Working better together

A study of collaboration and innovation
in the workplace

Google for Work RACONTEUR

Collaboration changes everything

> " Efficient ongoing collaboration has a significant impact on business innovation, performance, culture and even the bottom line

Google for Work customers often tell us that encouraging and enabling collaboration has dramatically improved their business. We decided to dig a little deeper by conducting some original cross-industry research that measures the power of workplace collaboration in concrete terms.

For this study we teamed up with Raconteur and surveyed senior staff and C-suite executives at 258 North American companies representing a wide range of business sectors and sizes. What we found is that efficient ongoing collaboration has a significant impact on business innovation, performance, culture and even the bottom line.

We know that modern employees, especially digital natives, love work tools that make sharing and collaborating as easy

as using consumer apps. But upper management and IT departments can be slow in adopting the tools workers really need. As a result, there's often a gap between the innovation and collaboration a business wants and what employees are able to deliver. To gauge the progress companies have made in closing this gap, we asked respondents to categorize their company's innovation culture as one of four types: Pioneers, Believers, Agnostics or Traditionalists.

In this report, we present our most significant findings along with collaboration stories from successful Google for Work customers. These real-life examples illustrate how a commitment to collaboration can foster innovation and fundamentally change a business for the better.

Executive summary

Our research explores the power of collaboration from four critical angles. First, we show why collaboration is good business. Next, we discuss who should drive the change that leads to greater collaboration. We explain why and how forward-thinking companies create a culture of collaboration. Finally, we explore how to choose the right collaboration tools for your own organization.

Collaboration is good business

The key lesson from our research is that the benefits of collaboration extend far beyond the success of any single project. An overwhelming 73% of respondents agreed that their organization would be more successful if employees were able to work in more flexible and collaborative ways. When asked what changes would have the greatest impact on their organization's overall profitability, 56% of respondents ranked a collaboration-related measure as the #1 factor (Figure 4).

Who can spark change?

While respondents clearly look to departments all across their organization for innovation, IT was considered the most crucial. When it comes to driving innovation, 26% of respondents named IT as the leading department, followed by marketing at 17% (Figure 6). Expectations are high for IT because IT has a close relationship with every part of the business and has the greatest expertise with the latest technologies essential to innovation.

Creating a culture of collaboration

Another eye-opening discovery is that collaboration and employee happiness go hand in hand—88% of respondents who strongly agreed that their company fosters a culture of knowledge-sharing and collaboration also strongly agreed that employee morale and job satisfaction are high. The most serious threats to organizations in terms of people management are failure to attract enough talent (25%), inability to retain the best talent (18%), and concerns about a disengaged workforce (14%). While a direct causation hasn't been proved, it appears that a culture of collaboration could potentially help

alleviate these threats by creating a more desirable work environment.

Mastering the tools

In our survey, 34% of respondents identified their organization as 'Believers', making that category the most common (Figure A). Believer companies are those that have adopted new technologies and reworked their business models, but have not yet experienced the full gains of transformation. In other words, they're moving in the right direction, but don't have all the right tools in place to realize their goals. For instance, when it came to standard collaboration tasks, respondents felt that employees outperformed their collaboration tools (Figure 14). And when asked what would have the biggest business impact on knowledge-sharing and collaboration, respondents chose investing in technology as the #1 opportunity and listed it as a top-three factor more than any other option (Figure 15). In this section of the report, we explain what employees are looking for in their work tools and how you can deliver what they need.
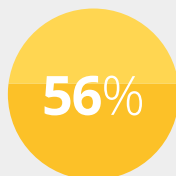

Key findings

88%

of respondents who strongly agreed that their company 'fosters a culture of knowledge-sharing and collaboration' agree that 'employee morale and job satisfaction is high in their company'

73%

of respondents agree that their organization would be a more successful organization if employees were able to work in a more flexible way

56%

of respondents ranked a collaboration-related measure as having the biggest impact on their organization's profitability

53%
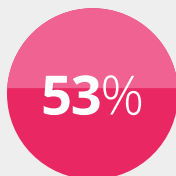
of respondents are confident that collaboration is currently having a positive and tangible impact on their organization

About the survey

This study of 258 North American business and IT leaders, produced by Raconteur and sponsored by Google for Work, was conducted between January and February 2015.

Respondents were asked to complete an anonymous online survey about their beliefs and predictions around innovation and collaboration in the workplace. The individuals that responded to this survey represented a broad spectrum of industries in terms of both their size and main areas of activity. The survey analysis has been separated into four sections:

01 Collaboration is good business

02 Who can spark change?

03 Creating a culture of collaboration

04 Mastering the tools

The 4 culture categories

Figure A
Breakdown of respondents by culture type:

18% · 34% · 21% · 27%
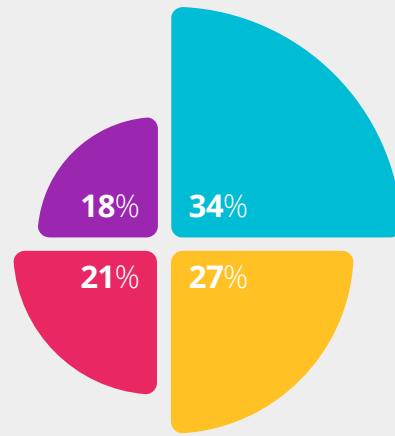
P Pioneers
Staff work the way they live. People are free to use technology and tools they are most comfortable with. Agile and collaborative culture with a functional leadership strategy

B Believers
New technologies are adopted and business model is reworked, but they are yet to experience the full gains of transformation

A Agnostics
Management has the vision and certain structures in place, however, is slow to implement change across the organization

T Traditionalists
Use basic technology and the company is highly hierarchical, hampered by barriers to changing culture

Demographic

The 258 North American-based respondents were broken down by business orientation, size, sector and job function.
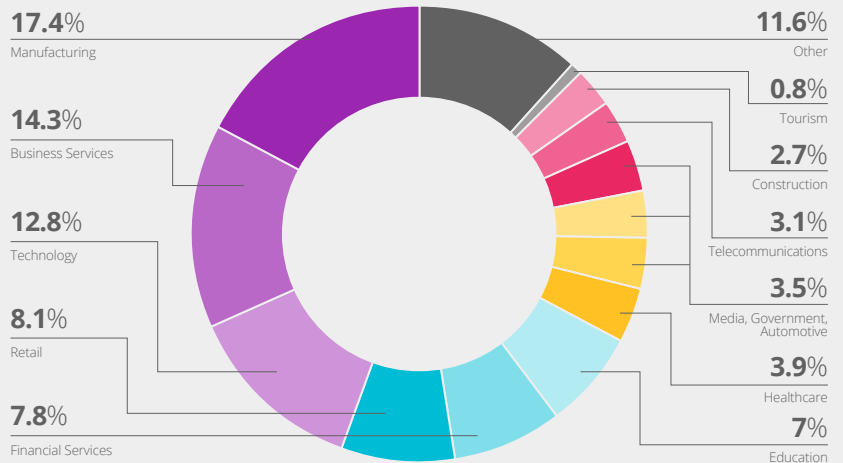
What is your company's primary business orientation?

B2B	**37**%
B2C	**19**%
Mix	**30**%
Other	**14**%

What is the approximate number of employees in your organization?

