How Productivity Platforms Can Power Business Impact

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Foreword

Uncertainty surrounds UK businesses today. Although fears of a recession are receding, economic turbulence is set to continue.

In the midst of this turmoil, leaders are looking for new ways to drive growth while employees are often working in leaner teams with fewer resources. Customers, meanwhile, are placing budgets under the microscope.

Pushing into these headwinds, every organisation must put productivity and customer-centricity front and centre. That requires adapting new tools, processes and mindsets to improve how work happens.

This report shines a light on how this can be done, revealing the steps businesses can take in response to new market realities. It does so by assessing the attitudes and behaviours of 350 IT decision makers and 1,650 knowledge workers in the UK.

IT decision makers will be central to deploying productivity-boosting platforms while knowledge workers will be on the front lines of their day-to-day use. By analysing these cohorts, this report reveals how businesses can take a new approach to productivity, one that empowers everyone with the agility they need to thrive.

In the following chapters business leaders, knowledge workers, and IT decision makers will find an assessment of:

1

The barriers organisations face to productive work

2

What organisations can do to accelerate work

3

How productivity platforms can power better ways of working

Part one: Delivering more engaging and productive digital experiences

In the digital-first age of work, productivity is intimately linked to the technology businesses use. Yet to date, organisations aren't unleashing the full potential of the technology available to them—just 1 in 2 (50%) knowledge workers believe their organisation invests enough in creating an effective digital experience.

IT decision makers recognise this must change. 87% of them want to improve the digital experience, and 80% are looking to invest in technology that solidifies their hybrid working approach in the year ahead.

However, with economic uncertainty growing, 71% of IT decision makers are also looking to cut costs. Optimising work—and IT spending—by prioritising open, extensible platforms that deliver productivity for the whole business and integrate with other tools, will be key.

Where IT decision makers want to make improvements:

87%
Want to improve the digital experience for their organisation

80%
Want to invest in technology that solidifies their hybrid working approach in the year ahead

71%
Are also looking to cut costs

Slack Top Tip: Integrate tools to drive agility

Swapping between apps slows teams down. Slack solves this by integrating with over 2,600 enterprise apps—like Zoom, Office 365 and Workday. Meanwhile, deep integration with Salesforce Customer 360 means teams from sales, marketing, engineering and more can instantly access those productivity-boosting apps directly from Slack. Integrations drive a better experience of work, making it easy for everyone to work faster without needing to switch context or break focus.

Research from Harvard Business Review shows that workers at big employers toggle between different apps and websites 1,200 times every day—equating to 5 weeks every year spent switching.

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The relationship between productivity, flexibility and technology

While productivity is an increasing focus for businesses, according to workers it's closely linked to flexibility. In fact, the majority of both IT decision makers and knowledge workers state that flexibility in where and when they work helps them be productive.

In turn, this boosted productivity can drive greater innovation among teams, lead to faster deal cycles and increase customer satisfaction.

Although it's only one part of the productivity picture, leaders should consider how technology can deliver autonomy and flexibility to teams. Whether it's by enabling asynchronous collaboration or integrating tools, productivity platforms can empower teams to deliver high impact work.

Percentage of workers who say having flexibility in where and when they work helps them to be more productive

56%

IT decision makers

54%
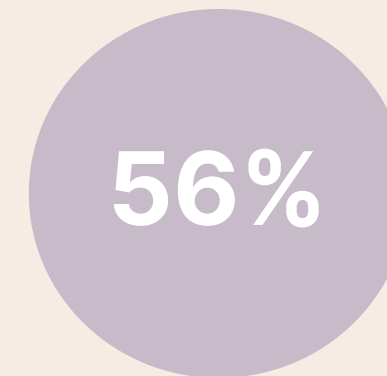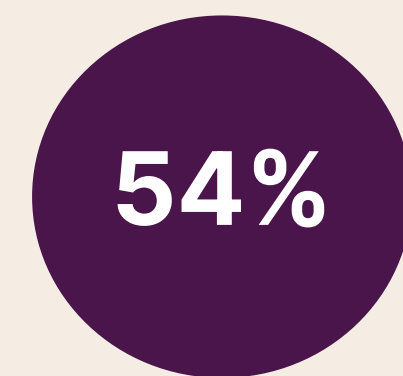
All knowledge workers

Future Forum research found flexible remote work policies were cited as the number one factor that has improved company culture over the past two years.

