Achieving success with a flexible workplace

Forward thinkers’ best practices to enhance productivity, spur innovation and reduce costs
Introduction
In our hyperconnected world, employees expect to work from anywhere … at any time … with any device. Each of these new access points, however, increases the IT security perimeter. In the flexible workplace, how can organizations balance the promise of greater productivity that increased access provides with the security concerns increased access creates? And how can they do it without wreaking havoc with the budget? The new, more accessible workplace needs to be, in a word, manageable.

The flexible workplace
Today’s workplace is a virtualized and physical environment characterized by connections, collaboration and user choice that enables the worker to be more agile and perform activities anywhere, anytime—and can ultimately help create greater enterprise value.

This redefined workplace is the result of industry trends in technology and work habits. Today’s workers increasingly meet, share, discover and get work done via technology. They expect the technology tools they have embraced in their personal lives to play an important part in their business lives, as well. This poses important challenges for the organization supporting the workplace.

On average, those taking action now are reporting 20%+ improvements in productivity and cost savings

Overwhelmingly, survey respondents told us that the flexible workplace is a new reality. Seventy-four percent of CIOs and IT managers are placing greater priority on the flexible workplace compared to other investments over the next 12 months. The vast majority expects to make significant investments across all the key attributes of the flexible workplace in the next one to two years.

Moreover, the majority expects the flexible workplace will yield productivity gains and enhanced security. Nearly half believe it will reduce costs and potentially increase revenues (see Figure 1).
There are some important challenges that need to be met—chief among them security and cost. Security is seen as the most significant (see Figure 2 on next page). Interestingly however, security is a key benefit as well as the top challenge. This is not a contradiction in the data, but rather a reflection of the nature of the flexible workplace—which raises security challenges because of expanded, multi-device access while also providing the tools and technologies, such as virtualization, that can make the workplace more secure than it has been before.

**Percent of respondents expecting significant improvements from the flexible workplace**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Expectation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Productivity</strong></td>
<td>Improved employee productivity</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improved employee satisfaction</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Security</strong></td>
<td>Improved security</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Financial</strong></td>
<td>Cost savings</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increased sales/revenue</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 1: CIOs and IT managers expect to see significant productivity, security and financial benefits from their flexible workplace initiatives.*
Achieving success with a flexible workplace

While the promise of the flexible workplace is compelling, most CIOs and IT managers are wondering how to best harness it to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of their enterprises and institutions. These CIOs and IT managers want to know how their peers deploy and manage flexible workplaces.

A cluster analysis of the survey data reveals four types of flexible workplace adopters (see Figure 3 on next page):

- **Forward thinkers** (9 percent) report 20 percent or greater improvement in productivity and cost savings on average. They are more likely to have workplace and mobility strategies in place and support the highest proportion of remote workers and the greatest number of devices.

- **Fast followers** (19 percent) indicate that they achieve 10 percent improvement in productivity and cost savings on average, making particular use of desktop virtualization and software as a service for their service desk.

- **Majority movers** (63 percent) report 6 percent improvement in productivity and cost savings on average. However, their approach to the flexible workplace is more constrained and risk-averse.

- **Late adopters** (6 percent) with smaller and more tactical initiatives report less than 1 percent improvement in productivity and cost savings on average.

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**Most significant challenges in adopting the flexible workplace**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Security most significant challenge</th>
<th>Cost most significant challenge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mobility</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End-user support</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 2: In response to the question “What is your most significant challenge in each of these areas?” CIOs and IT managers chose security by a large margin over the number two challenge, cost.*

**Forward thinkers’ best practices**

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Flexible workplace adopter types

To better understand forward thinkers, it is critical to explore how they are approaching three key focus areas:

- Increasing productivity
- Securing the flexible workplace
- Delivering cost efficiencies

**Increasing productivity**

*Making the move on mobility*

Mobility makes the flexible workplace work, and it is the attribute most in demand by end users. The tools that support users—applications and information—need to go where business is taking place. Recognizing the opportunity, the vast majority of forward thinkers has a clearly defined mobility strategy in place and is executing key tactics faster than everyone else (see Figure 4).
Forward thinkers are making fast use of emerging mobile devices, operating systems, platforms and applications. They recognize that the bring-your-own-device (BYOD) trend is expanding and, rather than trying to limit usage, they are supporting a broader set of devices and operating systems. They are investing in a mobile application platform and creating application stores that favor collaborative and content applications for core business processes versus the back office.

**Improving collaboration through social business**

Forward thinkers are keenly focused on improving enterprise performance through collaboration (see Figure 5). They are leveraging social business to strengthen two-way communication and sharing—both within the organization and with customers, vendors and partners. They understand the productivity upside of offering the kinds of tools employees use outside of work. And as adoption of social collaboration grows, forward thinkers are becoming less reliant on traditional communication tools such as email.

**Supporting employee productivity**

To maintain high levels of productivity, collaborative technology must work consistently, invisibly and seamlessly. When the technology goes awry, CIOs and IT managers need quick and cost-effective fixes. The vast majority of forward thinkers has
moved to virtualized desktop solutions to address service and support (Figure 6). In addition, even more are exploring how to exploit cloud-based virtualization.

**Figure 6:** Forward thinkers are virtualizing workers’ desktops, exploring cloud delivery models and overwhelmingly using group sourcing and crowd sourcing to help reduce end-user support costs.

Forward thinkers are also consolidating service desk processes and using the flexible workplace’s automation tools to reduce per-desktop support costs. They are more likely to employ

**Figure 7:** The top methods forward thinkers are using to help secure the flexible workplace include enhanced encryption of systems and data and biometrics security for mobile devices.

