THINK REPORT 2022

The State of Thinking
Today and Into the Future

Lenovo

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Foreword

By **Shivvy Jervis**
Innovation Forecaster & Futurist

If I asked ...

Are you doing your best, highest-quality thinking? How has it been this past week, month or even year? And what could you achieve with the space and time to deliberate on things more meaningfully, versus the "in the moment," survival mode we've accepted as our current reality? Calling for meaningful musings may sound borderline poetic or philosophical, and yet unlocking more exploratory, expansive thinking can be game-changing for business, our personal selves and global society.

Really, the *Think Report* is a window into elevating human potential. It reveals our craving to feel less frantic and have more clarity. To consider how the remarkable digital advances emerging all around us can be exciting enablers — not distractions — to our real-world well-being when used wisely. So, what will it take to enhance our thinking and put the power and weight of intentionality behind it?

That's one of many burning questions asked by this groundbreaking Lenovo study. The *Think Report* research doesn't poll for the standard or transactional findings; rather, I see it as a quest to ask: Do we need to revamp *how* we think so we can do more, make an impact and drive the world forward?

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Peace of mind versus our minds in pieces

Switching off and pacing ourselves at work must be normalized.

We're told, "Think on your feet," "Multitask," "Be agile, be fast!" The pressure on our brains and bodies to perform has never been more intense. The *Think Report* tells us that UK, US and German respondents certainly feel this pain, interestingly, in Japan less so.

268 miles per hour: That's the highest speed attainable for an F1 race car. And astonishingly, it's how fast our minds can process information with breathtaking volume and capacity. No wonder many of us feel forever "switched on."

In the workplace especially, encouraging slower, deeper thinking versus solely rewarding unsustainable levels of multitasking would go a long way in making it acceptable to focus on — dare I say it — one thing at a time. Even science now backs up that "multitasking" can be damaging to us physiologically.

The *Think Report* finds most people crave the headspace and time for a more reflective state. Surely, engaging in enough contemplative thinking makes for a more mentally and physically productive workforce and consumer base?

So, what's holding us back, and what can we do about it?

New approaches to thinking are potentially transformative

Until we believe this, we won't see systemic change.

Business is personal, and our personal lives cross over into our work — scattered, rushed thoughts impair our ability to strengthen personal relationships or spark innovation. Nearly 80% of the *Think Report* community crave new approaches to the art of thinking itself!

More than half of respondents, barring Japan, thought society would be kinder if it engaged in deeper thinking, with 50% from the US and Germany agreeing it would help solve systemic problems. It's not just good for us personally, but for all of humanity.

In my work as an innovation forecaster, I've constantly got my ears to the ground for signs of the most incredible breakthroughs that will elevate both consumers and businesses. I see rapid shifts and turns day in and day out.

And yet our thinking evolves ... and should adapt to serve us best. I am particularly passionate about using purposeful innovation and technologies as a method to engage in new kinds of thinking.

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A movement of human-centered technology is fast taking shape

Don’t ignore it. There is deeply uplifting news here.

Technology is a catalyst and key to bridging this thinking crisis. Brilliant digital innovation — paired with the benefits of our offline, “real” world (think nature, fresh air, better sleep, good nutrition) — has a powerful role here.

Some of my best thinking has come to me on a short walk, as I capture my ideas on my phone. Human-centric devices, apps, digital platforms, online resources — some may think these innovations keep us tethered to technology, and yet they can — as part of a multi-faceted approach — transform the quality of our thinking.

Hardware is no longer solely transactional or a handy gadget. Software isn’t about endless lines of clinical code. They’re bridges to this “thinking divide.” IT decision makers and employees are fast recognizing and championing this too.

We have got to democratize access to these enabling tools and show the wider public that we can use technology more purposefully and mindfully (and this includes setting boundaries).

Over half of respondents would consider looking at ways technology can elevate their thinking and would go as far as reevaluating their relationship with technology! Instantly I infer from these findings that the positive power of digital has been deeply underestimated.

