



Reimagining Work in the New Norm

The Exponential Workplace

Azim Pawanchik

Productivity *Insights* Vol. 2-3

Asian Productivity Organization



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PREFACE

The P-Insights, short for “Productivity Insights,” is an extension of the Productivity Talk (P-Talk) series, which is a flagship program under the APO Secretariat’s digital information initiative. Born out of both necessity and creativity under the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic, the interactive, livestreamed P-Talks bring practitioners, experts, policymakers, and ordinary citizens from all walks of life with a passion for productivity to share their experience, views, and practical tips on productivity improvement.

With speakers from every corner of the world, the P-Talks effectively convey productivity information to APO member countries and beyond. However, it was recognized that many of the P-Talk speakers had much more to offer beyond the 60-minute presentations and Q&A sessions that are the hallmarks of the series. To take full advantage of their broad knowledge and expertise, some were invited to elaborate on their P-Talks, resulting in this publication. It is hoped that the P-Insights will give readers a deeper understanding of the practices and applications of productivity as they are evolving during the pandemic and being adapted to meet different needs in the anticipated new normal.

INTRODUCTION

The quest for increased performance and productivity has always been at the top of every organization's wish list, driving them to explore various techniques and tools such as total quality management (TQM), kaizen, agile, design thinking, and many others. More recently, the swing toward digital transformation has been added to the list in an effort to enhance customer satisfaction, external stakeholder engagement, or employee performance. Many have also looked toward innovative startups like Grab, Airbnb, and Gojek, which have exhibited the ability to introduce new technologies and offerings based on a digitally enabled platform approach to operations. These organizations have delivered new value for consumers and introduced new ways of working for their own employees and partners. These new technologies and operating models have helped overcome many performance and productivity barriers that traditional organizations face, such as hierarchy, bureaucracy, and silos, and have enabled employees and key partners to access a greater degree of empowerment and autonomy while delivering services and offerings with increased efficiency and effectiveness.

When the world blundered into the pandemic, many organizations were suddenly faced with a new quandary: remote work. Unprepared, many ventured forth with what was at hand. As the pandemic shifted to become endemic, organizations began to explore the best ways to equip themselves and regain and perhaps surpass the level of productivity attained in the past. Taking cues from organizations that appear to have flourished, this report presents how traditional organizations and individuals could possibly reinvent the ways they work, explores the platform approach to work, and dives deep into how knowledge-based work such research, data analysis, communication, or decision-making can be innovated and transformed.

This report is split into four main sections. Section 2 looks at the challenges to productivity and high performance faced by knowledge workers. These range

from external factors such as bureaucracy, hierarchy, silos, and cognitive biases to personal factors such as work preferences and motivations. This section also explores trends enabled by current digital technology and tools that have the capacity to change how work is carried out and how knowledge workers' productivity and performance can be enhanced.

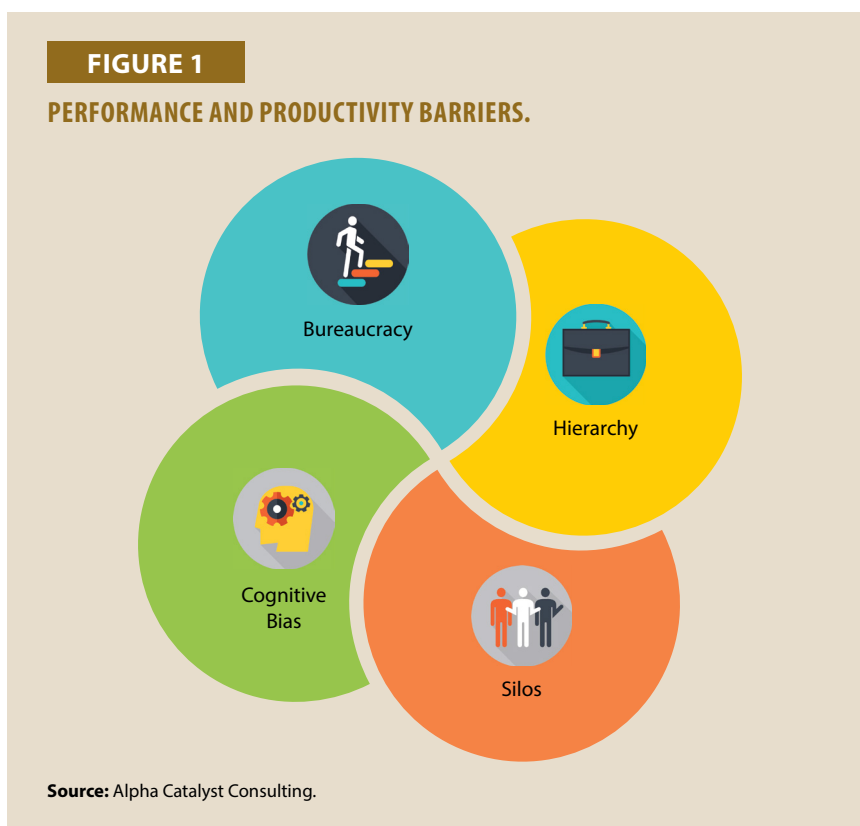
Section 3 assesses how the pandemic has changed the way organizations work and operate, the shifting expectations of employees due to their varying experiences, and the consequences and challenges that arose due to the new ways of working. While much of these are still in a state of flux, an organization's best strategy is to prepare for all possibilities.

