



The Connected Enterprise

Workplace Modernization





2026 WORKPLACE MODERNIZATION

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Organizations are using technology to connect with employees and customers more than ever, but fragmented systems and data silos often leave both groups frustrated.

AI initiatives built on incomplete context only compound the problem. But a connected enterprise approach can improve the experiences of both customers and employees. CDW can help organizations integrate disconnected systems, unlock AI's full potential and build a modern, frictionless workplace.



Introduction

Organizations have spent years investing in data, AI and productivity tools, but many find they still cannot provide the best experiences for customers and employees. The issue is fragmentation: Disconnected systems leave leaders guessing and employees and customers frustrated. To improve these experiences, organizations must understand why these efforts stall, what the data reveals about their challenges and how a connected enterprise turns fragmented tools into a unified foundation for growth.



A connected enterprise not only improves the experiences of customers and employees but also enables business leaders to see the big picture. This means more proactive customer service and employee interventions, as well as insights that help to improve products and services, increase revenue and spur innovation.”



CHAPTER 1

Why Many CX and EX Efforts Fall Short

For years, organizations have been trying to use their vast data stores to improve the experiences of their customers and employees through increased personalization, reduced friction and proactive support. And for years, these efforts have largely come up short, with significant numbers of both customers and employees continuing to report that they remain frustrated with their experiences.

The problem is not a lack of data. And with myriad collaboration suites and AI tools coming into use in recent years, it would also be difficult to argue that the problem is a lack of technology. Organizations have made significant investments in the customer experience, AI tools, customer relationship management (CRM) platforms, marketing automation solutions and employee productivity suites. But instead of simplifying employee and customer experiences, this wealth of data and technology solutions has largely led to increased fragmentation and complexity. Every advancement in technology seems to be accompanied by new data silos, increases in support ticket volume and an epidemic of shadow IT.

90%
THE PERCENTAGE
OF CONSUMERS
who say they are
willing to share
some type of
personal data for
more personalized
service

Source: pwc.com,
“PwC’s 2025 Customer
Experience Survey,”
Sept. 29, 2025

Further, the situation is complicated by changing customer expectations. According to [research from PwC](#), 70% of executives say customer expectations are evolving faster than their company can adapt, while 61% of consumers consider a quality customer experience to be a minimum expectation for a brand. The stakes are high: 29% of consumers say they have stopped using or buying from a brand due to poor customer experience.

Employee experience data tells a similar story. According to [research from Ivanti](#), an overwhelming majority of IT teams say that a strong digital employee experience positively affects productivity (87%), satisfaction (85%) and employee retention (77%). And yet, just 23% report that their use of digital employee experience tactics is “advanced,” with 42% struggling to automate processes and monitor endpoints despite investments in digital employee experience.

Subpar employee and customer experiences have a common culprit: disconnected corporate systems and data. Even though organizations have more information and technology than ever, these tools and their data typically sit apart from one another, with IT and business teams struggling to unify their environments in ways that could reduce friction for both their customers and their employees. And when every system essentially holds a different piece of the puzzle, leaders end up guessing instead of making confident decisions backed by a holistic view of their workforce and buyers.

A connected enterprise not only improves the experiences of customers and employees but also enables business leaders to see the big picture. This means more proactive customer service and employee interventions, as well as insights that help to improve products and services, increase revenue and spur innovation. By modernizing their workplaces through more connected tools and data, leaders aren't just creating more satisfied customers and engaged employees. They're also building a foundation that will reduce friction throughout the entire business.



The Personalization Paradox

A time traveler from 50 years in the past would likely be shocked by the amount of information that organizations today have about their customers and employees. Thanks to advances in technology, companies can track users across sites, tying emails and account IDs to behavior across websites and mobile apps. They also collect information through purchases, loyalty programs, surveys, service interactions, workplace software and connected devices. And CRM platforms, contact centers and analytics tools give organizations increasingly sophisticated ways to store, analyze and act on this information.

Seeing these capabilities, the time traveler might expect every customer and employee interaction with a company to feel remarkably personal. It would be reasonable, for example, to expect that companies are now able to anticipate what customers need, remember past interactions and provide employees with excellent support. Instead, customers still receive irrelevant recommendations from brands and spend time repeating information they have already provided to customer service representatives. Employees, meanwhile, often have to search across multiple systems to piece together a basic understanding of the problem they are trying to solve.



