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Zones Innovation Center Gives Organizations a Head Start on the Adoption of New Services and Technologies

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Abstract: Digital transformation has widespread implications across all aspects of the business. IT teams are tasked with understanding all of these areas with limited resources. Zones Innovation Center, coupled with Zones Managed Services and Zones Professional Services, can help IT decision-makers (ITDMs) quickly gain familiarity with services and solutions from Zones-validated partners to accelerate digital transformation projects.

Overview – The Problem

The demands placed on IT departments often leave little time for them to build comprehensive labs to experience new technology before moving into a proof of concept. This often leads to delays in implementing new pieces of overall digital transformation initiatives, which has a downstream effect of prolonging current issues and creating a backlog of requests. Likewise, this demand on IT means that advances in technology by Zones' partners—the platform, services, and product vendors trusted throughout the industry—can often go overlooked.

Zones created Innovation Center to help ITDMs explore and experience various technologies and use cases without having to begin their own research or set up a lab from scratch, while also giving Zones' partners an opportunity to showcase their products as part of a validated experience. With Innovation Center, customers can start their journey from an informed position and more quickly transition into proofs of concept, pilots, and deployments, saving valuable time and resources and accelerating their digital transformation projects.

Digital Transformation Isn't Just One Thing

While digital transformation is nothing new, the rate at which organizations are adopting new technology has been accelerating on a year-over-year basis for some time. This overall modernization isn't limited to one facet of IT, like end-user computing or public cloud. Rather, digital transformation affects all areas of IT, including but not limited to:

- Cloud and on-premises data centers
- Storage
- Networking
- Applications
- Data
- Devices
- Management
- Monitoring
- End-user and customer experiences
- Unified communications and collaboration

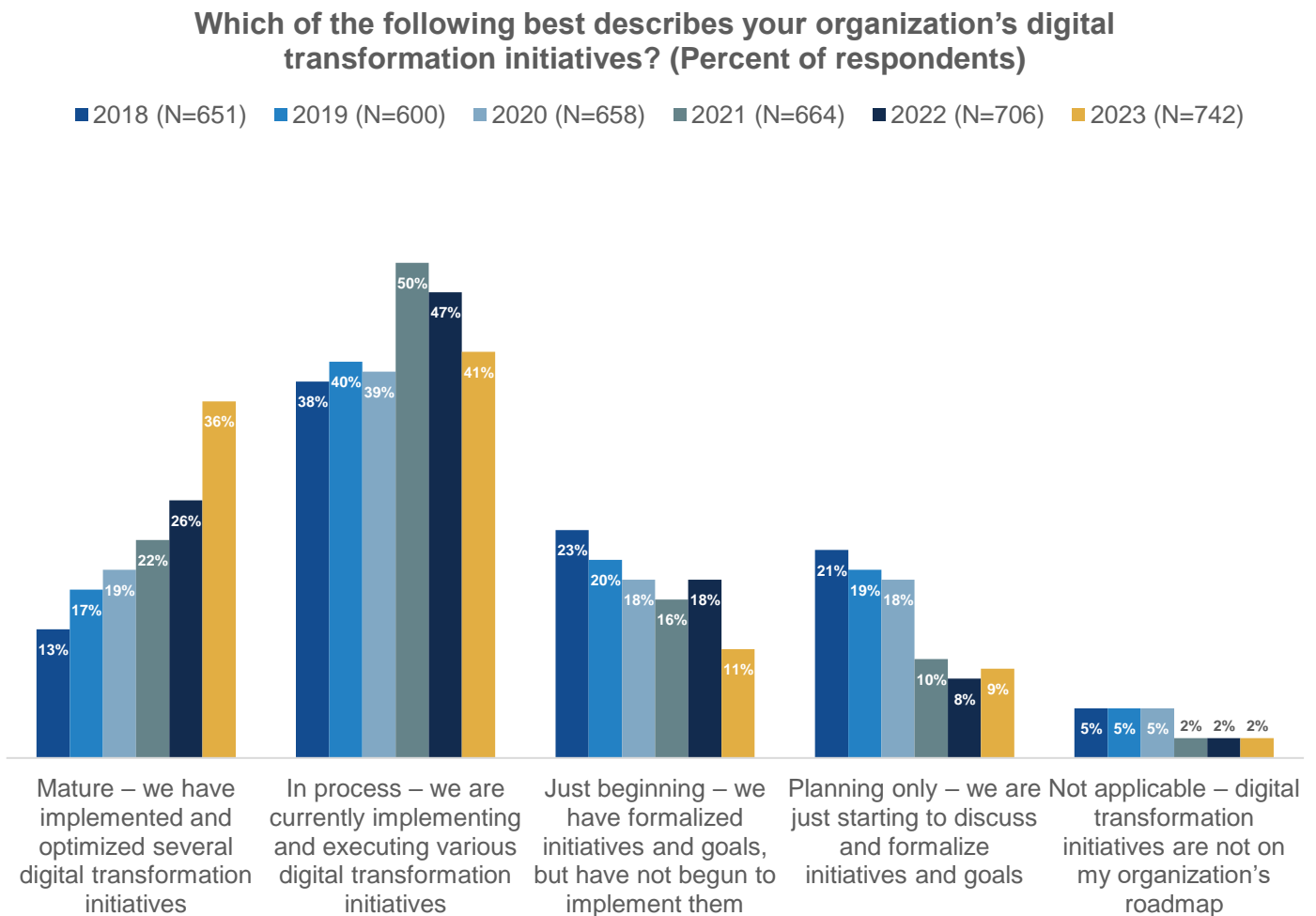
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Where Organizations Are With Their Digital Transformation Initiatives