The conversation in section 4 shifts to thinking about work beyond a hybrid model. Learning from platform companies how work can be defined differently, we explore possible scenarios when the platform approach is adopted by organizations.

The final section 5 explores the next steps that organizations and their leaders can take in new approaches to work. They include cultivating a hybrid mindset, which is a combination of efficiency and innovative mindsets. Enabling this requires leaders who are willing to allow their employees to run pilots and experiments on new ways of working.

PERFORMANCE AND PRODUCTIVITY AT WORK

The past decade has borne witness to the rise of many new tools and approaches to help employees be more productive at work. Organizations transitioned from email to instant messaging tools to various organization-wide collaboration tools (MS 360, Trello, Slack) to improve communications. However, the existence of bureaucracy, hierarchy, silos, and cognitive biases within organizations, as illustrated in Figure 1, is still very apparent.



Bureaucracy has been equated with many evil things. Walmart CEO Doug McMillon calls it “a villain,” while Berkshire Hathaway Vice Chair Charlie Munger says its tentacles should be treated like “the cancers they so much resemble.” Gary Hamel and Michele Zanini in their 2018 *Harvard Business Review* article [1] felt that bureaucracy saps initiative, inhibits risk taking, and crushes creativity and is a tax on human achievement.

Kate Sweetman [2] added the dimension of hierarchy as a challenge. In her 2012 *Harvard Business Review* article she related how a strong compliance culture can be risky to organizations as it may miss out uncovering new risks, problems, and ideas, leading to suboptimal decision-making. She shared the view that power distance, which she described as the degree to which less powerful members of an organization accept that power is distributed unequally [2] is very high among many Asian countries. In these very high-power distance cultures, lower-level persons will unfailingly defer to higher-level ones and accept it as the natural order.

Silos, whether functional or geographic, have also been known to create boundaries and rivalry, leading to a lack of trust and reluctance to share data and collaborate, ultimately affecting workplace cohesion and employee engagement.

Another barrier to high performance is cognitive bias, a subconscious mental shortcut when processing information, which has been shown to lead to misinterpretation of information or inaccurate decision-making and judgment. Example of biases that may particularly affect performance include:

- Myopia, or a tendency to overvalue the near future but undervalue the distant future.
- Risk and loss aversion, or fear of risking and loosing.
- Status quo bias, or a preference for maintaining the current state of affairs.
- Authority bias, or a tendency to attribute greater accuracy to the opinions of an authority figure without considering the facts.

Other factors that determine performance at work are an individual’s workstyle preference, in combination with his/her motivating factors, whether intrinsic

or extrinsic. Individuals' work preferences would include the need for social interactions, whether a structured or organic work environment is favored, level of trust and empowerment that they are afforded, and many other factors that may help an individual achieve flow and focus to be more productive. It is worth noting that these preferences may fluctuate depending on varying context. Motivating factors, on the other hand, are what enthrust an individual about completing the work allocated, whether it is reward-driven (pay or other forms of external rewards), which can be categorized as external, or in contrast, whether it is driven by an internal sense of purpose or self-satisfaction.

The issues mentioned above are not something new but have been a central topic of discussion for a long time across many organizations. In 2019, Future Agenda, an open-source think tank, conducted several foresight sessions globally on the topic of the Future of Work [3]. One of the workshops, held in Kuala Lumpur in December 2019, explored the impact of digital technologies on how we work, where we work, who we work with, and how we lead and manage others. There were a few key themes that emerged. First, with the rise of digital technologies, more automation is able to be applied in a number of professions ranging from legal, finance, human resources (HR), and many others. This may then result in new skills and roles emerging in tandem with the adoption of digital technologies. Taking HR as an example, HR professionals can currently tap algorithms and AI for recruitment and performance management. Hence, the emergence of data science and AI in HR management becomes a new competency to look for or to develop within the profession. The urgency of upskilling and reskilling can also be seen in many other professions due to similar trends.

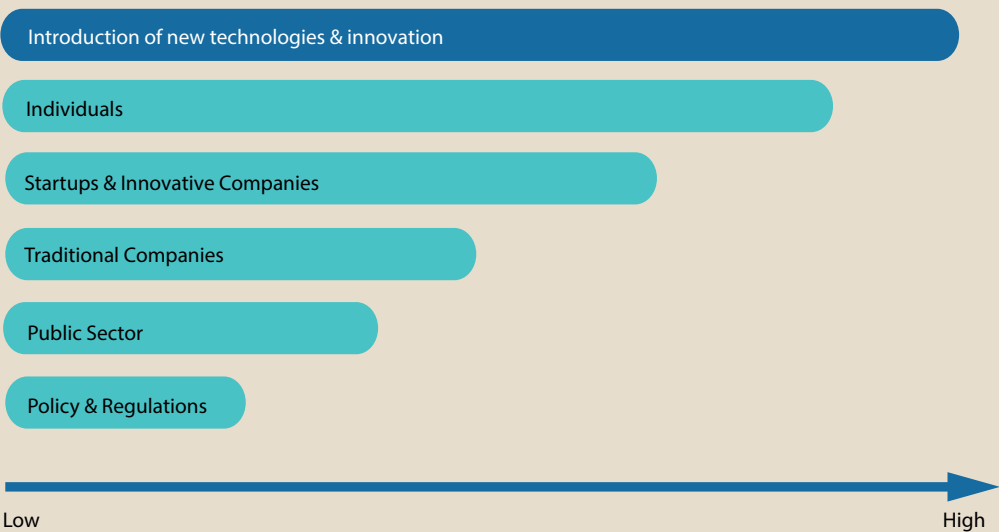
The second trend that emerged was the rise of human and machine interaction, leading to augmentation of tasks and the rise of digital and algorithmic supervision and management. The former is apparent with tasks like scheduling or voice command recognition, used predominantly at an individual level, while the latter has been adopted in the usage of algorithms in apps for ride-hailing or delivery services which track performance in real time, reducing the need for human supervision and managers.

