

COMPUTACENTER INSIGHT

# THE GREAT WORKPLACE RESET

Working how, when  
and wherever we need

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# IT'S TIME WE STARTED WORKING SMARTER

The past 12 months won't just be remembered for a pandemic. History will show them to be a pivotal period in workplace transformation; a year-long reckoning, then reconfiguring, of the way we all work.

In 2020, the commute, the nine to five, and endless days tied to one location evaporated from the schedules of millions of people. New ways of working emerged, laying the path for a more modular, blended approach to how we live and work. We glimpsed a future in which we work where and when we are most productive, rather than in set patterns defined by the ticking of a clock.

Ashley Richardson, Chief Technologist, Workplace at Computacenter picks up the story: "2020 has become the year of transformation; the year that all the changes we were predicting actually happened. The change was faster than we ever expected, but these new ways of operating are proving to work. We won't be going back to the way we were before."

In 2020, the world accepted the blurring of the boundaries of work and home and embraced the principles of working however, whenever and wherever we need to.

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Work fits around life now – not the other way around.

Olya Scekaturova,  
Head of Sales, Workplace,  
Computacenter

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# THE TIME TO REIMAGINE

Digital and workplace transformation has been a hot topic for years. Business leaders agreed that mobility, cloud, IoT, AI, 5G and other breakthrough technology would converge to revolutionise productivity and the quality of work.

But the pace of change was sluggish. Big businesses were slow to adopt the holistic, core-to-edge technology that would truly transform the modern workplace. A minority moved to the cloud early. Others hedged their bets on home working, and invested in on-premises solutions, thinking cloud was for the future. CIOs equipped employees with mobile phones, tablets and laptops, but management still expected their people to brave long commutes or travel for face-to-face meetings that could so easily have been virtual.

Businesses suffered the consequences of not going all-in. Productivity didn't always reflect longer working hours,

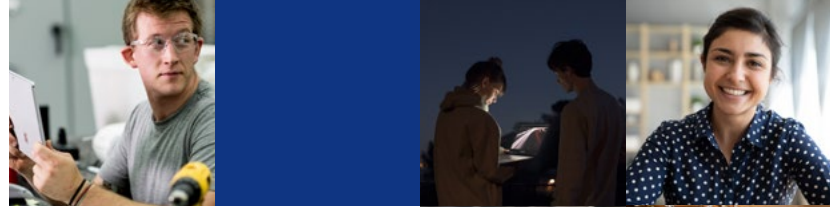
and we saw a rise in workplace stress. CIOs received complaints from their people – and their customers – about frustrating user experiences. And the same old office arguments about parking spaces, IT service issues and unproductive meetings raged on.

Ashley Richardson describes a nation ready for change: “By the start of 2020, UK private and public sector organisations had been talking about workplace transformation for some time. Businesses knew that Windows 7 support was ending, and they were thinking about transforming user experience with a consistent set of tools, processes and technology.

The will to transform to a more modern workplace was already there for many and they saw the benefits: greener working, a wider talent pool, and greater collaboration. But financial reasons, security reasons or organisational inertia still held them back.”

Something had to change. And it did.





# COVID-19: A CATALYST FOR WORKPLACE TRANSFORMATION

The pandemic thrust workplace planners into action. They had to act decisively and fast, whether moving a reduced workforce into home-working en masse, ramping-up production on a factory line for face mask materials, or prioritising telephone, online and app banking.

Every employer faced their own challenges.

The NHS had to build and deploy major new infrastructure, initiate new working protocols, manage staff safety, source new PPE and ventilator equipment, train doctors and nurses and start a huge public information campaign. Microsoft supported hardworking doctors, nurses and

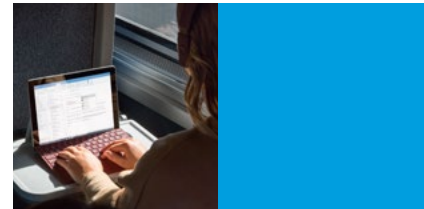
support staff by providing Microsoft Teams for free, enabling them to carry out their vital work.

