

Google Workspace

Create what's next

The future of collaboration and productivity



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The future of work is already here.

After a year of global disruption in 2020, the conversation around the future of work has intensified. Even before the pandemic, employees, business leaders, and analysts were already thinking about how work needed to evolve, but the crisis brought the future cascading into the present. Virtually overnight, millions of companies and workers became part of a yearlong global experiment in remote working, pushing their collaboration and productivity tools to the test across living rooms and time zones and continents. While some organizations were able to launch new solutions or adapt existing ones to keep their people connected and productive, many struggled.

The organizations that struggled quickly discovered their tools weren't complete, scalable, secure, or built for the cloud era. Meanwhile, across all industries and business types, employees reported spikes in burnout, feelings of disconnection, and frustration with finding the latest information or using unfamiliar tools to collaborate.³ 2020 was the year of "You're on mute," and "Can you see my screen?"

With a majority of businesses headed toward a hybrid blend of in-person and at-home schedules,²⁷ the world of work has been transformed, possibly forever. Workers, employers, and analysts are having a fresh and fast-moving conversation about how organizations can succeed within the evolving future of work. But at the center of that discussion are two familiar topics: **productivity and collaboration**. How will they evolve in an era of distributed teams and surging employee demand for flexibility? And how will businesses meet expectations to innovate quickly and deliver on rising customer expectations while navigating the new future of work?



Although 2020 was a major inflection point, a closer look reveals that many of the technologies, trends, and cultural norms shaping the future of work have been around for some time. For years, forward-thinking organizations have been wrestling with how to maximize collaboration, productivity, and wellbeing among their employees, and they've been developing the tools to make it happen at scale. By that measure, the future of work has been here for some time; it just hasn't been evenly distributed or easily visible.

This report identifies three areas of focus for organizations wanting to catch up with competitors that are already empowering the future of work:

- 1 Making work-from-anywhere a reality with flexible solutions
- 2 Giving people helpful tools to maximize their impact
- 3 Enabling knowledge sharing and human connection

Armed with these three strategies, businesses can improve productivity and encourage innovation while better meeting the needs of their customers and their employees—now and in the years ahead. Let's take a look at each focus area.



1

Making work-from-anywhere a reality with **flexible solutions**

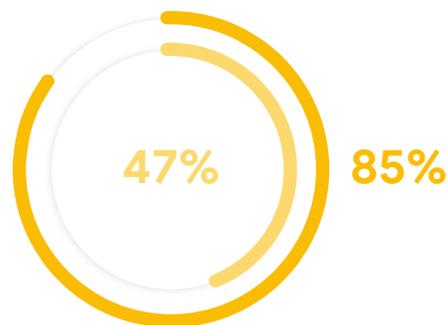


Two core values are reshaping work for forward-thinking organizations and will help determine the future success of every business: **flexibility and collaboration**.

Research shows that flexibility enhances employee productivity and happiness while helping companies attract and retain the best talent from across the globe. When businesses offer flexible work options, people gain more control over where and when to be productive, as well as how to balance their job responsibilities with their personal lives. In a post-pandemic work world, this kind of flexibility has become an expectation for many workers.

One out of three professionals say they see no barriers to taking advantage of workplace flexibility, while 72% of office workers would like to work remotely at least two days a week,²⁹ signaling that demand will continue to increase for remote work, alternative schedules, and new kinds of facilities such as coworking spaces.

People want to choose where and when they work



85% of global workers state working from home is appealing, yet only **47%** currently do so¹³

Flexibility: good for workers, good for business.

Research shows that flexibility influences:

Performance

83%

of employers say the shift to remote work has been successful²⁹

Wellbeing

43%

of professionals cite less stress and better mental health as the #1 benefit of work flexibility⁸

Work outlook

77%

of larger organizations will increase work flexibility while 53% will shrink office sizes⁴

For many businesses, flexibility requires leaders to rethink old assumptions about designing effective workspaces, building strong teams, and assessing job performance. It also requires an IT environment that ensures the same degree of security, reliability, and functionality across locations and devices, both inside and outside a physical office. Traditional remote access solutions, such as VPNs, often fall short in this department: They take time to set up, involve an extra sign-in step, only work on certain devices, and often slow the performance of websites and applications like video conferencing solutions. Ninety-eight percent of people experience frustration with video conferencing while working from home.⁴

With cloud-based services, employees get an identical experience from their business apps and communication tools whether they're sitting at their desks, serving customers in the field, camping out in a coworking space, or working from home or in a remote office.

Collaboration for all. From anywhere. On any device.

People want the freedom to work on their own terms, but that doesn't mean they want to work in isolation. Increasingly, employees value collaboration just as much as flexibility, and they believe that teamwork leads to higher productivity and stronger results—and research backs them up. This is especially true for millennials, the post-1980 generation that will make up three-quarters of the global workforce in just six years. A study found that 74% of millennials prefer to collaborate in small groups.²⁰

Recognizing the growing importance of collaboration, leading organizations are taking steps to reward group efforts, encourage communication and coordination across departments, and transition away from hierarchical models of management toward networks of teams. Particularly important in this evolution is the concept of **collaboration equity**: the ability for employees to participate fully regardless of their location, role, experience level, language, or device preference. Capabilities like multi-language captions in video meetings, or the ability to switch between devices without downgrading the experience, help to bolster collaboration equity.

“Collaboration happens at many different levels. So a vice president and a first-level analyst can be working together, but it doesn't matter what their titles are. They're focused on the task before them.”

David Sondergeld, CIO
for a U.S. retail company

Making flexible collaboration work

People believe collaboration helps them work better...

65%



of organizations view the shift from functional hierarchies to team-centric and network-based organizational models as important or very important⁷

67%



of employees state they are encouraged by senior leaders and management to adopt tools that promote employee collaboration¹¹

39%



of executives state that introducing digital collaboration platforms was the top factor in making remote work sustainable⁷

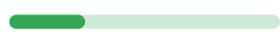
...but not all organizations are teamwork-friendly.

