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How IT Teams Equip Their Global Workforce

150+ IT managers weigh in on how they equip their distributed workforce.

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Trend Report

Welcome

77% of global teams struggle to find the right talent. Borderless hiring is the answer to these woes—but equipping employees with the right IT equipment poses another bottleneck.

Remote joins Workwize to share insights into how IT teams equip their distributed workforce with the necessary IT equipment.

151 IT managers. 15 questions. But just 1 goal: to understand how IT teams onboard and offboard their employees—no matter where they are located.
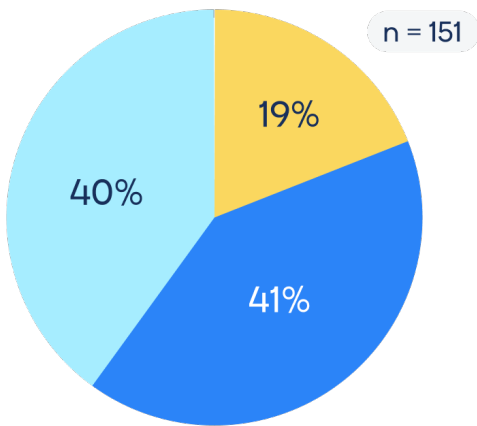
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Who responded to our survey?

Total respondents: **151**

Size of Organization

19%

40%

41%

n = 151

- 201-500 employees
- 501-2000 employees
- More than 2000 employees

Employees' locations

18%

25%

57%

n = 151
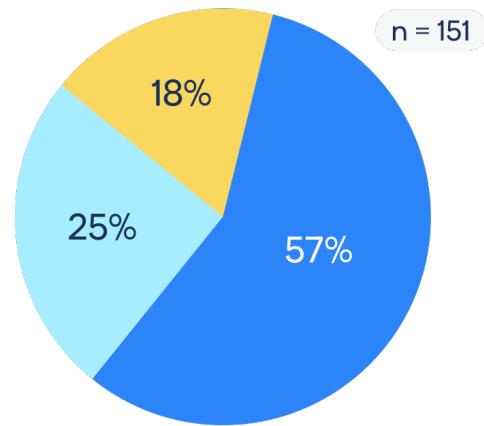
- 2-5 countries
- 6-10 countries
- More than 10 countries

Preface

Barbara Matthews
Chief People Officer

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Culture is actually the thing that's not static - you can have static values, but culture is something that evolves and should always be evolving as we're adding new people to the organization. All of those people bring backgrounds, life experiences, and family situations, and all of that needs to be woven into the organization. The organization needs to grow and evolve with those people. You can have your foundational steps like your values or your non-negotiables, but you also then need to layer on a culture that's constantly evolving.

When it comes to global HR management, the most significant challenges for companies expanding into new international markets are the statutory regulations and tax regulations. It's crucial to ensure that you are not exposing your company in a negative way. There are also certain employee rights in other countries that differ from practices like employment-at-will in the US. There are very different contractual nuances country by country.

If you're trying to find all that information yourself, it's just a nightmare, and you'd pay a ton of money to an external legal consultant. That's without even touching on whether you're going to actually get an office and what

that means, where you get the office, and how you make sure that it's the right office. Even lease contracts and lease negotiations in different countries are just more and more complex. To me, it's all about managing that complexity and ensuring compliance to avoid risk exposure for your company.

In building a global organization, it's critical to have HR leadership with a seat at the table. If my role, for example, had been reporting into someone else and I wasn't sitting at a C-level, it would be very challenging to be seen as a critical partner in driving the business forward.

I continuously talk to our people organization about how Remote employees are our clients, and our role is to enable the business to move its strategy forward on an ongoing basis. It's even about the language that the leaders within the HR world are using with their own teams. We focus continuously on looking at all the work that we do and constantly asking ourselves what can be automated, deprecated, or deprioritized, making sure that we're always elevating the work that we're doing.

What's critical is bringing data to the business. Even opening conversations about diversity - we didn't have a diversity dashboard, we didn't know what the gender breakdown was company-wide. A lot of that stuff we do know now, but we didn't have granular control. Even knowing how many managers are managing people and what that does for business efficiency, and connecting all those people data numbers to how they slow the business down or speed the business up - continuing to have conversations at that level is what makes it a more strategic conversation.

Chapter 1
IT Procurement

Procurement is the first step in equipping a distributed workforce, and it's one of the trickiest.

Thanks to borderless hiring, employees are now scattered across different locations. And ensuring everyone has what they need can be a logistical nightmare.
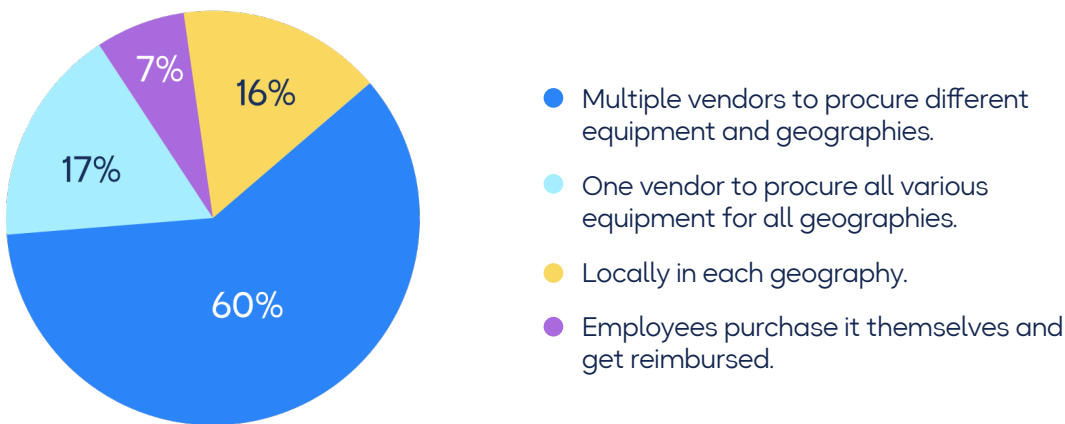
From supply chain delays to vendor inconsistencies and budget constraints, there's too much manual work and not enough automation. As organizations scale, this can consume hundreds of hours.

For example, ordering laptops feels like rolling the dice—will they arrive on time or end up stuck in customs? The process needs more consistency and less guesswork.

Moreover, the task isn't just about buying equipment; it's about finding the perfect fit for various roles/departments and ensuring compatibility with existing systems.

Let's see how IT managers across the globe tackle these procurement challenges.

