



SURVEY & FINDINGS

IT's Role Building a Connected Digital Workplace in a Remote World

In the first few months of remote work, organizations were scrambling to set up short-term solutions with the assumption that work would be back to “normal” by the end of the year. Now we’re seeing that short-term changes must now become long-term solutions.

This report covers what we’ve learned from surveying 1,000 Technology leaders on what they’re prioritizing to support sustainable remote workforces. It’s time to think about this for your organization.



Remote Work is Here to Stay. What's Your Plan?

2020 has radically changed what the workforce of today looks like. From Zoom call packed days to elaborate home office setups, it has changed our daily workflows in more ways than one. What seemed like temporary changes are becoming permanent. This begs the question: How is your organization managing remote work for the long-term, and who in your organization is taking lead of this effort? And, how do you take stock of your organization's current collaboration technology?

The workforce is becoming even more distributed. Teams are not only working across continents and time zones, but they're also dealing with vastly different work schedules. With this distribution comes an increased sense of disconnection. Organizations have tried to keep their workforces connected in creative ways,

however, over a year in, it's time to think about how to convert temporary adjustments into long-term solutions.

We're hearing from employees that remote work is now a permanent part of their work-life. A recent [PWC report](#) revealed that going forward, **83% of officer workers want to work from home at least one day a week**, and 55% of employers anticipate that most of their workers will do so long after COVID-19 is no longer a concern. It appears that flexible work weeks will be a norm not only in the present but also for the foreseeable future. No matter the solution, whether it's a hybrid office-home schedule or a complete work-from-anywhere model, organizations will need to figure out how to make remote work a success.

Although employees anticipate adjusting to long-term remote work, they are already experiencing challenges. According to Slack's [Nationwide Remote Work Survey](#), compared to experienced remote workers, newly remote workers are struggling to adapt to their new workplace reality. One, they are struggling to stay productive. According to the survey, **"a third of newly remote workers say that working from home has negatively affected their productivity."** And two, they are struggling to connect to their teams. The study notes that, **"45% of newly remote workers report that their sense of belonging suffers at home**, compared with only 25% of experienced remote workers." Framed another way, newly remote workers are nearly twice as likely as their experienced counterparts to say that their sense of belonging has taken a hit since they started working from home.

This leads to three important questions organizations should be asking themselves:

- 1** *How are we supporting our current (and growing) remote workforce, and how are we adapting temporary changes to become sustainable solutions?*
- 2** *Who in our organization is leading these initiatives and what is their knowledge of our current collaboration technologies?*
- 3** *Without in-person interactions, how are our employees finding the right information about the right people to collaborate within a remote-first workforce?*

We've done some digging into these questions by surveying 1,000 Technology leaders at companies of 1,000+ employees who are thinking about how to support their remote workforces. Here's what we found.



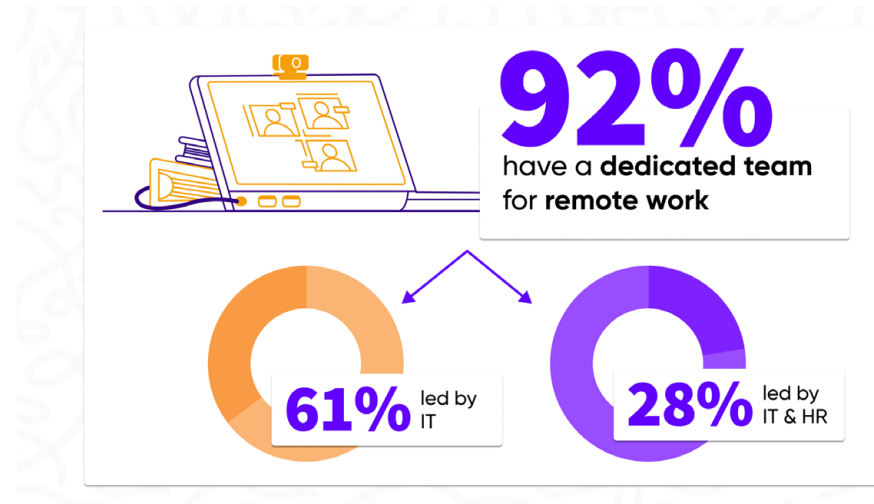
It Takes Teamwork, and IT is Here to Lead

Finding #1: Organizations that are effectively planning for long-term remote work have a taskforce that is dedicated to supporting remote work.

Our survey found that the majority of respondents are continuing to work remotely in the future compared to pre-COVID levels. Of these respondents, **92% state that they have a dedicated team that is currently handling remote work.**

Of those who have dedicated teams, 61% are led by IT and 28% are led jointly by IT and HR. Although IT leads the majority of these teams, it's important to note HR's role in collaborating with IT to support remote work. According to our survey, IT's top

initiatives include: supporting remote work, improving collaboration, and improving IT support. IT has a critical role in shaping and supporting the experience of work, especially when that work is happening remotely. As the digital experience is now the work experience, it's more important than ever that employees have the tools they need to connect and collaborate. This need invariably ties to IT's involvement in the evaluation, purchase, and management of their organizations' collaboration tools, which leads to another finding.