Tools that improve communication, collaboration, organization and time management are game changers. Think about apps that counter anxiety or keep our brains and cognitive function healthier for longer. Or amazing inventions that reduce distractions (and simple functions such as being able to go on “do not disturb” or darken the screen) — all help to decrease digital “clutter” and noise.

The caveat here is that when introducing technology to assist thinking, it needs to be part of a broader plan. When asked about the reasons for feeling blocked from better thinking, the UK and US categories reported they had too many things or distractions on their mind. Japan reported that not feeling “physically or mentally healthy” was a significant driver of lower-quality thinking. This indicates that organizations may need to do even more to support employee well-being — for example, by offering later starts, more flexibility or simply healthy food on-site.

All this so our overwhelmed brains can stop to take stock, observe, brainstorm and feel inspired. And so, the role of technology providers is key. This is an important lesson for both organizations and developers of technology. Already they are committing to both a human-centric and nature-centric design. They can shape minds ... and not just provide transactional solutions.

268 mph

How fast our minds can process information with breathtaking volume and capacity.

>50%

of respondents, except Japan, thought society would be kinder if it engaged in deeper thinking.

50%

of US and German respondents agree deeper thinking would help solve systemic problems.

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01 Think, Again

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At Lenovo, we've been thinking a lot about thinking (this gets very meta, but stay with us)

That's why, as a technology company passionately committed to developing technology that can encourage, motivate and facilitate thinking — and give people the abilities and capabilities they need to bring that thinking to life — we wanted to know more about what people around the world are thinking about all this.

What's on their minds?
We had a hunch, an inkling, an idea about what people were thinking about thinking, but we didn't have the data to form new insights; define the issues; understand the challenges; identify the possibilities; and offer meaningful, sustainable solutions that can get us thinking — and thinking big — once again.

What we found

People are **overwhelmed** and **overburdened**, leading to a "**Thinking Gap**."

We have deprioritized deeper thinking and compromised with "**Survival Thinking**."

People agree thinking has transformational benefits. **Deeper, clearer thinking** has the power to improve individual lives and the world.

Technology can help bridge the "**Thinking Gap**," if used **purposefully** and with appropriate boundaries.

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The events of the last two years have impacted thinking

How much, if at all, have the events of the last two years impacted respondents' ability to engage in **clear, deep and productive thinking?**

64%
United States

58%
United Kingdom

61%
Germany

48%
Japan

"Impacted strongly" or "Impacted somewhat"

United States
United Kingdom
Germany
Japan

"What do you think?"

A common enough question, yet way more complicated than it sounds. That's because thinking, while it comes naturally to us, is becoming unnaturally difficult.

We're all just so busy. We've got so much going on. There aren't enough hours in the day. And all of that's not even considering the health crisis we've experienced over the past two-plus years — and the stress, self-preservation, worry and, in some cases, grief that's clouded our thinking. Add in an uncertain economy, among other issues impacting how we live today, and deep, thoughtful thinking becomes almost … unthinkable.

And yet today, at a time in human history in which we face not just daunting but actually existential challenges — as a planet; as a species; as people just trying to do the right thing for ourselves, our families, our employers and our communities — thinking — hard, complex, expansive, nuanced, insightful, imaginative, innovative, compassionate, intentional, inclusive, purposeful, shape-shifting thinking — has never been more critical to our future.

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58%

say it's "extremely" or "very" difficult to do their best thinking when feeling burned out or fatigued.

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02 The Thinking Gap

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The truth is, there is not enough deep, critical thinking going on

It's not that as individuals, we aren't thinking — we're human beings, after all. But the truth is, there isn't enough deep, critical thinking going on.

We're experiencing what we call a "Thinking Gap," and it's something we cannot afford, especially now. Unfortunately, there's no one cause for it — something we can just fix — but a combination of causes that have impacted us as never before.

64%

Say the **ability to multitask and think quickly is "extremely" or "very" important**.

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What is keeping us from better thinking?

People today feel overwhelmed from all sides, after all, making it even harder to focus and think.

The world is moving so fast, change is happening all around us so quickly, that it can be hard to find a ballast in the storm, one that would steady us, make us feel secure and allow our minds to move beyond speed-thinking and multitasking and instead live up to our potential.

