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# The future of meetings

Europe whitepaper



**Savanta:**

**BARCO**

# Introduction

**In 2018, we published a whitepaper exploring ‘Five Steps to the Perfect Meeting’. This whitepaper looked at people’s frustrations and how to make better use of time spent in meetings.**

**It’s a real problem which needs solving. According to Gartner, 1.55m meetings take place in the US alone every day, costing \$1.4tn a year, which is 8% of GDP or 15% of the total budget for employees. Of course, some of these meetings are good meetings – however many are not, and the cost of bad meetings is estimated at \$250bn per year.**

The key finding from ‘Five Steps to the Perfect Meeting’? Technology emerged as the critical enabler of the perfect meeting. But in an era of fast-paced technological development with artificial intelligence, augmented reality, virtual reality etc. on the rise, what do people expect from technology in meetings?

Intrigued, we wanted to take this a step further and take a more detailed look at how meetings are changing. Given its importance to the perfect meeting, we wanted to explore people’s attitudes to technology and their expectations for how it will transform meetings. In short, we wanted to uncover ‘The Future of Meetings’.

Working together with independent research experts Savanta, we have created this report, based on a survey of more than 1,500 white-collar professionals across Europe, the US, China, India and the Pacific. The sample included Senior Managers, Heads of Department, Directors and C-Level executives aged between 21 and 65.

The findings tell a clear story. Technology has made meetings better. Technology helps us have shorter meetings. And crucially, technology will continue to revolutionize meetings in the future. We’ve certainly come a long way from the days where the most sophisticated

technology found in a meeting room was a telephone and slide projector! Across the next three chapters, we see how technology has impacted the modern-day meeting, and will continue to do so going forwards:

- 1** Technology is at the heart of great meetings
- 2** Meetings are changing
- 3** New technology will revolutionize meetings

In this whitepaper, we reveal our findings for **Europe**. Region-specific whitepapers for the US, China, India and the Pacific are also available, as well as a Global version. We hope you find this whitepaper stimulating and helpful as you plan the future of meetings in your organization.



