



CONVERSATIONS . UNBOUND

**THE FIGHT TO COLLABORATE:  
A GROWING RIFT  
BETWEEN IT AND TEAMS**

How Loyalty to Tech is Creating Walls Between IT and Employees  
and Threatening Workplace Productivity

# HOW BRAND LOYALTY TO TECH IS SEEPING INTO THE WORKPLACE

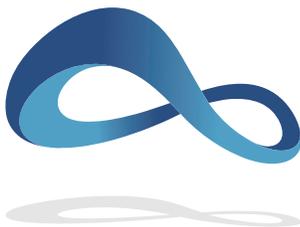
Organizations of all sizes live and breathe on the ability to communicate and collaborate. Not so long ago, collaboration existed solely within the office or over the phone. That has all changed.

In a few short years, we have progressed far beyond the traditional workplace and can now work in real-time with one another across state lines, time zones and even from across the world. This is made possible by the plethora of tools available to connect us from virtually anywhere. From messaging services to video collaboration to product management software, the choices are abundant and seemingly endless.

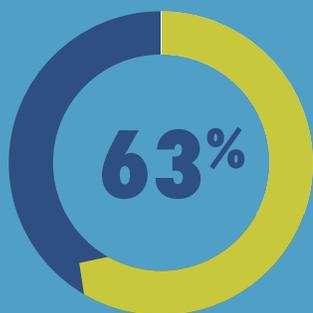
Despite the myriad of options, it's only natural for people to gravitate toward certain tools and brands. People develop loyalties to different tech brands and products as consumers and are accustomed to selecting the tools and devices that best meet their needs, and they want that experience mirrored in their work life. Business professionals will

no doubt make attempts to bring these favored tools and technologies into their workplaces and team workflows. This growing loyalty will inevitably put IT in an uphill battle in dictating the brands of technology and tools used within an organization while simultaneously managing the security and network systems.

To better understand the extent of this growing rift and its impact on workplace collaboration and productivity, we surveyed 750 business professionals in a range of positions and industries. We explored the rates at which these professionals are introducing technology into the workplace, the extent of their loyalty toward brands of technology, and their resistance to IT or management dictating how they or their teams work together.



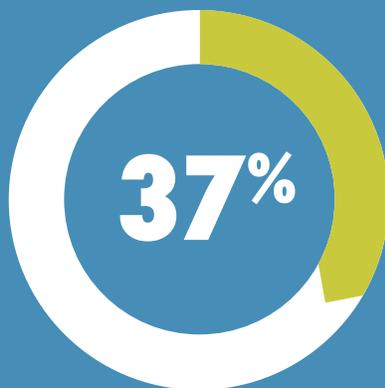
# BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS EXPRESS LOYALTY TO TECH BRANDS



The majority of respondents (63%) expressed loyalty to the technology products they use for their job, with over one-third (37%) saying they only use brands or products they're familiar with.

When it comes to technology, people develop loyalty to certain brands. Consumers who use iPhones will often have an iPad and an Apple computer to round out their collection. And the brands and products consumers use in their free time often have a way of making it into their work. If the preferences in brands of technology don't match up with what is provided at work, companies can expect employees to stray from IT policy.

In fact, 63 percent of respondents expressed loyalty to the technology products they use for their jobs. When describing their loyalty:



said they only use brands or products they are familiar with.



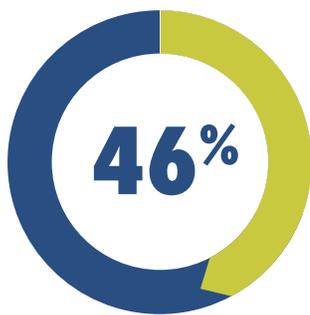
said they use the brands/products for their job that their company provides, but in some cases, they would rather use other brands or tools.

And it doesn't stop on an individual level — 42 percent of teams have loyalty to technology products, with some citing that they'd prefer to use tools outside of what their company provides, and some citing that they only use the products they're familiar with.

