

# Built for impact:

The vital role of devices  
in accelerating AI success



# Foreword

When it comes to AI transformation, there is no shortage of ambition among business leaders in the UK. Four in five (**82%**) believe 2025 will be a pivotal year in re-thinking key aspects of their business strategy and operations, while a similar number (**81%**) expect agents to be integrated into their company's AI strategy within the next 12 to 18 months.<sup>1</sup>

Yet maximising AI's potential requires devices that are capable of supporting it. Which means as AI workloads shift across both cloud and device, hardware can become either a launchpad for innovation – or a bottleneck for progress.

Without AI-enabled devices capable of supporting AI objectives, leaders may see their transformation plans stall.

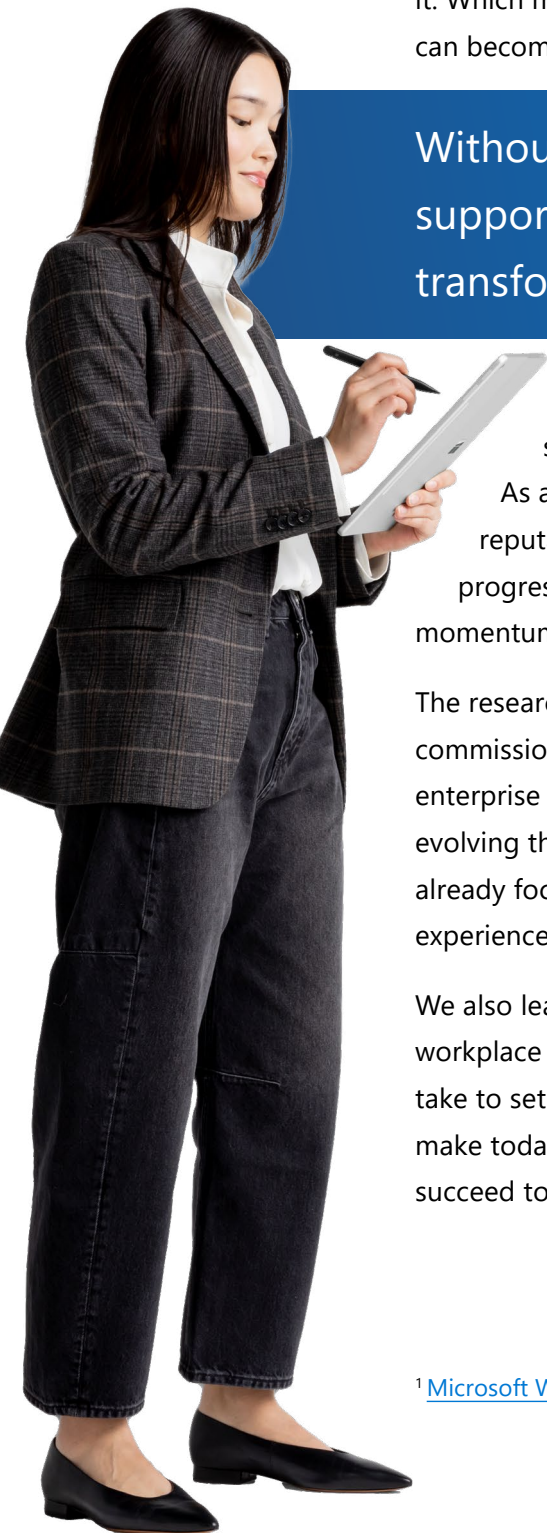
Right now, fewer than half of IT Decision-Makers (ITDMs) surveyed are considering whether their hardware is AI-ready.

As a result, they risk missing out on the financial, operational and reputational benefits of having an AI-enabled workforce. At a time when progress is faster than ever, this inaction costs more than money; it costs momentum and, ultimately, competitive edge.

The research at the heart of this report comes from two surveys commissioned by Microsoft: one of enterprise ITDMs and the other of enterprise employees. The findings reveal just how successfully UK ITDMs are evolving their hardware strategy for the AI era – with leading organisations already focusing on embedding reliability, security and positive user experiences in their hardware estate.

We also learn what employees really want from their devices in the modern workplace and, most importantly, suggest a set of practical steps ITDMs can take to set their organisation up for success. The hardware choices ITDMs make today have never been more important to their ability to lead and succeed tomorrow. Now is the moment to back up ambition with action.

