

Digital workplace 2020  
A Blue Door point of view

# What's next for the digital workplace?

How today's tools will create our future workplace

*Telefonica*

O<sub>2</sub>  
business

# Taking the digital workplace forward

The way we work has changed almost beyond recognition. Technology has allowed us to make more intelligent decisions about how we work.

Some of us use digital tools to work remotely, others are using them to streamline processes on site. All of us stand to gain from digital working, no matter what industry or sector we work in.

Those organisations who've started to embrace digital working can see many benefits, such as:

Better employee experiences

Improved business operations and productivity

Better customer service

But a true digital workplace should always be evolving – enabled by new technologies, a culture that supports different working styles and a desire to change the status quo.

So where do the opportunities lie for those who want to take their digital workplace further?

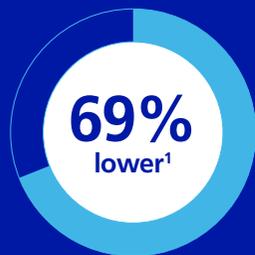
**“We can expect to experience more digital change in the next 20 years than we’ve seen in the last 300.”**

Spencer Kelly –  
Doctor of Technology

# Creating a better employee experience

Employees use their digital workplace to work remotely and share ideas. And when organisations help their employees work in this way, they can see lots of benefits:

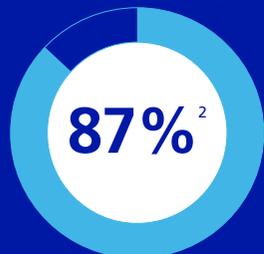
Absenteeism is



Productivity is



Talent retention is improved by



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## Traditionalists – over 70

Have a settled approach to work, with a lot of knowledge to pass on.

## Baby Boomers – aged 55-69

Competitive and with a strong work ethic, they are good role models for younger generations.

## Generation X – aged from 39-54

Believe respect has to be earned. IT literate and independent, they often challenge the status quo.

## Generation Y, also known as millennials – aged from 23-38

Focused on self-improvement. Typically, they have strong social consciences and have taken over from Generation X as the biggest group in the workforce.

## Generation Z, or digital natives – are aged 22 and under

Have grown up on a diet of social and digital media, so technology is intuitive for them.

But keeping everyone happy can be a challenge, especially when your workforce is made up of five different generations who all want different things.<sup>3</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Remote.co, 2020. 17 Stats about remote work in 2020

<sup>2</sup> O2. Flexible working: The route to greater business efficiency and happier people

<sup>3</sup> Approximate values derived from survey conducted by Pew Research Center

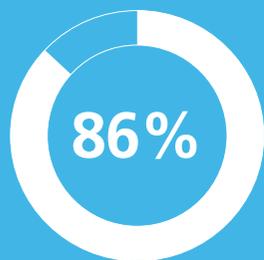
# Here's three practical tips for a digital workplace that works for every generation:

## 1 Build social centres

Embracing social platforms helps different generations communicate in a way that suits them, creating a sense of community.

This is important for employees who spend all or most of their week working remotely – whether that's down to family commitments or because they prefer to work in their own space.

That's why at O<sub>2</sub>, we use Workplace from Facebook to raise employee engagement, and we've seen great results:



of O<sub>2</sub> people are active in a Workplace group



active groups, and any employee can set one up



users in a 24-hour period

**"[Workplace by Facebook] has totally changed the way we communicate with each other and with our workforce."**

Ann Pickering – prior Director of HR and Chief of Staff at O<sub>2</sub>

Using social networks adds a more personal touch to business comms. O<sub>2</sub> CEO Mark Evans uses Workplace to share company results, England Rugby (sponsored by O<sub>2</sub>) updates or to mention that he's been to see his child in a school play. Such openness is great for showing other colleagues that yes, it's alright for them to do the same. And when colleagues share more freely, they get to know each other, even if they aren't able to catch up over a coffee in the office.

## 2 Support device flexibility

Today, most people joining a new organisation will receive a company device. But this presents problems. They can be expensive to look after and they're not always right for everyone – millennials may be more familiar with a MacBook than PC, while generation Z may prefer to work from a mobile on applications like Samsung DeX.

