

Foreword

Business leaders across all of Europe face continued economic pressures and workplace challenges that drive the need to innovate and introduce new ways of working. Remarkably, our report found that a third (31%) of European decision makers would consider leaving their job in the next 12 months, and a further 29% would when the economy improves.

Equally, the drive for smarter work/life balance while meeting the needs of working in leaner teams with fewer resources is also changing the dynamics of company culture. The report shows that a third of those who already plan to leave their jobs want to work for more digital-forward companies because they are frustrated with the current systems and processes they are required to use.

Additional to these challenges, the emergence of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) is bringing a radically disruptive influence on workplaces few could have imagined even just 12 months ago.

In short, there is a compelling need for business leaders to proactively drive digital transformation forward by instigating digital technologies that ensure they are delivering against day-to-day imperatives, meeting the challenges of stakeholder and employee demands, while ultimately enabling long-term strategic visions to be realised.

This report explores the digital maturity of businesses and organisations across Europe. It benchmarks attitudes and perceptions of 1,800 EMEA business decision makers evenly distributed across France, Germany, and UK & Ireland of the challenges, attitudes and ultimate opportunities around evolving digital strategies when it comes to delivering the new future of work.

Key insights identified

Digital maturity is a conduit to a more engaged workforce.

1-in-4 decision makers would consider moving roles due to frustration with systems, processes or ways of working. 60% of decision makers would leave their job in a better economic climate. However, the percentage of people wanting to leave their roles is lower in more digitally mature companies.

Digital maturity and business resilience go hand-in-hand.

Organisations with 'very high' digital maturity are 3x more likely to have transformative resilience - that is to say, they are able to not only adapt to disruptions, but also innovate and thrive in the face of disruptive challenges. Underlining the need for technology in driving future resilience, 34% of decision makers state the CTO/CIO is most likely to deliver the biggest impact on the organisational performance and resilience of their business - higher than the CEO (30%).

Outdated manual processes and tools are restricting time to value, hindering productivity, future strategy and growth.

European business decision makers spend a disproportionate amount of time (12 hrs a week) undertaking nonvalue, repetitive tasks. Employees want to spend more time on meaningful high-value tasks (44%), or strategy (46%), leading to them potentially seeking more digitally forward-thinking employers.

Organisations increasing digital investment.

The large majority (70%) of organisations are increasing their digital investment / adoption to compete in a rapidly changing business environment. Yet only 31% expect investment in digital modernisation/ transformation initiatives to rise in the next 12 months.



Using tools like ChatGPT drive efficiencies

24% UK&I

22% France

36% Germany

Companies are well on their way to being digitally transformed.

43% of decision makers already consider themselves to be digitalfirst, and organisations believe they are more digitally advanced than their overall economy. Germany has the highest perceived level of digital maturity about their own organisation (54%) while France the lowest (44%).

Businesses are seeing digitisation as assisting with future initiatives.

61% of decision makers agree that the digital improvements being made across their organisations go beyond processes and help support sustainability and inclusivity aims. There is a similar consensus regardless of country: Germany 63%, UK&I 61%, and France 60% in agreement.

Organisations recognise the need for training and upskilling.

65% already recognise they have a skills gap within their operations, and 45% are making reskilling, upskilling and training talent a top strategy. Others are introducing new technology to help plug the gap - e.g. half are investing in digital contract management solutions, and introducing ChatGPT.



Faster Time to Value

In the modern business ecosystem, retaining, attracting, and developing talent is essential for the overall resilience and growth of the organisation. However, a lack of digital maturity and an over-reliance on manual or outdated processes and systems has created a series of frustrations that not only hinder everyday productivity and performance, but - at its most extreme - drive workers to seek new opportunities.

Employees and business decision makers are eager to close the gap between what they desire from work, and the everyday reality of their roles. They want to replace days spent on low-value administration and execution with high-impact deep work and forward-thinking strategies that engage them and drive the business forward.

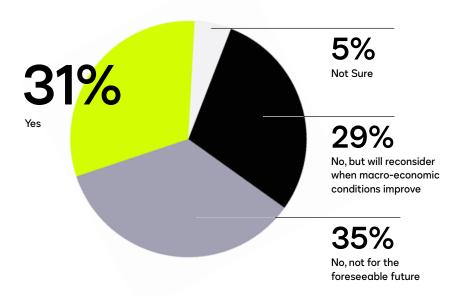
Businesses that focus on digitisation targeted at unlocking faster time to value by removing frictions and reducing the time it takes to deliver - whether closing a deal, signing a contract, or pivoting an approach - stand to gain significant competitive advantages. Such returns are gained both by attracting, retaining, and developing talent, and through accelerated business processes.

