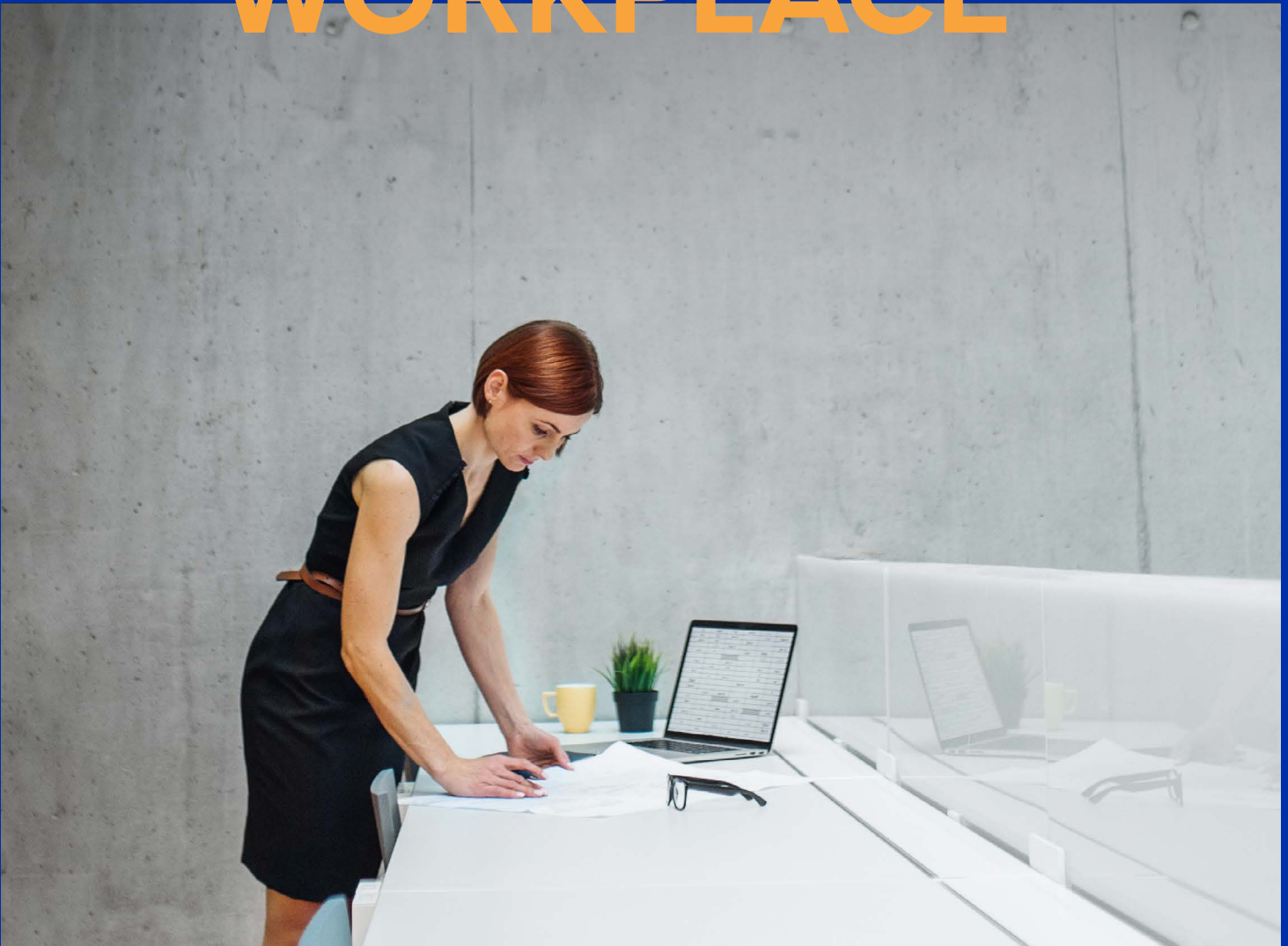


RingCentral

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# TECHNOLOGY IN THE WORKPLACE



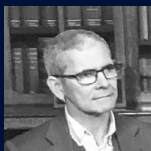
eBook

# INTRODUCTION

In late 2019, Sunny Dhami, Director of Product Marketing for RingCentral UK, joined a group of veteran technologists to talk technology, the future of work and the role of the CIO. The conversation was chaired by CIO Watercooler's David Savage.