Building customer companies

One way for businesses to conceptualise the changes they need to make to drive productivity, engagement and impact is to focus on becoming customer companies. Customer companies are those that put their customer at the centre of everything—using data, automation, and AI to deliver exceptional experiences. To do this, they need platforms that can accelerate and automate work, enable flexible approaches, improve knowledge sharing and boost team connection and engagement.
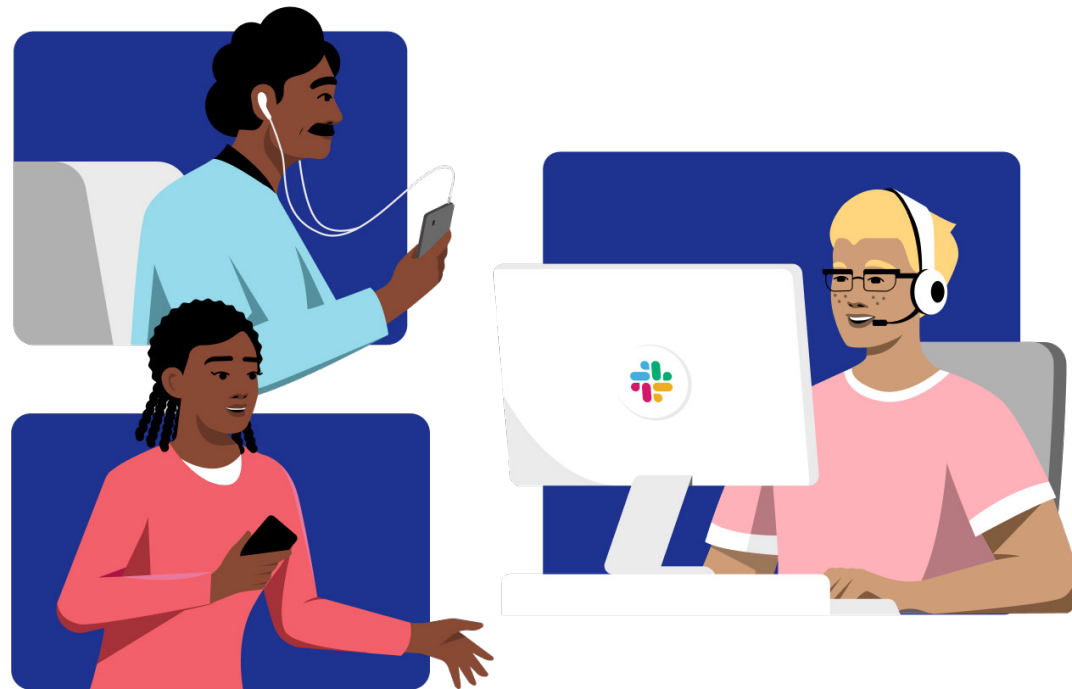
Revolut aligns sales teams through Slack's productivity platform

With over 25 million users, Revolut is one of the most innovative businesses in Europe.

During the pandemic, the business used Slack as its productivity platform as it onboarded almost a thousand salespeople remotely. At this time Revolut also re-evaluated working habits and realised meetings were causing a drain on their time—with almost ten weeks worth of sales time lost to half-hour all-hands calls.

To overcome this, they've used Slack to power flexible productivity—so people can choose to communicate in more efficient ways, whether that's through messages, video clips or audio huddles. Meanwhile, by integrating with essential tools like Salesforce, Slack acts as a central platform that empowers every employee with instant access to the information they need to maximise their productivity potential.

Revolut

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Part two: Optimising knowledge sharing through teams and technology

Some of the biggest ongoing barriers to productive work centre on apps and meetings overload. For too long, businesses have used tools that reinforce unoptimised processes—think endless meetings or video calls, and lengthy email threads where little is resolved.

This has led to linear processes and siloed, disconnected and disengaged teams—and it needs to change. With 36% of knowledge workers and 44% of IT decision makers spending more time on video calls compared to 12 months ago, meetings must be made more efficient.

