



NEWS RELEASE

New Cisco Research Reveals Collaboration, Cloud, and Security are IT's Top Challenges

2021-03-22

IT Leaders are adapting to new challenges by prioritizing collaboration, cloud and security more than ever before

SAN JOSE, Calif., March 22, 2021 /PRNewswire/ --

News Summary:

- Report identifies core priorities essential to IT success including: focusing on security and collaboration for a hybrid workforce, delivering the best end-user experience, driving innovation and security in a cloud-first world, and leveraging technology to invest in employees and tackle societal issues.
- To address these challenges, 56% of IT decision makers are investing in cloud applications, 56% in network security, 51% in cloud security, and 45% in multi-cloud infrastructure in 2021-2022.
- [Read the full report.](#)

According to [Cisco's new Accelerating Digital Agility Research](#), CIOs and IT decision makers (ITDMs) are looking to maximize investments and drive innovation after a difficult year which raised the profile of IT leaders in driving critical workplace innovation.

Over the past twelve months, CIOs and ITDMs from across the globe have been challenged to accelerate their digital and cloud capabilities while protecting their organizations from a growing list of expanding security threats. IT leaders must look to maximize critical investments made in 2020.

To set up their organizations for success in 2021 and beyond, IT leaders have adapted priorities and strategy to focus on core issues including delivering secure collaboration tools to keep distributed workforces productive, maximizing technology investments from the past year, delivering the best end-user experience to employees and customers, embracing cloud and "as a Service," and tackling corporate and societal issues with technology.

"IT leaders are at the forefront of ensuring critical success for their organizations in 2021," said Liz Centoni, Cisco's Chief Strategy Officer and GM, Applications. "Even as questions remain and new challenges will surface, CIOs and IT decision makers are telling us they need to accelerate digital agility for their teams, so they have the speed, flexibility and choice to consume services across both traditional and modern environments."

Key findings:

To prepare for the future of work, teams need highly secure access and the best collaboration experiences to succeed as a hybrid workforce. While a majority (61%) of CIOs and ITDMs are unsure of what the future of work looks like, 89% believe that maintaining security, control, and governance across user devices, networks, clouds, and applications is essential. Most (86%) agree it is important to empower a distributed workforce with seamless access to applications and high-quality collaborative experiences. Securing the expanded threat landscape created by a distributed workforce is paramount – 88% believe it is important to secure remote work tools and protect customer or employee data in the distributed work environment.

IT teams must create optimized end-user experiences to keep pace with IT environments that have become increasingly distributed, dynamic, and complex. More than three-fourths of the CIOs and ITDMs surveyed agree that user experience should focus on delight versus satisfaction. To deliver a great user experience, 89% think it is important to ensure a consistent application performance across both the application and infrastructure, and 86% believe it is important to make infrastructure as dynamic as application software to meet the changing policy and optimization needs of the application and developer. While the user experience should aim to delight, nearly all (90%) say it is important or very important to maintain application-to-infrastructure security to meet compliance without slowing down the business.

The need for agility, speed, scalability and security is driving adoption of hybrid cloud environments and SASE (Secure Access Service Edge) solutions. CIOs and ITDMs are using cloud to achieve business resilience. However, there is no one-size-fits-all cloud solution. While most CIOs and ITDMs (84%) agree it is important to offer freedom of choice when it comes to cloud environments – whether on premises, public cloud, private cloud or SaaS – 86% think offering a consistent operational model across these environments is essential. Nearly 70% of CIOs and ITDMs have adopted SASE solutions because they were investing in cloud applications that needed to be secured (61%), they like to stay up-to-date on industry best practices (56%) and/or their workforce is going to stay distributed (37%).

Customers expect a cloud-consumption experience regardless of whether their solutions are deployed on-prem or in the cloud, leading to widespread adoption of "as a Service" solutions. Of those surveyed, 73% have adopted "as a Service" solutions and 76% use flexible consumption models. Three fourths of those surveyed believe that "as a Service" will help deliver a better experience for the end user and a better experience for IT teams, helping their organizations achieve operational consistency. In addition, 76% say "as a Service" will provide better business outcomes, and 77% want "as a Service" solutions to simplify processes and remove risk.

Technology will be a driving factor in the facilitation of CIOs and ITDMs to tackle talent retention, internal corporate initiatives and broader societal issues in 2021. Most CIOs and ITDMs (85%) believe the ability to attract and retain talent in the all-digital world will be critical. Nearly half of those surveyed said they are upskilling current talent (49%) and investing in talent in new areas (46%) over the next 12 months. Most CIOs and ITDMs (90%) plan to tackle internal initiatives in 2021, including sustainability (50%), employee mental health (50%), privacy (47%), diversity and inclusion (47%). In addition, 85% will tackle external societal issues in 2021, including digital divide (39%),

healthcare (37%), climate change (35%), social justice (34%), human rights (33%), misinformation or "fake news" (31%), poverty, hunger and homelessness (28%).

Additional Resources:

- [Cisco Digital Divide Blog](#)
- [Cisco Inclusive Future Blog](#)

Survey Background

Cisco's Accelerating Digital Agility research was deployed by Censuswide in November 2020, gathering insights from more than 23,000 CIOs and IT decision makers (ITDMs) across 34 global markets:

- Americas: Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Peru, United States
- EMEAR: France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, UAE, UK
- APJC: Australia, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam

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