
Freedom without Anarchy

Empowering your users while keeping control

Dale Vile, Freeform Dynamics Ltd, February 2013

It is often said that an organisation's greatest asset is its people. Many also believe that empowering employees through the delegation of authority and trust is an important enabler of innovation and productivity. But is there any evidence that a culture of empowerment actually does lead to better performance? And if so, given the level of dependence of the modern business on technology and information, what are the key enablers of empowerment from an IT and communications perspective? Should we just let users do their own thing?

Key Points

The empowerment that matters is at a business and productivity level

IT vendors and pundits have recently put a great deal of emphasis on BYOD and other ways of allowing users to make their own technology decisions. Real empowerment, however, comes from developing the right culture and mindset, and deploying solutions in a properly supported manner that allows business decisions to be made and acted upon effectively and efficiently.

In terms of IT, the empowerment discussion goes well beyond devices

Access technologies such as desktop and mobile devices have a role to play, but it's the underlying applications and services that make key functionality and information available that really matter. As mobile fads and fashions come and go, organisations need a solid layer of foundation capability. Whether this is delivered from the datacentre or the cloud, the purpose is to serve up information and functionality in a safe, flexible and (wherever possible) a device agnostic manner.

The most effective organisations emphasise a number of key enablers

Organisations with a strong culture of empowerment get more from their people and generally have a happier and more content workforce. They are also more likely to have put the following in place:

- Comprehensive and flexible core business systems
- A versatile set of personal productivity tools
- A culture in which 'citizen development' can thrive
- Good collaboration and social media facilities
- Broader deployment of smartphones and tablets
- Self-service application provisioning mechanisms

Beyond enabling solutions, it is critical to understand and manage the challenges and risks

While the upside of user empowerment is clear, a number of challenges and risks are very obvious too. These range from security and compliance related issues, through the danger of creating increased cost and overhead, to the potential for distraction and time-wasting that actually undermines rather than enhances workforce productivity. Appreciating that different users have different levels of skill and experience, as well as different needs, is critical to coming up with an appropriate blend of capability and safeguards to achieve success in your environment.

The study upon which this report is based was designed, interpreted and reported by Freeform Dynamics, with data gathered from 544 respondents via an online survey hosted on The Register news site. The study was sponsored by Dell.



Introduction

Rapid developments in mobile technology, cloud computing and social media have had a big impact on our personal lives over recent years. With a few clicks, taps or swipes we can now access and share content, and network with others, wherever we happen to be and whatever the time of day. Whether it's smart phones, tablets or ever lighter and more powerful notebook PCs, today's always-on mix of consumer technology and services has been very liberating.

Not surprisingly, the same developments have started to change our expectations of technology in a work environment, and the same desire for freedom and flexibility is becoming increasingly obvious in many workforces. The topic of user empowerment in a business context has therefore been put firmly in the spotlight, which has in turn led to all of the associated discussions around BYOD and other aspects of 'IT consumerisation'.

Along the way, however, conversations have arguably become a bit too dominated by the 'client' side of the equation. This is not surprising given the wide range of highly desirable equipment now available, but genuine empowerment is about much more than making sure users have the right devices. Regardless of the equipment used and who owns and manages it, devices are ultimately just a means of getting to the applications and information relevant to the user.

The discussion that really matters when it comes to user empowerment is therefore about how well underlying applications and services allow employees to work in an effective, efficient and flexible manner. This includes making sure they can get to the information they need when they need it in an appropriate form, can communicate and collaborate effectively with others as necessary, and can ultimately put the business decisions they make into practice operationally.

We explore the practicalities of this notion in the remainder of this report based on the results of a recent online research study. During this, input was gathered from 544 respondents, mostly IT professionals and more advanced end users (see Appendix A for more details).

What do we mean by 'user empowerment'?

The challenge with discussions about employee empowerment ('user empowerment' from an IT perspective) is that notions of pandering or anarchy often overshadow the more objective consideration of business value. This comment from one of our survey respondents sums up a frequently heard view:

"Why should the opinion of someone with an iPad, and a spoilt brat mentality, carry more weight than that of an expert? You wouldn't insist on rewiring your house with Apple branded string and rant at the electrician when he refused."

There is also a suspicion in some sections of the IT professional community that 'empowerment' is just another marketing weasel word:

"What kind of person witters on about user empowerment? Is it the same kind of person who uses the word 'leverage' as a verb?"

Such sentiments are understandable given the idealistic and simplistic arguments we often hear from advocates in relation to topics like BYOD, cloud computing and social media. It's important, however, not to let this stand in the way of considering the practical means by which employees may be enabled to contribute to the business in new and different ways, which is, after all, the essence of user empowerment.

This aspect of workforce optimisation is particularly pertinent against the backdrop of an unpredictable trading environment that rewards innovation and responsiveness, while punishing inefficiency, complacency and inflexibility. As the following comments highlight, unlocking the creativity and productivity of your people can be the difference between staying competitive or not in a dynamic and challenging market:

"Organizations that don't support new paradigms for getting work done are doomed to wallow in the lower tiers of their industry. If your competitors get 2-

4% more productivity from the only source of wealth -- the employee -- you might as well cash out now”.

“Empowerment is crucial to building a forward looking workforce who will improve current services and create new ones.”

“Treat people like grown-ups, give them the opportunity and tools to excel, and it pays dividends to all involved.”

If we are going to have a meaningful discussion against this background of differing opinions, it is important to be clear about what we mean by user empowerment. The trick here is to anchor the discussion at a business and productivity level. This might sound like an obvious thing to say, but it's the difference between the following two objectives, which often get confused:

- Empowering employees to make their own technology-related decisions independently of IT
- Empowering employees to make good business decisions and act upon them effectively

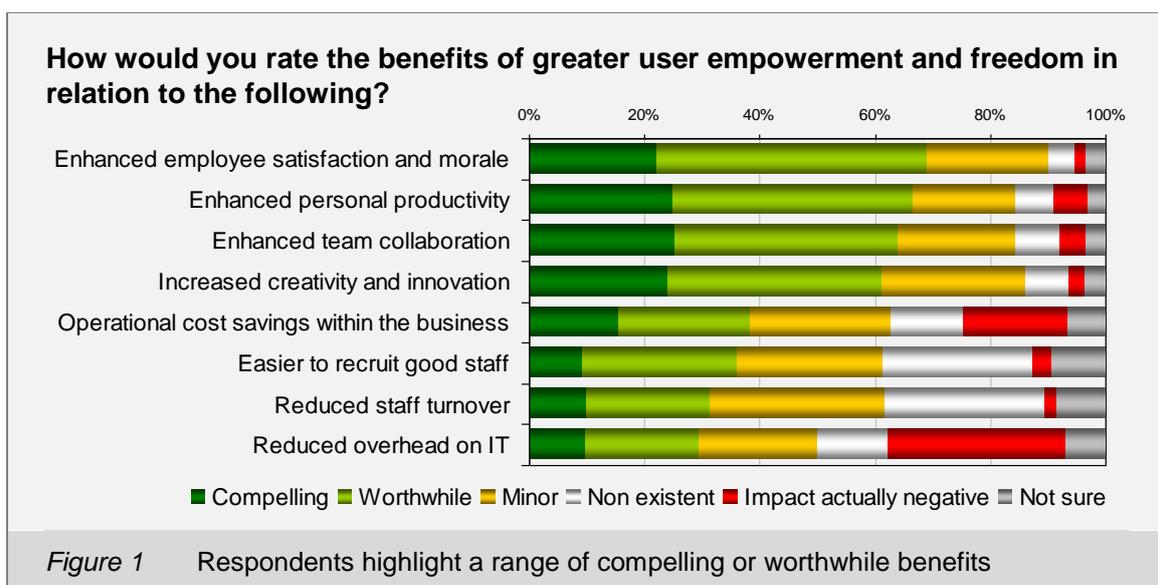
It's the second of these that we are primarily concerned with in this report. The first may have a role to play in this (subject to appropriate controls), but only by exception. Wherever possible, we want to be empowering users through fully supported applications and services that are comprehensive and flexible enough to deal with new or unusual requirements as they arise. Where this isn't possible, then it's a case of having mechanisms in place so users can plug capability gaps safely and efficiently, without running into issues that often arise if they wander completely 'off piste'.