1-250	**33**%
251-6,000	**47**%
6,001+	**19**%

What is your company's primary sector?

- 17.4% Manufacturing
- 14.3% Business Services
- 12.8% Technology
- 8.1% Retail
- 7.8% Financial Services
- 11.6% Other
- 0.8% Tourism
- 2.7% Construction
- 3.1% Telecommunications
- 3.5% Media, Government, Automotive
- 3.9% Healthcare
- 7% Education

What is your current role within your organization?

29% MD · **12%** Owner · **10%** CEO · **6%** CIO/CTO · **6%** CFO

Other roles:
6% HR Director/Head of HR
5% COO
3% CMO
23% Other
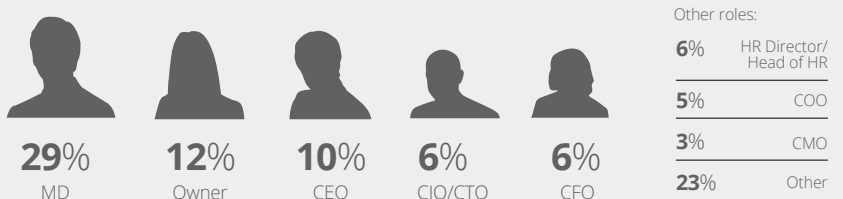
01 Collaboration is good business

Customer engagement gives respondents a clear focus but the challenges of funding and efficiency make running a successful business anything but a walk in the park

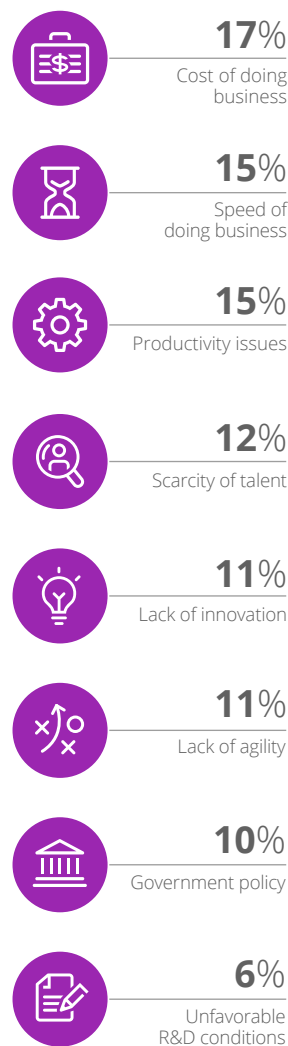When we examined the responses from the C-suite executives that were surveyed, it became very apparent why some of them suffer from sleepless nights. There are quite simply a broad range of threats for businesses. For our panel it was the cost and speed of business, together with productivity issues, that topped the table of threats. Another threat that appeared frequently was 'lack of innovation'. In a rapidly changing business world, the ability to adapt through innovation is vital to both survive and thrive. Innovation can also have a key role to play in mitigating the challenges associated with the top three threats set out above and in Figure 1.

Probing further on innovation, the survey showed that the biggest driver behind the need to innovate is customer engagement; 20% named it as the #1 factor. At a time when the ways in which businesses connect with their customers are more important than ever, this enabler of business performance is clearly crucial. What might be less obvious, though, is how to make those connections efficiently and effectively.

While customer engagement is considered the most important driver of innovation overall, the survey data does reveal some variation in the factors that influence businesses of different types (Figure 2). Strikingly, companies that are identified as 'Believers' tend to place more importance on factors that relate to growth (such as market share) and the notion of creativity and innovation (innovative culture). They put less emphasis on systems and processes, which could suggest that they consider these to be regressive and inhibitive. 'Believers' appear to be constructively frustrated with the status quo.
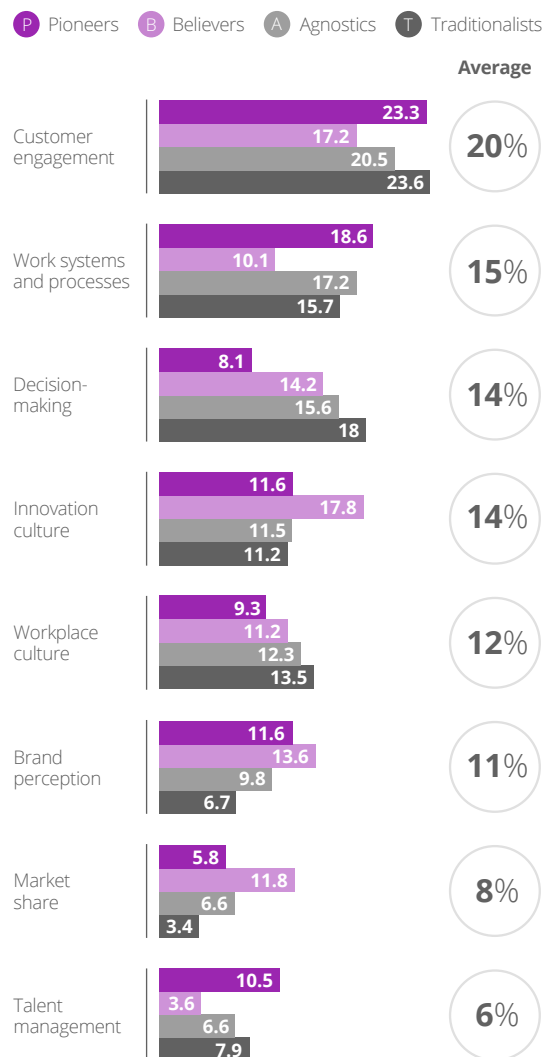
Figure 1
What are the main threats to your organization?

17% Cost of doing business

15% Speed of doing business

15% Productivity issues

12% Scarcity of talent

11% Lack of innovation

11% Lack of agility

10% Government policy

6% Unfavorable R&D conditions

Figure 2
What are the biggest drivers behind the need to innovate within your organization? (%)

P Pioneers   B Believers   A Agnostics   T Traditionalists

Average

Customer engagement
23.3
17.2
20.5
23.6
20%

Work systems and processes
18.6
10.1
17.2
15.7
15%

Decision-making
8.1
14.2
15.6
18
14%

Innovation culture
11.6
17.8
11.5
11.2
14%

Workplace culture
9.3
11.2
12.3
13.5
12%

Brand perception
11.6
13.6
9.8
6.7
11%

Market share
5.8
11.8
6.6
3.4
8%

Talent management
10.5
3.6
6.6
7.9
6%

Looking closer at Figure 2, a fascinating trend can be observed relating to both decision-making and workplace culture as drivers behind the need to innovate. The data shows that the importance of the two drivers decreases as the gap between the innovation and collaboration a business wants and what employees are able to deliver closes. For example, 18% of 'Traditionalists' identified decision-making as a key driver compared to only 8.1% of 'Pioneers'. This trend suggests that decision-making processes and workplace culture become less of a driving concern as a business' culture of innovation and collaboration develops.

Aspiration to innovate and transform the way that organizations function is important but, inevitably, there are barriers that stand in the way. Cost is the main one (14% of respondents cited 'not enough funding' as one of the main barriers to forming a robust innovation strategy (Figure 3). With limitation on budget always being a factor that inhibits the desired focus on customers and investment in growth, companies need to be smart and select changes that deliver results.

