



Inside ITSM 2026: The Future of Internal IT

From incidents to strategy: how DEX, collaboration and AI are transforming the role of IT





Table of Contents

Introduction	➤	03
Main results	➤	04
The role of IT in employee experience	➤	05
IT and service management in transition	➤	10
AI and automation: support rather than replace	➤	15
Conclusion	➤	21

Introduction

Which would your organisation find harder to go without for one day: water or IT? The answer is clear. Without IT, everything comes to a standstill – no communication, no collaboration, no innovation. IT is the beating heart of organisations, shaping both the employee experience and business operations. From reserving workspaces and collaborating with colleagues, to using AI that helps you work faster and smarter, everything depends on good IT and service management.

That is why, in 2025, IT is under even greater pressure. Employees demand the speed and convenience they are used to at home, and managers want greater productivity and efficiency. Meanwhile, AI is knocking on the door – not to replace IT professionals, but to help them work with more focus.

So how can IT teams deal with this? Every day there are new incidents to solve and tickets to process. And on top of that, there are external factors that require attention – from data sovereignty and cybersecurity, to XLAs replacing SLAs, AI that handles tickets autonomously, and the shift towards human-centric service management. These are not challenges for tomorrow; the future has already arrived, and IT teams are seeing it every day.

To understand how this transformation is unfolding, we spoke to IT professionals in the UK and other European countries about how they are navigating this shift – from troubleshooting on the fly to becoming a strategic boardroom partner.

In this report you will read:



how IT failures affect employee happiness and digital experience;



what makes IT and the service desk future-proof and what role cybersecurity plays in this;



which tasks AI is already taking over in the IT department.



About the research

This report is the result of an international online survey conducted by Censuswide in August 2025 on behalf of TOPdesk. A total of 6,000 IT professionals participated, from Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Austria, the United Kingdom and Switzerland. All of them work in organisations with more than 25 employees. This report focuses on the responses of 1,000 UK IT professionals.

Main results

In this report you will read:

72%

think that negative IT experiences reduce employees' job satisfaction

40%

feel that they are so busy putting out fires that they hardly have time to prevent future IT failures

29%

of organisations experience major IT disruptions such as system outages, hardware issues, or lost data at least weekly

39%

state that the entire organisation experiences additional workload at least weekly due to IT disruptions

53%

believe that employees turn to IT for every little thing and do not first try to find a solution themselves

IT service management in transition

45%

state that their IT department is already fully future-proof. This is the highest score of all countries surveyed

53%

see cybersecurity and data protection as the most important features of a future-proof IT department

84%

think that IT failures would be resolved faster if departments collaborated better

AI and automation

AI

is fully embedded in 36 percent of UK organisations. This puts the UK at the top of the list compared to other European countries

21%

think AI is a major risk that requires dedicated resources to reduce

70%

say AI adoption is primarily driven by the IT department

39%

say system access requests in their organisation are already fully automated

The role of IT in employee experience



In today's hybrid workplace, the IT department is no longer just the problem solver. The focus has shifted from whether IT works, to how employees experience it. In 2025, IT is the foundation of your working day – whether it's a glitchy Wi-Fi connection, headphones that won't connect to your laptop, or a printer that refuses to cooperate. The digital employee experience (DEX) is crucial for employee productivity, employer branding and innovation. This means that IT is no longer isolated; it affects the entire employee journey, from onboarding and collaboration to productivity and offboarding.

Why DEX matters

IT professionals also recognise the importance of DEX within the organisation. More than half (58%) think that negative IT experiences reduce employee job satisfaction and make them less happy with their jobs.

The value of IT through the eyes of IT professionals



Productivity:

90% believe employees are more productive when their digital tools are reliable and intuitive



Success:

87% believe that seamless IT management contributes significantly to employee success

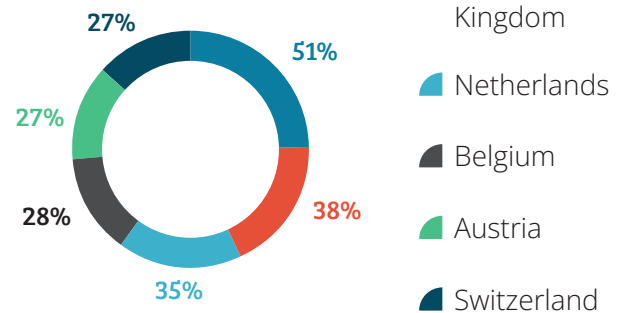
IT also plays a critical role in onboarding (96%). Only three percent believe that IT has little to do with onboarding.

Reality: DEX limitations

Although IT professionals recognise the value of a strong DEX, they face obstacles in practice. Take hybrid or remote working, for example. More than half (58%) say it makes delivering a good digital experience more difficult.

In addition, IT departments in more than a third of organisations (38%) are facing high workloads. This reduces slightly in larger organisations (5,001-10,000 employees: 33% vs. 26-49 employees: 44%). Interestingly, the UK ranks second in Europe when it comes to high workload.

