Unlocking the Value of GenAI in Document Management

The IT Specialists' View

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Contents

Executive summary

Generative AI has become a key area of focus for business leaders across the world seeking to understand how they can unlock value from the technology by increasing productivity among their employees.

Adobe, a company with a rich history of facilitating communication and collaboration within organisations, commissioned London Research to carry out a business survey to better understand perceptions around the benefits and challenges associated with GenAI when deployed for document management and related areas within the workforce.

This report looks at the adoption of GenAI from the perspective of specialist IT professionals within the business, i.e. CIOs, CTOs and the senior managers in their departments. It explores how the technology can help to address the challenges faced by organisations, and the barriers to its wider adoption. We also compare their views with those of non-IT specialists.

Seen through the lens of IT, improved productivity is the most widely reported benefit of utilising GenAI for content-related tasks, cited by almost two-thirds (62%) of respondents. Another key research finding is that AI adoption is being welcomed across organisations. Almost all IT respondents (93%) agree that better use of AI will make them more productive in the future, and almost as many (88%) agree it's already doing so.

The research also found that:

- IT specialists are more bullish about the potential of GenAI than their non-specialist counterparts. They are 10 percentage points more likely to be 'very positive' about its impact than non-specialists (45% vs. 35%). And more than half (57%) strongly agree that better use of AI will make them more productive in the future, compared to 45% of non-specialists.
- This strong positivity is tempered by the wider constraints of organisational culture. Almost two-thirds of IT respondents (62%) say their organisations are being 'somewhat cautious' in their adoption of AI for content-related activities, and a further fifth (21%) say they're being 'very cautious'.
- Unsurprisingly, the biggest reason for this caution is concern about security. Two out of five IT respondents (41%) said fears around the security of content and documents were a major barrier, and just over a third (36%) cited fears around the security of the cloud. Around three-quarters (73%) of IT respondents said that overall security was a higher priority than a year ago, compared to 58% of non-IT respondents.

Methodology
This report is the third and final in a series of reports looking at attitudes to the use of AI in content creation and management, each from a different organisational perspective. The research is based on a survey of 450 C-level executives, senior managers and directors/heads of department, carried out in the first half of 2024. The respondents were spread evenly across the United Kingdom, France and Germany. This report compares attitudes to AI, its role in the organisation and the barriers to its uptake among specialist IT professionals (n=225) and their non-specialist counterparts (n=225).

Section 1

Introduction

We live in a time of great uncertainty, and faced with this turbulence, businesses are responding in two ways.

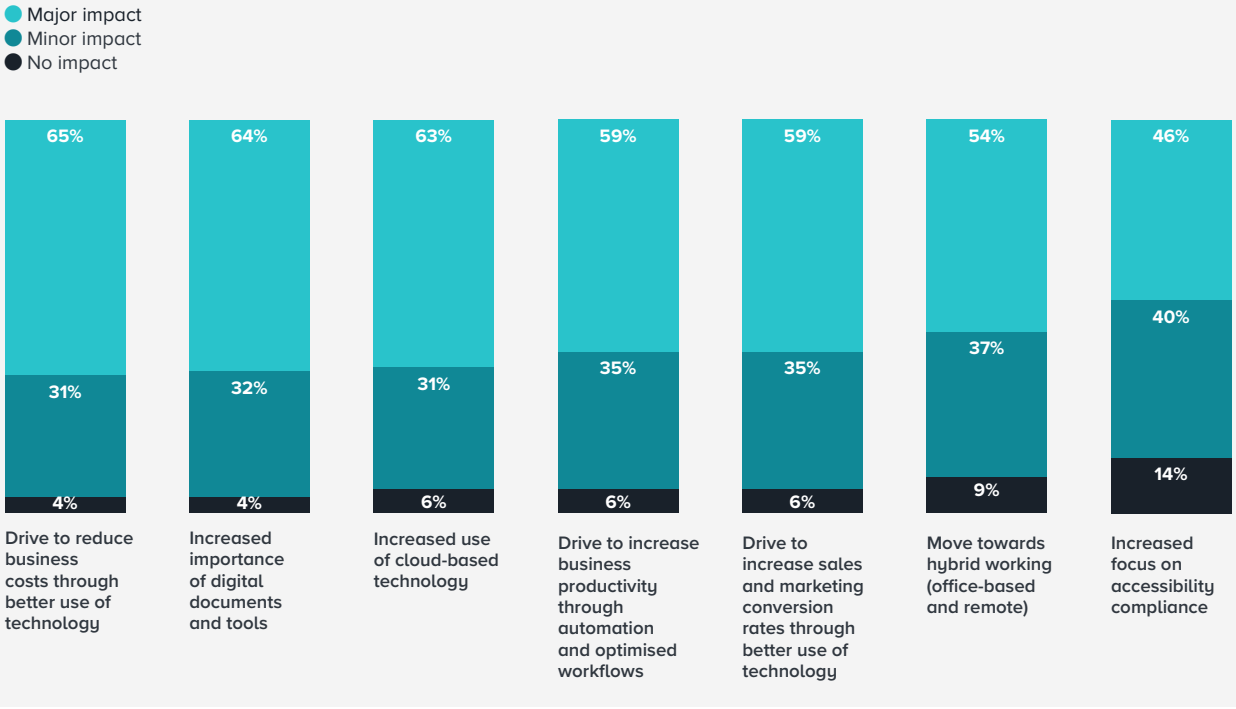
They are hunkering down; focusing on cutting costs, increasing efficiency and retaining customers. At the same time, they are experimenting with new and emerging technologies – most notably artificial intelligence – to help them reach these goals.