73% of respondents agree that their organization would be more successful if employees were able to work in a more flexible and collaborative way. What's more, 'employees working together more collaboratively in person', 'better communication between teams' and a commitment to 'open innovation' are the factors that respondents would expect to have the most profound effect on the profitability of a company (Figure 4).

We think this is an interesting and revealing piece of data. The benefits of communicating in person are pretty intuitive. As a 2013 study published in the Journal of Neuroscience* found, face-to-face communication enables more effective communication by increasing interpersonal neural synchronization. Put more simply, face-to-face communication puts participants on the same wavelength. Unfortunately, in the real world, meeting in person is not always possible. So business leaders may find that they benefit from providing guidance to employees on increasing the effectiveness of remote communication. A good starting point is encouraging video conferences, which are still a significantly underutilized resource compared to the traditional audio conference call. Video conferences put people face-to-face, recreating some of those critical benefits of meeting in person.

Today, the majority of respondents (53%) are confident that collaboration is having a positive and tangible impact on their organization (Figure 5). However, a significant minority (20%) still aren't convinced. Part of this may be due to the fact that making a major commitment to collaborative working and effective teamwork is a new challenge for many organizations. It takes time to hone any new process or mode of working, but by reassessing the way we think about the notion of 'work' itself, the benefits of collaboration can be more easily realized.

Figure 3

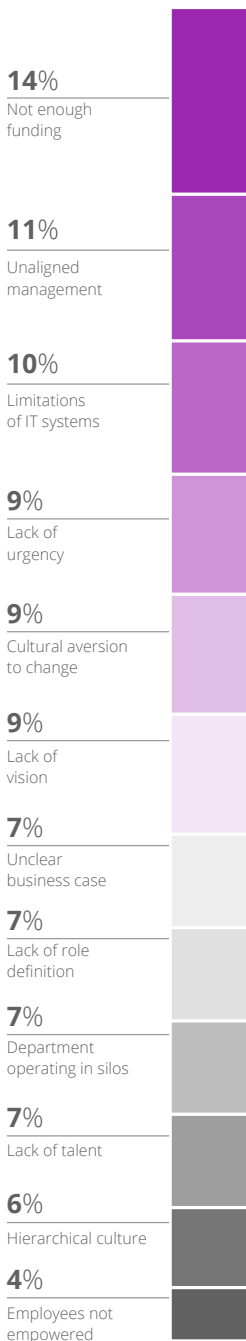**What are the main barriers to forming a robust innovation strategy?**

14%
Not enough funding

11%
Unaligned management

10%
Limitations of IT systems

9%
Lack of urgency

9%
Cultural aversion to change

9%
Lack of vision

7%
Unclear business case

7%
Lack of role definition

7%
Department operating in silos

7%
Lack of talent

6%
Hierarchical culture

4%
Employees not empowered

Figure 4

Which of the following changes have the biggest impact on an organization's profitability?

Ranked
● 1st
● 2nd
● 3rd

Employees working together more collaboratively in person: 20, 5, 4
Better communication between teams: 15, 7, 8
Open innovation/joint-innovation with external partners: 14, 12, 7
Responding more rapidly to market opportunities: 12, 14, 16
Utilizing existing talent more effectively: 9, 12, 17
Developing a stronger culture of innovation: 9, 12, 11
Changing the way employees are managed: 8, 12, 5
Using and integrating technology better: 6, 14, 12
More collaboration internationally: 5, 7, 7
Improved sharing and understanding of data: 2, 5, 14

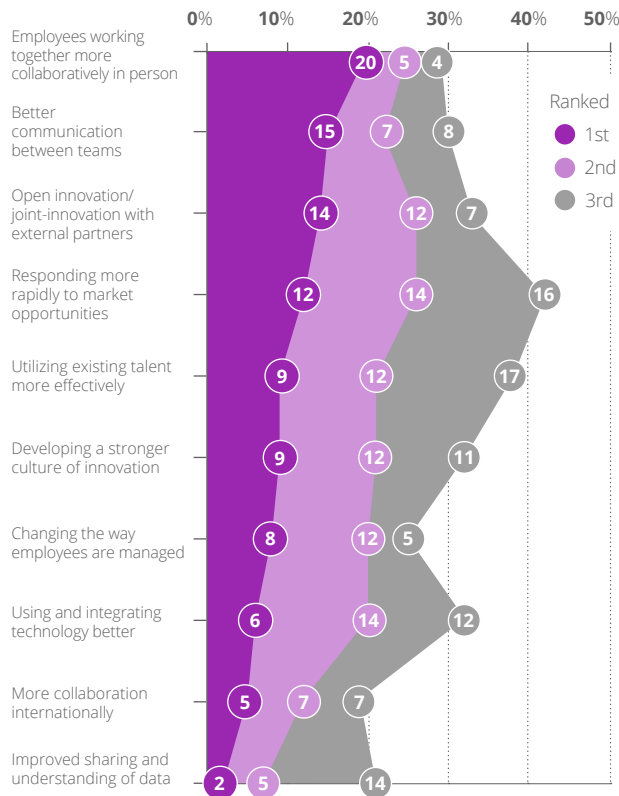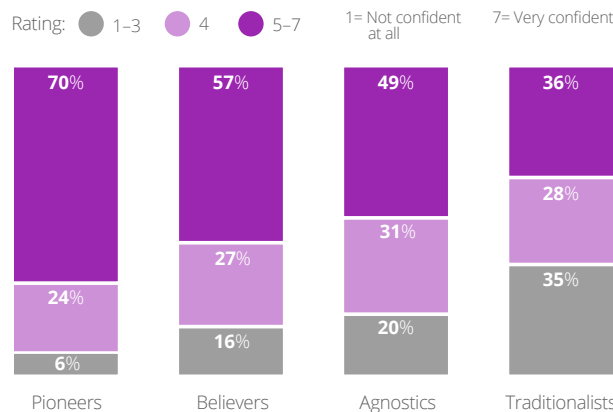## Figure 5

How confident are you that collaboration between employees and teams has a positive and tangible impact on your organization?

Rating: ● 1–3 ● 4 ● 5–7   1= Not confident at all   7= Very confident

	Pioneers	Believers	Agnostics	Traditionalists
5–7	70%	57%	49%	36%
4	24%	27%	31%	28%
1–3	6%	16%	20%	35%

" 73% of respondents agree that their organization would be a more successful organization if employees were able to work in a more flexible way

Case studies:
Winning strategies

Customers' engagement with Krispy Kreme

When it comes to delighting customers, Krispy Kreme's team is dedicated to giving its fans even more reasons to stop by the doughnut shop. Last December, they created the "Joy Goes Around the Holiday Hangout" campaign, an interactive in-shop experience that allows their guests at participating locations to toast to the holidays through customized Krispy Kreme Hangouts. This initiative involved the installation of Chomebooks in 17 of their retail stores, enabling customers to use Google Hangouts to engage with other Krispy Kreme fans around the world.
(Read more about Krispy Kreme)

> "
> We're thrilled that we're helping people share a cup of coffee and an Original Glazed doughnut as if they were sitting across the table from each other

Lafeea Watson
Public Relations Manager
Krispy Kreme

Innovation with Boticca

According to Kiyan Foroughi, Co-founder and CEO of online marketplace Boticca, innovation can actually be the thing that helps organizations to save money and work in a more cost-efficient way.

