Adaptavist

The 'human' cost of digital transformation

Special report: Uncovering the hidden drivers behind 'technostress', 'quiet cracking' and cultural collapse in the workplace, and paving the path to 'technojoy'.

2025

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Foreword

From Tom Lasparini, Chief Operating Officer, The Adaptavist Group

'Digital transformation' promised empowerment, but for many employees it has become something worse than a 'buzzword': a burden, causing stress, disconnection and uncertainty that extends beyond the working environment to impact people's personal, as well as professional, lives at an alarming scale.

It is even contributing to a global 'quiet cracking' crisis. This is a workplace trend whereby employees experience a silent decline in motivation, performance, and overall well-being due to factors such as poor management, declining growth opportunities, and a lack of connection to their jobs.

'Quiet cracking' also has devastating effects on workplace cultures and business bottom lines. According to Gallup, a drop in global employee engagement last year cost the world economy as much as $438 billion in lost productivity.

Now, in an attempt to resolve this issue, many leaders are doubling down, investing in more AI, more tech, and more tooling. But, technology alone isn't a cure-all. Nor is it the enemy. Instead, how

companies adopt, manage, and support its use determines whether their workplace culture and employee experience thrive or fracture.

At Adaptavist, we support thousands of organisations around the world to bring people, processes, and technology together in a way that works for teams and businesses alike. We see first-hand how getting this right can fuel transformation, innovation, and growth. Yet change isn't always positive, and poorly implemented technology can unleash a tidal wave of negative consequences, from team burnout and poor attrition to cybersecurity and reputational risk.

With technology integral to the success of so many businesses, we're pleased to share this important study into the human cost of digital transformation. With new data and insightful contributions from our strategic technology partners, this report explores how key issues can be overcome, and paves a positive path forward for organisations looking to find 'technojoy'.

Introduction

Knowledge workers globally are in a state of crisis.

Over the last 12 months, we've seen the emergence of 'quiet cracking', causing people to experience a persistent feeling of workplace unhappiness that leads to disengagement, poor performance, and an increased desire to quit. Not only is this devastating to workers themselves, but it also risks hindering business growth, innovation, and creativity on an enormous scale.

With our latest study, *The 'human' cost of digital transformation,* we first wanted to understand the scale of the problem, before examining the role of technology and processes in workplace happiness.

Our research revealed alarming concerns about the current employee experience. More than four in 10 knowledge workers (42%) report reduced motivation over the past 12 months, 41% admit to feeling unappreciated by managers, and 40% say they've experienced emotional withdrawal over the last year.
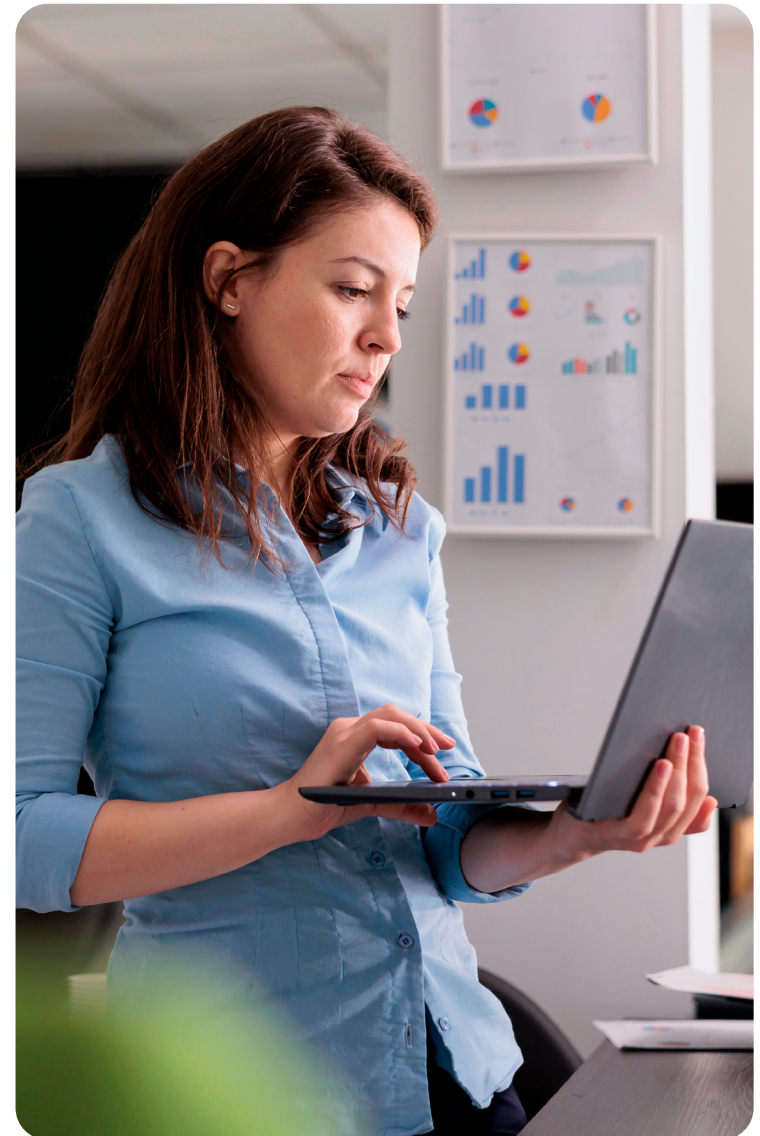
We also uncovered the systems of communication, work, and engagement that are fuelling the hidden drivers of 'quiet cracking'. These include:

Technostress
The strain employees feel from the constant demands of adapting to new digital tools and systems.

