How to build your roadmap to the modern workplace

"Productivity is the engine of human progress—it is what propels our society forward. The promise of technology is to help us get more done, with less effort." -Satya Nadella, CEO, Microsoft

Around 80 percent of businesses that have undergone digital transformation report increased profitability and employee satisfaction. However, introducing new technology without a specific vision is like driving a brand-new car with your eyes closed: you won't get off the showroom forecourt without taking a serious hit.

So, how do you move to a modern workplace without damaging the legacy you've worked so hard to build?

As with any journey, the key is planning for the road ahead. If productivity is the engine and your desired business outcome is the destination, then all you need to get from A to B is a clear and calculated roadmap.

Breaking from tradition: what is the modern workplace?

The definition of a digital transformation isn't fixed. Strategies can change depending on the type, size and capabilities of the company you're running. However, one thing that remains consistent is the need to move away from the current hierarchical, office-based approach.

A massive 75 percent of millennials say remote working is the key to their productivity and, by 2020, this generation will make up the majority of the UK workforce.
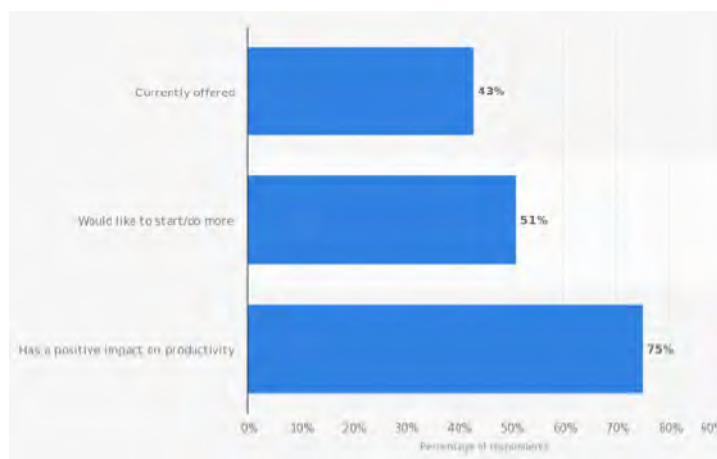
75 percent of millennials see a positive impact from remote working practices.

Businesses seeking workplace nirvana need to start catering for a changing approach to work, focusing on four main principles:

- Flexibility
- Mobility
- Agility
- Collaboration

Adjusting your focus to include these core concepts will drive the innovation you need to stay competitive.

In the next five chapters, we'll look at the best ways to integrate new technology into your business and build a working roadmap to the modern workplace. We'll focus on:

- Choosing desired outcomes and benchmarking
- Changing your cultural mindset
- Creating seamless collaboration and communication
- Embracing mobility and multi-device management
- Implementing proactive and intelligent security

Ready to get on the road? First, you need to figure out where you're headed.

What's A and what's B? Choosing your desired outcomes

As with any new project, you'll need to benchmark what you've already got. This baseline assessment is point A – the showroom forecourt. You're here to trade in your old, rigid approach to work for a sleeker, more modern model. But why are you bothering to undergo digital transformation in the first place? What are you ultimately hoping to achieve?

Boiling the answers down to distinct business outcomes will give you point B. Here a few examples of digitally-driven outcomes:

- Cost reduction
- More efficient processes
- Increased or new revenue streams
- Government regulation
- Better customer experience

Aligning strategic business goals with one or more of these outcomes will give you a clear, positive destination to strive towards. At this point, you can begin thinking about the capabilities you need to drive that change.

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Avoid backseat drivers: change your cultural mindset

Moving to a modern workplace requires buy-in from key stakeholders and employees. Without their commitment, there is no impetus for change – you'll have stalled on your very first hill start. So, how do you overcome resistance from your colleagues?

Fortunately, one of the core concepts of the modern workplace is flexibility and empowerment. Handing your employees the tools to unlock a more productive working day is a firm incentive in itself. Committing to a growth mindset like this will ensure everyone shares the same practices, values and vision going forward.

Answering a few simple questions can help you kickstart your cultural shift:

- **Vision:** What does the end result look like?
- **Skillsets:** What do you have? What do you need?
- **Resourcing:** Who is going to do the work?
- **Incentive to change:** Who in the organisation is incentivised to change? Who needs more incentives?
- **Action plan:** What are some of the first concrete steps you will take?

Your culture should be built on providing the right tools and

experiences for people to get more out of the work they're doing. Equip employees to try new approaches, learn from mistakes and react quickly to inefficiencies or bottlenecks.

Adopting technology such as the cloud can democratise information, create new, data-driven opportunities, and provide greater visibility into overall performance.

Mirror, signal, manoeuvre: perfecting communication and collaboration

In the modern workplace, communication and collaboration must be at the heart of all projects and procedures. Just as drivers signal their intent to other road users, employees need clear channels for interacting with their colleagues.

