BUSINESS CONTINUITY

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Contributors

Peter Crush
Business journalist, specialising in human resources and management issues, former deputy editor of *HR* magazine.

Hazel Davis
Writer, specialising in small businesses and contributing to the *Financial Times, The Daily Telegraph* and *The Guardian.*

Oliver Pickup
Award-winning journalist, specialising in technology, business and sport, and contributing to a wide range of publications.

Sooraj Shah
Contributing editor at *New Statesman Tech,* writing regularly for *Computing, IT Pro* and other business tech publications.

🐦 @raconteur f /raconteur.net 📷 @raconteur_london

LEADERSHIP

Emerging from a crisis chrysalis

Trust is a key ingredient in running an organisation at the best of times. In the midst of the biggest socio-economic crisis in generations, it is essential

Peter Crush

Josh Calabrese/Unsplash

How often has it been said leadership and trust are two words that don't often go hand in hand? Edelman's annual trust barometer typically finds two thirds of staff tend to think this most of the time. Yet the curious thing is it's precisely in times of crisis, and just when things might be regarded as being at their most difficult for chief executives, that leadership is exactly what employees want and need like never before.

Vulnerability begs stability and when crisis occurs people want to trust their leaders. Some might say a crisis can be the perfect catalyst for leaders to reinvent themselves, to pull their people with them, build long-term engagement and enable them to emerge from their "crisis chrysalis" stronger than ever? But how and is it really that easy?

The task might sound Herculean, but history is certainly littered with examples of leaders who have literally been recast by either adversity or a crisis, whether it's arctic explorer Ernest Shackleton, or politicians such as US President John F. Kennedy during the Cuban missile crisis. Or even sporting achievements, notably Sir Matt Busby's eventual football triumph, winning the European Cup a decade after losing eight Manchester United players in the Munich air crash of 1958.

Such precedents should be extremely heartening to leaders grappling with a crisis of their own. "There's probably less a lack of trust in leadership per se, but more a distrust of individual leaders," argues Richard Glynn, former chief executive at Ladbrokes.

"When a crisis comes, many of the inadequacies of leaders will come into sharper focus, but there is absolutely the opportunity to metamorphose. However, something different has to come out. A new covenant of trust needs to be created."

London Business School's Professor Alex Edmans, author of just-published book *Grow The Pie,* argues trust should be seen as a pie, which gets smaller as pieces are chopped away by, for example, companies avoiding paying tax, paying excessive bonuses or failing to be socially inclusive.

When a crisis brews, Edmans says, not only must shrinkage of the pie be arrested, but leaders actually need to grow it. "We're seeing particularly interesting leadership strategies with COVID-19," he observes.
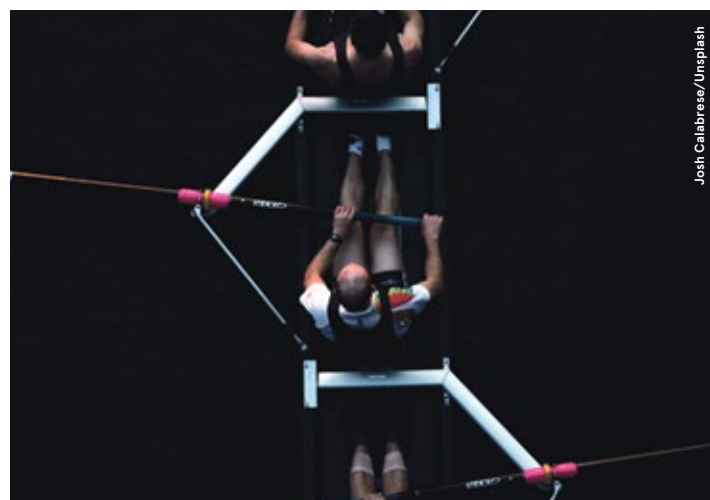
"Boeing's CEO has said he won't take a salary for the rest of this year, while Unilever is donating €100 million of hand sanitisers and soaps, as well as offering cash-flow relief to its supply chain to ensure products reach customers.

"In the UK, Chelsea Football Club is offering its Stamford Bridge Millennium Hotel to NHS staff. What's interesting is, thanks to this, we're seeing enhanced warmth and trust in owner Roman Abramovich, who has not historically fared well with the British public. While typically venerated leaders like Sir Richard Branson, who is wanting bailouts yet is perceived as having a net worth to ride the crisis out, are seeing their lustre tarnish."

In some respects, it's a classic case of actions creating trust. As David Lewis, academic and author of *What Philosophy Can Teach You About Being a Better Leader,* says: "Leaders manage by the authority of their position, but can only lead if people follow them." However, he also says regaining or inspiring trust requires leaders to understand what sort of crisis leader they need to be.

"One of the biggest challenges about a crisis is the temptation to want to take control," he argues.

"So bosses need to determine what requires 'expert leadership', with them just taking clear decisions, and what needs 'facilitated leadership', that is showing willingness to others to get involved."

Academics accept that too much of a lurch one way can be jarring and can cause employees to doubt the long-term authenticity of their actions. "This is why following the underlying principles of what instils trust, crisis or not, still needs following," says Dr Alan Watkins, psychologist and human performance expert.

He says three key elements are needed: personal contact, in this sense prioritising communication; putting across values and motivations with leaders explaining why; and then delivering on promises.

"Trust isn't a popularity contest; staff will go a long way with leaders even if they make decisions that impact them in the short term," says Watkins. "If staff know why a certain decision has been taken and see it followed through, trust builds. What a crisis does require though, is a doubling down on all three of these areas. Leadership is important ordinarily; in a crisis it's now super important."

A problem with trust though is, while it's fast to lose, it's slow to rebuild. Leaders expecting a fast turnabout with their new-found attention could be disappointed. "True trust is earned through progressive behaviours over time," says Glynn. "So while a crisis might be a point of turnaround for leaders to consider it more, they only truly earn it slowly over time. They should not expect change overnight."

Watkins argues leaders, who really want to change, and want to emerge from their crisis chrysalis reborn, must really understand their own emotions too. "Crisis creates a fork in the road, to be a better leader or not," he says. "But they can only choose a better path if they establish a new sense of meaning; that they've woken up to a new reality."

This might be a harder challenge as Churchill found to his cost. The prime minister, who was arguably Britain's greatest war-time leader, was unable to repurpose all that made him successful in adversity when the Second World War ended. Despite approval ratings of 83 per cent, he suffered one of his party's biggest electoral defeats, arguably because people saw his work was done and somebody different was needed.

"The biggest problem leaders will face after this particular crisis is over is knowing how to shift between different leadership approaches as smaller, ongoing crises present themselves," says Lewis. "In our now 'new normal' world, nothing will be quite as predictable as it once was."

Establish trust though and there is a much higher probability of leaders charting a new direction supported by the majority. Last year a study by organisational improvement consultancy Tolero found lack of trust in leadership was the biggest issue impacting their work performance, but that by instilling it engagement rises.

