The Future of Work: Adapting to an Accelerated Workplace Reality

Key considerations for responding, rebounding and reinventing through the pandemic

This executive insight is part of a series of resources to help navigate your organization's next steps. Learn more at cgi.com/3R.

CGI

Respond
Rebound
Reinvent

What's inside

Organizations are pivoting at pace in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic, adapting how they are structured, how they work, with whom they work, and how they collaborate. People and technology are at the center of these changes. Technology, in particular, has become a key enabler for new work practices that promise to shape the future of work for years to come.

Drawing upon the 2020 CGI Client Global Insights, along with the work of our experts across the globe, this executive briefing shares the key work practices of industry leaders, along with recommendations for adapting to an accelerated workplace reality.

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A subject that has divided opinions for years

We have been designing organizations, work cultures, workspaces and ways of working ever since Frederick Taylor laid out his principles of scientific management in 1911.

Over time, organizations pivoted from centralized to decentralized structures and shifted their locations to take advantage of national corporate tax benefits, trade zone benefits, labor costs, and resource and talent availability. With the rise in the availability of inexpensive and connected technologies, organizations adopted new ways of working to connect and collaborate. We redesigned workspaces, for example, replacing offices and cubicles with creative activity-based spaces and using large TV screens and white walls to communicate information.

The increase in smartphones with messaging (chat) already has displaced the desk phone and phone calls, and organizations are now using tools like Slack and Microsoft Teams to enable collaboration across various geographical locations. Video conferencing has been around for many years. Webex, for example, was first launched in 1995 and Meeting Center in July of 1999. Today, we have even more options with Zoom, Apple's FaceTime, GoToMeeting and others, which enable inexpensive virtual meetings. These technologies have allowed virtual teams to communicate and collaborate across locations and time zones, giving rise to a new nomadic workforce, remote business models, and a swelling of the work-from-home segment.

WORKPLACE DEBATES

- Centralized vs. decentralized
- Hierarchy vs. holacracy
- Offices/cubicles vs. open plan
- Office work vs. virtual work
- Human vs. machine
- Onshore vs. offshore
- Agile vs. decentralized agile

However, based on findings of the [2020 CGI Client Global Insights](#), 83% of executives report significant challenges with cultural and organizational change, and 55% report attracting and retaining talent as a major constraint. In addition, 88% cite that they are not yet seeing results from enterprise digital strategies.

Our research indicates that those organizations with high business agility outperform their peers by a factor of 2-3 times in terms of revenue and profitable growth. Organizations with high agility embrace a future workplace and workforce to advance innovation and collaboration. Clearly, they are in a class of their own, and their workplace management skills are a key factor behind their success.

What distinguishes workplace management leaders from their peers?

Leaders in workplace management put the customer experience at the forefront of everything that they do: Putting customer interactions at the forefront impacts your employee experience, as well as your organizational design. In addition to focusing on the employee experience and agility, leaders design their workplaces with the customer experience in mind. Every internal technology tool, process and best practice is evaluated through the lens of the customer experience. How does each impact employees' interactions with customers? How does each potentially enhance the customer experience?

Leaders create a holistic employee experience: Attracting and retaining talent requires more than improving the office environment and implementing a few tools. Leaders understand the value of creating a holistic employee experience that engages employees, makes work exciting and builds human connections that foster purpose, belonging and trust. They use technology that drives not only a more personalized experience but one that encourages employees to perform at their best.

Leaders are more agile: Leaders design their operating model (structure, governance, culture and management practices) to be more responsive to external signals (customer, social, economic, environmental, technology, political) and enable faster insight-driven decision-making that is closer to the customer and the customer's needs.

Leaders leverage their ecosystem:
The 2020 CGI Client Global Insights demonstrate that leading organizations proactively leverage their ecosystem of suppliers and partners. They collaborate both internally and externally to innovate, design and coordinate their supply chain to provide a data-driven, end-to-end customer experience. Their deep partnerships with niche players replace the need for talent and capability to exist in-house, further advancing their ability to offer products and services to their customers in rapid time.

