

Enhancing
digital employee
experience:
The key to
optimized
productivity



Contents

Stop digital friction from killing employee productivity	3
What causes digital friction?	5
Quantifying the business impact of poor digital experiences	8
The human consequences of poor DEX	9
6 DEX KPIs to remove productivity blockers and unleash your workforce	11



Stop digital friction from **killing employee productivity**

Employees strive to be as productive as possible and their success, satisfaction and wellbeing can be impacted when the digital experience suffers due to process inefficiency, collaboration blackholes, and digital friction.

Productivity drops as employees waste a sizeable chunk of their day context switching, app hopping, working through interruptions due to tech instability, and even worse, searching and reviewing the wrong information.

In our [2024 DEX survey](#) of 2000 knowledge workers, it showed that badly executed digital experiences mired in friction add up to significant wasted time for businesses as routine work tasks take longer. A lot longer in many cases.

Knowledge workers waste an average of 5.55 hours each week (3.1 weeks a year) of a single knowledge worker's time because their employer hasn't provided them with the right technology. And that time adds up enormously in a workforce of thousands of employees.

The consequences of badly executed DEX for businesses' productivity and profitability are serious, as this survey outlined. But the impact on the workforce is equally concerning.

Across the board, the data on how DEX affects individuals has worsened. More knowledge workers say that poor DEX has reduced their job satisfaction now (43%) than in 2021 (38%), and more say it has made them want to leave their job (29%) than in 2021 (18%).

IT and HR leaders must act fast to cut this waste, boost productivity and reduce the impact of negative DEX, particularly at a time when negative economic headwinds are circling.

One reason for poor DEX is the high incidence of digital friction. Our research finds that knowledge workers are experiencing multiple instances of digital friction across many areas, from “notification overload” (30%) to application switching (35%). Digital friction is a particular scourge that affects DEX and is a drain on productivity. One [study](#) of knowledge workers by Harvard Business Review revealed that excessive toggling between apps alone causes workers to spend four hours a week “reorienting” themselves between windows.

The range of different types of friction experienced underlines why today’s enterprises must achieve visibility into the real-life DEX of the workforce to identify and mitigate these roadblocks to effective work.

Digital friction is defined by [Gartner](#) as the “unnecessary effort extended by employees using technology for work”.

It can come in the form of anything that is a roadblock to employees’ productivity. Digital friction is one of the biggest culprits for poor DEX. Gartner finds that [47% of technology users](#) experience high digital friction, and 34% experience this friction several times a week.

Lack of visibility hides inefficiency

These everyday points of friction often go unseen by IT and it’s an issue that has only gotten worse as organizations have moved to a more permanent hybrid working model.

Inefficiencies and digital instability that impact productivity are hidden by committed employees working extended hours, incurring a risk of burn-out. Issues remain unseen, unreported and unaddressed, covered up by the commitment of hidden heroes.

Application instability and inefficient workflows may have become the norm as workarounds have become semi-automatic and employees don’t even think of them as inefficient anymore.

Which of the following examples of digital friction have you experienced at work?



Applications that repeatedly freeze, crash or load slowly

47%



Lack of instructions/training on how to use an application or software

29%



Too many communication channels to manage resulting in “notification overload”

30%



Having to toggle between applications repeatedly to find information or complete a task

35%



User interfaces that are hard to navigate and are confusing

24%



Unable to find the right data/records to complete a task

23%



Complicated workflows that require extra steps to complete, even for routine tasks

28%

What causes digital friction?

While technology is the primary tool used to improve employee productivity, a common pitfall is the ability to gain visibility and insight to be able to recognise and address sources of digital friction. This is because digital friction often remains hidden. Committed employees endure poor experiences, unstable systems and fractured task flows, patiently accepting poor performance of IT services or adopting workarounds to get work done. This needs to be addressed with a DEX platform that gives granular, second by second insight on how employees usage software and the user journeys they take.



So how can we address these modern-day challenges? Let's start by understanding the causes of friction in the digital workplace.

