



# PRODUCTIVITY REPORT 2022

***ARE WE MORE PRODUCTIVE  
THEN WE WERE A YEAR  
AND A HALF AGO, AND HAS  
THE WORKPLACE CHANGED  
FOR GOOD?***

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Boosting productivity has always been a priority for companies but advances in workplace technology have redefined what that means for employees. When we first talked about this in our 2020 Productivity Report, published in late 2019, the world was in a different place. Working in offices, having in-person meetings and collaborating face-to-face with colleagues was the norm.

A lot has changed since then.

COVID-19 drastically affected working habits, employee needs and productivity. While businesses adapted — shifting priorities and investing in new technologies — no one could've predicted how significant of an impact it would have. And companies must rethink how they'll operate moving forward.

Workers now expect more flexibility in how and where they work, which ultimately requires a new set of workflows and tools. If businesses want to stay ahead, they need to start embracing a fully digital future and new work environments.

Our previous report examined the relationships between productivity and the tools that drive it. This year's report builds upon those findings and also explores how the global pandemic has transformed productivity, workflows and digital initiatives, as well as the trends and technologies shaping work in 2022 and beyond.



# KEY FINDINGS

## 1 **Workers felt less stressed while working remotely.**

In 2020, the number of workers feeling moderately stressed dropped by 12%, and job satisfaction increased by 6%.

## 2 **Working from home is here to stay.**

While more offices are reopening, 46% of workers expect to work from home (WFH) more frequently after the pandemic ends, and 75% believe WFH support is extremely important when evaluating future job opportunities.

## 3 **Remote work paved the way for paperless.**

When everyone shifted to remote work in early 2020, global printing declined by 52% and paperless workflows began to take hold. From February to June 2020, PDF annotation increased by 84% and eSigning increased by 60%.

## 4 **Document processes are still inefficient.**

Eighty-three percent of workers said the way their company handled documents had not improved significantly during the pandemic. And 95% saw room for improvement in how their organizations handled documents.

## 5 **Digital transformation plans have accelerated.**

Eighty-six percent of business leaders said COVID-19 accelerated the need for digital transformation. Plans for digital initiatives are now expected to happen within the next two years.

## 6 **IT budgets are getting bigger.**

Around eight in 10 business leaders say IT budgets increased between 10% and 14% from 2020, and two in 10 say it increased more than 25%.

## 7 **Higher demand for collaboration and productivity tools.**

Pre-pandemic, companies began adding collaboration and productivity tools to their tech stacks, but their importance grew as remote work became the norm. Around 70% of workers find both tools to be extremely impactful.

## 8 **Document productivity is more important than ever.**

More workers today are using an eSignature solution than in 2019, which at the time was only 12%. And nearly half of workers said they would be somewhat or much more productive with either an eSignature or PDF solution.



PART ONE

# The evolving state of productivity

01



# STRESS TAKES A TOLL ON PRODUCTIVITY

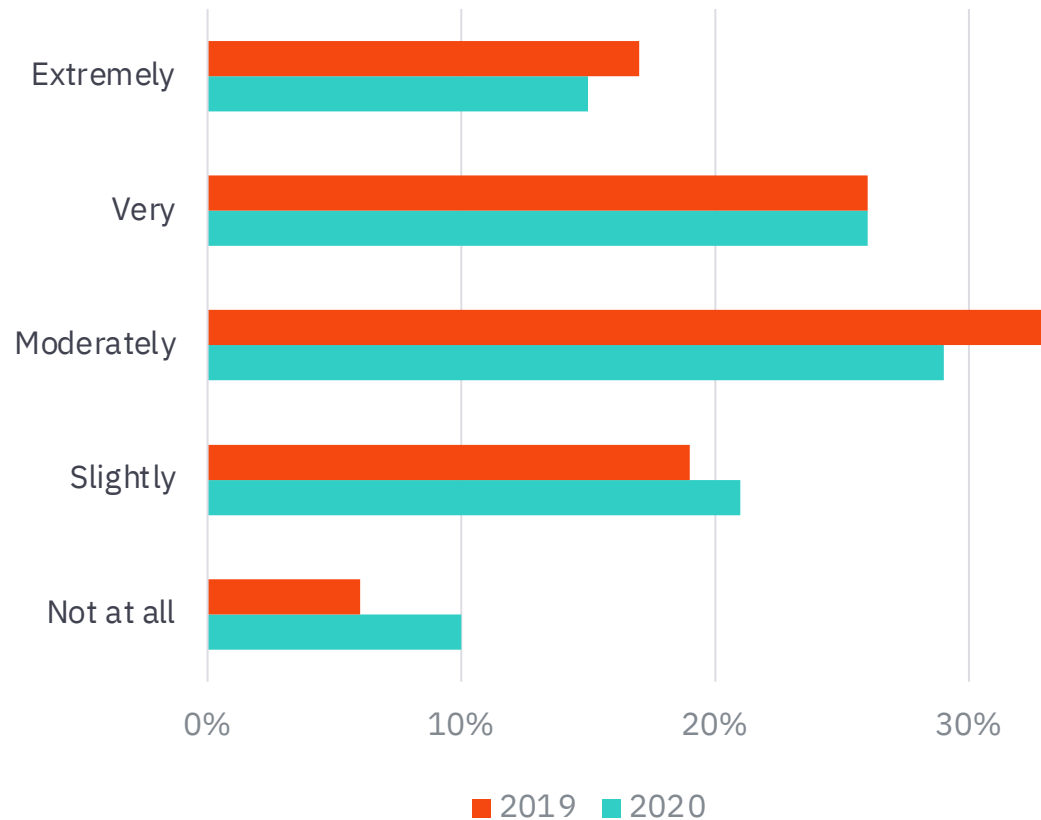
Before the pandemic, nearly a quarter of respondents were putting in more than 40 hours per week and 43% reported feeling stressed at least very often at work. While hours were high, nearly one out of every three respondents felt only somewhat productive or worse at their jobs.

