2021 **IT Talent Trend Report**

INFO~TECH
RESEARCH GROUP

2020 volatility forced IT leaders to

change the ways of work and how they manage talent

In March 2020, many organizations were forced to switch to a virtual working world. IT enabled organizations to be successful while working from home. Ultimately, this shift changed the way that we all work and in turn, the way IT leaders manage talent. Many organizations are considering long-term remote work (Kelly, 2020).

In addition, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) have become a greater priority for organizations as a result of events related to social justice inequities. This has broadened the awareness worldwide about subjects like, but not limited to, anti-Black racism and has pushed organizations to show their DEI efforts (Chan & DiMauro, 2020).

Due to the shift in the way we work, there have been changes in the IT department. What are we seeing now and what can we expect for the IT talent of the future?

Pandemic changes force leaders to "get" positive impact of employee experience

And a good employee experience is what's best for the IT department

Right now, IT departments are becoming more aware of employee needs and their overall experience at work.

Largely, organizations are focused on the impact of the pandemic on the employee experience. We anticipate that this awareness will prepare IT departments to thrive moving forward through to a post-pandemic world.

Change is starting but is lagging.

The data shows IT is changing in the area of talent management. IT has a large role in enabling organizations to work from home, especially from a technological and logistics perspective. There is evidence to show that they are now migrating to also expanding their role to better support employees when working from home. Survey respondents identified efforts already underway for IT to improve employee experience, and subsequently, IT effectiveness.

Positive employee experience is associated with employee retention and increased revenue (Ismail, 2019).

Increase focus on employee experience to navigate new challenges

IT Effectiveness

Employee Experience

DEI: A Top Talent Objective	Remote Work Is Here to Stay	A Greater Emphasis on Wellbeing	A Shift in Skills Priorities	Uncertainty Unlocks Performance

Overview of IT Talent Trends 2021

DEI: A Top Talent Objective	Remote Work Is Here to Stay	A Greater Emphasis on Wellbeing	A Shift in Skills Priorities	Uncertainty Unlocks Performance

2020 in review

What we found in our *2020 Talent Trends Report*:

IT Takes Ownership of Talent Acquisition	**The Age of Radical Transparency**	**IT Departments Become Their Own Universities**
Flexible Work Becomes Fluid Work	**People Analytics Is Business Analytics**	**Offboarding: The Missed Opportunity**

Flexible work remains a trend for 2021 – flexible work, due to the pandemic, continues.

This report will introduce you to

five key talent trends in IT

Each trend:

Is introduced with key questions you can ask yourself to see how your department fares in that area.

Is based on statistics from a survey of 273 of your peers.

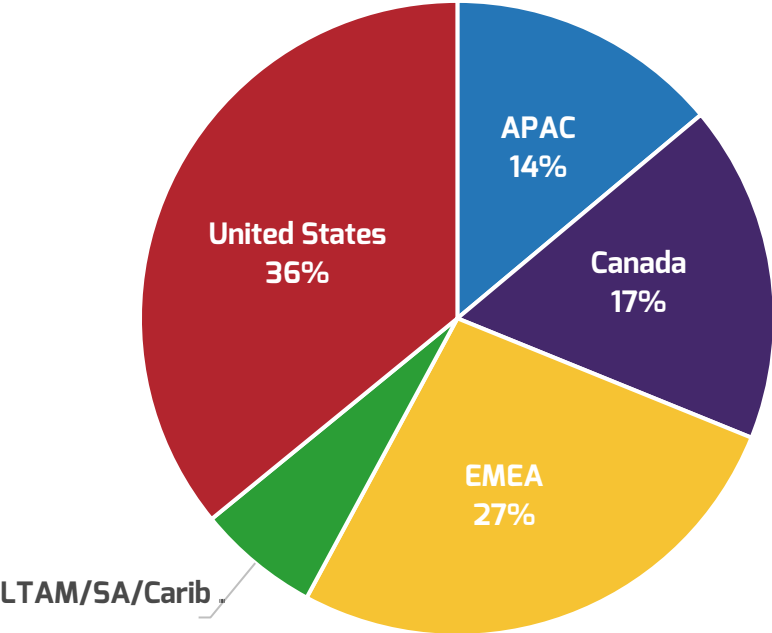Includes recommendations for next steps and a key metric to track your success.

Lists Info-Tech resources that you, as a member, can leverage to begin your journey to improve talent management in your department.

This report is based on data gathered from Info-Tech Research Group's 2021 IT Talent Trends Survey. The data was gathered in September and October of 2020.
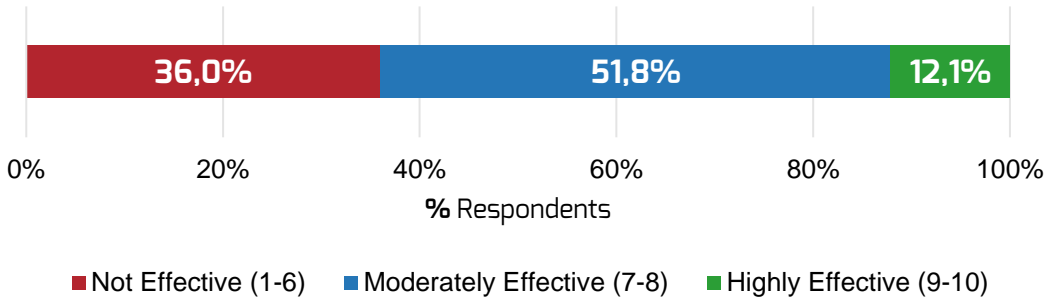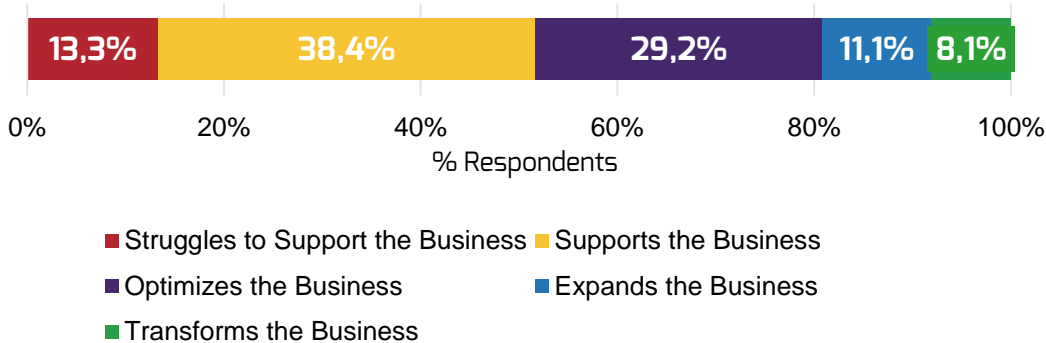
The data is based on an organization like yours

In which country or region is your organization's headquarters?

United States 36%
APAC 14%
Canada 17%
EMEA 27%
LTAM/SA/Carib

Overall, how would you rate the effectiveness of your IT department?

36,0%	51,8%	12,1%

% Respondents

■ Not Effective (1-6)　■ Moderately Effective (7-8)　■ Highly Effective (9-10)

Which of the following best describes the state of IT at the organization?

13,3%	38,4%	29,2%	11,1%	8,1%

% Respondents

■ Struggles to Support the Business　■ Supports the Business
■ Optimizes the Business　■ Expands the Business
■ Transforms the Business

Which title best describes your position?

% Respondents

- Owner / President / CEO: 1,8%
- C-level officer: 14,7%
- VP-level: 11,0%
- Director-level: 18,0%
- Team lead / supervisor: 9,2%
- Manager: 29,8%
- Team member: 8,8%
- Contractor: 0,7%
- Consultant: 5,9%
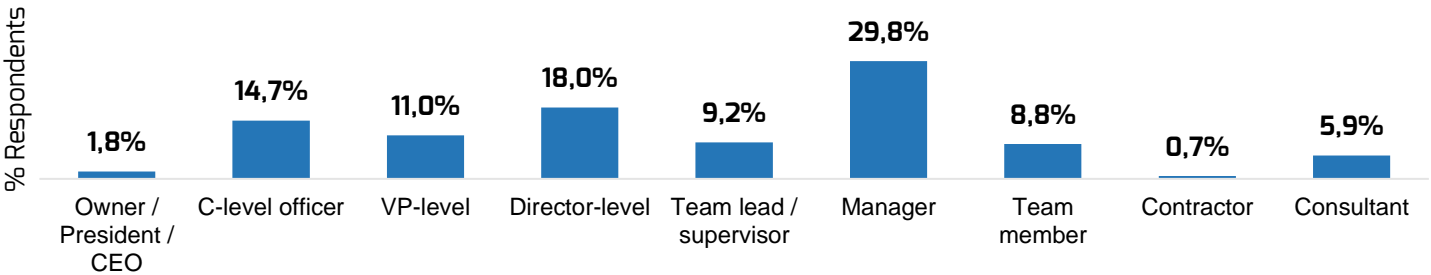
The data is based on an organization like yours

Size of business based on revenue

- Large/Enterprise 27%
- Small 44%
- Medium 29%
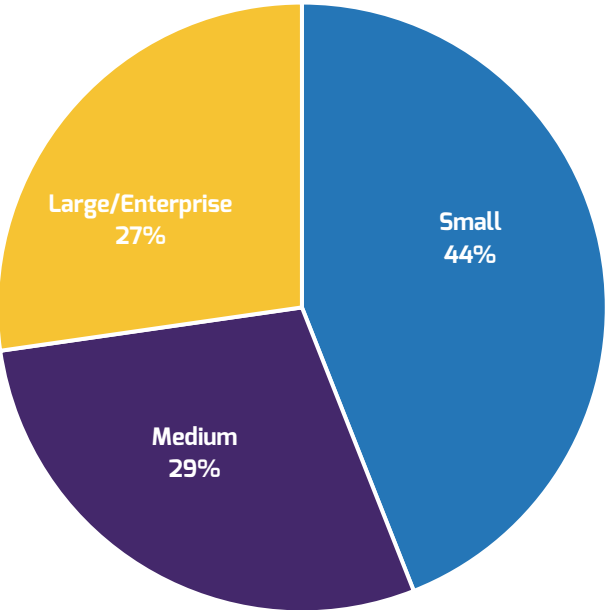
What is your enterprise's primary industry?

% Respondents

- All Other Industries: 13,6%
- Education: 7,3%
- Financial Services (including banking & insurance): 13,2%
- Government: 19,8%
- Healthcare & Life Sciences: 6,2%
- Manufacturing: 9,2%
- Media, Information, Telecom & Technology: 9,9%
- Not for Profit (including professional associations): 5,5%
- Other: 8,8%
- Professional Services: 6,6%

The data is based on an organization like yours

Please estimate your organization's revenue (US$)

% Respondents

Category	%
$0 - less than $1M	6,9%
$1 - less than $5M	5,4%
$5 - less than $10M	4,2%
$10 - less than $25M	6,2%
$25 - less than $50M	5,4%
$50 - less than $100M	7,3%
$100 - less than $500M	23,1%
$500M - less than $1B	8,8%
$1 - less than $5B	11,2%
$5B+	1,9%
I don't know	19,6%

What is your sub-department of IT?

% Respondents

Category	%
All Other Sub-Departments	14,7%
Application Development	9,2%
Business Relationship Management	6,2%
Data and Business Intelligence	5,1%
Enterprise Architecture	7,7%
Infrastructure and Operations	14,7%
Security	5,9%
Senior Leadership	31,1%
Service Desk	5,5%

Which talent objectives are most pressing for IT?

Please rank the following talent-related objectives for the IT department from 1-12.

