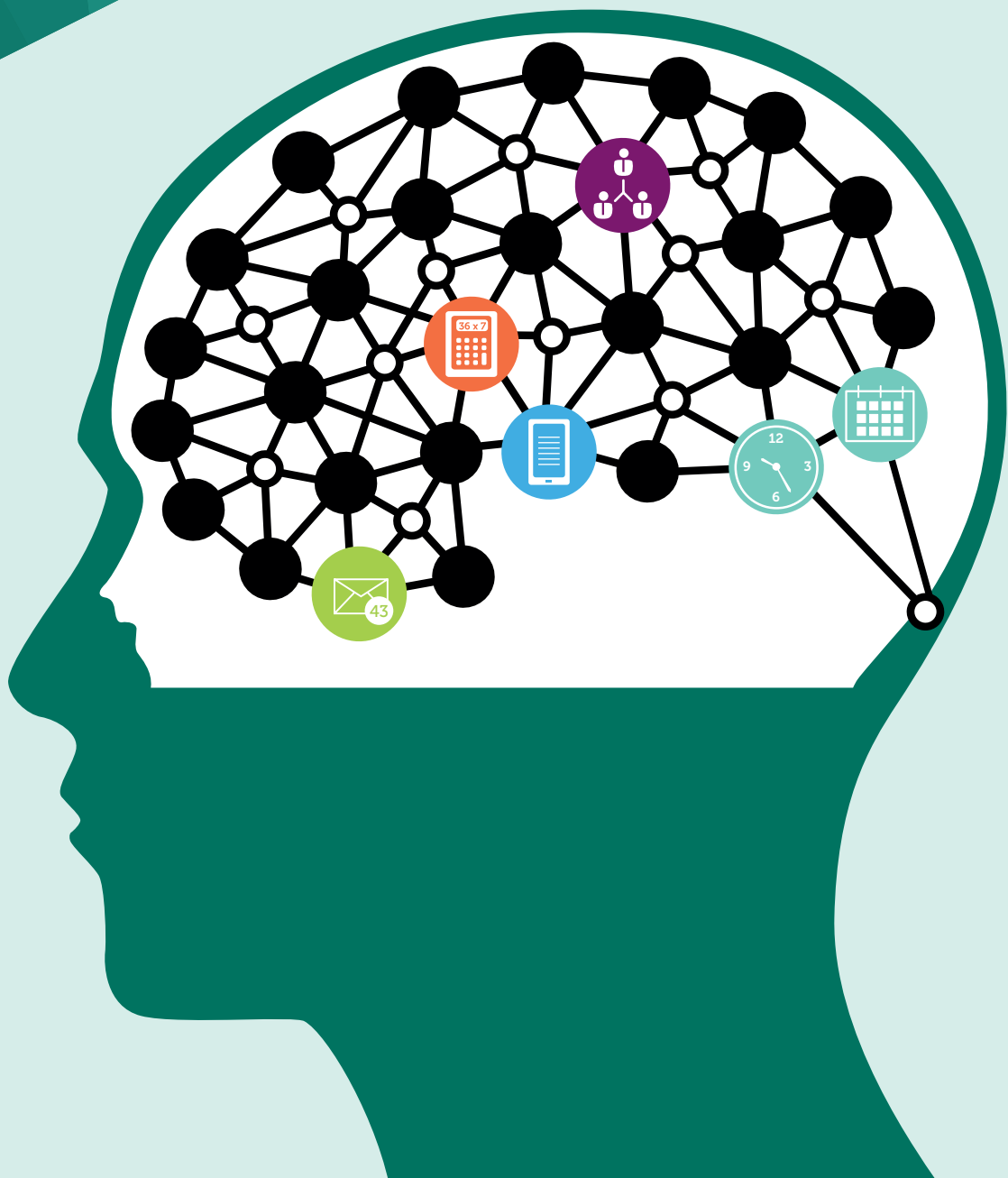


# DIGITAL AMNESIA AT WORK

the risks and rewards of forgetting  
in business



# Executive summary

Digital Amnesia is the experience of forgetting information that has been entrusted to a digital device. In the work environment Digital Amnesia is a natural, even inevitable response to an always on, data-driven, connected business environment.