This report looks at the issues businesses face in harnessing the potential of AI and facing down the challenges. And it compares the views of IT specialists among senior management with those of their non-IT specialist counterparts.

The results shown in *Figure 1* confirm the importance of technology in addressing current challenges faced by organisations.

FIGURE 1

How would you describe the impact of the following business trends on your organisation? (All respondents)



65%

The percentage of organisations majorly impacted by the drive to reduce costs through better technology usage.

Almost two-thirds of our respondents (65%) say the drive to reduce business costs through better use of technology is having a 'major impact'. Similar percentages say the same about the increased importance of digital documents and tools (64%) and the increased use of cloud-based technology (63%).

Only slightly fewer (59%) see the drive to increase business productivity through automation and optimised workflows as having a major impact. The same proportion say the same about using technology to increase sales and marketing conversion rates.

IT specialists (CTOs, CIOs and senior IT managers reporting to them) are more likely to see all these trends as having a major impact than are non-IT specialists (*Figure 2*). The two trends where the difference in opinion is most significant are for the increased use of cloud-based technology (70% vs. 56%) and the use of technology to reduce costs (69% vs. 61%).

Security is the highest priority

These trends are mirrored by what respondents think are the most important areas of focus for their organisations. As *Figure 3* shows, security is a 'high priority' for the largest proportion of respondents (81%). It's followed by digital transformation (74%), customer engagement and satisfaction (72%), and employee productivity (71%).

81%

The proportion of respondents describing security as a high priority for their organisations.

FIGURE 2

Proportion of organisations describing the impact of the following business trends as 'major' (IT vs. non-IT)

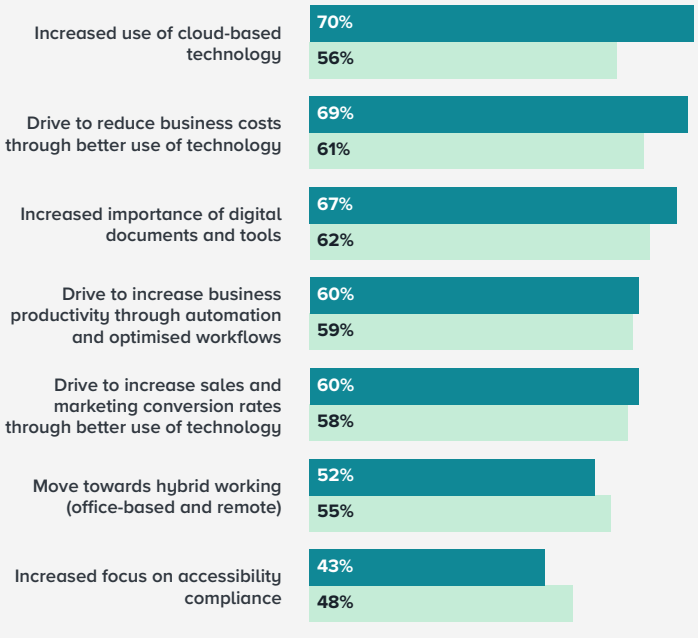
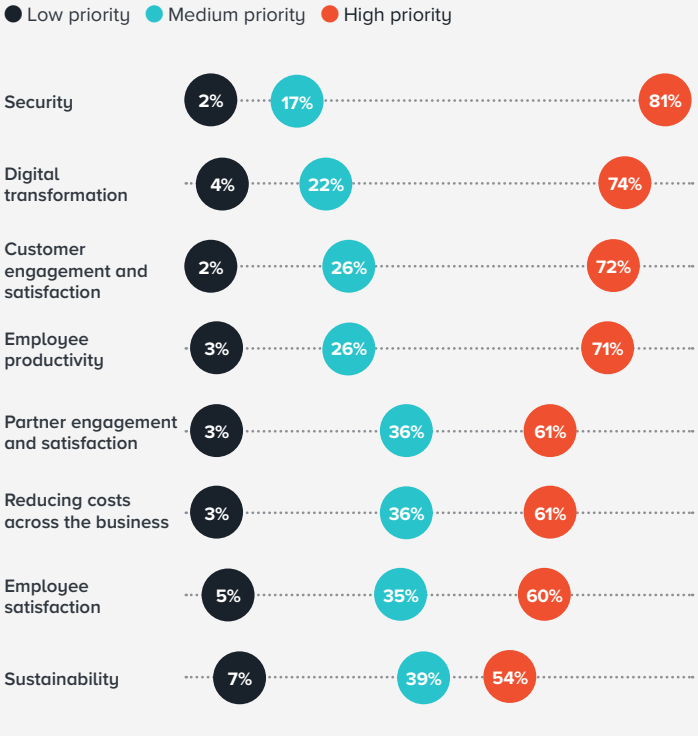