Then, of course: COVID-19. War. Displacement. Challenges to human rights. The breakdown of civil society. Climate change. These and many other issues that rightly drive the news live in our heads — take up space when we're not even conscious of it and get in the way of our ability to think deeply and productively.

	US	UK	Germany	Japan
Having too many things on their minds	63%	54%	57%	36%
Having too many distractions	62%	53%	53%	38%
Feeling tired or fatigued	58%	53%	56%	52%

We. Are. Exhausted By. It. All.

The result? What we call “Survival Thinking,” a short-term, compromised way of thinking that gets us to the next goalpost, whether that’s finishing a client presentation, getting dinner on the table or binge-watching the latest drama, but as individuals and as a society is not getting us to where we need to go.

More than half believe that fatigue and feeling burned out is preventing them from doing their best thinking.

In other words, there’s a lot of really smart, actionable thinking that’s just not being done. As individuals and as a society, we’re missing out on the creativity, brilliance and insight that might otherwise drive progress, improve lives and create a more fair and just society. This thinking gap comes at great cost to humanity and the future we share with one another.

The thinking gap leads to significant time “loss”

Approximate time lost each day to lower-quality thinking:

~3 hours
United States

2+ hours
United Kingdom

1.5+ hours
Germany

~2 hours
Japan

Younger generations are even more challenged by lost time. **Business end users (BEUs) report a loss of ~2.5 hours each day**.

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IT decision makers feel it too

In the workplace, IT decision makers (ITDMs) believe their colleagues struggle "**a great deal**" or "**somewhat**" with engaging in **clear, deep and productive thinking**.

75%
Germany

84%
United States

66%
Japan

76%
United Kingdom

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Only 34%

spend most of their thinking time on clear, deep and productive thinking.

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03 The Power of Better Thinking

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Better thinking is valued, but what kind?

While people seem to understand that they're experiencing a thinking gap, they also know what they're missing because of it — and they miss it. In fact, it's clear that respondents value better thinking, but what kinds of thinking do they find most important? It turns out that critical, collaborative and reflective thinking rank high.

Critical Thinking	The ability to evaluate facts from opinions and unreliable and often false information, in order to form a judgment or make a well-informed decision
Collaborative Thinking	Engaging with and building on the ideas of others (e.g., brainstorming, discussion groups, etc.)
Reflective Thinking	Introspective thinking, in which one is aware of and evaluates themselves and their lives, as well as how their actions may impact others

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All of this adds up to higher-order thinking

Clear, deep and productive thinking that can improve life and the world we share.

The truth is, while people may not be experiencing "higher-order thinking," they know in their gut what it feels like and its potential to create transformational benefits. They envision its power and the positive impact it can make on decision making, mental health and self-awareness. And they want to capture — or in many cases, recapture — the value they know it provides them, the joy they know it gives them and the benefits they know it grants them.

>65%

of respondents across all markets **believe that engaging in clear, deep and productive thinking will help them make better decisions**.

>80%

of respondents, with the exception of Japan, **believe that doing so will also help with their mental well-being**.

Unlocking better thinking opens up new possibilities

The value, joy and benefits of better thinking impact a wide variety of things that give our lives meaning and, in some cases, that mitigate life's challenges.

Many people believe that deeper thinking can help them accomplish their goals, plan a better future for themselves and lead to greater balance, efficiency, exploration, focus and positivity. This doesn't just extend to achieving professional goals but to accomplishing goals in their personal and private lives as well.

Clearly, people have put a lot of thought into this.

There's value in better thinking

Between 60% and 85% of respondents said better thinking helps them:

- Protect their mental well-being
- Make better decisions
- Feel more present and patient
- Reduce stress
- Become more self-aware
- Expand creativity
- Act more intentionally
- Improve their outlook on the world
- Boost their memory

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How much do you value and enjoy clear, deep and productive thinking?

Value

86% United States

80% Germany

74% United Kingdom

50% Japan

Enjoy

82% United States

78% Germany

69% United Kingdom

44% Japan

"A great deal" or "Somewhat"

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Better thinking has its benefits.

