



# FUTURE OF WORK

**Atos**

**CIO**  
WaterCooler

# THE DISRUPTIVE FUTURE<sup>OF</sup> WORK

Generally, this *Future of Work* survey undertaken by the CIO WaterCooler ([www.ciowatercooler.co.uk](http://www.ciowatercooler.co.uk)) and in collaboration with Atos ([www.atos.net](http://www.atos.net)), a global digital services company, seems to support the idea that we are at a disruptive inflection point on the journey to Mutable Business (businesses in a constant state of evolution and change).

Nevertheless, this survey looks forward over 2-5 years and 10 years, depending on the question, and it is notoriously difficult to predict past an inflection point. So, there are some contradictory answers to the survey and a feeling of uncertainty as to the exact future (or, perhaps, timescales). This is valid data in itself, and implies that managing cultural change may be a significant feature of planning for future working environments and attitudes.

We identified 3 main trends for Future Work, from this survey: Automation; Reskilling, as we need to increase social skills rather than technology skills; and a new focus on the Flexible Workforce, which, will be needed to cope with the requirements of the Mutable Business.

In addition, we think that Mutable Businesses will need to deal with employee stress and social well-being, because change is stressful, and the survey prompted some thoughts here, too.







# AUTOMATION

**Automation will be key to operating the Mutable Business and respondents seem to think that the impact of automation and digitalisation on the organisation is of concern (over three-quarters of respondents) and almost a half thought that their management was aware that some roles were under pressure from AI etc.; conversely, under a third thought that it had a plan for addressing this pressure.**

Opinions seem quite widely divergent, typical of a community at a point of inflection. Well over half agreed or strongly agreed that their technology and skills investments were well-aligned to business needs – but a worrying quarter didn't agree. More concerning still, almost half didn't agree or strongly disagreed with the idea that they had adequate learning and support mechanisms in place to allow their IT staff to meet business needs over the coming 12-24 months. However, around a third thought that they had. Conversely, over two-thirds thought that they had a good understanding of how they needed to adapt their IT skills profile over the next 12-24 months. Perhaps the goal is clear, the journey less so.

Attitudes to advanced technology such as AI are split, as one might expect, as not many people have much experience of it as yet. Over two-thirds thought that AI would either impact about a tenth of jobs or was irrelevant for their organisation, which is eminently reasonable today but, perhaps, will be less so 5 years out. Almost a half thought that their management was aware that some roles were under pressure from AI etc.; conversely under a third thought that it actually had a plan for dealing with this pressure.

In a possibly related issue, almost half of respondents thought that their organisations were not actively identifying candidate processes and/or roles for automation generally; and of those that are, most ask each function head or IT to identify automation candidates. Only a little over a tenth of them have set up a specific function for this, but this may well be the best way of doing it.

Roles identified particularly as under pressure from AI automation include operational staff (almost a half of responders), admin staff (almost two-thirds), customer service (well over a third). Top management, unsurprisingly, was not thought to be at risk (only 4% suggested that it might be).





To what extent will automation and digitalisation impact your organisation?



Which functions within your organisation are under pressure due to automation or introduction of AI?



How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements when thinking about your own IT organisation?

Our technology and skills investments are well-aligned to what our wider business needs today.

**AGREE - 59%**  
**DISAGREE - 26%**

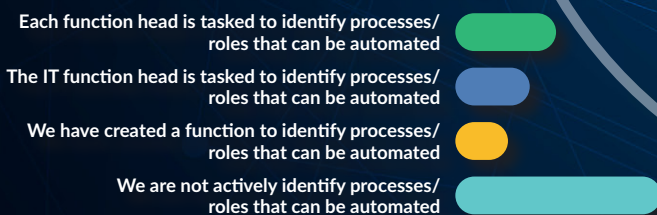
We have the right learning and support mechanisms in place to enable our current IT staff to meet the needs of our business over the next 12-24 months.

**AGREE - 34%**  
**DISAGREE - 43%**

We have a good understanding of how we need to adapt the skills profile of our IT organisation over the next 12-24 months to meet business needs.

