

Improve Employee Usage, Engagement and Productivity With Digital Adoption Solutions

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Employees are faced with increasing numbers of applications to learn and use to perform their jobs, creating technology adoption issues and decreased engagement. Application leaders must provide guidance and deploy digital adoption solutions as part of their digital transformation strategy.

Overview

Key Challenges

- Employees are saturated with too many point solutions required to perform their jobs, leading to them disengaging from technology or underperforming in their designated roles.
- New hires are challenged to learn applications or newly released features, often attributing the friction they experience to inadequate training. This results in lower adoption of applications and continued manual efforts.
- As organizations change business processes to accommodate where and how employees work, employees receive conflicting messages on what, where, how and when to perform tasks or business processes within applications.
- Application leaders struggle to identify metrics in order to measure adoption levels.

Recommendations

Application leaders responsible for improving delivery and adoption of workplace technology should:

- Overlay digital adoption solutions across the organizational tech stack by focusing on key applications in a single functional domain to improve onboarding, decrease the time spent on performing tasks in multiple solutions and reduce money spent on additional training.
- Increase software adoption and usage by using the analytics provided by digital adoption solutions to understand usage and block points, and to provide a more consistent end-user experience.
- Track performance improvements or cost savings by creating metrics and benchmarking them at the start of an application deployment with a digital adoption solution (DAS).

Strategic Planning Assumption

By 2025, 70% of organizations will use digital adoption solutions across the entire technology stack to overcome still insufficient application user experiences.

Introduction

The 2020 Gartner Digital Workplace Survey of Research Circle members revealed a striking contradiction: while digital workplace leaders agreed that “designing engaging and intuitive work environment for employees” and “how to support workforce agility and adaptability” were their second- and third-highest priorities for their organizations’ digital workplace program in 2021, “digital adoption solutions” was the least important application category. Such polarity exposes the limited understanding of applications that can facilitate digital adoption and their role in the digital workplace.

Client inquiries regarding DAS show a significant increase, month on month, between 2019 and 2020. In addition, DAS queries to Gartner’s search function have increased steadily throughout 2020. The majority of discussions focus on the desire to roll out DAS across the organizational tech stack. Many initial discussions center around one functional area or business unit that has been prioritized for attention.

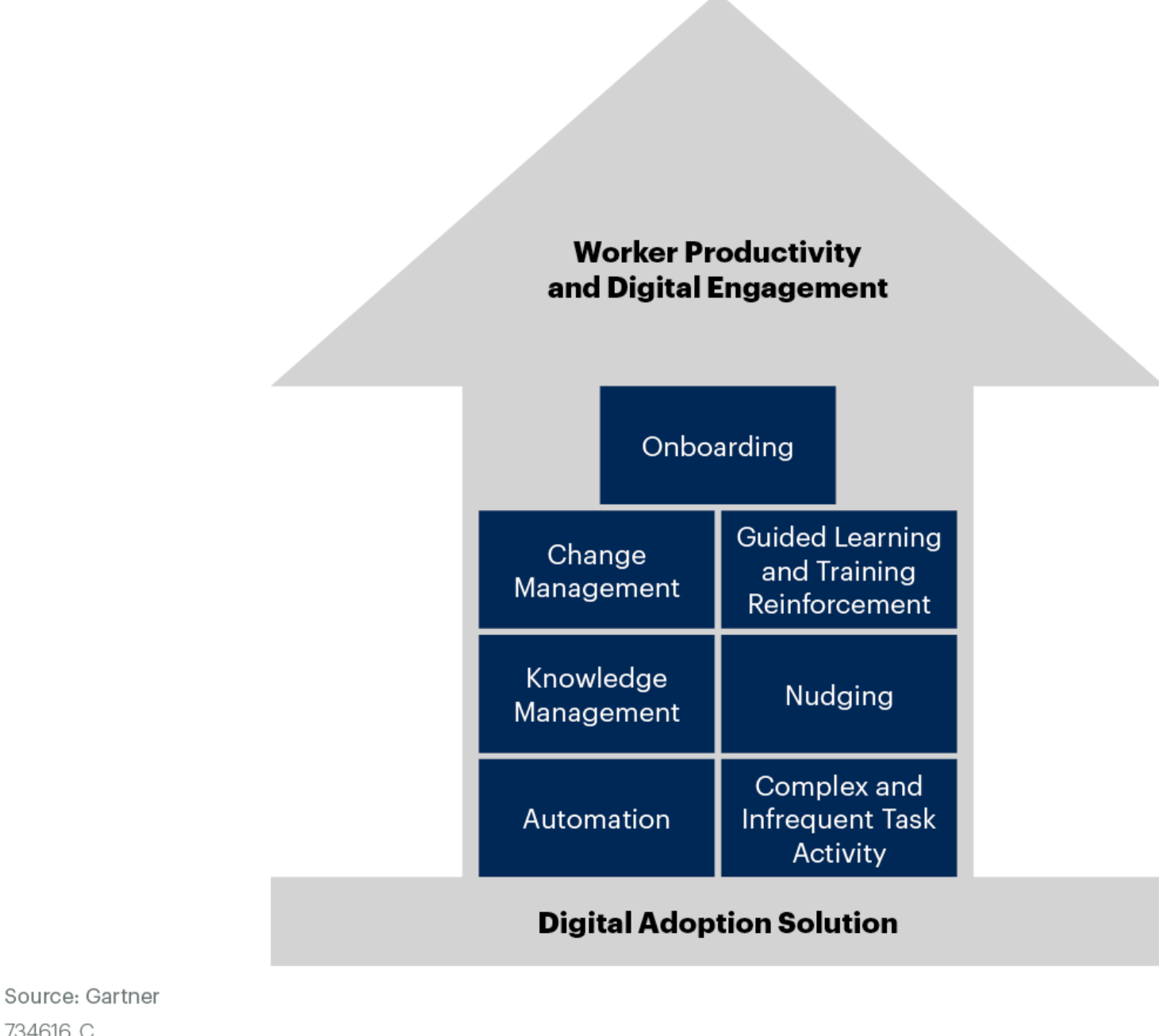
DAS is a developing category of technology to help employees get the most out of their application portfolios. DAS is strengthening its position in the market and is a pivotal technology, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic and afterward. DAS assists employees with the new and improved ways of working — complex business processes, infrequently performed tasks, change management activities and even light automation (see Figure 1) — to improve productivity and engagement.