While email remains the favoured method of office communication, it is by no means the most efficient. In fact, employees spend more than a third of their day reading and answering messages in their inbox.

But what's the alternative? How do you create frictionless interaction between an increasingly distributed and diverse workforce?

Humanising the virtual workplace

According to Gartner, collaboration technology has become one of the main themes of the digital workplace. With cloud productivity tools such as SharePoint and Skype enabling workers from all over the globe to work on the same project at the same time, value and simplicity are no longer lost to the black hole of the email thread.

To foster genuine teamwork in your business, consider the following steps:

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- **Integrate tools that make communicating easy** – Slack and Microsoft Teams are great places to start.
- **State expectation and preferences early** – make sure everyone knows how to reach out to their colleagues and managers.
- **Avoid interruptions** – schedule regular calls and meetings early in the week so employees have unbroken time to work on projects.
- **Make time for social calls** – recreate the office breakroom online so employees can build internal relationships.

You should also ask your employees how they like to work. Identifying common breakdowns in communication will help you decide which tools will have the biggest impact on productivity.

Shifting gears: embracing multi-device mobility

In 2017, 46 percent of business had adopted a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) policy. As smartphones and tablets continue to dominate modern working practices, business technology needs to keep pace.
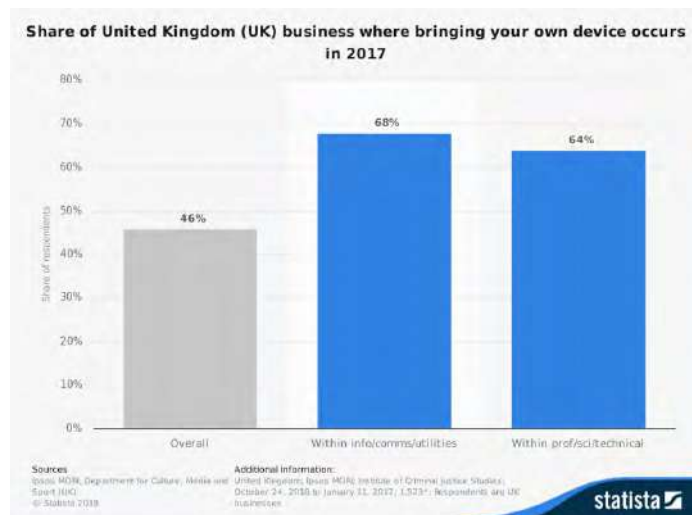
46 percent of businesses allowed employees to bring their own devices to work in 2017

The user experience is no longer bound to a single device—it travels

with your employees wherever they go. Creating a seamless workspace across multiple devices will enable workers to access critical business applications whether they're sat at their desk or commuting across the city.

True mobility is now a major competitive advantage, with less restrictions placed on when and where work gets done. Key benefits of a mobile approach include:

- Instant access to company resources
- Faster response to customer feedback and concerns
- Familiarity with device and functionality
- Better time management and increased productivity

Viewing mobile working as a business enabler rather than a liability will help you implement a strategy that cultivates agility and efficiency.

Keep your seatbelt fastened: implementing intelligent security

Like seatbelts in cars, proactive security measures should be compulsory.

But all too often network security is an afterthought, not a precaution. It's bolted on to architecture that is structurally flawed and easy prey for corporate hackers. To fully embrace the modern workplace, you need intelligent defences that respond to evolving threats, protecting all assets and devices in your network.

With Microsoft Azure, this is exactly what you get. Security is built in to all Azure technology, simplifying access and control

- **Identity, app, data, and device protection** with Azure Active Directory, Microsoft Intune, and Windows Information Protection.
- **Advanced threat protection** with Office 365 Advanced Threat Protection and Windows Defender Advanced Threat Protection.
- **Data archiving, governance, and discovery** with Advanced eDiscovery.

Knowing all your apps and devices are secured by the same intelligent system reduces the risk of data breaches and ensures you meet essential compliancy regulations. While you will always need to keep your eyes on the road, a proactive threat response makes it easier to drive innovation and adapt to changing business demands without increasing the probability of a crash.

Plan the route, enjoy the journey

Digital transformation is about more than technology. According to Deloitte, 80 percent of digitally mature businesses have a clear strategy for embracing the modern workplace. Replicating this level of commitment in your company might not be an easy task, but it is an essential one.

Digitisation has the power to create new revenue streams, overhaul inefficient processes and build distinct competitive differentiation. For those starting out on their journey, mapping a route and setting out attainable steps ensures a much smoother transition.

Through our SmartPath initiative, we've helped hundreds of businesses move to a workplace that promotes their values and builds on accessible, affordable cloud technology. Understanding your specific business objectives helps us personalise your journey and reach your desired outcomes quicker and more efficiently.

Keen to get the engine running? Book a meeting with one of our SmartPath consultants and learn what a modern workplace looks like for your business.

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