What followed was a candid discussion covering multiple aspects of digital transformation, looked at from different perspectives. As the evolution of technology shapes our expectations of experiences within (and without) the workplace, what challenges does that create for businesses wishing to stay competitive? What are the real technological difficulties that businesses face today, what does future-proofing look like and how can the CIO figure in that process?

## JOINING DHAMI AND SAVAGE WERE:



**Ade McCormack**

Founder, Digital Readiness  
Institute



**Harvey Neve**

Head of Digital Transformation,  
Public Health England



**Mark Fabes**

Group CIO, Post Office



**Peter Adams**

Group CIO, Avant Homes

This eBook pulls three threads from the discussion and sets them out as key themes in businesses' adaptation to the evolution of consumer and workforce landscapes. The conversation in full is [available to view on YouTube](#).

# EXPOSURE AND EXPECTATIONS

As technology continues to affect so many aspects of our lives, from communication to leisure to transportation, our changing experiences affect our future expectations. If we can have meaningful video calls with friends and family overseas, why can't we do the same at work with colleagues? If we can collaborate on personal projects with contributors in cities around the world, why shouldn't we apply that remote productivity to our professional environments?

Those of us who remember life pre-internet left our education with crates of books, folders, and files. Contrast this with millennials, many of whom submitted their GCSE coursework in a digital format and took their exams on computers. The integration of technology in the classroom normalised its application to educational tasks, setting expectations of its role in other aspects of life, from employment to entertainment to dating.



## AS PETER ADAMS EXPLAINS

When someone grows up surrounded by computers in the classroom, they're more enabled in terms of access to technology, which sets their expectations for later life. Thus, the younger generation, through greater exposure to technology throughout their cognitive development, form different habits and develop different expectations when it comes to the world of work.

The variety in employee expectations has this generational element to it. It is these expectations that the CIOs on the panel agree put pressure on businesses to keep pace with the development of IT. The use of technology is an intrinsic part of how people live their lives outside of work, so if the access to technology inside work is different, that raises feelings of incongruity.

In the previous era of business, it was in the workplace that people would have access to the latest IT. As development has progressed and prices have dropped, technological innovation has become cheaper and access to tools has increased.

The pace of digital innovation increases exponentially, hard- and software becomes rapidly obsolete, and businesses no longer have the resources to keep up with developments in technology.

Today our technology is portable; we bring powerful devices into work every day. If employers aren't providing the access to technology their employees demand, they'll simply fill the gap themselves. Whether that's connecting their own devices to the VPN, or installing unregulated software on their work device, this is the kind of "shadow IT" risk that keeps CIOs up at night.

The CIO panel anticipates the way people want to work will accelerate the changes in business technology, which puts pressure on public and private sector businesses alike to all keep pace.

Approaches to work have changed dramatically over the past half century. Expectations have evolved. Today's employees dare to want to enjoy their work; they want to get on with their work without being hampered by substandard tools.

They don't want to have to effectively downskill in order to navigate a task or a challenge. This type of friction affects employee motivation and engagement.

In the current climate, the pressure is on businesses to address their employee experience

(EX) proposition. [Research by Jacob Morgan](#) found companies that invested heavily in the employee experience earned more than four times the average profit and twice the average revenue compared to those that didn't.

Attracting top talent is what makes a business competitive, and offering an attractive EX is a significant part of that talent acquisition. Workforce enablement, and access to cutting-edge technology, go towards meeting potential employees' expectations, giving holistically thinking companies an edge in the jobs market.

We can't talk about these changes without mentioning the term digital transformation, but digital transformation is about much more than just changing technology.