The solution is to introduce Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) schemes. Something many are aware of, but few have fully introduced. However, in recent times the conversation has moved forward. As BYOD offered a solution for companies who needed to onboard remote employees quickly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Security and compliance are often the main barriers to BYOD schemes. But these can be overcome by putting cloud software at the heart of your business. Solutions like Microsoft 365 let you keep working on Office apps including Word, Excel and One Note, while protecting your data with security solutions.**



### 3 Make training available to all

The technology we use has evolved so rapidly that many companies have a skills shortage. For example, 74% of businesses rely on external partners to bridge their skills gap and assist with their Industrial IoT development.<sup>4</sup> And a lack of appropriately skilled personnel ranks as one of the top five obstacles to digital transformation.<sup>5</sup>

**Every generation can benefit from additional technology training. Employers should offer online courses and set aside time to upskill their staff, so everyone can work happily with new technology and enjoy the benefits it brings.**

#### What will employee experiences be like in the future digital workplace?

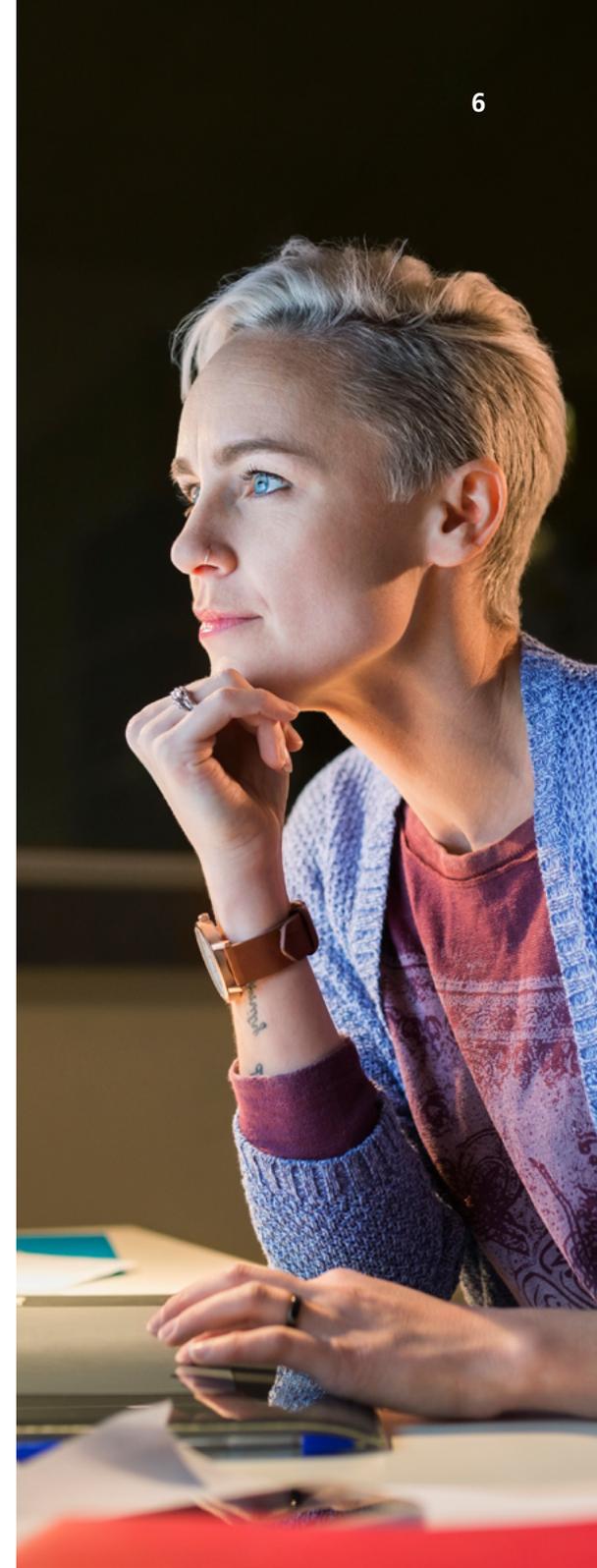
The need for social platforms will increase as more people work remotely and we replace in-person communication with digital. People will have high expectations of these technologies, as they'll become an essential part of the way we share ideas – personally and professionally.

First, video will be the preferred method of communication, used to bring remote teams together over virtual happy hours and company lunches, but augmented reality (AR) will take its place. For example, the Spatial app lets people chat face to face and interact with shared models, bringing them into the same room – wherever they are located. 5G will enrich these AR experiences by enabling 4K and 8K streaming from anywhere. This technology could replace physical conferences, limiting the need for travel to such events, saving people time and protecting the environment.

And joining a company may become a very different experience when Intelligent Assistants take on the role of digital HR. VMware have already developed an intelligent assistant that comes to life when someone joins an organisation, guiding them through the onboarding process. This means inductions can be tailored to the new employee role.

Soon the workplace will become so digitised that it will adapt to worker needs, creating an office environment that suits everyone. Like at Watson IoT HQ in Munich, where the IoT adjusts the ambient lighting and temperature to each person's preferences. IoT can also take on the role of digital receptionist, assigning people to the right meeting room based on the number of attendees.

