

POINT OF VIEW

# Four priorities for leading in the virtual world of work

*COVID-19 has forced many businesses to make major changes to how they operate. Perhaps the most substantial has been the shift that's moved entire teams and organizations to work remotely. While it feels disruptive, history has taught us that this is a unique opportunity to transform how we use technology and manage people to emerge stronger.*

*We can create a digitally enabled virtual world of work where business models are agile, people fulfil their roles from anywhere at any time, and organizations become more resilient. Change management is easier when change is the only logical option. But there's a window. And we believe it will only stay open until roughly the end of 2021.*

While the vision for a virtual world of work is compelling, many enterprises are struggling to turn this vision into a reality.

They're urgently looking for answers to challenging questions facing them today and into the future:

- **Adapt** - How and when do I get people back to the office - and should I? How do I preserve and enhance our culture? How do I improve transparency and control?
- **Rise** - How do I get our business transformation back on track? What additional value can I get out of it? What new talent can I access? How do I hire, train, manage, and redeploy employees? Which processes can a distributed workforce run?
- **Thrive** - What operating models and practices will work best in these new conditions?

Answering these questions is essential. Some businesses that have experience with remote or distributed work may make a smoother transition, but all can thrive if they're willing to learn from each other.

## Today's priorities for tomorrow's business

Remote working and collaboration between globally distributed people and increasingly intelligent machines have always been at the heart of Genpact's operations, culture, and the thousands of processes we run. From

these experiences, we've identified four priorities enterprises must focus on to adapt, rise, and thrive in a virtual world of work.

1. **Offline becomes online:** Customers who find it uncomfortable to shop in crowded places and employees who fear their offices need a new way to engage. Many have found that moving online is the answer.

To flourish within this world, companies must redesign customer experiences and the employee experience that underpins them. Businesses must give employees tools to deliver online services, so customers receive the digital interactions they want and need.

2. **The move to partially virtual, distributed work:** To perform effectively, employees will seek to redefine their working style and performance criteria. Depending on their role and personal preference, some will work from anywhere with flexible hours, some will follow office routines, and others may choose a blend of both. Their main tool will be collaboration technology, not just email or phone calls.

There's an urgent need to revisit where work gets done and by whom (figure 1). In a more virtual world of work, there will be a higher proportion of people working from home (WFH) or working from anywhere (WFA) - fully or partially. Some people will use offices, including satellite sites or offices far from the rest of their team. Businesses should not be afraid to bring in partners with specialized remote-management experience to help with this transition.

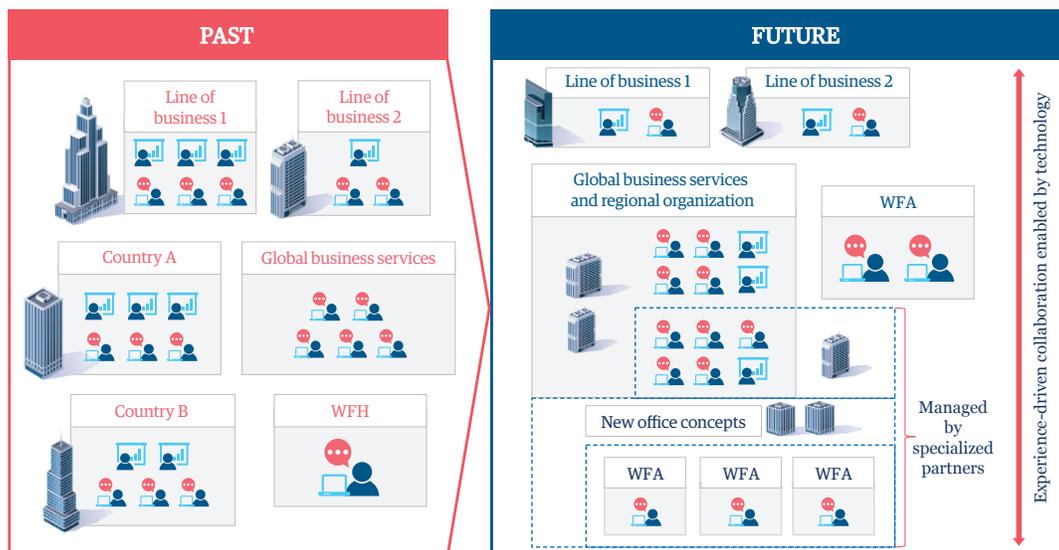


Figure 1: Making the shift to virtual operations

If you're eager to get started, examining which processes best lend themselves to virtualization is a good place to begin. These will likely be mature processes where companies have access to reliable data, no regulations or restrictions apply, and they can easily measure outcomes.

Then, identify processes that rely on people who may have a difficult or expensive commute and can easily get connected from anywhere. And if the process requires hard-to-find skills in specific locations, a virtual team can access a larger talent pool, especially by hiring independent workers who don't need in-person training.

