

doing more with less: the new productivity paradigm



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Introduction

When Atos made the announcement, in 2011, that we intended to become a zero email company, we suspected that it was an idea that would capture people's imagination. What we hadn't realised was just how much it would do so.

In the weeks and months that followed the announcement, the scale of the response made it abundantly clear to us that this was an idea which had found its time. But why?

We have our own reasons, of course, but what we became interested in was why other people were so moved by the idea. What need was it that the possibility of being a zero-email company was addressing? And how did this fit in to a broader discussion about the challenges people face in their working lives?

What we did next was to commission a piece of research in an attempt to answer our questions. The broad context for our research is, of course, familiar to most of us. During the boom years, preceding the collapse of Lehman Brothers, organisations were trying to do more with the same. During the recession they were trying to do the same with less. Now, amidst ongoing uncertainty, they're trying to do more with less.

214 senior managers were surveyed in the course of our research: more than three-quarters of them said their organisation was coming under strong, or intense, pressure to cut costs and about two-thirds said the same of the need to increase sales. But we were keen to dig deeper - to try to understand the various ways in which pressure manifests itself, to explore the nature of complexity in the workplace and to understand what could be done about it.

What became clear is that there is now an immediate need for new levels of productivity. And while we're not pretending to offer a cure for what are, after all, the inevitable by-products of working life in industrialised, capitalist economies, we are concerned with the question of whether a change to the productivity paradigm can make things better: to make it possible to do more with less.

Our conclusion is that much rests on the ability of organisations to exploit three keystones, each of which are discussed in detail throughout the remainder of this report:

- ▶ **The ability to reclaim time lost to low-value activities**
- ▶ **An agile, decentralised approach to business change**
- ▶ **The ability to harness and exploit new technologies.**

Making Atos a zero-email company is the central part of our strategy to address the first of those keystones. It will, we have no doubt, be an exercise that presents many challenges. But that's why we want to start by trying to change ourselves.

Keystone 1

Reclaiming time lost to low-value activities

There is a growing frustration amongst employees that a significant amount of time and energy is wasted on low-value activities, and a desire to reclaim this time and put it to more productive use meeting business challenges.

If the broad context for this report is about organisations trying to get more from less then it's important to see how that pressure manifests itself.

Unsurprisingly people talk about it being harder to get things done than it used to be. Slightly fewer than a third (29%) say they find it either hard or very hard to get business-as-usual things done. 40% say it's harder than it used to be. And with so much effort being spent trying to keep track of business-as-usual activities, new initiatives are suffering even more. 58% said they find it hard or very hard to get work on new initiatives done and about half say it's harder now than it was five years ago.

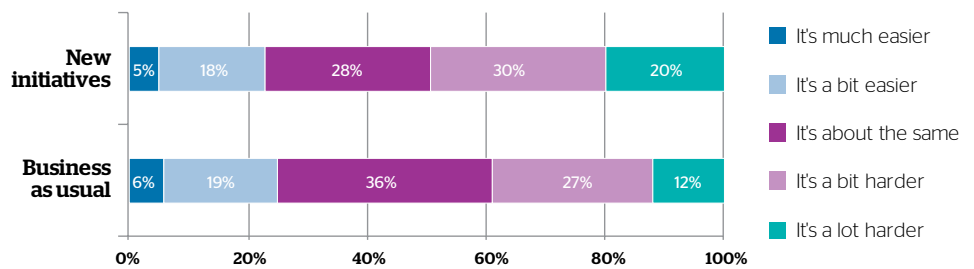


Figure 1: The extent to which respondents say their ability to get things done has changed in the last five years.

When you ask people what's changed in their working environment in the last five years the largest proportion (69%) tell you that their workload for business-as-usual activities has increased. 61% say that they're working on more projects and 57% say they have fewer people to support them. But there are two other major factors which are stopping people from getting things done.

- ▶ The first is that work is becoming more complex. Of course complexity is a truism of modern life, and once again the idea that it is increasing won't surprise anyone. But how exactly does that complexity manifest itself? Immediately below the top three (more work, more projects, fewer people) in the list of things that have changed are a group of factors which suggest that the nature, as well as the volume, of work has changed: 56% of respondents told us that they have to gather or stay up to date with more information than they did five years ago; slightly fewer than half (49%) talk of having to enter data into or keep track of more systems than they used to and slightly fewer again mention having to deal with more products or services (48%) or more internal stakeholders (46%)
- ▶ The second is the growing sense that a lot of time is being wasted. Tasks that add no value, or where value is uncertain, take up a large proportion of people's time. Nearly one in every four respondents to our survey said they spend more than a quarter of their time writing emails that add no value to their organisation, a similar number say they spend more than a quarter of their time attending meetings in which they're adding no value and the number spending a large proportion of their time carrying out basic administrative tasks, or checking up on the work other people have done, is considerably higher.