23%



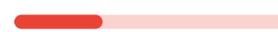
of U.S. employees said that the lack of collaboration within their team gets in the way of work³⁵

25%



of employees find it challenging to locate the right tool to contact someone¹⁹

35%



of workers are not able to access people or groups due to technical issues¹⁹

As individuals and businesses gravitate toward flexible collaboration, technology is evolving to support—and sometimes even anticipate—their needs. We now have tools that let people on opposite sides of the globe work together as a team, from video meetings for face-to-face interaction to digital whiteboards for collective brainstorming. Some of the top ways employers are making it easier for employees to work remotely is by providing conferencing tools (81%), computer hardware (74%), and connectivity tools such as VPN or cellular devices (73%).³²

The old way vs. the **new way**

Old

You miss a whole day of work when your kid stays home sick from school.



New

You join critical meetings via video chat while the little one takes a nap.

To train a team in another city, you lose several workdays to travel and suffer jet lag.



You can present to hundreds of people right from your desk, watch their reactions, and answer questions in real time.

You email many versions of the same document back and forth, from v1 to v1_final to v1_final_for_real.



Multiple people edit one shared version and changes are tracked automatically—no email required.

Sometimes talking is more effective than typing, but you struggle to get everyone on a call or in a room.



You can instantly transform direct messages and group chats into video calls to have a spontaneous quick sync.

Employees rarely interact with business leaders and people in other teams or offices.



Video meetings and online discussion platforms make it easy to connect with anyone, breaking down organizational barriers.

You'd like your team's input on which graphic to use, but it's so hard tracking everyone down that you just ask your neighbor.



You post the options in your team's group chat and start getting votes within seconds.



Case study

[Salesforce](#), a leading provider of cloud-based customer relationship management software, gets everyone on the same page.

Strategy

- Replaced legacy tools with **cloud-based apps** for email, video meetings, documents, and more
- **Adopted shared documents**, ending the practice of sharing drafts via email
- **Automatically gathered metrics** on room and resource use
- Empowered employees to compose emails faster with **AI-powered suggestions**

Results

- **Shortened the review process** for marketing materials from weeks to 24 hours
- **Freed up 200–300 hours** of conference rooms each day by monitoring underutilization
- **Resolved recurring version control issues**, simplifying the long-range planning process
- Enabled employees to spend **less time on email** and more time creating value for customers

“We can collaborate and communicate with all of our stakeholders—both in real time and in a highly secure environment—to create meaningful impact at scale.”

Jo-ann Olsovsky,
Executive Vice President
and Chief Information
Officer, Salesforce



Case study

Cloud tools enabled [Twinkl](#), an online platform for teaching resources, to quickly grow its staff by 535%.

Strategy

- **Adopted cloud apps** for content production, file storage, meetings, and communication
- Moved data from on-premises storage into **shared, searchable repositories in the cloud**
- **Used shared calendars** to automatically schedule job interviews at convenient times
- **Enabled secure sign-in** from any location or device without the use of a VPN

Results

- **Grew staff by 535%** without having to worry about setting up new infrastructure
- **Saved 1,500 hours** of IT administration per year
- **Processed an unprecedented number of job applicants** quickly and easily
- **Improved onboarding, management, and security** for remote and globally disparate employees

“We spend time delivering solutions for our customers, not maintaining infrastructure and services. These tools have supported our exponential growth.”

Jez Seaton, Chief
Technology and Security
Officer

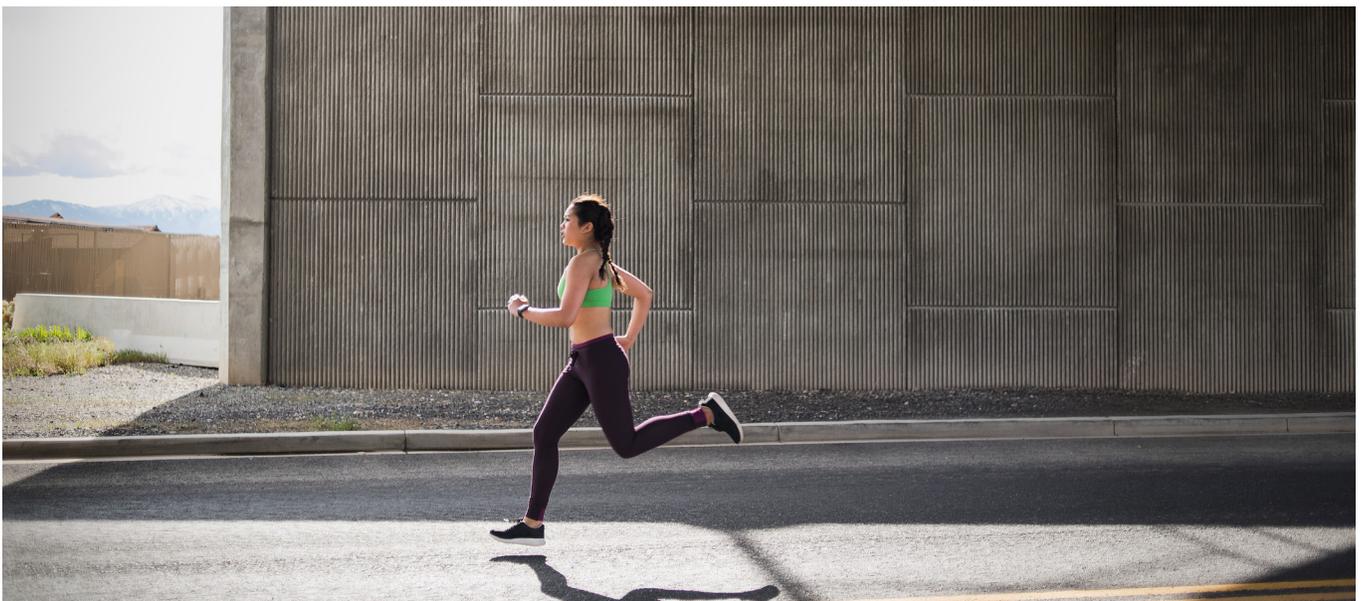
Wellbeing in an always-on world: how to disconnect

There are numerous benefits of tools that let people work anytime and anywhere—but there’s a downside, too. Thanks to cloud-powered tech that allows us to be constantly connected—from smartphone apps to online document storage—many people feel pressure to stay responsive during their time off. **On average, U.S. workers spend eight hours of non-work time per week reading and answering work-related emails.** Fifty-four percent of workers report that their home life is negatively affected by work at least once a week, and more than 50% report sleep loss.⁷ This workplace stress brings physical health consequences as well, leading the World Health Organization to classify burnout as “resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed” as a diagnosable health condition.