"Leaders who can explain the context of a crisis will always stand a better chance of gaining, or regaining trust, because staff will see things from their point of view and have an understanding of what they need to do," says Lewis. "Those able to couch it as an opportunity to learn will also succeed."

While few leaders will ever want to experience a crisis, most should be able to see them as opportunities to reposition themselves and change where they might have been going wrong. "Once leaders develop new mindsets, they develop new habits too," Edmans concludes. "That should continue to keep trust alive." ●

WHO'S RESPONSIBLE FOR CRISIS MANAGEMENT?

● C-suite   ● Non C-suite

Crisis preparedness
42%
25%

Crisis response
41%
24%

Stakeholder communication
39%
20%

PwC 2019

Commercial feature
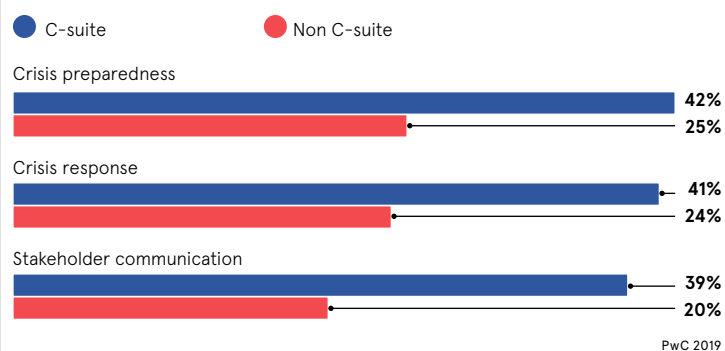
Necessity is the mother of transformation

We are on the cusp of the next revolution in the working world

Digital transformation, already a significant theme for organisations across the globe, has been turbocharged by recent events. As the business community adjusts to a changed emphasis on remote working, many are recognising now is the time to use technology and enable fast, flexible and, critically, safe practices throughout the corporate world.

Key among these new practices is that of electronic signatures such as Adobe Sign. A technology that has often in the past been seen as a simple desire to save paper is now being recognised as having far greater benefits through its transformative effect on an organisation.

ADOBE SIGN: SAVING THE WORLD ONE SIGNATURE AT A TIME

E-signature not only makes things quicker, easier and more secure for businesses, it's better for the environment too and enables the following resource savings:

£444,322
in paper costs per year

160,000
gallons of water over three years

58,188
pounds of wood over three years

9,000
pounds of waste over three years

"Adobe Sign has allowed us to begin to think about how we strip back a wealth of form-filling and about the pertinent points of data we need to collect," says Ian Bell, chief executive at the Police ICT Company, a membership organisation that supports UK police forces with technical insight. "There's been an impact against the whole of the delivery cycle."

The move away from "wet" signatures has been gathering force since the practice became accepted as legal in the UK two decades ago. The benefits are quantifiable in both time and money, according to the Total Economic Impact of Adobe Sign, a commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Adobe, which revealed an average of 1.5 hours are saved with every transaction. There is a 96 per cent reduction in cycle time from seven days to a mere two hours. Organisations also found it freed up the equivalent time of three full-time compliance employees who could move to higher value tasks.

The numbers quickly add up in organisations. Statement processing time in the police force has been reduced from four days to a matter of minutes. With up to 700 statements a month now completed via phone and Adobe Sign, an estimated 25,000 hours of officers' time is saved every year.

Policing is being transformed by the National Digital Policing Strategy, launched in January and jointly authored by the Police ICT Company and the National Police Technology Council, and Adobe Sign is a part of that bigger picture. Speeding up the process of taking witness statements using the phone rather than in-person interviews has improved the quality of witness recall, giving the police a better chance of resolving crimes.
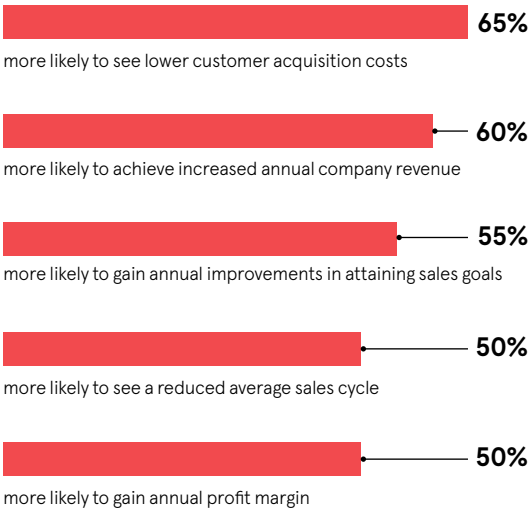
Forces are now innovating with Adobe Sign, looking to use the technology not only in witness statements but also in other paper-intensive processes such as firearm licensing applications, a 15-page form processed 55,000 times a year by the police.

According to the Forrester study, Adobe Sign often leads to a re-evaluation of workstreams: "some interviewees have simplified and consolidated documents... transforming

them into templates or forms that reduces time spent on document preparation or contract generation."

Time-savings have also been one of the biggest benefits at Rentokil Initial, a FTSE 100 company built on pest control and hygiene. Bringing in Adobe Sign cut contract turnaround times from a typical two to three weeks to an average of twelve minutes.

"It's incredibly quick and productive for us," says Daragh Fagan, Rentokil Initial group general counsel. "But it's also a great pitch for the customer; we come across as professional and show we are easy to deal with."

The huge range of Rentokil customers, from an individual with a wasp nest in their garage to global food companies or hotel chains, necessitated a plug-and-play solution that worked well with existing technology.

"We already had online tools so customers can get all kinds of data about their service, but the contract

E-SIGNATURE IN ACTION

Sales departments using e-signature technology are:

65%
more likely to see lower customer acquisition costs

60%
more likely to achieve increased annual company revenue

55%
more likely to gain annual improvements in attaining sales goals

50%
more likely to see a reduced average sales cycle

50%
more likely to gain annual profit margin

"Funds came through in record time, with the process proving much quicker and easier as a result of having the right technology in place

element was a gap," says Fagan. "When you sort that part as well, it's both efficient for the customer and it delivers increased insight for us. It gives us a visibility and governance that we have found hard to achieve before."

DIGITAL IS THE NEW NORMAL

Leading organisations understand the power of digital tools and leverage them more frequently than their competitors in order to improve the buying experience

● Leaders ● All others

E-signature / other digital signing tools	Business intelligence / sales analytics	External social selling and prospecting tools	Rich media or augmented / virtual reality sales tools	Machine learning
39%	39%	28%	21%	20%
21%	27%	18%	10%	12%

Aberdeen 2019

"Adobe Sign enables businesses to continue operating throughout a crisis," says Mark Greenaway, director for digital media at Adobe, who points to the ease of use as a key reason for its adoption. The technology can be used on any device and, in most cases, training takes a matter of minutes. It can be used whether staff are at home, on the move or in the office. "It can be deployed quickly without changing processes, but can then develop those processes. Customers are consistently surprised by the benefits they can achieve," says Greenaway.