Higher stress levels were linked to the number of documents they were working with daily. Those working with over 10 documents felt more stressed, in part due to repetitive workflows and manual processes like printing and scanning.

Now, fast-forward to summer 2020. In the second installment of our [Future of Work Report](#), we found that despite working during a global pandemic, respondents surprisingly felt less stressed and more productive at work.



## How often are we stressed at work?



Most strikingly, the number of workers feeling moderately stressed dropped by 12%, and those that felt no stress at all increased by 66%. This was likely attributed to having more control over the workday, which allowed employees to better balance work tasks and family-related responsibilities during this period.

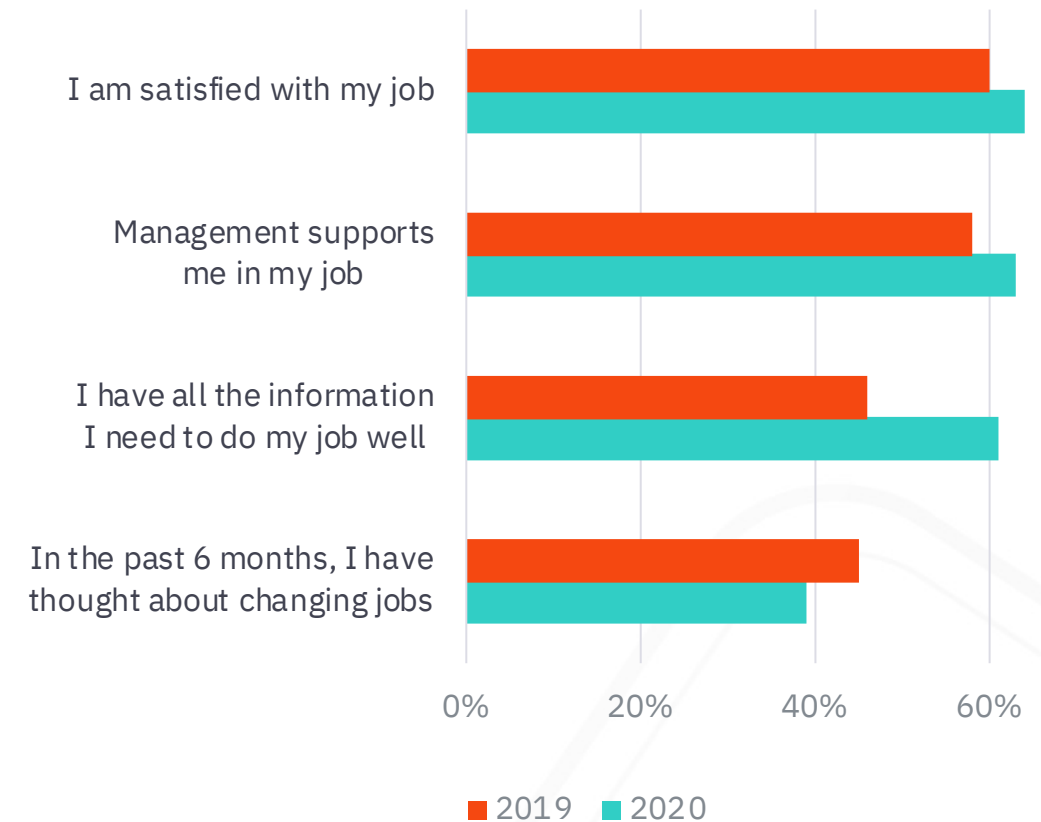
In 2019, about 10% of work took place outside the hours of 6:00 am to 6:00 pm. According to data from Nitro Analytics, nearly 20% of work occurred outside of those hours during the height of the pandemic in spring 2020. While the total amount of work accomplished remained steady, working hours became more evenly distributed across the broader part of the day.