Experiences often break down in this way even when individual tools are doing exactly what they're supposed to do. Typically, the problem is not a lack of capability, but rather a lack of integration. Three different business units might be using three separate systems meant to optimize the customer or employee experience. And leaders in each of these business units might think they are providing an excellent customer or employee experience because they lack visibility into what happens when these systems fail to work together.

For example, a customer who calls into a contact center with a problem, then follows up the next day for an update expects a seamless interaction. The contact center platform may be working, and the system containing the previous day's conversation may be working, but if the handoff between them fails, the customer will have to explain the problem all over again. Similarly, an HR platform might have all of the necessary information about a new employee's role, location and start date, but if this data never gets integrated with the appropriate IT systems, it leaves new hires to spend their first days on the job tracking down the right laptop and requesting necessary permissions.

As a result, systems built for personalization can still leave customers and employees feeling invisible. The emergence of AI presents an opportunity to finally resolve this persistent paradox. But if organizations merely layer AI capabilities onto their already fragmented environments without solving the underlying problems, they may actually make things worse.



AI Is Only as Good as Its Context

Business leaders across industries have expressed considerable excitement about AI tools that promise to improve customer and employee experiences, and with good reason. Customers can now use AI chatbots to quickly find the answers to questions, solve problems and even initiate refunds on their own. And employees can use chatbots trained on corporate data to surface insights hiding inside a company's contracts, customer call transcripts and financial reports.

However, AI tools are only as good as the context they are given. This means that when customer, employee or operational data is incomplete or contradictory, AI outputs based on that information will also be incomplete or contradictory. At best, AI answers based on insufficient context will be vague and generic; at worst, they will be flat wrong. This can be especially harmful to the customer and employee experience when people feel trapped in an AI loop, with no way to escalate to a human agent.

For AI to be useful, organizations must ensure that these solutions have access to several essential forms of

context: history (what the customer or user has previously purchased, requested or experienced); current context (what is happening now, such as a delayed order or an issue with a device); intent (what the person is trying to accomplish); and rules and constraints (the policies, permissions and business rules governing what the AI tool is allowed to recommend or do).

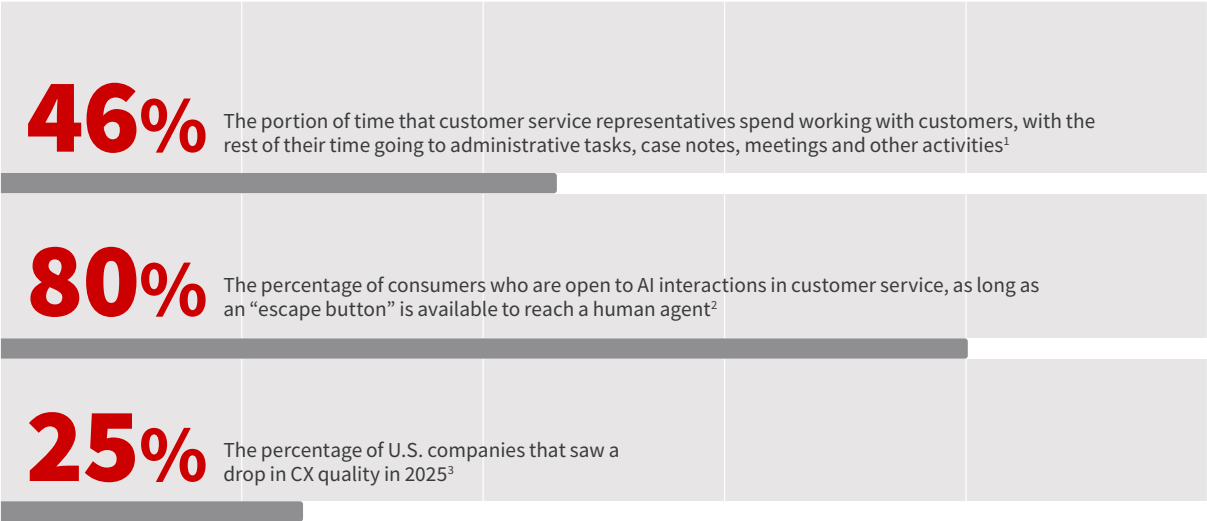
Today, this context is typically distributed across numerous disconnected systems and databases. One approach is to move all of this information into a central data lake or warehouse. However, organizations can also use integration tools to connect these systems in ways that make the necessary information available when customers or employees engage with AI solutions.

