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# Umicore's Pilot of MS 365 Copilot

**A report from Umicore's Digital Workplace team**  
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Jessica Keller  
Daniel Prial



# Successful AI Adoption at Umicore Through Community Management

## AI success at Umicore relied on a human element.

In the last 18 months, the rise of artificial intelligence has captured the attention of industries worldwide. With innovation and technology at the core of what we do, Umicore was not going to let AI pass us by. Our Digital Workplace and Information Services teams launched a pilot project to test the possibility and impact of an integrated AI assistant and the results have been strong.

*“Productivity is up, quality of work improved, and over 90% of testers want to keep using AI at work.”* says **Quentin Poncelet**, head of Umicore’s Digital Workplace program. But Quentin believes the big lesson at Umicore has not been the power of AI, but the power of community: *“My team can put on webinars and publish learning materials, but we at Umicore are most successful at picking up new technologies when we can learn from each other and succeed together as colleagues.”*





# Context & Methodology

# Conducting a pilot for Copilot 365

## Goal of the Pilot: understand the impact of MS365 Copilot and its ROI potential

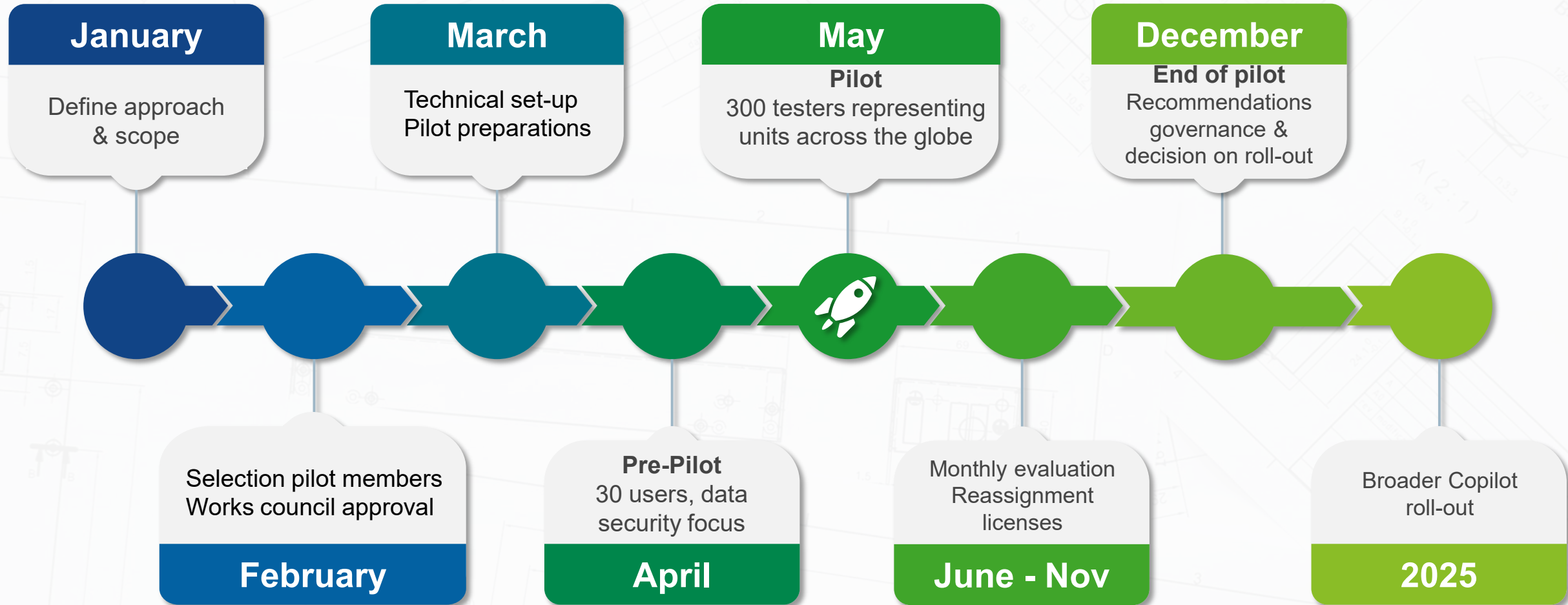
The pilot test issued 300 Copilot licenses to colleagues from every business unit and department in the company for a period of eight months. They were nominated by the leaders of their business unit or department with a focus on international representation. In addition to tracking location, we also tracked job family, i.e., a tester within a business unit working on financial topics could get measured both against a corporate finance tester and also against testers from their own business unit.