When employees feel unproductive, they also feel more stressed, less supported and less motivated to meet customer needs.

Pre-pandemic, 71% of those who felt unproductive expressed the lowest levels of job satisfaction. Additionally, 78% of those who didn't feel productive at all also felt the least supported by management.

These views completely shifted when stay-at-home orders took effect and businesses moved to working from home. Knowledge workers reported greater job satisfaction in 2020, despite no major improvements in productivity.

## Working from home increases job satisfaction





# WORKING FROM HOME INCREASES JOB SATISFACTION

Although fewer respondents considered changing jobs while working from home, those who still found it difficult to get resources were more likely to be dissatisfied. In 2019, we found respondents who had access to the resources they needed to do their work felt more satisfied in their jobs. Seventy-five percent of them who expressed difficulty finding resources reported being not at all satisfied with their jobs.

The consequences of employee turnover can be painful, especially for companies competing in spaces where workers expect the best tools and perks. When an employee leaves, the rest of the team suffers from a productivity gap, and morale and workloads can be majorly affected.



PART TWO

# Redefining document processes & workflows

02



# REMOTE WORK DRIVES THE MOVE TO PAPERLESS

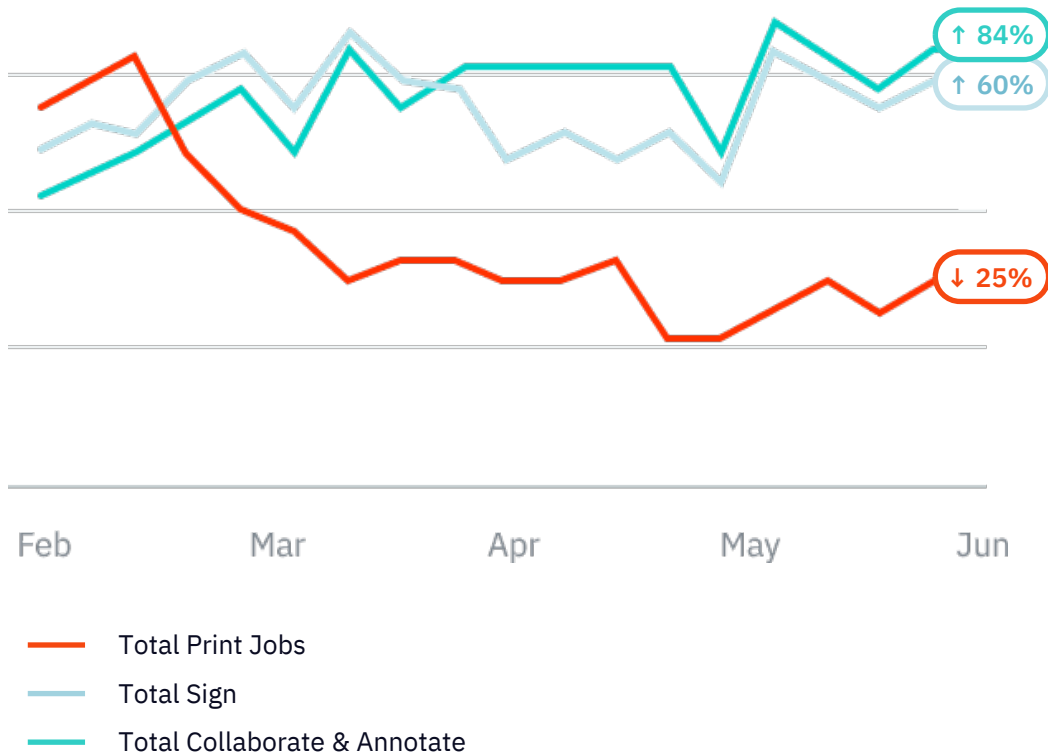
Before COVID-19, paper-based workflows dominated the workplace. Seventy percent of workers printed documents, 60% scanned and 48% signed or approved on paper. And that same behavior continued into early 2020 before the pandemic hit.

However, once employees started working from home and no longer had access to office printers, there was a 52% decline in global printing — highlighting how prevalent and largely unnecessary this work habit had been.