How much do you benefit from clear, deep and productive thinking?

United States

United Kingdom

Germany

Japan

85%
United States

75%
United Kingdom

79%
Germany

49%
Japan

“A great deal” or “Somewhat”

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81%

say clear, deep and productive thinking makes them more self-aware.

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04 Empowering Better Thinking

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Better thinking won't just happen on its own

That's not how the world works.

As individuals and as a society, we must want it, seek it, find it, cultivate it, protect it and sustain it. And we have to be creative in how we bring it to life.

There are the tried-and-true approaches, such as:

Seeking out familiar, quiet and comfortable places

Exercising

Carving out certain times of day that seem to loosen the constraints on our ability to think

Requirements for better thinking

For some, the road to better thinking starts with something as simple as reminding themselves to sit up or stand up straight, which can feel refreshing, or adding plants to their work and living spaces, which many find comforting and inspiring. In fact, perhaps due to their simplicity, these two strategies were among the most popular ways people around the world who took part in our study sought better thinking.

It turns out that the top requirement for better thinking among our respondents, however, is peace and quiet.

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Ultimately, technology is an instrumental tool

It has to be, doesn't it? Otherwise, we'd be fooling ourselves about the role it plays in our lives and society.

Technology is here to stay, so the question becomes: How can we better use technology to improve our thinking and solve the challenges we face (not to mention make life more fun and joyful, which takes better thinking, too)?

>50%

across all markets would consider **reevaluating their relationship with technology to improve their thinking**.

The role of technology in thinking

We know people want to understand how technology can improve their thinking.

This is true for those who use technology in their jobs — which is almost everyone, in one way or another — and even truer for those who are in the business of technology (like those of us who work at Lenovo). Millennials and Gen Zers, in fact, are more likely to use technology to better understand technology and how it can help them become better, more productive and more efficient thinkers.

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Technology behaviors and thinking

Most respondents, particularly in UK and US markets, believe in the power of technology to help individuals engage in critical, reflective, collaborative, exploratory and new kinds of thinking.

Among those who believe technology can help them become better thinkers, the most popular behaviors include:

Learning how to use technology more purposefully

Acting more mindfully when using technology to interact with others

Being intentional by setting boundaries around their technology usage

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Technology helps us engage in different types of thinking

Overall, I think technology helps individuals engage in ...

	US	UK	Germany	Japan
Critical thinking	71%	70%	63%	56%
Reflective thinking	69%	67%	61%	59%
Collaborative thinking	73%	73%	63%	66%
Expansive/ exploratory thinking	75%	73%	66%	70%
New kinds of thinking	76%	75%	68%	75%

Business end users are even more likely to reimagine technology's impact on thinking

Percentage of business end users (BEUs) who are **looking for information on how technology can help with clear, deep and productive thinking:**

- 76% **United States**
- 72% **United Kingdom**
- 62% **Germany**
- 54% **Japan**

Percentage of BEUs who would consider **reevaluating their relationship with technology if it would help them engage in clear, deep and productive thinking:**

- 76% **United States**
- 72% **United Kingdom**
- 62% **Germany**
- 52% **Japan**

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Technology companies and the greater good

Users also think technology companies have a responsibility to contribute to the greater good by offering features, benefits and other solutions that can motivate them to pursue better, deeper thinking that, in turn, can also contribute to the greater good (as well as to their own good).

The technology industry is actually luckier than some others because people want to believe in it and, especially in the US and UK, want it to be a part of the solution to help individuals engage in critical, reflective, collaborative, exploratory and new kinds of thinking. It's an opportunity technology companies should embrace.

How can we learn to better use technology?

While features that facilitate collaboration and communication are considered most helpful in promoting better thinking, even tools as simple as noise-canceling technologies are desired.

Other features that would empower better-thinkers-to-be on their journey forward include those that limit distractions, decrease information overload and simplify tasks.

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>70%

believe they can use technology to become better thinkers.