But it doesn’t have to be this way. Business leaders can create a culture of respect for each individual’s personal time, helping employees feel comfortable disconnecting and potentially preventing burnout. And there are features in some collaboration tools—like segmentable work hours in employee calendars, or ways to reduce distractions and notifications—that help people sustain work-life balance.

“Detachment is a choice, so be intentional about giving your mind a break to recharge and refocus on the next moonshot.”

Lauren Whitt, PhD,
Wellness Manager at
Google



Managing wellbeing

Recommendations from Google Wellness Manager Lauren Witt

1. Avoid sending non-urgent messages after a certain time of day or over the weekend, and encourage your team to follow suit. To make it easier, use an email service that lets you schedule delivery in advance.
2. Model healthy detachment by leaving the office or logging off at a reasonable hour, incorporating more movement into your day, taking micro-breaks every 90 minutes, and logging out of work-related communication platforms when you're off the clock. Also remember to keep your work inbox closed while on vacation. (Avoid temptation by turning off mail syncing on your phone.) As long as you've designated an alternate contact in your out-of-office responder, everything will be OK—really.
3. If you manage people, check in regularly with each of your reports to discuss work-life balance. If your employees are regularly struggling to detach from work, help them pinpoint the challenges they face and develop strategies for setting boundaries. They may need clarity on which projects to prioritize, permission to push back against unreasonable requests, or reassurance that your company rewards people for doing great work—not for always being on call. Set the example you want to see in your teams.
4. Use a shared calendar solution that lets you and your team set daily working hours and block off time for personal commitments. It's an easy way to manage expectations about when you can join meetings, answer emails, and chime in on group messages.
5. Be open to your employees' requests for flexible work arrangements, like a gradual transition from full-time leave or the option to work remotely on a regular basis. Research suggests that employees with high wellbeing are more likely to feel engaged at work, enjoy their work, and recommend their organization.

Get more tips [here](#).



2

Giving people **helpful tools** to maximize their impact



From launching new services to developing immersive, personalized experiences, companies face growing pressure to delight increasingly demanding consumers. Speed of execution has become crucial, not only because the pace of business has increased but also because it frees up time for employees to make an impact, problem-solve, innovate, and have meaningful engagements with customers.

But for many organizations, routine tasks and inefficient processes are slowing people down. Sixty percent of a workday is consumed with coordinating work—activities such as communicating about work, searching for information, switching between apps, managing shifting priorities, and following up on the status of work. This leaves only a portion of the workday for meaningful work: 26% on the work employees were hired to do, and 14% on forward-looking strategy.³

So where are all those hours going?

Research shows that employees around the world spend significant chunks of their day on low-value tasks that require little human ingenuity and get in the way of productivity. These include attending fruitless meetings, managing high volumes of email, tracking down the latest versions of documents, switching between applications, and dealing with IT problems.

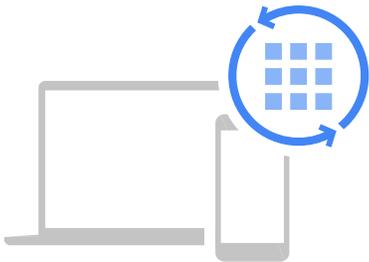
With so many routine tasks consuming their working hours, it's no wonder that employees rarely have time to go above and beyond the daily grind. Even worse, busywork contributes to employees becoming actively disengaged (in 2020, Gallup estimated that to be 14% of all US employees).¹⁴ Not only are people unhappy with all the things that drain their productivity, but businesses are suffering as a result: low employee engagement costs US companies \$450–\$500 billion a year in lost productivity.³¹

“You almost need to set aside some time each day to check different communication channels because, if not, then your only activity during the day becomes answering somebody.”

Massimiliano, IT Director
at a leading European retail
corporation

Time is precious. Here's where it vanishes at work.

Context shifting



The average person switches between business apps and tools **25 times** per day³

Unproductive meetings

67%



of professionals say spending too much time in meetings and on calls distracts them from making an impact at work to some degree⁹

15%

On average



(or 9 minutes) of a 60-minute meeting is wasted³⁴

Communication

70%



of respondents believe that email is one of the biggest drains on productivity at their organization²⁴

Busywork

13%



of time is spent by teams on work that's already been completed, wasting 236 hours per year on duplicative efforts³

Finding speed and agility in the cloud

Many employees already know what they need in order to pick up the pace and make time for innovation: the same kind of seamless, cloud-based tools they use in their personal lives. Some are taking matters into their own hands, with 77% of remote employees using unmanaged personal devices to access corporate systems—a win for productivity, perhaps, but a potential threat to the security and privacy of corporate and client data.⁵ Indeed, 67% of security professionals say remote workers' use of their own mobile devices such as tablets and smartphones to access business-critical applications and IT infrastructure has decreased their organization's security posture.²⁸

Slow, outdated tools can turn everyday tasks like attaching files and joining video calls into headaches. Future-minded organizations understand this, so they're trading in their legacy productivity software for modern business apps that accelerate the pace of work by getting out of people's way. These new solutions are typically cloud-based and align with the cloud-first approach many enterprises follow. Research shows that companies of all sizes increasingly rely on the cloud for their IT needs in general—from collaboration and communication to software development and data analytics—and that the rate of adoption will continue to grow in the future. By 2024, global spending on cloud services will surpass \$1 trillion.¹⁸

“The generations that are coming into the workplace are digital. They come to the corporate enterprise and they want the same stuff. Consumer IT is forcing us to change how we do enterprise IT.”