Deteriorating work-life balance
The blurring of boundaries between professional and personal time that leads to exhaustion.

Not understanding why they are working on tasks
The demotivation that comes from completing assignments without a clear sense of purpose or impact.

AI-related workplace tensions
The anxiety and conflict arising from uncertainty about how AI impacts roles, skills, and job security.

Overuse of workplace jargon
The frustration caused by the prevalence of buzzwords that confuse, rather than clarify, communication.

However, while this initial picture appears bleak, the findings also highlight clear drivers of employee happiness, giving leaders a roadmap to transform 'technostress' into 'technojoy'.

Methodology
Research surveyed 4,000 knowledge workers from the UK, US, Canada, and Germany in August 2025. The research was conducted by Attest.

CHAPTER 1

'Technostress' – Technology's broken promise

1a. What is 'technostress'?

Technology is supposed to empower workplaces, but for many staff it has become a source of stress, anxiety, and cognitive overload. This 'technostress' is a direct result of poor implementation, lack of training, and weak workplace cultures.

Over the last 12 months, **nearly two-thirds of knowledge workers (64%) said technology had negatively impacted their lives at work.** This underscores how deeply embedded technostress has become in everyday professional life. Workers are not overwhelmed by a single system, but by the cumulative effect of too many tools, too many notifications, and too few guardrails.

What's more, **a quarter of employees (27%) said they regularly experience digital overwhelm,** while **43% point to the volume of notifications or the burden of using multiple platforms as key contributors to their stress.** Instead of streamlining communication, technology is compounding it, leaving workers more distracted than ever.

FERNANDA SASSIOTTO

Head of Engineering and Operations, Easy Agile

Easy Agile

"Today, a big part of a leader's job is to surface the right signal at the right moment to unblock teams and allow for fast decision making. This keeps everyone focused on what matters the most, and ensures less noise, more flow."

The problem is exacerbated by insufficient training. **More than one in five employees (21%) report that the lack of training on new tools directly drives stress and anxiety,** forcing them to learn in isolation or through trial and error.

19% Feel pressure to remain connected outside of their contracted hours.

DANNY COLEMAN

Business Information Services Manager, Adaptavist

"21% of employees tell us that poor training on new tools fuels anxiety. It's proof that technology alone doesn't solve problems—without process, enablement, and a supportive culture, it can just as easily create them."

At the same time, workplace culture has failed to adjust to the realities of digital work. **Almost a fifth of workers (19%) feel pressure to remain connected outside of their contracted hours,** while **17% admit they feel constant pressure to 'prove' their productivity through digital metrics.** These expectations blur the boundaries between work and personal life, fuelling exhaustion and resentment.

