

The IT talent crisis:

How service
providers can
bridge the gap

wanstor



Contents

Introduction.....	2
The growing IT talent crisis.....	3
The challenge.....	4
The business impact.....	5
Actionable steps.....	7
Why the IT skills gap exists.....	7
The challenge.....	8
The business impact.....	9
Actionable steps.....	10
Competing for scarce IT talent.....	12
The challenge.....	12
The business impact.....	13
Actionable steps.....	14
Bridging the IT Skills Gap.....	15
The challenge.....	16
The business impact.....	17
Actionable steps.....	18
Future-Proofing Your IT Workforce.....	19
The challenge.....	19
The business impact.....	20
Actionable steps.....	21
Measuring Success and Next Steps.....	21
The challenge.....	22
The business impact.....	23
Actionable steps.....	24
Let's get started.....	25
Sources.....	27



Today, businesses are more reliant than ever on technology. From cloud computing and cybersecurity to AI-driven analytics and automation, IT underpins nearly every aspect of operations. Yet, while technology continues to evolve at lightning speed, the supply of skilled IT professionals is struggling to keep up.

Globally, the IT talent shortage is staggering. By 2030, an estimated 85 million positions could go unfilled, potentially leaving £6.6 trillion in unrealised revenue on the table¹. Businesses face a perfect storm: digital innovation demands highly skilled teams, but the available workforce is limited, creating bottlenecks, project delays, and operational risks.

The impact of this shortage is tangible; companies are paying more to attract talent, struggling to deploy critical IT projects on time, and facing increased cybersecurity risks due to gaps in expertise. Organisations that fail to address these challenges risk falling behind, while those that take proactive steps can turn the skills shortage into an opportunity for growth and resilience.

This eBook is designed to guide you through the current IT talent landscape, explore the causes and consequences of the skills gap, and highlight practical steps organisations can take to bridge it.



The Growing IT Talent Crisis

In today's digital-first world, IT is the backbone of nearly every business operation. From cloud computing and cybersecurity to AI-driven analytics and automation, organisations rely on skilled IT professionals to keep systems running smoothly and innovation moving forward. Yet the demand for talent is far outpacing supply, leaving businesses facing a critical shortage of qualified IT staff. This chapter explores the scale of the problem, the challenges it creates, and why closing the gap is essential for success.



93% of UK mid-market organisations have struggled to fill IT roles in the past year².

40%

of those experiencing skills shortages say the impact will be increased workload on other staff

32%

of employers believe the shortage will worsen over the next five years

75%

of organisations said they're also struggling to find the qualified candidates

18%

of UK adults lacked the essential digital skills that are needed for the workplace

