

Let'sTalkTech

Autumn/Winter 2025-2026



axon

Welcome to the Autumn/Winter 2025-2026 edition of **Let's Talk Tech**

It's hard to believe that 2026 is already upon us. 2025 was a momentous year for technology, with AI and autonomous agents appearing in almost every strategic conversation: What are they? How do we use them? Will they take our jobs?

This edition of Let's Talk Tech arrives at a pivotal time for IT, with the pace of change feeling somewhat relentless. However, with this relentless innovation comes enormous opportunity for organisations ready to embrace a future powered by intelligent automation.

As with previous editions, this Autumn/Winter issue explores the latest trends setting the agenda for the next 12 months. We're taking a deep dive into the "agent era", the beginning of a transformative shift as AI-powered agents move from concept to practical reality. While technical intricacies are evolving behind the scenes, the impact for businesses is clear: a new generation of digital assistants is reducing manual workloads, streamlining operations, and enabling teams to focus on creative and strategic pursuits.

With it, the integration of platforms like Microsoft 365 Copilot signals a move towards more innovative, more intuitive workplaces, where routine tasks are delegated to technology and human talent is freed to innovate.

Looking ahead to 2026, business leaders should expect technology to become even more embedded in daily operations, supporting decision-making and unlocking new sources of value. This edition will guide you through essential innovations, from enhanced security and governance measures that protect data integrity to sector-specific solutions tailored for unique challenges across industries. We'll highlight how customisable AI agents and natural language capabilities are making automation accessible for organisations of all sizes. No longer is artificial intelligence only accessible to enterprise-level businesses.

Whether you're an IT leader, business owner, or simply passionate about the future of work – accelerated by technology, this edition has something for you.

Let us know what you think!



Tim Mears
Managing Director
Axon IT



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The agent era is here:

How automation is transforming how businesses operate

The rise of AI-powered agents is ushering in a new chapter for business automation, reducing manual workloads and enabling teams to focus on strategic priorities. Agents, essentially digital workplace assistants, are designed to perform tasks independently and are already embedded in platforms like Microsoft 365 Copilot, streamlining everything from scheduling meetings to preparing reports.

Beyond routine tasks, agents are increasingly supporting decision-making processes. By analysing data in real time, they can surface actionable insights and recommend easy-to-understand next steps. Gartner predicts that by 2026, 75% of organisations will use AI agents in some capacity, fundamentally altering how work gets done and shifting employee roles towards more creative and analytical endeavours.

What's more, according to Microsoft, businesses leveraging AI agents are already seeing an average productivity boost of 22%, with manual tasks such as data entry and information retrieval now handled automatically. Team members can delegate work to Agents using natural language, with actions delivered in almost real-time, driving efficiency and consistency.

Beyond manual tasks, the agent era is an opportunity for business leaders to rethink how their business operates, reduce costs, and unlock new value. The key to agentic success is to identify areas where automation can deliver immediate impact, pilot agent solutions, and scale successful initiatives. As agents become more sophisticated, their ability to drive business transformation will only grow.



The future of work. Introducing Work IQ

The 2025 Microsoft Ignite conference, held in San Francisco in November, brought several significant advancements to the agent landscape, further reinforcing the pivotal role of AI-powered automation in the modern workplace. Notably, Microsoft announced the introduction of “Work IQ”, which represents a significant leap in business intelligence, leveraging advanced analytics to monitor and optimise workflows, offering leaders a comprehensive view of operational efficiency. By analysing patterns across routine and strategic activities, Work IQ identifies bottlenecks, recommends process improvements, and delivers actionable intelligence to drive business performance, which empowers organisations to make data-driven decisions, ensuring resources are allocated effectively, and teams can focus on high-impact work.

For those concerned about agentic security, Microsoft announced enhanced privacy controls and audit trails for all agent-driven actions, ensuring that automation aligns with compliance standards and reassuring IT managers and business leaders about the responsible deployment of intelligent agents.



