



THE FUTURE OF WORK

**THE PARADIGM SHIFT:
PEOPLE AND PRODUCTIVITY
IN A HYBRID ERA**

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Abstract

When there are dark times, there are silver linings. Consider the changing work culture catalyzed by disruptions brought forth by the global crisis: the transformation in the organizational setting, the employer-employee relationship, and the broader role of the government in smoothening the transitions.

There has been a phenomenal boost in the speed at which we are heading into the future of work. And yet, one critical question emerges: what does the future of work entail? Recently, Dell Technologies hosted “Dell Open Mic: Future of Work”, which featured five visionary CIOs who navigated their organization through the inevitable slumps to the other side, inspiring many leaders to do the same.

The Open Mic also saw multiple IT leaders bring their own experiences and insights to the table to discuss key questions critical for any organization looking to adopt a hybrid work model. The report, *The Paradigm Shift: Culture & Technology*, is divided into two parts, each focusing on the assets that will drive our future – people and technology.

The first part features people-centric strategies for reimagining a hybrid culture resilient to incoming challenges. This report answers the following key questions:



1. How can leadership work together to build a culture where a hybrid setup thrives?
2. How do you prepare the organization and associated stakeholders for the imminent change?
3. How can organizations support their workforce through this transition?

Introduction

Organizations are moving toward the future of work at an unprecedented rate. Individuals are now better equipped for global collaboration and realizing new ways to work by leveraging technology. Thus, organizations are already adapting, rethinking, and restructuring their approach to work, which continues to be defined by leaders as they understand and unravel the new dynamics of work.



Leaders looking for a meaningful and mindful work design must consider three aspects - characteristics brought on by the 'future of work', which refers to working structures, the autonomy thus created and enjoyed by both individuals and organizations, and the challenges brought on by the said autonomy.

Solving the Paradox of Autonomy with Algocratic Orchestration

Algocratic Governance occurs when authority is embedded in software that structures different forms of work performance. This assumes importance, especially when we have more work autonomy and where the workers are distributed across the globe virtually.

In such a scenario, a traditional authority-based governance mechanism with a strict hierarchy might not function efficiently. Uber is an example of an autocratic organization where they create value for the market while satisfying the need for autonomy of the value-producing agent.

But it suffers from inherent flaws. Algocratic organizations may use algorithmic rule structures, imposing intended or unintended work and time choice restrictions. This is quite a paradox as it reduces the autonomy of the worker. Thus, the autocratic organizations that promise autonomy in the future of work may end up restricting the same. However, organizations led by leaders who can balance the autonomy needed with productivity will stay ahead strategically in the coming future.



Reimagining C-Suite for a Digital-First World

The concept of remote working is now ubiquitous, with almost every organization trying to implement it. However, contrary to popular understanding, the concept was developed several years ago.

In his Open Mic session, **Mr. Harish Sharma**, CIO, and CHRO, Toyota Financial Services India, discussed the importance of identifying and realizing possible bottlenecks that could potentially reduce productivity, especially in the absence of life-altering events taking place globally. In his opinion, the future of work is hybrid. In this system, employees can work from the office as well as their homes, and as leaders, it is imperative to be imaginative, innovative, and a couple of steps ahead.



Work, as we know now, will be quite different in the coming future. Technology will be central to the future of work. Employees will be more dynamic, and organizations more innovative. Though difficult, the path will be interesting and rewarding in the long run. The behavioral and cultural shifts brought about in the last three years demand decision leadership built on foresight and supported by managers. For successful implementation, an organization must have a distributed executive team.

However, trends suggest that managers feel stuck between leadership and employee expectations. Managers are a critical bridge between evolving employee expectations and leadership priorities. If empowered, they hold the key to unlocking the potential of hybrid work. If empowered, they hold the key to unlocking the potential of hybrid work. Thus, equipping them with the right resources required to manage this transition is imperative. While the policy is set at the top, leaders need to decentralize decision-making and empower managers to make changes on behalf of employees' individual needs.

1. 74% of the managers say they do not have the influence or resources to make changes for employees.
2. 54% of the managers say leadership is out of touch with employees.

The foremost challenge for any organization is to maintain and sustain a culture where most employees work remotely and are virtually distributed. Thus, building social trust

Rebuilding Social Capital Looks Different in a Hybrid World

To build social capital, leaders must prioritize time for relationship-building, team bonding, and acting as 'dot connectors' to help employees broaden their networks.

- 51% of hybrid employees say they are likely to go remote in the year ahead
- 43% of leaders say relationship-building is the greatest challenge in remote and hybrid work.

