

The Connected Future Workplace

The working environment is evolving fast and all organizations need to keep up and support their people – wherever and whoever they are – to sustain competitive advantage.



INSIDE ISSUE 7: RESPONSIBLE FREEDOM: CREATING THE CONNECTED FUTURE WORKPLACE Miguel Teixeira, CEO NTT DATA Americas // **LOOKING BACK TO GET AHEAD** Gethin Nadin, Award-winning psychologist and author of *A World of Good* // **ESSENTIAL SKILLS IN A DIGITAL FUTURE** Isabel Amor Cordero, Talent & Transformation Manager, NTT DATA EMEA // **BUILDING GENTLETTIGENT CULTURES FOR THE FUTURE OF WORK** Megan Gerhardt, Professor of Leadership at Miami University and author of *Gentelligence* // **AND MORE...**



Hello.

Welcome to the seventh issue of CXO Magazine

As we emerge into a world where the unexpected is commonplace and face-to-face interaction is no longer essential to run a business, many things are changing for employees and employers alike.

The connections that underpin business operations, from the wires that transmit data to the relationships we forge with colleagues, are what keep us together, what keep us strong, even as new challenges unfold around us.

This issue of CXO Magazine takes an analytical view of the working environment, which has changed so dramatically in a comparatively tiny amount of time. What do the workers of today need, expect and aspire to? And how can we, as leaders, shape the environment that best suits how, when and where they need to work? We believe the future lies with technology, where its role extends beyond its current scope as an enabler, to being an equalizer, opening up possibilities for people – all people – to contribute and collaborate.

Here at NTT DATA it is our culture that has kept us steadfast. We champion flexibility, but recognize that individual needs must be balanced with our

goals as a team, and as a global company. In a hybrid environment, leaders must extend trust, and in turn, expect responsibility. This concept of ‘responsible freedom’ is central to how I have run my organization these last two years. By encouraging people to see their individual preferences within a wider context, making compromises to accommodate others’ needs does not feel unfair, but rather is seen as a valued contribution to our shared ambitions and purpose.

With a values-based culture, one that respects and actively includes people from all walks of life – no matter their age, gender, ethnicity, background or lifestyle – and gives them the platform to work together, your organization can weather the various storms of today’s business landscape – and create a future that keeps us all connected.

Enjoy the read.

Miguel Teixeira
CEO, NTT DATA Americas

Issue 7 Contents

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| <p>6 Responsible Freedom: Creating the Connected Future Workplace
By Miguel Teixeira, CEO, NTT DATA Americas</p> | <p>31 In Depth: Connecting Your Hybrid Workforce
By NTT Ltd.</p> | <p>49 5 Minutes On... AI and the Digital Employee Experience
By Alessandro Pistella, Head of People Digital Hub, Enel Group</p> | <p>64 Why Ethical AI Requires a Human Touch
By Dr Sandrine El Sauaf, Head of Global Leadership Development & Diversity, NTT DATA Business Solutions</p> |
| <p>12 Show Them Some Respect: Doing Better At Diversity and Inclusion
By Sergiu Maxim, People Experience Manager, NTT DATA Romania</p> | <p>32 Creating Balance, Transforming Work, Empowering People
By Anna Amodio, Head of Human Resources, NTT DATA Italia</p> | <p>50 Hybrid Happiness: Designing the Work Environment of the Future
By Ioana Zdrenghea, People Experience Manager, NTT DATA Romania</p> | <p>68 Looking Back to Get Ahead
By Gethin Nadin, Award-winning psychologist and author of <i>A World of Good: Lessons from Around the World in Improving the Employee Experience</i></p> |
| <p>16 Workforce Transformation: An Employee Perspective
By Kunal Koul, Managing Director, Digital Consulting and Advisory, NTT DATA Services</p> | <p>37 The Connected Future Workplace: Maximizing value through the power of human connection
A film by NTT DATA</p> | <p>54 Leadership First, Location Second
By Wayne Turmel, Co-founder of The Remote Leadership Institute and co-author of <i>The Long-Distance Leader</i></p> | <p>72 Building Gentelligent Cultures for the Future of Work
By Megan Gerhardt, Professor of Leadership at Miami University and author of <i>Gentelligence: The Revolutionary Approach to Leading an Intergenerational Workforce</i></p> |
| <p>21 5 Minutes On... How to make people fall in love with the workplace
By Adela Negru, Chief Human Resources Officer, NTT DATA Romania</p> | <p>38 How to Make the New, Hyper-Connected World of Work Work for Everyone
By Anna Budde, Chief Marketing Officer, NTT DATA DACH</p> | <p>59 5 Minutes On... Protecting Mental Health in a Hybrid World
By Laura Lipponen, People Function, Global Leadership Development & Diversity, Expert Health & Wellbeing, NTT DATA Business</p> | <p>77 In Depth: A Perspective on Harnessing the Potential of 5G
By NTT Ltd.</p> |
| <p>22 A Recipe for Hybrid Working
By Jordi Largo, Director, Liquid Workplace, Cloud & Infrastructure Management, NTT DATA EMEAL</p> | <p>43 Addressing the Lack of Diversity in Senior IT Roles
By Ida McKinley, Sr. Vice President, IT Services, GM Financial</p> | <p>60 Employee Wellbeing is the Core of Connected Workplaces
By Laura Lipponen, People Function & Health Management, NTT DATA Business Solutions</p> | <p>78 Inclusion and Diversity Matter, and Here's Why
By Stephen Frost, Diversity, inclusion and leadership expert, and CEO and founder of Included</p> |
| <p>26 How Automation Will Unlock the Next Level of Human Performance
By Tarrel Pierson, Director, Workforce Readiness at NTT DATA Services</p> | <p>44 A Lesson in Workplace Learning
By Laura Bartoli, Engagement Manager, NTT DATA Italia, and Sara Manocchio, Associate Manager HR Transformation Practice, NTT DATA Italia</p> | | |

Issue 7 Contents

- 83 5 Minutes On... The Relationship Between Technology and Inclusion**
By Stephen Frost, CEO, Included
- 84 New Work: Is the Great Resignation Finally Making Us Think Differently?**
By Dr. Johanna Bath, Hybrid work advisor and founder and CEO of Talentista Now
- 88 How Data Can Enhance the In-Office Employee Experience**
By Eduardo Tarasca, Product Marketing Director, NTT Smart World
- 93 The Future of Healthcare and a Secure 5G Network**
By NTT Ltd.
- 94 Why Now is a Moment That Matters**
By Kevin Eikenberry, Thought leader, multiple bestselling author and co-founder of the Remote Leadership Institute
- 98 Effective Change Management for a Resilient Workforce**
By Julia Rumpel, Senior Change Management Consultant, NTT DATA DACH
- 103 The World's Largest Connected Stadium**
By NTT Ltd.
- 104 Designing the Future Workplace**
By Soumyasanto Sen, Leader in digital strategy, workforce transformation and future of work, and author of *Digital HR Strategy*
- 108 The Hybrid Office: A Work in Progress**
By Klaus Strack, Managing Director, Business Unit Germany, NTT DATA Business Solutions
- 112 Essential Skills in a Digital Future**
By Isabel Amor Cordero, Manager, Liquid Workplace, Talent & Transformation, NTT DATA EMEAL
- 116 People Embody the Success of an Organization**
By Natalie Porter, Director, Culture and Employee Experience, NTT DATA UK
- 120 Better Communication: Understanding the New Language of Digital Teamwork**
By Erica Dhawan, Leading expert on digital teamwork and author of *Digital Body Language: How to Build Trust and Connection, No Matter the Distance*
- 125 5 Minutes On... Workplace Diversity in a Global Society**
By Dr Chaundra Scott, Professor at Oakland University and author of *Diversity in the Workforce: Current Issues and Emerging Trends*
- 127 The Future of the Workforce is Here, Are You Ready?**
By Kim Curley, Vice President, Workforce Readiness Consulting, NTT DATA Services
- 130 Designing an Ethical Future**
By Lisa Woodley, General Manager - Northeast, Nexient an NTT DATA Company
- 132 Mind the Gap: Addressing the Current Shortage of Digital Skills to Meet the Needs of the Future**
By Pam Chase, Former Senior Vice President HR, NTT DATA UK
- 135 5 Minutes On... The Human-Centric Digital Workplace**
By Vishal Brown, Chief Evangelist and Digital Workplace Leader, NTT DATA Services
- 136 Gen Z at Work: What Young Professionals Expect From Leaders**
By Palmer Montalbano, Business Consultant, NTT DATA Services
- 139 Unconscious Bias is Harming Our Teams and Technology: How Can We Tackle It?**
By Tom Winstanley, CTO & Head of New Ventures, NTT DATA UK
- 141 Guide to the Metaverse: The Future is Already Here**
By Francisco Spadafora, Head of Internet Value, NTT DATA Italia
- 144 NTT DATA Consulting Leadership Team**

Responsible Freedom: Creating the Connected Future Workplace

By Miguel Teixeira, CEO, NTT DATA Americas



The pandemic forced businesses and organizations to abandon the physical office and adopt remote working. But with Covid now seemingly behind us, and hybrid practices well-established, is there a danger that without face-to-face interaction, organizations will lose the very thing that keeps them connected?

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What we do, what we say and how we say it when we meet others may be small and seemingly inconsequential but cumulatively it makes up the glue that binds us together, as a team and as a business.

Technology has always been a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it is the destabilizer that turns the world on its head: the destroyer of business models, markets and long-established ways of working. But it's also an enabler: the lever, the connector that makes so much more possible.

Technology-driven change happens continually. But back in the spring of 2020, the pace of change accelerated massively when most of the world found themselves living with pandemic-induced restrictions on traveling and socializing – by the end of March, well over 100 countries were either in a full or partial lockdown. Suddenly, we were at a massive inflection point, with millions of businesses forced to rethink their workplace-based systems and structures. And for many, within a short time, home-working became the new normality.

Did this cause disruption? Of course. Most businesses took a big hit and for many the shock was too great to survive. Those best protected were the ‘connected organizations’ that were already some way along the digital track. At NTT DATA, for instance, our agile model, technical expertise and technology infrastructure meant we could accommodate total remote working relatively easily.

It was still a challenge; trying to maintain business continuity at a time of great uncertainty always is. But our readiness from a technical and cultural perspective meant that we remained strong – and

kept our word that there would be no enforced redundancies or layoffs. Not every company, unfortunately, is able to say the same.

The foundation of connection

Now that the pandemic is receding behind us, would I want to move to a completely remote working model, as some organizations have chosen to do? No, and this is why.

For me, the foundation of NTT DATA's resilience is not the person at the top, nor the strategies that we use: it is our corporate culture, the values and behaviors that define how we do things.

And I believe that to maintain your organization's culture you need some element of in-person working, or you lose the small, everyday interactions that occur between people. What we do, what we say and how we say it when we meet others may feel small and seemingly inconsequential but cumulatively it makes up the human glue that binds us together, as a team and as a business.

So, for me, without some element of face-to-face connection, the essence of our culture becomes diluted. Just looking at each other on a screen is not enough. And I'm certainly not alone in this. Research shows that three-quarters of C-Suite executives believe that their company will be financially worse off without in-person working

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Inflexibility is bad for business: it's bad for recruitment and it's bad for retention. Your staff are too precious a resource to gamble on how they'll react to an ultimatum.

The conundrum of culture in remote workforces

Contrary to popular belief, it's not impossible to create and maintain a strong culture in a remote company. Essentially that's what I had to do for a year during lockdown. As a new CEO, only three weeks into the job, I can tell you that trying to understand the culture of a 2,000-employee company without meeting anyone was not ideal, but we made it work.

The reality is that there is no solution except technology for bringing together colleagues in offices that may be in different countries thousands of miles apart. And by adding in central wikis and content management systems, it's technology that enables employees to benefit from (and contribute to) the knowledge of others, wherever they are – generating a synergy that is greater than the sum of its parts.

But I believe now, almost three years later, as a regional CEO with more than 16,000 employees, such digital infrastructure needs to sit alongside physical personal interactions. In recent weeks I've been in Peru, Colombia and Brazil: my actually being there, with our teams, brings a different kind of energy to our meetings and interactions.

So, although we have the tools to allow 100% remote working, that doesn't mean we should feel obliged to work remotely. There are many types

of business where this model simply doesn't work, not to mention people for whom workplace routines and interactions are core to who they are, how they wish to structure their day and how they organize their working life.

While I'm enthusiastic about being in the office, it doesn't mean I'd ever consider coercing or threatening people back to their desks. That just doesn't work these days. Staff will become resentful, creating tension and souring relationships. If you try to do that, you just get a backlash. Look at what has happened at Apple, Tesla and AT&T. Inflexibility is bad for business: it's bad for recruitment and it's bad for retention. Your staff are too precious a resource to gamble on how they'll react to an ultimatum.

My recommendation (and what I always strive to do), is find ways to meet the needs of those who want to work from home, while encouraging them back into the office at the same time.

A suggestion for the optimal hybrid environment

At NTT DATA we have the concept of ‘responsible freedom’. This is about encouraging people to see their individual preferences within a wider context, and I think this is key to creating the optimal hybrid work environment.

In other words, people should recognize the needs of others and be willing to change their behaviors

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Employees are looking for safety, and this is something that can only exist in companies where there is transparency and trust.

to accommodate these. So, when our preference impacts others, we must be ready and willing to compromise. As an example, say you don't like having meetings first thing in the morning because it interferes with taking your children to school, but others in your team do like meetings at that time because it fits with their early starts. If everyone holds their ground this creates conflict and tension between colleagues. It is a suboptimal solution.

However, if people show 'generous flexibility' and work in a way that helps others – and do so without resentment – it's a win for everyone.

So, at an organizational level, I am happy for people to work from home, but I also see it as part of my job to persuade them that by coming into the office three or four times a month they will be adding value both to the business and those colleagues who prefer in-person working in an office environment.

Yes, it may mean they have to commute maybe once a week, but this is a way of making a contribution to the collective good through better team bonding, solution creation and collaboration. When people understand this, they don't resent it.

But you can only get to this position by making sure that coming into the office is worthwhile. The office must be a destination, somewhere you want to go to because you can do something more

or different when you're there (not a venue for pointless meetings).

If you can achieve this, you create the sense of community needed to bind together a workforce that's not only geographically dispersed through home-working, but is also generationally diverse. And again, this is where being together in a physical office is important.

To ensure that hard-won wisdom and experience stays within your organization, you need that knowledge and skills flow between all generations, from Boomers to Gen Z. Facilitating this flow is much easier when you have in-office working because, particularly when starting out in our careers, people absorb knowledge simply from being around more experienced colleagues. The discussions shared, the meetings attended and the nuggets of information that pass between us create a body of knowledge by osmosis. And that can't happen if your business is entirely virtual.

A new management mindset

Of course, instilling generous flexibility in a company requires you to focus more than ever on making your employees feel valued, trusted and safe.

So, if you're not prioritizing their mental health and wellbeing, or failing to promote Diversity,



Equity & Inclusion (DEI), then many of your best talent will leave or 'quietly quit'.

This means there is no longer any room for micromanagement if you are to provide the empathetic leadership that creates employees who are more productive, loyal, engaged and creative – research shows that when the workforce believes their managers care about their welfare, they generate more and better ideas.

And this is even more the case after the collective trauma of going through Covid-19. Employees are looking for safety, and this is something that can only exist in companies where there is transparency and trust.

At NTT DATA, I believe that we exhibit not just those characteristics but also real purpose – and purpose is what people buy into. Whilst you need profit of course, it should not be at the expense of everything else. That is why we talk about delivering 'technology with purpose' for our clients and those in the wider community. I am so immensely proud of the work we do helping educate thousands of people in Latin America, for instance, which is just one of our social responsibility programs.

Remote and hybrid models are becoming embedded and are likely to remain a major component of the working landscape. Of course, it is technology that creates the connection that makes this possible, so

organizations must provide the digital infrastructure that makes switching between home and office seamless. In ten years, who knows how the metaverse may have added a new dimension to this. Maybe, in future, our virtual world of work will have become so good that it really does replace the need for the human space that is the physical office.

But until then, I will continue to believe that it takes more than just technology to be a connected organization in a connected world – it takes people.

For references, please go to cxomag.com/article/responsible-freedom-creating-the-connected-future-workplace/



Miguel Teixeira has over 25 years of experience in consultancy companies, with the last 13 years at everis, a multinational consultancy company present in 18 countries, and part of NTT DATA Group. Miguel was formerly everis Portugal CEO, helping the company grow from 250 to 1100 employees. From April 2020 to March 2022 he was everis Chile CEO, and part of the Executive Comité Américas. He is currently CEO of the Americas region for NTT DATA EMEAL. Throughout Miguel's time at NTT DATA there has been a consistent focus on value, differentiation and innovation.

Show Them Some Respect: Doing Better At Diversity and Inclusion

By Sergiu Maxim, People Experience Manager, NTT DATA Romania

How have employee relationships and experiences changed over the course of the pandemic? NTT DATA Romania sought to find out, with results showing a wide range of perceptions: some celebrated the new forms of communication and others were dispirited by the decrease in in-office interaction. This leads to a challenging but crucial question: how can we make sure we all feel included in our organizations?

The manifold benefits of a diverse, equitable and inclusive workforce are by now well-documented, from greater profitability to better decision-making. Despite the known benefits and increased focus that the subject has, many organizations struggle to communicate DEI policies and practices to their employees.

At NTT DATA Romania, we wanted to understand how the social interaction between our employees, and the employee connection to the NTT DATA work environment, had changed over the course of the Covid-19 pandemic – and how we can use that data to make our workplace more inclusive. An internal study provided thought-provoking results.

Some employees felt positively about the hybridization of work, celebrating the new forms of communication (socializing more “on their

own terms”) and collaboration available. Others felt dispirited by the decrease in in-person, in-office interaction.

At the heart, though, was a central theme: mutual respect. To have respect for a colleague involves a fundamental belief in their right to be a part of the team, to be heard, and to have the same opportunities as everyone else. Fostering this sense of belonging, through respect, is absolutely essential for any future workplace to be successful.

Diversity in the corporate world

Often we talk about diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in terms of competitive advantage – doing well, rather than the more ethical slant of ‘doing good’. Plenty of research backs up the hoped-for commercial benefits, with one recent study

reporting that inclusive teams are more than 35% more productive than their counterparts, and revenue earned per employee is 2.5 times higher too. It therefore is often seen as a practical tool in solving workforce problems, retaining highly-skilled staff and, ultimately, achieving business goals. But looking only through the lens of commercial advantage is too narrow: the true power of improving DEI across the organization is the uplifting effect on the employee experience.

An environment that leverages diversity and where people feel valued is key to finding and keeping highly-skilled staff. In Romania, 58% of employers feel optimistic about growth and hiring ahead. This positive, competitive climate means we remain focused on recruitment. Our workforce strategy must attract, develop, reward and retain

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There is more to be done, both at a national level – for example setting DEI practice standards, rather than importing them and retrofitting to Romanian legislation and cultural attitudes – and at an organizational level.

the skilled individuals we need to succeed: this provides the framework for all our DEI activities and commitments.

Committing to doing better

Workforce diversity and DEI activities at NTT DATA Romania are comparatively mature, as for many Romanian organizations, diversity and inclusion management is still in its infancy. However there is more to be done, both at a national level – for example setting DEI practice standards, rather than importing them and retrofitting to Romanian legislation and cultural attitudes – and at an organizational level.

We come from a very humanistic background in terms of organizational culture, where the person is at center and the feeling of belonging is perceived in terms of the team as a family. Now, we are growing to a more mature, collaborative culture where there is respect amongst all staff. Our mission, with our Mutual Respect and Diversity Strategy, is to make sure we all feel included in the organization.

Gender equality, while only one aspect of DEI,

is an important focus for us at NTT DATA Romania, championed by CEO Maria Metz, appointed in April 2021. The balance between men and women is even across the workforce (with 49% women to 51% men) and female leaders make up 35% of senior management.

We have a keen focus, too, on working with schools and universities to remove the barriers to entry to careers in technology. We work with high schools on STEM education, and help prepare final-year students for the workplace with our Dojo program.

To counter the disparities in the Romanian education system with regard to students from differing socio-economic backgrounds, our Postgraduate Training Program for Computer Science centers on discovering talent from outside ‘traditional tech’ career routes. It is ideal for candidates who, initially at least, perhaps thought they wouldn’t have the opportunity to get into a career in IT. On qualifying, these candidates often bring the most original insights and opinions to our industry. And for our organization, our connections

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Our colleagues talk about good relationships as the essential foundation for successful teamwork. Promoting tolerance, as well as helping individuals to look after their own mental and physical wellbeing, helps us build a healthier environment for all.

with the next generation of tech talent means we have avoided the succession planning issues seen elsewhere in the IT sector.

Established practices with regard to equal pay, training and development, and wellbeing have also helped us offer a more holistic and supportive experience for staff. Mindfulness and meditation sessions, educational awareness sessions (tackling stress and burnout), personal development, 15-minute wellness breaks, and workshops on emotional resilience and the art of tolerance have been a great focus before and throughout the pandemic.

A future built on respect

As social creatures, a sense of belonging is important to every person. Belonging and employee engagement are deeply connected.

In order to create a culture where everyone feels like they belong, communication is key (we focus on more frequent one-to-ones between managers and their direct reports), as is creating a safe environment that genuinely encourages and allows

people to show up as their authentic selves.

Next year and beyond, we’ll continue our work on increasing the respect for diversity in the workplace by removing biases and inequalities. Through partnerships with national organizations promoting DEI, diversity training for our HR professionals and managers, mentorship for underrepresented groups and new policies and procedures that promote better relationships in the workplace, we’re creating the future we want, and need – a future built on respect.

For references, please go to cxomag.com/article/show-them-respect/



Sergiu Maxim is an enthusiastic People Experience Manager, as well as an accomplished psychologist, trainer and coach. Making sure that people stay at the heart of NTT is what drives him every day. Sergiu brings over 10 years of experience in HR and leadership development to the table.

Workforce Transformation: An Employee Perspective

By Kunal Koul, Managing Director, Digital Consulting and Advisory, NTT DATA Services

As we all adjust to post-Covid life, companies are reassessing their workplace processes and procedures – figuring out what’s working, what isn’t, and what the future holds. How can companies establish the foundations that allow them to fully realize employee potential in a hybrid working world?



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Across every individual and touchpoint, work and life are now intertwined. Instead of ‘customers’ and ‘employees’ there are people who each have lives that need balance and boundaries that respect them.

The world’s working axis tilted in 2020. Companies were forced to turn to digital technology to ensure ongoing operations and employee connections in a fractured landscape. Some were ready, their digital transformation strategies were in place and they could pivot towards the remote employee with relative ease. Others were still finding their feet and were forced out of legacy working frameworks and into new ways of working. Today, companies are reassessing their existing workplace processes and procedures – they want to know what worked, what didn’t, and what the future holds.

A recent survey by Gallup found that only 15% of people are engaged at work, while 51% are looking for a new job. According to Society for Human Resources (SHRM) that kind of staff turnover is costing companies productivity loss of anywhere from \$1,500 to \$10,000 per employee, depending on their role. And this estimate doesn’t even consider other significant losses like organizational knowledge, retraining new employees, lost revenue, and reduced customer satisfaction. Not listening to employees can be an expensive mistake.

This sentiment is echoed in a 2018 Stanford study that found if older Americans were given more flexibility they could work for longer. Imagine the

wealth of knowledge that could remain within the business if working frameworks evolved?

Changing perceptions, changing lives

Across every individual and touchpoint, work and life are now intertwined. Instead of ‘customers’ and ‘employees’ there are people who each have lives that need balance and boundaries that respect them. In 2021 there were more resignations than since tracking began in 2000. Nearly 39 million people quit. People had changed. They were now working from home, working longer hours than before and struggling with emotional and physical burnout.

The American Psychological Association 2021 Work and Wellbeing Survey found that burnout is at an all-time high with 79% of employees citing work-related stress. From a health and mental wellbeing perspective, people need support in how and where they work, and how they manage their time and energy.

An article in Harvard Business Review found that people need to manage their energy, not their time. It is the former that will ensure they can get things done and meet deadlines, and remain in control of the risk factors that can cause burnout. This is echoed in a recent Forbes piece that didn’t just highlight how important it is to control burnout,

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Companies need to be more inclusive if they want to create transformative and engaged working environments that hold onto loyalty and engender trust and growth.

but to recognize its physical and mental impact. This makes it important for both employees and their companies to take steps that highlight the risks of burnout and help to prevent it.

In addition to this, people have become accustomed to working from home and having the space and time to connect with their families. Crying kids, laughter, shouting, dogs barking – these are sounds that have become common to online meetings.

People have made significant switches to their personal lives and roles, and to how they approach their work. Companies need to be more inclusive of these changes going forward if they want to create transformative and engaged working environments that hold onto loyalty and engender trust and growth. They need to find ways of offering people the tools they need to thrive, be it in the office, at home, or a mix of both. People crave authenticity and connections and there is no reason why they cannot have these in the modern workforce.

Building the human-technology bridge

Technology has evolved significantly over the past three years. It’s adapted to help companies and people bridge the gaps and create interdependencies that deliver value to remote and hybrid workers

and frameworks. It now has so much more to offer in terms of supporting people in achieving their daily commitments, in creating connections that help them to collaborate with other people and in building functional teams that aren’t divided by digital, but rather enhanced by it.

Companies need to find ways of answering three key questions:

- What steps can be taken to help people become more engaged?
- What can be done to change burnout?
- What dynamics need to evolve to create a better working environment?