The workload in the IT department is high



A possible reason for the high workload is a lack of the right resources. More than four-in-ten IT professionals (43%) state that their IT department does not have sufficient resources to solve disruptions efficiently.

The consequences of this high workload are also visible in daily practice. Many IT professionals spend so much time fixing immediate problems that they hardly get around to preventing future IT failures. No less than forty percent of UK IT professionals recognise themselves in this situation, and it is precisely these IT disruptions that have a major negative impact on DEX.

IT problems and their impact



29%

of UK organisations experience major IT disruptions such as system outages, hardware issues, or lost data at least weekly

Nevertheless, the UK seems to be doing relatively better than other countries. For example, organisations in Austria (58%), Germany (48%) and Switzerland (48%) face major IT disruptions on a weekly basis more often.

Smaller IT disruptions such as an unstable internet connection or access problems are even more common. More than four-in-ten UK organisations (44%) experience this weekly,

including ten percent who encounter these problems daily.

According to IT professionals, the consequences go beyond DEX. Nearly two-in-five (39%) believe the entire organisation experiences additional workload every week due to IT disruptions. In other words, IT failures affect not only the IT department, but the whole organisation. It shows how intertwined IT is with daily work in 2025.



If you look around, we spend hours working on laptops and other devices. Compared to ten years ago, IT has grown and become more robust—but also more complex. When something fails, it impacts many employees at once. That shouldn't happen weekly.

IT teams are stuck between fixing incidents and wanting time for improvement. Yet half a day spent on optimisation could prevent half the problems. The key is to seek support and make clear agreements.

Do IT issues need to be solved instantly, or within an agreed time? One thing is certain: IT must work. It's a core pillar of productivity and deserves priority.

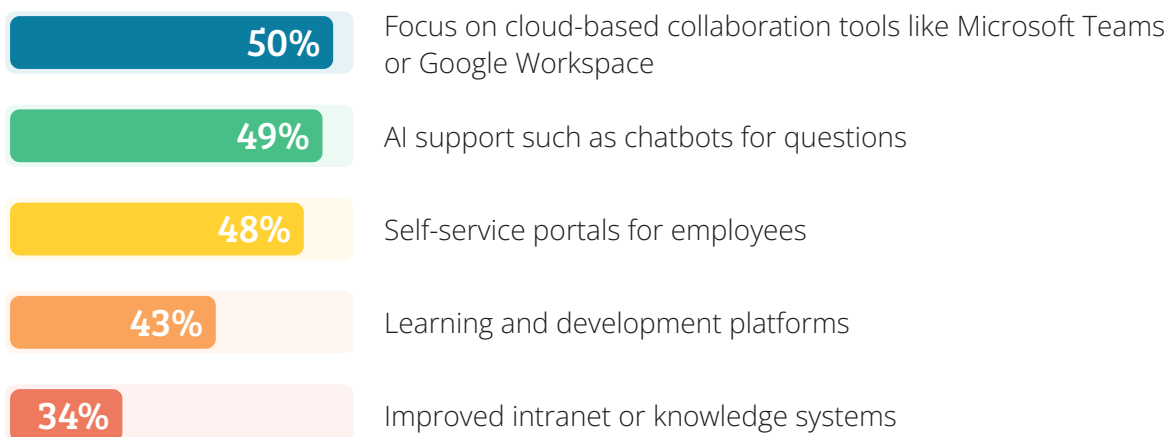
How organisations improve DEX

95 percent of organisations are investing heavily in improving DEX. Which shows, once again, that IT professionals recognise the strategic value of DEX. This trend isn't only confined to the UK - improving DEX is also a priority in other European countries, with high investment levels in Switzerland (92%), Belgium (89%), Austria (88%), Germany (85%) and the Netherlands (81%).

Yet, seventeen percent of IT professionals say that they are hardly concerned with the improvement of DEX. This is especially the case in healthcare (14%).

So, what do IT professionals see as the key factors for DEX? They mainly seem to link it to tools that support smooth collaboration and access to information.

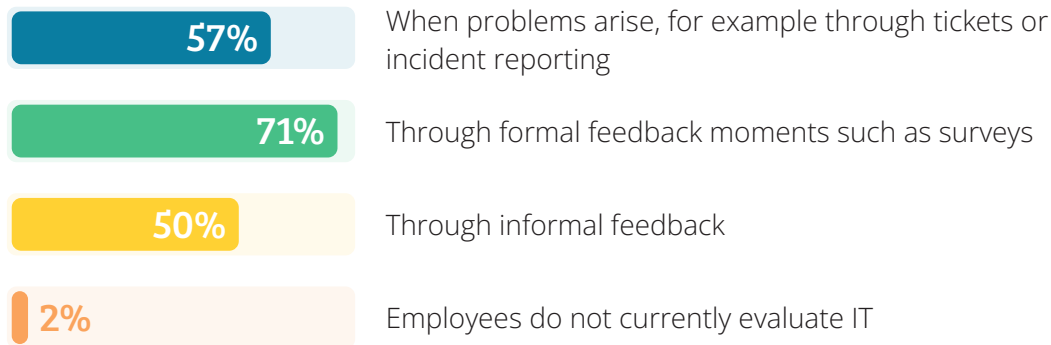
Tools and measures IT departments use to improve DEX



The relationship between IT and the workplace

DEX requires an ongoing dialogue between the IT department and employees. With its choices in tools and support, the IT department largely determines how smooth the employee experience is. But without understanding and cooperation from the workplace, DEX comes under pressure. So how actively are IT professionals seeking employee feedback about their digital experiences?