Too many channels for communication – *Inefficient collaboration*

Email has historically been the biggest offender. Now add Teams, Zoom, Slack and the plethora of other messaging apps to the mix and it's easy to see how quickly problems may occur. Employees aren't just getting more inbound communications than ever before; they're getting them in a multitude of channels and are constantly trying to figure out how to best manage their attention.

This is raising a host of issues. Silos of knowledge and fragmented conversations develop as teams utilize different legacy channels. Conversations in one channel exclude others at some point. Missed information or participation occurs because of an increasing tendency for employees to simply overlook communications because there just isn't enough time to absorb it all. This makes it difficult to utilize knowledge and content across the organization and compromises an organization's ability to execute and make decisions rapidly.



Application overload

While the array of purpose-built applications delivered over recent years was crucial to meeting the demands of a sudden shift to remote work, they unintentionally created a fragmented user experience by overwhelming users with an influx of new technology. [68% of workers toggle between apps up to 10x an hour](#). When you consider the more than [23 minutes it takes to regain focus](#) between each interruption, that's a lot of lost productivity.

Many companies purchased and licensed multiple applications in the same category to fill short-term needs, and in some cases shadow IT may have crept in, such as having Zoom, Slack and Microsoft Teams in place. Employees simply have too many tools to deal with in their day. And what's worse is because this influx of tools was deployed so tactically and with such urgency, most employees don't even know how or why to use what they've been given.

But in the long-term, this 'category sprawl' results in wasted cost, a bloated technology stack, siloed conversations and can be a security and governance risk.



What causes digital friction?

Tasks and information not integrated into the flow of work

Inefficient user journeys and digital processes, created by poorly integrated applications, poor access to information and inefficient task flows, can dramatically reduce productivity, slow transaction rates, and impact customer experiences. In our recent, [2024 DEX survey](#), 23% of employees interviewed said that they were unable to find the right data/records to complete a task. And 35% highlight the frustration of having to toggle between applications repeatedly to find information or complete a task. These inefficiencies frustrate frontline and back office teams who strive to deliver optimal output.



System failure – End-user device and application instability

If the end user device fails, your applications do too. To complicate matters, hybrid working brings into play a whole series of additional factors that can impact device performance and therefore your employees experience.

IT teams often struggle to gain visibility into the performance of both software and hardware assets from a user perspective, not to mention how they're actually being used. This can make it difficult to identify problem areas, and pinpoint stability and reliability issues. Endpoint visibility ensures IT teams need insight and knowledge of device utilization, software and hardware stability and software usage, allowing faster discovery of any issues that impact productivity, such as under-performing devices, under-provisioned hardware, required upgrades, and more.



What causes digital friction?

The hidden burden of Application Switching

Beyond the obvious symptoms of technology failure there are other issues that should be a serious cause for concern but often go undiscovered. The need to switch applications to complete tasks is certainly near the top of that list, often presenting an ongoing daily burden on frontline and back office workers alike. Ineffective software and inefficient processes are impacting the productivity of many employees.

In our recent, [2024 DEX survey](#), 35% of employees interviewed said that they had to toggle between applications repeatedly to find information or complete a task.

In a study conducted by Pegasystems Inc. after studying nearly 5 million hours of live desktop activity of operational support employees, the report found that the average employee switches between 35 job-critical applications more than 1,100 times every day. The study analyzed nearly 5 million hours of desktop activity of British operational support employees of 35 global companies across 11 industries, who mostly perform back office (non-client-facing) work, data entry, or customer support center (also known as contact center) tasks.

Time lost may seem insignificant at first but when employees are exposed to the need to switch applications mid task, both the act of switching and the impact of refocusing add up. Some studies suggest it takes a full [23 minutes to recover your focus](#) after distraction. Incremental gains derived across a large team of frontline workers leads to significant increases in productivity.



