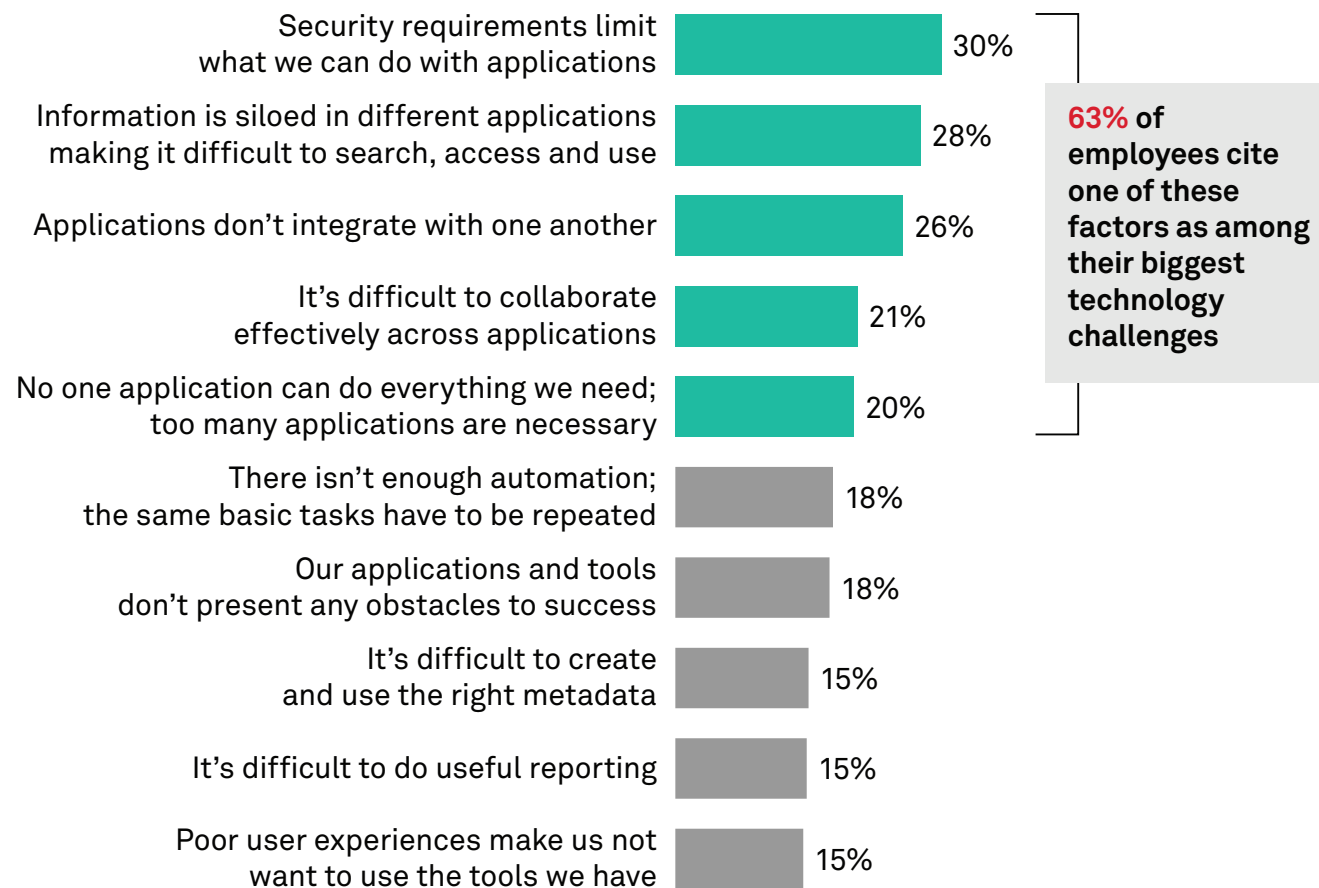# Work Hubs Emerge To Give Modern Teams Better Context, Collaboration and Cohesion

451 Take

Over the past five years, organizations have increased their focus on (and investment in) improving their workforce's productivity and engagement experience. In fact, our Voice of the Enterprise: Workforce Productivity and Collaboration, Technology Ecosystems 2021 survey found that it is now the number one IT-led transformation priority. The pandemic accelerated and mainstreamed that focus with the shift to more distributed teamwork, which often introduced new application silos, making it harder for employees to focus, align and collaborate with one another.