Supermarkets had to redeploy and grow their workforce, buy-in vehicles, and optimise and adapt processes so they could serve exponential growth in home deliveries.

Banks enabled staff to work from home whilst helping more customers to move from branch banking to new service channels. They faced a double challenge; higher levels of absenteeism in contact centres and increased workloads as the Government relied on them to maintain financial liquidity by lending to small and medium sized businesses. Those who had already made the move to cloud collaboration, provided modern laptops to their people and invested in keeping their infrastructure up-to-date found themselves best placed to 'flick the switch' to remote working.

Covid-19 has catapulted us 5 to 10 years into our digital future.

**Boston Consulting Group:  
Transforming Beyond the Crisis  
With Head, Heart and Hands**







In the high street, shops, restaurants, petrol stations and bars had to reshape the way their staff worked, served and sold. And in the office, almost every CEO had to decide how to keep staff productive from their dining tables, garden or home study.

Paul Kelly, Modern Work Director at Microsoft describes the burst in activity: “We have lived through a ‘once in a generation’ shift. As the initial era of ‘remote everything’ has given way to hybrid models of work, we’ve entered a new digital age that is completely transforming how we work – today and for the next decade.

At Microsoft, we support organisations with hybrid working solutions to enable their people do to their best work. We’ve seen this demand borne out in the use of our services and products. Microsoft Teams has reached 115 million daily active users. This quarter, Microsoft 365 users around the world generated more than 30 billion collaboration minutes in a single day as people communicated, collaborated, and co-authored content.

Windows 10 now has more than 1 billion monthly active devices, up 30 per cent year-on-year. And the demand for Surface devices has risen 37 per cent year-on-year.”

CIOs were forced to make decisions and then act on them at breakneck speed, whilst balancing the need for stability, security, governance and productivity. They had to source new technology and ensure that their colleagues were trained how to use it. Budgets were a concern, whilst demand went through the roof. Social distancing, self-isolation and quarantine all had to be accounted for.

And all the time, CIOs knew that any mistakes might cause irreparable reputational damage.



We saw two years of digital transformation in two months.

**Paul Kelly,**  
Modern Workplace Director,  
Microsoft





# THE WORKFORCE – DISRUPTED, DIVIDED, BUT DETERMINED

IT leaders astonished all with their pace of delivery. They kept Britain productive, completing multi-year projects in weeks.

But after a few months, the cracks began to show.

Ashley Richardson describes the challenges: “Even those businesses who’d already started their cloud journey never planned for life without any access to a physical office. Some businesses found that their VPN or network bandwidth was simply not sized correctly to support the

number of people trying to log-in from home. This left workers unable to access their systems or even check email. Then, when the VPN capacity was expanded, people could log-on but found the experience was much slower than normal. For many, it was quick fix after quick fix.

With proof-of-concepts happening in real-time, IT leaders were often addressing issues as they went along. But now they are beginning to question how best to remove the sticking plaster, review, adapt and consolidate, and turn the quick fixes into permanent change.



Covid has forced big changes. Businesses realise this modern way of working can work for them. It’s opened up the conversation for further improvements. But there are things to fix first.

**Mat Starnes,**  
Solution Leader, Workplace,  
Computacenter



Meanwhile, security had become a major concern. Spreading the IT estate into suburbia had led to increased vulnerability to outages and cyber attacks.”

