



ASHLEY RICHARDSON
CTO, Workplace

FUTURE OF WORK

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The future of work is inextricably linked to the evolution of the workplace, an evolution that has been accelerated during the global pandemic. We have seen and personally experienced the challenges that necessitates this evolution. From being unable to find what we needed in stores, or secure a home delivery slot, to being unable to contact a service provider due to increased demand. It was clear that many services, tied to the way people work were not up to the challenge.

We had already witnessed the workplace moving towards automation, artificial intelligence and machine learning, along with a general digitalisation of processes, to both streamline and create new services for business.

With the displacement of people from offices, and the frustrations of individuals being unable to access services, it highlighted just how far many organisations had fallen behind. The future workplace must account for how services are consumed to ensure great customer experience and keep businesses relevant and functioning regardless of external pressures.

Where we work

The digitalisation of the workplace and the transformation of work will manifest in hybrid ways of working. Having the capability to work from any location will also impact the place of work as well. Organisations will need to think about what the workplace will be used for and why people would return.

Some organisations are looking to reduce their physical office space or move out of major cities. Office workers might require more specialised collaboration facilities that are inclusive of people wherever they might be. Front line workers may require access to new technologies or information to help support new business initiatives.

Skilled for Work

Employees will have to re-skill or retrain as technology augments their role and potentially impacts where the tasks are performed. Digital competency is a valuable skill that all must embrace. Much of the effectiveness of work is dependent upon understanding both what, and how technology should be used to be effective in the workplace.

Artificial intelligence, machine learning, and personal assistants will make people far more productive. Scheduling meetings,

booking appointments and time management are obvious benefits, allowing people to focus on the important things in their day, rather than being tied up in administrative tasks.

Fit for Work

One area of focus, that arguably has previously been hidden from view, is employee health and wellbeing. Employee welfare is an integral part of any workplace strategy. Supporting employees to be their best selves allows for more productivity, creativity, builds trust and employee and by extension customer satisfaction.

One thing I have realised during the last 9 months or so, is that work, for everyone has changed, probably forever. Whether a scientist, a nurse, a teacher or a social worker, we all work very differently than we did before. We have proven in many cases that work is about what you do, not where you are. Cultural pressures and inherited mistruths have been not only challenged but turned on their heads. The future of work can be summarised as follows:

- People can and will want to work from different locations so that they can better balance their lives
- Technology is rarely the inhibitor to change, culture or lack of training is usually the barrier
- Digital services will augment what we do in the workplace and how people interact with these services. This doesn't mean replacing people, rather providing a choice as to how people connect and consume services
- New skills will be needed from us all. Just as the workplace evolves, so must we. Basic, repetitive tasks will be automated or digitised.
- Workplace evolution is underpinned by modern technology, so the question to ask is how far along are you with replacement of ageing or legacy technologies and embracing cloud services. Failure to do so will limit the ability to transform and innovate in services to consumers

I read a quote that encapsulates what is required for the future of work, it reads "It's evolve or die, really, you have to evolve, you have to move on otherwise it just becomes stagnant."

The future of work is ever evolving; the question is; will you?