



# Better technology, greater efficiency

A Nuance report for SMBs



# Don't stop me now

When you're a blue-chip organisation you can afford to have some slack built into the system.

But when you're a small to medium-sized business (SMB) you don't have quite so much scope. Most of your focus is likely to be on the here and now – and anything that slows you down or gets in the way is going to hurt.

**After all, time is money. And wasted time is a wasted opportunity.**

What SMBs need are ways to keep their working days as productive as possible, either by building efficiency into the system from the beginning, or by finding solutions to time-wasting problems that have crept in. And if those solutions are **simple and low-cost**, so much the better.

In September 2014 Nuance commissioned research in the UK, France and Germany. We wanted to know how efficient SMBs in those countries felt themselves to be. We also asked where they felt most time was wasted, and what technology (if any) they used to address this. Finally, we asked about barriers to improving efficiency, and how those barriers might be removed.

In short, we wanted to know if they were aware of simple short-term measures to save time and money – and if they were, whether they'd considered using them.

**Make every pound, euro and minute count – by using the right tech tools to improve efficiency.**

# Good news

We found all kinds of good news. On the whole, SMBs feel they run themselves fairly efficiently, particularly in general administration.

The less good news was as we feared: they were indeed spending too much time and energy on repetitive or redundant tasks.

But nonetheless perhaps the best news of all was – and is – how much scope there is to address these issues, either by changing working practices or introducing new technology. And it wasn't just about scope either. There is a general and genuine enthusiasm about tackling obstacles to efficiency. Business owners recognise a problem when they see one – and they're not reluctant to take it on.

**Not surprising, really. When you're an SMB, every pound or euro counts – and so does every minute.**

## Who's efficient – and how?

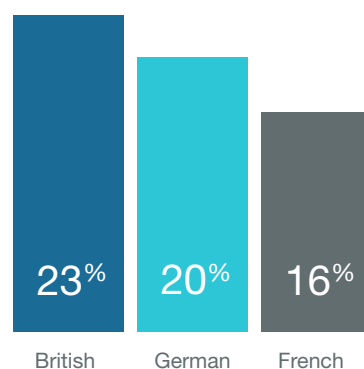
While there was little evidence of complacency, most SMBs surveyed feel they are pretty efficient. More than 70% of SMBs feel they are efficient in administration, managing cashflow, sales and managing workflow.

### There were some national differences.

For example, 9% of German SMBs say they are inefficient at managing cashflow, while only 5% of the British agreed. Under a quarter of British SMBs – 23% – say areas of their business can't be improved, and even fewer of the Germans and French feel the same way, at 20% and 16% respectively.

But are there really national differences in efficiency, or merely differences in what's perceived to be good? It's hard to tell.

*% of SMB'S who say areas of their business can't be improved*



**More than 70% of SMBs feel they are efficient in administration, managing cashflow, sales and managing workflow – but only 20% feel there is no room for improvement.**

# Where is most time wasted?

Some issues are pretty much the same for everyone. We asked SMBs across the UK, France and Germany about activities that take up too much time, and their top two answers both come under the heading of red tape: they are bureaucracy and compliance.

It's difficult for SMBs anywhere to make red tape go away, and it's also hard for them to put more resources into advertising (another big occupier of the working day, apparently). But the issue that comes next on the time-wasting list is something so basic, so much a part of every area of every kind of organisation, that it stops people in their tracks. Find a way to fix this, and businesses everywhere will feel they've been let off the leash.

So, what is it that every business does – and that every SMB in particular spends too long doing?

## **The answer is managing and creating text-based documents.**

We're talking here about reports. About contracts. Funding applications. Tender documents. Marketing collateral. Competitor analysis. Sales projections. Supply chain documentation. Product specifications. The list goes on, and on.