While printing and scanning did decrease during the pandemic, 56% of workers were still printing and 50% still scanning, even while working from home.



## 2020 usage data from Nitro Analytics™



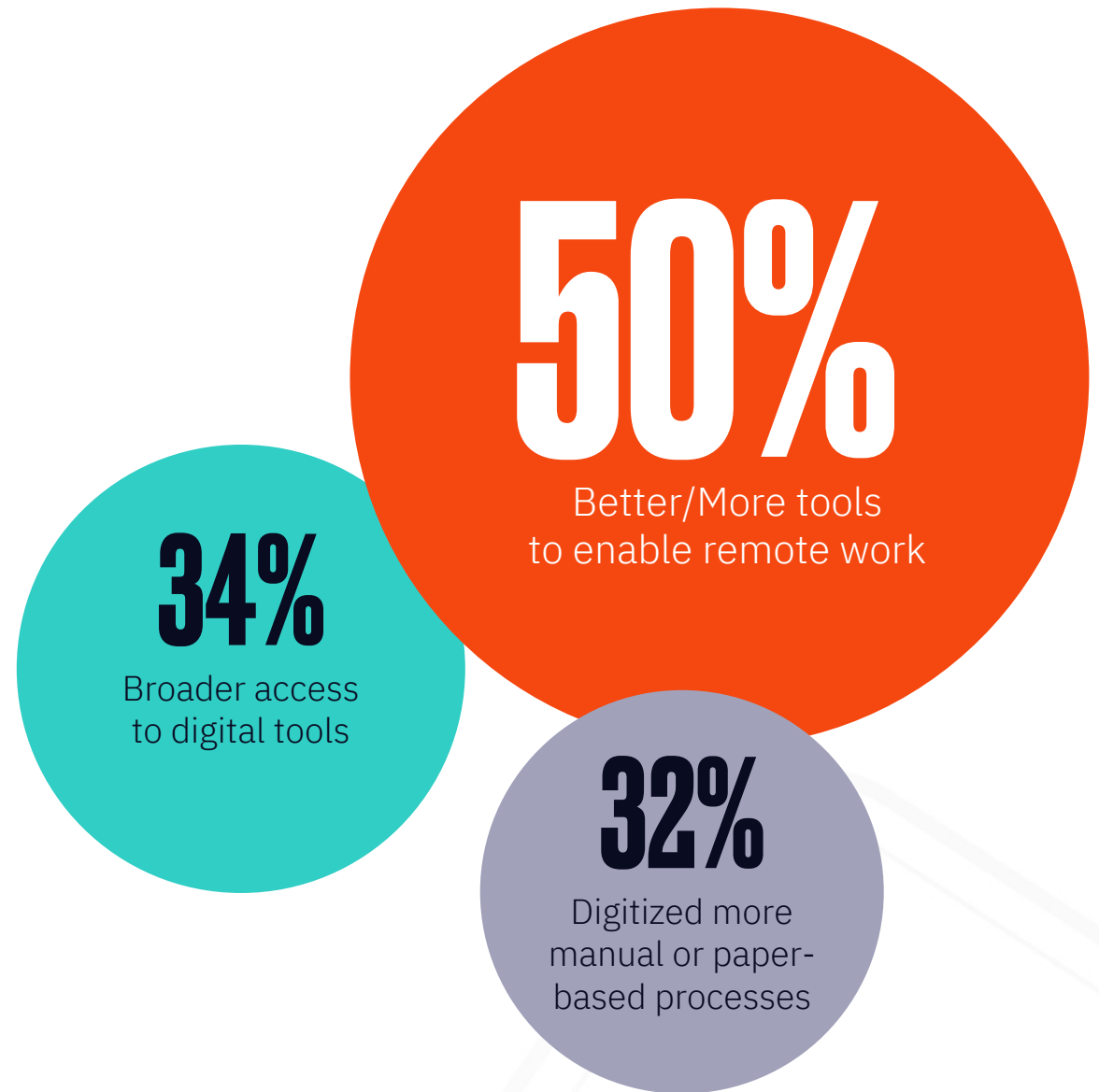
Remote productivity was challenging for knowledge workers who relied on office printers and scanners. It also became impossible to do common tasks such as redline a document and walk it over to a colleague for input. It quickly became digitized workflows or nothing at all.

In the second part of our **Future of Work Report**, we found PDF collaboration and eSigning increased exponentially among Nitro users, while printing declined. These changes indicated companies were starting their transition toward digital workflows. In 2021, the paperless journey continued. In fact, 50% of respondents said they're using physical documents and paper-based processes less since the start of the pandemic.



