

The State of SMB IT Support: How to Empower and Secure the Hybrid Workforce

NEW RESEARCH REVEALS THAT THE USE OF MULTIPLE IT MANAGEMENT TOOLS CREATES COMPLEXITIES AND RISKS FOR SMALL AND MIDSIZE BUSINESSES (SMBS).



The COVID-19 pandemic has led to an unprecedented global shift to a hybrid workforce. Organizations around the world now find themselves with blended workforces that include employees working virtually and in on-site facilities part or full time.

Many workers now value the flexibility of this hybrid workforce model, causing businesses to shift their thinking away from *where* people work to *how* they work. Location no longer matters if employees are completing their work, customers are satisfied, and business is running smoothly and efficiently.

Although hybrid work offers significant benefits, a recent survey conducted by IDG and sponsored by GoTo has revealed challenges to this work model, primarily in providing consistent, seamless IT support to a distributed workforce.

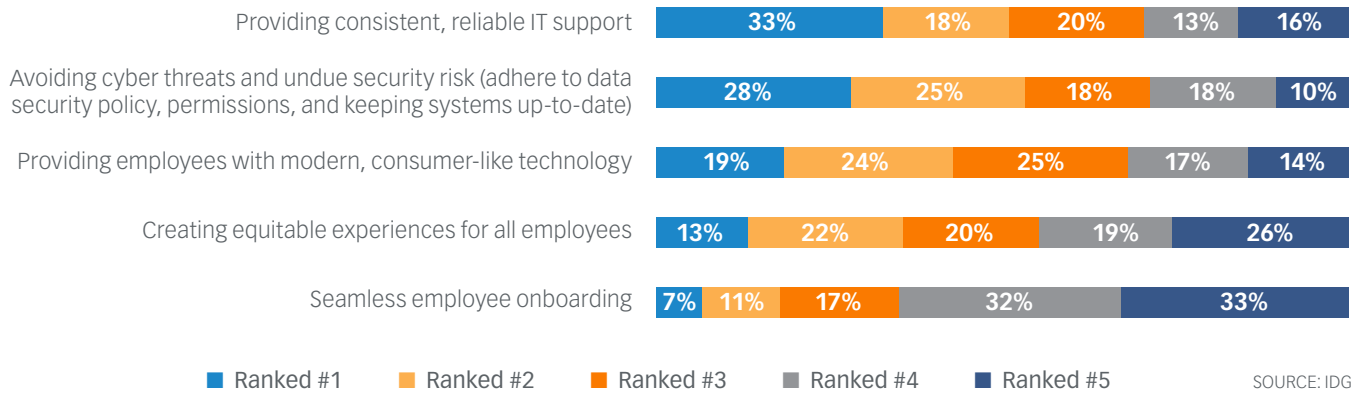
The IDG research included responses from 300 IT leaders in Australia/New Zealand, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Specifically, these respondents are employed at small and midsize businesses (SMBs) with between 100 and 999 employees. It explored the following topics:

- How SMBs are prioritizing IT support.
- Challenges in providing IT support to a hybrid workforce.
- The best tools for accommodating this new, evolving dynamic.



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FIGURE 1 **Top Priorities in Supporting a Hybrid Workforce**



THE STATE OF IT SUPPORT FOR HYBRID WORK

The scope of the hybrid workforce is vast, and it includes several work-location options. Asked for the breakdown of where employees will work over the next 12 months, IDG respondents said they anticipate:

- 45% will work in the company office full time.
- 29% will split their time between the office and a remote location.
- 26% will work full time remotely or at home.

This wide mix is challenging for IT leaders, who said that providing consistent, reliable IT support is their top priority (see Figure 1). Closely associated with this concern is avoiding cyberthreats. Considering the range of work options, respondents said they must address data security policies, permissions, and system updates to mitigate undue security risks.

IT leaders want to provide equitable and consistent IT support whether employees are working remotely or in the office. They recognize key organizational benefits such as increased employee productivity, improvements in security and employee retention/talent recruitment, and better customer experiences.

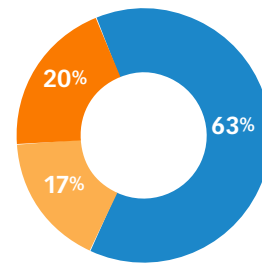
IT departments are also reaping advantages from the hybrid work experience. Asked how the demands of supporting hybrid workers have affected their IT/help desk teams (See Figure 2), IDG respondents cited:

- Greater collaboration with lines of business.
- Improved IT productivity.
- Increased IT knowledge sharing/collaboration.