Objective	Average Ranking	Ranked #1	Ranked #2	Ranked #3
Enabling departmental innovation	5,1	39	33	36
Enabling learning & development within IT	5,5	18	38	27
Supporting departmental change	5,7	24	28	31
Developing the organization's IT leaders	5,8	28	32	30
Facilitating data-driven people decisions within IT	6,3	16	23	34
Providing a great employee experience for IT	6,3	20	18	12
Controlling departmental labor costs and maximizing the value of the labor spend	6,3	39	28	24
Fostering a positive employee relations climate in the department	6,6	20	25	18
Rapidly moving internal IT employees to staff strategic priorities	6,9	14	18	24
Fostering an environment of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the department	7,4	25	15	13
Recruiting, e.g. quickly filling vacant roles in IT with quality external talent	7,4	19	13	13
Providing a great candidate experience for IT candidates	8,7	11	2	11

Average Ranking (the lower the number the more important they were)

IT-specific talent strategies are uncommon

For which of the following areas does IT have a documented departmental strategy in place?

% Selected

	%
None of the above	45,8%
Learning & Development (or Leadership Development)	31,1%
Employee Engagement	20,9%
Wellbeing	15,0%
Talent Management	14,7%
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	13,9%
Total Rewards	12,8%
Talent Acquisition	12,1%
I don't know	11,7%
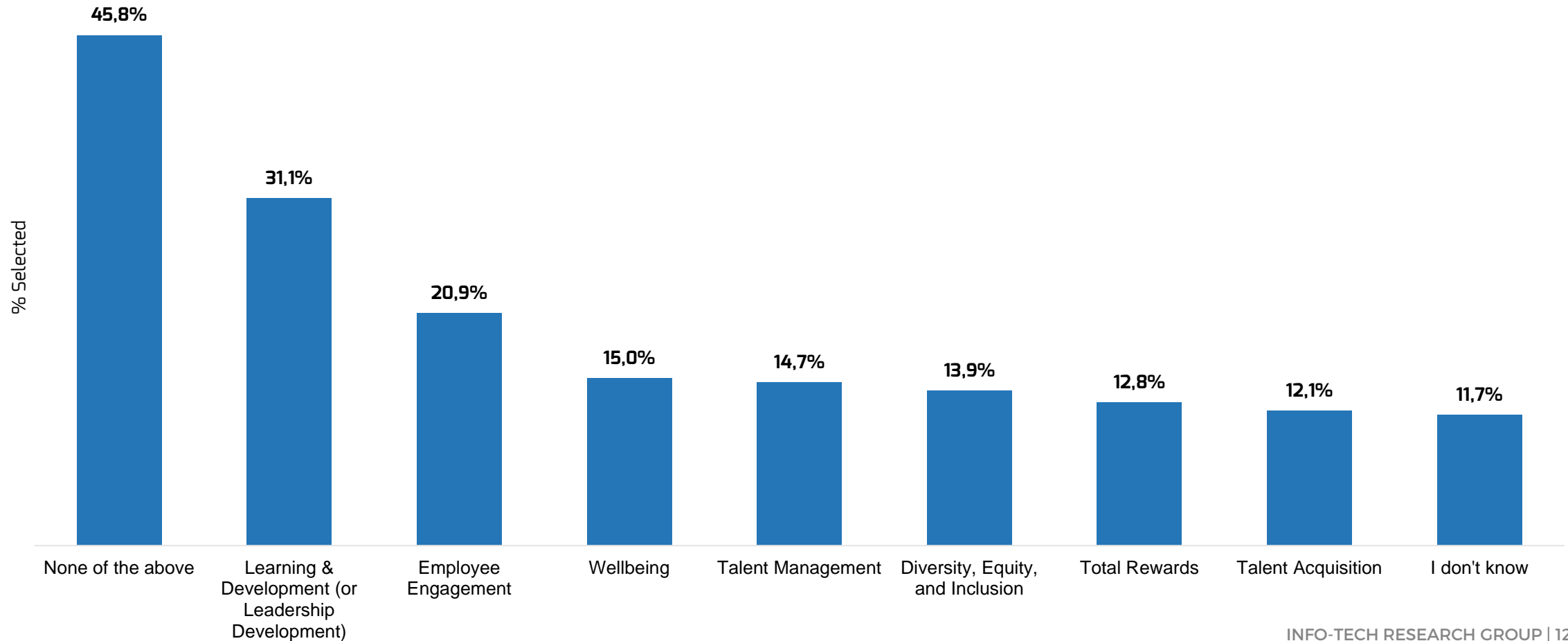
DEI: A Top Talent Objective

The rise of DEI in the workplace

The pandemic has given rise to many changes in the workplace. One of the shifts we have seen is the expanded focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, spanning the entire organization beyond just HR.

Everyone Plays a Role

Each department has an impact on overall DEI initiatives. We see publications such as CIO.com (e.g. Diversity and inclusion: 8 best practices for changing your culture) posting about these topics to help IT leaders, evidence that DEI initiatives are sometimes held within IT specifically.

Further, IT can have specific DEI needs versus other departments. For example, some IT departments may need to focus on *hiring* candidates from marginalized groups whereas others may want to focus on retention. As a result of societal pressure, some organizations and departments are shifting their own priorities to align with or to spearhead DEI.

Key questions to ask yourself:

- Do you measure organizational and/or departmental DEI?

- Do you ensure that IT recruits a diverse group of candidates?

- How can you collaborate with other departments to ensure a holistic approach to DEI?
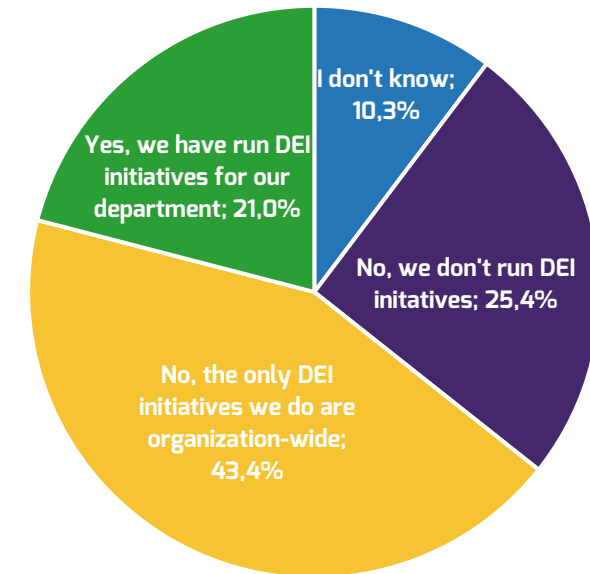
DEI efforts at all levels

Twenty-one percent of respondents have reported that IT is running department-specific DEI initiatives, with the largest contingent coming from small organizations. Despite the evidence of IT-specific DEI initiatives, only approx. 14% of respondents reported that their IT departments had a documented strategy for DEI.

The largest group of respondents (43%) reported that DEI initiatives are run organization-wide. This is not surprising, given the rise of interest in DEI at the workplace overall and HR often owning this initiative.
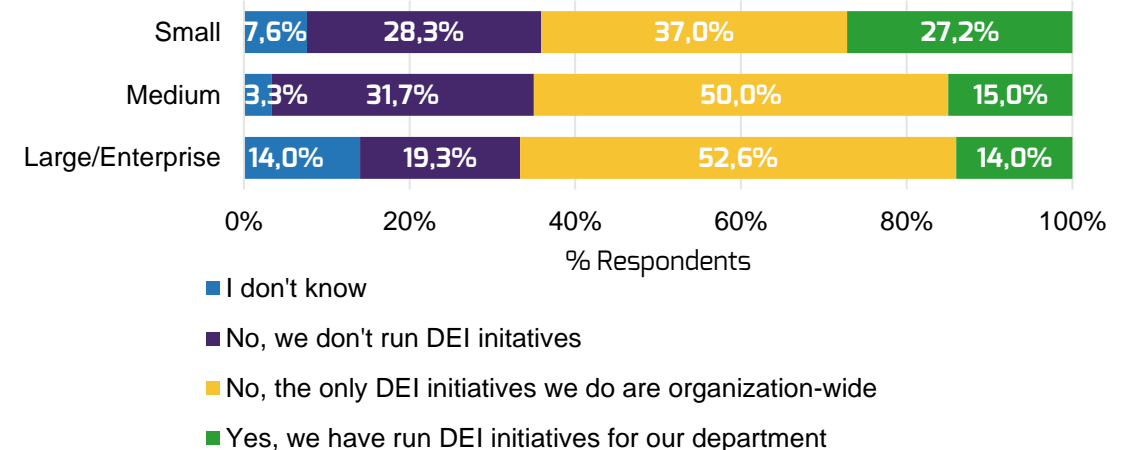
Still work to do...

Approximately 25% of our respondents still reported that their organizations do not run any DEI initiatives, whether it be department specific or organization wide.
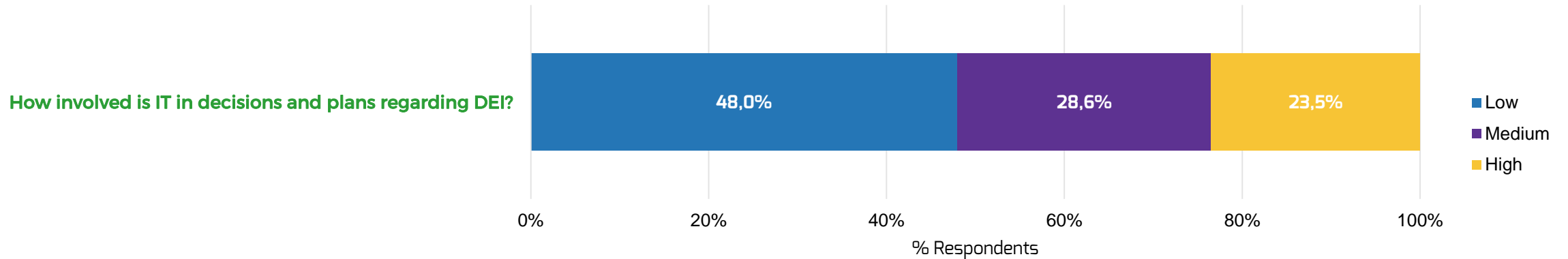
Has IT implemented department-specific diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives internally?

I don't know; 10,3%

No, we don't run DEI initatives; 25,4%

No, the only DEI initiatives we do are organization-wide; 43,4%

Yes, we have run DEI initiatives for our department; 21,0%

Differences by Size of Business

	I don't know	No, we don't run DEI initatives	No, the only DEI initiatives we do are organization-wide	Yes, we have run DEI initiatives for our department
Small	7,6%	28,3%	37,0%	27,2%
Medium	3,3%	31,7%	50,0%	15,0%
Large/Enterprise	14,0%	19,3%	52,6%	14,0%

% Respondents

- ■ I don't know
- ■ No, we don't run DEI initatives
- ■ No, the only DEI initiatives we do are organization-wide
- ■ Yes, we have run DEI initiatives for our department

IT is (somewhat) involved in DEI

How involved is IT in decisions and plans regarding DEI?

Low	Medium	High
48,0%	28,6%	23,5%

Legend: ■ Low ■ Medium ■ High

% Respondents (x-axis: 0%, 20%, 40%, 60%, 80%, 100%)

Even for the DEI initiatives being run organization-wide, IT is still involved with decisions and plans regarding DEI, emphasizing the joint effort from all departments. Fifty-two percent of respondents have a medium-to-high level of involvement in DEI decisions and plans, suggesting the importance of DEI is recognized by IT leaders.

IT respondents also ranked DEI as the third most important talent related objective, however, only a small percentage of respondents reported having a department-specific strategy. DEI may have started to become more of a priority, but there is still work to be done to close gaps in the realm of DEI within IT.

Some of the reported barriers to running DEI initiatives included:
- Knowledge not available at the organization
- Leadership buy-in
- Lack of resources and time

The comments also indicated that IT DEI efforts and/or awareness is focused on employee representation and hiring.

