Anatomy of an intelligent print environment

What great document management
looks like in action
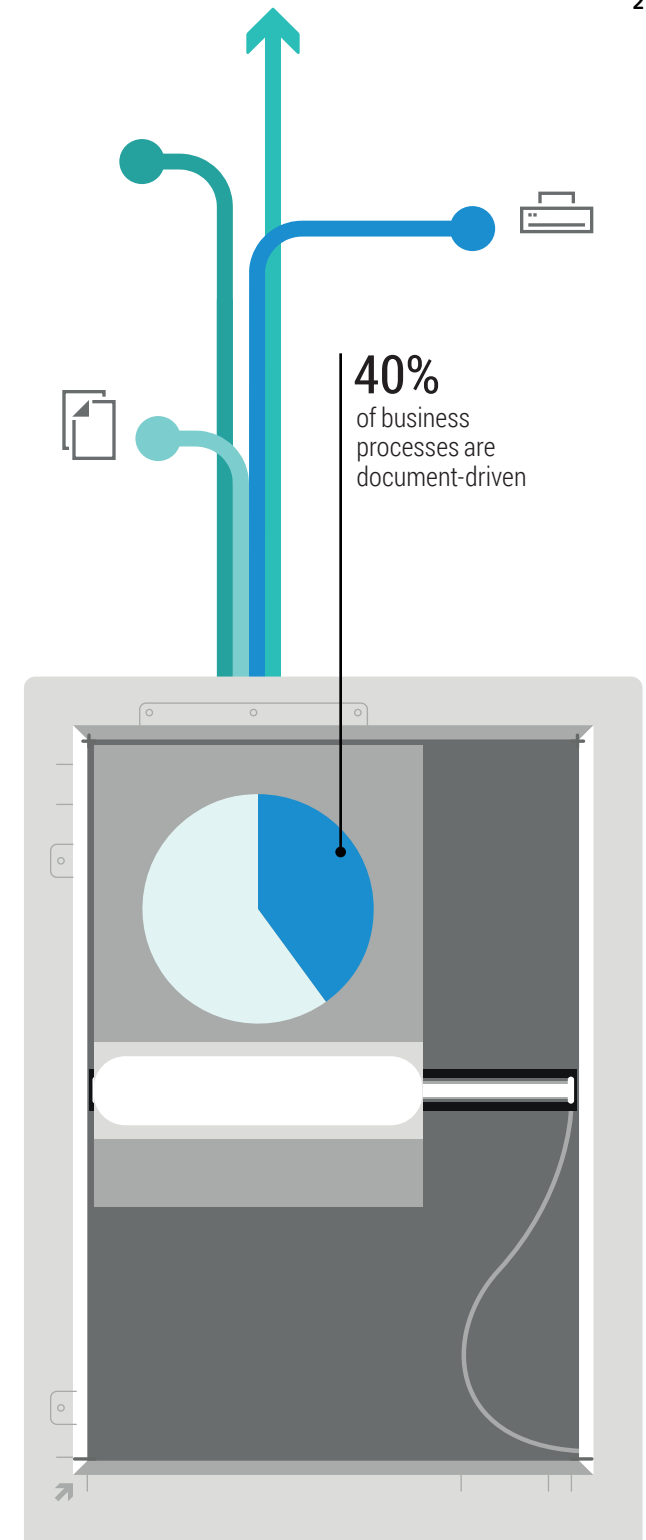
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Where documents meet process

If you're responsible for your company's IT, you might be surprised by the impact document-based processes have on your day-to-day operations.

On average, printing and document management represent 15% of an SMB's overall IT budget and accounts for at least 12% of IT resources[1].

That's a big chunk of your budget that could be used in more strategic places. It might seem like switching to 100% digital workflows is the fast track to efficiency and reduced spend, but believe it or not, **40%** of business processes are document-driven[2].

The paperless office is still a myth. And not nearly enough is said about optimizing document processes in the real world.

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Where documents meet process

Creating an intelligent print environment is about striking the right balance between paper and digital, so you can:

- Optimize the mix of printers and multifunction printers (MFPs) in your buildings

- Integrate scanned hard copies of documents into digital workflows

- Pull digital files from the cloud and print on demand, without workarounds

- Use paper and print efficiently when it's the best way to get work done

When you get document management right, there's less drag on your time and resources, and information can flow around your organization in a smooth predictable way.

In this eBook, we'll be looking at the various components of an intelligent print environment – users, printers and documents. Then we'll show you how to implement smarter processes to make the most of your print infrastructure.