The answer lies in boundaries, visual connections, and emotive engagement. When a company has a lot of virtual meetings, it’s a good idea to encourage people to turn on their cameras so they look at one another and engage with the meeting. It’s easy to turn off the camera and read your phone, or answer emails, or lose interest in the meeting itself.

Like all things, of course, this needs to be done in balance. There are cases for the connections created with camera-led calls, leading to better employee engagement and recognition in the organization, and there are cases for reducing the amount of time spent on camera to manage fatigue. Both are relevant and emphasize the importance of

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Organizations need to create environments that allow for flexibility and that recognize individuality within clear boundaries.

balance and boundaries in the modern workplace.

There has even been a shift towards walking meetings that encourage people to take their meetings on a walk around the park or neighborhood as this stimulates thinking and encourages engagement.

The transformative workplace

Amidst the conversations around burnout, stress, remote working, hybrid offices and growing digital dependence lies one core truth: organizations need to create environments that allow for flexibility and that recognize individuality within clear boundaries.

This doesn't have to be intensely complex or expensive, it needs only to be agile enough to recognize that different people have different needs and expectations, and that by not enforcing rigid rules and requirements into every interaction, companies can transform how employees engage with the business. It's through flexibility that an organization's culture can really thrive.

At the same time employees need to understand that with the responsibility of working remotely, there will be mechanisms put in place that track productivity of the remote workforce. We are already seeing this trend evolve today.

Embracing a flexible and agile culture that recognizes the value of people, companies can avoid the expense of losing an experienced worker and their knowledge, or the risk of a toxic

environment. It is about prioritizing productivity through wellbeing and the business in ways that allow for people to thrive. This is the golden route to connecting to employees as people and acknowledging that they are invaluable to long-term sustainable success.

For references, please go to cxomag.com/article/workforce-transformation-an-employee-perspective/



Kunal Koul is a Managing Director in NTT DATA's Digital Consulting and Advisory group, responsible for advisory services and creating roadmaps, strategies and oversight to delivery. Kunal has over 21 years of experience in collaborating with C-Suite leaders, and has had extensive success delivering digital transformation for Fortune 500 companies. As a trusted advisor, Kunal has assembled, motivated and mentored cross-functional teams that have developed and deployed fundamental change and value for clients.

5 Minutes On...

How to make people fall in love with the workplace

By Adela Negru
Chief Human Resources Officer,
NTT DATA Romania



Scan the QR code with your smartphone camera



Retaining talent is all about nurturing people: getting to know them, supporting them, and working out what will make them stay. Adela Negru tells us how to make your workforce feel truly valued, and in doing so, ensure that they don't take their talent elsewhere.

A Recipe for Hybrid Working

By Jordi Largo, Director, Liquid Workplace,
Cloud & Infrastructure Management, NTT DATA EMEAL

Our physical and digital working environments are converging at breakneck speed, and few organizations would claim to be ready. Preparedness is often seen as a purely technological responsibility, but a broader set of ingredients is required for a truly successful strategy. As workplaces become more 'liquid' and organizations refine their post-Covid working practices, the key lies not just in tools and infrastructure but in behaviors that allow for understanding, organizing and optimizing work within this new hybrid environment.

Hybrid working has become shorthand for the space between in-the-office work and remote or home working. The concept connects various long-standing digital development trends that, accelerated by world events, have now become a firmly established paradigm. So much so that a recent Future Workforce Report stated that almost 75% of all project teams will include a remote element by 2028. Despite this momentum, a similar proportion of businesses (72%) still haven't developed a clear hybrid work strategy. If you're among them, don't panic. There are lessons you can learn from early adopters.

The highs and lows of hybrid working

Hybrid working has freed us from geographical constraints. This dispersion presents a wealth of opportunities, but also a fresh set of challenges. Proximity and informal face-to-face communication have long been associated with fostering creativity, innovation and knowledge sharing, for example. Anecdotally, success often comes from chats over coffee or similar unplanned moments. Might these be lost in a hybrid environment?

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Hybrid working means your sense of belonging, alignment behind objectives and reinforcement of personal links may all need to be reimagined. Questions around technology need to be balanced with maintaining great employee experiences.

Remote work can create risks around employee wellbeing too. On average, remote US information workers already work 10% longer than their office counterparts, and up to 80% of UK workers have reported that they fear working from home negatively affects their mental health.

Traditionally, organizations look to teamwork to overcome such challenges. However, hybrid working means your sense of belonging, alignment behind objectives and reinforcement of personal links may all need to be reimagined. Questions around technology need to be balanced with maintaining great employee experiences. Wellbeing, diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) all need to feature within conversations alongside expanded productivity. As a business function, technology is not well placed to deliver this alone.

Connected strategies and effective tools

Moving forward means considering the strands of technology, physical and digital spaces, and people in a holistic sense. Any strategic thinking must be multidisciplinary and inclusive in nature.

In this context, it is best to consider technology

an enabling asset rather than a driver in itself. Appropriately applied, it can develop use cases as new digital operating models are embraced. The right model, however, depends on a broad range of factors unique to your business.

One undeniable common feature of today's workspaces, however, is likely to be high user expectations. Today, WhatsApp's 2.44 billion unique users talk instantly across the globe through their personal devices. Such access means your employees are likely to feel digitally empowered and want to influence business communications too. As internal clients, their input needs to be valued. Of course, everyone is different and any strategies need to provide flexibility, and skills training where required, to help everyone engage equally. However your hybrid culture evolves, and whatever the ultimate goal, the key to success is adopting a framework around both employee needs and the practicalities of sharing business assets.

The benefits of instant digital communication need to be balanced with the need for structured work. Hybrid working is already gaining a poor reputation for the latter, with 70% of today's UK

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The benefits of instant digital communication need to be balanced with the need for structured work. You can help avoid mistakes by having clear rules about when, how and why your people collaborate.

hybrid workers, for example, complaining of interruptions for inefficient online meetings. You can help avoid mistakes by having clear rules about when, how and why your people collaborate.

Real productivity, then, comes from tools that enable genuine working, testing, prototyping and decision-making in real time. Tools including Microsoft's Windows Mixed Reality suite, which blends the physical and digital worlds by mixing human, computer and environmental interactions, and NTT DATA's knowledge management application, Knowler, help realize this potential. Active knowledge sharing tools such as Knowler quickly capture information and make it immediately digitally accessible. Such systems, combined with organizational openness, prevent remote employees from missing out.

Preparing your people

Having the right tools in place, however, is only half the story. For many, succeeding at remote, asynchronous communication means both learning new skills and making attitudinal

changes. Sentiment analysis or opinion mining within affected populations will assess how the required transformation might be perceived. Forewarned is forearmed.

Once you understand your hybrid audience, you need to ensure you put energy into creating and maintaining healthy digital collaboration that supports employee wellbeing and DEI objectives. Leading with empathy is key here. Management that respects the new demands of hybrid working will be rewarded with ongoing success.

Choosing the right communication infrastructure means helping your teams dive into your organization, share challenges, celebrate successes, understand roles and responsibilities and feel fully embedded. Once hybrid teams feel at home, know where they sit organizationally and can comfortably collaborate, the next step is fostering a shared sense of purpose. OKR (Objectives and Key Results) methodologies are well documented, however transparent monitoring and clarity over results become more important without in-person reinforcement.

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The right communication infrastructure means helping your teams share challenges, celebrate successes, understand roles and responsibilities and feel fully embedded.

Hybrid team working in this way doesn't come naturally to everyone. Prioritizing cultural fit and recruiting people with an aptitude for it will help your organization in the long term too.

True hybrid spaces

Once you are up and running, the temptation is to divide remote workers from in-situ office workers and operate two parallel, but different, use cases. It is more useful, however, to create a vision of joint spaces and technology. This means considering a range of shared experiences – from dedicated online demonstration rooms to large co-hosted events.

Whatever the future holds, hybrid working definitely isn't going anywhere. Our way of doing business has evolved beyond measure along with how we communicate at home. The tools that have enabled this change may have come from the technology sector, but making them a success needs a broader set of ingredients and an inclusive, multidisciplinary approach.

For references, please go to cxomag.com/article/a-recipe-for-hybrid-working/



Jordi Largo is Director at NTT DATA EMEA and LATAM, and is in charge of leading the Liquid Workplace Business. With over 20 years of industry experience in different business and operational roles, he is focused on elevating the hybrid workplace to be

an enabling lever in the forms of increased talent attraction, employee engagement, productivity and cost efficiency, sustainability and market reputation.

How Automation Will Unlock the Next Level of Human Performance

By Tarrel Pierson, Director, Workforce Readiness at NTT DATA Services

When so much is changing in our day-to-day personal and professional lives, organizations need to make sure they are adjusting to the new demands of work whilst being sensitive and supportive of their workers. Automation allows employees to engage in creative, exciting, rewarding endeavors that lead to elevated career and personal satisfaction – as well as delivering efficiencies for the business.

In the 1970s, a massive technological change swept across the financial industry with the introduction of automatic teller machines (ATMs). Automation alarmists worried that this innovative technology would lead to mass unemployment for bank tellers and displace thousands of employees.

However, the story played out differently. By the mid-1990s, more than 400,000 ATMs were installed across the US and bank tellers began growing faster than ever in the workforce.

It became cheaper to operate a branch and branch offices began to expand. The labor-saving costs created more jobs for bank employees and allowed tellers to reduce manual cash handling and focus on marketing, relationship-building, customer service, and other engaging tasks. Studies show that wages for tellers improved, and more college graduates entered similar roles. It was evident that machines

did not threaten employees, but instead offered to empower them.

Still, amidst widespread digital transformation and technological advancement, workers across industries continue to fear automation and resist organizational change. How can leaders quell fears, augment training and skilling, and illuminate the many benefits of automation? The critical step to successfully adopting automation is to embrace a human-first approach.

The widespread benefits of automation

There is a compelling case for scaling automation across the enterprise; competitors are moving faster, customer expectations are higher, and employee priorities are shifting daily. Automation offers a path forward by allowing organizations to capitalize on the speed and efficiency needed to capture market

share, deliver on-demand digital experiences, and offer employees more fulfilling work. Automation provides benefits in six primary areas, including:

- 1. Productivity:** Automated programs oversee repetitive tasks much faster than people can and work 24/7, freeing employees to tackle higher-level work.
- 2. Accuracy and quality:** Reducing dependence on manual data entry equates to fewer errors, less rework and better business results.
- 3. Lower costs:** Automation may give organizations the option of maintaining a leaner workforce, saving not only wages but benefits, training, real estate, technology support and other related costs of employment.



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**How can leaders illuminate the many benefits of automation?
The critical step is to embrace a human-first approach.**

4. Business resilience: Automated systems enhance a business's ability to continue operating and serving customers effectively in the face of unexpected circumstances.

5. Enhanced employee experience: By taking over time-consuming and mundane tasks, automation can help employees focus on more cognitive work and achieve a better work-life balance.

6. Customer satisfaction and retention: Automated solutions, such as virtual agents and chatbots, can solve many customer issues immediately. At the same time, a more engaged workforce is empowered to deliver top-notch service when a human touch is needed.

Automation is powerless without your people. Scaling automation only works when employees are partners in designing their new relationships

with machines. However, new relationships take time and attention. Employees must be willing and even excited to participate in training and skilling programs that support automation.

A company-wide push toward automation should include a robust change management element to inform, educate and motivate employees. This might include practical training for employees on how automation can help them save time, and a program to reskill or upskill workers who might otherwise be at risk of downsizing. In addition, leaders should explore different avenues to sustain organizational change.

A new approach to change management and skills development

Companies see 40% of digital investments fail to meet intended goals due to a combination of preventable factors, including lack of understanding of the objectives (36%), employee

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Automation is powerless without your people. Scaling automation only works when employees are partners in designing their new relationships with machines.

pushback (32%), poor communication (28%), and lack of leadership (26%).

Organizational Change Management (OCM) initiatives are rooted in the understanding that engaged and motivated workers drive business results. Although it may be tempting to launch automation and expect employees to adapt, OCM encourages leaders to design a pathway to adoption before implementing digital technologies and platform modernization at scale. Cross-industry experts work in tandem with leaders to build personalized frameworks that guide organizations on how to prepare teams for change to make it stick.

The introduction of automation hastens the demand for advanced skills. Research shows that by 2030, the time spent using advanced technological skills will increase by 50% in the US and 41% in Europe. Additionally, 40% of surveyed companies are extensive adopters of automation and AI.

Consequently, the need for a workforce that uses

basic skills, such as data input and processing, basic literacy, and basic numeracy will decline. At the same time, the demand for technology experts will expand as tasks performed by high-skill workers shift to lower-skill ones.

In response to this movement, organizations must revisit training and skilling programs to upskill workers for an automation-first future, by exploring the following solutions:

- Curriculum design
- Enterprise app training development and support
- Learning content development
- Learning organization strategy
- Learning tools and content assessment
- Training program management.

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When organizations embrace automation as a critical component of every business function, it creates unparalleled opportunities for people to rise above the grind of unfulfilling taskwork and access their full potential.

Gearing up for the future of work

Automation will undoubtedly influence and steer the future of work. For example, 31% of businesses have already fully automated at least one function, and 66% are actively working on automating an essential business process. The same study reports that organizations that successfully scale automation adoption are twice as likely to involve HR transformation, and seven times more likely to include communications functions.

To keep pace with the future of work, leaders must engage HR teams and build talent strategies that reflect the demands of the future workforce. Organizations interested in fully automating processes can partner with experts to strengthen the following:

- HR transformation
- Talent strategy and future of work design
- Workforce transformation.

On the surface, automation is a tool to streamline processes, serve customers more efficiently and grow profit margins. It can help organizations overcome the skills gap and shortage of workers in key positions and retain the employees who still work there. But automation is much more than that. It unlocks the next level of human performance and achievement. When organizations

embrace automation as a critical component of every business function, it creates unparalleled opportunities for people to rise above the grind of unfulfilling taskwork and access their full potential. Automation allows employees to engage in creative, exciting, rewarding endeavors that lead to elevated career and personal satisfaction.

In this way, hyper-automation can help organizations move past the Great Resignation and usher in the next phase of work: the Great Re-engagement. As the future of work matures in lockstep with technology to achieve incredible levels of productivity, agility and resilience, businesses will be well-equipped to manage whatever challenges the world has in store.

For references, please go to cxomag.com/article/automation-will-unlock-performance/



Tarrel Pierson is the Director of Workforce Readiness and the Learning and New Skilling consulting practice lead for NTT DATA Services. He has over 20 years of experience in the learning and development industry, delivering learning experiences to over a quarter of a million people.

In Depth

NTT DATA takes a deeper look into critical areas of business trust.



Connecting Your Hybrid Workforce

Recent research from NTT showed that over 90% of organizations recognize the value of employee experience to their strategy, or as a crucial strategic differentiator, but just 25% fully agree that the value of EX is understood and embraced across the enterprise. Forward-looking organizations have moved ahead with secure-by-design digital transformation to enable hybrid working – and are reaping significant rewards. But can leaders, managers and employees agree on what the future of work should look like?



Employees are now at the forefront of workplace strategy and the global success of organizations



Employee wellbeing and EX have risen in strategic importance

90.6% recognize the value of EX as important to the organizational strategy or a crucial strategic differentiator



But capabilities lag

Just 37.9% are very satisfied with their current EX capability



Understanding varies

72.7% agree that parts of the organization don't understand or truly embrace the value of EX

...but there remains a lag in executing that strategy

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Creating Balance, Transforming Work, Empowering People

By Anna Amodio, Head of Human Resources, NTT DATA Italia

Covid has changed how people view their professional trajectories, as well as the way in which companies perceive their employees. Leaders now have the opportunity to experiment, testing hybrid work formulas in order to secure both the health of the company and of the individuals working within it. At the core is balance, fairness and inclusivity.

It is the start of a new era, one where the professional blends with the personal to create a new way of working that's sustainable and reflective for the future of business. It has become very clear to organizations, globally, that the pandemic was the starting point of deep and systemic change. It has changed how people view their lives and their professional trajectories, and it has changed how companies perceive their employees – from human resources to individuals that require nurturing and support.

There are several aspects to this change. The first is one of the most well-known: the Great Resignation. First reported towards the end of 2020, this remains a challenge for most companies as the resignations continue to flood in, even though the pandemic has subsided.

As a recent article by the BBC pointed out, initially it was thought that the Great Resignation was due to chaos and uncertainty, but today it is clear that it has more to do with people wanting roles that add value and meaning to their lives.



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A new common culture needs to be based on flexibility, trust, sustainability, and to guide us in the evolutionary process in which we are immersed.

On the other side of this departure is ‘quiet quitting’ – that is, staying in work but staying out of the hustle (and away from the risk of burnout, particularly impacting Millennials and Generation Z).

These phenomena are all part of a deeper change that needs to be managed properly, and that asks for companies to be more aware of the new working concept we are designing and building through our present decisions. At NTT DATA Italia we listened to people, collected the different experiences and understood the new needs that emerged. This has allowed us to build the foundations to redesign a way of working of the future, more tailored for our people.

Perspective is the key

Accustomed in the past to having recognizable working expectations and a frame of reference, today we must do a continuous exercise of active listening to understand the new context and scenarios that arise, and develop new managerial approaches.

Culture, which is expressed through values, principles, and corporate and social behaviors,

is the common denominator through which we can interpret (with awareness and compassion) the complexity and diversity that we are facing, particularly across generations. A new, common culture needs to be based on flexibility, trust and sustainability, to guide us in the evolutionary process in which we are immersed.

Resilience and adaptability are essential to the success of the modern worker within the modern business. People have developed new skills and ways of working to adapt to the demands of the pandemic emergency and the complexities of remote and hybrid working.

All these factors have combined to fundamentally change how people perceive themselves and their working environments. They have discovered they have the ability to navigate the intense complexity and uncertainty, and are able to survive. They have realized that life is short, that risk is inherent and that there is only one chance to live their lives.

This means that companies also need to change their perspectives. They need to recognize the importance

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It is through the construction of a trust culture that people who need flexibility when working will offer as much to the business as to their own lives.

of personal satisfaction and caring for others, and creating communities within companies that embed trust and wellbeing.

It is an ongoing, interesting journey, aimed at reconciling everyone’s specific objectives with the common business ones. Therefore, we truly believe that it is important not to create rules and norms but rather to build an entirely new mindset based on trust. It’s necessary to create a careful balance between the culture of the company and the needs of the employees, in recognition of the inherent value within both.

How trust builds engagement

A relationship based on trust makes every employee capable of fulfilling the mandates of their role, instead of a constant use of control. Thanks to widespread organizational trust, people can be productive and engaged when they adopt remote working practices and take on the life of a digital nomad. It is through the construction of a trust culture that people who need flexibility will offer as

much to the business as to their own lives.

Our philosophy is summed up in the definition we have given ourselves of the Smile Working Company – an environment where technology, creativity and innovation meet; one which promotes cultural change in the name of flexibility, inclusiveness and care. It’s based on the principle that a new corporate culture, based on trust and responsibility as a prerequisite, can transform how people work. It can also embed a respect for a new way of working that is truly flexible and oriented towards the wellbeing of each person.

A specific issue concerns the construction of new development paths for all managers whose role has been significantly impacted and who are supporting the greatest effort in this process of change. To them, and in general to the redefinition of the new leadership model, we must devote a large part of our work.

How balance enters the equation

Although we have developed a transparent and trust-based system for smart working, we don’t

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Smart working shouldn't be an all-or-nothing approach but rather a foundation built on flexibility that allows for people to work in the office, at home, in other places on the move, but within teams and within the culture.

necessarily want everyone to stay remote 100% of the time. It is important to retain office connections and for people to return to the offices so that they share in an environment that's focused on collaborative working and connections.

Smart working shouldn't be an all-or-nothing approach, but rather a foundation built on flexibility that allows for people to work in the office, at home, in other places on the move, but within teams and within the culture.

We strongly believe in people development and training. This is key to engaging one another, ensuring balance, creating a resilient and connected culture, and in establishing trust. We know that there are problems and issues that come hand-in-hand with the new ways of working, but we also know that if we create a culture of shared values and commitments, people will always meet in the middle.

The real challenge is to have the courage to experiment. To look ahead to the future with fresh models and approaches, rather than trying to adapt old models into new operational structures. Our way forward is to share a common mindset that allows

for the business to create engagement, to speak to everyone with one voice without compromising on the qualities of creativity, inclusion and diversity.

For references, please go to cxomag.com/article/creating-balance/



Anna Amodio is a change management oriented leader with 30 years' experience supporting the high performance of organizations. Specializing in the HR field in Italian and international ICT companies, Anna is highly skilled in human capital management, the reengineering of work processes, recruiting, development, training and compensation. She's worked with the Olivetti Group, Telecom Italia and Wind Telecommunication, as well as participating in the start-up phase of Omnitel Pronto Italia (now Vodafone Italy) for recruiting and organizational projects. She was also Senior Partner in consulting companies in the field of change management and headhunting.

VIDEO

The Connected Future Workplace: Maximizing value through the power of human connection

A film by NTT DATA

In the last few years, so many aspects of our working lives have undergone rapid transformation – but the most radical changes have been to the ways we connect. With employee expectations changing, leaders have a unique opportunity to reimagine workplace connection in a way that prioritizes empathy, flexibility and the people driving their organization's future.

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How to Make the New, Hyper-Connected World of Work Work for Everyone

By Anna Budde, Chief Marketing Officer, NTT DATA DACH

Successful leadership in today's world of hybrid work requires a reset in how we manage and empower our teams. Leaders should focus on facilitating social connections and creating a fertile breeding ground for innovation by establishing the structures for employees to communicate and collaborate across boundaries.

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Working in a hyper-connected world has actually led us to lose a lot of human connection. By putting our most important asset – our employees – at the center of the way we lead, communicate and collaborate, we have a powerful key to mastering these challenges.

We are living in an era of change: the disruption of business models, societal challenges, as well as the role of people at work and work itself are changing.

Remote and hybrid work have become the norm in this ever-changing, increasingly connected world. Thus, leadership has to change. The way we lead our organizations and our employees shapes culture, which in turn drives the business forward and empowers the people within it. The pandemic has accelerated many of these developments and is still driving us at the moment – but it is not the main driver of change.

Ironically, working in a hyper-connected world has actually led us to lose a lot of human connection. It's the reason why during the lockdown, for example, many companies introduced socializing formats like cappuccino calls, virtual lunches, cook-alongs, or online games sessions. We are, after all, a social species that relies on cooperation to solve the societal challenges we face.

However, by following a human-centered approach and putting our most important asset – our employees – at the center of the way we lead, communicate and collaborate, we have a powerful key to mastering and navigating these challenges.

Leading with empathy in intergenerational settings

In my view, the most important skill leaders need today is empathy, so they can understand where, how, and who their team members are. While the increasing hyper-connectedness moved us further away from each other in one sense, it also is bringing people much closer, because we see into their living rooms and bedrooms, into their family lives.

Before remote work became the new normal for many of us, people could come to work at their offices and almost play a role. There was an unwritten expectation that their personal lives would happen elsewhere. That is no longer the case: now, work and our personal lives are no longer separate, but confluent – we have entered an era of work-life blending.

As a consequence, we need to radically rethink leadership and take our employees' personal situations and requirements into account – in particular that of Gen Z, and soon, Gen Alpha – without neglecting the generations that came before them. Every working generation is important and has its own requirements, and the recipe for success lies in the intergenerational mix of your organization.

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The goal is to ensure that the company can adapt to changes as quickly as possible – which reflects a mindset, not a physical space.

Adopting an appropriate mindset

This will require agile leadership, as the new world of work requires leaders to hand over responsibility to staff. Large corporation CXOs around the globe have started thinking about the ideal mix of remote and on-site work in order to leverage the best of both worlds, while simultaneously maintaining a high degree of vitality and agility.

That doesn't necessarily mean that the office is where they work. Instead, it's a place to foster that sense of agility. The goal is to ensure that the company can adapt to changes as quickly as possible – which reflects a mindset, not a physical space.

Tried and tested management tools like the Objectives and Key Results (OKR) method can support leaders in empowering and inspiring employees on an individual and team level. They allow leaders and employees to jointly set the direction at a high level without micromanaging the way the objectives are achieved.

Leaders also need to constantly remind themselves of their function as a role model and make sure that they are leading by example. Leadership fit for the new way of working is as much about behavior as it is about attitude.

Fostering collaboration and communication for a distributed workforce

When working with a distributed workforce, leaders will need to learn to allow their employees to choose where they prefer to work, provided it makes business sense for their role, tasks, team-mates and business partners or clients.

Leaders will also need to create special occasions and provide platforms, in particular for informal interaction. This helps to foster and promote employee engagement, bringing employees closer together after more than two years of (mainly) remote work.

On a day-to-day basis, leaders will need to evaluate and set up new channels of communication, because what we've lost to remote work are those chance encounters away from your desk and formal work settings – in lounge areas, at the coffee machine, in the cafeteria – where you bump into someone and inadvertently solve a problem or ignite a new conversation or project. I don't think we realized how important that informal small talk was; it happened naturally before all of the lockdowns, and now we, as leaders, have to find ways to put it back into the equation.

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What we've lost to remote work are those chance encounters. I don't think we realized how important that informal small talk was; it happened naturally before all of the lockdowns, and now we have to find ways to put it back into the equation.

This means giving people an opportunity to socialize with each other at the beginning of a remote meeting, or calling team members individually just to see how they are, not necessarily to discuss work or project-related issues.