IT involvement in DEI pays off
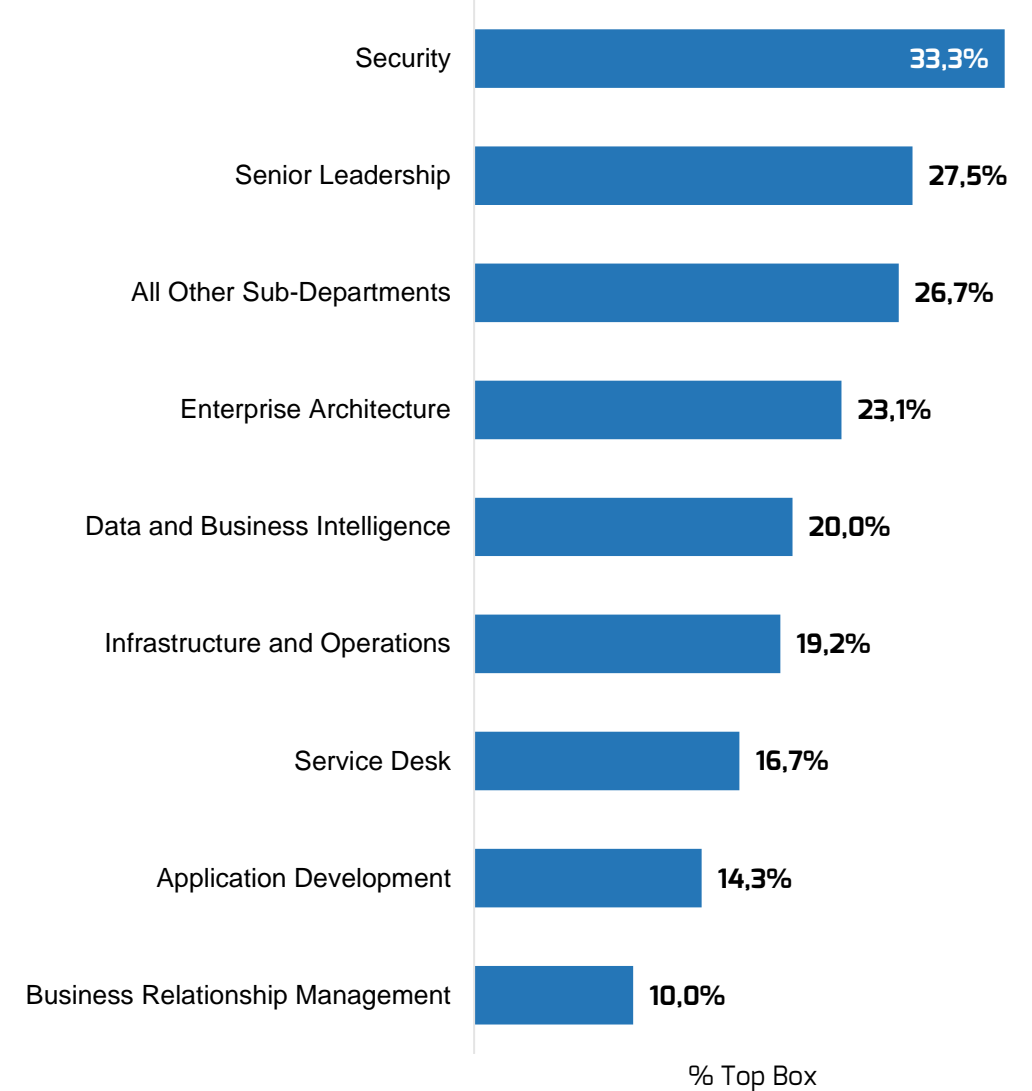
DEI involvement is linked with IT effectiveness

Interestingly, there is a link between IT effectiveness and IT's involvement in DEI plans. The more involvement the IT department has, the greater overall IT effectiveness they've reported. Because most IT departments are currently **not** highly involved, there is opportunity for improvement.

DEI involvement varies by sub-department

Those in Security reported the highest levels of DEI involvement, followed by senior leadership. Senior leadership involvement is unsurprising, due to DEI affecting overall business strategy. Security being the top was an unexpected finding given only 5.9% of respondents identified as that sub-department.

DEI involvement with IT effectiveness
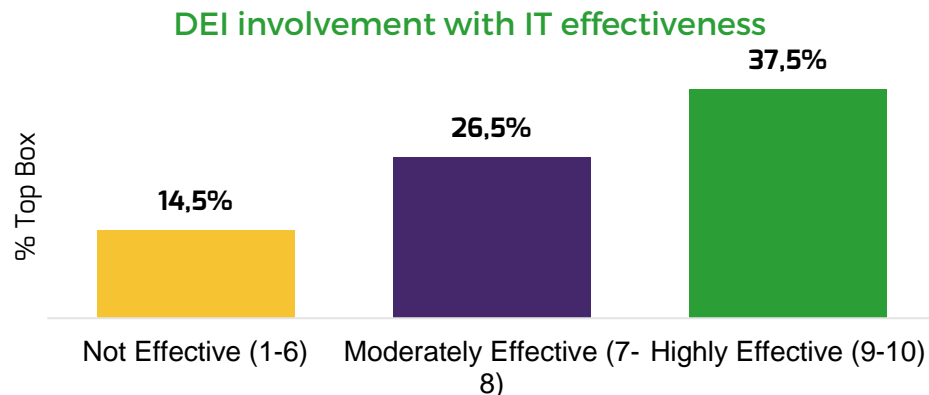
### DEI involvement by sub-department - percentage breakdown

Recruitment & DEI: Any changes?

In our *2020 IT Talent Trends Report*, we saw that talent acquisition was vital to IT effectiveness. We found that time to hire decreased with direct IT involvement in the process, which was also directly related to higher IT effectiveness.

Time to hire

Higher IT effectiveness
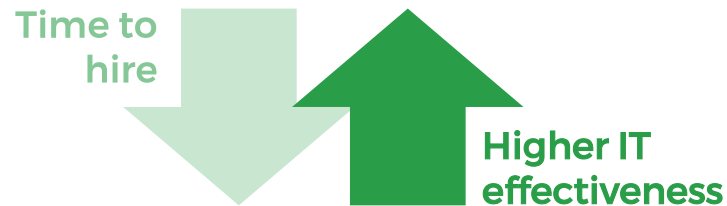
In 2021, we wanted to know if there were efforts in DEI affecting recruitment processes. DEI goes beyond recruitment but can be the starting point for many IT departments. What we found is that approximately 53% of the respondents reported a mid-to-high level of change to recruitment process because of DEI priorities.

Have DEI priorities changed any part of the recruiting process for IT?

| 47,4% | 29,9% | 22,7% |

- Low
- Medium
- High

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

% Respondents
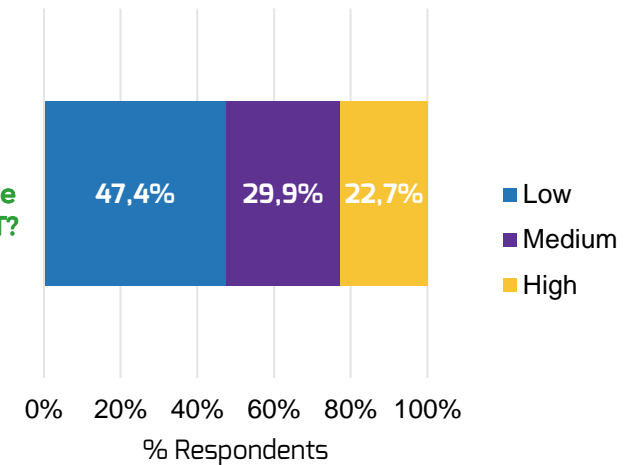
DEI: A top talent objective for IT

Key Takeaways

All departments have a role in improving DEI at their organization.

IT ranks DEI as one of their top talent priorities, however, they are only somewhat involved in DEI initiatives or plans. There continues to be great opportunity for IT leaders to become more involved, especially to address specific concerns for the department.

There is a positive relationship between IT involvement in DEI and reported overall IT effectiveness.

Info-Tech Resources

Recruit and Retain More Women in IT
Contact a rep for a diversity, equity, and inclusion call.
Additional resources to be posted February 2021.

Recommendations
Choose from the following based on your department's maturity.

Early steps
- Understand the DEI challenges that are specific to your department.
- Action plan in the areas IT controls, e.g. creating employee resource groups within IT.

Intermediate
- Collaborate with other departments or the organization to understand and measure DEI.
- Action plan accordingly – decide actions and owners with employees either within the department or beyond.

Advanced
- Align department-level DEI goals with organizational-level DEI goals.
- Provide updates on DEI initiatives specific to the department and across departments.

Key metrics to track: DEI questionnaire scores

Remote Work Is
Here to Stay

"Forced" work-from-home

Many organizations are adjusting attitudes and policies regarding remote work as a result of the pandemic. Forced work-from-home demonstrated to organizations that employees can be productive while working away from the physical office.

Ninety-eight percent of employees have reported that they would like to, at least to some extent, work from home indefinitely (Griffith, 2020). This aligns with our *2020 IT Talent Trend Report* findings: 95% of employees consider flexible work options somewhat or very important in selecting an employer – in short, flexible work options matter significantly.

How have IT departments changed since many organizations instituted mandatory work-from-home policies during the pandemic?

Key questions to ask yourself:

- What does long-term remote work look like?

- Are your remote work policies aligning with the needs of both managers and staff?

- How can IT better enable the business to continue to support remote work?

Positive outcomes from remote work

Just over 80% of respondents reported that senior leadership would have a medium-to-high degree of openness to some roles being permanently remote. This may not be a surprise, given the success of remote working during the pandemic.

When asked about the benefits of working remotely, some notable responses included:

- 31.5% reported an **expanded hiring pool**
- 43.6% reported **increased productivity among employees**
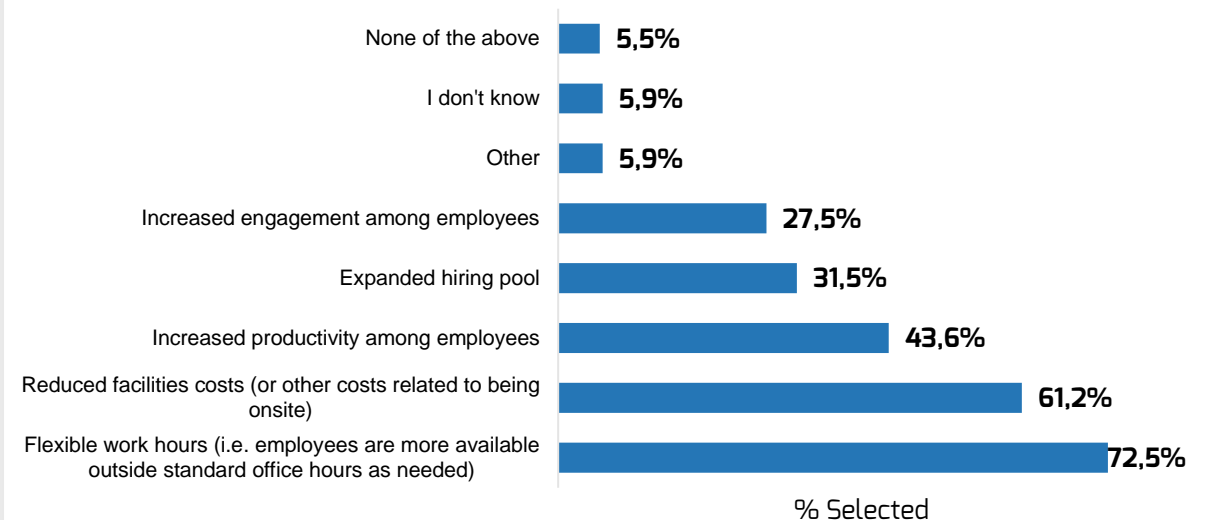- 61.2% reported **reduced facilities costs**

Respondents shared that much of the success they've experienced since the pandemic was due to remote work pilots carried out prior to COVID-19. Success doesn't come without some challenges, however. Some respondents reported that the reactive nature of forced remote work brought with it upheaval, uncertainty, and additional capacity requirements without increased budgeting or resources.

INSIGHT: Preparing and testing remote work before the pandemic set up organizations for success.