Digital has been the norm long enough to provide evidence of its benefits. A research report published last year by Aberdeen found 39 per cent of leading sales organisations used e-signature, compared to only 21 per cent of others. Other digital metrics showed similar differences. When it came to business intelligence and sales analytics, the comparison was 39 per cent against 27 per cent, and for machine-learning it was 20 per cent against 12 per cent.

The report was clear that seamless touchpoints are critical in improving the customer experience. "E-signature is not a luxury; it's a necessary part of the typical buying experience that all savvy sales teams should be leveraging," it concludes. "E-signature is only one piece of the digital buying landscape, but it's a piece that makes the whole greater from being added to the sum of all parts."

Time and again, customers from a wide range of sectors find e-signature has unexpected, but very valuable, side effects. Documents can be exchanged far more securely, but still at speed with a digital certificate. For life sciences companies, for example, where regulation and standards are critically important, securing the

Success begins with an agreement

Whether you are exchanging goods or services, at the heart of all business is a simple agreement. The exchange of documents is what drives business. From the obvious agreements such as sales contracts through to the supporting structure of procurement, organisations are built on agreements.

Yet in many organisations, agreements are the hidden cost of doing business. When documents are still paper-based and time consuming to complete, employees are often hamstrung by the need to print, negotiate and agree a deal.

E-signature is re-imagining this most basic part of the working world. By digitising agreements, companies can eliminate the inefficiencies that come with multiple copies of printed documents. Time-savings come not only from no longer needing to send physical copies of contracts through the post, but also from reducing errors. Skipton Building Society cut its error rate on

mortgage declaration forms from 25 per cent to almost zero.

Sales conversion rates are improved, with customers more likely to be impressed by the refined experience, and revenue starts flowing more quickly. When e-signature is used in human resources, onboarding is quicker, cutting the risk that potential recruits will go elsewhere. In procurement, goods can be processed faster, reducing the risk of key components being unavailable at a critical time. Legal documents can be securely sent and returned, with a clear audit trail of any changes made.

Integrating Adobe Sign into other applications can bring further benefits. Admin is reduced when documents are stored centrally. Contracts can be reviewed internally and searched for specific conditions that need attention. In a few clicks, staff can create, sign and store a contract that can then be digitally managed throughout the whole of the document's life cycle.

integrity of clinical trial documents is vital. In consumer banking, the speed with which lending agreements can be signed not only significantly improves the customer experience, eliminating one of the consumer's biggest gripes and improving their perception of the industry, but also increases the speed with which the funds arrive in the customer's bank account.

"Companies are becoming much more receptive to this capability and adoption is moving very quickly," says Greenaway.

The Forrester study notes Adobe Sign generates incremental revenue. "Reduced cycle times mean salespeople can be more efficient, increasing the volume of deals per salesperson. Reduced cycle times have also improved competitiveness in the market, resulting in less lost business compared to long paper-based processes," it says.

From delighting the customer with a seamless experience to delighting the chief financial officer with reduced

costs, from enabling a faster and more flexible agreement to securing an audit trail and more accessible documents in storage, from freeing up staff to concentrate on more valuable tasks to making it easy to build new workflows, e-signature will transform and future-proof your business. As the use of e-signature becomes commonplace, it is no longer an option to run your business without them.

To get your free trial of Adobe Sign, please visit www.adobe.com/go/raconteur

As a decentralised company with a high proportion of its workforce out on the road, Rentokil is already using technology in many of its processes. "We're a very tech-savvy company and do a lot with digital tools. We use Google apps, artificial intelligence, connected bait boxes and other internet of things devices, award-winning online learning tools, but we were still printing paper contracts and couriering documents for someone to sign with a pen. It was antiquated," says Fagan. "Once you've used Adobe Sign, you wonder why you did it any other way."

One benefit that has been welcomed in the coronavirus crisis has been the increased ability to social distance, with businesses continuing to operate with a minimum of physical contact. But it has also proved useful when updating terms and conditions quickly and efficiently.

"We launched new disinfection services in more than 60 markets around the world, but needed to tweak the

contracts to make sure that when our people turn up it's a safe environment for them and our recommendations are followed. Updating contracts for thousands of customers has been very clunky and slow in the past, but this could be done by a simple click-and-sign process rather than some large-scale postal campaign," says Fagan.
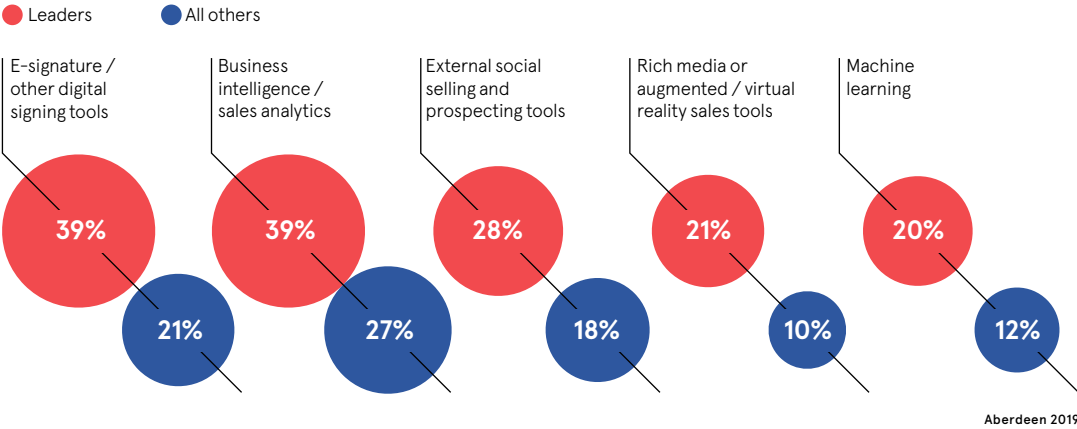
"So, yes, it's just a signature, but then it's changing how your business processes work and the scale of what you can do. It enables different ways of working."

Rentokil quickly discovered the versatility of Adobe Sign and is now using it beyond contracts, for example to file annual accounts and complete board minutes. Adobe Sign was also invaluable when the company set up a commercial paper programme to apply for UK government funding. Funds came through in record time, with the process proving much quicker and easier as a result of having the right technology in place.

"

As the use of e-signature becomes commonplace, it is no longer an option to run your business without it

Adobe

SHOULD REMOTE WORKING BE HERE TO STAY?

As global lockdowns prevent people from commuting into the office, remote working has become critical to ensuring business continuity. This has inadvertently created a real-time experiment that could reshape the future of work, namely can operations continue when employees are remote and – if so – should remote working be here to stay?