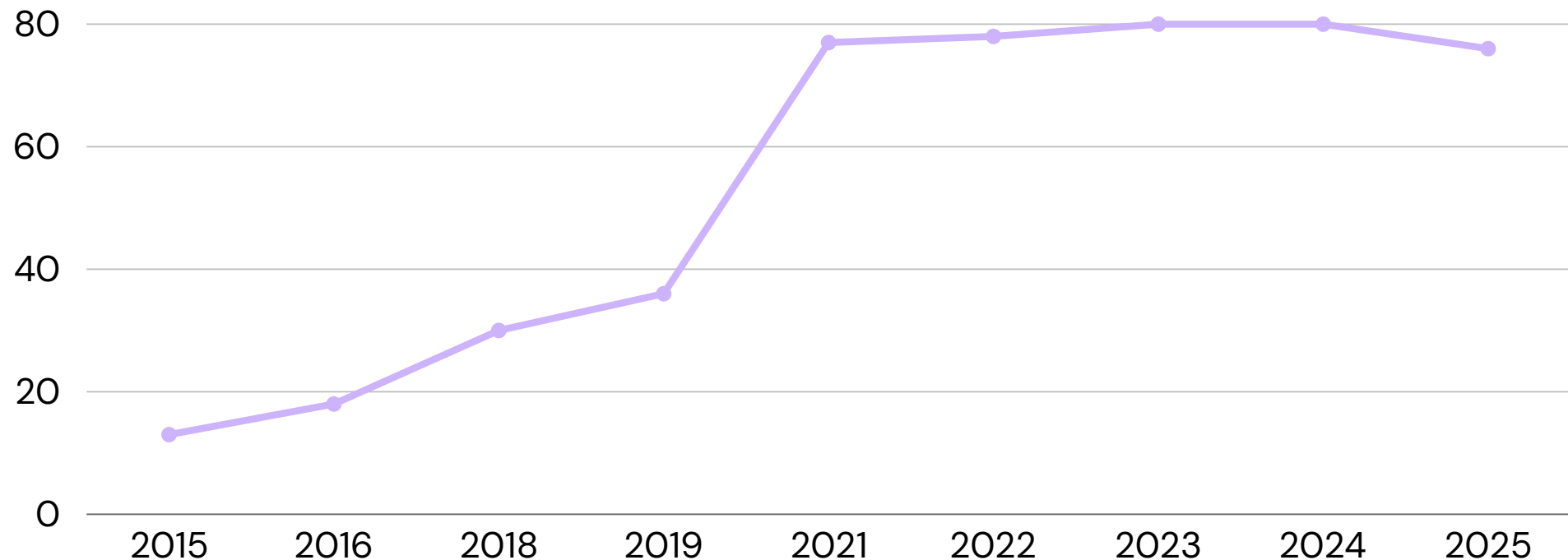
60%

of UK adults are unable to do all 20 digital tasks that government have defined as essential for work

The Challenge

The IT sector is facing an unprecedented talent shortage. In 2025, 74% of global employers reported difficulties in finding skilled talent, with the IT sector being particularly affected³.

The shortage is driven by a combination of rapid technological change, an ageing workforce, and the sheer pace of digital transformation. Technologies such as artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and cybersecurity are evolving faster than the talent pool, leaving companies unable to fill critical positions. Moreover, the demand for tech skills continues to outstrip the supply of graduates and experienced professionals, creating a competitive environment where hiring and retention are increasingly difficult⁴.



The Business Impact

The consequences of the IT talent shortage are far-reaching and multi-dimensional.

- Financial Impact: Companies are spending significantly more on recruitment and training to attract qualified candidates. The average cost-per-hire in the UK has risen by 15% over the past year due to heightened competition for skilled IT professionals. Recruitment delays and higher salaries further strain budgets, limiting resources for other strategic initiatives⁵.
- Operational Impact: The shortage also affects the pace and success of IT projects. Research shows that 80% of UK businesses experienced delays in software deployments, with an average delay of 3.8 months, costing organisations roughly £107,000 annually⁵. Delayed rollouts hinder digital transformation efforts and reduce competitiveness.
- Security and Risk Impact: The lack of skilled IT professionals also increases vulnerability to cybersecurity threats. Organisations are less able to monitor, maintain, and secure critical systems, leaving them exposed to breaches. Deloitte reports that 68% of executives acknowledge moderate to extreme AI skill gaps in their teams, while 27% of tech leaders consider this shortage highly significant, especially in strategic or high-risk areas⁶.
- Innovation Impact: Finally, innovation suffers. Teams stretched thin on operational tasks have little capacity to explore new technologies or optimise processes. Without access to skilled personnel, businesses risk stagnation, reduced efficiency, and the inability to compete in an increasingly tech-driven marketplace.

Actionable Steps

To begin addressing the IT talent shortage, businesses can take the following steps:



Assess Your Current IT Capabilities

Identify areas where your team may be lacking in skills or resources



Explore Strategic Partnerships

Consider collaborations, consulting services, or interim expertise to supplement internal capabilities.



Invest in Employee Development

Offer training and development opportunities to enhance the skills of existing staff.



Implement Strategic Hiring Practices

Develop a targeted hiring strategy focused on attracting and retaining top IT talent.

By following these steps, organisations can begin to mitigate the immediate effects of the IT talent shortage while also laying the groundwork for long-term resilience. Building a proactive approach to skills, partnerships, and workforce development not only helps businesses stay competitive today but also ensures they are prepared to adapt as technologies and market demands continue to evolve.



