

IT INNOVATION

Harnessing technology to attract skilled IT talent



INNOVATION: THE CORNERSTONE OF SUCCESS

Whether you're a start-up or an established business, the success of your company depends on ideas, teamwork and future-oriented employees. In short, businesses need to be innovative to succeed.

In this ever-changing business landscape, new products, streamlined processes or creative approaches to big challenges can all provide a competitive edge through innovation. But whatever the catalyst, the crucial points to consider are whether your business has the right environment to develop these ideas and whether it attracts the right employees.

Information and communication technologies affect how we live, learn and work. They also affect our economy. Digital technologies like mobile, social media, cloud computing and big data/data analytics all promise huge potential for innovation. And to make the most of these opportunities, you need the best people with the best ideas.

Just to attract the most skilled technology professionals can often be a challenge because your company must first be seen as an innovative place to work. This is why being perceived as an innovative company has become an essential part of IT recruitment.

How innovative are UK businesses?



Four ways to foster innovation



IT as a driver of innovation



Innovation attracting the best employees



How innovative are UK businesses?

The first challenge when exploring innovation relates to how it is defined and measured. Many companies in the UK measure innovation using specific criteria, such as their budgets for research and development or the number of patents they hold. Yet innovation can take place in every area of the business and doesn't necessarily need to be large-scale changes or technological advancements.

Another option may be that UK companies tend to use key performance indicators to measure non-technological innovation, for example the knowledge and skills of their employees. As innovation outside of technology isn't measured in a comparable way, it isn't perceived in the same sense, creating a so-called 'innovation gap'.

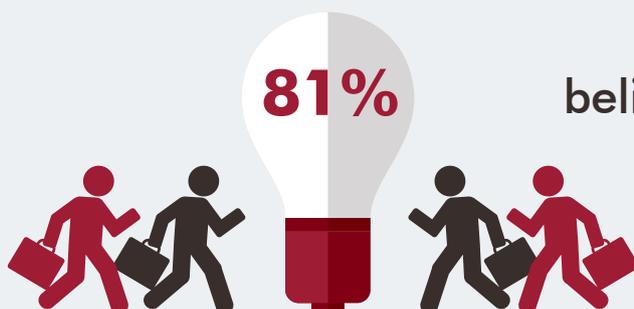
According to a Robert Half Technology study of chief information officers (CIOs) and chief technology officers (CTOs), British companies scored themselves, on average, 3.36 on a scale of one to five where one is 'not innovative' and five is 'highly innovative'.

The study revealed that small-sized businesses consider themselves more innovative than large companies, on average, at 3.55 and 3.32 respectively. While these figures suggest that smaller companies may nurture innovation better than large companies, it also shows there's scope to improve across the board. After all, innovation drives business growth and prosperity.



UK companies scored themselves at 3.36 out of 5.

The study also showed that companies seen to be encouraging a culture of innovation attract highly qualified IT staff. The majority (81%) of CIOs and CTOs find a strong link between innovation and attracting strong IT workers. In other words, innovation breeds innovation, which suggests there is good reason to exploit innovation to attract, recruit and retain employees.



81% believe technology innovation has a positive impact on hiring strong IT talent

Four ways to foster innovation



CAPTURE IDEAS

Without noting creative ideas as they are formed, businesses could miss out on valuable innovative solutions. Developing a well-defined strategy to gather and capture these ideas as well as making the strategy accessible to employees will lead to more innovation long term.



CREATE A CULTURE OF INNOVATION

Leaders must foster a culture that supports new ideas. This includes developing clear structures and processes to identify and implement innovation.



DEVELOP THE TALENT IN YOUR ORGANISATION

Staff development is integral to innovation. It promotes innovation skills like personal responsibility, understanding of errors and visionary thinking.



REMOVE THE BARRIERS

Innovation relies on both financial and technological possibilities. IT must support this with modern technologies – like [data analytics](#) and [cloud technology](#) – and remain attractive to professionals at the same time.



IT as a driver of innovation

The internet of things is changing consumer behaviour, and the race to digitise business processes is changing the demand for IT skills. By 2018, digital businesses will need half the business process staff compared with today but five times more new digital business roles, according to predictions from IT market research firm Gartner*.

94% of CIOs and CTOs believe technology will play an 'important' or 'very important' role in their business growth plans.

The shift to a greater digital focus is already evident today. Of the senior IT executives surveyed in the Robert Half Technology study, 94% believe technology will play an important role in business growth this year. The standout areas are through driving process or employee efficiency (32%) and improving customer transactional experience (45%).

The ways businesses are already working to achieve this are through cloud adoption (34%) and virtualisation (29%), business analytics and intelligence (31%), and mobile solutions and application development (both 24%).



Any device from any location – Flexible working and the cloud

According to Gartner, cloud technology is displacing business processes and making enterprise-grade technology more accessible and cost effective. When combined with virtualisation it will also lead towards flexible business models, making them more reliable, scalable and competitive than their peers.