1.1 How do you currently procure IT equipment for your distributed workforce?

- ● Multiple vendors to procure different equipment and geographies.
- ● One vendor to procure all various equipment for all geographies.
- ● Locally in each geography.
- ● Employees purchase it themselves and get reimbursed.

1. Most IT managers (**60%**) prefer using multiple vendors to address the diverse needs of their workforce's equipment types and geographical locations. This approach enables better customization and flexibility to respond to regional market conditions and regulations.

2. However, **17%** still adhere to centralizing their procurement with one vendor, which can simplify vendor management and potentially improve negotiation power.

3. Meanwhile, **16%** procure locally to leverage local market advantages and quicker logistics.

4. The smallest group, constituting **7%**, allows employees to purchase their equipment, which can boost employee satisfaction by allowing for personalized choices, albeit potentially complicating standardization and security protocols.

Each method reflects differing priorities, from reducing administrative overhead to maximizing organizational flexibility.

✓ **Multiple vendors** keep you flexible and prevent over-reliance on a single source, but they can also complicate logistics due to constantly changing vendor policies and timelines.

✓ **Centralized procurement** is ideal if your entire workforce is in a single region. It might not be the best for a distributed workforce because shipping fees and delays could add to delays and overhead costs.

✓ **Local procurement** saves time and reduces logistical hassles. It also cultivates relationships with local vendors, who can offer faster support. And, of course—discounts, adjustments, and personalized service make it an attractive option. But you'd need someone onsite to manage these relationships.

✓ **BYOD (Bring Your Own Device)** policies are on the rise, and there is no reason why—they're cost-effective, leverage employees' familiarity with their devices, and reduce procurement headaches. However, they introduce challenges around device compatibility, security, and support.

Chapter 2
IT Equipment Deployment

Deploying IT equipment isn't just about clicking "send" on a shipment order; it's a complex ballet of tracking, configuration, and user training.
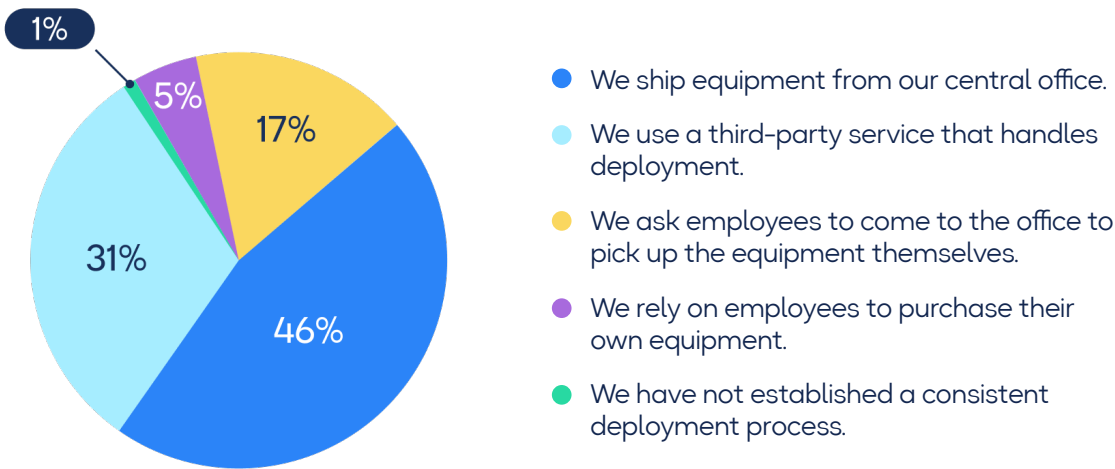
Recent trends, such as BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) policies, make it even trickier, introducing inconsistencies and security gaps.

IT managers now wrestle with ensuring seamless integration, applying standard configurations remotely, and managing user access and permissions.

Ensuring each device meets the company's security standards is non-negotiable. Rigorous checks and configurations are essential before a device reaches an employee's hands.

Some teams deploy devices with pre-installed software and security protocols, while others ship them to a central location first for setup.

2.1 What is your primary method for deploying IT equipment to remote employees?

- ● We ship equipment from our central office.
- ● We use a third-party service that handles deployment.
- ● We ask employees to come to the office to pick up the equipment themselves.
- ● We rely on employees to purchase their own equipment.
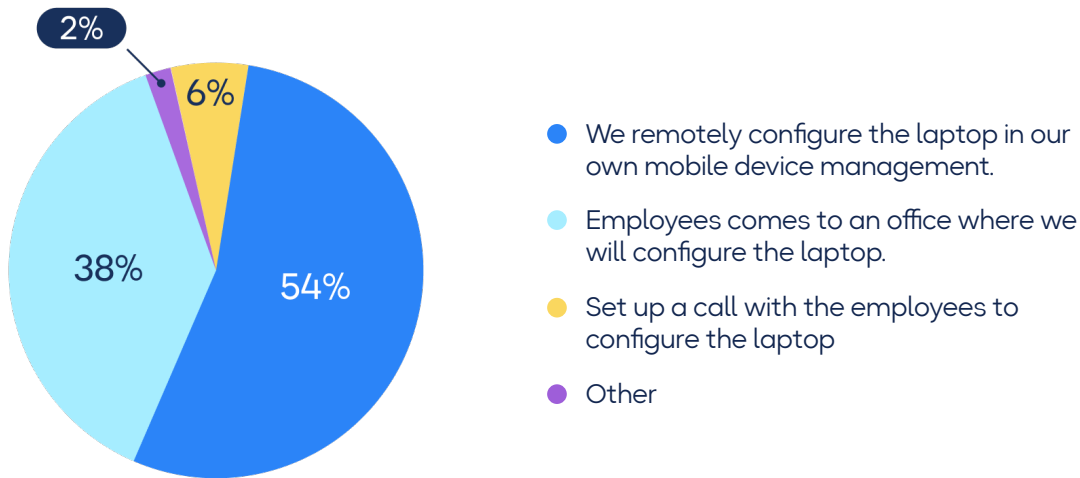- ● We have not established a consistent deployment process.

1. Of the survey respondents, about **46%** ship IT equipment directly from their central office, facilitating a standard approach while ensuring control over distribution.

2. This choice highlights a preference for centralized control. In contrast, **31%** utilize third-party services that can provide local support and facilitate faster deployment across different regions.

3. The **17%** who request employees pick up equipment may aim to blend remote and office-based atmospheres.

4. A **5%** of respondents rely on employees to purchase their own equipment which can lead to security issues, productivity loss, and increased employee costs.