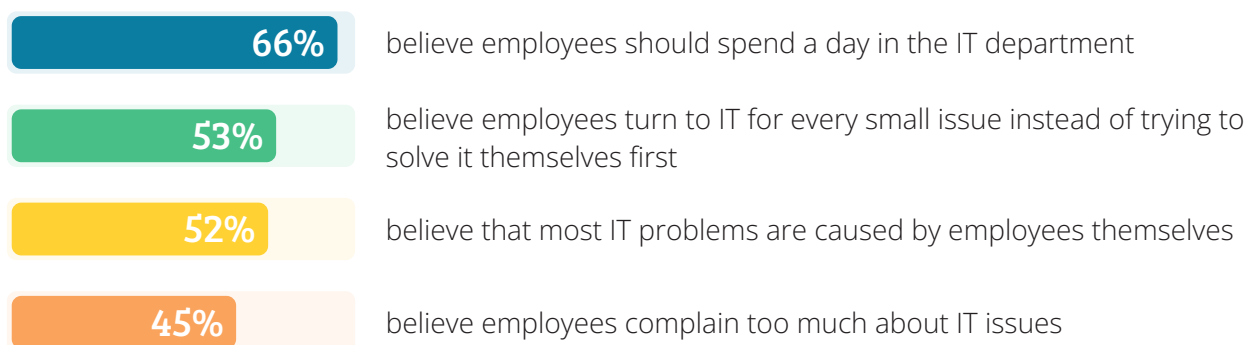
When employees evaluate IT



Formal feedback mechanisms and reactive incident-based feedback coexist in most organisations. Larger organisations are especially likely to use structured feedback cycles (>10,000 employees, 82%; 26-49 employees; 59%).

So how do IT professionals, in turn, assess their colleagues?

How IT professionals view their colleagues





Self-reliance is an important indicator of the digital experience of employees. When it is low, the IT department notices immediately. Employees come knocking with every small IT issue. You should not see that as a burden or problem, but as a signal. It reveals how digitally mature your organisation is, how well the digital workplace functions and where the limits of your services lie. Because if everything runs smoothly, no one comes knocking.



A strong digital experience therefore requires a balance between human contact, a well-functioning digital workplace and clear boundaries in services. This balance will become increasingly important in the coming years. Thanks to smart technology such as AI-assisted search functionality, predictive maintenance and proactive support via self-service portals, we are moving towards greater employee autonomy. They will no longer need the IT department every time. At the same time, personal contact remains essential. There are always complex or personal situations for which you want to speak to an IT professional. The challenge for the IT department is therefore not to replace human contact, but to design the digital foundation in such a way that human time is invested where it really matters.



IT and service management in transition

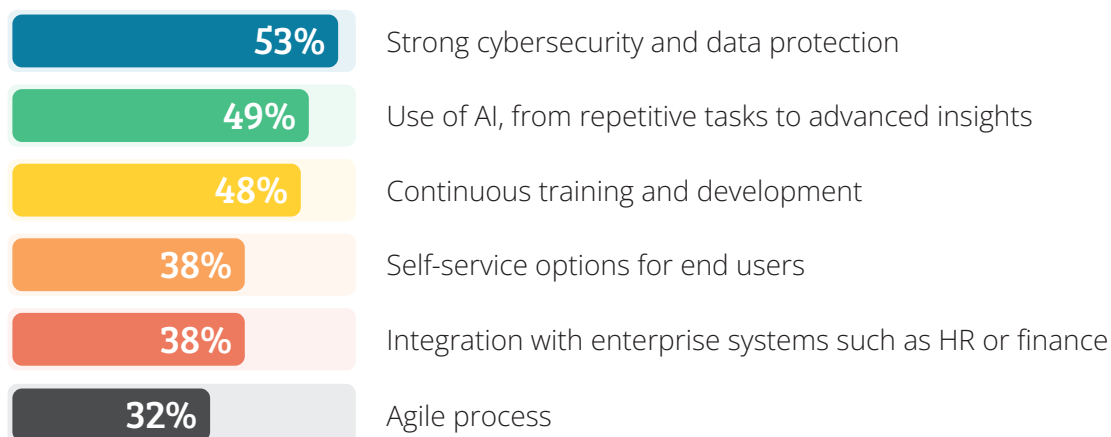


We've already explored how the average IT department still too often operates like a fire brigade: constantly rushing to the next incident. But the hybrid workplace continues to function, employees are more dependent than ever on digital resources and the role of IT is growing by the day. Organisations need more than firefighters – they need builders, laying stable foundations for future innovation and resilience. Which raises the question – just how future-proof are UK IT departments?