Digital maturity drives employee satisfaction

Digital maturity, or the ability to add value through digital tools or processes, is a prime indicator of how successful an organisation's transformation has been to-date. But critically, an organisation's ability to meet the digital needs of its employees is also positively correlated with greater worker satisfaction and has been directly linked with the number of people considering leaving their roles.

31% of respondents in the DocuSign 2023 Digital Maturity Report stated they would consider leaving their roles in the next 12 months, with a further **29% asserting they are considering leaving when macroeconomic conditions improve.**

Would you currently consider leaving the company you work for in the next 12 months?



Start-ups have an advantage over larger organisations with regards to retention, with only 22% of respondents considering leaving their roles, compared to 39% at SMEs and 32% at enterprises. However, digital maturity can have a direct impact, with 43% of those at lowdigital maturity organisations, compared to 29% of respondents at organisations with a very high digital maturity, considering leaving their roles in the next 12 months.

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The main reasons to consider leaving their present role centre around frustrations with current systems, processes, and ways of working (31%), and a lack of upskilling or development opportunities (26%). Wanting to work for a more digital-forward company with the right infrastructure, processes and systems in place motivates 27% of those looking to change jobs, rising to 34% of C-level decision makers.

Frustrations around processes lead to dissatisfaction with the workplace. For that reason, it's vital that organisations place an emphasis on digital maturity and provide employees access to the right tools and the right training — in turn, driving retention of key talent.

Would consider leaving the company they work for in the next 12 months



Outdated processes restrict high-value work

The DocuSign 2023 Digital Maturity Report found that workers are on average wasting 12 hours per week on low-value, repetitive tasks - 8 hours of which could be automated. Meanwhile, 46% of respondents state they would like to spend more time on forward looking strategy, 44% on more highvalue tasks, and 35% looking to allocate less time to lowvalue tasks.

There is a clear gap between the drivers for digitisation and the realities of how people are working. 59% of business decision makers rank building resilience for the future, or driving operational productivity and efficiency, as among their top priorities for digitisation.

However, less than half of respondents are spending sufficient time on high-value, strategic tasks that are designed to propel business forward. This is not only harming engagement and failing to leverage talent effectively but also runs the risk of hindering overall business performance.

Respondents working for Startups spend less time on these tasks, suggesting scale quickly impacts the total time lost to outdated processes and that it's even more important organisations have scalable systems in place to combat this as they grow.

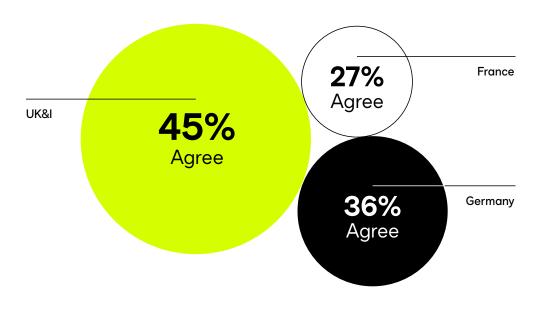


Where time is lost in an average working week

Spend 5 hours or more manually entering data / information that could	be automated		
	25%		
Spend 5 hours or more searching for information / documents each week			
23%			
Spend 5 hours or more correcting issues caused by human error			
21%			
Spend 5 hours or more on repetitive tasks			
	27%		
Spend 5 hours or more on non-value tasks like admin			
	27%		

The cumulative time spent on lowvalue activities add up to an incredible loss of focused work. The automation and digitisation of such tasks can accelerate the efficiency of an organisation, enabling employees to focus on more high-value and forwardthinking strategies, while simultaneously offering a potential 25% productivity boost to the business - estimated to be over £34,000 per worker per year in the UK alone.

Would like to spend more time on Deep Work



"This survey surfaces the disturbing fact that employees are wasting a staggering 12 hours per week on low-value tasks. Finding ways to enable staff to focus on more valuable duties and drive forward-facing strategies is vital. The deployment of the right digital strategy and processes will not only build in the right business resilience but will also curb a potential exodus of skills and top talent."

Ronan Copeland Group VP and General Manager, EMEA DocuSign.

