



# Leading the way in technology support

*How Frontrunners are pulling ahead*



IBM Technology Support Services

In a world that demands continuous availability, IT environments need to be supported like well-honed racing teams support their cars and drivers. Every element must work perfectly to reach the finish line, and proactive integrated strategies deliver the best performance.

Many companies rely on legacy technology support plans that meet minimum requirements to keep their business running. They neglect to update their strategy to include new devices, platforms and technologies.

Technology support leaders, however, actively redesign their support roadmap to address these issues, and are reporting many business advantages.

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#### About the study

To understand how companies can derive success through technology support, we surveyed over 300 IT professionals located in Australia, Canada, India, the United Kingdom and the United States. The respondent base consisted of IT leaders who manage support for their IT environments and work primarily in executive and managerial role. Nearly 60 percent were Directors of IT or CIOs at companies spanning 17 industries – including manufacturing, financial services and health care – ranging in size from 500 employees to more than 10,000.

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#### About IBM Technology Support Services

[ibm.biz/Technology-Support-Insight](http://ibm.biz/Technology-Support-Insight)

IBM Technology Support Services can be the single point of accountability for all your technology support needs, providing modular, flexible support modules that allow organizations to expand and change with today's always-on, dynamic enterprise. Leveraging Watson cognitive computing and offering enhanced analytics capabilities, Technology Support Services can help customers to solve their problems before they even happen, providing proactive and predictive maintenance. With an experience of over 70 years, IBM TSS is your trusted partner that helps you innovate.

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# Technology support is a complicated team activity



91%

of respondents support 3+ categories of devices/platforms



54%

of respondents use 6+ vendors for support

The technology support environment facing today's enterprises is more challenging than ever. The support mantra of the past was "never change a running system" - however, in today's hybrid and heterogeneous IT environments continuous change is the normal. This also includes more and more vendors and service providers who needs to be orchestrated. In this ever-changing IT landscape, support is oftentimes overlooked and undervalued when it comes to addressing long term business outcomes.

Technology support is an IT necessity. It is a service with continuous, long-term demand that evolves and expands with the demands of the business. An updated support strategy that aligns with this demand is vital to the sustainability of the IT environment.

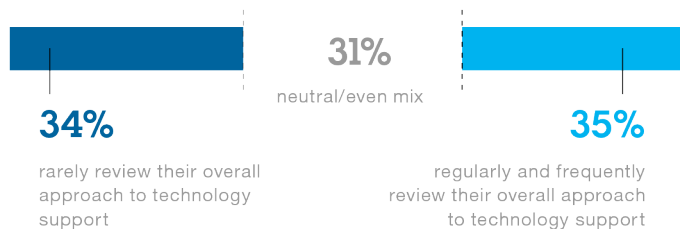
For line-of-business users, availability is critical and support should be seamless – ideally, routine maintenance activities such as patches, system and application updates, and configuration are transparent to the end user. But with multiple devices and platforms to support, deployment strategies like bring-your-own-device and multiple vendor relationships to manage, IT support becomes a significant business issue.

In our study of 300 IT professionals across 17 industries we found that more than nine out of 10 companies have current or planned technology support contracts that support three or more categories of devices and/or platforms. On top of that, more than half of all companies polled reported that they were using six or more vendors to support those devices and/or platforms.

With complexity on the rise, it is no surprise that many enterprises have difficulty optimizing support for their environments and forcing them to operate in a reactive, break/fix mode. They lack the knowledge and tools to proactively minimize risk of potential service disruption and improve future service, which affects IT performance and the larger line of business goals.

