A Techaisle White Paper sponsored by Mitel

Building A Strong
Hybrid Work Foundation

Unified communications (UC) tools are vital to modernizing today's workplace

The Drive to Modernize and Enable Hybrid Work

Modernization is most often used to indicate an amorphous state in which an organization can seamlessly deploy new capabilities that streamline current or next-step processes, eliminating the friction inherent in basing these capabilities on inefficient and disconnected methods. Modernization is generally seen as a proxy for process efficiency and has been a management goal for many years. The pandemic brought urgency to these plans. Today, business operations start with, rely on, and in many cases are constrained by access to capable modern infrastructure. Business agility is not simply an outcome of a management objective; it is the foundation of growth and competitiveness in the 'next normal' economy.

As hybrid work environments have emerged in the next normal economy, streamlining business processes and associated communications across locations, users and devices have become imperative. The need to support and expand remote operations called for new ways to communicate and collaborate internally with employees is being felt internally by organizations of all sizes, as well as externally among partners and customers. Modern unified communications (UC) is now seen as a critical driver for business growth and facilitating robust internal employee and external customer experiences.

Techaisle conducted a detailed survey - Mitel-sponsored - of 1,361 organizations in Australia, France, Germany, the UK, and the US. Based on the research, this research paper examines modernization maturity, organizational preparedness for hybrid work, dynamics between employer/employee expectations, and UC solutions' current and planned adoption.
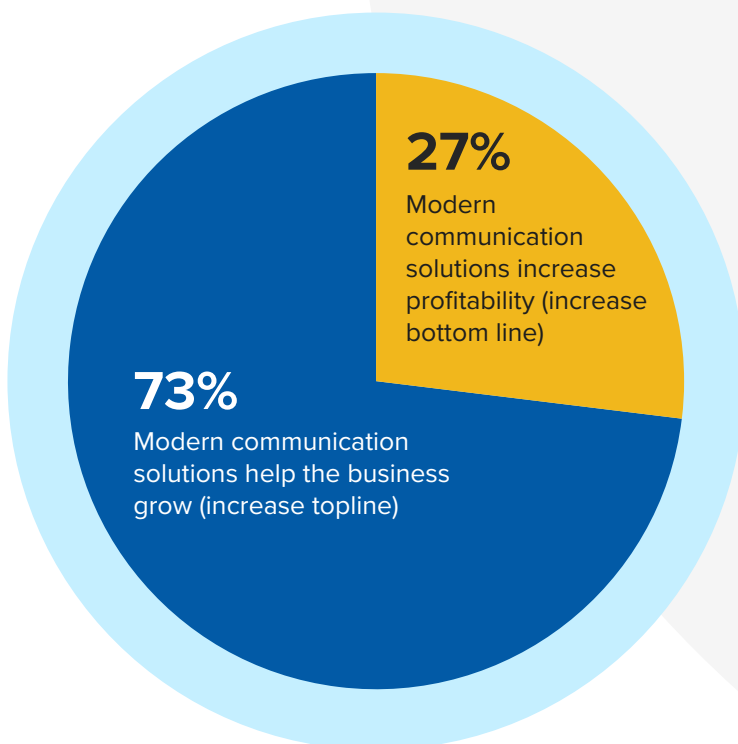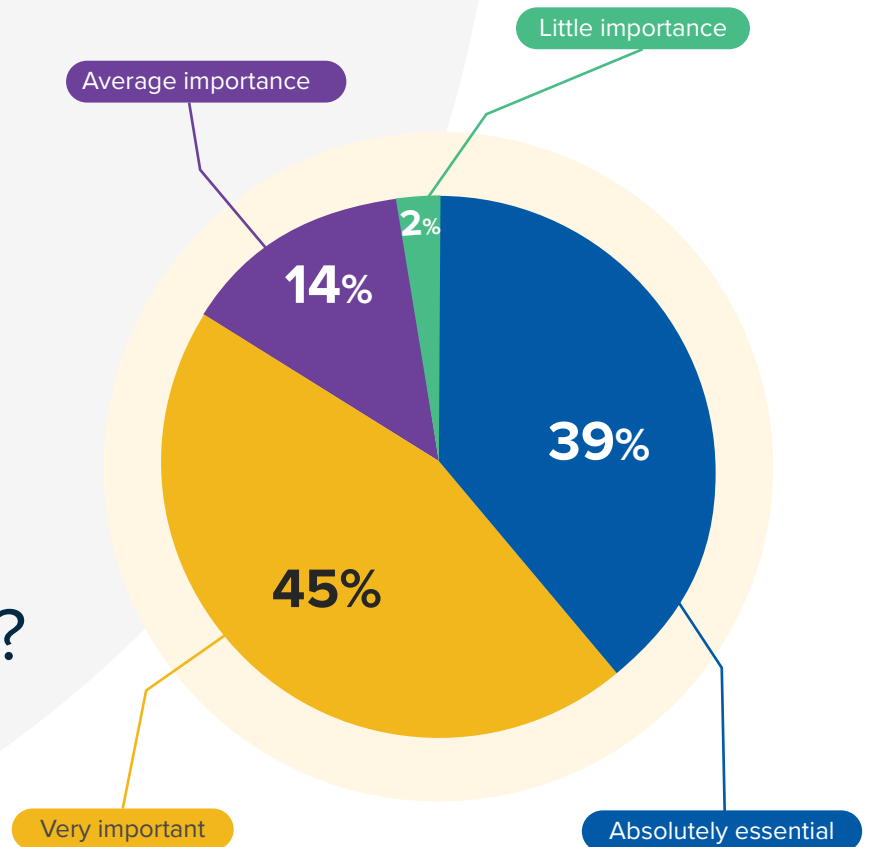
84%

of organizations (250 - 10,000 employees) say that modern communications solutions are vital for business success

73%

say that such solutions drive business growth.