77% of global businesses say they use flexible workspace policies to attract and retain top talent

International Workplace Group 2019

76% of workers say they would be more loyal to their employers if they had flexible work options

FlexJobs 2018

54% of employees say they would move to another company if it would give them greater working location flexibility

Fuze Workforce Futures 2019

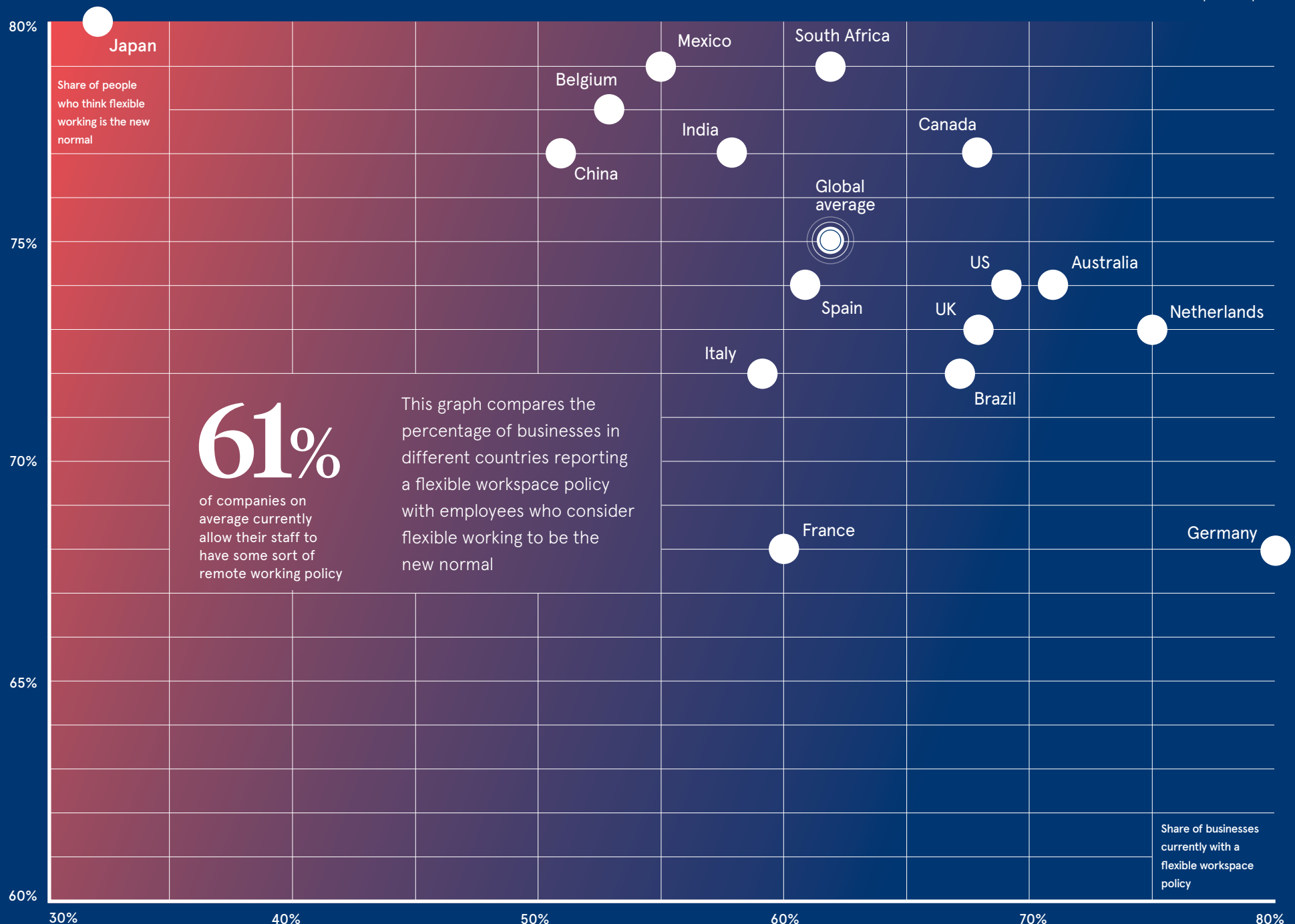## FOR MANY PEOPLE IT'S THE NEW NORMAL. YET MANY BUSINESSES STILL LACK A CONCRETE FLEXIBLE AND REMOTE WORKING POLICY

International Workplace Group 2019

Share of people who think flexible working is the new normal

61% of companies on average currently allow their staff to have some sort of remote working policy

This graph compares the percentage of businesses in different countries reporting a flexible workspace policy with employees who consider flexible working to be the new normal

Share of businesses currently with a flexible workspace policy

Countries plotted: Japan, Belgium, China, Mexico, India, South Africa, Canada, Global average, Spain, US, UK, Australia, Netherlands, Italy, Brazil, France, Germany