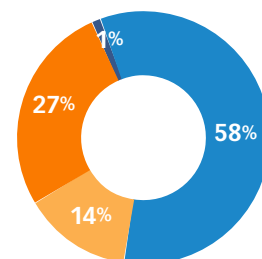
Despite these benefits, IT departments have not been spared by the Great Resignation. Nearly half (47%) are seeing evidence of increased IT employee attrition, and only 35% have seen an improvement in personnel satisfaction/morale.

FIGURE 2 **How IT Support of Hybrid Workers Has Benefited IT Teams**

Collaboration with other Lines of Business

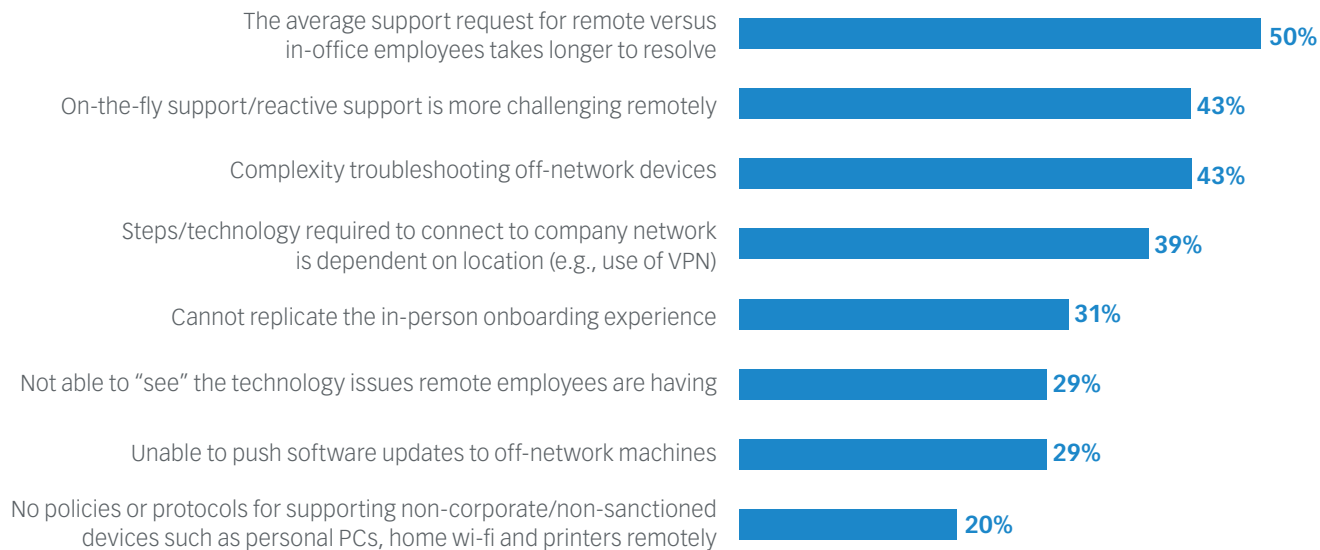


IT Productivity



- Increased
- Decreased
- No change
- Don't know

FIGURE 3 IT Help Desk Challenges in Supporting Hybrid Work



SOURCE: IDG

THE CHALLENGES OF SUPPORTING A HYBRID WORKFORCE

Despite the benefits and improvements that hybrid work generates, IT teams still struggle to provide consistent support. Respondents to the survey cited a variety of ongoing challenges (See Figure 3) such as:

- Longer resolution times when troubleshooting for employees.
- Difficulties solving problems with off-network devices.
- The inability to seamlessly provide their distributed workforce with on-the-fly support.

A significant reason for these challenges is the complexity that arises when IT teams must use multiple tools to support a hybrid workforce.

For example, 50% say that having to switch among multiple technologies is affecting help desk productivity; 45% say it's time-consuming to manage multiple tools; and 42% believe they're paying for underutilized or unused tech tools. In addition, support history and contextual data are dispersed, resulting in a lack of visibility.

Another challenge is that hybrid work has complicated the task of responding to cyberattacks, which have become more prevalent and sophisticated. Two-thirds of IT leaders

(67%) say that time spent mitigating cyberattacks has increased in the past 20 months.