In practical terms, this means considering basics such as how well your core business systems and reporting mechanisms support users in different roles and offer them the necessary level of flexibility. Beyond this we have self-service application provisioning and so called 'citizen development' facilities, which allow users to create their own solutions in a safe and secure 'sandbox' style environment. Appropriate information management and collaboration capability is also key, from document sharing in a project or team context, to full blown enterprise social media.

We'll be looking at these enablers in more detail a little later. Suffice it to say, for now, it all boils down to providing users with a greater level of empowerment and freedom from an IT perspective, but with the appropriate boundaries and safety nets in place. Pitch it right, and the indications are that the benefits are real. Let's take a look at some of the evidence for this.

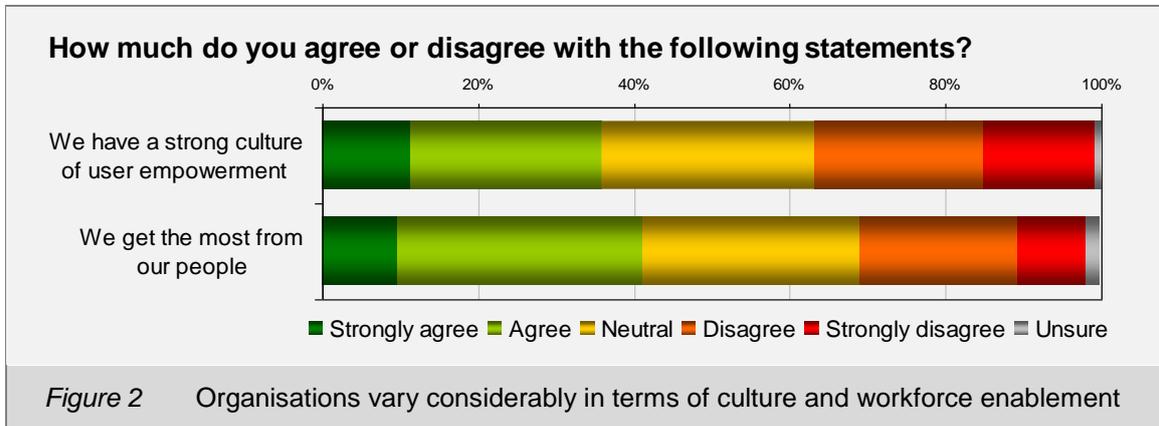
Benefits of increased user empowerment and freedom

When asked to provide a high level view of the impact of greater empowerment, respondents in our study highlighted compelling or worthwhile benefits across a range of different areas (Figure 1).

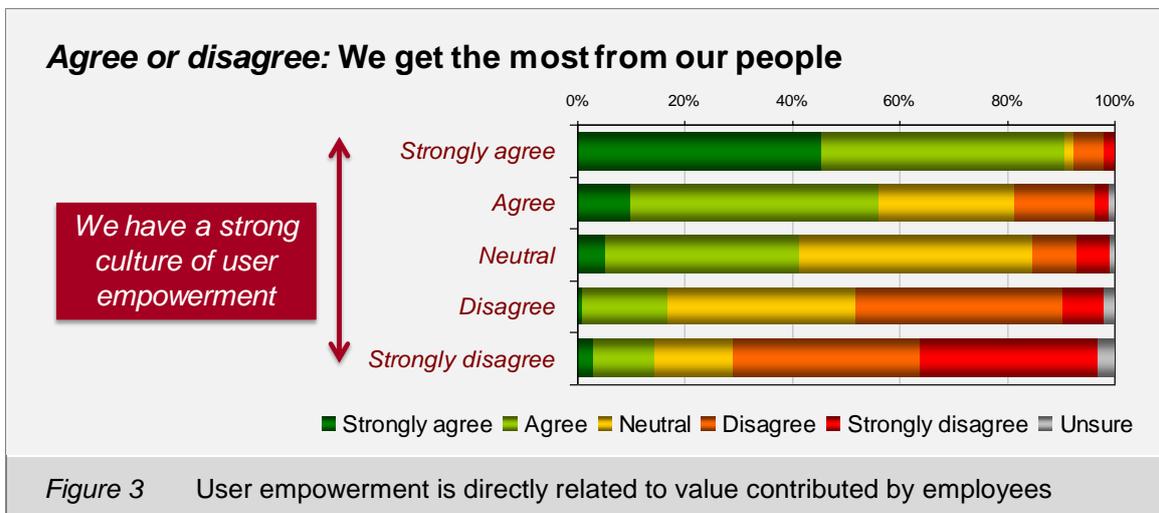


Of course high level perceptions like these expressed in a survey may or may not be that reliable depending on the experience of the respondent. First impressions and guesswork get mixed in with more informed feedback. When analysing research, we therefore generally like to corroborate direct responses such as these. Looking for relevant correlations elsewhere in the data is a good way of doing this.

The following two 'agree or disagree' style questions provide a good starting point for corroborating the business value of greater user empowerment (Figure 2).



While it's interesting to note the high degree of cultural variation and the broad range of responses on the question of whether the organisation gets the most from its people, the more interesting insight comes from plotting the two sets of responses against each other (Figure 3).

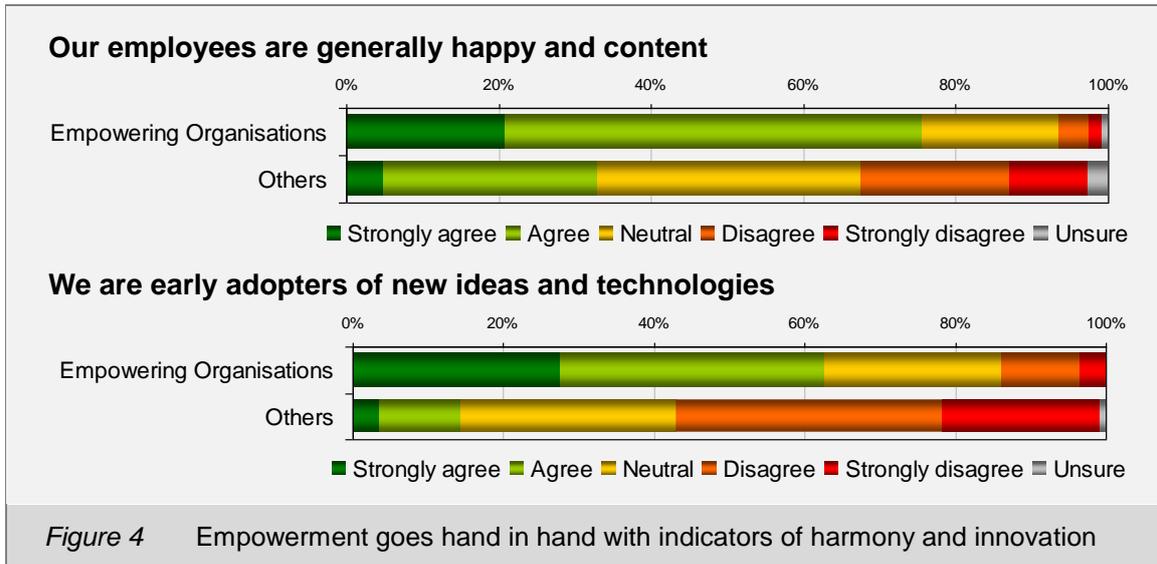


Even within the limitations of online surveys, this striking correlation is difficult to argue with. It provides us with a good degree of confidence in the principle of user empowerment being an effective way of unlocking the potential that exists within your workforce.

The notion of 'Empowering Organisations'

Based on the data we have been looking at, it is possible to identify a subset of respondents to our survey which we will call 'empowering organisations'. These are the ones whose representatives give a rating of 4 or 5 out of 5 on the 'culture of empowerment' scale. Isolating this group allows us to identify what *empowering organisations* have in common, and how they differ from others in terms of their attitudes, activity and behaviour.

The *empowering organisations* group, for example, tend to be much more likely to have a happy and content workforce, and to be early adopters of new ideas and technology – the stuff of innovation (Figure 4).



So much for the high level view; let's drill into some of the practical specifics we mentioned earlier.