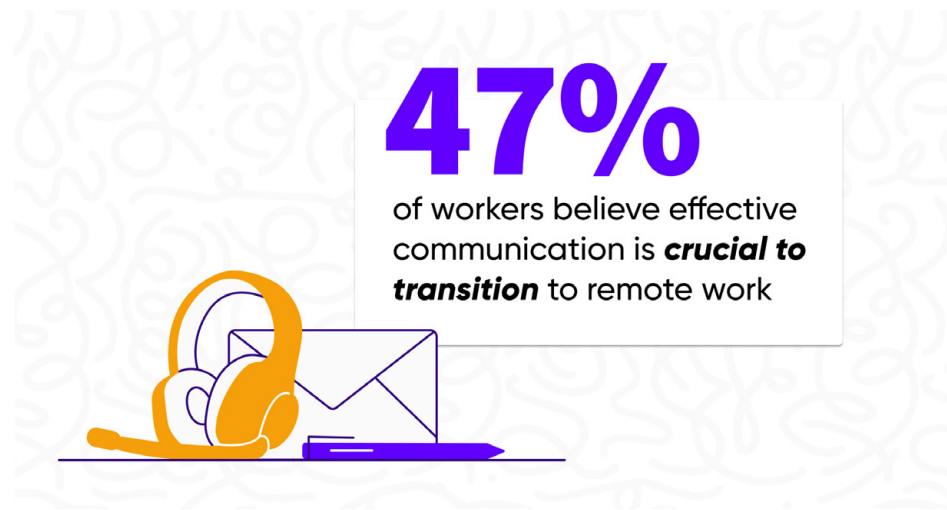
Finding #2: One of the smartest moves that a business leader can make in the near term is investing in tools that support communication, collaboration, and connection in their workforce. And which group should drive this initiative? Most likely, IT.

According to [research from MIT Sloan](#) on how leaders can support remote work, the key is maintaining effective communication. They explain, "When employees work from home, they can feel disconnected from their organizations. Nearly half (47%) of

participants in our survey cited effective communication as crucial to their transition to remote work." The key to effective communication is much more than having channels through which you can contact your coworkers. It's understanding who you need to talk to, to get the information you need to get your job done.

In a pre-COVID world, finding the right person with the piece of knowledge you need to move a critical task forward was more straightforward. You could turn around and tap someone on the shoulder to ask a quick question. You could overhear a conversation in a conference room. Now, in this digital work environment, it boils down to leveraging technology that allows employees to explore the knowledge, skills, and experience available in their organizations.

If you don't currently have this capability in your organization, who should you consider to set up this capability? We found that IT has the power here. Approximately half of our survey respondents identified IT as the evaluator, purchaser, and manager of enterprise employee collaboration tools. As our findings suggest, collaboration tools have a significant impact on remote workers' feelings of connection and ability to find the information they need to work productively. However, there is one important step you need to take before investing.





Evaluate the Gaps in Your Collaboration Tools

Finding #3: Before jumping into purchasing new tools to support your remote workforce, stop and evaluate the state of your current collaboration tools .

Once you've analyzed what you have, you'll probably find that you have plenty of collaboration tools. According to [Okta's 2020 Businesses at Work Report](#), the average company uses 88 workplace tools. **Specifically, we found that 48% of respondents identified that they are already managing over 20 different pieces of software that collect and/or store employee information** i.e. communication tools, collaboration tools, directory systems, HR tools, project management systems, etc.).

Having a plethora of tools causes two problems:

1. You have plenty of ways to communicate with people in your organization, but a huge gap in terms of understanding who to communicate with and how to enhance the power of those connections.

When considering a tool, rather than asking, will this tool help my remote employees connect? Take it one step further and ask, will this tool help my remote employees find the information they need to connect and collaborate more effectively? Does your current tooling provide a centralized place to understand the skills, experience, contact information, organizational structure, etc. of your people that is essential for your employees to know about one another and collaborate effectively? It's increasingly difficult to maintain visibility of this information as a remote organization grows. And according to 78% of respondents, having access to this information is "very important" to their ability to collaborate effectively. So, when your IT leaders are searching for tooling that supports your remote workforces, consider this nuance.



2. Too many tools can cause inconsistent employee data that leads to a disjointed, inconsistent, and ultimately inefficient employee experience.

With employee information living in different systems, delivering it in a consistent way to both your IT teams and employees is very challenging. When an internal recruiter needs to find someone with a specific certification, or a developer needs to retrieve something as simple as a person's photo, they find it exists in multiple systems—sometimes with different or conflicting data. Bringing this data together to a consistent, accurate source provides value that could save countless hours. 88% of our respondents said they would find value in an API that could act as a single source of employee information, saying it would save time doing manual data pulls and resolving inconsistencies that inhibit better collaboration across the enterprise.

When evaluating your current collaboration technologies, and when searching for new tools, an essential consideration is how effective they are at equipping your people with the information they need to connect, communicate, and collaborate more effectively. Consider an API that helps bring data together into one place where you can more easily leverage this information.



Conclusion & About Sift

Remote work, and the challenges resulting from this trend, are here to stay. As outlined by both the PWC and Slack reports, and our own survey, how organizations support communication and collaboration will be the key to sustainable remote workforces. In your efforts to plan for the future, consider who in your organization will be leading remote work support. Is it IT? And if it is, IT leaders need to evaluate their collaboration tools' ability to provide employees with the information they need to collaborate. This capability is essential to supporting your remote workforce in the long-term.

KEY FINDINGS:

- > Organizations that are effectively planning for long-term remote work have a taskforce that is dedicated to supporting remote work.
- > Invest in tools that support communication, collaboration, and connection. IT should take a leadership role in this effort.
- > Evaluate the state of your current collaboration tools and your peoples' ability to access the information they need to work effectively.



Sift's modern people directory aims to support remote workforces by allowing people to discover and collaborate with others, both close to their team and across the organization.

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