How open is your organization's senior leadership to the option of some roles being performed remotely on a permanent basis?

| 18,7% | 29,1% | 52,2% |

Low ■ Medium ■ High ■

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%
% Respondents
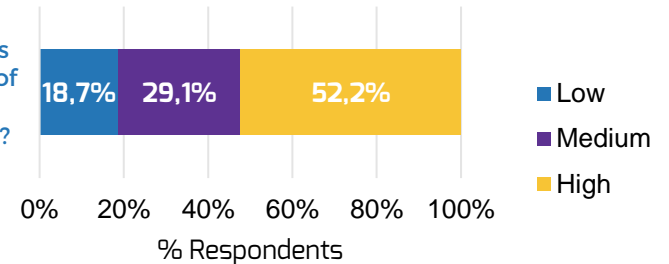
What are the anticipated benefits to the organization as a result of increased remote work during COVID-19?

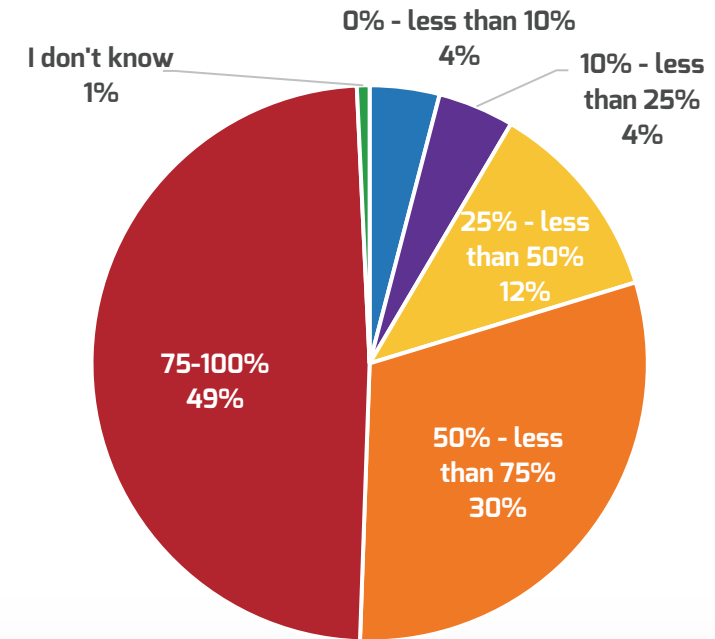| Category	%
None of the above	5,5%
I don't know	5,9%
Other	5,9%
Increased engagement among employees	27,5%
Expanded hiring pool	31,5%
Increased productivity among employees	43,6%
Reduced facilities costs (or other costs related to being onsite)	61,2%
Flexible work hours (i.e. employees are more available outside standard office hours as needed)	72,5%

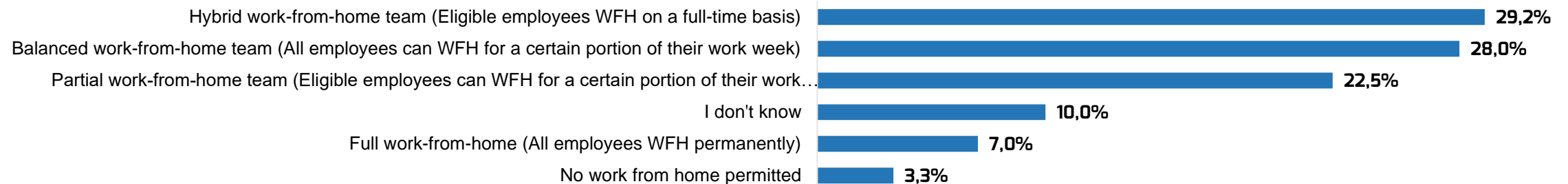% Selected

Remote work feasibility

Most organizations are planning some combination of remote and onsite work in 2021 – the highest reported plans for WFH were hybrid, balanced, and partial WFH. This builds on our findings in the *2020 IT Talent Trends Report*, which found 78% of IT departments offered flexible work hours and 74% offered remote working.

This year's survey also showed that 79% of respondents estimated that 50 to 100% of IT roles can be performed remotely.

Approximately what percentage of roles in IT are capable of being performed remotely permanently?

- I don't know: 1%
- 0% - less than 10%: 4%
- 10% - less than 25%: 4%
- 25% - less than 50%: 12%
- 50% - less than 75%: 30%
- 75-100%: 49%

What is your organization's plan for work-from-home (WFH) in 2021?

Hybrid work-from-home team (Eligible employees WFH on a full-time basis)	29,2%
Balanced work-from-home team (All employees can WFH for a certain portion of their work week)	28,0%
Partial work-from-home team (Eligible employees can WFH for a certain portion of their work…)	22,5%
I don't know	10,0%
Full work-from-home (All employees WFH permanently)	7,0%
No work from home permitted	3,3%

% Top Box
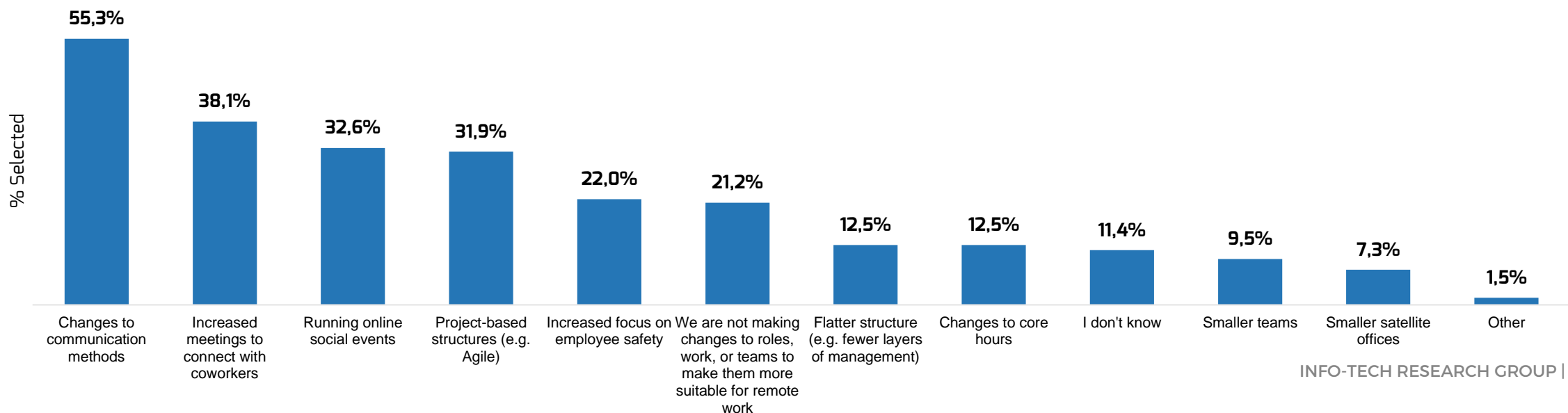(Selecting 5 or 6, N/As were not included in the calculation)

Remote work changes how we execute

The truth is that remote work environments change the way many of us are used to executing. IT departments will need to examine existing programs, like talent management strategies and employee experience monitoring, so that employees remain engaged and productive.

Our _2020 IT Talent Trends Report_ outlined recommendations for adapting your culture to the remote environment. In the 2021 survey we see leaders expanding their focus beyond culture into day-to-day operations of managing employees remotely. Building on this, we've found that IT departments not only need to think about employee experience changes, but also the changes that apply to roles, work, or teams.
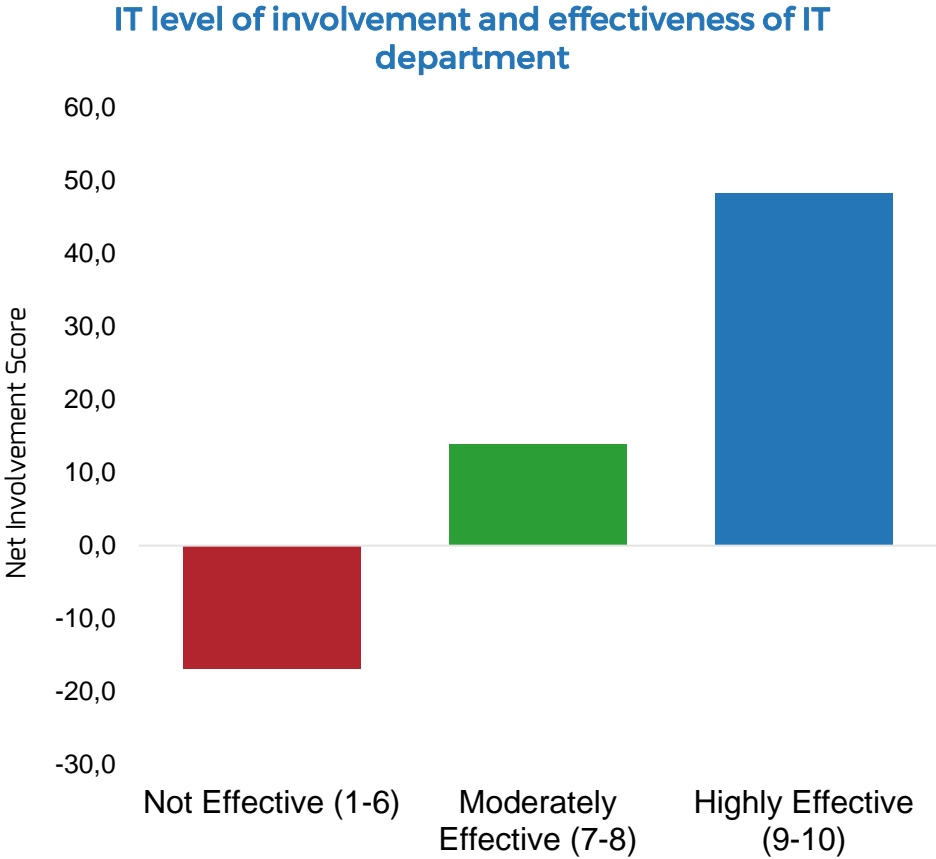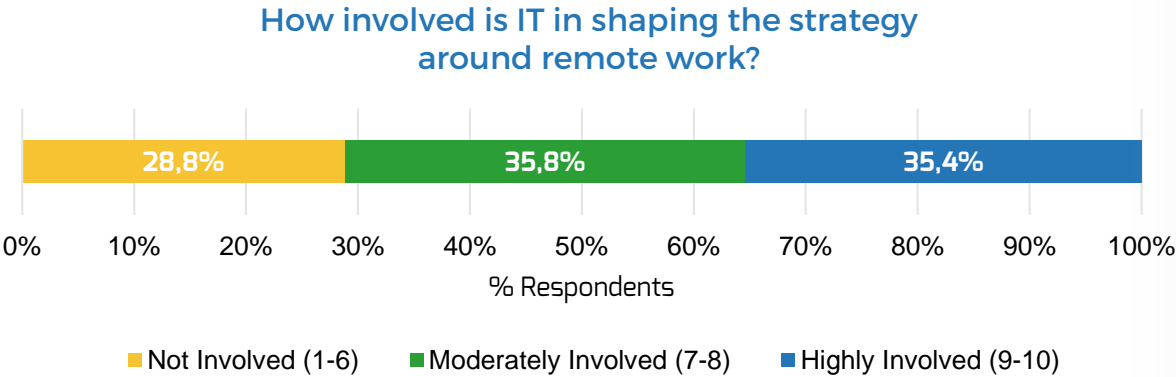
Communication was the number one reported change for roles, work, and teams. This makes sense: remote work physically separates employees; there is less day-to-day oversight and unplanned touchpoints. Another key finding was that 21% of respondents reported that the organization is not looking to make changes for remote work in the future. This may be due to an already successful work-from-home model or that we are still in response mode, rather than planning mode.

How is your organization looking at changing the nature of roles, work, or teams to make them more suitable for remote work in the future?