DAS as a category is especially relevant to sales due to the nature of sales processes, which are becoming exponentially more complex. It was the initial use case for organizations, as sales is the key revenue driver. As organizations adopted DAS for sales, they saw relevant use cases across the organization, including areas such as HR, digital workplace, ERP, procurement and customer service. DAS will not completely replace the need for training and coaching, but it will increase adoption and reinforce training. A DAS is valuable given the number of applications and level of complexity in the market, which only seems to be becoming more of a challenge for employees (see Note 1 for a sample vendor list).

Figure 1. Digital Adoption Solutions Capabilities Increase Engagement and Productivity



Digital Adoption Solutions Capabilities Increase Engagement and Productivity



Source: Gartner
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Over the last 18 months, DAS deployments have expanded within organizations beyond the sales function to ERP, HR, procurement and digital workplace. Organizations initially select DAS for one or two applications within a function. Improved results then drive expansion, both within that function and across to other functions, reaching more applications in the portfolio. Organizations, in an effort to increase productivity and collaboration, especially among remote employees and those working from home (WFH), have added new point solutions and increased the importance of employee compliance. Complicated business processes combined with insufficient native application UI cause friction in work. Little training has been provided for end users, and in some cases the deployment of the technology is poor. The result is end user frustration and low or improper usage. Examples of added technology include collaboration tools (such as Microsoft Teams or Slack), online meetings (such as Zoom or Webex) and collaborative work tools (such as Google Docs or Sheets).

Application leaders must apply a strategy to deploy DAS across the entire organization by applying it in a prioritized and systematic fashion across the portfolio of applications comprising their work nuclei in order to improve the employee experience.

Analysis

Overlay DAS in a Functional Domain

Employees always have multiple applications open at once — generally more than five — navigating between them to do daily work. There are many more available that will be used less frequently, but that can pose just as much of a challenge due to the infrequent use. This creates friction for employees striving to perform their work efficiently. A recent digital workplace survey indicated that 22% of sales respondents were dissatisfied with the applications that the workplace provides.¹ In addition, individuals underutilize — or even completely avoid — point solutions that could actually help them to be more effective.

Organizations must create a strategy to increase employee engagement and reduce friction by prioritizing functional areas with:

- Direct or high correlation to revenue generation.
- Direct or high correlation to customer experience and customer satisfaction.
- High error rate of data collected.
- Low employee engagement.
- Underutilized applications with high perceived value.
- Low adoption of purchased technology.

Organizations should create a plan to deploy DAS systematically to all technology within a functional domain in order to ensure a smooth workflow for employees.