FIGURE 3

How much of a priority are the following areas for your organisation in 2024? (All respondents)



Breaking this down as before (*Figure 4*), we find that IT specialists are slightly more likely to see security as a high priority than their non-IT counterparts are (85% vs. 77%). But they are much more likely to say the same about digital transformation (83% vs. 64%). This suggests that the security message – or fear of a security breach – has got through to executives in most areas of organisations. In contrast, a third of non-IT people (36%) don't see digital transformation as a high priority for their business. This may either be because they already feel it has transformed, or because they are yet to be persuaded of the value of becoming a digital-first business.

Strikingly, at least 45% of respondents also said all the areas identified in *Figure 3* were more important now than they were a year ago (*Figure 5*). The most likely to be seen as more important were security and digital transformation. And once again, IT specialists were significantly more likely to say these two areas are now more important than their non-IT counterparts were. In other words, IT specialists believe their peers elsewhere in the organisation aren't worrying enough about these two areas.

73%

The percentage of IT respondents who say that security is a higher priority than a year ago.

FIGURE 4

Proportion of respondents describing as a high priority for their organisation in 2024 (IT vs. non-IT)

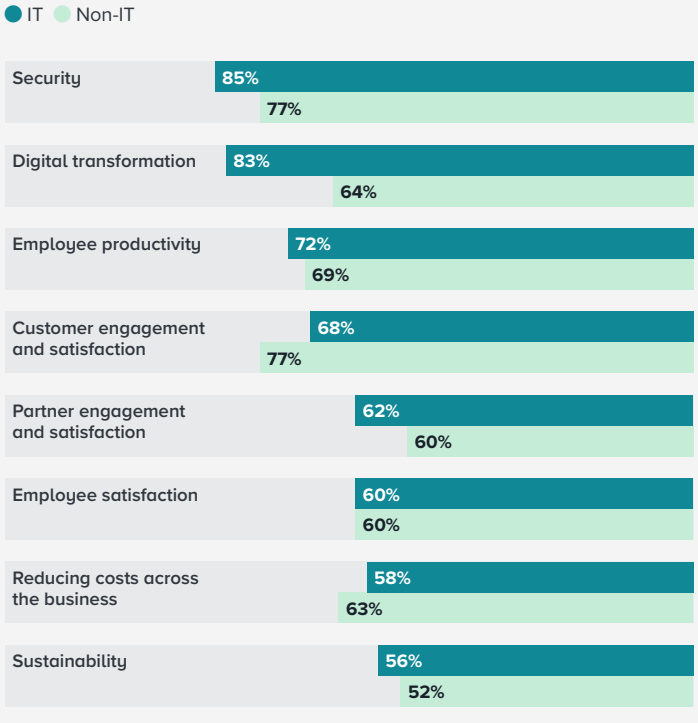
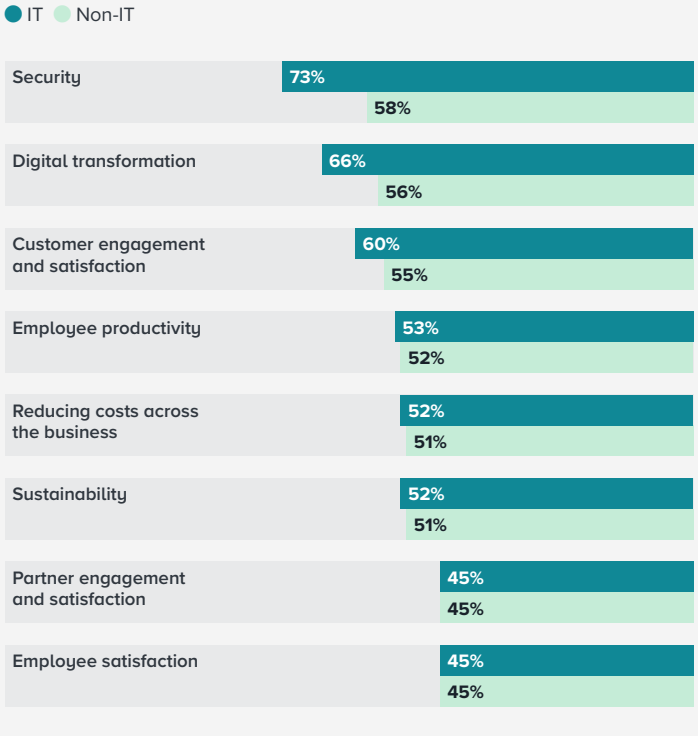