5. Lastly, a tiny fraction has yet to define a strong approach to deployment, showing a general sophistication in remote work strategies.

Direct shipping offers control over configurations but can be costly and time-consuming, especially as your team scales.

Utilizing third-party services can alleviate some logistical headaches, though finding a reliable vendor across all locations is a must.

In-person pick-ups reduce times but aren't practical for a highly distributed team.

2.2 How do you configure laptops for your distributed workforce?

2%

6%

38%

54%

- ● We remotely configure the laptop in our own mobile device management.
- ● Employees comes to an office where we will configure the laptop.
- ● Set up a call with the employees to configure the laptop
- ● Other

1. A significant majority, **54%**, prefer cloud-based management for configuration, indicating firm reliance on remote capabilities for setup tasks.

2. For **38%** of respondents, it involves hands-on, in-office configurations, which require physical presence.

3. The consultative method via calls indicates a tailored approach in only **6%** of cases, demonstrating its minimal usage due to the personnel-intensive nature of these interactions.

4. Small percentages use alternative methods, emphasizing niche or specific needs that are not widely adopted.

Workwize Verdict

✓ **Cloud-based management** streamlines the process, enabling rapid, remote configurations without the hassle of physical setups. This method scales effortlessly as your team grows.

✓ **In-office configurations** require physical presence. This might hinder flexibility but ensures direct control and employee interaction.

✓ **Personal calls** for setup promote customization but might be overwhelming if there are too many new hires.

Chapter 3
IT Asset Management

IT equipment management is the backbone of a smooth-running IT department. With remote work on the rise, managing devices from afar presents fresh hurdles. IT managers now juggle device tracking, software updates, and repairs, all while ensuring compliance with company policies.

This shift demands smarter, automated solutions. Picture this: finding a lost device in a different country or remotely wiping data on compromised hardware—all can now be performed with a click.

However, balancing security with ease requires an agile, well-coordinated approach.

The pressure mounts as IT teams navigate through issues like rapid scaling and diverse device types for different teams.

Let's see how IT teams manage these challenges and stay on top of the game.

3.1 How do you manage laptops for your distributed workforce?

- 3%
- 26%
- 71%

- ● We use a cloud-based asset management system.
- ● We have an internally developed asset tracking spreadsheet or database.
- ● We do not have a formal asset management process.

1. **71%** of survey respondents utilize a cloud-based asset management system, indicating a significant shift towards automated, integrated infrastructure management.

2. Meanwhile, **26%** still rely on manually created systems such as spreadsheets or in-house databases for equipment tracking. These provide customizable solutions but may lack cloud solutions' scalability and real-time functionality.

3. Very few, only **3%**, admit to not having a structured asset management process, highlighting potential risks in asset mismanagement. This small percentage suggests that most companies recognize the importance of systematic asset tracking to mitigate loss or misuse of essential IT equipment.

Workwize Verdict

- **Cloud-based platforms** ensure ease of access, centralized control, and seamless updates across all devices, regardless of location.

- While **familiar, legacy systems** can quickly become cumbersome and are prone to errors that cost valuable time and resources.

- **Lacking a structured process** can lead to chaos and inefficiencies, especially for expanding teams.

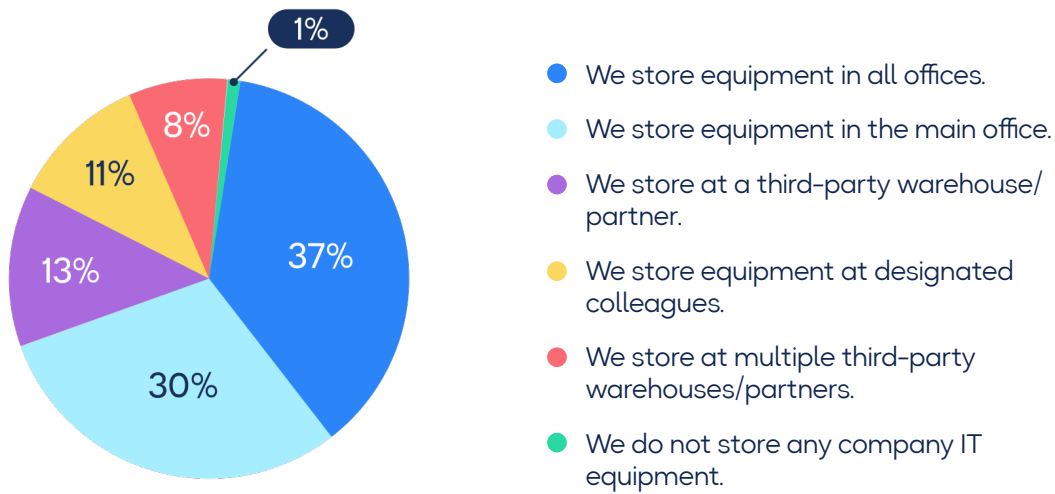- **Alternative methods** might work for niche cases but lack the scalability to support quick growth.

3.2 How do you manage peripherals (monitors, keyboards, webcams, etc.) for your distributed workforce?

- ● We use a cloud-based asset management system.
- ● We have an internally developed asset tracking spreadsheet or database.
- ● We do not have a formal asset management process.
- ● Other

1. For **63%** of surveyed companies, a cloud-based asset management system for handling peripherals is used, which shows a preference for centralized, automated management tools.

2. Meanwhile, **29%** still depend on in-house solutions like spreadsheets, demonstrating their reliance on potentially less efficient but familiar processes.

3. Surprisingly, **7%** of companies admit to lacking any formal management process for peripherals, which may risk oversight and loss.

4. Those opting for other methods represent a minimal **1%**, indicating specialized requirements or innovative management techniques.

Workwize Verdict

- ✓ **Cloud-based platforms** provide a macro view and micro control, simplifying asset tracking and ensuring up-to-date security measures.

- ✓ **In-house solutions** like spreadsheets may seem practical but soon turn unwieldy, leading to out-of-date records and clumsy management practices.

- ✓ **Informal peripheral management** exposes businesses to significant operational risks, such as untracked loss and security exposures.