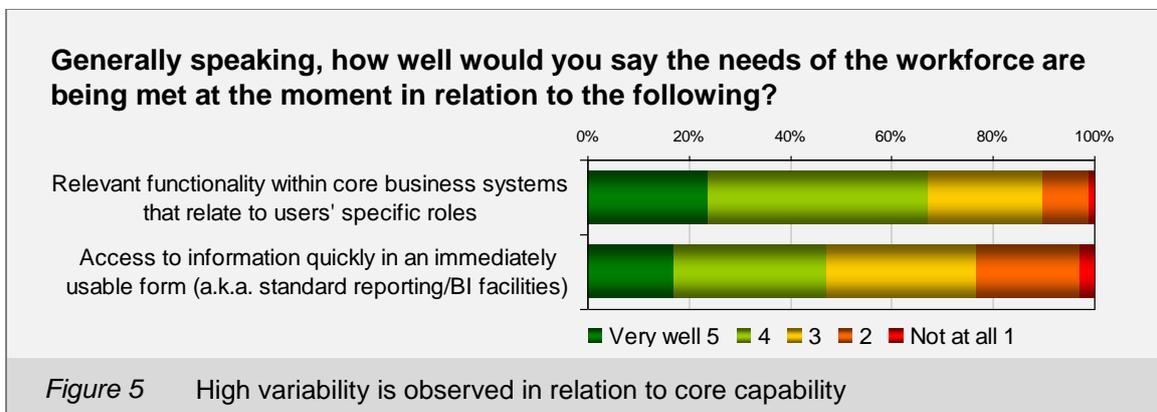
Getting the basics right

Most modern businesses are dependent to one degree or another on technology and information to operate effectively. For all but the smallest of organisations, we would therefore expect to find a set of core applications in place, or equivalent services if cloud computing is used as a delivery model.

These core systems are typically based on applications such as sales, marketing, service management, accounting, procurement, HR, full-blown ERP or more industry specific solutions. Many of these are accessed by groups of users that often vary considerably in the roles they perform and the situations they encounter as part of their day to day activities.

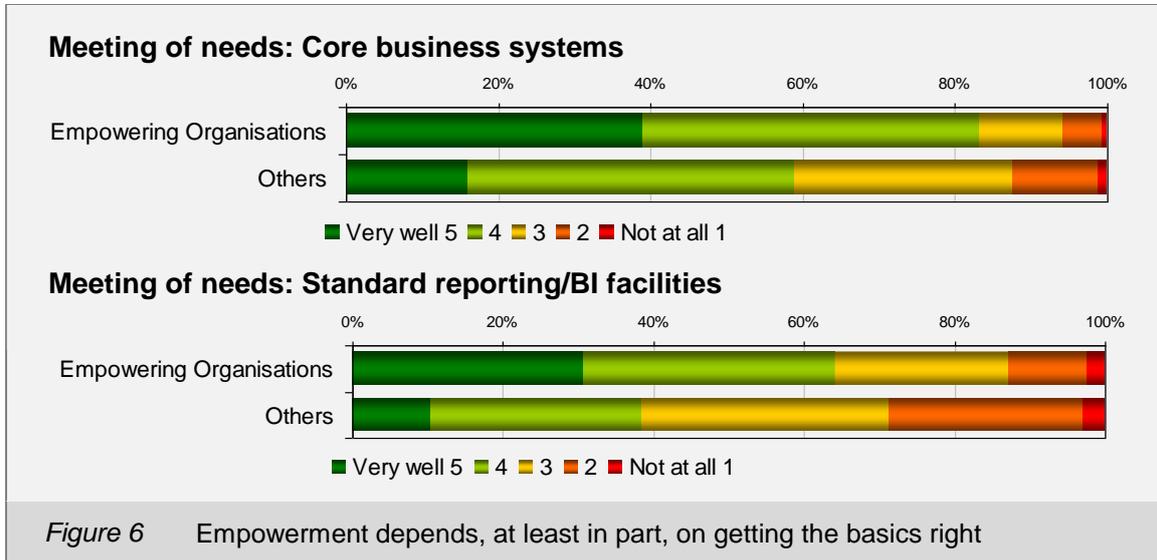
How well these core systems and associated standard reporting/BI facilities meet the full range of needs that exist across the workforce is a big consideration from a productivity perspective. If standard functionality is inadequate or poorly aligned with the employee's needs, then users either end up constrained by the system (which is the opposite of empowerment), or are forced to look for other ways to meet their requirements, neither of which is ideal.

With this in mind, while many organisations have this reasonably well covered, it is notable that a significant number of respondents in our study indicate significant shortcomings (Figure 5).



We have not shown it here, but the data behind this chart tells us that larger organisations are more likely to have problems, which is understandable given the greater level of diversity in terms of specialist roles and activity that often exists.

More directly pertinent to our discussion, however, is the fact that *empowering organisations* are more likely to be meeting needs in a core system and standard BI/reporting context (Figure 6).



But what's this got to do with the theme of our report? After all, the kind of core capability we are looking at here is generally very process/function-centric and/or focused on largely predictable needs, so it is not often included in the empowerment discussion.

Consider, however, the value of being able to instantly look up relevant data for a customer, use this together with a standard sales margin performance report to make a decision on whether to offer a discount in a given situation, then execute a transaction based on that decision.

That's actually pretty empowering for the user concerned, even if it is based on 'standard' functionality. Indeed many a sales or customer service representative struggling with disjointed and patchy core systems can only dream of such capability, and in the meantime are stuck with the line "I'll get back to you on that" in far too many situations.

Having said this, while core system capability is a critical part of user empowerment, other types of solution are important too.

Personal productivity solutions

Many requirements are best met through what we might call 'tools' rather than systems. Office suites (word processing, spreadsheets, presentation building, and so on) fall into this category, as do tools that are required for specific roles. These include things like graphics packages, lightweight project management programs, desktop database or analytics software, and the myriad of other applications that a user might run on their PC, Mac or mobile device.

In addition to desktop and mobile software, in today's browser-centric world, we must also remember that a lot of personal productivity capability is now available in the form of network based applications and services, whether running on servers in your own datacentre, or delivered by a cloud service provider. Broad capability environments such as Microsoft SharePoint fit here, but other examples include everything from office suites, though project management, to analytics and data visualisation solutions.

Not surprisingly, those prioritising user empowerment are more likely to be telling us they are in a stronger position when it comes to this class of solution (Figure 7).



Apart from catering for generic horizontal needs, a comprehensive personal productivity toolkit can potentially help users deal with new and unanticipated requirements and situations through using the facilities available to build their own 'DIY' solutions. This brings us onto our next important aspect of user empowerment.

Citizen development

One of the most controversial debates when it comes to user empowerment (up there with BYOD) is the degree to which users should or shouldn't be permitted to develop their own solutions, as comments such as these illustrate:

"I'm not sure if I'm more amused or more terrified at the idea of users choosing their own hardware solutions and performing 'DIY Development', but I certainly don't see it ending well."

"In large corporates with multiple security and systems domains, DIY and BYOD are a nightmare to manage."

"Whilst my users are generally very smart (we make cancer treatment drugs), giving them access to design their own solutions or provide their own equipment would be a disaster, in my opinion."

"Disaster is only a click away."

Such comments reflect a frequently held view among IT professionals, not least because they are often the ones who need to pick up the pieces when things go wrong. But it's not just about the level of hassle and overhead from an IT perspective. When users don't know what they don't know, and discipline that IT departments take for granted is not applied (e.g. peer review, testing and security management), it's easy for people to make mistakes without even realising it. Whether it's a miscalculation that goes unnoticed in a spreadsheet or report, or erroneous data being written to a database that will cause problems down the line, development carried out by enthusiastic users with a 'dangerous level' of technical knowledge can represent a real business risk.

Nevertheless, so called 'citizen development' is a fact of life in many businesses as users work around gaps and limitations in core systems, e.g. by using the aforementioned office and other personal productivity tools to manipulate data, as in these examples provided by study respondents:

"I use Excel to combine and analyse data sets."

"I often build local databases and spreadsheets to support specific projects."

"Spreadsheets and databases created and used because of either a lack of functionality or training on the company provided services."

The reference to training in this last example is interesting, as it highlights that it's often easier for users to quickly knock up a solution of their own rather than try to figure out how to solve the problem with standard reporting tools and other core system capability.

But it's not just working with extracts from corporate systems offline in spreadsheets and personal databases. Citizen development is often a lot more sophisticated than that. All of the following examples are of end users' own development activity (i.e. none of them are from IT professionals):

"Developed an internal process to allow frontline engineers to give feedback on their interactions with backline engineers. Using available reporting, excel macros, SharePoint customisation."

"Wrote my own address-cleaning and parsing software, as well as a geocoding system. Employer's geocoding system gets a hit rate of 80%, mine up to 98%"

"I work in a small team covering a specialised area, I've written bespoke neural network software, and other forecasting software."