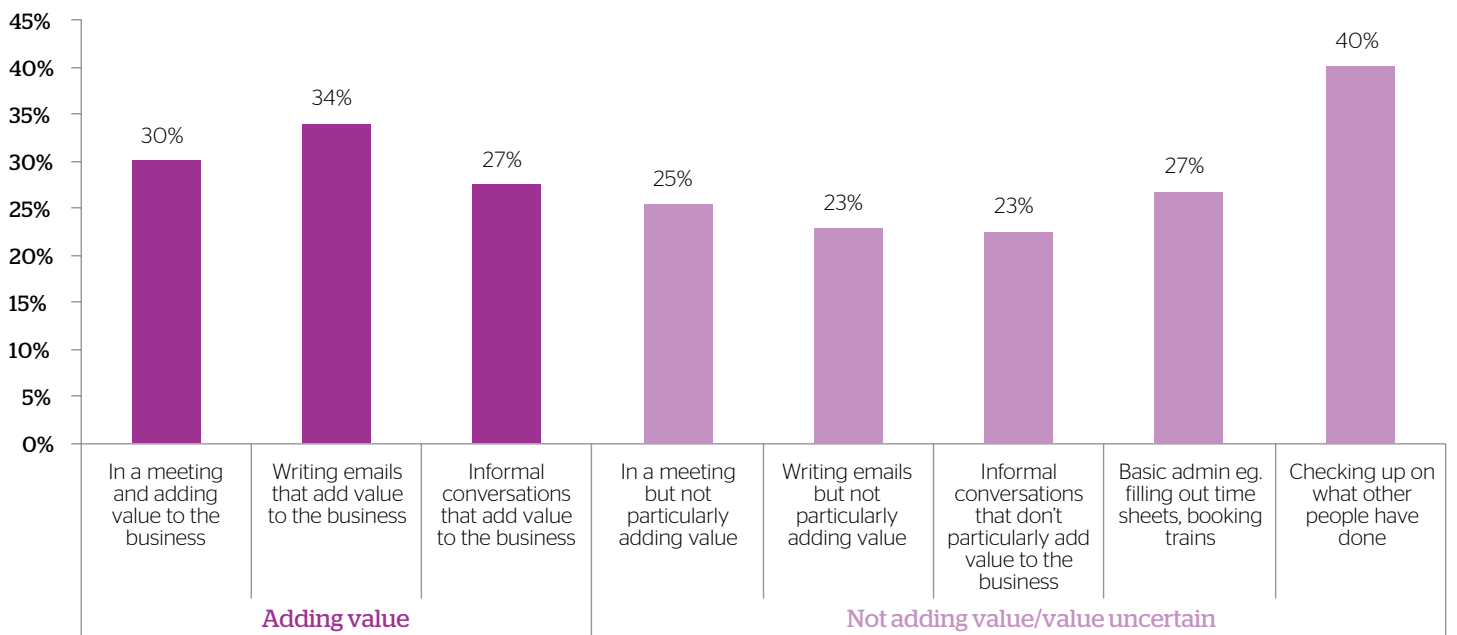


Figure 2: The proportion of respondents saying they spend 25% or more of their time on various activities.

Both of these - complexity and wasted time - are issues that need addressing, but the latter is surely the one that ought to be keeping senior managers awake at night. The idea that organisations are stretched to breaking point whilst 1 in 4 people spend 25% or more of their time in the unending, and value-less service of their email inbox ought to be all the evidence needed that something isn't working as it should. Finding a way to address this - if necessary by something as radical as the phasing out of email - would, our research concludes, be time very well spent.

Keystone 2

A new approach to change

There is a growing recognition that the traditional approach to getting things done is not paying back. Centrally devised and managed transformation programmes are proving to be less and less effective.

Our survey tells us that stock organisational responses to the challenges being faced have been tried but that successes have been limited. Overall the impression is of organisations failing to make much ground by approaching issues in the way they always have. 56% of respondents, for example, think that their organisation's ability to respond to change has either stayed the same or got worse, and the same proportion think that decision making has either stayed the same or got worse.