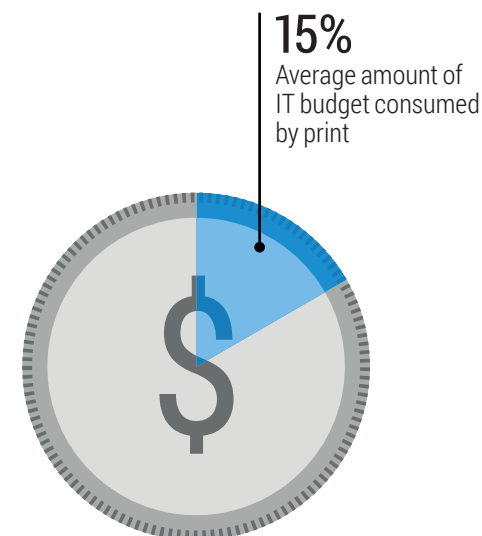# Three aspects of an intelligent print environment

The first aspect of an intelligent print environment is the Return on Investment in your print infrastructure. That means you're not over-spending on supplies and printers, and the printers and supplies you do have are not under-utilized.

The second aspect of an intelligent print environment is its impact on your users' productivity – the ease with which they can connect to systems. That means making sure your users don't have to worry about 'making it work'.

They should just be able to connect those printers to whatever they need to connect to – whether that's their mobile device or their cloud apps – so that information can flow easily between devices and systems.

At the same time, making your users more productive shouldn't come at the cost of IT's own productivity. Today, that's an issue with 40-60% of help desk calls being print-related[3]. Which is why the third aspect is about maximizing your own Return on Effort, making your print environment easier to manage.

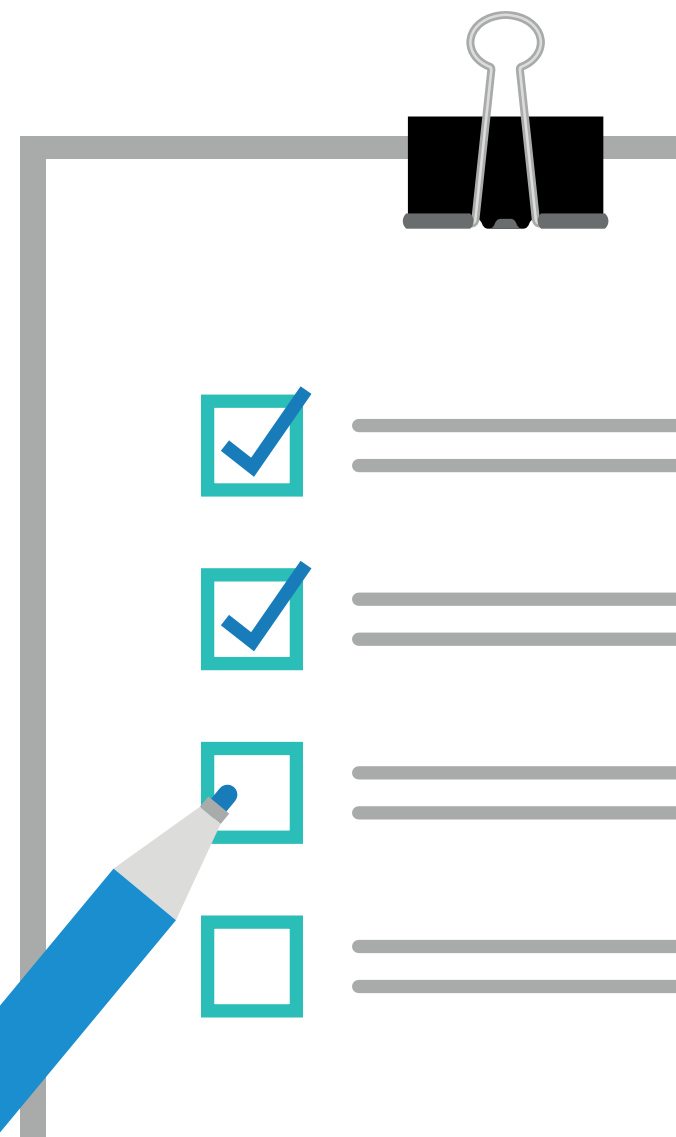Let's take a look at an intelligent print environment in practice.