**AGREE - 72%**  
**DISAGREE - 16%**

How are you identifying process/roles that can be automated?



# SOCIAL RE-SKILLING

We noticed an emphasis on the softer aspects of organisational management, which implies that managers must ensure that appropriate “*soft skills*” are available. The majority of responders (almost two-thirds) seem to think that their organisation cares about employees health and well being and many (about half) have programs in place that focus on this.

Of particular interest as far as disruptive change goes, when it came to the actual skills required by the organisation, the three leaders were ability to cope with change and ambiguity (over two-thirds, communication skills (just under half) and understanding the impact of technology on business (over a third). This will disrupt organisations with a past focus mainly on technology skills – just over a third of responders thought that they were actually missing an ability to cope with change and ambiguity, a shade under a fifth identified a lack of communications skills and over a third didn’t have people with an understanding of the impact of technology available. As a consequence, there’s a training opportunity – but note that these are soft skills, not hard technology skills, and this may imply staff changes.





To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

The workforce is becoming more flexible. Organisations increasingly work with a small team of permanent employees and a large temporary workforce of freelancers in order to have the right in-house knowledge and remain competitive.

**AGREE - 60%**  
**DISAGREE - 17%**

Less liberal migration policies will make it more difficult to bring necessary skills to our business.

**AGREE - 50%**  
**DISAGREE - 19%**

It is becoming increasingly more difficult to recruit skilled individuals to work for larger corporations.

**AGREE - 67%**  
**DISAGREE - 8%**

There is a generational divide in how individuals approach their working lives and working methods.

**AGREE - 81%**  
**DISAGREE - 5%**

Your country's education system is able to provide individuals with the necessary skills your business requires for the future.

**AGREE - 32%**  
**DISAGREE - 37%**

Is your office a place to work, meet & socialize or both?

Mainly a working environment with areas to meet  
**34%**

A working environment only  
**21%**

A working environment with areas to meet and socialize  
**19%**

A flexible environment with areas to meet, socialize and work  
**26%**



# FLEXIBLE WORKING

The survey results indicate that about half of respondents see social interaction as a feature of the future working environment and a majority allow flexible working (of all responders, about a third have a half or more home-working employees). Of responders that do allow flexible working, slightly over half expect people to be working flexibly every day; and a third more, see them working every week.

It is also indicative that chat and videoconferencing (just under four-fifths of respondents), collaborative software (just over four-fifths) and social collaboration platforms (just over a third) are important. The survey suggests that this will increase over the next 5 years.

The overwhelming majority of respondents appear to want employees who are digitally oriented, empathic and flexible; who feel that asking the right questions, sharing and collaborating is important; and who can self-learn. This supports the idea that we are at an inflection point, over two-thirds of respondents thought that under half of their workforce actually achieved any of this today.

*In order to shape the organisation of the future, social skills are becoming more important. To what extent do you **agree** or **disagree** with the following statements?*

*We need more people who are digitally oriented, empathic and flexible.*

**AGREE - 92%**  
**DISAGREE - 4%**

*...more people who can self-learn.*

**AGREE - 95%**  
**DISAGREE - 1%**

*...people who feel that asking the right questions, sharing and collaborating are important.*

**AGREE - 98%**  
**DISAGREE - 1%**



Which technologies does your organisation use to work more efficiently?



Are you going to implement new technologies?



Data Analytics  
**72%**

Collaboration Tools  
**73%**

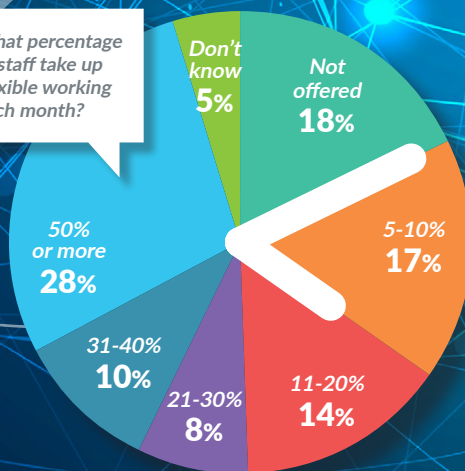
Artificial Intelligence  
**61%**

Virtual Meeting Tools  
**58%**

Robots  
**28%**

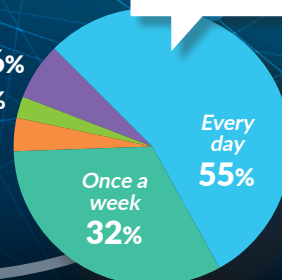
Virtual Reality  
**21%**

What percentage of staff take up flexible working each month?