- ✓ **Specialized requirements** often necessitate custom solutions to hybridize cloud features with tailored fit.
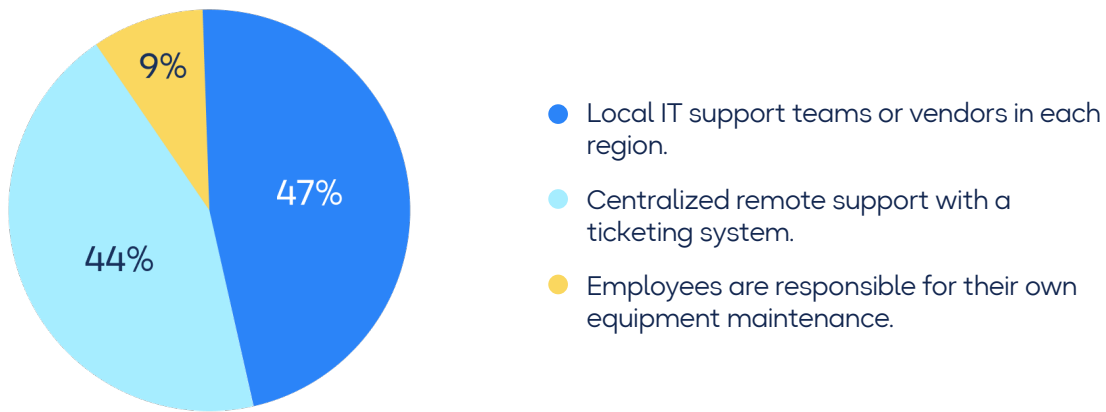
3.3 How do you store company IT equipment?

- ● We store equipment in all offices.
- ● We store equipment in the main office.
- ● We store at a third-party warehouse/partner.
- ● We store equipment at designated colleagues.
- ● We store at multiple third-party warehouses/partners.
- ● We do not store any company IT equipment.

1.   Of the surveyed companies, **37%** prefer dispersing their IT equipment storage across all locations they operate, which can minimize downtime and improve accessibility for teams.

2.   Conversely, **30%** store equipment solely at their main office, highlighting the centralization of their IT management.

3.   Additionally, specialized logistics offered by third-party warehouses attract **13%** for secure, off-site storage, with **8%** opting for multiple warehouses for further geographic diversification.

4.   Only a tiny share, **1%**, claim not to store equipment, likely relying on cloud solutions or just-in-time delivery methods to meet their operational needs.

✓ If **the central office** has enough storage, it centralizes inventory but might delay distribution to remote teams.

✓ **Storing across all offices** offers quick local access yet can inflate complexity and costs due to varied protocols.

✓ **Third-party warehouses** can streamline logistics but often add extra layers of negotiation and monitoring with the vendor.

✓ **Utilizing multiple warehouses** balances quick access with flexibility but requires strong coordination to avoid duplication and inefficiencies.

✓ **Not storing equipment** jeopardizes readiness and scalability, making provisioning new hires or requesting replacements challenging.

3.4 What systems do you have in place for maintenance, repairs, and support of IT equipment in remote locations?

- Local IT support teams or vendors in each region.
- Centralized remote support with a ticketing system.
- Employees are responsible for their own equipment maintenance.

47%

44%

9%

1. **47%** rely on local IT support teams or vendors to maintain and repair IT equipment. This indicates a preference for personalized, localized IT services.

2. **44%** use centralized remote support systems, illustrating the importance of unified incident response procedures.

3. **9%** expect employees to handle maintenance independently, suggesting a decentralized approach or potentially higher demands on employee IT know-how. This method can offer flexibility but might also challenge non-technical staff.

✓ **Relying on local IT support** can ensure timely fixes but risks inconsistent service levels and varied protocols.

✓ **Centralized remote support** leverages expertise and standardization, though it might need help with hands-on tasks for critical issues.

✓ **Expecting employees** to handle maintenance could lead to reduced downtime, but it often requires more professional depth and could cause more issues.

Chapter 4
IT Asset Retrieval

Retrieval is the process of collecting IT equipment from employees, whether they depart the company, no longer need it, or it's due for upgrades.

For most IT managers, this can become a logistical nightmare when team members are scattered across different time zones and borders.

Arranging shipping, tracking the devices, and ensuring their safe return—without hindering productivity—requires a meticulous tightrope walk of coordination.

Then there are the unexpected hurdles: misplaced inventory, delayed couriers, and uncooperative departures. It's as much about patience and diplomacy as it is about process and protocol.

Let's see how IT teams across the globe handle retrievals.

4.1 When an employee leaves the company, what is your process for retrieving IT equipment?
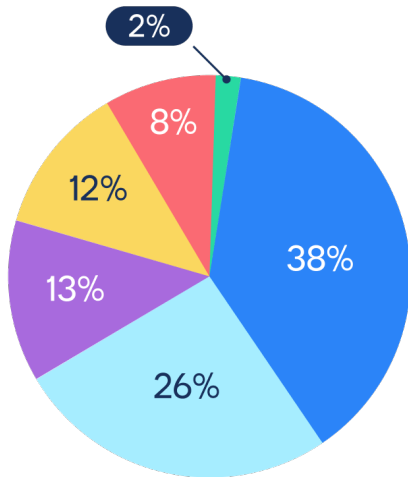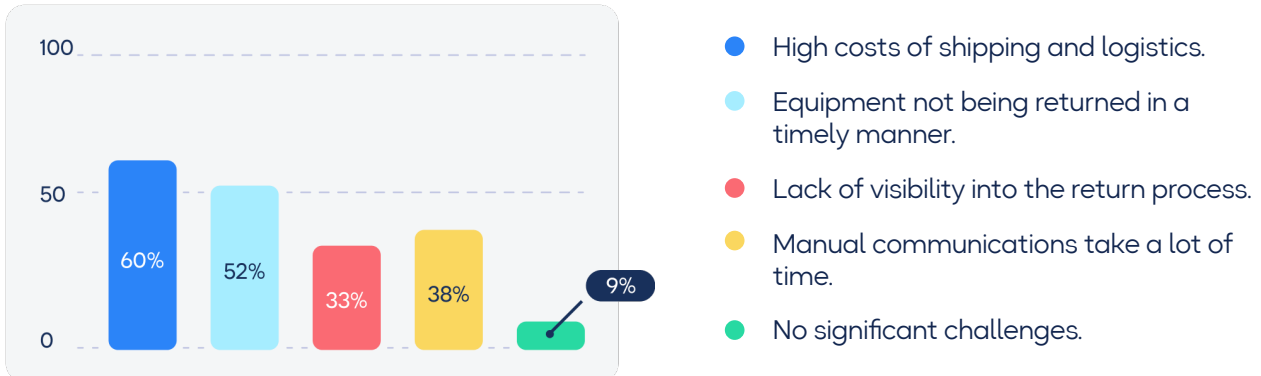

- 🔵 We ask employees to ship equipment back to the main office.
- 🔵 We ask employees to ship equipment back to the closest office.
- 🟣 We have multiple vendors to handle all retrievals globally.
- 🟡 We ask employees to ship equipment to their teamlead / a designated colleague.
- 🔴 We have one vendor to handle all retrievals globally.
- 🟢 We allow employees to keep the equipment.