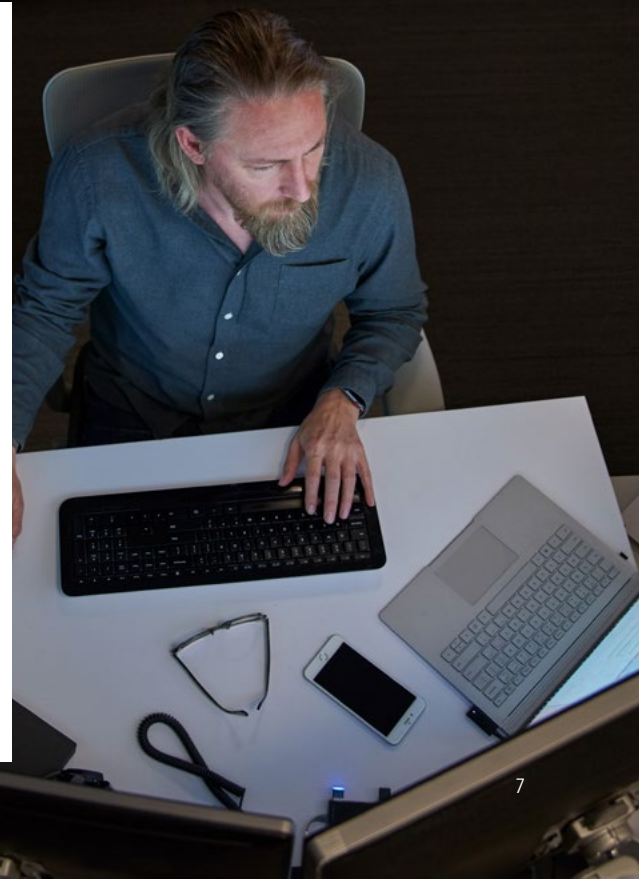
Ashley Richardson explains: “Companies now need to review all the things that have been deployed very quickly and see if these fit with their specific security postures, policies and best practices. I’m talking security built-in, not bolted-on.”

Mat Starnes, Solution Leader, Workplace at Computacenter expands the point: “Some organisations didn’t embrace the cloud during the pandemic. Those still using legacy

management and deployment techniques found that shipping devices to homes massively increased the number of connections and bandwidth usage across VPN solutions. And an increase in BYOD (bring your own device), meant non-corporately owned devices now had corporate data on them. It’s been a challenge to get this all back under control. You can’t simply reset a personal computer full of an employee’s photos. In the future, security has to be built into every file, from birth until retirement or deletion.”

Eighty-five per cent said their businesses have somewhat or greatly accelerated the implementation of technologies that digitally enable employee interaction and collaboration, such as video conferencing and file sharing.

**McKinsey: Future of Work**





# FROM ADRENALINE TO ACCEPTANCE

As the world settled into new working patterns, CIOs began to reflect.

There were positives and negatives. Many employees had embraced home working, but some struggled to combine work with home schooling, the proximity of work and family life, or they had a lack of technical infrastructure at home – such as patchy WiFi – which made productivity difficult.

The CIOs also developed a better understanding of their IT estate. Many discovered multiple under-used capabilities in their existing technology stack. Lockdown pushed them to test this functionality, with varying degrees of success.



There were some mishaps with technology and service levels, but there were breakthroughs too. Forward-thinking hospitality businesses, while working within tight restrictions, found ways to up-skill their staff to take orders on mobile point of sale devices, and to build new ways of ordering by app. Other industry leaders pushed customers and staff onto self-service, saving them time and money, and delivering a wealth of actionable insight through a more data-rich environment. Big winners, including online streaming giants and e-commerce start-ups, worked flat out to service rapid growth.



Experiments with productivity, new devices, and new working patterns yielded huge insight. And as the smog cleared it became clear it was time to look long-term.

Paul Kelly predicts far-reaching changes: "The pandemic has brought about a cultural shift in the expectations of how workers choose to work. The genetic make-up of our organisations will change dramatically. We no longer expect to be in the office nine to five, five days a week.

From a technology perspective, the user experience is more important than ever before. A person's company laptop becomes the entry point into their working world, interacting with their colleagues, and their sense of connectedness and being valued by their organisation.

Gone are the days of being handed a brick-like device that takes five or 10 minutes to start up due to outdated security scripts. Working remotely, users expect a rich, fast, intuitive collaboration toolset brought to life on a modern device that they love and that their security department can trust."

Hybrid working is the future. We're moving to a world where work is device and location agnostic, but the experience is always the same."

