from the truth. You can scale your organization's headcount by 10x, or even 100x, without overburdening or jeopardizing your L1/L2.

Beyond the Nexthink platform, our customers have enacted smart techniques to manage their userbase:

1

Decentralized Support Structures

Super User Program: Train tech-savvy employees in each department to serve as first-line support, reducing IT workload.

Peer-to-Peer Learning: Encourage employees to share knowledge through mentoring, internal forums, or collaborative help desks.

Department-Specific AI Assistants: Deploy AI-driven chatbots that can answer common adoption questions in real time.

2

Self-Service Learning & Resources

On-Demand Knowledge Hub: Create a centralized repository with FAQs, video tutorials, and step-by-step guides.

Interactive Chatbots & AI Help Desks: Automate basic IT queries and troubleshooting with AI-powered support tools.

Microlearning Modules: Offer short, targeted training sessions that employees can complete at their own pace.

3

Proactive and Preventative Automations

Automated Onboarding Workflows: Use guided, interactive walkthroughs within software to help users learn as they go.

Proactive IT Monitoring: Implement analytics to identify common adoption pain points and address them before they become major issues.

Automated Ticketing & Self-Resolution Tools: Allow users to resolve common issues via AI-driven troubleshooting before escalating to IT.

4

Hyper-targeted Change Management & Communication

Role-Based Training Rollouts: Prioritize training based on job functions to ensure critical users receive support first.

Office Hours for Q&A Sessions: Schedule regular live sessions where employees can ask IT questions in real time.

The quantity of employees IT supports shouldn't restrain their operations. Take for example, Digital Experience Director, Anthony Firmin, who led one of the largest MS Teams Adoption projects ever recorded with **350,000 employees across 150 countries.**

Fixing IT's 'False Confidence' with Investments

Most of the respondents in our survey have a 'false confidence' when it comes to rating their tech investments. While a significant majority felt they could prove the value of a **new investment**, nearly the same proportion admitted they need to improve their ability to **confidently identify underperforming investments.**

94% Felt like they **could prove** the value of a new investment.

93% **Need to improve** their ability to identify underperforming investments.

Being able to confidently rate whether an investment is overperforming or underperforming is crucial to the business and your employee experience.

The good news is that there are some simple strategies you can initiate today:

Establish Objective Performance Metrics

Set Defined Success Criteria: Before implementation, outline key performance indicators (KPIs) tied to business objectives (e.g., cost savings, efficiency gains, revenue growth).

Track Real-Time Usage Data: Use analytics tools to monitor how employees interact with the technology and whether adoption aligns with expectations.

Compare Expectations vs. Reality: Regularly benchmark actual performance against initial projections to identify discrepancies.

Implement a Structured Tech Evaluation Framework

Create a Tech Investment Scorecard: Rate investments on impact, adoption, cost efficiency, and alignment with business needs.

Adopt a Lifecycle Review Process: Regularly assess tools at different stages (pilot, post-implementation, long-term use) to determine their sustained value.

Standardize Performance Reviews: Require departments to provide structured feedback on how tech investments affect their workflows.

Leverage AI & Data-Driven Insights

AI-Powered Performance Analysis: Use machine learning models to identify trends, inefficiencies, and potential areas for improvement.

Predictive Analytics: Forecast future performance based on historical data to prevent long-term underperformance.

Automate Investment Audits: Implement automated reports that flag tools with declining usage, high costs, or diminishing returns.

Strengthen Communication & Cross-Department Collaboration

IT-Business Alignment Meetings: Ensure IT teams regularly discuss investment performance with leadership and department heads.

Encourage Honest Feedback: Create a culture where employees feel comfortable reporting inefficiencies or dissatisfaction with tech tools.

Pilot Programs Before Full Rollout: Test new solutions with small teams first, gather feedback, and adjust before company-wide deployment.

"Without Nexthink, I'm running blind. Nexthink gives me the transparency into when, how, and how often our users are using applications."

Michael Trepte, Landys+Gyr

Unearthing ~~Struggling with~~ AI's True Monetary ROI

Whether you're incorporating a new Generative AI tool or AI-powered chatbot, there are commonsense ways to track and calculate your ROI.