Conventional change programmes

Nor do conventional change programmes appear to hold all the answers. In fact our survey suggests that they've yielded very mixed results. What appears to matter is the approach to change. Projects in which an organisation relies on tactical improvements co-ordinated by a central team (or better still where improvements are driven by individuals) are seen to be considerably more successful than those in which change is approached through a centrally-managed transformation programme.

There's also evidence that the focus of a change programme has a significant bearing on its success. Those in which the main focus is either organisational re-design or technology are seen to be significantly more successful than those where the focus is cultural change or process re-design.

In terms of the factors which determine the success of change programmes, the most important appear to be:

- ▶ **Clear communications (73% chose this)**
- ▶ **The commitment of senior management (71% chose this)**
- ▶ **The involvement of people at all levels (62% chose this).**

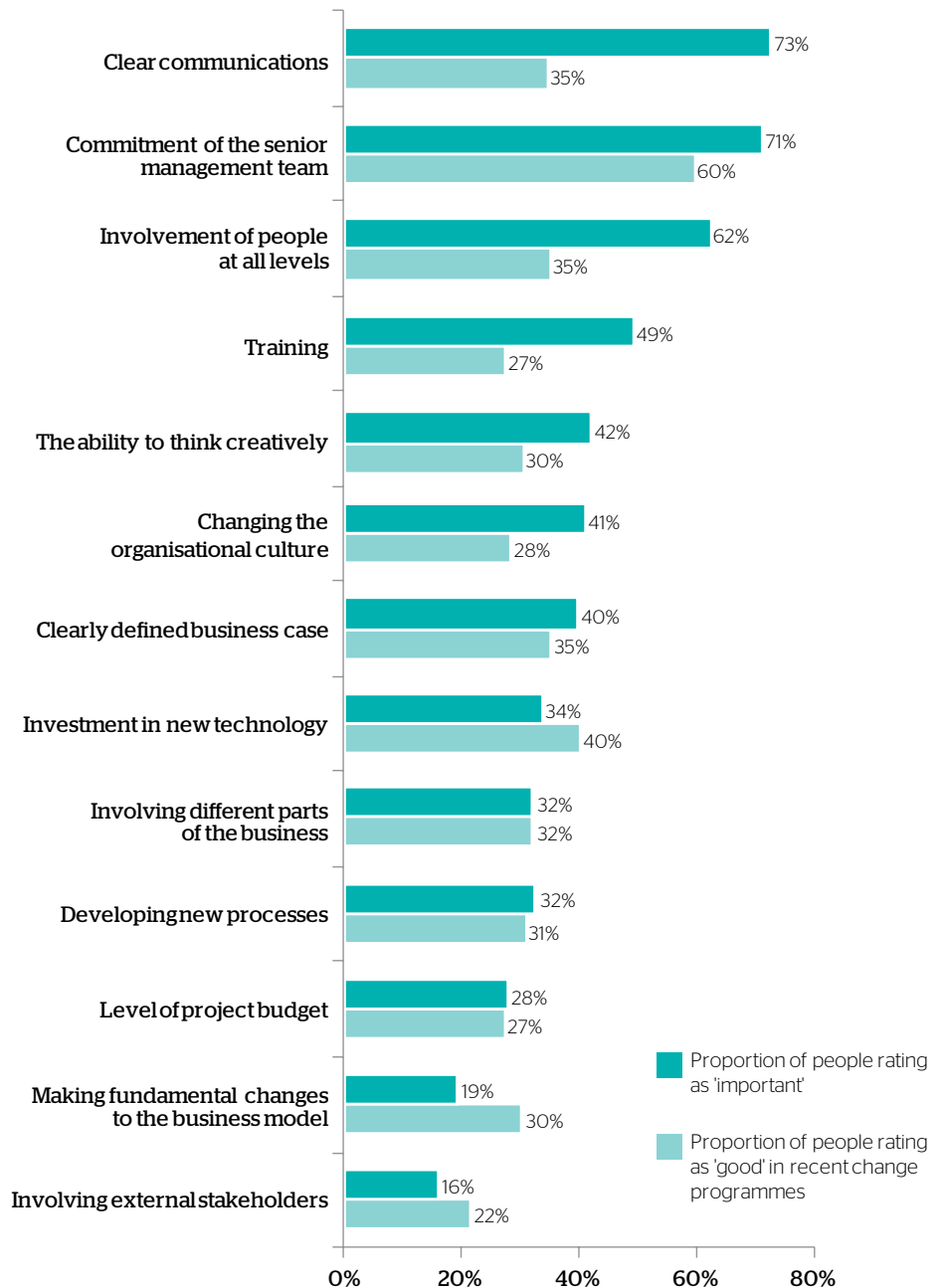


Figure 3: The factors people believe to be important in determining the success of change programmes and how they rate recent change programmes against each.

