Whitepaper

jumpcloud

Creating a New Normal for SME IT in 2022

Security, Scalability, and Hybrid Work

Contents

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Creating a New Normal for SME IT in 2022

Introduction

During the first two months of the pandemic, many small-to-medium sized enterprises (SMEs) underwent two years' worth of digital transformation. And over the past six months, SMEs have gone through even more change as they search for a "new normal." Of course, none of this has *really* felt normal. And many SME IT leaders have begun to realize that any sense of normalcy we *do* come to won't be something that happens on its own. The new normal is going to be something they create.

In our May 2021 report, "**IT Trends Report: Remote Work Drives Priorities in 2021**," we explored how SME IT professionals were helping their organizations adapt to trends in remote work and examined their shifting security and IT management priorities.

But in this updated survey of 1,012 SME IT professionals across the U.S. and the U.K., we see a new trend emerging: one in which SME IT professionals are beginning to adjust to all this change starting to think even more proactively and strategically, and getting a handle on how to simultaneously secure their organizations while empowering remote workers and supporting "work-from-anywhere" models.

In short, as we head into 2022, SME IT has an enormous opportunity to create a new normal for their teams, their organizations, and their collective industries.
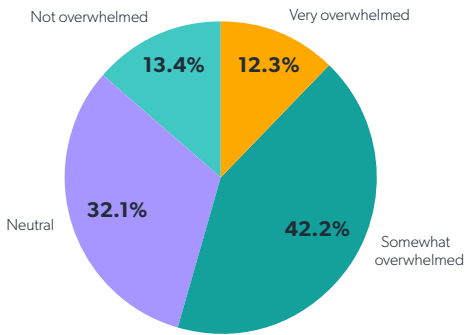
Creating this new normal requires scalable, secure, and seamless experiences. SME IT professionals need to enable their employees to work from anywhere, on any device, with minimal friction. Many SME IT managers seem to be on top of it, with a clear strategy for Zero Trust security, clear communication with their employees about security practices, and a clear understanding of the complexities they're managing. They just need the right tools and teams to back them up.

Let's take a look at the pressures, priorities, and practices that are going to set the stage for SME IT leaders in 2022…
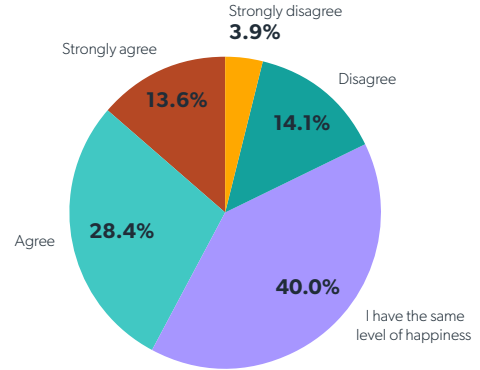
Adjusting to the New Normal

### 1. In terms of my job responsibilities and expectations, I am...

Not overwhelmed 13.4%

Very overwhelmed 12.3%

Neutral 32.1%

Somewhat overwhelmed 42.2%

2. I am happier in my job than I was a year ago.

Strongly disagree 3.9%

Strongly agree 13.6%

Disagree 14.1%

Agree 28.4%

I have the same level of happiness 40.0%

The good news is that fewer SME IT professionals are feeling overwhelmed (54.5%) at the end of 2021 than they were at the beginning of 2021 (66.3%). And overwhelmingly, SME IT professionals are just as happy (40%) or even happier (42%) with their job than they were a year ago. There is good reason to celebrate: SME IT professionals have put in a lot of hard work to balance the security and productivity of their organizations during these trying times. A deep sense of pride and accomplishment is definitely warranted.
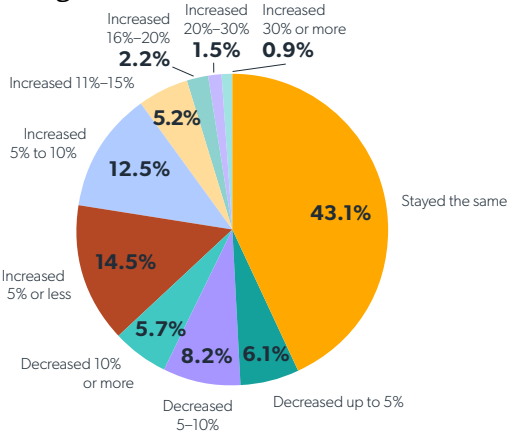
3. Decision-makers in my organization listen to my recommendations.

Strongly disagree 3.7%

Disagree 5.3%

Strongly agree 24.9%

Neutral 14.7%

Agree 51.4%
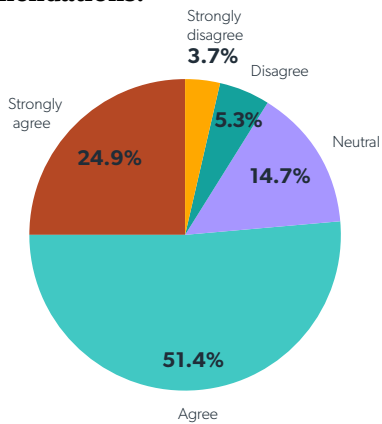
Even better, more than three-quarters of SME IT managers believe that their senior decision-makers listen to their recommendations (51.4% agree; 24.9% strongly agree). This respect empowers IT professionals to find and implement the solutions they need to continue enabling the next chapter of this new normal, because the reality is that there is still a lot of work to be done.
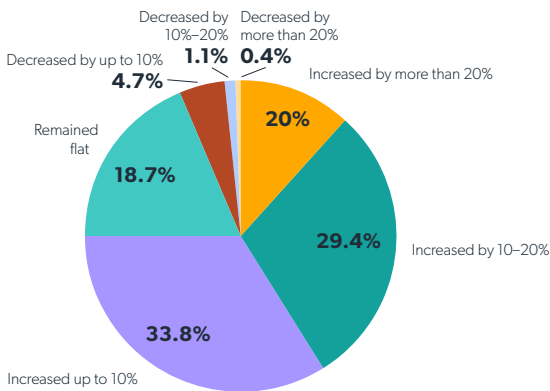
Level-Setting New Budget Benchmarks