The third trend that was emerging was the concept of Organization 3.0, meaning organizations that are flatter by design, have fewer levels, and where digital tools enable more project-based tasks, flexible working hours, and virtual

teams. The concept of Organization 3.0 was also related to the notion of being a porous organization, which is open to work with external gig-workers, subcontractors, or external experts in a more structured manner. This would allow the organization to embrace the staff-on-demand notion and keep head counts at optimum levels.

While these technologies that had the potential to overcome many barriers to performance and productivity were easily available and rather affordable at that point, the adoption and assimilation into organizations appeared lackluster. The conclusion back in 2019 was that these trends would take quite a few more years to gain traction as organizations were still not ready to adopt the approaches.

Referencing the norms in technology adoption, this was hardly surprising. Adoption rates of new technologies and innovation, for instance, social media such as Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn, are predominantly fastest among individuals as compared with organizations. This is also similar when Airbnb was first introduced; it was individuals who started adopting it before the corporate sector began utilizing the services. As a general rule, startups and the more progressive and innovative companies that are more experimental embrace emerging technologies faster than more traditional ones. This is followed by services offered by the public sector. Policy and regulations are typically the slowest to change and adapt to emerging technologies. This is evident in many countries that are still struggling to regulate platform-based businesses such as ride-hailing, e-commerce, and the gig economy. This trend of adoption is illustrated in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2**ADOPTION RATE OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND INNOVATION.****Adoption rate of new solutions & technologies pre-pandemic**

Source: Alpha Catalyst Consulting.

EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC

The Pandemic and Work

As the pandemic unleashed itself upon the world, organizations and governments scrambled to respond. Almost overnight, nationwide lockdowns were announced, closing businesses, schools, and government offices. Out of necessity, organizations had to adapt to remote work and digitally transform themselves. They had to learn to use video calls, digitize their work, and adopt new tools, including digital signatures. What was optional or not permissible prior to the pandemic became possible, even at board levels. Organizations had no choice but to create new strategies, policies, and procedures to allow employees access to new tools and data while maintaining data security. The public sector and government had to come up with new policies, regulations, and strategies to survive the pandemic. With the pandemic being protracted, it was quickly ascertained that a return to "normal" was never going to happen.

With the pandemic raging, many new technologies and innovations were introduced very quickly to deal with emerging needs, and life was suddenly much more digital. Virtual conferences, online workout classes, ghost kitchens, digital wallets, online shopping for food or home equipment, and even online weddings became the norm. Teachers and students similarly embraced the virtual classroom hurriedly. Many governments were also fast to respond with new regulations and procedures to support these new technologies. The adoption rate of new technologies and innovation seen earlier was amplified many times over.

The pandemic could be seen as the burning platform for the transformation to happen in almost every aspect. A study by Lund and Madgavkar for Deloitte [4] proved that the pandemic acted as a catalyst for change within organizations. Before the pandemic, the adoption of remote work and collaboration was estimated to take 454 days. However, it took a mere 10.5 days after the pandemic

was recognized. Similarly, the use of advanced technologies in business decision-making was shaved from an estimated 635 days to 25.4 days [4].

After more than a year, the only certainty is that the future is uncertain. We have observed that there are a few types of organizations. One type is forward looking. Having envisioned a better future, this type has invested in new competencies and capacity that will enable building new business models and tapping AI, automation, or virtual reality or incorporating the use of drones or robotics. The other, undergoing hibernation mode, is holding on to the hope that things will go back to “normal” while tapping government support to maintain the status quo. Finally, there are those that are cutting their losses as they foresee that the future is bleak, with smaller markets and less rosy revenue pipelines.

Surviving, sustaining, and thriving in this current state of flux require employees to be more productive than before, while at the same time organizations need to be able to harness their creativity and energy to develop and execute new ideas and solutions.