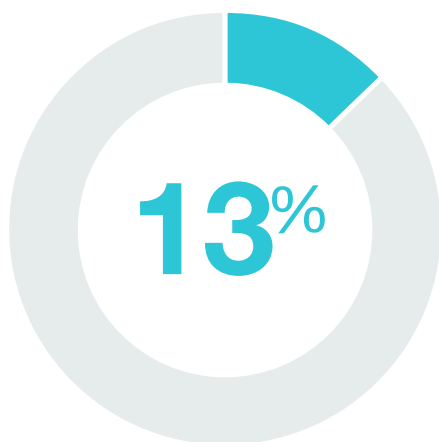
Every one of these documents can go through several drafts. Every draft takes time. And a great deal of that time – too much of it – is spent struggling not with the message, but the medium.

Because it's the process that slows businesses down – and all too often, that means the software.

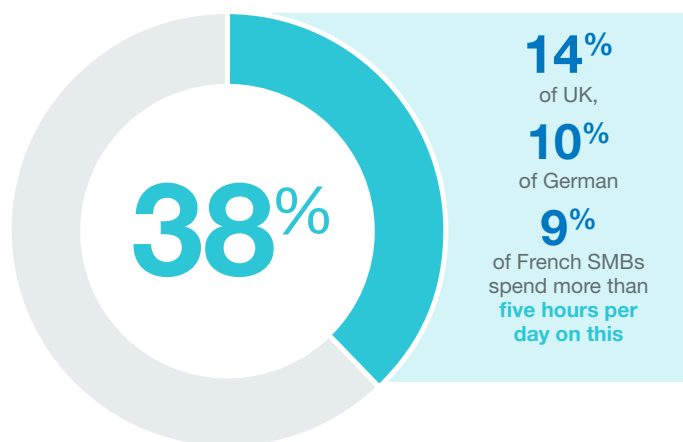


**Managing, creating and editing text takes too much time**

# Vexed by text



13% of all SMBs questioned say managing, creating and editing text-based documents is a greater waste of time than too much travelling to meetings (7%)



38% of SMBs spend an average of two hours per day working on these documents...

**The problem is worse in specific sectors. For instance, 25% of legal organisations spend up to four hours a day working on documents, and 19% spend up to six hours a day.**

These numbers don't only represent the loss of a major part of every working day: they also represent the loss of a great deal of money. Lawyers' hours are billable, and every hour needlessly spent on administrative tasks is an hour that should be generating income. Assuming a five-day week at eight hours per day, those four hours a day aggregate to **126 lost working person-days** in the UK, France and Germany.

Professions such as law firms may bill their time, but that doesn't mean other types of organisation don't lose money too. A wasted half-day is a wasted half-day for anyone, and for SMBs with small workforces the ripple effect is felt right through the business.

**PDFs are useful to SMBs – but they could be better**

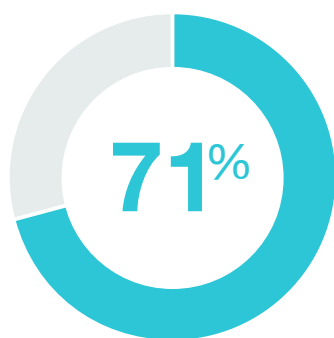
Time needlessly spent bogged down in documents is a dead weight. Fix the problem, lighten the load, and business owners will be able to run their companies more efficiently, and more profitably too.

### How can this be achieved?

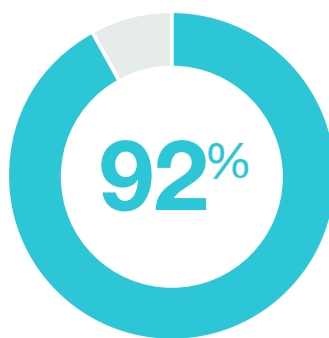
Smart, simple technology changes can meet the text problem head-on. Two of the best such changes SMBs can introduce are powerful PDF software and equally powerful voice recognition software – but as we shall see, one of these is not commonly used by SMBs.

And the other kind of software? Well, yes, it's used, and used widely. But it's not used particularly effectively – and that's part of the reason so much time is being wasted.