4. Since the start of the pandemic, how has your salary changed?

Increased 16%–20% **2.2%**
Increased 20%–30% **1.5%**
Increased 30% or more **0.9%**
Increased 11%–15% **5.2%**
Increased 5% to 10% **12.5%**
14.5%
Increased 5% or less
Stayed the same **43.1%**
5.7%
Decreased 10% or more
8.2%
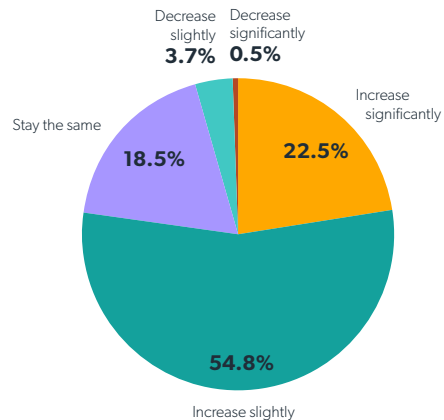Decreased 5–10%
6.1%
Decreased up to 5%

It is important to realize that even though fewer SME IT professionals are feeling overwhelmed at the end of 2021, more than half of them are still feeling overwhelmed. And while their recommendations seem to be valued, the majority (63.1%) have not received a raise.
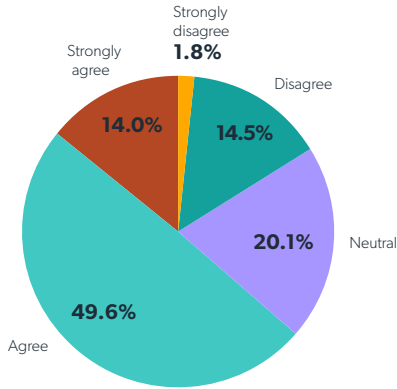
5. Over the past year, my IT budget…

Decreased by 10%–20% **1.1%**
Decreased by more than 20% **0.4%**
Decreased by up to 10% **4.7%**
Increased by more than 20% **20%**
Remained flat **18.7%**
Increased by 10–20% **29.4%**
Increased up to 10% **33.8%**

6. Over the next year, I expect our IT budget to:

Decrease slightly **3.7%**
Decrease significantly **0.5%**
Increase significantly **22.5%**
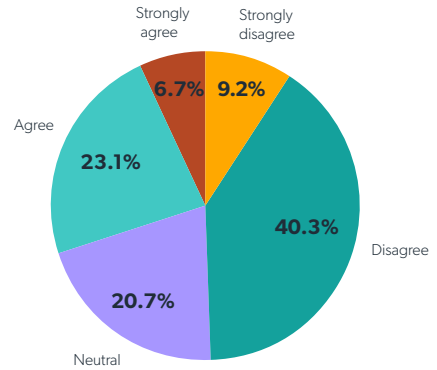Stay the same **18.5%**
Increase slightly **54.8%**

These are still lean times for many organizations, but the silver lining is that IT budgets seem to be growing. More than three-quarters (75.1%) of IT budgets increased in the past year, and even more (77.3%) are expected to increase over the next year. That means that overwhelmed IT professionals should be able to invest in more efficient solutions to help eliminate some of their burdens.

7. My IT budget is adequate to meet the needs of my organization.

Strongly disagree **1.8%**

Strongly agree **14.0%**

Disagree **14.5%**

Neutral **20.1%**

Agree **49.6%**

8. I feel like my organization is spending too much to secure/enable remote work.

Strongly agree **6.7%**

Strongly disagree **9.2%**

Agree **23.1%**

Disagree **40.3%**

Neutral **20.7%**

The majority of IT professionals agree (63.6%) that these mostly increasing budgets are adequate to meet the needs of their organization. Combined with the fact that senior decision-makers are listening to their recommendations, that indicates that many IT professionals have the ability to drive investment toward new solutions that work best for them and their organization.
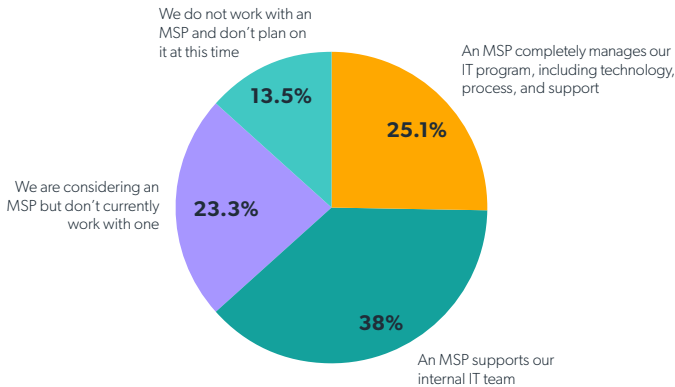
Nearly one-third (29.8%) of respondents either strongly agree or agree their organization is spending too much to secure/enable remote work. SME IT professionals have some great perspectives on how to enhance the post-pandemic employee experience, and SMEs seems ready to listen and invest in them. That's encouraging, since remote work will continue to be such a high priority in 2022.
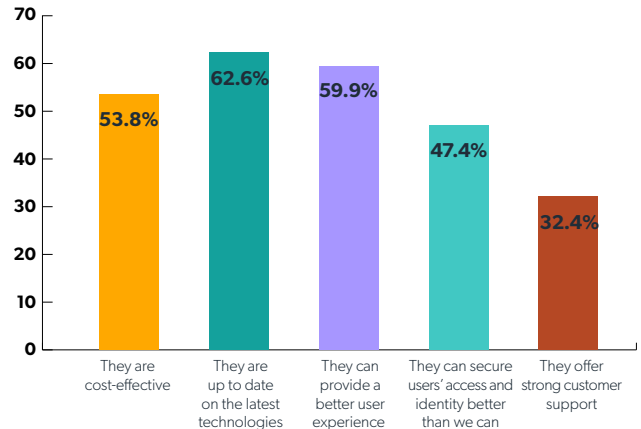
A Focus on Managed Service Providers

