![Insight]

Insight Report:

The Employee Experience

Are UK Businesses Creating the Modern Workplace, or Falling at the First Hurdle?

Introduction

The workplace of today is very different to the one five years ago. By listening to their employees' changing demands, organisations are realising they can create a solution that fits both parties – happier, motivated and productive staff, as well as lower overheads and increased profits. It's no surprise that just under three-quarter **(74%)** of firms in Europe allow home working, according to IDC.

Technology sits at the heart of both the challenge and the solution for organisations looking to create a truly modern workplace. There's a wealth of options on offer to improve the all-round employee experience and enhance engagement with the business, from mobile devices to cloud-based applications. But with so many options, and rising employee expectations, it can be difficult knowing where to start. While no two organisations are identical, many struggle with similar challenges as they look to digitally transform their workplace. Understanding those challenges is key to beginning to solve them.

To find out more, Insight carried out a new study based on interviews with more than 2,000 UK office workers[1]. The results reveal that many firms appear to be struggling to create a digital-first workplace. Workers complain of unintuitive or overly restrictive technology systems and feel they're being left without adequate training. The result is many hours wasted, productivity challenges, with disengaged and frustrated staff overloaded with information.

This must change. Employers must work harder to source the right technology platforms for their staff, to provide a simple, familiar and highly intuitive experience. The demand will only grow as more millennials enter the workforce; who are likely to value the ability to work remotely over generous holiday allowances, for instance. Ultimately, the very success of the business depends on its ability to empower these new, connected workers.
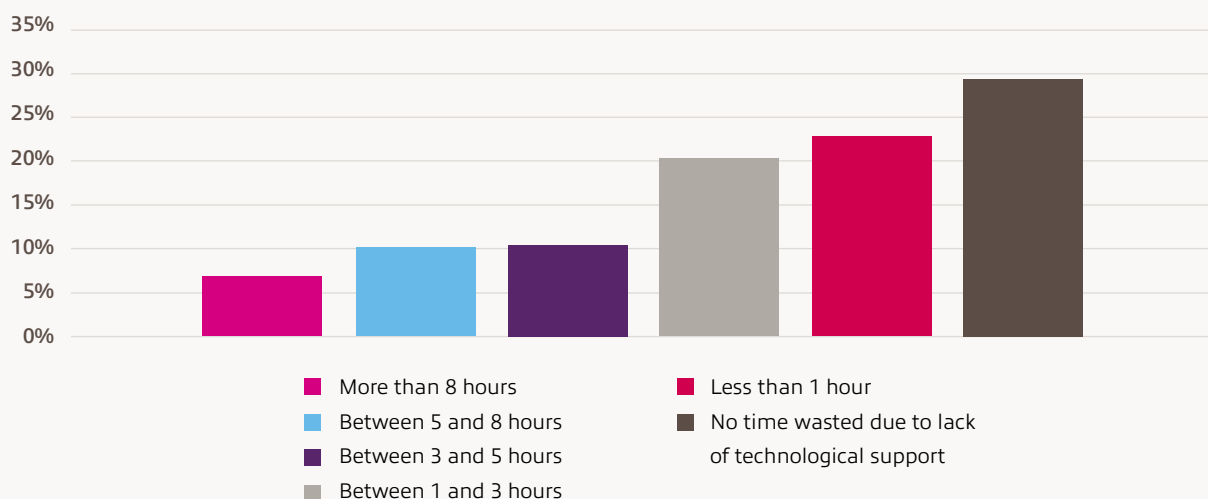
[1] See "Methodology"
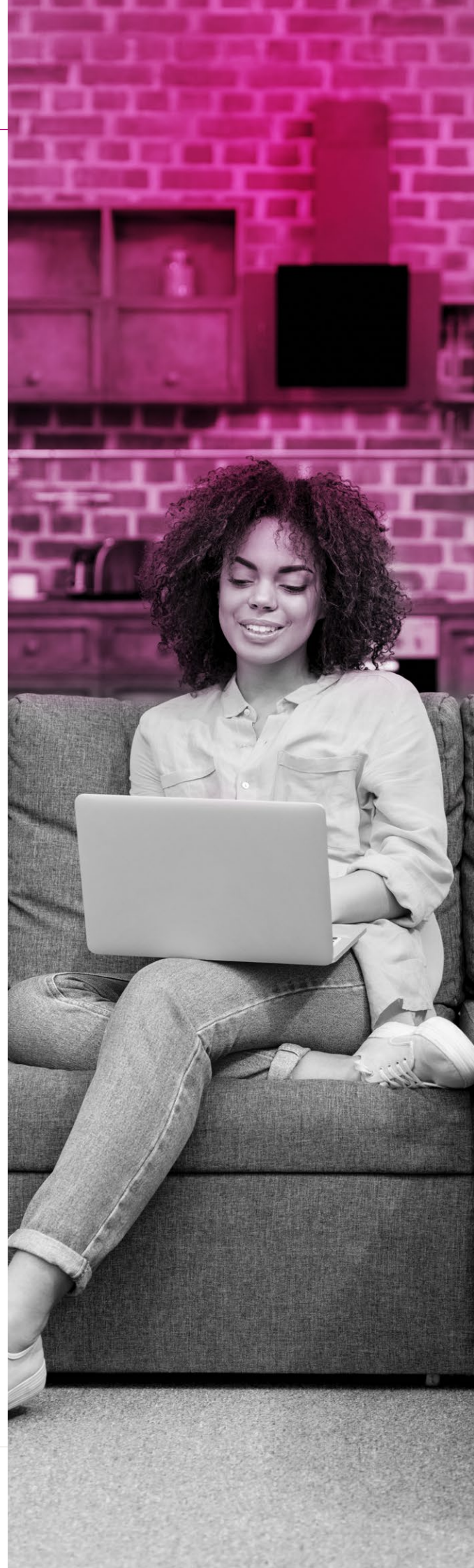
1.8 billion hours wasted