Between the breadth of areas impacted by digital transformation and the momentum that has been building over time, it's no surprise that 41% of respondents to a recent research survey conducted by TechTarget's Enterprise Strategy Group noted that they were in the process of implementing and executing various digital transformation initiatives, with another 20% either planning or beginning their projects (see Figure 1).¹

Figure 1. Digital Transformation Progress Year-over-year



Source: Enterprise Strategy Group, a division of TechTarget, Inc.

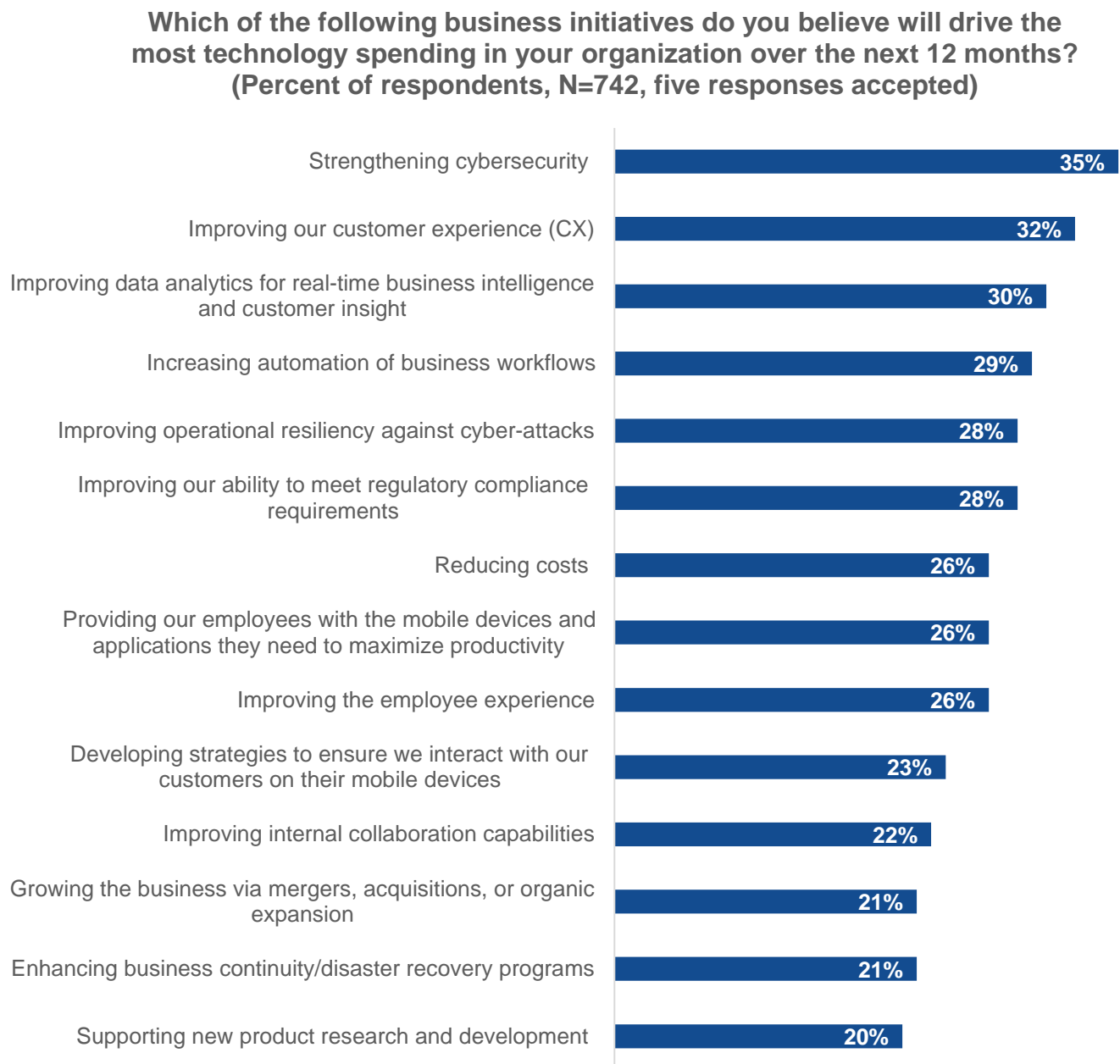
It's also worth noting that the percentage of respondents that considered their digital transformation initiatives to be mature grew significantly faster between 2022 and 2023 than in previous years, and, at 36%, it shows significant progress from five years ago.