How important is a modern communication solution for business success?

Little importance

Average importance

2%

14%

39%

45%

Very important

Absolutely essential

27%
Modern communication solutions increase profitability (increase bottom line)

73%
Modern communication solutions help the business grow (increase topline)

Do modern communication solutions drive top-line or bottom line

The Pandemic Forced 29% Of Organizations to Expedite Their Modernization Plans

Data illustrates that organizations identified improving employee productivity as the primary objective motivating corporate investments in modernization.

Top five drivers of modernization initiative

44% Improve employee and company productivity

42% Reduce costs

41% Improve engagements with partners contractors, or suppliers

40% Improve operational efficiency

38% Drive innovation

The Road to Modernize and Enable Hybrid Work is Bumpy

While the drivers motivating organizations to embrace modernization are apparent, obstacles inhibit a broader and more rapid rollout of impactful modernization initiatives.

1: Distant hybrid-first mindset

Despite a global move toward hybrid environments, many organizations remain unprepared. Only **11% of organizations** have a hybrid-first mindset, while **44% have basic hybrid capabilities.** Organizations have a long way to go to support remote work adequately. Even though a "hybrid-first" mindset is more necessary now than ever, the notion of hybrid work is still very new for many organizations.

2: Employee-employer disconnects

The survey found that **46% of organizations** see work-hour flexibility as a top initiative to help promote productive workers, but a significant gap exists between employee and employer expectations. Remote/hybrid work culture, support, and technology are not yet well understood and are out of sync. **51% of employees** are worried about work-life conflict compared to only **23% of employers.** At the same time, **50% of employers** are concerned about their ability to effectively manage remote workers, while only **36% of employees** shared that concern.

3: Customer choice vs one size fits all

Survey data reveals organizations have unique communications needs with a mix of infrastructures: on-prem, public cloud, private cloud, or a hybrid solution. A one-size-fits-all approach is not viable for most. It is a customer choice issue. Today, on-premises UC solutions are dominant, with **88% of organizations** using some on-premises UC solutions. However, **44% are combining** on-prem solutions with a cloud solution. Cloud communications solutions are also on their long-term plans, with **47% either evaluating** or currently moving their on-prem communications to the cloud. However, customer choice and complexity create decision inertia.

4: Security and integration inhibitors

Even with the accelerated move towards the cloud, data shows that lack of security and control are critical inhibitors. **65% of organizations** are worried about security vulnerabilities in the cloud technology itself, and **52% are concerned** about unauthorized access to or leaks of their proprietary information. Additionally, organizations are worried about the resources required to integrate operational systems across hybrid traditional/cloud-based applications and systems. They also worry about applying appropriate levels of security and governance to an ever-expanding pool of data that moves at an accelerated pace through an increasingly complex constellation of systems, users, and locations.

Paving the Road to Modernization And Enabling Hybrid Work

The future may be uncertain and the ride bumpy, but there are clear action items that organizations can take now to connect today's capabilities with tomorrow's success. Modernization of unified communications is at the core of organizational agility and viability.

1. Invest in modern technology to support hybrid work

Hybrid work is no longer a question of choice for many organizations. **78% of employees agree that better communication and collaboration tools help them do their job better. Only 34% of organizations believe they have mature remote work practices** with advanced communications and collaboration tools. Data shows that **20% of full-time employees** will work from home exclusively, and **43% will likely work from home**

3-4 days a week. Although most industries believe they have adequate technology to support remote work, many are still in the process of modernizing their communications tools. In Hospitality/ Travel/ Entertainment/ Leisure, **30% of businesses** cite a lack of adequate technology as adversely impacting their employees' ability to work remotely. Manufacturing follows slightly behind at **26% of organizations.** Insufficient investment in hybrid and remote work tools and resources risks furthering an organizational environment where collaboration, productivity, and employee engagement suffers. These same inhibitors likely impact organizational success and growth.
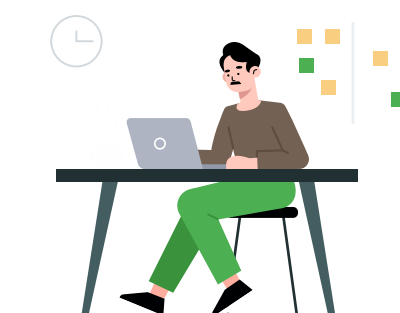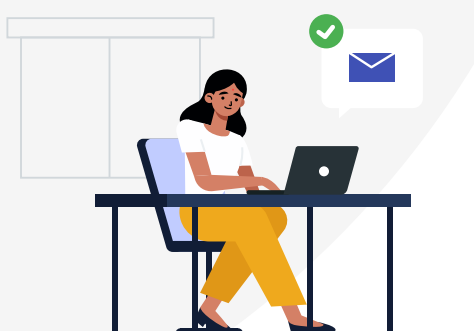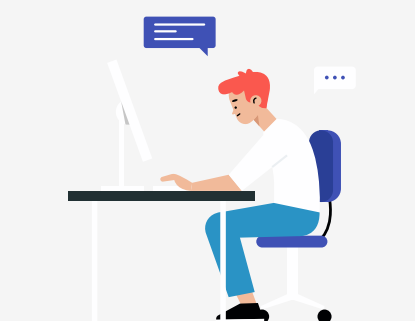
2. Bridge employee-employer divergence, prioritize employee mental health and wellness