Digital communication also contributes to the problem: **18% feel that colleagues' messages make them feel excluded or incompetent,** while **28% worry about the misinterpretation of tone** in online interactions. Together, these pressures erode well-being, engagement, and productivity, underscoring that technology can only be an enabler when paired with proper training, thoughtful processes, and a supportive workplace culture.
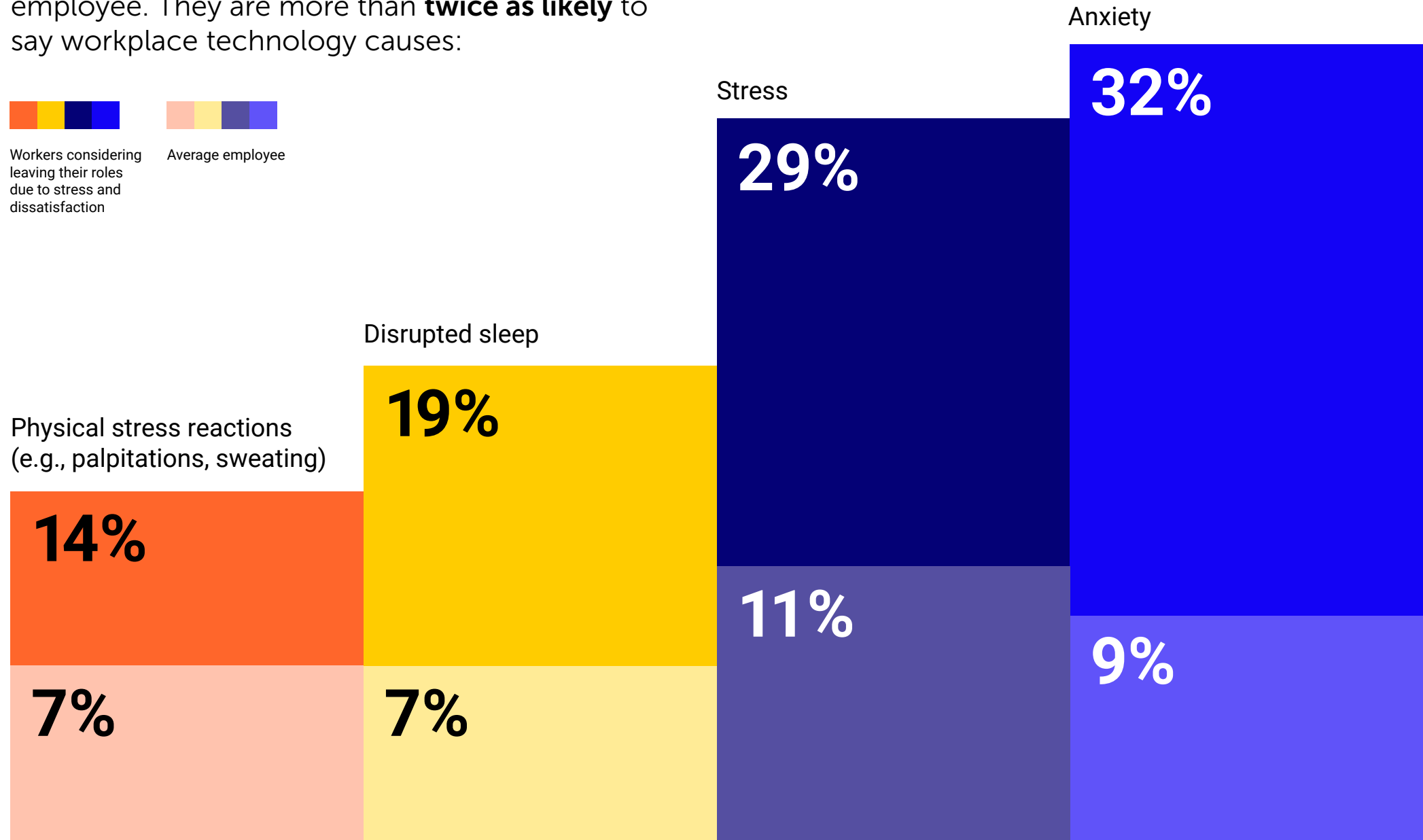
1b. Stress less: happy workers are more resistant

'Technostress' is having a dramatic impact on businesses, with many workers disassociating from their work, downing tools, and even looking for new jobs. Evidently, many business leaders are underestimating the role technology plays in the employee experience—and in their general well-being. Additionally, the data points towards company culture having a crucial role in preventing technostress before it manifests.

Workers considering leaving their roles due to stress and dissatisfaction report far more negative experiences with technology than the average employee. They are more than **twice as likely** to say workplace technology causes:

Workers considering leaving their roles due to stress and dissatisfaction

Average employee

Anxiety

32%

Stress

29%

Disrupted sleep

19%

Physical stress reactions (e.g., palpitations, sweating)

14%

7%

7%

11%

9%
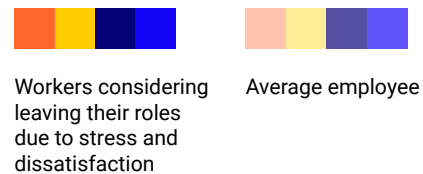
For workers considering leaving their roles due to stress and dissatisfaction, technology rarely feels like an enabler.