NEARLY ALL EMPLOYEES ARE IN FAVOUR OF SOME DEGREE OF REMOTE WORKING

◆ Yes　◆ No

Would like to work remotely at some point — **98%** **2%**

Would recommend remote working — **97%** **3%**

AND THERE ARE MANY REASONS WHY EMPLOYEES DECIDE TO WORK REMOTELY

38%	41%	43%	44%	48%	76%	78%	78%	79%	91%
Eldercare responsibilities	No company office	Moving home	Accomodating disability	Childcare responsibilities	Saving money	Less stessful	Avoid commuting	Improved productivity	Better work-life balance
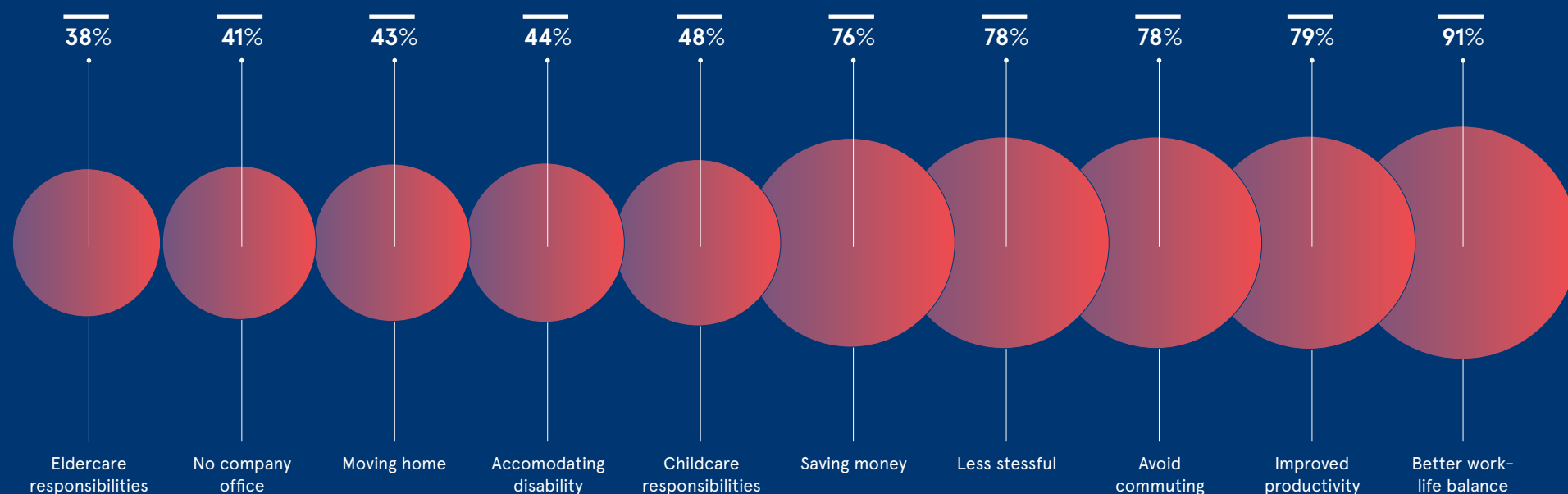
THE FLEXIBILITY OFFERED BY REMOTE WORKING ALSO BENEFITS BUSINESSES, WHICH SEE MAJOR IMPROVEMENTS IN EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY
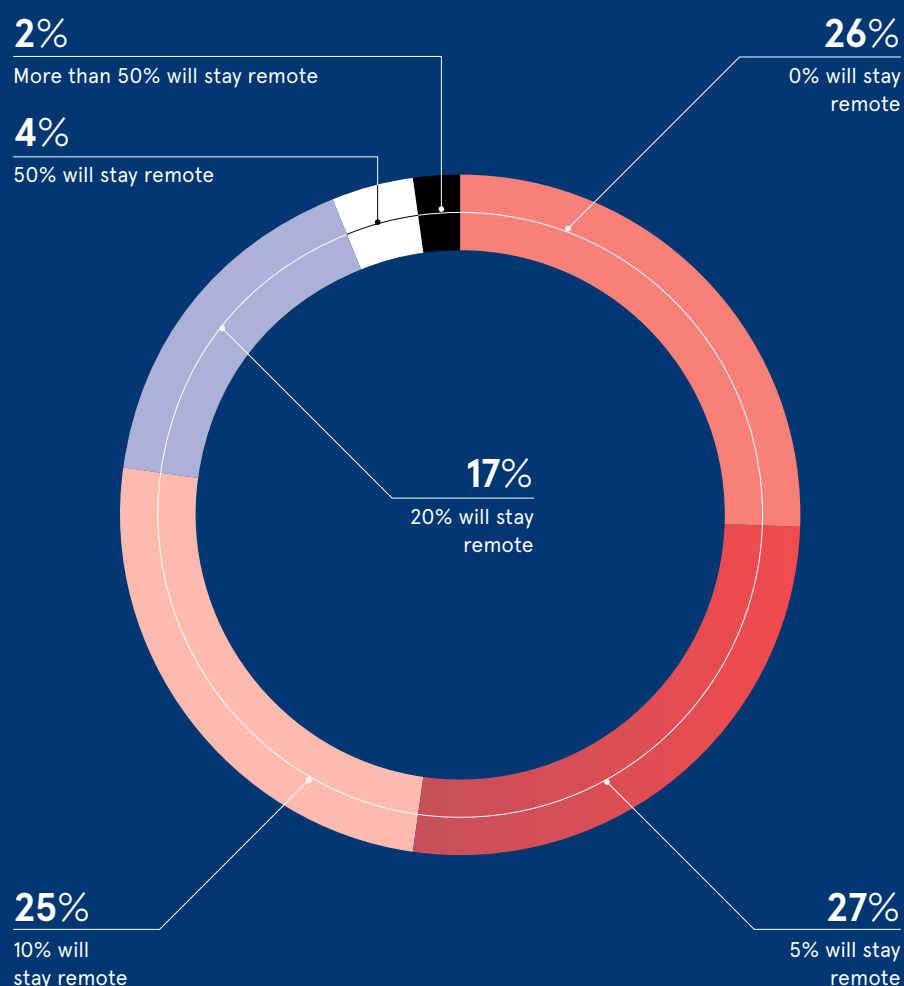
Percentage increase in productivity expected from a flexible workspace policy; percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding

3%
No increase

3%
0-5% increase

37%
40%+ increase

10%
6-10% increase

17%
11-20% increase

18%
21-30% increase

11%
31-40% increase
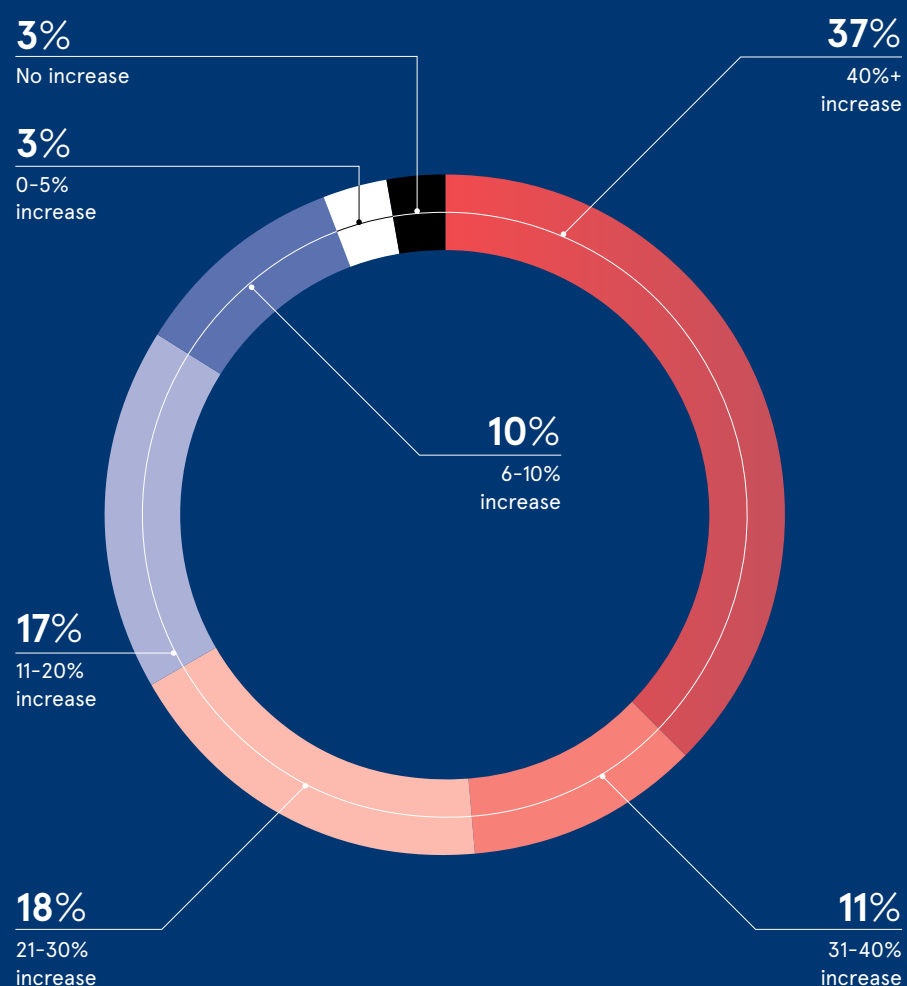
IN THE WAKE OF COVID-19, ALMOST THREE QUARTERS OF COMPANIES PLAN TO PERMANENTLY INCREASE THEIR AMOUNT OF REMOTE WORK

Percentage of employees that will remain permanently remote post-COVID-19 who were not remote before

2%
More than 50% will stay remote

4%
50% will stay remote

26%
0% will stay remote

17%
20% will stay remote

25%
10% will stay remote

27%
5% will stay remote

No shortcuts allowed in digital transition

The rapid shift some companies have had to make to ensure continuity when remote working has raised concerns about potential vulnerabilities when it comes to cybersecurity and compliance

Oliver Pickup

Unsplash/Unsplash

Nations may have been locked down and masked by the coronavirus pandemic, but minds have been opened. For business leaders needing to adopt mass home-working policies effectively overnight and embrace digital processes, it has been liberating. But at what cost in terms of compliance?