Common-area couches do not define office space, and actionable serendipitous hallway conversations do not measure daily office life. It can be hard to replicate these interactions in a remote or hybrid setting, especially if organizations have inadequate communications technologies. **34% of employees are concerned with loneliness while working remotely, while only 27% of employers are worried about the same.**

Organizations must ensure a commitment to employee mental health and wellness. An excellent first step is to alleviate the frustration and fatigue from management misunderstandings and communication failures. In addition to providing the right technology solutions, employers must also listen to and value their employees' priorities. This commitment can be made through consistent evaluations and validations of employee concerns, and implementing appropriate business practices and collaboration tools that address these concerns. Approximately **50% of organizations** have a continuous feedback/assessment process to check employee expectations, **but 26% do not have this kind of process in place yet,** which in our view reflects a concerning lack of employee engagement. Investments in modern UC solutions can be a catalyst for efficient work and seamless connections, including between employees, employers, and co-workers.

3. Modernize UC solutions

Underpinning a healthy, hybrid work environment, UC is central to organizational modernization. Team collaboration solutions are the top priority for **54% of organizations, and organizations clearly prefer solutions that are multi-use and agile. 60% of organizations prefer the availability of a range of the latest functionalities as business requirements continue to change and markets evolve. 69%**

want to invest in multi-purpose communication and collaboration devices rather than single-purpose, dedicated devices. The right UC solutions allow for flexibility, complete with various features, and integrate well with other technology solutions such as office suites, project management, and CRM solutions.

As hybrid and remote work continues, video meetings will remain the primary way to collaborate. Employees expect to spend more time with coworkers on a screen, regardless of whether they work at home or in the office. Employees expect to spend **17% more of their time on video communications for the next two years.** A commitment to success in a hybrid work environment requires immediate action backed by the right communications solutions and daily business practices that support employees working in this environment.

4. Invest in a deployment model that makes the best economic sense

Organizations want convenient ways to purchase modern UC solutions, mainly in the form of operational expenditures (OPEX) — day-to-day, or often one-time, purchases to keep business processes moving or capital expenditures (CAPEX) — purchases, often through a contract, designed to be used over the long-term. When it comes to UC specifically, **60% of organizations prefer to purchase a UC solution that comes with an annual contract, while 40% prefer month-to-month services with a yearly contract.** UC providers who offer flexible purchase models are clearly better positioned to attract organizations wanting to modernize their communications.

5. Find the best fit for your vertical

Techaisle's survey examined the modernization trends by vertical industries in each geography. Data reveals that requirements vary by verticals and geo. Aligning the requirements with business needs, learning from use cases of other organizations in the same vertical will help in reducing adoption friction and deployment complexity. Key takeaways across verticals are:

1 A hybrid UC state is more than a waypoint on a cloud adoption journey; it is the final destination for most organizations in highly regulated verticals like healthcare and the public sector

2 Although most verticals believe they have sufficient existing communication capabilities, many are implementing modern technology

3 Modernization of communications is a top priority for financial services and information/media businesses

4 Manufacturing, healthcare, retail/wholesale, and professional business services are in the planning/evaluation stage

5 Multiple communication platforms are most prevalent in manufacturing, followed by financial services, transportation, construction, and real estate

6 Telecom, Prof. business services, hospitality and financial users are the highest users of cloud communication solutions

7 Retail, resources and hospitality are less inclined to move to UCaaS but they are open to being persuaded by use cases, focus on security, privacy, regulations

8 In two years, employees in manufacturing, hospitality, retail will see the highest percent increase in time spent on video communications, as compared to today

On the Drive to UC Modernization, Picking the Right Tour Guide is Critical

Lack of operational agility, fear of security breaches, and inability to migrate applications/systems to the cloud are critical barriers to UC modernization. It is true across all countries surveyed. However, the barriers to modernization can be overcome with the right partner.

Techaisle's research finds organizations must consider many factors when investing in modernization efforts. The complexities can be overwhelming — from navigating hybrid work challenges, selecting the right communication and collaboration tools, and creating a culture that keeps employees happy and engaged. Techaisle sees a few critical steps organizations can take now to begin mitigating potential pitfalls:

1. Evaluate your hybrid work environment

If your organizational productivity has suffered since the onset of a transition to hybrid work, then it's likely your hybrid work environment needs modernizing. This lack of productivity may show itself in the proliferation of silos, incomplete deliverables, and dysfunction in business processes that once worked successfully. Ask yourself, is your UC solution working for you or against you?

