

WHAT'S HOLDING BACK LOCAL GOVERNMENT DIGITAL ADOPTION?

Exploring attitudes to new tech adoption in
local government across the UK



Executive summary

In March 2017, the Department for Culture, Media & Sport published its Digital Strategy, designed to maintain the UK Government's position as a world leader in serving its citizens online.

This paper shows that significant progress has been made based on the responses by more than 1,000 local government staff.

The overwhelming majority of local government organisations have a digital strategy in place. And 82% of those working in local government say the introduction of new technology has a positive impact on their organisation.

Collaboration tools like instant messaging and video conferencing have been widely adopted across local government, and 38% say they have already implemented a cloud-based computer system.

Yet major challenges remain:

- Budget and the perceived cost of new technology are seen as key barriers to the adoption of new technology.
- Only 51% of respondents believe senior management understand the importance of new technology. Just 21% think they invest enough money to stay up to date with the latest developments.
- And more than a fifth (22%) say certain individuals in their organisation are holding back tech adoption to preserve the status quo.



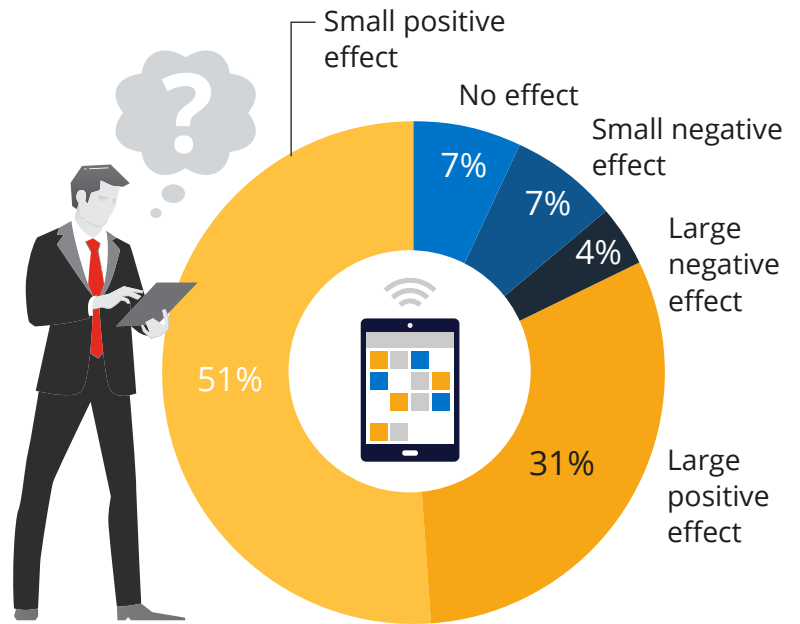
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Research findings

How do local government staff feel about the introduction of new technology?

Respondents overwhelmingly believe that the impact of new technology has had a positive effect. 31% said that there had been a large, positive effect, with a further 51% saying there had been a small, positive effect. Only 11% said there had been a negative effect (large and small) and just 7% believe there has been no effect of new technology.



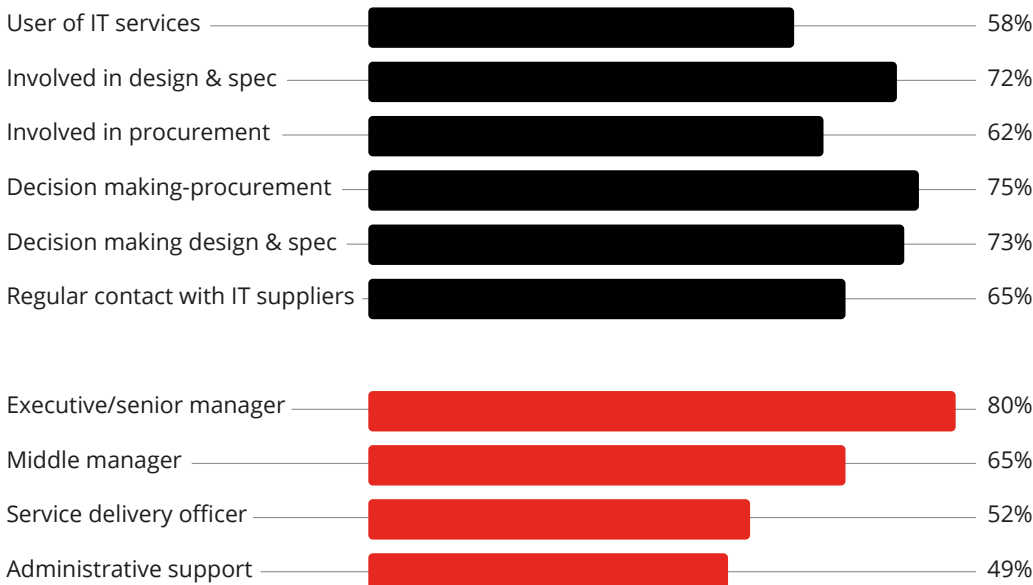
Does local government have a tech plan?