FIGURE 5

Proportion of organisations saying these objectives are more important to them than they were a year ago (IT vs. non-IT)



Section 2

Attitudes to AI

For most people, AI only stopped being science fiction in the past couple of years, thanks to technologies such as ChatGPT. But AI in various incarnations is already widely accepted as driving the next revolution in business.

But as with any new technology or idea, some businesses are slow to adopt AI, or are doing so badly. These businesses will find themselves at a competitive disadvantage. Indeed, previous research by Accenture has found that three-quarters of US C-suite executives surveyed believe that they risk going out of business entirely if they don't scale their use of artificial intelligence in the next five years.

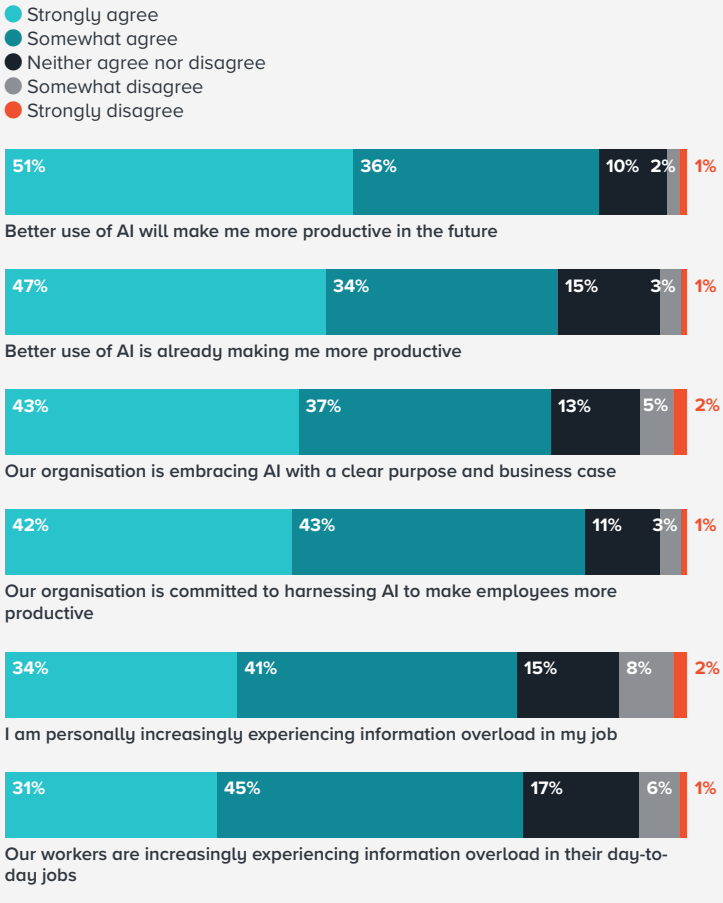
The drive to increase productivity

Figure 6 shows how clearly adoption of AI is tied to the drive for increased productivity, highlighted in the previous section. Almost three-quarters (71%) of respondents said this was a high priority for their organisation in 2024 (*Figure 3*).

Two out of five of respondents (43%) strongly agree their organisation is 'embracing AI with a clear purpose and business case'. Almost the same proportion (42%) strongly agree that at least part of that business case involves increasing staff productivity. What's more, they agree with the move. Almost all (87%) respondents agree that better use of AI will make them more productive in the future (either 'strongly' or 'somewhat'. Almost as many (81%) agree it's already doing so.