2. Check in with your employees

Create a safe space where your employees can speak freely about their struggles balancing the demands of hybrid work with personal life. Once you understand your employees' concerns, invest in solutions that promote connectivity and communication, ultimately leading to great communications experiences that leave no one (customers and employees) feeling left out. Don't let employee wellness be just lip service or a few cursory attempts at meeting their needs. Be intentional in providing a workplace that relieves stress and fuels engagement. Maybe that means taking an unconventional route — through new activities or team-building exercises — to promote mental health awareness and avoid burnout.

3. Pick the right UC modernization tour guide

When making the decisions on this journey, it helps to have a beacon who is both an expert in hybrid work efficiency and can provide solutions that make decisions easier. This tour guide should lead organizations to a modernization destination that includes a UC solution with five key attributes:
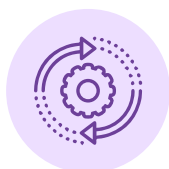
Agility

The ability to deploy quickly through the organization and not prompt a "wait and see" approach after initial adoption

Adaptability

The ability to meet business needs, opportunities, customers, and competitors as they evolve

Transformative

Go beyond business as usual to be a disruptive, modern force

Flexible

Capable of integrating across multiple areas, applications, workflows, employees, and business processes

Empowering

An invisible work ally, delivering business agility, reducing cost, improving operational efficiency, driving innovation, and empowering productivity while helping all employees achieve work-life balance, wellness and health

Mitel's Customer Lifecycle Management approach is designed to evolve as their clients evolve and help their customers experience these five attributes. Based on our findings, this is a winning strategy.

Maybe an organization's on-prem solution isn't enough anymore, and they want to know their cloud-based options. Perhaps they've realized a UCaaS solution could be beneficial but don't know how to implement it into their workflow. Companies like Mitel are geared towards providing support whenever it's time to make a change. Furthermore, partnering with a trusted expert who can present a range of practical options in your modernization journey — with a primary interest in doing what's best for your organization's specific use case — is invaluable.

For more on Mitel and their UC products and solutions, visit https://www.mitel.com/

APPENDIX

GEO DIFFERENCES

Hybrid work status by country

US

| 9% | 42% | 36% | 12% |

Australia

| 12% | 43% | 33% | 13% |

UK

| 16% | 43% | 33% | 8% |

France

| 12% | 42% | 35% | 11% |

Germany

| 10% | 47% | 32% | 11% |

■ Non existent hybrid work ■ Basic hybrid work

■ Mature hybrid work ■ Hybrid first mindset
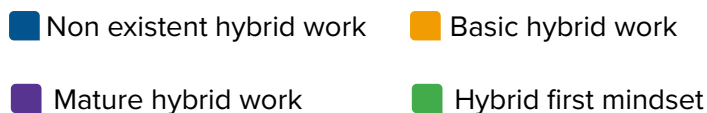
Definitions

Non-existent hybrid work = prefer in-person, in-office work with basic phone/email, some office-centric tools

Basic hybrid work = Remote work is enabled with specific guidelines, prefer digital meetings, online communication tools

Mature hybrid work = strong remote work practices, advanced communication and collaboration tools

Hybrid first mindset = established remote work environment, both async and synchronous communication, work-life balance a priority

Pandemic's effect on accelerating modernization plans

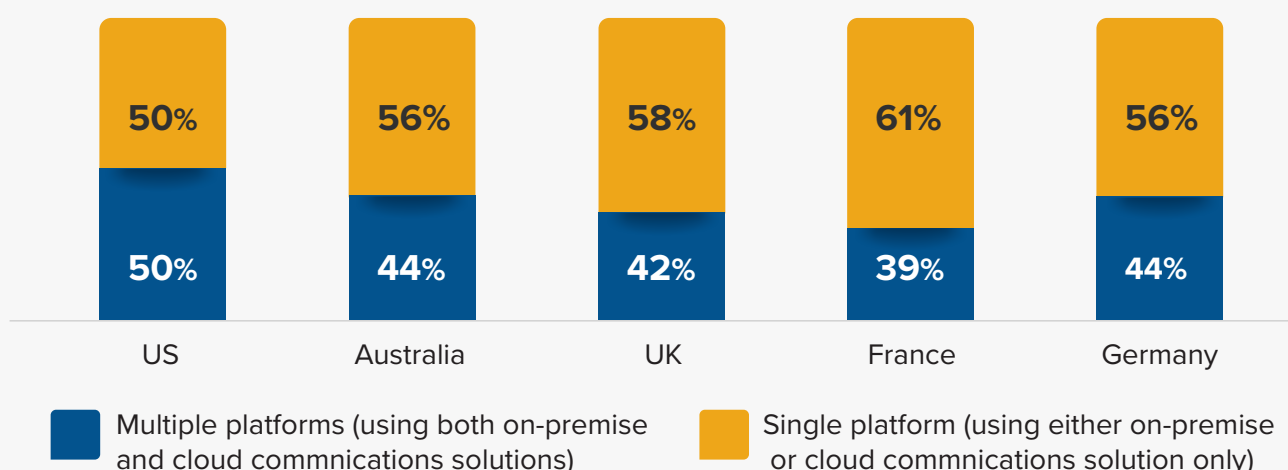|	US	Australia	UK	France	Germany
Pandemic did not affect our plans	18%	19%	16%	19%	16%
Pandemic forced us to expedite	33%	28%	25%	28%	29%