A future-proof IT department

What makes an IT department ready for the future? According to IT professionals, it mainly comes down to the strength of the technical basis. Interestingly, IT professionals hardly see a user-centric approach as a defining characteristic, even though this is precisely the basis for DEX, as we saw in the previous chapter.

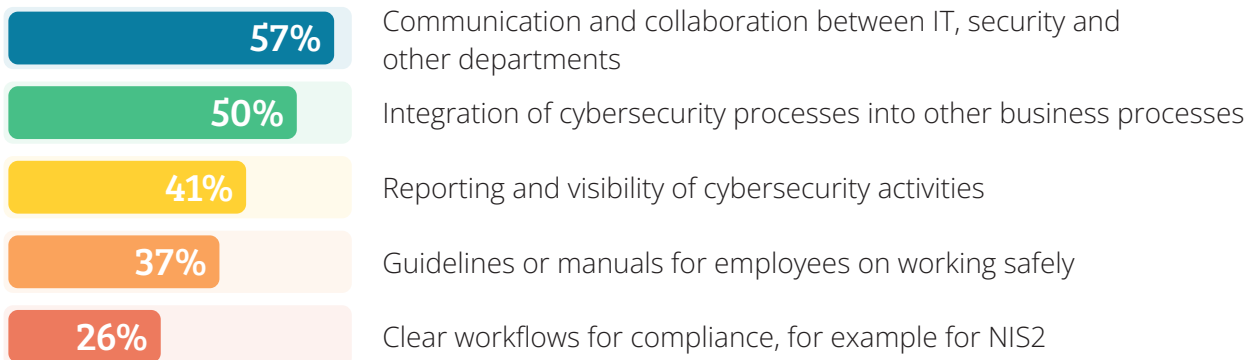
Characteristics that make an IT department future-proof



Strong cybersecurity and data protection are seen by IT professionals as the most important indicators of a robust IT department.

But how do things currently stand, and what do teams want to improve most in terms of cybersecurity?

The top 5 most important cybersecurity improvements according to IT professionals



Collaboration with other departments is by far the most common strategy organisations aim to improve cybersecurity. Only a third (35%) have a single process and platform for IT and security. In most organisations (54%), there is a partial integration, where some IT and security processes are connected.



Cybersecurity is no longer purely a technical issue for IT or a task for the security department; it affects the entire organisation. It is therefore not without reason that collaboration with other departments is seen as the most important cybersecurity improvement by IT professionals. Yet practice shows that integrated processes between IT and security are still rare. It is precisely this integration that is crucial. Without shared insights, workflows and responsibility, you remain stuck reacting to quick fixes instead of building a safer workplace. In the years ahead, alignment will be the key word. Both at a strategic level by formulating shared KPIs, and at an operational level by opting for a single platform or integrating ITSM and security. The IT department has a connecting role to play in this.

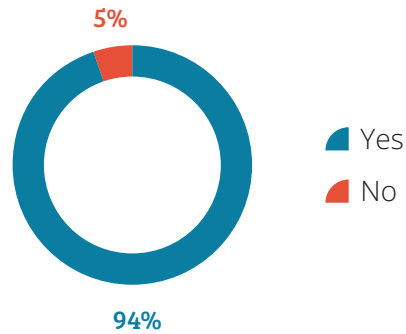
Geopolitical developments as an external factor for agility

Geopolitical developments such as cyberattacks or import tariffs affect the resilience of IT departments. While some organisations are considering fully phasing out their on-premise environments, the demand for a European sovereign cloud raises new questions about those plans.

The impact of geopolitical developments is a concern for IT professionals. More than half (62%) of organisations are concerned about the impact on IT, data storage and cybersecurity over the next twelve months. Additionally, over half (53%) say they already are experiencing disruptions on a monthly basis or more. Despite these concerns, nineteen percent of organisations say they never worry about the impact of geopolitics on IT and cybersecurity.

**Back to future-proofing:
how future-proof are IT
departments today?**

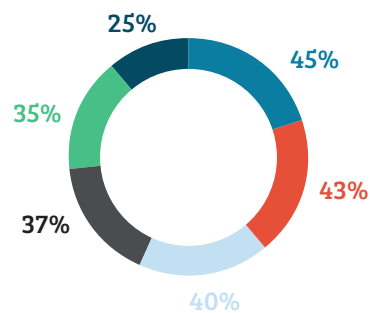
**Is your department ready for
the future?**



IT professionals' view of how future-proof their department is appears closely linked to their organisation's AI maturity. Those who feel more mature are far more confident, with 98 percent seeing themselves as future-proof, compared with 83 percent of those still experimenting.

If we zoom in on the number of IT professionals who currently consider their department to be fully future-proof, this drops to 45 percent – which is largely similar to other European countries.