**One thing is certain for the future of the digital workplace, change will be driven by the people who work there.**



# Smarter ways to run a business

## In a digital workplace people can collaborate more effectively.

They can access the information they need from anywhere. And their business runs more smoothly. This has a direct benefit on the bottom line – saving money and increasing revenue.

Enhanced connectivity could increase UK's industrial output by **£34.1bn**<sup>6</sup>

Companies with a digital workplace see an increase in annual cost savings of **12%**<sup>7</sup>

**56%** of CEOs say digital transformation has increased profits<sup>8</sup>

AI can boost operational efficiency by up to **78%**<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> O2. Business without boundaries report

<sup>7</sup> O2. How connected are you?

<sup>8</sup> Telefonica. Innovate to stay relevant

<sup>9</sup> Telefonica, 2019. Ride the new wave of digital transformation

<sup>10</sup> Stay safe online

## Three ways a digital workplace improves core business outcomes:

### 1 Greater cost-savings

Intelligent devices can be used to uncover insights and make savings. Yarmouth local authority services successfully used IoT to do this. They used low-cost road surface temperature sensors to determine when and how often the roads needed to be gritted, which meant they spent less on salt, fuel and driver time, and reduced carbon emissions.

### 2 Better security

The average data breach costs a business \$3.86 million, so staying secure is essential to business functions.<sup>10</sup> Effective security solutions stay out of each users' way and let them work uninterrupted. A good example of this is AI that learns users' daily routines on their laptops or mobiles. If the AI spots that unusual software or apps are opened, it can alert IT departments to the suspicious behaviour. This prevents confidential files from being stolen off the device or malicious software from being installed – and doesn't require any action from the user.

### 3 More time saved

In a digital workplace, people and artificial intelligences work side by side to speed up tasks. Intelligent Assistants such as Alexa, Cortana and Siri will soon be getting a smart upgrade for the office. Deploying natural language understanding, these IAs will perform actions like setting up conference calls, transcribing and distributing meeting notes, and assigning action points. This means workers can save time on routine tasks, and spend more time focused on their strategic and creative responsibilities which add the most value to the company.



## Becoming the most digital water company in the world

**One of the key changes for the digital workplace in 2020 is the launch of 5G. In our case study with Northumbrian Water, they used 5G to help their workers get access to information in real time and resolve faults faster.**

### Remote expert training and support

A high-speed audio-visual link, connects technicians in the field to experts who can assist with the details of specific jobs. So highly skilled operatives can optimise their time by advising remotely, rather than having to physically go to each job where their expertise is required. This allows teams to resolve faults quickly and more effectively.

### Live access to Geographic Information System (GIS) database

A core feature of the digital workplace is making sure people can access the information they need, wherever they're working. Northumbrian Water's GIS database is a hefty 24GB in size – impossible to transmit over a standard 4G network. Previously, field workers' Tough Pad tablets had to be updated with this information manually every 2-3 months. With 5G, updates can be made and accessed directly by technicians over the air, saving them the trip to the nearest office.



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### What's next for business operations in the digital workplace?

**5G will almost certainly shape how businesses operate in future, enabling us to connect, share and solve problems faster.**

One technology that will benefit most from 5G is IoT, as its low latency and carrier-grade security is ideal for device-to-device communications. IoT can be applied to a range of business processes to improve outcomes. In agriculture, networks of sensors could be placed in the soil to monitor irrigation, nutrient and pesticide levels – this data could then be used to ensure crops receive the right balance of each, maximising yield and increasing revenue.

AI will find itself embedded in most business applications within the next few years. It will be put to a range of uses from finding insights in data to forming part of smart systems that learn over time from data, experience and user input – reducing the time-consuming workload of data analytics and programming.

**And as more companies adopt these intelligent technologies to solve their operational challenges, it will soon become the only way for businesses to keep up with their competitors.**

## Delivering a better customer service

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Many of us are already seeing the benefits of a digital workplace in our working lives, the next step is to bring these benefits to customers.

This can be done using two methods. Technology like chatbots and digital self-service can enhance customer experiences directly. Or customer experience can be improved indirectly by giving employees the tools they need to provide a better service.



## Three ways a digital workplace will make a better customer experience

### 1 Faster delivery and response

The launch of 5G will have a direct impact on customer experiences, making them quicker and more seamless.

5G will digitise roles in sectors that rely on field workers, such as construction and healthcare. This means activities which were only possible face to face – such as patient diagnosis or assessing repairs – could now happen anywhere and will happen much quicker than a physical human response. So customers and patients get more efficient access to the services and care they need.

Take O<sub>2</sub>'s Smart Ambulance trial, we used state-of-the-art devices and simulated 5G connectivity to turn a standard ambulance into a remote consultation room. In the future, the ambulance could be deployed as a solution to help patients get faster diagnosis and treatment.

