

PDQ Releases Annual State of System Administration Report

Survey of 1,000+ IT professionals finds rising stress from workload, as sysadmins adopt automation and assistive AI to reduce risk while maintaining control.



SALT LAKE CITY, UT, UNITED STATES,

March 3, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- PDQ today released its 2026 State of System Administration report, finding that sysadmin stress continues to rise as expanding responsibilities, hybrid environments, and security pressure push modern IT work past sustainable limits.

Based on responses from more than 1,000 IT professionals worldwide, the report shows sysadmins increasingly responsible for outcomes shaped by tools and decisions outside their control.

With little margin for error, sysadmins are seeking relief by standardizing environments, automating high-risk repeatable work, and cautiously exploring AI where it improves visibility without introducing new failure modes.

"Sysadmins aren't struggling because they can't keep up," said Dan Cook, CEO of PDQ. "They're under pressure because the work keeps expanding. This year's data makes it clear that stress is structural, and that means it's something organizations can actually fix."

Key 2026 findings

□ Stress is rising across all experience levels

57% of respondents report feeling more stressed than last year. Unlike prior years, stress is no longer concentrated among newer sysadmins; senior sysadmins are increasingly acting as default escalation points for complex, cross-platform, and high-risk issues.

□ Security remains the top concern

62% of respondents cite a security breach as a top organizational concern, so it's no surprise that security is a major source of pressure. Many sysadmins also report a widening gap between responsibility for outcomes and authority over risk acceptance.

□ AI is welcome ... with limits

Sysadmins are not anti-AI. In fact, 94% can already identify concrete ways AI can improve their work, particularly in analysis, reporting, and risk visibility. However, interest drops sharply as AI's autonomy increases. Most sysadmins prefer assistive AI over fully autonomous systems that act in production without clear oversight.

"Sysadmins are practical about new tools," said Mark Littlefield, VP of Product at PDQ.

"Automation helps when it's predictable and reversible. AI helps when it increases visibility. What they don't want is black-box autonomy that concentrates responsibility without reducing risk."

Why it matters

For sysadmins, the report validates what many are already experiencing: stress driven by workload design, not individual failure, and a growing need for tools that reduce cognitive load.

For IT leaders, the data signals a shift in retention risk. Workload sustainability and on-call burden are now as important as compensation.

For organizations, the findings highlight the operational risk of misaligned responsibility, unchecked tool sprawl, and manual work that doesn't scale.

"The future of IT isn't about moving faster," Cook added. "It's about making the work lighter, safer, and more repeatable ... and making sure the people responsible for uptime and security aren't carrying everything alone."

The full 2026 State of System Administration Report is available now.

Download the report: <https://www.pdq.com/state-of-sysadmin/download/>

About PDQ

PDQ builds IT management tools that are simple, secure, and pretty damn quick. Trusted by more than 33,000 system administrators, MSPs, and IT professionals worldwide, PDQ's suite of autonomous endpoint management (AEM) products (including PDQ Connect, Deploy & Inventory, and SmartDeploy) streamlines patching, deployment, and vulnerability and endpoint management across Windows and macOS devices.

Founded in 2001 and based in Salt Lake City, Utah, PDQ is built for sysadmins, by sysadmins.

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