1

Define Obvious and Simple AI-related KPIs

Align AI Metrics with Business Goals: Track AI's impact on revenue growth, cost reduction, efficiency improvements, or customer satisfaction.

Adopt Industry Benchmarks: Compare AI performance against similar organizations to contextualize ROI.

2

Implement AI-Specific Performance Tracking

Pre and Post-Adoption Analysis: Measure key business metrics before and after AI implementation to assess direct impact.

AI Cost Attribution: Break down AI costs (development, licensing, infrastructure, training) to track spending effectively.

Predictive Analytics: Use AI itself to forecast and refine expected ROI based on real-time data.

3

Establish Financial & Operational Transparency

AI Value Dashboards: Create real-time dashboards that track AI's contribution to productivity, revenue, and cost savings.

Stakeholder Alignment Workshops: Regularly educate board members on AI's impact using non-technical, data-driven insights.

Test-and-Learn Approach: Start with small-scale AI pilots, analyze results, and expand based on measurable success.

4

Qualitative & Strategic ROI Considerations

Measure Indirect Benefits: Consider AI's long-term value in competitive advantage, risk reduction, and innovation.

Assess Employee Productivity Gains: Track reductions in manual work, faster time to market (or sales deals), and improved DEX.

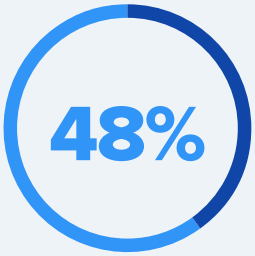
Customer Experience Metrics: Link AI-driven personalization and automation to increases in customer retention and loyalty.

Accurately Calculating ~~Miscalculating~~ DEX

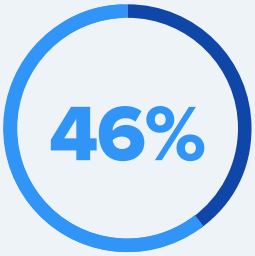
Roughly half of the 'pioneer' organizations that claim to offer an above-average DEX, say they can't monitor or improve their DEX, or identify digital blockers to employee productivity.

That's an alarming contradiction.

Every automation, software rollout, or interaction with an employee depends upon an accurate reading of one's DEX.



Can't monitor/improve their DEX.



Can't identify digital blockers to employee productivity.

For example, the Nexthink DEX score compiles calculations from three subscores:

Endpoint Score

The Endpoint score reflects the ability of employees to start and use their device on specific operating systems without interruption (device reliability) and with good response times (device performance).

Applications Score

The Applications score reflects the ability of employees to use their applications smoothly and with good response time.

Collaboration Score

The Collaboration score reflects the ability of employees to use collaboration applications, such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom.

Those three subscores are then combined with a sentiment score, which is computed based on an employee's satisfaction with IT (among other things).

The DEX score and its subscores are calculated daily and use the following mapping for the score values:

0-30
Frustrating

31-70
Average

71-100
Good

What's critical is that your DEX calculation is consistent as it is accurate. Refining this process will enable IT to benchmark the organization's DEX against similar industries and competitors.

"Time is money. Every minute that I can't work productively is lost time. Our people want to concentrate and really get into their work. Disruptions throw them out of their zone. And that's why we chose Nexthink."

Andres Spölming, Apetito

Who Owns the Employee Experience?

In the first half of our survey we were able to sketch the direction of EUC, and articulate many of the problems and misconceptions IT leaders face.

But there's another significant piece of the puzzle yet to be explored.

Who owns the employee experience?

Productivity is no longer just a business KPI—it's a battle-ground. And as work becomes digital by default, employee experience is up for grabs.