## Stop trying to centralise everything: Provide autonomy and accountability throughout the organisation.

**Gartner: Why Now Is The Time To Accelerate Digital: September 2020**



# FROM CRISIS TO CONFIDENCE

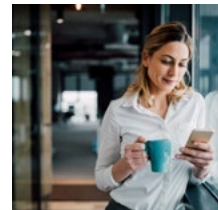
Deloitte says a typical crisis plays out over three time frames – Respond, in which a company deals with the present situation and manages continuity; Recovery, during which a company learns and emerges stronger; and Thrive, where the company prepares for and shapes the new normal.

After a gruelling Respond phase, CIOs are now entering the Recovery phase. They've witnessed the acceleration of long-term trends such as digital-first, self-service, migration to cloud and remote working. They've learned they can change operations at pace. And the experience has left them ready to experiment.



There was a knee-jerk reaction with a lot of businesses buying whatever devices they could get their hands on. Now it's time for them to rationalise their IT estate.

**Olya Scekaturova,**  
Head of Sales, Workplace,  
Computacenter



“ Some organisations, of course, are still managing the current crisis, trying to make it through the next week, while others are already looking long-term.

**Deloitte: Covid-19 Workforce Strategies For Post-Covid Recovery**

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**They're asking themselves key questions:**

- How can we secure the entire IT estate?
- What tools and support do our workforce need for a connected, secure, productive day?
- What are the many ways our people want to work – and how can we enable this?
- How can we work smarter, not harder?
- How can we become the agile, flexible organisation that gives our people blended working, while cutting costs and improving productivity?

The same CIOs are listening to Gartner, who stress the importance of accelerating towards a technology foundation that balances efficiency with resilience, an adaptable workforce equipped with skills, processes, information and autonomy to flex in the face of disruption, and any-scale operations that can spin up and down with demand and unforeseen circumstances<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gartner.com/smarterwithgartner/why-now-is-the-time-to-accelerate-digital>



# A RECESSION – AND A REVOLUTION

## After the adversity comes the acceleration.

CIOs can see there will be no quick fix for the pandemic and forthcoming double-dip recession. They know social distancing, remote working and self-isolation may be here for much longer than originally envisaged. And they've spotted markets are more disruptive, making agility a must-have for any business serious about long-term survival.

Today, the pace of change is faster than ever. And that means businesses must change the technology and behaviours underpinning the working day.

Ashley Richardson predicts that businesses will concentrate on driving operational efficiency by optimising existing tools and modernising: "They'll increase business agility and growth by transforming productivity and flexibility through the cloud, making experiences more user-centric and buying time to innovate by outsourcing BAU (business as usual) processes."

Paul Kelly says organisations that have rapidly flipped to remote working can take the next step by leveraging the Microsoft Power Platform: "Building on a platform like Microsoft Teams, CIOs can take an interface that their people are familiar with, enrich it with new functionality, and add in day-to-day business processes, which will replace old paper-based processes. They're going to make their teams feel valued and invested in."

The months of upheaval have given CIOs much greater insight into what's needed and what's possible. Now they have the experience, and evidence, to make lasting change happen.

## Europe's economy is sliding towards a double-dip recession.

**Financial Times: Europe's New Covid Outbreaks Raise Threat Of Double-Dip Recession: October 2020**





# PUTTING PEOPLE AT THE HEART OF A PRODUCTIVITY BOOM

Where workplace enablement was once a strategic objective, it's now a strategic imperative. And the strategy has to be designed around the people who serve it.

Mat Starnes highlights the importance of fitting IT solutions to the needs of people: "CIOs need to be considering the different persona types in their workforce. They need to ask their people: what is your experience like now? Then they can start iterating and improving and removing the things that don't work.

They'll be moving to the cloud, because that's where the agility comes from, but their primary concern should be asking what is going to allow that individual to be the most effective in their job, and then matching the technology to that need."







Creating more human-centric workplaces has become non-negotiable. Attracting and retaining the best talent is one reason. High potential Gen Z and Millennial workers won't put up with static-desk jobs, long commutes and complex processes. They expect the same convenience they get from Uber, Amazon or Deliveroo in their working lives. That means devices and systems that work when and where they want to work. Frictionless working is no longer the winning hand; it's rapidly becoming table stakes.