CDW can help you build a connected enterprise that delivers valuable experiences to customers and employees.

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CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE BY THE NUMBERS

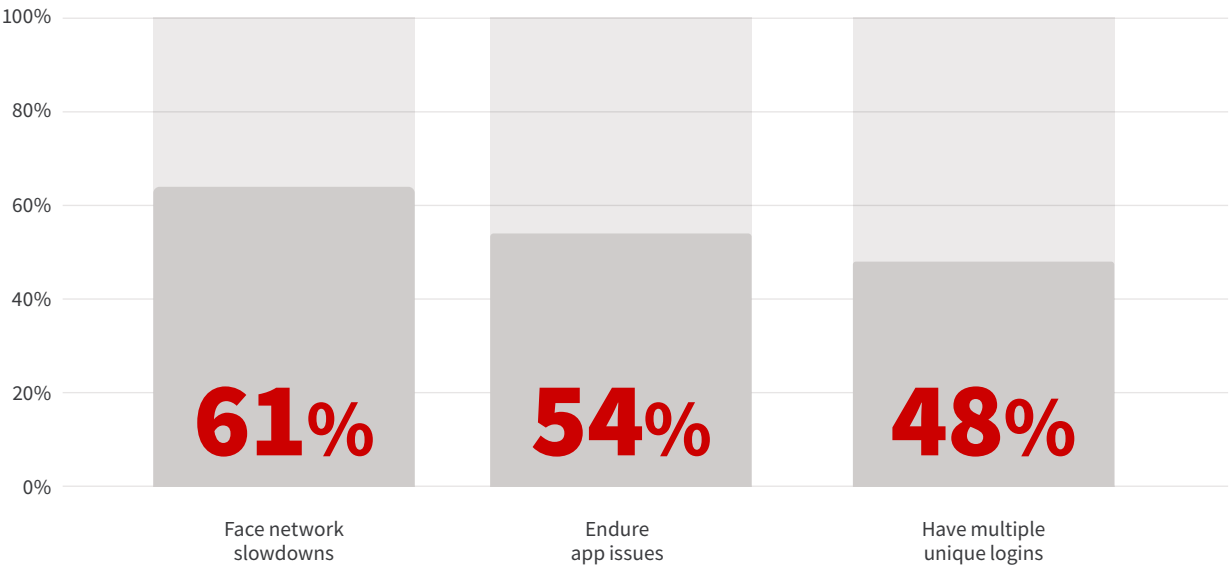


Sources: ¹Salesforce, “State of Service, Seventh Edition,” September 2025; ²Five9, “2026 Business Leaders CX Report,” June 2026; ³forrester.com, “Customer Experience Quality In The US Falls To An(other) All-Time Low,” June 24, 2025



GETTING THE EX BASICS RIGHT

According to research from Ivanti, challenges such as cost, complexity and a lack of skilled talent are hindering the digital employee experience. Many organizations even struggle with relatively basic aspects of EX.



61% The percentage of office workers who say they sometimes, often or very often experience slow network connections at work

54% The percentage who say they sometimes, often or very often deal with poor application performance

48% The percentage who say they sometimes, often or very often struggle with too many unique logins to access corporate data and systems

Source: Ivanti, "2025 Digital Employee Experience Report: Next-Level DEX," September 2025



CHAPTER 2

Building the Connected Enterprise



In a connected enterprise, customer and employee systems seamlessly exchange data, allowing applications and AI tools to work from a consistent, holistic view of the customer, the employee and the enterprise. Again, the goal is not necessarily to replace existing platforms or push every record into a single data repository. Rather, organizations should aim to connect the environment so that information and context can follow interactions from beginning to end.

While organizations likely already have many of the components of a connected enterprise in their environment, the results of this transformation show up in the form of new capabilities and integrations. Siloed channels become a unified ecosystem in which customer experience solutions, enterprise resource planning platforms and CRM tools all contribute to a consistent experience. Rather than merely acting as systems of record, these solutions start to work together to inform real-time action. As the connected enterprise matures, basic automation gives way to autonomous agents that draw from cross-functional data to deliver context-informed customer and employee experiences.