FIGURE 6

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements in relation to your own organisation?
(All respondents)

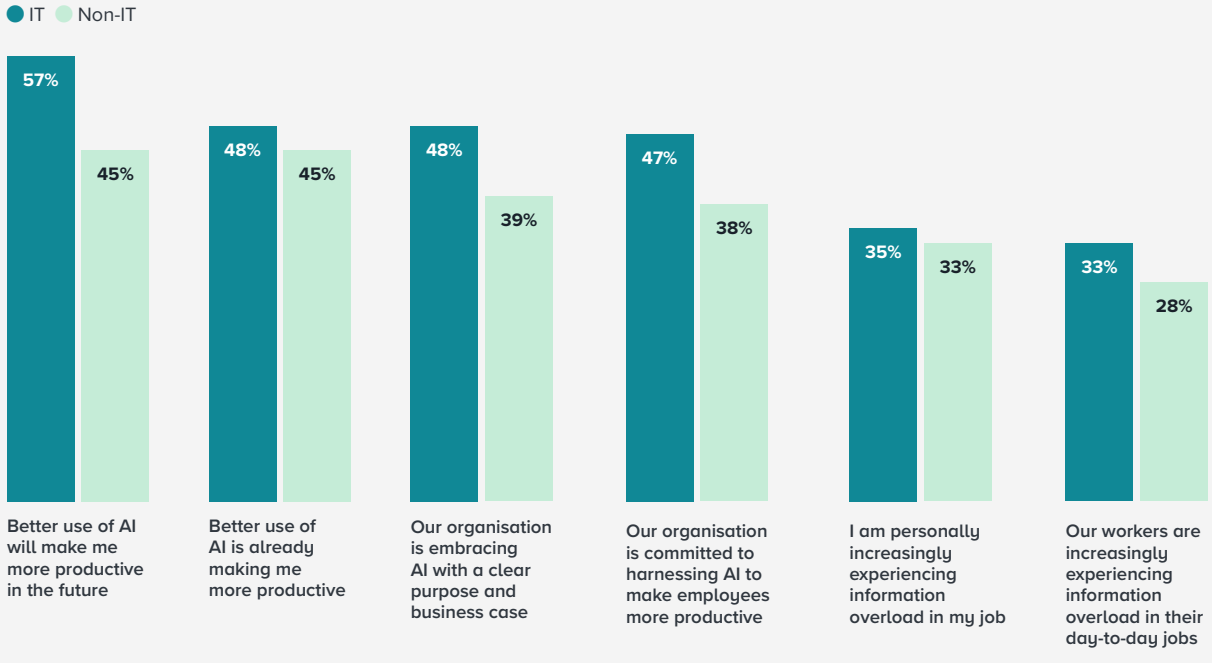


43%

The percentage of respondents who strongly agree their organisations are embracing AI with a clear purpose and business case.

FIGURE 7

Proportion of respondents strongly agreeing to statements in relation to their own organisation (IT vs. non-IT)

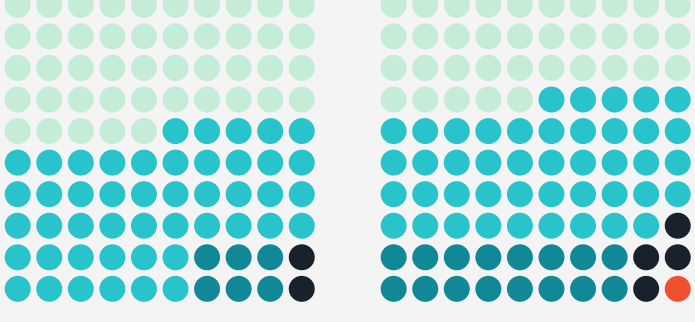


IT specialists are more likely to believe in their organisation's purpose and business case for AI than their non-IT specialist peers (48% vs. 39%). This is likely to be due to their being closer to the discussion (*Figure 7*). They're also more likely to recognise unequivocally their organisation's commitment to harnessing AI for greater productivity (47% vs. 38%).

Interestingly, IT specialists take a very similar view of the current impact of AI on their personal productivity to that of non-specialists. Some 48% strongly agree that better use of AI is already making them more productive, compared to 45% of non-specialists. IT specialists are, however, significantly more bullish about its future benefits in that area (57% strongly agree that better use of AI will make them more productive in the future, compared to 45% of non-specialists).

FIGURE 8

How would you describe your own feelings about the impact of AI on your work life? (IT vs. non-IT)



IT		Non-IT	
Very positive	45%	Very positive	35%
Somewhat positive	47%	Somewhat positive	44%
Neutral	6%	Neutral	16%
Somewhat negative	2%	Somewhat negative	4%
Very negative	0%	Very negative	1%

This difference in enthusiasm for the effects of AI can also be seen in *Figure 8*. IT specialists are 10 percentage points more likely to be 'very positive' about its impact than non-specialists (45% vs. 35%). However, this should be seen as part of an overall climate of excitement. Only a tiny percentage of all respondents reported negative feelings about the impact of AI.