While we are entering a paperless work world, making the full transition will take some time. Many businesses still rely on paper for some processes and have not deployed digital solutions company-wide.

According to our 2021 survey, respondents felt their companies could have better prepared for remote work by implementing better digital tools, providing broader access to technology and digitizing paper-based processes. This lack of tools and digitization has made document management more challenging. Eighty-three percent of knowledge workers said the way their company handled documents had not improved significantly during the pandemic, and 95% saw room for improvement in how their organizations handled documents.



# BETTER DIGITAL TOOLS & WORKFLOWS ARE NEEDED

Forty percent of knowledge workers do not find their current workflows very efficient, and only 34% are somewhat satisfied with their workflows — signaling an urgent need for improvement.

Now that working from home is a permanent norm, companies will face growing pressure to improve their document processes and digital strategy. Failing to address these issues will likely have a negative impact on employee productivity and efficiency.

## Barriers to improvements

**42%** IT is too busy



**41%** Limited budget available



**38%** Lack of training or support for users



**34%** Management is unaware of challenges



**24%** No way to provide input to decision makers



PART THREE

# Navigating the digitization revolution

03



# DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION PLANS TAKE OFF

Digital transformation was somewhat of a business priority before the pandemic. But once stay-at-home orders took effect, it became necessary for companies to survive in a completely remote work environment.

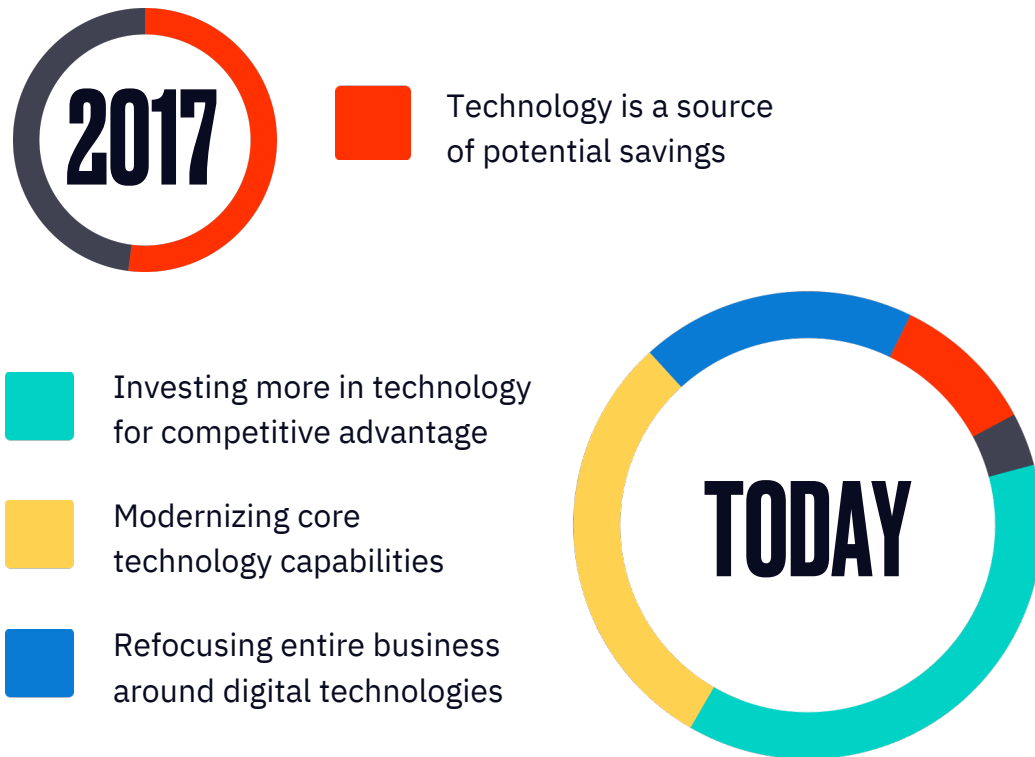
According to our 2021 survey, 61% of respondents felt their organization was extremely or very prepared to support digital needs at the onset of the pandemic. However, 86% of business leaders said COVID-19 accelerated the need for digital transformation. Plans for digital initiatives are now expected to happen within the next two years. However, around 5 in 10 leaders anticipate updates within the next year.

For years, enterprises have been optimistic in their self-assessments, thinking they're further along in their digital transformations than they really are.

— JULIE SWEET, Chair & CEO, *Accenture*



## The pandemic has changed how executives view the importance of technology today



Pre-pandemic, technology was important but was implemented more so to scale down costs.