5% Technology makes me happier at work

21%

20% Technology makes my life easier at work

34%

21% Technology improves my productivity

34%

11% Technology boosts my confidence

28%

14% Technology helps my career progression

25%

Workers considering leaving their roles due to stress and dissatisfaction

Average employee
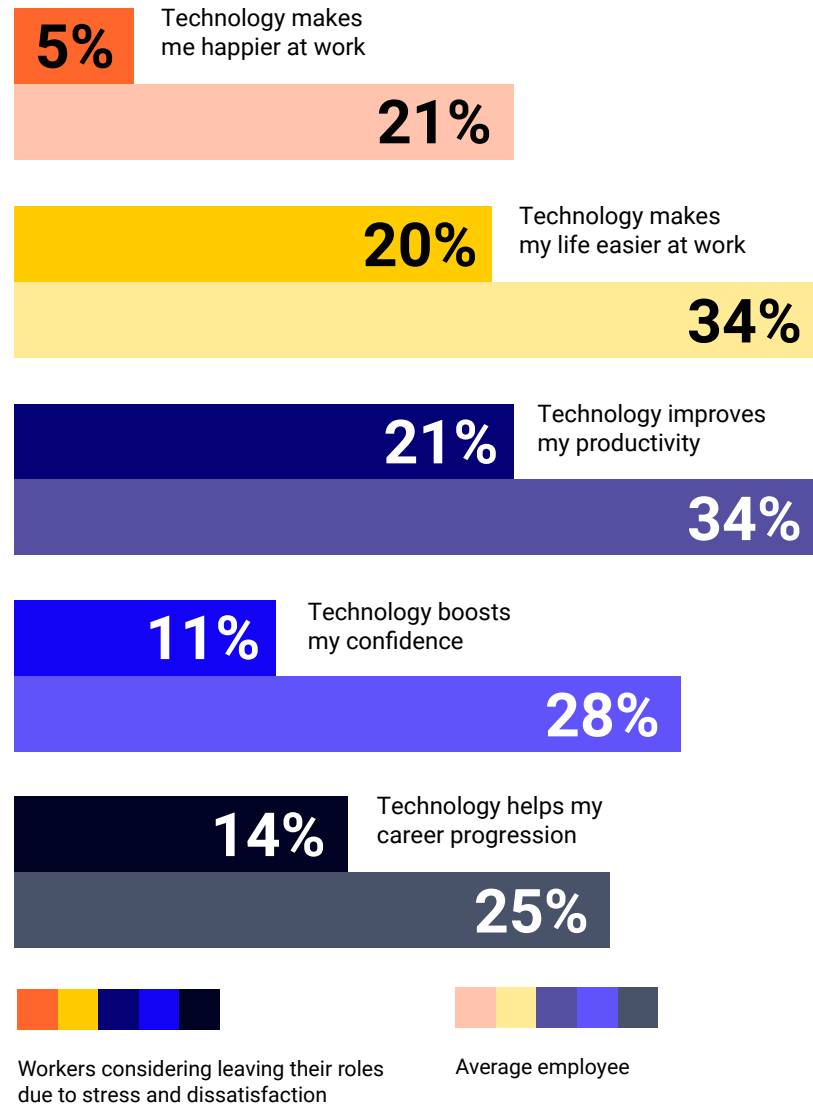
Employees who feel energised and motivated by their work environment report overwhelmingly positive experiences with technology.

60%
report that technology has significantly helped their career advancement (vs 32% of the global workforce)

93%
(vs 79% global average) say they and their colleagues integrate technology effectively into collaborative work

1c. The path to 'technojoy' — finding a cultural antidote

CANNON LAFFERTY

Head of Consulting North America, Adaptavist

"There is a pressing need to address 'technostress' head-on. Technology roll-outs fail not because of bad technology, but because of bad change management and bad project management.

"The companies that succeed in preventing burnout and disengagement will focus on more than selecting the right tools; they will work with a trusted partner like Adaptavist to focus on the human elements, from preserving worker autonomy to creating supportive cultures around technology adoption."

The research shows that employees value support and empowerment far more than a reduction in the number of tools. When asked what actions their organisations should take to ensure workplace technologies enable rather than frustrate, **almost half (48%) listed 'a culture where people are comfortable asking for help'** as a top-three priority. While only **18% ranked 'fewer tools'** as a top action, **43% highlighted the importance of more training,** technical support, or dedicated learning resources, reinforcing that satisfaction is less about the tools themselves and more about whether employees feel confident and supported in using them.

The relationship between autonomy and positive technology experiences is equally striking. Among employees who report feeling energised and motivated at work, **40% say they retain complete discretion** over which tasks to do and how to execute them, even when tools monitor or organise workflows. This is almost double the 21% global average. This sense of task discretion is closely linked to workplace satisfaction, demonstrating that when employees feel trusted to make decisions about their work, technology can become a genuine enabler, rather than a source of stress.

SHANNON MASON
Chief Strategy Officer, Tempo

Tempo

"When organisations implement flexible solutions that guide without dictating, workers gain greater autonomy, motivation, and even career acceleration. The next generation of work platforms must replace rigidity with adaptability—giving teams the clarity, balance, and freedom they need to thrive while letting AI and orchestration amplify human potential, rather than overwhelm it."

TERLYA HUNT
Head of People and Culture, Easy Agile

Easy Agile

"People and culture build people-centred organisations and design intentional practices so technology genuinely enables work. We build capability, co-design ways of working, provide equitable access to tooling, set transparent guardrails, and continuously iterate to keep pace with change. When we get this right, motivation, collaboration, and performance thrive".