It appears that the vast majority of local government organisations have a digital strategy in place. In fact, 80% of senior staff say they have a plan.

But the study suggests more work needs to be done to communicate this widely – only 65% of all staff are aware that a digital strategy exists.



Our organisation has a digital strategy in place:

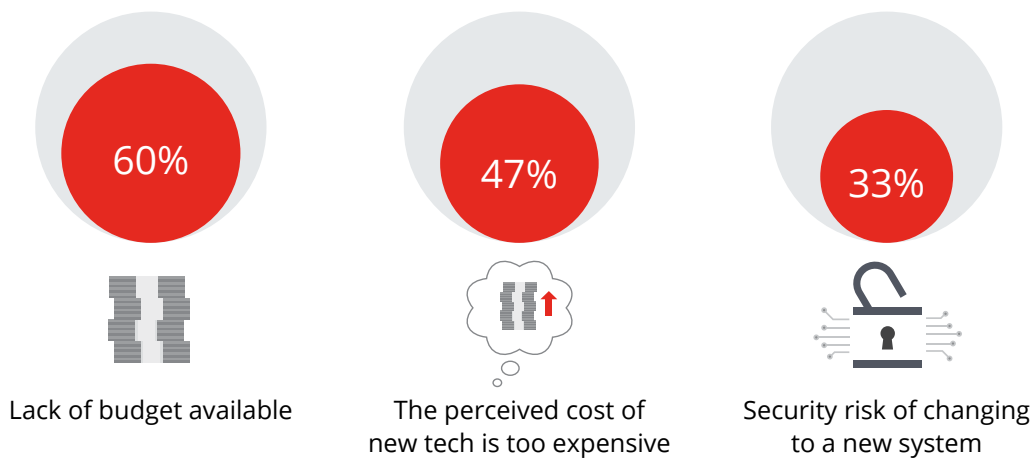


What factors hold back the adoption of new technology?

Given the current pressures on government spending, it's perhaps inevitable that a significant number (60%) of local government workers say budgetary constraints are holding back tech adoption.

Another key concern is the security risk associated with new technology (33%), something which is of paramount importance given the sensitive personal data about millions of citizens held by these organisations.

Top three factors holding back tech adoption

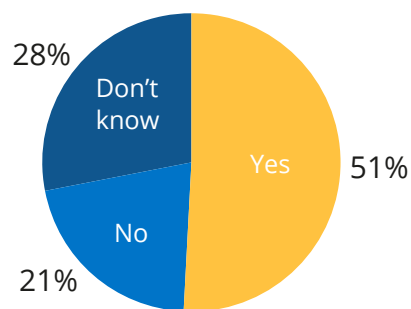


Do senior leaders embrace the adoption of new technology?

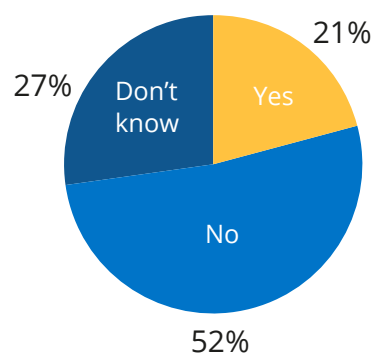
The study found only 51% of respondents believe senior management understand the importance of new technology and just 21% think they invest enough time and money to stay up to date with the latest developments. This contrasts with the private sector, where over half (56%) believe there is sufficient investment in new technology, according to [separate research 8x8 conducted in late 2016](#).



Does your senior management team fully understand the importance of new technology?



Does your senior management team invest sufficient resources to stay up to date with new technology?



