babble

Small holes sink big ships

One small leak can sink a whole business operation

These findings were the result of insights gathered from businesses surveyed in late 2021.

Don't ignore the warning signs, stay out of deep water

Sometimes in business, you're so busy avoiding big, obvious risks like competitors, regulatory change, or market volatility, that it can be harder to invest in fixing the more day-to-day concerns — like disintegrating company culture and lack of teamwork, unstructured customer communications processes and sloppy security protocols. Eventually those small, ignorable issues will creep up on you to become just as troublesome as the big ones. With only half of our survey respondents rating their technology stack moderately, and almost two thirds feeling unprepared for a cyber-attack, I feel that businesses are leaving themselves vulnerable.

But there's good news: many of these hazards can be addressed with the same solution, so your business can continue to thrive, ready to fend off those larger risks from a strong foundation.

Matthew Parker
Chief Executive, Babble

Companies need to get hooked on upgrading

Many firms we surveyed found it difficult to maintain culture during the pandemic, with 50% saying that keeping company culture alive was their biggest challenge. Work environment and teamwork were also both raised as issues, and 50% stated that the technology at work was only moderately or not very effective. Ouch.

However, with hybrid work on the agenda for the foreseeable future, businesses will need to invest rapidly in helping their teams return to full productivity by investing in tech that will improve the employee experience. Good tech = happy employees = smooth sailing.

Another major finding is that although the majority rated their customer experience highly, a mystery shop conducted by Babble found some fairly average results across phone, social and web chat enquiries, with 42% of web chat enquiries left unresolved and only 5% of phone calls followed up within three working days.

Businesses are looking to implement newer technologies like chatbots, but many are still hampered by clunky, reactive touchpoints like phone and email and don't appear to be taking a holistic view of their customer journey.

The vast majority (87%) are more aware of cyber-attacks than they were 18 months ago, and 13% have been victims of cyber-attacks. However, confidence in cybersecurity isn't high, with only 29% feeling extremely prepared for a cyber-attack.

Some of these things might seem small in isolation. But all it takes is one small leak, ignored for long enough, to sink a whole operation.

Company culture has gone downhill

Many of our respondents (50%) found that keeping company culture alive was a struggle during the pandemic. A concerning 36% struggled with work environments, and 34% felt that teamwork was an issue — not an inspiring picture for businesses trying to run a tight ship.

50%

of businesses found that keeping company culture alive was a struggle during the pandemic.

50%

only rated their technology moderately and suffered from ineffective home working support.

The tech specs are getting a mixed response

Whilst around half of respondents thought their home working setup was extremely effective, 50% only rated their technology moderately and suffered from ineffective home working support — which reveals a significant amount of businesses running on so-so systems.

Respondents felt that tools like VPNs, better laptops and more cloud-based solutions would improve effectiveness, along with support and training.

Hybrid working is the people's choice

With a seemingly permanent global shift towards remote work, it's time for businesses to be realistic and start investing in their team's tech and culture in order to make hybrid working the most effective it can be.

84%

see the future with a hybrid working model.

85%

of respondents rated their customers' experience a 7 or 8 out of 10.

Are businesses over-confident about their customer experience?

A staggering 85% of respondents rated their customers' experience 7 or 8 out of 10. Not bad at all! But would customers say the same? Mystery shopping undertaken by Babble suggests there might be more than a little room for improvement.

Only 12% of web chat enquiries were resolved via the chat, with 42% left unresolved. Social media enquiries fared better, with 42% resolved. For phone calls, only 5% were followed up within three working days.

Are the old-school customer touchpoints really cutting it?

Most popular customer touchpoints are old school: email (97%), direct phone (89%) and social media (74%). These are high-touch, largely non-automated and reactive forms of customer comms that can get lost in inboxes without excellent systems to make sure nothing falls off the radar.
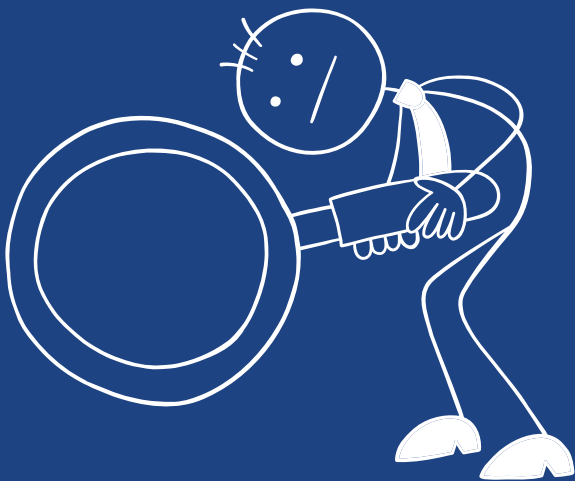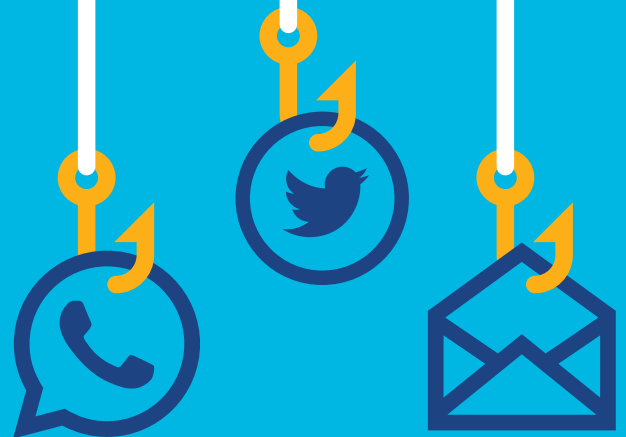
Tech stacks may not be the most up-to-date

Despite the need to evolve to meet new uses like hybrid working and growing customer expectations, over 50% last reviewed their tech stack six months or more ago. Budget (63%) and lack of resourcing (66%) were cited as the two main obstacles preventing digital transformation.