■ Pandemic forced us to expedite our modernization plans

■ Pandemic did not affect our plans – we are modernizing at the same pace as before
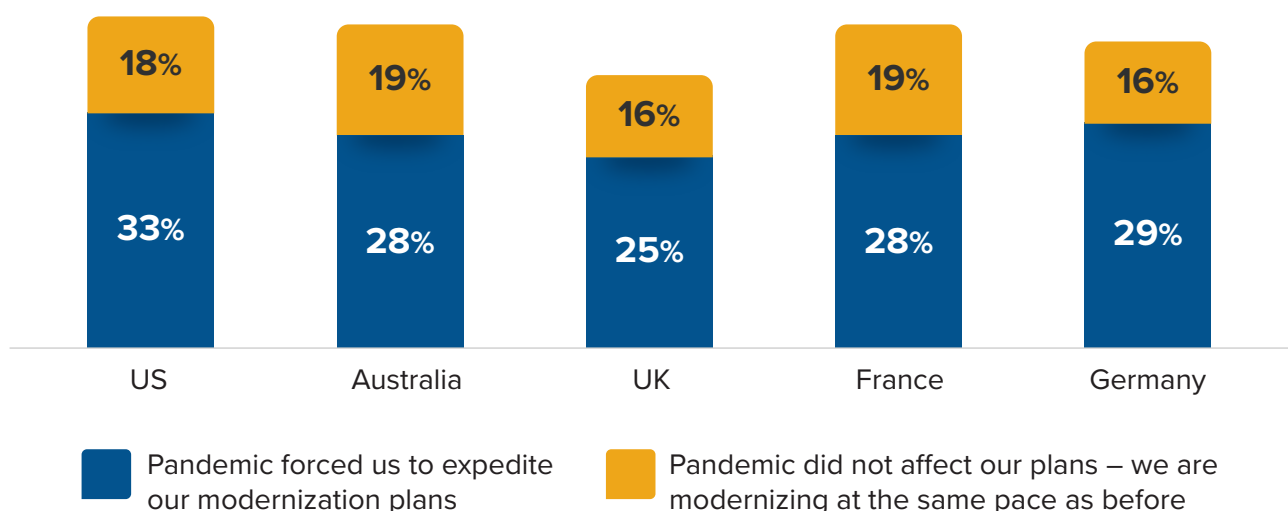
Single vs multiple communication platforms

	US	Australia	UK	France	Germany
Single platform	50%	56%	58%	61%	56%
Multiple platforms	50%	44%	42%	39%	44%

■ Multiple platforms (using both on-premise and cloud commnications solutions)

■ Single platform (using either on-premise or cloud commnications solution only)

Organizations make communications modernization a priority

US	Australia	UK	France	Germany
70%	65%	58%	63%	64%

Work-life conflict

	Company's concern	Employee's concern
UK	23%	50%
France	19%	48%
Germany	24%	51%
Australia	22%	50%
US	24%	53%
Global	23%	51%

■ Company's concern   ■ Employee's concern
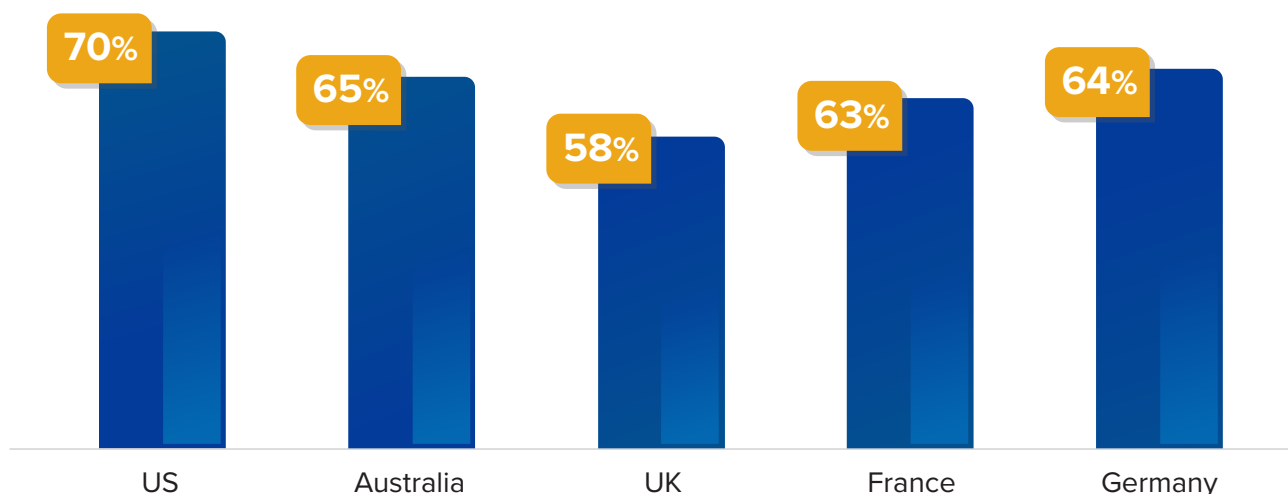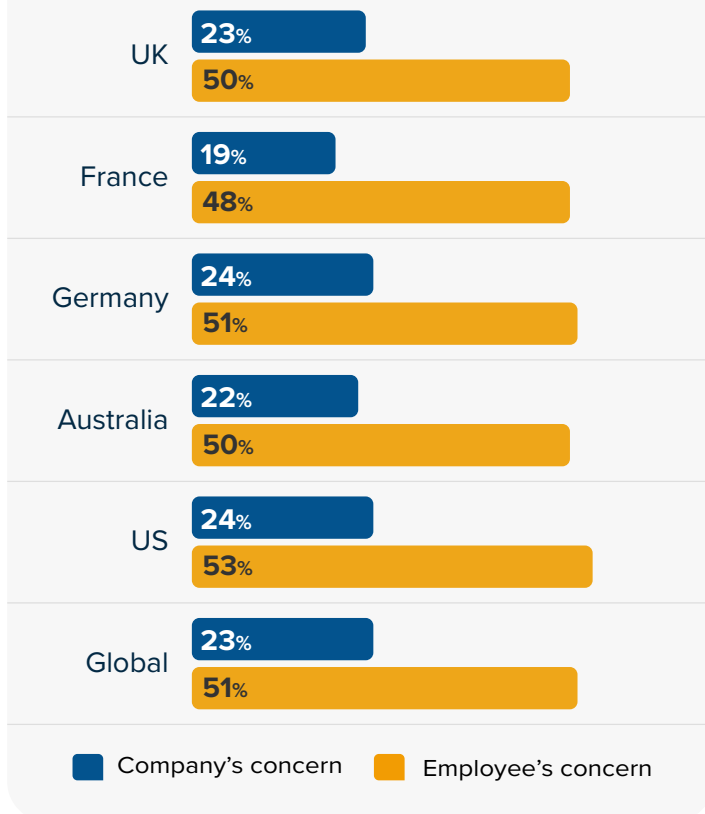
Lack of opportunities for mentorship / training