Mat Starnes continues: "There are no water cooler moments or chats in the corridor anymore. For many people the quality of the device and the entry into work – via the device and login – is the work experience. Businesses must reinvest the money they save from closing offices into the technological experience of their workforce."

Productivity is key. Redundancies mean that many businesses now have to achieve more with fewer people. But are old-school productivity checks such as 'line of sight' even possible in a remote environment?

Perhaps. Gartner says 16 per cent of employers are using technologies to monitor employees through methods such as tracking computer usage, online clocking in and out and monitoring employee emails<sup>1</sup>.

More forward-thinking businesses are tracking employee engagement and wellbeing to create actionable data on employee experience. All must consider the fine line between privacy and performance and ask themselves: how do we enable 'blended' work through trust and technology, while maintaining productivity and engagement?



I think a much more blended approach is likely, two or three days in the office and two-three at home or wherever is going to be a much more typical pattern.

**Richard Kauntze,**  
Chief Executive,  
British Council for Offices (BCO)



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gartner.com/smarterwithgartner/9-future-of-work-trends-post-covid-19/>

# A WORKPLACE WITHOUT THE WORRY

CIOs may feel they're walking a tightrope between enabling blended working, building in the agility the C-Suite demands, and maintaining secure, resilient, compliant networks that can flex with demand.

But the truth is that workplace transformation can remove security stress as well as silos from the IT environment.

Ashley Richardson picks up on this point: "We can get to a position where workplace security is ensured even as we provide services to people in the way they want to use them. End-to-end security – device, perimeter, data – all needs to be thought about. But there are new ways to think about

security postures and compliance that don't restrict outcome-focused innovation or collaboration."

Tomorrow's CIOs will embrace a new user-centric way of working, one which capitalises on the security and productivity benefits of cloud, backed by an empowered multi-channel service desk. Their job will be forward-focused; their days spent looking into how their flexible infrastructure can be combined with 5G, IoT, AI, automation and other new technology for rapid gains in efficiency, productivity and cost.

The old world of complexity and compromise will be long gone.



Companies need an understanding of their exposure, vulnerability and potential losses to inform resilience strategies.

**McKinsey: Risk, resilience, and rebalancing in global value chains**



# EQUIP, EMPOWER AND ENJOY THE BENEFITS

The future of work is exciting. For employees it will mean freedom over workplace location and times with less frustrating IT issues. Equipped with new devices and freed from productivity roadblocks, they'll enjoy more family time and more autonomy over their projects. They'll have one-click access to apps and files, biometric logons, and simple intuitive UIs and support – at home, in the office, on the ward, or on the factory or shop floor. In short, they'll have the tools and flexibility they need to enact change and achieve their full potential.

Businesses will also benefit. By driving their workplace transformation, private and public sector organisations alike will deliver better experiences to customers, citizens and their own people. The workplace will fulfil its potential to become a hotbed of collaboration, inspiration and innovation.

With the lure of greater resilience, new opportunities and competitive advantage it's time for business leaders to embrace change, enable users and stay ahead of the game.



The pandemic has created an imperative and an opportunity for organisations to reengage with the workforce and reinvent their workplaces.

**Deloitte: Covid-19 Workforce Strategies For Post-Covid Recovery**



# THE CONTRIBUTORS



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# GET IN TOUCH

To discover how Computacenter can help transform your digital workplace with Microsoft, please contact your Computacenter Account Manager, call **01707 631000** or email **[enquiries@computacenter.com](mailto:enquiries@computacenter.com)**

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## **About Computacenter**

Computacenter is a leading independent technology partner, trusted by large corporate and public sector organisations. We help our customers to source, transform and manage their IT infrastructure to deliver digital transformation, enabling users and their business. Computacenter is a public company quoted on the London FTSE 250 (CCC.L) and employs over 15,000 people worldwide.