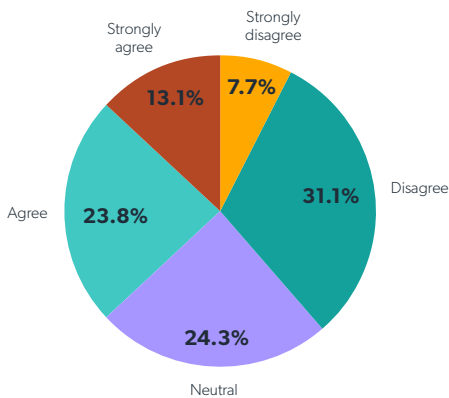## 9. To what extent does a managed service provider (MSP) play a role in your IT program?

- We do not work with an MSP and don't plan on it at this time — 13.5%
- An MSP completely manages our IT program, including technology, process, and support — 25.1%
- An MSP supports our internal IT team — 38%
- We are considering an MSP but don't currently work with one — 23.3%

10. We use MSPs because:

- They are cost-effective — 53.8%
- They are up to date on the latest technologies — 62.6%
- They can provide a better user experience — 59.9%
- They can secure users' access and identity better than we can — 47.4%
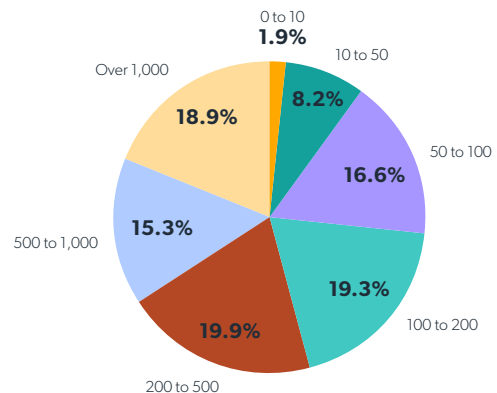- They offer strong customer support — 32.4%

Managed service providers (MSP) are a popular choice for resource-strapped SMEs for many reasons. More than half (63.1%) of SME IT professionals work with an MSP. More than half of SME IT professionals said MSPs are cost-effective, that they are up to date on the latest technologies, and that they can provide a better user experience. In fact, more than three-quarters (76.2%) said that using an MSP results in better security, and more than half (57.1%) cited a better employee experience. The main reason (56.3%) SME IT professionals choose NOT to use an MSP is because they prefer to handle IT themselves. As organizations consider how to achieve scalable, seamless experiences, partnering with an MSP is one viable option.

11. I have concerns about how our MSPs manage security.

- Strongly disagree — 7.7%
- Disagree — 31.1%
- Neutral — 24.3%
- Agree — 23.8%
- Strongly agree — 13.1%

12. At what number of employees do you think an MSP makes sense:

- 0 to 10 — 1.9%
- 10 to 50 — 8.2%
- 50 to 100 — 16.6%
- 100 to 200 — 19.3%
- 200 to 500 — 19.9%
- 500 to 1,000 — 15.3%
- Over 1,000 — 18.9%

# Turning the Page: Creating a Seamless Experience

13. I consider employee experience to be an important factor in making IT solutions purchasing decisions.

- Strongly disagree 0.2%
- Disagree 2.4%
- Neutral 9.5%
- Agree 54.3%
- Strongly agree 33.6%
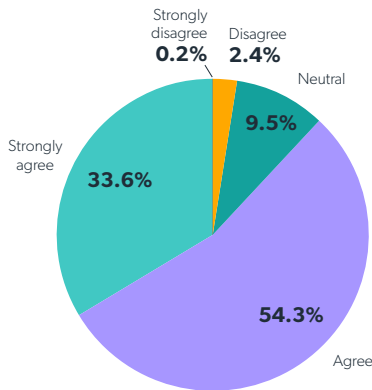
14. What is the breakdown of employees working in the office full time/working hybrid/working remotely full time?

- Office full time — 40.6%
- Working remotely full time — 30%
- Working hybrid — 32.5%
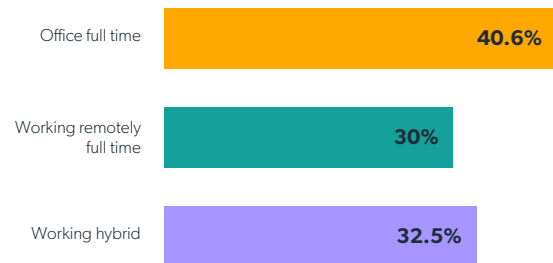
As SME IT professionals look ahead to 2022 and beyond, the overwhelming majority (87.9%) agree that the employee experience is an important factor in making IT purchasing decisions. And it can be difficult to balance security and productivity across increasingly complex and fragmented environments and ecosystems. Employee experience can often suffer in the pursuit of security, and the hybrid work environment just makes that dynamic even more challenging.

As some organizations slowly return to the office, most SMEs continue to enable remote and hybrid work. Less than half of employees (40.6%) have returned to the office full time, while close to two-thirds of employees continue working remotely (32.5%) or in a hybrid model (30%). All of this represents additional management complexity for SME IT professionals, especially when it comes to creating a safe and smooth experience for employees working from anywhere.

15. Our remote/hybrid experience is not as seamless (easy/convenient, etc.) as it could be.
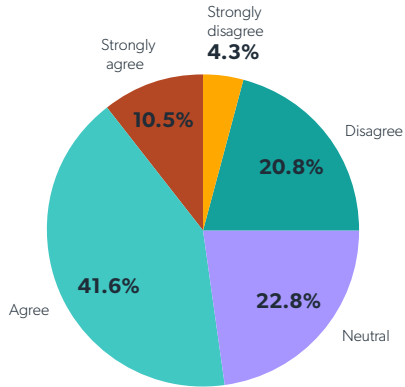

What's more, most SME IT professionals would agree that the remote/hybrid work experience could be improved. More than half agree (52.1%) that their remote/hybrid experience is not as easy or convenient as it could be. This has been a major undertaking during the past two years, so it's easy to see why so many SME IT professionals still feel overwhelmed. There's still a lot more work to be done.