Following the same route, **Mr. Kiran Belsekar**, SVP – CISO & IT Governance, Aegon Life, empowered his organization by completely transitioning to a 'work from anywhere' ecosystem. Collaboration and providing their employees enough time for deep work, reflection, and relaxation are the implemented values that will go a long way in cementing the social capital at Aegon Life.



Similarly, **Mr. Sharma**, at Toyota Finance Ltd, who initiated the remote work transition at his organization long before it became a common model of work, identified the need to break silos and enhance collaboration. This led to the team building a collaborative tool and effectively using it to provide the professional and emotional support the employees needed to tide over the pandemic.



Supporting Your Workforce Through Their Transition



The Future of Work Study 2021 was done on 9,326 workers by Accenture. They discovered about 83% prefer a hybrid work model. It was also found that those who worked in a hybrid model had better mental health, were stronger, and experienced less burnout than those who worked entirely on-site or remotely.

For your workforce to successfully adopt hybrid-friendly, productive practices, they must be equipped with the right technology, tools and solutions that help them enhance efficiency.

- Workers will need increased access to corporate training through the metaverse.
- The new immersive training capabilities, like collaborative learning, will produce a new wave of workforce skills.
- Technology that promotes remote work, such as VPN, holograms, VR, and Video calling software, will see increased adoption by employees all over the different sectors. New businesses and opportunities will revolve around these technologies.
- With the constantly changing times, employers will implement initiatives to provide mental health support to employees. They will be measured with the parameter to provide proactive and reactive health care to their employees.
- There will be increased instances of the side hustle and side gigs as the flexibility of work increases.

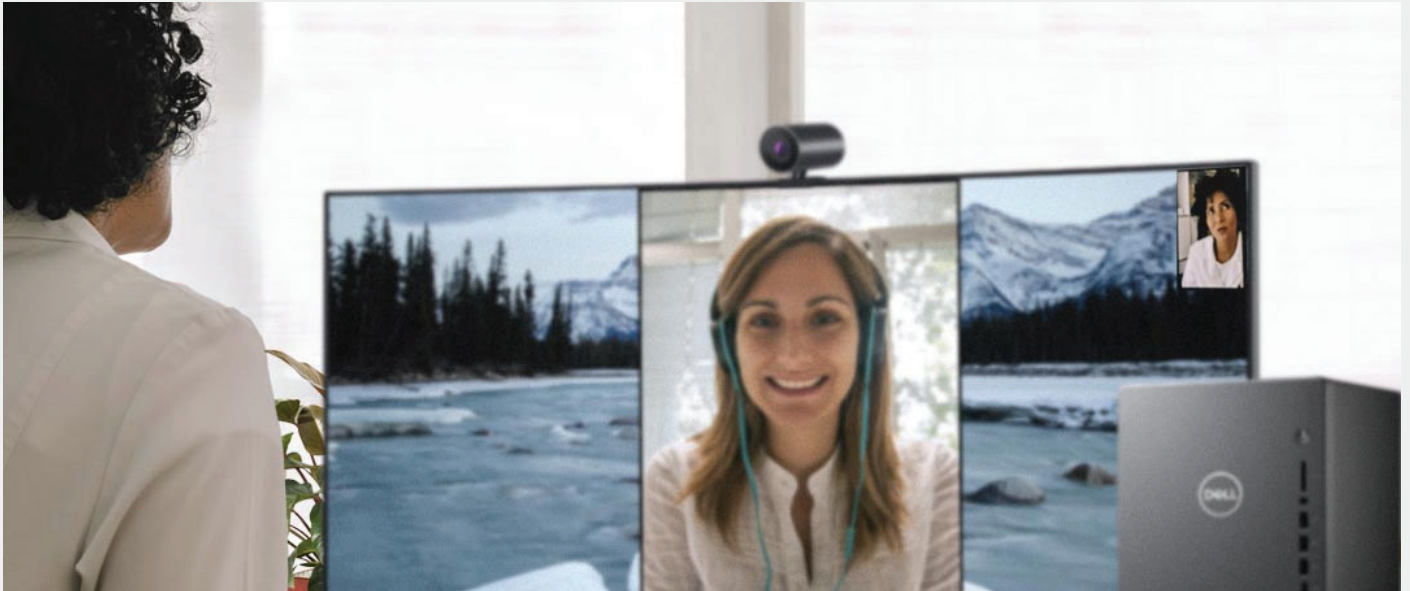
Flexible Work Does Not Have to Mean “Always On”

The hybrid system requires new norms and boundaries to make flexible work sustainable. Teams need to create new norms around flexible work to reduce time spent in meetings and empower people to hit the off switch. This should not be a solo effort but a team-led movement to establish more sustainable hybrid work practices.

