irrational fears and the cloud

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Executive summary

Irrational fears have always been prevalent when it comes to the adoption of new inventions. Whether it was our ancestors fretting over the safety of electric lights in the home or concerns over the reliability of the combustion engine, irrational fear of the unknown has been the spanner in the gears of the adoption of new inventions. Today, we are no different and unfounded concerns are still prone to haunt our personal and working lives. This pervading sense of fear and caution is one of the key factors that holds back the kind of innovation that could help to pull us out of the economic crisis.
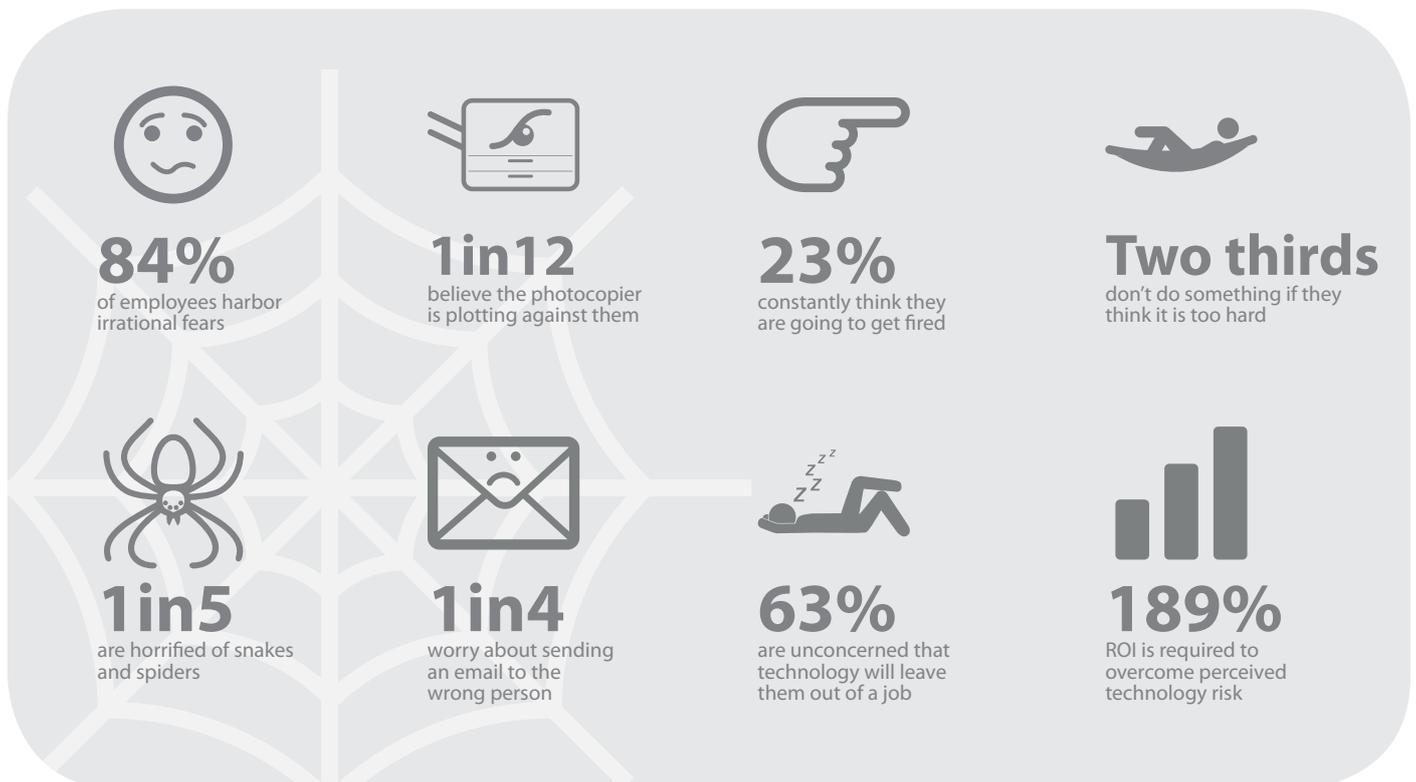
In this research we look to identify these fears, what is driving them and what is needed to overcome them. The results are eye-opening with the vast majority of respondents admitting that they harbour an irrational fear in the workplace. This culture of fear is widespread and, in many cases, fuelled by the attitude and actions of management.