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What it all adds up to: the road to better thinking

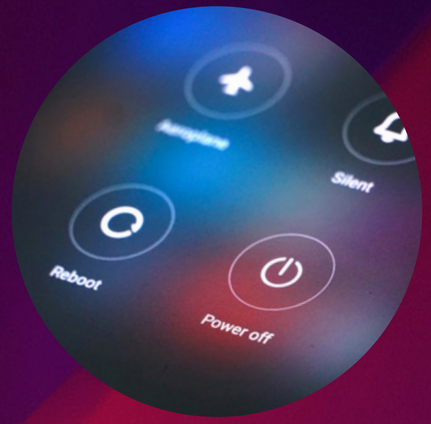
While some may say technology can inhibit better thinking, respondents had a different take.

Sure, limiting screen time and other behaviors like that can contribute to elevated thinking. But the study data shows that, far from being an inhibitor, technology can help improve thinking.

The technology-thinking formula

Based on the research, **the formula that we're hearing from people for better technology-driven thinking is**:

Using technology more purposefully



Setting boundaries around technology usage

Clearer, deeper and more productive thinking

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05

Thinking About Humanity

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Thinking drives human progress

Throughout human history — depending on whom you ask, we're talking the past 300,000 years — it has been our ability to think, and think long and hard, that has driven progress.

It has motivated us to overcome challenges from the trivial to the profound; enabled us to do more and do better for ourselves and others; helped us to see the world not only as it is but how it could be; allowed us to make connections between our thoughts, behaviors and achievements; empowered us to act boldly, decisively and with conviction; and inspired us to be kinder and gentler when we can be, yet fierce and fervent when we must be.

Everything that is good about humanity is because we not only thought good thoughts, but we took the time to consider them, their implications, their promise and their outcomes.

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Better thinking helps our society

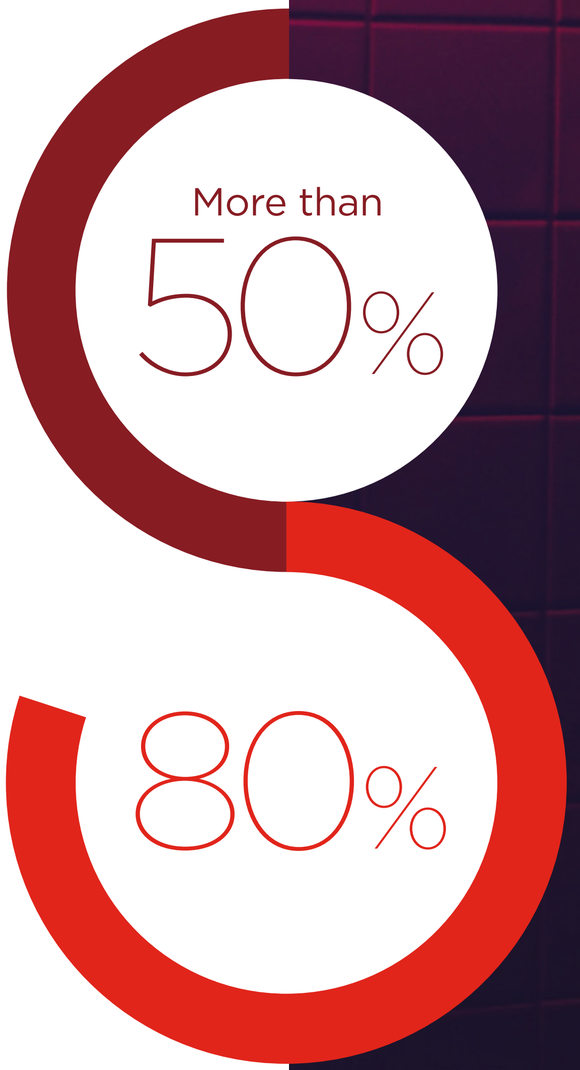
Better thinking is not only beneficial for us as individuals, but also for society. In fact, nearly half of respondents across all markets believe that engaging in better thinking would make our society kinder and more peaceful.

Which of the following do you think would be a benefit of engaging in more clear, deep and productive thinking as a society?