Category	% Selected
Changes to communication methods	55,3%
Increased meetings to connect with coworkers	38,1%
Running online social events	32,6%
Project-based structures (e.g. Agile)	31,9%
Increased focus on employee safety	22,0%
We are not making changes to roles, work, or teams to make them more suitable for remote work	21,2%
Flatter structure (e.g. fewer layers of management)	12,5%
Changes to core hours	12,5%
I don't know	11,4%
Smaller teams	9,5%
Smaller satellite offices	7,3%
Other	1,5%

IT is involved with remote work plans

IT has been instrumental in the shift to remote work; approx. 71% of respondents were either moderately or highly involved in remote work strategy. Additionally, those respondents that were highly involved in the remote work strategy reported they were a more effective IT department.

How involved is IT in shaping the strategy around remote work?

28,8%	35,8%	35,4%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

% Respondents

■ Not Involved (1-6) ■ Moderately Involved (7-8) ■ Highly Involved (9-10)

IT level of involvement and effectiveness of IT department

Net Involvement Score

60,0
50,0
40,0
30,0
20,0
10,0
0,0
-10,0
-20,0
-30,0

Not Effective (1-6)   Moderately Effective (7-8)   Highly Effective (9-10)

Prepare for the future of remote work

Key Takeaways

Overall, IT departments and organizations are finding benefits in remote work and there is high leadership buy-in.

IT has been significantly involved in remote work strategy, and those departments who were more involved reported higher IT effectiveness.

Most IT staff can work from home, and the organizational plans for 2021 reflect some sort of mixed model involving onsite and offsite (home) work

Info-Tech Resources

Develop a Flexible Work Program for IT
Sustain Work-From-Home in the New Normal
Equip Managers to Effectively Manage Virtual Teams
Adapt Your Onboarding for the Virtual Environment

Recommendations

Choose from the following based on your department's maturity.

Early steps

- Provide guidelines about the expectation for working from home.
- Solicit feedback on what is working and what's not for employees working from home.

Intermediate

- Discuss long-term policies and which roles are most suitable for remote work.
- Have clear guidelines in place addressing remote work.
- Continue to solicit feedback from employees about how to improve the remote experience.

Advanced

- Create policies that go beyond remote work and address all flexible work options.
- Support employees working from home through stipends and providing other needed equipment or financial support.
- Adapt the entire employee experience for remote environment – performance management, learning and development, etc.

Key metrics to track: Employee engagement

A Greater Emphasis on Wellbeing

Employee wellbeing during crisis

When the pandemic hit, organizations were significantly concerned about how employees were doing. We know that employees who work remotely can be more engaged than those onsite (*Effectively Manage Remote Teams – Manager Webinar*), but they also struggle with loneliness and isolation, which is further exacerbated by crisis. In fact, 69% of employees are feeling burnout symptoms while working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic (Fox, 2020).

According to McLean & Company's *Pandemic Survey Report*, close to half of the respondents surveyed reported that supporting wellbeing was a challenge for the organization. Therefore, despite employee wellness becoming a concern, organizations are struggling to address it.

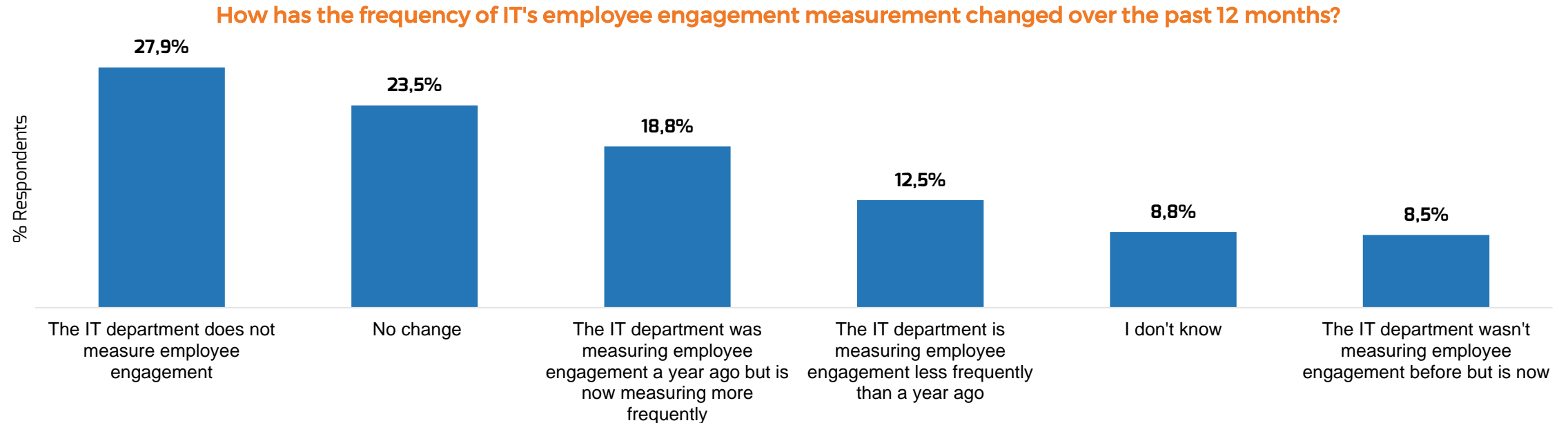## IT Employee Engagement and Wellness

Soliciting feedback from employees through surveys or check-ins can inform the department on how to better support employees through the pandemic. Additionally, training managers and providing resources for employees can help support wellness. How much ownership is IT taking on employee wellbeing?

Key questions to ask yourself:

- Does IT measure employee engagement?

- Are managers encouraged and equipped to check in with employees?

- What EAPs does the organization offer? Has this been communicated (and communicated again) to IT employees?

IT ups monitoring of employee engagement

How has the frequency of IT's employee engagement measurement changed over the past 12 months?

% Respondents

Category	%
The IT department does not measure employee engagement	27,9%
No change	23,5%
The IT department was measuring employee engagement a year ago but is now measuring more frequently	18,8%
The IT department is measuring employee engagement less frequently than a year ago	12,5%
I don't know	8,8%
The IT department wasn't measuring employee engagement before but is now	8,5%

During COVID-19, 80% of employees reported that employers are responsible for addressing wellness (Mayer, 2020). Further, this study found that when employers provided pandemic supports, it resulted in employees feeling better overall.

Has IT wanted to know more about the engagement of their employees? Almost one-third (32.3%) of respondents have increased the frequency in which they measure employee engagement in some capacity, demonstrating that IT leaders are concerned about changes to employee engagement, morale, wellness, and overall wellbeing. It will be important for the IT department to have a better understanding of fluctuating engagement levels as they continue to navigate challenges associated with changes to the work environment.

Wellbeing during crisis

Employees have experienced new barriers at work:

- Uncertainty about future
- Social isolation/loss of connection
- Financial uncertainty
- Health & safety concerns
- Physical environment/distractions

In addition, previous barriers continue and can be worsened during a pandemic:

- Limits to personal time off (PTO)
- Challenges gaining or maintaining work-life balance
- Workload
- Trust

For more information, see *Webinar: Support Mental Wellbeing During COVID-19*.

IT makes changes to support employees

Wellbeing is related to employee engagement, and efforts to improve wellbeing can help mitigate turnover (Peterson, 2019). Now more than ever, mental wellbeing is a big concern for employees (_Webinar: Support Mental Wellbeing During COVID-19_).
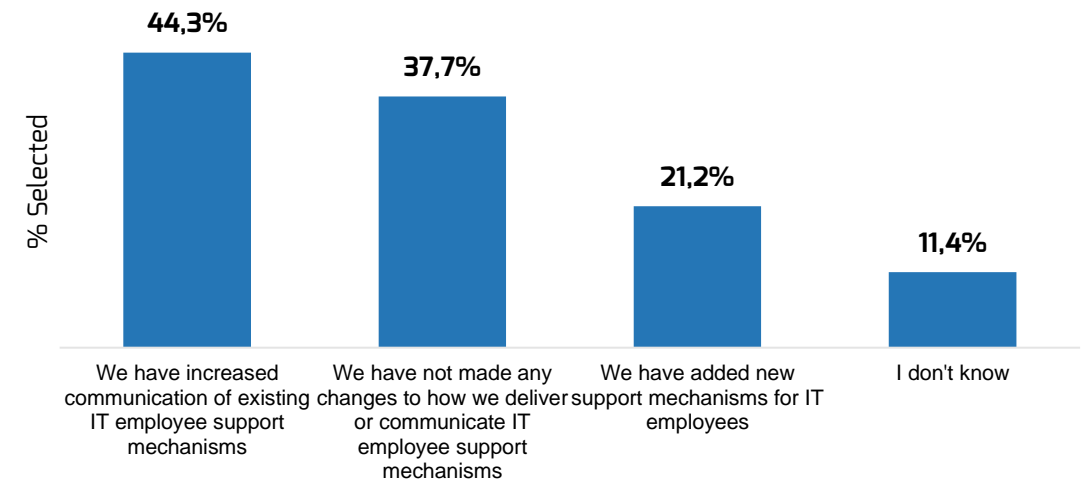
How has IT supported employees through this time?
We found that 44% of respondents have increased communication surrounding support mechanisms and 21% have added new support mechanisms for IT employees.

There is a close split between IT departments that have added training or resources for employees or managers and those IT departments that have not. Some survey comments give indication that because HR is seen as owning wellbeing initiatives, IT's ability or motivation to provide additional training or resources is limited.
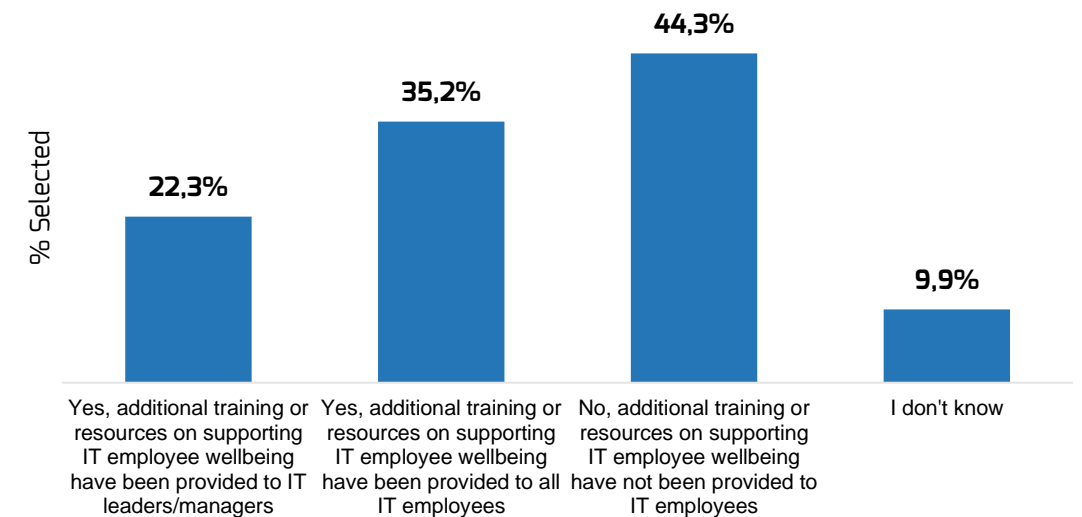
Respondents shared some of the other supports they've been offering:
- Peer support groups
- Educational programs
- Use of collaboration software to connect

What efforts has IT undertaken to increase employee awareness of employee support mechanisms (e.g. EAP, wellbeing programs)?

% Selected

	%
We have increased communication of existing IT employee support mechanisms	44,3%
We have not made any changes to how we deliver or communicate IT employee support mechanisms	37,7%
We have added new support mechanisms for IT employees	21,2%
I don't know	11,4%

Has additional training or resources been provided to IT to help support employee wellbeing?