Bashir Agboola, VP and CTO
for a U.S. healthcare company



The old way vs. the new way

Old

Each contributor edits a separate document, requiring someone to consolidate many versions into one.



New

Everyone works together in a single document and sees changes as they happen.

The team spends a lot of time organizing folders and files with versions and naming conventions for reference and sharing.



Powerful, intuitive search means that the right files and folders surface when they're needed.

You spend more time on the layout of your presentation than you do on the content.



Automated design suggestions can be applied with one click, instantly giving your slides a polished and consistent look.

Planning a meeting takes a lot of manual work.



Your calendar automatically finds convenient times, pre-books rooms, creates and sends reminders, and generates dial-in numbers.

You write "Have a great weekend!" 50 times every Friday.



Personalized suggestions appear as you type, reducing the time it takes to compose an email.

New hires get access to email, applications, and resources in a slow and piecemeal fashion.



IT admins use cloud-based management tools to quickly set up new users and deploy apps to their devices.

IT teams must manually upgrade software and install security patches on individual machines, creating downtime for users.



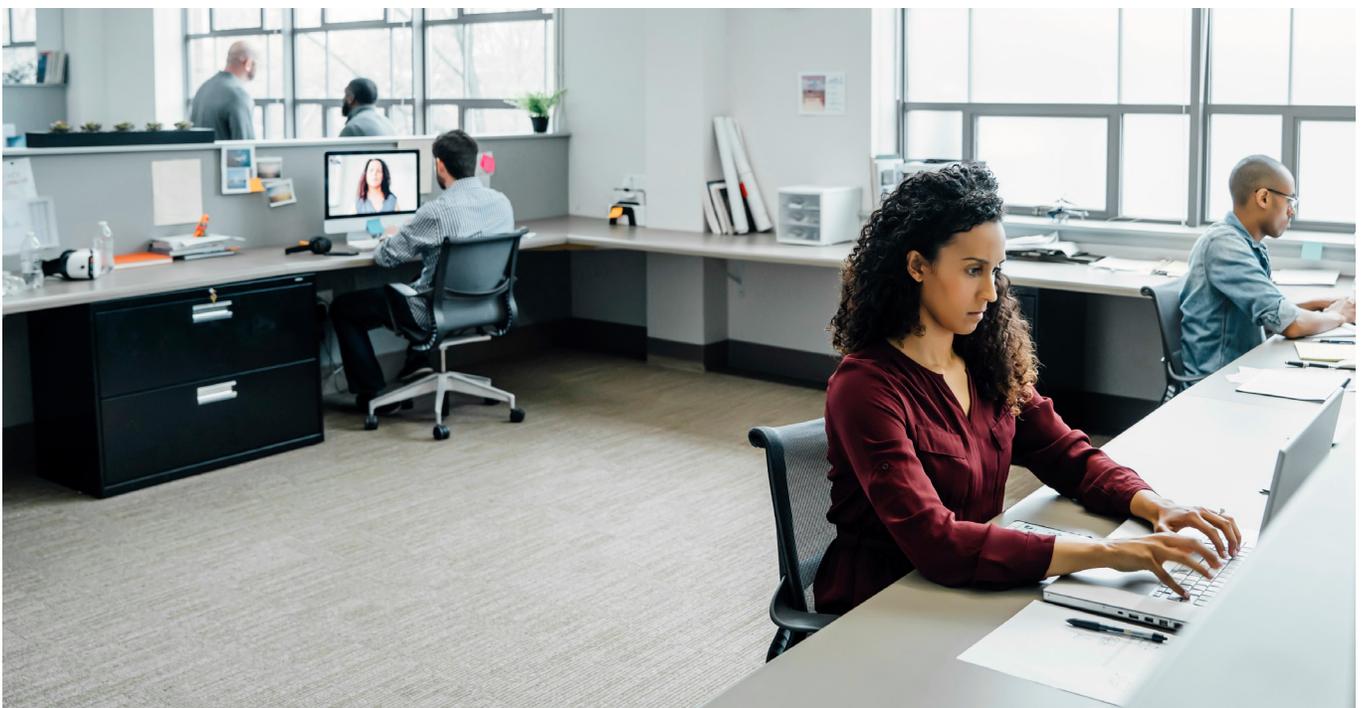
Cloud software stays up to date automatically, so you always have the latest features and safeguards.

Cloud-based tools are designed to fade into the background so people can deliver their best, without thinking about the technology they're using or the device at their fingertips. Working behind the scenes, these solutions handle routine and repetitive tasks, or eliminate the need to perform them in the first place, letting employees get to the core of their jobs faster. Business teams can focus on creating new products and delighting customers instead of attaching files and searching for the right version of a presentation. Analysts can focus on gleaming insights, not formatting reports. Customer support specialists can focus on answering questions, not pulling up records in multiple systems. And frontline workers can focus on delivering impact, instead of searching for the information they need to be successful.

Cloud-based business solutions have the greatest impact on speed and productivity when they work together. And that includes how they work with third-party software applications through integrations and interoperability. This allows employees to complete entire workflows without toggling between apps or re-entering credentials. For example, a salesperson can find customer info from their CRM tool while drafting a strategy document, an engineer can add tasks to their project management app directly from their email, and a recruiter can consult their hiring pipeline while scheduling interviews in their calendar.

“Today we need to open Office to edit a document, then go to File Explorer to change its name, then open email to send it, then go to WhatsApp to send an audio message, and then schedule a video conference in Skype. This is not a seamless experience.”