Here again, using multiple tools doesn't help; nearly half (49%) of respondents say a greater volume of IT support technologies is creating an increased security risk. Worse yet, they're concerned that existing technology toolsets can't keep up with the need to avoid cyberthreats, with 52% rating this as highly challenging.

These challenges are leading to a heightened awareness of vulnerability, with 68% extremely or very concerned about the possibility of a data breach.

TOOLS TO SUPPORT A HYBRID WORKFORCE

The many knock-on effects of using multiple tools are causing IT leaders to recognize the need for a new approach with fewer tools. Yet, some hesitate to consolidate technologies because of a perceived need for backup solutions to avoid potential business disruptions. Secondly, they have concerns about integrating a new technology into their existing infrastructures.

They seek to balance the needs for better support and the empowerment of the hybrid workforce, however. To that end, survey respondents say they are looking for all-in-one tools

that include permission-based support with end-to-end encryption and the ability to enable MFA/SSO. They also want a feature that requires agents to reauthenticate to modify and create potentially sensitive automated tasks.

IT leaders also see great value in a single IT support solution that allows agents to access machines and support end users without disrupting end users. They want:

- The ability to connect to or support up to 10 devices at the same time.
- The ability to run, manage, and monitor automated commands on multiple devices.
- Unattended remote access and diagnostics.

When asked about the most important software technologies needed to support hybrid workers, the top response was antivirus software. Respondents also identified remote access and support as well as identity and access management as important.

A MODERN APPROACH TO SUPPORTING THE HYBRID WORKER

As SMBs have shifted toward a hybrid work model, *how* employees work is becoming far more complex. IT is increasingly called on to manage rapidly growing software ecosystems and a variety of communication channels, while quickly diagnosing points of failure to provide support.

“Yet, most IT teams at small and midsize businesses have to use an assortment of tools to identify and solve just one problem,” says Chris Savio, senior manager of product marketing at GoTo. “It’s causing IT teams to constantly navigate or jump from one screen to the next, adding time and complexity to their day.”

That’s why organizations are seeking a single, consolidated platform such as GoTo Resolve. It provides IT teams with one solution to manage their day-to-day tasks and includes built-in automation to reduce manual tasks and lighten workloads.

For example, when an IT support worker needs to clean up the CEO’s hard drive, they often work through multiple systems, such as an alert system, a ticketing system, and an email application to communicate with the CEO. GoTo Resolve streamlines this process. It consolidates systems and bridges requests with resolutions using conversational ticketing — which is the ability to create and manage support tickets right from workplace messaging apps — and a single

login process to provision and manage accounts.

“There are multiple benefits of bringing everything into one solution, including time savings, productivity enhancements, reducing errors or accidentally not capturing information, and even just employee happiness,” Savio says.

TOP FACTORS WHEN CONSIDERING A MODERN, CONSOLIDATED SOLUTION

SMBs should consider the exponential growth of messaging tools such as Slack and Microsoft Teams when thinking about improving IT support for the hybrid workforce.

“SMBs should carefully consider how to leverage these tools as part of their IT workflows,” Savio says. “A key consideration is to figure out whether the applications or technology that employees are using are truly integrated or merely connected. The latter can actually reduce productivity for both employees and IT teams.”

At the same time, IT leaders seeking to balance security with ease of use should examine and even survey their employees about their frustrations with tech use. For example, forcing them to enter security keys — while beneficial for security — can slow down employees or cause them to seek workarounds. When the need for security login or access measures arises, IT staff should explain the reasons and benefits.

“Wherever possible, make security easy for employees,” Savio says. “For example, you might remove the pain of remembering a password while also making systems more secure.”

Also, IT staff should scrutinize all IT support tools in use and eliminate those that are underutilized or unnecessary. An efficient and cost-effective approach would be using the cloud wherever possible.

Finally, in the wake of increasing supply chain attacks and evolving cyberthreats, they should take the time to define a modern IT approach for the organization. The goal should be to provide consistent, seamless IT support that empowers both the hybrid workforce and the IT team.

GoTo Resolve helps IT professionals streamline their help desks by bringing together tools to seamlessly engage, identify problems, and fix issues faster. It combines game-changing IT management and support software with conversational ticketing and a zero trust architecture into a single, consolidated tool that’s secure, streamlined, and best of all, free to use. Get it for free at goto.com/resolve.