Trying to remember everything is counterproductive. Important areas such as innovation, intelligence sharing and collaboration will all suffer if people tried to store every fact in their mind.

For example, we found that Digital Amnesia plays an important role in business creativity. New ideas stem from seemingly unconnected details, and digital devices are a good place to store such information: freeing – and feeding – the process of creative thought.

46% believe that the more detail they have to remember, the less creative they become – while 63% say that some of their best ideas have come from rediscovering information they had noted down on a device and then forgotten about.

However, we also found that the act of transferring information to a device can mean that people miss contextual, emotional or behavioural clues that are vital for the accurate understanding of the information being communicated.

44% say that typing notes into a device during a business meeting or presentation can mean they don't really listen to what is being said, and 60% believe that the digital record would be inaccurate if non-verbal elements were missed.

In other words, when it comes to the business environment, Digital Amnesia and the human mind work best when they work together.

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**Digital Amnesia:**  
the experience  
of forgetting  
information that  
you trust a digital  
device to store and  
remember for you.

## Introduction

Digital technologies, such as the internet and mobile devices have transformed the way people collect, use and remember information. In 2015, Kaspersky Lab published research that revealed the extent to which consumers are transferring the task of remembering information to their internet-enabled devices – often without taking adequate action to safeguard that information.

Kaspersky Lab named this phenomenon Digital Amnesia, the experience of forgetting information we trust a connected device to store and remember for us. The latest phase of the research explores in more depth the impact of Digital Amnesia in the workplace, with a particular focus on two areas:

- ▲ What it means for corporate creativity and innovation; and
- ▲ What it means for the way people take in information.

The results show that Digital Amnesia in a business environment can bring valuable benefits – but that its existence also exposes organisations to risk, particularly in terms of IT security and understanding.

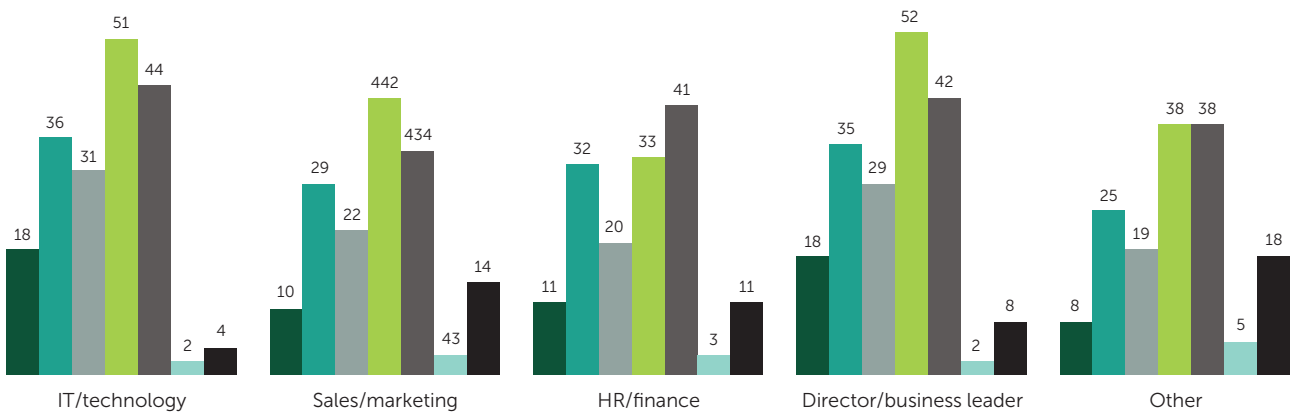
The research methodology and respondent profile can be found at the end of the report.