**Meetings are not in and of themselves problematic. Meetings are essential to teams and organizations.**

**What we need to rid ourselves of are bad meetings, wasted time in meetings, and unnecessary meetings.**

Dr. Steven G Rogelberg,  
Author of 'The Surprising  
Science of Meetings's

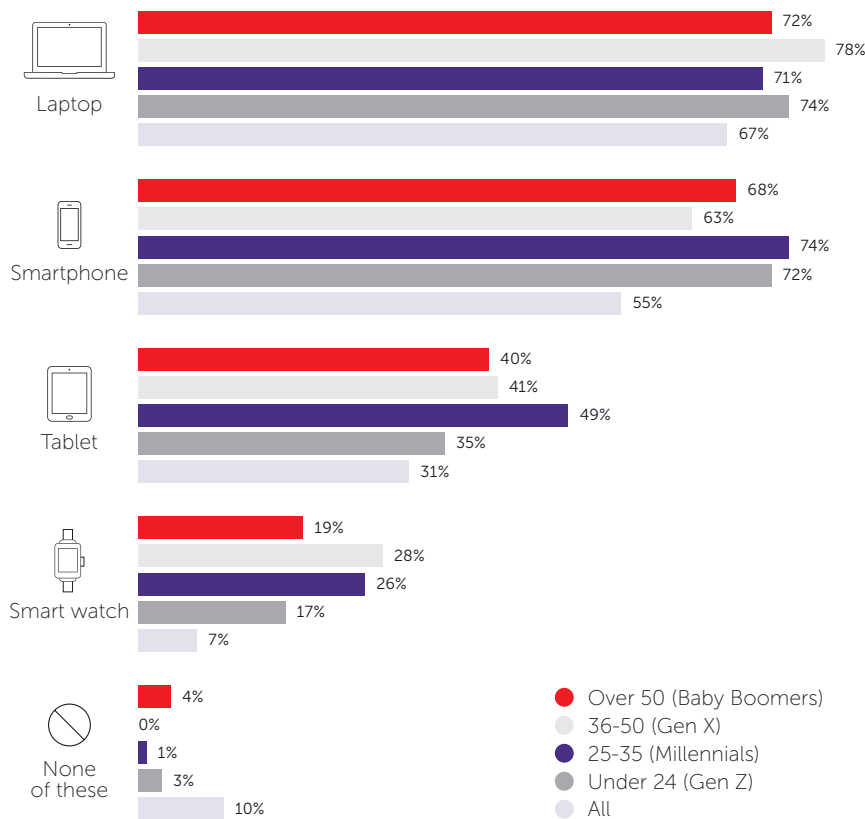


# Technology is at the heart of great meetings

66% of us take at least two devices to a meeting  
8% of us take four

**In 2019, technology has a central role in most meetings. Only 4% of employees in Europe will arrive at a meeting without a device. Even amongst the older Baby Boomer generation, those not bringing tech to meetings remains at a mere 10%.**

Technology typically taken to meetings by attendees



## We like to take technology to meetings

Perhaps unsurprisingly the laptop dominates: 72% take their laptop with them into meetings. But the laptop is not alone. Also highly prevalent is the smartphone, with 68% taking this to meetings with them, whilst two in five also bring a tablet and one in five a smart watch (19%).

More recent technologies are more frequently brought into meetings by younger generations in the workforce. For example, in our survey sample 17% of Gen X had a smart watch on them, yet this rose to over one in four (27%) among Gen Z and Millennials. As these younger generations increasingly dominate the workforce, we expect to see the growing influence of new technology in meeting environments.

## Number and type of devices taken to meetings<sup>1</sup>

	1 device (31%)	2 devices (38%)	3 devices (20%)	4 devices (8%)
Laptop	51%	79%	91%	100%
Smartphone	29%	83%	98%	100%
Tablet	15%	30%	78%	100%
Smart watch	4%	7%	33%	100%

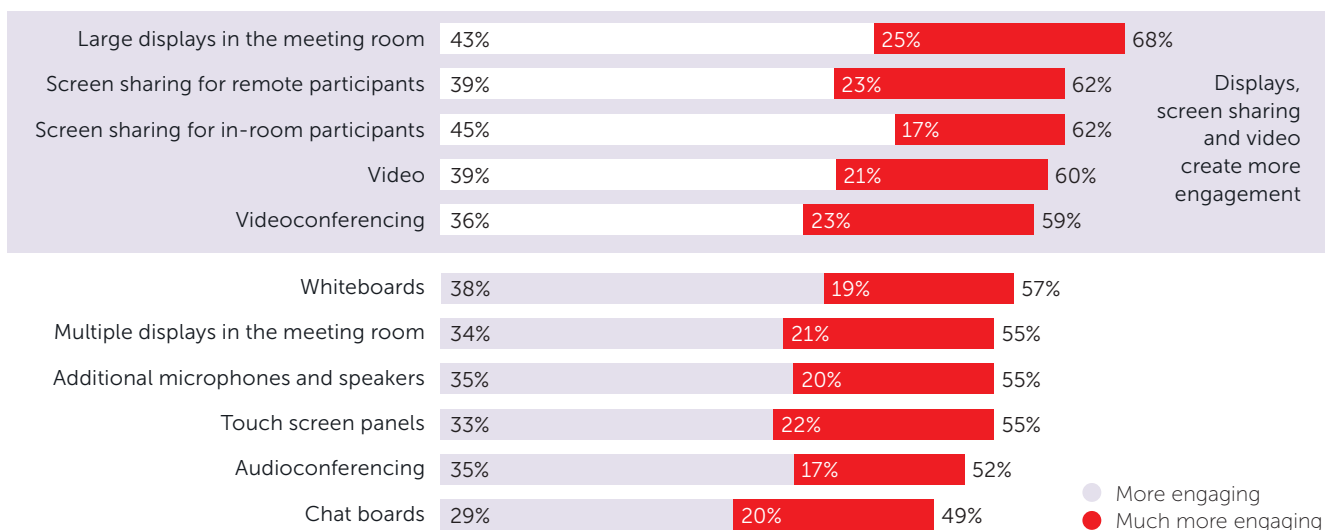
### We like to take a lot of technology to meetings