No matter the size of your organisation, one thing remains true; its greatest asset is its employees. Yet their technology needs are not being adequately met, potentially putting business growth at risk.

Staff are routinely forced to travel to unnecessary meetings that could easily take place remotely; or having to work inefficiently, because they don't have the right technological support – such as access to the right tools or the right education to use them effectively.

On average, employees waste **2.4 hours** per week at work due to these issues, with a fifth of respondents claiming to waste **3-8 hours**. This amounts to a staggering **1.8 billion** working hours each year for UK PLC[2].

Hours per week wasted at work due to not having the right technological support.

Legend:
- More than 8 hours
- Between 5 and 8 hours
- Between 3 and 5 hours
- Between 1 and 3 hours
- Less than 1 hour
- No time wasted due to lack of technological support

What's more, the majority **(80%)** have reported feeling disadvantaged at work at some point as they are unable to use their preferred technology.

There's a sense of frustration that the tools they use so readily at home, or similar ones at least, are not available in the workplace.

80% of office workers have felt disadvantaged at work by not being able to use the technology they want.

More than a third of respondents **(34%)** agreed that a lack of support from IT "makes flexible and remote working difficult and stressful." Since a major part of the modern workplace should be a more flexible approach to work — allowing employees to do their jobs how, when and where they want - the lack of flexibility could cause significant issues. For instance, a decline in employee job satisfaction and productivity levels as well as challenges with attracting talent.

Most employees expect to be able to use their own smartphone in the workplace, for example. It's a crucial gateway to productivity-enhancing corporate applications, which should be used to enable employees to work anywhere, at any time. In short, technology decisions must be centred around employee needs, rather than business goals.

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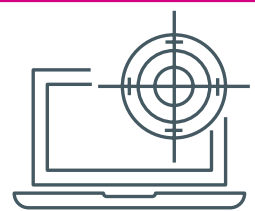
Information overload

The average office worker misses important or useful information at work four times a week, and **38%** miss information at least once a day because they've been forced to manage too many communication channels. The problem for many workplaces today is there is simply too much communication across too many channels – from email to text to multiple instant messaging platforms; this in turn leads to information overload.

Average number of times, per week, office workers miss important or useful information at work.