While we expect products to have an intuitive and easy-to-use design, that is not always the case. Application user experience (UX) is still insufficient for smooth workflows. Add to this the fact that organizations overlay complicated business processes, and the UI/UX will degrade rapidly. It is likely that some functions or solutions in general may be complex. For example, sales compensation solutions are very complex, due to the need for them to create complicated pay rules and structures. A DAS will help guide a new user who does not use the software every minute of every day to perform important tasks with confidence. A DAS will also help companies with new feature/functionality releases within internal systems. These can be highlighted with a special pop-up or hover feature, or via widget launchers, where a user can select or search for assistance.

A DAS will overlay a guided workflow to encourage users to execute tasks consistently and efficiently. The analytics the solutions provide will help operations to understand where users are struggling or abandoning the process. This will enable the process workflow to be altered and optimized for better performance. The DAS provides validation and tips for end users, helping them through their daily tasks. Vendors offer launch pads to internal knowledge centers as well as links to other information, such as training videos. Utilizing this type of solution helps organizations with the digital optimization of processes.

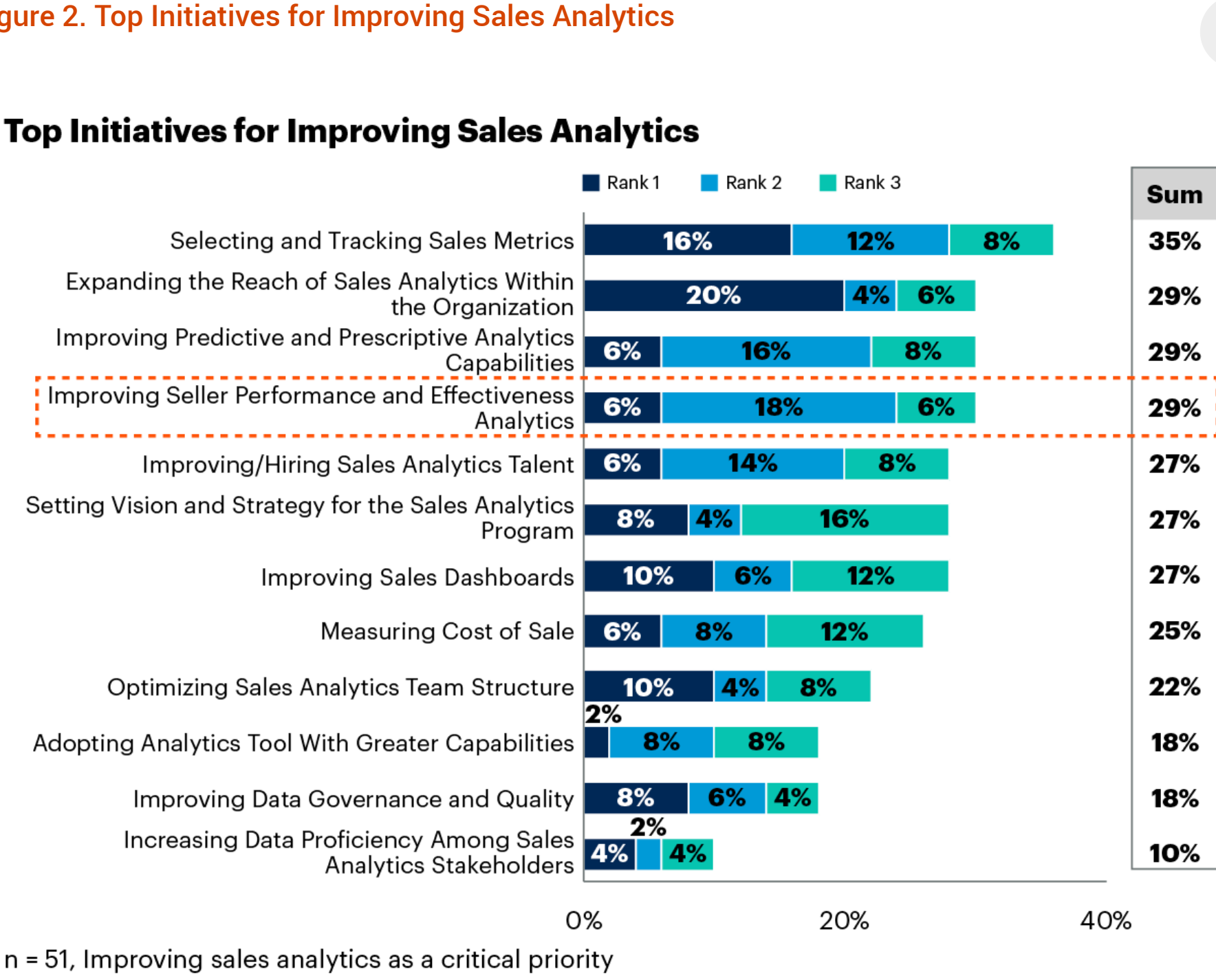
Recommendations:

- Provide a consistent user experience by using DAS to overlay applications, starting with a single functional area.
- Review support tickets to identify “application how-to” trends and identify the most common and frequently performed workflows to prioritize. Other sources include employee satisfaction surveys and process metrics, such as time-to-complete and error rates.
- Identify complicated tasks that require multiple steps and decision paths to streamline them, or include them in the initial rollout of the DAS.