Beyond remote work, it is also worth observing that most SME IT environments are a complex mix of operating systems. Windows remains the most common operating system on more than two-thirds of devices (67.8%), but more than one-in-five (21.3%) devices are now macOS, and 15.8% are Linux. Many SME IT professionals resort to using multiple tools to manage these different operating systems, which further complicates things, rather than working with just one robust tool.

16. What is the device type breakdown of Windows/Linux/macOS devices in your workplace?
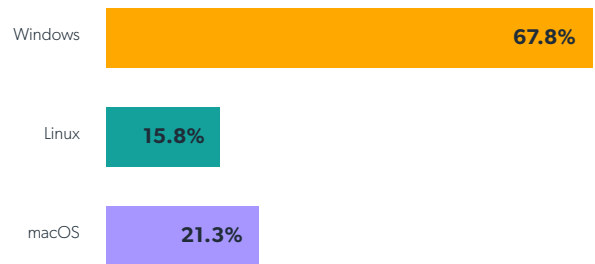
17. What have been the biggest challenges for your IT team since the start of the pandemic?
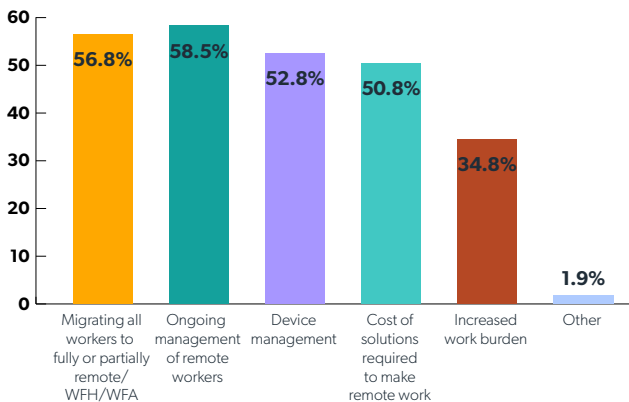
Migrating workers to fully or partially remote work, the ongoing management of remote workers, and device management have been the three biggest challenges of the past two years. More than half of SME IT professionals cited these challenges. In fact, even more SME IT leaders (57%) have realized the challenge of remote work at the end of 2021, compared to the beginning of 2021 (40%). More than half of SME IT leaders also cited the cost of solutions required to make remote work, which can certainly add up when multiple point solutions are involved.

18. Rank the following (with top rank being highest priority): Our IT priorities for managing security for 2021 were, and 2022 will be:
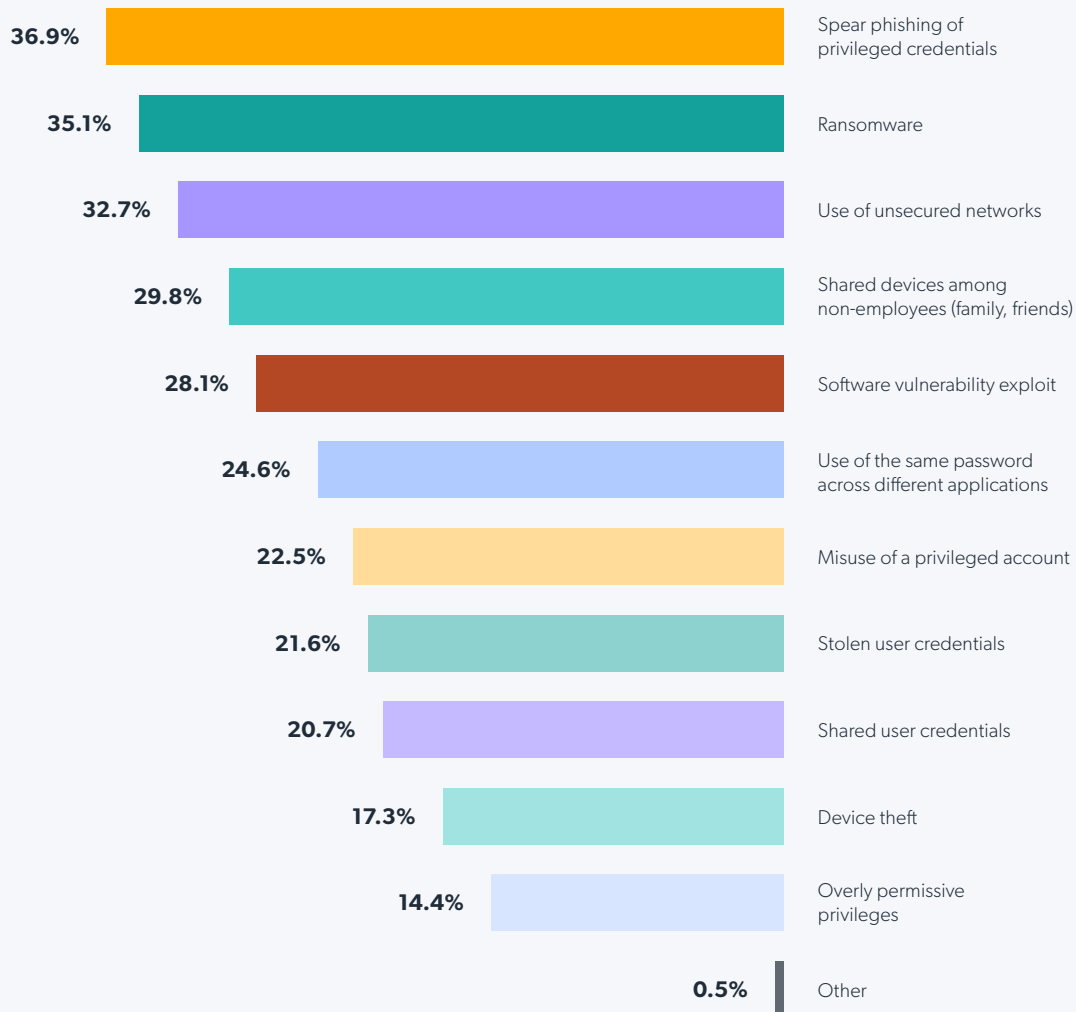
Item	Overall Rank		Score		No. of Rankings	
	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022
Adding layered security so work-from-anywhere is truly secure	1	1	5,172	5,073	971	971
Making remote work easier for end users	2	2	4,883	4,733	971	964
Making remote work easier for admins	3	3	4,577	4,458	966	954
Easier management of user devices	5	4	4,365	4,358	954	956
Implementing SSO or unifying identity management	6	5	4,325	4,287	962	954
Making device management easier	4	6	4,441	4,213	956	950
Gaining analytical insight into user access	8	7	3,517	4,056	946	959
MFA	7	8	3,861	3,903	924	939