## Current approach to technology support

Neutral/even mix



# What do companies cite as their biggest challenges?

**28%**  
Aging hardware

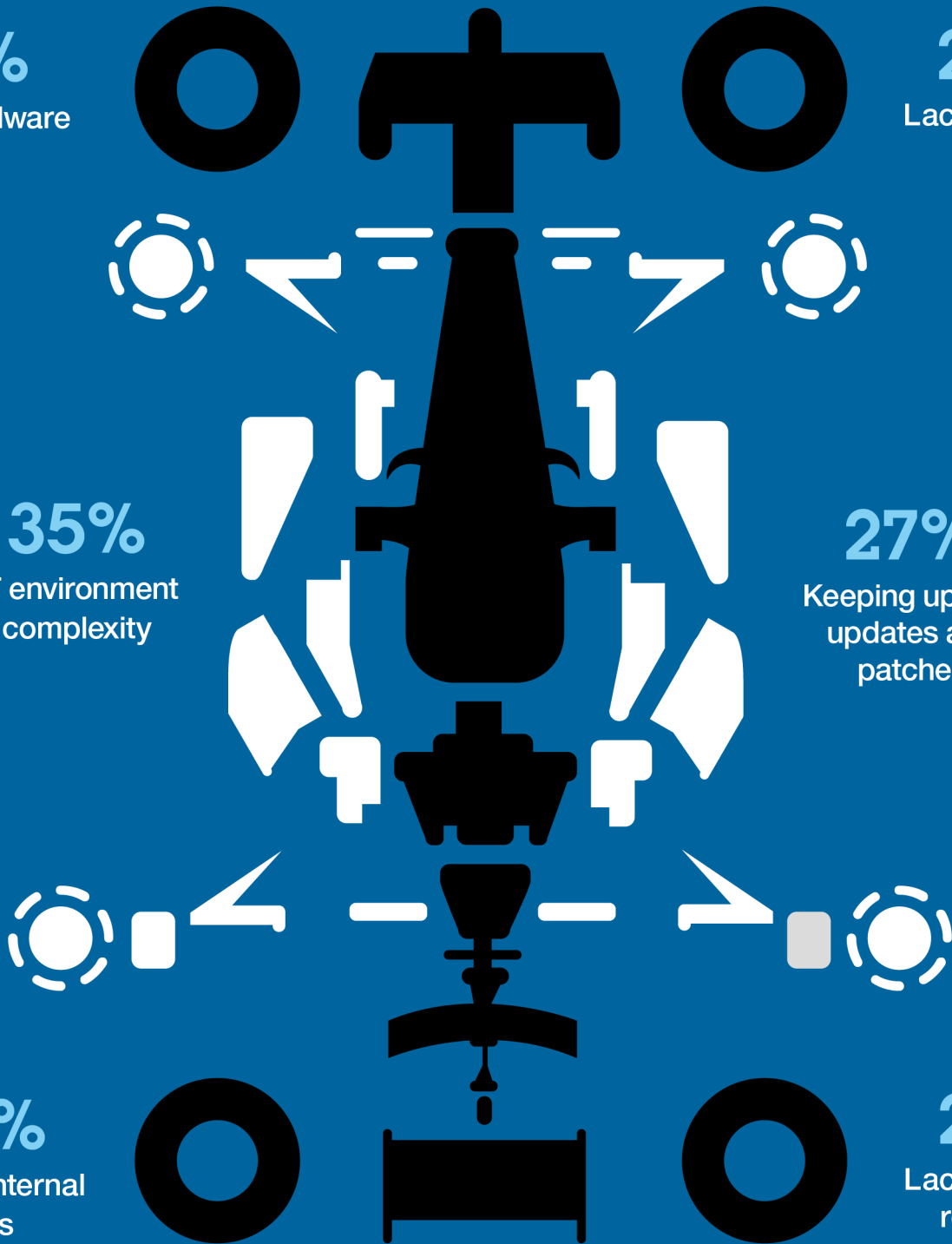
**26%**  
Lack of budget

**35%**  
IT environment  
complexity

**27%**  
Keeping up with  
updates and  
patches

**23%**  
Lack of internal  
skills

**29%**  
Lack of internal  
resources



# IT complexity tops a long list of challenges

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The task confronting technology support professionals is more difficult than ever due to the number of vendors, devices and platforms covered, the expanding scope of the IT environment and the demands of an “always on” culture.