	Company's concern	Employee's concern
UK	36%	33%
France	40%	29%
Germany	34%	38%
Australia	37%	31%
US	33%	34%
Global	36%	33%

■ Company's concern   ■ Employee's concern
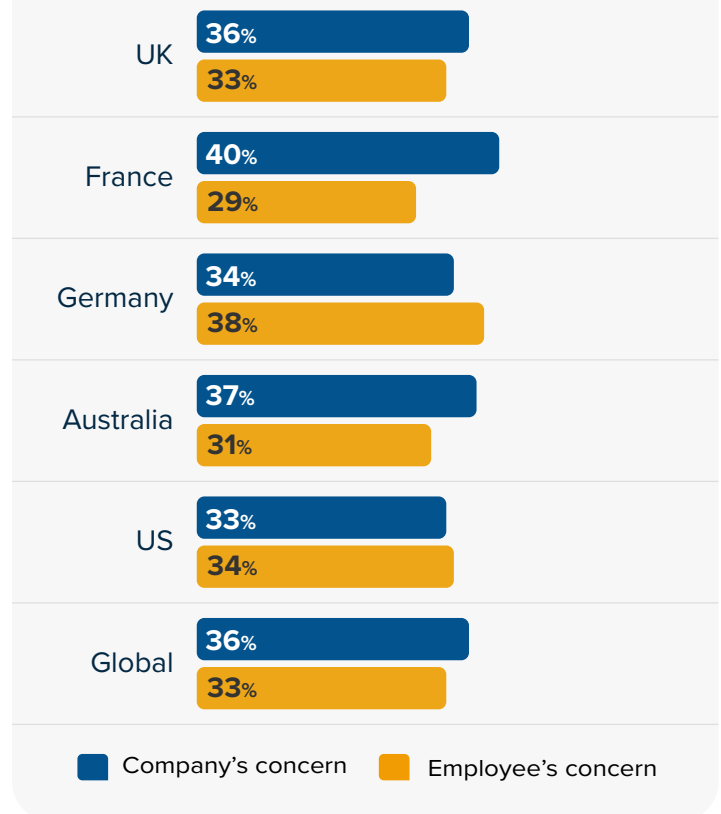
Maintaining company culture / team cohesiveness

	Company's concern	Employee's concern
UK	49%	38%
France	50%	44%
Germany	45%	39%
Australia	54%	41%
US	49%	41%
Global	49%	41%

■ Company's concern   ■ Employee's concern
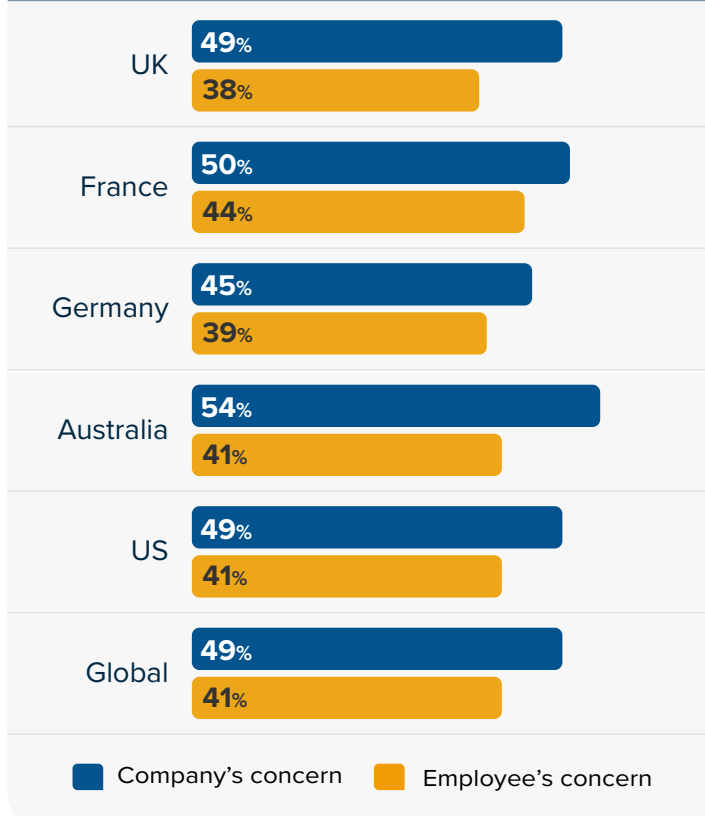
Difficulty managing remote employees