**Key questions to consider: increasing employee productivity**

1. Does your organization have an enterprise-wide mobility strategy?
2. Is your organization adopting desktop virtualization or self-service tools to streamline employee support?
3. How are you using collaboration and social media tools to deliver better business outcomes?

**Securing the flexible workplace**

Survey respondents report that security is the largest and most immediate workplace challenge. What forward thinkers already know, and others are coming to realize, is that the flexible workplace can enable security—at less cost—than previous workplace iterations. The vast majority of forward thinkers has already taken steps to encrypt and secure their systems, data and devices (Figure 7).

**Initiatives contributing to employee services/support performance and improvements**

- Group/crowd sourcing: 88% (Forward thinkers), 42% (All others)
- Explore/use cloud-based desktop virtualization: 76% (Forward thinkers), 44% (All others)
- Virtualized desktop solution: 73% (Forward thinkers), 54% (All others)

**Initiatives contributing to security improvements**

- Enhanced encryption/security of systems and data: 84% (Forward thinkers), 58% (All others)
- Biometrics security for mobile devices: 67% (Forward thinkers), 31% (All others)

With each new access point, the security perimeter grows—and mobility significantly expands the number of access points. Rather than trying to contain the bring-your-own-device (BYOD) trend, forward thinkers are embracing it with security policies and procedures that help employees access enterprise data and applications interchangeably from various devices.
Mobile security covers everything from developing and enforcing strict password guidelines to establishing comprehensive policies regarding supported devices to using biometrics to secure devices.

Virtualization can also offer more control over data and applications, because they both never leave the data center—instead being accessed on demand via a desktop PC, a thin client, tablet, laptop or smartphone. Security measures can be applied consistently and comprehensively with automatic security updates whenever needed, reducing the cost of security and compliance.

Other flexible workplace features play their part, as well. Single sign-on can help users access the data and applications they need, when and where they need them. Automated user authentication helps protect data from unauthorized access and can provide fast, secure and user-driven provisioning of collaborative workspaces.

**Key questions to consider: securing the flexible workplace**

1. Are you confident that your organization’s mobile security strategy is comprehensive enough?
2. Does your organization use advanced encryption or other progressive security techniques to help keep enterprise data secure on any device?
3. Does your company leverage leading-edge security for mobile devices, such as biometrics?

**Delivering cost efficiencies**

Among forward thinkers—those who report achieving 20 percent or more in productivity gains and cost savings—outsourcing is a more prevalent practice. Forward thinkers are more likely than other organizations to outsource any IT function and three times more likely to outsource their overall IT environment (see Figure 8). Organizations that outsource are also more likely to have a wide range of mobility, collaboration and end-user support activities underway.

**Respondents who outsource or use managed services**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Forward thinkers</th>
<th>All others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entire IT function</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service desk</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 8: Forward thinkers are three times more likely to outsource their overall IT function—and nearly two times as likely to outsource their mobility environment and service desk—than survey respondents as a whole.*
Outsourcing can also be a highly effective way to address CIOs and IT managers’ concerns about resource breadth and availability of certain skill sets—for example, virtualization, cloud deployment and security measures—within their own departments. Through outsourcing, forward thinkers access the benefits of third-party expertise and knowledge of the available tools, thereby allowing internal IT staff to focus on other business-critical initiatives and reinvest the savings back into the enterprise.

Key questions to consider: delivering greater cost efficiency
1. What is your strategy for cost reduction and access to new skills?
2. Does your IT department have the resident capabilities for mobility management, collaboration tools, virtualization, security and support?
3. How can third-party providers help your organization achieve its productivity goals?

How to become a forward thinker
How can CIOs and IT managers looking to expand workplace flexibility increase their organizations’ productivity while reducing costs? They can take their lead from the forward thinkers (see Figure 9).

Figure 9: The key components of forward thinkers’ flexible workplace success can be leveraged by virtually any organization.

Forward thinkers are making early and aggressive moves to adopt key mobility, collaboration and employee support capabilities and making strategic use of outsourcing. They are developing comprehensive workplace strategies and aligning those strategies with business goals and objectives.

The importance of strategy
While other adopters are implementing some flexible workplace capabilities, forward thinkers are placing emphasis on the development and execution of flexible workplace strategies that align with core business strategies. Forward thinkers are looking at the bigger picture and making integrated investments.
Case study: forward-thinking U.S. bank builds a strategy for the flexible workplace

With a growing number of employees splitting their time between onsite customer calls and working from home, a U.S. bank sought to improve support for an increasingly mobile workforce. At the same time, the bank placed a high priority on maintaining a tight, centralized management structure geared toward enforcing the industry’s strict security, privacy and compliance requirements.

To get started on the right foot, the bank needed to develop an accurate picture of its current workplace environment—and determine the best-fit opportunities for making that workplace more flexible. Sophisticated analysis methodologies and tools, which anonymously logged user activity over a period of time, revealed an inefficiently configured server infrastructure supporting a portfolio of 2,600 applications. Of those applications, only about two-thirds were actively used.

Creating a virtualized application solution while streamlining the bank’s IT configuration by 60 percent helped deliver comparable performance at lower costs and reduced maintenance. By including the needed Windows 7 migration in the overall workplace strategy, the bank was able to save the time, effort, expense and risk of a separate initiative.

The bank has also enabled mobility support for a wider variety of devices, leveraging the robust security protections built into its newly virtualized application portfolio to help it achieve compliance at lower cost.

The bank’s holistic and strategic approach to the flexible workplace puts it firmly among the forward thinkers. It reports measurable improvements across all three key workplace focus areas—increasing employee productivity, enhancing security and enabling more cost-effective delivery and maintenance.

For more information

To learn more about the productivity, innovation and cost benefits of the flexible workplace, and how to realize these benefits in your own organization, please visit the following website: ibm.com/services/workplace

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Somers, NY 10589 U.S.A.

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