More than a third of study participants say their top challenge is IT environment complexity. For example, although servers, networking, storage, and printers are most frequently covered by current or planned technology support contracts, over 50 percent of companies also have support contracts for PCs/laptops, mobile devices, CRM/ERP software, and OS software. Not only are IT managers now responsible for additional devices that increase the likelihood of potential disruptions, they are also managing more vendor contracts, tracking more product lifecycles and ensuring these additional devices receive support equivalent to the traditional IT infrastructure.

Some 72 percent of companies indicated that maximizing and/or optimizing availability is their top objective, highlighting the need for effective support in an already complex landscape. As the number of devices and platforms grows, so does the level of IT sophistication, responsibility and room for error. The increased scope of duties, along with the need to manage extra business partners and vendors, only adds to the issue.

Almost 30 percent of IT leaders named lack of resources as another top support challenge. Furthermore, 26 percent report lack of budget and 23 percent report lack of capital as the top challenge, it is clear that companies are neglecting to provide support managers with what they require to actively monitor and make appropriate changes as needed.

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*Despite the adversity, some companies stand out in their ability to gain business advantage through technology support. What makes them different?*

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# Frontrunners report better performance against key metrics



**Frontrunners** adopt an integrated organization-wide technology support strategy with more frequent reviews, and take action on insights.



**Contenders** execute support somewhat strategically and utilize resources to consolidate support management, but are late adopters of technology that enhances support.



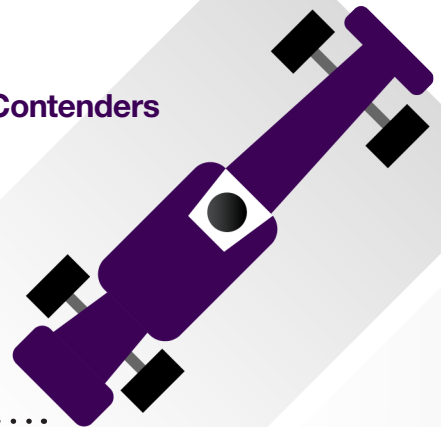
**Qualifiers** align business objectives with IT-only responsibilities, react to disruptions, and plan less frequently.

Despite the significant challenges and complexities, several of the companies surveyed have support strategies that integrate tactical insights and new technologies. Approximately 20 percent of IT professionals are categorized into this choice group of technology support service Frontrunners. By comparison, some 38 percent rate as Contenders, while 42 percent are identified as Qualifiers.

Enterprises that address technology support proactively have moved beyond the break/fix mindset displayed by those that take a traditional, IT-centric approach. They are constantly looking at the data and asking if there is a better way – one that lowers costs, improves performance and leads to better business outcomes. These leading enterprises are adept at acting on what they find and ready to look at technology support differently.

How does performance compare to industry peers?