Leaders also need to create communication opportunities for employees to build and experience culture, by creating opportunities for them to share personal work-related experiences, because culture is even more difficult to grasp in an increasingly digitalized corporate world, with team members distributed all over the globe.

Finally, leaders who want to meet the requirements of today's workers need to design and provide platforms for collaborative processes and create structures for employees to network – across teams, disciplines, and departments – which will create a fertile breeding ground for innovation. At the same time, leaders need to give their staff time to focus, for instance, by starting meetings on time and cutting them short, or by recommending designated times as meeting-free zones.

Balancing business needs

As we contemplate all of these shifts, we must always bear in mind that while it is a new, exciting world of work, at the end of the day business still

has to run smoothly, and the bottom line has to be right. As leaders, especially, we can't allow ourselves to lose sight of this.

It is possible – and has never been more important – to keep the business impact in mind while being genuinely committed to keeping people at the center of all our decisions and actions.

For references, please go to cxomag.com/article/how-to-make-the-new-hyper-connected-world-of-work-work-for-everyone/



Anna Budde is Chief Marketing & Communications Officer and member of the Management Board for NTT DATA in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, where she is responsible for new work, change management, culture, and leadership programs.

Throughout her 25-year career in the IT industry, she has held various management positions in leading global IT companies such as Atos and Siemens. Her experience includes complex transformation programs, strategic leadership, and employer experience.



VIDEO

Addressing the Lack of Diversity in Senior IT Roles

Ida McKinley Sr. Vice President, IT Services, GM Financial

General Motors aims to be the most inclusive company in the world. GM Financial's SVP of IT Services, Ida McKinley, talked to CXO about the ways in which the traditionally male-dominated IT industry can take full advantage of all the talent in the market.

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A Lesson in Workplace Learning

By Laura Bartoli, Engagement Manager, NTT DATA Italia, and Sara Manocchio, Associate Manager HR Transformation Practice, NTT DATA Italia'

With job skills changing so rapidly and the increasing competition for talent, workplace learning plays a pivotal role in keeping organizations at the top of their game. By making L&D departments more agile and fluid and creating a learning-led company culture, organizations can always keep ahead of new competencies, and talent can be nurtured from within.

In many economies around the world, there's an imbalance between the number of job vacancies and the number of people seeking jobs: too many of the first and a lack of the latter.

In the UK, official statistics for the first quarter of 2022 revealed the tightest jobs market ever seen. In Italy, the Governor of the Central Bank recently bemoaned the fact that in the country there were 2.62 million people available to work, but not looking for employment. While in the US, even though recession beckons, companies are 'hoarding' staff rather than letting them go, for fear they may need to recruit them back soon.

This means employers are fishing for new talent in a pool that's becoming ever smaller, leading to delays in hiring and higher salaries to be offered. In this environment, a 'post and pray' recruitment model that's reliant on job boards and LinkedIn is no longer sustainable.



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Pandemic-induced homeworking exposed the weaknesses of e-learning when not robustly supported by networking and mentorship. Adopting a ‘blended learning’ approach is regarded as the only credible and sustainable option.

What’s the alternative?

Rather than looking outside for talent, organizations need to search within for ‘hidden talent’. Many would find they are sitting on a goldmine of under-used human capital just waiting to be trained into shape.

There would be no need to recruit for anything other than the most specialized roles, and it would help to keep employees’ skills ‘liquid’ – able to flow to wherever they are needed. It would also give your business the capacity to shapeshift internally, which is critical for any company with ambitions to be hyper-agile and keep up with the changing needs of the marketplace.

So, developing homegrown talent isn’t just about having the right employees for today: it’s also about having them available tomorrow. The speed at which the world of work is changing makes this critical.

In just three years, the World Economic Forum believes that technological change will require the reskilling of half of all employees. And two years after that, nearly 70% of skills we now consider important will be in some way different.

Imagine having to recruit under that kind of pressure. How will your organization compete against everyone else in the market looking for exactly the same talent as you? This is why learning

and development (L&D) should be pushed up the corporate agenda.

Training has long been part of the mix for most enterprises. But pandemic-induced homeworking exposed the weaknesses of e-learning when not robustly supported by networking and mentorship. Given that working from home is now embedded in so many job contracts, adopting a ‘blended learning’ approach – that brings together the best aspects of in-person teaching with the flexibility of online learning – is regarded as the only credible and sustainable option. The education sector is already having success with a similar ‘HyFlex’ (hybrid and ultra flexible) learning model.

The same, but different

How best to do this? We suggest that a learning-led organization should be built upon four pillars, the first of which is **empowerment** – allowing everyone access to training content that enables them to flourish.

So, we are not talking about one-size-fits-all training imposed by L&D, but real employee-centric learning that recognizes the disparate aspirations of individuals.

This should go further than training in support of their functional role. It should also deliver on what

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One-on-one tutoring can improve performance by 98% when compared to learning in a traditional classroom environment.

employees think are their personal development needs. When only just over a third of employees feel connected to their work, offering the opportunity to ‘grow beyond the job’ can significantly increase their degree of engagement. While this may require some trade-offs, it will almost certainly help improve employee retention.

Our second and third pillars – **networked knowledge** and **nudge** – are so closely connected that we should think of them as learning twins.

Networked knowledge is about ensuring crucial ‘wisdom’ is distributed into an organization’s every nook and cranny. How? We advocate creating a network of ‘knowledge holders’ who are ready, willing and able to offer help and information to others as a formalized part of their role, for which they are properly compensated.

The power of any form of one-on-one tutoring cannot be underestimated, with a famous study in educational psychology finding that it can improve performance by 98% when compared to learning in a traditional classroom environment.

In parallel, you must find ways to ‘nudge’ people to learn by ensuring the process for doing so is as painless as possible. If people are too busy to learn or find the whole process onerous, they won’t do it.

Focus must move away from large, inappropriately timed, indigestible blocks of classroom instruction, into bite-sized chunks of learning, easily accessible and consumable at the moment of need.

You also need to think about how to accommodate those who wouldn’t call themselves natural life-long learners. Here, gamification and innovative mechanisms that reward engagement can go a long way toward making learning available to all.

Our final pillar is **technology**. Imagine being able to ask a digital assistant for the ‘tricks of the trade’ when meeting a new client for the first time, being able to scan a QR code linked to specific resources that take you through a particular procedure, or asking a chatbot to point you in the direction of the knowledge holder you need to answer a question. Using technology to engage with employees like this is a way to make knowledge transfer more frictionless.

Proactive not reactive leadership

Effective L&D in today’s workplace, then, requires a new training regime based around continually updated micro-content, readily shared through wikis and knowledge holders, available on demand, and personalized to individual needs – all supported

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Business as usual doesn't work. Business leaders need to recalibrate their approach if they are to create a truly effective continuous learning environment that nurtures and builds confidence.

by one-on-one mentoring to keep everyone on track.

This is learning 'within the flow of work' and this, we believe, is the only way forward for organizations wanting to become resilient in marketplaces being disrupted by new competitors and economic turbulence. In this environment, business as usual doesn't work.

Business leaders need to recalibrate their approach if they are to create a truly effective continuous learning environment that nurtures and builds confidence, rather than looking to return to pre-pandemic ways of working. The productivity benefits of homeworking, for instance, are being squandered by 'presenteeism', as employees join Zoom meetings unnecessarily just to make themselves visible to distrusting, control-minded managers. The learning and development team should also reset its priorities and take on new roles, like auditing existing employee competencies, mapping out bitesize training programs and monitoring performance improvements. These are all ways in which a business can help future-proof itself.

People are the building blocks of a business and you should be looking to maximize their potential.

As American entrepreneur Jim Rohn once put it:

“A good objective of leadership is to help those who are doing poorly to do well, and to help those who are doing well to do even better.”

That's what all great leaders should aspire to do.

For references, please go to cxomag.com/article/a-lesson-in-workplace-learning/



Laura Bartoli is an engineer (PhD) with a passion for innovation and people's behaviors. She has over 15 years of experience in designing and delivering change management projects, with expertise on digital transformation, employee experience and behavioral design. In NTT DATA, she is the focal point of the Change Management team.



Sara Manocchio is a Multilingual management Associate Manager, specializing in designing and delivering strategic HR and learning transformations to multinational clients.

5 Minutes On...

AI and the Digital Employee Experience

By Alessandro Pistella
 Head of People Digital Hub,
 Enel Group



5 Minutes On... the need for post-pandemic working to combine the best of remote and in-office working, which has increased organizations' digital dependency. What else can you offer to your employees digitally that will enhance their experience at your organization, rather than hinder it? And how can you make these as useful as possible?

Scan the QR code with your smartphone camera



Hybrid Happiness: Designing the Work Environment of the Future

By Ioana Zdrenghea, People Experience Manager, NTT DATA Romania

With organizations currently looking at an increasingly detached workforce and a fierce talent war, a human-centered approach to HR is certainly gaining traction. This is where design thinking comes into play – to remain competitive, companies need to involve people in co-designing an environment where they want to show up.

The world of work is experiencing unprecedented levels of change, brought about by a pandemic that has consigned many traditional working practices to the waste bin of history and replaced them overnight with home-working.

In the US, the proportion of remote workers grew from 6% of the workforce to almost 10 times that in just two years, with 59% of workers whose jobs can be done remotely opting to work from home. However, many organizations have yet to recognize that we are on the cusp of moving away permanently from yesterday's in-person, five-days-a-week working model.

Working environments, of course, are not just made up of the physical office space. The psychological environment must be safe and healthy too; work can be stressful at the best of times, and unfortunately in some organizations remote working, among other things, has spawned an unpleasant toxicity. Leadership styles, relationships with colleagues and all the hard and soft values that make up a

corporate culture need to be taken into account when redesigning any work environment, to ensure that it is protective as well as productive. The pandemic gave many workers unprecedented flexibility and they are keen to defend their newfound freedom, to the point where they are prepared to change jobs if they don't get what they want. The 'Great Resignation' has shown the willingness of many to walk away, with some choosing early retirement over the stresses and strains of the workplace.

So, while some employers may vigorously demand an all-or-nothing return to the office, the genie is out of the bottle and it won't go back in. What we are seeing is a recalibration of how and where work is done. When it comes to creating tomorrow's workplace, flexibility rather than location is now the mantra. This is leading to the emergence of new human-centric companies, shaped far more around the needs of employees rather than shaping employees to fit the organization.

The new role of HR

Successfully creating such organizations will depend in no small part on the performance of HR departments, which must find ways to accommodate both physical and virtual work environments that extend beyond the corporate four walls and into the homes of employees.

When over 1,000 current and former employees at Apple, one of the world's most innovative companies, have argued in an open letter that "office-bound work is a technology from the last century", it shows that moving to a different model is going to require a major shift in leadership thinking.

Here again, HR has a vital role to play by educating management about what workers want and need – taking a stand against top-down, one-size-fits-all initiatives. There can be no hiding behind excuses about home-working leading to a drop in productivity. Far from that, many studies suggest that more gets done. One experiment in China showed that home-working led to a 13% performance



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HR has a vital role to play by educating management about what workers want and need – taking a stand against top-down, one-size-fits-all initiatives.

increase, and a survey in the US found that 45% of remote workers found team performance had improved during the past two years.

One of the big challenges is that there can be no micromanagement in the new work order. Digital monitoring, for instance, which generates so-called worker productivity scores, may give employers a sense of control – but ultimately it destroys trust and results in ‘performative’ work, including virtual presenteeism as people vie to be demonstrably visible by attending unnecessary virtual meetings. As Ryan Fuller, Microsoft’s former Vice President for Workplace Intelligence notes: “We’re in this era of measurement but we don’t know what we should be measuring.”

A time of transition

This doesn’t mean that the physical office is irrelevant, only that its role has changed. Once it was the place where everybody went because it was where the tools, people and resources you needed to do your job were. Now it’s less a place for deep work (home is generally much better for this), and more a place for collaboration. Brainstorming sessions or decision-making meetings may require gathering people together, but much work is just heads-down execution that can be done where and whenever.

If there are initiatives to bring people back into the office, HR needs to be the honest broker to ensure employees are fundamentally involved in their development. So, rather than gathering data from surveys or one-on-one discussions to come up with solutions, employees from across functions and roles should be involved in a far more inclusive and egalitarian way.

If you can, discover what makes office life a negative experience for employees. Surveys take you so far, but the real answer here is to talk to them and really listen to what they say. When you know what’s annoying them, then you can begin to design out the pain-points, with successive iterations resulting in ever-improving solutions. When employees are part of designing a new workplace architecture – that is inspiring and conducive to a good office experience – they are far more likely to use it.

Of course, this same thinking must carry over into ensuring your IT infrastructure is a help rather than a hindrance, whether in the office or working remotely – no complex or unreliable logins, and information available where you expect to find it, in real-time. For workers splitting their time between the corporate office and their home office, the transition between the two environments must be seamless.

People-shaped progress

By using approaches such as design thinking, it’s possible to better understand what employees like and dislike about their work environment and then create a better structure – one that recognizes empathy and human connectivity as much as process. Doing this requires HR to reimagine all aspects of work, and effectively take on a new role – more ‘experience architect’ than process developer.

This June at NTT DATA Romania, for instance, we launched a redesign project centered on our People Experience (reflecting our belief that our work environment is a place of equals, we prefer to use the word ‘people’ rather than ‘employee’), which means an upgrade to our HR processes as well as a repositioning of our value proposition for the workforce.

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The real answer here is to talk to them and really listen to what they say. When employees are part of designing a new workplace architecture, they are far more likely to use it.

We now have a highly diverse, nine-strong project team, all of whom have been trained in design thinking methodologies. They’re asking the right questions first, before coming up with any solution. In practice, this means they are talking to people about their experiences at work, and then using tools such as empathy maps and personas to find new ways to better structure and engage with the incoming data. As a result, we’re able to generate more innovative and effective ideas to design and test exciting solutions and experimental prototypes, developing what works and either moving on from or improving what doesn’t.

A better workplace

Will such a human-centric workplace be perfect? No workplace is. And the rapid, widespread movement to remote working will certainly raise questions that HR departments will need to resolve in ways that are both creative and equitable.

In other words, HR must be ready to relentlessly reinvent itself, and our People Experience redesign is one example of how we are doing so by using human-centric design as a true value driver in our organization.

Building and maintaining culture is certainly also a challenge. But if we are willing to experiment, we will find new ways to foster connection and meet the cultural needs of the workforce. To keep pushing for a return to old ways is to be in denial. We haven’t even touched on the ethical viability of requiring employees to make long, fuel-consuming commutes or using vast quantities of electricity to cool large, overheating glass-sided office towers in a world increasingly impacted by climate change. So, we need to think positively and wholeheartedly

about resolving such conundrums, rather than regard them as hurdles. That means no more mixed messages from leaders who officially encourage flexible working but then don’t commit to it. As Airbnb’s Brian Chesky realized as the company went fully remote: “You can’t fight the future. We can’t try to hold on to 2019 any more than 1950. We have to move forward.”

And that means investing more time, money and energy not on office space, but on people – wherever they choose to work.

For references, please go to cxomag.com/article/hybrid-happiness/



Ioana Zdrenghia is a passionate People Experience Manager who injects empathy into every project. As a trained psychologist with over 14 years of HR experience, she brings a unique skillset to her work — understanding people and

empathizing with their needs, while enhancing the employee journey. Leveraging her extensive experience in talent and workforce management, integration, career development and recruiting, Ioana uses her creativity to redesign solutions in order to help our talent thrive.

Leadership First, Location Second

By Wayne Turmel, Co-founder of The Remote Leadership Institute
and co-author of *The Long-Distance Leader*

No matter how you feel about it, remote work is here to stay. As leaders, how confident and comfortable you are with this shift will depend on your own experiences, background, and even your seniority. There are very real changes involved in working remotely or in hybrid teams, but there is good news: when we take the time to be intentional, the proper courses of action become clear.

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What many leaders forget is that leading people remotely is more the same as leading in person than it is different.

As a leader, do you prefer that people work remotely or in the office together? No matter how you answer this question, there are two important things to remember. First, your response may depend on where you sit in your organization. Second, it doesn't matter how you feel: it's happening.

This change feels sudden and earth-shaking to many in leadership positions. Remote work has been increasing year-over-year since the advent of the internet, and will continue to grow. With the Covid pandemic pushing many people into remote work without properly preparing for it, the change accelerated. While these feelings are common, and there are very real changes involved in working remotely or in hybrid teams, there is good news.

The good news is, there have always been leaders who led from a distance, Genghis Khan and Queen Victoria ruled large portions of the planet without the need for a Zoom account. In fact, Julius Caesar was far more successful out in the field. It's when he returned to the home office in Rome that things turned ugly. How were they so successful?

What they knew, and what many leaders forget, is that leading people remotely is more the same

as leading in person than it is different. However, those differences matter and must be addressed. Kevin Eikenberry and I discussed those differences in our 2018 book, *The Long-Distance Leader: Rules for Remarkable Remote Leadership*. The first rule of leading from a distance is 'think leadership first, location second.'

Leading from a distance

That simply means that the role of leader requires the same skills and actions no matter where people are located. *What* we do as managers hasn't changed so much as *how* we do it. We can no longer rely on our own direct observations of behavior. Communication is no longer in-person, and the frequency with which we interact with our teammates is much less and feels far less personal.

In short, even though the job hasn't changed appreciably, it feels very different. This sense of disconnection can lead to a range of undesirable behaviors, from not communicating enough (out of sight and out of mind) to micromanaging in an effort to feel that you're informed and connected.

In 2018, we conducted a survey of leaders

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Over two-thirds of workplace communication now takes place in writing. That requires new ways of collaborating that many experienced managers aren't familiar or comfortable with. As a result, we often engage in behavior that is natural but goes against what we know to be the best practices of leaders.

regarding their approach to remote work. What we found has been borne out since the pandemic by reporting from Bloomberg and others. The higher the position on the organizational chart, the more likely leaders are to be concerned about making remote work successful in their companies.

More senior leaders than front-line-managers have been surprised by the success of working from home. The University of Chicago Booth Business School reported that most workers felt leadership's concerns about whether work would get done, or the quality of that work, are overblown.

One example of how this perception matters is when we asked managers, "How confident are you that people will be productive when working remotely?" Supervisors and managers were very confident, while senior leaders expressed real concerns.

The out-of-sight conundrum

Why do those with the most experience and career success worry about working in these new ways?

Firstly, we draw from our own experience. As leaders, we achieved a certain level of success by networking internally, learning from those

around us, and having access to mentors and leaders. It's hard to imagine anyone else achieving our position working in any other way. It's the way things have always been done.

Secondly, while we need to do all the things leaders have always done to help our people succeed, we are forced to do it in ways that are unfamiliar or uncomfortable to us. Now, work is mediated by technology. For the first time in history, over two-thirds of workplace communication now takes place in writing (email, text, chat messages). That requires new ways of collaborating and productivity that many experienced managers aren't familiar or comfortable with.

As a result of these differences, we often engage in behavior that is natural but goes against what we know to be the best practices of leaders. Because we can't just pop our heads over a cubicle wall to see 'how it's going,' we might resort to more frequent, unexpected check-ins that feel like micromanagement. Where a face-to-face coaching session might be in order, it's easier to send an email or just not give timely feedback until the

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If you do the things good leaders do, while accounting for the challenges of remote work, you'll be successful. It takes awareness, intentionality, and proactivity to overcome the very real limitations remote work puts on leadership.

next scheduled call. And, of course, there's the need to feel connected and thus overschedule people with Zoom meeting after Zoom meeting.

Even in hybrid work situations where some or all of the team may come into a central location occasionally, leaders don't always do the things we know instinctively work. One of the biggest challenges for managers in these situations is proximity bias. While we know we should delegate tasks based on the best person for the job, or the person who needs to develop a particular skill, it's far easier to give that task to the person you see frequently, or who is in your line of sight.

What good leaders do

When we take the time to be intentional about our actions, the proper course of action becomes clear. If the goals are clearly understood and metrics discussed at the beginning of a project, you will get the information you need while giving workers the space to be productive (without feeling micromanaged). When a performance issue is important, knowing that a webcam chat will be more effective than another nagging email will elicit better results.

Post-Covid employee surveys bear out something that should be obvious but surprised many people. Teams that reported high levels of trust with their manager before the pandemic reported the same or higher levels of trust since going remote. Where trust wasn't high, remote work has widened the gap. In short, if you do the things good leaders do, while accounting for the challenges of remote work, you'll be a successful leader.

It takes awareness, intentionality, and proactivity to overcome the very real limitations remote work puts on leadership. The good news is, it's not as radical a shift as many fear. Just think leadership first, and location second.

For references, please go to cxomag.com/article/leadership-first-location-second/



Wayne Turmel is an author, consultant, and co-founder of The Remote Leadership Institute. For 25 years he's been captivated by how people communicate – or don't – at work. He's the author or co-author of 15 books including *The Long-distance Leader: Rules for Remarkable Remote Leadership*.

5 Minutes On...

Protecting Mental Health in a Hybrid World

By Laura Lipponen

People Function, Global Leadership Development & Diversity, Expert Health & Wellbeing, NTT DATA Business



5 Minutes On... the potential of the new, hybrid working environment to create shared purpose, establish a sense of belonging and improve employee wellbeing overall. Additionally, when in-person collaboration is required, what can organizations do to encourage people back into the physical office?

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Employee Wellbeing is the Core of Connected Workplaces

By Laura Lipponen, People Function & Health Management, NTT DATA Business Solutions

Leaders will need to learn to manage wellbeing and the social aspects of team relationships, if they want to successfully build connection and productivity in the workplace of the future.

When the Covid-19 pandemic sent millions of people home to work, essentially overnight and without any real warning or preparation, it ushered in a kind of forced work-life integration. As people set up makeshift offices at kitchen and dining room tables, and as parents tried to juggle work with homeschooling their children, the former delineation between work and home was completely erased. This came with benefits: less time spent commuting, more time spent with family, and more flexibility overall.

Many companies also realized the importance of employee wellbeing, and started to put a variety of interventions in place from online yoga, sports or workout classes to talks on mental health by psychologists and social workers.

But there was a downside to this new way of working too: the lack of connection with colleagues, which is a vital part of cohesion and common purpose, was keenly felt by management and workers alike. It was difficult to build or maintain any kind of company culture when employees were

reduced to talking heads on our computer screens. Now, as there is a partial return to office spaces to varying degrees, companies need to think about how best to integrate the office into the wider work-life ecosystem. And it is an ecosystem: work is no longer confined to the physical office space – it's everywhere. Work and life have moved from being two separate things into a single unified concept.

This means taking care to foster that vital part of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) conversation, which is belonging. As people work from their homes, which are now satellites of the office, it's vital that they still feel like a part of the mothership, and that there are ways for them to connect both with other members of their team, and those they report to.

Building back connection and cohesion

Why is this so important? Because before the pandemic employees connected in casual, almost unconscious ways – the chats on the walk to the canteen, or while waiting for people to arrive for

a meeting, for instance. That just doesn't happen when you're all working in isolation. Moreover, there are people who don't necessarily have the social framework within their private life to cope with this situation, and they are in danger of falling through the cracks. It's important to catch those people, because if they don't get the support they need, they won't be able to perform. Most won't even be able to ask for the support they need.

Thus, as we move into the hybrid working era, team leads will need to recognize much more quickly when a team member is struggling, and provide the necessary support. They must prioritize the social and connectivity aspects of work, both of which are more important than focusing on productivity.

To assist with this, at NTT DATA Business Solutions, our People department conducted – and continues to conduct – employee surveys to check in with our staff on a regular basis, as well as putting several employee resource groups and communities in place to connect them. Since 2020, at our Germany offices, we also run a call every month with our top



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Work is no longer confined to the physical office space – it’s everywhere. Work and life have moved from being two separate things into a single unified concept.

management, where employees can ask questions about the pandemic, fears, challenges of remote work, and so on. We also provide financial support for our employees to set up their home offices and assist with the purchase of desks, chairs, and other essential equipment.

Because what the pandemic has shown us is that people are professional and can perform. They went home, delivered what was expected of them, and kept their companies going – they don’t need to be micromanaged. What they need is support.

Trust, therefore, is a very big issue. People adapted without complaint, very fast, during the lockdowns, proving that they can be trusted, that they know what they’re doing – that they are adults who don’t need to be constantly supervised. But they do need to connect: we are social animals, after all. And that will require some thinking about how to change the structure of offices in order to build that connection.

Repurposing office premises as places to connect

As we navigate the new workplace, we need to accept that things won’t look the way they did in

the past. Offices will be less about working together, and more about connecting, while work takes place at home. We will be using our premises for completely different purposes – for meetings, as a place to cement the company’s culture through team and company events, and for face-to-face engagement when it’s required.

We had a sports event recently where about 200 employees were together, and it was incredible – I still get goosebumps when I think about it. How lovely it was to meet with others, and how important to talk, have a barbecue together, have a beer. You can never recreate that when you’re having a project meeting on Microsoft Teams.

Beyond events, however, it also requires that companies put more emphasis on wellness, and not just by having a wellness day once a year. Just as we offer training on ‘hard’ business skills, we need to train employees in resilience, mental wellbeing, and health – and then take those issues seriously on a daily basis. Wellness must be integrated into the company culture, and be a part of how employees and team leaders relate to one another – it’s putting the ‘human’ back into human resources.