SUMMARY

Building a path to 'technojoy' begins with resisting the urge to implement technology for technology's sake. Organisations should start by understanding the real needs of their workforce, and then mapping solutions against those needs. That means involving employees in the decision-making process, implementing intuitive cloud-native tooling, onboarding and training teams properly, and creating a culture where questions and feedback are encouraged. Ongoing evaluation is equally critical, and leaders must continuously test whether tools are helping employees feel more supported, not less.
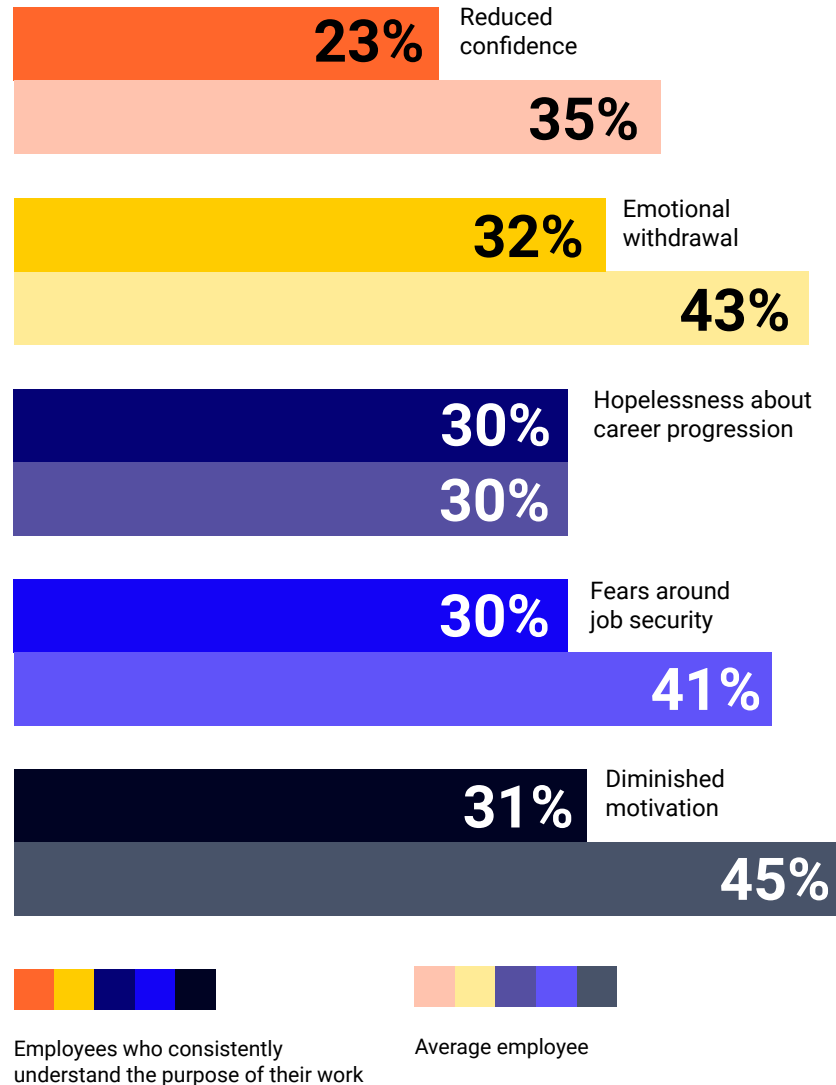
CHAPTER 2

The power of understanding 'why'

Severance, the popular Apple TV show which premiered its second season this year, presented a dystopian view of the drawbacks of not understanding the 'why' behind work tasks.

Adaptavist's research shows that these ideas aren't a million miles away from the truth, as workers who always understand the 'why' behind their assigned tasks are **less likely** to experience the symptoms of quiet cracking than those who don't.

Employees who consistently understand the purpose of their work are **far less likely** to experience:

23% Reduced confidence

35%

32% Emotional withdrawal

43%

30% Hopelessness about career progression

30%

30% Fears around job security

41%

31% Diminished motivation

45%

Employees who consistently understand the purpose of their work

Average employee

Younger workers are disproportionately affected by not understanding the 'why' behind their work. The graph below shows the percentage of people, by age group, who report only 'sometimes' or 'rarely' understanding task purpose.

18-24

Overall avg

55+

34%

25%

17%
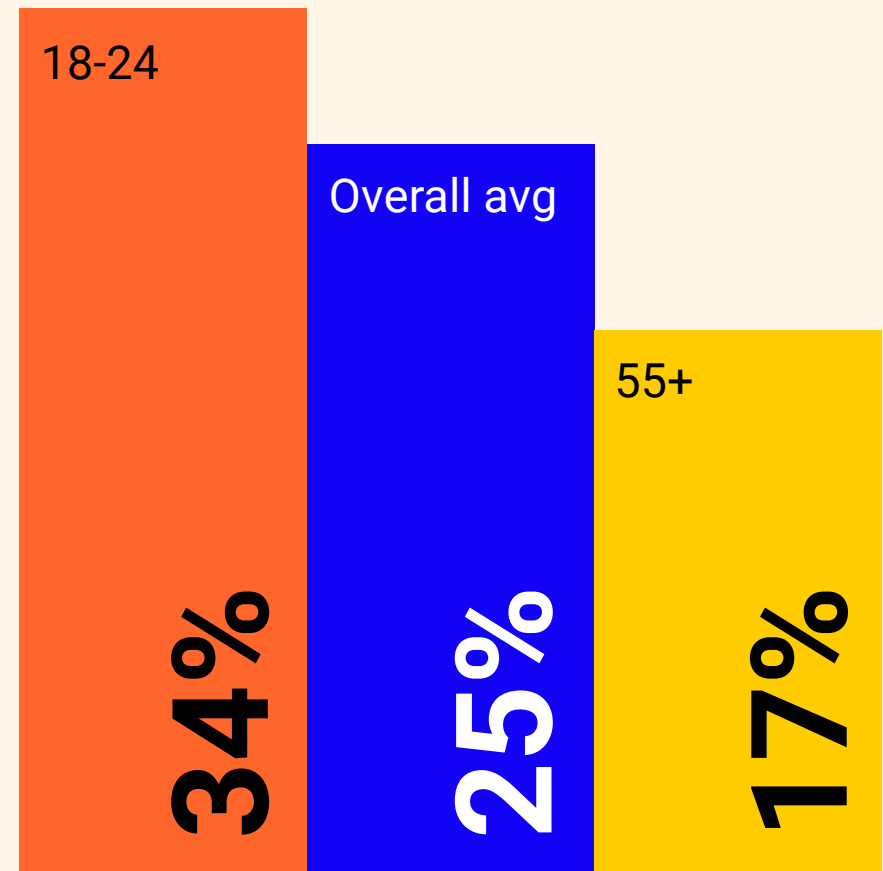
Understanding the 'why' also strongly correlates with engagement: employees who grasp the purpose of their work are more than twice as likely (61% vs 29%) to feel energised and motivated by their work environment.