If yes, how often are employees able to work flexibly?

Less than once a month **6%**  
Once a month **3%**  
Once a fortnight **4%**





# EMPLOYEE STRESS AND WELL-BEING AT WORK

Change is stressful and managing employee stress and well-being is going to be an important aspect of future work. In this CIO survey, about a third of responders feel stressed at work, slightly more don't. About a quarter don't seem to know, which seems odd.

The majority (almost 2/3rds) seem to think that their organisation cares about employees health and well-being and many (about half) have programs in place that focus on this. Perceptions that the company cares about its employees don't seem to vary much with company size, but smaller companies are somewhat less likely to have health and wellbeing and stress reduction programs in place.

Respondents in small companies didn't appear so likely to feel stressed at work (only about a fifth agreed with this idea, none strongly agreed and over a half disagreed or strongly disagreed) as opposed to larger companies (around half agreed or strongly agreed, only about a quarter of medium companies and just over two-thirds of large companies disagreed, in neither did respondents disagree strongly).

Health insurance is the biggest mental health and well-being programme benefit (almost 2/3rds of respondents cite this), but this is reactive rather than proactive. Future work probably means keeping employees healthy (mentally and physically) rather than fixing them when they break. It is a major benefit, regardless of company size, but small companies generally have a less rich set of benefits, as might be expected.







To what extent would you **agree** or **disagree** with the following statements?

*I feel stressed at work.*

**AGREE - 35%**  
**DISAGREE - 43%**

*My organisation has specific programs in place that focus on health and wellbeing.*

**AGREE - 48%**  
**DISAGREE - 31%**

*My organisation cares about my health and wellbeing.*

**AGREE - 61%**  
**DISAGREE - 16%**

*My organisation monitors stress levels.*

**AGREE - 17%**  
**DISAGREE - 61%**

*My organisation has specific programs in place to help reduce stress.*

**AGREE - 26%**  
**DISAGREE - 39%**

An employee assistance program is popular too (about a half of respondents cited one, although smaller companies are less likely to have one). A canteen serving healthy food seems popular (about a third); as does free fruit (a quarter); and gym membership (a shade less popular) – we wonder if these are all the same companies? Only somewhat under a quarter of companies seem to be providing sports activities, which rather surprises us. Health risk assessment is an interesting option in a few (under 1/5th) of companies.

More significant for future work, perhaps, are the availability of “*personal growth*” initiatives (we don’t remember many of these in the past); achievement recognition; peer2peer support groups, mindfulness training, and yoga/Pilates. However, only around a tenth of managers appear to be getting training on dealing with employee mental health problems, which is a pity. But we were encouraged that about a fifth provide access to financial education, as we have a feeling that future workers may be highly skilled and well-paid but may not be particularly mature and experienced.

A future survey might usefully investigate any correlation between organisations with mental health and wellbeing related benefits and about one-fifth of organisations that monitor stress levels; or those that have stress reduction programs (about a quarter do, rather more don’t; about a third of responders don’t seem to know).

# GENERAL IMPRESSIONS OF THE IMPACT OF COMPANY SIZE

To what extent do you **agree** or **disagree** with the following statements?

We will need to change our management hierarchy to accommodate the working styles of the next generation of workers.

**AGREE - 92%**  
**DISAGREE - 4%**

We will need to change our organisational structure to accommodate the next generation of workers.