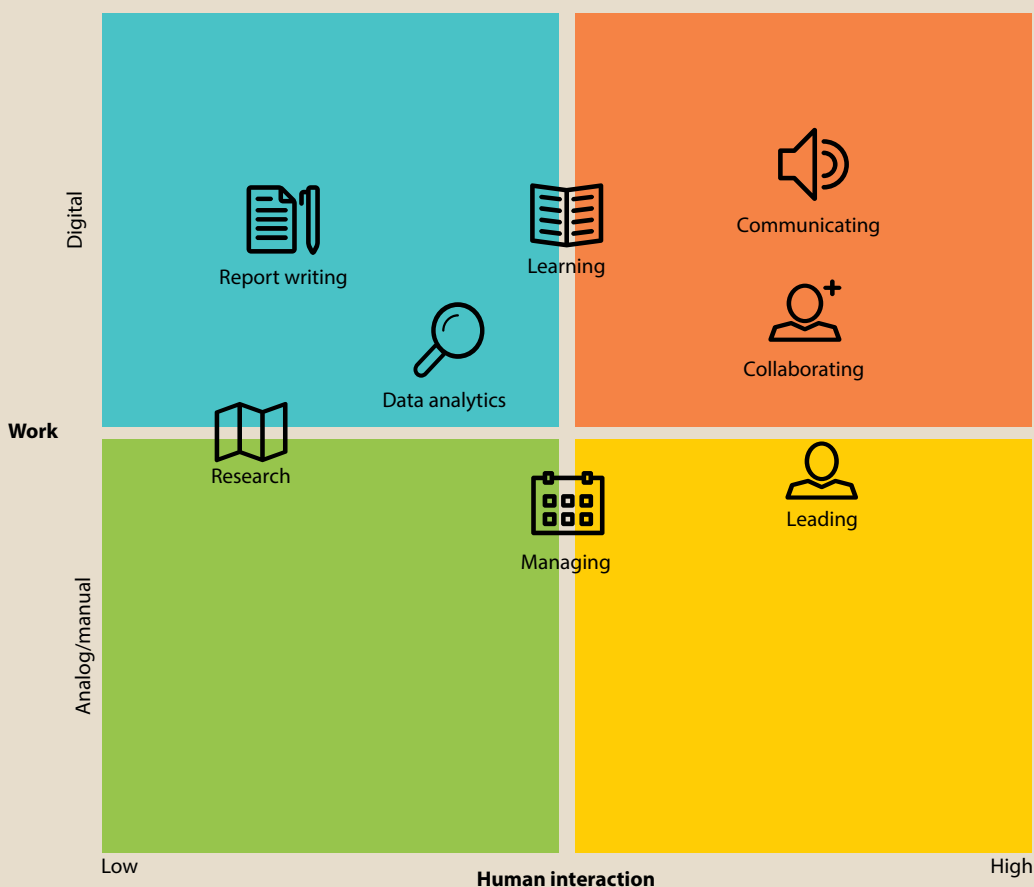
The Pandemic and Performance

The impact of the pandemic on work performance depends on various factors. Among them is the nature of the work itself. This appears to be based on two dimensions: first, the nature of the input and output of work, whether it is digital or analogue; and second, whether it requires a high or low level of human interaction. There is not much choice for roles such as scientists or surgeons where physical tools or resources are required for the work to be carried out. The same goes for work that requires a high level of physical human interaction such as in brick-and-mortar retail or tourism, where virtual work is not an option. This concept together with the distributions of associated tasks is shown in Figure 3.

The focus of this report, however, is on knowledge workers, who include software developers, designers, lawyers, doctors that provide telemedicine services, and many others. If we examine the various tasks performed by them, they appear to be distributed predominantly within the digital band but vary in the level of human interaction required. Thus, this would influence the possibility of virtual work, regardless of function (finance, HR, IT, etc.) or level (managers, top management).

FIGURE 3

DISTRIBUTION OF TASKS BASED ON THE CHARACTERISTICS AND LEVEL OF HUMAN INTERACTION.



Source: Alpha Catalyst Consulting.

At the initial stages of the pandemic, many knowledge workers reported that they were much more productive working at home as there was less time spent commuting or being stuck in physical meetings. Research by the Boston Consulting Group reported a productivity increase of 15–40% by adopting a remote work approach [5].

Our experience at Alpha Catalyst Consulting during the initial stages of the pandemic in 2020 were similar. Many of the consulting assignments in both

the public and private sectors in the region were designed to be based on physical meetings, workshops, and public engagement. There was no choice but to shift our consulting strategy. First, we selected platforms and tools that met the security and privacy requirements of clients. Second, we provided our clients with brief guidance on how to use these new tools and proceeded with the assignments. While challenging in the beginning, both parties quickly reaped the benefits, as we could involve more people during the discussions, and meetings started on time and were shorter. We also introduced online collaboration tools that allowed far more interaction than expected. This allowed the less vocal participants to share their views and be more actively involved in discussions. Additionally, since most meetings were recorded, participants who could not attend were still able to keep abreast of developments and provide their feedback. This introduced the concept of asynchronous meetings and discussions to our clients. Another feature that was transformational was the use of voice-to-text conversion. Applied to the various online discussions, this saved the various teams time in analyzing the discussion sessions, in addition to speeding up information searches within conversations.

Interviews with many individuals and organizations uncovered the numerous merits of virtual work, although it is not all a bed of roses. Despite the gains of working remotely, many struggled with new issues such as internet quality, privacy, maintaining work–life balance, distractions, and even loneliness [6]. The toll on employees began to show. Many employees were struggling with digital overload due to the endless online meetings and high volume of email and online chats. Juggling work with the needs of the family (especially those with young children, who were also confined to the home), limited space (for some, there was no proper work area), and normal cooking and cleaning were getting too much to bear. Combined with the lack of social interaction, many employees began to tear at the seams. As the unintended consequences begin to emerge and impact employees' performance, productivity, and morale, organizations began to question the best way forward.