	Company's concern	Employee's concern
UK	47%	36%
France	52%	37%
Germany	55%	36%
Australia	44%	32%
US	50%	36%
Global	50%	36%

■ Company's concern   ■ Employee's concern

Career implications

	Company's concern	Employee's concern
UK	25%	35%
France	25%	32%
Germany	21%	37%
Australia	26%	33%
US	28%	31%
Global	25%	34%

■ Company's concern ■ Employee's concern
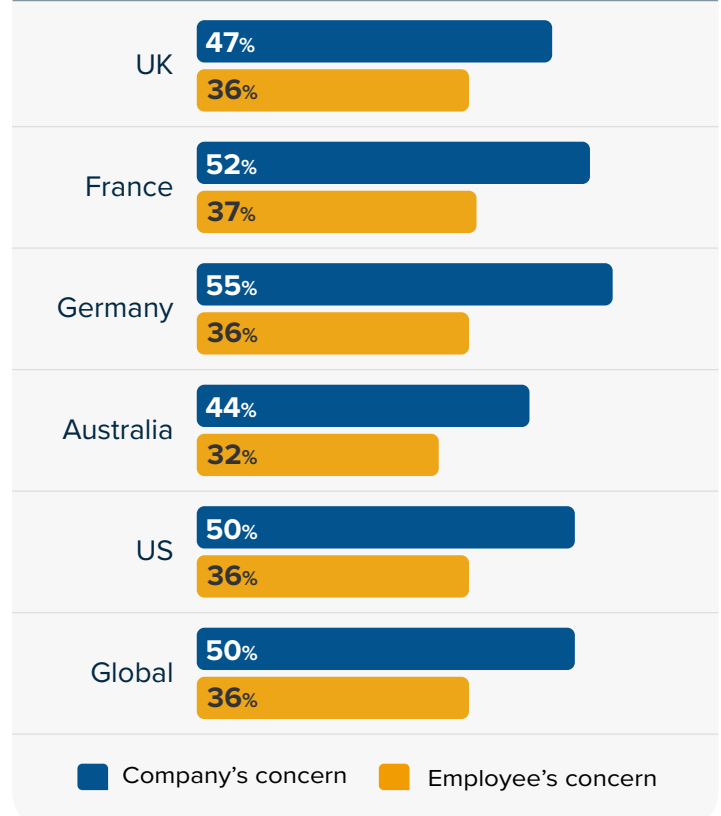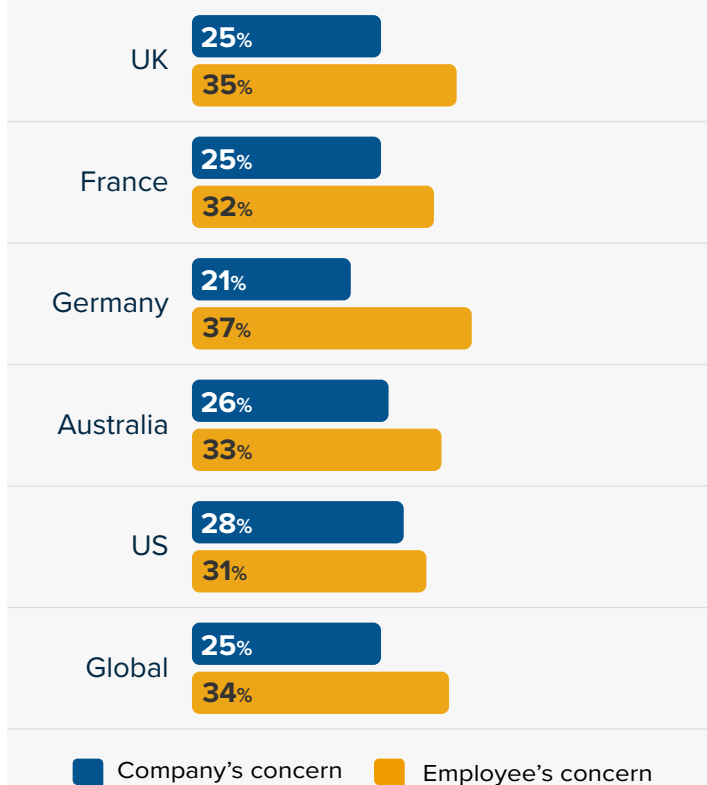
Loneliness / engagement and satisfaction