Another interesting way to view this trend is by exploring the total number of tech devices meeting participants bring with them. Two thirds of attendees (66%) will have a minimum of two devices (generally a laptop and a smartphone). And it doesn't stop there, as 28% will take at least three devices with them, and nearly one in ten (8%) typically turn up with four – a laptop, smartphone, tablet and smart watch!

### Technology improves engagement in meetings

What does this abundance of technology mean for today's meetings – is the meeting experience improving thanks to technology? The answer is an overwhelming 'yes'. The vast majority agree that the presence of technology makes meetings more engaging. In particular, our findings reveal that large displays, coupled with screen sharing and video, lead to much more engaging meetings. It's clear that technology has already established a central role in meetings. And this role will increase in importance as younger tech-savvy generations become more prevalent in the workplace.

## Impact of technology on meeting engagement



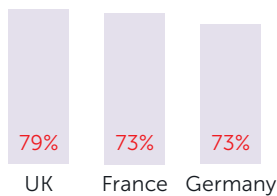
<sup>1</sup> Percentages may not appear to add up to total, due to rounding to nearest whole number

# Meetings are changing

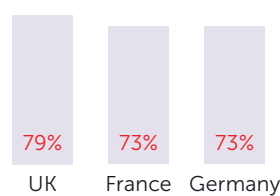
60% of us say meetings are better or much better than they were 5 years ago

**How long does your average meeting last? One hour? Longer? How much of this time is valuable? How much is actually spent productively? The answer: probably not much (see our 2018 whitepaper on how The Perfect Meeting in Europe could be as short as 22 minutes).**

Preferred duration for meetings



Preferred size of meetings



## We prefer short meetings

Most professionals would rather have shorter meetings. Over three quarters (79%) of respondents in Europe say they prefer short meetings over long meetings, although this is lower than in China (85%) and the Pacific (87%). Meetings need to be focused and to the point.

## We prefer small meetings

We would also rather be in meetings with just a small, select group of people, rather than ones with large attendee lists. Three quarters (75%) prefer meetings with just a few people.



**Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.**

Dr. Margaret Mead,  
Cultural anthropologist



Ideal length in minutes of different meetings

	2-4 people	5-9 people	10+ people
Presentation	34 minutes	44 minutes	55 minutes
Decision-making	33 minutes	46 minutes	92 minutes
Brainstorming	37 minutes	48 minutes	96 minutes

### 30-60 minutes is ideal

As you might expect, the more people taking part in meetings, the longer they are expected to last. When asking how long different types of meeting should ideally last, given the number of participants and the content of the meeting, our survey showed that the 'content' has little impact. Regardless of whether it's a presentation, a decision-making meeting or a brainstorm, the overwhelming determining factor is the number of attendees. More attendees means more time spent in meetings.

Professionals in Europe state that a meeting involving 2-4 participants should last for just over half an hour, yet this increases to three quarters of an hour if 5-9 attendees are present, and around a whole hour for meetings with 10+ attendees.

### Meetings are getting better

To achieve these ambitions for meeting length, the use of good technology is crucial. In the 2018 Five Steps to The Perfect Meeting research, we found that people are spending 11% of the meeting length setting up technology – a painful waste of time.

With employees bringing their own devices to meetings, it's ever more vital that technology in meeting environments is intuitive, easy to use and highly compatible.

When this technology works well, the impact is significant. The majority (60%) of workers surveyed say that meetings are now better than they were five years ago. Amongst Millennials this rises to 71%. When this technology works well, the impact is significant. The majority (60%) of workers surveyed say that meetings are now better than they were five years ago. Amongst Millennials this rises to 71%.