Conservative management is strangling innovation and decision makers are reluctant to embrace new technologies, such as the cloud. Without the encouragement of collaboration coming from the top those individuals whose ideas have traditionally driven innovation, are not given the opportunity to prosper.

Too many decisions are being made based on irrational fears and preconceptions with decision makers relying on popular buzzwords to secure buy-in to the choices they take, rather than convincing their stakeholders with arguments based on real business benefits.

To allow innovation to flourish, employees need to be actively encouraged to embrace change and assess risks and opportunities. In the current climate, people are often too focused on keeping their job to rock the status quo, which is having a negative impact on their willingness to share ideas.

This mentality needs to change and this change must be led from the top.

84%
of employees harbor irrational fears

1in12
believe the photocopier is plotting against them

23%
constantly think they are going to get fired

Two thirds
don't do something if they think it is too hard

1in5
are horrified of snakes and spiders

1in4
worry about sending an email to the wrong person

63%
are unconcerned that technology will leave them out of a job

189%
ROI is required to overcome perceived technology risk

Research commissioned by Mozy® by EMC, provider of cloud data backup and access solutions. More information can be found at www.mozy.com/blog

Irrational fears stifle innovation

According to the research, innovation is being held back as 84 per cent of employees harbour an irrational fear with a staggering one in twelve people even believing that the photocopier is plotting against them.

Work is a big source of groundless fear for many, with nearly one in four respondents (25 per cent) admitting they fret unnecessarily about sending a sensitive email to the wrong person, whilst 23 per cent panic about getting fired even though they have no reason to worry. One in five respondents stress over being 'found out' for being no good at their jobs (19 per cent), and 21 per cent are concerned that they will inexplicably turn up an inappropriate website during an innocent internet search at work.

Irrational fears at work are preventing many from doing their jobs – with 68 per cent admitting they had not done something because they thought it would be harder than it actually was. It's also holding them, and their businesses, back as unfounded fears of using new workplace technologies, such as the cloud, mean they miss out on using tools that could give them the edge.

The fear of being replaced by technology, however, was not as prevalent as some might think with nearly two thirds (63 per cent) of people unconcerned that technological advancements might take away their jobs.