At this point, many realized that the previous normal of heading in to work or going fully virtual was not suitable. The 2021 Work Trend Index survey of over 30,000 people across 31 countries revealed that many employees preferred a hybrid approach to work and wanted a flexible remote work option [7]. A similar study done by IPSOS for the World Economic Forum also revealed that

many employees were looking for flexibility in terms of when and where they worked [8]. The need for flexibility was particularly strong among women, parents with young children, and adults under the age of 35.

Our conclusion is that the pandemic has accelerated transformation at the workplace. Even though there are several merits of working virtually, it is not feasible or desirable for everyone in the longer term. We believe that there is great opportunity to innovate and transform knowledge-centered work such as research, analysis, report writing, or decision-making. Work should not be limited to a single venue but instead be based on how you work, especially with access to new tools, new policies, new norms, and new data that were not available prior to the pandemic. The key is to explore how to use the new work norm to overcome the barriers to high performance and at the same time find new ways to be more productive and innovative regardless of where we work from.

THE NEW APPROACH TO WORK: HYBRID IS NOT ENOUGH

There are a number of things that happen when something is disrupted relating to the digital world. Based on the 4D concept introduced by Ismail et al. in Exponential Organisations [9] and illustrated in Figure 4, first there is digitization. When examining this from a work perspective, it includes many aspects of the work itself. Meetings, since virtual, are digitized and therefore are able to be recorded, shared, and transcribed. Digital documents, data, and information are more accessible and easily shared. Signatures too can be digitized [9].

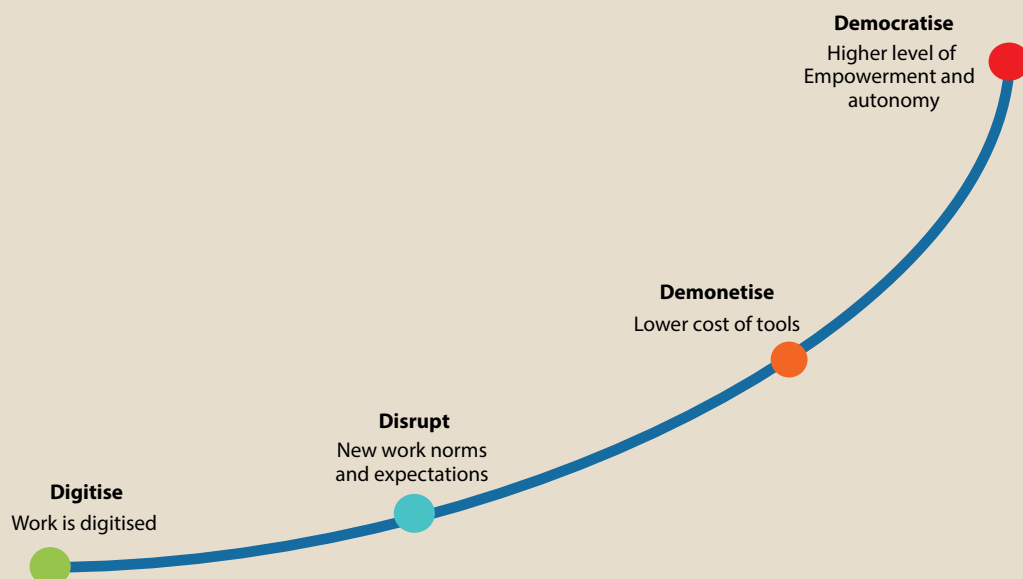
The presence of digitized material or means is able to disrupt how things are done. Meetings that are now more commonly held virtually save many a commute (which previously may have involved lengthy journeys or even flights). Work therefore can be done from anywhere. This also influences how engagements or discussions are conducted with individuals residing in other countries. Digital signatures open the possibility of faster confirmation, authentication, or verification. Multiple signatures can be obtained in less time, streamlining administrative and legal processes.

With advances in technology, computing power, software, hardware, and infrastructure (internet, storage space) have become cheaper. Money is then almost removed from the equation. This is where “demonetize” comes in. Today, the software and tools to support work in a digital world have become so inexpensive, and on many occasions free, that many people or organizations are able to afford it. The concept of working from home has lowered the operating expenses of many organizations as there is no need for office or parking space, while also lowering travel costs for employees.

This brings us to the stage of democratization. Once something is digitalized, it paves the way for more people to have access to the service or product,

FIGURE 4

4DS OF EXPONENTIAL ORGANIZATIONS.



Source: Reproduced with permission from Ismail et al. [9].

essentially democratizing ownership. Powerful technologies are therefore no longer restricted to large companies, governments, or the wealthy. Now everyone can have a piece of technology, at a fraction of the price it used to cost.

The new way of working is therefore now possible for almost everyone with enormous opportunities to transform how work is done while offering higher levels of empowerment and autonomy, both of which many knowledge workers are seeking. This argument reinforces the narrative for organizations to think beyond just hybrid work and instead explore a new way of working altogether, regardless of where work is done.

The Platform Approach to Work

Platform providers have emerged over the last couple of years as aggregators of service providers, offering a multitude of services ranging from logistics, accommodation, food, event spaces, car and house repairs, and many more.