Contenders



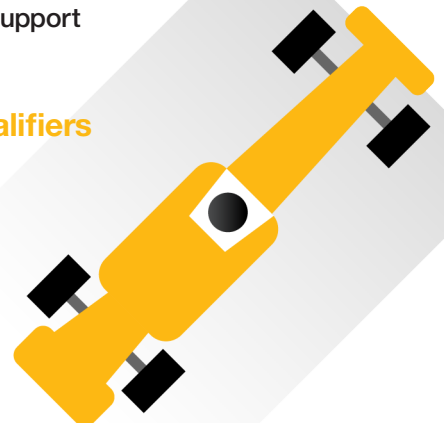
57%

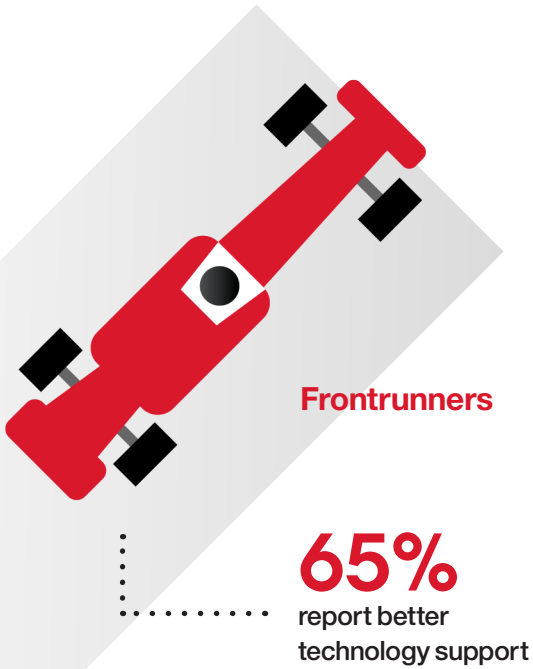
report better technology support

37%

report better technology support

Qualifiers



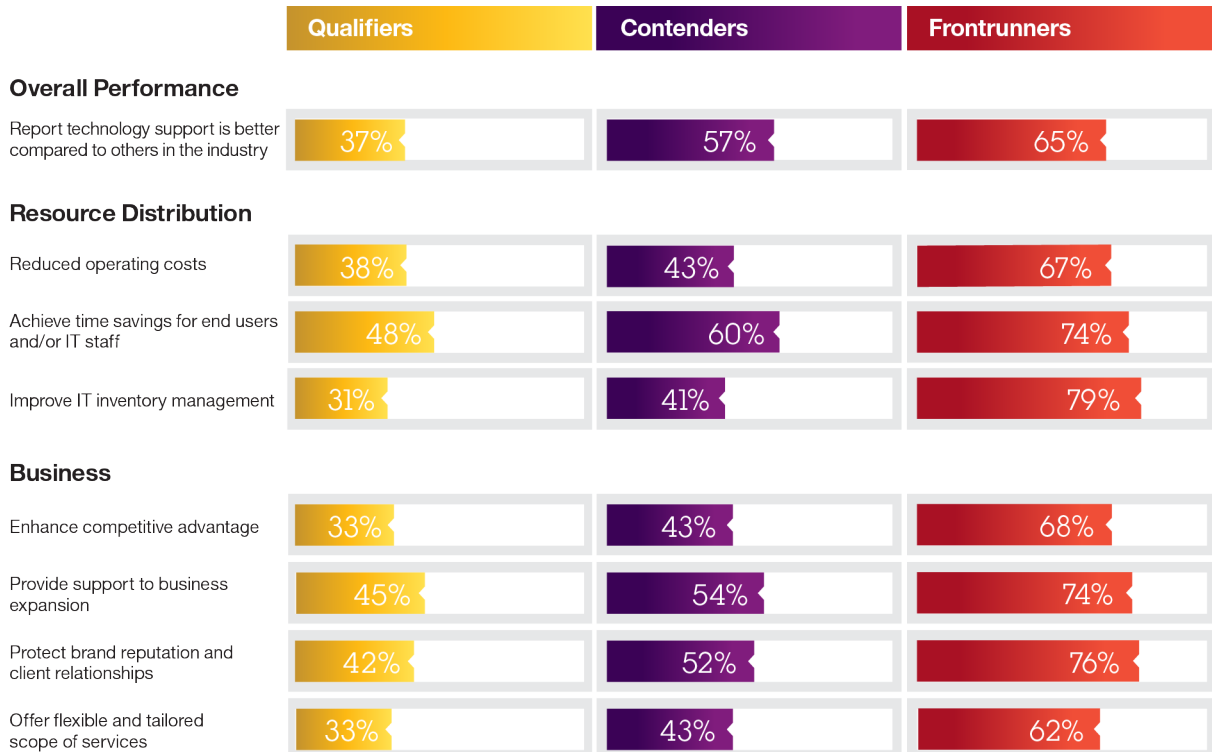


## Technology adoption

The enterprises that reported the best results were the most engaged and rigorous, ready to push the limits by adopting technologies that can enhance support, like artificial intelligence, cognitive computing and social platforms.