1. About **38%** trust the traditional approach of asking leavers to mail back IT equipment to the company's HQ, which can be tedious.

2. Another **26%** make it location convenient, directing equipment to wherever is closest among company facilities.

3. Adopting an immediate point-of-contact method, **12%** have equipment sent to leaders or assigned persons within close physical proximity, streamlining retrieval and accountability.

4. Contracts with global vendors illustrate that **8%** take a unified approach while **13%** engage multiple specialists for flexibility and rapid coverage. This allows for a more managed process with an international reach, corresponding to a company's presence worldwide.

5. Of surveyed employers, **2%** give the option to keep equipment. This eliminates the complexities of recovery logistics, honors trust, and likely benefits from a tax depreciation perspective.

- **Asking leavers to mail back IT equipment** to the company's HQ could be a logistical nightmare for IT teams. It could open new possibilities for security breaches and increase overhead costs due to shipping costs.

- **Requiring employees** to drop equipment off at the nearest remote office simplifies logistics but may introduce issues with record-keeping and timely inventory system updates.

- **Sending to team leaders** or colleagues could enhance trust but risks lost, delayed, or unprocessed returns.

- **Too many VARs** and suppliers can complicate the coordination process, creating the potential for mishandled equipment or inconsistencies in retrieval processes.

- **Employees often keep equipment** because retrieval costs exceed its value. However, failing to wipe the equipment according to industry standards can lead to severe security issues.

4.2 What challenges do you face with the retrieval of IT equipment?

- ● High costs of shipping and logistics.
- ● Equipment not being returned in a timely manner.
- ● Lack of visibility into the return process.
- ● Manual communications take a lot of time.
- ● No significant challenges.

1. **60%** find the logistics costs prohibitive, emphasizing the expensive nature of shipping and managing physical IT assets, especially over longer distances.

2. **52%** report delays in recovering equipment, which can complicate inventory management and operational readiness.

3. **33%** need help to track the retrieval process, so transparency becomes a concern.

4. **38%** mention the extended time required for manual communications during retrieval.

5. **9%** experience no significant challenges, indicating that a minority of businesses may have optimized processes or fewer recoverable IT assets to manage

Workwize Verdict

- ✓ **Prohibitive costs** emphasize the expensive nature of shipping and managing physical IT assets, especially over longer distances.

- ✓ **Delays in recovering equipment** can complicate inventory management and operational readiness. Redeployment could be delayed, too, so new hires need to wait even more.

- ✓ **Tracking challenges** reveal a significant need for better oversight and transparency throughout the return process; equipment can go missing without it, leading to increased costs.

- ✓ **Disliking manual communications** indicates that many teams find existing procedures too labor-intensive and error-prone.
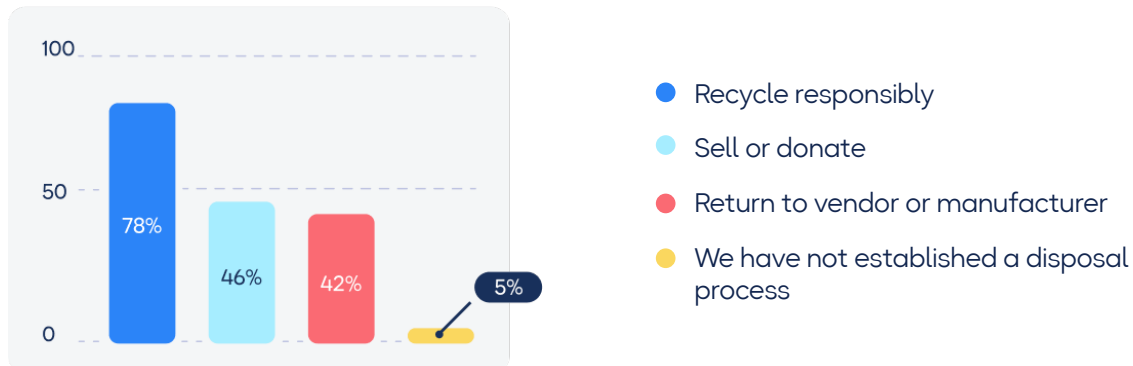
Chapter 5
IT Asset Disposal

IT equipment disposal involves responsibly discarding devices that have reached the end of their lifecycle. However, this is no small feat, especially with more employees working remotely across different locations and time zones.

Manually coordinating secure hardware disposal across countries and regions can be difficult, increasing the chance of non-compliance with local environmental regulations.

Centralizing this can help, but the nitty-gritty of ensuring compliance, wiping data securely, and handling logistics adds layers of complexity.

E-waste regulations vary widely from country to country, making it incredibly challenging to develop a universally compliant solution. Balancing the sheer volume of e-waste adds even more complexity. Let's see how IT teams tackle these disposal challenges.

5.1 How do you dispose of outdated or unnecessary IT equipment?

- ● Recycle responsibly
- ● Sell or donate
- ● Return to vendor or manufacturer
- ● We have not established a disposal process

1. **78%** of the responses indicate that most recycle outdated equipment responsibly, aligning with eco-friendly goals.

2. **46%** opt to sell or donate unused or old IT gear, embracing a perspective supporting community involvement or potentially recouping some investment.

3. **42%** return their equipment to vendors or manufacturers, ideally leveraging a take-back program. This reflects a proactive approach in alignment with sustainability through the reusability of parts or refurbishment.

4. Surprisingly minimal, **5%** of companies admit to needing a structured way of discarding IT assets, which might expose them to risk violations of the pertaining environmental guidelines or the loss of financial benefits from potential equipment repurposing.

Workwize Verdict

- **Recycling outdated equipment** responsibly shows a commendable trend towards sustainability.

- **Selling or donating** enables maximized resource utilization but must be carefully managed to protect sensitive data.

- **Opting to return equipment** to manufacturers hints at a shift towards responsibility and manufacturer take-back programs.