Leaders deploy advanced technologies:
Per the 2020 CGI Client Global Insights, executives cite digital employee tools as their second most important digital initiative. Leaders use automation, artificial intelligence and visualization technologies to automate and augment their employees' work and collaboration, freeing up employees to focus on value-adding activities, customers, innovation, product and service development, and proactive problem resolution.

Overall, leaders are embracing new ways of thinking and working not only to respond during this critical time, but also to emerge from it stronger than before.

Respond: The world's biggest work-from-home experiment

William Gibson once said, "The future is already here. It's just not evenly distributed." This is certainly the case with how suddenly some organizations, in response to the pandemic, have implemented collaborative tools like Microsoft Teams—tools that have existed for some time.

The pandemic suddenly thrust us into the biggest work-from-home experiment ever recorded. Organizations have had to rapidly adapt their supply chains, partner to realize joint goals, rethink their customer channels, and redefine their business models in rapid time all while balancing their customer's changing needs.

We have seen organizations pivot to new business models, such as virtual fitness, redefined conferences and networking events, and more. Offices are empty as staff work from home, with some realizing that this new way of working is highly collaborative and efficient. As a result, they are questioning why they have not worked this way before. For these organizations, the future has suddenly arrived.

For many organizations, collaborative tools have been in place for a while. However, they have taken on new importance during the pandemic, viewed as critical to maintaining business operations. One example is the increased use of video in virtual meetings. This more personalized way of communication has helped break down barriers and build bonds among employees as they see each other in home settings and realize, yes, people have kids and dogs.

Many business executives are finding the new ways of working very productive. Digital meetings are more focused, with people more attentive and time savings achieved through the elimination of travel. Senior executives are able to attend more key meetings across the organization, enabling faster decision-making, driving greater alignment and creating a sense of being closer to the business and the customer. At the same time, expectations for employees have skyrocketed to keep up with an ever-changing environment, often at the cost of burnout.

When developing his theory of evolution, Charles Darwin wrote, "Natural selection favors a sense of flexibility. It's not always the strongest species that survives; it's sometimes the most adaptable."

The pandemic has demonstrated that people are highly adaptable. The speed at which people have changed the way they work and embraced new technologies has clearly demonstrated that a new future of work is clearly achievable if executed with a clear purpose and leadership.

In the respond phase, leaders have pivoted at pace. To follow their example, leverage existing technologies (messaging, collaboration, automation and mobility) to augment your people and critical operational business processes.

CGI deploys Microsoft Teams to

4,000 remote client staff in just over 2 weeks

As Canada began enforcing measures to slow the spread of COVID-19, a large Canadian road and public transport agency faced the challenge of transitioning its 4,000 employees to remote work. Speed was of the essence. Restrictions imposed by Canadian governments demanded an immediate response. In addition, maintaining employee productivity was critical. For help in meeting these challenges, the agency turned to CGI.

Following an agile/sprint-based approach for solution rollouts, CGI implemented Microsoft Teams for the agency's 4,000 employees in just over 2 weeks. The initial rollout focused on essential, high-priority Microsoft Team features, while subsequent sprints added nice-to-have capabilities such as live events and corporate telephony system integration.

Through CGI's Microsoft Teams expertise and solution rollout experience, the agency was able to respond rapidly to pandemic workforce pressures, and with Microsoft Teams in place, it will continue to benefit from a strong collaboration platform as it rebounds from the pandemic.

Rebound: Why have we not done this before?

A question we increasingly hear from executives is, "Why have we not done this before?" While some are experiencing the new workplace normal for the first time, many organizations already have been down this road, testing and implementing innovative ways of working, and the journey has yielded some valuable lessons.

Here are just a few key lessons learned:

Find the right balance: Rarely is one option for implementing a new workplace practice the best. A dual, balanced approach typically yields the best results.