A shared sense of purpose can help people to

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What the pandemic has shown us is that people are professional and can perform. They don’t need to be micromanaged. What they need is support.

connect. We recently held global company runs and cycling events to raise money for Ukraine war survivors, for instance. That takes the event from mere participation to something that creates a larger purpose, something meaningful, and a feeling of togetherness.

A new kind of leadership is required

The challenge is the mindset of the team leads, who must understand that the way they lead has an impact on employee health and wellbeing. Retaining talent is much easier when employees are satisfied, when they want to do their work, and when they know that their health and wellbeing is taken care of.

And this needs to come from above – so many managers and team leads put excessive pressure on their teams to perform and get results, sometimes forgetting that they’re working with human beings, not machines. Besides, even machines undergo some maintenance and service from time to time, and have periods where they are switched off.

We need to ensure that team leads are trained, therefore, to recognize the first symptoms of burnout in their team members, to know when to ask if someone is okay. They need to learn how

to maintain continuous connection with people – to keep the rope loose, in other words, but not to lose hold of it. And to understand that doing so will have far more of a positive impact on productivity than putting undue pressure on people to perform or be constantly available.

Everyone from the top down needs to understand that taking care of your health when you are already ill is too late. As we integrate back into a new way of working, we need to ensure that health and wellbeing are integrated into that model, as part of the way we do business now.

For references, please go to cxomag.com/article/employee-wellbeing-is-the-core/



Laura Lipponen is a health and wellbeing expert, with over 25 years experience at NTT DATA Business Solutions. For the past 11 years she has been fulfilling people functions, including recruitment, health management and occupational work safety.

Why Ethical AI Requires a Human Touch

By Dr Sandrine El Sauaf, Head of Global Leadership Development & Diversity, NTT DATA Business Solutions

Algorithms may be perceived as being an objective way to instill diversity, equity and inclusion in an organization, but AI is by no means exempt from the unconscious biases that human beings exhibit, and we must guard against thinking of AI as a silver bullet. We know that greater diversity leads to greater innovation, but diversity of thought and cultural background is also crucial in driving out biases from AI design.

As we navigate the turbulence of the past few years, many workplaces are grappling with how to design remote and hybrid working so that it works – and in many cases, looking to Artificial Intelligence (AI) for the answers.

AI already has the ability to vastly improve the way we work from home, supporting team communication and collaboration, managing workflow and even playing a role in improving security, and its usefulness is only likely to grow over time.

One example is the important role AI is playing in streamlining HR tasks such as recruiting: shortlisting candidates from an onslaught of resumés, for instance, is extremely time-consuming, and machines can do this in a fraction of the time, and also automate any other manual recruitment tasks.

Of course, the assumption in this example is that algorithms offer the advantage of being much

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Most of us don't believe that we are prejudiced against others. Unlike prejudices, unconscious biases aren't intentional – but they can mean that we miss the opportunity to recognize people's true potential.

more objective than people – and to some extent they are. In many instances, they can even help to support Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) in organizations. But AI is by no means exempt from the unconscious biases that human beings exhibit – something we need to take into account.

Defining unconscious bias

What is unconscious bias? It's a subconscious pattern of thinking that has been socialized into us – something we all have, and as the name suggests, are not aware of. Yet these biases have enormous impact – we don't realize that all day, in multiple encounters, we are stereotyping people automatically without considering whether our assumptions about them are correct.

In fact, when those incorrect assumptions are pointed out, we may be shocked because most of us don't believe that we are prejudiced against others.

But unlike prejudices, unconscious biases aren't intentional – we've just internalized them over many years, thanks to our upbringing and other forms of socialization. They might be gender or age specific, or relate to names, appearances or culture – and those are just a few examples. But whatever form they take, they can mean that we miss the opportunity to recognize people's true potential.

So why would AI be biased too? Because it relies on the data that people feed it. And they bring their biases with them.

How AI bias shows up

There are some simple examples of how this plays out. In 2015, for instance, a University of Washington study searched for different occupations and looked at the percentages of women who appeared in the top 100 Google image search results, compared with how many women actually worked in those fields.

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We need to be aware of who is controlling the narrative in our workspaces in general – but also more specifically when we are harnessing the power of AI to streamline processes. This means that even when we’re trying to foster greater DEI using AI, we need to be aware of diversity.

The results were telling: in a Google image search for “CEO”, 11% percent depicted women, whereas 27% of US CEOs are women. In addition, 25% depicted authors as women, versus 56% in reality, and 64% of the telemarketers were female, while the actual gender divide is 50:50. Google promised to fix the problem, but a 2022 update shows these discrepancies have been only partially rectified.

Examples like this are common – from facial analysis programs that discriminate against patients with darker skin to exam-scoring algorithms that downgrade the scores of disadvantaged students, you don’t need to look far to find examples. So AI has a role to play, but it needs to be used with great care.

We need to be aware of who is controlling the narrative in our workspaces in general – but also more specifically when we are harnessing the power of AI to streamline workplace processes. This means that even when we’re trying to foster greater DEI using AI, we need to be aware of diversity among the teams designing those processes, because it makes a difference. A study presented at the 2020 NeurIPS machine learning conference concluded

that biased predictions are mostly caused by imbalanced data, but that the demographics of engineers also play a role.

We already know that a more diverse workforce is important for greater innovation and creativity, for greater opportunities for professional growth, and for better decision-making. But diversity in the teams designing the AI underpinning future workplace processes will also help to keep it less biased, and ensure organizations achieve their DEI goals.

Fostering awareness

It also needs to remain a topic of conversation in organizations, so we ensure employees are constantly made aware of unconscious bias. But it needs to be discussed in a way that is open and easy – because people tend to get offended when you tell them they’re biased! This requires that we normalize it as a concept – and help employees to understand that it’s a universal human trait.

To do so will require ongoing training and awareness-building. In our organization, for instance, which is spread across 30 countries, we

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Most of us are unaware of our unconscious thinking patterns – as long as we are not affected by them. But those who bear the brunt of these biases can be severely disadvantaged. We still need to use our human judgment to ensure that AI-supported decision-making is as fair as possible.

have set this up globally, and connect discussion with special days such as International Women’s Day. We’ll have a keynote that employees can listen to and discuss afterwards.

We also need to do concerted training of leaders on diversity, so that they can recognize those biases both in themselves and within their teams. When you’re dealing with a multinational company, intercultural training can be very useful, for instance. But even within a single country there are usually a variety of cultures – we all need to be sensitive to that, and to the other kinds of discrimination that may arise.

Most of us are unaware of our unconscious thinking patterns – as long as we are not affected by them. But those who bear the brunt of these biases can be severely disadvantaged when bias becomes the breeding ground for decisions that lead to discrimination or preferential treatment of employees. This will, in turn, have a detrimental effect on their performance.

AI may help to reduce levels of bias, but we must guard against thinking it’s a silver bullet, and find

ways to define and measure fairness. And while AI is in the process of being refined and improved, we will still need to use our human judgment to ensure that AI-supported decision-making is as fair as possible.

For references, please go to cxomag.com/article/why-ethical-ai-requires-a-human-touch/



Dr. Sandrine El Sauaf is Head of Global Leadership Development & Diversity for NTT DATA Business Solutions. Here she combines her passion for leadership and diversity topics. She has a PhD in International Management and Global Economics

from the University of Osnabrück and wrote her thesis on the impact of culture on leadership and negotiations.

Looking Back to Get Ahead

By Gethin Nadin, Award-winning psychologist and author of *A World of Good: Lessons from Around the World in Improving the Employee Experience*

Looking back has always been a crucial part of moving forwards. Understanding the history of the workplace can help business leaders to accelerate their path to success in the future. The best advice for delivering a great employee experience, that will attract and retain the best people, is hidden in our past.

In 2017, when I published my first book, *A World of Good: Lessons From Around the World in Improving the Employee Experience*, I had no idea that a few years later a global pandemic would force thousands of organizations to adopt the changes I had suggested.

By late 2021, the book was being discussed as part of a book club run by a consultancy in New York. The first question the club asked me was, “Your book was written pre-pandemic. Knowing what you know now, what would you change in the book for a post-pandemic workforce?” I pondered that question for a moment – and responded with “nothing”. You see my book was created on the premise that all over the world, and throughout history, the lessons we needed to learn for the modern workforce were already there. For over a century, different cultures and countries have held the secret to how leaders in 2022 can build the workplace of the future, connect more to their people and be more successful.

From the research for my first book, there are two critical elements that I believe the world has taught us that can help us to build more successful and resilient organizations. They come from Africa and Denmark.

Ubuntu: invest in bringing your people together

Ubuntu comes from the Nguni Bantu term meaning ‘humanity’. Its origins are in the African phrases, ‘Motho ke motho ka batho ba bangwe’ (‘A person is a person through other persons’) and ‘Umuntu gaunt ngabantu’ (‘I am because we are; we are because I am’). In modern terms, it is used to refer to the idea that we are who we are because of other people. Ubuntu is about building relationships that focus on the whole, whether that is a local community, family, or indeed a team at work.

Head of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Archbishop Desmond

Tutu, is credited with bringing this ancient term into the 20th century and into the Western world. Tutu used the principles of Ubuntu to help bring harmony to Africa, and even Nelson Mandela adopted its principles when he established his new Government in 1994. In the workplace, the application of Ubuntu can help organizations to tackle a new and growing problem: how they bridge the physical gaps between their people in a hybrid world.

There is a growing body of evidence that shows when all the elements of community come together in a positive way, the impact on the individual and the organization is significant. Studies have found that when community in the workplace increases, so does financial performance, customer service and productivity. Better communities at work also directly correlate with overall employee life satisfaction and mental health. The more opportunities employees have to talk and socialize



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When community in the workplace increases, so does financial performance, customer service and productivity. The more opportunities employees have to socialize, the better they do, and the better the organization does.

with their colleagues, the better they do, and the better the organization does.

A few years ago in the small Minnesota city of Albert Lea, 18,000 residents were part of a community experiment. Residents were encouraged to exercise together, volunteer and contribute to meetings with local leaders. The impact of this investment in the community was huge. The average resident increased their life expectancy by three years, and key employers in Albert Lee saw a reduction in absenteeism by 21% and a decrease in health care costs by a massive 40%.

The big challenge here is balancing what we know is good for people and our workplace with the needs of the individual. While more home and remote working may enable employees to save money and better balance their home lives, it's still important we find ways to bring our people together frequently. This means understanding the needs of our employees better so we can remove any barriers to them successfully spending time with one another.

Trust: be more transparent with your people

In Denmark, employees appear to have more trust at work than anywhere else in the world. Author of *How to Live in Denmark*, Kay Xander Mellish says, “Trust is the basis of Danish society”. Employees are just expected to complete their work – when

and where they get it done isn't important. Pre-pandemic and the advent of mass home working, this level of trust meant that employees could frequently work from home or leave early. This had huge benefits to work-life balance and consequently, Denmark has some of the highest employee satisfaction statistics in the world.

Studies into wide-scale traumatic events like the Wall Street Crash, World War II and 9/11 also show that among the four universal basic needs people need from their employer at times of crisis, trust is number one. As we recover from the latest crisis and prepare for new ways of working, it's critical for employers to sustain the trust that was created during the Covid-19 pandemic and build an employee experience founded on it.

When the pandemic first broke out, many companies shuddered at the prospect of having to trust their employees and allow them to work ‘behind closed doors’. According to newspaper reports, many employers spied on their people and bought hidden software to track them. But as the pandemic raged on, the way we worked began to change forever. More than half of employees felt their colleagues were more productive than usual, and 90% of companies say they believe their culture improved during Covid-19. The pandemic forced employers to do something the most successful organizations had already grasped – they had to trust their people.

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As the pandemic raged on, the way we worked began to change forever. More than half of employees felt their colleagues were more productive.

Community: the benefits of togetherness and trust

When we compare those organizations with a low trust in their employees to those with high trust, we can see a significant difference. Those organizations who trust their employees show 74% less employee stress, 50% higher productivity, 13% fewer sick days, 76% higher employee engagement and 40% less burnout.

Trust forms the foundation of any successful relationship. It's one of the most critical issues in human behavior and heavily influences our lives. When we trust our people to work in a way that works best for them, we are giving them autonomy and control – two very important parts of happiness and wellbeing. Organizational trust has now become so vital for building successful workplace cultures that for most employees, the quality of that culture is now more important than pay.

If we aren't letting and empowering our people to make choices of when and how they work, we are saying we don't have trust in them. So why did we hire them in the first place? For all the benefits flexible working has shown to employees and employers these last few years, none of it could have happened without trust. There are very strong links between community and trust. Where social trust in society is higher, there are fewer suicides and fewer traffic fatalities. In a trusting organization, employees build more of the

social capital we now know is so important to future success. The effect is so strong that country-level social capital is now a stronger determinant of our wellbeing than our income.

Trust is higher in our organizations now than it was before the pandemic and we must make sure that doesn't change. This means addressing inequalities, building more empathetic and egalitarian workplaces, and creating opportunities for our people to connect. History tells us that doing so will not only create greater workplace cultures, but organizations that are on a much more worthwhile and successful route to profit.

For references, please go to cxomag.com/article/looking-back-to-get-ahead/



Gethin Nadin is an award-winning psychologist and bestselling HR author who has been helping some of the world's biggest brands with their employee experience strategies for more than two decades. He has been featured in *Forbes*, *The Guardian* and *The Huffington Post*, and he is frequently listed as one of the world's top Employee Experience and HR influencers.

Building Gentelligent Cultures for the Future of Work

By Megan Gerhardt, Professor of Leadership at Miami University and author of *Gentelligence: The Revolutionary Approach to Leading an Intergenerational Workforce*

Within every organization today, there is an untapped source of advantage, one we all possess but almost no-one is using well: the potential of age diversity. Intergenerational collaborations tap into the different expertise that stems from growing up in different periods of history. To get away from the notion that teams made up of multiple generations will suffer from miscommunication and conflict, leaders must create organizational cultures where generational differences are reframed as a source of strength and opportunity.

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Intergenerational teams can experience conflict, frustration and miscommunication. Yet with a proactive leadership strategy and a climate that appreciates and supports these differences, those adverse effects can not only be neutralized but turned into a source of competitive advantage.

“Gentelligence pushes back on the idea of generational competition, replacing it with the idea that people of all ages can benefit from the potential of intergenerational power. The perspective of seeing other generations as a threat is not new. These tensions have been around so long that many leaders have accepted them as normal, assuming nothing can be done to ease them. With an escalation in the speed of change and the increase in global competition, the cost of this tension is now greater than ever before. Ignoring this conflict negatively affects key business outcomes, including attracting the best talent, developing diverse teams, filling the leadership pipeline, and creating adaptable cultures for the future of work.”

– Extract from *Gentelligence: The Revolutionary Approach to Leading an Intergenerational Workforce*.

The future of work is one of those obscure concepts that seem distant and removed from what we need to think about today. Yet we are deciding the future of work right now.

The pandemic has fundamentally reset any preconceived notions we may have had about how things had to be and has left us a blank slate about what work could be. Yet, despite all the significant changes afoot, one thing remains true: whether an organization will thrive depends

almost entirely on the decisions they make about its talent and its workforce.

Gentelligence: the missed opportunity

In every organization today, there is a source of hidden potential: one we all possess but almost no one is utilizing well. It's the potential of intergenerational and age diversity. Interestingly, most organizations view generational differences as nothing more than an annoyance, giving them surface-level attention if they give them any. Strangely, age diversity is rarely included in diversity and inclusion strategies, even though every organization has it.

Yet, there lies one of the most critical opportunities for the future of work: the potential to create powerful intergenerational collaborations. Such collaborations tap into the different areas of expertise that stem from growing up in different periods of history. This is what we call Gentelligence.

Left to their own devices, research shows intergenerational teams will not likely be powerful or wise. They will instead experience conflict, frustration and miscommunication. Yet with a proactive leadership strategy and a climate that appreciates and supports these differences, those adverse effects can not only be neutralized but turned into a source of competitive advantage. Well-managed intergenerational teams can tap

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Through intergenerational learning, all participants are given a chance to teach and to learn, growing their skills while impacting wisdom on the other party. The benefits are spread out, allowing each generation to gain without anyone losing.

into different informational networks and merge complementary skills and abilities inherent to other generations.

We need a strategy to help us create organizational cultures where generational differences are reframed as a source of strength and opportunity rather than one of frustration and threat. Gentelligence is that strategy.

Building Gentelligent cultures

To create Gentelligent places to work, companies must focus on the three levels of organizational culture: their artifacts (what they see and do), their espoused values (what we say), and their underlying assumptions (what they truly believe). Each of these levels must support the normalizing of intergenerational learning and collaboration. In other words, at all levels, we must authentically think, speak, and show that we believe generational diversity is valuable and essential.

In our book *Gentelligence: A Revolutionary Approach to Building an Intergenerational Workforce*, we share the following advice on how to build Gentelligent layers of culture from the ground up (excerpted).

Artifacts: what we see and do

Most existing efforts to transform organizational cultures to appeal to multiple generations focus

exclusively on the layer of artifacts. For example, organizations tend to invest in surface-level, visible improvements rather than focusing on the more challenging, more in-depth aspects of their corporate cultures to catch the attention of the newest and youngest job seekers.

While people generally love the idea of perks like free food and game rooms, our research shows this is one of the most minor enticing factors for keeping professionals at their current companies. Instead, people would much rather see their company focusing on benefits like learning and development programs that are open to all ages, philanthropic opportunities that can bring different age employees together for meaningful purpose, and return-to-work schedules that prioritize opportunities for different age colleagues to be in the office together.

Espoused values: what we say

To build Gentelligent workplaces, we suggest building a generationally aligned set of shared values and setting a bold goal for a company's intergenerational collaborations. To inspire action, an organization needs a substantive, aspirational target to envision what is possible. Since so few organizations currently promote a Gentelligent culture, we use the term aspirational intentionally to capture the need to work collectively toward a desired future rather than being content with the current reality. For an organization

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to build this culture, it must set a goal that focuses attention and energy on valuing, appreciating, and leveraging perspectives of all generations.

Underlying assumptions: what we believe

Managers must ask what beliefs their organizations cling to surrounding age diversity and expectations, encouraging (and incentivizing) leaders and employees to identify existing practices and norms that are not generationally inclusive. Nothing should be sacred, even (or especially) practices that represent company tradition and established protocol. By enlisting people of all ages and career stages in this critical review, companies will likely uncover embedded beliefs that obstruct or limit intergenerational potential. Such roadblocks can be lurking in a company’s hiring, decision-making, and ongoing learning processes. A great starting point asks, “What around here isn’t Gentelligent?”

Research has shown that intergenerational learning benefits its participants, regardless of age, by developing strong positive relationships between the generations and furthering cohesion and social inclusion between the generations. Through intergenerational learning, all participants are given a chance to teach and to learn, growing their skills while imparting wisdom on the other party. The benefits are spread out, allowing each

generation to gain without anyone losing. Worldwide, we are currently experiencing a fundamental shift in how we work, where we work, and when we work, and many of us are also revisiting the question of why we work. Work with meaning and purpose, and workplaces where we feel appreciated and seen for the unique value we bring (including age and generation) are more critical now than ever.

For references, please go to cxomag.com/article/building-gentelligent-cultures/



Megan W. Gerhardt, Ph.D. is a Professor of Management and Leadership at the Farmer School of Business at Miami University, where she also serves as Director of Leadership Development for the Farmer School and the Robert D. Johnson Co-Director of the Isaac & Oxley

Center for Business Leadership. Megan has published widely on generational differences in the workplace and is author of the book *Gentelligence: A Revolutionary Approach to Leading an Intergenerational Workforce*. Her Gentelligence work has been featured in Harvard Business Review, NBCNews.com, The Washington Post, The Chicago Tribune, The San Francisco Chronicle, MarketWatch, The Houston Chronicle, and Inc. Magazine, among others. In 2017, her TEDx talk “Why I Love Millennials...and You Should, Too” was released. Dr. Gerhardt’s work focuses on leveraging differences to achieve impact and extraordinary levels of performance.

In Depth

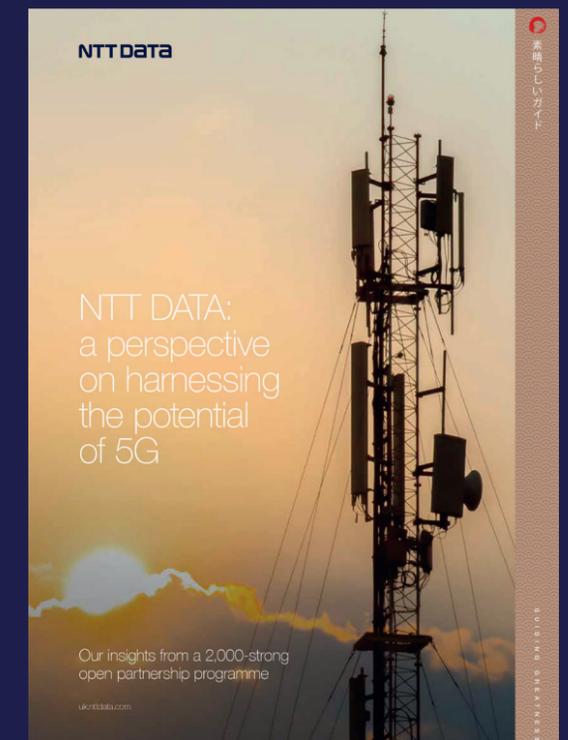
NTT DATA takes a deeper look into critical areas of business trust.



A Perspective on Harnessing the Potential of 5G

The advent of 5G networks has caused a great debate within the global telecommunications sector. The new generation of wireless networks is viewed as a savior by some, set to transform the industry back into a growth engine; to others, it looks to be another huge capital expenditure with an uncertain use case. For 5G to reach its full potential of becoming a significant revenue source, carriers need to adopt an ‘outside in’ approach to innovation.

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Inclusion and Diversity Matter, and Here's Why

By Stephen Frost, Diversity, inclusion and leadership expert, and CEO and founder of Included

Leaders today face a bewildering amount of change and uncertainty. They are expected to guide others, even when they themselves are unsure of the way forward. Yet diversity, which is often perceived as a problem, is actually a free resource to help leaders to de-risk and calibrate their decision-making.

Diversity is a reality. No two people are the same. Besides race and gender, there's cognitive difference, social background, and so much more – diversity is infinite.

Yet diversity alone isn't the debate. It's including that diversity that matters to performance. And it's leaders who disproportionately choose whether to include (or exclude), often based on their own biased or flawed decision-making.

It's ironic that leaders who could most benefit from greater diversity around them are often the ones least likely to embrace it. I say this based on more than 20 years in the field, working with thousands of executives worldwide. It's usually not malicious; simply ignorant. If we don't consciously include, we unconsciously exclude. And when our minds are full, we rely on heuristics – cognitive shortcuts – to aid us in our decision-making. Inclusion is often based on what school you went to, whether you drink alcohol, your sense of humor, even your accent. This isn't merit based.





The leadership challenge is to make the best possible decisions based on valid criteria. To surround yourself with diverse talent based on skill, rather than on lazy assumption. How can we best do that?

Difference matters

There are three changes leaders need to face, where inclusion can help. Where we work is changing – globally and locally – with the proliferation of hybrid working. When we work is also changing, enabled by technology and lifestyle changes. And who is working is also changing: we now have a truly multigenerational workforce. The where, when and who intersect to produce catalytic changes that challenge leaders every day.

Rather than try and control this change, the most successful leaders adapt to it. They are appropriately vulnerable about it, and solicit partners. The worst ones are defensive, or in denial. The reality is that whilst many leaders are brilliant, none are brilliant enough. No-one can have all the answers, and the more we are able to

be humble (whilst still exuding confidence in the vision), the more we are likely to plug our blind spots, upskill our education level, and make more de-risked and accurate decisions.

Much of the current discombobulation comes from new technology (which is changing faster than we can adapt), social movements (think Black Lives Matter, which caught many leaders and companies unprepared), environmental and ethical challenges, and employee activism. And that's before we've mentioned the pandemic, hybrid working and media influence.

The world has changed. It's now not about whether leadership should also change, but how quickly it can adapt. Including diversity then becomes a question of not "Should I?", but "How can I not?"

The changing role of leadership

To cope with the changing where, when and who, we need to change how we lead. We need a new toolbox that probably didn't feature in the MBA module you thought had prepared you. Take heart, because many of these skills are very human and

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The more we are able to be humble (whilst still exuding confidence in the vision), the more we are likely to plug our blind spots, upskill our education level, and make more accurate decisions.

you may well have them already.

The World Economic Forum future skills report lists four kinds of skills required:

- Problem-solving (such as creativity and initiative);
- Self-management (such as resilience and flexibility);
- Working with people (leadership and social influence), and;
- Technological skills (50% of us will need to upskill by 2025).

We need to adapt to stay ahead of clients, otherwise what value do we add? KPMG realized the class, gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation of its staff weren't representative of the make-up of wider society, or its client base. This was an unsustainable position for an advisory firm. So, having modeled its future diversity against the market, it addressed hiring, promotion, and retention issues.

Besides demographic change, what about cultural change? How do firms stay ahead of employee activism? Being passive in the midst of

massive social change is no longer neutral. Disney demonstrated the impact of a well-considered point of view. Stances on gay marriage and trans bathrooms have offended some of their client base, but won over their employees who kept the company successful. Being intentional delivered Disney a cost-benefit that was overall positive.

Some of us have never had to adapt. Some have always had to. But whether we want to or need to, all of us now have to.

How to adapt

If your workforce is not yet connected, it will soon need to be. Collaboration, alongside supporting infrastructure, is the only way to innovate at the pace current change requires. Meeting diverse workers' needs will cease to be a luxury, and simply how good leaders lead.

