



# THE FUTURE FOR CANADIAN ORGANIZATIONS.

Workplace Environments and Collaboration Tools.





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CDW commissioned a survey in partnership with Angus Reid to examine the intersection of workplace tools, technology and solutions and their impact on employee engagement and productivity through the lens of today's remote work environment. The survey examined the sentiments of Canadian IT professionals who experienced this change first-hand and focused on uncovering the challenges they were facing, along with evaluating solutions their organizations implemented as the next normal is established.

COVID-19 and the rapid shift to remote work created new challenges for which many Canadian organizations were not prepared. Some workplaces struggled with a lack of access to technology and services, productivity concerns, deteriorating relationships among team members, difficulties with collaboration and an overall lack of engagement. Given the ever-evolving work landscape and how remote or hybrid work will continue long-term, it is crucial for organizations to provide their employees with the right tools, technology, flexibility and solutions needed to feel productive and engaged at work, ultimately leading to an empowered and successful workforce. It is essential for organizations to continuously assess how employees are responding to changes.





## CDW's Key Findings:

- As a result of the pandemic, organizations are placing higher importance on implementing collaboration tools and technology that improve the overall employee experience. Our survey found that before the pandemic, over three quarters (79 percent) of IT professionals believed their organization valued collaboration tools and technology, while nearly all (94 percent) believed this was important to their organization during the pandemic.
- Most organizations are reaping the benefits of the collaboration tools they use.
  - Prior to COVID-19, 58 percent of people felt that the digital workplace tools their organizations provided them with made them feel empowered, increasing to 74 percent during COVID-19.
  - Additionally, the majority (82 percent) of respondents felt that video conferencing tools such as Zoom, WebEx and Microsoft Teams supported their organization's relationships between colleagues, 89 percent felt they were important to their organization's productivity and 92 percent felt they were important to their organization's engagement.
- With the shift to remote work, many organizations faced abrupt changes in employee collaboration. Unsurprisingly, most working Canadians (86 percent) felt the way they collaborate with colleagues changed entirely or somewhat due to the pandemic, and only 14 percent felt their collaboration did not change at all.
- The pandemic accelerated the use of a variety of collaboration tools and technology. Our survey found that Microsoft Teams (73 percent), Office 365 (68 percent) and SharePoint (50 percent) continue to lead the collaboration tools market among working Canadians. Interestingly, the common sentiment among IT professionals was that all collaboration tools, including Microsoft Teams (92 percent), Office 365 (97 percent), SharePoint (93 percent), Google Docs (88 percent), Slack (83 percent), Git (91 percent) and ServiceNow (98 percent) will all continue to be important to their organization post-pandemic.
- Promisingly, and likely thanks to the collaboration tools implemented over the course of the pandemic, levels of employee collaboration have seen improvement. Nearly half (49 percent) of respondents felt collaboration improved, 27 percent believed their collaboration had worsened and 24 percent felt collaboration stayed the same.
- Moving forward, organizations should make fostering positive intra-personal employee relationships a priority. According to the survey, nearly half (44 percent) of respondents felt their relationships between colleagues suffered, while 25 percent believed their relationships strengthened and 31 percent felt their relationships stayed the same.
- Interestingly, despite the abrupt change, many Canadian organizations prepared employees for remote work. During the transition to online operations, the majority (80 percent) of respondents felt their organization prepared its employees to be comfortable working remotely.



- Canadian organizations have generally been open to flexible work arrangements throughout the pandemic and will likely continue offering their employees flexible work options in the future.
- More than two-thirds (69 percent) of respondents said their organization supports flexible work arrangements, including flexible start and end times or staggered hours, work-from-anywhere policies, compressed work weeks (4-day work week) and reduced hours.
- The most common flexible work arrangement (82 percent) was flexible start and end times, also known as staggered hours. This indicates that the trend of putting employee needs first could be here to stay, which is crucial to empowering the workforce as we look ahead to a post-pandemic landscape.
- Most organizations are reaping the benefits of flexible work arrangements. Of the 69 percent of respondents whose organizations provide flexible work arrangements, over half (59 percent) stated they believe it has improved workplace productivity and 51 percent believe it improved their workplace engagement. As a result, it is no surprise that 61 percent of respondents believe their flexible work arrangements are here to stay.



## What is Driving the Change?

Most Canadian organizations adopted new tools and technologies to optimize employee engagement and collaboration while working remotely.

