

# Designing the Intelligent Workplace Experience of the Future

How Leaders Are Aligning People, Places,  
and Technologies for AI Execution



**Erica Spinoni**

Senior Research Analyst,  
WW AI-Enabled Future of  
Work & EMEA Practice Lead, IDC



**Bruno Teyton**

Associate Vice President,  
Network Infrastructure  
and Services, IDC



# Table of contents



Click any title to navigate directly to that page.

|                                                                                            |    |                                                                               |    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Executive summary                                                                          | 3  | Do not inherit the rules; shape them                                          | 12 |
| The AI mandate asks organizations to pivot to AI-enabled models                            | 4  | An intelligent workplace experience built for AI, people, and the future      | 13 |
| AI has entered daily work and is increasing expectations and risks in equal measure        | 5  | Next steps for leaders eager to design the workplace experience of the future | 14 |
| Flexible work only works when tech needs are met                                           | 6  | About the IDC analysts                                                        | 15 |
| Intelligent workspaces and modern process tools deliver on smart collaboration aspirations | 7  | Message from the sponsor                                                      | 16 |
| The modern network will work autonomously with human oversight thanks to AI                | 8  |                                                                               |    |
| Networks and security: No longer two separate conversations                                | 9  |                                                                               |    |
| Smart offices demand smarter connectivity                                                  | 10 |                                                                               |    |
| As the network brings IT and OT together, leaders make it happen                           | 11 |                                                                               |    |

# Executive summary

AI is no longer an experiment; it is the operating model reshaping the workforce and the workplace. The AI-enabled technology used at the intersection of these corporate assets will be the decisive factor in whether this new operating model delivers productivity, experience, and resilience or quietly undermines them.

## The modern workplace rests on four connected pillars:

- ➔ **AI-ready network:** Ninety-three percent of executives already report productivity gains from AI, but AI traffic is uplink-heavy, latency-sensitive, and always-on. Networks must be re-engineered for AI workloads and support seamless access to company resources.
- ➔ **Unified network and security:** With 40% of employees already using free AI tools, shadow AI and encrypted API traffic break traditional perimeter models. IT and HR teams must share ownership of user experience, resilience, and risk.
- ➔ **Intelligent workplaces:** Forty-six percent of organizations have invested in smart rooms and digital workspaces. The office is becoming a dense digital edge where connectivity underpins employee experience (EX), sustainability, and real-estate strategy.
- ➔ **Agentic workforce:** Autonomous AI agents are emerging as a 24 x 7 skilled layer alongside people. AIOps is already automating 31% of network tasks today. This is expected to rise to 54% within two years. The fully autonomous network under human control is within reach, reducing downtime and improving overall EX.

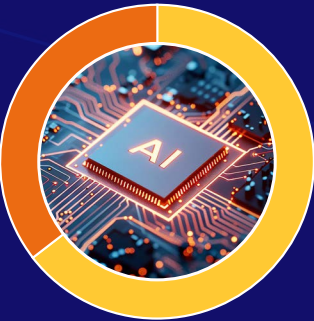
Future proofing the workplace means creating a workplace where people can actively work and participate to the work environment connecting with other people and technologies, among which AI will play an increasing leading role. IT, real estate, HR and business functions must align around one shared vision: a network built for AI, people and the future.



# The AI mandate asks organizations to pivot to AI-enabled models

The majority of global organizations have already implemented AI-enabled work models; thus, network teams are no longer supporting experiments but underpinning the new operating model.

Q: Has your organization implemented, or does it plan to implement, an AI-enabled work model in the next 18 months?



- 65% Fully implemented
- 35% Plans in the next 18 months

Productivity outcomes

93%

of higher executives and decision-makers have seen a moderate to significant productivity improvement.



However, 31% of employees working remotely see IT, connectivity, and security as pressing challenges, compared with 23% working only in offices.

Source: IDC's Worldwide Future of Work Survey, August 2025 (n = 1,440);  
IDC's Employee Experience Survey, April 2025 (n = 5,000)



Enterprises anticipate an average 50% speed increase at the edge for AI traffic.