### Desired outcomes

- A set of rules/profiles to define future access to MS 365 Copilot
- A governance for attribution of licenses
- An understanding of the following benefits reported by Microsoft:
  - Increase to Individual Productivity
  - Improvement to Quality of Work Outputs
  - Notable User Friendliness of the Program
  - Impact on Talent Retention / Attraction

# Timeline 2024

After a limited, security-focused “pre-pilot”, most users were onboarded in the first days of May 2024 and tested the software for eight months.



# Community Engagement

Knowing the importance of a digital mindset and the reinforcing power of a learners working together in a group, the Digital Workplace (DW) team set a goal of not having individual testers, but a true testing *community*.



A dedicated MS Teams site for asynchronous communication, sharing information, and storing resources.



A series of regular events including trainings, webinars, and even informal unplanned gatherings.



Impulses to the community such as weekly challenges to try new features and share experiences.





# Community Engagement

**The benefits of the testing community could be felt by the testers themselves.**

*“Testing Copilot in the Community gave us opportunities to exchange ideas and brought a lot of inspiration!” says Copilot tester **Marija Blinova** from Brussels, Belgium. “It is always much more exciting to discover and learn new things in a group than in a vacuum. It’s a team play! Exchanging on the challenges and new findings of Umicore colleagues kept motivation high to test and explore further.”*



Another tester, Stephan Shroeder in Kobe, Japan, also appreciated how the community brought many perspectives together: *“The fact that we tested in a cross-functional team allowed me to see issues and use cases that I would not have encountered in my regular line of work.”*

# Expectations

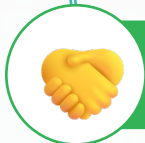
The DW team onboarded every tester in kick-off sessions and set the following expectations for them. This was also true for testers who joined the pilot later.



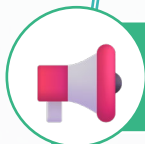
Be **Curious**: Test & use Copilot 365 whenever possible



Be **Patient**: Give Copilot (& yourself) enough time to unveil full potential



Be **Accountable**: Complete Weekly & Monthly Surveys



Be **Open**: Proactively share questions, experiences & prompts (!) in Teams collaboration site



Be **Discreet**: Should you encounter sensitive documents, please maintain their confidentiality and report it to DW team and the document owner.



# Expectations

In turn, the DW Team provided resources and a community for the testers and promised the following:



We'll offer monthly focal webinars and informal chats



We'll curate learning nuggets



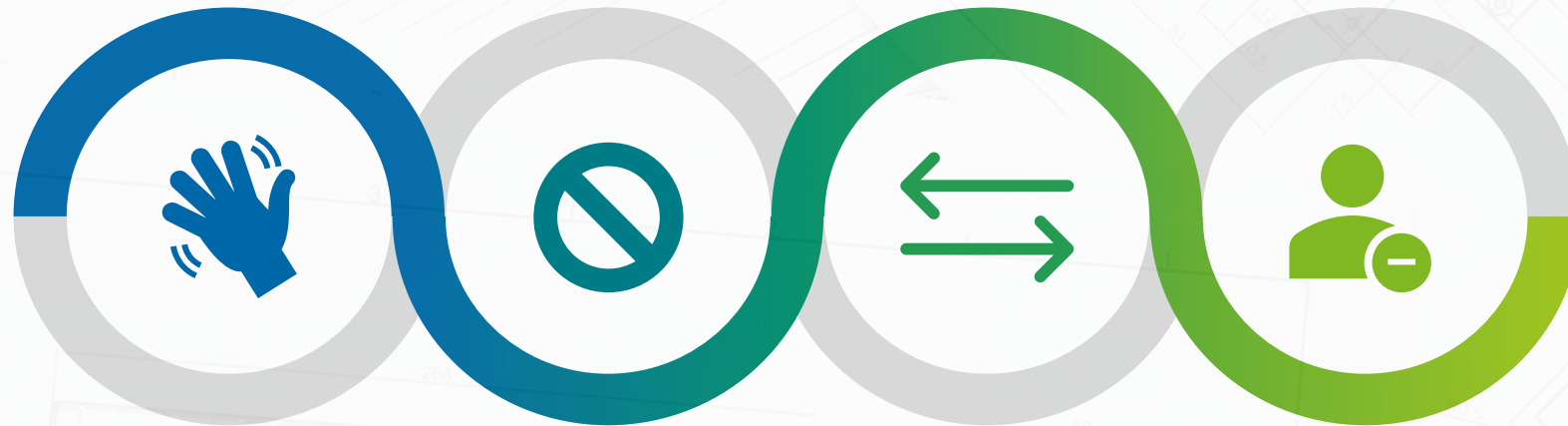
We'll share best practices, challenges & use cases