- Many respondents (79 percent) believe that their organization valued collaboration tools and technology prior to COVID-19. However, almost all (94 percent) believe their organization valued collaboration tools and technology during the pandemic.
- Our survey found that prior to COVID-19, 58 percent of people felt that their digital workplace tools made them feel empowered. This number increased to 74 percent during the pandemic, indicating a direct link between tools and technology and an empowered workforce.
- Some of the most common tools that organizations have implemented include video conferencing platforms (such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom and WebEx), shared drives and data centres (such as Google Drive and SharePoint), cloud productivity software and software as a service (SaaS) tools (such as Microsoft Office 365 and Salesforce).
- Of all these tools, the majority of respondents (89 percent) cited video conferencing platforms as the most important to their organizations' productivity and engagement, followed closely by shared drives and data centres (87 percent).
- Additionally, our survey found Microsoft Teams was the most used (73 percent) collaboration tool amongst working Canadians. Since almost all (94 percent) respondents unanimously agree that post-pandemic, their organizations will continue to value collaboration tools and technology, looking to the future, it appears promising that organizations will continue adopting the tools that benefit their employees and help them stay better connected while working remotely.





## The Future of Work

Today's workplace is vastly different from what it looked like prior to the pandemic, as many organizations are facing challenges with employee collaboration and engagement. As a result of the shift to remote work, organizations are continuously having to create innovative solutions to address these challenges.

- Our survey found that 69 percent of respondents indicated that their organization provides some form of flexible work arrangement, including varying start and end times (82 percent), work-from-anywhere policies (64 percent), compressed work weeks (28 percent) and reduced hours (13 percent).
- Of those who indicated their workplace supports flexible work arrangements, 61 percent believe these arrangements are long-term changes. This should come as no surprise to Canadian organizations as more than half of respondents (59 percent) found that their productivity has been positively affected by this and 51 percent said they felt more engaged at work as a result of flexible work arrangements.
- Concerningly, of the respondents whose organizations do not allow for flexible work arrangements, over one quarter (29 percent) cited this has negatively impacted their overall employee productivity and 28 percent cited the lack of workplace flexibility has negatively impacted their employee engagement.
- These statistics highlight the positive impact of flexible work arrangements on employee engagement and demonstrates why organizations buying into employee flexibility have a competitive advantage.

## Investment in Employee Comfort

One of the many ways organizations are ensuring comfort and productivity among employees at work is by making up home office shortcomings. Our survey found that the majority (80 percent) of employees felt that their organization had prepared them to be comfortable working remotely by providing them with proper tools, technology and services.

- Some of the tools that were cited as helpful to employees' overall work environments included laptops/computers (82 percent), monitors (64 percent), webcams (65 percent), desks (33 percent), chairs (41 percent), desk risers (18 percent), office supplies (35 percent) and software/subscriptions (68 percent).
- Investing in tools that provide employees with comfort and flexibility at home is key to ensuring employee comfort, productivity and overall satisfaction that will lead to driving the business forward.
- Looking to the future, it will be important for organizations to equip their employees with the right tools and solutions so they feel productive, connected and empowered at work in order to maintain business continuity.







# WHAT WE'RE SEEING IN DIFFERENT INDUSTRIES





## Business and Professional Services

Business and Professional Services organizations are traditionally leaders in adopting new ideas and technology. When it comes to supporting flexible work arrangements, our data shows that business and professional services are in the lead, with 83 percent of respondents citing that their workplace supports flexible work arrangements, the highest of all industries.

- The majority (81 percent) of employees in this sector cited they have flexible start and end times, and over three quarters (77 percent) cited they can work from anywhere. These flexible work policies had an overall positive impact on the industry, with over half (51 percent) citing their organization's flexible work arrangements improved employee engagement.
- Despite the overall improved engagement and workplace flexibility, over three quarters (81 percent) said the shift to remote work changed the way they collaborate with their colleagues, with almost half (46 percent) disclosing that their team's relationships were negatively affected or worsened during the pandemic.
- It is also apparent that the industry heavily relies on various collaboration tools and technology. Almost all (87 percent) of people working in the industry say video conferencing tools such as Zoom, WebEx and Teams supported their relationships between colleagues and 86 percent cited Software as a Service (SaaS) tools (Microsoft Office 365, Slack, ServiceNow, etc.) as important to their organization's engagement.