In its early days, Boticca, which connects customers with handcrafted fashion accessories that are made all over the world, provided its employees with separate tools for email, calendars and document-sharing. "But," says Kiyan, "when you stacked them together, our Frankenstein solution cost up to £30 [$46] per user each month." As a result, the business switched to Google Apps for Work, bringing Gmail, Calendar, Docs and Sheets together into a single product*. "Since we can pay on a monthly basis with Apps, we didn't have to invest a large sum upfront or sign a binding contract, as is common practice with other vendors. I can add accounts for staff as they're hired rather than buying 100 licenses but using only 40." What's more, Google Apps meant that the company could scale quickly, efficiently and with less risk. Freelancers were called in to write product descriptions for the website and, despite working remotely, were able to collaborate efficiently and effectively with the rest of the team in real time.
(Read more about BOTICCA)

> "
> Effective communication is the first step toward empowering each person in the company to take ownership
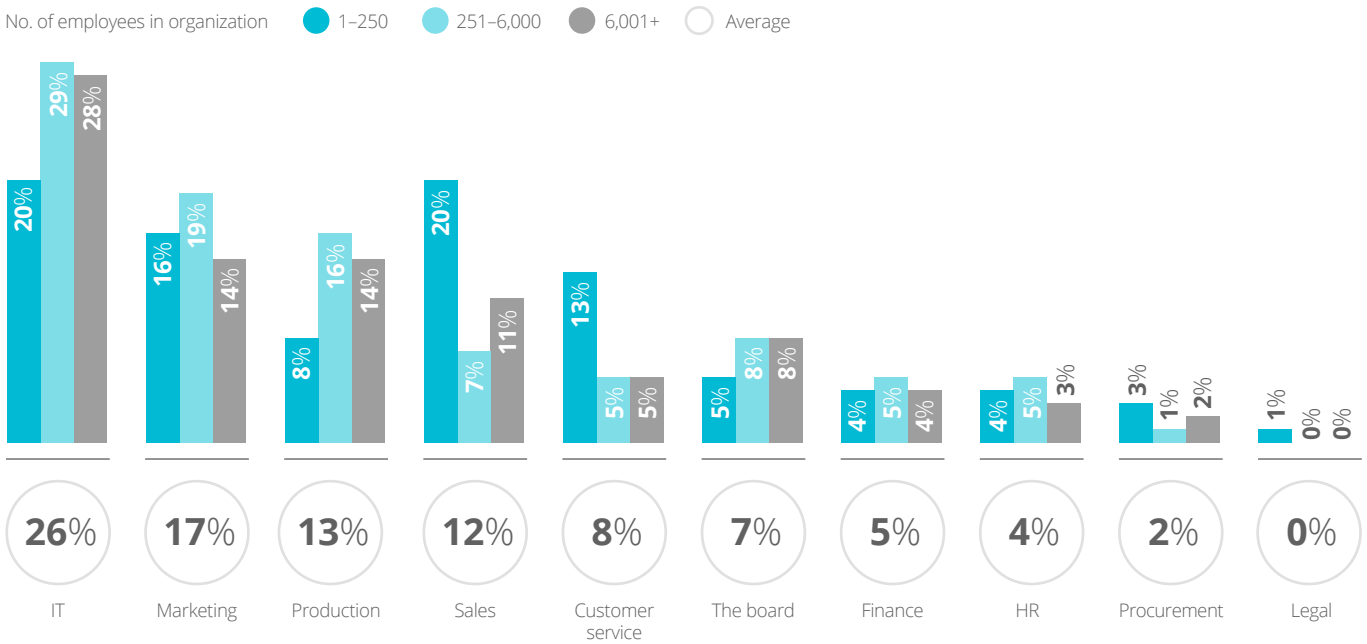
Kiyan Foroughi
Co-founder and CEO
BOTICCA

*Google Apps costs $10/user/month with unlimited storage

02 Who can spark change?

With improved business performance the destination, and better collaboration the vehicle, who should be behind the wheel? The results from our survey suggests that IT should be in the driving seat

Figure 6

Which of the following departments in your organization will be the biggest drivers of innovation?

No. of employees in organization ● 1–250 ● 251–6,000 ● 6,001+ ○ Average

IT	Marketing	Production	Sales	Customer service	The board	Finance	HR	Procurement	Legal
26%	**17%**	**13%**	**12%**	**8%**	**7%**	**5%**	**4%**	**2%**	**0%**

Respondents see IT as the department that is the most important driver of innovation within individual organizations. Some 26% of respondents named IT among the top two, whereas the second most frequently mentioned department was marketing at 17%.

A closer inspection of Figure 6 shows that in companies with a population smaller than 250, 20% of respondents see IT as the biggest driver of innovation. Interestingly, larger companies consider IT to be more prominent, with 29.3% and 28.3% in companies with 251–6,000 and 6,001+ employees respectively.

Expectations are so high for IT departments because they have close relationships with every part of a business. As such, they are uniquely positioned to drive innovation and improve organizations' capacity and capability for collaboration. On top of that, IT is the department that has the greatest responsibility for getting to grips with new technology. And, so often, it is new technology that is responsible for driving innovation.

Effective, forward-thinking IT departments are able to immerse themselves in the rest of the company and combine a deep understanding of business needs with a mastery of technology. In some cases, they can take a pro-active role in providing solutions and improved ways of working.

Respondents also consider IT to be the department that is most accomplished at collaborating both with other departments in the same organization and externally (Figure 7).

Figure 7

In your organization, which departments are accomplished/less accomplished at collaborating interdepartmentally and externally?
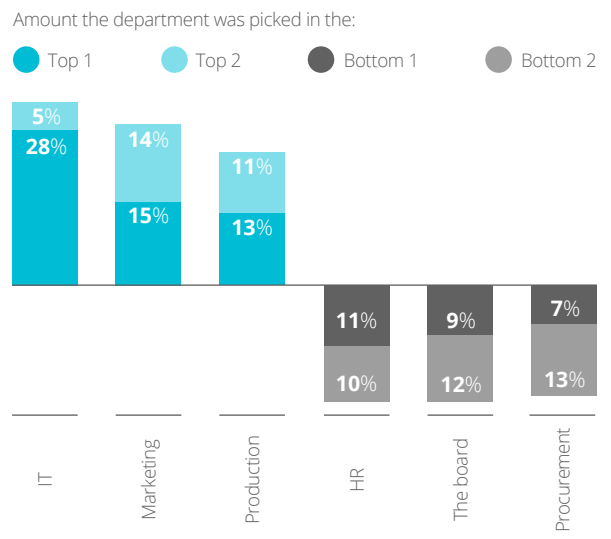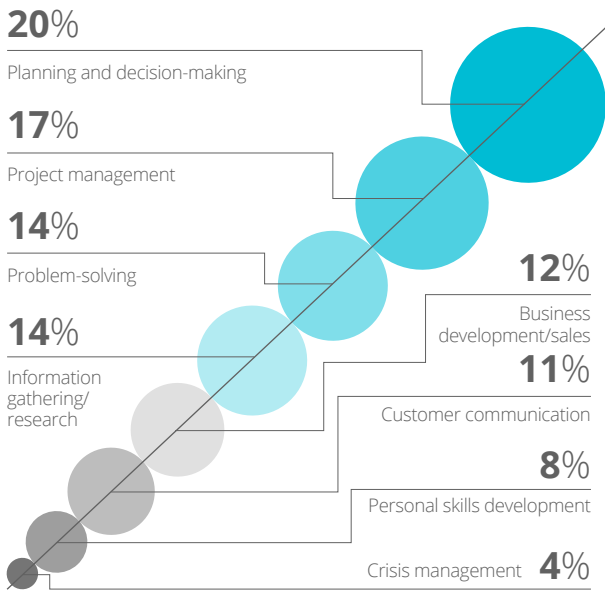
Amount the department was picked in the:

● Top 1 ● Top 2 ● Bottom 1 ● Bottom 2

Figure 8

Which processes would derive the greatest benefit from increased collaboration in your organization?