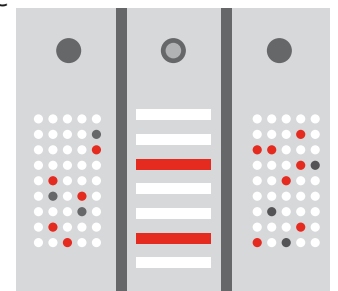
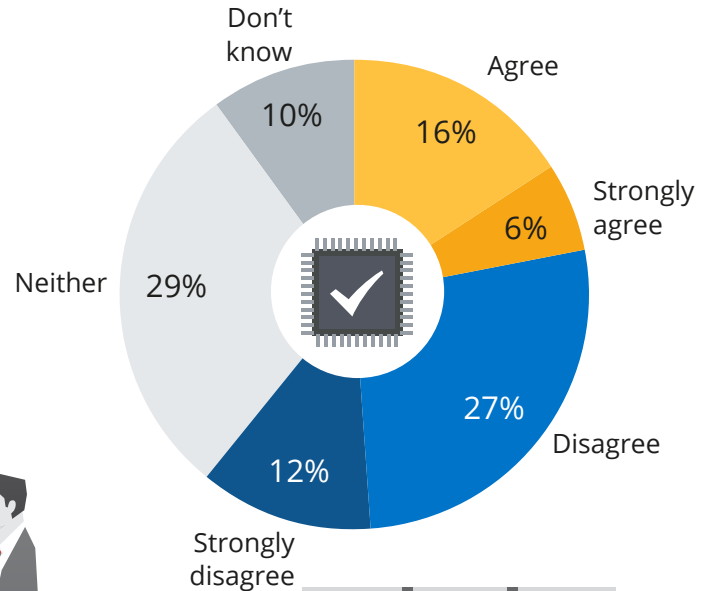
Are some individuals blocking progress to preserve the status quo?

To what extent do you agree with the following statement "Individuals within my local authority are holding back the implementation of new technology to preserve their own position or maintain the status quo"?

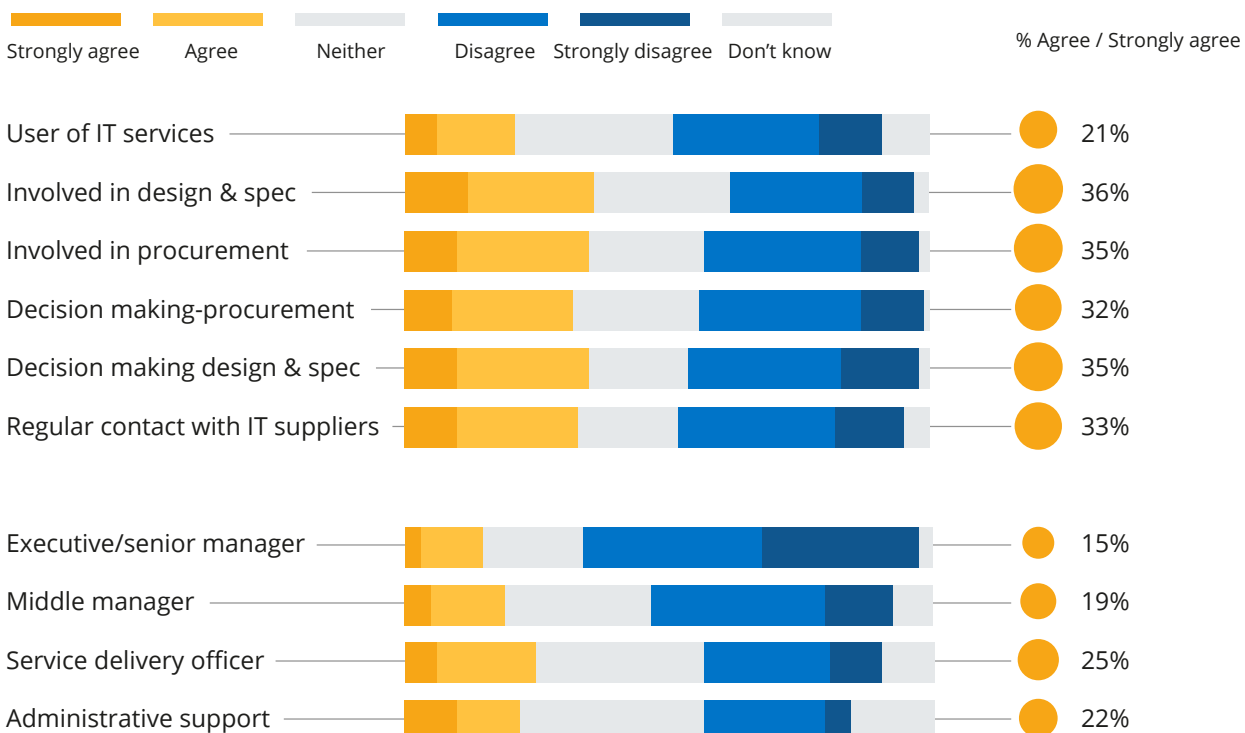
A particularly interesting finding of the study was that more than a fifth (22%) say certain individuals in their organisations are holding back tech adoption to preserve the status quo. This was the fourth biggest barrier, after budget, cost and security.

