# Challenges of hybrid work and how to solve them

Here's what 4,000 IT pros told us

There's work *before* the pandemic and work *after* the pandemic, but a real advantage to establishing a hybrid workplace can be found in examining what happened to work *during* the pandemic.

Lenovo's global research study, "The Future of Work and Digital Transformation," shows that while no single challenge of pivoting to a distributed workforce stands out as a massive issue, a range of frustrations and concerns created some level of annoyance for IT leaders across businesses of all sizes.

Here's a look at three of the more prominent challenges, with context and analysis from other dimensions of the Future of Work report findings, to help as you strategize for a hybrid workforce.

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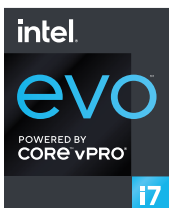
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Managing data security, cybersecurity, and privacy

Managing data security and privacy policies was the top challenge faced by IT leaders in the Future of Work study, followed closely by concerns about cybersecurity — and with good reason. Remote teams may accomplish more, but they also increase the average cost of a data breach by nearly $140,000, according to IBM's "2020 Cost of a Data Breach Report."

Continuity plans that employed data protection products and services helped businesses feel more prepared during the pandemic, and IT leaders found that the most useful work-from-home strategy solutions included:

- All-in-one hardware/software bundles
- Training sessions and documentation for employees
- ROI reports
- Flexible purchasing arrangements

Securing the flexible workforce of the future requires a multilayered approach that will help your business thrive. To stay secure, your tech toolkit needs up-to-date devices, and your tech strategy needs to address obsolete hardware in the rotation and formulate a plan for continuous device replacement.

The big, upfront capital expenditures often required to refresh devices are a challenge for many organizations, and the additional capital needed often forces them to delay device updates.

A Device as a Service (DaaS) model that bundles hardware, software, and support services can keep companies flexible and cost-efficient.

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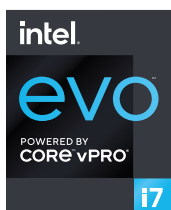
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Maintaining control of IT solutions

The Future of Work study asked IT leaders: What are the top considerations when deciding if your company should invest in digital transformation solutions?

"Data security" was the leading response for businesses of all sizes. After that? "IT management of the solution" (followed by employee productivity, operating costs, and data privacy, respectively).

IT leaders want to remain in control of whatever digital solutions they put in place next.

During the pandemic, controlled solutions came by way of the cloud. Those who quickly pivoted to an online or digital business model during the pandemic were challenged with quickly scaling up existing servers and online infrastructure. As one IT leader from the US wrote, "Moving everything to the cloud is now absolutely necessary. Having vital programs and data in one place is a liability."

A cloud-based Software as a Service (SaaS) approach can save IT time and money while allowing for full visibility of an entire fleet of devices.

ThinkSmart Manager, Lenovo's management console for ThinkSmart devices, is a great example of this kind of software. With this powerful tool, IT can manage and protect an enterprise-wide fleet and leverage manageability features for increased levels of performance, control, and analytics.

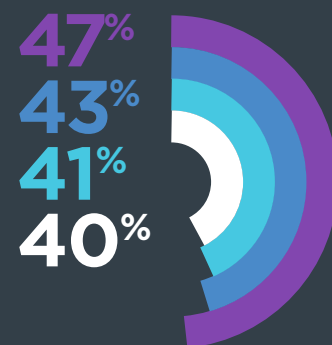## Top data protection strategies by business size

45%
39%
31%
31%
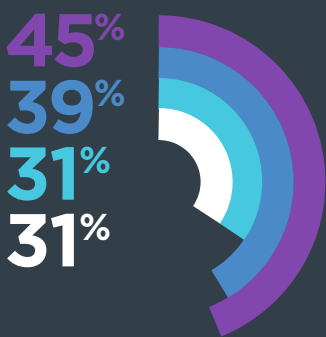
SMALL

- Cloud-based data backup
- Physical data backup
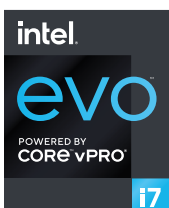- Data backups in two different locations
- Backup/redundant servers

44%
35%
34%
33%
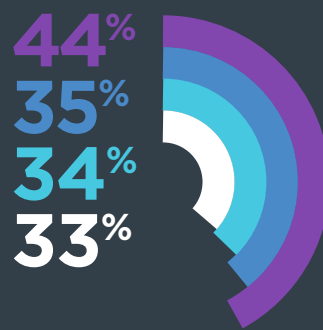
MEDIUM

- Cloud-based data backup
- Physical data backup
- Cybersecurity advisors
- Company-wide data security training

47%
43%
41%
40%

LARGE

- Cloud-based data backup
- Physical data backup
- Company-wide data security training
- Cybersecurity advisors

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Finding additional resources to help employees

Among IT leaders' top challenges of pivoting to an online or digital business model was finding additional resources. Employees needed help setting up their home offices. This was preceded only by concerns of data security, cybersecurity, and marketing to customers.

