

# Productivity-enabling tech - what remote workers want

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There was a time when we envisioned a future in which employers used technology as an ever-watchful eye, frightening workers into maximum productivity. Instead, we've seen workplace culture go largely in the other direction, with employers fostering productivity by loosening the reins and letting employees work remotely.



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The *Dell and Intel Future Workforce Study 2016* showed that this freedom is increasingly viewed as providing both quality of life and productivity benefits, and technology is seen as an essential enabler; globally, the top two productivity benefits cited include the ability to focus and eliminating commute time. Evolving technology has already had a huge impact on modern lifestyles and a remarkable 95% of German and 87% of UK remote workers confirm that they are happy in their jobs. However, the same study shows there are at least two significant remote work challenges we're still trying to fix.

## Remote work challenges

The first one is replacing the convenience and comfort of face-to-face communication. This isn't a universally recognised problem – majorities in China, India and South Africa don't prefer face-to-face communication over other forms of collaboration. But in the United Kingdom, Germany, France, North America and most of the world, we do prefer meeting face to face, implying that remote workers might be at a disadvantage when it comes to collaborating with colleagues.

Another major hurdle is that many workplaces aren't ensuring their technology keeps pace with worker needs. Far from enabling productivity, poor technology is actually making work more difficult, with workers citing tech-related glitches as the biggest time wasters they face.

Globally, 35% of workers say their home technology is more cutting-edge than what is offered at their workplace, with less than a quarter of workers giving the edge to their office tech. This trend is clear in Europe as well. In Germany, the disparity is greatest, with 50% saying their home technology is superior and only 19% saying their workplace technology is more cutting-edge. Clearly, there's a significant gap between how productive we are and how productive we can become.

## Innovation integration

The fast-paced innovations in design and performance of everyday consumer technology can help to drive technology

shifts and implementation in the workplace. Virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) innovations could impact the workplace and bridge that gap sooner than we think as 61% of employees in Europe and South Africa would be willing to use VR/AR in their professional lives.

The most frequently cited user cases for the new technologies include training on new skills in realistic virtual environments (25%), problem solving or coming up with new ideas through 3D visualisation (18%) and presenting to clients using immersive technologies (15%). AR/VR-based communication can more closely mimic the experience of working with a colleague in person, so it may have a chance to supplant face-to-face communication as our preferred format. In addition, it can make remote and office-based workers more productive at their jobs by putting the information and feedback they need in their field of view as they work.

## **Retaining the best and brightest**

It's not a surprise that a significant portion of millennials claims to be willing to quit their jobs if the technology provided by their employer is substandard (a staggering half of millennials reported that intent in France). Millennials in the study (in some countries up to 86%) also say that a new job's available technology would affect their decision on whether to take or decline the position.

If you want to recruit and retain the best and brightest team members, think productivity-enabling tech, not ping pong.

Of course, what's cutting-edge today will be ubiquitous tomorrow, and more than 50% of workers in South Africa say they're already looking forward to the day when artificial intelligence makes their jobs easier. But in the meantime, companies will be well-served simply to solve the challenges their employees face today.

The first mandate is to give them technology that works. The next is to give them technology that helps them work together and individually more easily, wherever they may be located. The third is to get out of the way and let them unleash their productivity. The research implies they're eagerly waiting to do just that.

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