

Digital Connectivity Becomes a Priority for CIOs

WE LIVE IN THE DIGITAL AGE, SO SHOULDN'T OUR WORK ENVIRONMENT BE JUST AS CONNECTED AND COLLABORATIVE? NEW RESEARCH SUGGESTS IT LEADERS ARE QUICKLY MOVING IN THAT DIRECTION.



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Companies are transforming into digital enterprises, thanks to the convergence of mobile, cloud and big data trends. A large part of this transformation includes the evolution of how businesses empower their organizations with a connected, collaborative environment — one that enables fast communication, information sharing in real-time and the ability to quickly work together to solve day-to-day business challenges.

IDG Research Services recently surveyed senior IT leaders to better understand how they are enabling the transformation to a digitally connected and collaborative workplace. This paper examines the results and offers insights into the benefits of digital connectivity.

Early Stages of Adoption

As organizations continue to evolve toward what IDC calls the Third Platform, or the intersection of social, mobile, cloud and big data, the impact of the transformation is becoming increasingly noticeable.

The fast movers — think of firms such as Uber, Airbnb and Warby Parker — are borderless, intuitive and responsive, thus redefining business norms. What makes these companies different is their ability to seamlessly accomplish tasks. Their leaders embrace the “anywhere, anytime, any device” mantra that today’s professionals demand.

But for those companies still on the evolutionary path toward digital connectivity, understanding the ways in which people connect is critical when it comes to determining how your business can thrive in this new environment. This is true whether communication and collaboration are strictly internal efforts, or if they involve customers and strategic partners.

And based on the IDG survey, most companies are still in the early stages, with 79 percent of respondents saying their organizations have at least started the process of becoming a digitally connected/collaborative workplace.

What’s driving them? More than half cite their organization’s ability to quickly collaborate with remote colleagues (67 percent) as a top reason for becoming more digitally connected. Meeting with vendors and clients and boosting employee satisfaction are also important factors.

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Interestingly, those IT leaders who say they have mastered this and have become a digitally connected organization are more likely to report that executive meetings are driving their desire to become more digitally connected. This suggests business leaders have seen the important role digital connectivity plays in fueling collaboration, regardless of where it occurs within the enterprise.

Understanding Obstacles

As with any transition, the shift toward digital connectivity has its share of obstacles. It’s no surprise to see IT leaders report a limited budget as the top challenge.

But more interesting is their reporting of low technology adoption rates as preventing their transformation to a digitally connected and collaborative workplace. One reason for this is the overwhelming lack of user-focused training. Simply investing in video collaboration tools doesn’t guarantee their use.

There must be a solid level of understanding both in how to use the technology and how it can benefit daily operations and tasks. As such, training should be a priority rather than an afterthought. Look for flexible support models including video assistance or an on-site technical staffing program. Likewise remember to provide practical examples that are

appropriate for each user base or department.

Another obstacle to overcome: a lack of strategic guidance, which ranks as the third most important challenge holding companies back from digital connectivity. Ironically, IT leaders in the survey fully understand the benefits of working with technology partners and vendors (see The Road to Realizing Benefits below).

“Realizing a positive ROI depends on achieving a positive user experience.”

— Dale Bottcher, SVP, AVI-SPL

To address this need for strategic guidance, do your homework. Seek an experienced technology provider with a robust services offering. “With the right engineers and experience, a professional services engagement can include everything from readiness assessments to system designs and schematics, and from implementation and managed support services to end-user training and technology adoption programs,” says Dale Bottcher, senior vice president at AVI-SPL, a provider of communications and collaboration solutions. “This will tailor or customize the strategic guidance to IT leaders’ needs.”

The Road to Realizing Benefits

Certainly, no matter where they are on the path to digital connectivity — from those who say they have mastered it, to those working through roadblocks, to organizations that just have connectivity on their radar — all respondents recognize the benefits of working with a partner that specializes in collaboration solutions, including:

- Reduced burden on IT
- Faster resolution of technical issues
- Optimized operations
- Improved user satisfaction

The right strategic partner can help facilitate the path to success, according to the IT leaders surveyed. Their top requirement in seeking a collaboration and communication systems vendor is simple and fast installation. At number two is end-user training. Thus, they recognize they must address one of the top challenges identified earlier: low technology adoption rates.

“A positive user experience engenders strong technology adoption,” Bottcher explains. “Plus, a standardized user experience — from room to room, city to city — makes remote support of systems much more scalable and manageable. Frankly, realizing a positive ROI depends on achieving a positive customer user experience.”

Another characteristic the respondents say would tip the scales toward one vendor over another is having the choice of technology deployment models. This sort of flexibility gives organizations an easier transition to digital connectivity as they budget for capital or operational expenditures, or a mix of both.

As they seek strategic partners who provide various deployment methods, IT leaders should ask about a hybrid model, which would allow them to scale their collaboration resources to meet demand. On-premise infrastructure can be utilized first with fixed cost and then cloud-based infrastructure may be tapped as usage spikes or demand grows, with a variable operating cost. Because one size doesn’t fit all, having a choice of deployment options offers the flexibility to grow.

The digital transformation is occurring quickly and not just within large enterprises. Senior IT leaders recognize there are significant benefits and opportunities by instituting a seamlessly connected and highly collaborative workplace.

Fortunately, the technologies that companies require to accomplish this goal already exist and, with the right help, implementation and utilization isn’t difficult to achieve. ■

About AVI-SPL

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