20%
Planning and decision-making

17%
Project management

14%
Problem-solving

14%
Information gathering/ research

12%
Business development/sales

11%
Customer communication

8%
Personal skills development

Crisis management **4**%

However, the strong performance of IT departments doesn't mean that other parts of a business should think that collaboration and innovation are outside of their responsibility. The most successful companies will, increasingly, be those in which every department adds value in this way.

When respondents were asked to think in terms of processes, some 20% said that 'planning and decision-making' would derive most benefit from collaboration. Project management (17%), problem-solving and information gathering/ research (14% each) also featured prominently (Figure 8).

Planning and decision making, project management and problem-solving, when not done in person, have traditionally been sequential processes involving circulation for comments and laborious

> When respondents were asked to think in terms of processes, some 20% said that 'planning and decision-making' would derive most benefit from collaboration

reconciliation. We believe that these responses indicate that mentalities have changed. People crave the ability to work together effectively and simultaneously, drawing on the business' collective intelligence, irrespective of geographic proximity. This is a big ask but one that the right technology can facilitate.

Case studies:
Winning strategies

**IT leadership
with Thrillist Media Group**

The IT department at Thrillist Media Group (TMG) has been integral to a five-year journey that has seen the company expand from a 30-person organization housed in a one-room office, to a 300-employee content and e-commerce business with three locations and revenues of $100M.

Manager of Product Development, Ben Darr **(watch Ben Darr's interview)**, says that while staff still use Gmail "for a lot of things", other tools such as Hangouts provide the ability to quickly and easily collaborate with IT (and other departments) on a day-to-day basis. It's a way of working that provides "the immediacy that the creative process really demands". He explains: "Sometimes I'll get a

question in a Hangout meeting, ping a developer and before the person is done asking the question I'll have the answer for them. You just can't replace the spark and productivity in these meetings with an email chain."

On top of that, TMG also called on its director of front-end web development, Ken Peltzer, to use Google APIs to develop a new purpose-built app that shows the availability of meeting rooms in real time. Darr says Peltzer's solution has helped all the company's departments to overcome the age-old problem of finding a free meeting room, and has "wiped out" long, time-consuming email chains. Darr adds: "Needless to say, he's become the most popular person in the office."

> Sometimes I'll get a question in a Hangout meeting, ping a developer and before the person is done asking the question I'll have the answer for them

Ben Darr
Manager of Product Development
Thrillist Media Group

03 Creating a culture of collaboration

Collaboration has been shown to support productivity and business performance but what impact does it have on employees themselves? Respondents appear to suggest that it could positively impact job satisfaction and employee engagement. We think they could be onto something

When we plotted the data for job satisfaction against the extent to which a company fosters a culture of knowledge-sharing and collaboration (Figure 10), the two sets of values appeared to correlate quite clearly. While it is important to remember that correlation and causation are two different things, this does strongly suggest a link.

And, with failure to attract enough talent (25%), inability to retain the best talent (18%) and concerns about a disengaged workforce (14%) ranking as the most serious threats to organizations in terms of people management, it's clear why the culture of an organization is so important.

But implementing and encouraging the right culture for a given organization isn't necessarily easy, as can be seen in Figure 11 on page 10. The difficulty of changing working styles and habits (22%), a lack of incentives for employees to work collaboratively (17%) and a lack of leadership (14%) were the challenges named most frequently by survey respondents. There's no doubt that each of these barriers should be taken seriously, but with strong leadership, exact communication, and inspired change agents within the business, none of them is insurmountable for any business, as is illustrated in the Avery Dennison case study on page 10.

Figure 10

How much do you agree with the following statements (%):

0-9   10-19   20-29   30-39   40-49   50+
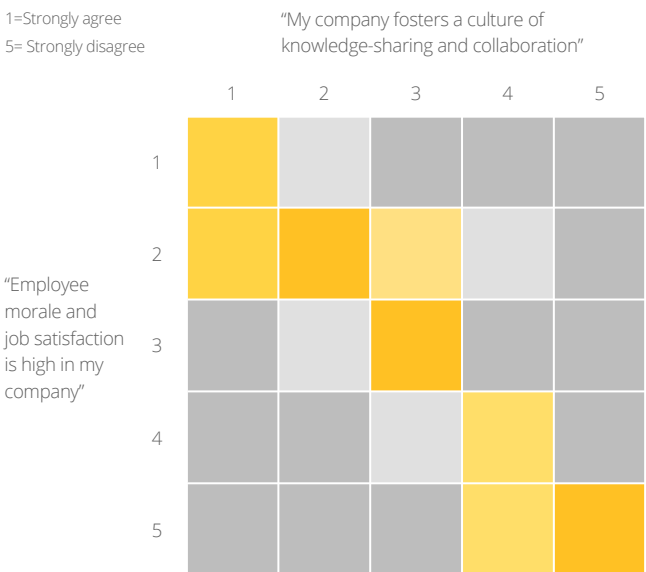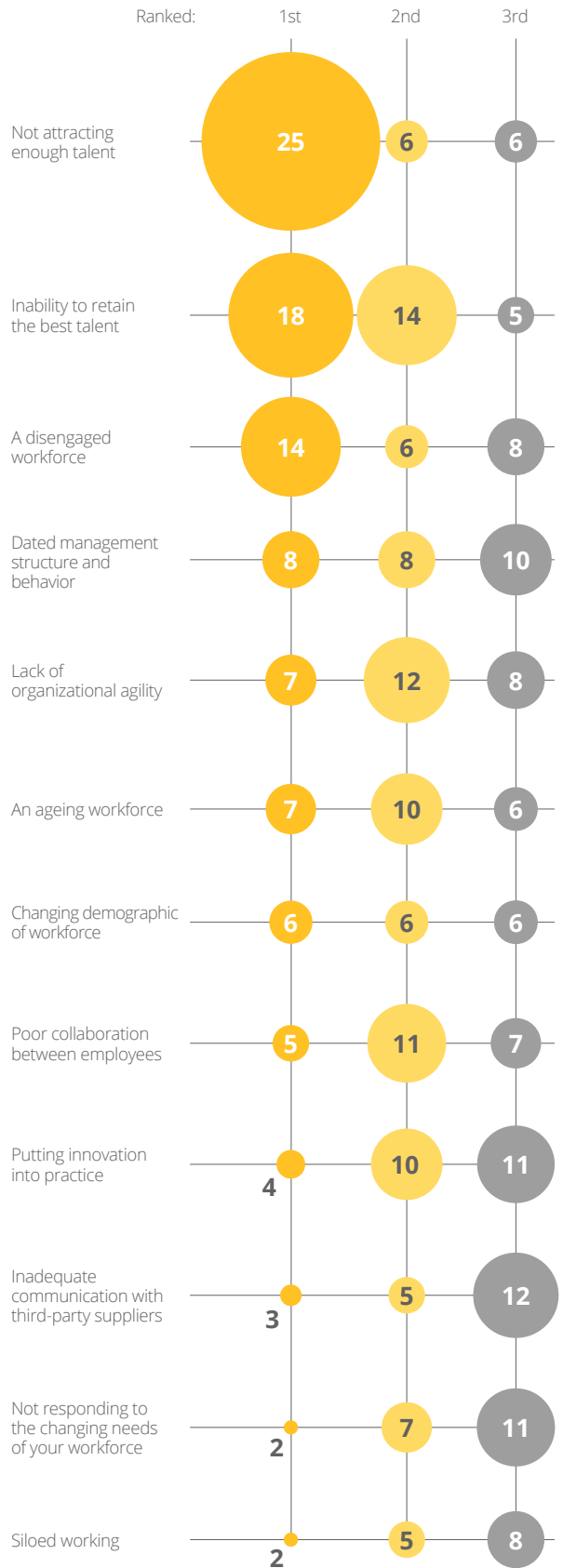
1=Strongly agree
5= Strongly disagree