"I use VB/SQL to do my own projections as company software is too poor to do the job the way I want it done."

"Built a database in MS Access, which is now used to run a large part of the works."

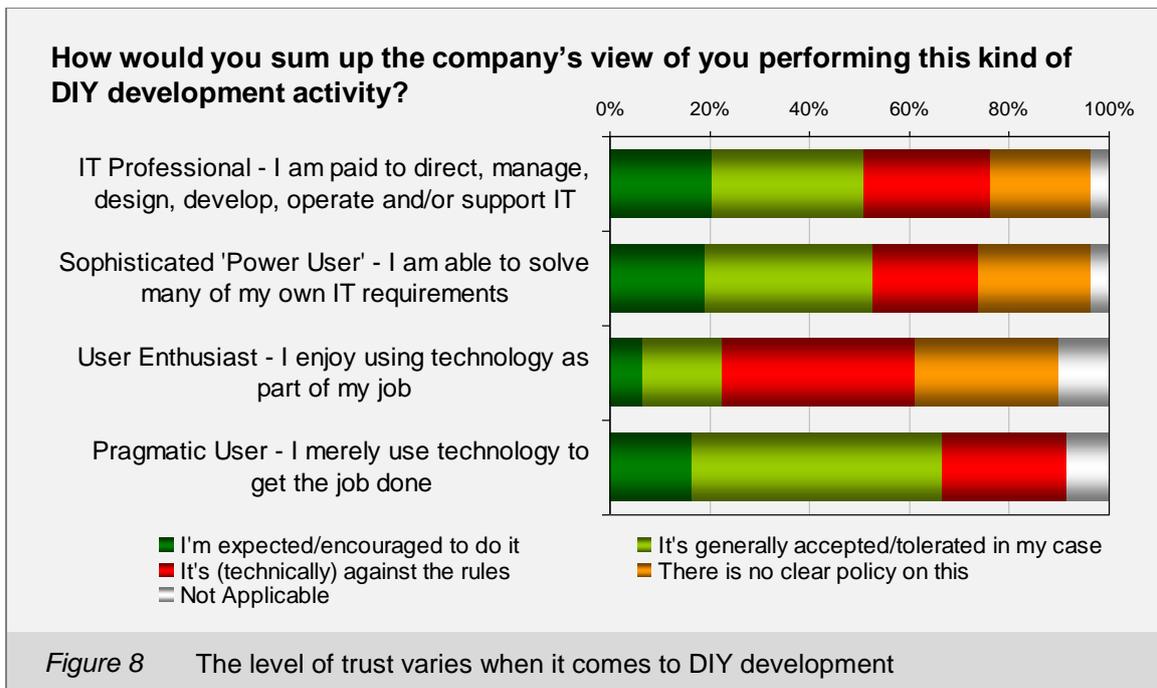
"Database for tracking equipment and products...etc"

"Develop my own [education] course websites."

"I can code with the best of them."

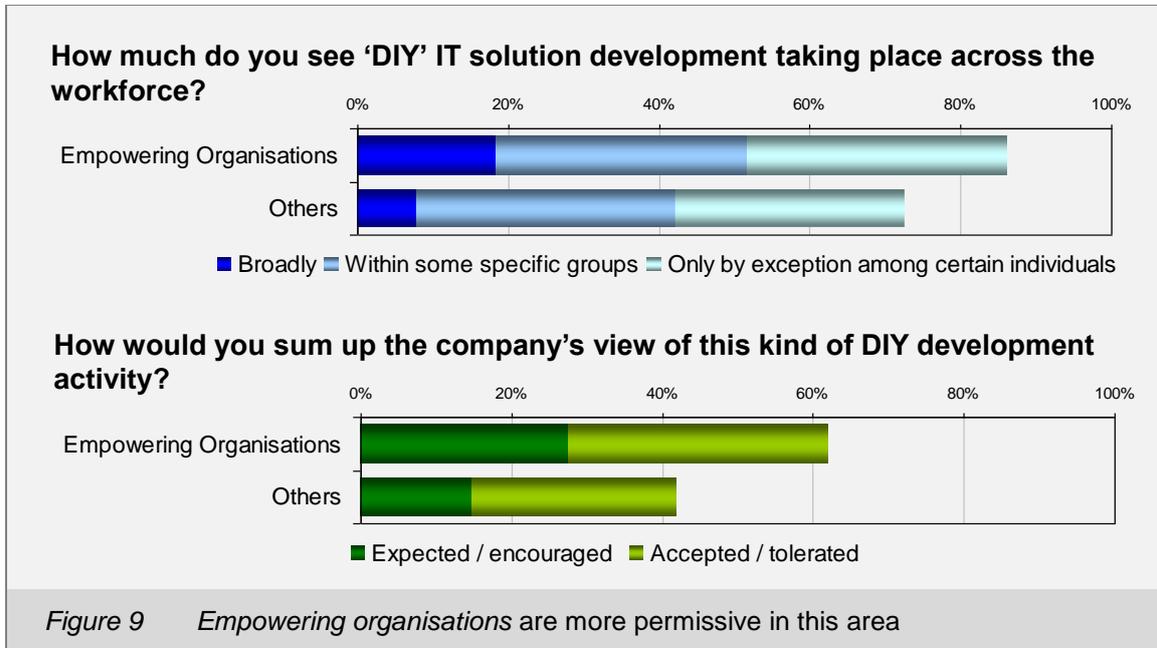
As this last comment would suggest, IT professionals don't have a monopoly on IT skills. Many engineers, scientists and other professionals working in more technical disciplines may even have received some basic training in programming and systems design as part of their education or as they progressed their careers in industry. There are then financial professionals who have been instructed in VB script on advanced Excel courses, and/or have accumulated years of experience developing sophisticated macros to help with budgeting, forecasting, and general financial analysis. Such employees, along with business analysts, statisticians, data scientists and the like, are often legitimate 'power users' that are both knowledgeable and responsible.

The problem, however, is knowing who is genuinely capable within the user base and who isn't. With this in mind, it is telling that when asked how their employer feels about their DIY development activities, one particular group stands out as having noticeably less encouragement and approval than others (Figure 8).



While many are comfortable with IT professionals and power users doing development work on the side, and even pragmatic users who might do some simple offline data manipulation out of necessity, it's the enthusiastic amateurs that present the biggest potential problem. And this is significant because the 'user enthusiast' group is probably one of the fastest growing in many workforces as more and more people dabble in the context of personal and home technology.

Zooming out from the activity of respondents as individuals to the picture across the workforce as a whole, it's clear that most organisations represented in our survey are seeing at least some citizen development taking place among their employees (Figure 9).



We can also see from this chart that the level of activity and endorsement of citizen development is greater in our group of *empowering organisations*, suggesting that the potential for creating incremental value exists if the costs and risks can be managed effectively.

In the meantime, let's move on to consider our next big area of empowerment capability.

Communication and collaboration

One of the most effective ways of boosting performance and productivity is to get people working together effectively. This of course applies in the context of routine business tasks, but the impact is even higher when it comes to creative activities, whether it's innovation in a product or service context, for example, or a group of people working through how best to deal with an unanticipated operational or customer-related issue. When faced with an unfamiliar opportunity or challenge, two heads are better than one, and often several heads are better than two.

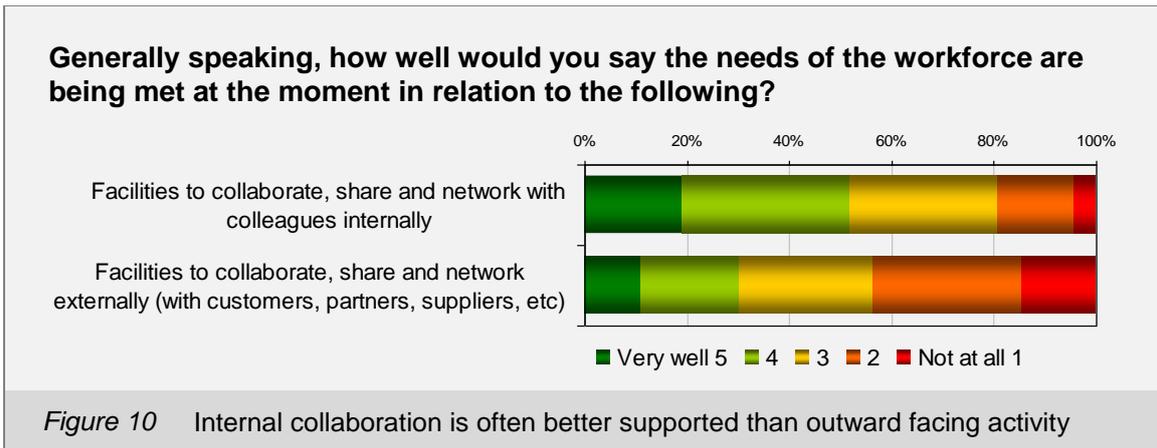
In many cases there is a need for such collaboration to take place in real time, and while it's great to get people around a table in the same room, this isn't always possible. With the level of distribution and mobility we often find in today's workforces, facilities to communicate and collaborate with colleagues remotely are becoming increasingly more important. As part of this, particularly in larger organisations, there is an associated need for mechanisms that allow you to track down the person or people that can help with a particular requirement as a precursor to actually collaborating. It might be, for example, that you need to identify a colleague with the right skill set or experience of the matter you require assistance on – or simply someone who is available, right now!