## The findings

### BACKGROUND: THE USE OF CONNECTED DEVICES IN THE WORKPLACE

Respondents across all functions use a range of company-owned and personal devices to access corporate networks and to work on, store and share all kinds of work-related information. The devices, particularly laptops and personal smartphones are also widely used as a creativity tool: to conduct online research and generate ideas.

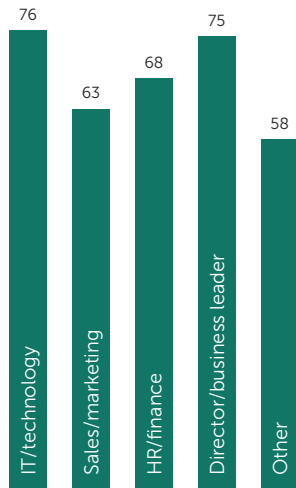
### To think creatively



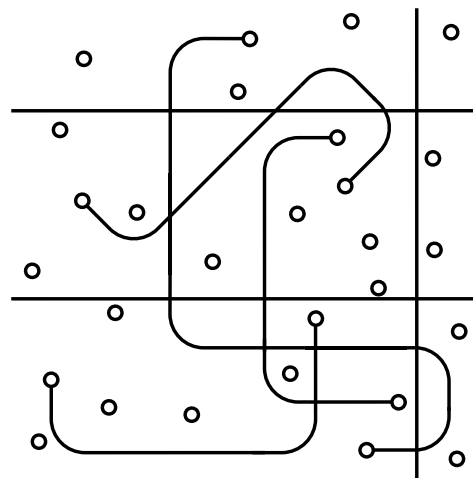
■ A company-owned smartphone   
 ■ A laptop   
 ■ N/A  
■ My personal smartphone   
 ■ A desktop PC/Apple  
■ A tablet computer   
 ■ Other

Answered: 2495

I like remembering details – that’s where the golden nuggets hide (% agree)



Answered: 2495



**Digital Amnesia as a driver of creativity**

When it comes to such device-enabled creativity, it is clear from the study that Digital Amnesia has a significant role to play.

There is a universal consensus that the building blocks of new ideas are the little bits of information we all carry around with us, both in our heads and

on our devices. Three quarters (73%) of those surveyed say they like remembering details because that’s where the golden nuggets hide. However, the volume of detail can quickly mount up and act as a barrier to creative thinking. **46% believe that the more detail they have to remember, the less creative they become. Similarly, 61% say that when the pressure to remember facts is removed, for example because they are or can be stored on a digital device, they more easily take in new ideas and thoughts.**

This suggests that Digital Amnesia enables business professionals to free up valuable mind space for creative thinking and innovation. And the benefits go one step further as the stored and forgotten facts themselves help to spark new ideas.

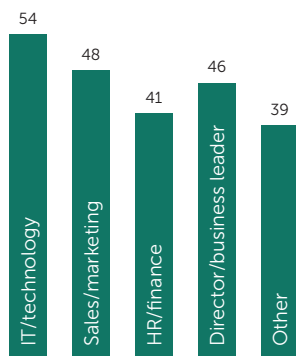
**Around two-thirds (63%) of respondents say that some of their best ideas have come from rediscovering information they had noted down on a device and then forgotten about.**

This digital creativity complements traditional remembering: 71% say that some of their best ideas have come from facts stored in their memory which just seemed to connect one day – while 69% point to a coming together of personal recall and device-stored data.