Many are already familiar with names like Airbnb, Grab, Uber, Serv, or NinjaVan. These companies appear to exhibit a number of common features:

- They connect buyers and sellers and more often than not do not own any of the services they are peddling.
- They enable an efficient process of procuring services, from identification of the service, communicating progress, to payment for the service which leverages various algorithms to merge digital and physical transactions. For example, when ordering food, the list of nearby restaurants is matched against a location and with available delivery persons in the area. Preferences based on previous actions on the platform would also suggest possible cuisines.
- Trust and quality control aspects are built in on the platform in the form of performance feedback for all parties involved, and the visibility of these performance reviews inadvertently nudges the service provider to always aim for high performance. Clear guidelines and expectations from the various parties which are enforced by algorithms or rating mechanisms also enhance the performance of the various parties.
- Tracking mechanisms on the platform allow for a higher level of communication. This ranges from real-time tracking of the service provider to constant updates on progress made. This itself strengthens the trust level accorded to the platform models.

The platform model can be seen as an extension of the model of Organization 3.0 mentioned above, weaving in more intricately existing technology to enhance performance and productivity while allowing management to devolve certain levels of authority, decision-making, and action through empowerment. The nature of work and the role of the organization thus blur. At the same time, what constitutes the core capability of a company is also changing. Although some specific areas of expertise such as strategy, innovation, and brand are usually retained, over the years increasing pressure to streamline processes has led to a number of established activities being outsourced, including operations, sales, fulfillment, and finance or legal services. Applying the platform concept to work then creates a new dimension, resulting in newer

forms of flatter, project-based, highly connected and collaborative, outsourced, virtual, and informal organizations.

Critical to this new breed of the networked organization is the changing role of leaders, with the focus shifting toward creating partnerships; enforcing self-organization, empowerment, and ownership; building in mechanisms for trust and transparency; yet designing the organization to be flexible enough so that it may effectively respond to a single aspiration. “In a connected age, leaders need to instill passion and purpose around a shared mission.” Deborah Ancona, Professor of Management and Organisational studies at MIT, alludes to the need for a distributed leadership [10]. With a network-centric configuration, knowledge workers are able to create and leverage information to increase competitive advantage through the collaboration of small, agile, self-directed teams. Alongside the convenience of technology, this can also increase worker mobility, with many moving across jobs, projects, and teams, bringing with them critical knowledge and know-how. While many leaders recognize this as an important aspect, many corporations have been slow to respond and adopt. Deloitte’s 2020 Human Capital Survey [11] showed that 75% of the respondents believed that creating and preserving knowledge across a frequently changing workforce was important for their success, although only 9% felt that they were ready to manage this. The organizational culture therefore needs to change from one solely determined by a single form of organizing (e.g., hierarchy) to an adaptive hybrid, enabling multiple forms of organizing within the same organization, often based on social networks [11].

Crystallizing the concept of the platform approach to work, several scenarios are evident, pertaining to how organizations are able to operate. First among them is how employees tap digital tools that provide them greater autonomy and flexibility based on work preference. Second is the use of cognitive automation and augmentation that enhance their productivity and amplify their creativity. Third is how employees utilize collective intelligence that exists within and outside their organization to help overcome information silos and cognitive biases that may inhibit access to information and effective decision-making. The underlying enabler obviously is the presence of a platform, powered by various algorithms, which is able to connect all employees.

Some of these traits can be adopted and further refined to transform how work is done in organizations. More importantly, the key features could circumvent

the challenges faced by organizations which were identified earlier, i.e., silos, bureaucracy, hierarchy, and cognitive biases.

All these would allow for several key changes to occur within organizations.

- **Work could be asynchronous**, meaning that employees can work from anywhere, without a fixed time or place, depending on the task at hand. Access to view meeting recordings and transcripts offers the flexibility to choose which meetings are critical for in-person presence. The individual can otherwise focus on higher-value work.
- **Decision-making** can be made virtual through polls, chat functions, or other digital interfaces. Decisions assisted by data on hand (from shared databases) and algorithms may also reduce latency or in some cases can be automated. The digital interface provides transparency and furthermore addresses biases in certain kinds of collective decision-making.
- **Gathering of pain points**, areas of opportunity, or customer dissatisfaction shifts to being a collective responsibility. With equal access to share areas for improvement, whether big or small, organizations are able to collate and obtain tangible data prior to creating strategies. No more will knowledge of front-line problems vaporize before it reaches the ears of top management.
- **Solving challenges** faced by the organization also takes on a new life as solutions may come from any level. Those who are sometimes distant to the issue may lend fresh perspectives. While they may not come up with the perfect solution, this is where the platform allows others within the organization to help refine and build upon the initial solution. Decision-making for these challenges also has the potential to be democratized, with the possibility of employees contributing (where applicable) and where decisions made can be easily communicated or are easily visible.
- **The creation of project teams** takes a twist as algorithms are able to suggest experts in the particular field who may be best for the project. Alternatively, rather than depending on “who you know” within the

organization, teams are able to search the organization for the best brains or employees are able to seek preferred tasks or projects. Project updates within the organization are also renewed as whole-day update meetings are done away with. In their place is asynchronous updating of projects, which is made richer by images or videos to communicate the progress, undistorted by verbal interpretation or text description. Updates to particular individuals or mentors can also be automated by push notifications, allowing them to view updates at their convenience. Parameters such as team members, allocated or estimated budgets, timelines, and planned tasks would all be easily visible on the platform.