Technology-focused change

But perhaps most strikingly, where the focus of a change programme is technology, the proportion of respondents who say that they have seen substantial improvements rises significantly, to 55%, for programmes where a centrally-co-ordinated but tactically-focused approach is taken, compared with the 29% who say the same thing of centrally-managed transformation projects.

Indeed further analysis reveals the limitation of centrally-managed large-scale transformation projects and the benefits of a more localised, tactical approach, or even one which places the emphasis on improvements being led by individuals. For a start, amongst people for whom the main focus of a change project was technology, the rating given to the quality of the project increases significantly against a wide range of measures.

- ▶ **36% say that they rate the ability of their organisation to think creatively as 'good', for tactical programmes managed by a central team, and the proportion rises to 41% where improvements are driven by individuals, compared with large-scale, centrally-managed transformation programmes, for which fewer than a quarter of people say the same thing**
- ▶ **Tactical programmes also score higher than centrally-managed transformation programmes for: the involvement of people at all levels (54% said good); clear communications (43%); having a clearly defined business case (55%) and against all other measures we asked about**
- ▶ **Projects for which improvements were driven by individuals appear to have especially valuable results. For example, the proportion of people who say their IT systems improved greatly following a project in which improvements were driven by individuals is more than twice as large (25%) compared with centrally-managed transformation projects (10%).**

It would appear, then, that advances both in technology and in the way people interface with it is leading to the demise of conventional change programmes. In future agility will be what matters.



Keystone 3

Harnessing new technology

The ability to harness new technology is an important component of the productivity paradigm. Social media, cloud computing and bring-your-own-device, used in the right way, are helping employees to waste less time and to drive change faster.

There will be those for whom the idea of introducing technology in an attempt to counter complexity and wasted time will cause a wry smile, but the results of our survey appear decisive on this issue. People who believe that their organisation fails to make good use of new technology are:

- ▶ Four times more likely to say that they find it a lot harder to get things done in a business-as-usual context compared with five years ago, than those who say their organisation makes good use of new technology
- ▶ More than twice as likely to say that they find it a lot harder to get things done around new initiatives.

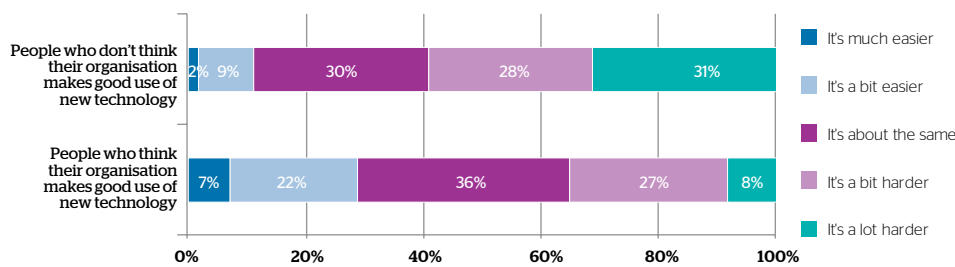


Figure 4: The extent to which people find it easier or harder to get things done for business-as-usual than they did five years ago.

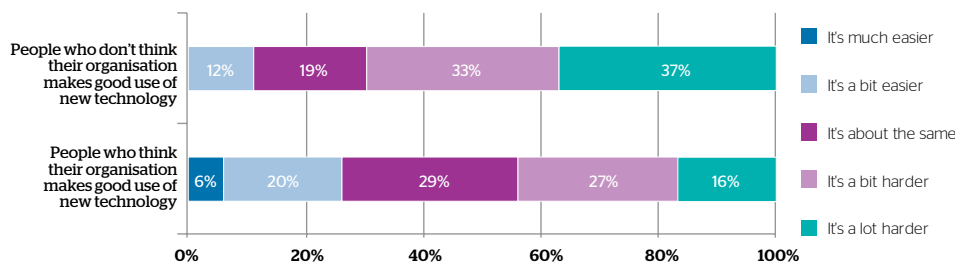


Figure 5: The extent to which people find it easier or harder to get things done for new initiatives than they did five years ago.

