A person wearing a white face mask is shown in profile, looking at a smartphone. The background is dark with vibrant, colorful bokeh lights in shades of blue, green, red, and purple. The person's hand is visible holding the phone, which is illuminated by the ambient light.

The future of
business depends
on today's digital
transformation

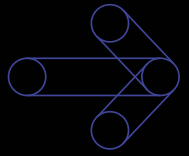
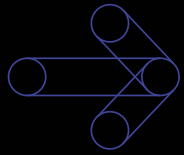


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What is digital transformation?

Change is an unavoidable – but sometimes uncomfortable – part of life.

The current COVID climate is rapidly forcing difficult changes that have left us increasingly dependent on technology, especially in the business world.

To keep operations from being totally disrupted, or worse, replaced, companies across the board are being asked to implement swift digital transformation, a decision that impacts almost every area of their business.

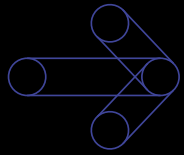
Let's rewind here. Digital transformation (DX) is the adoption of innovative technologies to achieve greater efficiency or effectiveness of a company's business model, processes, products and services, customer or employee experience, etc. Done intentionally, DX can also help manage risk and control business costs. The concept of digital transformation is a term that encompasses a myriad of tools and solutions that make process improvements possible.

As companies bring more digitalisation into the fold, they increase the flexibility with which they do business. But with budget cuts breathing down the necks of decision makers, businesses have to make some tough, strategic choices with their technology investments.

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Companies are investing in tech

Considering the increased disaster-preparedness pressure from leaders and stakeholders, it's no real surprise that IT teams are looking to mitigate other potential setbacks.

Though that's not the only reason they're turning to tech.

It's estimated that **73% of IT managers** are planning to accelerate digital transformation initiatives during this crisis. According to an OpsRamp survey conducted in early April, "58% expect to either 'significantly' or 'moderately' increase their annual technology budgets right now."

But what are they spending that money on?

A special edition of AppDynamics' "Agents of Transformation" report gives insight into what IT professionals are prioritising:

Experts and researchers also predict that DX will fuel significant demand for data intelligence and analytics tools.

88%

said the digital customer experience is now their company's top priority

87%

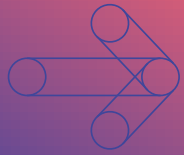
expect more focus on risk and disaster planning

86%

expect to see continued use of remote working tools and technologies

84%

expect their organisations to maintain more flexible/on-demand resourcing



Telecommuting for the masses

Humans have technically worked from, or at least within, the home for roughly 1.4 million years.

Before cubicles were the norm, your garden or farm was your office. But according to Global Workplace Analytics, before the COVID outbreak, only 3.6% of the employee workforce worked from home more than half of the time.

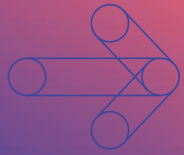
Now, the research and consulting service predicts, “25-30% of the workforce [will be] working at home on a multiple-days-a-week basis by the end of 2021.” The report goes on to say that, “the longer people are required to work at home, the greater the adoption we will see when the dust settles.”

It seems this transformative time has only increased employee demands for remote work options, which were already a priority for 80% of workers before the pandemic. It’s also destabilised long-standing objections from the employer side, slowly reducing the fear of managers and executives who previously opposed telecommuting.

On the whole, most companies are finding that with the right tech and clear expectations, productivity can actually increase while employees work from home. Done right, telecommuting could also have long-term cost-savings potential, a positive impact on sustainability and improve employee-employer relations.



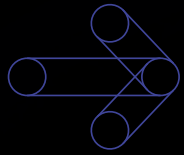
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Your telecommuting checklist

As COMPUTERWORLD explains, remote work increases the risk of unauthorised systems access, internal IT infrastructure vulnerabilities, increased bandwidth costs and data breaches. At minimum, companies should safeguard their enterprises by:

- Training employees on basic security best practices**, including how to spot phishing, securing their devices and Wi-Fi equipment, the dangers of public Wi-Fi, and who to contact if there's an issue.
- Deploying a VPN**, giving employees access so their locations and IP addresses remain hidden while company data stays secure in transit.
- Installing security protections to work devices**, ensuring virus checkers, firewalls, and device encryptions remain up-to-date at all times.
- Conducting a password audit**, creating a security policy or employing a digital password manager that mandates features like alphanumeric codes, two-factor authentication, etc.
- Updating all software**, automating it across all devices employees use in their remote work.
- Providing access to company-approved cloud services**, using secure apps that have first been verified by your IT team.
- Securing home routers**, offering support to help employees reset their default Wi-Fi passwords.
- Enlisting an online backup service**, discouraging backups to local storage devices, external drives, and USB sticks that are vulnerable to malware.
- Managing devices with an MDM/EMM solution**, separating personal and professional data, while better controlling Mac security.
- Developing contingencies**, putting people and plans in place to ensure all failsafe roles and systems have a backup.