With these points in mind, you can decide if your company moves to a fully virtualized infrastructure, a hub-and-spoke model, or a combination of the two.

- 3. Renewed operational excellence:** Things that were once considered impossible don't seem impossible anymore. COVID-19 took many businesses headfirst into a major remote-working experiment. While you should welcome experimentation and innovation, sustaining large-scale performance is the highest priority. Digital-first models will help businesses maintain operational excellence (table 1).

	Solution design	Recruit	Onboard	Transition	Train	Secure data	Manage	Redeploy	Feedback
From	Face-to-face workshop Regionalized	Concentrated pools of talent Face-to-face screening 12 weeks	Office	In person Lots of travel 12 weeks	In-person, classroom-based	Valuable information under lock and key	Floor huddles Visual management	Heavy lift from human resources	Manual operation procedures
To	Virtually reimagined, truly global	Distributed pools of talent Fully virtual, accelerated process	Decentralized	Remote presentation Six weeks Continuous support	Virtual learning	Digital Virtual desktop infrastructure	Digital huddles Virtual floors Collaboration tools like Microsoft Teams	Talent matching More dynamic supply and demand	Machines supporting people, requesting and analyzing feedback

Table 1: Sustaining business performance through operational excellence

Operational excellence also extends into many business competences (table 2). Most of these areas typically have established practices, but many are not fit for the future. They also need immediate attention to accommodate rapidly emerging best practices.

collaborating remotely. In turn, this unlocks the collective intelligence of an entire network.

Think of supervisors who can monitor the flow of work and help team members support customers at speed, irrespective of location. Or, intelligent machines that trigger proactive, informative alerts so people can focus on what truly matters.

Return to work	Solution design and planning	Transition and change	Hiring	Overall employee experience
Overall operational excellence	Managing human resources	Learning	Collaboration methods and technology	Risk management
IT infrastructure	Facilities and logistics	Legal controls and tax	Cost management models	Overall digitization of operations

Table 2: 15 competencies for a virtual world of work

- 4. Digital and artificial intelligence (AI) as cornerstones:** Digital technologies and AI help shed unnecessary activities and augment people's capabilities when

## Positive impact across your organization

In the short-term, IT and facilities costs may rise, and productivity may suffer - but there's light at the end of the tunnel. In the long-term, the virtual world of work will likely reduce costs, boost productivity, and uncover new and better ways of working - for instance by improving hiring strategies and how companies supervise work. And the positive impact extends far beyond cost control:

- **Unconstrained talent pools:** As businesses eliminate location constraints, they can access varied, high-quality talent from all over the world. This includes groups that may have been out of reach: stay-at-home parents, seniors, and part-time workers. As a result, companies will match talent supply to demand more accurately, and will be able to operationalize talent faster - a crucial factor will be an organization's ability to offer superior reskilling. And customizable hours and working practices will satisfy employee expectations for flexibility, ensuring businesses retain talent.
- **Improved customer experience:** As the employee experience is intrinsically linked to the customer experience, you need to find the best person for every role. By breaking away from the traditional constraints of catchment areas, you'll have more choice and track down the right person for the job, wherever they are.
- **Increased business resilience:** A distributed, virtual workforce is more resilient in the face of disruption. By tapping into the intelligence within your system in more agile, flexible ways you can tackle whatever the future holds.
- **Broader positive impact on society:** The virtual world of work can make our societies - including traditionally disadvantaged areas - stronger by providing more widespread work opportunities. And, we're already seeing the positive environmental impact of our digital-first working practices as businesses reduce travel and the need to commute. All of this will instill a renewed sense of purpose in employees and stakeholders.

## The time is now

Every enterprise has some work to do to prepare for the virtual world of work. If you break down the task into phases, it will be much easier to manage.

- **Adapt - Fix short-term problems:** Start with the return to work. Decide which employees can go back to physical workspaces and which will remain or become remote workers. Deploy simple measures to optimize the new ways of working and make them sustainable. This is the most pressing task facing your business.
- **Rise - Build virtual operations:** Within the next 12 months, make positive changes that will set your business up for continued success. Designing new employee and customer experiences, supported by operational and technology transformation, is an immediate, no-regret move.
- **Thrive - Lay the foundation for the future:** Don't lose sight of the longer-term goal. Use the steps you've taken so far to embed an augmented collective intelligence across your organization. This vast, agile network of people and AI-powered machines working together will help your business compete and succeed in a more volatile world.

Lastly, remember that you don't have to make this journey alone. Backed by our experience in remote and virtual ways of working, Genpact is here to help you adapt, rise, and thrive.

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### About Genpact

Genpact (NYSE: G) is a global professional services firm that makes business transformation real. We drive digital-led innovation and digitally-enabled intelligent operations for our clients, guided by our experience running thousands of processes primarily for Global Fortune 500 companies. From New York to New Delhi and more than 30 countries in between, we connect every dot, reimagine every process, and reinvent companies' ways of working. Transformation happens here.

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