- At least 5 times
- At least twice
- At least once
- Never
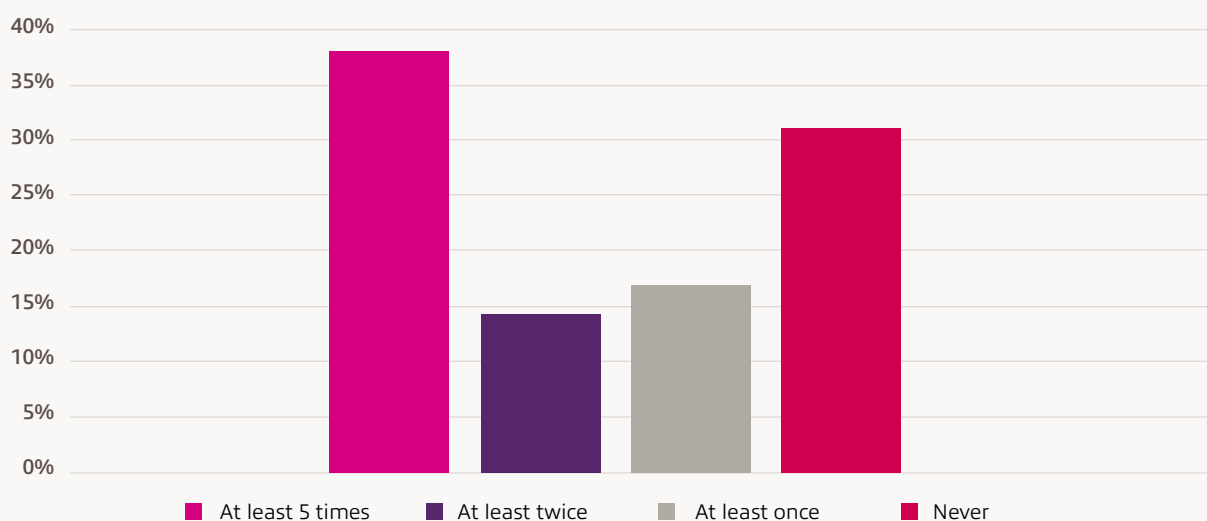
The problem is often compounded by employers' poor handling of internal communications. Only half **(53%)** said it was "effective."

Providing the right information effectively to your employees is a key prerequisite for business success. Yet in too many cases, managers inundate staff with content whether it's relevant or not, resulting in employees ignoring key messages. When it comes to proactively seeking out or sharing corporate information, staff can find centralised data store, like intranets, hard to navigate or filled with incomplete, irrelevant or outdated information. The answer to this should be personalised information-feeds for each employee, sent proactively by managers via a single, user-friendly channel. Without this, employee engagement will continue to suffer resulting in lower levels of productivity.

53%

Only **53%** of office workers say internal communication is effective in their organisations.

Failure to engage

This lack of employee engagement can be illustrated in various ways. For example, **60%** of respondents admit to ignoring most information until someone personally brings it to their attention. What's more, only **47%** of the internal information shared with workers is relevant to them. In terms of information from outside the organisation, the figure is even lower – just **39%**.

Organisations must work harder at meeting the personal needs of their employees, rather than making technology decisions purely based on business goals. This means focusing on enhancing the workplace experience – for instance by ensuring that the information employees receive is relevant and personalised. The more workers feel the organisation understands their needs, the more likely they will be to engage with the business.

47%

Only **47%** of information sent internally is relevant to employees.

Collaboration problems

Unfortunately, this lack of engagement and the unavailability of useful, user-friendly technology in organisations is having a negative impact on staff productivity. Respondents claim they accept delays or a worse-than-expected outcome on a task/project on average three times each week because they don't have the right collaboration tools. That could mean late or disrupted meetings, below par or incomplete documents, poorly organised cross-departmental projects, and more.