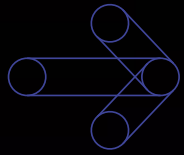
The rise of virtual events

After global travel ground to a halt and gatherings of large groups were deemed unsafe, event planners, conference goers and fundraisers took their efforts online. Repackaged as virtual events, galas, trade shows and annual retreats are now being test piloted as digital experiences.

Though it remains to be seen whether they'll be as well-attended or well-funded, at the very least they're supported by a litany of networking technologies including:

- ✓ Wi-Fi 6 and 5G can support extensive IoT constellations. Both improve the wireless user experience of remote workers by delivering fast speeds and reducing battery usage even on densely populated networks.
- ✓ Digitised spaces, which helps analytics engines flag potential physical breaches by using wireless device signals to track patterns of movement.
- ✓ Software-defined wide-area networking, SD-WAN, which helps networks and networking engineers route traffic to nearby data centers securely, while decreasing bandwidth.
- ✓ Machine learning, which will proactively analyse, optimise and secure networks more efficiently and autonomously.

With the help of these and other networking technologies, the decreased costs and flexibility of digital event content could be a long-lasting format.



Establishing trust in a digital world

Identity verification is an oft-overlooked part of digital transformation.

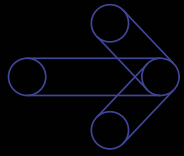
But when everything from your banking to your grocery shopping needs to happen online, suddenly digital identity management takes front and center. Now, companies have an undeniable obligation – if not outright incentive – to verify that an online customer’s digital ID matches their physical ID.

Without the ability to verify a customer’s identity at a physical location, and a stark increase in identity theft, the onus is on businesses to gather, verify and – most importantly – protect their customers’ private information, all while monitoring their access to specific applications.

TechRadar explains,

“Single Sign On (SSO) solutions are becoming increasingly necessary. These allow users to authenticate themselves across a business IT infrastructure without having to login separately for every application, and all without compromising on security. This is almost certainly going to be the default way that employees and consumers manage their identity in future, instead of having to remember multiple passwords and other login credentials.”

These and other verification solutions are fraud-deterrents that also improve the user experience, a goal the vast majority of businesses share.



SaaS and the cloud – the great equalisers

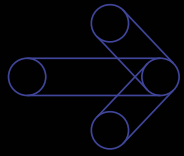
Present-day disruptions are changing our sense of normalcy at breakneck speeds. Fortunately, the cloud has made it possible to connect and communicate in real-time.

It's kept us streaming, data mining and collaborating, while staying safe from online and human viruses. It's also allowed for businesses to pivot on a dime, saved jobs and helped us stay connected, even as the outbreak has kept us physically apart.

And it's done all this uniformly, making the benefits of DX accessible to more individuals and businesses than ever before.

Duck Creek Technologies sums it up nicely: “Good technology has a democratising effect on business. It enables the largest number of users to more quickly and dramatically improve their work output because it minimises barriers such as cost structures, complexity and clumsy interfaces. The best users – meaning the ones with the most experience, intuition or creativity – optimise their results by discovering or devising new opportunities to increase their productivity. That’s one of the promises of digital transformation.”

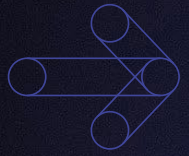
“Good technology has a democratising effect on business. It enables the largest number of users to more quickly and dramatically improve their work output...”



SaaS and the cloud – the great equalisers

SaaS companies have also been quick to offer help during the pandemic. As BlastMedia reports, some notable offerings include:

- ✓ Atlassian is offering a flagship product, including its Jira issue-and-project-tracking software, which is now free for teams of up to ten people.
- ✓ Boardable is offering its board engagement and management platform to nonprofits everywhere for free for up to 90 days in order to help board members communicate and continue board operations.
- ✓ Box is offering its business edition, which offers things such as unlimited storage and data-loss protection, now available for free for 90 days.
- ✓ Moz is offering free access to Moz Academy, their must-know breakdown as the leader in search engine optimisation technology.
- ✓ Slack is offering free upgrades to paid plans for teams working on coronavirus pandemic research, response or mitigation.



Conclusion

We're all venturing into the unknown.
But digital transformation is helping
to keep us from flying totally blind.

The more forward-thinking and customer-focused these
digital services are, the more these forced changes can
improve businesses for the better.