SMB agents use cases

Agents can revolutionise everything SMBs do.
Here are just a few examples:



Automated meeting scheduling

Agents can coordinate diaries, book meeting rooms, and send calendar invites for internal and client meetings, eliminating back-and-forth emails, ensuring everyone is aligned and saving valuable time.



Expense management

Agents can collect expense receipts, validate claims against company policy, and automatically generate monthly expense reports, streamlining the finance workflow and reducing errors in reimbursement.



IT helpdesk automation

Agents can reset passwords, troubleshoot common issues, and escalate complex problems to IT staff, reducing downtime and keeping teams productive.



Document preparation and reporting

Agents can draft proposals, generate sales reports, and prepare board packs by pulling data from various business systems, allowing staff to focus on reviewing and decision-making rather than manual compilation.



Compliance monitoring

Agents can track regulatory deadlines, remind staff of policy updates, and log audit trails for sensitive actions, ensuring regulated industries always remain compliant.



Customer support ticketing

Agents can triage incoming customer queries, assign tickets to the right team member, and provide instant responses to common questions, resulting in faster response times and improved client satisfaction.



Sales pipeline management

Agents can monitor leads, send follow-up reminders, and update CRM records, helping sales teams stay organised and ensuring no opportunity is missed.



Employee onboarding

Agents can guide new starters through induction processes, ensure paperwork is complete, and schedule introductory meetings, creating a consistent and welcoming experience for each new employee in a growing team.



Some of the key benefits that agents can bring:

- Reduced operational costs
- Improved accuracy of tasks
- Enhanced productivity
- Accelerated business growth
- Strengthened employee satisfaction

Ready to explore agent use cases for your organisation?

Book an agent exploration session with us today.

The move to a passwordless future

Passwords have long been a weak link in cybersecurity, responsible for over 80% of data breaches according to Verizon's Data Breach Investigations Report. The shift towards a world without passwords is fast approaching, with biometrics and passkeys emerging as standard methods for securing access while minimising risk.



Biometric authentication, which uses fingerprints, facial recognition, or voice, offers a seamless and secure alternative to traditional passwords. According to Microsoft, Windows Hello adoption has surpassed 300 million users worldwide, with businesses experiencing a 50% reduction in phishing incidents after switching to biometric logins. Passkeys, which rely on cryptographic protocols, further enhance security by eliminating the need to store or transmit passwords.

Additionally, Citrix highlights that passwordless solutions not only boost security but also improve user experience, reducing login times and support requests. In 2026, Gartner predicts that 60% of large enterprises will phase out passwords for most use cases, opting for biometric and passkey-based systems. However, successful implementation requires careful planning, including user education, device compatibility checks, and robust identity management policies.

By embracing passwordless authentication, organisations can safeguard sensitive data, streamline workflows, and prepare for a future where security is both effortless and robust.

As the landscape of authentication evolves, organisations must be ready for the next wave of security threats and adapt accordingly. Integrating passwordless solutions with additional access controls, multi-factor authentication, and ongoing monitoring ensures resilience against sophisticated attacks.

Collaboration between IT teams and business leaders is essential to balance usability with compliance requirements, especially as regulatory frameworks evolve to address emerging technologies. By continuously refining authentication strategies and leveraging innovations such as biometrics and passkeys, businesses can ensure their environments remain secure while empowering users with frictionless access to essential resources, setting the foundation for future digital growth and transformation.



Is your CRM in need of a makeover?

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems are at the heart of modern business, but many organisations find their current solutions lacking in flexibility, integration, or experience. **A well-chosen CRM can cut costs, improve customer experience, and unlock new growth opportunities** – all of which we know businesses in 2026 look for.

When evaluating your CRM, consider factors such as ease of use, mobile accessibility, integration with other tools (e.g., email, marketing automation), and reporting capabilities. Gartner recommends regular reviews of CRM performance metrics to ensure alignment with business goals and customer expectations. Upgrading to a modern CRM can also facilitate automation, personalisation, and data-driven decision-making.



How to spot the signs your current CRM isn't right

If you relate to one or more of the following signs, then maybe it's time to explore options.