But collaboration isn't always real-time in nature. The right kind of content sharing and access mechanisms permit knowledge and intelligence exchange on a more continuous basis, within specific teams or workgroups, but also across the organisation as a whole.

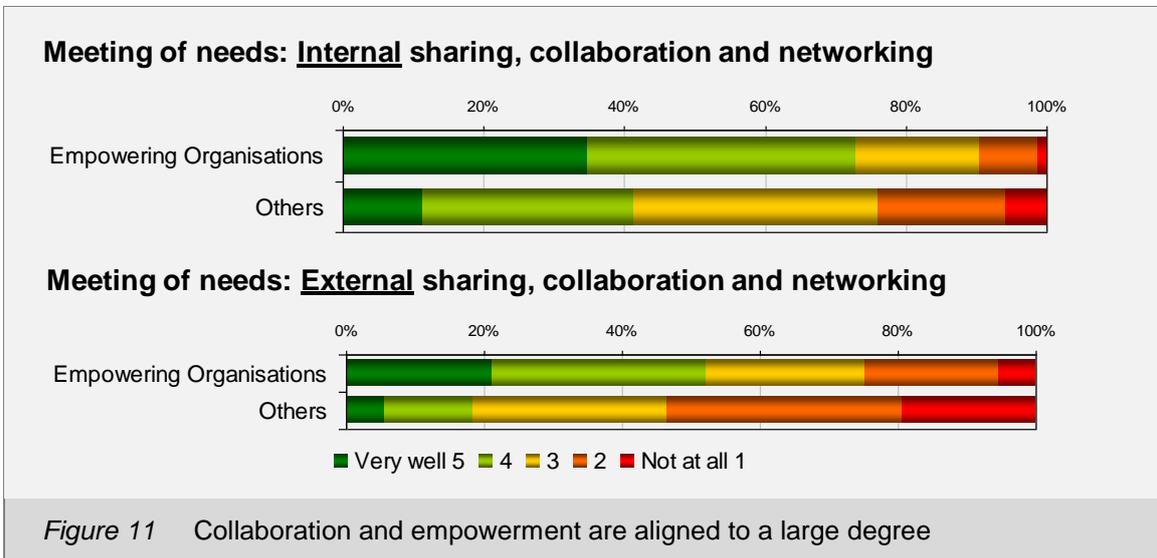
Providing systems that grease the wheels of collaboration can be extremely empowering. You can often get things done a lot more quickly if you can tap into someone else's knowledge, insights or skills.

And as the internet has removed many of the traditional barriers between organisations, these principles of communication and collaboration apply equally in an external context, e.g. in relation to customers, partners and suppliers. Communication, openness and sharing, within the constraints of commercial confidentiality, frequently goes hand in hand with more productive and profitable business relationships.

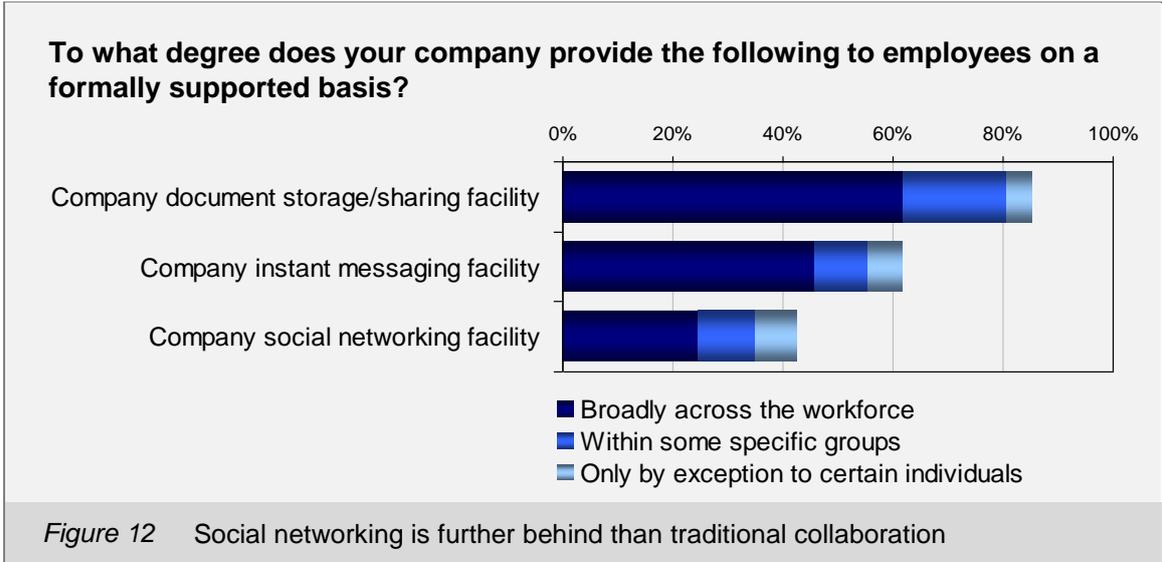
Many organisations, however, are not meeting needs particularly well when it comes to communication and collaboration, with externally facing weaknesses being more common than internal ones (Figure 10).



As we might expect, given some of the previous data we have been looking at, *empowering organisations* again exhibit a higher level of capability on average (Figure 11).

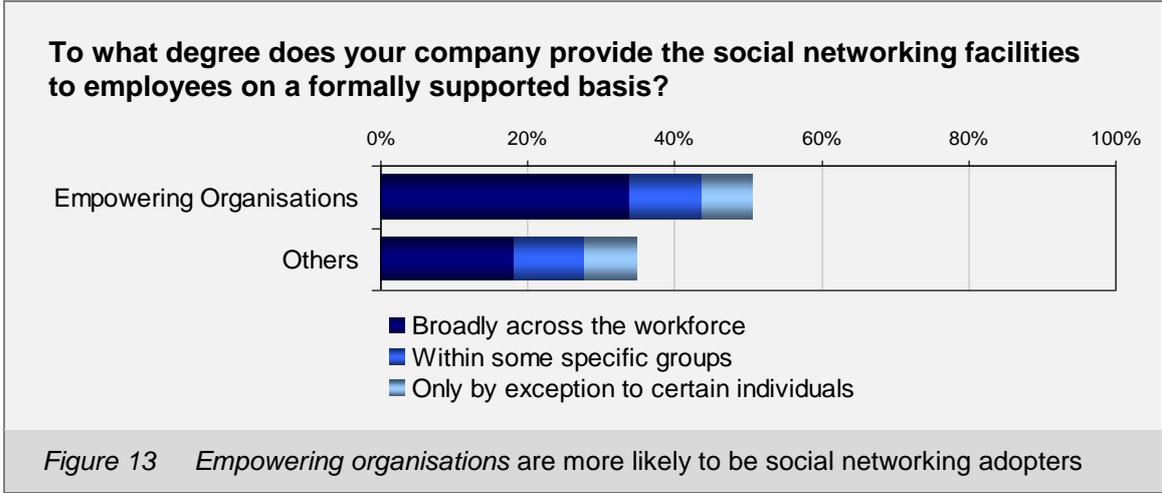


There was a limit to how exhaustive we could be in the context of our study on specific types of solutions in this area, but to pick out some important ones, it's clear that organisations in general are more advanced in rolling out document sharing solutions than instant messaging, for example, with adoption of social networking capability being further behind again (Figure 12).