Carefully design the workplace: Poor decisions have led to less meaningful interaction, not more. Carefully considering design implications will pay dividends.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR DESIGNING THE FUTURE WORKPLACE

- Resources (permanent, temporary and robotic)
- Proximity
- Structure, governance and delegated authorities
- Office policies and employee expectations
- Data, information, insights and security
- Culture and workplace environment
- Innovation and collaboration
- Ecosystem (partners, suppliers and supply chains)
- Co-design (involve customers and other stakeholders)
- Complexity of structures, processes and technology
- Technology (enablement, automation and augmentation)

Involve your employees in decision-making affecting culture and work practices: Involving your employees in designing new workplace practices will revive their sense of workplace purpose, instill trust and establish new positive cultural practices. Move from having them "respond to the change" to having them "be the change."

Take into account potential mental health impacts: This helps to avoid the downsides of remote working, including a sense of loneliness and feeling disconnected.

Reduce office space and its cost: Reduce your office space while increasing the flexibility of its layout, design and use.

Consider demographic changes: Rethink how you address interests and demands arising from changing demographics.

Invest in your footprint: Design a resilient and sustainable business footprint by taking into account your locations, talent, resources, travel costs and energy consumption.

Build the right team and leadership: Ensure your teams have the right skills, foster transparency and build trust.

Invest in the right technology: Invest in reliable infrastructure and tools to facilitate smooth uninterrupted working regardless of location.

The reality is that organizations are complex, so deciding where to strike a balance in focusing on the above is important, as well as managing interdependencies and other organizational aspects.

In the rebound phase, leaders will continue to test this hybrid world. Not all activities will return back to the way they were. Business agility has proven to be critical. As organizations review their strategies and adjust their operating models, it is imperative to take time to understand these changes and reflect on how they will influence the future.

CGI helps U.S. behavioral

health provider rebound through digital documentation

A leading U.S. provider of behavioral health services specializing in treatment for mental illness, alcohol and drug dependence, anxiety, and depression relied on a paper-intensive, in-person patient care model prior to the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. After the outbreak, the provider had to quickly transition to a more digital business model to accommodate both its employees and patients.

CGI helped the provider rebound by rapidly moving its documentation processes online, eliminating the need for patients to complete forms in-office. One of the solutions CGI used had not been used in healthcare before, but proved to be both a creative and effective answer to the provider's challenges. CGI also worked intensely to complete the project in record time and continues to work with the provider to add and enhance features.

The provider's new digital documentation platform is not only a solution for pandemic-related challenges but will significantly improve the patient experience post-pandemic.

Reinvent: Becoming a more human corporation

Future workers (GenZ, millennials) value flexibility, and they are no longer lured by higher pay. They want meaningful, interesting work and a high quality of life.

The pandemic has led many to think about what they value and want for their future. A spirit of community has emerged, along with a focus on human connections and social well-being.

People are experiencing a new reality, and while the cause and much of the impact of the pandemic are negative, there have been some positive outcomes, including this new temporary normal in which people are starting to see a way to achieve greater work-life balance.

ORGANIZATION MINDSHIFT

- From profit to purpose
- From hierarchies to networks
- From controlling to empowering
- From planning to experimentation
- From privacy to transparency
- From abundance to sustainability

We will continue to see the development of digital products and services. Our increasingly digital world will drive a low-touch economy as virtual connectedness increases across markets, companies and ecosystems.

However, the pandemic has been a very disruptive force on the traditional structures and operations of organizations. It has exposed the weakness of being highly dependent on people. It also has shown how external decisions, made in this case by governments, can have a geographic impact on supply chains. Organizations have discovered to a greater degree who and what they can trust, raising important questions around stability, resiliency and sustainability. Leading organizations are starting to rethink their strategies, prioritizing safety, risk and resilience.

Their future operating model design is now under review (location, resourcing, supply chain, workplace, ecosystem, etc.). Leading companies are starting to design the minimum viable company—an operating model that supports the operations of their business with a minimal footprint, and one that can be deployed in a cell-like network across multiple locations, providing resilience and local sustainability.

In the reinvent phase, leaders will balance a dual environment.
The future workplace will be more flexible and balanced where empathetic and humanistic strategies are balanced with productivity and collaboration. By nature, it will be driven by data and insights, not only financial and operational, but also behavioural.