36%
of knowledge workers are spending more time in meetings

44%
of IT decision makers are spending more time in meetings

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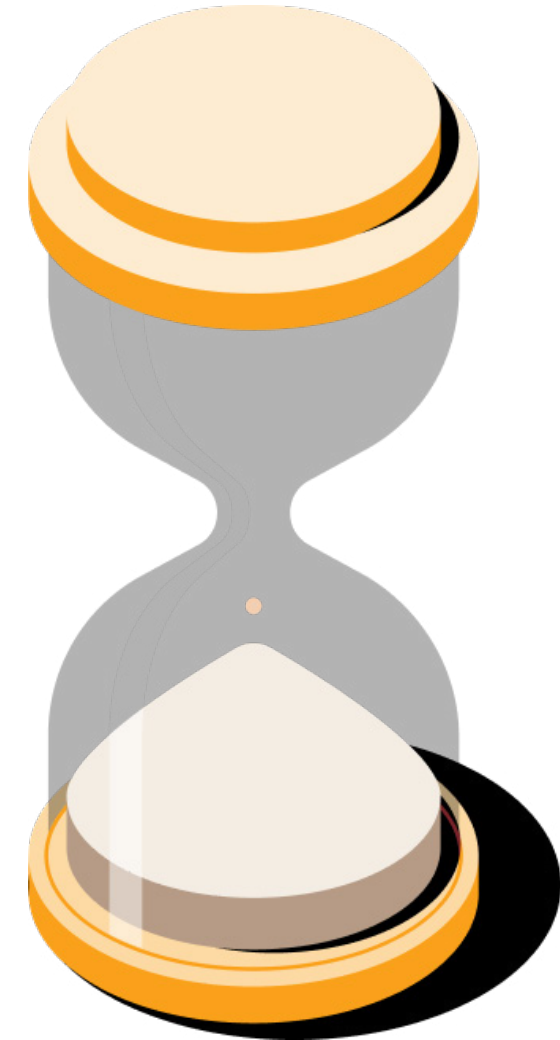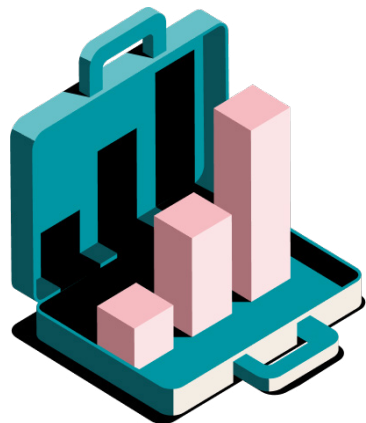
Time in meetings each week

**7 hours
42 minutes**

Knowledge workers

**10 hours
58 minutes**

IT decision makers

Time on deep work each week

**9 hours
2 minutes**

Knowledge workers

**7 hours
1 minutes**

IT decision makers

Overall, around a whole working day each week (7 hours 42 minutes) is currently spent on meetings by knowledge workers, rising to nearly 11 hours for IT decision makers. In comparison, just over 9 hours is spent on deep work—for example, resolving customer challenges, building products or analysing reports—by knowledge workers, falling to just 7 hours for IT decision makers.

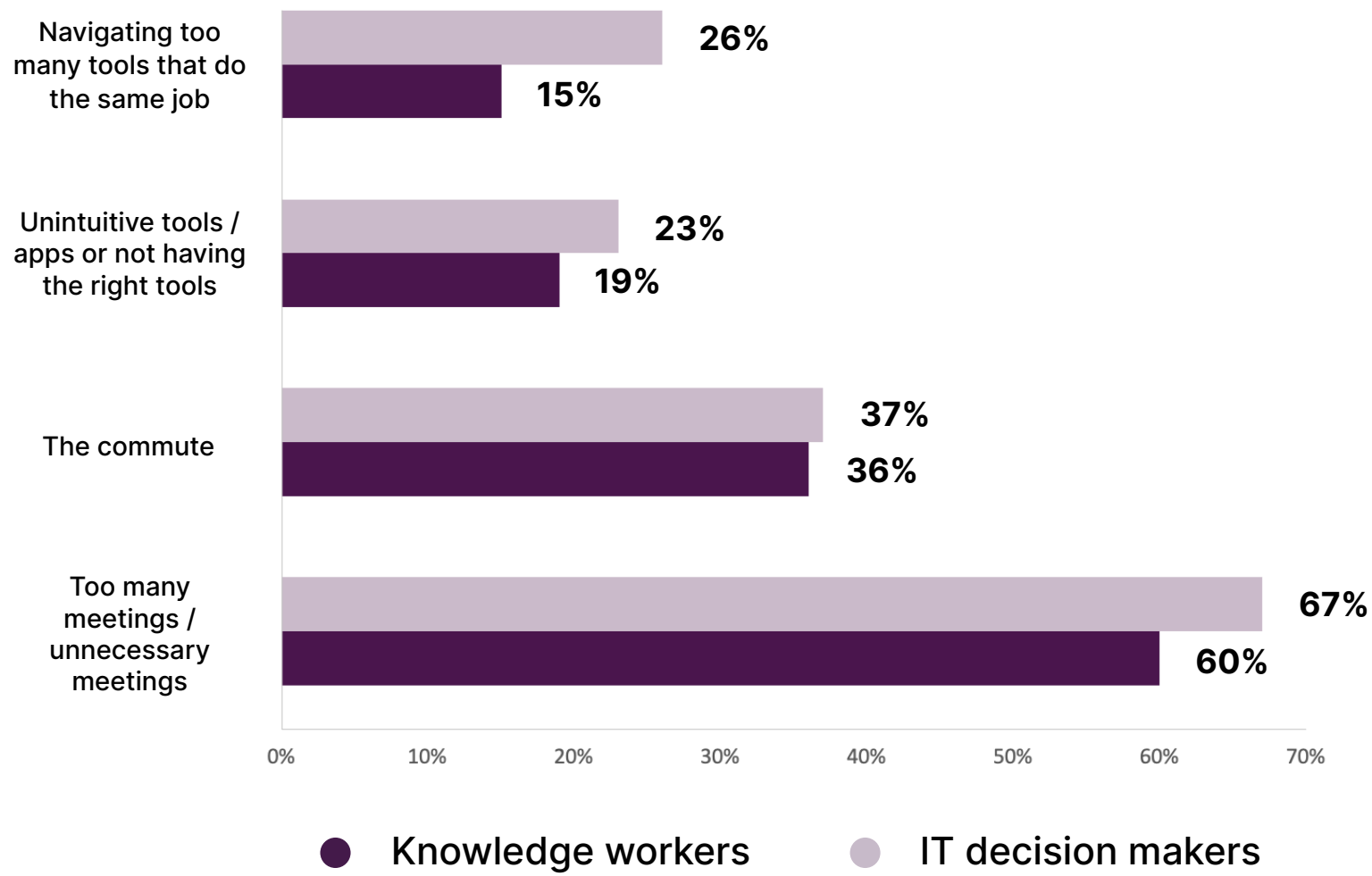How Productivity Platforms Can Power Business Impact