2

Why the IT Skills Gap Exists

If the IT talent shortage is the visible problem, the skills gap is the engine driving it. Businesses are transforming faster than ever, adopting cloud infrastructure, new cybersecurity frameworks, and AI-powered tools. But the workforce simply isn't keeping pace. Universities, training programmes, and professional development pathways are struggling to produce talent at the scale and speed required. This widening gap between business needs and workforce capabilities is leaving organisations exposed and underpowered.



Over 50% of UK employers report that the digital skills of their workforce are already behind current needs, with demand for cloud, cybersecurity, and AI skills growing fastest⁷.

The Challenge

One of the biggest causes of the IT talent shortage is the mismatch between skills required and skills available. While organisations are eager to invest in technologies like AI, cloud, and automation, they often discover that their workforce doesn't have the expertise to implement or manage them effectively. In fact, nearly two-thirds of CIOs say the digital skills gap has prevented them from keeping up with change in their industry⁸.

Education systems and training pipelines have not caught up with the rapid evolution of IT. A UK Parliament report notes that while the tech sector grows nearly three times faster than the overall economy, the number of graduates entering the field is not growing at the same pace⁷. This is compounded by retention issues; many professionals switch industries or move abroad, deepening the gap.

The Business Impact

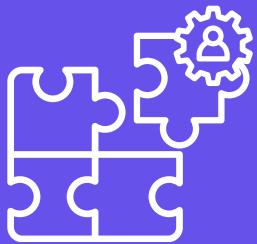
The IT skills gap drives up costs, slows transformation, increases security risks, and puts unsustainable pressure on existing teams.

- Stalled Transformation: Organisations eager to adopt new technologies often hit a wall when they lack in-house expertise. For example, 75% of UK businesses say they cannot keep up with digital transformation because of insufficient skills on their teams⁹. This slows growth, reduces agility, and leaves firms trailing more innovative competitors.
- Increased Costs: The mismatch between skills and demand drives up salaries for highly sought-after professionals. In the UK, cybersecurity specialists, cloud architects, and AI engineers command salaries up to 40% higher than equivalent roles in other industries¹⁰. These inflated costs make it harder for mid-market and smaller organisations to compete.
- Security Vulnerabilities: A shortage of cybersecurity professionals has a direct impact on risk exposure. According to ISC2, the UK cybersecurity workforce gap stands at nearly 56,800 professionals as of 2024¹¹, leaving organisations unable to monitor and secure systems adequately. This increases the likelihood of breaches, fines, and reputational damage.
- Employee Burnout: Teams tasked with managing new platforms without the right training are stretched thin. Gartner found that IT staff in under-resourced teams are 1.7x more likely to experience burnout, leading to higher turnover and compounding the skills shortage¹².



Actionable Steps

To combat the skills gap, businesses can take the following steps:



Map Skill Needs vs. Existing Workforce

Conduct a skills audit to identify where the biggest gaps lie.



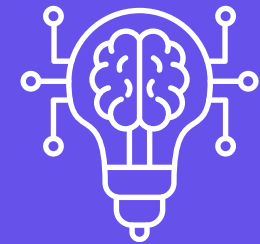
Upskill Strategically

Prioritise training in areas of fastest growth such as cloud, cybersecurity, and data.



Leverage External Expertise

Bring in interim specialists or consultants while building long-term internal capability.



Embed Continuous Learning

Create a culture where professional development is ongoing, not occasional.



3

Competing for Scarce IT Talent

With demand for IT professionals outstripping supply, businesses are finding themselves in a fierce competition for talent. Skilled candidates can afford to be highly selective, while employers face rising salary expectations, long hiring cycles, and frequent turnover. This talent war is reshaping how organisations think about recruitment, retention, and workforce planning.



The Challenge

Recruiting IT staff has become a strategic battleground. According to the British Chambers of Commerce, eight in ten UK firms struggle to fill digital roles (BCC, 2024). In-demand professionals, particularly in cybersecurity and cloud computing, often receive multiple offers at once, driving salaries beyond the reach of many mid-market firms.

Retention is just as difficult. A 2024 Gartner study found that two-thirds of IT professionals are open to leaving their current roles within 12 months (Gartner, 2024), creating instability for teams and increasing recruitment costs. Add to this the growing popularity of remote work, and businesses now find themselves competing not only locally but also against global employers willing to pay more for the same talent.