Use Analytics to Increase Usage and Improve User Experience

The primary use case for DAS is to help onboard employees quicker and get them to full productivity. For example, analytics plays a key role in helping to identify seller usage and adoption. In a recent Gartner survey, 29% of respondents cited “improving seller performance and effectiveness analytics” as a top initiative (see Figure 2).²

Figure 2. Top Initiatives for Improving Sales Analytics



n = 51, Improving sales analytics as a critical priority
Source: 2019 Gartner QSL Sales Market Survey
Q: You indicated improving sales analytics as a critical priority. What are your top 3 initiatives within this category?
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DAS’ use of artificial intelligence (AI) — a core component of digital optimization — can help correct the course. Analytics that include AI provided by DAS vendors enable operations to understand how sellers engage with the system. The DAS analyzes clickstreams, how long a step takes and where users get stuck or abandon the process completely. This kind of information gives administrators the ability to make corrective changes to workflows and guidance to help users complete tasks in processes. It also provides the ability to track improvements in usage. It is important to also take time to examine business processes and make sure they are providing the desired outcomes, rather than just providing metrics for managers and data entry for employees.

A DAS can provide a streamlined experience for the employee. Information is disseminated the same way to everyone. Tasks are guided so that they can be completed quickly and to a higher quality level. Analytics are also available to show where sellers are dropping out of the guidance. This may be an indication of a process issue or that the information is irrelevant. These indicators allow sales managers to adjust and provide better process and information. Many of the solutions also utilize gamification as a way to engage employees to follow the program. Some even automate manual input, improving data cleanliness and accuracy while reducing employee effort. This leads to better adoption and a more satisfying engagement.

Recommendations:

- Utilize DAS analytics to rectify areas of friction by simplifying business processes and enabling automation where available.
- Avoid drops in usage and adoption by looking at trends via analytics provided by the DAS vendor.
- Use DAS analytics in combination with other corporate data, such as support tickets or satisfaction, to add additional insights.

Apply Metrics to Show Improved Productivity and Engagement

In light of tighter purchasing budgets, it is imperative to prove not only the return on investment (ROI) of technology purchases through usage, but also increased productivity and engagement improvements through the use of DAS. Application leaders must work to support the business units in creating a set of metrics that can be tracked. Most often, these can also be correlated to money saved or improved revenue outcomes. Table 1 shows example metrics that can be used.

Table 1: Example Metrics for DAS

Enlarge Table		
Metric	Measurement	Outcome
Number of and time spent to resolve support tickets	■ Number of “how do I” tickets by application	■ Fewer tickets allow for more complex problem resolution and increased end-user satisfaction (higher engagement)
	■ Length of time to resolve issue	■ Reduced length of resolve time allows N percent group overall response time improvement
Training time	■ Reduced hours toward onboarding and change management	■ Decrease in training costs due to in-application learning
		■ Artifacts created by DAS do not need to be created by the training department
		■ Change management training may be eliminated
Onboarding time to productivity	■ Time from hire to fully productive	■ Training reinforcement leads to higher end-user satisfaction (higher productivity)
		■ Reduced time to onboard saves money and increases contribution rate for employee (e.g., decreased time to get a seller productive and delivering revenue)

Source: Gartner (November 2020)

Recommendations:

- Help the business units to understand productivity by providing them with reporting to benchmark, track and report improvements regularly.
- Use successes and lessons learned to apply to other applications and functional areas.

Evidence

¹ Gartner Digital Workplace 2020 Research Circle Survey, June 2020 (n = 131 research circle members)

- Q. Which of these digital workplace program topics do you expect will be most important to your organization through YE21?
- Q. Which of these digital workplace application topics do you expect will be most important to your organization through YE21?

² Gartner for Sales Leaders 2020 Market Survey

Note 1: Sample Digital Adoption Solution Vendors

- Appcues
- AppLearn
- Aptly
- Chameleon
- Digital Attitude, a Methodos company
- Edcast
- Gainsight
- Helpier
- InsideBoard
- LeapPoint
- Newired
- Pendo
- SAP (Enable Now)
- Skylful
- Toonimo
- Tour My App
- TTS (Performance Suite)
- UserIQ
- Whatfix
- WalkMe