When looking at adoption data like this, and indeed other results presented in this report, it's important to remember that online surveys tend to attract people with more of an interest in the topic being researched. The upshot is that the percentages on the graph should not be taken as a literal indication of market penetration – the level of use of social media solutions, for example, is undoubtedly exaggerated.

Having said this, it is clear that those with a focus on user empowerment are more likely to be using advanced collaboration capability such as social networking (Figure 13).



Looking at this, it's worth drilling down a little on the specific solutions that we see being used within our survey sample.

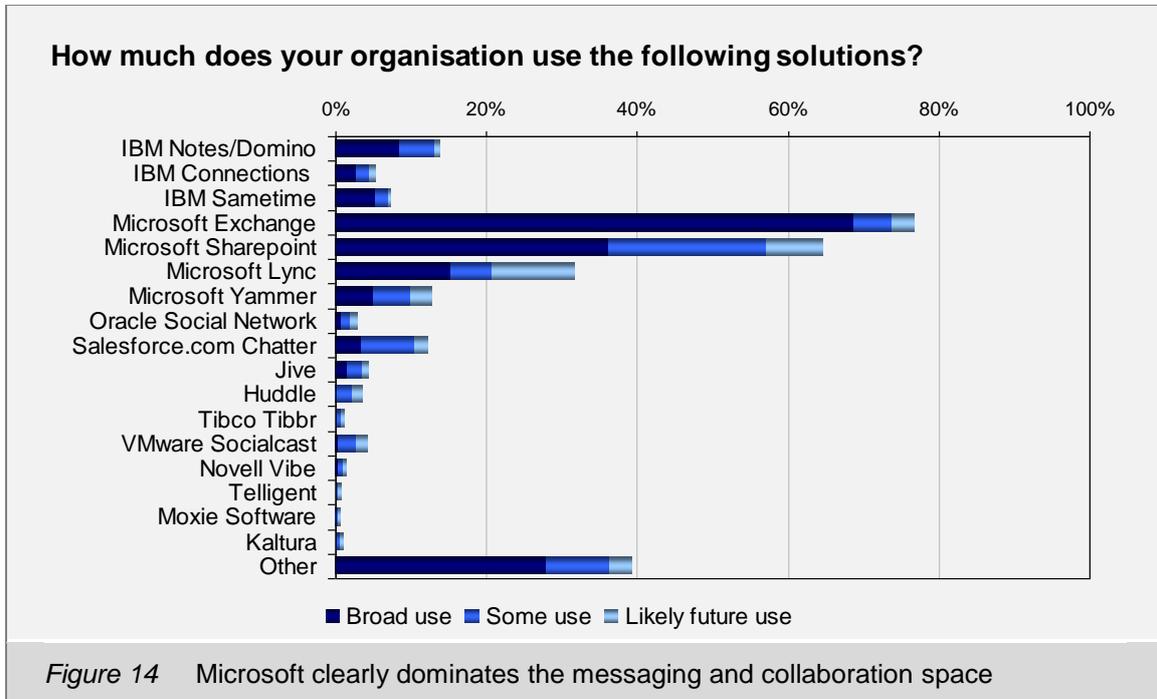
Drill down on social networking solutions

In the context of personal/consumer use, the big players in the social networking space are fairly obvious, with Facebook clearly dominating the landscape at the moment. In a business context, however, things are less clear cut.

Feedback from respondents in our study suggests that about a third of organisations are seeing public social networks used in a work context as a result of unilateral adoption by employees. LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and Google appear at the top of the list here, in that order.

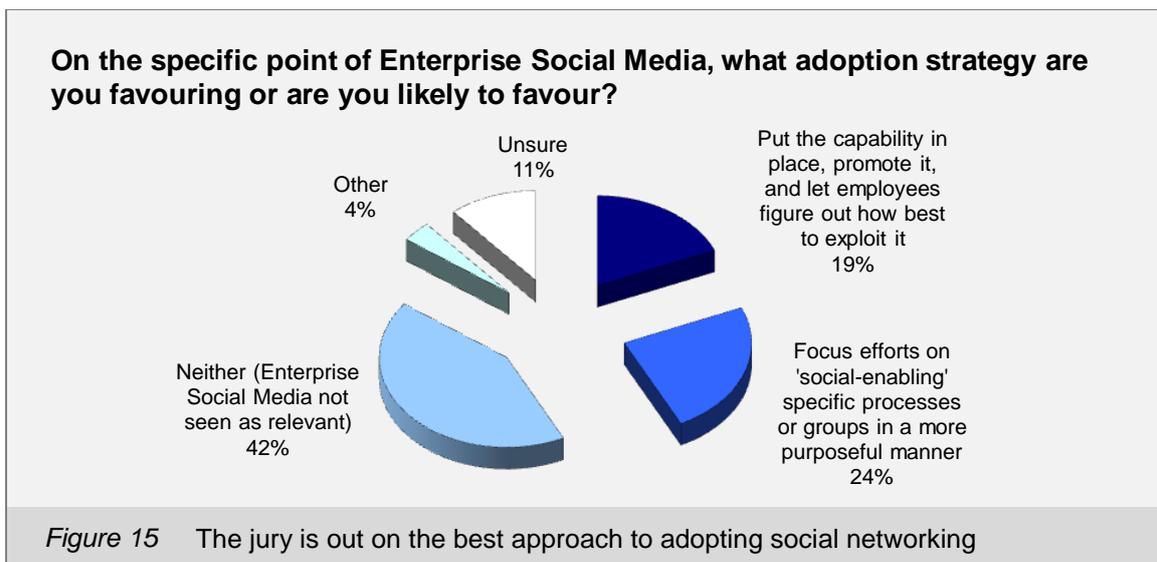
When it comes to a more formal rollout, however, the big question is whether social networking should be considered as a specific class of application, or an extension of the existing communications and collaboration landscape. The picture is further complicated by the inclusion of social networking capability into other products and services. In some cases this can be separated out, as with Salesforce.com's Chatter, but in other cases, such as Microsoft SharePoint, this is not possible as it is essentially implemented as a feature set within a larger scope solution.

Either way, what's clear from this study is that the enterprise social networking landscape is very fragmented at the moment (Figure 14).



You'll see some non-social solutions on this chart for comparison purposes, and solutions that might be regarded as borderline, such as IBM's Sametime and Microsoft's Lync. The most frequently listed solutions in the 'Other' responses were Cisco Webex, Skype and various Google services.

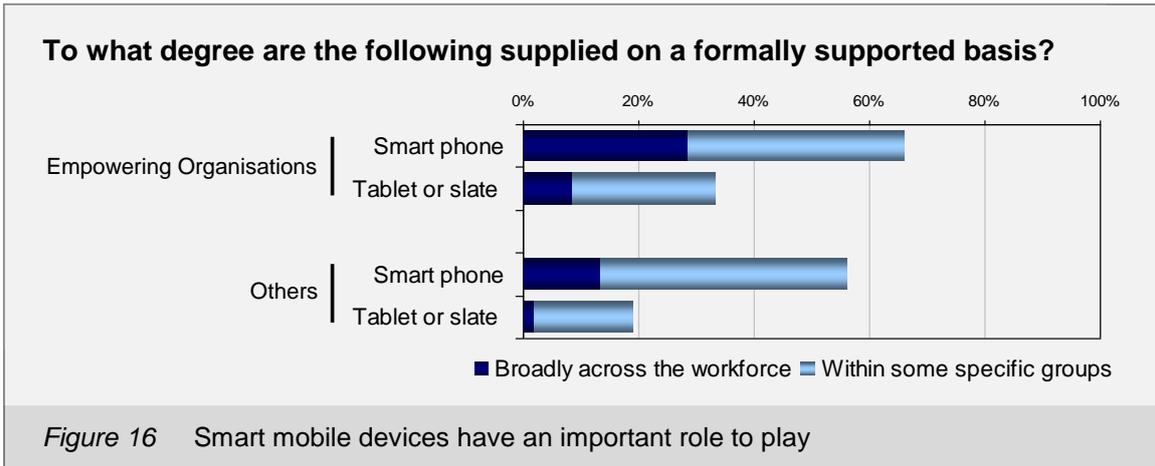
In terms of implementation philosophy, those interested in social networking are equally split between the 'build it and they will come' approach and a more focused rollout (Figure 15).



As solutions with an existing high degree of incumbency, most notably SharePoint, strengthen their social capability, and more specialist offerings mature in terms of enterprise class security, compliance, integration and information management, we would anticipate more organisations getting on board with social networking over time.