First of all, create a culture people want to be part of. This depends on psychological safety and wellbeing, of which your behavior is often the biggest influence. A recent study showed that new ideas flourish when people felt their leaders cared about them. More than four times as many

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Disney demonstrated the impact of a well-considered point of view. Stances on gay marriage and trans bathrooms have offended some of their client base, but won over their employees who kept the company successful.

employees (61% compared to 13%) report feeling more innovative with empathetic leadership than those without.

Second, hire more diverse talent. Millennials have often dominated discussions, but they are comparable in an increasingly diverse workforce to Generation X (both at circa 35%). A growing Generation Z makes up more than 20% and will only continue to offset the declining Baby Boomer and Post-War generations. For disabled people, the employment rate in the UK was 53% in Q2 2021, compared with 81% for non-disabled people, an overall increase of nine percentage points since Q2 2013, but with definite room for improvement.

Third, promote more diverse talent. Promoting underrepresented talent matters. The likelihood of financial outperformance between the bottom and top quartile for gender diverse executive teams widened from 15% in 2014 to 25% in 2019. This extends to 36% when viewing ethnic diversity.

If this still seems a tall order, focus on the platinum rule: rather than treating others the way you would like to be treated (the golden rule), treat others as they wish to be treated. Different employees have different needs when it comes to communication, the environment that allows

them to produce their best work, and their interactions with others. As a leader, adjusting your management style according to individual traits and preferences is incredibly valuable: adapting to someone else makes them feel they belong, and is great professional development for you.

For references, please go to cxomag.com/article/inclusion-and-diversity-matter/



Stephen Frost is a globally recognised diversity, inclusion and leadership expert, and founded Included, the global diversity and inclusion consultancy. From 2007-2012 Stephen designed, led and implemented the inclusion programmes for the London Olympic and Paralympic Games as Head of Diversity and Inclusion for the London Organising Committee. From 2004-2007 Stephen established and led the workplace team at Stonewall. Stephen has also led D&I at KPMG and worked in advertising and consulting. He is author of *The Inclusion Imperative*, *Inclusive Talent Management* and *Building an Inclusive Organization*, and the editor of *The Key to Inclusion*.

5 Minutes On...

The Relationship Between Technology and Inclusion

By Stephen Frost
 CEO, Included



5 Minutes On... how inclusion can truly fulfill its potential as an unassailable route to innovation, why we need to go outside our comfort zone and include people who are as different from us as we can handle, and the risks and opportunities leaders should look out for when it comes to technology.

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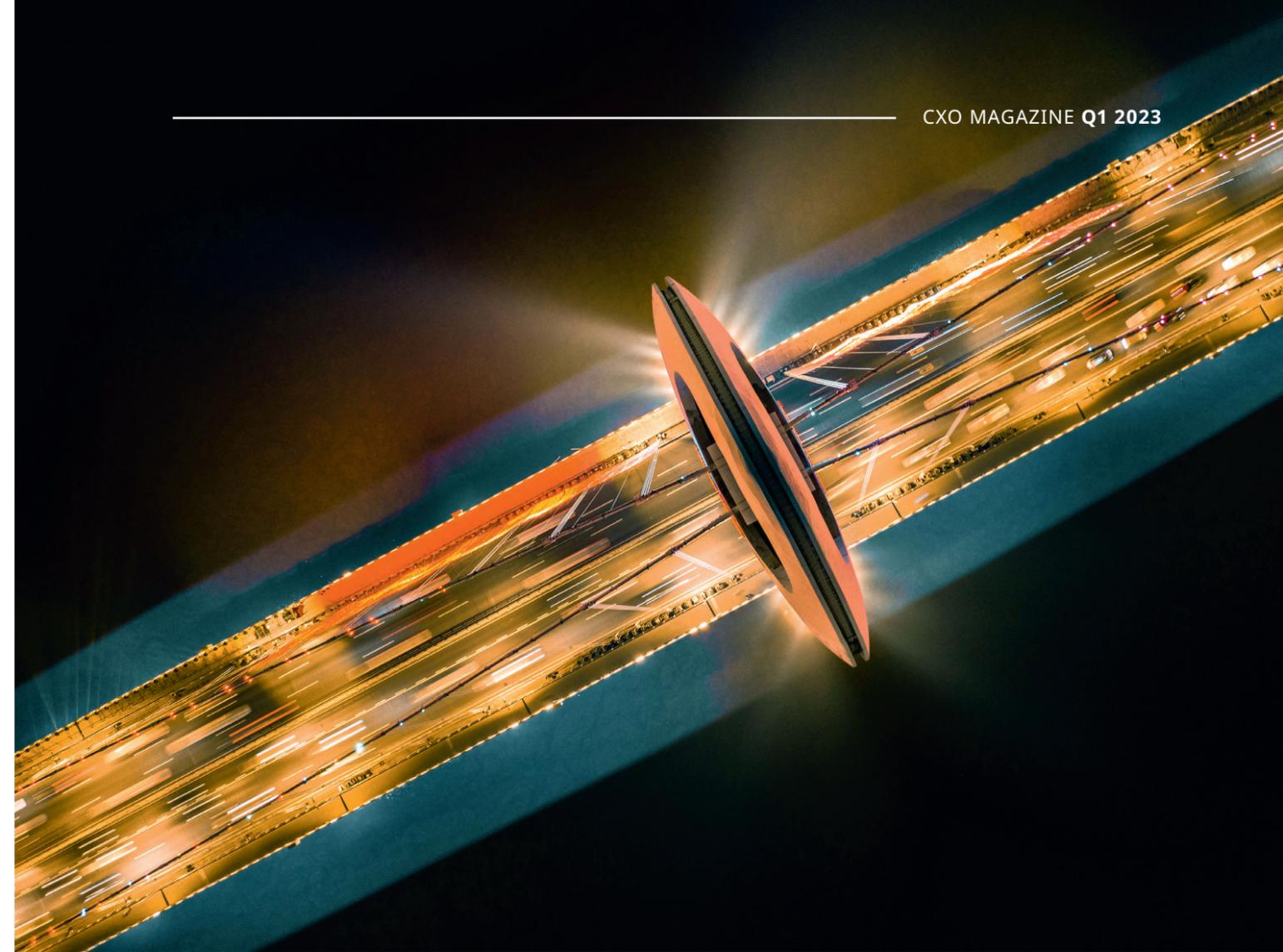


New Work: Is the Great Resignation Finally Making Us Think Differently?

By Dr. Johanna Bath, Hybrid work advisor and founder and CEO of Talentista Now

Few companies have fully grasped the reality of today's New Work challenges. The majority seem content to wait and see – but this complacency could mean the difference between moving ahead and lagging behind. There is a lot at stake, and to make a success of the new world of work leaders need to move on from technology and team leadership and focus on strategy at a higher level.

The concept of New Work is enjoying a renaissance. This is largely thanks to two factors operating in parallel. Digitalization means job roles have been radically reviewed and the pandemic has caused massive disruption to all our lives. This confluence of strands has, for some, meant making big decisions. The Great Resignation saw a record 4.5 million US workers quit in March 2022, for example. Looking at the information sector in more depth, you can argue drivers behind poor staff retention actually predate COVID-19 by years, if not decades. Factors include ineffective school and university training, insufficient entry-level jobs and Baby Boomers leaving employment. Seventy-five percent of those born before 1964, for example, now plan to retire early. A new working model feels urgent and well overdue.



The history of New Work

Remote working was first discussed seriously 50 years ago. The terms “telecommuting” and “telework” were first coined by NASA scientist Jack Nilles in 1973. IBM was piloting home working by 1979 and there have been many other progressive models since. The pandemic undoubtedly acted as a catalyst and accelerant, but wider acceptance hasn't come out of the blue.

Given this momentum, why am I concerned with progress? Much of the New Work discourse is centered around the digital workplace. The speed and efficiency with which we adopted MS Teams and equivalent technology to mimic office-based calls, email management and meetings was incredibly impressive. In fact, it prompted many to ask why we hadn't done it sooner.

The answer seems to be a reluctance to tackle wider cultural questions and change our mindsets. Even now, these seem to be largely unexplored. Why? We know fundamental change is difficult. Fulfilling the genuine potential of New Work will need time, effort and strong committed leadership.

New leadership

It's perhaps a given that the 'mode of work' in a healthy organization needs to support its strategic goals. For example, if you have big headcount growth targets, the efficiency of remote hiring and inducting might be a big help to you. The first task of any leader is to understand that such connections exist and to champion them. Your employees will feel more connected if they understand this too. They need to know your goals and what they

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Often authoritative styles of leadership stem from perception gaps. Management often sees things either too optimistically or too pessimistically.

are expected to do to contribute. Importantly, the method of contribution matters to them too. A workplace where the “how” is mismatched with the “what and why” is unlikely to fully succeed.

In this context, leaders have to understand that strict top-down approaches are unhelpful. Often authoritative styles of leadership stem from perception gaps. Management often sees things either too optimistically or too pessimistically. Both these misjudgements bring dangers. When considering New Work, it’s important to use data analytics to provide an accurate reality check before making big decisions.

The new office

Many seem to have invested in their office spaces to attract staff back. Düsseldorf has seen a healthy increase of 36% in office space uptake in Q1 2022 for example. The truth is, however, that mixed activities such as email management, meetings and focus work can now be done wherever employees wish. It’s hard to see the attraction of an open-plan office, however well-equipped.

This is because employees are planning their days based on a new, firmer understanding of their needs. What draws them from home to an office setting is typically one of two needs:

1. To be immersed amongst other people for workshops, one-to-one meetings or collaborative projects.
2. To focus without the interruptions that come with remote work such as domestic responsibilities.

Existing offices are typically not well placed to support either of these scenarios. Success will only come from fundamentally rethinking access, spaces and facilities.

New teamwork

New Work is forcing many companies to revisit their strategy and think hard and fast about their core offering. Companies tend to want to be all things at once – the quickest, the most innovative and the one with the best quality. This is virtually impossible to deliver because it requires values that may contradict each other. If time and budget allow, yes, high-quality innovation can be delivered speedily, but what about the real world?

Organizational values provide most guidance when teams must make difficult decisions. New Work, with its disconnected communication, can make it easy to avoid awkward conversations around implementing changes that might hurt. Fostering collaboration in difficult times remains a key management responsibility whatever

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Adapting to broad new freedoms, where anything becomes possible, leads to stress and decision fatigue. New Work, counter-intuitively, might mean your employees welcome firmer guidance from you as an employer.

communication tools you adopt.

Moving discussions on from the micro-level of individual one-to-one issues will help. Too often, direct supervisors are asked to call all the shots around their reports. Far from making life easier, adapting to broad new freedoms, where anything becomes possible, leads to stress and decision fatigue. At the height of lockdown, for example, 32% of US adults struggled to make even the simplest of choices. New Work, counter-intuitively, might mean your employees welcome less freedom and firmer guidance from you as an employer.

Meeting the challenge of New Work

Post-pandemic it seems small team units have largely become good at organizing themselves remotely in any case. It is connecting cross-functionally and supporting internal customers that seems to have become more challenging. Having survived the initial phase of change with technology fixes, leadership now needs to invest time and effort at higher organizational levels than optimizing their nuclear teams.

One size will definitely not fit all. Much of the talk about New Work seems to be a search for the right formula. Which is better? Two days in the office and three days remote working? Or vice-versa?

The work, unfortunately, is harder than that. The right balance of time, tools, techniques and strategies will be unique to your organization.

If the threat of The Great Resignation is hanging over you, you will only succeed in keeping people if you invest in a new, tailored world of work for your employees. This means rethinking leadership, communication and collaboration alongside infrastructure. And time is pressing. Why wait?

For references, please go to cxomag.com/article/great-resignation-think/



Dr. Johanna Bath is both a business school professor and start-up founder, and has previously worked as a manager in the consulting and automotive industries. Her vision is to make organizations more knowledgeable on the factors

that positively drive employee performance by being data-driven and human-centric at the same time.

How Data Can Enhance the In-Office Employee Experience

By Eduardo Tarasca, Product Marketing Director, NTT Smart World

In a world where talent is demanding flexibility and employers want connection, data can provide the answer. Using the data you already have available in your office building can help you both to maximize resources, and make the office attractive to employees.

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One way to deal with reluctant returners is to make the office attractive again. And it's here that data can provide the answer.

While remote work is becoming the norm for many employees and companies – especially in the tech space – offices continue to be seen as important places to collaborate, connect, innovate and break the routine.

In sectors where employees are able to work from home, the last few years have seen many employees embracing the increased flexibility, enhanced connection with family and less time spent commuting that the pandemic brought. Many are pushing back against returning to the office, especially in situations where employers are insisting that everyone return to a Monday to Friday, nine-to-five proposition.

At the same time, there is recognition that there is value in meeting colleagues and clients face to face in certain instances, which means companies are having to find ways of working that allow both flexibility and time for in-person interaction – a situation that requires some creative thinking, and a level of comfort with fluidity.

One way to deal with reluctant returners is to make the office attractive again – attractive to people who are used to flexibility and their creature comforts. And it's here that data can provide the answer: to make going to the office a pleasant

experience that both attracts and retains talent, and which makes employees feel secure, comfortable and prioritized.

Responding to evidence rather than instinct

In the past, decisions were made on visible information and instinct. However, now, with the abundance of data we have from a myriad of sources, we can have access to insights that either reaffirm or contradict our instincts with evidence and create the best possible environment for employees.

Data helps to create indices so we can understand what's happening in a particular environment, and generate insights, predictions and recommendations that can help us to create improvements and provide a better experience all round.

For example, related to offices and buildings, there are two indices that can be created from the available data.

- **Quality of stay:** An index that measures the experience, comfort, sustainability and productivity within an environment. This index can answer questions related to the different senses such as: is the place too crowded? (occupancy level), is it too loud? (noise

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Data is also very relevant for building management teams so they can optimize energy consumption, schedule services, adjust temperature – in essence, provide a better, more inclusive and more sustainable experience for all employees.

level), and are the temperature and humidity comfortable? (environmental conditions).

- **Quality of access:** An index that measures access to the environment such as availability of parking, elevators and wait times, communal areas and meeting rooms, availability of public transport and visibility on how crowded it is (would it be better to travel via another route, or at another time?)

This data can be provided directly to employees so they can make the right decisions in terms of whether they go into the office or not, at what time, via which route, where to sit, etc. In addition, it is also very relevant for building management teams so that they can understand and optimize energy consumption based on occupancy, schedule janitorial services accordingly, adjust indoor temperature, and so on. In essence, they can provide a better, more inclusive and sustainable experience for all employees.

Understanding what the data tells you

This will require a new collaboration between operations and human resources – building managers, office managers, everyone who's in

charge of looking at the building and making sure they have visibility around the energy, the occupancy, the flux of people, and so on, will need to analyze the data and once they have done that, work with human resources to implement changes and strategies accordingly.

It's important to look at the data from two perspectives. The first deals more with real-time: what is happening now in the building? How busy is it? How many parking bays are available? How much energy is being consumed?

The second is about correlation and prediction: where creating a model is useful to show how, if you change specific parameters, you can improve the quality of stay or quality of access – and then communicate that to HR. They can then communicate with employees and indicate how they are using the information to improve employee wellbeing and comfort.

Figuring out how to gather the data

Some may be concerned that this will require a huge installation of data-gathering equipment, but many of the sensors required already exist. Most office buildings have security cameras, for example. What's required is to use that information

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Begin with what you already have – how can you access the security footage and the temperature monitoring, for instance, and leverage it for this new purpose?

differently. Offices with air-conditioning systems probably monitor the temperature already – how can you use that data?

If you implement a data strategy, and a data platform, you begin with what you already have – so how can you access the security footage and the temperature monitoring, for instance, and leverage it for this new purpose? How can you apply analytics to it and use the output in the service of employee wellbeing?

These considerations are also important for those planning new office buildings, so that they are planned to be super-smart from day zero, with a variety of environmental sensors that can feed the future occupants the data they need, in much the same way as you would plan now to ensure there are enough charging stations for electric vehicles in future buildings, for instance.

Once you know what data is already available, you may want to add more sensors, but you do need a data strategy – where do we want to start, where do we want to go, what do we want to achieve? Because at the end of the day, you can have all the data you want, but if you don't know how to read that data and correlate the different data sources, it becomes a little dry and pointless.

Getting to grips with smart data

This takes us from pure data to “smart data” – where it is aggregated, correlated, predictive, and helps you to know how to respond or behave to achieve a certain goal.

And what it allows employers to do is to get the most out of their offices – to maximize the space, avoid energy wastage, ensure the right security is in place, and that janitorial services are appropriately allocated. It helps them to allocate scarce resources – human or otherwise. It can even save costs on rental, as there's little point in having office space for a large number of people when only a few are coming in at any one time. Employees, on the other hand, can plan more accurately for a pleasant experience on those days that they need to be physically present to connect with their colleagues or clients.

Data can help employers to change the office so it's not just a line of desks, but a place that is comfortable, collaborative and focused on employee wellness – a kind of hub that fosters authentic connection and boosts productivity as a result.

For references, please go to cxomag.com/article/data-enhance-employee-experience/



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VIDEO

The Future of Healthcare and a Secure 5G Network

By NTT Ltd

Effective healthcare relies on a community of partners to ensure the best outcomes for patients. That's why NTT teamed up with Robert Schuman Hospitals to build a cloud-based healthcare platform that's integrated with a 5G network to enable secure connections and access to vital data.

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Why Now is a Moment That Matters

By Kevin Eikenberry, Thought leader, multiple bestselling author and co-founder of the Remote Leadership Institute

The game has changed. Our role as leaders in this time of unprecedented change is to look outside ourselves – to consider the needs and experiences of our teams, customers and communities. When we do that, we will serve everyone – including ourselves – far better.

There has never been a time where the way we do, and think about, work is changing more than it is right now. The vast experience of working from home – or somewhere other than their previously traditional workplace – has changed how individuals and society see work forever.

While I don't know you, I've worked with hundreds of leaders around the world in your role and with the responsibilities you shoulder. I've heard their concerns and challenges in our increasingly unsettling post-pandemic world of work. Let me share with you a perspective that you can use to your personal, professional and organizational advantage during all this change and uncertainty. Here it is, in short: *Now is a moment that matters.*

Often during seismic change, we don't have the perspective we need; or we view the change as temporary rather than systemic. How you



respond and lead through this time will shape your organization and team, your relationships with those you lead, and even your legacy.

Why now

Perhaps you have made your decision about where and when people will work. That is a fine starting point, but that is far from the finish line. The bigger questions are:

- How is that decision working (both for the organizational results and those doing the work)?
- Do you think you are done thinking about this (and is your team done)?

Technological advances and other factors had been slowly pushing us to a more flexible arrangement and location for work for the past 20 years. Then, with the advent of a virus, we pushed the accelerator of that change to the floorboard,

and in an historical blink of the eye the world of work as we knew it changed forever.

To think that we can deny all of that working experience (both the positive and the challenging parts), and just move back to the “good ol’ days” is both dangerous and misinformed. Why wouldn't we want to take what we have learned over the last two or so years and apply it to how we do work and lead our organizations?

Why it is hard

Even if you agree with what you just read, I know it is hard to think about the change as being this big and this important. There are several reasons why it is hard:

- **You know how to play the old game.** You grew up in a world of work where you learned the rules and played it well – that is how you became a highly placed leader. It is hard to let

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How you respond and lead through this time will shape your organization and team, your relationships with those you lead, and even your legacy.

go of the old rules (especially when you aren't sure you need to) and decide to learn from a new playbook.

- **You get to make the rules.** As a senior leader you may feel you get to make the rules now – you've earned that right – and so why not work and lead the way we always did and you are most comfortable?
- **You idealize the “good ol’ days.”** Trust me, based on our conversations with leaders for the last 20 years, the way we were doing work before Covid wasn't perfect. The further removed from the past we are, the more we think we liked it. This thinking is tempting, but false.
- **Denial seems easier.** In times of massive change, it seems easier to try to weather the storm, assuming the world will return to the past state. You know that isn't going to happen.

Making this a moment that matters

If you want to use this time as a leverage point for the future of your organization, there are several things to think about:

- **Think pilot not policy.** Remember that policies should have expiration dates, especially in times of rapid change and upheaval. Whatever decisions you made about return-to-office, hybrid teams, flexible work schedules and more, are best seen as tests. Keep trying and keep learning.
- **Include the team.** In times of massive change, looking for best practices is shortsighted. The learning is coming too quickly to look at what someone else is doing (whose situation is necessarily different), and assume their approach will solve your challenges. Your best next steps will mostly be found internally, with the help of your team. You do not need to have all the answers, nor should you assume that is your role. Engage people throughout the organization to share their experience and perspective about how your organization will best succeed.
- **Apply the right criteria.** What are the right criteria to determine when, where and how work will be accomplished? They must be defined by looking at the needs of the work,

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You grew up in a world of work where you learned the rules and played it well. It is hard to let go of the old rules (especially when you aren't sure you need to) and decide to learn from a new playbook.

your team members, your customers, and your culture. Maybe that means being in the office most of the time; maybe that means selling your offices. The right decision for you depends on your unique situation. (Be mindful though that these criteria don't include your personal wishes, goals or preferences: keep the focus on the criteria above – that is your job.)

- **Think team design and culture.** What will your teams look like in the future? And what do you (meaning everyone, not just you or the senior leadership team) want the culture to be? In our upcoming book, *The Long-Distance Team*, we encourage you to consider your team design and culture with the three pillars of **communication**, **collaboration**, and **cohesion** – regardless of where and when people will be working.

The big idea

If you think about all you just read, here is the bottom line – we are living in a time of unprecedented change in how we view and will do work in the future, as a society. How we navigate that as leaders has massive implications for our short- and long-term

organizational success, and our ability to retain the great talent to reach those goals.

Our role as leaders in this time is to look outside ourselves: to consider the needs and experiences of our teams, customers and communities. When we do that, we will serve everyone – including ourselves – far better.

For references, please go to cxomag.com/article/why-now-is-a-moment-that-matters/



Kevin Eikenberry is a leadership thought leader, multiple time best-selling author, founder of The Kevin Eikenberry Group, and member of the Forbes Coaches Council.

Effective Change Management for a Resilient Workforce

By Julia Rumpel, Senior Change Management Consultant, NTT DATA DACH

Change management ensures organizations can implement new ways of working, new technologies and new methodologies – as well as cultural and mindset changes – without losing employee traction and engagement. This vital element of project delivery keeps people and productivity on side while shifting business foundations towards the future.



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There should be consistent communication and training, alongside regular bilateral exchanges with affected stakeholders, to address and overcome any misconceptions or problems from the early stages of the project.

Change management, according to the Harvard Business Review, is a complex journey that, two out of three times, ends in failure.

It has been researched, analyzed and unpacked. New methods and insights have been injected into old processes and approaches. And yet, as the saying goes, ‘the more things change, the more they stay the same.’ This is because change management is challenging. It’s more than the sum of its parts, and because change touches so many parts of the organization, orchestrating it must blend the soft, the hard, and the unexpected.

On the soft side, change management digs into leadership, culture, people and engagement. These corners of the business must be smoothed out to ensure change is coherent and consistent. However, there are the harder sides to this process that must be equally considered – metrics, measurables, teams and deadlines. These two sides of the change management coin must be carefully managed to ensure that the end result is less a chaotic banging of drums and more a perfect symphony.

The flow of change

To start with, every company should focus on change elements and intentions, ideally through a workstream dedicated to change management. There should also be a focus on change elements within each project team, to ensure cohesion

throughout the project. This doesn’t have to exclusively be dedicated to organizational change at scale. Instead it should be a considered part of every project and approach to ensure that every investment, tweak, policy change and technology adaptation is understood by everyone, and used optimally.

This defines change management on the general level, where it becomes an elementary component of every transformation across organization, process and tooling, and where its focus is on supporting stakeholders and groups. It smooths the way for those who are most affected by the change and minimizes resistance so there is a psychological acceptance of the transformation from the outset.

To successfully address this layer of change management, there should be consistent communication and training, alongside regular bilateral exchanges with affected stakeholders, to address and overcome any misconceptions or problems from the early stages of the project.

The remote conversation: a challenging new landscape

Of course, one of the biggest changes to hit the business over the past two years has been the radical reinvention of working. Today, thanks to the pandemic, digital transformation and the shifting demands and expectations of employees

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One of the key benefits of remote change is that leaders and teams now have access to new and innovative formats for communication and training that are more flexible, agile and adaptable. This makes them easier to manage and adjust.

and customers, remote and hybrid working have become the norm. This has affected change management on two levels – the fact that change management itself has had to adapt to new ways of engagement and integration, and ensuring that radical operational change is understood by every person within the organization itself.

In the past, change management was reliant on being present, in having personal exchanges with people and ensuring that physical reminders and memos and announcements were publicly displayed throughout the office building. Now, there has been an influx of new methodologies and tools that have emerged to meet the needs of change management professionals and expectations. It has become as exciting for the professional as for the company that they support.

However, there are challenges to remote change management. The first, and perhaps the one challenge that is consistent across many different aspects of the business, is limited personal engagement. It’s difficult to get moods and feedback on change topics that were previously discussed in the kitchen, over coffee or in a casual desk visit. This process must now be managed through active collection for example within change agent communities that are organized remotely and are committed to ensure the messaging gets across effectively.