It is interesting to note that adding layered security to the work-from-anywhere environment was named the number one priority of SME IT professionals for both 2021 and 2022, while making remote work easier for end users and for admins continue to be their second and third priorities. It is easy to see how SME IT professionals could be feeling overwhelmed, since security and productivity are frequently competing priorities.

This is why developing seamless *and* secure employee experiences in 2022 and beyond is such an important priority. Resolving this tension is at the heart of the new normal that SME IT will create next year. Let's take a closer look at some of the SME security pain points and priorities surrounding this challenge.

The Seamless Security-Productivity Dilemma

19. Of the following, please select three that are your biggest security concerns:

|	
36.9%	Spear phishing of privileged credentials
35.1%	Ransomware
32.7%	Use of unsecured networks
29.8%	Shared devices among non-employees (family, friends)
28.1%	Software vulnerability exploit
24.6%	Use of the same password across different applications
22.5%	Misuse of a privileged account
21.6%	Stolen user credentials
20.7%	Shared user credentials
17.3%	Device theft
14.4%	Overly permissive privileges
0.5%	Other

It should come as no surprise that the three biggest security concerns are vulnerability exploitation (36.9%), ransomware (35.1%), and the use of unsecured networks (32.7%). The stunning revelation of SolarWinds, one of the worst-ever exploitations of a third-party software vulnerability, and repeatedly devastating ransomware attacks such as the Colonial Pipeline would be enough to keep any SME IT professional up at night. And as organizations endeavor to continue to enable work-from-anywhere, their attackable surface area not only continues to expand, it becomes increasingly difficult to track, much less protect. So cybersecurity threats and the use of unsecured networks are likely to remain top concerns for quite some time.

### 20. Remote/hybrid work has increased my organization's focus on security.

Strongly disagree **1.2%**
Disagree **3.6%**
Neutral **13.8%**
Strongly agree **30.5%**
50.9% Agree
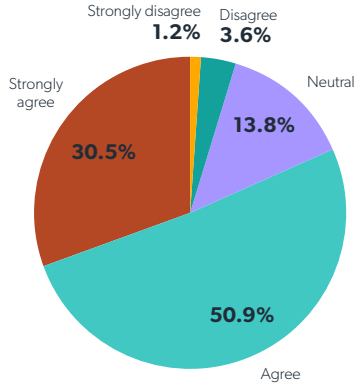
21. I think that remote work makes it harder for employees to follow good security practices.

Strongly agree **14.2%**
Strongly disagree **4.5%**
Disagree **17.9%**
Neutral **19.1%**
44.3% Agree
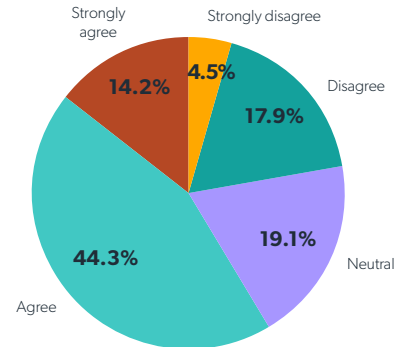
Organizations have certainly increased their focus on security as a result of remote work, although some see this increased focus on security as a detriment to the employee experience. More than four out of five organizations (81.4%) have increased their focus on security as a result of remote/hybrid work, and more than half of SME IT professionals (58.5%) agree that remote work makes it harder for employees to follow good security practices. More than half (58.1%) also believe that additional security measures mean a more cumbersome user experience.

22. Additional security measures generally mean a more cumbersome user experience.

Strongly disagree **2.8%**
Strongly agree **12.2%**
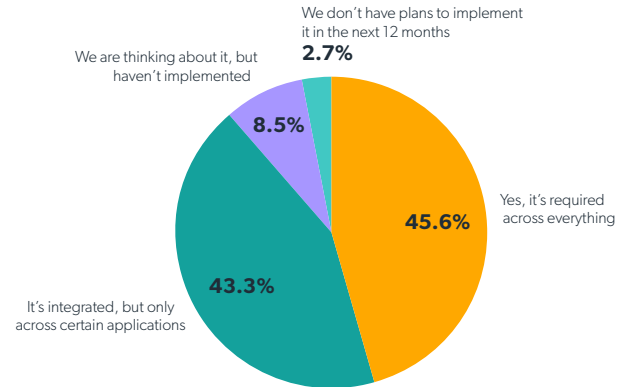Disagree **16.0%**
Neutral **23.1%**
45.9% Agree
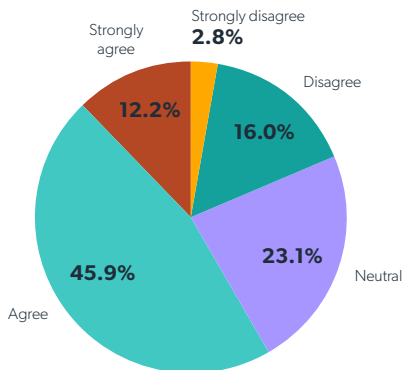
This is going to be the juggling act for SME IT professionals in 2022: balancing the high demand for security against the high demand for positive user experience.