Luciano Nascimento, CTO
at one of the largest banks
in Brazil



Easing the burden of busywork

Automation, or augmented productivity, is increasingly part of modern productivity and collaboration apps. Powered by AI, this kind of augmentation helps employees save time by removing the burden of mundane tasks. Imagine, for example, intelligent software that learns your work patterns and preferences over time. Then, when you're preparing for a meeting or drafting a status update for your team, it automatically surfaces suggested files to review—relevant presentations, documents, and spreadsheets—so you don't have to track them down. Add up the few minutes it saves you each time, and that's a significant chunk of the day you've reclaimed. In fact, intelligent collaboration and productivity tools can save the equivalent of one full work month per year per employee.¹⁰

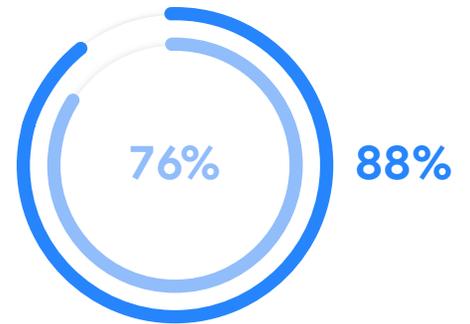
Technology experts and business leaders emphasize that these tools enhance human productivity by helping people spend more time doing what machines can't: thinking strategically to innovate. Many businesses are well on their way to harnessing the power of augmented productivity. In a recent Deloitte study, 58% of respondents stated that their organization already uses AI to improve the consistency and quality of their work.⁷ And it's not just about knowledge workers. The prevalence of smarter and more powerful mobile devices has opened up new opportunities for those working on the front lines, especially during the global pandemic—from nurses and construction workers to field technicians and retail associates.

“Automation isn't about replacing your job. It's about empowering you to do more with your time.”

Maribel Lopez, Founder and Principal Analyst, Lopez Research LLC



Automation can lighten the load of routine tasks and result in new opportunities.



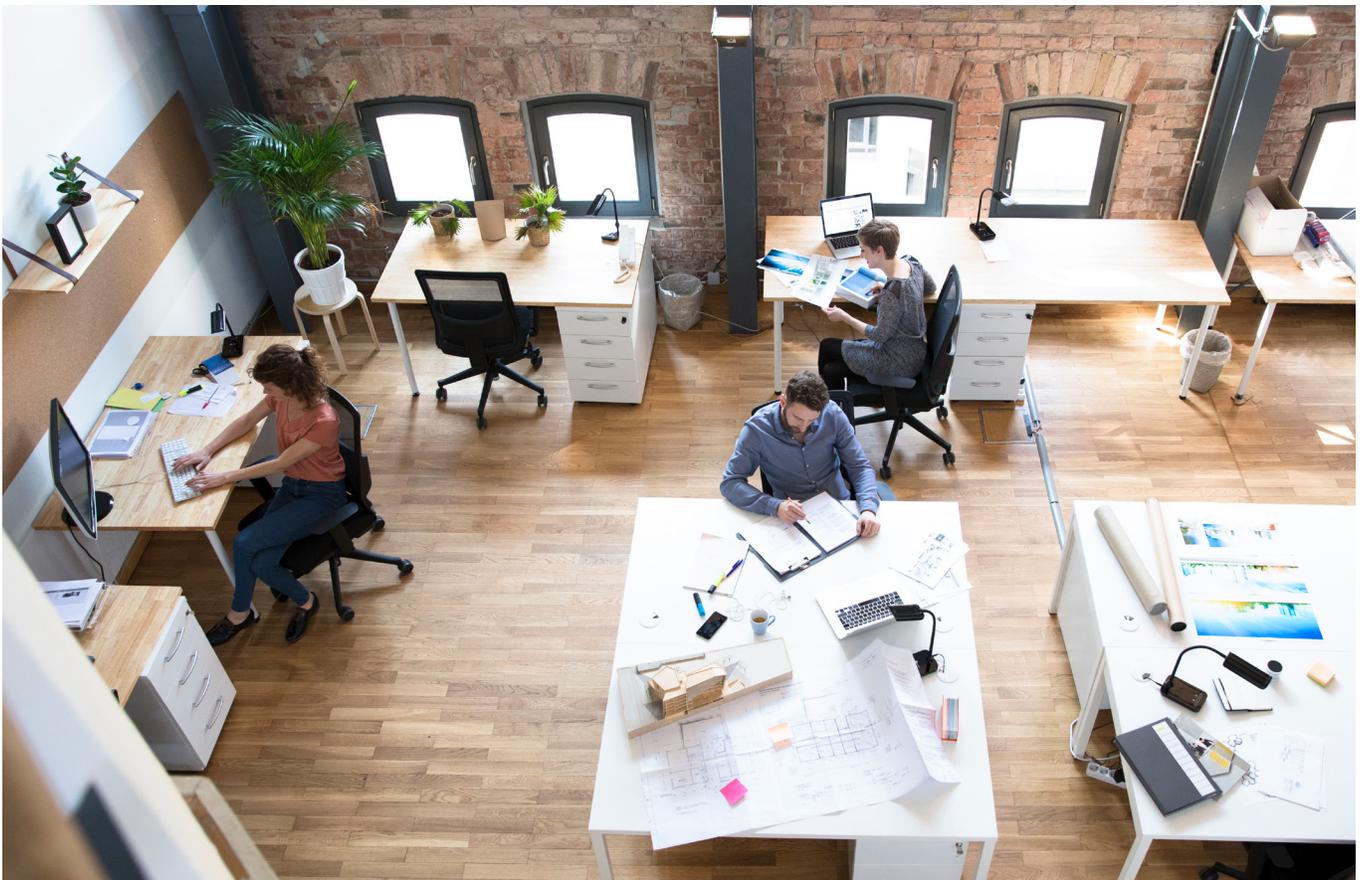
73%

of workers believe that automation will offer them an opportunity to qualify for more highly skilled work¹²

66%

of employees agree that new roles will replace ones lost to automation over the next five years¹⁶

88% of finance and insurance executives, and 76% of information and technology executives reported increased implementation of automation and AI since the outbreak of the pandemic²⁶



Fringe benefits of faster, smarter tools

Today's workers place so much value on modern, easy-to-use tools that an organization's choice of technology can affect recruiting. Seventy-two percent of US workers say that a company's digital leadership greatly influences their desire to join that company.³⁰ Meanwhile, 77% of executives state that their technology architecture is becoming critical to the overall success of their organization.¹ Giving employees compelling digital experiences also improves retention: 96% of talent professionals say employee experience is becoming more important, while only 52% of employees say their company provides a positive employee experience.²¹

It's not only internal users who benefit when companies adopt faster, smarter technology. As employees spend more time on delivering impact and less time on routine tasks, there's a powerful trickle-down effect on the speed and quality of customer interactions and experiences. In an era of soaring consumer expectations, this is essential to staying competitive.