Compared to 5 years ago, do you think meetings are?



## People are now confident using technology

All across the world we have welcomed technology into our personal lives with open arms. When asked to describe their confidence using digital technologies, 70% feel at least 'comfortable' using digital technologies. Over one in four (28%) go so far as to say they 'live in the digital world'.



And this isn't a 'younger generation fad'. Despite many commentators observing a lack of tech-savviness amongst older generations, we found that three quarters of Baby Boomers (75%) say they are comfortable using new technologies. The stereotype of technophobic older generations is a thing of the past.

## We prefer meetings where technology is used

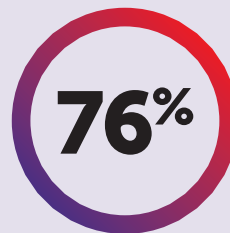
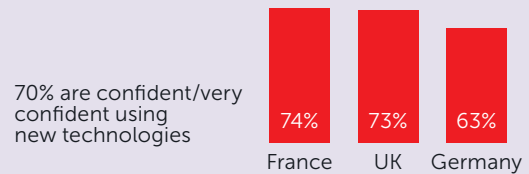
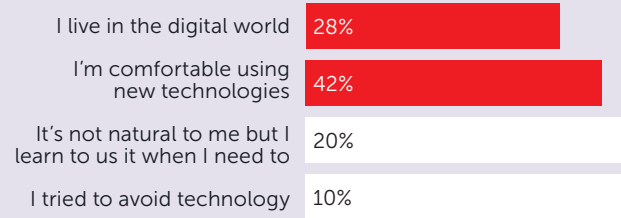
We live side by side with technology. We've seen how it can change our lives. We increasingly expect to use technology in all our interactions. It should come as little surprise therefore that the majority (76%) prefer meetings that embrace technology:

## It's true in all sizes of organization

This clear preference for technology becomes even starker as the size of organization increases:

 **60% of us now regularly use video in meetings, rising to 74% of Gen Z.** 

How respondents would best describe their confidence using digital technologies

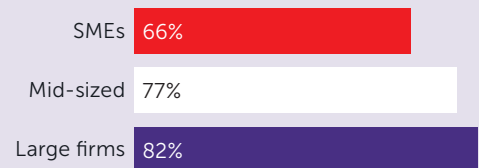


Using technology



Not using technology

Compared to 5 years ago, do you think meetings are?





## Most meetings now have remote attendees

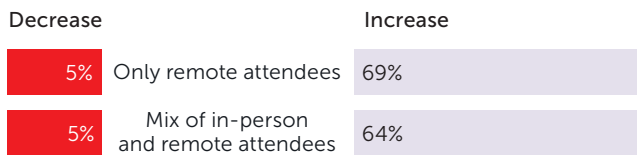
One likely reason for employees at larger organizations stating a strong preference for technology in meetings is that theirs are more likely to include remote attendees.

Across all organization sizes though, over half (51%) say that meetings are now remote – either partially or fully. A quarter (25%) state that the average meeting has all participants attending remotely, while 26% say they most commonly include a mix of in-person and remote attendees:



## More meetings will have remote attendees in the future

Expected increase in proportion of meetings involving remote attendees in 3 years' time



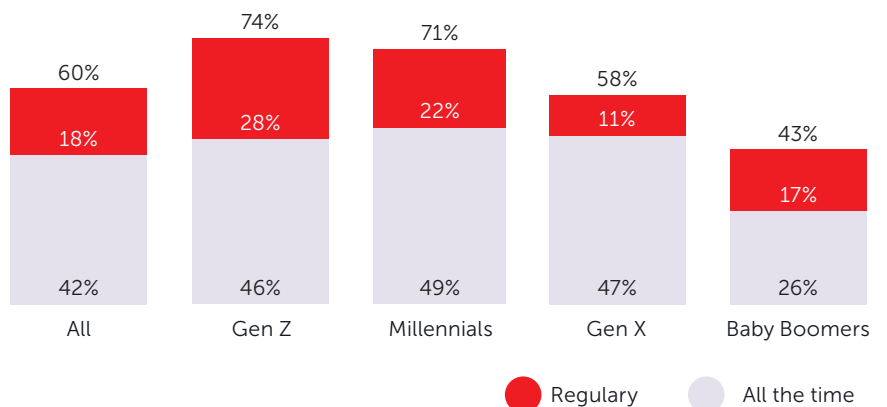
This shifting balance is strongly linked to increases in flexible working, with the number of remote workers having increased 115% during the last decade<sup>2</sup>. And the pace of change is expected to grow. Over two thirds (69%) of workers in Europe expect the proportion of meetings with only remote attendees to increase in the next three years, although this rises to a huge 87% in India.