Irrational fears in the workplace
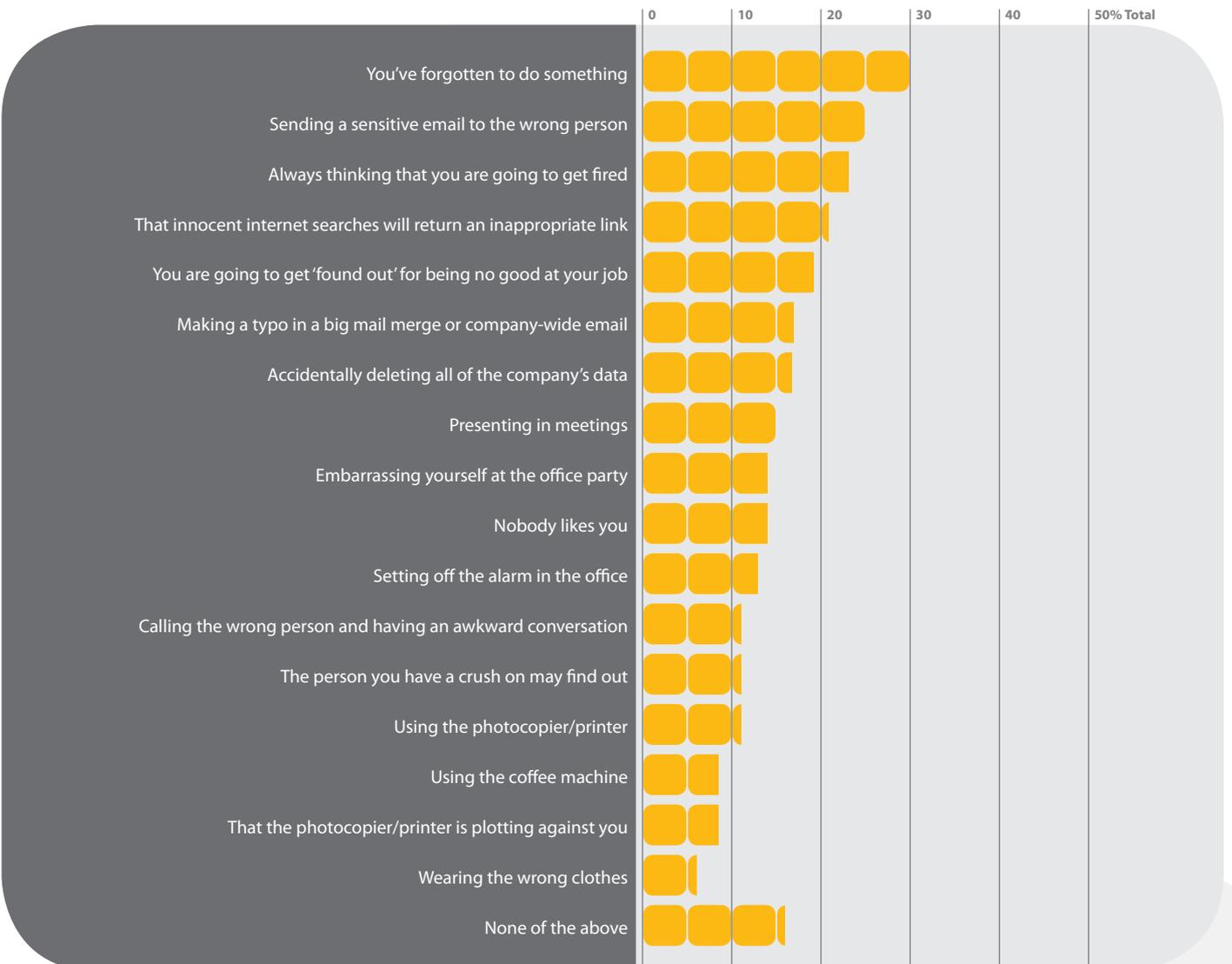
Base: all respondents

In fact, many (44 per cent) believe that the computer has had the greatest impact on our lives, along with other recent technology inventions including the internet (36 per cent) and the mobile phone (28 per cent). The computer represents more than double the amount of people (20 per cent) who believe that lifesaving antibiotics has had the greatest impact and nine times (5 per cent) that of the steam engine. Even the wheel, often heralded as the greatest invention of all time, couldn't compare to technology with only 14 per cent believing it had the greatest impact on our lives demonstrating that consumers are living in the here and now.

It's not just work that has people worried – nearly half of us (48 per cent) live in fear of something happening to a family member, 27 per cent are terrified of public speaking, one in four are scared of rejection, and one in five are horrified of snakes and spiders.

Around two in five people think that in the not-too-distant future, we'll no longer be nervous about using mobile phones on flights due to interference to plane electronics (38%), or using credit cards to make online purchases due to security risks (41%).

ROI to overcome perceived technology risk

	0	10	20	30	40	50% Total
100% - 150%						
150% - 200%						
200% - 250%						
250% - 300%						
*More than 300% (please specify)						
Average (return on investment needed to take the risk) **189%**						

Base: IT decision makers whose organisation has perceived technology as a risk

Mozy viewpoint

Irrational fears have driven our actions throughout }history and could have seriously hindered the modern world if they hadn't been overcome. For example, many people considered medicine witchcraft, were terrified of sailing off the edge of the world, or believed that sending people into orbit could lead to 'space madness'. Fortunately, those myths were debunked. We believe that, in the future, the same will be said about a lot of modern technologies that some people eye with suspicion today.

The current working climate is fostering these irrational fears and stifling innovation. Everyone is so scared of losing their jobs or doing something wrong that they are unwilling to come up with ideas and challenge 'how it has always been done'.

Companies and individuals are held back from reaching their goals through fear and confusion. To maximise our opportunities, we need to challenge outdated and irrational ideas of what is 'safe' and take advantage of new possibilities online.