**My IT department is
now fully future-proof**



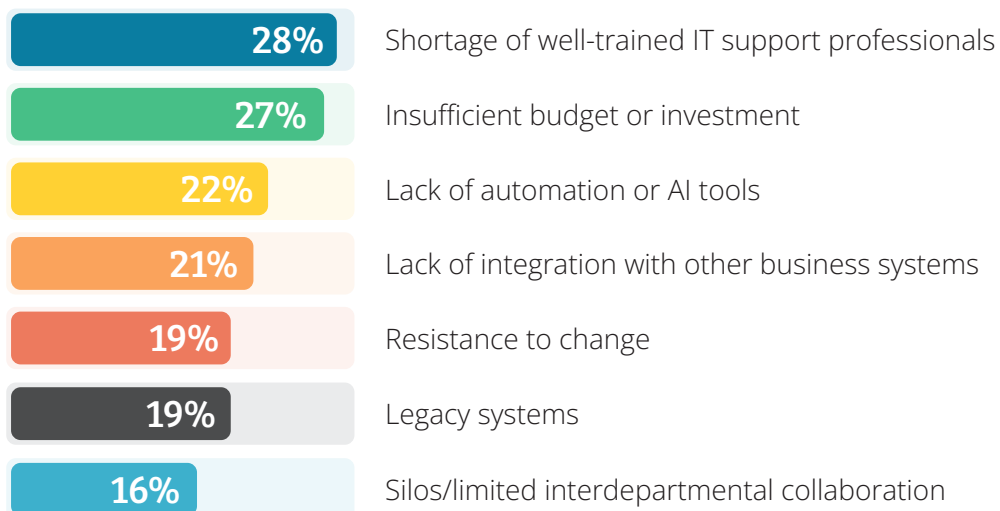
- United Kingdom
- Switzerland
- Austria
- Germany
- Belgium
- Netherlands



45%

of UK IT professionals consider their IT department fully future-proof

What IT departments back from becoming future-proof

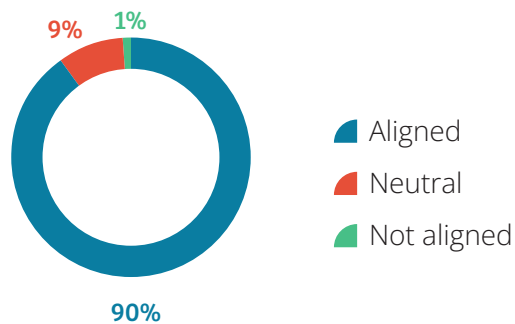


Breaking down silos

A future-proof IT department breaks down silos and works strategically with other departments. Only then can IT play a role in innovation and business performance. Nine-in-ten IT professionals (90%) agree: they believe their team plays an important role in innovation and long-term business performance. By comparison, the figures stand at 77 percent in Germany and 68 percent in the Netherlands.

One way to contribute to business performance is to align service management with business goals. For example, at a retailer where the website needs to be online 24/7, the service management team prioritises incidents that can impact revenue.

Service management and business goals



Why service management does not align with business goals



The fact that a lack of communication is one of the main reasons why service management does not align with business objectives immediately highlights the problem. Effective cooperation requires clear communication with other departments.



84%

of IT professionals believe IT disruptions would be solved faster if departments collaborated better

How easy or difficult do IT people find it to collaborate with other departments within their organisation?

Department with which IT professionals collaborate easily or with difficulty

Easy to collaborate with: customer service (80%), operations (78%), HR (77%), facilities (76%), finance (74%), marketing (73%), procurement (72%),

Difficult to collaborate with: finance (8%), executive leadership/c-suite (8%) legal and compliance (8%), marketing (6%), procurement (6%), sales (6%), HR (5%)

Eight percent of IT professionals find it difficult to collaborate with the management team

A possible cause for this this? The majority (56%) think that management/C-level does not understand the complexity of IT.



Often, you see that the C-level has less understanding of IT complexity than the IT department. That is not surprising - management is not made up of tech experts and understandably focuses on results and keeping the business running. They don't need to know everything, but they do need to understand enough to see how crucial the IT infrastructure is. This is especially true when it comes to security. Under NIS2 legislation, knowing the basics and understanding how the organisation is protected is even mandatory for executives. IT is no longer a side issue or cost centre. When IT does not operate in isolation but is well integrated with the business strategy, technology is used in ways that truly make a difference for customers.

With AI and automation on the rise, the gap between IT and management could become even greater.

AI and automation: support rather than replace



It won't be long before AI is as commonplace in the workplace as email. By now, everyone knows ChatGPT or other examples of generative AI for writing and summarising. But for IT departments, that's just the beginning. True AI maturity means that AI handles tickets, predicts problems, and manages systems.

So, how far along are IT professionals in embedding this level of AI? Who drives this change and what will the department look like in five years' time?

AI maturity

In most UK organisations, AI is no longer just a pilot or experiment. But is it fully embedded and supportive of business goals? Only in 36 percent of cases.