15%
Average amount of IT budget consumed by print

1. Optimize your investment

To optimize your print environment, you have to start by assessing its scope. That means looking at:

☑ The number of printers in current use

☑ The number of different brands of printers

☑ The number of users per printer

☑ The number of users who need color printing to do their job

☑ The number of users and departments that need access to private printers

☑ The number of shared or central printers required to serve the rest of your users

☑ The location of various printers in relation to the location of the people using those printers

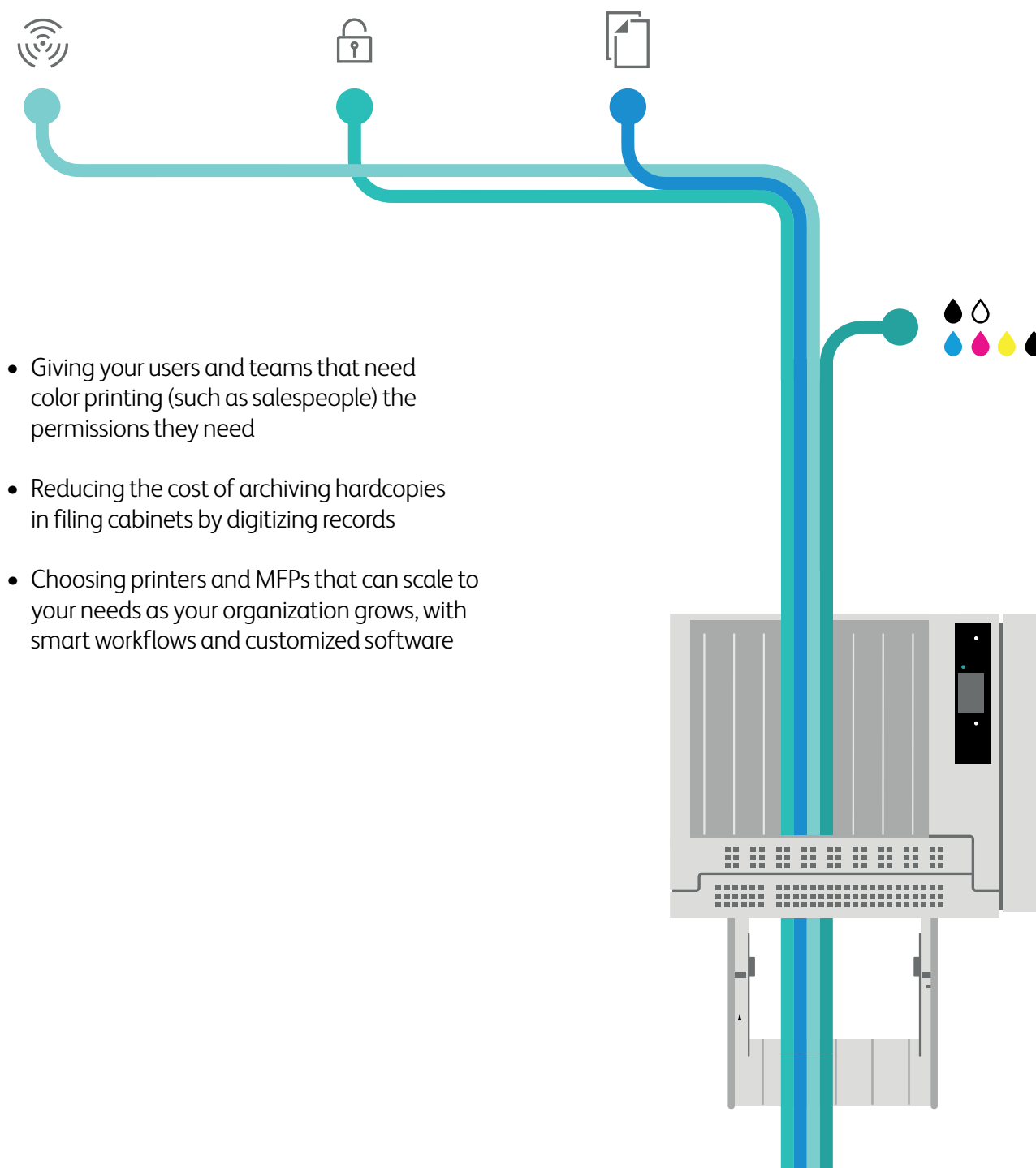These may sound like simple questions, but finding the answers to them is often harder than it looks.

In fact, we've found most IT leaders are around 70% off in their estimations of the number of printers spread across their companies.

1. Efficiency

So a short walk around your immediate workplace may surprise you.