## Strategic planning

The best performers plan extensively and examine their actions more often. This stands in stark contrast to the much less frequent and organized approach reported by the majority of enterprises.

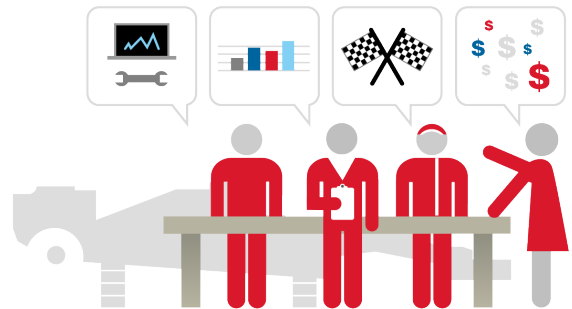


# Perform like a Frontrunner:

## Frontrunners surpass their peers in four categories

### Plan

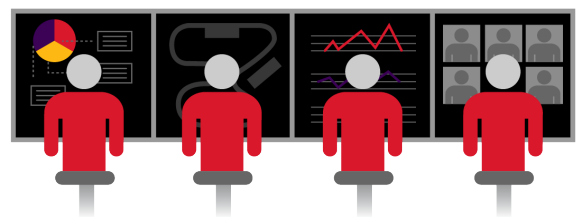
Frontrunners think strategically, update plans often and are more deeply engaged in technology support across the enterprise. This enables them to get ahead of issues before they become problems.



	Qualifiers	Contenders	Frontrunners
Have an established and strategic approach for support	13%	45%	83%
Select support vendors based on their experience with individual products	12%	38%	77%
Treat technology support as a joint business and IT responsibility	14%	37%	59%

### Monitor

Frontrunners tend to base their actions on insights gathered from actual performance. They also work to simplify support tasks by collaborating with outside vendors and optimizing the lines of communication.

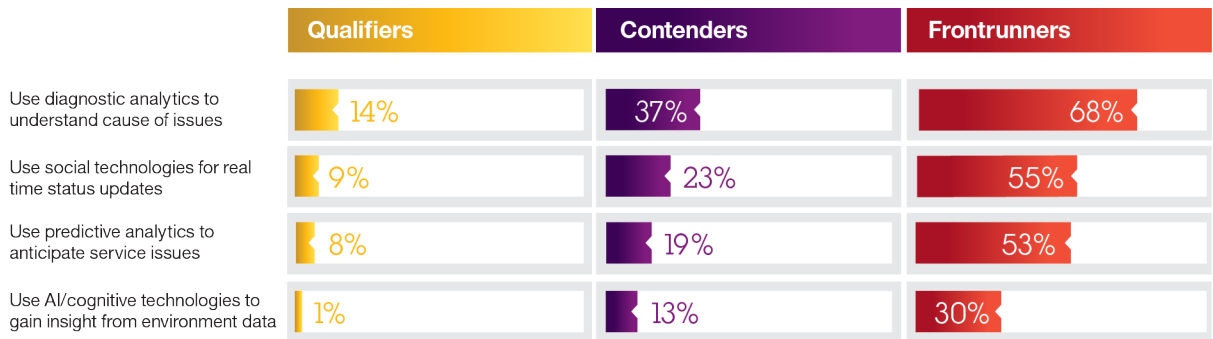
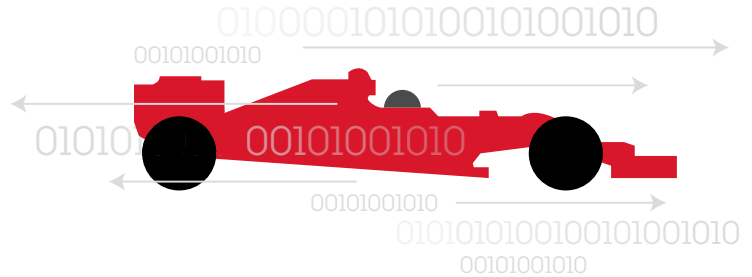