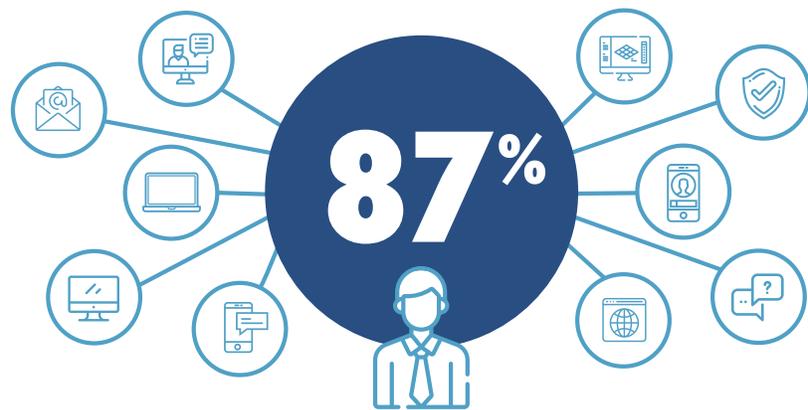
It's clear that both individuals and teams have established loyalties to the technology they use for their job. These tools become tightly intertwined in how individuals and teams do their jobs, leading to pushback or straying from policy if the IT-mandated tools don't mesh with established workflows.

# EMPLOYEES ARE FINDING THEIR OWN WAY OF DOING THINGS

It is not uncommon for companies to provide technology to their employees so they can do work on behalf of the company. Computers, cell phones, software and email applications are often on the list of company-supplied technologies. Overall, the majority of business professionals agree that they are provided the tools they need to collaborate with colleagues inside and outside the office.



**Nearly half (46%) said they or their team have introduced new technology into their workplace and 73 percent said they've been successful in implementing their choice of tech tools.**



**87% of business professionals agree that their companies provide the tools they need to collaborate with colleagues internally and externally.**

But despite this fact, business professionals and teams are still bringing in their favorite brands and tools into the workplace. Whether it's collaboration tools for a one-off project or video conferencing to host a meeting across time zones, nearly half of business professionals (46%) said they or their team have introduced new technology into their workplace.

Not only have employees introduced new technology into the workplace, but 73 percent said they are finding success in implementing their choice of tools. This success doesn't come without resistance, though. Twenty-eight percent of respondents said they experienced some pushback from IT because of interoperability or security issues around the technology.

While the majority of employees said their company provides the technology they need to collaborate, a growing number of business professionals are seeking out new tools and technology to not just do their own jobs better, but to help their teams collaborate more effectively.

# A GROWING RIFT BETWEEN IT AND EMPLOYEES

**38 percent of respondents said they would be resistant to IT or management dictating which software or tools they use, and 40 percent said their team would be resistant to such a mandate.**

Rarely do employees have complete freedom when it comes to deciding what technologies they use to do their job. IT must often regulate what technologies are used within a company for a number of reasons, including controlling the cost of subscriptions and ensuring company information is secure. More than half (54%) said IT has the final say on all of the programs and technological devices used, and only 10 percent said they have full say in the technology they use.

But a rift is growing between employees and IT. No longer are employees complacent about IT calling all the shots. And it's not just individuals, but teams are starting to stand together to dictate how they work together. Thirty-eight percent of respondents said they would be resistant to IT or management dictating which software or tools they use, and 40 percent said their team would be resistant to such a mandate.

The reasons for pushback against IT reflect the notion that individuals and teams know how to do their jobs best and should have a say in the tools they use to do their work.

When it comes to the reasons **individuals** specifically would be resistant to strict IT mandates:



**25%** of individuals said they know which software or tools work best for their role and work



**13%** said they would be resistant to learning new software

When it comes to the reasons **teams** would be resistant to strict IT mandates:



**26%** said they have an established workflow with our current selection of software and tools



**14%** said they don't want to relearn software



**13%** said management and IT doesn't understand how our team works best

On their own, employees are exploring new ways to do their job and incorporating these tools into their daily work and how they work with their teams. No longer are employees simply abiding to the limited menu of options presented by IT. This increasing lack of compliance demonstrates an underlying disconnect between how employees want to do their jobs and the tools and software IT thinks are best for the company.