## We use video regularly

As the popularity of remote meetings continues to grow, it becomes increasingly crucial for organizations to have a conferencing solution that everyone can work with: a solution that is conducive to enabling meetings that are both efficient and engaging.

At the heart of a great conferencing solution is video.

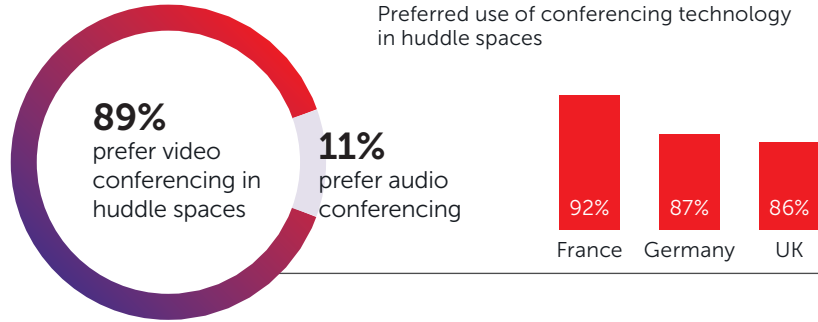
Regularity of video usage in meetings by age



## We prefer video conferencing

Over two thirds of respondents (68%) state that video will be standard in meetings in Europe within the next three years, with India (94%) and China (91%) leading the charge globally.

Even when having meetings in 'huddle spaces3' – non-bookable workspaces for small, impromptu meetings – audio conferencing is no longer an acceptable option. Nearly nine in ten respondents (89%) prefer using video over audio in huddles spaces, rising to 96% of Gen Z.



Technology is enabling the evolving nature of meetings. Employees are becoming more confident digitally, allowing them to work remotely and use video to collaborate. And the workforce isn't ready to stop here.

We want more.

Simply put:  
the future  
of meetings  
is video



# New technology will revolutionize meetings

77% of us want to see voice recognition in meetings within the next two years

**It can be tough to keep up with the pace of change in technology! Yet our appetite for new technology in meetings shows no signs of abating. With the technology we use in our personal lives often out-pacing the technology available in meetings, a re-balancing is essential. We expect organizations to use the latest tech trends to enhance meetings. In our survey, we asked professionals how soon they thought a range of technologies should be made available to use in meetings. The findings: get ready for voice recognition, hand gestures, video filters and avatars!**



**Every once in a while, a new technology, an old problem, and a big idea turn into an innovation.**

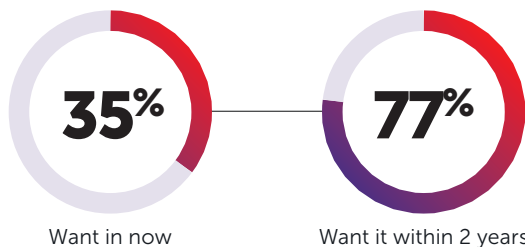


Dean Kamen,  
US inventor and engineer

## We want voice recognition

The most keenly sought-after emerging technology is voice recognition. Over a third of European professionals (35%) want this in meetings now. Whilst the absence of voice recognition in meetings may be tolerated today, employees will soon be less forgiving. The vast majority (77%) want voice recognition in meetings within two years at the latest.