23. We are pursuing, or plan to pursue a Zero Trust approach to our security program.

I don't know

20%

21.4%
No

58.6%
Yes
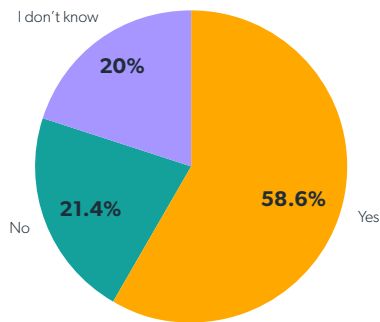
24. My company requires employees to use MFA (multi-factor authentication) across any application/logins:

We don't have plans to implement it in the next 12 months
2.7%

We are thinking about it, but haven't implemented
8.5%

45.6%
Yes, it's required across everything

43.3%

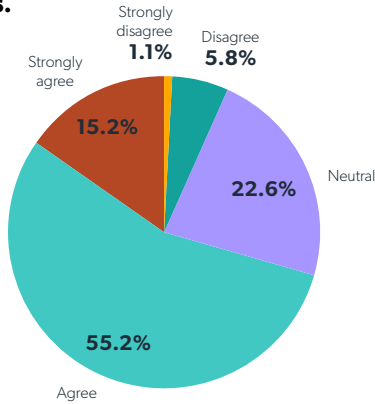It's integrated, but only across certain applications

The complexity of SME IT environments, combined with the high demand for security, has catalyzed the adoption of **Zero Trust**. Secure authentication, authorization, and access — backed by trusted identities, devices, and networks — are hallmarks of Zero Trust security. More than half of organizations (58.6%) are pursuing or plan to pursue a Zero Trust approach to security, 45.6% have already integrated **multi-factor authentication (MFA)** across all of their applications, and 43.3% have integrated MFA across certain applications.

However, managing all these different security options in an increasingly unpredictable IT environment isn't easy. And that brings us to the admin challenges SME IT professionals face…
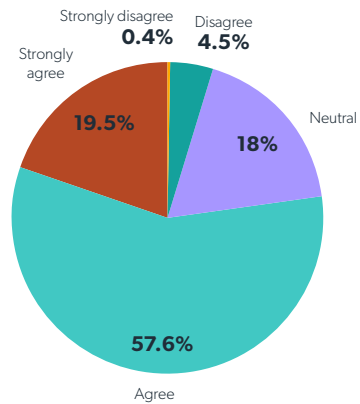
IT Admin Complexity – A Mixed Bag

25. Our ability to onboard new employees and connect them to the resources they need meets or exceeds expectations.
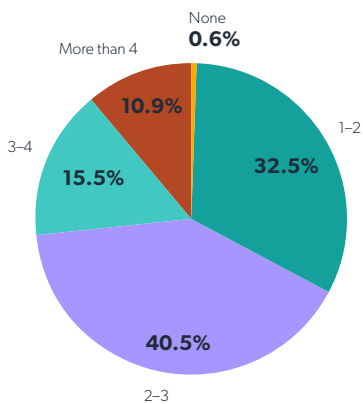
- Strongly disagree 1.1%
- Disagree 5.8%
- Strongly agree 15.2%
- Neutral 22.6%
- Agree 55.2%

26. We have been able to meet or exceed employee expectations with respect to ongoing support in a remote/hybrid work environment.

- Strongly disagree 0.4%
- Disagree 4.5%
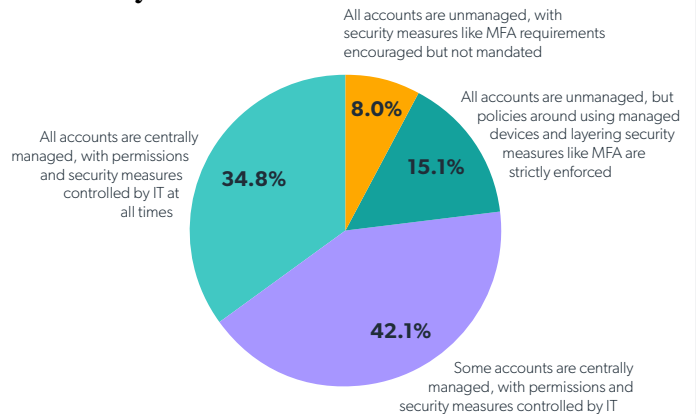- Strongly agree 19.5%
- Neutral 18%
- Agree 57.6%

The good news is that SME IT professionals are overwhelmingly positive with regards to their ability to support their employees. More than two-thirds (70.4%) agree that their ability to onboard new employees and connect them to the resources they need meets or exceeds expectations, and more than three-quarters (77.1%) agree that they have been able to meet or exceed employee expectations with respect to ongoing support in a remote/hybrid work environment.

Despite all of their challenges, SME IT professionals feel confident in the job they're doing, which helps explain why so many are happy in their work.

27. On average, how many accounts would you estimate employees have to manage to access their work resources (across devices, applications, networks, etc.)?

- None 0.6%
- More than 4 10.9%
- 3–4 15.5%
- 1–2 32.5%
- 2–3 40.5%

28. How "easy" is it for your employees to access what they need?

- All accounts are unmanaged, with security measures like MFA requirements encouraged but not mandated 8.0%
- All accounts are unmanaged, but policies around using managed devices and layering security measures like MFA are strictly enforced 15.1%
- All accounts are centrally managed, with permissions and security measures controlled by IT at all times 34.8%
- Some accounts are centrally managed, with permissions and security measures controlled by IT 42.1%

However, there still are some rough edges to smooth out. Two-thirds (66.9%) of SME IT professionals reported that their users have to manage multiple user accounts. Just over one-third (34.8%) are centrally managing accounts with permissions and security measures controlled by IT, and one in five (23.1%) admitted that all of their employees' accounts are unmanaged. Organizations that don't manage their employee accounts are putting themselves at risk, as well as creating more friction for their employees, who may not always be as technically adept as IT professionals.