Source: IDC's AI in Networking Survey 2025, November 2025 (n = 336)

AI has moved from pilot to a real operating model. With 65% of organizations already running AI-enabled work models and another 36% planning to do so within 18 months, AI is no longer a side project but a real way of getting work done. However, the new AI-shaped operating model only works if the network underneath it does, with the broader infrastructure built accordingly. Today, nearly a third of remote workers still flag IT, connectivity, and security as their top challenges, with in-office workers not far behind. Meanwhile, enterprises expect a 50% jump in edge traffic as AI is embedded into daily workflows. The organizations that will realize AI's promise are those treating speed of execution and employee-centered outcomes as equally relevant in their plans.

**Recommendation:** Start by understanding how AI is actually being used, including emerging projects. Build a comprehensive inventory of AI services, along with their associated APIs and endpoints, to effectively map use experience.

# AI has entered daily work and is increasing expectations and risks in equal measure

Employees rely more on AI-enabled apps and rich collaboration tools, improving employee experience and productivity. However, the risk of shadow AI is high.



**63%**  
of employees  
already use AI  
tools daily.



**40%**  
of employees  
use free  
AI tools.



**2 hours**  
versus  
**4 hours**

Estimated daily time spent on  
searching for internal information

Estimated daily time gained  
thanks to the usage of AI tools

When employees use AI tools daily and expect up to four hours of productivity gains, network downtime or latency is no longer just an IT issue; it impacts business performance directly. This is critical given that without full AI support, employees spend about two hours a day retrieving information. At the same time, “shadow AI” must be addressed, as 40% of employees report using free AI tools, making governance and training essential.

For IT and network managers, rising demand and shadow AI significantly increase expectations. Any performance degradation now affects employee experience. Ensuring always-on, high-capacity access to AI services across office, home, and mobile environments is a business-critical priority, not just an infrastructure concern. Additionally, traditional security models are no longer sufficient, as AI is API-driven, continuously moves data outward, and relies on encrypted traffic.

Source: IDC's Worldwide Future of Work Survey, August 2025 (n = 1,440); IDC's Worldwide Employee Experience Survey, April 2025 (n = 5,000)

**Recommendation:** Do not overlook shadow AI or embedded AI capabilities in SaaS applications, as it is a critical first challenge that must be addressed immediately. Subsequently, ensure your infrastructure is built to meet the demands of daily AI tool usage to avoid falling behind on employee productivity and experience.

# Flexible work only works when tech needs are met

Ninety-three percent of global organizations use hybrid or flexible work models, which means users now expect the same application experience across home, office, and mobile locations.



38%

of employees say work flexibility (place and time) is the most important factor determining their overall work experience.

Source: IDC's Worldwide Employee Experience Survey, April 2025 (n = 5,000)



39%

of employees cite a lack of collaboration opportunities as a top challenge of flexible working.

Source: IDC's Worldwide Employee Experience Survey, April 2025 (n = 5,000)



29%

of enterprises consider remote working to be one of their biggest networking concerns.

Source: IDC's European Enterprise Networking and Life-Cycle Services, July 2025 (n = 1,520)

Nearly half of organizations are focused on bringing workers back onsite, with many reimagining spaces for collaboration. The physical workplace is being reinvented, and the technology underpinning it must keep pace. However, the workspace remains of primary relevance, regardless of the work model or workforce location.

This cannot rest with a single team. IT, HR, and real estate and facilities functions must align, break down silos, and build a shared vision of workspaces that are efficient, intelligent, and ready for whatever comes next.

Network teams must support oscillating traffic patterns across offices, homes, mobile endpoints, and collaborative spaces without compromising consistency. The enterprise LAN must expand to home environments with relevant security and data protection policies.

**Recommendation:** In a world with flexible work patterns, your network performance metrics must reflect the full end-to-end user experience or you will never know where consistency is breaking down.

# Intelligent workspaces and modern process tools deliver on smart collaboration aspirations

As employees rely more on AI-enabled, rich collaboration tools and modern workspaces, seamless, high-capacity network access from anywhere becomes a core driver of perceived employee experience and productivity.