If nothing else, this information will help you optimize your print environment in a way that delivers real efficiencies by:

- Ensuring the majority of users are within an appropriate distance of a shared printer

- Ensuring only departments with specific security requirements have their own private printers

- Standardizing the majority of your central printers around cost-saving settings like 'duplex printing' (printing on both sides of the paper) and black-and-white

- Giving your users and teams that need color printing (such as salespeople) the permissions they need

- Reducing the cost of archiving hardcopies in filing cabinets by digitizing records

- Choosing printers and MFPs that can scale to your needs as your organization grows, with smart workflows and customized software

2. Make it easier for your users

For your print environment to flex with the way your people work today, it needs to be able to offer them two things:
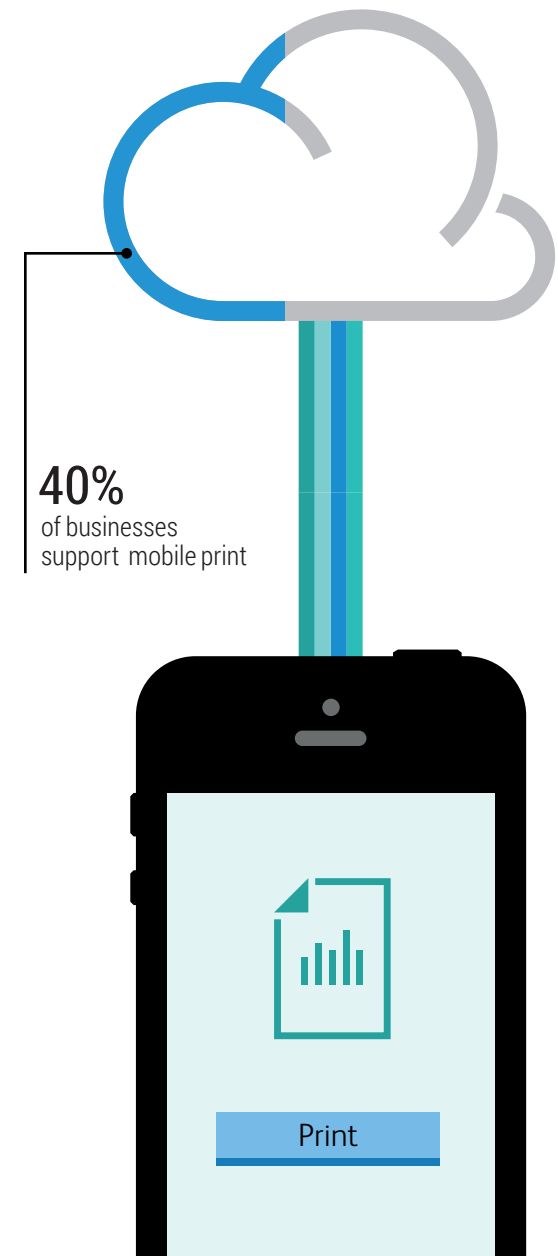
Cloud and mobile connectivity

Mobile devices and cloud applications like Salesforce, Office 365, and Dropbox are increasingly essential tools for productivity.

An intelligent print environment needs to be able to offer seamless integration to these cloud applications and make sure mobile printing is easy to use.

And if an intelligent print environment looks as if it was designed for an increasingly mobile world, well, that's because it was.

The good news for mobile workers is that **40% of businesses** already support mobile print with another 36% planning to implement it in the next 12 months [2].

40%
of businesses
support mobile print

Print

2. Make it easier for your users

Automated workflows

The steps needed to complete document workflows often aren't all that complicated. For instance, in order to process a purchase order someone may need to scan a physical document, upload it to a specific folder and possibly alert someone else when the job is done.

So instead of burdening your users with these often-repetitive steps, you could be using your MFPs to automate these basic tasks in 1-click.

By defining preset workflows that automatically route documents to folders, you can create customizable 'apps' on your MFPs that turn multi-step processes (like invoicing) into a one-step job. So instead of manually scanning, storing and emailing every time a new invoice comes in, employees can just hit the button marked 'Invoice' on their MFP.

You can even tailor specific apps to specific users, processes and departments.

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3. Make it easier for yourself

Your printers should be reliable enough that you aren't constantly managing them. And easy enough to manage so that when you do need to get involved, it doesn't waste your time. Low cost printers might make life easier in the immediate term. But in the long run, their costs and maintenance needs become way more of a burden than IT needs. In order to make life easier for IT, an intelligent print environment should give you the ability to:

Troubleshoot remotely

The Aberdeen Group reckons that every hour of IT downtime costs smaller organizations $8,581. A lot of that downtime is troubleshooting – physically visiting a user to sort out their problem.

So instead of having to sprint across the office every time something breaks down, make sure the MFPs you use are set up with a virtual interface you can access from your desktop. That way if a user says they're having trouble with a certain device, you can troubleshoot from where you are, rather than where the printer is.

Configure new MFPs rapidly

You shouldn't have to manually configure every new MFP with the right user permissions, policy controls and default settings.