Digitalisation: A time to value

Accelerating growth opportunities will be a challenge for organisations of all sizes over the next 12 months. However, many have already pinpointed the changes that will help them achieve this. Half of businesses are planning to invest in digital contract management, while **35% believe reducing inefficiencies from manual processes**, and the onboarding of new customers, vendors and partners (31%) would deliver a faster time to value across the ecosystem.

Additional benefits to the streamlining of outdated ways of working should not be ignored. 27% of respondents believe digital choices help reduce waste and better support sustainability aims, while 24% agree it would improve an organisation's Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) credentials.

Business leaders need to optimise performance today while still laying the groundwork for success tomorrow. Such strategies require the building and maintaining of a digital infrastructure, culture, and ways of working that both help to remove friction and optimise current performance and productivity while enabling future growth and resilience. As such, 43% are turning to technology and plan to invest further in digital tools and automation to help make this a reality.

Defining 'digital maturity' across an organisation



Very High Digital Maturity:

Embraces emerging tech such as Al, machine learning and IoT which automate systems with little to no human intervention. Uses real time data to optimise operations.



High Digital Maturity:

Generally has fully integrated digital tools and streamlined workflows. Most processes are automated with data driven insights informing decisions.



Medium Digital Maturity:

Generally has basic digital tools implemented, has started to automate some processes, but has a lack of integration between systems.

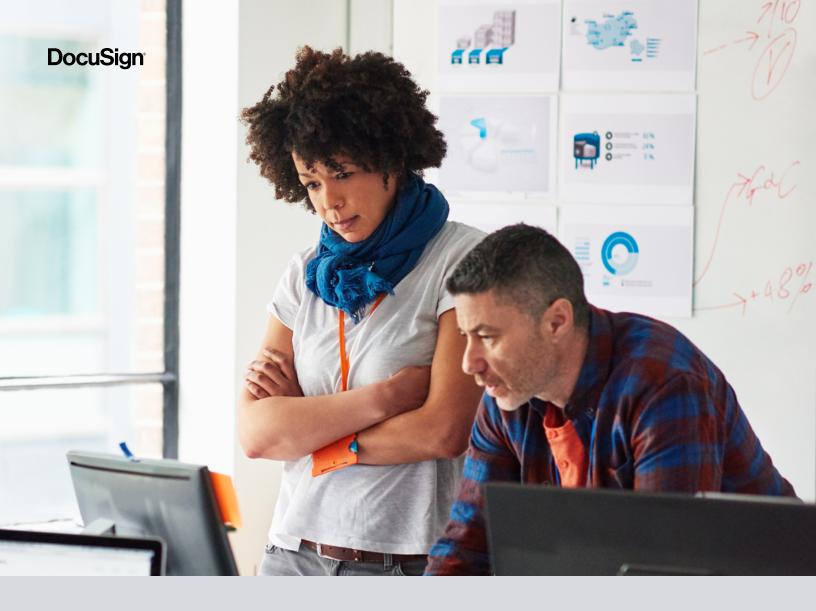


Low Digital Maturity:

Primarily relies on paper-based processes, manual data entry and spreadsheets - no integrated systems in place to share information across departments.

Which of these do you think would have the biggest impact on your organisation's performance and productivity in the next 12 months?





Assessing Digital Maturity Across Europe

Digital-first organisations are those that have orientated their business models, corporate culture, and organisational structures to take full advantage of digital technologies. They build an integrated digital infrastructure and leverage technology to achieve their business outcomes.

Almost every business plans to be a digital-first company in the future — if they aren't already. Only 5% of decision makers think their organisation will never be a digital-first company. However, despite this overwhelming ambition towards digital maturity, the implementation of digitisation strategies has been less than optimum, which left unchecked could potentially weaken business resilience.

Organisations don't act in silos, if any member of their ecosystem lacks digital maturity it can impact or hinder the wider business. By deploying the right digital tools along all aspects of the value-chain, organisations regardless of size can take full advantage of smarter, faster and more economical ways of working.

Benchmarking Digital Maturity

Digital maturity represents the extent to which an organisation has integrated and optimised digital technologies and processes throughout its operations infrastructure. It underpins the readiness and effectiveness of the organisation to leverage digital technologies and processes to attain its strategic goals. This maturity has a huge impact on resilience — businesses that have a 'very high' digital maturity are three times more likely to have transformative resilience than those with 'low' digital maturity.