It seems that in an age of ubiquitous connectivity and big data, when many employees and their business leaders are faced with a daily deluge of information, **Digital Amnesia can be a powerful and positive force for creativity. Relieved of the burden of having to hang on to every little fact, people can focus on doing what the human mind often does best: uncovering the creative patterns and synergies that pave the way for new solutions.**

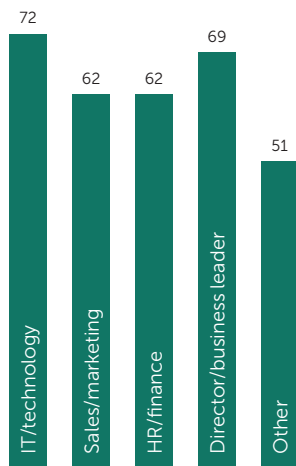
However, there are limits to our willingness to share everything we know with others: over half (59%) say they like to keep at least some information to themselves, in their heads, as it forms part of their unique value to the business. There is remarkable consistency on this across all the job roles explored, but business leaders and IT professionals are the most likely to agree strongly (29% and 28% respectively, compared to 19% of those in sales and marketing, and 20% of those in HR and finance.)

Often, the more detail I have to remember the less creative I become (% agree)



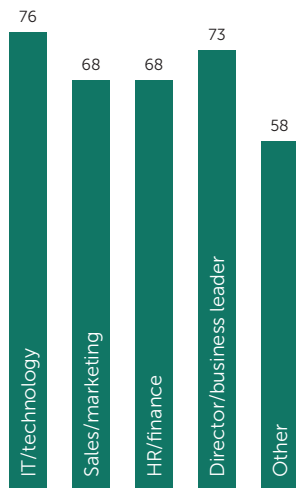
Answered: 2495

Some of my best ideas have come from rediscovering information I had noted down on a device and then forgotten about (% agree)



Answered: 2495

Some or my best ideas have come from a combination of rediscovering facts noted on a device and things I remember (% agree)



Answered: 2495

THE RISK OF OVER-DEPENDENCE ON DEVICE RECALL  
Entrusting too much information to a digital device, however, with no back up in terms of memory or security software, could leave organisations more vulnerable than they realise. Not only is such data at risk of a growing range of IT security threats, including data corruption, loss of access or theft through malware, cyberespionage or ransomware – the very act of transferring data to a device could have an impact on what is remembered and how.

**Our study set out to explore whether typing notes during a meeting or presentation influenced the user’s ability to take in and comprehend information. And, if so, what this meant for the quality of the memory captured.**

**Digital Amnesia and the risk of data distortion: Devices can hear, but not listen**

Digital devices are widely used to take notes during meetings or presentations. On the one hand, such notes provide a real-time, permanent record of what is said. 46% of respondents believe that the factual accuracy of typed and stored notes is more important than the nuance of conversation, rising to 59% of those in IT/technology. 67% add that digital notes can be backed-up and shared, which is better than relying on the personal memory of a conversation.

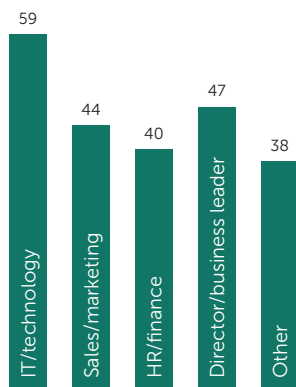
On the other hand, the act of typing can directly impact people’s ability to listen. **44% say that transferring notes to a device during a business meeting or presentation can mean they don’t really listen to what is being said, rising to 53% of IT professionals.** 45% often have to check their notes to remember what was said, and by whom.

The impact of this is two-fold. Firstly, if the digital notes are then lost or rendered inaccessible, for example through a ransomware attack, the user has no personal memory to fall back on. **Around one in seven (13%) of the study respondents had lost notes they had typed into a device and found themselves unable to remember anything that was said.**

Secondly, it can mean that people miss contextual, emotional or behavioural clues that are vital for the accurate understanding of the information being communicated. And this matters. **60% say that a typed record of a conversation can be inaccurate if it means you missed the emotion and meaning behind the spoken words – a result that is consistent across all job roles.**