That sentiment has obviously changed over the past couple of years, especially within the last 19 months. While cost savings is still a significant benefit of deploying technology, it's not the only one.

Companies now view digital technologies as critical elements of their overall business success. According to McKinsey, nearly 40% of business leaders are investing in technology to stay competitive.

SOURCE McKinsey 2020; How COVID-19 has pushed companies over the technology tipping point—and transformed business forever

# THE BEST DIGITAL TOOLS FOR LONG-TERM REMOTE WORK

During the pandemic, collaboration and document productivity tools (PDF editing and eSignature) were the most implemented solutions. With few workers going into the office for the foreseeable future, both became a more of a necessity.

Knowledge workers claim these two tools are extremely effective and impactful to their organization. And a little over 60% said they are extremely or somewhat easy to use.

**71%**

of knowledge workers feel extremely or very prepared for long-term remote work

**44%**

of respondents are collaborating on documents more since the start of the pandemic

PART FOUR

# Trends for 2022

04



# WORKING FROM HOME WILL CONTINUE TO BE THE NORM

Working from home was not that common pre-pandemic. Most companies expected employees to be in the office full-time, but all of that changed when offices around the world abruptly closed.

Our 2021 survey found that while there is some desire to return to the office, most employees want to continue WFH in some capacity. Forty-six percent of knowledge workers said they plan to work remotely more frequently even after the pandemic ends, and many organizations are preparing for this type of outcome.

Nine out of 10 of respondents said their companies have some type of post-pandemic work policy in place. Some businesses will allow employees to work remotely forever, but the hybrid model — a schedule that blends in-office and remote work — has become the standard for most.

A popular cliché of 2020 was that covid-19 accelerated pre-existing trends. Yet that is a poor description of the massive rupture to office work.

Before the pandemic, Americans spent 5% of their working time at home. By spring 2020 the figure was 60%.

— THE ECONOMIST



- 13% Employees can work from home full-time indefinitely
- 27% Option to work from home or work in the office
- 32% Option to have hybrid work from home/in office schedule
- 17% Employees expected to be back in the office once it's safe
- 10% My organization does not have a post-pandemic work policy yet
- 1% Other

Thirty-eight percent of respondents are currently working from home, and 47% are taking the hybrid approach (working from home, another residence or the office).

Having work from home support will be critical in this new work world, especially when recruiting new talent. Seventy-five percent of knowledge workers said it is extremely/very important when considering future employment opportunities.

As companies build out their 2022 strategy, they must keep work from home or work-from-anywhere top of mind because it's no longer considered a "nice-to-have" perk, it's now an expectation.

# CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE & DIGITAL PRODUCTIVITY ARE TOP OF MIND

The pandemic not only impacted operations, but it also shifted business priorities. Leaders listed enhancing the customer experience and improving digital productivity as top priorities for their organizations.

Without in-person interactions, companies needed to focus more on how to build and maintain their customer relationships virtually as well as how to boost productivity across remote workforces.

These will likely continue to be focus areas in 2022 as most organizations are expected to be working remotely or from home through early next year.

In response to COVID-19, customers have taken many activities they may have previously done in-person online. This change in behavior increased the demand for new digital products and services, a trend that will continue to increase going forward.