Lack of adoption of applications and processes

There's nothing productive about workflow bottlenecks, a common problem that occurs when only a limited number of employees have access to a software solution, or an application being used to deliver a business process lacks functionality and forces users to switch to an alternative application to undertake a specific task. Incompatible versions or applications lead to delays in processing, reviews and approvals.

Similarly, for a number of reasons, there is often significant variation in the path that employees may take when navigating applications in order to deliver a particular task. Not only does this disrupt workflows, but it runs the risk of introducing errors and poor governance as users map their own route to completing key process elements. Without granular, near-time data and insight on how every team member executes processes and tasks, driving adoption and standardization at scale is impossible leading to an inability to identify best practice and standardize on it together with governance risks.



Quantifying the business impact of poor digital experiences

Research commissioned by Scalable Software and conducted by independent research company, Censuswide revealed that there is a significant business impact resulting from poor digital experiences both in terms of productivity and importantly, staff wellbeing and retention. The survey exposed the digital experience of 2,000 UK knowledge workers who use IT in their work, and while hybrid working brings fresh challenges and amplifies others, it does serve to confirm the impact of poor digital experiences and highlight challenges that make it more difficult to detect.

What this current state of play adds up to for organizations is a considerable amount of lost time and productivity because the digital experience isn't up to scratch. The research found that knowledge workers waste an average of 2.72 hours a week because their employer hasn't provided the right technology to do their job. Moreover, an additional 2.83 hours are wasted because employees are struggling with technology that simply doesn't work, runs slowly, or because of poor design and inefficient workflow. This means that in total, poor digital experiences waste 5.55 hours each week of knowledge workers' time.



Hybrid workers **waste 2.72 hours per week** due to a lack of the right technology



Hybrid workers **waste 2.83 hours per week** due to technology that doesn't work



In total, hybrid workers **waste 5.55 hours per week** due to a poor digital experience



The human consequences of poor DEX

The consequences of badly executed DEX for businesses' productivity and profitability are serious, as our report has outlined. But the impact on the workforce is equally concerning. Across the board, the data on how DEX affects individuals has worsened. More knowledge workers say that poor DEX has reduced their job satisfaction now (43%) than in 2021 (38%) and more say it has made them want to leave their job (29%) than in 2021 (18%).

What impact has a poor digital experience had on you as an employee?

Left me feeling frustrated
56%



Reduced my job satisfaction
43%



Made me want to leave my job
29%



Contributed to me leaving a job
13%



Bad digital experiences make routine work tasks take longer. A lot longer in many cases. Employees are working an extra 3.1 weeks a year because of poor digital experiences; a concerning increase of almost a full week on the 2.2 extra weeks identified in 2021.¹

Poor digital experiences force hybrid workers to work:



Clearly, this is not sustainable for businesses or employees. These findings should ring alarm bells for HR and IT departments who must take steps to minimize the potential burnout that employees are facing from bad DEX. Analytics from DEX tools are critical here in arming IT teams with data that can objectively measure wellbeing “red flags” such as excessive working hours or out-of-hours working. These insights equip HR teams to identify those individuals at the most risk and take early action.

¹ 3.1 weeks is based on an additional 2.6 hours worked during each 40-hour week over 48 weeks in 2023.

Enhancing productivity

Understanding the interaction between employees and the systems they depend on to do their jobs is critical to ensuring a frictionless, optimized experience for both the employee and the organization. By analyzing user-journeys, organizations can identify opportunities to streamline processes and procedures, remove points of friction, enhance the employee experience and drive greater organizational productivity.

Failure to capture and study the data around how teams interact with their various applications means that organizations cannot identify inefficiencies that result in user frustration and wasted time. This information gap means organizations are unable to link successful behaviours to outcomes allowing them to be replicated across the business. These organizations miss the opportunities to streamline disconnected tactical solutions and drive better ways of working consistently, improving productivity and unlocking the unrealised growth potential for the organization's workforce.

“
But what digital experience KPIs should your team measure to enhance productivity? Which KPIs enable your team to assess the digital experiences of individuals, roles, teams and locations, and identify productivity blockers that are holding employees back?”