Whether one really is a direct result of the other is something that's open to debate - this could be as much about perception as reality - but the fact remains that the link exists.

The good news is that most people (80%) think their organisation does, indeed, make good use of new technology, but many (43%) disagree that they implement changes quickly, a third disagree that their business and technology goals are aligned and 37% disagree that their technology keeps pace with their business needs. What that tells us is that the problem is less about intention and more about the way it's acted on. There's a willingness to adopt new technology but a lack of recognition about (or at least a workable solution for) the fact that where new technology is concerned, speed is of the essence. ERP systems might not change significantly over the course of a few years but social media technology might change beyond all recognition.

A further link appears to exist between the proportion of people who say their organisation makes good use of new technology and those with completely centralised IT departments. The former is much higher (85%) amongst people who work in organisations with fully centralised IT than it is amongst those who don't (67%). To a large extent this runs counter to the prevailing school of thought which says that IT is becoming, and needs to become, a more fragmented, user-driven matter. But it's quite possible that many organisations find themselves in the interregnum between two broad approaches to IT (centrally managed and locally managed) and that until the migration from one to the other is complete, centrally managed IT looks more organised than the chaotic alternative.

Three specific technologies

Of course talking about new technology generically isn't really enough in this context, which is why we've focused on three specific areas in the next section of our report: social media, cloud computing and Bring-Your-Own-Device (BYOD).

Most organisations, it would seem, recognise the need to do something where social media, cloud computing and BYOD are concerned, but a significant minority are still making no use whatsoever of each of these major new initiatives:

- ▶ **29% say they're making no use of social media platforms**
- ▶ **31% say they're making no use of cloud computing to access data**
- ▶ **35% say they're unable to choose what devices and applications they use at work (BYOD).**

The hype around new technology (social media and cloud in particular) would have you believe that these organisations are about to fall flat on their faces but the reality is more likely to be about opportunities lost rather than dangers faced.

What problems can new technologies help to solve?

New technology won't take away some of the fundamental pressures organisations are facing, but there appears to be a consensus around the idea that it can - at the very least - help to tackle complexity.

Social media platforms

57% think social media platforms would improve their ability to keep up to date with and gather the information they need; 53% believe they would improve their ability to launch new products and services more quickly (essentially seeing them as a marketing channel) and 52% think they would help them to liaise with internal stakeholders.

Cloud computing

Nearly two-thirds think cloud computing would improve their ability to keep up to date with and gather the information they need, 60% think it would make it easier to enter and keep track of data on different systems and the same proportion think cloud computing would better enable them to keep track of different projects.

BYOD

70% think that BYOD would help them to keep track of different projects and 68% think it would help them to keep up to date with and gather the information they need. Perhaps more intriguingly more than 70% of people think that allowing employees to bring their own devices to work would help them to manage their own team. To some extent that's likely to be about some of the softer elements of people management (employees feeling more motivated by having greater choice over the hardware and software they use to do things) but there may be more pragmatic benefits which are driven by the democratisation of IT, such as teams of people finding and congregating around apps that work in a more efficient way than the systems they're currently forced to use.