“Work is going to focus more and more on the abstract, the creative, and the unique things that people are good at and that can't be outsourced to machines.”

Paul, CTO at a U.S. media and gaming company



ATB Financial

Case study

Alberta-based financial institution [ATB Financial](#) speeds up mundane tasks to spend more time improving the banking experience for customers.

Strategy

- **Replaced legacy office tools** with a cloud productivity solution
- **Empowered deskless workers to be productive from anywhere**, without needing a VPN
- Redesigned their workflow to **end file loss while improving security and compliance**
- **Sped up business processes with collaboration tools** that prevent versioning issues

Results

- **Reduced quarterly board reporting time** by nearly 60%
- **Cut consolidation time in half** for its semiannual talent review
- **Reined in unnecessary meetings** by enabling teams to connect over video

“To serve our 750,000 customers better, we knew we needed to reimagine how we work together. And to do that, we knew we needed a new kind of toolset to enable collaboration like never before.”

Wellington Holbrook, Chief Transformation Officer, ATB Financial

NIHR | National Institute for Health Research

Case study

Cloud-based collaboration tools helped the [National Institute for Health Research](#) innovate in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, enabling it to deliver health studies in days instead of months.

Strategy

- **Enabled 8,000 workers to communicate and collaborate** across multiple locations with a single cloud-based solution
- **Connected a network of stakeholders** with a single email system that seamlessly integrated with video conferencing
- **Implemented a global search tool** that allowed researchers and staff to find the data they needed

Results

- Urgent health studies **completed in days, not months**
- **Video conferencing became the backbone of connection** during COVID-19 lockdowns, with a 379% increase in the first two months
- **Data is discoverable faster** for life-saving research

“We wanted a solution that would empower us to operate as a single corporate entity over multiple locations, multiple platforms, and multiple scenarios. The hub we have built is the fundamental backbone of our operations.”

Justin Riordan-Jones, Head of Systems and Information (Research), UK Department of Health and Social Care

Making meetings matter

For many employees, inefficient and unproductive meetings are the most wasteful part of the day. We reached out to Google experts who train their colleagues on how to run productive, efficient meetings and asked them to share their secrets.

- 1. Pare down your guest list**

Productivity advisor Laura Mae Martin typically limits her meetings to attendees who can contribute meaningfully to the conversation, help the group reach a conclusion, or come away with new insights that will help them do their jobs. When in doubt about a meeting invitation, ask for a detailed agenda or follow up with your host to share your thoughts separately.
- 2. Send an agenda, every time**

Create an agenda for your meeting and share it several days in advance, along with any supporting documents, suggests training specialist Jose Gomez. An agenda helps ensure that key people actually show up, have time to prepare, and are in the right frame of mind to engage.
- 3. Take running notes**

Writing an ongoing account of the meeting as it unfolds can help keep people engaged and aligned while ensuring that everyone leaves with tangible action items, says Kevin Bleicher, a technical program manager. He recommends taking notes in a shared document in real time.
- 4. Draw out the silent types**

For some people, meetings offer a time to shine. But your team may also include some quieter, more strategic thinkers who have dazzling ideas yet don't thrive in a conference room. To avoid missing out on their input, Laura Mae Martin recommends inviting attendees to weigh in via email or shared document before the meeting. You can also ask people individually in the meeting what they think of a given topic, or invite them to give their feedback in a real-time meeting poll.
- 5. Be mindful of people's time**

Sometimes, a meeting isn't the best use of everyone's time. Can you easily achieve the same objectives with a group message, email thread, shared document, phone call, or casual chat? If a meeting is the right next step, all attendees should feel like it was time well spent.



3

Enabling knowledge sharing and human connection



Research continues to show that people do their best work when they have fast, easy access to collective knowledge and the information they need to do their jobs. Recent global survey data suggests that employees think real-time knowledge sharing leads to:

45%



Greater innovation & problem solving²³

56%



Increased efficiency & productivity²³

38%



Better levels of customer service²³

55%



Removal of organizational silos⁷

It makes sense that access to knowledge can help unlock employees' full potential. Sales teams can produce higher-quality presentations when they have the right data, proof points, and creative assets at their fingertips. Marketers can build better campaigns when they know how previous initiatives performed. And IT workers can respond more quickly to security risks when they receive proactive alerts about suspicious activity.



Accessing data and information

By 2022, 65% of CIOs will digitally empower and enable frontline workers with data, AI, and security to extend their productivity, adaptability, and decision making in the face of rapid changes.¹⁷ But despite this trend, employees on the frontlines and in the office are frequently in the dark or out of the loop.

People can't find the info they need

51%



of employees avoid sharing documents because they can't find them or it would take too long to do so¹⁹

88%



of employees cite the need for a dependable, unified search platform that would help them do their jobs better²³

83%



of workers struggle with version issues daily²³

Knowledge isn't shared across the organization

43%



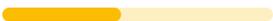
of employees report they were excluded from meetings or brainstorm¹⁹

28%



state they didn't receive information about process or policy changes due to silos¹⁹

44%



of workers state they have missed out on important information because it was communicated in person¹⁹

Access is a blocker

35%



of employees are unable to access important documents or information¹⁹

92%



of employees say that their job would be easier if they could quickly access documents without having to worry about which system or repository it resides in²³

To overcome these information gaps, 46% of workers have shared sensitive documents on their personal accounts, putting critical business data at risk.²³ Future-thinking businesses know there's a better way to empower employees to excel at their jobs, understand the context and consequences of their work, and build experiences that delight customers. It happens by creating a culture of transparency and knowledge sharing.