Corporate caution

This enthusiasm among our respondents is noticeably not matched at a corporate level (*Figure 9*). Almost two-thirds (62%) say their organisations are being 'somewhat cautious' in their adoption of AI, with a further fifth (21%) saying they're being 'very cautious'.

However, this caution hasn't stopped adoption reaching a high level. Some 11% of all respondents say AI is very much business as usual in the context of their day-to-day activities (*Figure 10*). A further 29% say it has been operationalised into their day-to-day activities, and over a third (37%) say they're experimenting with the technology.

Figure 11 shows IT specialists are almost twice as likely to say AI use is BAU for their organisation than are their non-IT peers (14% vs. 8%). They're also slightly more likely to say it's in everyday use (32% vs. 26%). This is most likely because IT specialists will be more aware of the AI features of the products already in use in the organisation.

46%

The percentage of IT respondents who say the use of AI for content-related activities is either BAU or has been operationalised into day-to-day workflows.

FIGURE 9

How would you describe your organisational culture in the context of embracing AI for content-related activities?
(IT respondents)

Very cautious	21%
Somewhat cautious	62%
Not very cautious	13%
Not at all cautious	4%

FIGURE 10

How would you describe your organisation's approach to the use of AI in the context of content-related activities?
(All respondents)

- AI is very much business as usual in the context of our day-to-day activities
- AI has been operationalised into our day-to-day activities
- We are experimenting but haven't developed many proofs of concept
- We are aware of the potential but have not used AI capabilities

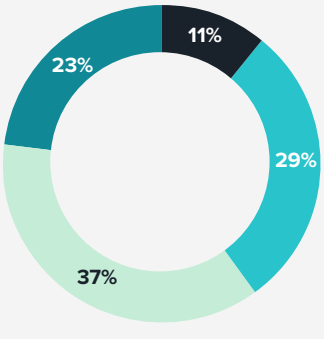
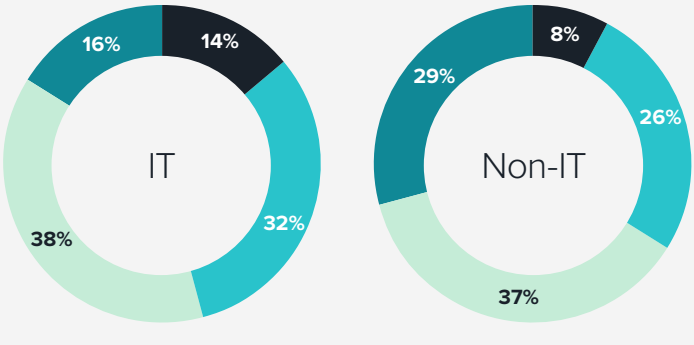


FIGURE 11

How would you describe your organisation's approach to the use of AI in the context of content-related activities?
(IT vs. non-IT)

- AI is very much business as usual in the context of our day-to-day activities
- AI has been operationalised into our day-to-day activities
- We are experimenting but haven't developed many proofs of concept
- We are aware of the potential but have not used AI capabilities



Section 3

Benefits and barriers

The emphasis on productivity continued when we asked about the benefits of AI in content-related tasks (*Figure 12*). Increased productivity came top, chosen by almost equal percentages of both groups (62% for IT vs. 58% for non-IT).

The second highest-rated benefit was reduced cost, again chosen by similar percentages of IT (56%) and non-IT people (50%). Again, this reflects the list of organisations' priorities discussed in Section 1. Next highest was accelerated time to knowledge. This was notably more significant for IT specialists than for their non-IT counterparts (47% vs. 35%). A possible explanation for this difference can be found in how the two groups report their organisation's use of AI for content-related activities (*Figure 13*).

IT respondents report higher usage of AI across the board for both information and content-related tasks such as getting quick answers from documents (71% vs. 59% for non-IT) and content creation for both text (67% vs. 61%) and for images or video (61% vs. 53%). This helps to explain why IT specialists within the business are more conscious of AI benefits such as increased productivity and accelerated time to knowledge.