Conversely, jargon-heavy communications continue to undermine morale, with 74% saying corporate buzzwords like **'KPIs', 'efficiency',** and **'action items'** make them disengage, and 39% expressing frustration with such terminology several times a week.

CHRIS DAVIDSON
Principal Solutions Engineer, Atlassian

"Too often, teams are left executing without a clear line of sight to the 'why' behind their work. This research shows the true effect this has on engagement, motivation, and retention, and highlights that it's a growing problem that leaders can't afford to ignore.

"Connecting strategy at the leadership level with execution on the ground isn't just a leadership challenge—it's a teamwork challenge. With the right systems in place, employees don't just complete tasks—they see their impact on the bigger picture. That's how technology like Jira and Confluence, when implemented well, turn alignment into action. And in turn, action-oriented teams become motivated teams."

SUMMARY

Use practices and platforms to understand purpose

Adaptavist's findings reinforce this perspective: leaders can no longer afford to ignore the cracks in workplace engagement, and evidently, employees need clarity and purpose, not buzzwords. With over a quarter of workers overwhelmed by digital noise, it's clear that teams need tools that support effective collaboration, purposeful communication, and which don't exacerbate stress and workloads. The findings underscore the critical importance of articulating the 'why,' pinning strategy to execution, and aligning teams around shared outcomes to both protect morale and boost performance.

This is where effective work management practices and platforms play a decisive role."Integrating tools such as monday.com to connect execution with strategy, and applying proven frameworks like the Atlassian System of Work to plan and track progress collaboratively, organisations can turn clarity into culture. The result is a workforce that understands its purpose, sees its impact, and feels supported rather than overwhelmed by technology," says Cannon Lafferty, Head of Consulting North America, Adaptavist.

CHAPTER 3

Meeting madness erodes work-life balance

Workers are drowning in meetings, with many spending as much time each week in in-person or virtual meetings as they do with friends in their personal lives.

This is further contributing to 'technostress' and 'quiet cracking', and organisations risk further crushing workplace spirits if they fail to address this imbalance.

On average, **knowledge workers now spend 4.3 hours per week in meetings, nearly identical to the 4.4 hours they spend socialising with friends.** Meanwhile, time spent using AI tools at work (4.6 hours) exceeds personal use (3.6 hours), and the combined total, 8.2 hours weekly, far surpasses social time with friends.

Meetings
4.3 hours
per week

Socialising with friends
4.4 hours
per week

Using AI tools
8.2 hours
per week

For some, meeting overload is extreme: one in ten workers loses a full day each week, or roughly 50 days a year, to meetings.

M   T   W   T   F
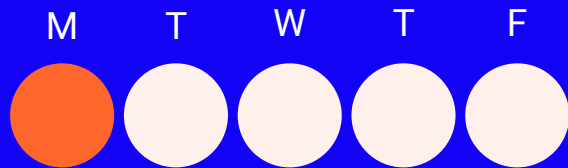
Increasingly, AI assistants are being enlisted to attend meetings on behalf of employees.

46%

Reported AI assistants being used.

40%

Consider use of AI assistants rude.

Broken meeting culture is more prevalent in large organisations (1,000+ employees), where workers are **more likely to spend 5+ hours a week in meetings,** demonstrating the challenges of communicating within big, often global workforces. However, despite this, those at large organisations still say **their work aligns with clear goals** that are visible across all teams (76%), and that their **teams plan and track work together (78%).**

SUMMARY

Make knowledge accessible

By embracing asynchronous communication technology, prioritising high-quality documentation and information management over constant conversation, and using AI to surface relevant knowledge, organisations can reduce unnecessary meeting load while strengthening alignment. Companies that replace 'meeting for meeting's sake' with a culture of shared, accessible knowledge will reclaim lost hours and boost staff well-being.