¹ Source: Enterprise Strategy Group Research Report, [2023 Technology Spending Intentions Survey](#), November 2022. All Enterprise Strategy Group research references and charts in this showcase have been taken from this research report.

Business Initiatives Driving Technology Spending

Enterprise Strategy Group research respondents were asked about the business initiatives driving the most spending at their organizations. As expected, the responses were quite varied, with strengthening cybersecurity the top response, followed closely by improving customer experience (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Business Initiatives Driving Technology Spending



Source: Enterprise Strategy Group, a division of TechTarget, Inc.

In all, this indicates that the burden on IT departments is significant. Not only must organizations achieve all these goals, but they must do so without disrupting existing business goals or negatively impacting customer and employee experience in the process, all while growing their business through mergers and acquisitions or expansion.

IT Organizations Are Not Equipped for This Much Change

To understand how prepared organizations are to achieve their goals, survey respondents were asked about the areas in which they felt that had a shortage of IT skills. Respondents noted that cybersecurity, IT architecture/planning, IT orchestration, and cloud architecture/planning, among others, were areas that were problematic (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Most Common Areas of IT Skills Shortages

In which of the following areas do you believe your IT organization currently has a problematic shortage of existing skills? (Percent of respondents, N=738, multiple responses accepted)



Source: Enterprise Strategy Group, a division of TechTarget, Inc.

Once again, the data points to a macro IT environment in which so much change is underway that organizations barely have time to survey the landscape, let alone conduct research, build expertise (or acquire talent), and test each of the potential solutions from scratch. Despite this, organizations must press forward or risk encountering security events, losing employees or customers, or falling behind competition.

Zones, a global IT solutions provider known for its expertise in delivering professional and managed services, has created Innovation Center to showcase validated partner solutions that can help organizations deal with the challenges associated with rapidly getting up to speed with new technology.

Zones Innovation Center

Zones Innovation Center was built to simplify the process of evaluating and testing new technology across IT departments. ITDMs can rely on Zones to get them up to speed quickly on new technologies and trends, and IT admins can get hands-on experience with the platforms or services without having to build labs from scratch. Using Innovation Center, coupled with Zones Professional Services and Zones Managed Services, organizations can build confidence in new technology while overcoming skillset deficiencies.

Innovation Center is arranged around three modules: Explore, Experience, and Engage. With the Explore module, ITDMs are able to view Zones and partner-created material that explains the various solutions. This curated repository of material includes white papers, case studies, recorded demos, and more, organized by technology, vendor, and practice area (Digital Workspace, Networking, Cloud, Data Center, etc.).

The Experience module is for IT admins to get hands-on experience with the technology in labs that are already set up by Zones. These labs are provided free of charge and help admins establish a comfort level without having to do the sometimes arduous task of setting up a lab for each product they want to try.

Ultimately, when IT is aligned on a solution and wants to try it, the Engage module can connect them with Zones directly to build a custom proof of concept to take a deep dive in their environment. As part of this process, Zones can showcase their Professional Services and Managed Services expertise by helping to build a comprehensive strategy that considers all other digital transformation efforts—even those not using Zones' preferred solutions.

The Right Approach

Designing and implementing a digital transformation strategy is a yearslong process that requires extensive knowledge of not only the technologies associated with it, but also the business processes unique to each organization. Organizations must be aware of the impact that implementing this new technology will have on the business, end users, and customers, as well, so that efficiency and experience aren't negatively affected throughout the entire implementation.

Overcoming the challenges associated with so much change starts with identifying strengths and weaknesses within IT, as well as identifying the priorities that need investment. Leveraging the Professional Services and Managed Services Zones has to offer, plus resources like Innovation Center, can help organizations develop a strategy and overcome deficiencies while both accelerating digital transformation efforts and minimizing the disruptions to the business, end users, and customers.

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