We'll communicate in an open & transparent manner

# Turnover

The turnover of testers in the pilot was just under 20%. This means that original testers left, or were asked to leave, and new testers came on board mid-pilot. The reasons for leaving the pilot varied.



Voluntary departure from the pilot.

Removed from the pilot for refusing to complete the mandatory use surveys.

Tester asked to transfer the Copilot license to another tester within the department.

Departure from Umicore.



# Pilot results

**What benefits did Copilot have for testers at Umicore?**



# Results after 8 months

An upward trend for all four KPI's can be seen over the course of the pilot.

## Increased Individual Productivity

- Early in the test, **66%** of respondents reported increased productivity
- 8 months in, **87%** of respondents report increased productivity

## Improved Quality of Outputs

- For familiar (within skillset) tasks, **79%** of respondents report better work results.
- For unfamiliar tasks (outside of skillset) **85%** of respondents report better work results.
- **83%** of respondents believe Copilot helps improve quality of their work.

## Notable User Friendliness

- **92%** are satisfied with the user experience

## Positive Impact on Talent Retention

- **72%** of respondents report that access to such a tool will affect their employment decisions in the future

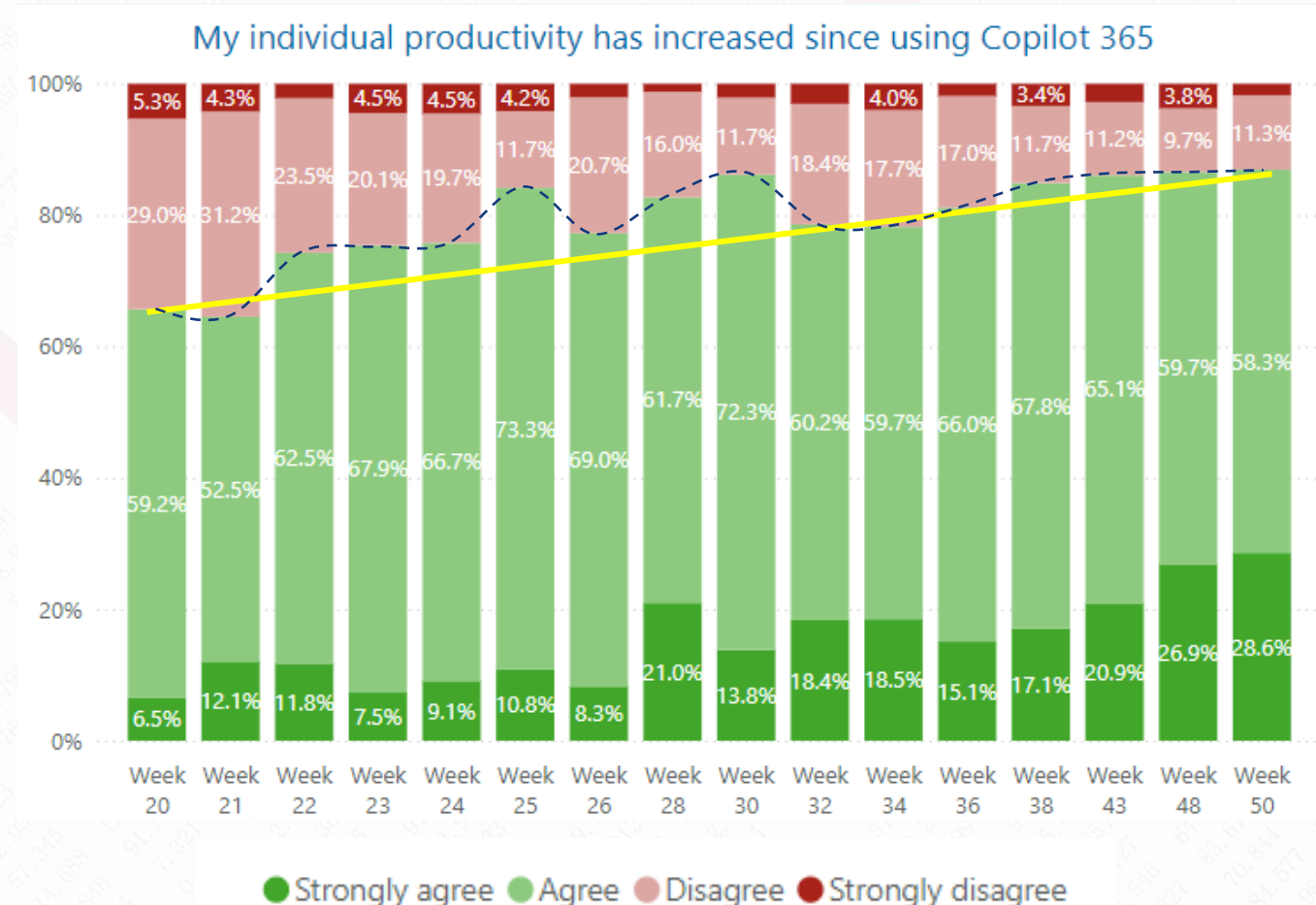
Current Results* (CW 50)	Umicore KPI	Microsoft Benchmark	
87% (▲)	66%	70%	
79% (▲) 85% (▲) 83% (▲)	50% 66% -	} 60%	
92% (▲)	80%		-
72% (▲)	-		30%

\*Number accuracy is impacted by two factors: varying survey completion rates and tester fluctuation. Hence real results might be slightly lower.

# KPI 1: Increased Individual Productivity

## Reported productivity increase reached new highs toward pilot end

- Respondents' **productivity increase** rose by **21,2%** since pilot test start.
- At the end, **87%** respondents reported **increased productivity**.
- **87%** of respondents reported that they **complete tasks faster** with Copilot.
- **83%** reported that Copilot helps them **achieve more**.