## AS ADE MCCORMACK MENTIONS IN THE DISCUSSION

Sprinkling your business with AI, IoT, and blockchain isn't a catch-all for success in a digital marketplace. Success is about developing a business that can thrive in the digital age, an age in which technology has replaced humans in some aspects of work. In this marketplace, our value proposition as humans is the ability to apply our cognitive capacity to challenges and tasks. Employers, therefore, need to create environments that allow them to harvest as much of that cognitive capacity as possible. Upholding archaic structures such as measuring productivity and value simply in terms of time can hamper a business's competitive chances.

A massive prerequisite in the battle for talent is enabling employees to reach their own point of productivity. For some, that will be in an open plan office surrounded by people. For others, that could be on the road between on-site visits. Younger employees, with their enhanced exposure to communication on the go, are more prone to work wherever they can get a 4G signal. When that connectivity is replaced by 5G, that potential will explode.

Making mobility awkward for employees will only push them elsewhere into an environment that is more enabling, with greater flexibility. As effective "customers" of a business, employees look for convenience: the kind of commitment that will cause minimal disruption or imbalance in their lives.

**Forcing people to go to work during rush hour is anathema to that need and is the kind of demand that drains your asset.** The businesses that resist this change will suffer.

# THE EVOLVING ROLE OF THE CIO

It's predicted that by next year CIOs will be as important a part of workplace culture as HR leaders. Digital transformation is affecting not only our technological, but also our behavioural, expectations in the workplace.

Digital transformation isn't restricted to the office. Our expectations regarding access to technology in the workplace are affected by our experience outside of work.

The way people want to work is accelerating changes in business technology, which is putting pressure on businesses to keep pace. If employees aren't provided with the best technology that enables them to perform, they will find and implement tech solutions of their own. The introduction of "shadow IT" creates an unmanaged and disparate spread of technology tools that increase business costs and potential risks.

Though the cloud has been around for a while, issues around security compatibility and versatility of access hindered adoption rates in its burgeoning years. The introduction of commercial services by the big players, followed by free open source platforms, improved accessibility and as redundancy improved, service delivery became more reliable. Today, cloud capability is rapidly enabling digital transformation in businesses of all sizes.

As more technology management is sucked into the cloud, requiring less in-house management, CIOs are forced to consider how this affects their role.

## ABOVE IMPLEMENTING SPECIFIC TECHNOLOGY INTO A COMPANY'S INFRASTRUCTURE, THE BASIC GOAL OF THE CIO IS DELIVERING PROFITABILITY AND VALUE TO THE BUSINESS.

That's often through the enablement of technology, which goes beyond buying licenses or implementing a VPN.

Two decades into the journey, many businesses are now having to revisit the infrastructure that underpins their digital transformation because it wasn't approached holistically at the early stages. We're re-learning the lesson that getting the foundation right is absolutely crucial.

One example of such an effect is the "lakes" of data that don't bring any value to the business because they come from systems that aren't integrated. There's a fundamental systems integration job to get the infrastructure right—a house-cleaning exercise—to be done, before businesses try to layer new technologies on top of an unreliable foundation. An opportunity exists for CIOs to address this uncertain foundation,

as they are uniquely positioned to understand how technology can disrupt whole industries.

A business's approach to technology tends to hinge on the attitude of its board of directors. In days gone by, the dynamic would typically involve a CIO approaching the leadership team with a proposal for a technological solution, to receive a dismissive response along with the implication that the technology was simply a "nice to have". This lack of engagement from leadership could lead to businesses falling behind in terms of technological enablement and therefore struggling to remain competitive in the marketplace.

It's therefore paramount for the CIO as an advocate of technological enablement to build trust with the C-suite in order to increase chances of buy-in. Investigating how technology can help make business more competitive is also a risk management exercise; too many organisations have only a "plan A", which is a risky position to be in. Given the volatility of some markets and economies, not having a "plan B" can be catastrophic for a business.