FIGURE 12

What do you see as the benefits of utilising AI for content-related tasks? (IT vs. non-IT)

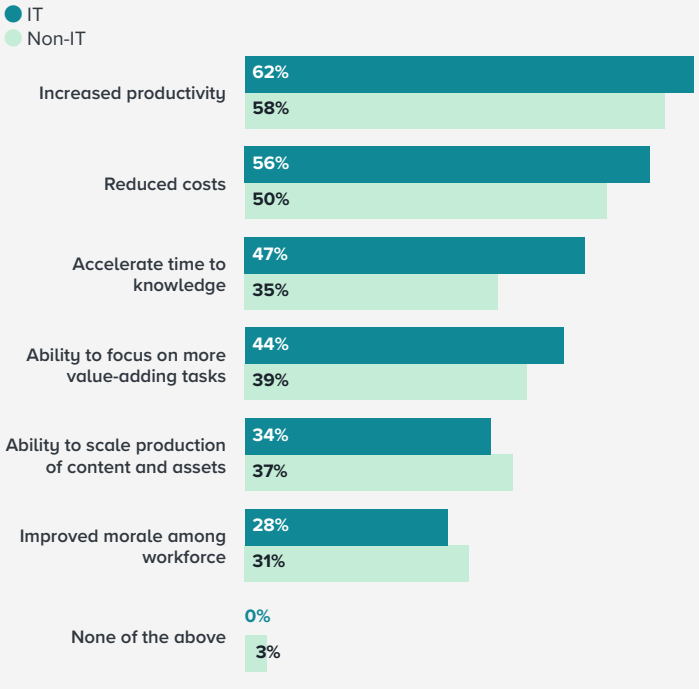


FIGURE 13

Proportion of organisations using AI for content-related activities (IT vs. non-IT)

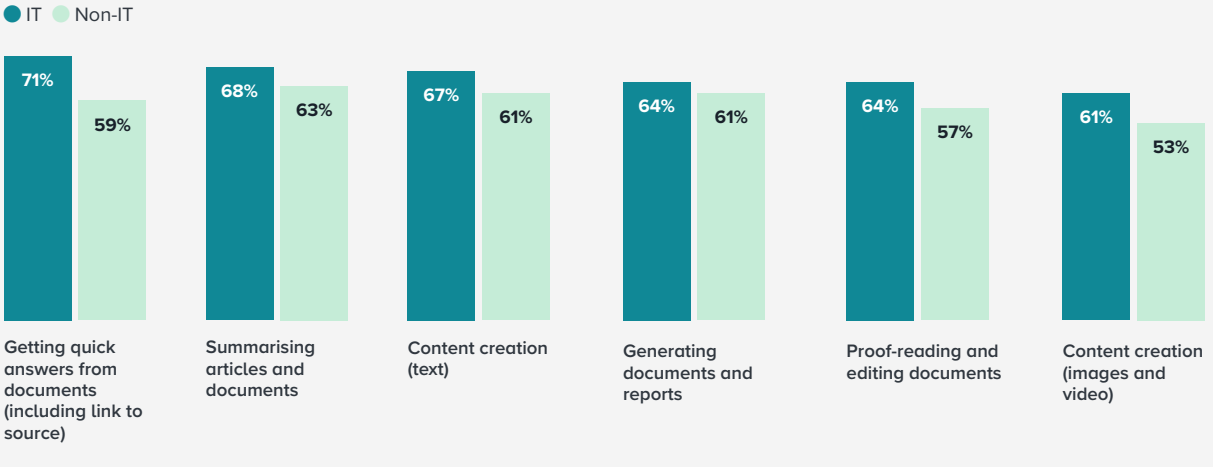


FIGURE 14

How many hours per week do you estimate that you could personally save through better use of AI technology? (IT vs. non-IT)

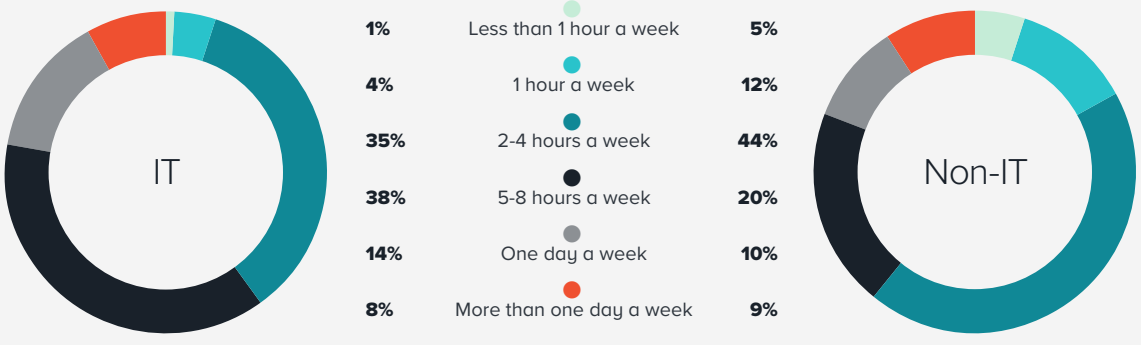
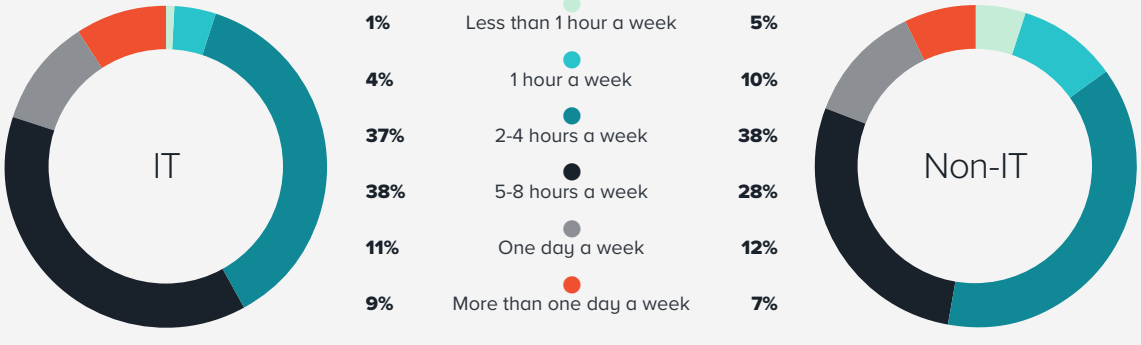