More than 80% of UK businesses say they are struggling to recruit IT staff with the right skills, with cybersecurity, cloud, and AI roles the hardest to fill⁹.



The Business Impact

The consequences of this talent battle ripple across organisations, affecting costs, productivity, and overall stability.

- Escalating Costs: The competition for scarce IT talent drives up recruitment expenses significantly. UK companies report spending 20% more per hire for IT roles compared to other professional positions¹⁰. This includes higher salaries, signing bonuses, recruitment agency fees, and relocation costs. Over time, these additional expenses can strain budgets, particularly for mid-sized organisations trying to remain competitive without overspending.
- Longer Time-to-Hire: Filling IT positions has become increasingly time-consuming. The average time to fill a technology role in the UK is now 68 days, almost double the 36 days for non-technical positions¹³. Extended hiring cycles can delay critical projects, slow digital transformation initiatives, and create gaps in essential operations, leaving businesses less agile in a fast-moving market.
- Lower Productivity: High turnover and prolonged vacancies mean projects often proceed with underqualified staff or remain stalled entirely. Teams are forced to juggle multiple responsibilities, leading to inefficiencies and mistakes. As a result, innovation slows and deadlines are missed, reducing overall organisational performance and limiting the company's ability to respond to emerging opportunities.
- Reduced Morale: Frequent churn and uncertainty within IT teams can significantly impact employee morale. Staff left to cover gaps often feel overworked and undervalued, leading to disengagement and burnout. This not only increases the risk of further turnover but also undermines team cohesion, collaboration, and the organisation's ability to retain institutional knowledge.

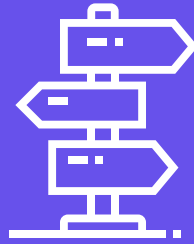
Actionable Steps

To address these challenges and start closing the IT skills gap, organisations can take the following practical steps.



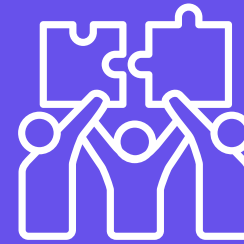
Rethink Recruitment

Focus on skills-based hiring and transferable capabilities, not just rigid role profiles.



Offer More Than Money

Highlight career development, flexibility, and work-life balance to attract candidates.



Build Retention Strategies

Invest in culture, recognition, and professional growth to keep top talent engaged.



Expand the Talent Pool

Look to apprenticeships, career changers, and underrepresented groups to fill roles sustainably.



Bridging the IT Skills Gap

While the IT talent shortage and skills gap pose serious challenges, businesses are not powerless. Organisations are adopting a mix of strategies to bridge the gap: training and reskilling existing employees, tapping into external expertise, and leveraging technology to automate routine tasks. This chapter explores these approaches, showing how companies can maintain productivity, strengthen teams, and prepare for the future.





74% of UK businesses say they are investing in upskilling or reskilling their IT teams to keep pace with evolving technology demands⁹.



The Challenge

Bridging the IT skills gap is not a simple task. Many organisations struggle to balance day-to-day operations with training programs, and hiring externally can be costly and time-consuming. Meanwhile, technology continues to advance, creating a moving target for skills development.

Developing existing staff through upskilling and reskilling requires significant time, investment, and structured learning programs. Without this focus on employee growth, businesses risk stagnation, lower morale, and higher turnover, which only compounds the talent shortage.

At the same time, technology itself offers solutions. Automation, cloud computing, and AI can reduce dependency on scarce skills and increase efficiency. However, implementing these tools effectively still requires knowledgeable professionals, creating a “catch-22” for organisations already facing staff shortages.

Many organisations also turn to external support, such as consultants or interim specialists, to fill gaps temporarily. While this can be effective in the short term, integrating external expertise with internal teams requires careful planning to ensure alignment, knowledge transfer, and continuity.