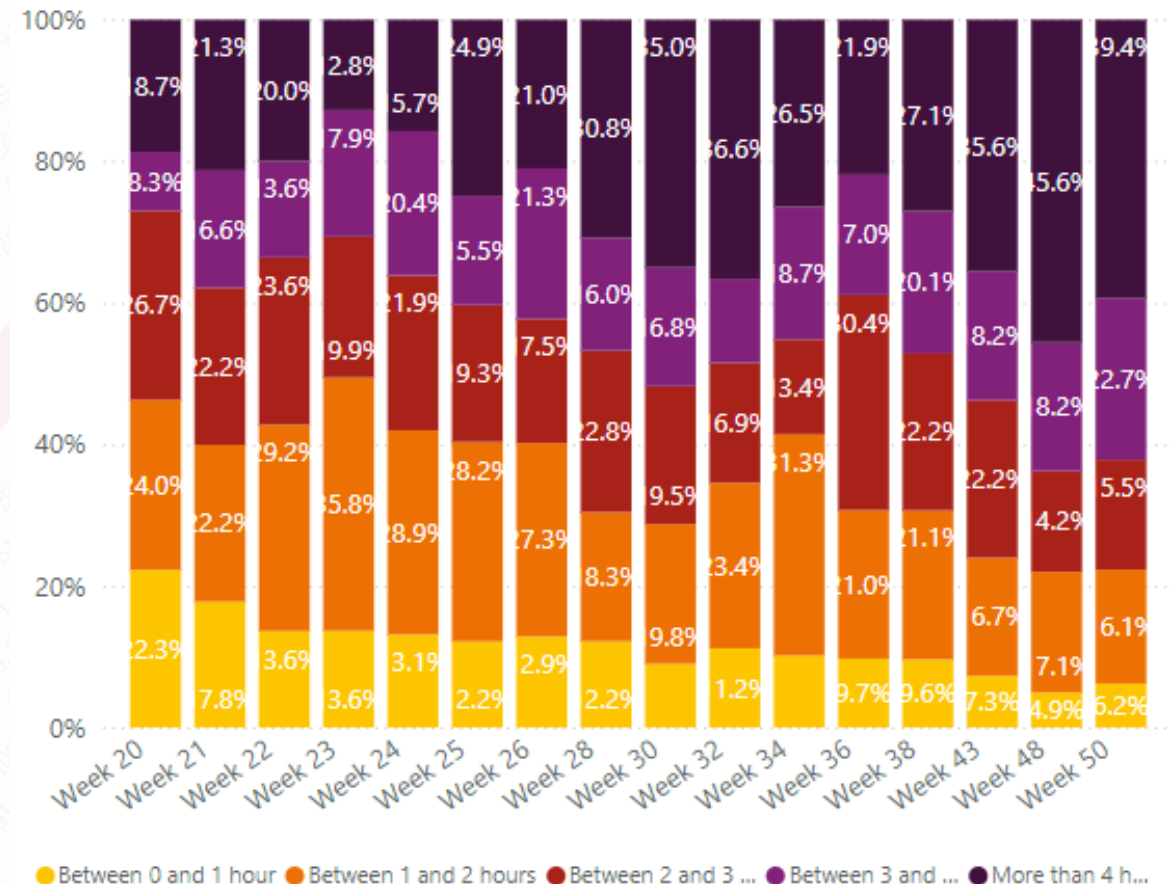


# KPI 1: Increased Individual Productivity

## Growing trend in time savings

- Over the pilot, there was **noticeable increase** in the percentage of respondents **saving more time** using MS 365 Copilot.
- Since end August...
  - **21 -> 39%** of respondents report to have **saved > 4 hours** per week.
  - **32 -> 47%** saved **between 2 and 4 hours** per week.
- In the final survey, respondents estimated to have **saved 2,1 hours per week** (up from 1,2 in first week).

Based on your estimation how much time this week did you SAVE engaging with Copilot 365?