3x Office workers have to accept delays or worse-than-expected outcomes on tasks or projects **3 times** a week
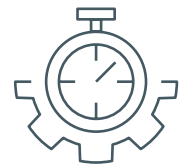
It's crucial that organisations invest in collaboration tools that their employees can plug-in and start using quickly and easily. They must base purchasing decisions around user experience and look for tools that can emulate the consumer technology experience. The latter has raised the bar for corporate IT; anything failing to offer a similar experience will be rejected by employees.
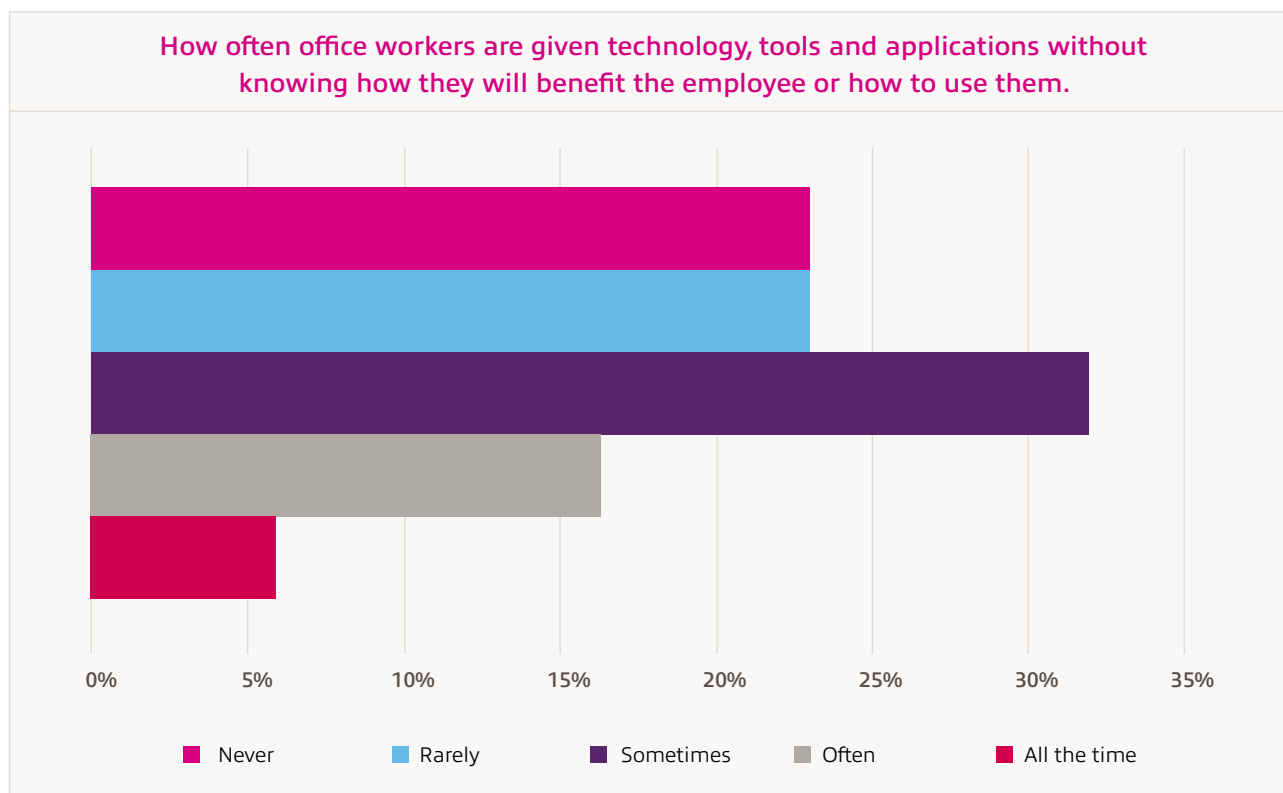
Businesses must also avoid over-promising what technology is capable of or risk expectations climbing too high. IT needs to evaluate the best solution for its employees' needs, taking a close interest in the collaboration tools staff are already using as well as the platform and applications best suited to their business needs.
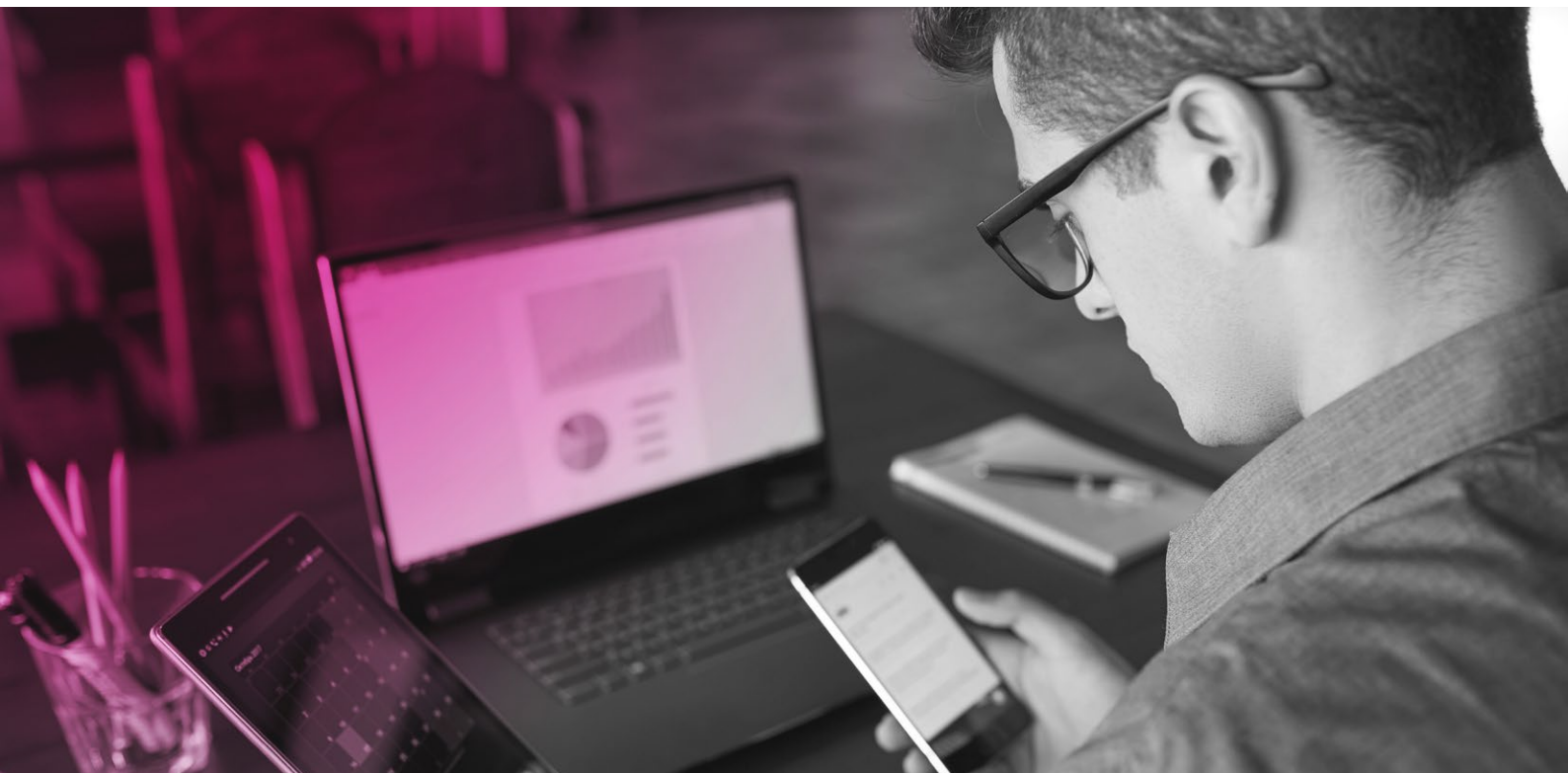
Failing to train, training to fail