Technology and the internet services are hugely valuable resources but many workers are afraid to use them as much as they could to make an impact at work. This is not a fear of being replaced by technology but more of looking foolish. This is compounded by rules laid down by IT departments and managers, which limit or delay their use. Often, it also appears that managers in the workplace are driving the fears causing companies and individuals to be held back from reaching their goals through fear and confusion. To maximise our opportunities, we need to challenge outdated and unfounded ideas about the risks and benefits of technologies for storage and collaboration in the cloud and take advantage of new possibilities online.

Why aren't we innovating?

The research found that more than a third (37 per cent) of workplace projects have been blocked by the board due to fear. In addition, 57 per cent of IT decision makers believe the board/company management are the most fearful of new technology implementations and more than half (55 per cent) stated that they or their company perceives the adoption of technology as a risk.

Rules set by IT departments are also hindering innovation with 52 per cent of people admitting that they have not been able to do something that would help their job due to limitations imposed on them. In addition, 24 per cent of ideas generated to improve businesses are delayed for so long by the IT department that they fail to deliver results. However, money talks and a return on investment of 189 per cent is all that's required to overcome this perceived risk and put a project into action.

It is not just IT departments holding projects back but an institutionalised fear of trying new things at work. 15 per cent of all respondents stated that no one in their organisation takes risks and less than half (46 per cent) of workers questioned said their business actively embraces change. One in three (34 per cent) also haven't submitted any ideas at work and only 17 per cent of respondents have had an idea at work that has been put into practice.
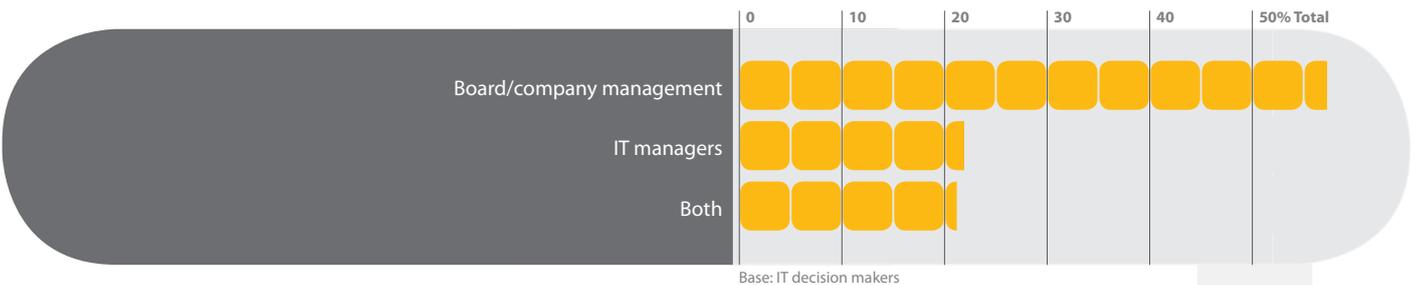
Creating the right buzz

What businesses are afraid of is changing and can be irrational, as demonstrated by the influence of buzzwords on technology adoption. The fact that any buzzword can influence a purchasing decision should be seen as worrying, since it means that decision makers are basing their choices on preconceptions rather than on the merits of a proposal

IT managers were asked what impact linking buzzwords to their budget requests had both today and two years ago and which words helped or hindered their proposals.

"Cloud" was the second worst buzzword to add to a budget request two years ago, with 31 per cent of IT managers saying it was a turn off for the board when submitting a proposal. Today, "cloud" is more of a help than a hindrance and the number of IT managers who would avoid it has almost halved. 39 per cent say that describing a project as "cloud" would help to get them funding.

"Gamification" has remained the worst buzzword to add to a funding request. "Collaboration", "on demand" and "virtualisation" are the best words to use to get a project signed off. Despite the fact that "on demand", "as a service (…aaS)" and "cloud" could all be used in many cases to describe the same projects, 17 per cent of IT managers say "as a service" hinders their pitch compared to just 5 per cent for "on demand." Conversely, 53 per cent say "on demand" helps their proposals compared with 31 per cent for "as a service."