Mobile devices

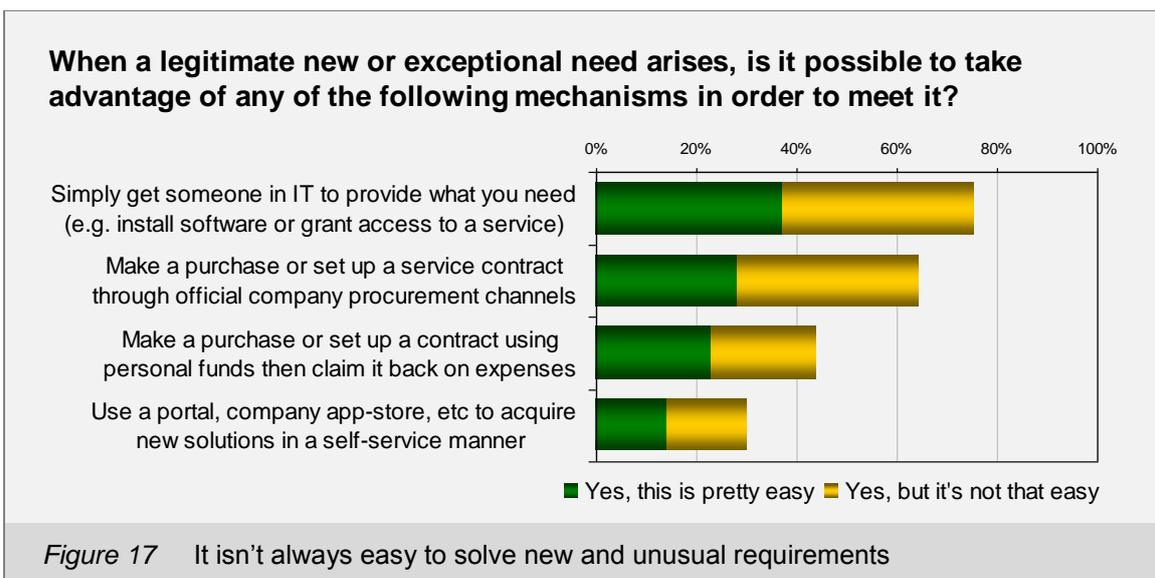
We said at the outset that this report wasn't about devices, and we certainly don't want to dwell on this aspect of user empowerment given the amount of coverage BYOD and mobility is receiving at the moment. However, flexible access is clearly important, and it is no coincidence that *empowering organisations* are more likely to be deploying modern devices such as smartphones and tablets (Figure 16).



For more discussion on this topic, we would encourage you to read the Freeform Dynamics reports entitled "The Consumerisation of IT" and "Mobile Computing Checkpoint", which are both available from www.freeformdynamics.com.

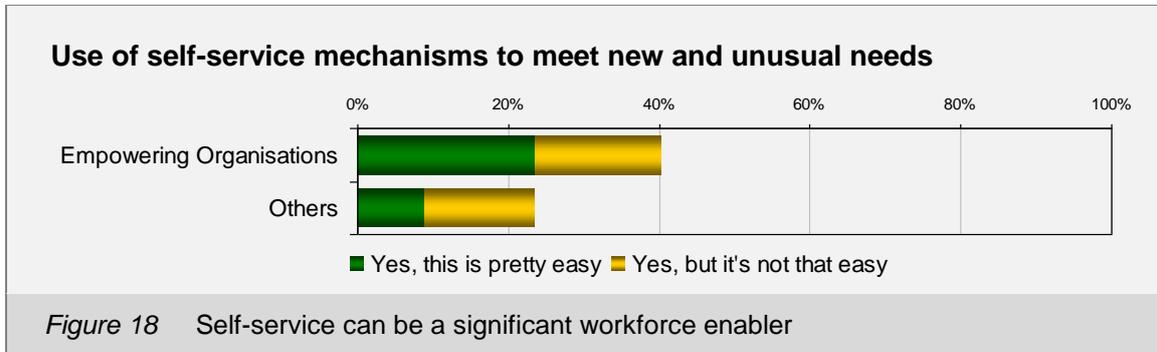
Mind the gap

Most of our discussion so far has been about the actual solutions that empower users. Another form of empowerment stems from the mechanisms in place that allow those solutions to be acquired when gaps are identified or new and unusual requirements arise (Figure 17).



The IT department is understandably the first port of call, but it is notable that so many don't see this as an easy route to take. A big factor here will be the degree to which many IT departments have themselves become constrained from a cost perspective. This is also undoubtedly one of the reasons why procurement and expenses based options are also not an option in many cases.

What all of these options have in common, however, is that effort is involved on the part of someone else (apart from the user) to make something happen. This brings us to the last option of self-service. While this is the least popular mechanism at the moment, more of those with an empowering culture are recognising the value of it (Figure 18).



It is interesting to consider the role of self-service delivery going forwards against the backdrop of the 'app for that' psychology and the expectation that stems from the world of consumer smartphones and tablets. In an enterprise application delivery context, things like cost, sign-off policy, license compliance and so on make it more complex, but the precedent has been set, and benefits in terms of both user convenience and reduced administration overhead are easy to comprehend.

Self-service delivery is potentially relevant for a range of different solution types, including - desktop software, mobile software, cloud services, custom applications and application components, e.g. widgets for use in portal based composite applications or mash-ups. These last two solution types are related to the previous discussion on citizen development, e.g. self-service portals could be a way of publishing and promoting internally built solutions to minimise reinvention of the wheel.

Putting it all into practice

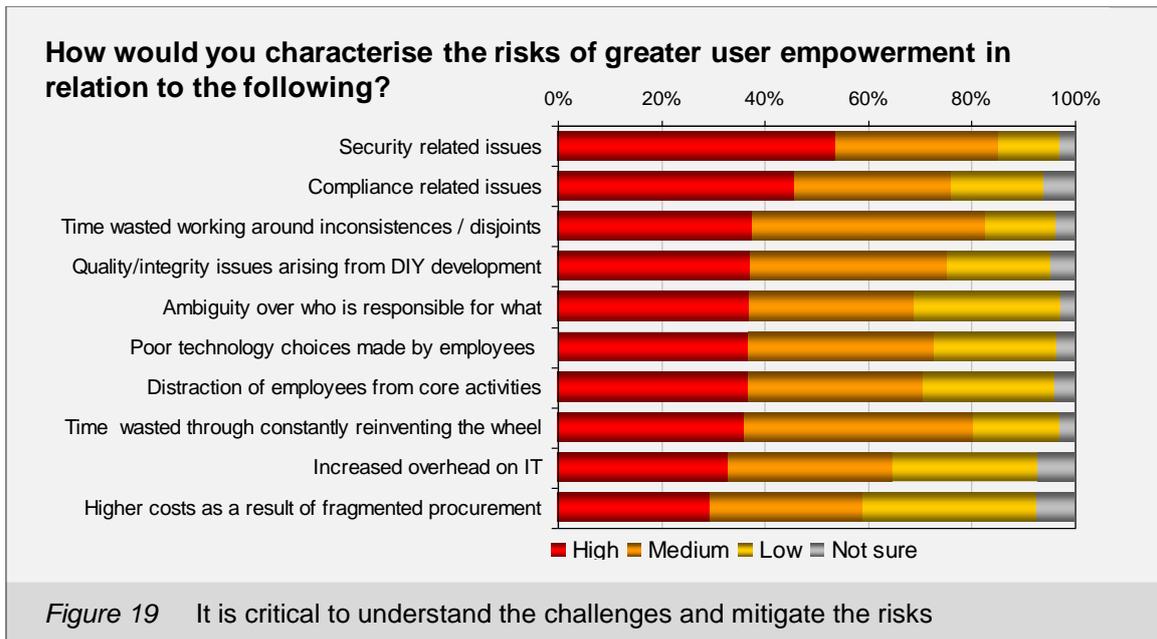
At the beginning of our discussion, we presented the case for greater user empowerment based on feedback from the research, and as we have explored different aspects of this highly important area, we have seen that those with a culture of empowerment are more likely to have:

- Comprehensive and flexible core business systems
- A versatile set of personal productivity tools
- A culture in which 'citizen development' can thrive
- Good collaboration and social media facilities
- Broader deployment of smartphones and tablets
- Self-service application provisioning mechanisms

However, shortfalls and works in progress in relation to these are still evident, even in many of the most advanced organisations. This highlights the fact that user empowerment is a complex area; indeed we have seen some pretty forthright feedback from IT professionals on the dangers and pitfalls.