- **Performance evaluation** is another aspect that would morph. Instead of the annual sit-downs with direct reports, performance is tracked on particular aspects on the platform, even in real time such as how individuals contribute to the growth of colleagues around them, successes of their projects, and how peers evaluate their level of collaborativeness, leadership, or social interaction. This list could go on.
- **Transparency** on the platform adds an interesting angle as projects may actually move faster or team members may subconsciously be more committed as everyone is able to view the progress or contributions made.
- **Gamification** elements then provide an avenue to spark desired behavior and shift organizational culture. Rewarding particular behavior or desired actions is easily incorporated and may be more impactful compared to a potentially superficial utterance of “good job.”

Consistent with the examples above is the democratization of information, decision-making, and contribution. Platforms allow equality for all to voice opinions and share ideas. Traceability and transparency on the platform make everyone accountable for their expressed opinions and thoughts too.

Above and beyond all these possibilities, the data captured on the back end of the platform provide opportunities for extensive in-depth analysis of

factors like what elements increase the likelihood of the success of projects, the key talent that shines within the organization, and what elements would drive employees to perform better. Unlocking these answers could potentially bring the organization to a new level. The level of autonomy accessible to employees itself becomes a magnet for other high-performing individuals to join the organization.

MAPPING THE JOURNEY FORWARD

As organizations strategize new guidelines for employees as they return to work postpandemic, there are a few things that should be considered. Technology should form an essential layer of the strategy, with the focus concentrated on automation and digitization, data and analytics, and collaboration and database tools to invigorate and facilitate operations. Alignment of employees' personal work preferences to the workspace and environment should also be explored. Remote work is not suitable all the time, yet it is preferable on occasions, depending on the context. To kick off the endeavor, there are several steps that can be undertaken.

Mandate: The first step in successfully making the transformation is to realize and believe that the shift is essential. This is especially crucial when undertaking an arduous, complex endeavor such as reimagining work. For the transformation to succeed, a coherent picture of the journey is important, bearing in mind that it can be a journey of experimenting with what may be right for the organization. As the second step, aligning expectations across all divisions, not just the IT division, is crucial.

Mechanism: Next, communicating the process that is to be undertaken, what will be experimented with, how results will be assessed, or who should be involved is important to provide clarity to all employees. The organization needs to develop a detailed plan, budget, timeline, and list of resources to be allocated. This way, expectations from all parties are well managed. Likewise, existing policies, guidelines, or governance processes that may contradict the experimentation phase should be reviewed. This entails examining line items like insurance coverage if employees are working remotely (possibly in another country for an extended time), network security, and others.

Buy-in from leadership is essential to drive this forward. It is also important to expose senior management to the possibility of the new model of work.

Methodology: Depending on where an organization is starting from, there are several stages that can be considered in the journey. The first stage is to focus on a new way of work from a personal efficiency and capability aspect. This includes exploring tools that augment individuals' work, for example, for those in the research field, tools such as Rome Research would assist in organizing, finding, collecting, and connecting related research fields.

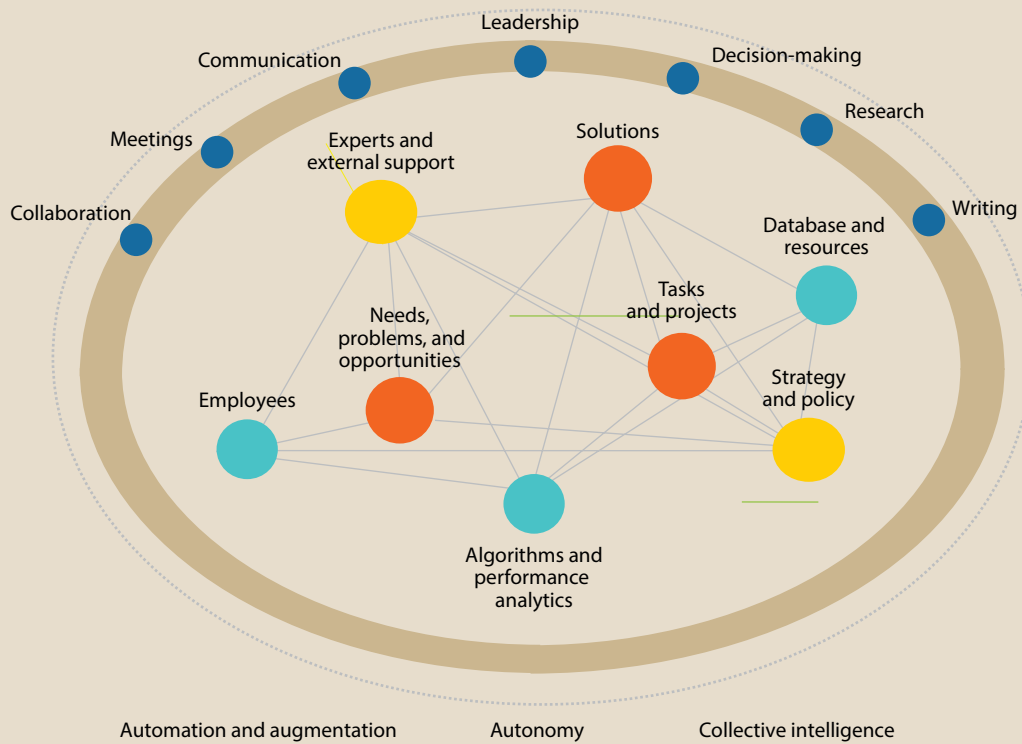
The next stage is to focus on enhancing efficiency at organizational and interdivisional levels, building the foundation for creating agility and enhancing collaboration. There are many tools that can be explored, from free options like Google documents, slides, or sheets to paid options such as Microsoft Teams. Other tools allow for real-time collaboration between teams that mimic actual discussions. Trello, a project management tool, provides free options to manage, track, and share tasks for projects. There are many other tools on the market which are similarly able to augment the productivity and collaboration between teams.

