

Enterprise Horizons, 2025: Technology Leaders Addressing the Network

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AI is fulfilling its potential and delivering positive outcomes.

A quarter of companies are now using AI extensively.



16%

Not using or just starting

Companies using AI extensively are much more likely than others to report that:

61%

Using AI in parts of the business but not all

- AI is critical to meeting their business priorities.
- AI implementations to date have exceeded expectations.
- The future outcomes of AI across the business will be positive.

23%

Using AI extensively

And it is positively impacting the business.

Top Positive-Impact Areas

- Quality and effectiveness of marketing**
- Overall business costs (net of AI)**
- Quality of customer interaction**

Source: IDC's *Technology Leaders Survey, 2025, January 2025* (N = 650)

Yet organizations are feeling some AI growing pains.

CIOs are feeling the weight of AI expectations.

33% of technology leaders feel that the board has **unrealistic expectations** of how new technology in general can benefit business performance.



Much of that pressure comes from AI:

28% say that expectations for AI are growing faster than their ability to meet those expectations — if they can meet them at all.

Source: IDC's *Technology Leaders Survey, 2025, January 2025* (N = 650)

And their networks are limiting their ability to deliver on those expectations.

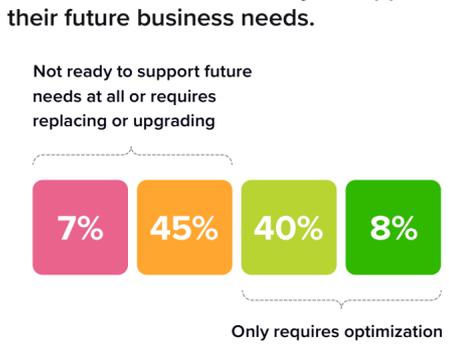
94% of organizations say their networks are limiting their ability to run large AI projects.

The top three issues have all become more common over the last year, due to more companies using AI in earnest and companies' AI-related needs having grown faster than their networks have improved.

- 1** Networks not scaling flexibly on demand
- 2** Inadequate network performance (e.g., in terms of application responsiveness)
- 3** Lack of bandwidth for large data transfers

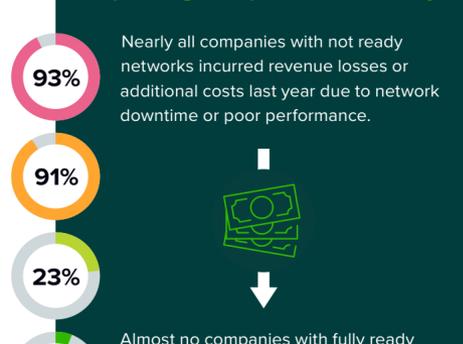
Networks are falling behind generally, and causing financial harm.

Half of companies are running outdated networks that are not ready to support their future business needs.



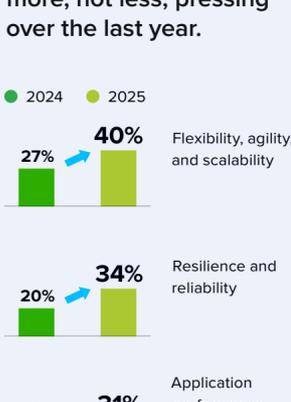
Source: IDC's *Technology Leaders Survey, 2025, January 2025* (N = 650)

These unfit networks are impacting companies financially.



Network improvements are urgently needed, and companies are turning to partners.

The three **most urgent improvements needed** in networking have become more, not less, pressing over the last year.



Source: IDC's *Technology Leaders Survey, 2025, January 2025* (N = 650); IDC's *Technology Leaders Survey, 2024, March 2024* (N = 650)

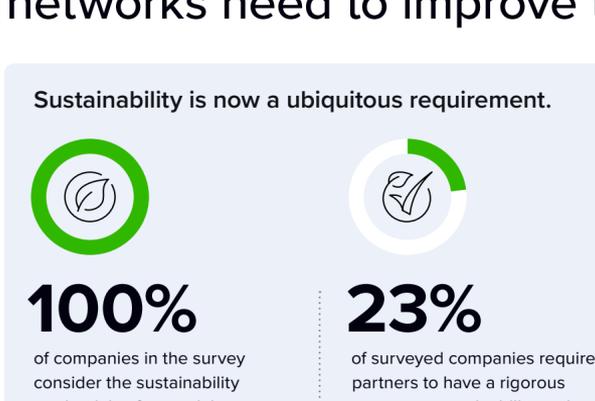
In addition, **sourcing networks in different regions** creates challenges, particularly in less-developed markets.



As a result, companies are **increasingly looking to partners for help**, turning networking from an in-house activity to a managed service.

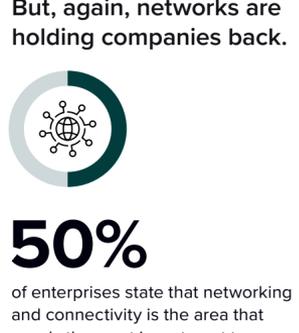


Sustainability is non-negotiable, and networks need to improve to support it.



Source: IDC's *Technology Leaders Survey, 2025, January 2025* (N = 650)

But, again, networks are holding companies back.



This is ahead of all other areas — even cloud, AI and data, and operational technology (OT).

Recommendations

- 1** **Be excited about AI, but be realistic, too.**
Companies furthest ahead with AI report the most significant benefits. However, putting too much pressure on technology teams to deliver on unrealistic expectations will have negative consequences. Assess AI's potential for your organization, but be realistic. Keep an eye on governance and workforce impacts, and in particular, look to where your networking and connectivity needs to improve to support your AI initiatives.
- 2** **Take a close look at your network.**
The network underpins everything: business operations, AI, cloud, digital, and even your sustainability efforts. When it falls behind, it drags these initiatives down and has negative financial impacts. Assess how ready your network is to support your most urgent needs, and identify the most urgent areas for improvement.
- 3** **Choose who is best placed to run your network.**
The signs are all there: Networking is falling behind other technology areas, it is hampering new initiatives and incurring unnecessary financial impacts, yet companies are not upgrading their in-house skills and are increasingly looking externally for help. Networking is moving from a once largely in-house activity to a managed service delivered by a trusted partner.

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