"COVID-19 has acted as a digital transformation accelerant since it is forcing archaic systems and processes to be overhauled," says San Francisco-based Nicole Alvino, co-founder of workforce communications platform SocialChorus. "The good news is most businesses are in the process of moving some, if not all, data and processes to the cloud.

"With this transition comes additional data, security and compliance requirements that have been in place for some time, and continue to be added as we saw with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in May 2018."

Other businesses seeking to plug potential data leaks and minimise compliance issues could learn from SocialChorus's approach. "We maintain the highest level of enterprise security and just passed our 2020 SOC 2 [service organisation control] type-2 audit and received our ISO 27001 certificate from the auditor," says Alvino. "Part of these audits ensures all employees have taken compliance training that includes how to deal with documents and secure files when not in an office."

Thankfully, technology can play a significant role in maintaining the security of business-critical documents, from sales agreements to legal documents, employee contracts, onboarding and beyond.

"Through moving to become more digital, employees can improve productivity, as cumbersome and lengthy processes involving paper or legacy systems are being replaced by more-efficient solutions," says Andrew Johnson, managing director of meetings provider PowWowNow.

"Digital signature service providers, for example, enable deals and documents to be shared with no dependency on location. You can automate a secure evidence collection system for the online signature process while guaranteeing full security thanks to email and one-time password processes."

Clare Lawson, chief customer officer at advertising giant Ogilvy UK, reports a big increase in the use of digital tools during this crisis. "We had the tools before, but the pandemic has driven our adoption rate and the digital transformation of how we manage comments and approvals, as well as signatures and document management," she says.

"We've long since provided digital asset management systems, like Adobe Experience Manager, for our clients as part of the service, but on many fronts the usage was patchy; not any more. We are now running multi-faceted campaigns from creative, through comments, to production and go live through a single digital platform. And it's increased our speed to market. We recently completed a campaign, which was scheduled to take six weeks from inception to going live, in sixteen days."

Given the need for speed, many experts are worried that necessary shortcuts being taken by business leaders are causing challenges with cybersecurity and compliance. "I have heard chief executives say they have made five years' progress on their plans to transform in two months," says Nelson Phillips, professor of innovation and strategy at London's Imperial College Business School.

Such acceleration, although great from an innovation point of view, has resulted in lots of cutting corners and ignoring best practices around compliance and security.

"While we have seen some remarkable successes in terms of organisations virtualising, we are also going to see an increase in the incidence of loss of data and a lack of security around documents," says Phillips.

Johnson agrees. "Knowing what data your business has, where and how it is held, who has access and protecting the integrity of that data is crucial for the successful long-term operation of your company," he says.

"During a pandemic, there is still no exception and data is at increased risk. Hackers have also evolved a strategy to leverage GDPR to extort non-compliant businesses, demanding ransom fees in exchange for avoiding fines."

A new report from Atlas Cloud, an IT provider, unearthed some worrying working habits since the national lockdown began on March 23. Of the 3,000 office workers surveyed, a quarter admitted to using personal laptops for home working, while more than half the respondents revealed they are storing work files on their device, raising concerns about compliance and the security of business information.

As it is human to err, Pete Watson, Atlas Cloud's chief executive, urges a shift towards server-led IT from a device-led model, where sensitive data is held on computers, tablets and smartphones. "Server-led IT takes control of business information out of the hands of individual employees working on individual devices, where the information is more vulnerable, and gives control back to the businesses that retain ownership of all their data in the cloud," he says.

Finally, what steps should business leaders take to improve their remote compliance? "Put in place clear policies for remote employees, clearly outlining what can and cannot be accessed remotely, and by whom, and ensure devices are encrypted," Johnson advises. These may be small adjustments, but they will be cost effective if they shore up defences against cyber-attacks and potentially crippling compliance problems. ●

> **"**
> I have heard chief executives say they have made five years' progress on their plans to transform in two months

26%
of deals get delayed by legal/technical compliance approvals

Aberdeen 2019

38%
of employees say they still have to use paper-based processes and manual administration methods despite the availability of faster and simpler software alternatives

Webexpenses 2019

Q&A

Embracing our unique digital workplaces wherever they may be

Gavin Mee, vice president, Northern Europe, Middle East and Africa, at Adobe, shares advice and expertise on home working

Gavin Mee
Vice president
Northern Europe, Middle East and Africa
Adobe

Q **What have been the key observations for you as a leader in remote working during the mass transition to home working?**

A The almost overnight switch to everyone working remotely has posed myriad challenges for most organisations and, more importantly, for the people that work for them. Even the most experienced remote worker has had to deal with the added complexity of extra responsibilities at home and changes to their daily routines. For those who are used to being office based, the transition has been an even bigger shift. People are a company's greatest asset and leaders need to make sure they are doing everything they can to support employees as they adapt to their own unique situations.

What has stood out for me is how well and how quickly our people have been able to adapt, and how they have managed to retain a strong sense of culture and community, even without seeing each other in person.

Equally, seeing the high levels of productivity that can be achieved outside the office environment, by setting new behaviours and processes and making use of the digital tools, has been similarly eye opening.

Q **What is Adobe seeing from its customers in terms of tools, technologies and processes that are helping to ensure businesses continue to thrive?**

A In the same way that supporting our people and helping them to continue to work productively and flexibly from home has been a major focus for us, the same is true for our customers. Many have responded to the current situation by identifying the fundamental technologies they need to stay operational and meet the needs of their employees and customers as quickly and seamlessly as possible.

It's especially important companies remain digitally connected with their customers during this period. We've seen huge demand from across the public and private sectors for our Document Cloud applications that enable people to stay productive and collaborate from anywhere, while keeping their operations running successfully.

Beyond those fundamentals, all companies are facing their own unique challenges. Where the hospitality and travel sectors, for example, have seen their operations heavily restricted, others such as supermarkets have seen demand increase and pressure on supply chains and customer service teams intensify, all

64%

of today's professionals say they could work anywhere

54%

of HR leaders say that poor technology and/or infrastructure is the biggest barrier to effective remote working in their organisation

Gartner 2020

> ❝ Digital transformation programmes that might have been planned for the next few years have needed to be delivered in a matter of weeks. Whatever the sector or business, this is a defining moment

while having to meet heightened health and safety requirements.