Any organisation looking to create a more empowering environment therefore needs to be mindful of the potential challenges that exist. These range from risk related areas such as security and

compliance, through increased costs and overheads, to simply an increased level of distraction that actually undermines rather than enhances workforce productivity (Figure 19).



Some of the challenges can be tackled, at least in part, by bringing the right technology to bear on the problem. Effective monitoring and management tools are perhaps the most obvious requirement here with the aim of both creating visibility and implementing the necessary electronic policy frameworks to deal with security and compliance issues.

Building on this, one of the most interesting findings from the research is with regard to citizen development, and the way in which attitudes vary depending on the type of user. IT staff and power users with a good degree of technical knowledge and discipline are more likely to be empowered, or more to the point 'trusted' with DIY development than 'user enthusiasts'.

One of the lessons we can learn from this is that DIY development in many cases is still an inherently technical activity. Even simple automation in Microsoft Office through the recording of macros can quickly lead to the user finding themselves in the world of VB script, where programming expertise is really required. A big question going forward is therefore how to more safely empower non-technical staff who have a need to personalise, customise or extend the systems with which they interact.

It's here that developments in pervasive portal technology such as Microsoft SharePoint, for example, have a potential role to play. A useful technique that may be used is the surfacing of data, services and transactions as components or widgets that can be 'wired together' or 'mashed-up'. The user then has the freedom to compose an application without having to worry about (or have the opportunity to tamper with) the technical layer underneath:

"I have used SharePoint to set up web views into our stock control system."

"The company has just deployed SharePoint to allow 'team space' type local web setups."

In effect, the idea is to provide less skilled users with application functionality in the form of a toolkit, which also has the spin-off benefit of making life easier for the 'real' developers in IT, as they no longer have to think through every possible use case:

"Tools are better than systems, as systems have to be complete and few companies have the resource to execute that well. Tools, however, permit combinations of solutions and pick-n-mix development."

Together with self-service capability and the further empowerment of users through effective collaboration and sharing mechanisms, significant productivity boosts can potentially be achieved across the workforce.

But let's not run away with the notion that it is sensible to attempt to empower all users to the same level in the same ways. The other lesson from our DIY discussion around different types of user is, well, that not all users are the same. Some respondents reinforce this view with comments such as this:

"The entrepreneurial spirit should always be encouraged, aided, and lauded. Just remember that MOST people are not entrepreneurs. MOST people have head-down-and-do-it jobs."

"User empowerment is not a one size fits all thing."

A number of respondents told us how this principle translates into practice in their organisation, with frequent references to cultural and organisational considerations, e.g.

"IMO it's all a matter of organizational culture. We're a company which regulates some basic processes - the ones at the interfaces between groups - but very much likes teams to be self-organizing, and shields team members from annoying corporate interferences by having specialized individuals to deal with these."

While this very progressive yet pragmatic approach might be difficult to implement in a large, traditional and more conservative environment, it does underline that user empowerment is as much about people and politics as it is about technology, indeed more so when you get down to the fundamentals.

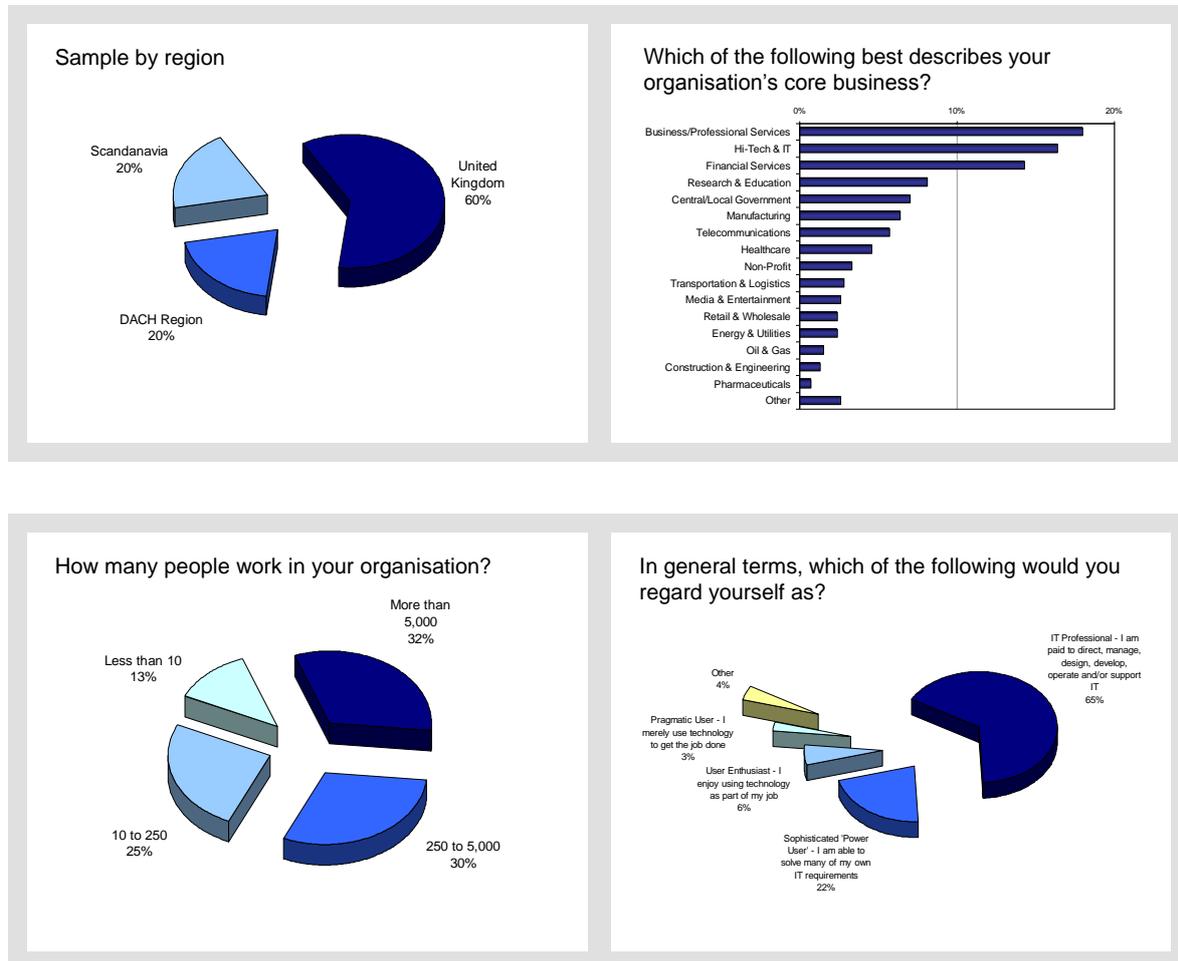
To finish off, we'll leave you with our favourite respondent quote from the study, which happens to sum up the conclusion of our research very nicely:

"The benefits of empowerment are great but so are many of the risks. Before taking this path, each risk must be carefully weighted and safeguards be put in place in order to address them. Overhead/support and security have the potential to be the most costly risks. However, used wisely, these liberties can greatly increase productivity and happiness among employees."

On that note, all that remains is for us to thank everyone who participated in this very revealing study, and wish you all the best for creating an empowering and stimulating environment in your organisation.

Appendix A: Study sample

Feedback was gathered via an online questionnaire published on The Register news and information site (www.theregister.com). In total, 544 respondents participated in the study from the geographies shown below. The respondents were predominantly IT professionals and more advanced end users, and the sample distribution was as follows:



A note on methodology

The web survey approach used in this study is subject to the 'self-selection' principle, which basically means that people with a greater knowledge of or interest in the topic are more likely to have responded.

The upshot is that absolute percentage values arising from the research could be misleading if quoted outside the context of this report. Levels of activity or adoption in relation to smart mobile devices, enterprise social networking and citizen development, for example, will undoubtedly have been inflated by the self-selection skew in the sample.

However, such limitations have been kept in mind while interpreting the data, and in no way undermine the comparative analysis we have performed, or the conclusions drawn, e.g. from looking at the relative levels of different types of activity, and the way in which *empowering organisations* compare to others.

The study was completed in January 2013, and we would like to take this opportunity to thank all of those who took the time to participate. Your help is very much appreciated.

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