IDC  
prediction



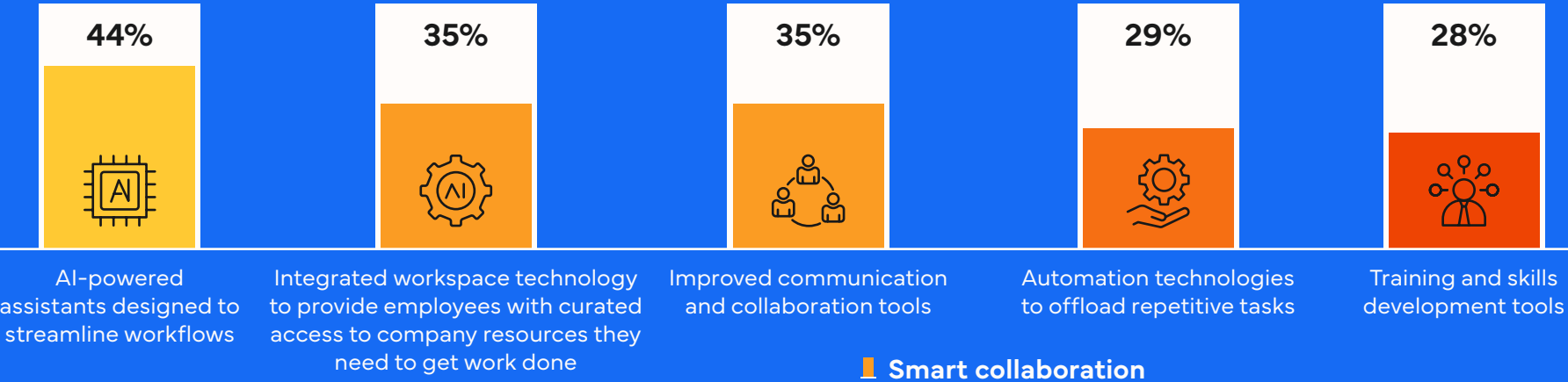
AI-integrated  
workspace



By 2028, 33% of device-dependent employees will use adaptive digital workspaces for advanced collaboration, client engagement, and productivity.”

Source: IDC FutureScape: Worldwide Future of Work 2026 Predictions, October 2025 (#US53859325)

Q: In which of the following software technologies has your organization invested?



Source: IDC’s Worldwide Future of Work Survey, August 2025 (n = 1,440)

Modern, smart collaboration requires AI-boosted and improved collaboration tools, in addition to seamless access to a single, integrated, curated company workspace with task-centric and work-related data and information. Robust network infrastructure will be essential for organizations that envisage wide AI usage, especially to boost collaboration reach. Whether working from the office or remotely, employees need seamless, low-latency connections to access required resources in a timely and efficient manner. As users adopt a Wi-Fi-first approach, bottlenecks might occur because AI generates short bursts of large data volumes and overflows uplink capacity with multiple concurrent sessions. Migrating to Wi-Fi 7 becomes a strategic imperative: It enables simultaneous high-throughput transmission across dense device environments while delivering the latency that real-time AI workloads demand.

**Recommendation:** Prioritize investing in intelligent, scalable network infrastructure with improved visibility that supports seamless connectivity for both in-office and remote collaboration tools, enhancing user experience.

# The modern network will work autonomously with human oversight thanks to AI

Today, 31% of campus/branch/edge network management tasks are automated and augmented by AI capabilities. Enterprises expect the level of augmentation and automation to reach 54% within two years.

Q: Which of the following examples of AgenticOps capabilities would you find the most valuable for optimizing the management of your campus/branch/edge networks?



Agentic operations enable proactive network management and closed-loop remediation of issues with human oversight. AI agents continuously analyze telemetry, logs, and KPIs across wired, wireless, and environments. By providing a unified management layer for both IT and OT, AgenticOps delivers end-to-end visibility across all connected endpoints, including power systems, blinds, sensors, HVAC, and user devices. These agents detect anomalous patterns (e.g., latency spikes, packet loss, jitter, and spectrum congestion) and can automatically trigger mitigation actions, subject to operator control.