Most fearful of technology implementations

Base: IT decision makers

Tools used in business to encourage innovation at all levels

	0	100	200	300	400	500
Online tools for file sharing and collaboration						
Meetings with management at all levels						
Regular brainstorming sessions						
An 'ideas' box						
Networking events						
Open use of work computers for professional and personal tasks						
Open use of computers and devices to download apps or use online services						
Use of personal technology						
Innovation competitions						
Code jamming sessions						
*Other (please specify)						
None of the above						

Base: office workers

Mozy viewpoint

The research goes to show there is too much red tape in businesses around encouraging innovation and the benefits of collaboration and using new technology like cloud services which are holding back success.

Signing a project off, or rejecting it, based on preconceptions and buzzwords mean that businesses are missing out. To succeed, businesses need to look at the actual benefits and risks of innovation - and stay up to speed with new developments that make adoption safer.

Leaders in business and technology need to be enablers, not roadblocks, if they want their companies to succeed in difficult economic circumstances. Through their own admission 84 per cent of employees are already bringing their own irrational fears to the workplace – they need direction from those who understand technology and business to encourage them out of their shells – not to stifle them with their own fears and misconceptions.

The fact that many irrational fears stem from management just highlights that significant changes need to be made from the top down if we are to continue to pull ourselves out of the current economic situation.

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37%
of projects are blocked
by board fear

Workplace rules
prevent more than half from
doing something better

1 in 4
projects delayed and
fail to deliver results

15%
said no one takes risks
in the office

A third
haven't submitted any
ideas at work

39%
said adding "cloud"
to a funding request
would help sign off

Only 5%
stated "on demand"
hinders a funding request

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The great cloud security myth

Despite cloud-based services like voicemail for mobile phones and web-based email featuring in the lives of most local markets, and the survey being completed using a cloud application, 46 per cent of people claim that they don't use cloud services in their personal lives. This highlights that many people are confused about what "the cloud" really is, creating a 'fear of the unknown'.

31 per cent of IT decision managers said that the board/company management was very sceptical about the cloud and only 10 per cent said they were not sceptical at all. This scepticism of the cloud by the board is driven by security concerns (38 per cent) according to IT managers.

A little knowledge also proved to be a dangerous thing, with people's perceptions of cloud security varying widely based on their level of technical understanding. Overall, only 20 per cent of people believed the cloud to be 'slightly risky' or worse. However just 3 per cent of those who described themselves as 'slightly skilled' thought that the cloud was a 'very safe' place to keep their data, compared with 22 per cent of people who described themselves as 'experts' and 46 per cent of people who stated that they were 'complete novices'.

This implies that non-technical people, who are regularly exposed to discussions about the cloud – such as business decision makers – are more likely to be confused about the cloud than those who are experts and aware of the measures in place to protect data online.

Interestingly, the security measures that need to be in place for people to feel comfortable that data such as photos, documents and videos are safe in a cloud environment are considered the same as in the home despite considerably fewer being in place in the majority of households. Encryption tops both lists with 44% stating that it is needed to protect data in the home and 55% saying a code that only they know is needed at a cloud vendor site. More people (38 per cent) consider an alarm a necessity at home compared to at a cloud providers site (31 per cent). Surprisingly, 13 per cent even stated they would only feel data in the home was safe with a biometric entry barrier; only slightly more (17 per cent) thought it was essential in the cloud environment to protect data.