<sup>1</sup> [Microsoft Work Trend Index 2025: The Year The Frontier Firm Is Born](#)





# Turning ambition into action

The majority of IT leaders recognise the value of AI-enabled devices in supporting a more efficient, productive and creative workforce. In fact, more than half (**58%**) are calling for their organisation to invest in devices that make it easier for employees to access AI features to support their daily tasks.

Yet while **ITDMs are excited and ambitious about the impact of AI, their good intentions are yet to translate into tangible actions when it comes to their hardware investments.** This research finds that the majority are not currently factoring AI readiness into their hardware purchasing decisions.

This leaves them stuck using last-generation devices that are not capable of running next-generation AI workloads. Unless ITDMs act to close the ambition-action gap now, they may find their organisations lacking the capabilities, culture and competitiveness to thrive in an AI-enabled future.

56%

of enterprise ITDMs believe AI will be critical to the future success of their organisation.

57%

of ITDMs believe AI will be critical to increasing employee productivity.

46%

of ITDMs are currently considering whether their hardware is AI-ready.

## Faster, smarter, AI-enabled

As the fastest, most intelligent Windows PCs ever, Copilot+ PCs are defining the next wave of computing. These fast, long-lasting, secure PCs are purpose-built to unlock AI experiences. When deployed strategically they can help IT leaders, business leaders and employees achieve more.

► [Find out more.](#)



# Empowering AI-enabled employees

As a new era of technology and work take hold, ITDMs' hardware priorities are shifting. With a move from the upfront cost of their devices to the long-term impact they can deliver for their business..

But that impact relies on having a workforce able to deliver it. And **when we consider whether UK organisations are moving fast enough to equip workers with the AI-enabled devices and skills they need, the short answer is a resounding 'not yet'.**

More than half (**54%**) of ITDMs say employee productivity and performance is a priority in hardware purchases yet **53%** of employees say their current device is not fully capable of supporting hybrid working. And if a device isn't powerful enough to run business software at home, it's unlikely to be capable of running on-device AI workflows either.

Meanwhile, only a fifth (**20%**) of the enterprise employees surveyed believe they have the skills to fully exploit their hardware's AI features – a problem that may spiral as technology advances.

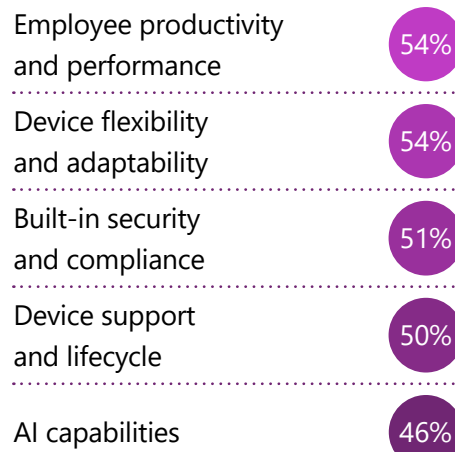


While many organisations see the opportunity, too few are moving fast enough to equip their people with **hardware** built for the era of on-device AI. **Businesses will benefit from shifting conversations away from “can we afford to upgrade?”, and towards “can we afford not to?”**