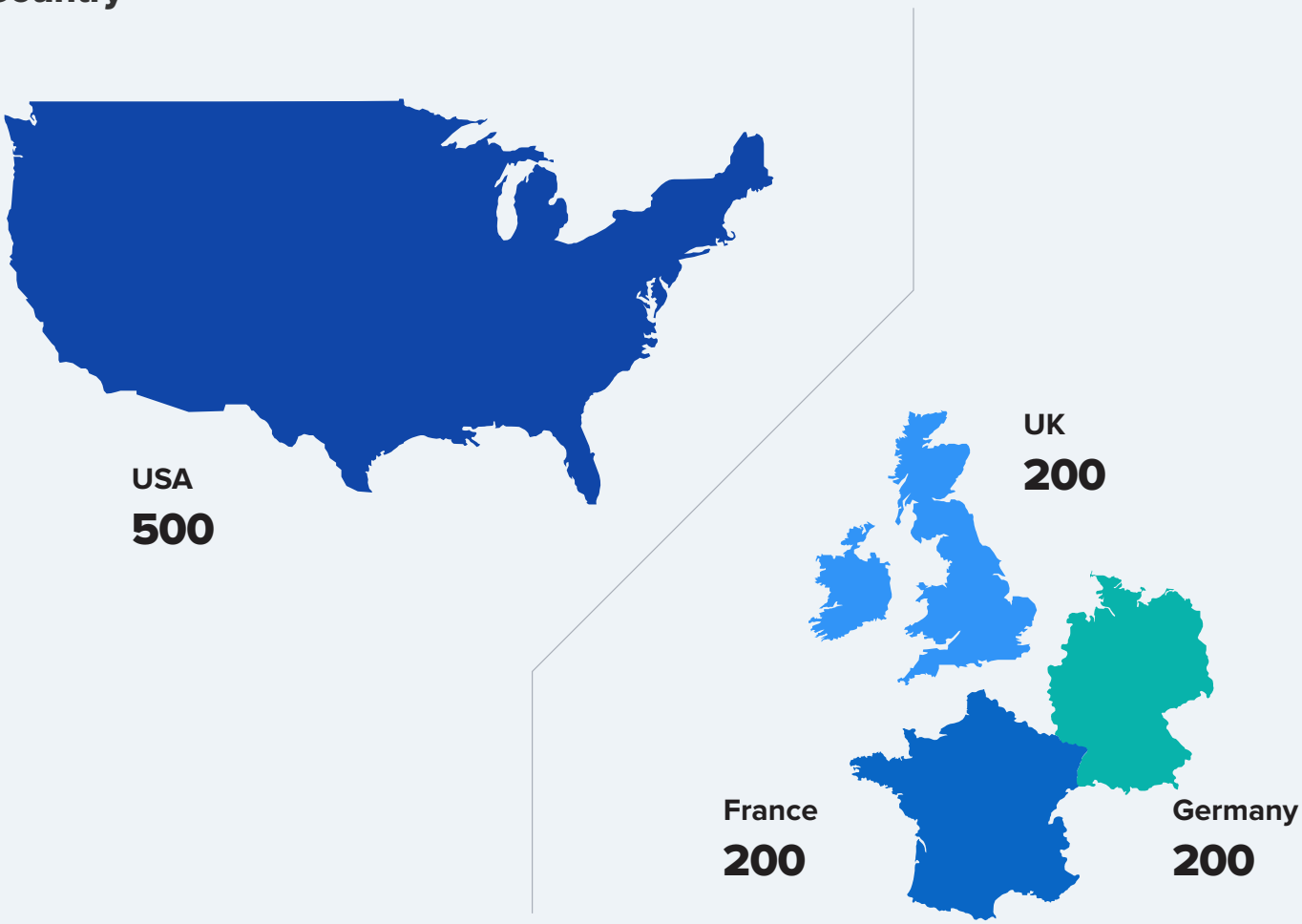
The proverbial writing is on the wall–the boundaries between IT and HR are dissolving. But questions remain, however, as to where and how these two entities will work together? In **Part 2**, we explore the 'Experience Silo', and offer tips for better managing the future of employee experience.

About the Survey

Teaming up with Vanson Bourne, we interviewed 1,100 Senior IT Decision Makers across four major markets: the UK, the USA, France, and Germany.

Respondents are from organizations of 1,500 employees or more.

Country



Position

217 Mid-Level Management; Manager of Team or Silo

752 Senior Management; Senior Manager of Unit, Function or Departnment

131 Board Member; C-Level

Organization Size

416
1,500–3,499 employees

350
3,500–4,999 employees

334
5,000 or more employees

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?

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