% Selected

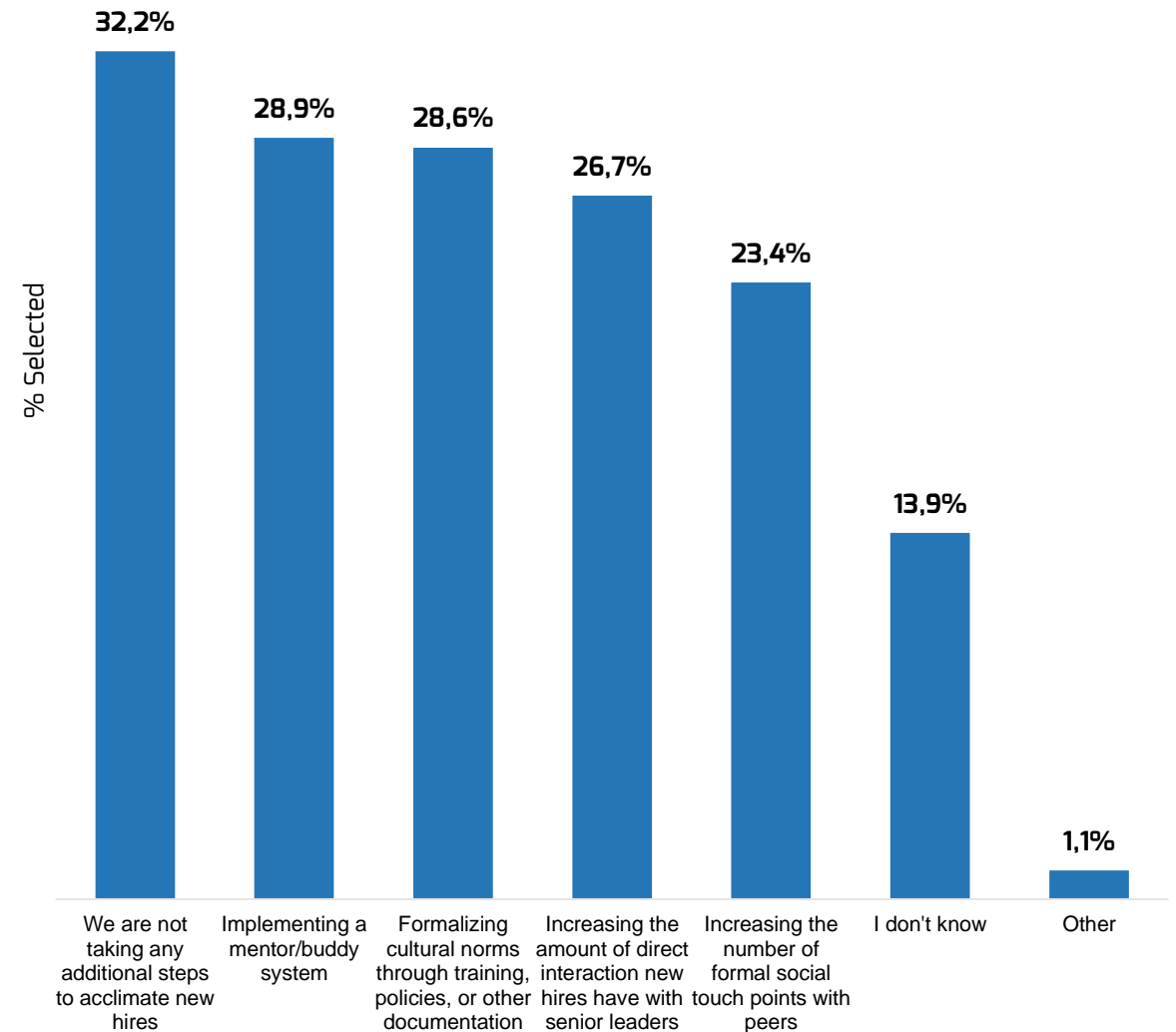|	%
Yes, additional training or resources on supporting IT employee wellbeing have been provided to IT leaders/managers	22,3%
Yes, additional training or resources on supporting IT employee wellbeing have been provided to all IT employees	35,2%
No, additional training or resources on supporting IT employee wellbeing have not been provided to IT employees	44,3%
I don't know	9,9%

Onboarding is a prime time to check in

Many IT departments are engaging in a variety of activities to help new hires when they first join the organization.

New hire onboarding is a key time to identify if employees are struggling while working remotely during crisis, especially due to the isolation and lack of peer-to-peer interaction. According to Click Boarding, those employees who received "great onboarding" are more likely to stay at the organization (Hirsch, 2017).

Talya Bauer, an award-winning author and researcher in HR and Organizational Psychology, also explains that "connection" is the most important part of onboarding: making personal connection and building networks (Hirsch, 2017). Organizations don't want to miss this time to help employees make connections, and as a result, flourish at work and stay with the organization.

What steps is IT taking to acclimate new IT hires to organizational culture since the pandemic?

Bar chart showing % Selected:
- We are not taking any additional steps to acclimate new hires: 32.2%
- Implementing a mentor/buddy system: 28.9%
- Formalizing cultural norms through training, policies, or other documentation: 28.6%
- Increasing the amount of direct interaction new hires have with senior leaders: 26.7%
- Increasing the number of formal social touch points with peers: 23.4%
- I don't know: 13.9%
- Other: 1.1%

Prepare for the future of remote work

Key Takeaways

Wellbeing and engagement can be spearheaded within the IT department – don't wait for HR.

Employees expect employers to take an interest in their overall wellbeing. Wellbeing is a top priority for employees, especially during crisis situations.

IT departments are providing additional training and resources around wellbeing. They have also been implementing some creative ideas to support employees such as virtual events like speakers/educational sessions, peer support groups, and additional employee supports.

Communication of available supports is critical. Many organizations have reiterated the supports they have by increased communication.

Info-Tech Resources

Provide Balanced Wellbeing Programs

Build an IT Employee Engagement Program

Webinar: Support Mental Wellbeing During COVID-19

Recommendations

Choose from the following based on your department's maturity.

Early steps
- Enable managers to have conversations with staff around their overall wellbeing.
- Create a process when someone is struggling and needs support.

Intermediate
- Proactively create programs that address various areas of wellbeing: mental, physical, and financial.
- Continue to monitor support programs and solicit feedback from employees (informally through check-ins or through formalized programs like employee engagement surveys).

Advanced
- Have a fully established wellness strategy that includes wellness programs and a feedback loop.
- Connect it back with other talent strategies and employee engagement to ensure a holistic talent management plan.

Key metrics to track: Employee engagement

A Shift in Skills Priorities

The skills of the future

Upskilling and finding in-demand skills was a challenge for IT before the pandemic. In the _2020 IT Talent Trends Report,_ we found that many IT departments were relying on in-house training and external training providers to proactively prepare for the skills of the future.

Preparing for the Post-COVID-19 Workforce

The priorities of the IT department, since the onset of COVID-19, have shifted. According to McKinsey, we are preparing for skills in "the distance economy" (Agrawal et al., 2020). They also reported that 87% of executives profess to having a skills gap within their teams, but many of them don't know how to address it.

Digital transformation will create a shift in the need for soft and hard skills, organization-wide. In McLean & Company's _Identify Skills of the Future_ research, the key future skills identified are:

- Resilience
- Digital literacy

- Emotional intelligence
- Change management

- Design thinking
- Agile scrum methodology

Key questions to ask yourself:

- Where are there skills gaps on your team?

- In what ways are you assessing skills?

- How are you upskilling employees?

Roles and skills in IT are changing

Survey respondents reported that approximately 69% of IT jobs have changed at a mid-to-high level. Notably, this breakdown varies by department.

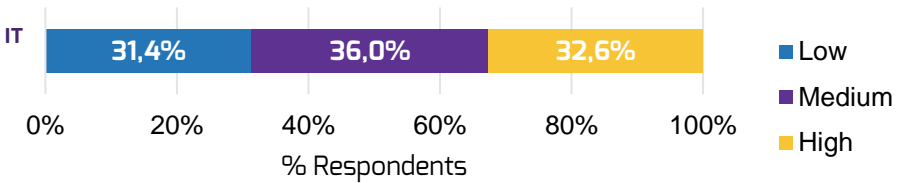**IT departments with the most reported mid-to-high level changes are:**

• Service Desk

• Business Relationship Management

• Infrastructure and Operations

To further identify the changing nature of IT skills, we also asked participants which roles they were having a hard time filling. Some of the top areas included:
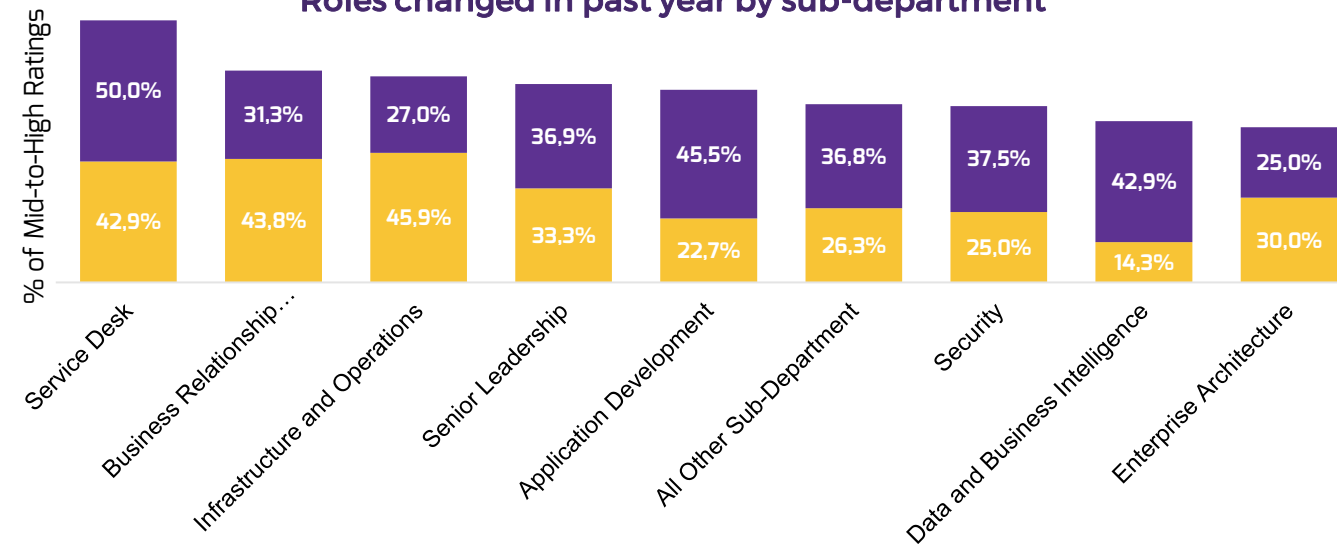
• Business analytics

• Cybersecurity

• Data analytics

• System analytics/architecture

• Cloud

Many respondents also mentioned that their organizations are currently under a hiring freeze, affecting their ability to hire externally to close skill gaps.

To what extent have employees' roles in the IT department changed in the past year?

| 31,4% | 36,0% | 32,6% |

■ Low
■ Medium
■ High

% Respondents

Roles changed in past year by sub-department

% of Mid-to-High Ratings

Sub-Department	Medium	High
Service Desk	50,0%	42,9%
Business Relationship…	31,3%	43,8%
Infrastructure and Operations	27,0%	45,9%
Senior Leadership	36,9%	33,3%
Application Development	45,5%	22,7%
All Other Sub-Department	36,8%	26,3%
Security	37,5%	25,0%
Data and Business Intelligence	42,9%	14,3%
Enterprise Architecture	25,0%	30,0%

*These percentages are based on "high" and "medium" ratings representing mid-high change.