The role of the CIO, in this respect, is to enable the success of the business. The question of business enablement comes before the answer of technology. Questions such as, "How do I enable collaboration?" and "How do I facilitate margin?" are addressed by the CIO in terms of addressing workflows and minimising cost by incorporating efficient tools. The ultimate consideration is, "How do I enable people's

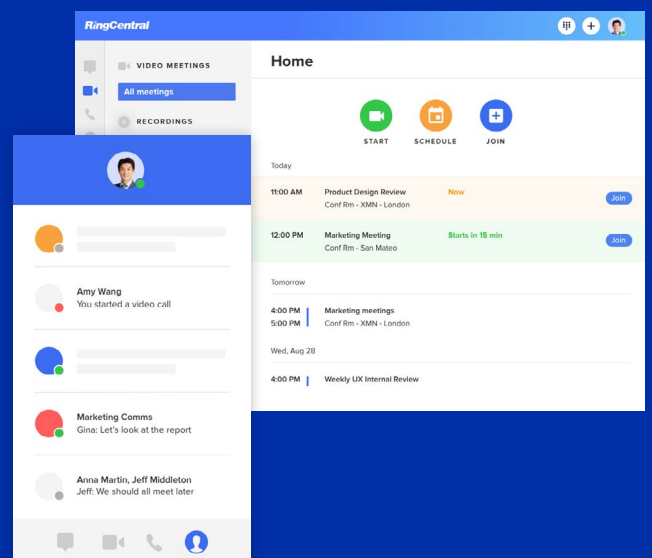
success and get their problems out of the way?"

One trick in encouraging the C-suite to adapt its approach to technology in the workplace is to encourage it to recognise that employees are customers of the business. Empowering a workforce isn't just about choosing an effective tool, it's about evaluating an entire workflow and reimagining it with more enabling tools in mind. The needs of the workforce, as well as the requirements of the project, must be taken into consideration.

**Becoming a "digital business" is the result of the interaction of people, place, and technology, of all these aspects coming together. This is where the CIO's role is expanded and goes hand in hand with workplace culture.** Rather than becoming obsolete, CIOs can become more critical than ever to a business's operation. RingCentral CMO Amrithesh Chaudhuri expects the CIO to evolve into the CXO: Chief Experience Officer. As the main concern is to understand and respond to how tools and systems help employees perform better, the responsibility inevitably includes understanding what a workforce needs in order to perform better.

This is a complicated and challenging facet as it requires understanding people's individuality as well as how they can work together as a contiguous whole. Understanding people isn't traditionally the remit of a CIO, but is a crucial element of a modern business's people operations policy.

# UNDERSTANDING A SITUATION IS THE FIRST STEP TO CHANGING IT—THE SOLUTION COMES LATER.



# REMOTE WORKING AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Remote working isn't a passing phase. Rather, it's a signpost of our capability. The way we communicate in our personal lives—multi-device, in micro-moments, with video playing a more prominent role—is helping to lead the way we communicate in our professional lives.

When we assess the work we do, we recognise that a large portion of the work in many fields can be done from anywhere with a decent internet connection. Sales, marketing, and tech-related

jobs are prime candidates for the application of remote working. Today's technology enables many workers to work from anywhere, with face-to-face communication replaced to a degree by real-time video conferencing. Thanks to modern speeds and reliability of internet connections, many workers don't need to be physically present in the office in order to complete most of the tasks required in their role.



## THE MOBILITY OF MODERN COMMUNICATIONS ENABLES REMOTE AND FLEXIBLE WORKING

Thus, the mobility of modern communications enables trends such as remote and flexible working. Mobility is a thread in the digital transformation of businesses as they take advantage of technology that facilitates fast communication and collaboration in response to opportunities and threats.

While the approach was pioneered by businesses with a disparate presence across multiple locations, it's now a vital component of many businesses' modern strategy. People who have operated in organisations going through, and benefiting from, digital transformation take those ideas and lessons into subsequent organisations as they move through their career.

While digital transformation is centred around the application of technology, the key to successful

transformation is to regard technology as a means rather than an end. This idea was echoed in the Technology in the Workplace discussion, as the CIO panel confirmed the discussion around the "future of work" is that it's not simply about installing tools, but is dependent on the outcome the business is trying to drive. Realising the "future of work" is about identifying a business goal and plotting a path to get there that incorporates the tools that enable the business to achieve that goal.