"My company fosters a culture of knowledge-sharing and collaboration"

"Employee morale and job satisfaction is high in my company"

Figure 9

From a people management perspective, what do you feel are the biggest threats facing your organization? (%)

Ranked: 1st   2nd   3rd

Not attracting enough talent — 25 — 6 — 6

Inability to retain the best talent — 18 — 14 — 5

A disengaged workforce — 14 — 6 — 8

Dated management structure and behavior — 8 — 8 — 10

Lack of organizational agility — 7 — 12 — 8

An ageing workforce — 7 — 10 — 6

Changing demographic of workforce — 6 — 6 — 6

Poor collaboration between employees — 5 — 11 — 7

Putting innovation into practice — 4 — 10 — 11

Inadequate communication with third-party suppliers — 3 — 5 — 12

Not responding to the changing needs of your workforce — 2 — 7 — 11

Siloed working — 2 — 5 — 8

The first step is to work out what a strong, effective culture would look like for a given business. This will change according to sector and other specifics, but there are some things that remain constant.

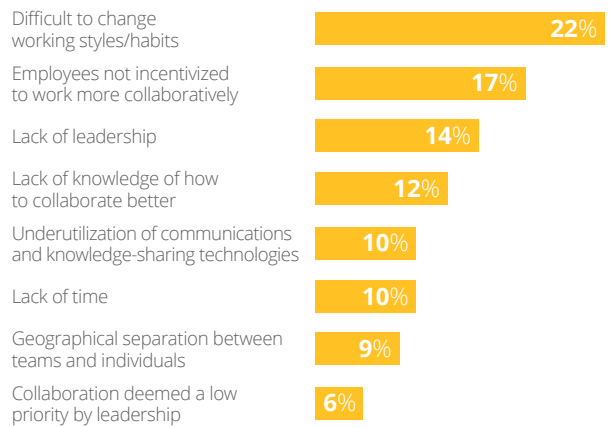Agility is key. Or, put another way, the ability to anticipate and respond quickly to changes in a business environment. Transparency is important too; if information is allowed to flow freely through an enterprise, and if siloes are broken down, then open dialogue is encouraged. And that should mean that everyone from the leadership of a company to its frontline employees feel as though their voice matters and is heard.

When we isolated the data for particular sectors, an interesting finding emerged. Media companies cited geographical separation and the underutilization of communication technologies as the biggest challenges in creating a more collaborative work culture. It is also interesting to note that half of the media companies surveyed identified themselves as 'Believers', acknowledging that they have adopted new technologies and reworked their business models, but still feel that they are yet to experience the full benefits of transformation.

Figure 11

What are your biggest challenges in creating a more collaborative work culture?

Challenge	%
Difficult to change working styles/habits	22%
Employees not incentivized to work more collaboratively	17%
Lack of leadership	14%
Lack of knowledge of how to collaborate better	12%
Underutilization of communications and knowledge-sharing technologies	10%
Lack of time	10%
Geographical separation between teams and individuals	9%
Collaboration deemed a low priority by leadership	6%

Case studies:
Winning strategies

Collaborative culture with Avery Dennison

Avery Dennison, the global labelling and packaging company, has more than 25,000 staff and has been around for 80 years, but was able to embrace new technology, processes and a more collaborative approach to work when it adopted Google Apps for Work for its global workforce.

Senior director of new technologies, Bhupesh Arora **(watch Bhupesh Arora's interview)**, admits that transforming the company's culture wasn't a completely straightforward process: "When you make a big change, you are going to face resistance—that's just the nature

of the beast." But, he adds, through clear, comprehensive communication with staff, and by calling on the help of "evangelists" within the business, it was possible to bring about a fast, efficient transformation. "We solicited help from 700 passionate employees across the world. These employees created a positive buzz and showcased how the tools can simplify work processes. The evangelists were our eyes and ears, and provided feedback about how to adjust our change management and communication processes across divisions."

> When you make a big change, you are going to face resistance – that's just the nature of the beast

Bhupesh Arora
Senior Director of
New Technologies
Avery Dennison

Gamify transformation with Globe Telecom

Globe Telecom, a leading Philippines company with more than 10,000 employees and 150 stores nationwide, also called on ambassadors when it made the switch from its legacy IT systems to Google Apps for Work. But the business encouraged a culture shift by other

means when it launched 'Globe City', a gamification initiative that encouraged employees to share their real-life project ideas with colleagues, who were then able to vote for their favorites and influence which were taken forward and developed further. **(Read more about Globe Telecom)**

> 'Globe City', a gamification initiative, encouraged employees to share their real-life project ideas with colleagues

04 Mastering the tools

More innovation, more engagement, more collaboration. Technology is key but needs to be selected carefully and made to work hard

As we saw in Figure 4 on page 5, there is an expectation among survey respondents that working more collaboratively would have a positive impact on the profitability of a company. That's just one of the reasons that technology has to take center stage. The right technology, used in the right way, makes collaboration easier by putting people, their passions and their talents ahead of anything else.

But as we saw at the start of this report (Figure A on page 3) many companies that have been willing to invest in new technology and to embrace transformation don't always get the most of their investment.

On average, survey respondents consider file-sharing tools to be the most effective communication and technology innovations in terms of their capacity to improve individual output and performance (its mean score was 4.8 out of 7, Figure 12). But it's interesting to note that no single tool came out head and shoulders above the rest. This may be because the most effective ways of working tend to leverage a number of tools that are used together.