Many organisations are on their way to being digitally transformed. 43% of decision makers already consider themselves digital-first, and organisations generally believe they are more digitally advanced than their nation's overall economy.

Do you consider your company to be 'digital first'?



For example, decision makers in Germany have the highest perceived level of digital maturity about their own organisations (54%), while France has the lowest (44%).

Interestingly, 50% of French respondents consider their company to be digital first, which may explain why only 20% of respondents are considering leaving their employment in the next 12 months.

When it comes to sectors, respondents from IT, Property/ Real Estate, Accounting, and Finance industries have digitised around 70% of their processes. Perhaps surprisingly, this is similar across business sizes: 12% of Start-ups, 10% SME, and 11% enterprise.

At a segmentation level, IT industry (57%) respondents are most likely to consider their own industry to have high digital maturity, followed by accounting and finance (50%). Government / public sector (28%) and healthcare (30%) are the least likely to rate their industry to have high digital maturity. But is there a gap between perceived maturity and reality?

Across the ecosystem, respondents personally believe they are more digitally advanced (78%) than their organisations - just 43% perceive their business to be digital-first (43%).

Companies must recognise that talent wanting to work for digital first companies will look for those organisations that are not held back by outdated processes and ways of working.

For businesses to attain digital maturity they must define and implement a digital strategy that works across all aspects of the organisation, working to reduce inefficiencies created in manual processes. In short, digitally mature businesses recognise the role technology and the automation of low-value tasks plays in creating more meaningful and high-value work for employees.

Approximately what proportion of processes within your organisation that were once analogue and paper-based have been successfully digitised?

70%	70%	68%	67%
ΙΤ	Property / real estate	Accounting and finance	Law or other business / professional services
65%	65%	64%	61%
Architecture	Automotive and aviation	Energy / utilities / oil and gas	Retail / wholesale trade
61%	60%	59%	59%
Electrical / Electronic Engineering	Education	Government / public sector	Manufacturing and distribution

"We officially started using DocuSign in February 2020 and found that it very quickly changed almost all our previous manual processes – it proved pretty transformational for us as a company in a very short period of time."

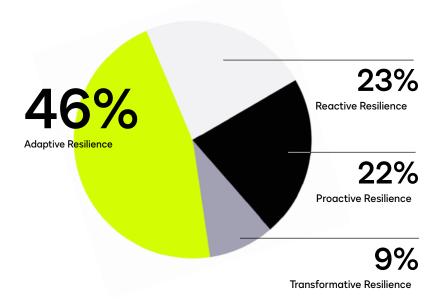
Matt Roberts Centre Manager Capital Space

Digital maturity's impact on resilience and innovation

Digital maturity relies upon an organisation to deploy strategies and components that enable them to effectively navigate and respond to disruptions. Gaps and legacy components in an organisation's digital infrastructure can leave businesses illequipped to deal with today's fast-paced and high-pressure markets.

63% of respondents believe that their current digital infrastructure equips their business to do well in enabling internal collaboration, optimising dayto- day operations (63%) and operating effectively in a hybrid working setting (61%).

What level of business resilience do you consider your organisation to have?



In essence, organisations believe their digital infrastructure is crucial to supporting many of the fundamental requirements of their ongoing business operations.

However, when looking at more mid-term trends, only 48% stated that their current digital infrastructure equips them well to exploit disruptive innovations, while 52% stated it will help them mitigate any potential impact of the economic downturn.



Such numbers are relatively low and to overcome such barriers and allay fears, organisations need to define and implement a digital strategy that builds trust across the organisation. One in which technology is not only being used correctly in the short-term but also creates the drive for future innovation, while simultaneously being affordable, scalable and adaptable.

When it comes to overcoming business challenges, organisations use a range of coping mechanisms. **46% of respondents reported their organisation uses adaptive resilience, responding to disruptions** but also adjusting its strategies and operations to adapt to changing circumstances. Yet, a mere 9% say they have transformative resilience - the highest level of business resilience.

Ultimately, organisations looking to bolster resilience and prepare their business infrastructures for a more digitally intuitive future should look at current digital transformation strategies and identify where improvements or strategy pivots can or should be made.

Resilience: Reactive, Adaptive, Proactive, and Transformative

How organisations adapt and capitalise on opportunities arising from disruption.

Reactive Resilience:

The ability to respond and recover to disruptions as they occur, without proactive anticipation or a prepared strategy.