In some cases, digital transformation programmes that might have been planned for the next few years have needed to be delivered in a matter of weeks. Whatever the sector or business, this is a defining moment.

Q **You've made staying in touch with your teams and partners a priority during the pandemic. How important is communication at this time and what changes have you brought in?**

A It's enormously important. Delivering a great employee experience is fundamental to maintaining a strong organisational culture and fostering a sense of community. With our people now working remotely, we've set up new internal social channels so our

teams can continue to keep in touch informally and share their experiences.

As well as moving our team meetings and calls to video conferencing, we also host coffee catchups and even daily challenges where our people share photos of their entries and winners receive a donation for a charity of their choice. Finding ways to replicate the social aspects of going to work has been a big focus for us.

Q **From a strategic perspective, what should companies consider when deploying technology to ensure business continuity?**

A The current situation has accelerated many of our customers' digital transformation plans or seen them pivot their intended investments from one area to focus on the solutions they need to stay operational. Things like cloud-based collaboration tools and e-signature technologies have gone from being somewhere on a list of priorities to being an absolute necessity.

However, there is a difference between staying operational and ensuring business continuity. The latter also covers the need to continue meeting the expectations of your customers and maintaining service levels. In many sectors, providing that same service entirely digitally might meet a pressing short-term need, but it could also change the way your customer sees you forever.

It's important to balance short-term needs with a long-term view and consider how the steps you make now will carry through to a world with fewer

restrictions, as well as how your customers will respond. For example, if you ramp up your digital offering now, will you be able to scale it back in the future or will your customers have changed their behaviour and expect it to continue?

**Q** **Finally, what advice do you have for business leaders at this time of crisis?**

A Leaders are faced with making great changes to both their business processes and commercial offerings as they strive to keep their customers and employees satisfied during this challenging period. They are also under pressure to make these changes as seamlessly as possible. It's a huge task and one where digital technology plays a pivotal role for many of our customers.

Above all, it's important to keep open minded, flexible, accepting of the situation we find ourselves in and remain supportive. It goes without saying that we are focused on supporting our employees, customers and community at this time and all of the other leaders I've spoken with from our customer and partner communities are doing the same.

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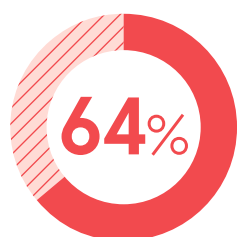
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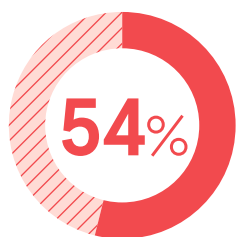
INCLUSIVITY

Reinventing inclusivity in isolation

How businesses are adapting and implementing connectivity processes

Hazel Davis

When the coronavirus pandemic forced millions of employees into remote working, the first thought on most employers' minds was doing so securely and efficiently. But as the dust has settled, the issue of ensuring inclusivity has risen to the fore.

For some companies, this has been a priority from the start. "We have always embraced a flexible approach to working and so prior to the lockdown we had a number of tools we used to encourage inclusion on a global scale to support the real mix of employment contracts we had in place," says Philippa Williams, head of talent at global talent acquisition and management firm Alexander Mann Solutions.

"Yammer, for example, has previously been used by the team to connect remote and home workers with the office as well as keep our colleagues worldwide in touch."

However, Williams adds: "In light of the global shift to greater remote working, and our entire global team now working from home, we quickly

implemented a number of changes that have been incredibly valuable in bringing everyone together.

"For example, as we prepared to move the teams out of the offices, we developed guidance documents to ensure staff and team leaders were as equipped as possible for the changes, both in terms of tools available and how to keep engagement up. We also ensured that staff were completely aware of where they can turn to for support if they are struggling with absolutely anything."

Producing guidance for leaders on how to keep neurodiverse individuals engaged was at the top of the company agenda. "For some in this group, the now-popular video calls are uncomfortable, so there are instances where videos should in fact be avoided," says Williams.

To this end, Auticon, a consultancy which exclusively employs autistic adults, advised that some of the guidance documents were potentially too "bright and busy" for some neurodiverse audiences and wouldn't be helpful. "As a result," says Williams,

"we adapted the documents for our neurodiverse employees."

While video calls are being widely embraced, there are some who find face-to-face communication uncomfortable in normal conditions, so to then have ten faces staring at you from your computer is certainly going to be an issue. "In some instances, phone calls are the best approach and we've ensured everyone was not only aware of this, but also comfortable with making a request to not join video conversations," she adds.

The company also uses video software menti.com, which enables people to post questions or comments anonymously during online

> ❝
> **It's times like these that really prove to employees how much a company genuinely cares**

webinars, and pigeonholelive.com to increase engagement.

Others have moved fast to introduce initiatives to promote better inclusivity. Brighton-based tech company Cloud9 Insight has implemented new systems for onboarding recruits remotely and created a "fun and good news" group on Microsoft Teams exclusively to run messages and exciting announcements, promoting and prioritising family. One staff member was even able to share his toddler's first steps while on a Zoom meeting.

Since lockdown, the company has launched a strategy and innovation competition. "Staff were divided into randomised groups of three. They were encouraged to set aside time, perhaps with a glass of wine, to chat online and come up with ideas for how they would invest in the company to grow the business in revenue and profit, in line with the future of work after COVID-19," says chief executive Carlene Jackson.

"The market is changing and I feel that our business strategy should have input from all levels of the business, inclusive of all ages, with younger people and newer recruits contributing equally to those in leadership positions.

"I found that team members have been really excited to be working with people they wouldn't usually work alongside. It's encouraging brand new connections which wouldn't have happened if it weren't for this crisis."

Other companies are realising that little touches go a long way. Digital agency Engage has implemented a range of things to keep its employees connected and engaged, including "Make me smile", a £15 budget to send a colleague a surprise gift, with pairing done through a random generator, a 21-day challenge, with everyone choosing something they wanted to do for 21 days to build a new habit during lockdown, raising money for charity and earning a £20 Just Eat voucher on completion.

"In times like this, you can't over-communicate as we aren't going to see everyone engaging with every initiative. By having regular, transparent communication and organising a range of events to suit different tastes we can increase the chance of everyone enjoying something, just having drinks on Friday over a video call isn't enough," says Alex Willcocks, Engage co-founder.

"Maintaining good company culture means people feel like they work at a business which really values them and their mental health and wellbeing. It's times like these that really prove to employees how much a company genuinely cares and is interested in investing in them."

Michelle Dyer, vice president, risk and compliance, at American Express Global Business Travel (GBT), which operates across 140 countries with 18,000 employees, says: "Many people already worked remotely, so maintaining service continuity while some office-based staff moved to a work-from-home environment wasn't the biggest challenge.