Another challenge is the loss of some formats that were originally used to deliver relevant information such as posters in the office, live workshops and live training formats. These can be replaced with fresh approaches and methodologies, many of which are still adapting to the new normal. Many, in fact, are hampered by the limitations of virtual meetings and notice boards as more and more people are burned out by longer meetings, a lack of connection, and the burden of remote working.

Finally, people have difficulty with implied understanding as they can’t fully capture facial expressions and gestures, and premature resistance due to limited exchanges and discussions. These factors can lead to transformation inertia, which can stop effective change management in its tracks.

An opportunity for innovative connections

These challenges may seem insurmountable or intensely complex, but they are balanced against immense opportunities within the remote working environment: opportunities that, if handled correctly, can transform change management and how people positively engage with the organization.

One of the key benefits of remote change is that leaders and teams now have access to new and innovative formats for communication and training that are more flexible, agile and adaptable.

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Events, change seminars, notes – everything can be conducted remotely. It also allows for asynchronous information transfer so people can slot their engagement into their own time. This goes a long way towards making people feel included on their terms.

This makes them easier to manage and adjust, fitting into tight schedules and variable working environments. It's important to remember that people want to be informed, they want to know what's happening. If they feel excluded or out of the proverbial loop, then they are less likely to want to engage in the change.

Digital tools allow for incredible reach across all employees in multiple locations, giving them insights and information that have a depth and accessibility unheard of in the past and that can potentially reach all employees in spite of different preferences across communication and collaboration.

Another benefit of digital transformation in this space is that it saves time and money. Events, change seminars, notes – everything can be conducted remotely. It also allows for asynchronous information transfer so people can slot their engagement into their own time. This goes a long way towards easing people into a situation on their terms and making them feel included.

Creating the change conversation of the future

Change management comes in many flavors. It is adaptable. It can scale. And it can be customized

to suit the expectations that are unique to every organization. However, to fully realize its potential and its functionality, it is best enjoyed in a hybrid environment that taps into the best of both worlds – digital and physical. It allows for companies to tap into their culture to create change management strategies that reach people effectively, and that allow for change to filter seamlessly throughout every silo, department, team and stakeholder.

For references, please go to cxomag.com/article/effective-change-management/



After studying Psychology and Management in Munich and International Marketing in Barcelona, **Julia Rumpel** found a passion for change management. Starting full-time work shortly after the Covid-19 pandemic, she was forced to adapt to remote working immediately. She is currently working towards a certificate as a psychological coach outside of her work as a Senior Change Management Consultant for NTT DATA.

CXO
BY NTT DATA



VIDEO

The World's Largest Connected Stadium

By NTT Ltd

Creating a revolutionary fan experience and optimizing race operations is critical to the success of the Tour De France. NTT works with the event's organizers to co-create an innovative, data-driven solution that provides insights to fans and broadcasters, and improves operational efficiency.

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Designing the Future Workplace

By Soumyasanto Sen, Leader in digital strategy, workforce transformation and future of work, and author of Digital HR Strategy

The impact of the pandemic and advancing technologies have made designing the future workplace a complex task. As well as focusing on flexibility and comfort, a good workplace design must support collaboration, interaction and innovation – and have connectivity at its heart. The interoperability and opportunities presented by the metaverse may hold one of the keys to overcoming legacy problems and providing your employees with the best possible experience.

Today's workplace looks vastly different from what we could have imagined just a couple of years ago. New ways of working – fueled by the pandemic, a change in behaviors, and growth of the digital world – demand the right future workplaces for human connection. These are places where employees' senses are being put to work and hold the key to creativity, collaboration and wellness.

In step with the dynamic pace of technological changes organizations are already dealing with, the advent of hybrid working is changing the face of work as we know it, at speed. Therefore, organizations must design spaces that allow for heterogeneity and flexibility wherever possible, and encourage employees to be creative, and honest, about how these spaces can be improved.

After all, workplaces reinforce the organization's culture and facilitate innovation. Understanding the real challenges of employees is crucial in order to design future workplaces that cater to the different user groups in the organization.

The ups and downs of the hybrid workplace

In today's highly technology-enabled workplaces, understanding the complex ways that teams

collaborate in person and remotely is the key to the rightsizing of workplace solutions. In many legacy office spaces, it is common to see a closed, unused private space (for example when an executive is out of the office traveling), while other employees struggle to find places to meet. So, designing new spaces can't resolve all of the challenges; organizations must also inspire new behaviors and shift workplace norms for the better.

In the past two years of the pandemic, we have realized that remote work brings its own challenges. Remote workers were experiencing difficulties separating home and work life, finding it hard to switch off from the daily grind. Virtual workplaces can better differentiate between home and work life, creating the workplace sensation and that of leaving after working hours. Moreover, such workplaces don't need a typical office environment, but rather a flexible location where employees feel comfortable working.

Another aspect people consider while designing modern and future workplaces are the younger generations. Many Millennials and Gen Z grew up with apps and social media that might give them native digital fluency, but this does not mean they don't like to connect physically. Therefore, we

should guard against generalizing about what new generations are interested in.

Workplaces should never serve one age group, gender, race, or other demographic group. A good workplace design must support desired behaviors such as collaboration, social interaction and innovation, taking into account the varying needs of the employee base.

A suitable workplace provides a positive environment and productivity, boosts leadership, and develops trust among colleagues and teams. Working together imparts opportunities to be creative and have more of an experimentation mindset; along with that, employee stress is reduced, proper safety is in place, and engagement is high. It is still possible for people to start making a human connection in this isolated age, where most of our activities are technology-led.

Considerations for the future workplace

Although there is growth in the mobile and remote workforce, the workplace still plays a crucial role in how we experience company culture, establish relationships and resolve business challenges. Based on how different people prefer to work on their daily tasks and the type of workplaces that

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Remote work brings its own challenges. Remote workers were finding it hard to switch off from the daily grind. Virtual workplaces can better differentiate between home and work life, creating the workplace sensation and that of leaving after working hours.

support their work styles, new program and design decisions can be made to better support productivity and cultural effectiveness.

These hybrid workplace trends should be based on the study of behavioral science, organizational design, change management, performance metrics, demographics, and technological advances. The following is an overview of future workplace trends:

- **Attracting top talent** – creating comfortable, appealing workplaces with flexibility and choices for work is an important tactic to recruit and retain top talent.
- **Engagement** – the workplace can engage employees by providing a communication and integration medium that helps recognize individual or team contributions and provides spaces for effective collaboration.
- **Remote working** – employees also work while traveling, in hotels, at customer sites, and at home. So, future workplaces need to be supported with the right technology that allows employees to work effectively from anywhere.
- **Flexible work** – employee engagement becomes relatively high when employees are motivated, which positively impacts flexible work. Workplaces must be flexible enough to support such needs, and activate the disengaged workforce.
- **Activity-based work** – to reduce complexity, workplaces need to be built to help support different work activities through dedicated work areas and facilities.
- **Modern design** – workplaces with modern

design that take into account thermal comfort or air quality, natural light, noise, open spaces and good ergonomics are needed to grow productivity and provide a healthy environment.

- **New technology** – the use of new technologies such as smart desks and boards, intelligent devices and assistants, and virtual team rooms is increasing in the workplace today.
- **Best experience for employees** – for workforces, what matters is the right, relevant experiences with their workplaces. So, the primary purpose of building any workplace should focus on providing the best experiences for them.

Many of these trends provide an opportunity for the growth of digital workplaces that will continue to evolve. Digital workplaces deliver all the tools employees need to accomplish their tasks while breaking down existing silos. A successful digital workplace strategy can have measurable returns, from increasing efficiency and productivity and a more significant level of innovation and collaboration, to reducing security risks, greater talent attraction, improved employer brand, improved employee engagement and retention, reducing cost and providing a better level of services and experiences for customers.

Are immersive experiences the future?

The ongoing hype with the metaverse promises to bring us persistent, decentralized, collaborative, and interoperable opportunities in the new world of work and an immersive experience that

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The metaverse promises to bring us decentralized, collaborative, and interoperable opportunities in the new world of work – that could help enterprises to achieve better connection with their employees through virtually augmented workspaces.

could be unforgettable. That could eventually help enterprises to achieve better engagement, collaboration, and connection with their employees through virtually augmented workspaces.

Organizations that want to hold seats in the early adopters' category can encourage employees to communicate with their colleagues at a virtual training center, visit virtual events, explore employee lounges (which can eventually become a connection point beyond work), relax in wellbeing spaces and build relationships among broader workforces. In addition, employees may create virtual avatars that match their personalities, preferences, and appearance, and immersive experiences can be used to augment and speed up the job application journey for new recruits and candidates.

Together with the experience, there is also an economic reward system for participating in the metaverse, which is, in fact, one of its key differentiators from the existing real world. A robust multi-dimensional reward model based on the economics of cryptocurrency tokens can potentially replace employees' incomes in the physical world. Interoperability within different metaverse worlds is an essential differentiator to overcoming current legacy problems.

Moreover, think about a physical workplace where you work with robots, humanoids and other intelligent machines as co-workers. Our colleagues in the metaverse will not be limited to the avatars of our real-world colleagues. Instead, we will be joined by many digital colleagues, who will be

knowledgeable, AI-powered, human-like bots. These cognitive agents will act as advisors and assistants, doing repetitive high-volume work in the metaverse and freeing up human workers for more productive, creative and value-added tasks.

Creating an effective digital workplace requires all the pieces of digital workplace strategy shaped into perfect order, while understanding the need to facilitate relationships, creativity and wellness. Technology and workplace experience are the key components of the hybrid employee experience, and improving these areas will drive employee satisfaction to the next level.

For references, please go to cxomag.com/article/designing-the-future-workplace/



Soumyasanto Sen is an Advisor and Leader in Digital HR, Workforce Transformation, Technologies and Future of Work. Soumya is also a well-known keynote speaker, and author of the book *Digital HR Strategy: Achieving Sustainable Transformation in the Digital Age*.

The Hybrid Office: A Work in Progress

By Klaus Strack, Managing Director, Business Unit Germany, NTT DATA Business Solutions

As interactions between corporate teams reach the point where virtual is as effective as in-person, the very nature and purpose of the physical office has permanently changed. Hybrid working has proven productive for organizations and rewarding for individuals, and is here to stay. Rather than cling to the past, we must embrace the opportunities of this new post-pandemic business environment – and as such improve speed of decision-making, efficiency of operations and the wellbeing of the entire workforce.

When the world went into lockdown, familiar ways of working were swept away. Physical offices suddenly emptied and organizations had to pivot more quickly than they had ever had to before. From this overhaul of everything we knew about how, when and where we work, opportunities emerged. For both employers and employees, a world of possibilities has opened up.

Since then, businesses have evolved to better manage this strange new environment, with varying degrees of success. Some, like Airbnb, have used lockdown as the catalyst for rejecting the office environment almost entirely and moving to totally remote functionality. But many more have adopted the hybrid model – a flexible blend of in-office, remote, and on-the-go working.

However, with the pandemic (mostly) behind us, organizations are facing a dilemma. Do they embrace remote working permanently, or retrace their steps to the pre-pandemic workplace?

Tesla and Apple are two high-profile companies whose leadership yearn for the ‘good old days’ and have made it very clear to their staff where their future lies: back in the office.

Many in manufacturing, hospitality and retail have kept going out to work, but for service

companies – and the knowledge workers within them – is a return to in-person working at centralized locations really the right thing for them to do?

Who says it's time to go back?

In the past, being in the office made sense because it was the only place where you had access to the tools, data and colleagues you needed to do your job. With this no longer the case, does in-office working make sense today?

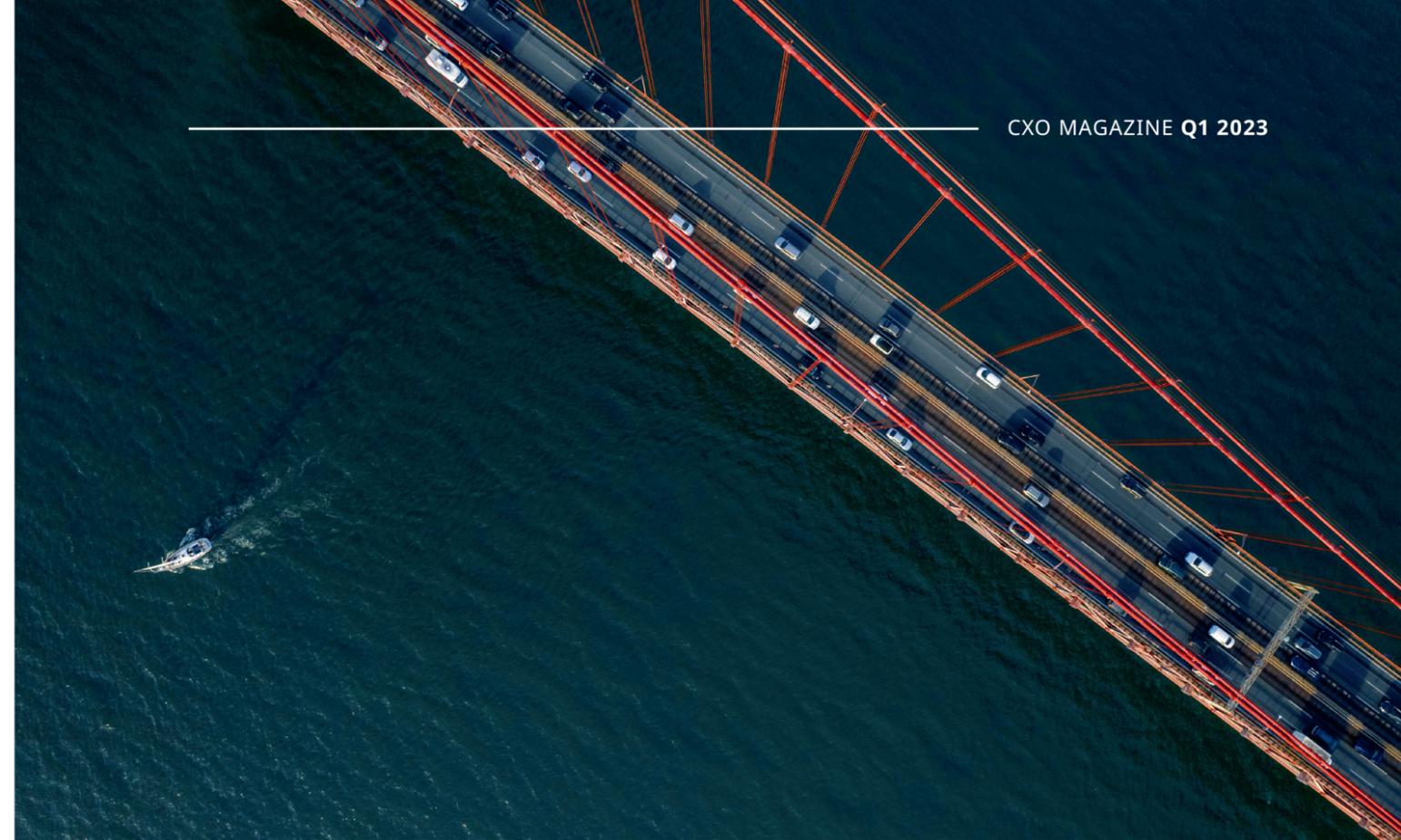
Many workers don't think so. In fact, the data shows that employees prefer remote work. After enjoying the flexibility that homeworking has given them, going back to a sterile and stringent corporate office is simply not a very attractive prospect, which is why (as Tesla and Apple are finding out) many are so resistant to the idea.

And maybe it is time that the voices of these disaffected workers are given more weight. Maybe those leaders who espouse the idea of ‘people being the organization’ should do more than pay lip service to it. Maybe instead of trying to impose their will on the workforce, they should let the will of the workforce be the thing that drives the business forward.

Even though not every hybrid model is running as smoothly as it might, and in some circumstances it can feel a little clunky even after all this time, perhaps we should give up trying to recreate the glory days of the office. And why the push to return to full-blooded office working? When new processes and procedures have become embedded and efficient, a return to full office working feels like a retrograde step. Isn't it better to let people work where they feel they do their best work – which for many is at home?

The reality is that for most businesses the introduction of remote working didn't cause the sky to fall down. In fact, quite the opposite, with study after study showing that it has led to an increase in productivity and helped cut real estate costs. IBM, for instance, saved itself \$50 million in real estate costs because it was able to give up 58 million square feet of office space.

Similarly, the collective intelligence of remote teams is little different from that of teams physically sitting around a table, face to face. It seems that what matters most is not where people are, but who does the work and how it's done. More and more businesses are coming to that conclusion, and rethinking what ‘the office’ actually means in this new era of hybrid work.



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While conventional wisdom may be that workers in their early to mid-20s are desperate to get back into the office for the social interaction it offers, they want flexibility as much as their older counterparts. And why wouldn't they, when they are perfectly comfortable working remotely?

All that said, there are still people who need to, and indeed love, going to the office. But the workplace must be styled around the real, current needs of the individuals in the business.

Reinventing the workspace

At NTT DATA Business Solutions, for instance, we're looking at how we can create a Goldilocks solution – an approach that's just right, whether you are a committed home worker, someone who craves the traditional social interaction of the physical office, or the nomad who moves between the two according to need. Rather than coercing people back to the office, our aim is to provide an attractive, fit-for-purpose space that they can choose to use when it suits.

To that end, we've been redesigning our office space into different zones, each with its own particular function, such as collaboration, contemplation, or deep work. We hope that this creates a work environment that appeals to everyone (and meets their needs), regardless of the stage of their career.

In other words, the office must become a destination – and you can only create a desirable destination if you listen to what its users want and then do your utmost to deliver it. This is about more than redecoration, comfy new sofas or trying to make your workspace look like a New York loft because you think it will appeal to a Gen Z demographic.

While conventional wisdom may be that workers in their early to mid-20s are desperate to get back into the office for the social interaction it

offers, they want flexibility as much as their older counterparts. And why wouldn't they, when they are perfectly comfortable working remotely? They are the ones who have grown up with smartphones, high-speed internet, social media, online games and online dating, so living digitally comes naturally to Gen Z and they are understandably keen to find companies, like NTT DATA Business Solutions, that are able to offer them the seamlessness between the digital and physical worlds.

Create the wrong office space and it won't be a destination but a ghost town. So, ditch any plan to put up mirror globes and neon signs and concentrate on giving everyone what they – and you – actually want and need, which is an organization in which everyone does their best work, wherever they are.

Maintaining continuity

This obviously requires seamless integration between remote and in-office working. Employees must be able to access the real-time information and tools they need, without having to endure a complex and sometimes unreliable login and be able to communicate in multiple ways with colleagues. This means the technological equivalent of being able to scribble a quick question to a colleague, as well as the 'formality' of Zoom or Teams meetings.

One of the reasons that organizations continue to seek the safety of the physical office may be because they haven't invested in making the technology work. But there's one other element

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A hybrid model requires much more hands-off management. But that, of course, requires unprecedented levels of trust on all sides. Employees need to do their job and managers must trust that they are.

that successful hybrid working requires, and that's a change in management mindset.

There is no point saying that you're adopting a hybrid model and then sticking with old-style, rigid management structures. This new way of working demands flexibility and a much greater willingness to accommodate employees' needs. If your first response to any request for flexible or remote working is to say no rather than yes, you may well have a problem.

The time for micromanagement is also well and truly over. This overly controlling approach to leading teams is a sure-fire way to damage remote working productivity because it encourages presenteeism, with employees turning up unnecessarily at virtual meetings or firing off too many emails just to prove they are there and keeping busy.

And as for using tracking software to monitor employee activity, you can forget that as a sustainable solution unless you want to add to the number of increasingly disengaged and alienated workers ready to 'quiet quit'.

A hybrid model requires much more 'hands-off' management. But that, of course, requires unprecedented levels of trust on all sides. Employees need to do their job and managers must trust that they are.

This is something that everyone must get used to as work becomes ever more self-directed. By 2024, research firm Gartner predicts that nearly a third of corporate teams won't have a boss as such, because they will have shifted from traditional, centralized

management to peer-to-peer, network-based decision-making, which saves time and reduces bottlenecks in a hybrid working environment.

Of course, we're still finding our way through this shift in the tectonic plates of work, and there are still many unanswered questions.

Nobel Prize-winning economist Milton Friedman once said, "Only a crisis – actual or perceived – produces real change." The pandemic has certainly illustrated how true that is. So, whatever Elon Musk may say, the nature of work – and the working environment – has been permanently reshaped by our experiences over the last few years. I believe the only sensible move is to accept the reality: the office as we know it has been reborn. What is there now to do except seize the opportunity to benefit our people, our bottom lines, and our commercial futures?

For references, please go to cxomag.com/article/hybrid-office-a-work-in-progress/



Having studied mathematics at university, **Klaus Strack** started his professional career at what was then Schmidt Vogel Consulting (today NTT DATA Business Solutions) in 1994 as a consultant. Via the position of branch manager in Stuttgart and Head of

Operations his path led him to his current position of Senior Vice President and MD of the Business Unit Germany with a focus on Delivery.

Essential Skills in a Digital Future

By Isabel Amor Cordero, Manager, Liquid Workplace,
Talent & Transformation, NTT DATA EMEAL

Digitally enabled collaboration through hybrid working models now seems critical to all our futures. The question is, are you ready? Alongside technological advances, your employees will need new skills and capabilities to thrive.

The new digitally enabled world of work has presented us all with a range of challenges. The most obvious ones relate to technology. Such has been the pace of change, it is easy to forget there was a time when hosting a video conference, for example, was considered a rare and specialist skill. Thinking back to 2020's growth in Microsoft Teams users from 20 million to 75 million perhaps best illustrates how quickly things can change.

Giving people access to new technology is, of course, only the start. It is relatively straightforward too. Remote and hybrid work require a suite of new, softer, more personal and harder-to-define skills. Organizing work, collaborating, managing and communicating all feel different when you're working apart from your colleagues. Remote staff can often struggle to manage their agendas and workloads, for example, with no colleagues nearby to check in with or bounce ideas off.

What new skills does a digital future need?

Remote screen, email and chat-based communication need a different skill set than face-to-face engagement. In EMEA, 74% of workers, according to a recent survey, found it difficult to be part of, or contribute to, online conversations compared to 'real life', and 76% complained of feeling disengaged by the process. Supervision can also be challenging when you're not



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Access to new technology is, of course, only the start. Remote and hybrid work require a suite of new, softer, more personal and harder-to-define skills.

regularly close to your reports. Another recent remote working report suggested that 80% of leaders found hybrid setups emotionally exhausting.

Once you start talking about these challenges, it is clear digital transformations raise varied and complex soft skills and people issues. With more than 9 out of 10 organizations claiming to be involved in some kind of digital initiative, these are prevalent problems.

Thanks to lockdown, we can all relate to being forced to change our behaviors and mindset too. We ought to, therefore, recognize there is more to get our heads around than new software, tools or devices as a result of advances in communication technology. If you're a leader, it is important to stay close to your teams and make the effort to understand any issues that concern them.

Differentiating between places of work

In doing so, there is a temptation to divide workers into three categories: those that work from the office, those that work remotely and those that work in a hybrid model. Such differentiation might be less relevant than you think because, however an employee works, the overall trend is toward flexibility.

At NTT DATA, for example, our work is increasingly global. We routinely work across borders, not to mention time zones. Almost all our projects, as a result, include a remote aspect. One or more of the team members on any given task will be dialing in from a different location and, incidentally, may come from a different culture. Meetings with external organizations such as clients and suppliers will often be managed remotely too.

This has been generally proven to be a

productive way of working. As a result, it has been adopted by 63% of high-growth companies and feels a permanent fixture in today's constant search for a competitive edge.

So even if, like 34% of knowledge workers, you have fully returned to the office, you can't turn back the clock. Ignoring the opportunities that digitally enabled collaboration presents for growth means you are likely to be left behind. My tip? Don't hesitate to help your people team-build and socialize online. The sooner you do, the better.

Reaching digital maturity

It's one thing to come to this realization, and another to know what to do about it. Like other technology companies, at NTT DATA we talk to our clients about their digital maturity levels. We have a series of diagnostic tools that identify strengths and improvement points, and we then prioritize tasks to help our clients reach higher levels of maturity.

In all, we assess 13 digital competences using a framework across four main areas – Technology Innovation, People Success, Digital Brand and Data Technology – and assess aptitude levels and characterize performance through archetypes (such as 'Digital Sleeper' and 'Innovation Pioneer').

Our inclusion of competencies relating to people is in recognition of the fact that digital maturity does not just mean having the best technology. Alongside systems, tools, organizational structures and operations, it is vital to understand cultural aspects of change.

The way we approach it is by considering five people-focused steps: information, awareness, training, experimentation and recognition. You should be able to identify where your people lie, at any point, in relation to these five steps.

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Ignoring the opportunities that digitally enabled collaboration presents for growth means you are likely to be left behind.

1. Do they know about digital opportunities?
2. Are they aware of the benefits?
3. Do they have the skills they need?
4. Have they tried their new capabilities?
5. How are new ways of working rewarded and fostered?

Sharing information and raising awareness are both great ways of starting your transformation process while learning how your people feel. Then, change management processes can be supported by a range of digital assets.

As part of the suite of services and partnerships which make up Liquid Workplace (supporting our clients with hybrid working), NTT DATA has just launched a new digital learning platform, Melt Learning, which we offer to both clients and our employees. With elements of gamification, self-directed learning and community interaction, the platform delivers corporate training, re/upskilling and education on navigating new digital environments.

Recent reports are stark: a 2022 global index showed three in four workers don't have the digital skills needed by businesses. But with a learning environment that's actually engaging – and tailored to the individual – that gap will steadily close.