Safe tools for accessing, finding, and sharing information

The first step is to provide employees with centrally managed technology that fully meets their need to access and share knowledge, curbing reliance on unsanctioned apps that may endanger sensitive data. For example, many businesses are adopting cloud-based file storage and synchronization services, social platforms designed for corporate communications, and tools for searching across internal data repositories. People can help themselves to information quickly and easily, without having to worry about versioning issues or going through the extra step of connecting via VPN. Ideally, employees don't even have to enter a keyword or open a folder; instead, an app will use artificial intelligence to automatically surface the right content at the right time.

But access is only part of the puzzle. Employees also need help transforming all this knowledge into value. How can they use data to make smarter business decisions and design better customer experiences? Leading businesses take advantage of AI-powered solutions that let anyone uncover valuable insights from data, even if they don't have specialized training. For example, a spreadsheet program might offer the option to write queries using natural language instead of SQL.

“I'm so busy that I'm just not going to go to the corporate portal to start fishing around and looking for things.”

Zachary, Director of IT Applications for a U.S. financial services company



The old way vs. the new way

Old

To locate last year's sales deck or a high-res company logo, you have to navigate complex file structures or scroll through old emails.



To draw meaningful conclusions from the Q4 budget report, you need help from a data analyst.



Employees rarely interact with business leaders and people in other teams, so they have little insight into what colleagues are doing and thinking.



People miss out on training opportunities because they're not in the right place at the right time.



Inventory reports are submitted at the end of each day, preventing real-time visibility into product demand.



To track the manufacturing process, line supervisors record metrics on paper and enter the data at a later time.



New

Smart tools automatically surface relevant information and enable fast, easy searching across your organization's assets.

It's easy to surface insights from a spreadsheet by typing questions in natural language—no formulas or SQL required.

Online platforms facilitate meaningful discussions and knowledge sharing, breaking down organizational barriers and increasing engagement.

Attendees join and participate in video training sessions from any location or device.

Shared spreadsheets provide teams with real-time data, helping them track and reallocate items more intelligently.

Metrics are captured in real time at mobile kiosks, allowing stakeholders to identify and address problems immediately.

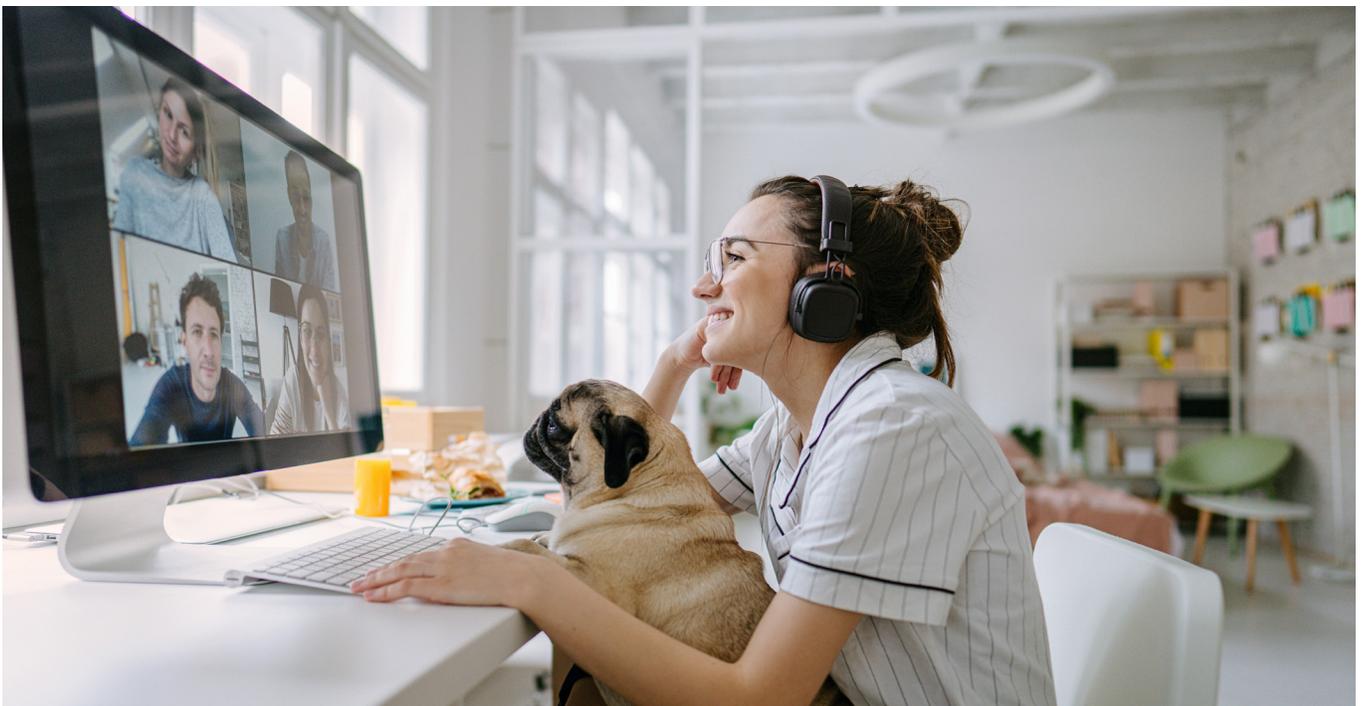
Enabling more voices, better ideas, and human connection.

Today's employees care about and benefit from expanded access to shared information, but that's not all: They also want opportunities to contribute to their organizations' collective knowledge, whether it's by suggesting a new product or service, providing feedback on internal processes or business initiatives, or exchanging insights with colleagues across the company. Research shows that highly engaged employees are 87% less likely to leave their companies than their disengaged counterparts.³³

Human connection is also crucial as employees find themselves relying on collaboration and communication tools across distributed teams. During the pandemic, 1 in 3 workers reported feeling disconnected from their colleagues and their company's culture.² As many employees find themselves in hybrid work models—splitting their time between working remotely and working in the office—they'll need help building and sustaining meaningful connections via the tools they use every day. Immersive experiences that put the focus on people rather than the technology will play a role, as will inclusive features like translated meeting captions so that global attendees can fully participate.