For example, while difficulty in focusing was already one of the key impediments to personal productivity, our Work Execution Goals and Challenges 2021 survey found that 26% of employees now find it even more challenging. About the same proportion said they struggle to align with their colleagues and find the information they need.

Employees' Biggest Technology-Related Obstacles to Their Team's Performance

Obstacle	%
Security requirements limit what we can do with applications	30%
Information is siloed in different applications making it difficult to search, access and use	28%
Applications don't integrate with one another	26%
It's difficult to collaborate effectively across applications	21%
No one application can do everything we need; too many applications are necessary	20%
There isn't enough automation; the same basic tasks have to be repeated	18%
Our applications and tools don't present any obstacles to success	18%
It's difficult to create and use the right metadata	15%
It's difficult to do useful reporting	15%
Poor user experiences make us not want to use the tools we have	15%

63% of employees cite one of these factors as among their biggest technology challenges

Q: Thinking about all the different applications and tools your team uses, which of the following are the biggest obstacles to your team's success? Please select all that apply.

Base: All respondents (n=502)

Source: 451 Research's Voice of the Enterprise: Workforce Productivity & Collaboration, Work Execution Goals & Challenges 2021

Organizations are not only concerned with these productivity challenges but also the cultural impacts of a more distributed workforce. They need new ways to foster team cohesion, encourage cross-functional collaboration and connect employees to company objectives and their divisional goals. Our Employee Engagement 2021 survey data suggests that these are significant issues to address. According to respondents, having a sense of belonging, a sense of purpose and enjoying working for their employer are among the strongest drivers of positive employee engagement. Employees need to feel connected to their peers and to their organization. Failing to get this right will likely damage morale and frustrate efforts to build more dynamism and resiliency across the workforce.

The scale and seriousness of these challenges is ushering in a second era of SaaS innovation. While the proliferation of point products defined the first 20 years, this second era is being driven by enterprise demand for convergence of capabilities into centralized work hubs that can provide more context, coordination and control for individuals and teams around their work.

Business Impact

New hub-and-spoke strategy powers visibility: Many technology and business operations leaders and employee experience strategists are rethinking their longer-term workforce technology strategies. They're giving more thought to users' overall experience across the estate of digital workplace and other business application technologies. More specifically, they're considering how to integrate the various applications within that experience. To optimize integration, businesses need to clarify what constitutes a strategic hub that gives employees a personalized view of the resources they need to coordinate work effectively, and which applications are the spokes that support that coordination.

A single source of truth for projects, programs and processes: Better coordination of work requires technologies that support the creation of a single source of truth for projects, programs and processes. This means the aggregation of context such as people, timelines, dependencies, resourcing, status and risks so employees have the right understanding to make effective and efficient work-related decisions.

Enhancing the overall employee experience beyond productivity: This new generation of work hubs will be important not just for meeting productivity goals, but also for driving workforce engagement and other outcomes dependent on that engagement, such as talent acquisition/retention and operational agility. In fact, having good-quality technologies and tools ranked as the second-strongest driver of employees' overall engagement at work, second only to having opportunities to grow and progress in their careers, according to 451 Research's Voice of the Enterprise: Workforce Productivity & Collaboration, Employee Engagement 2021.

Looking ahead

Over the past two years, many businesses have realized that they need to be more deliberate about how work is designed and orchestrated – it shouldn't just be the sum of disconnected point products designed to address specific functional needs without regard to how teams and the wider organization work. Such an approach has hampered employee productivity and leaves employers vulnerable to a more disconnected and less engaged workforce.

Solving this issue will require better collaboration among key decision-makers, such as IT, operations and human resource teams. Since having the right tools and technologies to succeed is the second-strongest driver of positive employee engagement, clearly, these decisions affect more than just employee productivity. Operational agility, workforce resilience, talent recruitment/retention and innovation management will all be impacted by how employers equip their employees.

The time invested to get this right will pay dividends. Over time, businesses will be able to generate and leverage intelligence from their work hubs to better troubleshoot operational bottlenecks, detect and mitigate risks, identify the strongest levers for employee engagement and define best practices. One of the biggest benefits will be using this intelligence to streamline the experience for employees through capabilities like intelligent alerting, personalized recommendations and more seamless knowledge integration within the key projects, programs and processes.

Qatalog

Book a call with one of Qatalog's Work Hub Advisors.