Adaptive Resilience:

The ability to respond to disruptions by evolving its strategies and operations in response to unexpected market conditions.

Proactive Resilience:

The ability to anticipate potential disruption before it happens and take proactive measures to mitigate risks and recover from setbacks.

Transformative Resilience:

The ability of a company to not only adapt to disruptions, but also to innovate and thrive in the face of disruptive challenges.

Marginal gains over bold transformative moves

Digital transformation is no longer the all-consuming driving force it once was. This may be due to most organisations having accelerated their digital transformation during the pandemic or may be indicative or a wider preference towards smaller, iterative evolution of their strategies. As a result, 62% of decision makers believe they are currently focused on digital improvement or modernisation strategies that improve the use of digital tools already deployed rather than changing the way technology is used across the business.

A large proportion of businesses (60%) continue to take a top-down approach to digital improvements, driven by corporate IT rather than being led from within operational teams.

This is particularly the case in SME (63%) and enterprise (66%), followed by 52% of Start-ups. There is a risk that such strategies lack the flexibility or agility to meet the needs of the whole business, leading to potential skills gaps or inefficiencies.

We are currently focused on digital improvement / modernisation rather than digital transformation



"One of the questions we ask ourselves when evaluating new software is: 'will it integrate in a way useful to DocuSign?' and that is something we will continue to ask."

G. Bjorn Christianson
Director of Business Development
UCL Consultants

Change does not happen in a vacuum; it needs to be understood at every level of the business. 61% of decision makers believe their leadership teams have the right expertise to implement digital change. However, this still leaves a large skills gap in digital understanding. As such, greater education and deeper expertise around digital transformation needs to be instilled at all levels within an organisation's management hierarchy.

As organisations continue to move away from wide ranging digital transformation into more long-term marginal improvements, growth will come from the removal of outdated processes in favour of digitally enhanced solutions designed to improve efficiencies while at the same time reduce costs.



Unlocking Future-Ready Operations

Businesses in recent years have increased investment in, and the adoption of, digital technologies to help them combat the ever-more competitive landscape and assist them in capitalising in the growth of the digital economy.

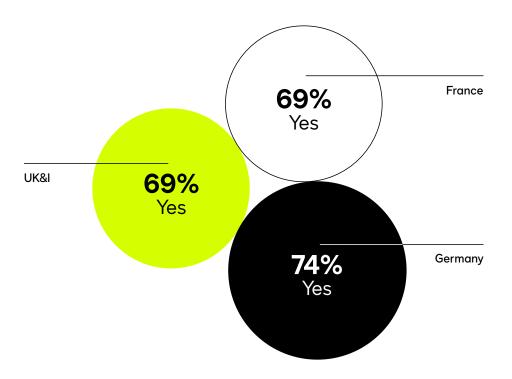
However, investment may not be going deep or far enough. It needs to be targeted at the right areas of the business and backed by the appropriate strategic approach to create genuine and sustained value. Even with the best technology and strategy, businesses will struggle without the skills to implement and execute. Addressing these digital issues will create a more resilient workplace, allowing for greater innovation and future-forward planning.

Benchmarking digital investment

Balancing the challenges of the present and building for the future are key imperatives within any organisation and businesses recognise the potential for their digital investment to support both. 71% of surveyed respondents stated their organisation has increased overall investment in and the adoption of digital technologies to compete in a rapidly changing business environment.

Larger and mid-sized organisations have prioritised these investments with 77% of enterprises and 75% of SMEs investing in digital technologies, compared with just 59% of Start-ups.

Has your organisation changed its investment in / adoption of digital technologies to compete in a rapidly changing business environment?



However, just 35% of respondents expect investment in digital modernisation initiatives to rise in the next 12 months, while a further 27% expect it to remain the same. This would tie in with the notion that business leaders are increasingly in favour of marginal gains through the digitisation of processes as opposed to wider sweeping digital transformation.

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The speed at which organisations implement further digital improvements can be influenced by a range of factors, with, unsurprisingly, money (48%) cited as the leading issue across all business sizes. However, cultural factors should not be underestimated with some 37% of respondents citing old working habits as a barrier to change.

In the spirit of iterative, marginal improvements, companies must consider how often they are reviewing their processes, tools and ways of working, and update strategies accordingly.

When you think about barriers to change, what have been the biggest obstacles to the rate and/or extent of your digital transformation/improvement?