The more involved with the IT process people are, the more likely they are to agree that certain individuals are blocking IT progress.

For example, this view is more prevalent amongst those in IT procurement, where more than a third (35%) believe colleagues are standing in the way of technology because it will disrupt what they already have in place.



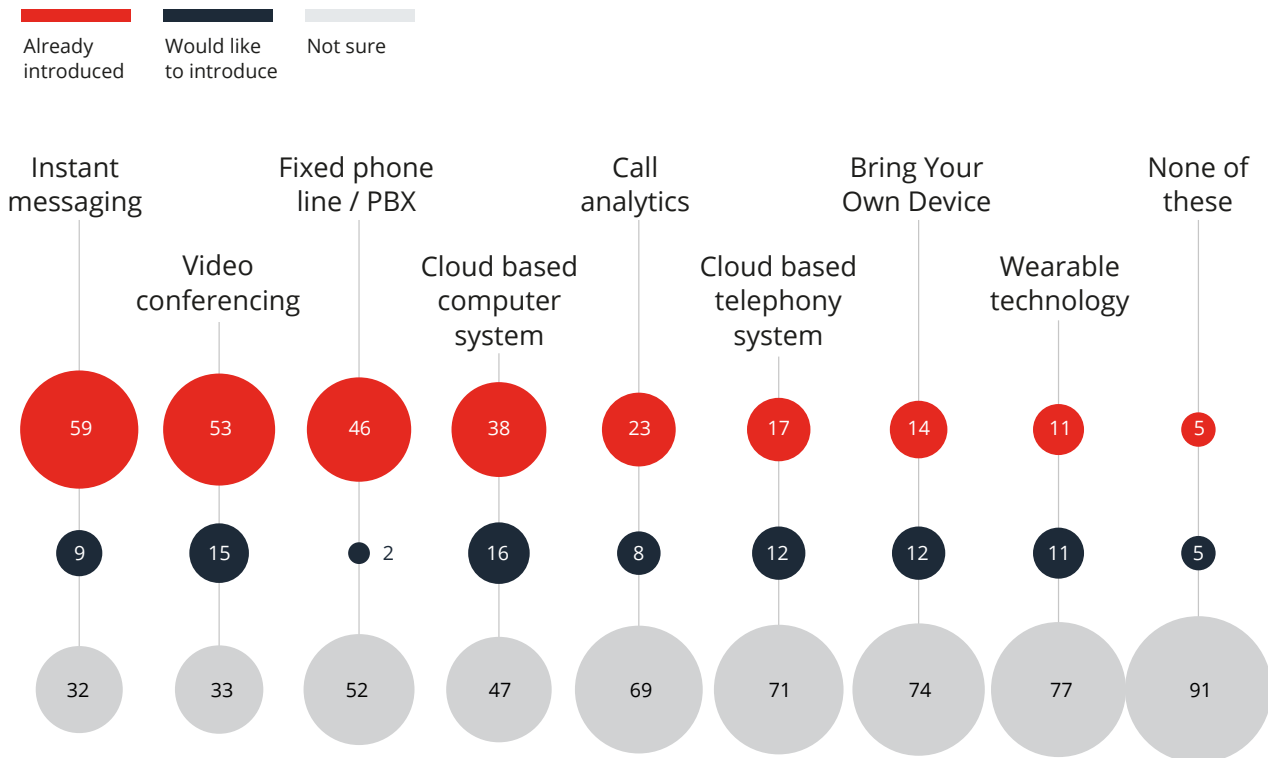
Results by job function:



Top technologies adopted

Collaboration tools like instant messaging and video conferencing have been widely adopted across local government, and 38% say they have already implemented a cloud-based computer system.