“We have found that companies with focused diversity and inclusion initiatives have proven to be more successful. When employees feel their voice is heard, there is better employee engagement and job satisfaction.”

Michelle Bailey, Group Vice President, General Manager, and Research Fellow, IDC



The value of diversity and inclusivity

Companies in the top quartile for gender diversity on executive teams were 25% more likely to have above-average profitability than companies in the fourth quartile.²⁵

36%



outperformance by companies in the top quartile for ethnic diversity compared to those in the fourth quartile²⁵

89%



of talent professionals say a multigenerational workforce makes a company more successful²¹

71%



of millennials and Gen Zs reported that their organization is creating a diverse and inclusive working environment⁶

Organizations also stand to gain from a range of voices: 89% of executives say that for a business to be successful, new ideas must come from everyone across the organization, regardless of their role or seniority.¹⁵ Forward-thinking companies understand this, and many have taken concrete steps to flatten hierarchies, promote diversity, and encourage creative thinking at every level. While over half of US workers say they're regularly asked to propose completely new ways of doing things, only two in five say their companies encourage them to set aside time for innovation.³⁵

What do employees need in order to innovate and problem-solve?

Enough free time to look beyond their daily to-do lists, along with access to information that enables smarter decisions.

“Incoming generations want to get work done efficiently. As a result, they will also demand more from organizations as customers, employees, and partners, because they grew up with the expectation that sharing, services, and information will be readily available.”

Jim Lundy, Founder, CEO, and Lead Analyst, Aragon Research



Case study

International lifestyle brand [GANT](#) streamlines the knowledge-sharing process, reclaiming 150,000 hours a year for global innovation.

Strategy

- Replaced expensive legacy tools with **cloud-based collaboration and productivity apps**
- **Enabled video meetings for connecting face to face** with teammates and partners from anywhere
- **Gave new hires immediate access** to online training, documents, and other resources
- **Assigned ownership of key files** at the team level for better availability and control

Results

- **Reclaimed 30–60 minutes every day** for their 800 users, freeing up time to focus on creating
- Eliminated the need to email files back and forth, **decreasing email usage by 40%**
- **Reduced travel costs by 20%** by conducting meetings and training sessions via video
- **Improved the productivity of new hires** by streamlining the onboarding process

“Our employees have everything they need accessible at all times, from any device. As a result, we’re reclaiming approximately 150,000 hours a year for global innovation.”

Rickard Söderberg,
Global Digital Workplace
Manager, GANT



Case study

Cloud tools cut planning time in half for [Canada Games Council](#), a nonprofit organization that organizes a biennial multisport event.

Strategy

- Provided employees and volunteers with **cloud-based tools for meeting, working, and communicating**
- **Replaced a paper-based knowledge transfer process** with an online file-sharing system
- **Streamlined travel planning** with a shared spreadsheet containing real-time updates
- Moved decades of information into **online storage for fast, easy sharing**

Results

- Enabled staff to **reclaim 40% of their day** by eliminating the task of keeping volunteers in the loop
- **Saved host cities up to \$2.5 million** in infrastructure, licensing, and support costs
- **Cut operational planning time in half** by improving productivity

“We empower as many as 500 volunteers and employees to collaborate. This has allowed venues to improve consistency by eliminating redundancy and to reduce the planning time from two years to one year.”

Aaron Bruce, Vice President,
Sport, Canada Games Council

5 tips for protecting your organization's data

Google security expert Heather Adkins shares some key security best practices:

- 1. Take advantage of security automation**

With cyberthreats on the rise and attackers using more sophisticated techniques, security is a business necessity that must scale. Move toward automatic security processes with next-generation analysis tools that alert admins to suspicious activities, respond immediately to attacker activity, and methodically apply the same rules to similar threats going forward.
- 2. Get a bird's-eye view of your security posture**

Many employees regularly work across multiple devices and apps, making it difficult to know where the boundaries of the enterprise begin and end. A unified dashboard can act as a sophisticated watchtower, providing admins with insight into their assets, updates on their security system's effectiveness, warnings about potential threats, and security improvement recommendations.
- 3. Stop relying on passwords alone**

Add an extra layer of protection with multifactor authentication, which requires employees to sign in using something they know (their password) and something they have (such as a phone prompt, voice call, or mobile app notification). Make the process even more secure by arming users with security keys, which are physical authentication tokens that connect to computers and devices.
- 4. Change the locks when employees leave**

With 73% of employees currently open to new opportunities, and 33% actively looking for new jobs,⁷ the risk of ex-employees walking away with corporate secrets is significant. Keep your organization safe and secure by taking advantage of cloud services and discouraging the use of local storage, such as USB drives. When an employee leaves, be sure to disable their access and remotely remove your data from phones and other personal devices.
- 5. Safeguard private information**

Information in the enterprise is growing at a rapid pace (doubling every 1.2 years)²³ so companies have more information than ever at their disposal—and much of it is confidential or protected. Data loss prevention systems reduce the risk of human error by scanning email traffic and shared files for sensitive content, such as credit card and bank account numbers. You can create rules to trigger automatic actions when detection occurs.



4

Delivering the future of work. Today.



The future of work is already here. It's in a shared document where three founders in three different countries hash out their mission statement together (and exchange a few GIFs). It's at a baby shower attended via video meeting by coworkers around the world. It's in the gigabyte-sized video files that a fashion brand buyer shares instantly with colleagues in Milan and Paris, or the online survey that inspires a local bakery's most popular cupcake yet. It's in every extra second that people can spend delighting customers, thinking creatively, or bringing ideas to life—all the exciting and amazing things that humans alone can do—while technology takes care of the other stuff in the background.



“This is a call to action to all organizations. To thrive in a distributed hybrid workplace, companies need technology that enables the business to create adaptable, intelligent and assistive services—because that’s what your competitors will do, and they will be ahead of you. Think about what you’re doing today that reimagines your work process to create agility that can help you unlock ideas and creativity.”

Maribel Lopez, Founder and Principal Analyst, Lopez Research LLC

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