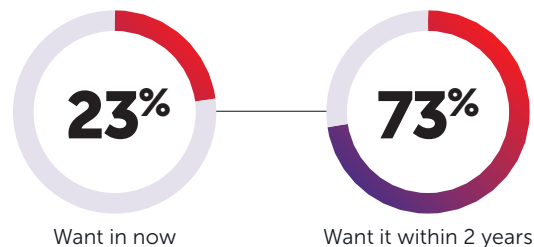
Should this come as a surprise? Perhaps not. Given that home ownership of voice recognition-enabled home assistants such as Amazon Echo, Google Home and Apple HomePod is expected to reach 57% in 2019<sup>4</sup>, it seems reasonable that employees would expect their workplaces to follow suit.



## We want video filters

Video filters (similar to those available on apps like Instagram) are also in high demand. With video set to feature in the vast majority of meetings in the future, participants want to look their best!. Nearly a quarter (23%) are already eager for this technology now and nearly three quarters (73%) want it within the next two years.

It's easy to fall into the trap of thinking that meetings are purely rational, business exchanges. They aren't. A meeting is a show where we are on display. Confidence matters, and video filters can help to provide this.



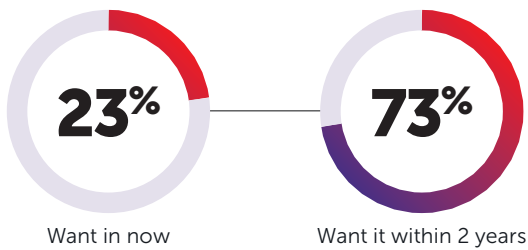
<sup>3</sup> <https://www.barco.com/en/news/2018-10-18-meet-the-huddle-space-small-room-big-benefits>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.mediapost.com/publications/article/321359/smart-speaker-ownership-hits-19-globally-35-in.html>

## We want hand gestures

Where's the clicker? Anyone seen it? Imagine not having to worry. Instead, what if you could use hand gestures to control technology in meeting rooms, such as 'swiping' between slides or adjusting the brightness of lights by opening or closing your hand?

Similar to voice recognition, this could vastly improve efficiency and convenience in meetings – nearly a quarter (23%) want this now and 73% within the next two years.