The Business Impact

Successfully bridging the IT skills gap has immediate and long-term benefits:

- **Increased Productivity:** Training employees in new technologies and automating repetitive tasks helps remove operational bottlenecks and frees teams to focus on high-value, strategic work. According to a 2024 TechUK report⁹, businesses that actively upskill their IT teams see a 20–30% improvement in project delivery speed, as employees spend less time troubleshooting basic issues and more time innovating.
- **Cost Management:** Investing in internal talent development can be more cost-effective than repeatedly hiring external specialists, especially for mid-sized organisations that may struggle to compete with larger firms on salary. A study by the Learning and Work Institute¹⁴ found that every £1 spent on workplace training returns up to £2.50 in increased productivity and retention, highlighting the financial benefit of developing existing teams rather than relying solely on new hires.
- **Reduced Risk:** Upskilled teams are better equipped to maintain cybersecurity, compliance, and operational resilience. Organisations with robust internal training programs experience 40% fewer security incidents than those relying solely on external expertise¹¹. Employees familiar with company systems and processes can quickly identify and mitigate vulnerabilities, reducing exposure to breaches and costly downtime.
- **Employee Engagement:** Offering clear growth opportunities boosts morale, reduces turnover, and strengthens the employer brand in a competitive talent market. Engaged employees are more likely to remain with their employer, contributing to long-term stability and knowledge retention.

Actionable Steps

By combining training, technology, and strategic support, organisations can reduce the immediate strain of the IT talent shortage while building a workforce capable of adapting to future demands.



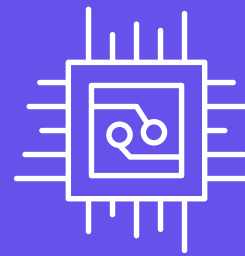
Map Skills Gaps

Identify the most critical skills your organisation will need over the next 2–3 years.



Upskill Strategically

Prioritise training in areas of fastest growth such as cloud, cybersecurity, and data.



Leverage Technology Strategically

Use automation, cloud, and AI tools to reduce reliance on scarce skills where possible.



Integrate External Expertise

Bring in consultants or interim specialists for temporary skill gaps while enabling knowledge transfer.

Future-Proofing Your IT Workforce

Technology will continue to evolve at an unprecedented pace, and organisations cannot afford to view the IT skills gap as a one-time problem. Future-proofing the workforce means creating a culture of continuous learning, adopting flexible workforce strategies, and integrating technology in ways that reduce dependency on scarce skills. This proactive approach ensures businesses remain resilient, competitive, and ready to seize emerging opportunities.

The Challenge

Preparing for the future isn't straightforward. Many organisations still operate in reactive mode, focusing on filling immediate gaps rather than anticipating the skills they'll need in three to five years. Rapid developments in AI, automation, cloud computing, and cybersecurity require employees to continuously upgrade their capabilities.

Workforce demographics are also shifting. Experienced staff are retiring, taking decades of institutional knowledge with them, while younger talent often enters the market with different expectations about flexibility, career development, and purpose-driven work. Organisations must balance retaining institutional knowledge with attracting and developing new talent, all while keeping pace with rapidly changing technology.

Without future-focused planning, the risks compound: underprepared staff struggle to implement new systems, cybersecurity vulnerabilities increase, digital transformation initiatives stall, and organisations fall behind more agile competitors. Gartner reports that 41% of IT projects fail due to skills gaps, illustrating the tangible consequences of inaction¹².

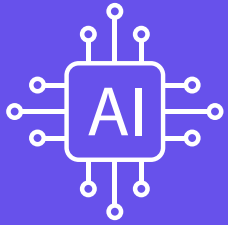
The Business Impact

The consequences of neglecting future workforce planning are wide-ranging.

- Slower Innovation: Teams without up-to-date skills are unable to explore emerging technologies or optimise processes, reducing competitive advantage. Organisations that invest in continuous learning report 20–30% faster adoption of new IT systems⁹.
- Increased Costs: Reactive hiring and firefighting operational gaps drive up recruitment, training, and project costs. Filling roles last-minute or paying premium salaries for scarce skills is often far more expensive than building internal capabilities.
- Security Exposure: Without ongoing training, employees may be unprepared for the latest cyber threats, increasing the risk of breaches, downtime, and regulatory penalties. (ISC)² shows the UK cybersecurity workforce gap stands at nearly 56,800 professionals, highlighting the importance of continuous upskilling¹¹.
- Employee Turnover: Lack of growth opportunities or a clear development path can lead to disengagement and higher attrition. Gallup research¹⁵ shows that organisations with strong professional development programs have 59% lower turnover and 41% higher employee engagement compared with companies that provide minimal upskilling opportunities.