Employees today likely have their home offices all geared up, but the point stands: They need help optimizing their setup to achieve maximum productivity — and they want that help from IT. Respondents who reported issues with IT support while working remotely during the pandemic lockdowns said problem resolution took longer than usual or was simply difficult to get at all. A device solution could help, like PCs based on the Intel® Evo™ vPro®

platform, which go to work right out of the box.

Managed tech support solutions help IT teams handle their ever-changing workloads. Lenovo's Smart Collaboration Professional Services are tailored for the ThinkSmart lineup of solutions. Lenovo also provides comprehensive hardware and software support services like Lenovo Premier Support. This 24/7/365 service delivers engineering expertise with proactive support, escalation management, and direct point of contact for IT support — all day, every day.

Furthermore, there's an opportunity to help employees help themselves by providing them hardware that can keep up when they're not at home or in the office.

IT leaders aged 18 to 34, especially, reported that tech providing mobility makes employees more effective.

Mobile, portable, and wireless device usage is on the rise, and a tech strategy can get ahead of this changing work style with hardware and software choices that enable on-the-go productivity. In response, software companies are shifting from products made for laptop/desktop PCs to fully functioning mobile apps that allow users to work from anywhere.

Once you've got mobility apps in place, communicate their availability. The Future of Work study showed workers aren't taking enough advantage of company programs to finance their technology purchases.

80%
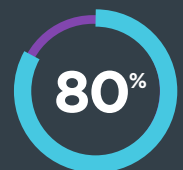
While 80% of IT departments reported they're willing to cover purchases of work-related equipment...

22%
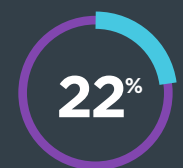
in some cases as few as 22% of employees have actually used these policies.

Top-ranked tech for remote employee effectiveness

01 **Laptop**

02 **Keyboard/mouse**

03 **Webcam**

04 **Printer**

05 **PC dock**

06 **Stand**

07 **Headset**

08 **Tablet**

09 **2-in-1 computer**

10 **Carrying case**

11 **Extra monitors**

12 **Smartphone**

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Go from what works "for now" to what works next

IT leaders have had to get creative as they outfit a flexible workforce — and fast. As the situation shifts again and the path forward finally looks a bit more stable, IT leaders should take a fresh look at the solutions they put in place and adjust as needed.

Get solutions for your future of work

Lenovo is here to help with modern solutions running Microsoft Windows 10 Pro and powered by the Intel® Evo™ vPro® platform, built for what IT needs and users want. Contact your Lenovo Account Representative or local Business Partner.

Visit **www.lenovo.com/PursueTheNew** for more digital transformation strategies.

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Hybrid health strategies

As hybrid workplaces quickly take shape, IT leaders must assess the solutions they put in place because of the pandemic and adjust as necessary. Here are ideas for achieving a more holistic hybrid plan.

☐ **Incent employees**
to use workplace-provided tech while working remotely, and communicate each employee's role in data security.

☐ **Enhance the user experience**
with smart features such as video resolution upscaling and intelligent cooling.

☐ **Develop hardware and software training documentation**
for employees to minimize unnecessary IT support requests.

☐ **Test and optimize collaboration tool integrations**
between in-person and remote teams with audio, connectivity speed, and flexibility top of mind.

☐ **Enable analytics tools,**
such as calendar plug-ins or mobile apps, to help employees and managers track productivity and prevent burnout.

☐ **Explore options for AR/VR devices**
to generate immersive work sessions or elevate customer experiences.

☐ **Team up with HR**
to create opportunities to expand the company's work culture to a hybrid environment, such as building out a digital wellness program or accommodating remote employees with multi-screen viewports at in-office get-togethers.

☐ **Establish regular IT team check-ins**
to specifically discuss and develop solutions for new hybrid challenges that come up along the way.

Sharpen your hybrid approach with expert support

How your team responds to the future of work will differentiate your company from competitors. Lenovo is here to help with modern solutions running Microsoft Windows 10 Pro and powered by the Intel® Evo™ vPro® platform, built for what IT needs and users want.

Contact your Lenovo Account Representative or local Business Partner to audit your current offering and help you make a healthy transition to hybrid. Visit **www.lenovo.com/PursueTheNew** for more hybrid workplace strategies.

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