We also found that staff are not always offered the training or education they need to use corporate technology. A staggering **77%** of respondents claimed that at some point they have been given technology such as laptops, mobile devices, or business software without knowing how they will benefit their role or how to use them.

How often office workers are given technology, tools and applications without knowing how they will benefit the employee or how to use them.

■ Never   ■ Rarely   ■ Sometimes   ■ Often   ■ All the time

Businesses must therefore step up efforts to train employees and engage more closely to really sell the benefits of any new offering – focusing on the needs of their staff. A lack of change management is a major reason why most organisations see poor adoption of new technologies. Training must take place before any change, with a focus on how to use the tech, how it will improve day-to-day work, and its impact on existing tasks and processes with a broader deployment plan in place. Employees should also be consulted after roll-out to elicit feedback. Most importantly, the goal must be realistic. If managed well, adoption should increase over time rather than expecting immediate uptake.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the majority of organisations need to improve how to select and deploy user-led technology. Less than a third **(29%)** of employees say they are completely happy with their employer's approach to technology. A fifth claim there's a "lot of room for improvement" and some are even prepared to leave the organisation because of it. This should be a wake-up call to management teams and business owners everywhere. Fail to offer user-friendly technology that meets the needs of your workforce and you risk not only productivity and profits, but also increased employee churn.