AgenticOps also strengthens security by continuously monitoring for threats, identifying anomalies, and enforcing policies in real time. Automated incident response capabilities, with human-in-the-loop governance, help contain breaches faster and reduce overall risk exposure.

Source: IDC's AI in Networking Survey 2025, November 2025 (n = 336)

**Recommendation:** Build on current momentum to accelerate AgenticOps, extending AI-assisted network operations across wired, wireless, and smart-building environments to enable autonomous networks with human oversight.

# Networks and security: No longer two separate conversations

True integration is still the exception. However, attacks crossing every layer and zero trust architectures make close cooperation between network and security teams non-negotiable.

Q: Which statement best reflects communication and cooperation between the networking team and the security team within your organization?



- **39%**  
We have regularly scheduled update meetings for full cooperation between us.
- **28%**  
The teams are fully integrated.
- **22%**  
We keep the security team in the loop only to let them know about new initiatives.
- **9%**  
We only communicate during larger companywide meetings (e.g., board meetings).
- **2%**  
We only interact when an issue arises.

Source: IDC's European Enterprise Networking and Life-Cycle Services Survey, July 2025 (n = 1,520)

True integration between network and security teams is still the exception rather than the norm, but close cooperation is no longer optional.

- ➔ Poor user experience can stem from network congestion or insufficient security controls. Without cross-team collaboration, troubleshooting becomes complex and time-consuming, ultimately degrading user experience.
- ➔ Modern attacks traverse multiple layers and spread across distributed endpoints, including home environments. Without coordination, detection and response times are significantly delayed.
- ➔ End-to-end visibility across traffic, latency, device health, identity, and threats is critical for root cause analysis.
- ➔ New architectures with cloud networking and zero trust converge network and security capabilities. Successfully deploying and operating these models demands close collaboration between teams.

**Recommendation:** Break silos and share ownership, with common business targets (e.g., user experience, mean time to repair, business resiliency, sustainability, and energy consumption). Implement unified visibility and create integrated workflows.

# Smart offices demand smarter connectivity

The office is no longer just a place to connect users; it is becoming a dense digital-edge, AI-infused environment that demands increased connectivity to address people’s needs and cope with building insights.

IDC  
prediction

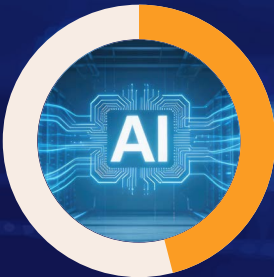


Workplace  
observability



By 2029, G1000 companies that leverage AI and IoT to automate buildings will cut operating costs up to 35% and potentially unlock new revenue streams.”

Source: IDC FutureScape: Worldwide Future of Work 2026 Predictions, October 2025 (#US53859325)



46%

of organizations have invested in smart rooms, intelligent devices, and digital workspaces.



36%

of organizations will invest in sustainability-centric AI investments, with smart lighting, heating, and air quality.

Source: IDC’s Worldwide Future of Work Survey, August 2025 (n = 1,440)

Forward-looking organizations recognize technology’s role as a seamless connection enabler with a specific, namely to curate spaces focused on people and their ways of working.

This is no longer about connecting laptops but about supporting a continuous flow of AI workloads, sensor data, video, and real-time tools across an increasingly device-rich environment. The impact reaches far beyond a simple technology refresh.

In this context, collaboration devices and video endpoints, historically managed as standalone peripherals, must become first-class network citizens: provisioned, monitored, and secured through the same fabric as every other connected asset.

Organizations gain the tools to advance sustainability targets, strengthen health and safety practices, make real estate decisions grounded in real data, and achieve a meaningful convergence of IT and operational technology within a single, coherent system.

**Recommendation:** With AI workloads, sensor data, and intelligent devices rapidly becoming a core part of office operations, do not wait for smart offices to expose the gaps in your network. The time to modernize campus and branch connectivity and bring collaboration devices and video endpoints fully into the network fabric is now.