Figure 12

To what extent do you believe that the following communication and technology innovations in the workplace improve individual output and performance?
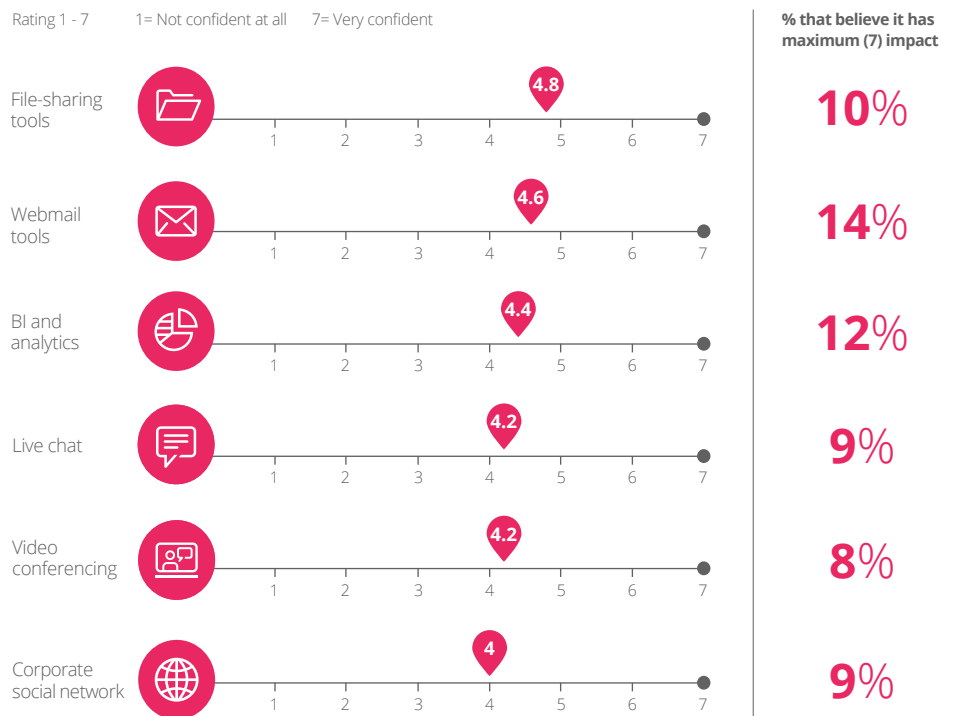
Rating 1 - 7   1= Not confident at all   7= Very confident

% that believe it has maximum (7) impact

File-sharing tools — 4.8 — **10**%

Webmail tools — 4.6 — **14**%

BI and analytics — 4.4 — **12**%

Live chat — 4.2 — **9**%

Video conferencing — 4.2 — **8**%

Corporate social network — 4 — **9**%

Figure 13

How much do you agree with the following statements (%):

1=Strongly agree   5= Strongly disagree

● 0-9   ● 10-19   ● 20-29
● 30-39   ● 40-49   ● 50+

"My company fosters a culture of knowledge-sharing and collaboration"

"My company is very receptive to adoption of new technology and processes"
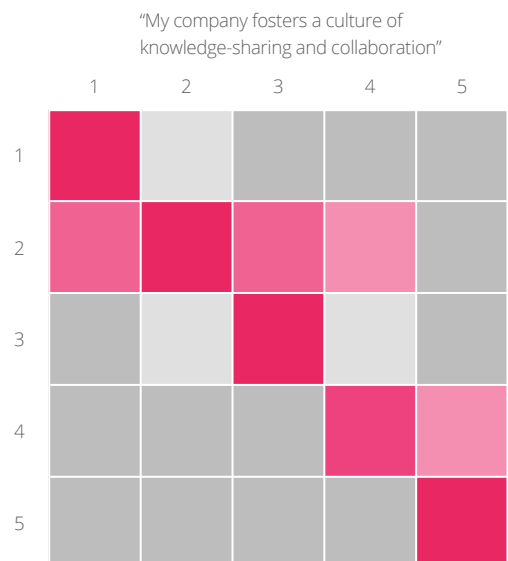
> " The right technology, used in the right way, makes collaboration easier by putting people, their passions and their talents ahead of anything else

Figure 14

In your organization, what are your current levels of collaboration and the suitability of collaboration/knowledge-sharing technologies respectively?

*Size of each bubble is representative of the product of "Level of collaboration" and "Effectiveness of tools"
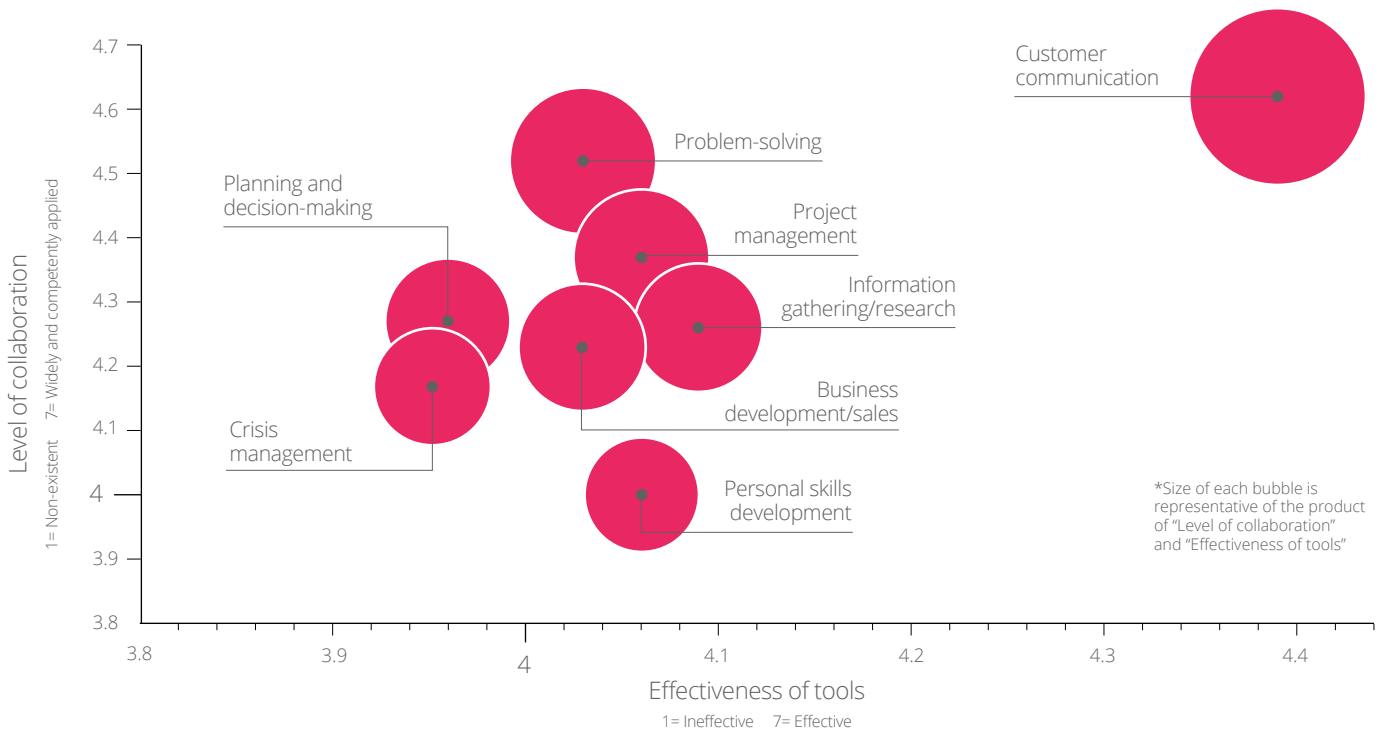
The data shows that respondents tend to feel that the effectiveness of the tools they have at their disposal lags behind the level of collaboration, suggesting that the tools available inhibit rather than promote collaboration (Figure 14). This implies that there is a need to improve the effectiveness of the tools, which should also boost the overall level of collaboration experienced. In addition, when asked to name the realistic measure that would have the biggest business impact on knowledge-sharing and collaboration, investment in relevant technology came out on top. It was named most frequently as the #1 measure for business impact, and also appeared in respondents' lists of top three factors more than any other option (Figure 15).