On the other hand, with a measured, user-centric approach to technology based around creating a consistent experience at any time, in any place, on any device, organisations can lay the foundations for lasting business success. Nearly half **(48%)** of employees say the technology on offer would influence their decisions on future employers. Creating a truly modern workplace in which technology enables greater productivity and an improved user experience is not just good news for your current employees – it will encourage the best of breed next generation workers to apply too.
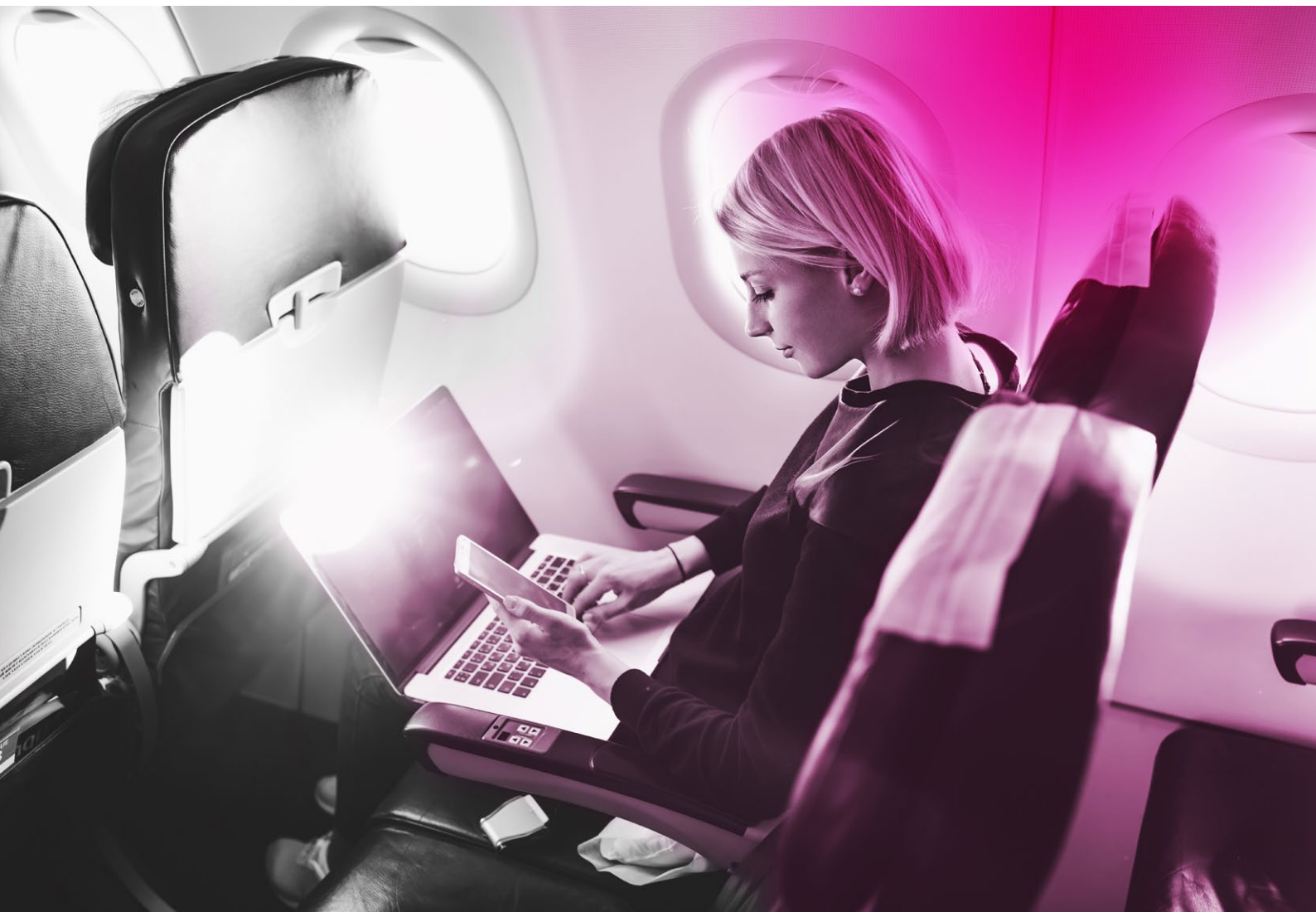
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