



**New IDG survey identifies four IT priority areas: workplace collaboration; network connectivity and resiliency; cybersecurity; and customer experience.**

At a basic level, the core job of IT executives and managers comprises two fundamental elements. The first is to fully understand the business needs and objectives of the organizations in which they work. The second, overarching job: to deploy, manage, and maintain the IT and networking infrastructures best suited to address those needs and objectives.

Defining these two central and interdependent IT roles is much simpler than achieving them. In our digitally dependent and accelerated world, business objectives as well as foundational technologies are all in a constant state of flux and evolution.

As they navigate within this shifting milieu, IT decision-makers often have little visibility into how their strategies and efforts stack up against those of their industry peers. However, a recent IDG survey helps shine some light on this murky area. The survey examined current technology adoption drivers and deployment activities, and it provides a window into the priorities, successes, and challenges of 100 technology purchasers, evaluators, and influencers.

**Balancing and juggling four key priorities**

The IDG survey polled 100 IT managers involved in technology purchases and working at multinational organizations with 1,000 or more employees. Half of the organizations employed from 2,500-4,999 people, and more than 30% employed 5,000 or more.

At a high level, the survey asked which of 15 activities the organizations were pursuing as part of their digital transformation initiatives. Leading the list: increasing process automation, which was cited by 80% of the respondents.

The next three top-ranked digital transformation activities, each cited by 60% or more of the IT managers, were: ongoing technology maintenance (68%), defining milestones and measures of success (66%), and monitoring and managing network performance (61%).

In and of itself, of course, digital transformation is something of an abstract concept. Activities occurring under the IT umbrella must ultimately serve the main business needs and objectives of each organization.

As shown in Figure 1, of four areas of potential technology investment, improving workplace collaboration and productivity led all others, but not by a significant amount. In essence, all four objectives were deemed important by most respondents.

Clear interdependencies exist among these four core priorities. For instance, internally focused collaboration and productivity as well as externally focused customer experience both depend on a pervasive and resilient networking foundation.

Mitigating cybersecurity risk, meanwhile, is a fundamental and all-encompassing IT and business requirement. The cybersecurity imperative has grown ever more challenging as organizations, employees, and technologies have become more distributed and dispersed.

## Measuring progress in achieving underlying goals

Pursuing each of the four core priority areas for technology adoption requires making progress on a number of underlying tasks and initiatives specific to each area. As part of the survey, respondents estimated their progress in achieving these supporting goals.

For each underlying goal, respondents were asked to characterize their progress in one of six ways: completed, at least 75% progress, at least 50% progress, just started, planning over the next 1-2 years, or no plans. The results, shown in the following four charts, provide a good window into which activities are well underway, and which are lagging.

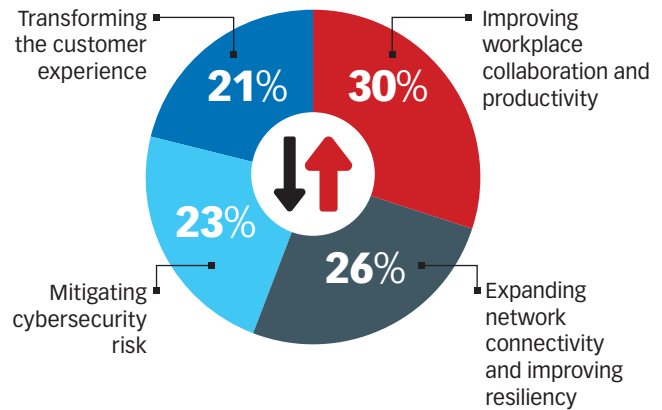
### Improving workplace collaboration and productivity

Providing employees with modern, easy-to-use, and accessible tools was relatively advanced, as was enabling mobile access to company applications and data. The latter goal became especially critical during the past year, as the COVID-19 pandemic sparked a mass migration of employees from offices to work-from-home and other remote work models.

**80%** OF THE RESPONDENTS LIST INCREASING PROCESS AUTOMATION AS A HIGH LEVEL PART OF THEIR DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION INITIATIVES. SOURCE: IDG

## FIGURE 1. Improving workplace collaboration tops priority list

POINTS ALLOCATED TO TECH PRIORITIES OUT OF 100



### Expanding network connectivity and improving resiliency

Forty percent or more of the respondents said they had either completed or made at least 75% progress toward completing four of the six goals in this category. Still, 30% said they were only just starting their efforts or planning their strategies to accommodate the increase in remote workers. Given the scale and the likely durability of the work-from-home trend, a significant number of organizations need to redouble their efforts in this area.