Making such a shift successful comes down to the culture of an organisation. Because digital transformation can require fundamental change in terms of processes and behaviour in an organisation, adoption isn't always fast and easy. Some businesses still struggle to accept the change in work styles, or leave implementation to the discretion of individual managers, underestimating the importance of consistent application.

This is an opportunity for CIOs to enable a culture of digital transformation. Decisions that enable such a culture need to be made company-wide as genuine strategies intended to achieve business goals such as increasing productivity and lowering costs.

Moving to adopt specific practices such as remote working are policy decisions that should be based on a business case. The logic for this makes financial sense—if you recognise that employees are customers of the business, you have more chance of getting the best out of your employees in terms of performance.

Customer-facing brands have already found that the consumer has been one of the key catalysts of digital transformation. The customer's desire to engage with a brand at any time, anywhere, and anyhow has forced brands to develop an omnichannel presence that is made possible

through the development of technology. The same principle applies to the workforce—if these are the conditions demanded by the customer, there shouldn't be any reason why the workforce can't operate in exactly the same way.

In fact, Ade McCormack argues that enabling your workforce through policies such as remote and flexible working is more important than attracting customers through digital transformation, because if a business attracts the best talent, the improvement in service and product performance will then attract the customers as a result.

Business recruitment used to be bound by geographical location and overcome with expensive relocation procedures. It no longer needs to be that way. Businesses are able to build a more global presence thanks to the technology that provides the connectivity to do so. Enabled by the right technology, a business is able to hire employees based in different geographical locations and adapt the way they work to make that a success. IT therefore enables you to attract the best talent regardless of location.

The conversation around work/life balance is changing because work used to be a place you used to leave home to go to, whereas work is now more a thing you do, and employees have more options of where and when to do that.



## ACCORDING TO HARVEY NEVE, REMOTE WORKING ISN'T A REACTIVE PRACTICE.

“Remote working is an opportunity for people to embrace the way life is nowadays,” said Harvey. “There isn't work and life; there is life, and outcomes you're on the hook for at work are part of your life. The ability to work where you're able to, dependent on what role you've got has to be built into the offer for the best employees. Remote working isn't something that is done to you or something you have to react to, it's an opportunity for companies to attract and retain the best people, and technology will enable that.”



One of the concerns of providing employees the capacity to work remotely is the question of whether they are too remote, whether they can still collaborate with colleagues and remain engaged at a distance. Putting tools in place is only one step to ensuring success in this area. The CIO must consider an entire workflow and deliver an integrated environment that encourages a workforce to stay connected over distance. The process must be managed well to ensure collaboration is working effectively and that the company and its employees are connected in everything they do.



# WORK/LIFE BALANCE AND PRODUCTIVITY SHOULDN'T COME AT THE COST OF SOMEONE ELSE'S.

Employees need to take responsibility, and be held responsible, for the way they work with colleagues and customers and ensure the process benefits not one person but the whole business. The big change is around behaviour and culture. That's the step change that is required with the executive.

# CONCLUSION

The term “digital transformation” still has the gravity to mean something. Although too often used as a catch-all, in many cases this is still the way to describe the technological situation faced by many businesses. Digitisation is still a process some organisations need to go through, and even those businesses that can claim to have “gone digital” are still vulnerable to getting caught in “evolve or perish” situations.

The pace of change is still accelerating. When it comes to adaptation, agility is critical in making sure organisations can seize opportunities and avoid pitfalls. That’s one reason we’ve witnessed the proliferation in “as a service” software products replacing costly and resource-intensive on-premises hardware stacks.



It’s likely the trend will continue, driven by the increasing specialisation of digital capability. The opportunity here is for businesses to avoid tethering themselves to products that sprint into obsolescence. This is just one of the promises of cloud-based communications and collaboration tools. “As a service” products allow businesses to focus on core functionality and value proposition by sourcing tools and enablement platforms from market-leading specialists.

For more information on how RingCentral supports business productivity and workforce engagement through market-leading UCaaS and CCaaS platforms, visit [ringcentral.co.uk](https://ringcentral.co.uk) or call 0800 098 8136.

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