



THE FUTURE IS NOW. IS YOUR OFFICE READY?

Our workforce, workplace, and work style are being fundamentally disrupted — here's how technology is keeping pace.

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The nine-to-five workplace as we have known it is quickly becoming a prehistoric notion. The concept of four walls and private offices is going the way of the dinosaur as companies move toward informal and open workspaces. Siloed desks are becoming a distant memory as collaboration areas increasingly emerge. Disruptive changes continue to transform the way we work, and companies everywhere are modifying their offices out of a single basic necessity: evolve or face extinction.

Workplaces are experiencing significant shifts: diversity is [increasingly prioritized](#) and celebrated, demand for information security is [growing](#), and the [fierce competition for skilled talent](#) worldwide is giving employees more job opportunities than ever before. Perhaps the biggest shift, however, is technology, which has enabled completely new ways of working, including a sharp rise in work that is happening outside of traditional office buildings. In fact, research from Global Work Analytics found that [80 to 90 percent](#) of workers want the chance to telework at least part of the time.

By embracing dynamic styles of collaboration, using new tools for communication and security, and designing offices for the way people work, it is clear that technology will continue to transform our workforce, workplaces, and work styles. Will companies embrace the change? Many already have, and with great success.

Our Workforce Has Diversified

According to a study by Boston Consulting Group, [75 percent](#) of global respondents see diversity becoming more prominent in their organizations. The study also found that achieving diversity translated to two positive outcomes: greater revenue generated from innovation and better financial performance, overall.

A prominent source of diversity in the workplace today is generational. For the first time ever, [five generations coexist](#) in the workplace. This has created an unprecedented challenge—as well as immense opportunity.

The interplay of generations in the workplace is vast. By 2020 Millennials will account for 35 percent of the global workforce, according to [Financial Times](#). [CNBC's Global Leadership Forecast](#) found that Gen X currently holds [51 percent](#) of global leadership roles and are poised to hold executive roles in the near future. Meanwhile, the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) says those above 65 years old are projected to achieve annual labor force growth rates higher than any other age group through 2024. The most tangible success will come to companies that create holistic work environments, inclusive of different backgrounds. Together, these amalgamated generations are ushering in new meaning for the term “workplace.”

Our Workplace is No Longer Just One Place

A recent [Deloitte](#) survey found that Millennials are much more likely to stay with a company for more than five years if it offers flexible working arrangements. In addition, [three-quarters](#) of Millennials say they would take a pay cut for flexible hours. Similarly, [AARP](#) found more than one-third of older Americans would like to have the option to work from home.

Employers are taking note. In the office, more dynamic environments are becoming the rule, not the exception.

Open seating, lounges, private meeting spaces and focus rooms are common features in these workplaces. According to a 2018 CBRE survey, [52 percent](#) of corporate executives plan to transition to unassigned seating within three years. Outside the office, apps, services and tools are enabling companies to meet their employees' expectations for flexibility.

For instance, remote video conference calls create a shared sense of involvement. Office software is increasingly functional across mobile and computer-based applications. While this contributes to a more productive way of working, it also presents a risk that all companies must address: security.

Physical security, such as measures that can automatically ID people entering the building or detect your approach and [unlock a door for you](#), is part of the equation. Cybersecurity is another. The increasingly complex cyber landscape makes securing devices, data and identities essential to preserving the trust and confidence people have in technology. However, according to PwC, only [53 percent](#) of worldwide business leaders say cyber and privacy risks are accounted for (and budgeted for) from the start of any project. Any organization undergoing transformation, be it digital or demographic, must make [information security](#) that is layered and hits every endpoint, including PCs and printers, essential to progress. Security is, and will remain, a critical component of any workplace of the future where collaboration and remote work are only becoming more valued.

Our Work Style is Less Defined

As workplaces evolve and become less traditional, the way we work is too. We may be working with fewer walls but that doesn't mean we are working alone. Research shows teamwork is more important than ever, with [94 percent](#) of Millennials describing collaboration as "critically important" to their job. Technology has made that collaboration much easier. Instant messaging, for example, is used by nearly half of the workforce today, according to a ReportLinker [survey](#), and in the tech industry alone, 71 percent of employees use instant messaging.

Insight from [Gartner](#) revealed that work styles are also changing due to companies embracing smaller, more fluid teams that recalibrate continually to changing workloads and projects. Artificial intelligence, apps, software and more are beginning to function almost like additional team members, helping projects get completed more efficiently among diverse and physically divided groups of people. In recent years, many companies have also experimented with the notion of [becoming flatter](#), reducing middle management positions. Decision making, therefore, falls to those with the most relevant knowledge for the matter at hand, not the title.

Technology can—and will—help organizations evolve and address the real issues present amid the transformation we're seeing in the workplace today. Seeing diversity, technology and security as opportunities, rather than challenges, will differentiate the successful offices of the future from those that are stuck in the past. Which will your company be?