AI psychological warfare

From job fears to meeting chaos and knowledge hoarding, workers are having a tough time getting used to AI at work.

Concerns about its impact on skills and job security are leading to psychological warfare, with employees 'gatekeeping' personal strengths.

While **60% of workers** worry about losing critical knowledge when colleagues leave, over a third are simultaneously hoarding their own expertise out of fear of AI replacement. Similarly, **38% admit they are reluctant to train colleagues in areas they consider personal strengths,** creating a vicious cycle: the very behaviours intended to protect jobs actually increase organisational vulnerability to knowledge loss.

Despite these fears, **60% still believe their company would struggle to replace their skill set if they left,** revealing a paradox where employees feel both confident in their own abilities and apprehensive about which roles AI might displace. Job security concerns are particularly acute among younger generations, with **40% of 18−24-year-olds** reporting stress or anxiety linked to AI adoption.

CHRIS DAVIDSON

Principal Solutions Engineer, Atlassian

ATLASSIAN

"Knowledge is a team sport—and when it walks out the door, so does momentum. To build resilient teams, organisations must focus on creating a culture that champions continual knowledge-sharing, including implementing intuitive systems that make knowledge visible, accessible, and lasting.

"Functionality like Atlassian Rovo's AI teammates augment this further, and when treated as a strategic collaborator instead of a competitor, can help surface essential knowledge and remove the friction of repetitive work so people can focus on the human strengths that drive innovation and progress."

Despite AI being perceived as a double-edged sword, the findings clearly showed that when it is embedded into team workflows and experimentation is encouraged, workers are reaping the rewards.

Nearly **half (48%) of respondents with AI embedded said they feel energised and motivated by their work environment,** vs just 19% of those without. Those harnessing AI also view technology as powering progression. Some **31% of those with AI integrated into their workflows believe technology has significantly helped their career,** compared with 15% without easy access to AI. For people leveraging AI, engagement was also increased—only 3% of workers with a positive AI culture say they often feel frustrated or disconnected from their work, compared to 14% of those who don't have AI properly embedded.

HARRIS BEBER
CMO, monday.com

monday.com

"At monday.com, we believe the best AI products are the ones that employees will actually use. They should accelerate you and the impact you can deliver for the business. The data in Adaptavist's latest report shows that when AI is seamlessly ingrained in daily workflows, professionals are more likely to feel empowered and see real career benefits: 31% of workers with AI embedded in their workflows say it has significantly helped their careers, compared to just 15% of those without.

"That's exactly the vision behind our recently launched AI capabilities, including our digital assistant monday sidekick and vibe-coding platform monday vibe. These capabilities are deeply integrated into daily workflows and serve as a real teammate, removing friction and helping people focus on the high-impact work that drives their growth."

The study also established a **clear correlation between AI adoption and task autonomy**–those with AI embedded are much more likely than their peers to say that tools which monitor, direct, or organise work processes help them. 82% of those using AI in workflows said tools give them more control over tasks or they retain control, vs 39% of those who don't have AI in their workflows.

In the UK, workers have experienced a [steep and steady decline](#) in 'task discretion' since the 1990s, with a body of research suggesting that having little control over how you work can negatively impact mental and physical health. While some of this may be attributed to the increased use of digital technologies, our findings indicate that the impact is much more nuanced, and if tools are implemented correctly, they can increase autonomy and empower workers.

OPHIR PENSO
VP of GTM, monday.com

monday.com

"This research confirms our core belief: the best technology doesn't just measure productivity, it enables it. 60% of knowledge workers say productivity is regularly measured using tech, and nearly half reported that workplace technology actually increases their tech autonomy. This shows that transparency and measurement, done right, become empowerment tools.

"That's why monday.com has evolved beyond project management into a multi-product platform spanning work management, CRM, dev and service. By reducing sprawl and uniting these solutions in one place, we empower people to work in ways that feel seamless, productive, and ultimately more autonomous."

SUMMARY

Putting people front and centre

Rather than simply deploying AI tools, organisations must take a more holistic approach to implementation:

Reframe AI as augmentation, not replacement
Help your teams understand how AI will enhance rather than eliminate human roles

Invest in reskilling and upskilling
Show your people how their careers can evolve alongside AI technology, and build a culture where employees feel part of the journey

Create knowledge-sharing incentives
Reward collaboration and mentoring rather than allowing protective hoarding

Measure psychological safety
Track whether workers feel secure enough to be vulnerable, share ideas, and admit mistakes

LISA SCHAFFER

Head of Adaptive Information Services, Adaptavist

"When technology feels overwhelming and users don't feel empowered, the natural default is to stick to what you know. This is demonstrated by the fact that 81% of workers still rely on handwritten or typed meeting notes for information retention.

"This lack of confidence can be the result of underlying culture issues and lack of training, leaving businesses exposed to risk when these notes are rarely—if ever—surfaced across the wider organisation. This issue is compounded when people change roles or leave, and information risks being lost or hoarded."