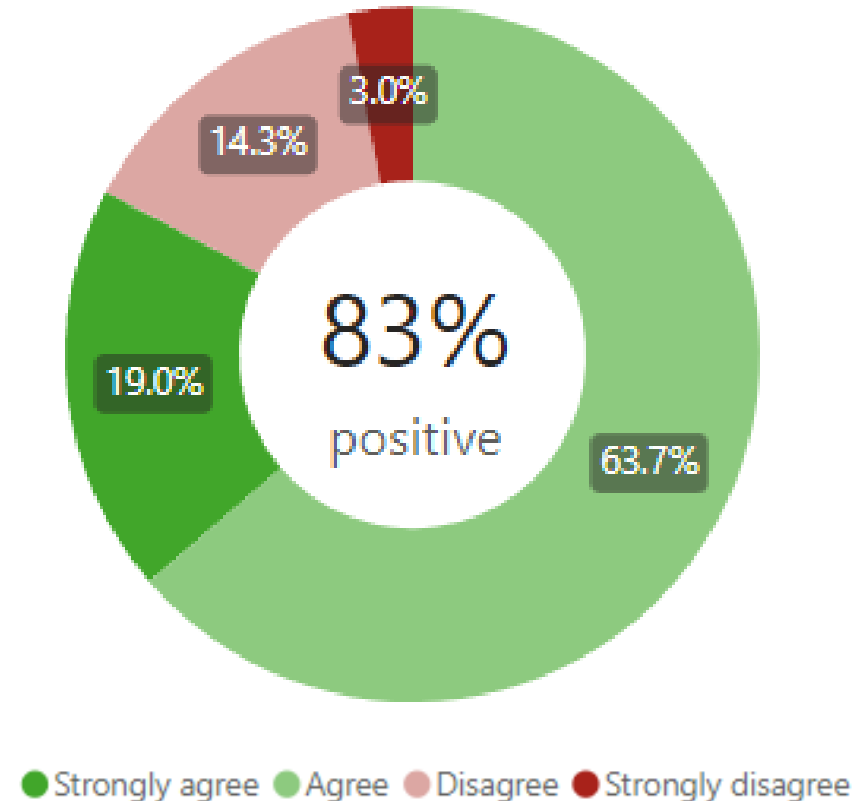


# KPI 2: Improved Quality of Outputs

**83% of respondents believe they are providing better work to Umicore.**

- At a ratio of 4:1, respondents believe that Copilot helps them to improve the quality of their work outputs.
- For **familiar tasks** (within skillset), **79%** of respondents report increase of quality.
- For **unfamiliar tasks** (outside of skillset) **85%** of respondents report quality increase.
- The **quality rating of Copilots' outputs** sees an upward trend:
  - 'Excellent' or 'Good' rating: 62,5% (36,9% at the beginning of the pilot)
  - 'Satisfying': 33,3% (53,5% at beginning)
  - 'Poor': 4,2% (9,4% at beginning)

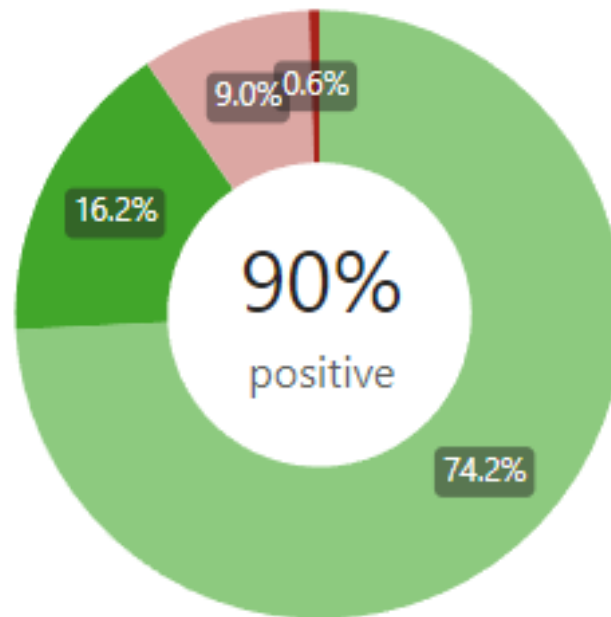
Copilot 365 improves the quality of my work



# General Satisfaction

**90% of respondents want to continue using MS 365 Copilot after the test period**

When this pilot is over, will you still want to use Copilot 365?



● Yes, I benefit from... ● Yes, I can't do wi... ● No, I'm indiffer... ● No, Copilot h...

After the pilot, when we asked the 9% of testers for their licenses back, so that we could transfer them to other colleagues, many suddenly found reasons to hold onto them.

# Copilot Usage and Use Cases



The DW team asked testers to name their favorite Copilot use cases.

**We received over 500 responses in eight different categories. Processing this data, we began to see the picture of possibility of the AI assistant. The next image is a visual representation of this data. The larger the box, the more frequently the use case was reported.**