# A GROWING POWER STRUGGLE

A power struggle is emerging between IT and employees when it comes to who has the final say in what technology and tools are used in the workplace. As employees develop their own preferences of brands of technology and tools, they are willing to go to bat to keep their favorites in their toolbox. In fact, more than half (53%) of employees said they or another team have pushed back on IT or management when they tried to dictate the technology they use.

Within teams who are asserting their preferences for how they do their jobs, department managers (39%) are taking the lead when it comes to pushing back against IT:



**53 percent said they or another team have pushed back on IT or management when they tried to dictate the technology they use.**



**22%** said they personally dealt with pushing back against IT



**19%** said a team lead pushed back



**12%** said a subject matter expert within the team that knows more about the solution pushed back

More often than not, teams prevail in pushing back on IT to allow their group to use the technology of their choice, with 46 percent saying IT made an exception for their team. But IT still holds a considerable amount of control, with teams complying with company mandates 42 percent of the time. Over 1 in 10 people still use the technology of their choice in defiance of IT.

Business professionals are fighting for their choice of technology and tools within the workplace, and IT is pushing back. This push and pull comes with mixed success for both sides, but the tension is showing no signs of stopping unless communication and collaboration strategies change to reflect the wants and needs of both IT and employees.

IT is in the difficult position of finding a balance between acknowledging the needs of the staff, controlling the amount of tools being brought into the workplace and adapting to the new normal.

# THE SOLUTION TO AN INCLUSIVE AND SECURE COLLABORATION STRATEGY

As technology continues to play a bigger and bigger role in the day-to-day, it is no surprise that people develop loyalties and preferences to the brands they use. And it's natural that those technologies and tools will find their way into the workplace as well. This is not a new phenomenon, as individuals introduced their smartphones to workplaces ten years ago despite IT's protests, and then began to introduce their own applications as well. This trend has clearly extended to a number of tools in the workplace today.

But as business professionals introduce their preferred technologies into the office, IT must continue to manage and secure the computer systems and networks. Unfortunately, when the roles and responsibilities of IT compete with the wants and needs of employees, walls can begin to form. This leaves IT in the difficult position of finding a balance between acknowledging the needs of the staff, controlling the amount of tools being brought into the workplace and adapting to the new normal.

Collaboration tools are a prime example of how business professionals are bringing their own brands into their workflow. Teams have displayed a clear appetite for

WSC (workstream collaboration tools), as there are now well over 100 vendors\* offering their own unique take on the perfect platform. In fact, a recent study\*\* showed that nearly half of 1,000 business leaders surveyed said their organization was using at least six collaboration tools, and over 1 in 6 were using more than ten. If a company is going to successfully implement these collaboration tools and allow teams to utilize their tool of choice, they must develop a collaboration strategy that opens up communication across different tools and platforms and also gives IT control.

While there are no one-size-fits-all options for all types of technology

employees might bring into the workplace, federation is one possible solution that can allow companies to deploy a comprehensive and open collaboration strategy that allows multiple collaboration tools to be used within the same organization. Federation allows companies to link their user collaboration platforms together with those inside and out of the organization, even if those platforms are different. This creates an opportunity for teams and individuals to be able to collaborate however they want, and for IT to maintain security and control on IT systems - a virtual win-win.

## PANEL INSIGHTS:

Among the provided list of departments in the survey, more than one-third (34%) of respondents work in operations/accounting/finance/HR, 27 percent work in sales and marketing while 17 percent identified as working in product management and development. Additionally, the top three industries represented were healthcare and pharmaceuticals (15%), retail/consumer durables (13%), and education (10%).

## METHODOLOGY:

NextPlane surveyed 750 business professionals in various industries in August 2018. This survey was completed online and responses were random, voluntary and completely anonymous.