AI maturity according to IT professionals

Established:

AI is used in multiple areas but not yet organisation-wide (39%)

Fully embedded:

AI is fully integrated and supports strategic goals (36%)

In development:

AI initiatives are underway (21%)

Experimental/pilot:

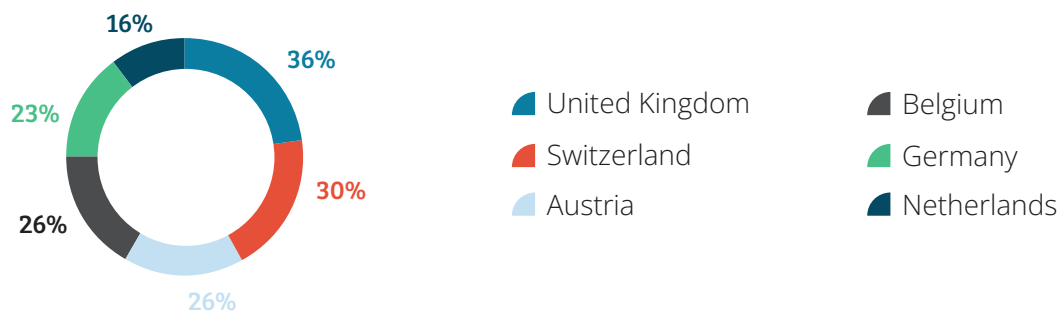
AI is being tested, but is not yet operational (3%)

Initial phase:

limited AI adoption (2%)

This puts the UK at the top of the list compared to other European countries.

My organisation is AI mature



**The UK is at the top of the European list in AI maturity:
AI is fully embedded in 36 percent of organisations**

Adoption and driving forces

As in other European countries, IT departments in the UK are most often the driving force behind AI adoption (70%), according to IT professionals.

Driving forces behind AI adoption

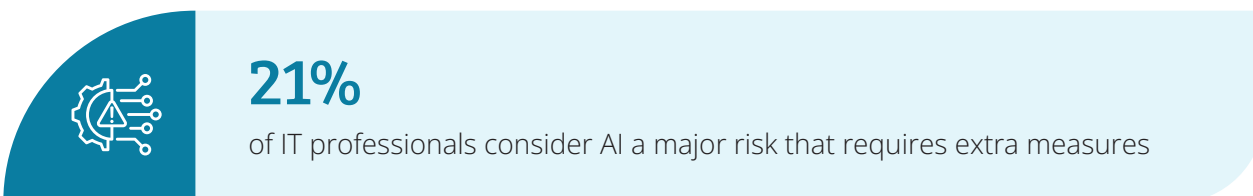
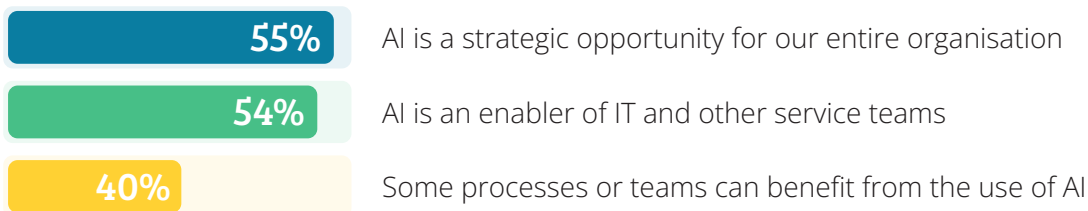


Did you know that C-level leaders don't see generative AI initiatives as a top priority? Recent [Gartner research](#) among 81 CIOs shows that a majority (58%) recognise this in their organisation. That is a clear increase compared to 2023, when the share was still at 45 percent among CIOs.

AI perception: opportunity versus risk

Most IT professionals see AI as an opportunity, especially at the department level. Yet the step to fully strategic AI thinking has yet to be taken, with 21 percent highlighting risks.

Positive AI attitude among IT professionals



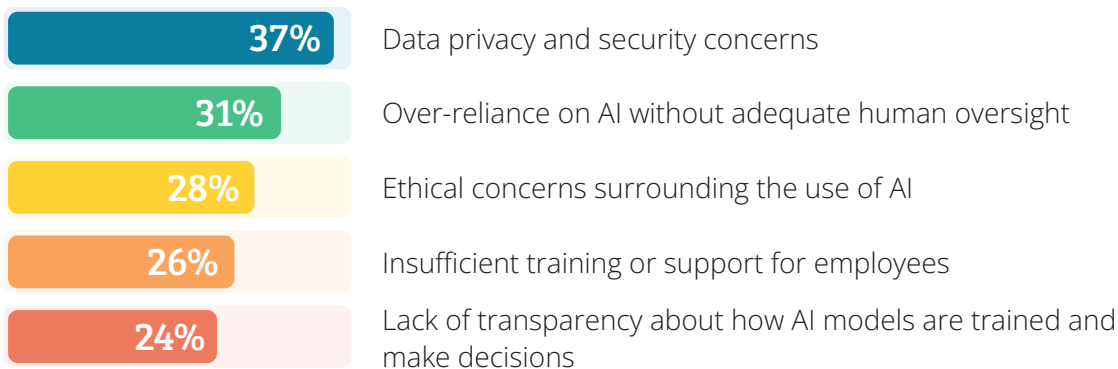
It is not surprising that in some organisations, AI emerges as a bottom-up movement. Employees explore it and experiment out of curiosity or interest. At the same time, multiple topics compete for attention at the top of the organisation, so AI does not always get the highest priority. That is why it is good that IT takes the lead here. With their background and IT affinity, they can ensure AI is used in a responsible and secure way in the organisation.