Tools that can adapt to the job at hand

Alongside identifying unnecessary meetings as a key time drain, workers also highlight they have too many tools that do the same job, or that unintuitive tools are slowing down their days.

These technology and meeting challenges are related: in the digital world of work, employees will often find themselves swapping between different apps to collaborate and hopping in and out of blocks of 30 or 60 minute meetings on a variety of tools. Having a single productivity platform that houses all work makes it quick and easy to share and search knowledge across your entire organization.

Which of the following do you identify as time drains?

Category	Knowledge workers	IT decision makers
Navigating too many tools that do the same job	15%	26%
Unintuitive tools / apps or not having the right tools	19%	23%
The commute	36%	37%
Too many meetings / unnecessary meetings	60%	67%

● Knowledge workers   ● IT decision makers

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Slack Top Tip: Choosing the right collaboration tool for the job

In Slack's productivity platform, teams have a variety of options for collaboration—meaning teams no longer have to try to solve every challenge or conversation with a 30-minute call. Instead, they can use the tool the context calls for, for example:

Channels: Organised by topic, channels give you instant visibility into work taking place across teams and act as the hub for everyday collaboration.

Huddles: Instant audio-only or video conversations you can launch with an individual or whole channel in one click, huddles are great for impromptu conversations and quick questions that don't call for a formal meeting.

Audio and video clips: Perfect for sharing asynchronous updates, video and audio clips provide an engaging way for teams to catch up on updates in their own time.

Canvas: A new way to collaborate around structured information and share that across your organisation. Canvases can be made up of any content— it can be information from you back-end systems, from Sales Cloud, from Service Cloud—from any data source, internal or external. It's also possible to embed workflows so you can take action in a canvas, right in the context of the information around it.

Slack Connect: Bring any stakeholder into an organisation's workspace– customers, partners, and external teams—and engage with them directly in Slack.