FIGURE 15

How many hours per week do you estimate the average employee in your department could save through better use of AI technology? (IT vs. non-IT)



IT has higher expectations for AI

Looking at the issue of productivity in more detail, IT people are more bullish about what AI can deliver. This is true of their own work (*Figure 14*) and that of people in their department (*Figure 15*).

Well over half of the IT specialists (60%) feel that AI could personally save them at least five hours a week, compared to only 39% of non-IT people (*Figure 14*). Similarly, 58% of IT specialists think the technology could save their staff at least five hours a week, compared to 47% for non-IT (*Figure 15*). It is, however, hard to establish how much this optimism is justified by greater knowledge, and how much it's due to the enthusiasm for the technology already seen in this research.

58%

More than half of IT respondents say that AI can save the average employee at least five hours a week.

FIGURE 16

Proportion of respondents reporting as 'major barriers' to greater uptake of AI-driven technology for content-related tasks and processes (IT vs. non-IT)

Barriers to adoption

Finally, we asked about the barriers preventing greater uptake of AI for content-related tasks and processes (*Figure 16*). Unsurprisingly, given the priority given to security, the most significant of these barriers are fears around the security of content and documents, and fears around the security of the cloud, cited as a 'major barrier' by 41% and 36% of IT respondents respectively.

More surprisingly, IT specialists were no more or less concerned about these security issues as a barrier to uptake than were their non-IT counterparts. The tech enthusiasm among IT specialists may be tempered by their informed concern about security, while the paranoia of the non-specialists is mitigated by their lack of detailed knowledge of the threats involved.

Management issues retain their importance

Views about the barriers to AI adoption do diverge in other areas. Non-IT respondents are more likely than their peers to say that lack of training in AI (34% vs. 29%) and lack of awareness about technology (36% vs. 27%) are major barriers.

This can partly be attributed to their greater distance from the decision-making around technology. IT people may be less concerned about the need for training since they are already familiar with AI technology, and the same applies to the issue of awareness. The proportion of non-IT specialists rating lack of awareness as a major barrier is the same as for fears around cloud security, and ethics and legalities relating to AI. This reiterates the point that cultural issues will be as important for AI technology adoption as technological ones.

Section 4

Conclusion

In just under 30 years, the internet has gone from a text-only academic medium to the dominant, video-driven commercial beast we know today. Generative AI is a relatively new phenomenon, but our research shows it's already being harnessed by many organisations. Who knows where it might be in the 2050s?

What's clear right now is that organisations are seizing on AI as the technology to address their current spread of problems. These problems demand greater efficiency, better customer retention, and the creation of digital-first businesses. Of these, our research shows the highest priority application of AI is in improving efficiency by reducing costs and increasing productivity.

It's also clear that, while there are concerns from IT and other business functions about the security of AI, the ethics and legality of its use, and the challenges of implementing it in the organisation, these are not sufficient to derail its uptake. Only around a third of our respondents regard each of these as major barriers to adoption (*Figure 16*).

Instead, the over-riding attitude among organisations is one of caution. More than eight out of 10 IT respondents (83%) describe their organisations's approach to AI as either 'somewhat' or 'very' cautious (*Figure 9*). However, an overwhelming 92% describe their own feelings about the impact of AI on their work life as 'somewhat' or 'very' positive (*Figure 8*).

Clearly, there is a balance to be struck. Too much caution, and you risk falling behind more adventurous competitors. Too little, and the leading edge could become the bleeding edge. The winning businesses will be the ones that not only strike that balance, but have the technological knowledge and organisational agility to maintain it.

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