- **Companies needing a structured way** to discard IT assets highlight a significant gap that needs addressing.
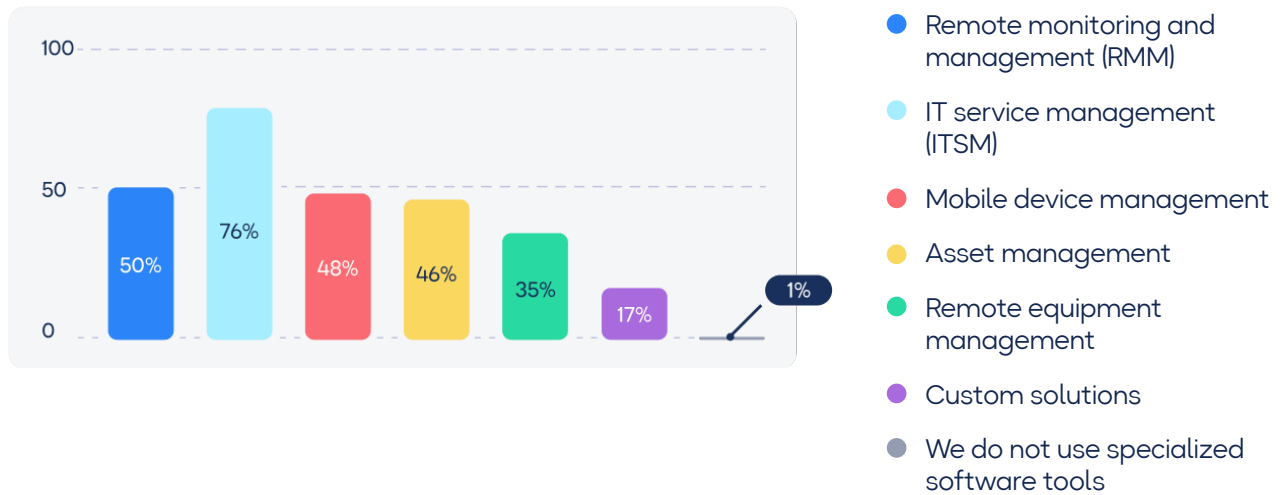
Chapter 6
Strategy and Tools

From procurement to disposal, the IT hardware lifecycle has countless moving parts that can overwhelm even the most organized managers. Things can easily fall through the cracks without proper strategy and the right tools.
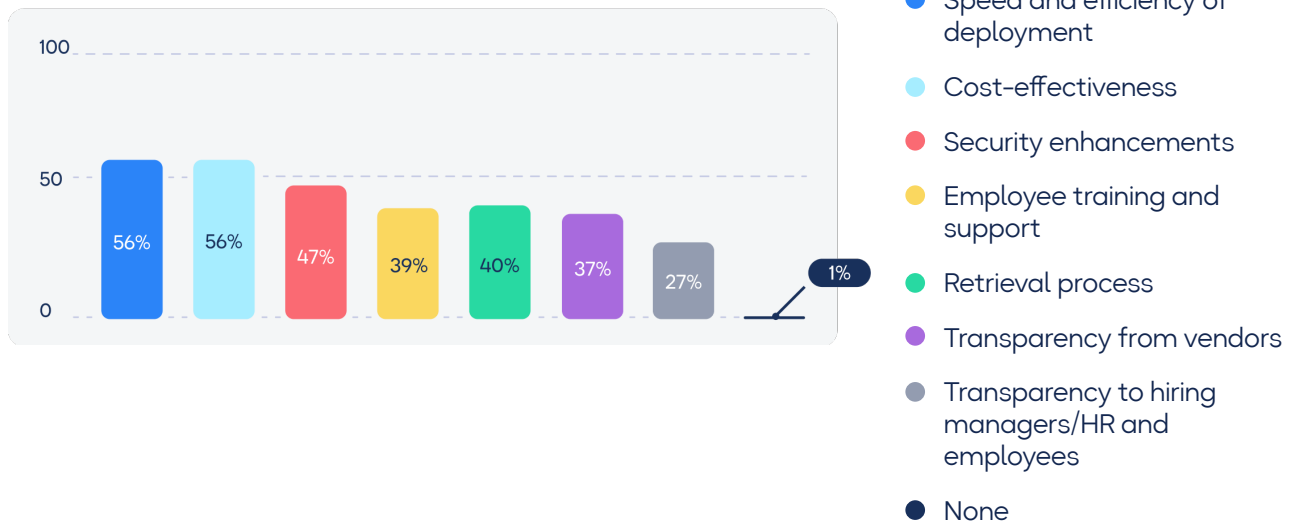
Let's see what strategies and tools IT teams embrace to tackle these challenges head-on.

6.1 What software tools do you use to manage remote IT operations?

Legend:
- Remote monitoring and management (RMM)
- IT service management (ITSM)
- Mobile device management
- Asset management
- Remote equipment management
- Custom solutions
- We do not use specialized software tools

Bar chart values: RMM 50%, ITSM 76%, Mobile device management 48%, Asset management 46%, Remote equipment management 35%, Custom solutions 17%, We do not use specialized software tools 1%
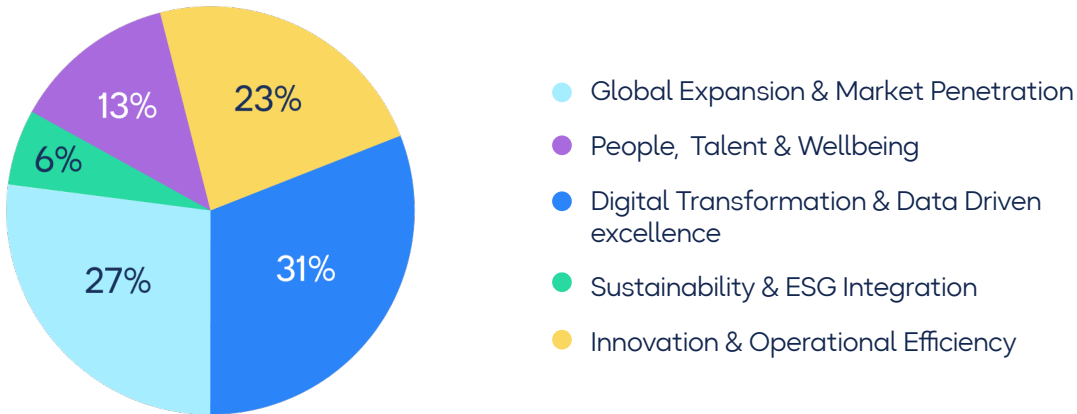
1. **50% utilize Remote Monitoring and Management (RMM) tools**, reflecting the need to oversee IT equipment efficiencies and alerts continuously.

2. **76% indicate the use of IT Service Management (ITSM) systems**, illustrating widespread bias toward integrated management tactics.

3. **48% report employing Mobile Device Management to streamline control** of over-enrolled mobile devices, enhancing network security.