	Qualifiers	Contenders	Frontrunners
Use management dashboard to track support contracts	12%	58%	72%
Track lifecycle of over half of products in IT environment	24%	44%	72%
Use external vendors to track IT product lifecycle	22%	35%	65%
Use a single point of contact to resolve issues across platforms and vendors	20%	38%	58%



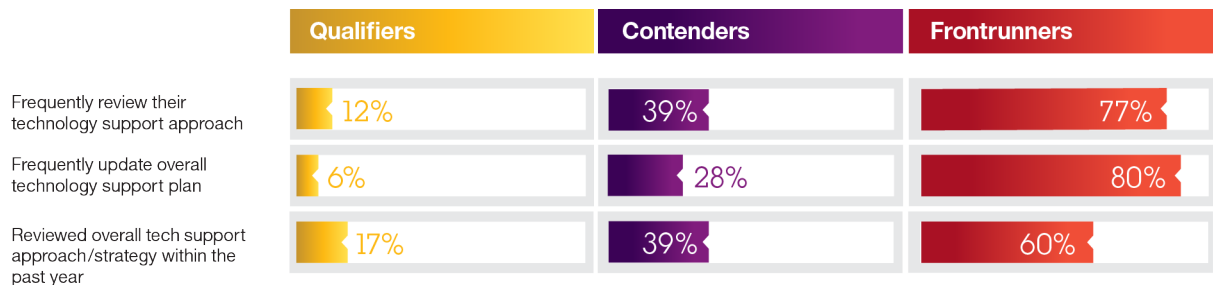
## Adopt

Frontrunners report high rates of technology adoption related to technology support. They are more likely to engage with users and implement advanced analytic and cognitive technologies to achieve their goals.



## Review

Recognizing the impact of rapid changes to the IT environment. Frontrunners report far greater emphasis on understanding how well their support strategy is working, and altering their plans when needed.



Finish

# Being a Frontrunner is about staying ahead of the issues

The challenges of complexity, resource constraints and rising demands for availability confront all enterprises as they introduce new devices and platforms and work to effectively provide technology support. Yet as the survey results show, some companies are better able to accomplish their goals than others.

From the experience of Frontrunners, we found that companies must think and plan strategically, while being assertive in their tactical approach. The difference between the Qualifiers, Contenders and Frontrunners is largely a matter of degree. Where Qualifiers tend to respond to issues, Contenders try to be more proactive where they can, while Frontrunners have found numerous ways to effectively stay ahead of support issues as well as improve the quality of technology support service that they provide.

Frontrunners consider the entire enterprise, change course when needed and do not hesitate to use all the tools and resources available to them. The rewards are clear for the whole enterprise. Those who are able to navigate this space in an effective manner are deriving greater value from their business, driving their new initiatives and delivering better support at lower overall cost – a clear validation of the investments they are making in technology support services.



# How can your organization become a Frontrunner?



## Establish a strategic, integrated approach

- Consider the needs of both your business and its customers.
- Base your strategy on a thorough understanding of needs and current relationships with OEMs, value-added resellers, third party vendors and partners.
- Consult with internal leaders, including supply chain partners and knowledgeable industry experts.



## Actively monitor product lifecycles and support contracts

- Understand product lifecycles and how they relate to support contracts.
- Review support contracts to make sure support needs are being met.
- Consolidate support management to a single point of contact.



## Frequently review support plan

- Incorporate insights into future plans.
- Benchmark yourself against industry leaders to pinpoint areas for improvement.



## Leverage new technologies

- Use predictive and descriptive technologies to enhance your support management by addressing support more effectively and to prevent future issues.
- Use technologies to simplify product lifecycle monitoring and support contract management.

Learn more at [ibm.biz/Technology-Support-Insight](https://ibm.biz/Technology-Support-Insight)



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