CREATING THE NECESSARY CONNECTIONS

The systems that need to be connected will vary by organization, but they typically include CRM platforms, contact centers, marketing tools, IT service management (ITSM) platforms, order management and purchase data, and any underlying data warehouse or data lake. Additionally, many organizations will need to integrate their unified communication tools, collaboration and meeting technologies, employee endpoints, virtual desktop environments, analytics dashboards and, sometimes, physical sensors.

These integrations are essential because each tool or environment typically owns a different portion of the customer or employee relationship. Account and sales information lives inside CRM platforms; engagement metrics and digital behavior are stored by marketing tools; contact centers manage live interactions and chats; and internal service management platforms track incidents, cases and service requests.

For example, on its own, a contact center platform can give representatives information about a customer's case and what steps have already been taken toward resolution. But when this information is combined with relevant data from CRM, sales and marketing tools, human representatives and AI agents have the 360-degree view needed to answer questions and make decisions.

Creating these connections requires application programming interfaces (APIs) to expose data and functions across applications; integration tools to move and translate data between systems; and automation tools to trigger actions once the information is connected and available. However, integration requires more than technical connectors, and much of this work spans disciplines and departments that are managed separately within most organizations. CDW's Employee and Customer Experience Team starts with desired business outcomes and then works backward to identify what data is required, where it resides and what steps must be taken to build a fully connected enterprise.



WHY COMBINE EX AND CX IN A SINGLE TRANSFORMATION EFFORT?

At first glance, it might seem unnecessary or too complex to address both employee and customer experiences in the same transformation project. After all, workers aren't calling into the company's contact center to complain about faulty products or subpar services, and customers aren't opening IT service tickets to restore their access to sensitive enterprise data.

However, in reality, the employee and customer experiences intersect frequently and draw from many of the same data stores. In sales and account management, for example, sellers need information from CRM systems and marketing tools to better understand their customers and avoid making irrelevant offers. Product and operations teams need to be able to connect customer complaints to manufacturing data that may reveal defects. And any gaps in internal ITSM ultimately affect customers, who will eventually feel the delays and poor service that result when employees lack the tools they need to do their jobs effectively.

This intersection between employee and customer experiences is most obvious in the contact center, where representatives need immediate access to previous conversations, order information and other customer data to provide customers with the best experience possible. When this context is scattered across disconnected systems, employees must hunt down information while customers wait. But when systems are connected, both the customer experience and the employee experience improve.

This is why attempts to improve either CX or EX in isolation often fail to eliminate friction within organizations. Rather than closing the gap between an organization's data and what it can accomplish with that data, these isolated efforts often simply shift this gap.



THE MATURITY MODEL

CDW's path to the connected enterprise follows a five-level maturity model. Most organizations begin their journey in one of the first two levels. CDW's Employee and Customer Experience Team can help them map their path forward based on their goals and existing environments.

Level 1: Siloed. At the lowest level of maturity, an organization's customers must repeat themselves every time they are transferred. Employees are forced to navigate across five screens to answer one question. When two teams pull the same report, the numbers don't match. If an organizational leader asks, "Who owns the customer record?" the answer is a shrug.

Level 2: Coordinated. At this level, the data moves, but a person is required to move it — someone exports a list once a week, emails a spreadsheet or copies a field between systems. This works until that person is sick or on vacation, and then it doesn't. Integrations are held together by habit, not the infrastructure itself.

Level 3: Integrated. As the connected enterprise matures, when a customer updates something once, the change shows up everywhere. Agents looking to help a customer can open one screen and see the whole story. Nobody argues about whose number is right, because there's one agreed-upon source. Handoffs stop being where things break.

Level 4: Intelligent. At this level, AI provides answers that business leaders can trust in front of a customer, because it can see the full context. Recommendations feel specific, not generic. Interactions are personalized to the individual, not to a broad segment.

Level 5: Autonomous. At the highest level of maturity, routine work resolves itself before anyone touches it. Agents act from end to end across the enterprise on data that users trust, and employees spend their time supervising and handling tough cases that represent exceptions instead of stitching systems together.