What does an accelerated reality look like across an organization?

ORGANIZATION		BUSINESS			TECHNOLOGY		
Structure and governance	**Culture**	**Ecosystem**	**Innovation and co-design**	**Simplification**	**Insights**	**Technologies**	**Employees**
o Self-governing intelligent, teams o Simplified virtual network structure o Organizational alignment by capability o Customer-centric grouping of teams o Hybrid and re-imagined workplace	o Right-paced, enabled by automation and AI o Solid, trusting culture, driven by and aligned on purpose and shared reality o Digital-driven and human-focused o Increased productivity o Enhanced focus on employee well-being	o Widened partner ecosystem network o Resource investments, simplified structure and processes o Greater value through visualization, automation and AI	o Value-focused and customer-informed o Open innovation— using the power of the network o Scalable and sustainable o More funding and resources	o Sustainable and simplified enterprise o Substantial value, accelerated process outcomes through AI o Faster and easier processes	o Balanced insights on human behavior, financials, operations and market changes o Automated and AI-enabled to drive value	o Simplified architecture o Fast and smooth integration of emerging technologies o Fluid / seamless physical and digital working environments	o More time to think and collaborate o Employee-led, value-focused innovation o Hybrid resources working together in a flexible, secure environment o Capability enhancement through contracted resources and partnerships

CASE STUDY

Helping restaurants reinvent the

dining experience to prioritize safety

As COVID-19 lockdown restrictions began to ease, restaurants across the globe gradually resumed indoor and sit-down services. With safety and hygiene a top priority, they faced the challenge of reinventing their workplaces to help continue to slow the spread of the virus. New dining protocols included regular temperature checks, lower restaurant capacity and enhanced sanitization measures.

In Germany, restaurants also were required to adopt contact tracing before resuming dine-in services. Contact tracing enables public health authorities to rapidly identify and break the chains of transmission in alignment with data protection, security regulations and best practices.

To support the re-opening of the hospitality industry in Germany, CGI partnered with Hospitality Digital, a business unit of global wholesale and retail food specialist Metro AG, to develop a digital solution that enables restaurants to capture and share contact tracing information. At the time of publication, more than 1,400 restaurants are using the technology across three countries.

In addition, CGI continues to work with Hospitality Digital to explore and implement other digital tools to minimize the risk of COVID-19, such as enhanced online menu, reservation and payment features, along with other value-add features to create a more engaging customer digital experience.

The role of technology in overcoming great challenges

Debates about how machines will affect the future workplace have been around for a while, with many predictions appearing in comics and science fiction. Although the timing is often debatable and often opportunistically overestimated, major changes driven by technology are inevitable. Here are some key trends we see:

○ **Wider adoption and creative use of what already exists:** While technologies to support collaboration and virtual work exist, we will see greater creative use of them, giving rise to new business and operating models. For example, people already are using the Zoom virtual background and recording features to develop inexpensive and professional quality TV productions, leading to a new breed of content channel providers.

○ **Increased automation and the role of artificial intelligence:** The increased availability of data, coupled with automation technologies (robotic process automation, 3D printing, robotics, artificial intelligence) will provide organizations with more design options to augment human capabilities. These technologies have the potential to reduce the economies of scale barrier and increase flexibility.

○ **Improvements in network connectivity and low latency:** Low latency describes a computer network that is optimized to process a very high volume of data messages with minimal delay (latency). These networks are designed to support operations that require near real-time access to rapidly changing data. Low latency could enable completely new ways of accomplishing tasks. Developments in network latency, especially with later developments in 5G, could enable future workplace options, such as augmented reality, holography, industrial Internet of Things, robotics, remote surgery, etc.

○ **Mirrorworld - Spatial Web02:** The Digital Mirrorworld (DMW) for the most part does not yet exist. In the near future, every place and thing—every street, street sign, lamppost, building, room—will have a full-size digital twin in the DMW. At present, only tiny pieces of this world are visible through augmented reality headsets. Piece by piece, these virtual fragments will be stitched together to form a shared, persistent place that

will eventually parallel the real world and encompass the entire planet. DMW is made possible by the convergence of 5G, cloud/edge/GPU computing, Internet of Things, sensor/camera miniaturization, blockchain, artificial intelligence, and augmented reality displays.