How safe is data in the cloud

Base: all respondents
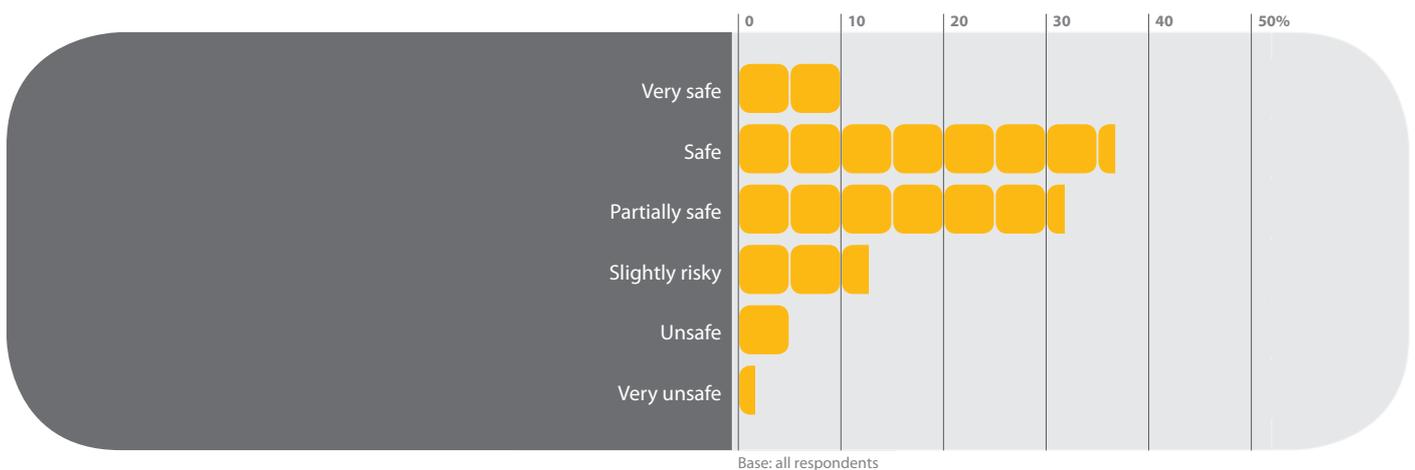
Security measures that need to be in place for people to feel comfortable that data is safe in a cloud environment

Measure	0	10	20	30	40	50%
Encrypting your files with a code that only you know at the cloud vendor site						
An alarm to protect against unauthorised access at the cloud vendor site						
Independent certification that the data centre is secure at the cloud vendor site						
Protection systems for fire, floods and earthquakes at the cloud vendor site						
Knowing that the doors and windows in the data centre are locked at the cloud vendor site						
Dividing it up, and having copies stored in different areas at the cloud vendor site						
A 24-hour guard and patrol dogs at the cloud vendor site						
Eyeball scanner to secure door at the cloud vendor site						
*Other (please specify)						
None						

Base: all respondents

Mozy viewpoint

Despite the widespread use of cloud in personal lives, even if people don't realise it, the IT department and the board are holding back adoption in the organisation. Security is the biggest driver of scepticism around the cloud but the elements required to make businesses feel their data is safe are already in place with many cloud services.

This highlights the lack of understanding within management that needs to be addressed in order for businesses to take advantage of the latest technology developments.

There's a mismatch between perception and reality. Although 90 per cent of people felt that the cloud could be safer, a service like Mozy offers all of the features required by 99 per cent of respondents in order for them to feel that their data was safe in the cloud.

Evolution is the key to survival and, in the current economy, significant changes need to be made in order for businesses not just to survive but thrive in the future. There is no room for irrational fears. A change in attitude and approach is required from the top in order to encourage everyone in the business to have ideas and innovate, no matter their level.

46%
claim they don't use cloud in personal lives

31%
of IT managers said board was very sceptical about cloud

2 in 5
said scepticism is driven by security

33%
of people think that cloud security fears will be banished to history before long