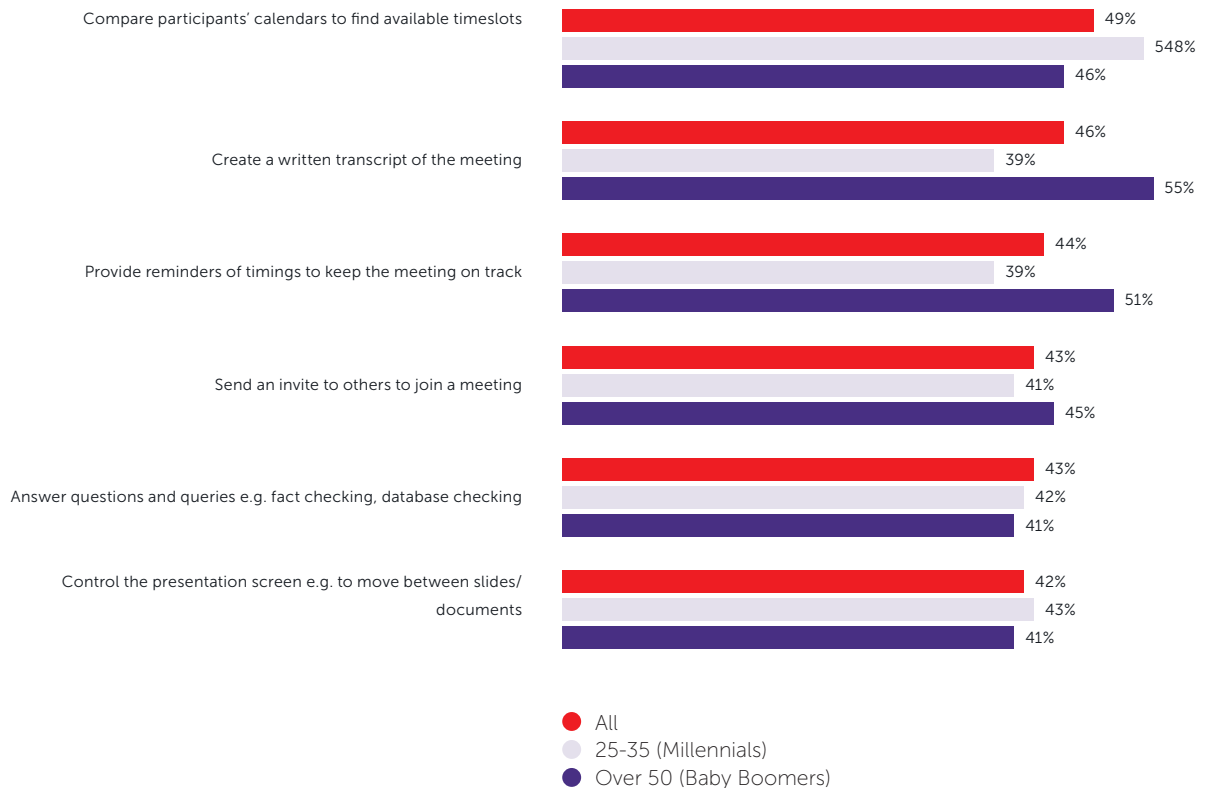
## We want avatars or bots

Not long ago bots and avatars were more often seen in Hollywood movies. Now they're everywhere. There are major benefits that bots and avatars – e.g. virtual assistants – can bring to meetings.

Baby Boomers want bots and avatars to help with administrative work mid-meeting: creating written transcripts (55%) and providing timing reminders to help keep the meeting on track (51%). In contrast, younger generations want them to help set up the next meeting by comparing calendars to find available timeslots (54%).

How would you use a bot or avatar to add most value to your meetings?

### What respondents want avatars or bots to be able to do during a meeting

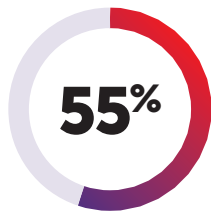


## We want AR

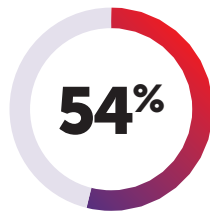
Last, but by no means least, are Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR). Meeting attendees see significant potential from AR overlaying information in real-time (55%) – e.g. onto smart glasses. We also want AR to bring in relevant information from external sources such as internet pages (54%).

VR meanwhile is also expected to take off, with 73% expecting it to be made available for meetings in their organization within the next three years. For certain industries, it will be near ubiquitous. The vast majority (86%) working in Technology think their organization will make VR available to them in three years.

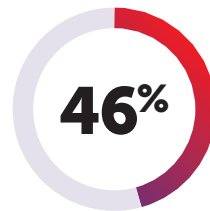
What respondents want AR to be able to do during a meeting



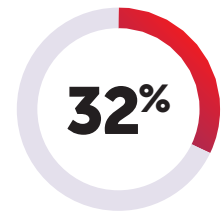
Information from the presentation/materials being discussed in the meeting



Information from external sources, relevant to the meeting (e.g. from the internet)



Details on the mood of meeting participants (e.g. show when they are becoming tired or bored)



Details on the room environment (e.g. air quality, temperature)

## And we want it in meetings in three years' time

Given the expected influx of new technology, it follows that employees expect meetings in three years' time to look radically different. Two thirds of respondents (67%) think the typical meeting will use voice recognition technology, with 64% expecting AR and VR to improve collaboration


between in-person and remote meeting attendees. Over half think a typical meeting will be coordinated or managed by bots or avatars (59%).

The state of meetings is in flux. Whilst it would be understandable to say that technology has already revolutionized


meetings, the real revolution is only just

beginning. Innovative technologies from voice recognition to hand gestures, and from VR to bots, will make meetings more engaging, more convenient and more informed. That is, assuming organizations can keep pace with employee expectations!