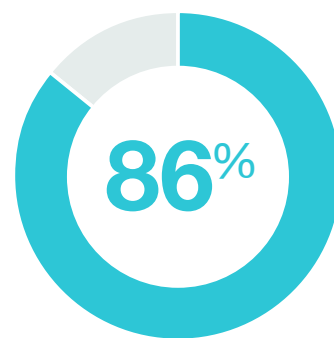
# Who uses PDFs?



of UK SMBs



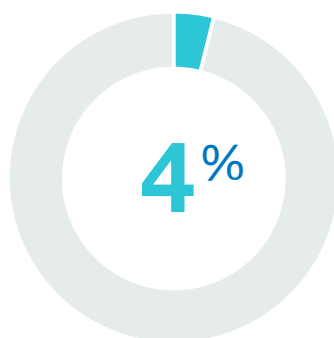
of German SMBs



of French SMBs

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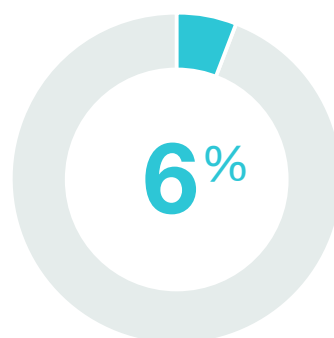
# Who uses voice recognition software?



of UK SMBs



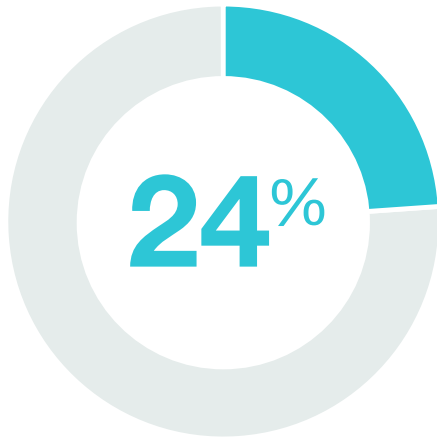
of German SMBs



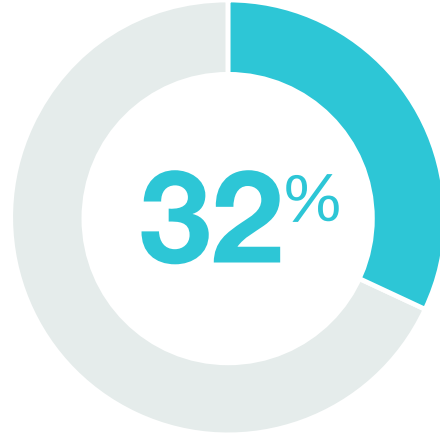
of French SMBs

# Fixing the problem

**Big problems don't always need big solutions.  
Most SMBs could save time and money with simple IT upgrades**

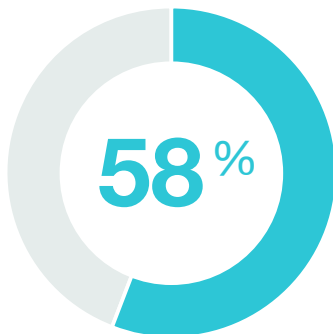


...but almost a quarter of them (24%) say they have never changed their software,



...and almost a third (32%) say they review their software requirements only every year, every 18 months or even longer.

**Why is this? The main reasons seem to be:**



## Knowledge

58% of business owners make the IT decisions. Some of them are well-informed – but many of them aren't

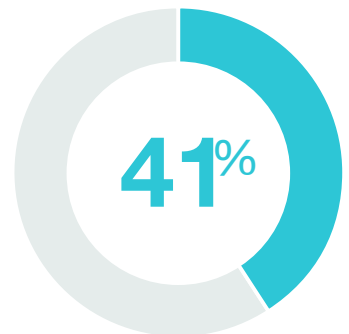
More than half of all SMBs



## Money

questioned (52%) say money is the biggest barrier

41% of the SMBs who responded say they don't



## Time

have enough time to consider potential improvements to efficiency

**The biggest issue here is knowledge:** if SMBs knew more about technology, they'd find faster, lower-cost solutions are available that would make considerable improvements to efficiency. Money and time factors may not be as significant as they think.