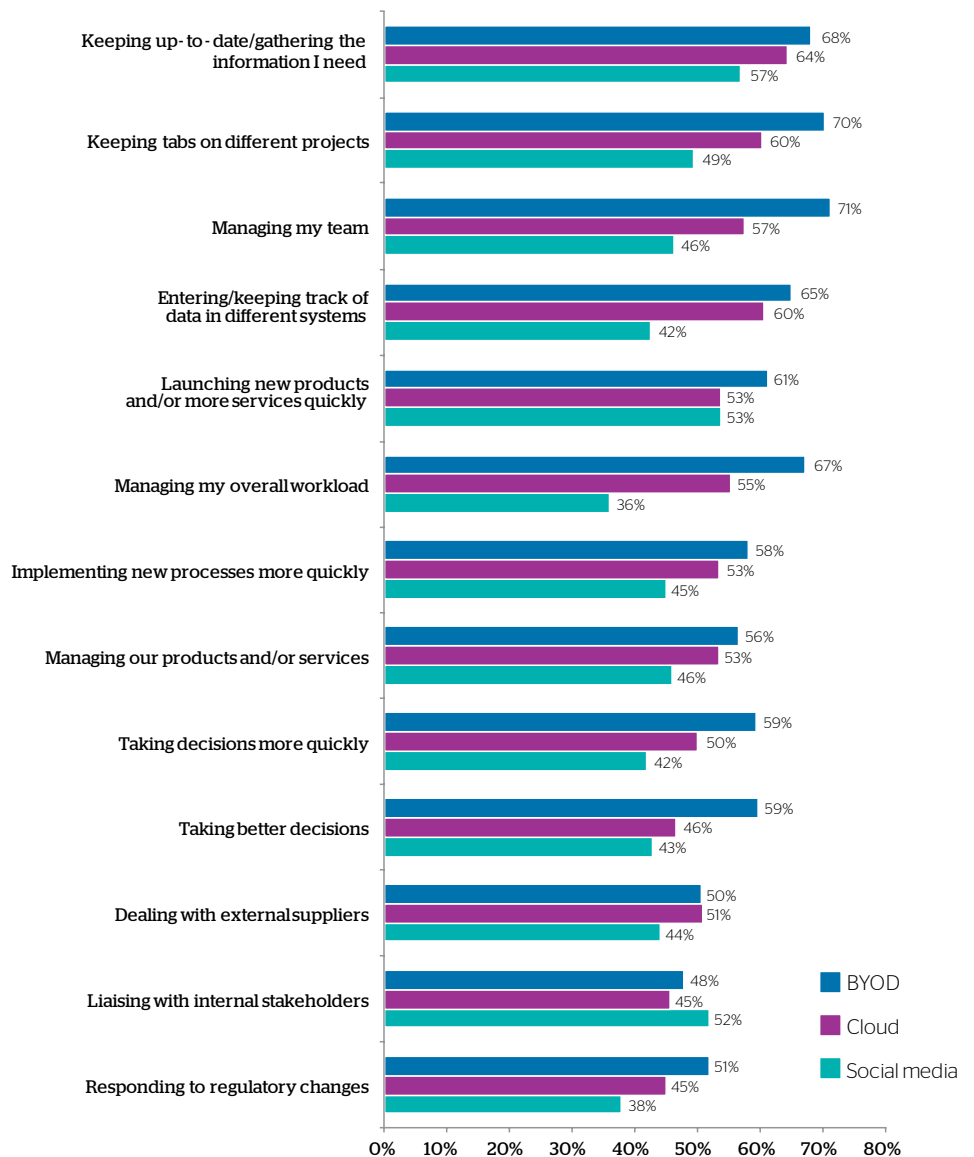


Figure 6: The proportion of respondents who believe that each new technology will lead to improvements.

But not all technologies are considered equal

Figure 6 shows that there are notable differences in the extent to which people believe different technologies have the potential to be useful. BYOD is thought of more favourably than social media or cloud computing against 11 of the 13 factors we measured. Its advantage over social media and cloud appears particularly marked when it comes to the management of teams, managing overall workload and taking better decisions. In fact only when it comes to liaising with internal stakeholders does it lag behind any other technology in terms of its usefulness.

Social media, by contrast, is the least accepted as a mechanism for accelerating improvement, coming last against 11 of our 13 factors, but leading where improvements to liaising with internal stakeholders are concerned. The overwhelming impression is that while social media platforms are widely accepted as a social tool - and more broadly as a mechanism for communication both within and outwith the workplace - people are still sceptical about their use as an enterprise solution.

Views vary by business function though. Operations people, for example, have a markedly more positive view of the potential of social media platforms than anyone else. In fact what's interesting is that their views stand in stark contrast to those of marketing people, who are presumably the most likely to have actually used the technology and are therefore aware of its limitations, as well as its potential. Finance people, for their part, are more positive than anyone else about cloud computing, largely because they think it will help to improve the way they liaise with internal stakeholders. Meanwhile IT people, who, along with marketing are generally the most sceptical about new technology, are far more excited about the possibilities of BYOD than anything else.