Frequent user complaints

Those using your CRM complain about its lacking features, speed or difficulty to update, to name a few.



Siloed data

You're unable to connect data sources, which means you're reliant on manual effort to gain a clear picture.



Low adoption

Team members either don't use it or use it irregularly. A good CRM should be accessed regularly.



Limited integrations

if your CRM doesn't talk to other systems and applications, you'll struggle to make real-time, data-driven decisions.



If your organisation finds itself constantly developing workarounds or relying heavily on manual processes, it's a strong indicator that your current solution no longer aligns with your operational goals.

Recognising these warning signs early allows you to prioritise a CRM upgrade or replacement before inefficiencies impact customer satisfaction or business growth. Engaging stakeholders from across departments can help identify pain points and build a case for investing in a system that truly supports your strategic ambitions.

Interested in an off-the-shelf CRM that can be up and running in hours?

Introducing Dynamics GO by Axon IT - available for sales and training teams.

Get in touch for more information.

Keeping on top of cloud costs

Cloud computing has revolutionised business operations, offering scalability, flexibility, and innovation. However, managing cloud costs remains a challenge, with Gartner estimating that **30% of cloud spend is wasted due to underutilisation and lack of oversight.**

Effective cloud cost management begins with visibility. Tools such as Microsoft Azure Cost Management provide detailed insights into spending patterns, helping organisations identify unused resources and optimise allocations. Regular audits and tagging policies ensure that every pound invested delivers tangible value.

Dell advocates a proactive approach, combining automation with regular cost-optimisation assessments. Auto-scaling and reserved instances can significantly reduce expenses, while workload placement and right-sizing ensure resources match business needs. Citrix highlights the importance of negotiating contracts and leveraging vendor discounts, especially for long-term commitments.

For business leaders and IT managers, cloud cost management is an ongoing process. Engaging with partners like Axon for cost-optimisation assessments can uncover hidden savings and ensure that cloud investments drive strategic outcomes.

While cloud cost management is a critical pillar of operational efficiency, it is also closely intertwined with broader digital transformation initiatives. As organisations increasingly embrace AI, automation, and data-driven strategies, the ability to optimise cloud expenditure becomes a key enabler of

innovation and agility. Forward-thinking IT leaders are integrating cost management tools with AI-powered analytics and workflow automation to ensure resources are aligned with evolving business priorities and performance goals. In this context, cloud cost visibility is not merely about savings, but about empowering organisations to adapt rapidly and scale intelligently in an ever-changing digital landscape. With the rise of hybrid and multi-cloud environments, ongoing optimisation and strategic vendor partnerships will be essential for maintaining competitive advantage and supporting long-term growth ambitions.

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Further illustrating the scale of the issue, Flexera's 2024 State of the Cloud Report found that 82% of organisations cite managing cloud spend as their top cloud challenge, and nearly 40% of companies report cloud waste exceeding \$1 million annually. Similarly, the Cloud Security Alliance notes that businesses often overspend due to fragmented purchasing, a lack of unified policies, and limited cross-team collaboration.

For business leaders and IT managers, cloud cost management is an ongoing process. Engaging with partners like Axon for cost-optimisation assessments can uncover hidden savings and ensure that cloud investments drive strategic outcomes. For example, Amazon Web Services (AWS) users have reported savings of up to 25% by implementing automated resource scheduling and enforcing stricter governance frameworks, according to AWS customer case studies.

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What does digital transformation even mean now?

Digital transformation has evolved from a buzzword to a business necessity, but its meaning is shifting in the age of AI and process automation.

Traditionally, digital transformation focused on digitising operations and migrating to the cloud. Today, it centres on reimagining business processes, enhancing customer experiences, and leveraging AI for competitive advantage.