# As the network brings IT and OT together, leaders make it happen

The network is shared business infrastructure that connects and merges the IT and OT worlds, but IT, HR, operations, facilities, and security experts are the glue that holds it together.



**36%** of organizations equipped with IoT use it or plan to use it for indoor facilities and buildings (e.g., smart lighting, HVAC, elevators, indoor security systems).

Source: IDC's Europe 5G IoT 2025 Survey, November 2025 (n = 1,300)

**45%**

Organizations where workplace transformation is becoming a shared business initiative across HR, IT, finance, and operations

**49%**

Organizations where consolidated dashboards and portals are becoming decision hubs for workplace operations

Source: IDC's Worldwide Future of Work Survey, August 2025 (n = 1,440)

**Recommendation:** Relying on a single consolidated dashboard is essential for business leaders to ensure IT and OT investments are delivering on sustainability requirements; with IT and OT increasingly converging, network performance is key.



Tripadvisor reimaged its global offices around activity-based working, deploying **384 smart collaboration endpoints across multiple countries in under 12 months**. By integrating occupancy sensing, environmental monitoring, and building management systems onto a single network fabric, the company achieved true IT/OT convergence, turning passive office infrastructure into a live data source.

Real-time insights into space utilization, air quality, lighting, and energy consumption enabled IT, real estate, and workplace design teams to make decisions from one shared platform.

The results were as follows:

- ➔ A **50% reduction in real estate footprint**
- ➔ Automated sustainability management
- ➔ A data-driven workplace strategy that scales globally, with **zero IT support tickets on day one** at launch

# Do not inherit the rules; shape them

Governance around AI is formalizing quickly, which means traffic policy, observability, and control points must be designed into AI operating models early.

*Q: Does your organization have or plan to develop an AI center of excellence to help with the governance of existing and new AI deployments?*



- 63% Planning an AI COE
- 31% Fully operational AI COE
- 6% No COE plans

As AI agents become active participants in the workplace, traditional security models leave critical blind spots. Zero trust must extend to the agentic workforce, establishing agent accountability, enforcing least-privilege access, and monitoring real-time behavior to block threats that static security tools miss.

Therefore, AI governance needs to move fast. Network managers cannot afford to be spectators. With 70% of organizations already operational or nearing operational AI governance structures (and 31% running a fully operational AI center of excellence), the frameworks shaping how AI traffic flows and how it is monitored and controlled are being set now.

Network managers need a seat at that table. The decisions being made around observability, policy enforcement, and control points will directly determine how AI workloads perform across the network. Getting involved early means the network is built for AI from the ground up, not retrofitted after the fact.

Source: IDC's European Enterprise Networking and Life-Cycle Services Survey, July 2025 (n = 1,520)

**Recommendation:** Do not wait for AI governance frameworks to be set without you. Retrofitting network requirements after the fact is far more costly than getting involved from the start.

# An intelligent workplace experience built for AI, people, and the future

Future-proofing work means addressing the four forces reshaping work: AI-ready network, unified network and security, intelligent workplace experiences, and an agentic workforce, all connected through the network.



**Recommendation:** Frame investments around business outcomes such as employee productivity, resilience, security, and smarter workplaces, not just network speeds and feeds.

# Next steps for leaders eager to design the workplace experience of the future

## Act now: Delivering on today's needs

**Establish an immediate baseline of AI usage, network demand, and risk.** Requirements are surging: inventory-approved versus shadow AI tools, embedded AI capabilities in SaaS applications, APIs, endpoints, and traffic flows. Create a single visibility to address today's most urgent issues, including latency, uplink pressure, remote-work consistency, encrypted AI traffic, and security gaps, to deliver a better employee experience.

## Build toward: Defining a brighter and steadier tomorrow

**Modernize the workplace network as shared business infrastructure.** Move beyond bandwidth upgrades and invest in scalable, intelligent, secure connectivity that supports hybrid work, smart collaboration, smart offices, and IT/OT convergence. Align IT, security, HR, real estate, and facilities around shared outcomes such as productivity, resilience, sustainability, and employee experience.