# Fast and simple

**When you're under pressure on both time and money, it's tempting to stick with what's familiar.** Our survey shows almost a third of SMBs (29%) choose new software based on brands they know, and 18% choose market leaders.

## Powerful software makes PDFs fast to create and manipulate – saving time and money and increasing productivity

But suppose alternatives were not only price-competitive but also more powerful? Take PDF software, for instance. Yes, it's a widely used technology – but there are powerful new options out there that can bring all kinds of benefits:

### Fast creation

Standard, searchable or editable PDF files straight from the scanner in just one click

### Fast editing

Single-step highlights, underlines, cross-outs and more

### Fast document juggling

Easy conversion of PDF files into word processing documents, spreadsheets and presentations – no more retyping

### Fast productivity

Software that's quick to install and easy to use delivers efficiency improvements very rapidly indeed

Think of the time and efficiency issues SMBs face, and you'll see the difference a simple software change like this could make.

And here's another thing. Suppose it's not just about great alternatives to applications SMBs already use, but about entirely new ways of doing things?

## Introducing voice recognition software is a small change that can make a big difference

We're talking here about voice recognition software. Not many SMBs use it – and that's a shame. Look at the time and productivity improvements it can deliver:

### Speed

Dictation enables people to get more done, more quickly: **voice is three times faster than typing.** Just think about the effect this would have on your bottom line, if two-thirds of all typing time was saved

### Accuracy

Recognition levels are high from the start, and they get even better with use

### Control

It's not just about dictation. Users can issue commands within apps, open new ones, create and send emails – and they can easily drop in copy blocks they prepared earlier

### Mobility

Creating documents hands-free is liberating. Users don't have to be deskbound

Winning time-and-money battles doesn't have to mean big upgrades and big budgets. Small and fairly inexpensive changes can make a major difference to the ability of SMBs to get things done. With fewer distractions and frustrations, it's easier to go out and win.



# If you always do what you always do...

Our research shows SMBs consider themselves efficient in a number of ways – but it also shows they have big productivity issues. Too often, they don't have the knowledge, the money, the ability and willingness to innovate – or the time. **Especially the time.**

New software is a solution. Entirely new applications, or alternatives to the ones SMBs use now, can quickly pay for themselves and rapidly improve efficiency.

But first, SMBs need to change their mind-sets. By resisting the pressures of time and money – just a little, and just now and then – they can change the way they think about, manage and renew their software. They can explore new purchase options such as smart voice recognition software, or radically more powerful PDF software. And they can commit to setting aside a little time now in the knowledge that it's likely to save a lot of time later.

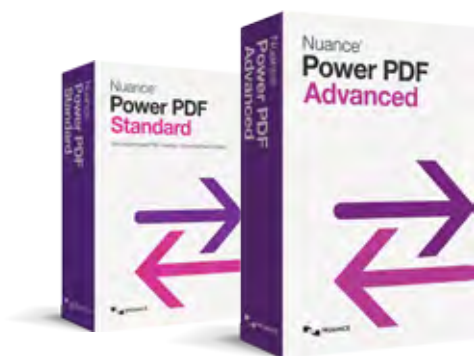
Because it's true what they say: if you always do what you always do, you'll always get what you've always got.

**For SMBs, time is money. And one small change can make all the difference.**



**Time and money.  
Spend a little now  
– save a lot later**

# SMB efficiency tools from Nuance



## Power PDF

Create, edit, secure, compress, convert, protect and share your PDFs – simply.

[Read more](#)



## Dragon NaturallySpeaking

Rapid, flexible and accurate voice recognition. Get more done – faster.

[Read more](#)

Find out more about the difference Nuance can make to business efficiency.

[Learn more](#)

Nuance's Efficiency Report was researched and compiled by Marketiers4DC in the UK, France and Germany in September 2014 and assessed the responses of 757 small business owners with up to 50 employees.



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