– GARTNER 2021 CIO AGENDA

# IT BUDGETS ARE INCREASING

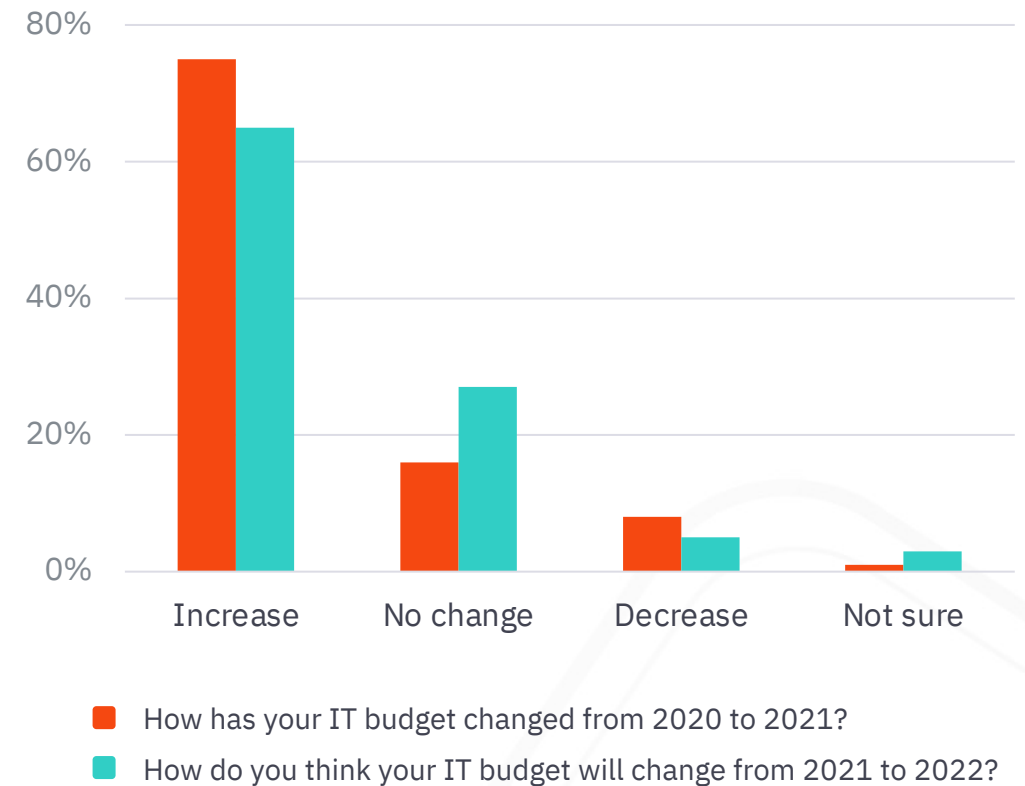
With digital transformation plans in full swing, many business leaders expect IT budgets to increase again in 2022. About eight in 10 business leaders say IT budgets increased between 10% and 14% from 2020, and two in 10 say it increased more than 25%.

Sixty-five percent of leaders believe budgets will increase next year however, nearly 60% think their current budget is sufficient.

As companies accelerate their digital efforts, more budget might be needed to cover the costs of a full transformation. According to Gartner's research vice president, John-David Lovelock:

*“Digital transformation can no longer be purchased overnight, and global IT spending projections reflect that. As the world continues to open back up, enterprises will invest in tools that support innovation, anywhere operations and employee productivity & trust.”*

## IT budget changes from 2020 to 2022



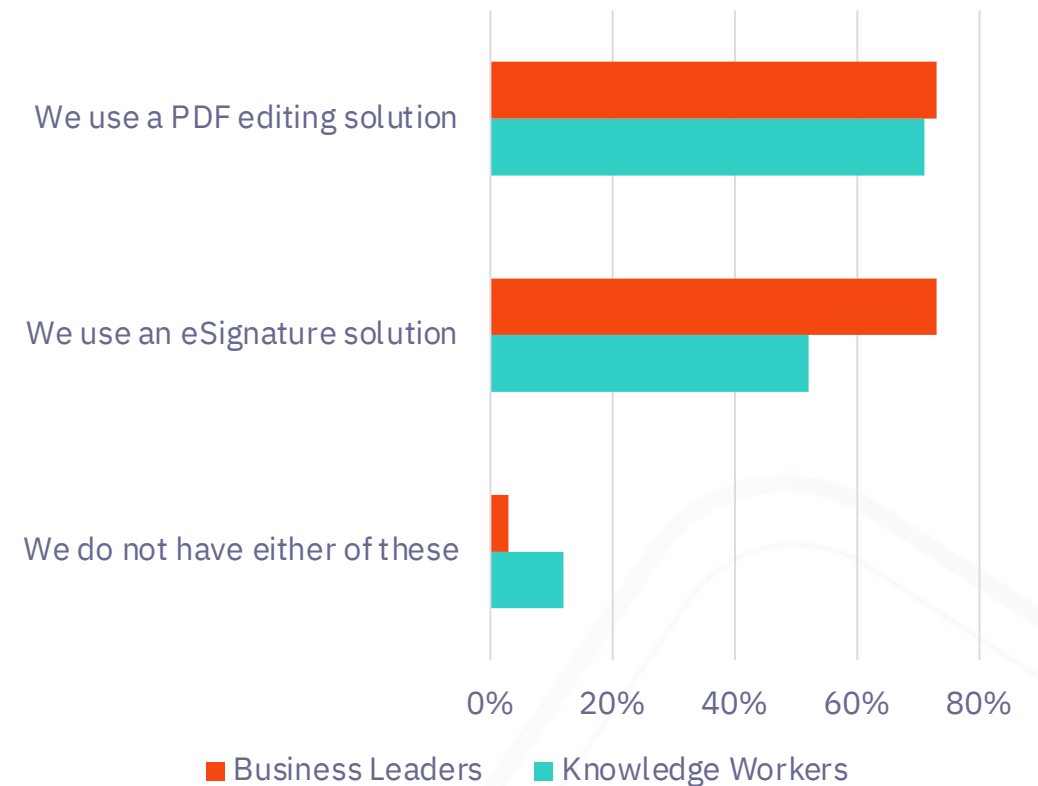
# DOCUMENT PRODUCTIVITY IS GROWING

Most knowledge workers and business leaders use a PDF editing solution, but a larger number of leaders use an eSignature solution. Although eSigning is not as widespread across entire workforces yet, it has gained more traction over the course of the pandemic.