4. **46% confirm leveraging giants in IT Asset Management**, aiming for improved asset life cycle management and record-keeping.

5. **35% of people using remote equipment management** hints at increasing adoption, likely due to the enlarging scope of remote work infrastructures requiring solid operational controls.

6. **17% have developed or used custom solutions** tailored to their organizational needs.

7. **1% reported not utilizing specialized software tools for managing IT operations remotely**, which may suggest a high degree of automation or alternative processes that do not fit traditional categories.

6.2 Which aspect of global IT management would you most like to improve?

- ● Speed and efficiency of deployment
- ● Cost-effectiveness
- ● Security enhancements
- ● Employee training and support
- ● Retrieval process
- ● Transparency from vendors
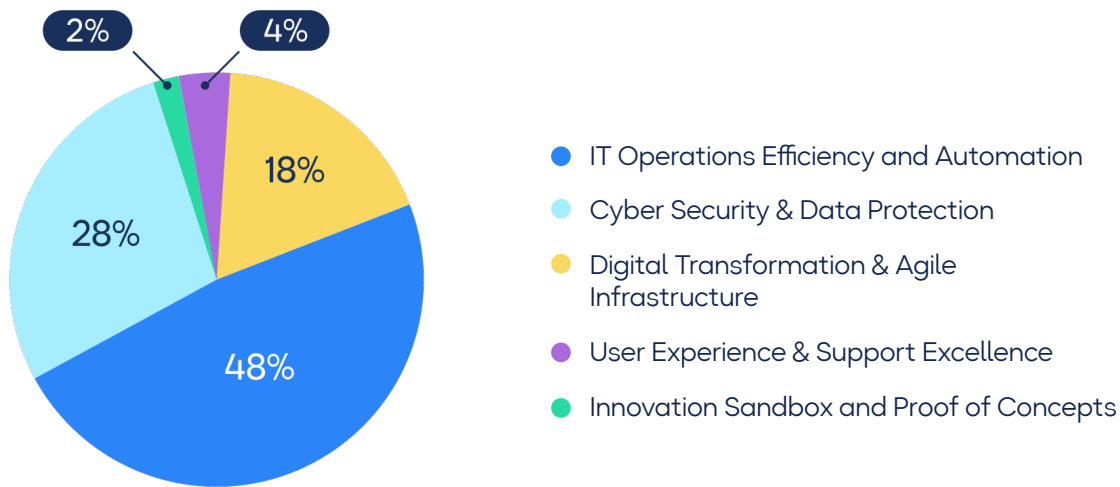- ● Transparency to hiring managers/HR and employees
- ● None

1. **56% aim to boost deployment time, improve cost-effectiveness, and core operational efficiencies.**

2. **47% seek improvements in security measures**, directly contributing to safeguarding IT frameworks.

3. **39% of organizations seek to improve employee training and support**, emphasizing the significance of human factors in the effective management of global IT infrastructure.

4. **40% of respondents prioritize retrieving outdated or malfunctioning equipment**, indicating a need for more streamlined methods in asset recovery.

5. **37% of participants desire enhanced transparency from vendors**, aiming to streamline communications and improve negotiations over territorial IT management and deliverables.

6. **27% would like to improve transparency** to hiring managers/HR and employees.

7. **1% reported no need for improvements**, possibly reflecting a high satisfaction with current operations or a lack of awareness needed for further advancement.

6.3 What is the biggest focus for your company in 2024?

- Global Expansion & Market Penetration
- People, Talent & Wellbeing
- Digital Transformation & Data Driven excellence
- Sustainability & ESG Integration
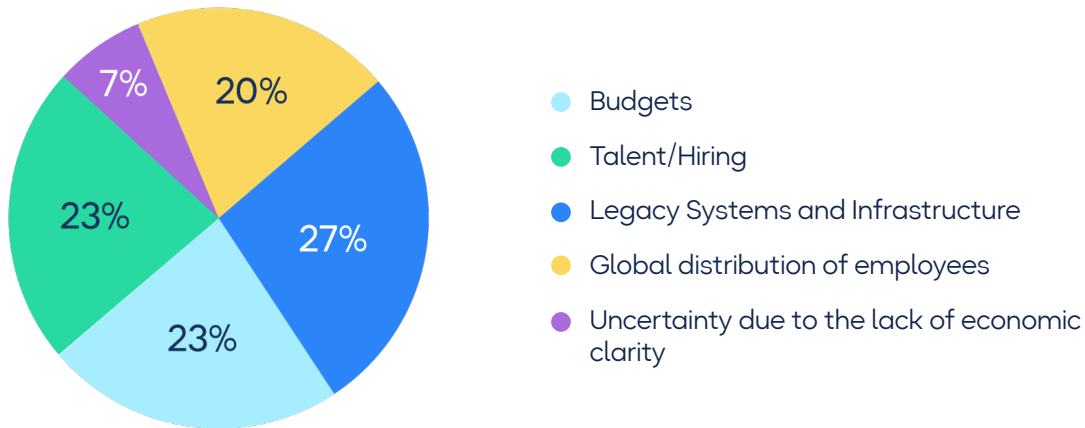- Innovation & Operational Efficiency

1. **27% want to expand globally**, which suggests a rise in borderless hiring.

2. **13% highlight the importance of investing in human resources**, focusing on employees' talent, health, and well-being as pivotal for organizational success.

3. **31% intend to advance their digital and data capabilities** to improve decision-making and streamline operations.

4. **6% prioritize environmental, social, and governance issues** to align business practices with more sustainable, ethical standards.

5. **23% of companies prioritize innovation and operational efficiency**, enhancing their competitive edge through new initiatives.

6.4 What is the biggest focus for your IT department?

- IT Operations Efficiency and Automation
- Cyber Security & Data Protection
- Digital Transformation & Agile Infrastructure
- User Experience & Support Excellence
- Innovation Sandbox and Proof of Concepts

1. **18% of IT-related focus is on digital transformation and agile initiatives**, suggesting changing quantitative demands for technological advancements.

2. **28% of priorities are focused on improving cybersecurity measures** and ensuring robust data protection to combat growing digital threats.

3. **48% of respondents believe operational efficiency should be enhanced and IT processes should be automated**, evidently focusing on effectiveness and scalability.

4. **4% of IT focus is dedicated to improving the user experience and support**, highlighting the need for better interaction between users and IT services.

5. **2% of IT departments devote resources to exploring and evaluating new ideas through innovation sandboxes and proof of concepts**, showing a strategic intention to foster creativity and experiment with new approaches.