The Connected Enterprise in Action

CDW recently worked with a financial institution to help the organization consolidate internal applications, integrate collaboration capabilities, enhance the user experience and improve workforce efficiency.

Leaders at the organization opted to consolidate on Microsoft Teams, with CDW leading the migration to Microsoft Teams Voice as the organization's primary voice platform. In addition to optimizing costs and improving worker productivity, the move was aimed at reducing the need for repetitive and non-critical tasks.

As a result of moving to a single collaboration platform, the organization achieved significant cost savings, improved worker productivity by reducing repetitive and secondary tasks, and successfully adopted an integrated voice solution that connects employees and collaborative conference spaces.



The connected enterprise enhances the experiences of both customers and employees. CDW can help you get there.

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In the connected enterprise, agents can see information previously provided by customers rather than asking customers to repeat themselves, organizations can anticipate why a customer might be contacting them, and employees spend less time searching across screens and systems for necessary context. The connected enterprise also enables greater personalization at scale.”



CHAPTER 3

Turning Integration Into Business Outcomes



Very quickly, AI has turned the connected enterprise from a lofty best practice into an urgent, business-critical concern. According to research conducted by CDW, 68% of IT decision-makers say they are implementing or have already implemented AI-powered chatbots, while an additional 17% say they are planning to do so.

Salesforce reports that organizations that integrate service channel data into one platform are 40% more likely than others to say their AI implementations have been “very successful.” And 89% of IT professionals say that prioritizing the digital employee experience has a positive impact on security because workers are less likely to use shadow IT, according to Ivanti.

11%
THE PERCENTAGE WHO SAY that their organization has achieved a mature or successful adoption of AI to reduce friction

Source: CDW, “Eliminating Digital Friction: How To Build a Frictionless Enterprise,” June 2026

CDW's approach turns customer ambitions into measurable outcomes. CDW Delivery Intelligence, a proprietary automation tool embedded into the Professional Services delivery model, reinforces governance, reduces variability and brings discipline to complex initiatives, ensuring that employee and customer experience integrations launch as intended and operate as designed.



OUTCOMES OF A CONNECTED ENTERPRISE

Connected enterprise efforts should be tied to measurable outcomes, not to activity. By effectively connecting their data and systems, organizations can achieve the following:

Improved customer and employee experience: Many people think of “experience” mostly in qualitative terms. But businesses closely track their customer satisfaction scores, their net promoter scores and their employee engagement and retention rates. In the connected enterprise, agents can see information previously provided by customers rather than asking customers to repeat themselves, organizations can anticipate why a customer might be contacting them, and employees spend less time searching across screens and systems for necessary context. The connected enterprise also enables greater personalization at scale.

Increased speed: Customers and employees generally spend significant time simply waiting for organizations to piece together information on their behalf. When this information is already unified in the connected enterprise, incidents are resolved faster and time-to-market shrinks. Investments in AI compound the benefit of increased speed. According to Salesforce, 88% of service professionals say that conversational AI accelerates resolution times.

Stronger financial performance: Disconnected employee and customer experiences cost organizations both time and revenue. In addition to improving agent and seller productivity, the connected enterprise makes it easier to identify appropriate upsell opportunities, correlate customer complaints to production issues and predict when customers may be preparing to leave for a competitor.

More effective automation: If AI is only as good as its context, then unifying that context via the connected enterprise inevitably improves the performance and accuracy of AI solutions. Instead of relying on partial or conflicting data, AI tools in the connected enterprise can provide outputs that are both accurate and comprehensive. This also paves the path for agentic AI tools that take action autonomously. While agentic systems with bad information may simply automate mistakes, the connected enterprise creates an environment where customers and employees can trust the output and recommendations of AI tools.

Flexibility and agility: Connected environments reduce organizations' reliance on redundant tools and error-prone handoff processes, while making better use of the technologies that the company already owns. In the connected enterprise, systems that are modular and continuously optimized make it easier to add new channels, adapt workflows to changing business conditions and introduce emerging AI capabilities.



THE CONNECTED ENTERPRISE ROADMAP

CDW follows a structured roadmap to help organizations connect their systems and data.

Assess current maturity: Before making any recommendations or design decisions, CDW's experts assess the current state of an organization's systems and the resulting impact on employee and customer experiences.

