

## IT Directors more important to business strategy than ever before

**Report finds that IT directors and CIOs are playing an ever-greater role in the strategic direction of UK businesses**

- **86% of business leaders recognise IT as a strategic priority**
- **88% see IT as an important enabler of change**
- **IT Directors and CIOs are dealing with an increasingly complex IT and communications estate**
- **Some struggling to keep pace with change: key concerns are staying up to date, security and BYOD.**

While the traditional image of IT departments was one of a cost sink-hole, living a separate existence to the rest of the company, they are now more important than ever to the strategic direction of UK businesses. That's according to a new report launched by Vodafone UK today, entitled 'The New IT Crowd'. Part of Vodafone's Perspective series, which aims to provide in-depth insights into the UK workplace, the report explores the ever increasing importance of senior IT professionals in today's workplace.

The research, which surveyed 300 IT directors and 300 non-IT business leaders, found that IT is now recognised as a strategic priority (86%) at board level, with the IT team now expected to think about the 'bigger picture' (88%). This comes at a time when the IT department is also expected to manage an increasingly complex technology and communications estate, becoming a key driver in business performance.

The rapid pace of technological change is one of the main reasons for the shift in fortunes of the IT department. IT is now seen as a key part of organisational innovation and transformation, rather than just being viewed as a tool for reducing costs and remaining competitive. Nearly nine out of 10 respondents stated that IT is now an important enabler of change and three quarters said that it has changed the nature of the competition they face.

Jonathan Kini, Enterprise Commercial Marketing Director, Vodafone UK, comments: *"Far from being the problem child of old, IT departments are now absolutely critical to the growth and strategic direction of businesses in the UK."*

However, despite their newfound importance, many IT Directors and CIOs are failing to live up to these expectations in the eyes of the rest of the business. Over one third of non-IT directors think that their IT counterparts need to hone their communication skills (39%) and communicate effectively with other functions (35%).

Some heads of IT are also struggling to keep pace with this rapid change of responsibility, with two-thirds worrying about remaining up to date with their knowledge of technology (63%). With a new generation of digital natives bringing their own devices into the workplace (BYOD), security remains a live issue for many, with 59% reporting that they are worried about increased and more complicated security risks.

*"The research points to a new generation of IT professionals who are a powerful, multi-faceted breed, thinking ahead, thinking bigger. For some, this will be second nature, for others it will take some time to get there,"* says Jonathan Kini. *"Collaborating across functions and with other*

*organisations – whether it is suppliers or customers – sharing knowledge and keeping on top of both business and IT developments will help develop this new mindset.”*

The report is available for download here: <http://www.yourbetterbusiness.co.uk/perspective-series-the-new-it-crowd/>

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## **About *The Perspective series***

The Perspective series is designed to help businesses and public sector organisations find better ways of working. Researched independently, the series explores the biggest challenges facing business today and provides new perspectives from independent thought leaders ([www.vodafone.co.uk/perspective](http://www.vodafone.co.uk/perspective))

## **Methodology**

The survey results in this report are based on two sets of online interviews with 300 business decision makers and 300 senior IT professionals, representative of the UK population. Interviews were designed, conducted and analysed by Circle Research in August 2013.

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## **Notes to editors:**

### **Five tips for the ‘New IT Crowd’**

Based on the findings, Vodafone has put together the following five tips for heads of IT in British businesses:

#### **1. *Stay connected***

Just being a technology expert is no longer sufficient. To be truly effective, you need to get under the skin of how your business works and think about where IT can improve it. You can help your organisation create a competitive edge by collaborating across different functions, listening closely to suppliers and customers, and monitoring the competition to look for gaps in the market that the business (and IT) can address.

#### **2. *Earn your keep***

The high cost and complexity of IT makes it even more important for the new IT crowd to be commercially savvy. The new IT professional runs their P&L like their own business. They manage suppliers and costs astutely, analyse business results to increase performance and are always looking to improve. They are also innovators and early adopters, seeking out new tools and ways to collaborate with others.

#### **3. *Look at new ways to simplify complexity***

In a world where technology is constantly changing and evolving, the head of IT needs to bring calm and clarity. New IT products and services are being launched all the time. Can you keep up? What is right for your business? Simplifying complexity is what will really benefit your business and add value. Outsourcing and sharing services are great ways of creating unprecedented new ways of working, collaborating, sharing and innovating.

#### **4. *Ensure data security is on the wider agenda***

Employees increasingly want flexibility and choice in how, where and when they work to achieve a better work-life balance. The increasing demand to Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) in the workplace certainly has clear benefits for the user and the organisation. However, the associated issues of device and data security have become a concern for many organisations. Take control of your IT infrastructure and work with end-users and management to create strategies, policies and preferred applications to minimise risk.

#### **5. *“It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change.” (Charles Darwin)***

Making the transition from a technical role to an increasingly managerial and strategic one is not easy. ‘Future-proofed’ IT professionals need to have a new set of skills not traditionally associated with IT. They need to be expert communicators, personable networkers, team players and inspiring visionaries. Acquiring a whole new set of skills can be overwhelming and ineffective, so focus on learning one new skill at a time.

#### **For further information:**

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