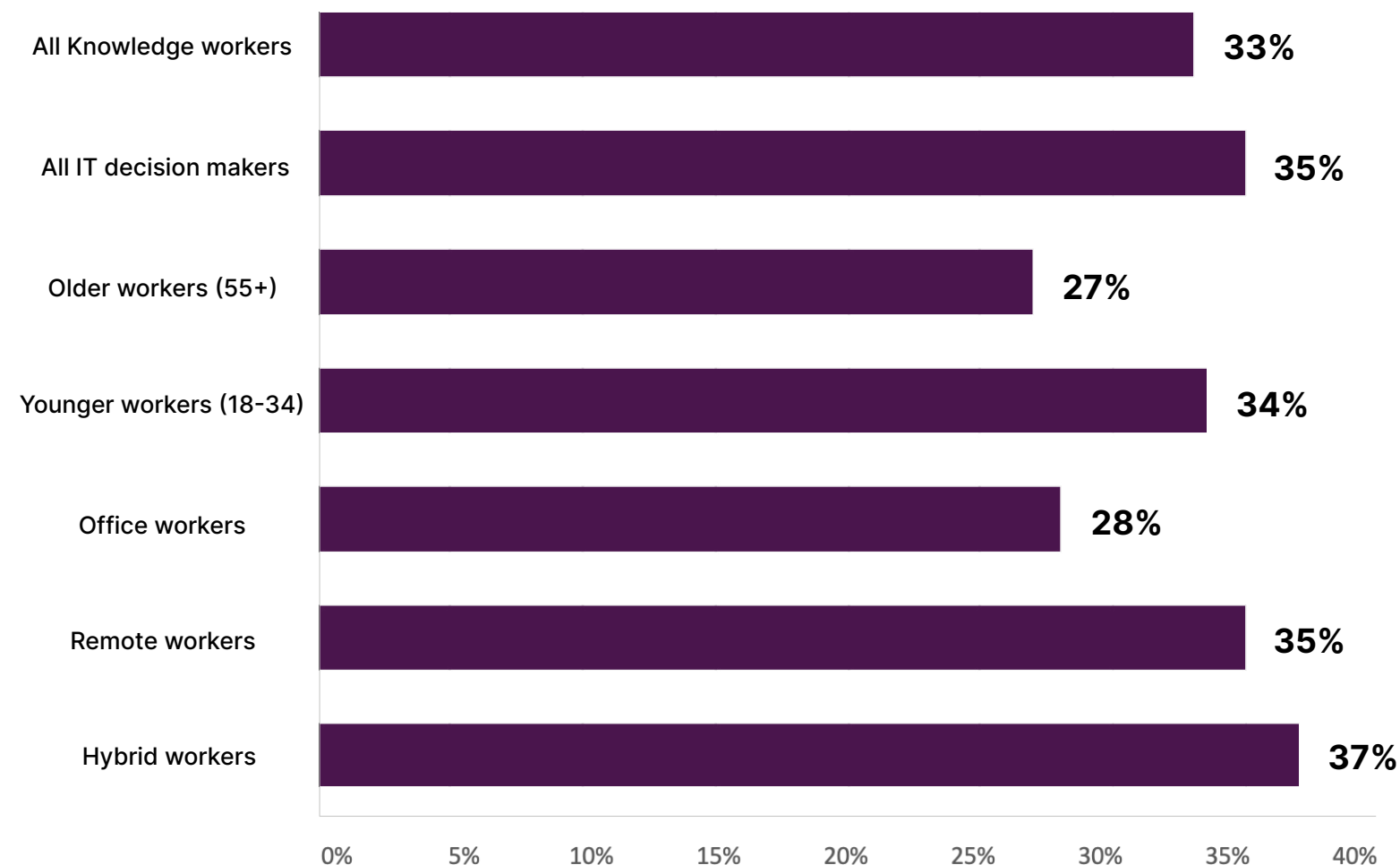How Productivity Platforms Can Power Business Impact

Workers need to connect and share knowledge across sources and seniority

Productive organisations today must cultivate connections both digitally and in person. To do this, playing to the strengths of each environment will be key. Offices shouldn't be filled with workers sitting alone on virtual calls—though often this is the case.

Previous research from Slack found that one in five UK knowledge workers were spending 3-4 hours per day on virtual calls when in the office.

Despite spending more time than ever in meetings and video calls, workers are feeling less connected—and this is a particular challenge for younger workers, who may need more opportunities to connect and learn from their peers.

Percentage of workers who feel concerned they connect less with co-workers due to hybrid working:

Category	Percentage
All Knowledge workers	33%
All IT decision makers	35%
Older workers (55+)	27%
Younger workers (18-34)	34%
Office workers	28%
Remote workers	35%
Hybrid workers	37%