48%

42%

Time

Old habits/resistance to change

36%

Skills

34%

Existing processes and infrastructure

Old habits/resistance to change

Business case/return on Investment

19

Transformation requires transformative processes and leadership

The best business strategies are those open to frequent evaluation and come built in with a willingness to change. However, a significant portion of organisations lack the necessary agility when it comes to reviewing and adapting their infrastructure policies and procedures.

32% of respondents stated their organisation reviews core processes every 12 months, or even less frequently, while 37% review core digital infrastructure every 12 months, or even less frequently. Reviewing security infrastructure (24%) and upskilling staff in the latest digital tools and technologies (23%) are most likely to be constantly reviewed within businesses.

Furthermore, with the accelerating emergence of Al impacting data driven processes, just 38% of respondents state their organisations experiment with disruptive new technology innovations every 12 months, or even less frequently. Organisations need to support Al experimentation if they are to take full advantage of the emerging technologies longterm business benefits.

"We review core processes every 12 months or even less frequently"



Central to delivering on digital change is a strong leadership team driving more effective transformation processes. Over a third (34%) of respondents believe that the CTO/CIO is one of the roles most likely to deliver the biggest impact on the organisational performance and resilience of their business – more so than even the CEO (30%).

This is especially true for larger companies with 36% of SMEs and 44% of enterprises citing the CTO/CIO as the role most likely to deliver the biggest impact on organisational performance and resilience, compared to just 22% of Start-ups. Due to the smaller and more agile nature of Start-ups, such respondents place more emphasis on the CEO (37%) as a driver of performance and resilience.

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Which of the following roles do you consider to be most likely to deliver the biggest impact on the organisational performance and resilience of your business? Select top three.

34% CTO/CIO	30% CEO	22% CEO/Finance
22% COO/Operations Lead	18% Chief People Officer /CHRO/HR	18% Special Task Force of Employees
17% CSO/Security Lead	17% Chief Risk Officer	15% Chief Sustainability Officer

"The current macroeconomic challenges are such that assessing the efficiency of internal processes is a key strategy to increasing ROI and maximising expenditure. This can be achieved by assessing which manual and outdated tasks and processes across the business ecosystem can be eliminated by simply going digital. By instilling a strategy of evaluation and change, organisations regardless of size can energise employees through smarter ways, while delivering faster times to value for the business."

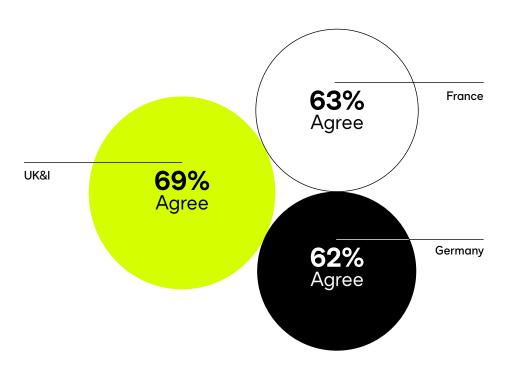
Ronan Copeland Group VP and General Manager, EMEA DocuSign.

Closing the skills gap to drive transformation

Investment in digital processes does not guarantee growth in isolation. The digital strategy of an organisation also relies on its rollout, implementation and wider support from within the company.

Almost two thirds **(65%)** of respondents believe there's a skill gap in their organisation around technology and digital skills - a gap that grows to 70% for European SMEs. As a result, organisations that do not offer the necessary digital tools potentially face a brain drain of talent to more digitally forward-thinking competitors..

Do you believe you currently have a skills gap within your organisation when it comes to technology and digital skills?



In the private sector, 70% of SMEs and 67% of enterprise respondents have a skills gap, while for Start-ups, who traditionally have a wider spread of skills, see smaller digital skills gaps within their knowledge operations - this figure is 58%.

Of those that believe their organisation has a skills gap, **52% agree that they are not able to do things that are part of their strategic plan,** or experiment with innovative technologies, because they don't have enough talent, or the right talent with the required skills.



Businesses are looking at ways to plug the skills gap, most notably through the upskilling of staff, but equally through emerging technologies such as generative Al. European businesses who believe they have a digital skills gap (30%) are more likely to anticipate an increase in Al investment in the next 12 months. If there is a positive to this situation, it is that business decision makers understand there is a problem and are looking for solutions.