	US	UK	Germany	Japan
Our society would be kinder	62%	54%	52%	31%
Our society would be more peaceful	62%	52%	57%	44%
We would be closer to solving systemic problems	54%	41%	47%	19%
Our society would be more productive	51%	41%	40%	29%

Thinking is essential to humanity

This isn't just us at Lenovo saying this:
Those who took part in our study believe it.



believe increasing space for thinking would **encourage kindness, peace and productivity on a societal level**.

think that clear, deep and productive thinking **increases our collective humanity, takes us closer to solving current social challenges** and can make a **positive impact for generations to come**.

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What's technology got to do with it?

As it turns out, a lot.

In fact, technology — used appropriately, thoughtfully and responsibly — may be the key to unlocking the potential for a level of thinking humankind has never experienced, the kind of thinking we need more than ever to solve the kind of challenges we face today.

Our respondents agree

By thinking better on a collective level, **we can improve the world around us,** and that we would be more **productive, more empathetic and more tolerant**.

By thinking better on a collective level, we could make **better decisions**, **be kinder to each other**, **problem-solve together and react better to global issues**.

To solve human problems, **technology companies and the devices, functions, applications and benefits** they offer also **must be human-centered**.

To enable better thinking that contributes to long-term social changes, brands must **consider customers' needs, interests, experiences and expectations**.

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Technology brands that want to be a part of social change need to put people front and center in their strategy

If technology companies can be more human-centric, and technology is able to unlock better thinking — both big ifs — people believe the results could be transformative in ways we perhaps cannot even imagine.

The data and insights derived from our research can help inform and support people in engaging with technology more intentionally, holistically and collaboratively and in ways that are:

More focused and less distracting

More purposeful and less compromised

More freeing and less time-consuming

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Technology is fundamental

Technology in and of itself may not be the sole answer to closing the thinking gap — thinking, after all, takes place in our brains (with an assist from the goodness in our hearts).

But in our digitized, computerized, motorized and automated world, with machine learning teaching us lessons and artificial intelligence becoming more real every day, technology is fundamental to making progress against virtually every issue we face.

As a modern, 21st-century society, we have the opportunity to recognize the positive impacts that bridging the thinking gap would have on the lives of individuals and communities around the world — not to mention planet Earth. We have it within our power to think for ourselves and to rethink how we are using this extraordinary human capability to make a meaningful difference today and long into the future.

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Methodology

How and When?

Online Survey
Fielding: July 4 to 24, 2022

Who?

Gen. Pop.
General Population
Adults 18+

BEUs
Business End Users
Gen Z/Millennials who use tech in their professions

ITDMs
IT Decision Makers

Where and How Many?

United States	n = **1,051 Gen. Pop.**	n = **650 BEUs**	n = **349 ITDMs**
United Kingdom	n = **1,014 Gen. Pop.**	n = **660 BEUs**	n = **363 ITDMs**
Germany	n = **1,010 Gen. Pop.**	n = **620 BEUs**	n = **338 ITDMs**
Japan	n = **1,020 Gen. Pop.**	n = **310 BEUs**	n = **310 ITDMs**

Margin of Error

For individual market samples (at a 95% confidence level):

Gen. Pop.
+/- 3 percentage points

BEUs
+/- 4 percentage points

ITDMs
+/- 5 to 6 percentage points

Please note
Data points and findings included throughout the deck are based on general population data unless otherwise noted

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Afterword

By **Shivvy Jervis**

We're thinking about legacy — what action can we take now to fuel positive impact for future generations? Even as we are getting busier, could we direct some of that energy to bring us closer to solving the systemic challenges facing humanity and society?

As the demands and our cortisol skyrocket, quality, higher-order thoughts jostle for space in our crowded brains. The kind that spur us to develop solutions, however small, to the pressing problems in not just our individual lives, but our work and societal communities.

In the past five years alone, I have seen firsthand how incredible innovations can be applied with greater intentionality than in the past decades combined. And I can say with great conviction and experience that this will only surge in the next five, ten, fifteen years to come.

The future is not a far-off, obtuse or vague reality. We are living it in the "now" and the "next." Remarkable digital innovations, brilliant breakthroughs, scientific advances, leaps in psychology … they can all help take us there with our heads up high and minds focused and inspired.

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