CASE STUDY:** UKTV sends its programmes to both broadcasters and on-demand digital services using an array of technology. It needed a technology solution for employees to work with any device and from any location, while working collaboratively to stay competitive in a fast-paced industry. The cloud was a solution that provided the tools to create a flexible working platform.

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* <http://www.gartner.com/technology/topics/trends.jsp>

** <https://www.microsoft.com/en-gb/smb/customer-success-stories/tv-company-powers-secure-collaboration-with-intergrated-microsoft-technologies/>





Accessing, translating, forecasting – data analytics

Businesses are finding new ways to tap into the growing quantities of data to help deliver growth. Through in-depth analysis, businesses can forecast trends using real-time data to make informed business decisions to support business growth.

CASE STUDY*: Food chain EAT needed to analyse its 200 products and 10,000 ingredients in real time, to produce the financial data needed to support the case for opening more branches. It made the investment to implement a data analytics solution to gain greater insights on the performance of individual products, sales and branches in any given week.

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Adapting to changing demands – mobile technology

Improving customer experience has become a digital priority. As Gartner reports, two-thirds of consumers use mobile devices for some sort of shopping activity, either browsing or buying. In fact, it may be the area most open to innovation for businesses, with industries creating more intelligent end-to-end processes that are in keeping with consumer demands, such as self-service.

CASE STUDY:** To address current consumer demands for investment advice at any time, Invesco, an independent investment management company, turned to mobile. It created an innovative mobile app so its employees could deliver a quality service to clients, allowing them to connect from wherever they are, whenever they want to browse Invesco's money market information and investment vehicles.

Read more



* <https://www.anaplan.com/customers/eat-case-study/>

** <http://chaione.com/my-product/invesco/>



Innovation attracting the best employees

While demand exceeds supply, finding skilled technology professionals remains a challenge for nearly all (96%) CIOs and CTOs. The best candidates are receiving a number of job offers and have their choice of companies they wish to work for.

96% of the CIOs surveyed find it 'somewhat challenging' (64%) or 'very challenging' (32%) to find skilled technology professionals.

Nurturing a culture of innovation could be one way your company can attract suitably skilled candidates. While this approach may sound unattainable, keep in mind that it isn't exclusive to companies like Google and Facebook. Many businesses already recognise the value of innovation when recruiting employees.

Innovation paves the way

Turning the innovation potential of information and communication technologies into business growth involves refocusing your business objectives to include an innovation-friendly environment. Here are three steps to making the most of innovation:

1. Clarify which innovations lead to growth

Defining your strategic objectives can help employees develop and share ideas that foster business growth. The business need for a more user-friendly mobile shopping experience or more efficient and cost-effective use of resources, for example, are areas where innovation provides measurable value.

2. Focus on innovation at a management level

If business leaders promote innovation from the top down, employees will feel empowered to innovate. This means you need to support your staff on critical decisions, accept mistakes – and learn from them – as innovation is always associated with a certain amount of risk.

3. Classify and quantify innovations

While return on investment can be a rough guide to innovation, there are many other indicators. The company's culture, for example, and its efficient use of skills and knowledge or communication processes can provide insight into how innovative a company may be – or can become.

You can use IT to identify key performance indicators as well as to measure them. Data analytics and cloud technology, for example, can analyse and process data, and this in turn can lead to even higher goals around improved customer satisfaction and continuous process improvement.

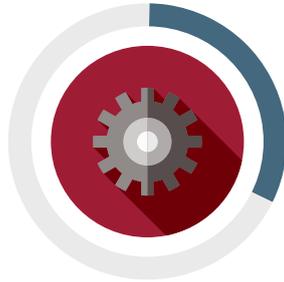


Which of the following is the primary role that technology will play in delivering growth within your business?



45%

Improving customer transactional experience



32%

Driving process/employee efficiency



12%

Improving customer communication experience



11%

Delivering data to drive business insights and strategy

With a high-profile culture of innovation, companies find it easier to develop new ideas and push forward. This also affects their visibility: the more innovative a company presents itself, the more active employees are involved, the more attractive a company becomes to professionals who want to join.

Innovate from the outside in

Even the most innovative companies don't necessarily create all their ideas in-house. Look around and be open to ideas from outside. Involve partners, service providers and customers in problem solving or solicit ideas from employees in other departments.

Give your employees autonomy

In October 2014, Microsoft abolished compulsory attendance at the office for its employees. The take-away point: if you trust your employees, you will reap the returns, and often in the form of new ideas.

Do you think a 'no office presence policy' could be successfully implemented in your company?



14% Yes, we have already implemented something similar

18% Yes, we are working on a policy for remote working

32% Yes, but only for some departments



About the survey

The Robert Half study includes responses from more than 100 online interviews with senior IT executives from companies across the UK with participants stratified by region, company size and company type. The survey was completed in December 2014.

About Robert Half

Founded in 1948, Robert Half pioneered the concept of professional recruitment and is the worldwide leader today. [Robert Half Technology](#) specialises in the placement of high-calibre IT professionals on a permanent and contract basis.



08705 329635
roberthalf.co.uk

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