The most common approach to closing this skills gap is a focus on reskilling, upskilling, and retaining critical talent (45%), followed by investing more in digital tools or automation (43%). By eliminating lowvalue and repetitive tasks through automated processes, employees can focus skills on more high-value tasks.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements Businesses are looking at ways around talent shortage?

Not able to do things that are part of our strategic plan because we don't have enough talent, or the right talent

52%

Not able to experiment with innovative technologies because we don't have enough talent, or the right talent

52%

Not able to deliver effectively against the day-to-day / operational technology imperatives because we don't have enough talent, or the right talent

49%

Lost tech talent because of macroeconomic / market conditions

48%

Not well equipped to orientate our business for the long-term

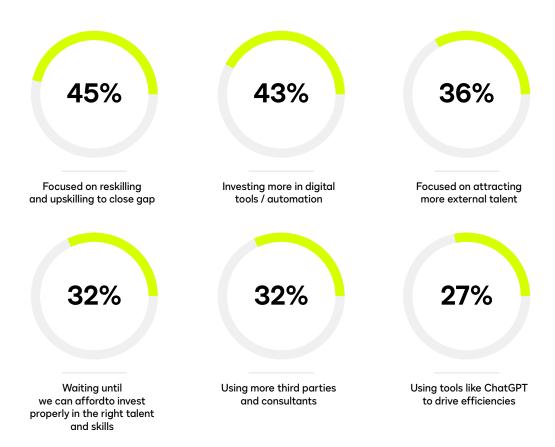
46%

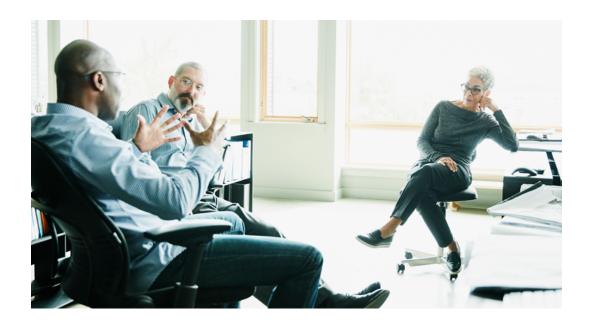
Interestingly, enterprises are more likely to allow current employees the chance to upskill (54%) compared to SMEs and start-ups (42%).

Ultimately, action must be taken along the value-chain to ensure that the right procedures are being followed, and the correct skills passed on.

With the right digital infrastructure adding value to the business and empowering employees to achieve more, organisations will attract the best talent—in turn further fuelling their digital maturity, building resilience in a competitive market and unlocking greater productivity.

What approach are you taking to close digital skills gaps?





Conclusion

Industry leaders and innovators agree that technology is changing at an ever-more accelerated rate. This has forced not only individuals but also organisations of all sizes to adapt, take on new skills, and ensure that a culture of constant learning is in place.

Some organisations have forged ahead with digital transformations, ensuring that the right tools and digital processes are implemented and meet the needs of the business, employees, customers, and partners. However, there remains a digital gap between the perceived forward -thinking strategies of businesses and the reality of their implementation. Equally, there remains a gap between the perceived digital skills of individuals and their actual skills as employees are still spending a disproportionate amount of time on low-value tasks that could otherwise be easily automated.

The accelerated pace of change, whether in the form of shifting macroeconomic uncertainties to the quickly emerging Al disruption, is putting increased pressure on internal processes to achieve more with less. By eliminating bottlenecks and low-value processes through automation and streamlining of outdated processes, businesses can drive incremental growth and build in better resilience.

Having the right tools and digital strategy in place is vital at every step along the value-chain if a business is to achieve better resilience. Digital skills gaps need to be reduced, and value added across the business, and not just to profit centres.

Join more than 1 BILLION USERS building resilience and closing skills gaps with DocuSign. Visit docusign.co.uk to learn more.

Methodology

The survey was conducted among 1800 Business Decision Makers in the UK, France and Germany. The interviews were conducted online by Sapio Research in April 2023 using an email invitation and an online survey.

Results of any sample are subject to sampling variation. The magnitude of the variation is measurable and is affected by the number of interviews and the level of the percentages expressing the results. In this particular study, the chances are 95 in 100 that a survey result does not vary, plus or minus, by more than 2.3 percentage points from the result that would be obtained if interviews had been conducted with all persons in the universe represented by the sample. The sample was selected from online partner panels.