## In three years' time, the typical meeting will...

 ... use voice recognition technology

**67%** UK = 65%  
France = 76%  
Germany = 59%

 ... AR/VR to improve collaboration between in-person and remote participants

**64%** UK = 55%  
France = 63%  
Germany = 68%

 ... be coordinated or managed by bots/avatars

**59%** UK = 56%  
France = 63%  
Germany = 59%

# Conclusion

Great technology and great meetings go hand in hand – having the right hardware and software in meetings is critical.

## Technology has made meetings better

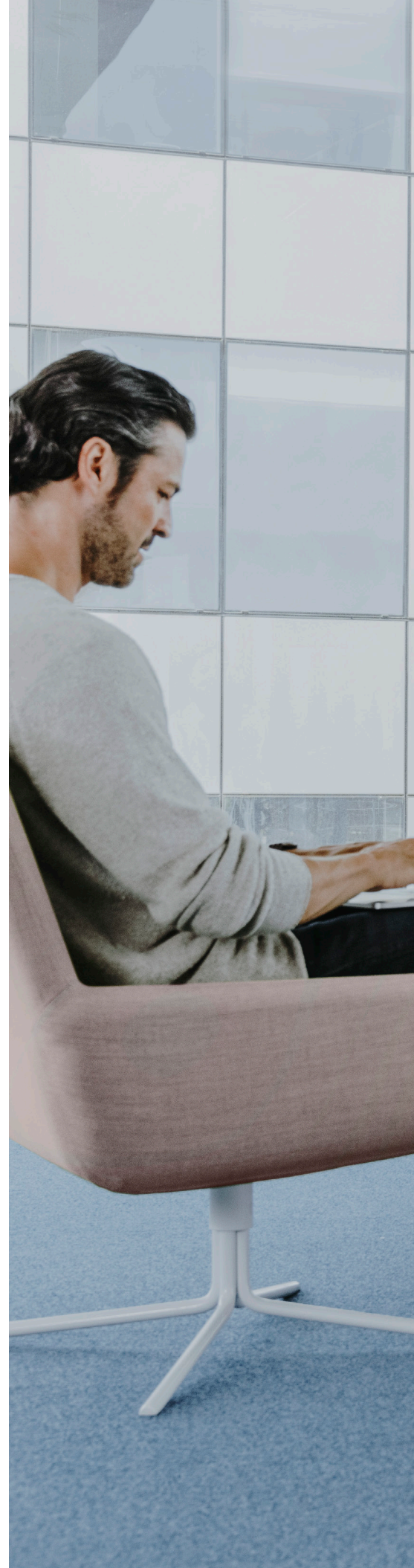
Meetings today are better than they were five years ago. And technology is at the heart of this transformation. Meeting attendees are confident using digital technologies and overwhelmingly prefer meetings that use technology. Nearly all employees take their own tech devices with them to meetings – nearly one in ten take four separate pieces of tech. There is no such thing as a technology-free meeting.

## Technology facilitates shorter, smaller meetings

Meetings should be short, with few people in them. Focus on what needs to be done, then move on. Technology is key to enabling this. It makes meetings more interesting, engaging and enjoyable for attendees. In particular, solutions making meetings more visual – such as large built-in displays, screen sharing and video – are drivers of engagement. But with so many different personal tech devices brought to meetings by attendees, in-office technology needs to be intuitive, agnostic and simple to use. Plug-and-play solutions are the future.

## The pace of change is increasing!

If you thought technology has already changed meetings and they can now stop evolving... think again. Attendees want voice recognition, video filters, hand-gesture control, AR, VR and bots all to be commonplace in meetings within the next three years. This will improve remote collaboration, enable more efficient meeting management, and increase engagement. Organizations that are slow to recognize and react to these evolving employee demands risk being left behind.





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Is your organization ready  
for the future of meetings?



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