### Mitigating cybersecurity risk

Reflecting the longstanding importance of cybersecurity, the survey found significant minorities of respondents reporting they had achieved at least 75% progress in meeting five of seven core cybersecurity goals. However, large majorities of respondents were only halfway or less toward achieving one of the most fundamental cybersecurity requirements: prioritizing the business-critical elements of their organizations that need protection. Given the potential complexity of such assessments, many organizations may require outside help to address this need.

### Transforming the customer experience

Organizations reported making solid progress across all eight underlying goals associated with improving customer experience. At the same time, for all eight goals, 20% or more of the respondents had either just started work on the goals, planned to start in the coming 1-2 years, or had no plans at present. Most notably, given that many customers now expect organizations to know something about them and their preferences, the limited progress on personalizing interactions could result in decreased customer loyalty and increased churn.

### Investing in technologies to achieve core priorities

IDG also asked the survey respondents about their adoption of, and investment plans for, a wide range of IT and networking technologies. Some of these technologies — for example, collaboration tools and security and risk management solutions — are directly related to one of the four core priority areas.

Others are broader technologies that can support two or more of the four core priorities. Among these multifaceted technologies: SD-WAN, cloud computing, artificial intelligence, and mobile apps.

Four technologies stood out for their relatively high adoption rates enterprise-wide, as shown in Figure 2. Behind them, five technologies have been deployed in business units or divisions at 50% or more of the organizations, while five others are largely in the pilot stage.

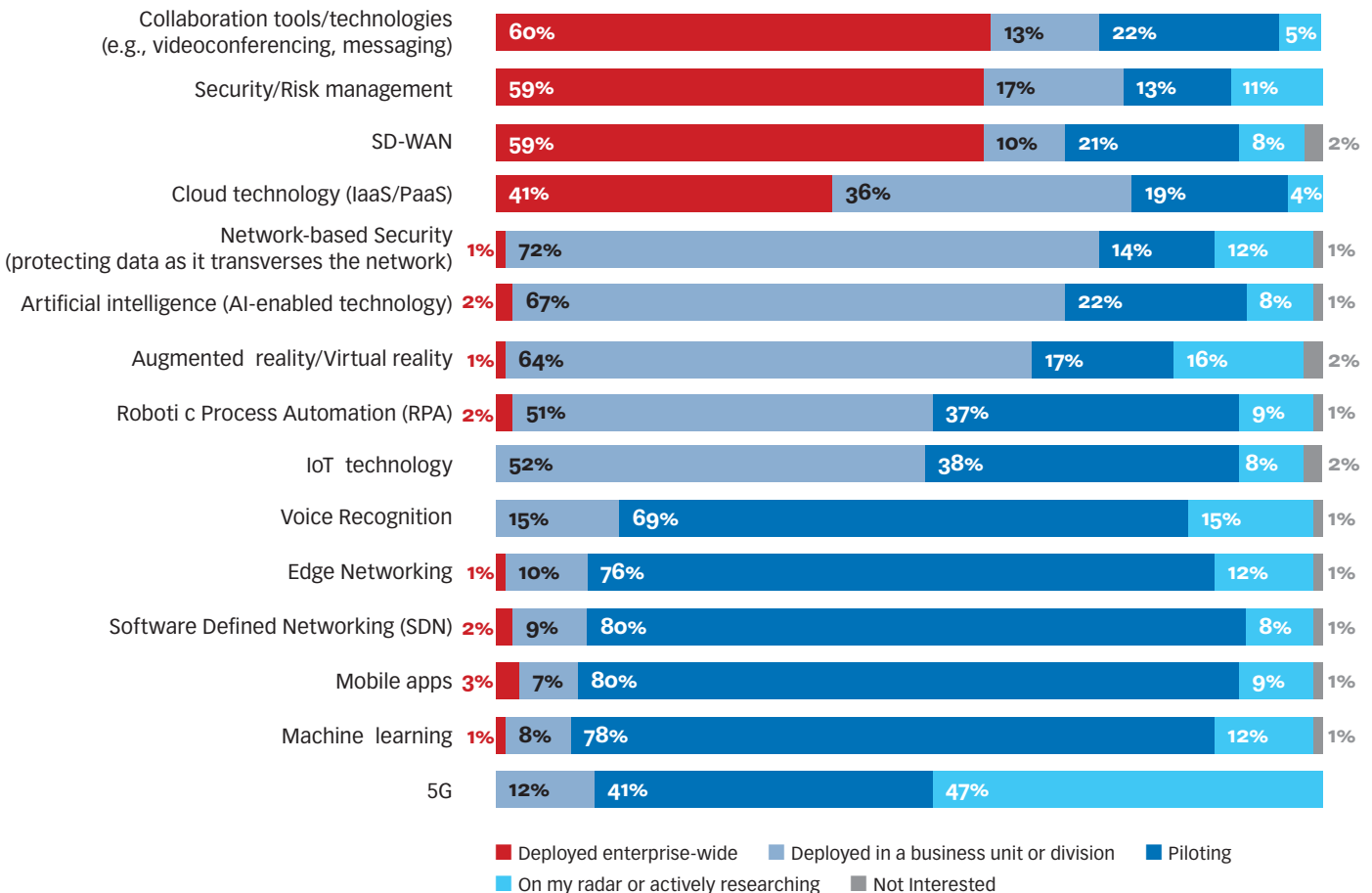
One technology, 5G, was only in pilot or on the radar at 88% of the organizations surveyed. This lagging adoption no doubt reflects the nascent rollout and availability of this advanced networking technology.