This is where collaboration with management comes in: IT leads in selecting and implementing safe AI tools, while management sets priorities and strategic boundaries. Especially with the arrival of the AI Act, this collaboration is crucial: organisations are required to test AI applications for safety, risks and compliance. The IT department plays a key role in this, but it needs the support and direction of management. In short, actively seek each other out and make responsible AI a shared responsibility.

Concerns and barriers

While IT professionals see plenty of opportunities for AI, they also have reservations. These mainly concern security and control, but also employee support and ethics.

IT professionals' concerns about AI use in their organisation



Did you know that, according to [Gartner research](#), 59 percent of CIOs see the risk of hallucinations as the biggest concern around generative AI?, 59 percent of CIOs see the risk of hallucinations as the biggest concern around generative AI?

Despite the concerns, over eight-in-ten IT professionals (87%) feel confident working with AI in their daily tasks.

The degree of automation

In most organisations, automation is present but not yet complete. According to IT professionals, the majority of the processes are in a hybrid stage where people and technology share responsibility.

Fully manual:



Fully automated:



Hybrid:



39%

of IT departments have fully automated system access requests

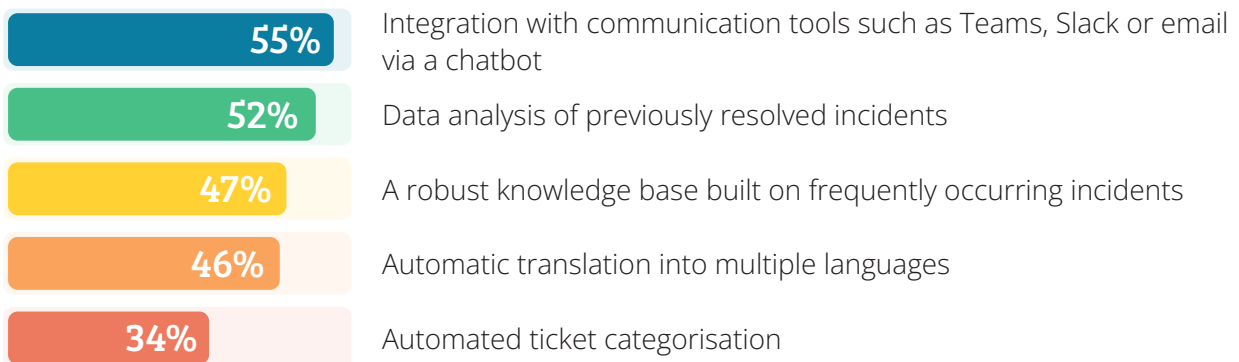


The principle in an organisation should always be: automate what you can automate. Thanks to AI, that threshold has been lowered immensely. Low-hanging fruit like password management and first-line IT support are the first tasks to automate. Applications in 2025 that do not support single sign-on should really be phased out.

The beauty is that automating something like password management immediately shows results in fewer first-line incidents. An employee who forgets their password no longer has to submit a service desk ticket. An automatic password reset resolves it instantly. That should be the ideal: automating first-line incidents in such a way that there is more room to structurally solve recurring problems.

The concrete use of AI

How AI is applied in internal service management

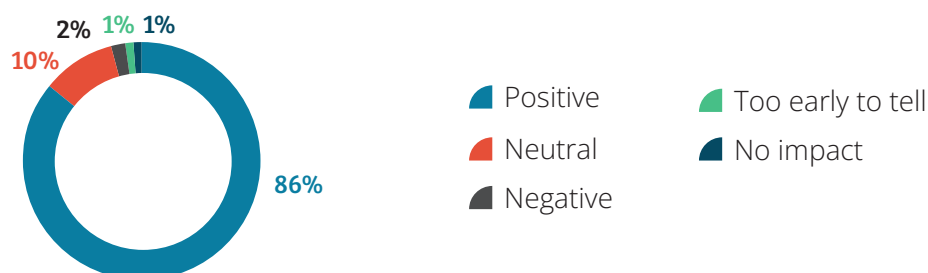


Is it enough? Nearly nine-in-ten IT professionals (88%) would prefer their organisation to use even more AI and automation.

The impact of AI

Most IT professionals are positive about AI and its impact.