- There has been a 252%¹ increase in time spent in meetings per week for an average team user since February 2020.
- There has been a 32%² increase in chats sent per person since Mar 2020.



Business Leaders Now are Reimagining the Role of the Modern Office Through Hardware, Software, and Culture



Leaders must establish the why, when, and how of the office. This means defining the purpose of in-person collaborations, creating team agreements on when to come together in person, defining hybrid meeting etiquette, and rethinking how space can play a supporting role. Organizations that fail to grasp the new standards defining the role of an office risk missing the true benefits that hybrid work offers.

- 38% of hybrid employees say their biggest challenge is knowing when and why to come into office
- 28% of leaders have created team agreements for hybrid work to define why and when to go to the office

Further, it is critical to invest in solutions that equip and train the workforce, thereby preparing them for the future of work not just with skills, but also a change in the mindset.

In the Open Mic hosted by Dell Technologies, most CIOs believed that the future of the workforce will be hybrid, but the degree of it would vary based on the nature of business. According to **Mr. Ravi Kalla**, CIO, Process Anthem Bio Sciences, businesses which operate in innovative spaces and creative thinking have the motivation to work on the hybrid model, but it will be challenging for businesses that work in the traditional manufacturing sector. They will struggle to adjust to the hybrid model since they rely on overseeing work in their operations.



Employees Have a New ‘Worth It’ Equation

What people want from work and what they are willing to sacrifice for a job is changing, and they will consider leaving to get it. Meeting these new employee expectations will require a mindset shift that accounts for the experiences of the past three years. The employees’ ‘Worth It’ equation has changed – and there is no going back. The best leaders will create a culture that embraces flexibility and prioritizes employee well-being – understanding that this is a competitive advantage to building a thriving organization and driving long-term growth.

Recently, companies like Spotify, Airbnb, and Atlassian announced that their employees could work from anywhere, reducing their attrition rate and indicating where the future lies from the employees’ point of view.

- 53%³ of the employees are more likely to prioritize health and well-being over work, compared to employees from three years ago.
- 52%⁴ of Gen Z and Millennials are likely to consider changing employer’s this year, up 3% points YoY

Therefore, addressing attrition, identifying reasons, and leveraging technology are not just for automating business processes as a fail-safe mechanism but also to create opportunities for your workforce to be less stressed.

Upskilling and reskilling are also appreciated by employees, as it not only reflects the company’s trust in their employees but also prepares them for newer, more exciting opportunities within the same organization. **Mr. Kaushik Mamania**, Senior Vice President, Engineering at UFO Moviez India Limited, explained the importance of reskilling, engaging the employees in the remote working environment, and enabling safe operating environments for the team.



3. <https://www.peoplesmatters.in/article/employee-engagement/transition-from-employee-well-being-to-a-healthy-organisation-34666>

4. <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/worklab/work-trend-index>

Categorizing Different Employee Personas



LTIMindtree brought forth the Yin-Yang Model, one based on the concept of duality that is redefining the future of work. The model focuses on building a hybrid working model, where instead of a one-size-fits-all approach, the roles are categorized under personas conceptualized based on employee roles & responsibilities, client requirements, and personal preferences.

For example, the role of a client can be defined as: office, work-office, hybrid, and home office. Further mapping these personas to their business function is more likely to be appreciated by employees. Retaining what is best and fixing what is not is the way forward for creating a culture that promotes efficiency, creativity, and productivity.

Multiple Teams with Multiple Reporting Lines: The Gig Culture

In a virtually distributed culture, the traditional employer-employee relationship might not exist. The terms of employment may differ from the traditional system, where employees are engaged with only one organization.

Take freelancing as an example. There is the realization that the knowledge required to create innovative and new value may reside outside the firm. Therefore, organizations would have to engage more external agents who work independently to get things done. Work may be of shorter duration, with teams forming and disbanding as and when required. Thus, the concept of multiple reporting lines comes into the picture, leaving the organization more matrixed than before.



Way Forward

- Employee flexibility and well-being are considerable expectations that create an opportunity for every organization to reimagine work-life integration as a win-win.
- To make 'hybrid work' work, leaders need to empower managers to be the culture keepers by rethinking the office's role, rebuilding social capital for a digital-first workforce, and creating new practices for sustainable flexible work.
- Technology plays a key role, but this moment calls for a new mindset. As the world continues to evolve, organizations that take a culture-first, the learn-it-all approach will come out ahead.

Organizations are heading toward the future of work with full force. It is only imperative to be ready for anything, anywhere, but the question remains – are we really ready? In the second part, we dive deeper into building technology-led resilience that goes a long way in preparing us to do so.





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