However, fixed line phone PBXs still dominate, with 46% of respondents saying their organisation uses one, compared to just 17% that have switched to a cloud-based telephony system.

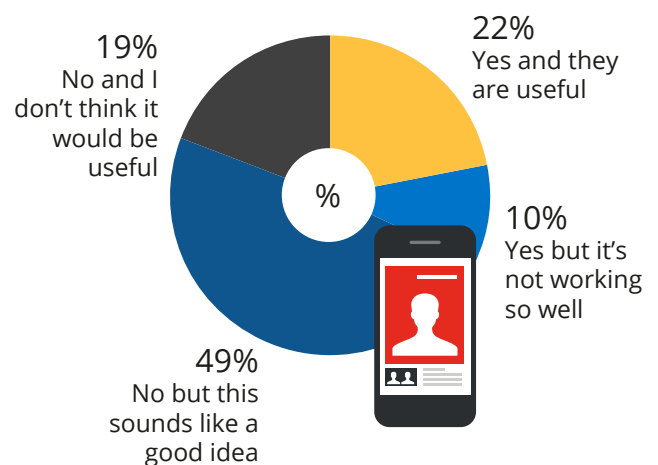


Virtual meetings

Around one in three respondents (32%) said that they have run virtual meetings with staff that work remotely / on the move. Around one in five, 19%, don't use them and don't think it would be useful for them.

County councils are far more likely to be making use of virtual meetings, with 35% of respondents describing them as useful (this compares with just 22% of all respondents saying they use them and they work well).

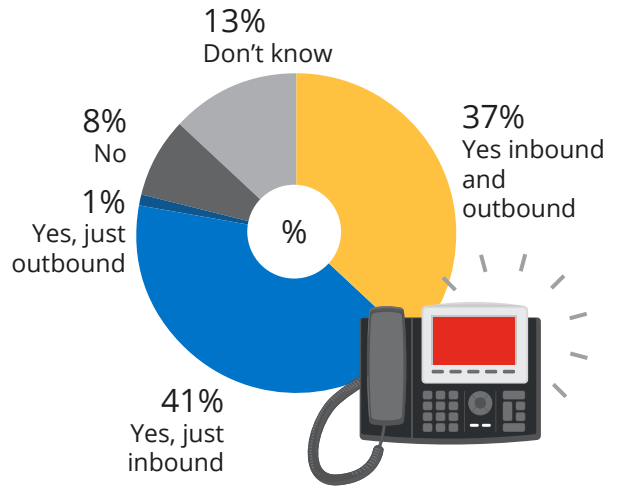
Do you run meetings with staff that are working remotely / work on the move?