Incomplete upskilling programs

A good upskilling program should begin with an understanding of skills that already exist within the group of current employees.
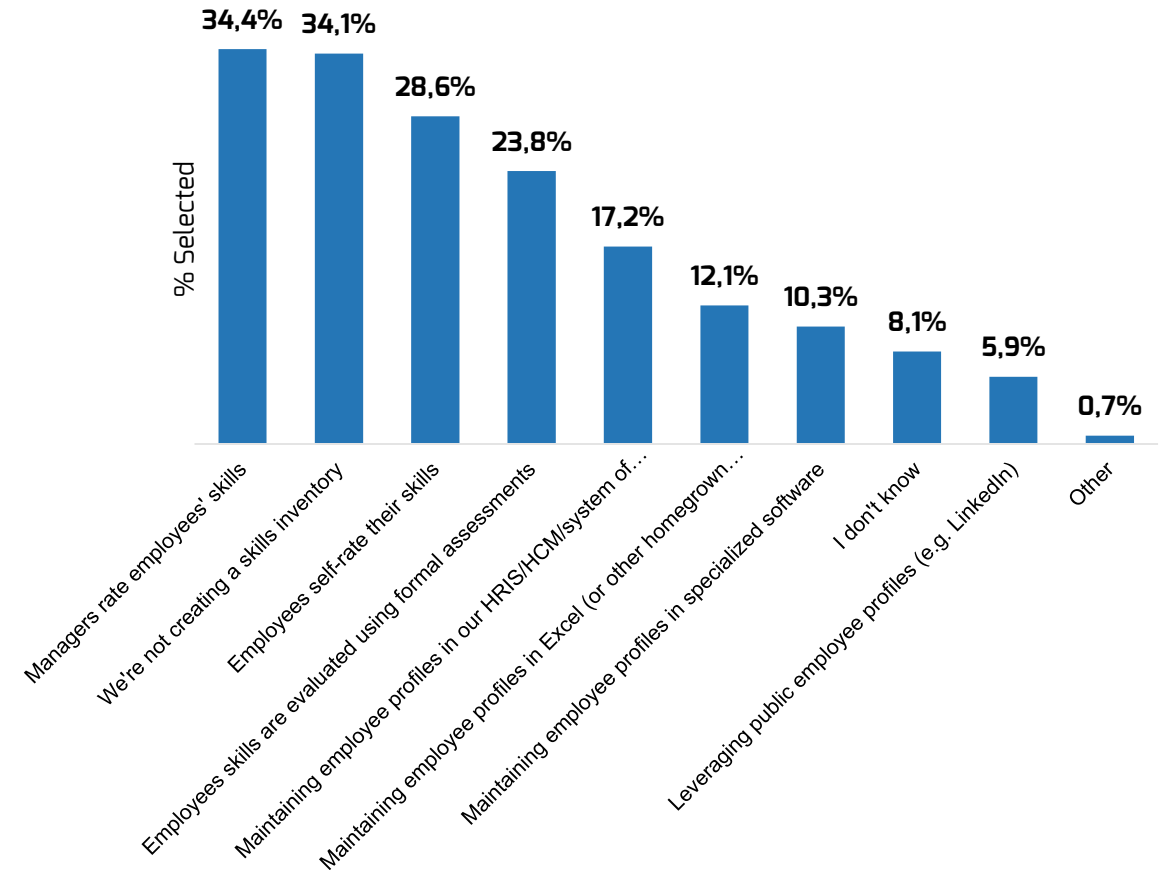
Participants were asked if and how they were creating a skills inventory, and the second most common response was that they were not.

> **IT departments may be redeploying or changing the nature of employees' roles without a formal structure. Without a skills inventory, the success of upskilling programs and efforts around digital transformation could be compromised.**

The survey results show that leaders from small organizations appear to be placing a greater emphasis on the creation of skills inventories than those in large/enterprise and medium-sized organizations.

Most IT departments (75%) have reported a mid-to-high level of changing or adding learning materials to help IT employees upskill.

What is IT doing to create a skills inventory?

Bar chart — % Selected:
- Managers rate employees' skills: 34,4%
- We're not creating a skills inventory: 34,1%
- Employees self-rate their skills: 28,6%
- Employees skills are evaluated using formal assessments: 23,8%
- Maintaining employee profiles in our HRIS/HCM/system of...: 17,2%
- Maintaining employee profiles in Excel (or other homegrown...: 12,1%
- Maintaining employee profiles in specialized software: 10,3%
- I don't know: 8,1%
- Leveraging public employee profiles (e.g. LinkedIn): 5,9%
- Other: 0,7%

Have you changed or added training/learning materials to help IT employees learn new skills?

Low	Medium	High
25,0%	39,4%	35,6%

% Respondents (0% – 100%)

■ Low ■ Medium ■ High
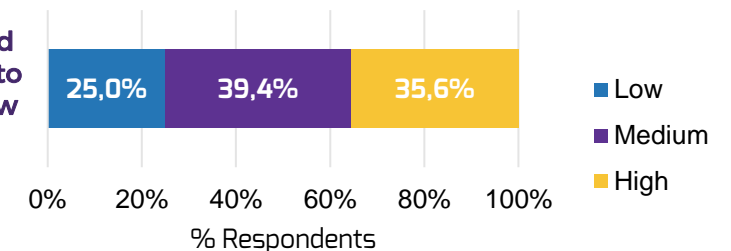
Why IT must have a skills inventory

Because the way we work is changing so rapidly, it's important to readily know who you can lean on to get you through unforeseen circumstances. If you need to redeploy employees, you are better equipped with a skills inventory to identify individuals that would fit the skill set of new vacancies.
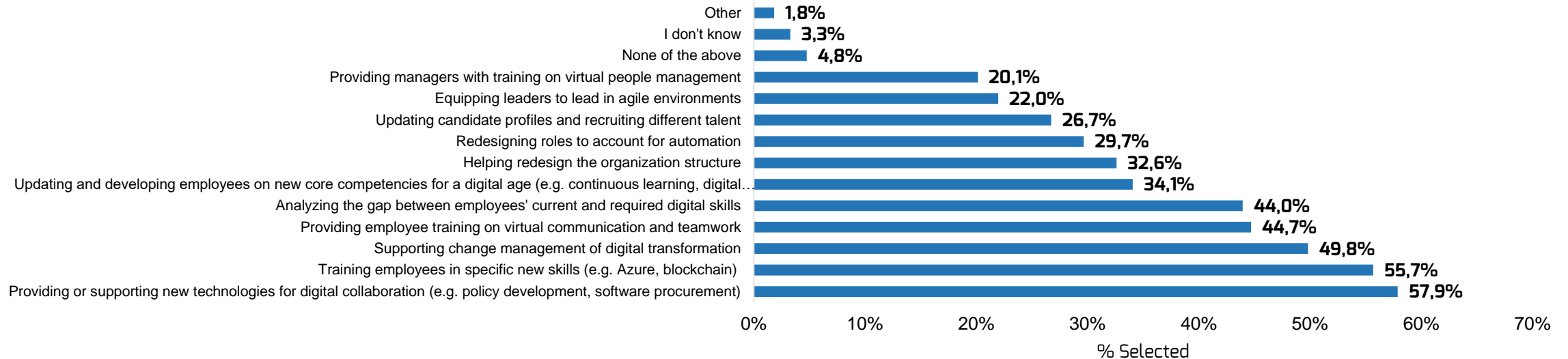
Employees leave. Having a skills inventory is a way for you to ensure knowledge transfer occurs before individuals leave the organization.

A skills inventory feeds into employee development plans. You can easily identify areas of improvement for individuals and the team overall.

IT is integral to digital transformation

IT is teaching new skills to all employees. When remote work became the norm, employees were reliant on a variety of technologies to complete work tasks and communicate with others. There was a gap between what employees knew about the technology versus what was expected of them. IT has been providing learning for all employees organization-wide to get them up to speed and continue to work productively.

Horizontal bar chart — x-axis labelled "% Selected" (0% to 70%):

Category	% Selected
Other	1,8%
I don't know	3,3%
None of the above	4,8%
Providing managers with training on virtual people management	20,1%
Equipping leaders to lead in agile environments	22,0%
Updating candidate profiles and recruiting different talent	26,7%
Redesigning roles to account for automation	29,7%
Helping redesign the organization structure	32,6%
Updating and developing employees on new core competencies for a digital age (e.g. continuous learning, digital…)	34,1%
Analyzing the gap between employees' current and required digital skills	44,0%
Providing employee training on virtual communication and teamwork	44,7%
Supporting change management of digital transformation	49,8%
Training employees in specific new skills (e.g. Azure, blockchain)	55,7%
Providing or supporting new technologies for digital collaboration (e.g. policy development, software procurement)	57,9%

Though many of these IT activities involved training and analyzing skills gaps, we found that skills assessments for IT employees were non-existent at many organizations. Digital transformation would likely achieve greater success with the existence of an inventory capturing the skills of all employees within the IT department.

Why are digital transformation initiatives important?

In the _HR Trends Report for 2020_, McLean & Company found that organizational change management support for digital transformation, updating/developing employees in core competencies, equipping leaders to lead in agile environments, and training employees in specific skills, are associated with:

• Overall organizational performance
• Ability to change quickly
• Ability to generate new ideas
• Workforce productivity

The future workforce is here

Key Takeaways

The move to remote work has accelerated the need to upskill existing employees within the IT department.

Changes to IT roles vary by IT sub-department, with Service Desk having the highest reported mid-to-high level change.

Thirty-four percent of IT departments do not have a skills inventory, yet it can be leveraged as a first step for developing a learning program and understanding where employees could be redeployed, saving time and money.

Info-Tech Resources

Mitigate Key IT Employee Knowledge Loss
Implement an IT Employee Development Plan
Build a Better Manager: Manage Your People

Recommendations

Start building out skills development programs.

Early steps

- Take a skills inventory of IT teams to understand current proficiencies and gaps.
- Build individual development plans (IDPs) for employees to upskill in areas that need more coverage.

Intermediate

- Identify the future state of the IT department and identify skills gap by comparing current employee skills with the skills needed for the future.
- Continue carrying out IDPs to align with future state and set out time for employees to carry out learning plans.

Advanced

- Have internal training and learning programs set up to continually upskill for the future.
- Identify skills and jobs needed for the future and hire externally as needed.
- Continually align program with organizational and departmental needs.

Key metrics to track: IT effectiveness

Uncertainty Unlocks Performance

Performance management shifts with global changes

Because of remote work, shifting priorities, and many other changes, performance management may have shifted to align with work changes.

How has performance management changed during previous global crises?

BCG reported that during the recession of 2008 (Strack et al., 2008), performance management became more long-term focused, versus focused on more short-term wins, to target more sustainable growth. They recommended incorporating soft skills (teamwork, cooperation, etc.) into performance metrics and specifically aligning it to the mission and values of the organization.
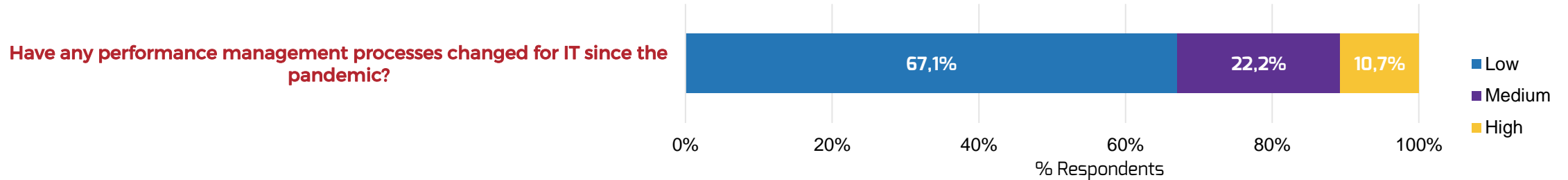
What are we seeing now?

One suggestion was to cancel performance evaluations all together (Wilken, 2020). This is due to the way remote work could have impacted performance and is supported by survey responses to questions and associated comments.

Another recommendation is to evaluate the changes within the team, department, or organization and alter the specific measures within existing performance management programs accordingly.

Key questions to ask yourself:

- Have you changed your performance management process to align with remote working or working through a pandemic?

- What is the purpose of performance management: administration or development (or both)?

- Do you feel the need to monitor the productivity of employees? Do you trust your employees to work remotely?