29. How many tools does your organization use to manage employee identity, access, and devices?

None
2.1%

More than 4
10.6%

1–2
25.4%

3–4
20.4%

41.6%

2–3
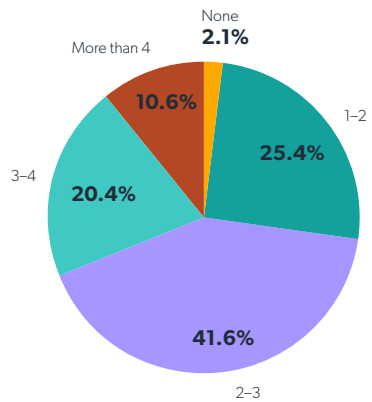
30. I would prefer to use a single solution/tool to do my job over managing a number of different solutions.

Strongly disagree
1.2%

Disagree

Strongly agree
20.9%

11.6%

18.1%

Neutral

48.2%

Agree
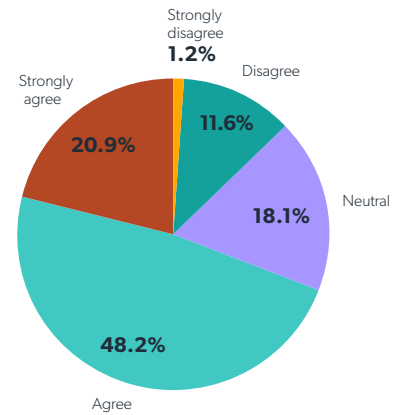
It seems that for many organizations, achieving control over their employees' identities, access, and devices is a complicated process. Only one-quarter (25.4%) of SME IT professionals are managing their employee identities, access, and devices with one or two tools. That means that most organizations have multiple tools that their IT professionals must manage, typically with increasing costs and complexity.

Despite mounting complexities, most SME IT professionals would prefer to streamline their management environment. More than two-thirds (69.1%) said they would prefer to use a single solution or tool to do their job instead of managing a number of different solutions. As organizations plan for 2022 and beyond, SME IT professionals have the budget and the respect of their decision-makers to suggest consolidating to a single solution to streamline their management complexity — creating a new normal for their *own* experience, not just the experience of the workers they support.

Closing Thoughts

The pandemic catalyzed a shift to work-from-anywhere, introducing security concerns and management complexity. Users are connecting from Windows, macOS, and Linux devices, which frequently require multiple solutions to manage. SME IT professionals want seamless experiences for their users, but remote work and hybrid work make it difficult; using multiple tools to manage users, access, and devices certainly isn't seamless for SME IT professionals. No wonder so many still feel overwhelmed.

As SME IT professionals look ahead to 2022 and beyond, many are asking themselves:

— How do we strike the balance between security and seamless employee experiences?

— How do we manage increasingly complex environments in which users can work from anywhere on any device, any operating system, and any network?

— How can we streamline the IT management process to create an easier experience for ourselves, as well?

The bottom line is, the SMEs that answer these questions will find themselves in a better position to grow. And that's where JumpCloud comes in.

JumpCloud has developed a **2022 IT Admin's Toolkit** with workbooks, templates, reading, and mental health resources to help you build a strategic, scalable strategy. **Get your copy** and start preparing for 2022.
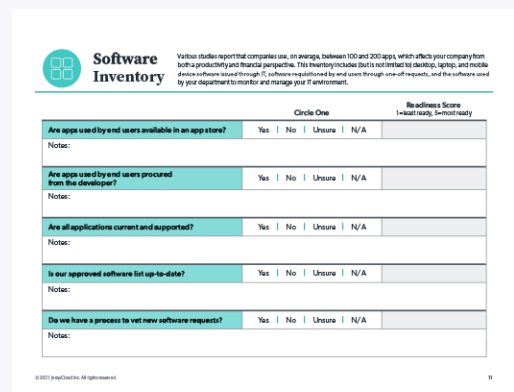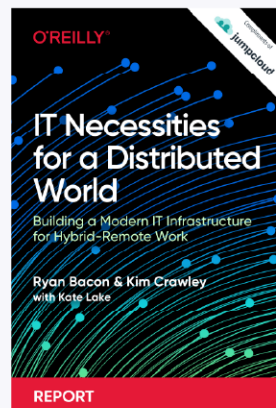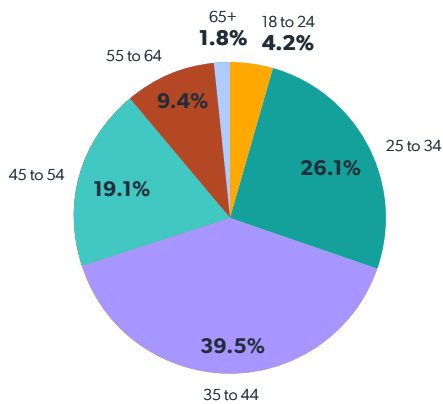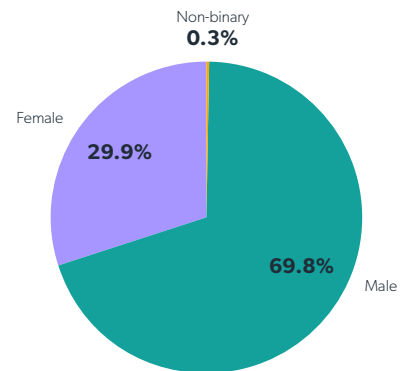
Methodology

— JumpCloud surveyed 509 U.S.-based and 503 U.K.-based SME IT decision-makers, including managers, directors, vice presidents, and executives. Each survey respondent represented an organization with 2,500 or fewer employees across a variety of industries.