Whether it's hopping on an audio-only huddle to coach a junior member of the team during a challenging moment, or providing them with AI-powered search to go hunting for answers, productivity platforms nurture a flow of knowledge that benefits everyone in the business.
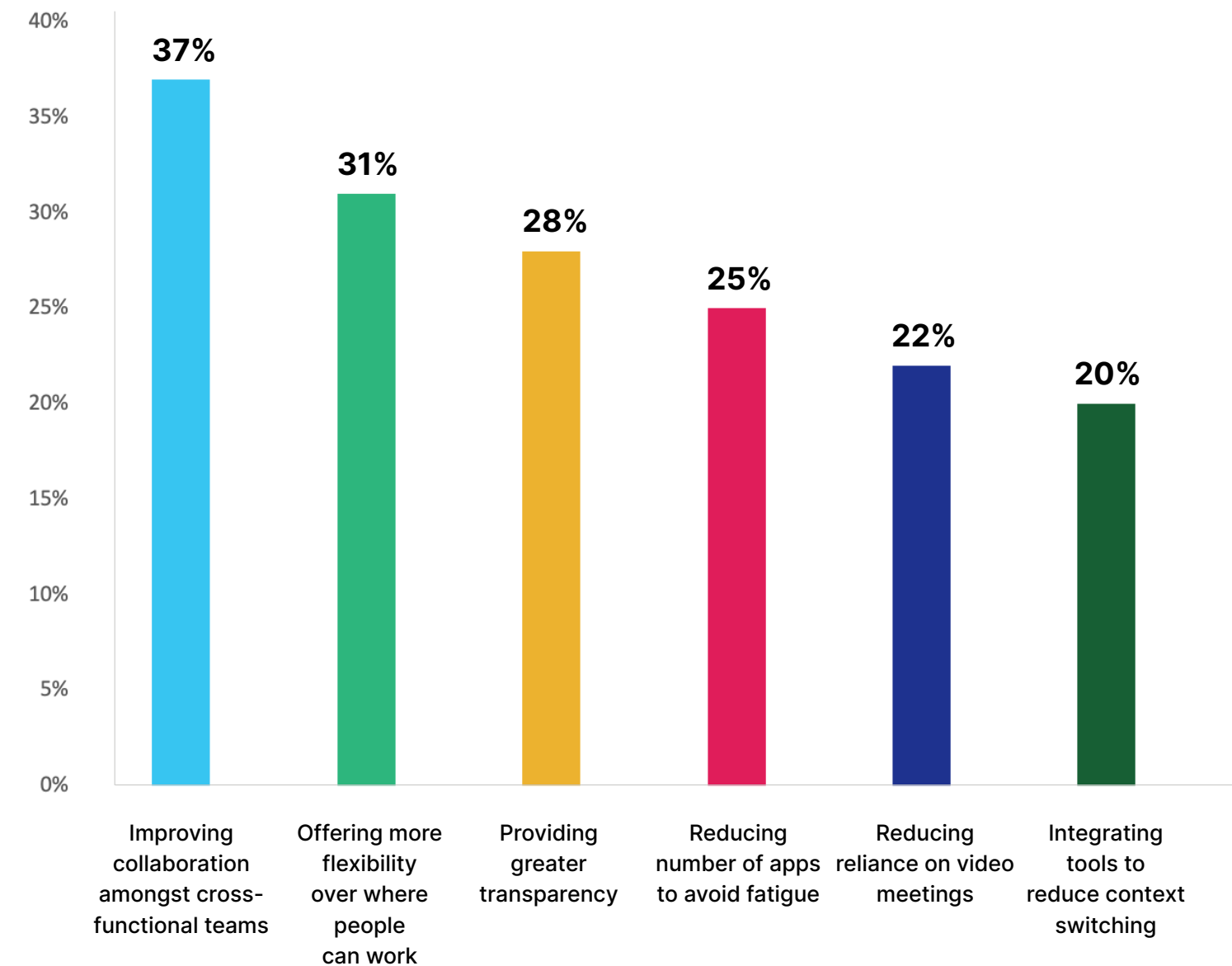
Nurturing knowledge sharing in hybrid work

For new hires, learning by osmosis is vital and younger workers are more likely than older ones to be concerned about connecting less with coworkers. To tackle this, organisations need to empower young workers to learn from management. With fewer desk-side chats, delivering anchor moments—from regular one-to-ones to group workshops—can ensure the next generation puts its best foot forward. However, autonomy is also key—empowering teams with platforms that enable them to discover and share information autonomously can drive self-learning.

Part three: Accelerating work with automations and workflows

Technology choices have a direct effect on business productivity and IT decision makers are acutely aware of this. They identify improving cross-functional collaboration, boosting flexibility, increasing transparency and reducing the number of apps as key areas in which technology can have an impact on productivity.

How IT decision makers see technology driving productivity in the next year:

Category	Percentage
Improving collaboration amongst cross-functional teams	37%
Offering more flexibility over where people can work	31%
Providing greater transparency	28%
Reducing number of apps to avoid fatigue	25%
Reducing reliance on video meetings	22%
Integrating tools to reduce context switching	20%

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When it comes to driving cross-functional collaboration, IT leaders should recognise that this doesn't have to be limited to internal collaboration.