Taken together, these two results suggest that many organizations have not yet equipped their employees with the best tools available. As a result, investment in collaboration tools could be reasonably expected to give rise to improved levels of collaboration and, therefore, better business performance.
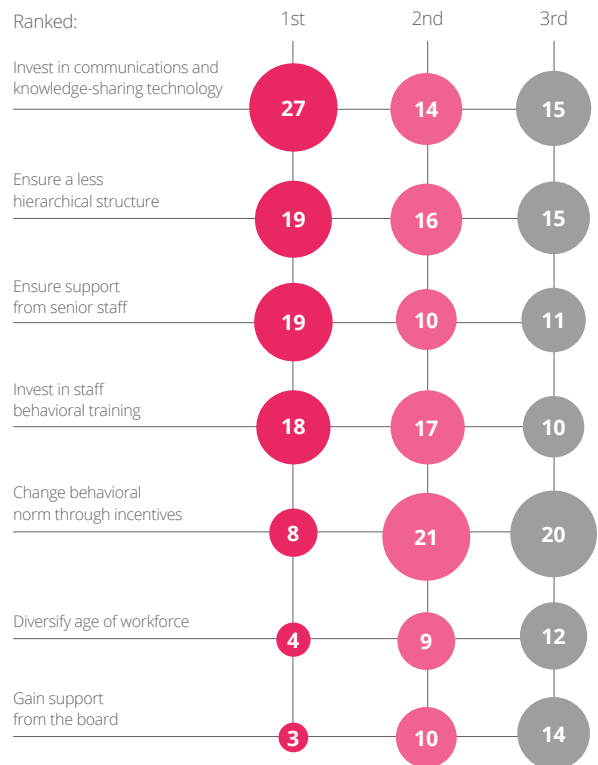
Actions that concern personal interaction were also considered important for increasing the business impact of knowledge-sharing and collaboration. Ensuring support from senior staff was the measure that accrued the second-highest aggregate score (Figure 15) and also featured prominently when respondents were asked to come up with two of their own suggestions for tangible actions that could be taken by their organization to address the same challenges.

Responses such as "Discuss with the senior team whether we want to embrace a culture of innovation, then determine what this means for our business" and "Determine if upper management will support this type of change" were typical.

It was also apparent that many respondents felt that more information and data was required to convince them that their organization really would benefit from updating its stance toward innovation and collaboration. Perhaps the evidence that has now been gathered and published in this report will help to do just that.

Figure 15

What could feasibly be done in your organization to increase the business impact of knowledge-sharing and collaboration? (%)

Ranked:	1st	2nd	3rd
Invest in communications and knowledge-sharing technology	27	14	15
Ensure a less hierarchical structure	19	16	15
Ensure support from senior staff	19	10	11
Invest in staff behavioral training	18	17	10
Change behavioral norm through incentives	8	21	20
Diversify age of workforce	4	9	12
Gain support from the board	3	10	14

Case studies:
Winning strategies

Building a more cohesive brand with Specialty Fashion Group

This is something that the Specialty Fashion Group found when the business overhauled its approach to technology. Despite having 4,500 staff, 900 stores in four countries and seven separate online shops, until recently the company relied on a printed visual merchandise bulletin that was sent by mail or fax. It would also use those same methods, plus daily voicemail messages, to communicate with individual stores regarding promotions and offers.

Viren Shah, Group CIO, realized that a scalable, cloud-based communication and collaboration platform was long overdue. As a result, the company adopted the whole suite of Google Apps for Work to allow staff to collaborate effectively and stay up-to-date.

The new technology has brought about cost savings, boosted collaboration, communication and allowed the company to create a more cohesive brand. And, Shah says, it has also had a direct impact on the culture and general atmosphere that employees experience at work: "It's hard to quantify just how huge of an impact Google Apps has had on morale, but it's massive."

> It's hard to quantify just how huge of an impact Google Apps has had on morale, but it's massive

Viren Shah
Group CIO
Specialty Fashion Group

Better meetings with The Weather Company

One media company that met the challenge of improving its use of communication technologies and alleviated difficulties caused by geographical separation in the process is The Weather Company.

Formerly known as The Weather Channel, the organization made a deliberate transformation from 'media company' to 'technology business', rebranding as The Weather Company in the process.

The company adopted Google Apps for Work, along with Chromebox for Meetings, the easy-to-use, high-definition video conferencing system that works seamlessly with Hangouts. In terms of reliability and ease of communication, it's a decision that has already paid dividends. "Being able to see people's faces when you can't get on a plane, it's so critical," says Bryson Koehler, The Weather Company CIO. "Helping people and helping businesses make decisions, we can't rest. And we can't be down and we can't be late." **(Watch the story of The Weather Company)**

> Being able to see people's faces when you can't get on a plane, it's so critical

Bryson Koehler
CIO
The Weather Company

Enabling a more engaged workforce with AllSaints

That has certainly been the approach at another fashion retailer, AllSaints. The U.K. founded business is completely vertically integrated, creating everything from the clothes in its stores to the lines of code that allow its customers to make online purchases from almost anywhere in the world. As a result, every part of the business, from factories, to stores and the head office, uses Google Apps for Work and in-store staff even have their own Nexus 7 tablets for keeping up to date with figures, floor plans, video Hangouts and Gmail. William Kim, Chief Executive Officer, says: "Our definition of creativity is using the intelligence of our 2,500 employees to solve our business issues."
(Watch the story of AllSaints)

> Our definition of creativity is using the intelligence of our 2,500 employees to solve our business issues

William Kim
Chief Executive Officer
AllSaints

Conclusion

The data from our research has provided some revealing insight into the role of collaboration today.

As we've seen, companies are at varying stages of development when it comes to the adoption of digital technology and the way that they have embraced a culture of collaboration and innovation. But an overwhelming majority recognize that they haven't yet fully experienced the benefits of the tools that are at their disposal. There's still room for improvement.

There's also evidence to suggest that collaboration has the power to boost innovation and efficiency—two things that are crucial for negotiating business challenges. But collaboration has a strong relationship with job satisfaction, too. That plays a critical role in attracting and retaining the most talented employees.

IT departments are widely expected to be the chief driving force behind innovation. In practice, that means not only having a mastery of relevant technology, but also taking the lead by coming up with new, improved ways of working that allow organizations to make the most of it. That is likely to include developing ways of communicating that are as natural, frictionless and immediate as possible. Working together in-person is still highly valued, but it's not always practical.

And although IT departments are important, the picture of an effective, collaborative and innovative company can only be complete if all parts of the business buy into the idea. Management must commit and invest in creating a culture that enables talented, engaged people to connect, share ideas, develop them and get things done from anywhere. That's when work gets better—and when the true value of collaboration can be felt.

> The picture of an effective, collaborative and innovative company can only be complete if all parts of the business buy into the idea