## Education

Education is a sector that has been in the spotlight from the outset of the pandemic as employees had to quickly learn how to work remotely and implement new technologies overnight. Unsurprisingly, this meant that 89 percent of respondents said the shift to remote work somewhat or entirely changed the way they collaborate with their colleagues.

- The shift from in-class to virtual learning has not been easy and this is evident in our data, as nearly half (47 percent) of respondents said their team's collaboration was negatively affected or worsened during the pandemic.
- The education industry's heavy reliance on collaboration tools and technology to perform daily tasks throughout the pandemic is also apparent. Nearly three quarters (73 percent) indicated that this was important to their organization before COVID-19, and almost all (99 percent) indicated this was important during COVID-19 – the highest of all industries.
- These results demonstrate how the education industry has benefitted from video conferencing tools as most employees (87 percent) said tools such as Zoom, WebEx and Teams supported their relationships between colleagues.

## Financial Services

The finance sector leads the field when it comes to flexible workplace arrangements, with 80 percent citing their workplace supports them. Despite their mass adoption of tools and technology, 56 percent of people working in financial services feel their team's relationships were negatively affected and worsened during the pandemic, the second-highest of all industries after government and crown corporations.





- Unsurprisingly, the financial services sector is also at the forefront of utilizing technology to improve their work experience. Almost all (97 percent) cited video conferencing platforms (Teams, Zoom, WebEx) as important to their organization's productivity and engagement and 91 percent cited video conferencing platforms as integral to supporting their relationships between colleagues, the highest of all industries.
- Over three quarters (79 percent) of financial services employees indicated that before COVID-19, their organization somewhat or highly valued implementing collaboration tools and technology to improve the employee experience, which jumped to 94 percent during COVID-19.

## Government and Crown Corporations

Over half (57 percent) of public servants surveyed said they felt their team's relationships were negatively affected or worsened during the pandemic, the highest of all industries. This could be the impact of the changes to the way businesses collaborate, as almost all (90 percent) public servants said the shift to remote work changed the way they collaborate with their colleagues daily.

- Over three quarters (77 percent) of public servants indicated that their workplace supported flexible work arrangements and over half (60 percent) believe that these flexible work arrangements are here to stay long-term.
- Interestingly, over one third (38 percent) of public servants cited their workplace allows them to have a





compressed work week, the highest of all industries. This indicates that government and crown corporations have gained a greater appreciation for collaboration tools and technology over the course of the pandemic. Survey data also indicates that over half (68 percent) of public servant respondents indicated that before the pandemic, their organization valued collaboration tools and technology, while almost all (90 percent) indicated this was important to their organization during the pandemic, an increase of 32 percent.

## Healthcare

The healthcare sector faced numerous strains and challenges throughout the pandemic, making it understandable that over three quarters (78 percent) of people working in healthcare said the shift to remote work changed the way they collaborate with their colleagues.

- Essential care workers faced significant limitations, which undoubtedly impacted their experiences during the pandemic. Over a third (39 percent) of respondents cited their team's relationships were negatively affected and worsened during the pandemic.
- Furthermore, just over half (56 percent) of respondents working in healthcare said that their workplace supported flexible work arrangements. This is relatively low compared to some industries such as business and professional services or finance, where most employees (over 80 percent) had some form of a flexible work arrangement.
- Unsurprisingly, less than half (43 percent) of healthcare workers could work remotely, the lowest of all industries.



## Where do we go from here?

As organizations continue adopting remote or hybrid work models, Canadian employees expect to remain reliant on their organization's collaboration tools and technology for months to come. As we look to the future, the top three takeaways we recommend for organizations to maintain an empowered workforce are:

1. **Recognizing the link between collaboration tools, employee productivity and engagement is critical to business success.** When employees feel empowered in the workplace, productivity and engagement increase which is key to achieving and facilitating organizational success. Be sure to continue evaluating, researching and implementing the various collaboration tools that will help keep employees committed to your organization.
2. **Explore and/or continue flexible work arrangements, as data shows they work.** Flexible work arrangements are here to stay, so it is critical to continue providing employees with these options. This is critical in order to continue attracting and retaining talent in both the short and long term.
3. **Invest in employee comfort, wherever their workplace may be.** Investing in tools that provide employees with comfort and workplace accessibility from home is essential. If you want to ensure employees work effectively and efficiently, invest in employees' digital and home workspaces.





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