And it's not just connectivity that will speed up response to customer needs – in call centres, AI can delegate calls to the appropriate customer service agent and manage simple customer requests itself. This means agents are able to focus on cases that really need a human touch.

Amelia, the call centre chatbot, offers an added benefit, it can program itself based on lessons learned from human operators, which frees up time for IT teams who would normally program the chatbots.

This management of tasks based on whether they can be handled by AI, virtual connection or in person means customers get the right level of support sooner. Satisfying the ever-growing demand for instant delivery.

### 2 Employees have the right tools

From dispatcher to community care, people can deliver better service if they have the resources and insights they need.

MySense uses IoT sensors in and around the homes of the elderly, vulnerable and disabled to help carers better respond to their needs.

It learns the behaviours of the occupant and can detect and alert if there are changes which could indicate a problem. For example, door sensors monitor unusual, or even a lack, of activity on front doors or fridges that could be signs of mental or physical issues. As well as enabling carers to detect potential problems, it also helps them deliver a more tailored care service.

While in telecoms and energy, technicians are using augmented reality headsets to 'see' networks of cables beneath their feet. This removes the need for guesswork or trial and error using paper maps. So they can get customers' connection back faster.

Simply put, when employees are supported by the right tools, their customers get better results.

### 3 Customer needs are predicted

What if the products we purchased never broke? In the not too distant future, this could be a reality.

Using a combination of AI and IoT, it's possible to see when a machine is about to break. For example, temperature sensors could be used to predict when your fridge or laptop needs repairing or replacing.

If the company you bought your fridge or laptop from could receive this data, they would be able to resolve faults before they cause your product to stop working. So you never have the frustration of a broken device.

Following a similar school of thought, HP have created 'Instant Ink' – a digital service that means your printer never runs out of ink, as internet-connected printers automatically order their ink when supplies run low.

In this situation, the customer becomes a service subscriber. They no longer buy products outright, instead they subscribe to a service where the company maintains the product in their home.

#### What does customer experience look like in the future?

A fully connected, faster experience, where services are tailored to each person. Customer journeys will be continuous from online to offline, as employees have the right tools to know everything about the customer in front of them and the products or services they use.

**While more customer interactions will take place with technology, personal encounters will still be at the core of providing good service. However, expectations of these interactions will increase considerably. On-demand will be too slow, predicting the desire or need will be the future.**



# How to get everyone's buy-in

If you're planning to take your digital workplace forward, you need to get the commitment of your board. Having the backing of key stakeholders makes the whole process much smoother. And means your digital workplace has the support it needs to transform your business.



Here, three experts offer their advice on getting 'the board on board':

## 1 Show the benefits

Simon Reed, Head of IT Service and Operations at Suffolk County Council

Reed suggests giving your sponsor in the boardroom the technology so they can see the benefits for themselves. He says "the sight of your contact working with the latest smart device, or a marked improvement in the quality of their presentations to the rest of the board, can speak volumes about what's possible. It can sow the seeds of a little device envy into the bargain."

## 2 Educate board members

Satya Nadella, Microsoft CEO

Nadella highlights the need for boards to adopt a positive attitude to learning new things: "Effective boards are those where the leaders of the organisation have stopped being know-it-alls and have become learn-it-alls."

## 3 Create a sense of urgency

Ann Pickering, prior CHRO and Chief of Staff for O<sub>2</sub>

Pickering points out that the London 2012 Olympics helped to kick start transformation for Telefónica UK because of the threat of travel disruption. And similarly, how the recent coronavirus pandemic triggered many companies to start working-from-home policies. Creating a sense of urgency can help to get the ball rolling on big projects.

**While you can't conjure up these events, a little research that indicates a rising threat from agile competitors, or increasing concerns about customer experience, may well help to focus the minds of your board members.**

# What's next for the digital workplace?

**The digital workplace of the future will look quite different from where we work today. Though many of the technologies will be familiar, we will encounter them in new roles.**

AI will become a fellow colleague, guiding us through our new workplace and greeting many of our customers. Behind the scenes, it will bring efficiencies to business processes, saving time and boosting revenues.

IoT will help us create more comfortable working environments and predict our customers' needs. 5G and IoT will unlock business opportunities in places we are only just starting to discover.

Social media will be our place to catch up and share. It's where we'll meet our new co-workers and learn from our peers.

But people will remain at the heart of the digital workplace, whether they're customers or employees. Their desire for better experiences and better business will continue to take things forward.

To discuss how we can help you take your digital workplace forward, call us on **0800 955 5590**, email [o2@o2business.co.uk](mailto:o2@o2business.co.uk) or get in touch with your O<sub>2</sub> representative.

To read more about O<sub>2</sub> points of view, explore our [blog](#).

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