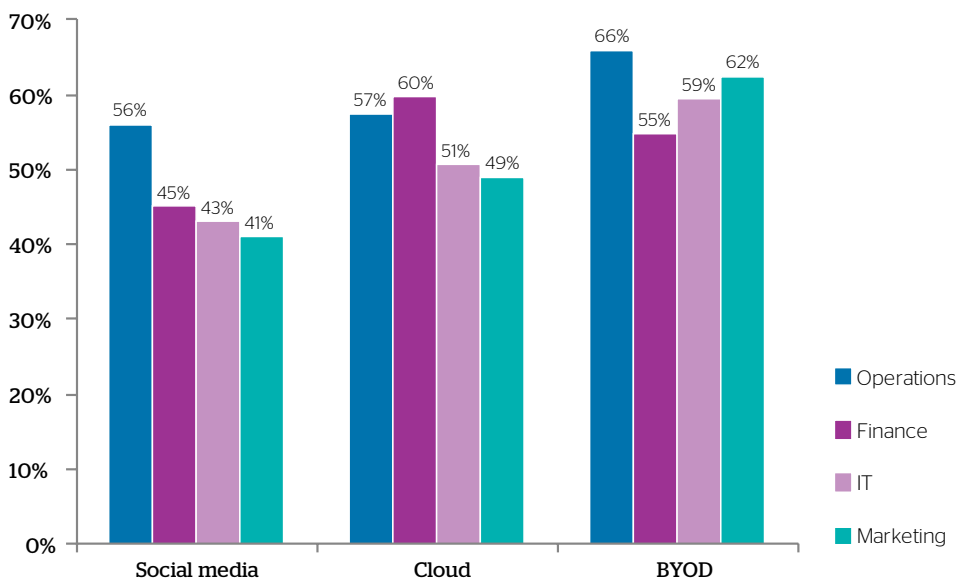


Figure 7: The average proportion of respondents across all issues saying that they think new technologies will lead to improvements.

A question of age

Age also plays a big role in people's view of new technologies and the difference is particularly marked when it comes to social media. People under 40 are significantly more inclined than those over 40 to believe that the use of social media platforms can lead to improvements. In fact there's evidence that they see it as a substitute for cloud computing. When it comes to keeping track of data in different systems, for example, people under 40 are far more likely than those over 40 to say they think social media will improve things, but less likely than those over 40 to say the same of cloud computing. But the biggest difference in opinion is around the contribution made by social media to reducing workload. In this respect about a third of people over 40 think the use of social media will lead to improvements, compared with nearly half of those under 40.

It's likely that much of the faith shown by people under 40 in social media will leave their older colleagues perplexed. Why is it, for instance, that people under 40 are so confident that the use of social media platforms can reduce their workload? Isn't Facebook just a website you visit to chat with your friends when you ought to be doing something more productive? The conclusion has to be that young people are seeing uses for social media platforms that haven't even occurred to their older colleagues yet (and may never).

Opinions are similarly, though not to the same extent, better amongst those under 40 than their older colleagues about the benefits of BYOD. Where there's least difference of opinion is around the question of the benefits of cloud computing, though it's worth noting that this is the only technology for which the difference of opinion ever swings the other way.