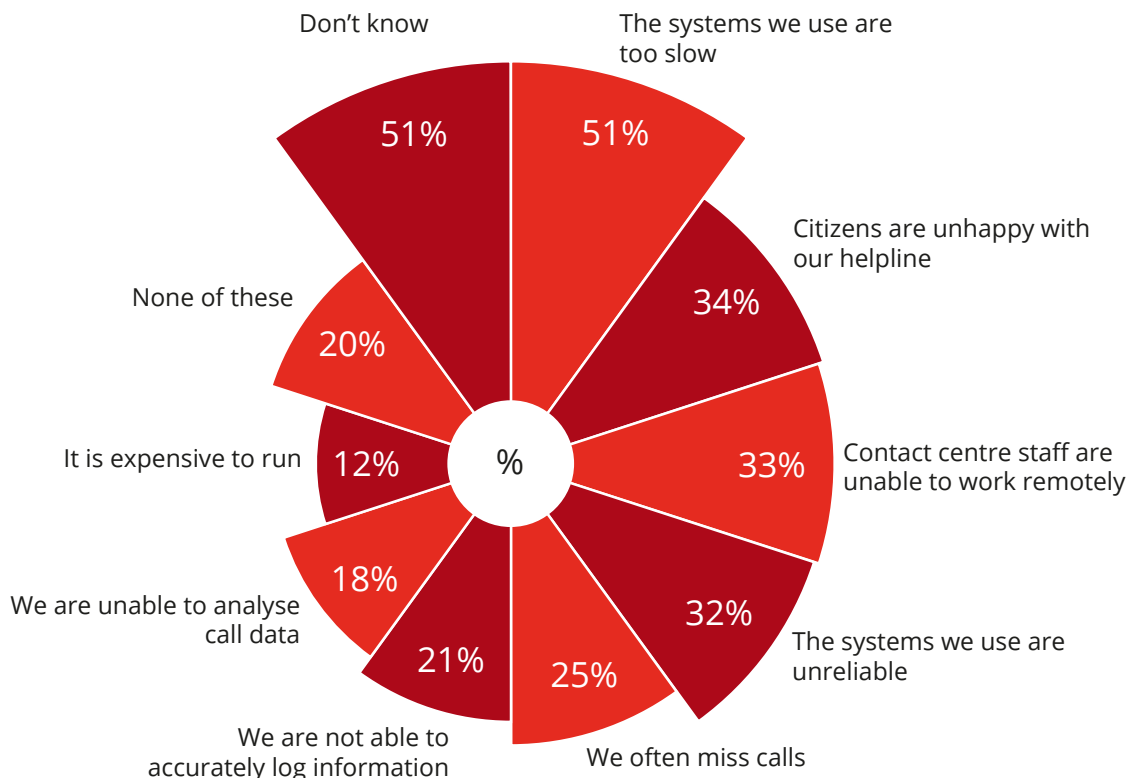
Call centre usage and issues

79% of all respondents say that their local authority runs a call centre. Of these, 37% carry both inbound and outbound calls and 41% just inbound. Just 8% said that their local authority does not run a call centre.

Does your local government service use a call centre?



Respondents who said that their local authority runs a call centre were asked about the problems that the call centre faced and slow systems was a big factor, cited by 51%. There is a cluster of reasons mentioned. Around one in three people said citizens are unhappy (34%), contact centre staff are unable to work remotely (33%) and systems used are unreliable (32%).



Commentary: removing barriers to tech adoption

The UK's Digital Strategy is designed to improve the vital public services on which we all rely.

It's encouraging to see optimism about the benefits of new technology amongst staff within local authorities.

But for the overall goals of the Digital Strategy to be achieved, local government IT leaders need to deliver at a time when there's considerable pressure on public money.

Whilst money can't be created out of thin air, cultural factors can be addressed that might make the path to new technology adoption a little smoother.

One issue that needs addressing is the role of senior staff. Only 51% of respondents believe senior management understand the importance of new technology and just 21% think they invest enough money to stay up to date with the latest developments. This study also suggests a minority of individuals are still standing in the way of change, with more than a fifth of all staff (22%) saying certain individuals are holding back tech adoption to preserve the status quo.

A cynic could argue that protecting the status quo might suit some senior IT leaders who will hold all the knowledge about legacy systems: if they are the only ones who understand that complexity, it clearly makes them more valuable to their organisations.

This isn't a problem unique to the public sector. Last year we conducted separate research which revealed that IT managers in the private sector also face significant opposition from senior leaders when it comes to adopting new technologies such as cloud communications.

Maintaining the status quo for reasons of self preservation is not in the interests of citizens. Ultimately, the damage is felt by the residents missing out on improved and streamlined services.

However, the views of senior business leaders obviously matter hugely to anyone who is trying to introduce new technology. And, ultimately, they hold the purse strings.

That means mid-level IT managers - and the wider technology community - need to do more to explain the benefits of embracing newer forms of technology, such as a shift to cloud communications, and talk the language which the Board and Directors understand.

We all need to do more to explain how key metrics like staff productivity, citizen satisfaction and cost savings can be positively impacted. If you're trying to persuade your senior team to adopt a new technology, I hope my six top tips on the following page may help.

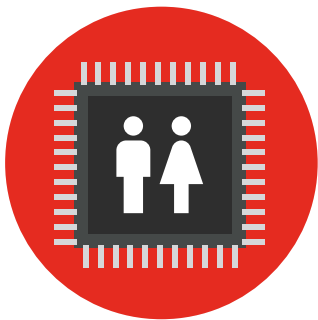


Six ways to get buy-in for new tech projects



1. Strip out the jargon

Nothing is more likely to alienate colleagues, and especially senior leaders, than a pitch drenched in jargon they don't understand. Avoid using terms your audience is unlikely to understand or, if they're essential, explain them as you go. The tech industry is also known for codifying its language - using shorthand to speak to colleagues or others in the industry. But terms that are widely used in technology circles, such as UCaaS, might unnecessarily confuse senior leaders and make them less receptive to new ideas.