	Company's concern	Employee's concern
UK	27%	32%
France	28%	37%
Germany	26%	36%
Australia	27%	35%
US	26%	32%
Global	27%	34%

■ Company's concern ■ Employee's concern
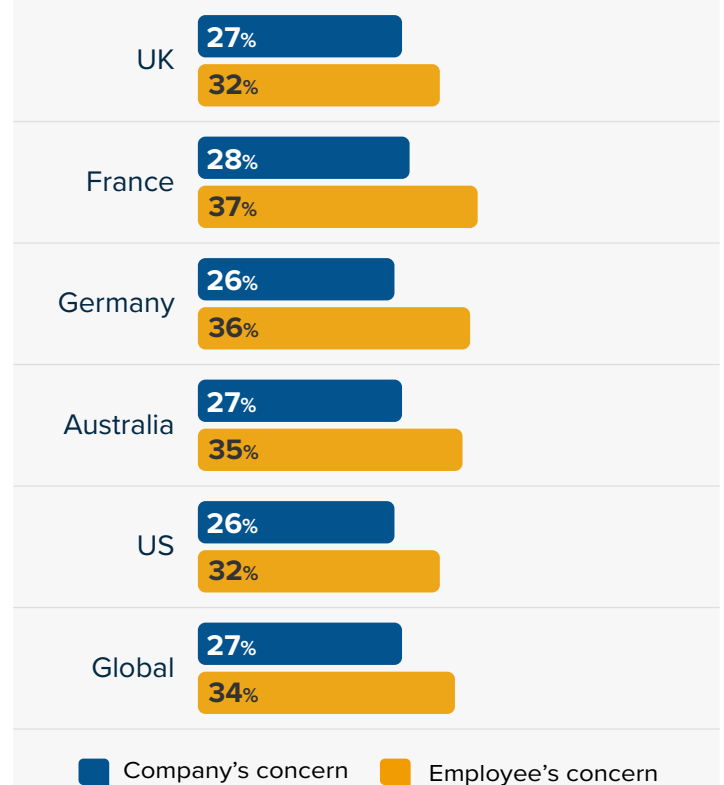
Reduced productivity and focus

	Company's concern	Employee's concern
UK	31%	20%
France	35%	21%
Germany	36%	26%
Australia	37%	21%
US	38%	25%
Global	35%	23%

■ Company's concern ■ Employee's concern
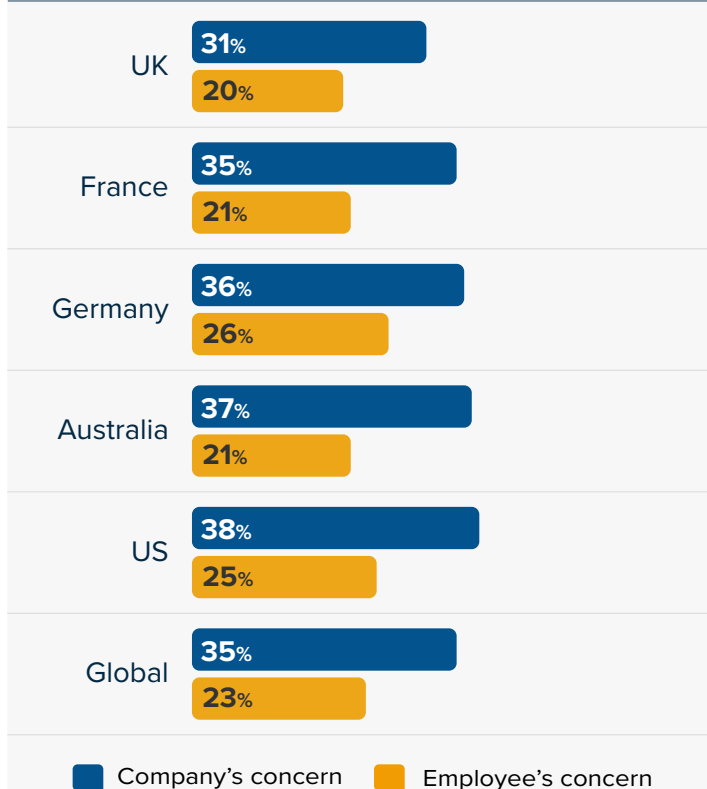
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Techaisle is a global SMB, Midmarket, and Channel IT Market Research and Industry Analyst organization focused on simplifying, expanding, and growing clients' share in three of the most complex market segments — small business, midmarket, channel partners. Techaisle's premise is that Go-to-Market strategies require insightful research, flexible data, and more in-depth analysis. Understanding the value of data consistency across markets to inform strategic planning, Techaisle is holistic in its approach to insights and provides globally consistent analysis across geographies by conducting in-depth surveys with end customers and channels to understand market trends, opportunities, buying behavior, purchase intent, and IT priorities. Besides covering topics such as cloud, managed services, mobility, edge, virtualization, analytics, artificial intelligence, end-points, collaboration, HCI/converged infrastructure, security, and digital transformation, its channel research coverage provides an in-depth understanding of resellers and channel partners globally. Techaisle provides insights built on a robust data-driven foundation, and its analysts are conversant with primary research and industry knowledge, which is a rare combination. Techaisle offers its clients: Syndicated Research, Custom Primary Research, Consulting Engagement, and Competitive Intelligence.