## Design for: Ensuring limitless, high-quality employee experience

**Design the network for AI-powered, always-on, experience-led work.** Build for uplink-heavy, latency-sensitive, continuous AI traffic; use AIOps and automation to move toward self-healing operations; and ensure consistent, secure, high-quality experiences across office, home, mobile, smart rooms, and future agentic workforce environments.

*Futureproofing your workplace is more than a technology strategy; it is a business imperative with measurable outcomes across the entire enterprise. Modernizing the workplace into an AI-accelerated experience cannot happen in silos.*

- ➔ *IT and network experts build the AI-ready network and security foundation.*
- ➔ *HR defines what a great employee experience looks like in an AI-augmented, hybrid world.*
- ➔ *Real estate/facilities brings buildings, sensors, and sustainability commitments onto the same fabric.*

*When these functions decide together, technology stops being deployed in parallel and starts being used to make intelligent real-time decisions, attract and retain talent, and deliver measurably on ESG and sustainability goals.*

# About the IDC analysts



**Erica Spinoni**  
Senior Research Analyst, WW AI-Enabled  
Future of Work & EMEA Practice Lead, IDC

As member of the global FoW team, Erica also leads the group’s EMEA-focused research, exploring how new workplace models and technologies such as AI and automation are transforming employee experience and productivity across Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. She works with tech vendors and IT buyers to translate data-driven insight into long-term strategies for the modern workforce and digital workspace, ensuring technological innovation is matched by the cultural change required to make it successful.

[More about Erica Spinoni →](#)



**Bruno Teyton**  
Associate Vice President, Network  
Infrastructure and Services, IDC

Bruno Teyton, based in France, is currently a Associate Vice President at IDC. Bruno Teyton brings experience from previous roles at idc, IDATE and sirius. Bruno Teyton holds a ENSAE Paris. With a robust skill set that includes Management Consulting, Strategy, Telecommunications, Market Research, Business Strategy and more.

[More about Bruno Teyton →](#)

# Message from the sponsor



At Cisco, we have designed a future-proofed workplace solution that does more than just connect devices — it creates a “platform effect.” Rather than stitching together different technologies for network connectivity, collaboration, security, and data analytics, Cisco uniquely delivers a full solution architecture that sits at the core of an AI-accelerated workplace experience.

It starts with an AI-ready, secure network as the foundation, one that combines power, data, and control over the same cable, turning your network into the backbone of your office.

It then connects with AI-powered collaboration devices that double as workplace sensors. Every device acts as an intelligent node on the network, feeding data back into the system.

This integration of technology includes IT and OT convergence so that every sensor, device, and AI agent operates on a single secure, governed data fabric.

The modern workplace is all about smart spaces delivering real-time intelligence — where every square foot is measured, every employee experience is personalized, every kilowatt is accounted for, and every building system shares one fabric.

[Learn more](#)

## IDC Custom Solutions

IDC Custom Solutions produced this publication.

The opinion, analysis, and research results presented herein are drawn from more detailed research and analysis that IDC independently conducted and published, unless specific vendor sponsorship is noted. IDC Custom Solutions makes IDC content available in a wide range of formats for distribution by various companies.

This IDC material is licensed for external use and in no way does the use or publication of IDC research indicate IDC’s endorsement of the sponsor’s or licensee’s products or strategies.



[IDC.com](#)

[IDC on LinkedIn](#)

[IDC Blog](#)

International Data Corporation (IDC) is the premier global provider of market intelligence, advisory services, and events for the information technology, telecommunications, and consumer technology markets. With more than 1,300 analysts worldwide, IDC offers global, regional, and local expertise on technology and industry opportunities and trends in over 110 countries. IDC’s analysis and insight helps IT professionals, business executives, and the investment community to make fact-based technology decisions and to achieve their key business objectives.

©2026 IDC. Reproduction is forbidden unless authorized. All rights reserved. [CCPA](#)