13%
would only feel safe with an eyeball scanner at home

17%
want an eyeball scanner at a cloud site

Mozy offers
all of the security features required by 99% of respondents

Only 7%
of people think that the cloud is unsafe

Cloud fears
melt in face of 25% discount

Research commissioned by Mozy® by EMC, provider of cloud data backup and access solutions. More information can be found at www.mozy.com/blog
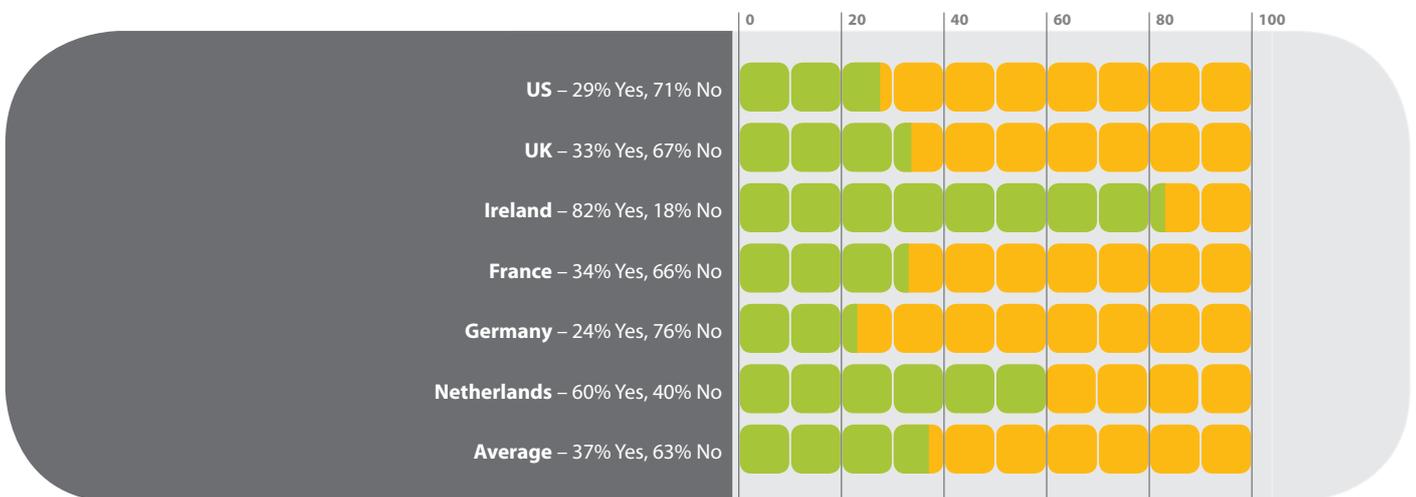
International comparisons

The results varied markedly across the countries with the Irish proving to be the most fearful and the Americans and Germans most accepting of change. In France, only nine per cent of respondents stated that no one in their company take risks, slightly ahead of Germany with 10 per cent which is in stark contrast to Ireland where 27 per cent of companies are risk adverse. In addition, 82 per cent of Irish IT decision makers said that they have had a project blocked by the board compared with only 24 per cent in Germany, 29 per cent in the US and 33 per cent in the UK.

Additionally those that have refrained from doing something because they thought it was harder than it was are vastly different across the countries. The French are most likely to take a chance and get stuck in with 47 per cent admitting that they don't hold off. By comparison the British are the most put off with 80 per cent putting something off because they are scared of it.