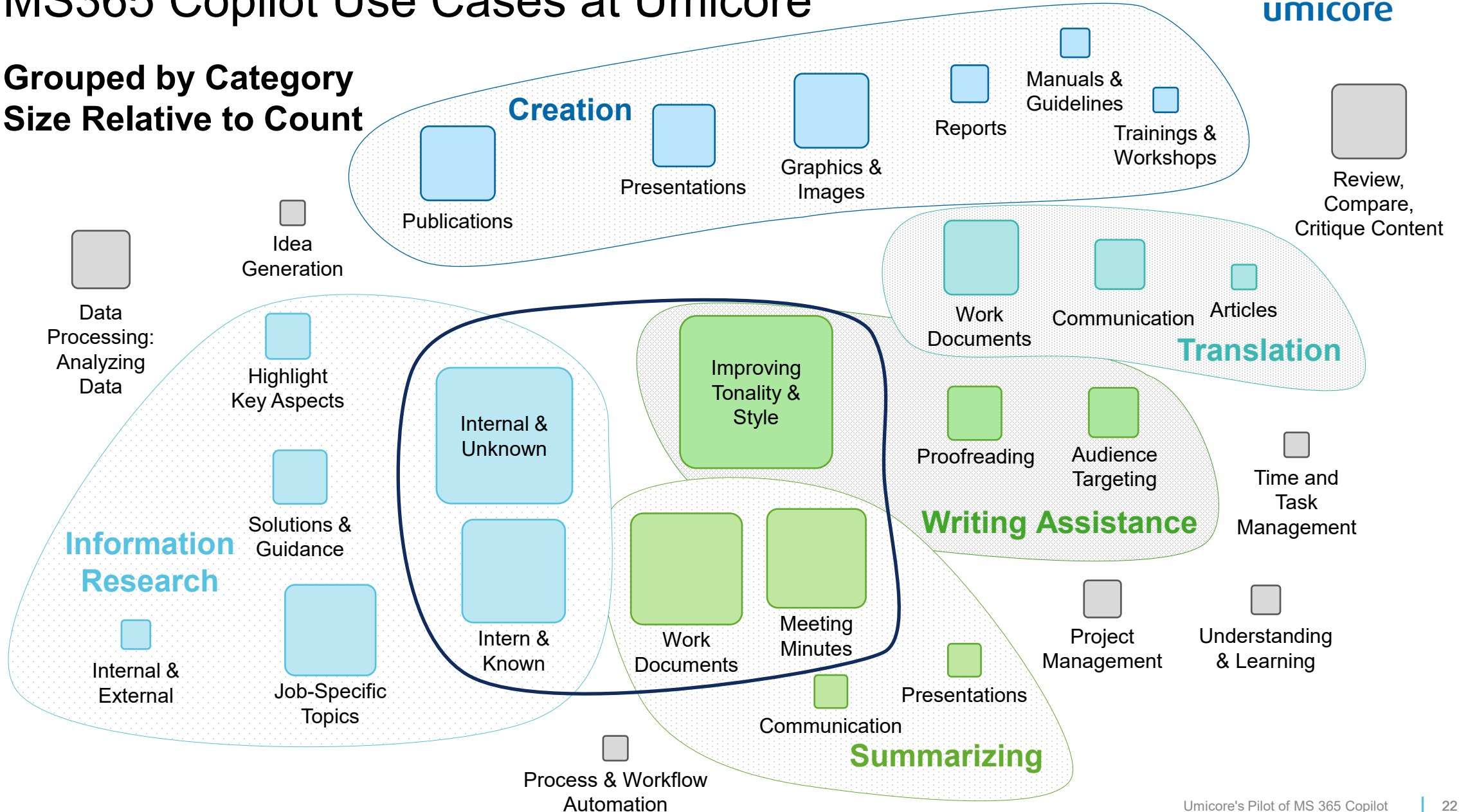
**Note the cluster of five reported use cases in the center. This is the “core functionality” of Copilot.**

**One final thought, this represents the capability of Copilot in 2024, before the rollout of AI agents. The software continues to develop.**

# MS365 Copilot Use Cases at Umicore



**Grouped by Category**  
**Size Relative to Count**



# Learnings from the Pilot



# Learning from the Pilot

## Future-proof workforce

Through MS365 Copilot, we are equipping our workforce with the skills for the future and the ability to work with AI.

Copilot provides our colleagues with a secure data environment and the benefits of the latest workplace-supporting technology. The benefit to productivity is clear.