In an intelligent print environment, you want to be able to literally 'clone' the configurations of one machine and then just apply it to the new one.

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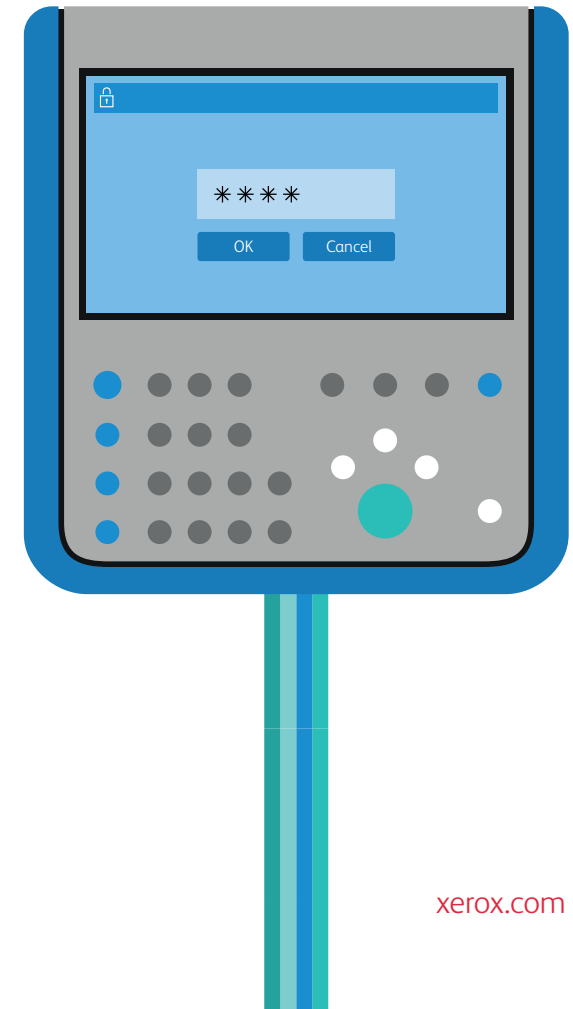
Outsource strategically

There are a number of ways to outsource the management burden of a growing print environment.

- You can simply outsource your print help desk so you aren't fielding user calls all day

- You can automate the process of ordering new supplies by making sure your MFPs notify a third party vendor when they're running low on toner

- You can outsource the optimization and management of your entire print environment to a managed print services provider.

However you choose to approach outsourcing, the goal is to make sure your print environment isn't overwhelming your IT resources.

Security

The printers you use shouldn't be the weak links in your information security protocols. Moreover, enforcing compliance and maintaining the right security policies across all your printers, copiers and scanners needs to be easy to administer and enabled by default.

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Making your print environment more intelligent

An intelligent print environment makes the most of your budget and takes less effort to manage and use. Implementing the best practices and tips we've outlined so far is a great way to start.

But the more your company grows, the more document processes and print devices you'll need to manage in order to accommodate new people.

In which case, going it alone can only take you so far.

Managed Print Services (MPS) is a great way to make sure your print environment is as efficient, easy-to-use and secure as it can be, while ensuring you don't have to assess, optimize or manage everything yourself. With the right provider to help you, MPS can:

- Reduce the costs of your print environment by as much as 30%

- Adapt your infrastructure to meet the changing needs of your company as it grows

- Maintain the efficiency and security of your print environment the business needs without overwhelming IT

- Mitigate against the various risks and threats to document security across your environment

- Give you the tools and advice you need to boost employee productivity across the board, identifying opportunities to automate and streamline workflows

So if you're serious about streamlining the flow of information across your organization to improve your people's productivity, take a serious look at how Managed Print Services might help you.

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Getting document management right

For growing companies to make smarter choices, it's crucial their employees have easy, reliable and efficient ways to access the information they need.

So when you improve the way documents are managed in your company – and therefore improve the flow of information – you stand to make your company work in smarter ways.

And considering the number of processes that rely on documents, the amount of revenue spent managing documents and the amount of time people spend working with documents, you stand to have a massive impact on your organization,

Aim for the three aspects of an intelligent print environment – the ROI of your print investment, the productivity of your users and your ability to manage it – and you'll be setting the entire company up with a foundation of solid processes that improve the flow of work.

It's a great way to make a strategic impact that ensures work can work better.

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Sources

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[2] Poor document processes lead to significant business risk, IDC

[3] Xerox RealBusiness Magazine – Gartner ITxpo Issue, 2012.

[4] Bridging the Information Worker Productivity Gap: New Challenges and Opportunities for IT," IDC, 2012

[5] Aberdeen Group, August 2013