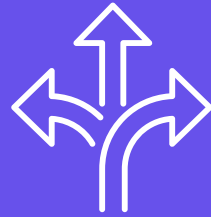


90% of UK IT leaders believe that continuous skills development is critical to remaining competitive in the next 5 years⁹.



Implement Continuous Learning Programmes:

Regularly train to cover emerging technologies and trends, including AI, cloud, and cybersecurity.



Plan for Workforce Flexibility:

Use cross-training, flexible roles, and internal mobility to adapt to changing needs without over-relying on external hires.



Forecast Future Skill Needs

Map expected technological developments to required competencies over 3–5 years, ensuring teams evolve alongside market demands.



Promote a Growth Culture

Encourage employees to take ownership of their professional development through certifications, mentorship, collaborative learning, and structured career pathways.

6

Measuring Success and Next Steps

Identifying the IT skills gap and implementing strategies to bridge it is only half the battle. To ensure long-term impact, organisations must measure progress, evaluate outcomes, and continuously refine their approach. Tracking success allows businesses to understand what's working, where gaps remain, and how to prioritise next steps, creating a cycle of improvement that keeps the IT workforce agile and future-ready.

The Challenge

Many organisations struggle with measuring the effectiveness of IT workforce strategies. It's not enough to offer training programs or hire specialists; without clear metrics, it's difficult to know whether these initiatives are closing skills gaps, improving productivity, or mitigating risks.

Additionally, the fast pace of technological change means benchmarks and KPIs must evolve constantly. Skills that are critical today may become standard tomorrow, and emerging technologies may create entirely new gaps. Organisations must establish systems that capture both quantitative outcomes (e.g., project delivery times, reduced incident rates) and qualitative measures (e.g., employee engagement, confidence in new tools).



18% of UK adults lacked the essential digital skills that are needed for the workplace (TechUK, 2024)⁹.

The Business Impact

Measuring success brings tangible benefits that go far beyond simply checking a box.

- **Optimised Investment:** By tracking outcomes, organisations can make informed decisions about where to allocate resources. Instead of investing in programs that may have limited impact, businesses can focus on initiatives that demonstrably improve skills, efficiency, or operational outcomes. For example, a company that tracks which training modules lead to faster project delivery can prioritise those programs and scale them across teams, ensuring every pound spent delivers maximum value.
- **Improved Workforce Performance:** Regular measurement of skills development ensures that training programs are tailored to the areas that matter most. Employees receive the support they need to master emerging technologies, and managers can identify and address gaps before they affect project timelines. Organisations that actively monitor skills development see a 20–30% improvement in project delivery speed, illustrating how targeted training directly boosts performance.
- **Risk Mitigation:** Monitoring competencies in cybersecurity, compliance, and operational procedures reduces exposure to both internal and external risks. Organisations that track employee readiness can proactively identify weak spots and implement corrective measures, lowering the likelihood of breaches or regulatory fines. For example, by assessing which staff are fully trained in cloud security practices, a business can reduce potential vulnerabilities while maintaining compliance with data protection regulations.
- **Enhanced Employee Engagement:** When employees can see clear progress in their development, it reinforces motivation and commitment. Staff feel valued and supported, which improves retention and strengthens morale.



More than 80% of UK businesses say they are struggling to recruit IT staff with the right skills, with cybersecurity, cloud, and AI roles the hardest to fill. (TechUK, 2024)

Actionable Steps

By combining training, technology, and strategic support, organisations can reduce the immediate strain of the IT talent shortage while building a workforce capable of adapting to future demands.



Define Clear Metrics

Establish KPIs for training completion, skill acquisition, project delivery, and cybersecurity readiness.



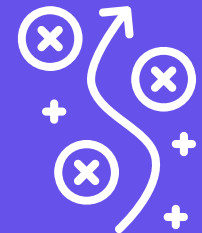
Conduct Regular Skills Audits

Periodically evaluate workforce competencies to identify gaps and evolving needs.



Track Employee Engagement

Survey staff to understand confidence levels, satisfaction with learning programs, and career progression.