In early 2020, there was an 108% increase in electronic signature requests, and a 61% increase in digital signing. Today, 52% of knowledge workers use an eSignature solution (a 333% jump from in 2019). For those that don't currently use one, half said they would be somewhat or much more productive if they had an eSignature tool, and 48% felt they would be more productive with a PDF editing tool.

Workers will also be looking to incorporate more contract life cycle management solutions (CLM) into their daily workflows. In fact, Gartner predicts that 90% of multinational, global enterprises and 50% of regional midsize organizations will have CLM solutions in place by 2023.

## Document productivity tool usage among leaders & knowledge workers





PART FIVE

# Preparing for the future of work

05



# ACT NOW TO STAY AHEAD

To prepare for a fully digital future and new work landscape, companies must focus on two key areas:

- FLEXIBILITY

*For employees, having the option to choose where and how they want to work will be a deal-breaker when evaluating current and future employers. Whether your company decides to take a full-time remote work or hybrid approach, there should be some sort of flexibility offered. People don't want to be tied to a desk or required to go into an office, at least for the near future.*

- DIGITAL SOLUTIONS

*It took a global pandemic for companies to prioritize and accelerate their digital transformation efforts. However, a key part of this transformation is equipping employees with digital tools that will help them be successful in a remote-first world. Investing in document productivity technology can have a positive impact and help keep your business moving forward, even during a global crisis.*





## Accelerate your digital transformation and increase ROI with Nitro

The Nitro Productivity Platform provides powerful, best-in-class document tools that are designed to serve every device, workflow and touchpoint. With PDF productivity, unlimited eSigning and analytics, you can transform your entire organization with a single solution.

Ready to accelerate your digital transformation journey?

→ [Learn more about Nitro and get started today!](#)

# ABOUT NITRO

Nitro is a global document productivity software company accelerating digital transformation in a world that demands the ability to work from anywhere, anytime, on any device. Nitro enables organizations to drive better business outcomes through 100% digital document processes and fast, efficient workflows.

The Nitro Productivity Platform offers comprehensive business solutions, including powerful PDF productivity, unlimited eSigning and industry-leading analytics, all supported by a superior customer success team. Nitro has over 2.8 million licensed users and 13,000+ Business Customers in 155 countries, including over 68% of the Fortune 500 and three of the Fortune 10.

Nitro is headquartered in San Francisco with hubs in Toronto, Dublin, London, and Melbourne.

To learn more, please visit [gonitro.com](https://gonitro.com).



# NITRO SOURCES

## 2020 NITRO PRODUCTIVITY REPORT

Nitro partnered with Qualtrics in April 2019 to conduct a research study of 1,183 full- and part-time knowledge workers across the United States, United Kingdom, Ireland and Australia. The study explored usage behaviors and perceptions of workplace documentation practices.

→ [GET THE REPORT](#)

## THE FUTURE OF WORK REPORT — PART 1

This report examined aggregated data collected by Nitro Analytics from February through March 2020. The data highlighted the impact of the global pandemic on productivity across industries.

→ [GET THE REPORT](#)

## THE FUTURE OF WORK REPORT — PART 2

Nitro partnered with Qualtrics in May/June 2020 to conduct a research study of 1,632 full- and part-time knowledge workers across the United States, United Kingdom, Ireland and Australia. The study explored usage behaviors and perceptions of workplace documentation practices as well as the success and challenges of working during the COVID-19 pandemic.

→ [GET THE REPORT](#)

## THE FUTURE OF WORK 2021 SURVEY

Nitro partnered with Qualtrics in April 2021 to survey 600 full- and part-time knowledge workers and 140 business leaders across the United States, United Kingdom, Germany and Australia. The survey examined the top challenges faced during the pandemic, changing workflows and digital needs and what a post-pandemic work world looks like.



# EXTERNAL SOURCES

[Accenture Technology Trends 2021 Report](#) →

[The Economist](#) →

[Gartner 2021 CIO Agenda](#) →

[Gartner IT Spending Forecast](#) →

[McKinsey 2020: How COVID-19 has pushed companies over the technology tipping point—and transformed business forever](#) →