Identify critical systems and data flows: Next, CDW's team identifies which information, systems, workflows and departments have an impact on intended business outcomes. By looking closely at CRM platforms, marketing tools, endpoint environments and other critical systems, CDW's experts can identify where data is currently being siloed.

Establish governance and integration standards: In addition to connecting systems and data, leaders must determine who can access what information, synchronize systems with authoritative sources and implement systems to determine data accuracy.

Connect customer and employee ecosystems: Next, CDW works with organizations to begin connecting the systems that support customer and employee experiences. This may include using APIs and data integration tools to move and translate information.

Enable AI and automation: Once organizations have centralized the necessary context, they can extend AI capabilities across systems and allow AI agents to autonomously make recommendations and decisions.

Measure outcomes and continuously optimize: Connected enterprise initiatives should be evaluated through business metrics rather than the number of integrations or AI interactions. Organizations should establish baseline measures for outcomes such as customer satisfaction, resolution time, employee productivity and operating costs, and then track progress via telemetry and analytics.



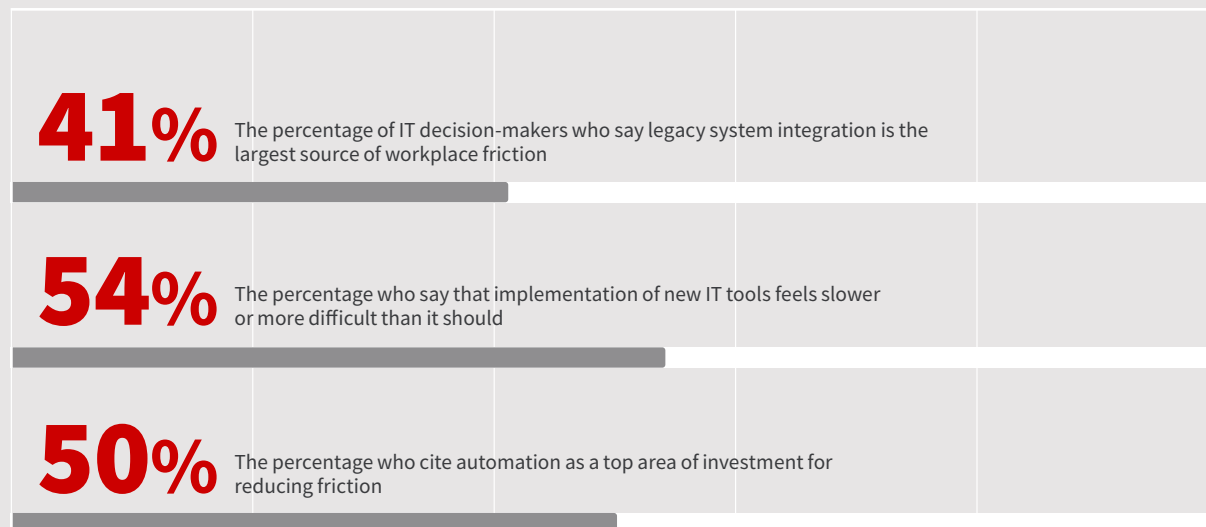
THE FUTURE OF THE CONNECTED ENTERPRISE

For most organizations, the immediate goals of a connected enterprise effort will center on using their newly unified data environments to improve employee and customer experiences. But many leaders very quickly realize that the connected enterprise opens new opportunities to make data-informed decisions that have impacts across the business. Once data from different departments and systems flows into one place, leaders can finally see their entire business at once, helping to uncover patterns that were hidden when everything sat inside separate tools. This is the real payoff for many organizations: Leaders can now connect with the information they need to understand where customers drop off, what is driving churn, which efforts truly increase revenue and how employees spend their time.

The gains in employee and customer experience are valuable, certainly, and leaders are likely to notice these outcomes first. But by improving decision-making, the connected enterprise continues to yield additional benefits that will compound well into the future.

WHAT'S CAUSING FRICTION IN THE ENTERPRISE?

According to CDW research, legacy systems and IT complexity are creating significant frustration in the workplace.



Source: CDW, "Eliminating Digital Friction: How To Build a Frictionless Enterprise," June 2026

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CDW can help you integrate customer and employee ecosystems and map your path to the connected enterprise. **Click To Learn How.**