— The survey was conducted via Propeller Insights, Oct. 21, 2021 to Oct. 25, 2021.

Demographics

What is your age?

65+ **1.8%**
18 to 24 **4.2%**
55 to 64 **9.4%**
25 to 34 **26.1%**
45 to 54 **19.1%**
35 to 44 **39.5%**

What is your gender?

Non-binary **0.3%**
Female **29.9%**
Male **69.8%**

Which industry do you currently work in?

Business Services **3.8%**
All Others **19.3%**
Other **12.5%**
Telecommunications **7.7%**
Manufacturing **9.2%**
Healthcare **4.1%**
Finance, Insurance & Real Estate **4.2%**
Education **4.9%**
Computer Software **34.6%**
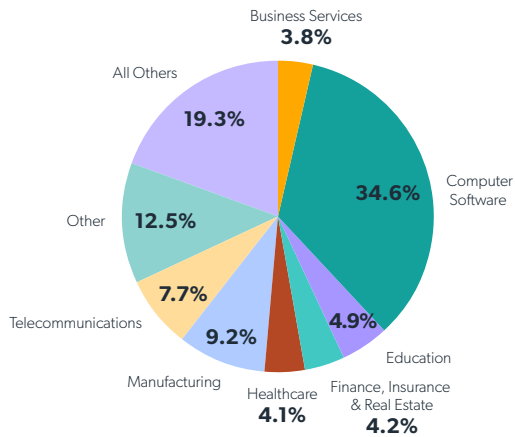
What is your employment status?

Part-time employee **3.0%**
Self-employed **2.6%**
Full-time employee **94.5%**
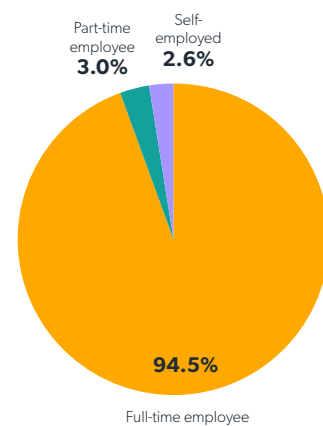
Demographics, continued.

Approximately how many employees work in your organization (across all locations)?

1	1.2%
2–10	2.4%
11–24	1.9%
25–50	5.5%
51–100	8.5%
101–500	21.3%
501–1,000	26.0%
1,001–2,500	33.2%
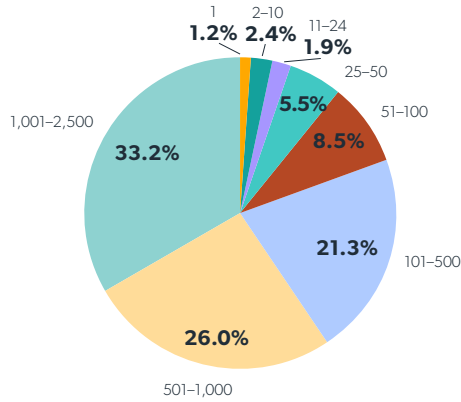
Which of the following best describes your level within the organization?

Owner	4.2%
Non-Manager	6.4%
C-level Executive	11.9%
Sr. Vice President	2.2%
Vice President	3.0%
Director	21.7%
Manager	50.7%
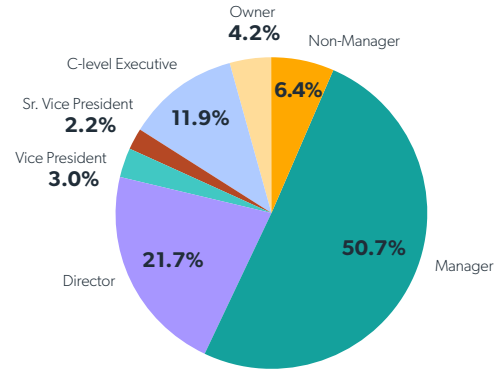
In what region of the United States do you primarily reside?

Mid-Atlantic: DE, MD, NJ, VA	7.5%
Pacific: AK, CA, HI, OR, WA	15.1%
Northeast: CT, ME, MA, NH, NY, PA, RI, VT	20.4%
Mountain: AZ, CO, ID, MT, NM, NV, UT, WY	7.7%
Great Plains: KS, IA, MN, ND, NE, SD, MO, OK	5.9%
Southeast: FL, GA, NC, SC	15.3%
South Central: AR, TX, WV, LA, MS, AL, TN, KY	15.3%
Upper Midwest: IL, IN, MI, OH, WI	12.8%
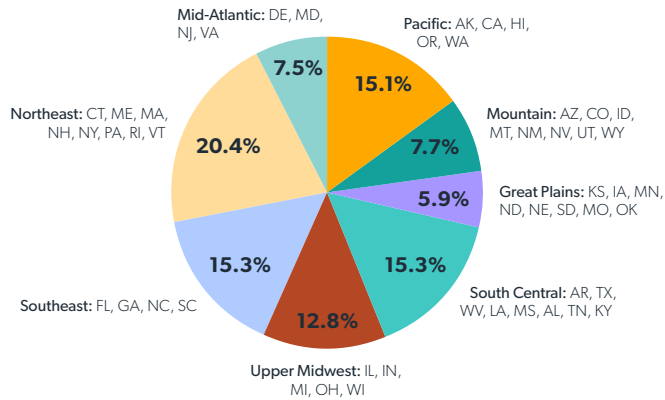
jumpcloud

The JumpCloud Directory Platform helps IT teams Make Work Happen® by centralizing management of user identities and devices, enabling small and medium-sized enterprises to adopt Zero Trust security models. JumpCloud® has a global user base of more than 150,000 organizations, with more than 5,000 paying customers including Cars.com, GoFundMe, Grab, ClassPass, Uplight, Beyond Finance, and Foursquare. JumpCloud has raised over $400M from world-class investors including Sapphire Ventures, General Atlantic, Sands Capital, Atlassian, and CrowdStrike.

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