○ **Organizational twin:** The increase in automation and digital data will enable companies to visualize how their organization works, collaborates and innovates, as well as the speed at which it moves. Digital twins mirror physical assets, such as wind turbines or large manufacturing plants. Now we are beginning to see the development of organizational twins—the digital mirrors of enterprises. We predict that all businesses will eventually have an organizational twin that models how they really work and, more importantly, how they respond to change over time.

If organizations want to become more agile and respond faster to market dynamics, becoming insight-led will be critical, and visualizing these insights and related actions will require an organizational twin.

The future of work: An accelerated reality

In the face of an accelerated workplace reality, organizations have a number of opportunities and challenges. What the pandemic crisis has taught more than anything is the importance and value of flexibility. Leaders in workplace management understand their need to flexibly respond, rebound and reinvent as pandemic impacts disrupt and change current ways of doing business. Using technology and focusing on people, they are implementing innovative workplace practices that enable their employees to thrive in the midst of crisis and change, which, in turn, enables their businesses to thrive.

Social
Talent and resourcing challenges

Technological
Hybrid workplace

Political
Austerity and strengthened alliance

The World After

Economic
Lengthened recovery

Environmental
Sustainable behavior

At CGI, we believe the future workplace in the post-pandemic world will be more responsive to evolving social, technology, economic, environmental and political trends. These areas will blend more together to create a dynamic ecosystem that organizations will need to continually asses and accommodate. Post-pandemic, we believe future workplace leaders will be mindful of these trends and the following:

- **Talent and resourcing challenges:** Some workers will reassess personal priorities and pursue new opportunities. Leaders will need to be ready to seek an infusion of new skills and capabilities to keep pace with changing business needs.

- **Hybrid workplace:** The continued infusion of technology into everyday lives will drive the need for greater agility, openness to innovation, and more organizational resilience. Leaders will look to constellations of ecosystems and partners to generate more insights, develop new business models, and create value.

- **Lengthened recovery:** Post-pandemic, we will see the permanent closure of some businesses, the retrenchment of multinationals increasingly focused on local markets, and the possibility of reduced global trade as countries turn inward for manufacturing and services. Leaders will prepare for a lengthened economic recovery due to the weakening of corporate cash and capital reserves, along with variability and unpredictability in the relaxation of social distancing. Considering this, leading organizations are pivoting their strategic plans and setting their big bets for the future of their business.

- **Sustainable behavior:** Values and expectations will continue to shift post-pandemic, influencing life decisions, buying behavior and consumer/citizen demands. Leaders will be carefully attuned to these changes and ready to adapt.

- **Austerity and strengthened alliance:** Leaders will look for a period of potential austerity, as governments attempt to balance their books and as new global governance structures may arise.

While pandemic challenges will continue for some time, each represents an opportunity to rethink traditional ways of working and evolve for the future. With the right mindset and action, organizations can overcome these challenges and become stronger than they were before, well-positioned to embrace and take advantage of the future of work.

Pivot to the future of work with CGI

As a leading provider of workplace strategies, solutions and services, CGI partners with clients across industries to drive and accelerate workplace transformation. We help clients develop the workplace vision, roadmap, operating model and framework they need to respond, rebound and reinvent in the face of changing economic, market and business dynamics.

Through our workplace management services, clients benefit from the following:

- Unique combination of organizational development, cultural change and technology competencies

- In-depth industry expertise

- Advanced workplace technologies, including intelligent automation, data analytics, mobility and cloud

- Industry-leading workplace IP solutions for resource allocation, scheduling, communication and collaboration

- Digital workplace capabilities developed through innovation with clients

- On time, within budget delivery, from strategy development to sustainable results

- Proximity to clients combined with global resources

We help our clients unlock business value by connecting, equipping and empowering their teams through common values, a strong culture and the right tools for getting their jobs done effectively. To learn more, contact us at **info@cgi.com**.

CGI