Integrated within Microsoft Teams, Melt is based on personalization, open collaboration and equipping people with the key skills they need for change. Melt's principles can be applied to any online learning environment to help organizations address the shortage in workplace digital skills:

- Promote the self-knowledge of each professional in the new digital environments;
- Identify the level of digital maturity of the organization, through continuous assessment;

- Align people's capabilities to the transformational challenges that shape learning for the future;
- Deploy gamification and analytical elements to ensure successful skills development.

But however you approach the challenge, the most powerful enablers of change and growth remain the softer skills, those of empathy, communication, adaptability, coaching and trust building. This is because issuing instructions about technology alone won't necessarily lead to understanding. Colleagues need to recognize new ways of working as improvements, and successes need to be validated for digital transformation to succeed.

It is incredibly hard to predict how tomorrow's advances in AI, virtual reality or any other technology might change digital skills adoption and training processes. However, the principles I've shared above are based on certainties of behavioral science. Derived from the fixed realities of human nature, they mean changes in mindset will always be best supported by human-focused training, skills development and guidance. My prediction is that a people-to-people approach will continue to play a vital role in all our futures.

For references, please go to cxomag.com/article/essential-skills-in-a-digital-future/



Isabel Amor Cordero is a specialist in the workplace and new ways of working with more than ten years of experience helping professionals and organizations to work in a more productive, collaborative, and healthy way.

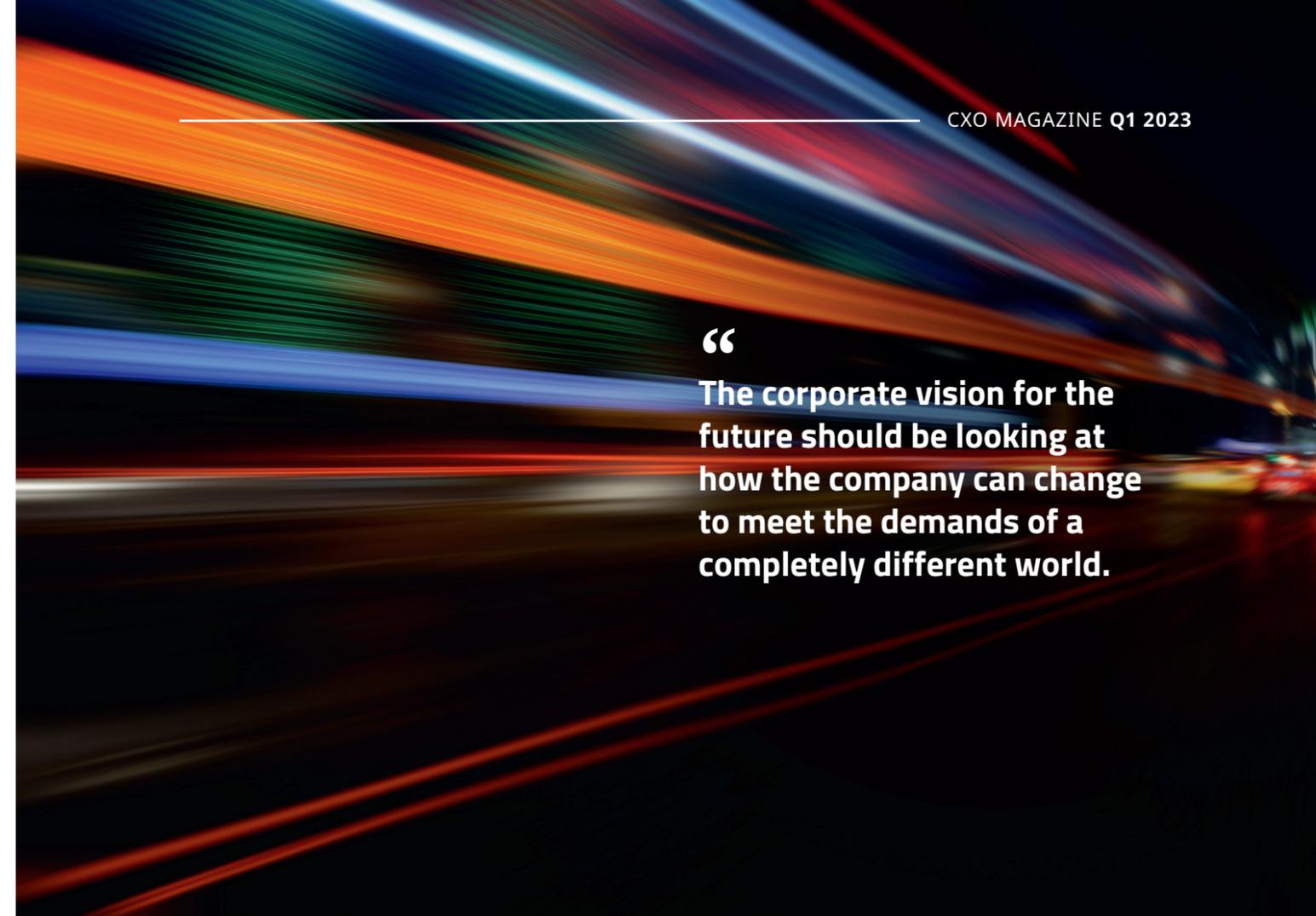
People Embody the Success of an Organization

By Natalie Porter, Director, Culture and Employee Experience, NTT DATA UK

Many businesses are struggling to make the right decisions about how to engage their people in this new, almost unrecognizable world of work. Employee engagement is down, reports of burnout are getting worse and worker satisfaction in many organizations is low. Now more than ever, success for any business lies in creating a culture that helps its people grow. But it's one thing to say that you want to be people-centric, and another to create an environment where this ethos is upheld. In-depth feedback around employee perceptions ensures companies can walk the talk.

Perhaps one of the most important questions every organization should be asking right now is this: how can you create meaningful connections between an organization, its people and the work that they do? Because without that connection, business suffers. As the World Economic Forum (WEF) pointed out, employee satisfaction and loyalty to organizations were in decline twenty years before the pandemic, but now resignation rates and levels of dissatisfaction are at a new high.

Imbalance in incomes, the demand for more flexibility and a more rewarding working life are noted as the biggest reasons behind the decline in worker engagement and satisfaction by WEF, who go on to highlight how recent rises in productivity have seen benefits 'accrue disproportionately to shareholders rather than employees'. When coupled with the cost of living and poor quality of life, it's easy to see why connection and engagement is decreasing. This is further compounded by global disruption, ongoing uncertainty, lack of work fulfillment and perceived lack of career growth and opportunity.



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The corporate vision for the future should be looking at how the company can change to meet the demands of a completely different world.

To bring engagement back into the business, companies need to find pathways to creating employee fulfillment and build internal cultures that are more engaging, relevant and connected. The corporate vision for the future should be looking at how the company can change its approach to meet the demands of a completely different world.

Finding the non-negotiables

Employees want connection with company purpose and a set of shared values. They want a blended lifestyle that allows them to fully realize their potential and value across both the personal and professional levels, and is inherently flexible. They require their employers to see them as a whole person, with a life beyond the professional work environment – not just a chair-filler who shows up, does the work, and leaves. This is a radical change from the employee-employer dynamic of the past, where the large organizations held sway.

The global enterprises that held the power in the

past are now fighting with startups and unicorns for skilled people because the latter are perceived as cutting edge, fun and interesting.

People enjoy working for startups and high-growth companies because they value being in a connected and dynamic environment where employee activities are important, where career development is interesting, and where they feel supported in their own personal development. These environments are far more attractive to skilled people today as they outshine the traditional corporate enterprise that's now seen as old-fashioned, bureaucratic and lacking in digital know-how.

More than three quarters of the workforce (76%) want their companies to allow them permanent flexibility across locations and schedules, according to a report from CNBC and global gender equality firm Catalyst that explored the trends shaping the future of work. The need for greater choices about when, where and how people work – as well as greater emotional connection from leadership, and appropriate recognition and chances for

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The corporate vision for the future should be looking at how the company can change to meet the demands of a completely different world.

development – is shaping many employee trends, with 41% of people wanting to leave their jobs because of a lack of flexibility and empathy, and the same percentage (41%) of those planning to make significant career changes doing so because they wanted work that was more flexible or remote (with almost as many, at 39%, wanting a raise or a promotion).

This situation is further complicated by gender disparity, with women continuing to do a disproportionate amount of housework and childcare – as well as having responsibilities at work increase. As Rachel Thomas, co-founder and CEO of Leanin.org explains “We see that women are taking on more work in the office around employee wellbeing, as well as advancing diversity, equity and inclusion efforts, which means their workloads are just going up and up and up.” CNBC’s Women at Work Survey found that 65% of working women feel that the pandemic has made life worse for them.

These statistics and views are shared in a recent McKinsey survey looking at how workers felt about the opportunities for more sustainable and inclusive growth in the US, that found that the majority highly value having control of where and when they work, and 87% of people would take the chance to work flexibly if it’s offered to them.

It should be no surprise that people want to feel motivated and passionate about the work that they do, and rewarded for the effort they put in.

However, this is often ignored by organizations. If these needs are not met, people leave: they move to companies that share their values, care for their wellbeing, and recognize the hard work that they do. Creating a culture and workplace methodology that allows for flexibility, improves accessibility, recognizes value, and ensures wellbeing and career growth as standard has – for today’s workers – become a non-negotiable.

Know where your business stands

Engaging talent is a challenge – you need to find ways of attracting the right people, keeping them engaged, and motivating them without compromising on your own business expectations and productivity. The World Economic Forum suggests the essential ingredients to achieve the goals of employee loyalty and engagement are: competitive wages; flexibility and balance; and purpose and culture. These are the building blocks of the employee experience and are tangible ways in which the business can create a cohesive and connected workplace.

The first step is for the organization to figure out and be clear about who it is and what its purpose is. Culture is ultimately a reflection of an organization – how it operates, what it values, and the environment it creates for its people. No business is going to be attractive to everyone – in fact, you don’t want to be all things to all people,

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To create a space that connects with the right talent and retains them in the long term, companies need to create a strategic narrative which sets out a clear and compelling purpose for the future of the organization. It’s the fundamental element.

because that’s the quickest way to leave everyone confused, uninspired and not working towards a shared future.

To create a space that connects with the right talent and retains them in the long term, companies need to create a strategic narrative which, amongst other things, sets out a clear and compelling purpose for the future of an organization. It’s the fundamental element around which your people strategy, and all its goals and activities, should be built. Ensuring decisions and actions are aligned with a company’s strategic narrative creates a safe space for employees, and gives them the value they crave. It is also the fastest route to creating a vibrant, connected culture and an engaging employee experience.

Tune the business

If you truly want to create a people-centric organization it is vital to truly understand your business and really listen to your workforce. Co-creating culture will help ensure the desired culture works, and it is embedded within the fabric of the organization. Only by obtaining feedback and data that allows you to understand where your business is sitting today, versus where you want to be in future, can you start to map out how you plan to achieve your goals of tomorrow.

Data and insights will help you to unpack your people strategy in more detail and with greater relevance, and ensure that you create an

environment that rewards your people in the ways that matter to them.

In-depth feedback around employee perceptions also ensures that the company continues to walk the talk. It’s one thing to say that you want to be people-centric, it’s another to create and continually support an environment where this ethos is upheld.

When it comes to inspiring employee experiences, companies can use their heritage to map the future. Fresh ideas, a clear vision, a trusted employee roadmap, recognition of hard work, and an unrelenting focus on staying committed to people and purpose – these are the steps that will put any company on a connected journey that will engage with its people.

For references, please go to cxomag.com/article/people-embodiment-success/



Natalie Porter is focused on creating meaningful connections and a positive experience in the workplace. For over 20 years she has been working as a culture and change professional across the globe, helping companies from multiple industries deliver their transformation and engagement projects. She is passionate about understanding the world of work with the ultimate aim of developing improved organizational capability and enriching the employee experience so that everyone can have a happier, healthier, and more productive life.

Better Communication: Understanding the New Language of Digital Teamwork

By Erica Dhawan, Leading expert on digital teamwork and author of *Digital Body Language: How to Build Trust and Connection, No Matter the Distance*

For many years now, there has been miscommunication happening in the workplace. It's not just about age or technology – it's because we didn't have a rulebook for our body language in a digital world. One of the crucial cornerstones of this new way of working is 'communicate carefully' and, given how central reading and writing comprehension is to our hybrid work lives, reminding ourselves what good communication looks like is critical to being a conscientious colleague. As our workplaces have become increasingly remote, these principles should be at the forefront of all that we do.

Not so long ago, we shared information with our colleagues across a table, listening to people's ideas and responding accordingly. Today, so many of those exchanges happen in written (or typed) form – think email, text, IM – meaning that listening in its traditional sense has been replaced by reading text on a screen. The problem with this is that we comprehend less when we read on a screen than we do when we read print; we devote less time to reading something in full, and tend to skim and search for key takeaways. And when it's our turn to reply to a message, we feel so burdened by the volume of emails we have to write that we end up sending sloppy, terse, or confusing responses.

Given how central reading and writing comprehension is to our hybrid work lives, reminding ourselves what good communication looks like is critical to being a conscientious colleague. Before you send off that next email, consider the following.

Is your email too brief?

One of the more obvious reasons our reading skills decline at work is that we're often moving at

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We're often moving at lightning speed, which makes details easy to brush over. The thing is, a lot of us aren't really as busy as we'd like to think we are. And it erodes our commitment to accuracy, clarity, and respect.

lightning speed, which makes details easy to brush over. The thing is, a lot of us aren't really as busy as we'd like to think we are. And it costs us: our speed, and the anxiety that surrounds it, and erodes our commitment to accuracy, clarity, and respect.

So, slow down and always reference details in your communications. If someone sends you a longer debriefing about a virtual meeting, respond to specific components of the email rather than sending back a blanket response. It shows that you put in the time to really read through the other person's time and thinking.

Brevity from the upper echelons of power isn't uncommon. Sloppy texts and sloppier emails, poor sentences, bad grammar, atrocious spelling – the message is, “We don't have time to care!” At Morgan Stanley, there was a running joke that the more senior you were, the fewer characters you needed to express your gratitude in a text or email. You started your career with “Thank you so much!” and after a promotion or two, this was cut down to “Thanks.”

Brevity can make a person appear important, but it can also hurt your team and your business.

Getting a slapdash email means that the recipient has to spend time deciphering what it means, causing delays and potentially leading to costly mistakes. And research shows when we use the punctuation we associate most with brevity – the dreaded sentence-final period – we come across as insincere.

One executive who I'll call Tom was renowned in our office for both his carelessness and his brevity. Once, when a direct report sent him an email, asking, “Tom, do you want us to move forward with this plan or should we gather more information?” Tom replied, “yes.” Thanks, Tom, we'll move ahead on one, or both, or neither. Imagine how much time his team wasted debating how long they had to wait before someone pointed out to him he hadn't answered the question! Leaders don't have to respond to every message, but when important work guidance is required, their communications should at least be clear.

Also consider proofreading your emails before sending them. A lot of the time, misinterpretation comes down to a dropped word or misleading punctuation. So, take advantage of spell check

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Tone – the overall attitude, or character, of a message – is the greatest tool for communicating empathy.

and other proofreading programs. Proofreading is both a habit and a skill: making it a point of pride to send clean, unambiguous copy will help people take what you write more seriously.

What tone are you projecting?

Tone – the overall attitude, or character, of a message – is another key component of strong reading and writing skills. Perhaps more than anything else, it's the greatest tool for communicating empathy. So ask yourself: Who is the recipient? Who is the audience?

One thing I tell my clients who struggle with digital communication is to make sure they keep in mind the visual impact of their message. I'll explain.

Ethan, a young manager I coach, once told me about an interaction he had with a senior leader that left him feeling unappreciated and belittled. As requested, he had sent this senior leader a detailed plan about increasing productivity among his teams. The plan set forth a different way of working that Ethan was certain could help teams avoid duplicating their efforts and create new levels of transparency. Ethan was

excited about the plan, and even included specific questions for the next team meeting. Expecting a positive response, maybe even a few follow-up questions, what he got back from the executive was this: “k.”

Ethan felt confused and insulted. The visual impact of “k” was that Ethan's clear and comprehensive proposal hardly deserved a response at all. Was the executive even thinking about Ethan's plan – or were they dismissing it outright?

Did “k” mean they were giving him the green light to proceed, or was it a subtle command to put his dumb idea on a back burner? It was impossible to tell. Also, did the senior leader think so little of Ethan that they couldn't be bothered to write more than a single letter? Even something pedestrian, like “okay I'll get back to you,” would have conveyed more respect and attentiveness than that “k.”

Tone deficiencies like the one Ethan's boss demonstrated can hurt morale and sow confusion. It's no surprise that responding to someone's hard work with a one word (or one letter) response communicates a lack of empathy for the person

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Lacking cues like eye contact and tone of voice makes digital communication challenging. In lieu of traditional body language, having the skills to read and write carefully is essential to organizations in our hybrid world.

at the receiving end. Don't respond for the sake of responding if you don't have something substantive to offer. If you are having one of those days where you can't give thoughtful attention to an email, send a quick reply acknowledging you received it, and let them know that you plan to respond to it at greater length as soon as possible.

Would it help to talk or meet instead?

With so many written platforms at our disposal, we can also get caught up in asking too many small questions in emails or group chats. Phone, video, or live meetings can force us to ask the right questions instead of asking one tiny question after the next. It can also save lots of time while simultaneously generating goodwill.

A German client once told me, "I was having a never-ending email back and forth with a French and an Indian colleague who were having a circular written dialog, covering the same ground over and over without understanding each other. I got them both to hop on the phone with me, asked a few questions a few different ways, and we got to the bottom of the issue."

If you just received a vague or confusing text or email, don't be afraid to request a phone conversation or, if possible, a video or in-person meeting. If it's a sensitive dialog, requesting a quick call shows you're being thoughtful. Instead

of making you look indecisive, waiting a few beats before responding to questions shows the other person that you are listening and taking your work seriously.

Lacking cues like eye contact, tone of voice, or body language to clarify what another person means makes digital communication challenging. In lieu of traditional body language, having the skills to read and write carefully is essential to organizations who want to make sure their teams are on the same page – and able to excel – in our hybrid world.

For references, please go to cxomag.com/article/better-communication/



Erica Dhawan is an internationally recognized leading authority, speaker and advisor on 21st century teamwork, collaboration and innovation. Named by Thinkers50 as the "Oprah of Management Thinkers", she is the author of two books: *Get*

Big Things Done: The Power of Connectional Intelligence and *Digital Body Language: How to Build Trust and Connection, No Matter the Distance*.

5 Minutes On...

Workplace Diversity in a Global Society

By Dr Chaunda Scott

Professor at Oakland University and author of *Diversity in the Workforce: Current Issues and Emerging Trends*



Has the corporate world fully understood its responsibility when it comes to DEI? With little formal training, many organizations are falling short of seeing real results. Dr Chaunda Scott talks to CXO about how leaders can move from paying lip services to delivering meaningful change, why having real conversations is so important, and how workplaces must adapt.

Scan the QR code with your smartphone camera



Opinion

Opinion pieces from NTT DATA's subject matter experts.

The Future of the Workforce Is Here, Are You Ready?

By Kim Curley
Vice President, Workforce Readiness
Consulting, NTT DATA Services



With so much upheaval to the work environment in just a few years, our expectations of and relationship with work have changed completely. How can organizations prepare for these shifts as employees set new boundaries and seek purpose at work?

The media is awash in stories about the Great Resignation, stating that anywhere between 25% and 40% of the workforce is ready to make a change in their career. People are making career changes after their current jobs couldn't or wouldn't provide the flexibility needed to care for family and loved ones during the Covid-19 pandemic. This burden fell mainly on women, with nearly 3 million US women choosing to leave the labor force in the past year. This stark number highlights the continued effects of persistent pay inequality, undervalued work, and the lack of available caregiving resources.

Employees are setting boundaries and demanding work-life balance and reasonable workloads – spurred by Covid-19's reminder that life is short. Employees exploring new job opportunities watched offers

disappear or decided to forego opportunities altogether due to the risks associated with changing careers amid a global pandemic.

In 2021, the US economy rebounded faster than expected, growing at a rate of 6.4% in the quarter, from 4.3% in the final three months of 2020. After the pandemic, 1 in 4 workers is considering quitting their job to pursue better offers, accelerate career advancement, and rethink their skill sets. This shift is sweeping across every industry, and employers need to prepare for the changes ahead.

Aside from the impact of the pandemic, numerous influences have created a long-anticipated tipping point in the workforce. Employers and employees alike are ready to replace the inflexible, antiquated workforce model with a reimagined future of work.

The ever-accelerating pace of change in organizations,

precipitated by AI, ML, automation and other advanced technologies, means that the way we work, train, skill, and reskill will continue to change in response. The rise and success of the 'gig economy' are hastening the move away from a traditional, permanent career model.

For example, the gig economy impacts healthcare, with healthcare institutions hiring temporary workers and freelance doctors to meet current demands. Hospitals are using pay-per-hour models to address the growing physician shortage in the US. Not to be overlooked, the diversified mix of generations in the workforce is changing the expectations workers have of their employers, with an increased emphasis on purpose, autonomy, and a growth mindset.

There are several ways employers can redefine work models to envision a more purposeful, autonomous, and continuously evolving workplace for all.

Connect to purpose

People are energized and motivated by meaningful work. In his wildly popular book and Ted Talk, Simon Sinek encourages organizations and people to "find your why." An organization's

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The rise and success of the ‘gig economy’ are hastening the move away from a traditional, permanent career model.

vision (its why) is essential, but an individual’s why is just as, if not more powerful. How are you connecting your workforce to the company’s why? How good of a job are you doing connecting the work individuals do to the outcomes your business creates?

According to a PwC study, millennials who have a solid connection to their organization’s purpose are more than five times more likely to stay with that company. Yet, only 27% of leaders help employees connect their purpose to the purpose of the company. Microsoft, #1 in the Wall Street Journal’s Management Top 250, landed that spot primarily due to its focus on employee engagement and culture.

Radical autonomy

Daniel Pink’s 2009 book *Drive* tells us that one of the main drivers of employee performance is autonomy. We crave the freedom to exercise our judgment as to how we accomplish work. Not only do we want to determine how we work, but we also want to dictate where and when we work best.

When our motivation is increased by autonomy, our

performance increases – we are more invested in doing an excellent job for our company and our clients. When we’re more invested, our clients know it. They see our attention to detail, the extra care and attention we invest in our interactions with them, and that we go above and beyond to produce the best results. Even employees who are not client-facing create equally valuable positives for their colleagues and the clients that never see them but see the results of their work.

A hybrid workplace model is a vital part of a strategy to attract and retain great employees and ensure that greatness manifests for your clients. The ways we work must fit within a digital framework that informs our tools, how we use them, and the best way to engage with each other and our clients. But at its core, autonomy is about empowering employees to do the great work we hired them to do in the first place. Perhaps the best-known example of this is Nordstrom’s employee handbook. It famously consists of one page and six words: “Use good judgment in all situations.”

A growth mindset

The intermingling of multiple generations in the workforce has impacted work models, but different mindsets may present the most significant disruption to traditional working methods. Carol Dweck, renowned author and speaker, researches and advocates for the idea that we can grow our brain’s capacity to learn and to solve problems – otherwise known as a growth mindset.

Organizations and individuals who have growth mindsets will be the winners in the workforce of the future. While a growth mindset may be more prevalent among Millennials and Gen Z, who demand immediate and constant opportunities to learn and try new things, Gen X is arguably full of the same energy and drive.

Researchers asked a collection of Fortune 1000 companies about how their organizational mindset impacts workers’ satisfaction, workplace culture, collaboration, innovation, and more. Leaders in growth-mindset companies rated their employees and organizations as more innovative, collaborative, and dedicated to learning and growing than those with fixed

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When we’re more invested, our clients know it. They see our attention to detail, the extra care and attention we invest in our interactions with them, and that we go above and beyond to produce the best results.

mindsets. Companies that maintain growth mindsets are laser-focused on hiring employees who share this desire to learn. You can create a culture and an infrastructure that supports growth mindsets vs. rigid and frameworks that stifle growth as a company.

How to foster a growth mindset in the workplace:

- Consider building the skills you need internally rather than buying them. While nearly all organizations will need to have some degree of variable workforce (e.g. gig worker, consultants, contractors), building up the skills of the people who already work in your organization is a win-win. Building the capabilities of your current workforce through training and upskilling is a win-win. Training and upskilling is generally less expensive than constant cycles of hiring the hot – and therefore most expensive – skills in the marketplace and it engenders loyalty and

engagement within the current workforce.

- Look for the skills you need in places others aren’t looking. Do certain positions only hire college graduates? Have you consistently recruited from the same colleges and training programs that everyone in your industry recruits from? Create new relationships with lesser-known (and likely very motivated) programs.
- Look within your current workforce at people who are doing a similar type of work. Don’t focus on the tasks; focus on how the work is done or the critical thinking skills required to be good at a particular job. Where else might those skills be applicable? Can a C++ programmer become a great application modernization developer? Think differently about your employees’ capabilities.

The foundation supporting these observations and recommendations is an organization’s culture. It’s no coincidence that executives are talking about the importance of culture in their organizations. Professionals working on the human side of the business have been long-standing advocates for prioritizing organizational culture. Often, it requires a significant and prolonged shock to the system for the importance of culture to move to the forefront of conversations.