Review and Adapt

Use data to refine training initiatives, workforce planning, and technology adoption continuously.

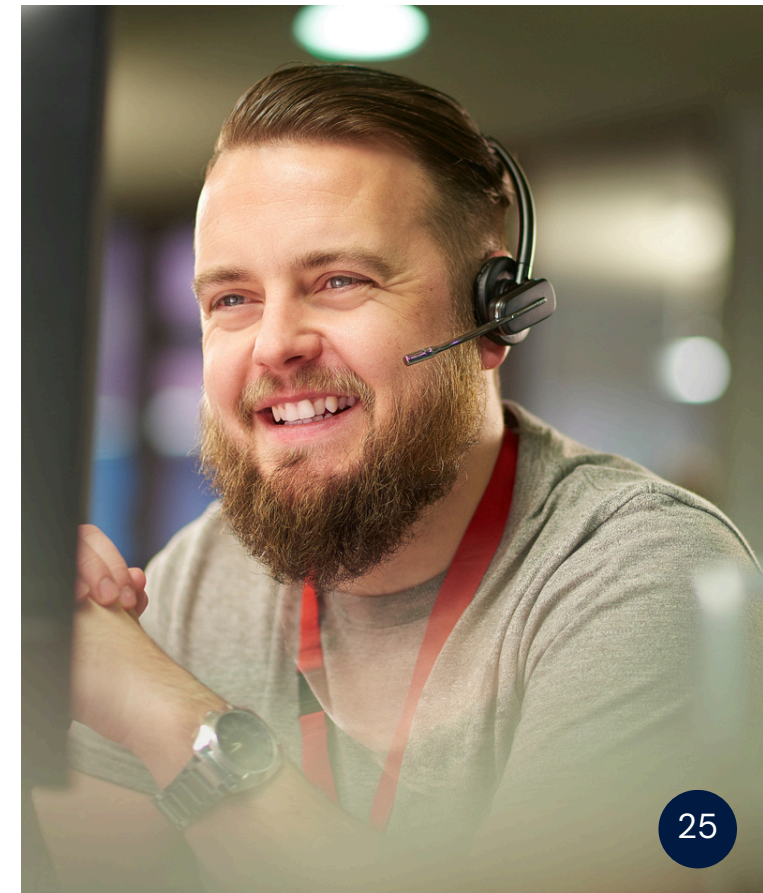
Let's get started

Whether you're facing a critical IT skills shortage, planning a major transformation, or looking to build a resilient, future-ready workforce, Wanstor can help.

We meet you where you are, offering practical expertise, clear guidance, and solutions tailored to your organisation's unique challenges. No jargon. No cookie-cutter approaches. Just measurable outcomes delivered by a partner who understands that bridging the IT skills gap isn't about quick fixes, it's about creating sustainable momentum for growth, innovation, and long-term success.

What we offer:

- **24/7 Managed IT Support:** Proactive monitoring, automation, and UK-based service desk to keep your systems running smoothly.
- **Cybersecurity & Compliance:** Threat detection, patching, and built-in Cyber Essentials to keep your business secure and audit-ready.
- **Cloud & Infrastructure Services:** Scalable hybrid cloud, hosting, and disaster recovery tailored to your needs.
- **Automation & Optimisation** – Streamlined processes and tools to cut costs, reduce manual effort, and boost performance.
- **Strategic IT Partnership** – Dedicated consultants and regular reviews to align your IT roadmap with business goals.



Wanstor's commitment to excellence has been recognised with multiple awards, including:

- MSP Service Desk of the Year at the Spark2025 SDI Conference.
- Best Service Desk CX at the same event, highlighting our dedication to customer experience.



More than 90% of organisations worldwide will be affected by the IT shortage by 2026. This is more critical than a mere skill gap; it's a strategic crisis that will redefine who leads and who lags in the digital economy.

Proven impact:

- 468 business risks closed in the past year
- 291 security incidents resolved last year
- £194,000 in cost savings identified
- 32,852 criticals resolved in just six months
- 540+ incidents prevented every single month
- Up to 50% reduction in P1 outages
- 56% decrease in monitoring alerts
- 175+ recurring problems identified and progressed monthly

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