## Tool updates = new possibilities

During the pilot, a tester would take a vacation for a week or two and return to find that the technology had evolved while they were out. MS365 Copilot will continue to improve and offer new opportunities (e.g., Copilot agents).

Our Copilot use cases show the past, not the future.



# Learning from the Pilot

## Shadow IT Threat

It became abundantly clear during the pilot that if Umicore doesn't provide an AI-tool to its employees, they will look for unsecure alternatives. This shadow IT could easily lead to breaches in data security, especially with LLM-driven AIs that are constantly improving and adding information to their systems.

## Missing Target Group

One group we had trouble getting to test the software was colleagues from senior management. While understandable, it is unfortunate because of the possibilities for quick wins in that target group. Since the pilot, however, the Executive Leadership Team has expressed interest in increasing Umicore's adoption of AI tools and a few members are taking the first steps in adopting an AI practice themselves.



# Learning from the Pilot

## Mindset Shift & AI Routine

Getting a license does not automatically equal a productivity increase. Added value from AI depends on digital mindset and developing AI usage routines. Microsoft marketing materials suggest that time savings would be realized until after 11 weeks of AI use. Our data shows a similar learning curve.

## Onboarding & Support

There are many levels of onboarding a support necessary for successful mindset shift and the development of an AI Routine. First, initial training and a clear explanation of the possibilities sets the tone. Then, involving power users/ambassadors and a learning community support the adoption over a longer term and help colleagues shift their habits.







# The future of Copilot at Umicore

# Rollout of MS365 Copilot at Umicore

**Umicore is now planning a broader rollout of AI assistants in the workplace. And will continue using community management techniques to do so.**

*“We are transitioning our tester community into a kind of ambassador community.” says **Jessica Keller**, Digital Workplace Team. “Our testers are advising their unit and department leadership about the pros and cons of AI and will be on call to help new users learn the technology.”*



*“Early adopters – such as our testers – usually pick up technology more quickly than others.” says **Daniel Prial**, Digital Workplace Team. “Our early adopters are ready to help the next round of users pick up on AI skills faster and more easily. We may be working with technology, but colleagues learn best from each other and from their human connections.”*

# MS365 Copilot can now be requested from IS

Due to the difficult financial year Umicore had in 2024, requests must show *cost reduction* or *cost avoidance*. AI must show a tangible, financial benefit.

**Goal:** Leverage AI Tools to help Umicore through a difficult financial period

**Cost Reduction:**  
Lower costs based on previous year's financials

**Example:** Last year, a team paid for translation services. This year, with Copilot, they no longer need to.

**Cost Avoidance:**  
Lower costs based on current year's financial plan

**Example:** A team has a proposal from a consultant, which they can remove parts of after being issued Copilot licenses.



Productivity gains will not be in scope.



# License Attribution Process

**Business Units and Departments can request year-long licenses every quarter. After 6 months, use will be evaluated and after 12 months, requests can be made again.**



- Templates & guidelines published by DW
- SPOC's inform their units about call for applications and related deadlines.

- BU's / SOF's complete BC templates
- SPOC's centrally collect cases & submit them to DW.
- In parallel: DW & SPOC's review success/failure of last quarters business cases

- DW pre-screen cases and revert to SPOC's in case of queries
- Final approval by IS Management
- DW provide feedback to SPOC's

- Procurement & activation of new licenses by IS

- New users receive starter kit for self-learning & get access to user community
- DW hosts onboarding webinars

Abbreviations:

- DW: Digital Workplace
- SPOC: Specific Point of Contact
- BU: Business Unit

- SOF: Shared Operational Functions
- BC: Business Case
- IS: Information Systems

## Umicore looks forward to an AI-supported future.

More than anything, Copilot has been helping colleagues focus on the core of their work. Colleagues in finance used the tool to gather the background information they needed giving them more time to focus on their numbers. A colleague in IP spent less time looking for documents and more time reviewing patents.



Copilot tester **Arik Puls** summed up his entire experience so:  
*“I have had the chance to use it in all kinds of different sectors, here and there, over and over again, as my little helper on the side.”*

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