"But when everyone is changing working modes, while faced with personal and professional
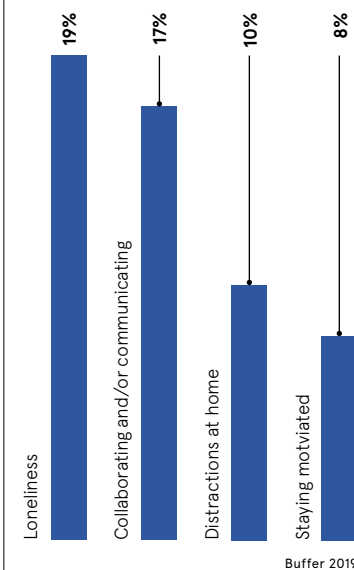
uncertainty at the same time, communication is vital."

To build a sense of community and a channel for information and resources, the company is using an optional interactive mobile app for furloughed employees. "The uptake has been fantastic," says Dyer. "Thousands of people are sharing personal stories about their recent experiences. They have access to wellbeing resources, including options for counselling services for themselves and their families.

"We're also including lists of volunteering opportunities and ways for people to learn new skills online, such as software development, photography and blues guitar."

In a group conference call or video meeting, it's easy to lose people in the crowd. Some voices can be marginalised, even inadvertently. GBT staff are being encouraged to be aware of this risk and try to facilitate the voices of all attendees by introducing everyone on the call, welcoming people by name as they arrive and giving everyone an opportunity to contribute. "Simple changes go a long way to making people feel they're involved," says Dyer.

Some inclusivity benefits have developed organically from the pandemic. "Our staff have felt empowered to show their true selves at work. Those with prior experience of working from home now embrace the interruptions from their kids, rather than hiding in the cupboard for a conference call," says Williams at Alexander Mann Solutions.

"And we're seeing more variety of networks develop. Employees are taking over Yammer to build their own communities that would never have been connected had we not been in lockdown. For example, one of our team members is working from home, completely alone and isolated from her family. She set up a group on Yammer with others in the same position so they can all offer each other support, something that certainly wouldn't have happened in the world of work prior to COVID-19." ●

FEELING INCLUDED AND CONNECTED TO COLLEAGUES IS VITAL FOR BUSINESS CONTINUITY

Some of the struggles faced by remote workers

19%	Loneliness
17%	Collaborating and/or communicating
10%	Distractions at home
8%	Staying motivated

Buffer 2019

Rethinking your continuity tech stack

Ensuring your business has the most suitable collection of software solutions and apps is vital for maintaining business continuity

Sooraj Shah

Since the coronavirus lockdown, digital tools such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams have rocketed to the top of the business agenda, playing a crucial role in keeping people connected. However, there are numerous other tools organisations are relying on to help their workforce while working remotely.

Julie Berry, IT partner at accountants Saffery Champness, says her firm put a cloud-first strategy in place prior to the pandemic in a bid to increase agility. To kick-start this strategy, the company required a new document management system and it immediately looked for cloud-based products rather than on-premise alternatives, which she believed were far too slow.

"The two key criteria were we wanted something that could manage our email and ensure everyone in the firm could find the relevant document they needed," she says.

People were relying on where they had saved a document on a system to track it down from the company's server, so Saffery Champness required a product which enabled staff to search for a document. After a thorough trawl, the company decided to opt for NetDocuments.

"It has been hugely helpful since lockdown, because it means our employees can work from home and, as long as they have access to the internet, they can access the document management system," says Berry.

This has also helped reduce the pressure on the firm's VPN (virtual private network) bandwidth, as employees no longer have to connect to the company's servers to access files.

Nick McQuire, vice president of enterprise research at CCS Insight, says VPNs have only been designed for around 20 per cent of most workforces. "One firm I spoke to had to consider encouraging workers to work at different times of the day to ease the constraints on its VPN," he says.

CCS Insight has seen a 100 per cent increase in the use of document-sharing and collaboration applications during the pandemic. But there's clearly reliance on tools other than video conferencing. Different employees will require different types of tools to help them work remotely, and it's up to organisations to make sure these tools can be deployed securely and without pressure on VPN bandwidth, says McQuire.

Multinational law firm King & Wood Mallesons has recently migrated to the iManage Cloud. Darren Brown, head of IT in Europe and the Middle East, says this has helped with working from home, maintaining performance and response times, and avoided VPN bandwidth issues, which may have arisen if the company's network and systems had not been cloud enabled

"iManage is an essential tool for our lawyers, providing a complete electronic file. It is therefore essential the platform is accessible when working remotely to service our clients' needs at all times," says Brown.

"With iManage Cloud this access is achievable with an internet connection and no complex needs for a VPN, ensuring everyone is able to see and work on the most recent and most relevant information as it is needed."

The law firm also uses Microsoft Intune to push applications to mobile phones, including the iManage Document Management System, Microsoft Office 365, Microsoft Teams, Elite Finance System, Microsoft Authenticator and an annual leave booking system.

"These tools ensure we are able to provide a secure, performant environment that replicates the user experience when in the office, including telephony, without complex redirection of calls, time-recording and matter management," says Brown.

"As the majority of the application suite is cloud based, the Microsoft product set integrate seamlessly with each other and other products via single sign-on and has required only a small amount of additional training, enabling the lawyers to focus on our clients and IT to continue working on business-as-usual activities."

Integration with Microsoft Office 365 or other key email applications is one of the main areas organisations seem to be striving towards to help with remote working, while also gaining other long-term benefits.

For instance, analyst firm Forrester interviewed Adobe Document Cloud and Microsoft Office 365 customers and calculated the potential return on investment of integrating the two applications would be £7.4 million over three years. Customers said they saved time and costs in areas including digital enrolment, printing, delivery and governance.

E-signature products that enable quick, easy and secure consent capture are key to these benefits. Forrester found that Adobe Sign saves £5 and 1.5 hours per transaction, and around £444,000 in annual paper costs.

> **One firm I spoke to had to consider encouraging workers to work at different times of the day to ease the constraints on its VPN**

Added benefits of integration during remote working are that employees don't need to print off copies of documents unnecessarily or spend time scanning signed letters; some employees may not have access to printers or scanners at home. In addition, clients are more likely to respond swiftly if they can sign documents electronically.

Developers at Rest Less, a website dedicated to helping over-50s, use a number of tools to help while staff are working remotely. These include Atlassian's Confluence, a collaboration software programme, and Atlassian's Jira, a software development tool.

"We were using these before the pandemic as we already had some remote teams so, while others may use a board and post-it notes and things like that, we have Jira which we share as a way to track progress," says Rest Less co-founder and chief technology officer Sara Stephens.

Since the lockdown, the team has missed whiteboarding and so has started to use diagram software Draw.io and screen-sharing with Google Meet, which has helped replicate personal interaction and enables creation of flowcharts and process diagrams.

Steve Clarke, senior manager of communication channels at Virgin Atlantic, says the airline deployed Workplace from Facebook's Knowledge Library to keep employees informed about COVID-19. "We use it to provide details on government regulations as well as specific policies and frequently asked questions related to Virgin Atlantic," he says. ●

65hrs

saved per user each year when using the Adobe Document cloud with Microsoft 365 apps

48%

of global employees feel frustrated by their employer's lack of investment in time-saving technology

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