Organizational culture is a beast that’s built from the ground up by individuals and their actions, but it’s made possible by the decisions made at the top of the house. What policies and practices are in place? Which behaviors are recognized and rewarded? Do you expect innovation and make room for failure? How do leaders hold themselves accountable to each other and their teams either feed or starve a culture? How you decide to address and respond to each area will answer the larger question: What do you want your future workforce to look like?

Designing an Ethical Future

By Lisa Woodley
General Manager - Northeast,
Nexient an NTT DATA Company



Those designing the digital products and services we use every day have a great responsibility. Technology has the power to change the world, by connecting and empowering us all. But designers can't do this alone – business leaders and decision-makers must act now, embedding ethical practices today, to make sure we're on the right path.

“The road to ruin is paved with good intentions,” or so the old saying goes. Technology has the potential to help push society forward, better connect us, make our lives easier and enrich us. But whether that future is bright depends not on our intentions but on our actions and the consequences they evoke.

The exponential tech growth we've seen in the last 10 years, from the internet and social media to smartphones, artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning, seems to point to a better-connected society where machines help us understand each other and eliminate bias from our world.

But present-day reality shows us there's a dark side to this technology.

The data that helps humans understand each other better is the same data that can be used to manipulate us. Algorithms meant to eliminate bias might actually propagate it. Social mediums that bring us together can also divide us. And the digital interactions that have become a part of our everyday lives can lead to anxiety and even addiction.

Designers never intended any of this. Back in the early days of user experience (UX) design, when clients would ask me to make their site or app “sticky,” the goal was to get people to spend more time interacting with their brands. We leveraged gamification, alerts, badges and scores to add a bit of harmless fun in our drive to

increase engagement.

What we didn't realize is every “like,” badge and alert tapped into the addiction center of the brain. In 2018, the American Psychiatric Association recognized addiction to gaming and the internet in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.

The good news: It's not too late to rewrite the future. We have the power to turn our intentions into actions that will create a future we all want to live in. It starts with ethical design, which focuses on the intersection of technology, business, human and society, and seeks to create solutions that meet the needs of all four.

While design often drives progress, it must be clearly defined, understood and owned by everyone – from designers and technologists to business stakeholders – to be successful.

Here at NTT DATA, we developed a Data and Design Code of Ethics, complete with a governance model, that clearly articulates to everyone in our experience design, build and analytics teams what ethical design and data use is, how to incorporate it into their work, and how to

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It's not too late to rewrite the future. We have the power to turn our intentions into actions that will create a future we all want to live in.

recognize and resolve ethical violations they may encounter. We even have an escalation process should anyone on the team feel they're being asked to design or develop something they feel is wrong.

And we encourage our teams to ask questions: Why are we capturing this customer data? How will it be used? If we leverage data to design an interaction that increases engagement, what are the benefits to the end user? What might the risks be?

We provide team members with real scenarios and offer them alternative options that achieve client business goals without straying into questionable ethical territory.

Central to the code is transparency. It's a vital way to empower users to decide what they want to do with data. Transparency also means building and maintaining the trust of people of all cultural, educational and financial backgrounds. And that means steering clear of dark patterns (like making a service easy to sign up for but difficult to cancel) and using plain language rather than confusing jargon.

Privacy and confidentiality are also paramount. According to our Data and Design Code of Ethics, designers must always: Respect data privacy and ensure confidentiality

is never compromised; document the reasons for collecting data and ensure all data collected is essential; and document a process for notifying customers of any changes in data collection or handling and ensure the analysis has been checked by a diverse set of reviewers to confirm there's no bias. Designers must always respect customers as people, not as a product, statistic or persona. We must explore the long-term effects of present-day design choices and ask not what if this fails, but what if it's wildly successful? And what impact will that success have on the person? We must maximize the positive and minimize the negative.

Mainly, it's important for organizations to understand the value that design ethics holds for their business. It's not an either/or scenario. Ethical business is good business, particularly if your goal is customer loyalty and lifetime customer value. Do your employees understand the importance of ethics to your business and how that translates to their work? Have they been empowered to make ethical choices?

It's also important to recognize that ethics isn't one size fits all. It's cultural, according to Antonio Grillo, Service and UX Design Director at NTT DATA Italia and Adjunct Professor of Inclusive Design at Politecnico de Milano in Milan, Italy.

“We all wear different cultural lenses,” Grillo says. “We must empower people and make transparency a must-have principle that is injected into every step of the experience.”

And, of course, we must make technology accessible to all, which isn't only ethical, says Grillo, it's also smart for business. “Take inclusion for those with disabilities. If you are considering 80% of people are other-abled – mild to severe – you are excluding almost 80% of your customer base by not being inclusive. This thinking moves your business from focusing on avoiding penalties to creating potential,” he says.

Smartphones, for example, were designed to fit most hands and they're becoming increasingly more accessible, Grillo says, with planned updates to introduce features such as automatic image descriptions and live captions for audio. This is an example of accessible technology at work.

The most important thing to remember is that though ethics is a life-long journey, designers can't do this alone. Business leaders and decision-makers also need to take a stand to choose ethical practices in their daily objectives. And we must act now if we want to make sure we're on the right path.

Mind the Gap: Addressing the Current Shortage of Digital Skills to Meet the Needs of the Future

By Pam Chase
Former Senior Vice President HR, NTT DATA UK



The demand for digital skills is only accelerating as organizations embrace hybrid working. To meet the demands of the future workforce, training – for everyone, no matter where they are in their careers – is essential to ensure the digital skills gap does not hold your organization back.

Demand for digital skills has increased dramatically in recent years as the workplace has become digitized and technological innovation has accelerated. The shift towards remote working during the pandemic only fuelled greater demand for these skills, and this trend is set to continue, with many large firms pivoting to a long term ‘hybrid’ strategy of in-person and virtual working.

While demand has soared, the supply of skills continues to lag behind. The ongoing shortage in digital skills in the UK is

leaving organizations unable to recruit the tech talent they need. Yet, despite creating a major challenge for the tech industry, this dearth of skills presents an opportunity for the sector to widen its talent pool. Targeted training initiatives can shrink the skills gap while also giving people from diverse backgrounds greater opportunities to enter the tech sector.

How big is the problem?

To understand the impact of the digital skills gap, we need to quantify the problem.

The World Economic Forum 2020 report found that only 61% of the working age population in the UK has digital skills. The 2021 Lloyds Bank Consumer Digital Index, an annual study of UK digital skills measured against the Government’s Essential Digital Skills framework, found that digital engagement had been boosted by the pandemic, but that certain groups still lacked digital skills. The study found that 31% of unemployed people have ‘low’ or ‘very low’ digital capability compared to 19% of people in the workforce.

These studies point towards one obvious root cause of the digital skills shortage: a lack of training opportunities. The World Economic Forum 2020 report found that while 94% of UK businesses are looking to accelerate the digitization of work processes, only 49% are looking to accelerate the implementation of upskilling or reskilling programmes. Further back in the

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Too few people are being provided with opportunities and encouragement to learn digital skills, and this is creating a shortage of talent.

pipeline of talent, the number of young people taking IT subjects at GCSE has dropped 40% since 2015, according to the Learning & Work Institute. Too few people are being provided with opportunities and encouragement to learn digital skills, and this is creating a shortage of talent.

The consequences of a skills shortage

The digital skill shortage has far-reaching consequences. For businesses, recruitment is particularly difficult as the skills shortage has created a highly competitive environment in which it is difficult to find and hire the right talent. Software developers were the most sought-after candidates from UK employers in 2019 and demand outweighed supply for the role 10 times over.

Failure to find candidates has a tangible impact for businesses. FDM Group found that the lack of digitally skilled

workers is a major pain point for almost two thirds of UK businesses in 2021. Indeed, whole projects can be jeopardized by a lack of technical expertise. In November 2020, Virgin Media warned that the skills gap could disrupt the roll out of UK broadband due to a lack of broadband engineers available to carry out the work.

Training is the answer

The solution to the skills gap lies in training initiatives and more opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds to gain digital skills. Apprenticeships are one way to boost digital skills while also supporting social mobility. They allow adults from disadvantaged backgrounds, who may be unable to afford attending university, to gain skills while earning a salary. Other initiatives might target specific groups – such as women who have been out of the workforce for an extended period or people

from other underrepresented backgrounds – to give them opportunities to learn the skills needed to enter the tech industry.

Examples of existing schemes include NTT DATA UK’s route2work initiative, which funds a scholarship programme for women to enroll in digital skills academies. The initiative aims to encourage diversity in the tech sector, in which women currently make up a mere 19% of the workforce, dropping to 3% for black women and 5% for Asian women. Other examples include the ongoing work of the Institute of Coding in enrolling 900,000 learners on more than 150 accessible and flexible digital skills courses – all supported by the UK government.

As well as equipping those outside the tech sector with digital skills, it’s important to nurture existing talent and ensure people within the sector have opportunities to expand their digital skillset. Opportunities

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The solution to the skills gap lies in training initiatives and more opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds to gain digital skills. Apprenticeships are one way to boost digital skills while also supporting social mobility.

should be made available to those from non-technical backgrounds, as well as employees with technical expertise, to increase skills across the board. In the longer term, educating children in digital skills at a young age will expand the digital aptitude of the workforce and encourage more young people to consider tech roles in the future.

The future of work

As companies increasingly digitize their work processes and as demand for technological solutions grows, digital skills will only become more sought after. In the future, we will see fewer and fewer roles that accept recruits with no digital training at all, and even employees with considerable technical training will be required to continually upskill to keep up with the pace of innovation.

To meet the demands of the future workforce, training – from

early years education through to retraining programmes for people well into their careers – will be vital to ensure the digital skills gap does not hold back organizations and stunt the UK economy. While expanding training to meet soaring demand is a challenge, it is also a unique opportunity to diversify the talent pool. Organizations can embrace this opportunity, and reap the benefits of a more diverse and more skilled workforce.

5 Minutes On...

The Human-Centric Digital Workplace

By Vishal Brown

Chief Evangelist and
Digital Workplace Leader,
NTT DATA Services



Vishal Brown tells us what an employee needs in the digital workplace in order to succeed. As the nature of work and the ways in which we work have been completely transformed, the demands have changed. From server capabilities, to connectivity, to ease of access, organizations need to target the gaps in order to deliver a strong employee experience.

Scan the QR
code with your
smartphone camera



Gen Z at Work: What Young Professionals Expect From Leaders

By Palmer Montalbano
Business Consultant, NTT DATA Services



As we strive to make sense of the global changes around us and balance our working and personal lives, the expectations of leadership have changed too. As consumers, Gen Zs are particularly known to hold organizations to account, and they're no different in their expectations for work.

Like many young professionals who recently entered the workforce or started a new job, my first work week was online. We spent hours on video calls discussing the company mission, meeting leaders, bonding with fellow employees, and learning about skills and tricks to success. At the end of the week, I knew what leadership expected from me and how to achieve success. When young employees enter companies and join new teams, a host of onboarding material establishes the expectations for the job. But what do the Generation Z employees expect from their leaders?

Young professionals want to be connected

When I started my career and entered the workforce, I began interacting with different leadership styles. I quickly learned that I didn't want to be micromanaged or cheered on from a distance. Instead, I was looking for a leader who understood my strengths and weaknesses, invested in my career plan, and was willing to connect me to resources that could further my career. Leaders who function as connectors provide younger employees like myself with valuable experience in their area of expertise, while including resources that better

suit their employees' skills and desired opportunities.

Connectors invite young professionals to meet leaders, share information repositories or valuable tools, and help map their careers. They empower others to make more significant contributions to an organization.

As a young professional my network was limited and one leader's effort to connect me with other leaders and resources made a substantial impact on my career. A key aspect of my onboarding experience was when leaders were open to providing personalized information sessions and connecting with new hires one-on-one. This made the first networking steps easy, opening doors to further connections.

One influential leader in my career was my professor, Senior Lecturer in Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Organizations at Vanderbilt University, Dr. Corbette Doyle. She connected me with resources that helped me progress to my current position. When looking for summer experience, Dr. Doyle connected me to an opportunity in my field of study. When I was

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When leaders were open to providing personalized information sessions and connecting with new hires one-on-one, this made the first networking steps easy, opening doors to further connections.

considering where to start my career, she introduced me to professionals for info-calls, so I could identify various career paths, discover how to highlight my skills, and get information on where I wanted to apply. I realized my potential largely thanks to the opportunities and information my leader provided.

Do as I say (and as I do)

Young professionals receive a large amount of new information when they start at a company. They will look beyond what leadership says to how leadership behaves in determining what to follow. For example, leaders who stay late to finish projects communicate the importance of dedication to their employees. Leaders who take vacations and sick days communicate to their employees the importance of work/life balance. The culture and values of organizations are built by how leadership behaves as much as what leadership dictates.

In a recent LinkedIn post, leadership expert and bestselling author Dr. Patrick Leddin discussed the importance of the 'leaders jump first' practice. As

a former US Army Captain in the 82nd Airborne Division, Dr. Leddin expressed how leaders have the responsibility to model the behavior necessary to achieve success, which is one reason military leaders jump from the airplane before their subordinates.

An example of a leader who exemplifies 'jump first' is Tom Brady, whose recent retirement and return to football has offered multiple stories of how the quarterback leads others through his work ethic, focus, and determination in his tasks. While most of us are not jumping from planes or throwing touchdown passes during the work week, leaders can still practice jumping by embracing innovative technologies, respecting their coworkers, or tackling a problem with expertise and grace.

Communication is crucial

Experience is the most significant missing piece in a young professional's attributes – one we are trying to obtain by working within an organization. What makes the experience so valuable in the workplace is both

the ability to lean on previous lessons learned and the ability to understand how projects and deliverables fit the bigger picture of a business or industry.

The best way to bring young professionals up to speed is to include them in project planning and governance meetings. We will benefit from gaining a better understanding of how the business operates. As young professionals, our work will improve as the organization's goals inform what we are working toward.

Remember that many young professionals are exiting the days of graded assignments and entering the world of annual reviews. Providing specific feedback often allows them to adjust to industry standards or company preferences, reducing the time it takes for new employees to look like seasoned pros.

How to attract, train, and retain

For Generation Z, a company's mission is essential. Companies that center their mission on social improvements tend to withstand

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The modern workplace is continuously adjusting to the work-life balance people increasingly seek. The most accommodating companies will have higher retention and employees that contribute their best work.

adverse markets and grow at faster rates. In addition, many recent graduates discuss how their work impacts society for the better. Therefore, it is important to Gen Z employees that they can see how a company makes a difference.

To be successful in any activity, people need practice. When training new employees, limiting the number of long video meetings and introductory information sessions can avoid ‘Zoom burnout’. Instead, companies could create practice projects that mimic the job activities expected of new hires. Feedback on deliverables and encouragement helps develop the skills leaders consider valuable to the organization. This also can give your company insight into where new employees should be

placed within teams.

Remember that everyone in recruiting, training, and working is a human, whether it’s a Gen Z’s first job or a Baby Boomer’s lifelong career. We all have different circumstances and needs. For example, some team members prefer to work remotely while others prefer in-person environments. Some people prioritize financial security, while others prioritize travel and experience. The modern workplace is continuously adjusting to the work-life balance people increasingly seek. The most accommodating companies will have higher retention and employees that contribute their best work.

The modern work environment is changing. Young professionals

today have options in selecting their employer, work model and career path. Whether work is done in an office or remotely, they are looking for leaders that facilitate real progress in their careers, and how they can impact people’s lives.

Unconscious Bias is Harming Our Teams and Technology: How Can We Tackle It?

By Tom Winstanley
CTO & Head of New Ventures, NTT DATA UK



Bias in technology is real, and as we design and build increasingly powerful systems, our obligations to those using the technology increase in step. Two experts share what they’ve learned for building diverse and efficient teams and ethical AI frameworks.

In April 2022, speakers from NTT DATA UK’s Women’s Business and Culture & Ethnicity Networks took the time to give us two fascinating presentations. The content of the speeches may have been different, but the overarching theme was the same. The topic was the ‘Big Conversation’: Bias in Tech.

The first speaker, Lucinda Faucher, covered the importance of building diverse and efficient working teams. The second, Andrea Cornavaca, took a different approach. She highlighted for us the growing global awareness of our collective responsibility to develop ethical AI frameworks.

There are some notorious examples of bias impacting the implementation of technology.

Amazon, Apple and the UK’s passport photo checker have all been accused of faulty, biased

design. Amazon scrapped a recruitment algorithm because it had effectively taught itself that male candidates were superior. US regulators investigated Apple because of claims that its credit card offered different credit limits for men and women. And women with darker skin were twice as likely to be told that their photos failed UK passport rules compared to lighter-skinned men.

Each of these case studies reveals how just one type of mistake can creep into the system. Perhaps they were the product of working teams that didn’t reflect their target audience? Perhaps these algorithms weren’t built with responsible development and futureproofing in mind? Whatever the reason, the incident had significant consequences for the organizations involved.

Culture fit

Lucinda headed our first presentation. She wears many hats: Head of Product at Aptitude Software, host of the ProdBBox podcast, and a mentor to those looking to get into the industry. Her passion lies in building diverse teams and initiatives. Lucinda shows people just how easy it is for unconscious bias to slip into and derail these processes.

How often have you heard the words ‘culture fit’? Too often, the phrase is used without a clear understanding of what it means. For many, the phrase is a shorthand for ‘people I feel comfortable talking to’. The problem with this approach is that it leads to homogenous product teams: how can we build products that serve everybody with a group of people who all think the same way?

Diverse teams will improve both your efficiency and your products. According to McKinsey research, more diverse executive teams financially outperform their counterparts by double-digit percentage figures. In 2019, gender-diverse teams were 25% more likely to achieve above-average profits. Ethnically diverse teams were 36% more likely.

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New technology has the potential to impact the lives of so many people. Therefore, we are responsible for ensuring that it serves the people it was designed to affect, not marginalizes them.

Lucinda left us with a parting thought. As IT professionals and individuals with a passion for design, analysis, security and a hundred other hands-on practices, we like to find a straightforward way to do things. If it doesn't work, we want to take that feedback and apply it to the next attempt. So that's precisely the approach that Lucinda recommended. Implementing diversity doesn't have to be complicated.

Test. Iterate. Get feedback. Then do it all over again, but better.

Diversity and AI

In Andrea's talk, we learned about the importance of responsible AI. It is a topic she is well-versed in. Andrea is the Head of AI Governance and Regulation Practices for NTT DATA Europe and Latin America. She has spent three years in NTT DATA's only European AI Center of Excellence in Barcelona and, over that time, her work has transformed from a line of research to a line of services.

At the Center of Excellence, they work every day to help businesses

break any bias that could be embedded into the algorithms of AI services. As the adoption of AI increases and its use scales across industries, we must anticipate its risks and build AI that puts society first.

To illustrate her point about this rapidly growing, largely unregulated field, Andrea showed us how many companies are following ethical AI principles. They're developing manifestos, guidelines and strategies to 'parent' a growing, immature technology. Last year, H&M Group, the fashion and design conglomerate, announced that they would be putting all of their new AI models up against a 'Checklist for Responsible AI'.

The speed of this evolution is stunning. It's clear as day in the legislation. Only last year UNESCO brought together 100 countries to sign the first global agreement on best practices for developing ethical AI.

A better tomorrow

New technology has the potential to impact the lives of so many

people. Therefore, we are responsible for ensuring that it serves the people it was designed to affect, not marginalizes them. We must make sure that our product teams reflect the audience that the product is intended for. At NTT DATA, we already have our own global set of AI ethics guidelines. Free, unregulated AI usage holds undeniable danger. We know that, and we all must work towards a balanced and fair society where humans and AI can coexist.

Guide to the Metaverse: The Future is Already Here

By Francisco Spadafora
Head of Internet of Value, NTT DATA Italia



When we think of the metaverse, we should not think of a hypothetical world but of a certain future. Technologies including augmented reality, IoT, cybersecurity and blockchain come together to form this new virtual space, and the opportunities for businesses and consumers alike are plentiful. But rather than trying to replicate the current world, we must be brave and creative in imagining a new one.

The term 'metaverse' combines the ancient Greek word meaning 'beyond' (meta; nowadays, often understood to mean transformation, metamorphosis or transcendence) and the word 'universe' (an enormous space in which everything happens). The metaverse is therefore an overcoming of the universe. A new form of it, an alternative variant.

The first to use this word was the American writer Neal Stephenson, who, in his 1992 novel Snow Crash, imagined a post-capitalist society in which the metaverse plays a central role. Just 30 years later, and the science fiction world he envisioned is taking shape, at least as far as the metaverse is concerned.

In fact, the metaverse is already a reality. It is no longer a question of whether it will arrive, but simply when it will become a common reality shared by all. The idea of a parallel world alongside ours is not immediately understandable and it is very simple to catalog this idea as a hypothesis, perhaps even distant or unlikely; nothing could be more wrong.

Proof of this is not only the countless technological development strategies around the world, but also the official position that the top executives of two of the biggest global companies – Facebook and Apple – have taken: the first, by the will of founder Mark Zuckerberg, decided to change its name to 'Meta',

convinced that the metaverse is the next chapter in the history of the internet. Apple CEO Tim Cook discusses a technology that can no longer be done without, even if specifically it refers to a broader concept of augmented reality.

Technology enables the metaverse

The metaverse is the result of a set of technologies which, united together, form this new world. It is characterized by blockchain, augmented reality, IoT and cybersecurity; technological advances that today often walk individually and that in the metaverse are all united to create a new world.

The metaverse is characterized by six fundamental drivers that fully define its nature.

1. The devices: at the base of everything there will be augmented reality (AR) glasses – normal glasses with a high level of interaction and with the possibility of showing very precise additional information directly on the lenses. The key to making the metaverse immersive is their wearability and portability – as soon as technology allows, the

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The metaverse is already a reality. It is no longer a question of whether it will arrive, but simply when it will become a common reality shared by all.

metaverse will undergo a great acceleration in its conquest of the world. Mobile phones and smartphones have been at a standstill in terms of technological development for years: attention and investments are all leaning towards devices for the metaverse. Meta/Facebook plans to launch its models in 5-10 years, and Apple says it has something in store for 2023/2024, even if it is not yet known at what level of progress. What is certain is that those funny-looking goggles you see today will not be needed: a pair of glasses will be enough to access the metaverse.

2. The concept of identity: in the metaverse we will be represented by our avatars – digital versions of ourselves that can match our facial features, hairstyles and clothing. There will be no

limits of gender, shape, look or identity: this new 3D world will respond to that great desire for freedom and tolerance at the base of many shifting social and cultural attitudes and expectations.

3. Interaction: in the metaverse, every interaction is 3D and immediate. It will be possible to speak to anyone, anywhere, at any time. This is normal for the new generations who grew up with video games – gaming platforms are in fact the first example of a real metaverse. You connect and from that moment on you can have interactions with anyone else online, at any distance. This revolution brings important steps forward in terms of network enhancement: 5G and fiber are necessary for this to happen and therefore it will be essential that everyone has access to a fast and powerful internet connection. The big

events of the future will be hosted in the metaverse, and there are already examples: world-famous singers like Ariana Grande and Travis Scott have already staged concerts in the metaverse, which people have attended with their avatars.

4. E-commerce: the world of shopping will also develop in the metaverse. Already, some platforms such as Instagram are trying to make it possible to buy what you want without leaving the app; in the metaverse the same thing will happen. Companies will be able to sell virtual objects, to be used in the metaverse (such as clothes and gadgets for avatars), or something concrete, which after being bought in the metaverse, reaches us at home. The new frontier of online shopping.

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The traditional approach – thinking of things as they are now – will not work. We need to think in a completely different way, using technologies to bring new benefits instead of replicating old approaches or outdated ideas.

5. New work: since the pandemic, ways of working have changed dramatically: video calls have become normal, having quickly taken over traditional face-to-face meetings. The metaverse will take this concept to the next level, effectively eliminating the need to do it in front of a screen. The new devices (above all, the AR glasses), will be the gateway to the metaverse and therefore also to the world of work. Each interaction will be guided by voice commands, realizing a great revolution in working techniques and in the very concept of work.

6. Tokens and monetization: blockchain tokens will be created which will enable a real secondary market, and with which it will be possible to buy and sell tokens and NFTs (non-fungible tokens). It's the money of the metaverse, the wealth of the future.

How to prepare

The new generations will have a great competitive advantage: they are already used to concepts of this kind. For them it is natural; everyone else will have to adapt, there are no other choices. We are at the gateway of a new era from a technological point of view, ready to begin. In 5-10 years it is expected to become ubiquitous, while for early adopters the implementation of first trials are important to begin to understand how this world works and maintain an advantage.

New metaverse platforms will be born every year (there are already many), and some will die in a process of natural selection. Dominant platforms will emerge on which everything will develop and which will be interoperable.

The important thing to do is to consider the metaverse from a radically different point of view. The traditional approach – thinking of things as they are

now – will not work. We need to think in a completely different way, using technologies to bring new benefits instead of replicating old approaches or outdated ideas.

We must therefore not try to replicate the current world, but think of a new one: companies that are planning to launch their business in the metaverse must keep in mind their target audience, customers and users; finally, you have to explore in order to choose the right metaverse for your needs.

We are faced with a new virtual world, which only by exploring and testing will we be able to understand how disruptive it will be. Whether or not the prophecies of Tim Cook and Mark Zuckerberg are realized, the premises are all there.

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The logo features the text "NTT DATA" in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The "T"s are stylized with a gap in the middle. Below the main text, the tagline "Trusted Global Innovator" is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font.

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