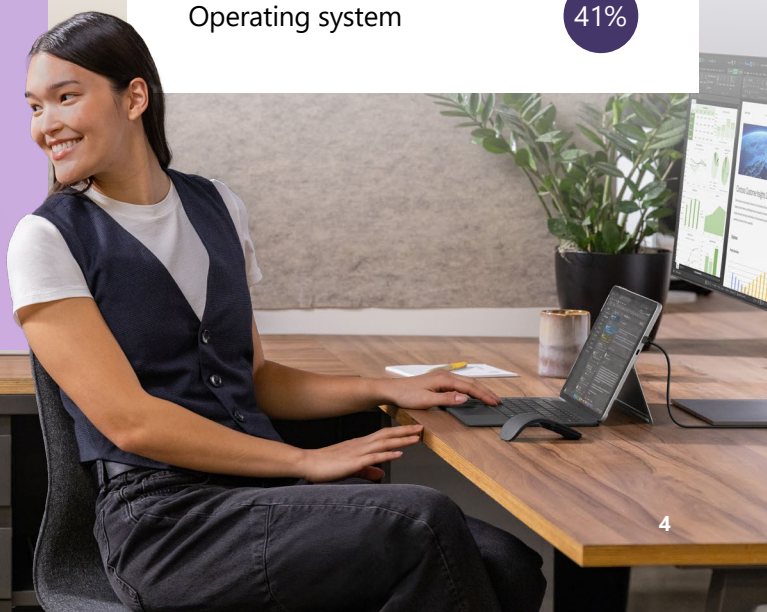
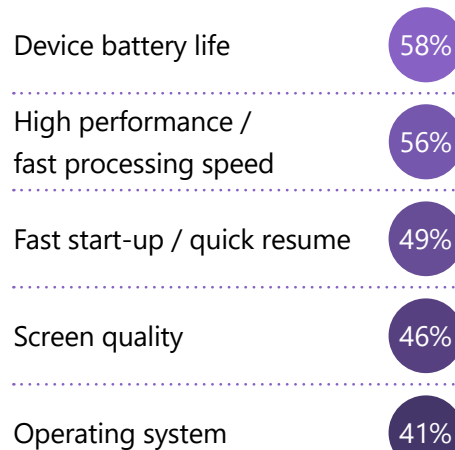
**Alan Slothower**

Head of Surface Commercial, Microsoft UK

## ITDM's Top Purchase Priorities



## Employees' Priority Features





# Driving business impact

**This research confirms that the right hardware strategy can deliver real and lasting business impact.** Total cost of ownership (TCO) is also becoming an ever more important factor in the investment decisions made by ITDMs surveyed around the UK.

Two in five (**40%**) of those ITDMs feel that investing in premium devices has directly improved business outcomes while a quarter (**24%**) say that opting for cheaper hardware at point of sale ended up costing them more over the long-run.

**Those businesses that do invest in the right devices also report common trends, such as increased reliability, enhanced security and better experiences for employees. You can quantify the possible effects for your own business using the [Surface TCO Calculator](#).**



"IT leaders should ground hardware procurement conversations in tangible outcomes that everyone in the business can understand: namely that AI-enabled devices lower total cost of ownership, energise a diverse, innovation-ready workforce and protect enterprise data."

**Ben Coley**

Senior Surface Global Black Belt, Microsoft UK

## The impact of AI-enabled devices

### Increased reliability

55%

55% of ITDMs now place reliability at the heart of hardware purchasing decisions.

To support locally-run AI workflows, PCs must be able to sustain performance.

### Better user experiences

44%

44% of ITDMs are now prioritising accessibility features when investing in hardware.

AI-enabled hardware can impact employees beyond just productivity gains.

### Security by design

51%

51% of IT leaders filter devices for in-built protection.

29%

29% would rather invest in hardware able to deliver AI workflows on-device to support security.

With AI workflows being delivered on-device, security by design is increasingly important.



# Investing for tomorrow today

To equip their organisations with the hardware required to thrive tomorrow, there are three key steps ITDMs should take today.

## 1. Select AI-optimised hardware



Equip teams with modern devices featuring NPUs (Neural Processing Units), built-in security from silicon to cloud and a clear roadmap for updates and support. This is fundamentally about prioritising hardware which is built, from the ground up, for fast and secure performance in the AI era.

## 2. Rethink refresh cycles



Adapt device lifecycles to match the current wave of progress in AI. This includes taking a more flexible procurement approach through staggered upgrades, leasing and/or device-as-a-service models. This helps keep your teams close to the innovation curve without overcommitting capital.

## 3. Invest in skills and insights



The right skills are key to unlocking the full value of AI-enabled hardware. Offer role-specific AI training and accessibility support, backing this up with a culture that encourages employees to innovate and learn. Track usage also lets you identify early wins and guide future deployment and ongoing measurement to ensure progress is recognised and repeatable.

“AI is here and organisations across the UK are investing in its potential. These strategies must include hardware. Given average refresh cycles, many of the devices bought this year may still be on desks in 2029. It’s important IT leaders act now to ensure their organisations are set up for success.”

**Alan Slothower**

Head of Surface Commercial UK, Microsoft



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## Research methodology

Figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc.

Total sample size 199 IT decision-makers and 276 employees in business size 500 and above. Fieldwork was undertaken between 16th - 29th April 2025.

This survey was carried out online in the UK.