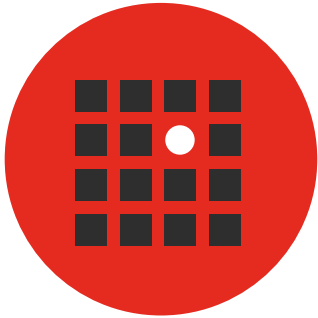
2. Explain how tech can help improve service for citizens

Avoid a temptation to focus on the technological benefits - such as faster computing speeds, or richer functionality. Instead, align the benefits of new tech to the citizens you serve and the goals you're looking to achieve. If you don't know what these are then do your homework first. For example, ask the senior team what their top five strategic priorities for the year ahead are.



3. Don't get defensive if challenged by colleagues

Senior leaders bring vast experience and decision-making skills and part of their job is to anticipate risk. When it comes to cloud adoption, a common senior level concern is around security. It's critical you don't get on to the defensive. Instead acknowledge these concerns and respond with facts. For example, according to the Cloud Industry Forum, perceptions around cloud security do not necessarily match reality: only 2% of organisations state they had experienced a breach of security when using a cloud service.



4. Test out new tech on smaller projects to prove its worth

Large, wholesale change can be scary for any organisation. Whilst you may be angling for a major transformation to the way your organisation operates, try introducing a smaller, low cost project first. For example, switch a particular, non-critical department, to the new system. Once you have proven the success of the project and have data that shows how it's benefited the organisation, suggest a bigger phase of change.



5. Check out what other leading local government organisations are using

Few senior leaders want to risk their reputation on something no one else has tried. One way to create a sense of urgency is by establishing that another local government organisation has implemented a similar idea with success. Nobody wants to stand behind the competition. Saying: "A particular local authority switched to the cloud 12 months ago and they've been able to increase performance by x%" makes a compelling case.

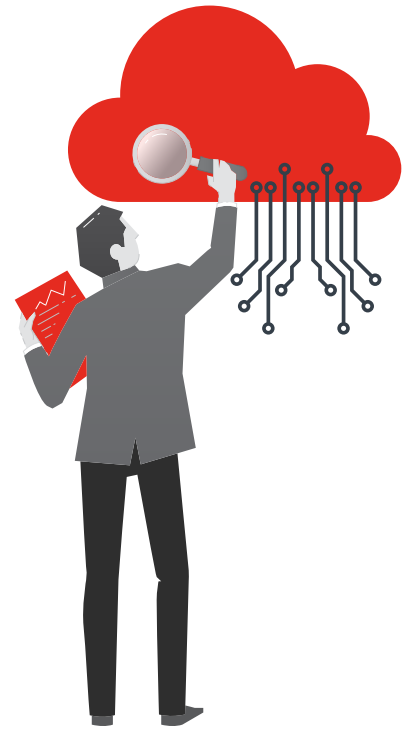


6. Build your case with objective stats and facts

Senior managers are more likely to listen to consensus than your gut feeling or a single example of success. There is a wealth of data available online and via third parties such as trusted channel resellers and analysts that can help you build the case for the change you're suggesting. You should also make use of the data (e.g. customer satisfaction metrics) your organisation tracks to show the positive impact of pathfinder projects like the one suggested above.

Methodology

This paper is based on research conducted on behalf of 8x8, provider of the world's first Communications Cloud. 8x8 commissioned research organisation, Dods, which canvassed the views of 1,095 local government staff in the UK. The primary research was conducted in April 2017.



About 8x8

8x8, Inc. (NASDAQ:EGHT) is the provider of the world's first Communications Cloud that combines unified communications, team collaboration, contact centre and analytics in a single, open and real-time platform. 8x8 eliminates information silos to expose vital, real-time intelligence across multiple clouds, applications and devices to improve individual and team productivity, business performance and customer experience. For additional information, visit www.8x8.com/uk or connect with 8x8 on LinkedIn, Twitter, Google+ and Facebook