50%

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Businesses are integrating new customer touchpoints — slowly

Businesses we interviewed are struggling to extricate themselves from clunky old technology, and despite one in five considering investing in areas like chatbots or live chat, these technologies have already been outpaced by more sophisticated tech.

1 in 5

are considering investing in areas like chatbots or live chat.

Forecasting
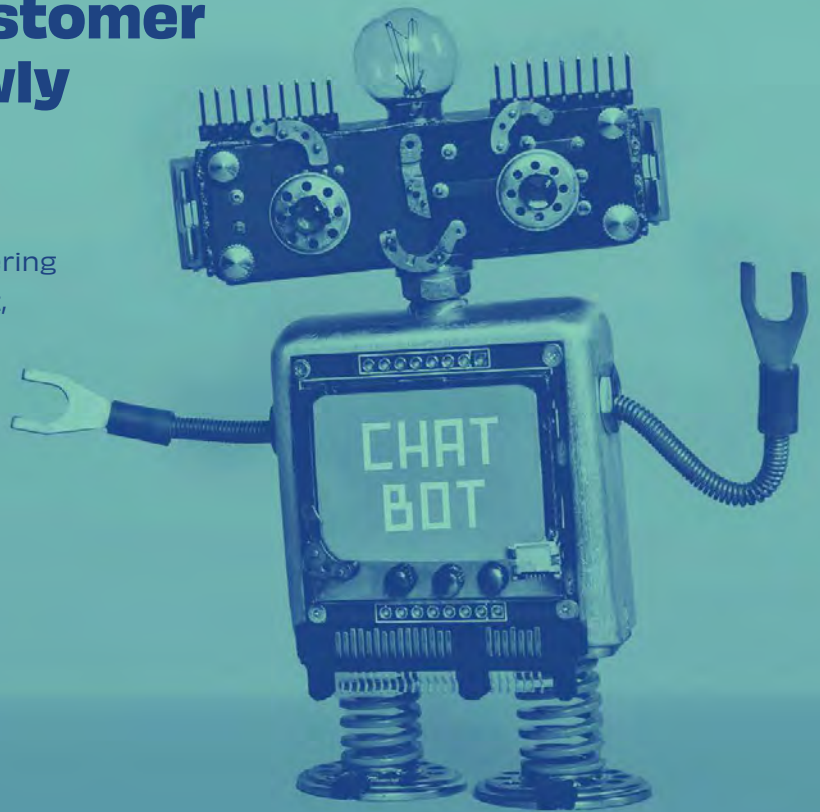
The pandemic has set a new course for businesses

Asked to elaborate, respondents overwhelmingly pointed out that hybrid working and customers' expectations that services should be fully digitised were now two of the driving factors in future planning for the business.

Awareness of the threat of cyber-attacks is on the up

The vast majority (87%) identified an increased awareness of the dangers of cyber-attacks in the last 18 months, and 13% have even fallen prey to them over the same period. However, only 29% of respondents felt extremely prepared for cyber-attack threats, suggesting that awareness isn't the same as action.

87%

identified an increased awareness of the dangers of cyber-attacks in the last 18 months.

Many operate on a patchwork of cloud solutions

40% of respondents reported having multiple cloud vendors working in isolation from each other, and of those who didn't have a cloud solution, only half were more likely to consider getting one post-pandemic.

40%

of respondents reported having multiple cloud vendors working in isolation from each other.

Fix the leaks to keep your business thriving

So, we've identified three main leaks in UK businesses:

- Teams are struggling to connect and get work completed between home and office because of lacklustre tech.

- Customer expectations are soaring ahead of what businesses can currently provide, but firms are reaching for band-aids to tide them over instead of comprehensive solutions that could make them watertight.

- The threat of cyber-attacks looms large, but businesses haven't yet acted to protect their most precious assets.

Sounds hairy, but we have good news. Each of these issues can be addressed with the same solution — end-to-end cloud which offers:

- Improved team communication, planning and meeting software to keep the team happy, productive and delivering on the vision.

- AI-enabled customer comms to keep you clear-eyed and on the front foot when it comes to delivering customer expectations.

- Outsourced cybersecurity to ensure your systems are safe far beyond where the eye can see.

Ocean liners can continue sailing long after a tiny leak or two has sprung. But if these remain unaddressed for long enough, even the smallest of breaches — missed emails, increased staff turnover — can sometimes sink the mightiest vessels.

Of course, it's entirely possible to bail out the water and limp into port, but it's a short-term solution and which someday soon will come back to bite you. Better to get that leak locked down before you take on too much water, because nobody took that return Titanic trip back to Southampton. Bon voyage!

About Babble

Babble is a leading technology business that is reimagining how we do work. Founded in 2001, the company works with over 4,000 organisations in a wide range of sectors — including financial, health and education, travel and accommodation, and public services — by sourcing, deploying and supporting locally the very best cloud solutions to deliver increased efficiency, customer engagement and profitability, whilst protecting customers' businesses.

Babble's growth over the last few years is one of the big success stories in its industry. This is demonstrated by the private equity investment of Graphite Capital in November 2020 — which was supported by reinvestment from LDC and management — to accelerate the buy and build strategy for the business.

Babble has four product pillars — Comms, Contact, Cyber and Mobile and believes in making next-generation technology simple to use, deploy and manage. This gives people the tools they need to build the organisations they want. Agile, scalable and successful.

To learn more about our capabilities and how we could transform your business, please visit babble.cloud.

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