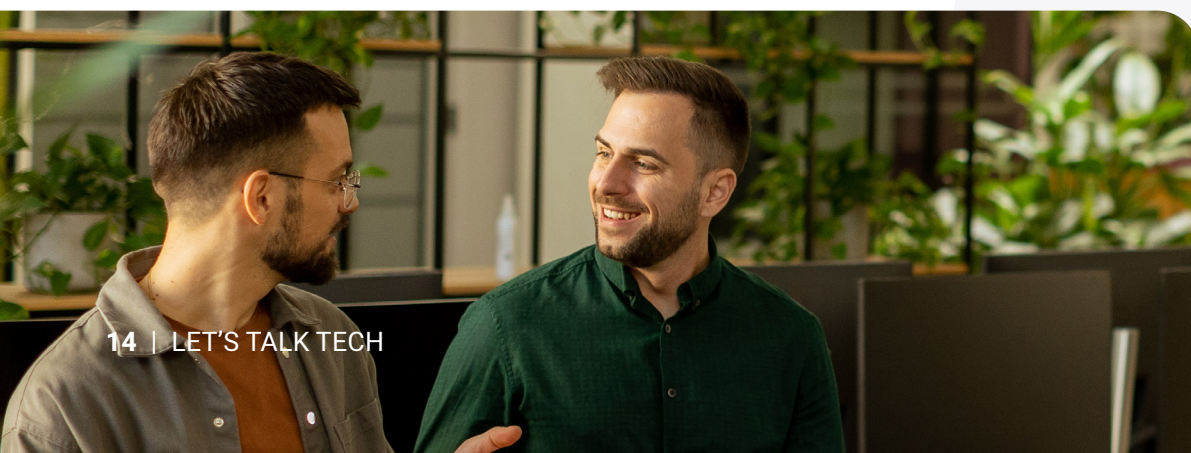
Gartner defines modern digital transformation as “the use of digital technologies to improve the performance or reach of enterprises radically.” This now includes integrating AI agents, automating workflows, and enabling data-driven decision-making across all levels of the organisation. Microsoft’s research shows that companies investing in AI-enabled process transformation see up to 40% faster time-to-market and a 30% increase in customer satisfaction.

Successful digital transformation requires more than technology adoption. It demands a cultural shift towards agility, continuous learning, and customer-centricity. Citrix recommends focusing on business outcomes rather than specific technologies, empowering teams to experiment and iterate. For IT leaders, the challenge is to align digital initiatives with strategic priorities and to measure value beyond cost savings.

As we move into 2026, digital transformation will be synonymous with adaptability and innovation, driven by AI, automation, and a relentless focus on delivering exceptional value.

Digital transformation has undergone a remarkable evolution over the past two decades, moving from an abstract concept to an operational imperative that touches every facet of modern business. In its early days, digital transformation was essentially synonymous with digitising paper-based processes and adopting enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems. Organisations sought efficiency gains by moving from manual workflows to digital platforms, often focusing on cost reduction and incremental improvements.

As technology advanced, the next wave of transformation centred on cloud computing, mobile applications, and the proliferation of data-driven insights. Businesses began migrating legacy systems to the cloud, seeking scalability, flexibility, and the agility to respond to market changes. According to Gartner, by 2023, more than 70% of organisations had shifted at least part of their workloads to cloud platforms, with those embracing digital transformation reporting operational cost savings of up to 25%. Cloud adoption also enabled greater collaboration, remote working, and the creation of new digital products and services.



In the current landscape, digital transformation has expanded well beyond the technical realm. Now, it is fundamentally about reimagining business models, enhancing customer experiences, and embedding intelligence into every process. The rise of artificial intelligence and automation has catalysed this shift, with AI-powered analytics and workflow automation becoming central to strategy. Microsoft's research demonstrates that companies leveraging AI-enabled process transformation experience up to 40% faster time-to-market and a 30% increase in customer satisfaction, while Gartner highlights that 82% of organisations cite digital transformation as a top business priority.

At the forefront of every business agenda, digital transformation is now synonymous with adaptability and innovation. Forward-thinking leaders recognise that technology adoption alone is insufficient; sustainable change requires a cultural mindset shift towards agility, continuous learning, and customer-

centricity. Citrix recommends focusing on business outcomes rather than specific technologies, empowering teams to experiment, iterate, and respond rapidly to evolving market needs. For IT leaders, the challenge lies in aligning digital initiatives with strategic objectives and measuring value in terms of innovation, growth, and customer impact - not just cost savings.