Another aspect around work that can be examined is collaboration with partner or stakeholder organizations to tap expertise, whether in seeking informal opinions or in more formal engagements. It may also involve sharing resources, for example, physical space, tools, or specialized equipment, with other organizations.

As illustrated in Figure 5, powered by the automation and augmentation of work, autonomy within the organization, and leveraging collective intelligence within and outside, organizations can embrace the concept of the platform approach. These three main concepts form the foundation of the platform approach, which then enables various actions like collaboration, meetings, communication, leadership, decision-making, research, and writing. Central to this model is the hyperconnected organization, linking every component, from employees to needs, solutions, tasks, databases, etc.

FIGURE 5

THE EXPONENTIAL WORKPLACE.



Source: Alpha Catalyst Consulting.

Ultimately, this could transform:

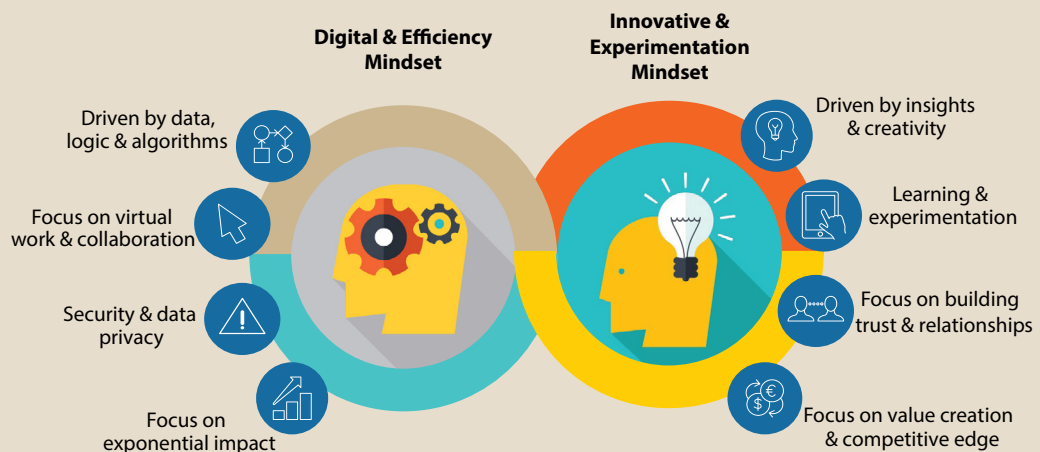
- When we work (time and duration).
- Where we work (home, office, satellite office, or preapproved locations).
- Who we work with (project-based team members, with possible access to external preapproved individuals).
- Who we report to (line managers, project leaders).

- What projects we work on (possibly based on preference, developmental needs, etc.).
- How our performance is tracked or measured (based on deliverables, etc.).

In undertaking the envisioned transformation, leaders in the organization should embrace a hybrid mindset, one that is focused on digital and efficiency on one hand and on innovation and experimentation on the other hand, as illustrated in Figure 6. The shift between the two mindsets should be iterative. As the organization strives to experiment with new approaches, the innovation and experimentation mindset takes the lead, but when scaling or implementing a solution, the digital and efficiency mindset takes the lead.

FIGURE 6

THE HYBRID MINDSET.



Source: Alpha Catalyst Consulting.

While in the digital and efficiency mindset mode, leaders should:

- Be driven by data, logic, and algorithms for work that is predictable or consistent.
- Save time and focus on virtual work and collaboration.

- Ensure that data are secure, and that privacy is protected.
- Seek to create an exponential impact (cost savings, efficiency, etc.) and find ways to work more efficiently on routine tasks, which may involve automating certain tasks, especially operations.

Alternatively, while in the innovative and experimentation mindset mode, leaders should:

- Find ways to uncover new insights and ideas using collective intelligence and tools and free up time to focus on generating creative ideas.
- Experiment with new tools and concepts to uncover potential value and impact and learn as much as possible from the experience.
- Focus on building trust and relationships with key team members and other leaders to co-create ideas and work on prototypes and pilots.
- Focus on creating value and a competitive edge for the organization.

Transforming and doing things differently often mean that organizations navigate into unknown territories that lack explicit pathways. At this stage, there is no proven model shown to be the best for work in the new normal. It is up to each organization to experiment and decide what works best for it based on the tasks at hand, the people, and its culture. What is clear is that there is a definite learning curve for all.

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