Slack Connect can enpower organisations to connect their Slack workspaces externally, transforming how they deliver on objectives with partners, vendors, customers and more by replacing email with channels. This enables teams to unite their productivity platforms, strengthening client relationships and working quickly, collaboratively and securely even with people outside their organisation.
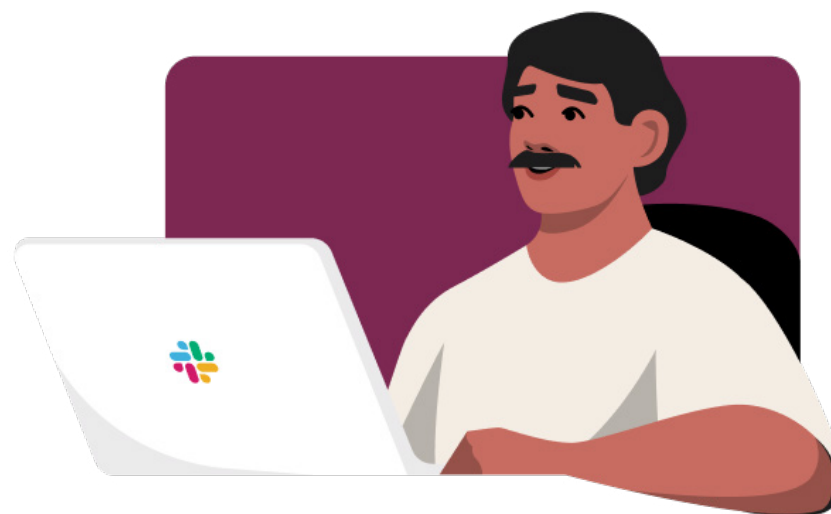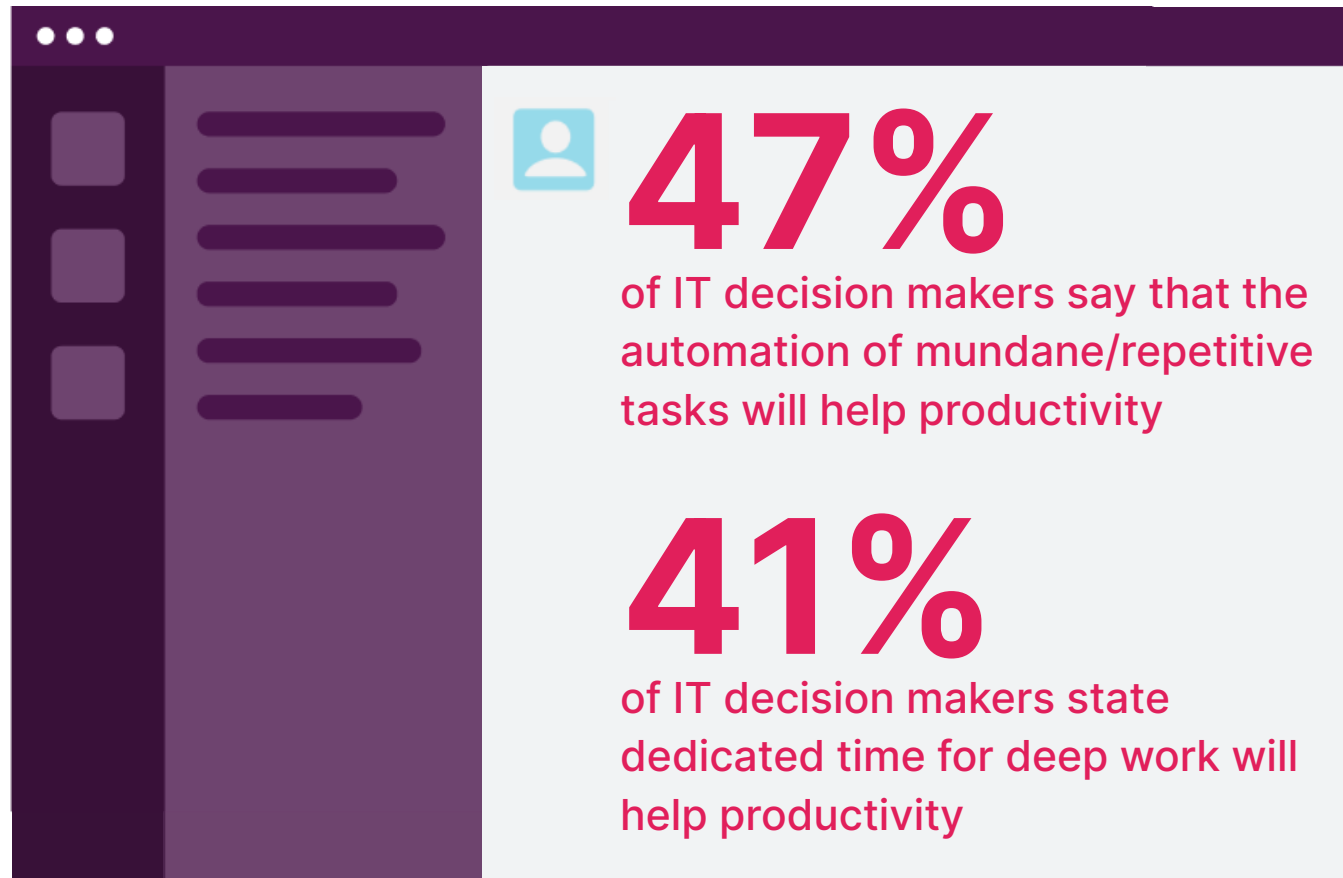
Increasing the velocity of work with automation and no-code workflows