**AGREE - 60%**  
**DISAGREE - 12%**

Large companies are by no means as unaware of future work issues as some might think, and mostly have similar levels of “*future skills and technology*” available to them as smaller companies. There is some evidence that if there are issues, perhaps medium sized companies are more likely to have them; and that the smallest companies might be most nimble at addressing them; while the very biggest companies have resources to throw at strategic, future planning.

How many employees in your company?



Note that company size differences should probably be considered as indicative, or as starting points for discussion, as the sample sizes are probably a bit small for them to represent definitive trends.

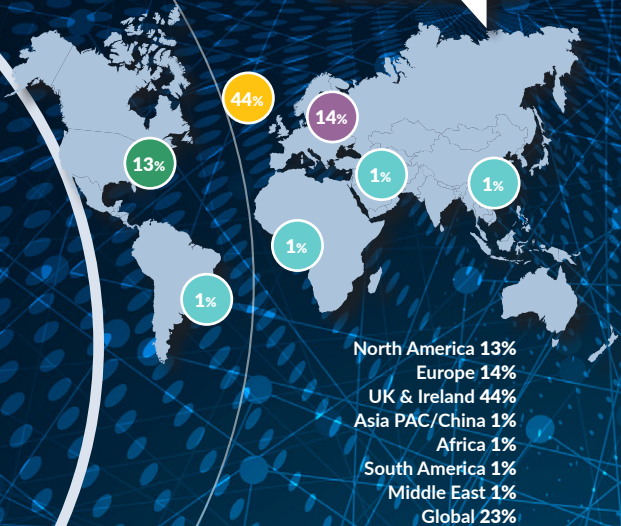


# CONCLUSION

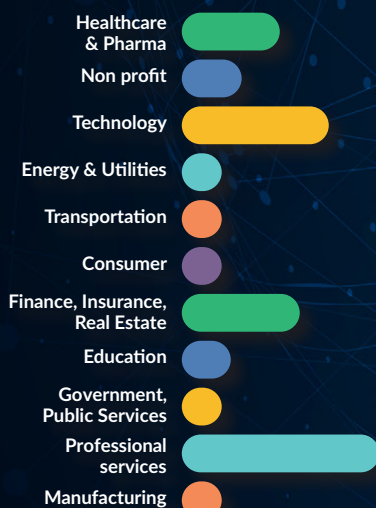
The trends elucidated in this CIO WaterCooler survey rather define the challenges to come over the next 10 years. Overwhelmingly, changing business models are going to be challenging - over three-quarters of responders thought this - but attracting and retaining talent also features (for almost two-thirds).

The majority of responders thought that organisational structures and management hierarchies would need to change to accommodate next generation workers and that new leaders need to be inspirational, able to coach, rather than dictate and trustworthy. Unfortunately, only a small minority of respondents thought that the majority of their managers had these skills.

Which region do you have responsibility for/ or operate in?



What industry is your company in?



What do you see as the most important challenge for the next 10 years?



## METHODOLOGY

The CIO WaterCooler invited 500 CIO's and IT Leaders randomly selected from its members, to share how they and their organisations were approaching the Future Work challenge. They came from a mixture of industries, company sizes and regions, Survey Monkey was used, a shade under 100 responses were achieved (20% is accepted as a very high response rate) and about half the sample was from the UK and Ireland, the rest was global; or Europe and North America.

Over half come from professional services/technology/financial organisations (in that order). The high response rate probably indicates a very focussed, motivated, supportive sample.

The results were analysed as a whole, and split into small (1-499); medium (500-4999); large (5000-10,000+) companies. This segmentation seems to be a real one, based on the results - medium sized companies behave differently, to some degree, to both large and small companies.





The CIO WaterCooler is a free, open and supportive community that helps its users share their knowledge and experience with their peers around the world. We help our members raise their profile, share their news and views and allowing to keep up to date with the developments fast pace of change and technology.

*The CIO WaterCooler... Providing the IT leader with peer guidance as they build the successful businesses of the future*

[www.ciowatercooler.co.uk](http://www.ciowatercooler.co.uk)



**Atos**

Atos is a global leader in digital transformation with approximately 100,000 employees in 73 countries and annual revenue of around €13 billion.