Just because some technologies have already been widely adopted doesn't mean they won't receive continued investments. In fact, when asked where they intended to direct new investments, three quarters or more of the survey respondents identified four well-established technologies:

- Collaboration tools and technologies (85% plan new investments)
- Security and risk management technologies (84% plan new investments)
- Cloud technology (76% plan new investments)
- Network-based security technologies (75% plan new investments)

These investment plans reflect the ongoing importance of these four areas, as well as their pace of technology evolution. Meanwhile, no other technology area was identified as a target for new investments by more than 45% of the respondents.

FIGURE 2. Next Generation Technology Adoption





**VERIZON'S NETWORK-AS-A-SERVICE (NAAS) PLATFORM, GIVES CUSTOMERS READY AND COST-EFFECTIVE ACCESS TO THE NETWORKING CAPACITIES AND CAPABILITIES NEEDED FOR THE DELIVERY OF DYNAMIC APPLICATIONS AND SERVICES.**

Interestingly, in two of the top four new investment areas — cloud technologies and collaboration tools — significant majorities of the surveyed IT professionals believed their organizations were already ahead of their industry peers in technology adoption. Their plans to continue investing heavily in these two areas suggests they hope to maintain what they see as a competitive advantage.

The only other technology area in which a large percentage (68%) believed they were ahead of the industry trend was SD-WAN adoption.

In only in two areas did significant majorities say they were lagging their peers in technology adoption: 5G (63%), and edge networking (60%). Both of these technology areas have received significant publicity during the past year, which may have given many IT managers an unrealistic impression of how wide their adoption has actually been.

As they seek to bolster their competitive advantage, or to make up ground on more-advanced industry peers, organizations must find strong technology partners to help them achieve their objectives. Ideally, those partners will have solutions and knowledge that spans collaboration and productivity, network resiliency, cybersecurity, and customer experience.

### **Verizon helps address all four technology priority areas**

Mobile networking leader Verizon can provide organizations with both the solutions and the expertise they need to tackle their core technology priorities. Verizon's digital transformation solutions portfolio encompasses everything from upgraded and virtualized networking infrastructure to collaboration tools to cybersecurity defenses. Combined, these offerings give organizations the flexibility and agility they require to succeed in today's demanding and fast-changing business environment.

Verizon's network-as-a-service (NaaS) platform, for example, gives customers ready and cost-effective access to the networking capacities and capabilities needed for the delivery of dynamic applications and services. The flexible, programmable, and scalable Verizon NaaS platform makes it easy for organizations to access and exploit 5G networking, multi-access edge computing, and artificial intelligence and machine learning, among many other capabilities.

Other Verizon solutions include everything from secure cloud interconnect technology to SD-WAN to remote worker support capabilities.

For more information about how Verizon can help you identify and deploy the technologies critical for achieving your organization's core digital transformation goals, go to <https://www.verizon.com/business/solutions/digital-transformation>