Automation is set to be a major focus for IT teams in 2023. Almost half (47%) of IT decision makers say that the automation of mundane/repetitive tasks will help productivity—and 81% say they need to invest in that technology in the year ahead. Alongside this, 41% note that dedicated time to do deep work would help boost productivity, which automation could potentially drive.

However, there's a disconnect in recognising the value of automation between IT teams and the wider workforce, with just 27% of knowledge workers saying it will help them increase productivity. This is despite 36% saying that taking more breaks would raise productivity—something that automation could help them achieve. Clearly, more education is required on the benefits of automation— alongside solutions that can help all workers derive productivity from it.

47%

of IT decision makers say that the automation of mundane/repetitive tasks will help productivity

41%

of IT decision makers state dedicated time for deep work will help productivity

Automation should no longer be a tool that's only used by tech specialists. With simple drag-and-drop interfaces like those in Slack's Workflow Builder, everyone can access the building blocks of automation and its benefits.

Slack Top Tip: Accelerate automation—and efficiency—for everyone

Democratising automation starts with no-and-low code solutions. Slack's Workflow Builder can enable teams to create custom automations for any routine or repeated tasks and process in a few clicks. Things like onboarding a new team member, requesting information or sharing a brief can all be accelerated without any knowledge of coding. Every week, Slack users launch 10.5m workflows—saving organisations time that can be reinvested in impactful work.

Unleashing your AI potential

The ChatGPT app for Slack combines a company's knowledge found in Slack with the intelligence of ChatGPT, empowering businesses with the information they need to move work forward faster.

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A future of work built on productivity platforms

The world of work never stands still. As businesses come under greater pressure, they must continue to adapt processes and technology to best serve their teams, partners and customers. From freeing knowledge worker's diaries of unnecessary meetings to empowering IT leaders to create digital experiences that engage every team member, there's still work to be done.

However, as businesses navigate turbulent times, the solutions are in sight.

Whether it's by driving greater flexibility in where and when teams connect, nurturing knowledge sharing across hierarchies and between businesses or empowering everyone with automations to accelerate work, productivity platforms can enable organisations to transform work, better serve customers and fulfil their potential.

Teams that use Slack:*

Are
49%
more productive

Have
36%
fewer meetings

Are
**35%**
faster at work

Send and receive
60%
fewer emails

Slack delivers a
338%
return on investment**

*Based on 2,707 survey responses from weekly Slack users in the US, UK, Australia and Canada with a ± 2% margin of error at 95% CI (December 2021).

**'The Total Economic Impact of Slack for Technical Teams', Forrester, 2020.

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Checklist: Identifying a productivity platform that can transform your business

1. Can it improve flexibility while connecting teams and boosting their engagement?

Look for: Flexible tools that keep work moving between teams, partners and customers. Think of channel-based messaging, instant audio or video huddles for impromptu conversations and connecting your Slack workspace with partners or customers for seamless collaboration.
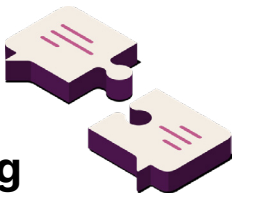
2. Will it boost access to knowledge and the ability to share it?

Look for: Intuitive search functions and app integrations. Think of one platform that connects with your other key tools, meaning no need for constant switching between apps, alongside AI-powered search to instantly surface the information you need.

3. Does it accelerate work with automation for everyone?

Look for: Tools that simplify automation and enable everyone to work faster. Think of simple no-code interfaces that allow anyone on the team to automate routine tasks and processes in a matter of clicks and offer deep integrations with large language model chatbots and AI tools, making work faster for all.

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About Slack

Slack is on a mission to make people's working lives simpler, more pleasant and more productive. It is the productivity platform for customer companies that improves performance by empowering everyone with no-code automation, making search and knowledge sharing seamless, and keeping teams connected and engaged as they move work forward together. As part of Salesforce, Slack is deeply integrated into the Salesforce Customer 360, supercharging productivity across sales, service and marketing teams. To learn more and get started with Slack for free, visit slack.com or connect with us @SlackHQ.