In terms of inventions that have had the greatest impact on our lives, only two countries didn't agree that the computer topped the list. These are Ireland, who believe it is electricity, and The Netherlands who stated that it is the mobile phone.
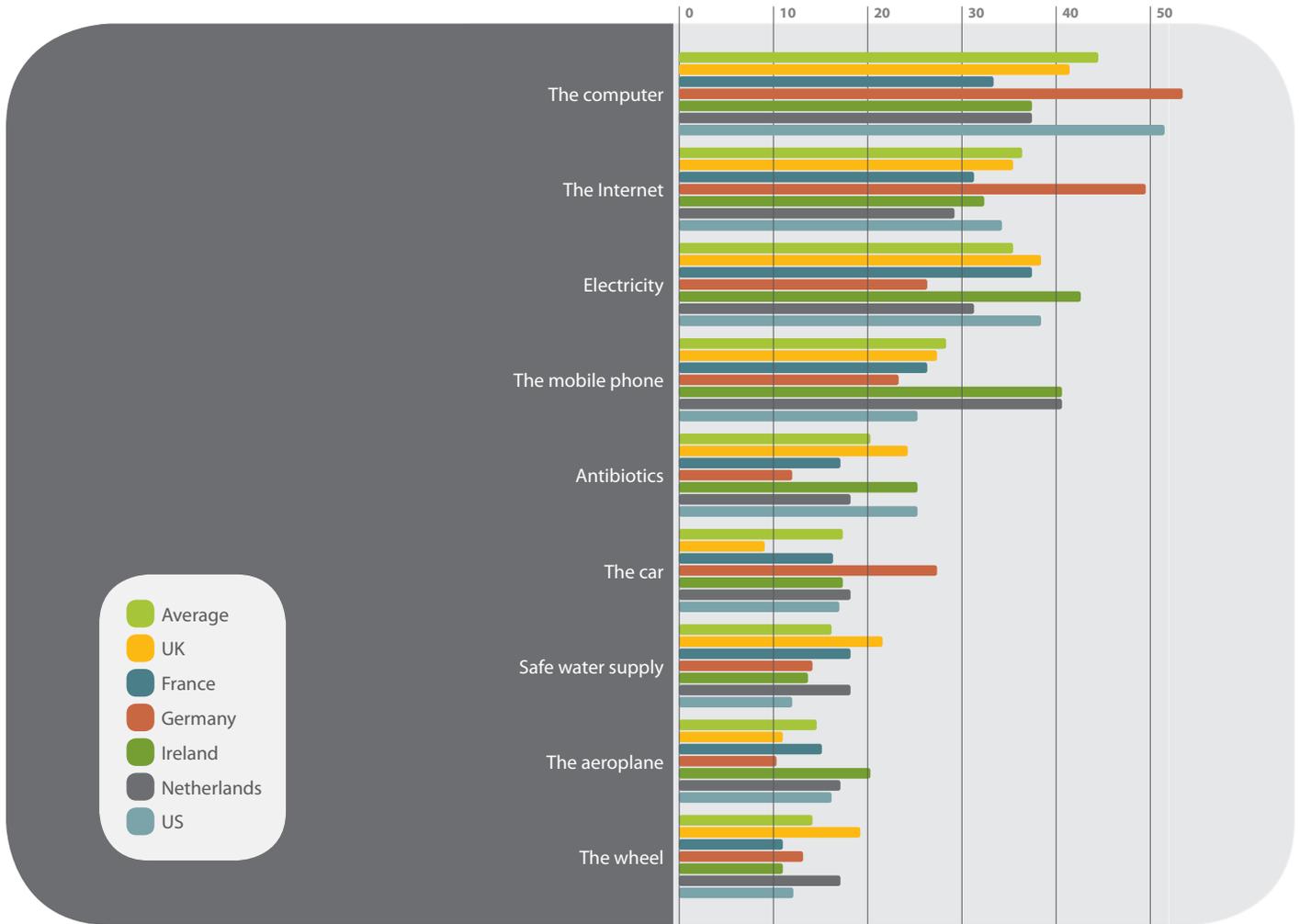
However, the US is the most accepting of cloud with double the average stating that they believe it is very safe. This is three times as many as the Dutch who believed the same. In contrast, it is the Dutch IT decision makers who say that the board has the least scepticism towards cloud with 13 per cent agreeing that management has none at all. The Americans are second with 13 per cent and the Germans are the most sceptical with only five per cent.

Projects blocked because management/the board was scared of it

US – 29% Yes, 71% No
UK – 33% Yes, 67% No
Ireland – 82% Yes, 18% No
France – 34% Yes, 66% No
Germany – 24% Yes, 76% No
Netherlands – 60% Yes, 40% No
Average – 37% Yes, 63% No

Inventions that have had the greatest impact on our lives

Base: all respondents

Mozy viewpoint

It is not a surprise that the Irish are the most cautious given that the country is one of the hardest hit globally by the economic crisis. In contrast Germany has one of the most stable economies and isn't as risk adverse. Although some may argue that it is the Germans conservative approach that has protected them from a lot of the troubles that have impacted other countries.

Despite this, and the very different views of IT decisions makers and office workers across the six countries surveyed, the premise is still the same when it comes to dispelling irrational fears.

The lack of consistency in responses goes to show that there is a global fear culture in both personal and working lives that needs to be overcome with education and encouragement to embrace change. This needs to come from the top and be filtered down through the entire organisation.

Where it exists, the reluctance to share ideas, evaluate risks and embrace opportunities needs to change across all countries. Those who are able to overcome fears and misapprehensions will be those in the best position to succeed – whether they are board members, managers or not.

Methodology

Research was commissioned by Mozy® by EMC and conducted by Vanson Bourne in May 2013. The survey questioned 550 IT decision makers and 1,250 office workers across the UK, US, Ireland, France, Germany and the Netherlands. Respondents work within organisations with 50 – 1,000 employees.

Country splits

	0	100	200	300	400	500
US – 150 IT decision makers, 300 office workers						
UK – 100 IT decision makers, 250 office workers						
Ireland – 50 IT decision makers, 100 office workers						
France – 100 IT decision makers, 250 office workers						
Germany – 100 IT decision makers, 250 office workers						
The Netherlands – 50 IT decision makers, 100 office workers						

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