Conclusion

'Quiet cracking' is a symptom of systemic neglect at the intersection of technology, communication, and workplace culture.

The data reveals a dangerous cycle: unchecked technostress drives disengagement, disengagement erodes trust, and mistrust accelerates attrition. Yet the same research also points to a solution: clarity, autonomy, and a supportive culture around technology can reverse the tide.

Companies that succeed will treat digital tools as enablers of human potential rather than as metrics to be policed. Leaders must prioritise training, psychological safety, and purposeful communication to combat the pressures that fuel quiet cracking. Tools such as Jira, Confluence, Trello and monday.com, alongside frameworks like the Atlassian System of Work, can help employees understand the 'why' behind their work, reduce meeting overload through asynchronous knowledge-sharing, and stay aligned with organisational goals without drowning in jargon or constant context-switching.

Adaptavist's consultancy expertise is critical in guiding organisations to achieve this balance. By aligning strategy with execution, implementing AI in ways that complement rather than compete with human teams, and providing the training and support that employees need, organisations can create a workforce that feels confident, capable, and in control. The result is a healthier, more engaged, and resilient workplace—one where technology supports people, rather than the other way around.
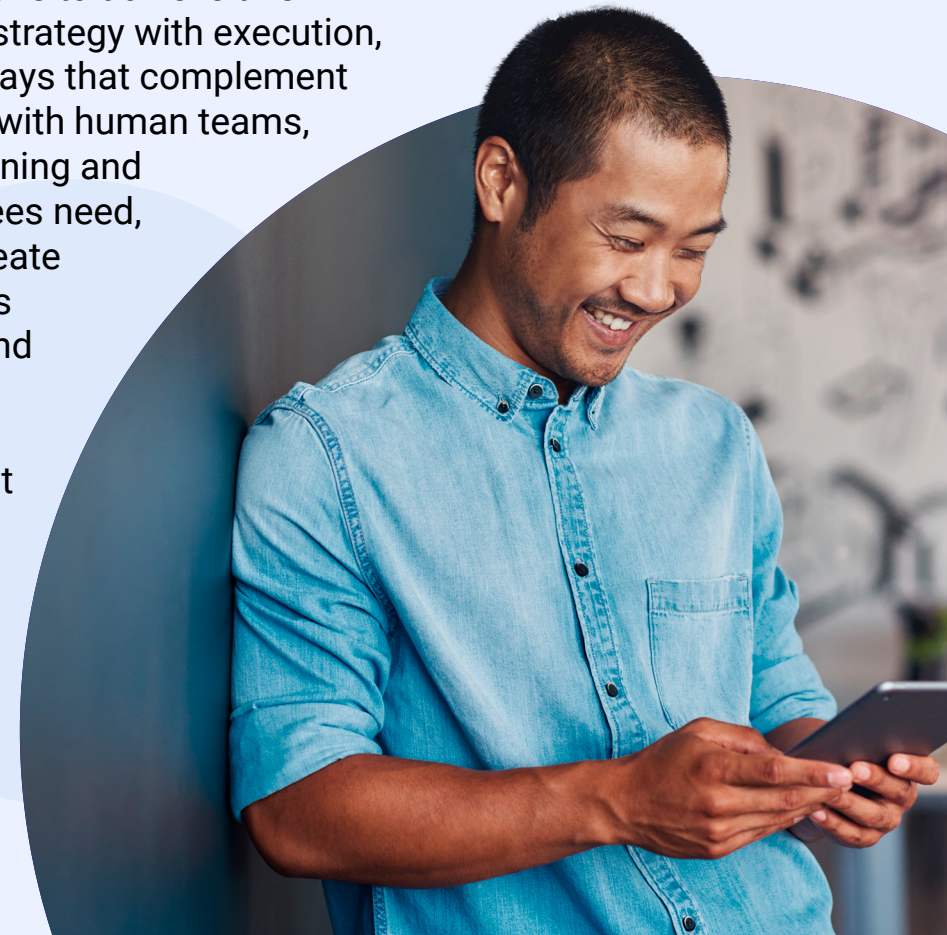
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About Adaptavist and The Adaptavist Group

Founded in 2005, Adaptavist is a global technology and innovative solutions provider that helps organisations improve agility and overcome the challenges of digital transformation.

We are experts at delivering innovative and tailored solutions and quality services across some of the world's most trusted technology ecosystems, including Atlassian, AWS, monday.com, GitLab, and many more.

It is the pioneer brand of The Adaptavist Group, a global family of companies with one common goal: to make business work better. We combine the best talent, technology, and processes to make it easier for our customers to excel—today and tomorrow.

The Adaptavist Group exists to support clients' day-to-day workflows, business transformation, and high-growth strategies. We offer a comprehensive but always evolving range of services across five key practices: agile, DevOps, work management, ITSM, and cloud. Our depth of knowledge across these practices unites us in our mission to help businesses embrace continuous transformation and make it their competitive advantage.

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