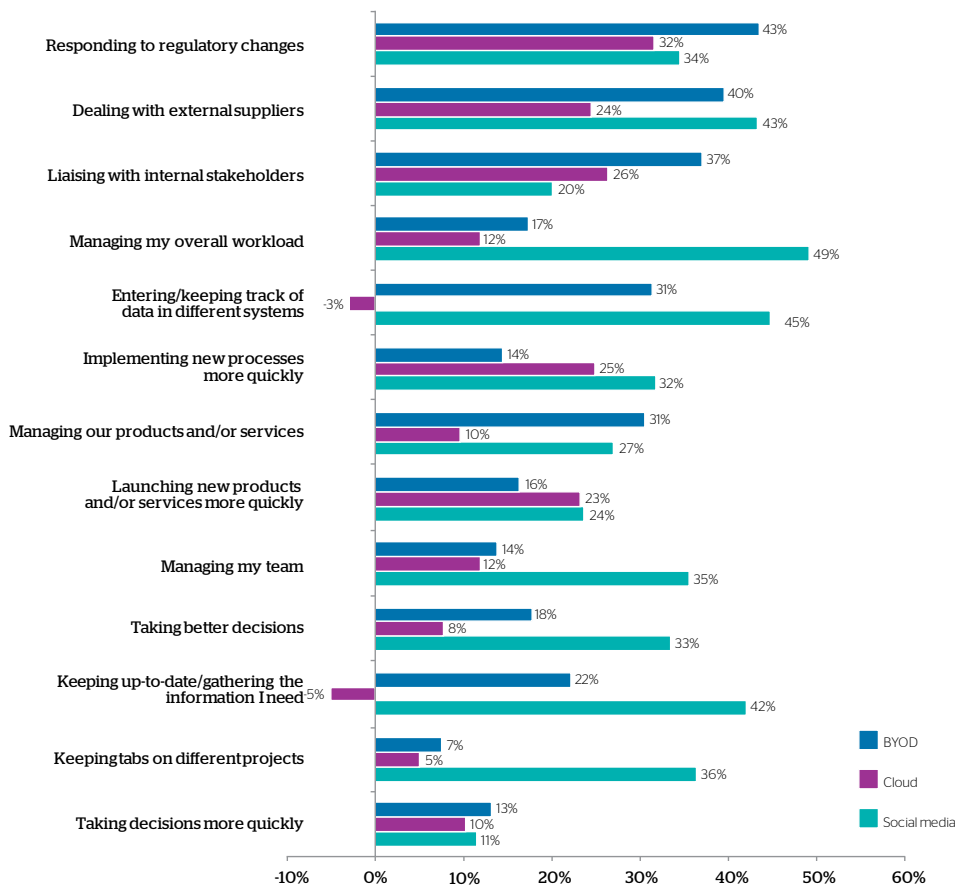


Figure 8: How much more (or less) likely people under 40 are to believe that new technology will lead to improvements than people 40 years or older

The lessons to be learned

Conflicting opinions and the relative immaturity of the new technologies discussed in this report lead to a wide range of messages about what an organisation should do with them. Three stand out more than any others:

- ▶ **Adopt a BYOD strategy in your organisation.** Allowing employees to work with their own devices and applications appears to hold the greatest immediate potential of all new technologies to improve productivity and the working life of employees
- ▶ **Recognise, but don't over-react to, the potential of social media platforms.** Give the youngest people in your organisation the most active role in determining what it will be used for in future. It might not suit everybody today, but its use in the long-term may be far greater than the most senior people can envisage. Monitor its potential both as an internal communication tool but also as an alternative to more traditional interpretations of cloud computing by running pilots in which it replaces email or other cloud-based services
- ▶ **Good communication is critical.** Old-fashioned top-down change initiatives in which massive new systems were deployed across a whole company required buy-in and sponsorship from the board more than anything else. In a world where change is a more democratic process and where technology is both more personal and more transient, it's the ability of people at all levels to communicate that, more than anything else, determines whether a change programme will be successful.

What business leaders also need to understand is that adoption channels are changing. Many of the new technologies which employees want to use are already very well known to, and well tested by, them outside of work. The question now is far less about whether IT departments can persuade employees to adopt new technology, and far more about whether employees can persuade IT departments to support it.

Conclusion

At a time when organisations are trying to do more with less, their willingness and ability to adopt new technology appears to have a material bearing on the extent to which their employees say they can stop wasting time and get things done.

Of all new technology initiatives, finding a way to allow employees to bring their own hardware and software to work appears to have the greatest potential to drive improvements, but there are benefits – some intuitive, some less so – associated with cloud computing and the use of social media platforms, too. Indeed these last will undoubtedly play a big role in our attempts to exploit the first of our keystones and become a zero-email company.

At the same time new insights are emerging about conventional change programmes. Certainly those in which technology plays a big part, alongside those in which organisation re-design is the focus, appear to deliver the greatest successes. But the style of technology-related change programmes has been brought into question by our research, and once again it's the democratisation of technology, of which the Bring-Your-Own-Device movement is such an obvious manifestation, that appears to offer the greatest potential.

Technology has moved on, to the point where the questions it raises are very different from the ones it used to raise. The days of one-size-fits-all change by central diktat appear to be numbered, giving way to a more dynamic, localised style of change. If organisations are prepared to recognise this shift and are brave enough to challenge conventional ways of thinking – if the vision of phasing out email and freeing up employees' time to do more important things could, for example, become a reality – then the idea of doing more with less becomes less about paradox and more about paradigm. In other words it's not impossible, it's just difficult.

We hope you'll continue to follow our story as we take the first steps towards changing ourselves.

About Atos

Atos is an international information technology services company with annual 2011 proforma revenue of EUR 8.5 billion and 74,000 employees in 42 countries. Serving a global client base, it delivers hi-tech transactional services, consulting and technology services, systems integration and managed services. With its deep technology expertise and industry knowledge, it works with clients across the following market sectors: Manufacturing, Retail, Services, Public, Health & Transports; Financial Services; Telecoms, Media & Technology; Energy & Utilities.

Atos is focused on business technology that powers progress and helps organisations to create their firm of the future. It is the Worldwide Information Technology Partner for the Olympic and Paralympic Games and is quoted on the Paris Eurolist Market. Atos operates under the brands Atos, Atos Consulting & Technology Services, Atos Worldline and Atos Worldgrid. For more information, visit: www.atos.net.