As we approach 2026, the pace of change is accelerating. Organisations are integrating AI agents, automating workflows, and enabling data-driven decision-making at every level. Hybrid and multi-cloud environments, edge computing, and zero-trust security models are becoming standard practice. Industry experts predict that by 2026, 80% of business processes will incorporate some form of automation, and nearly 40% of companies will rely on AI-driven decision-making as a core component of their operations.

Tim Mears, Managing Director of Axon IT, said:



"Digital transformation is no longer a project or a phase - it's an ongoing journey that sits at the heart of every successful business. Those who embrace technology, foster a culture of innovation, and put the customer first will lead the way."

Ultimately, digital transformation has evolved from a technology-driven buzzword to a holistic, business-wide imperative. As companies continue to navigate the complexities of AI, automation, and ever-evolving customer expectations, the ability to adapt and innovate will define success in the years ahead.

Trends to look out for in 2026

The outlook for business technology and IT support in 2026 points towards a wave of innovation, with artificial intelligence (AI), automation, and cybersecurity leading the way. Leading industry analysts such as Gartner anticipate that **AI-driven decision-making will become a standard practice, and by 2026, 80% of business processes are expected to incorporate some form of automation.**



Vendor predictions

Major technology vendors have outlined their forecasts for the years ahead. Microsoft predicts sustained growth in cloud adoption, with hybrid and multi-cloud strategies providing organisations with increased flexibility and resilience. Dell expects the rise of edge computing to enable businesses to process data closer to its source and access real-time insights. Citrix highlights the growing prominence of zero-trust security models, which are vital for safeguarding assets in a borderless digital environment.

Workforce, Skills, and Security Trends

Other significant trends include the expansion of remote and distributed workforces, increased investment in digital skills development, and the widespread adoption of passwordless authentication methods. To remain competitive, businesses must prioritise agility, foster continuous learning, and establish partnerships with technology providers to navigate the changing digital landscape.

Challenges and opportunities facing business leaders

For business leaders and IT managers, 2026 presents both challenges and opportunities. By staying attuned to emerging trends and embracing innovation, organisations will be well-placed to achieve sustainable growth and success in the digital era.

Data & decision-making

Data analytics has grown in importance, with businesses increasingly recognising the value of leveraging their data assets. Advanced analytics platforms and business intelligence tools are becoming more accessible, driven by scalable cloud-based solutions and user-friendly interfaces. The expanded use of Internet of Things (IoT) devices and connected sensors is providing organisations with vast amounts of real-time data, which can be used to optimise operations, enhance customer experiences, and identify new revenue streams.



Advancements in cyber security

Cybersecurity has become a top priority amid the rise of remote work and the expansion of digital ecosystems, which have led to an increase in cyber threats. Businesses have moved beyond traditional perimeter-based security, adopting sophisticated approaches such as zero-trust architectures, multi-factor authentication, and continuous monitoring. Security is now a shared responsibility across the organisation, with regular staff training and incident response planning established as standard practice. The shift to passwordless authentication and biometric verification reflects a broader commitment to secure yet frictionless user experiences.

The AI effect

Artificial intelligence remains a driving force behind many of these trends. Its influence spans intelligent automation, predictive analytics, personalised customer engagement, and AI-driven cybersecurity. Businesses are actively exploring generative AI, conversational agents, and machine learning-powered process optimisation, with these technologies increasingly embedded in everyday operations.



Looking to the future, AI is poised to become a fundamental element of the business landscape.

Companies that embrace AI, invest in digital skills, and nurture a culture of innovation will be best positioned to lead in the years ahead. In contrast, those who resist or delay adoption risk falling behind as competitors harness intelligent technologies to drive efficiency, enhance customer experiences, and seize new opportunities. The imperative for business leaders and IT managers is clear: adapt, innovate, and make AI a central component of strategy to ensure continued success in an increasingly digital world.



Want to discuss your
business' tech future?

Don't hesitate to get in touch.

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