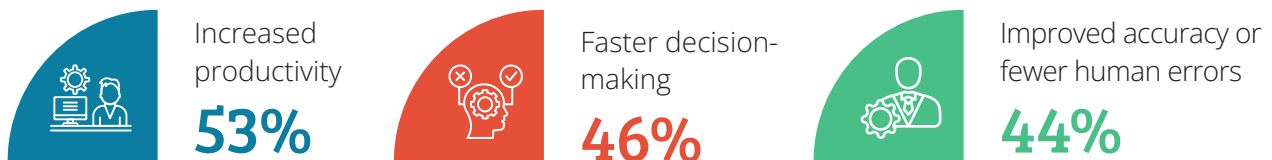
I see the impact of AI as:



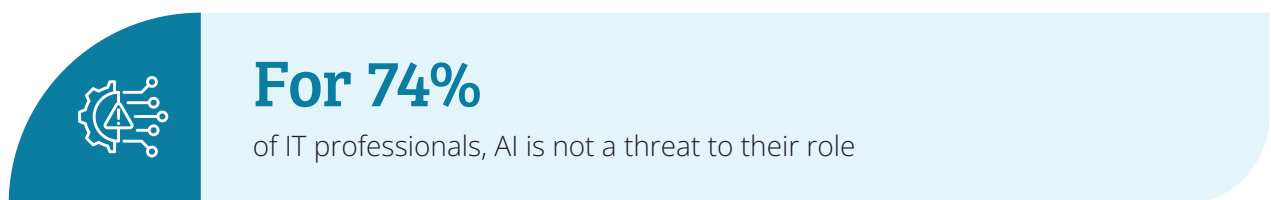
Younger IT professionals (ages 29-44) are far more likely to view the impact of AI positively (90%) than the older generation (ages 45-60), (73%).

So, in which areas are AI delivering the most positive impact?

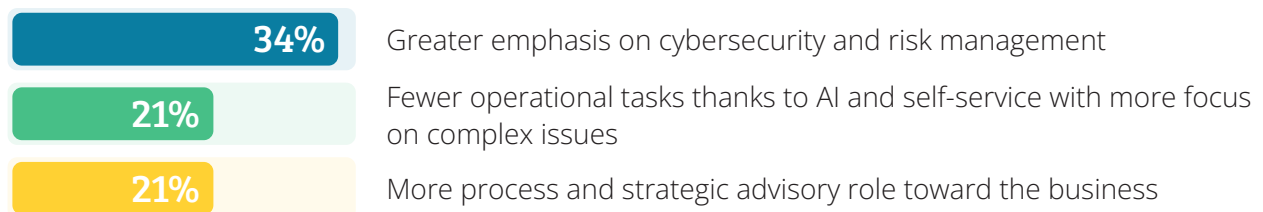
The positive impact of AI in our organisation is mainly in:



The positive outlook on AI among IT professionals may also be explained by the fact that three-quarters (74%) do not feel that AI is a threat to their role in the organisation. In fact, more than eight-in-ten (85%) are enthusiastic about the future benefits of AI for their role or field. For example, 86 percent believe that AI makes it easier to focus on the more meaningful parts of their job and that it helps them work more efficiently (87%).



How the role of IT support professionals will change in the next two to five years



Conclusion

What began as a question is now no longer in doubt. Without IT, little gets off the ground in organisations. IT directly impacts job satisfaction, productivity and innovation. From onboarding to day-to-day collaboration, employees expect a smooth experience in all facets of their work. IT and service management are therefore no longer just prerequisites but the very foundation of the employee journey.

Yet the reality is different. Many IT departments are still busy resolving incidents and handling minor requests. This consumes time and attention and leaves the foundation vulnerable. Because the entire organisation depends on IT, every disruption affects everyone.

That's why the IT department is at a crossroads. Should it continue solving small problems, or move toward becoming a strategic partner that supports business goals, breaks down silos and makes resilience a top priority?

That's where IT and service management are headed – or at least, where they need to be. Just look at today's world of geopolitical risks, cyberthreats and the demand for data sovereignty. One thing is certain: IT departments must be resilient and flexible so the organisation can be too.

AI can accelerate this transition. Not by replacing people, but by transforming their tasks. Soon, AI will answer first-line questions, which will enable IT professions to focus on collaboration, prevention and innovation. In other words, fewer tickets, more strategy. With AI as an accelerator and not as a replacement, the IT function can be turned into a strategic foundation.

The core message of this report is therefore simple: as AI advances and work changes, one factor remains decisive for organisational success: how smoothly people can do their work digitally.

Does this sound big and abstract? Not if you start small. Ask yourself these three questions tomorrow:

- What is the biggest pain point in the digital experience of your organisation, and how can you improve it tomorrow?
- Which recurring problem takes up the most of your team's, and how do you solve it structurally?
- Which task can you let AI take over today so you gain time for collaboration and innovation?



About TOPdesk

TOPdesk is a platform that simplifies the work of your IT service desk. The software developer provides user-friendly and easy-to-implement service management software. For over 25 years, the company has helped more than 5,000 organisations worldwide deliver consistent and high-quality services.

What makes TOPdesk unique in the field of service management is its in-house team of specialists. With experience and best practices, TOPdesk helps organisations step by step to achieve their goals. Whether they want to focus on self-service or join forces with other service teams.

TOPdesk has over 800 employees worldwide.

For more information: www.topdesk.com