6 DEX KPIs to remove productivity blockers and unleash your workforce

Recently, we conducted [research of 2,000 knowledge workers](#) to investigate how the quality of digital employee experiences (DEX) impact workers' productivity. Falling productivity is one of the most significant challenges facing businesses today. Companies are frantically trying to pinpoint explanations for why they are not meeting performance targets. And as global giants like Amazon and Zoom push for a mandated return to office (RTO), it is hybrid working that is being made the scapegoat.

But one-size-fits-all RTO policies fail to account for today's modern digital workplaces and do not consider organizations' unique circumstances – be that communication technology, task nature, or work cultures. In short, the way businesses measure productivity should be specific to them, whilst remaining accurate and objective.

Enter sophisticated digital employee experience (DEX) analytics. With insights from DEX analytics, IT Leaders and HR teams can set KPIs that assess the digital experiences of individuals, roles, teams and locations, and identify productivity blockers that are holding employees back.

Let's explore six KPIs that DEX analytics can help measure.



Application Stability

[Our research](#) found that 47% of knowledge workers experience applications that repeatedly freeze, crash or load slowly. These experiences not only frustrate employees but slow them down. Businesses can use DEX analytics to spot application instability and fix it – ensuring the reliability of everyday programs used by their employees.

1



Application Switching

More than a third (35%) of knowledge workers find themselves toggling between applications repeatedly to access information or complete a task. By using DEX analytics to examine the frequency and duration of application switching, businesses can identify areas for improvement in workflow efficiency.

2

3



Collaboration Streamlining

Worryingly, 30% of respondents claimed they experience “notification overload” because of too many communication channels. DEX analytics lets companies measure the adoption of corporate standard collaboration tools, like Microsoft Teams, to streamline the number of collaboration channels and minimize distractions.

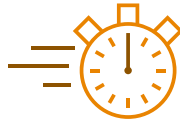
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Communication Efficiency

DEX analytics play a key role in tracking improvements in communication efficiency by adopting messaging platforms over asynchronous legacy e-mail. Companies can assess how instant messenger platforms, like Microsoft Teams, contribute to faster and more streamlined communications within teams.

5



Meeting efficiency

Businesses can track the adoption of tools used for meetings, such as Microsoft Teams, against other solutions. They can further measure the reduction in meeting numbers and duration to make sure employees’ time is being used wisely and that calendars aren’t being clogged up with too many meetings.

6



Out of Hours Working

Whilst working out of hours may be acceptable if it suits the employee, for example around the school run, employers should be mindful if an employee is engaged in both after-hours work and the standard eight-hour office day. DEX analytics can identify such burnout risks, helping to protect employee wellbeing.

Eliminating sub-standard experiences

With so much of today’s work reliant on technology, DEX analytics deliver deep observability to allow decision makers to analyze employee experience and productivity in near-real time. By spotting common productivity blockers, DEX analytics also help to eliminate the **5.55 hours** each week that knowledge workers are currently wasting because of sub-standard digital experiences.

The evolving work landscape demands a shift in how teams are managed and measured. Scalable Software’s Acumen platform seamlessly integrates DEX observability with KPIs, allowing decision makers to gain objective evidence on the performance of policies, as well as insight into work patterns and user journeys.

About Scalable

Scalable Software has more than 15 years of experience delivering actionable intelligence on how employees interact with technology.

Its Acumen platform enables IT and HR leaders to optimize productivity and Digital Employee Experience (DEX) in today's hybrid working environment. Coupling DEX observability with Key Performance Indicators, Acumen enables decision makers in the C-Suite, IT and HR to gain objective evidence of how hybrid and remote working models are performing, and deep visibility into employee productivity and engagement. Acumen provides insights into work patterns and user journeys to streamline disconnected tactical solutions and drive better ways of working consistently. Armed with this knowledge, organizations can optimize DEX; improve employee engagement and productivity; and reduce complexity and cost.

For more information visit: www.scalable.com or email: info@scalable.com