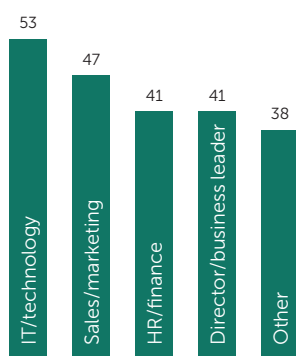
In short, the result suggests that as people are typing, they are so busy concentrating on the data capture – from speaker to device – that they don’t have the spare capacity to listen to and evaluate what is being said. **So there is another facet to Digital Amnesia: too much focus on the ‘digital’ aspects means that important, ‘real’ elements are overlooked and forgotten.**

The factual accuracy of typed and stored notes is more important than the nuance of conversation (% agree)



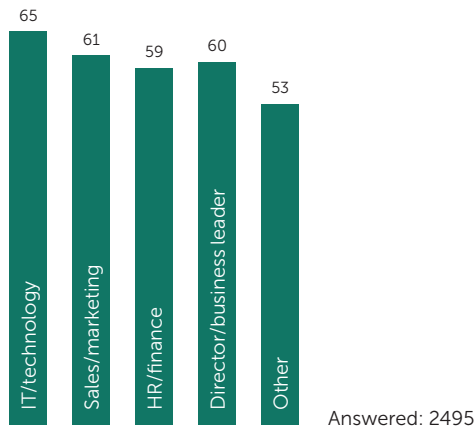
Answered: 2495

Transferring notes to a device during a meeting/ presentation can mean I don’t really listen to what is being said (% agree)



Answered: 2495

A typed record of a conversation can be inaccurate if it means you missed the emotions and meaning behind the spoken words (% agree)



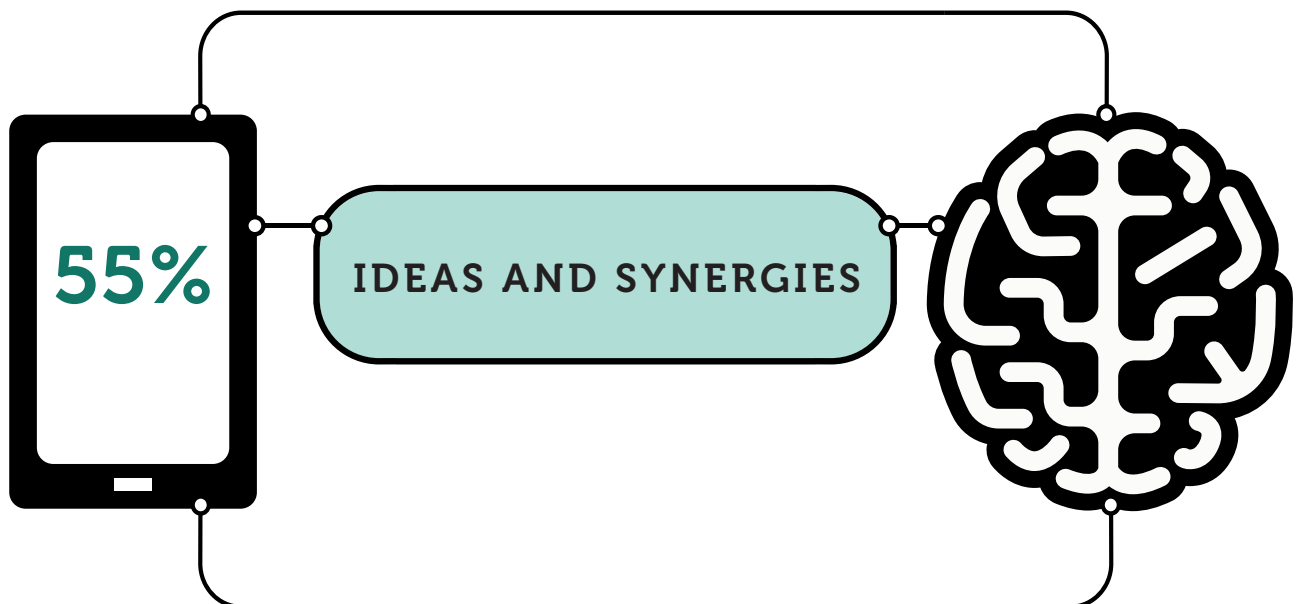
**Conclusion**

Digital Amnesia is a universal, 21st century condition. It prevails in everyday life and in the workplace, across all job functions and across the world. In every case it offers benefits and introduces some additional risk.