6.5 What is the biggest challenge for your IT department?

- Budgets
- Talent/Hiring
- Legacy Systems and Infrastructure
- Global distribution of employees
- Uncertainty due to the lack of economic clarity

1. **23% of respondents consider budget constraints and talent acquisition** as significant challenges.

2. **27% are unsatisfied with legacy systems and infrastructure**, signifying a primary focus on automation and modernization.

3. **20% struggle with managing and supporting a globally dispersed workforce**, again highlighting that automation and modernization are the need of the hour.

4. **7% recognize the influence of global economic volatility** as a significant challenge.

IT managers have 99 problems, but onboarding and offboarding employees with the right IT equipment shouldn't be one.

Automate your entire IT hardware lifecycle with Workwize, no matter where your employees are located.

Workwize is a zero-touch platform for IT managers to automate the management of their IT hardware, no matter where it is located. It has one centralized dashboard and five features.

Here's an overview:

⬀ IT Hardware Procurement

Global delivery of IT equipment (like laptops and IT peripherals) within days-whether to warehouses, remote offices, or employees worldwide.


Suppliers directory
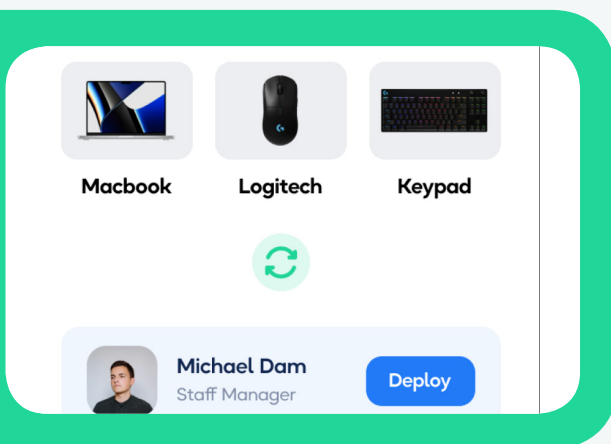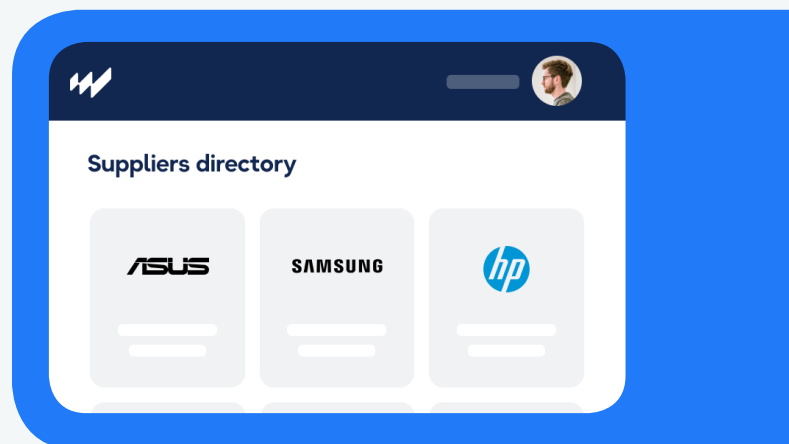
⬀ IT Hardware Deployment

Macbook   Logitech   Keypad

Michael Dam
Staff Manager   Deploy

Reliable tracking and status updates through a track-and-trace link. Out-of-the-box configured device image/enrolment into MDM and automatic onboarding via your preferred HRIS platform.

⎙ IT Hardware Management

Overview of rented/bought or employee-owned assets and their current and depreciating value. Employees can access self-service IT support to request items, request repairs/ maintenance, or request any other support.
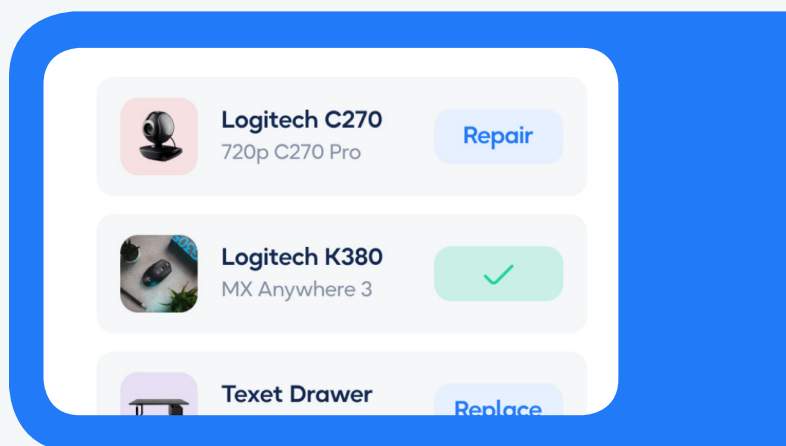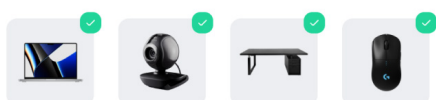
⎙ IT Hardware Retrieval

Zero-touch retrieval (communication with the employee, packaging, and logistics are handled by the logistics team), offboarding tracking, and warehousing: storage, wiping, cleaning, and redeploying. Multi-channel retrieval using email, phone, and WhatsApp.

⎙ IT Hardware Disposal

Get fair market value for disposed of IT hardware via our local warehouses or donate—all with a certificate of data destruction—eco-friendly disposal processes per the country's regulations.

How IT Teams Equip Their Global Workforce
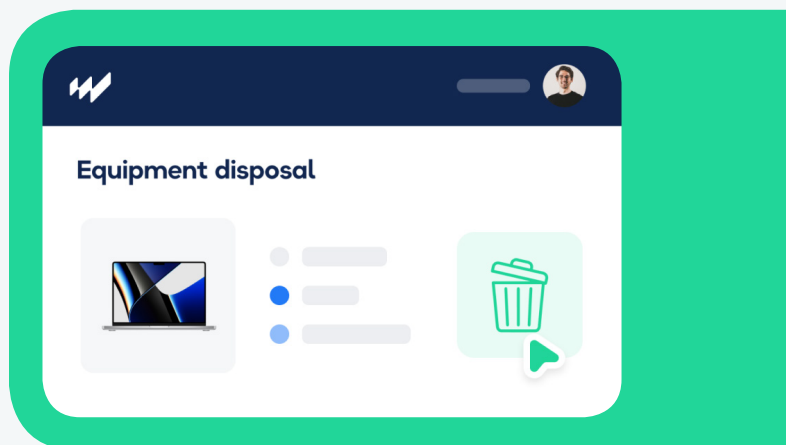
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