Performance management programs stay the same

Have any performance management processes changed for IT since the pandemic?

67,1%	22,2%	10,7%

Legend:
- ■ Low
- ■ Medium
- ■ High

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%
% Respondents

IT hasn't seen a large shift in performance management processes since the pandemic.

The 2021 IT Talent Trend Survey showed only 11% of responses said performance management processes have significantly changed. Those that reported changes emphasized process changes such as remote offerings for performance management discussions, increase in progress meetings, Agile methodology, and changes in assessment items (due to shifting priorities). Other reported changes included the use of software, removing pay for performance, and pausing formal performance management in its entirety while they adjusted to the changed work environment. HR was also mentioned as being responsible for this area of the employee experience, so some respondents felt IT could not change the current process.

How to determine if changing performance management processes/assessments are necessary:

Pause and evaluate the changes in the organization and the department. Think about if (recommendations based on Wilken, 2020):

- A large percentage of employees have been let go

- Priorities have changed

- Job tasks or nature of work shifted in a way that misaligns with performance assessment

- Team structure changed

These factors can impact if performance management assessments need to be revamped to align with the team, department, or organizational shifts.

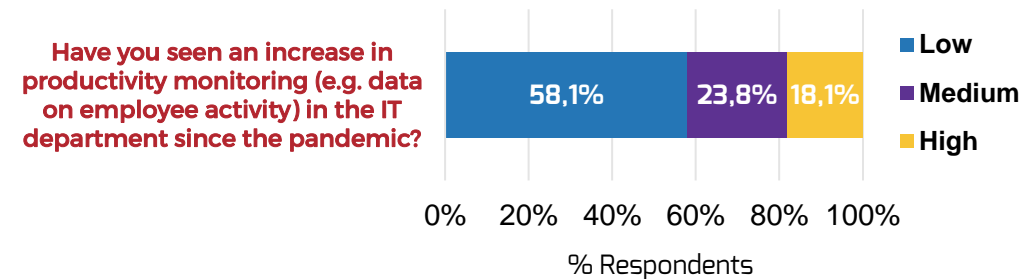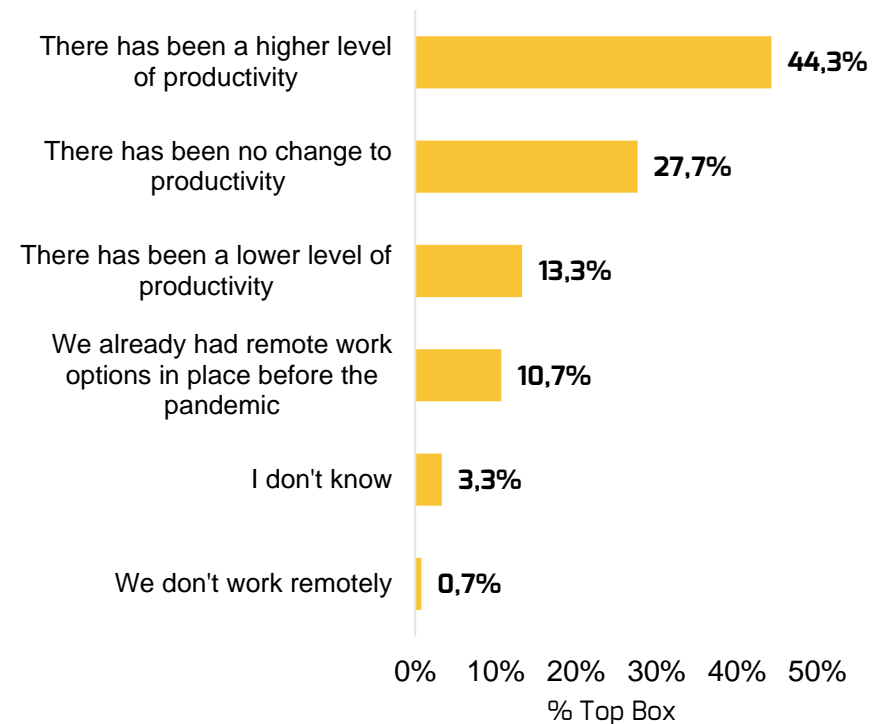# The question of productivity monitoring & trust

Leading into 2021, and as a result of remote work, respondents reported there has been a significant increase in the level of productivity within IT and close to 60% have indicated they are only carrying out a low level of productivity monitoring.

There is however a contingent of respondents who are showing interest in monitoring the productivity of IT employees as they continue to work remotely. Anecdotally we have heard from some IT leaders that they struggle to overcome, what is often unfounded, perceptions of employee shirking previously associated with not seeing employees sitting at their workstations.

As an extension of these challenges, there is external evidence showing increased interest for productivity monitoring tools. For example, productivity software companies, such as ActivTrak, have seen a sharp increase in demo requests (Buckner, 2020). Many respondents also mentioned they would like to see productivity monitoring software implemented, a change from their current state.

As noted in the _2020 IT Talent Trends Report_, "Flexible work per se shouldn't impact a manager's confidence that the work will get done. If you only trust your staff to be productive while you can see them physically at their desks, you have a trust problem, not a flexible work problem." Before committing to monitoring, reassess if perceived concerns are truly related to productivity or are rather a result of poor trust and relationships between management and employees.

What would you rate your IT department's productivity level now, compared to before remote work due to the pandemic?

There has been a higher level of productivity	44,3%
There has been no change to productivity	27,7%
There has been a lower level of productivity	13,3%
We already had remote work options in place before the pandemic	10,7%
I don't know	3,3%
We don't work remotely	0,7%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50%
% Top Box

Have you seen an increase in productivity monitoring (e.g. data on employee activity) in the IT department since the pandemic?

Low	Medium	High
58,1%	23,8%	18,1%

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%
% Respondents

Building trust

Check in and Share

One on one, in teams, or in groups, you can make sure to check in with employees on non-work-related topics, as well as work-related topics and progress reporting as needed.

Use Our 3i's Model of Communication

The 3i's model of communication consists of Inform, Interact, and Involve. Refer to our *3i's of Engaging Management – Manager Guide* for more information.

Be Honest

Share updates with your team (to the extent that you can). Be honest and transparent about the future.

Solicit Employee Feedback

Launch employee surveys or ask employees how things are going with their new working norms. Ask for recommendations on how the department could do better.

Info-Tech Resources

Creating Connections
Equip Managers to Effectively Manage Virtual Teams
Sustain Work-From-Home in the New Normal
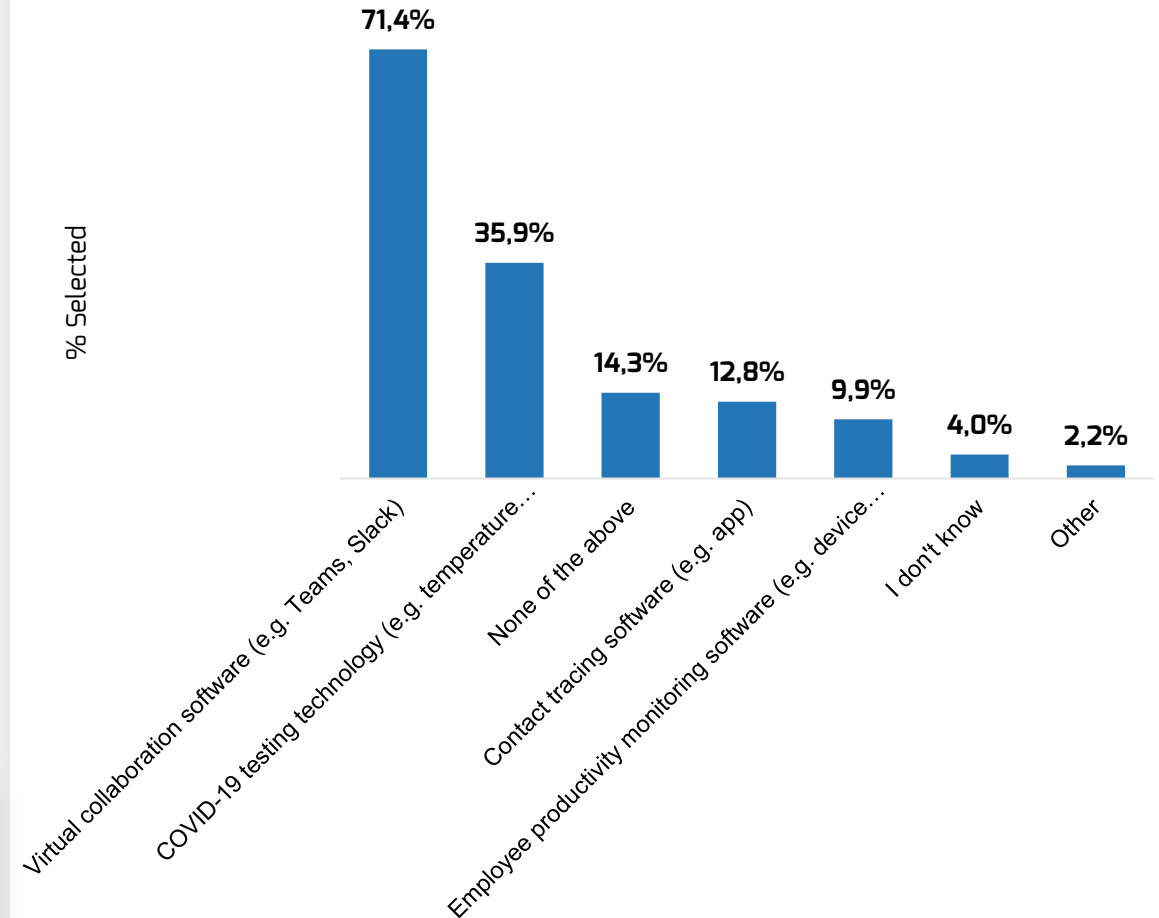
Choose software to better manage performance

Communication technologies top the list with 71% of respondents reporting that they have acquired or implemented usage. This aligns with other reports of increased usage of collaboration technologies, for example, Teams video usage increased 1,000% in March, at the onset of the global pandemic (Lardinois, 2020).

COVID-19 testing technology was another top technology respondents implemented.

Productivity monitoring software was only at 10% reported usage, despite the increase of reported monitoring at 18%. Organizations may be developing in-house solutions. Another software mentioned by respondents was the implementation of performance management.

INSIGHT: A productivity monitoring tool may not be what you really need. Think about implementing performance management software to manage, assess, and develop employees.

Which of the following technologies has your organization acquired and/or implemented as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic?

% Selected

- Virtual collaboration software (e.g. Teams, Slack): 71,4%
- COVID-19 testing technology (e.g. temperature…): 35,9%
- None of the above: 14,3%
- Contact tracing software (e.g. app): 12,8%
- Employee productivity monitoring software (e.g. device…): 9,9%
- I don't know: 4,0%
- Other: 2,2%

Adapt your performance management (PM) approach for 2021

Key Takeaways

Some have paused formal performance management during the pandemic, and few changes have been made to the fundamental process.

There is evidence that productivity has increased due to remote work in the pandemic, however, a small interest in productivity monitoring raises the issue of trust between IT leaders and employees.

Software implementation is on the rise – but mostly for communication and collaboration, rather than for productivity monitoring. Respondents also mentioned the implementation of performance management software to complete reviews virtually.

Info-Tech Resources

Set Meaningful Employee Performance Measures
Manage Poor Performance While Working From Home

Recommendations

Choose from the following based on your department's maturity.

Early steps

- Remove or change performance measures that don't work in a remote environment.
- Continue consistent communication between the team and manager to compensate for lack of oversight day-to-day.

Intermediate

- Adapt PM approach for each team member; not everyone excels in a remote environment.
- Build out PM processes that can work in-person or virtually.
- Involve multiple stakeholders in PM assessment.

Advanced

- Align PM processes with other IT talent strategies, especially in the remote structure.
- Create a feedback loop to continue to update PM process.

Key metrics to track: Employee engagement

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