The amount of information business professionals are bombarded with on a daily basis can become overwhelming. If everyone tried to remember everything the organisation would grind to a halt; and creativity, innovation, collaboration and intelligence sharing would all suffer. So it is not surprising that half of all respondents (46%) say they don't feel the need to remember business information as it's all stored on their device, and 57% believe that no-one takes offence if you can't remember something and have to look it up on a device.

The solution to harnessing the benefits of Digital Amnesia and addressing the risk is two-fold. Firstly, companies need to ensure that devices and the data they carry are secure and that employees know what to do to stay protected. Secondly, businesses need to remind employees of the value of their own intellectual contribution. The data remembered by a device offers just part of a picture, albeit an important one. The intuitive human mind can spot ideas and synergies in these digital memories that devices can't.

Fortunately, most business professionals understand this. When asked which was more important to their organisation, extensive factual knowledge or the ability to think creatively, creativity won by 55% to 39% overall. Respondents know that facts can be stored on a device, but only people can connect the dots. Digital Amnesia reminds us of the need to protect those dots.



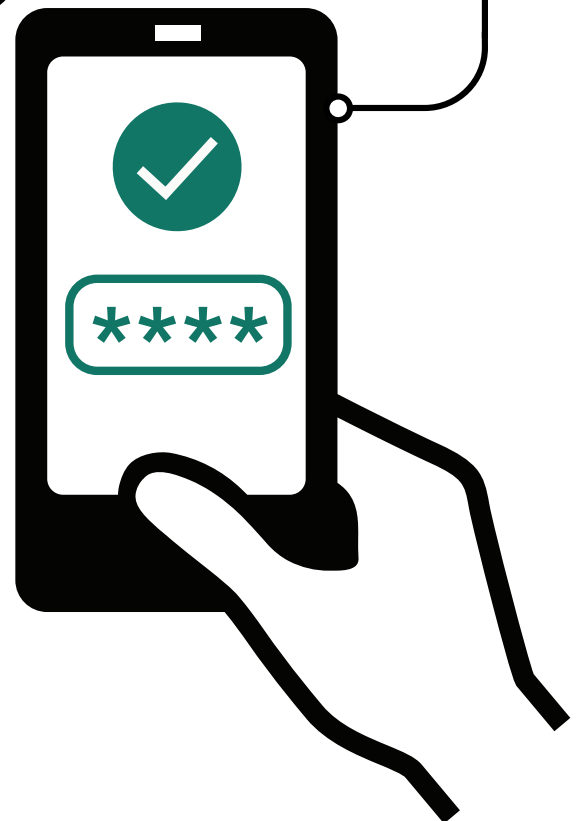


Connected devices enrich our lives but they have also given rise to **Digital Amnesia**. We need to understand the long term implications of this for how we remember and how we protect our memories.

### Research methodology

The research was undertaken by Arlington Research, targeting business professionals in IT/technology, business leadership, sales/marketing and HR/finance roles in the following countries: France, Germany, Spain, Italy, UK, Russia, the US, Mexico, Brazil, India, Malaysia, Singapore and Japan. The fieldwork was conducted online in late December 2015/early January 2016.

A third (35%) of respondents overall were employed in IT/technology roles, while one in five (19%) was a company director or business leader. 33% of respondents were aged between 25 and 34, and 30% were aged between 35 and 44. IT/technology professionals were more likely to fall into the younger age group, while directors/business leaders were more likely to be found in the older category.



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