

Skillup for Digital Workplace During Covid-19 and Beyond



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COVID-19 ACCELERATES THE DIGITAL ECONOMY

In ways large and small, our lives are being changed by digital technology.

Ever-present mobile devices enable us to work from anywhere and stay in touch with the people we care about and the information we need from everywhere.

According to World Economic Forum, the speed of current breakthroughs has no historical precedent. The transformation has been exponential.

By some estimates, change today is happening 10 times faster and at 300 times the scale of the First Industrial Revolution. The change is so momentous that it is referred to as the Fourth Industrial Revolution. And the clear consensus is that the pace of change is only going to quicken. This creates an overwhelming imperative for businesses to respond—and respond rapidly.

How would the Covid-19 outbreak affect this digital transformation ?

The Covid-19 outbreak since January have made us readjust our life in ways most of us never imagined. For those who are fortunate to still have a job, home is now office and doubles as a classroom for those with children.

What's clear is that this global pandemic will have long lasting and profound effects on the world, with structural changes to economies, industries and daily life.

Suzy Taherian, CFO of Kinetics, expects Covid-19 will push supply chain to go local rather than global. "The tariff and trade wars had stretched global supply chain to breaking point. The virus pandemic broke those chains. Companies will look to diversify their suppliers to favour local suppliers, even at a higher costs," she said in an article she wrote for Forbes.

Digital divide will cross the chasm with everyone shifting to working and learning online. Those with connectivity and technology jobs and skills could continue working remotely, fairly unaffected during the lockdowns. Access and ability to work online has become a must and those who are unable to connect and work online will fall behind economically.

Citi Research believes the global stay at home orders or lockdowns in varying degrees have also accelerate the trend for online transactions in nearly every aspects, from healthcare, business to shopping for grocery.

If advances in digital technology are the catalyst for the current digital transformation, Covid-19 has given the final push for it to cross the line where it has become a MUST DO for businesses to survive in the new digital economy.

The future workplace is evolving and now is the time to build a modern digital workplace able to empower people and drive business growth during Covid-19 and beyond.

Future Workplace – Trends

The nature of work keeps changing as technology advances.

Starting with the invention of the steam engine and the rise of industrial manufacturing, successive waves of technological innovation have provided new capabilities, tools, and power to make work more efficient and productive.

These have always been times of great disruption as old ways of operating became obsolete and new models of work emerged. Adapting to change in periods of rapid technology transformation is never easy for organizations or the people who work in them.

Businesses and industries are challenged to reinvent processes, develop new markets and partnerships, and invent new business models.

At a personal level, people are often challenged to let go of old ways of doing things so they can learn new skills and adopt new ways of working, thinking, and being in the workplace.

The companies that thrive are those that understand the forces driving change as well as their impact on people and implications for the workplace.

We reproduced below several future workplace trends shared by Microsoft from their article titled “The Future of Work - Empowering people and organizations to achieve more”.

Rise of Digital Natives

For the first time in the history of the modern labor market, the workforce spans five generations—from the last of the Silent Generation through Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and now to Generation Z. Millennials have become the largest generational cohort in the labor force. By 2025, they will constitute 75 percent of the global workforce.

Meanwhile, Generation Z is beginning to surge into the workforce as well.

Why is this so important? Because these new generations include the first digital natives. For many, they are the first to come of age in the era when life without a mobile device is nearly impossible to imagine. They expect flexibility about where and when they work, with touchdown spaces available so they can connect and collaborate with co-workers when it’s helpful or necessary. Increasingly, they demand the option to work remotely—something that 75 percent of Millennials would like to do more.

Millennials and Generation Z are looking for increased flexibility from employers about where they work, because staying connected is so central to their lives. For them, forming and conducting relationships with people through mobile technology tools and platforms is simply how the world is supposed to operate, including at work.

Blurring boundaries of time and place

As more companies become truly global with employees and partners located all across the world, traditional boundaries of time, location, space, and structure are quickly blurring.

Work doesn’t just happen between the hours of 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. at fixed desks in the same office building five days a week. People are now more mobile than ever, and business success depends on connecting people with each other and the information they need from anywhere, at any time, with whatever device is handy.

Work environments have also become much more fluid and flexible. It’s not simply a matter of location. Today, it’s rare to find a successful company without connections across a wide range of external partnerships. This makes it essential for businesses to be equipped with digital

collaboration tools that transcend geographical boundaries for communication and information sharing not only for groups within a company, but across teams that may span multiple organizations and communities.

Demand for lifelong learners

As technology automates routine tasks, human intelligence becomes even more important in the digital economy. More and more, companies will find that success comes from people who offer imagination, empathy, creativity, and ingenuity. According to LinkedIn research, interpersonal skills are foundational for people to be successful in the workforce, in addition to more specialized skills.

And as the pace and scale of change continue to increase, perhaps the most critical traits for humans to possess are agility and adaptability. A generation ago, the knowledge people gained in college probably served them well for most of their working lives. Now, according to a report from the World Economic Forum, about 50 percent of what students learn while earning a four-year technical degree will be outdated by the time they graduate.

Increasingly, we all need to become lifelong learners who embrace every opportunity to cultivate new skills. Because everything is changing so rapidly, people need to be able to adapt in real time, often without a lot of training and practice needed for a given task. This means companies will have to play a different role in ensuring their employees are “job ready.” In addition to traditional learning and development, such as on-the-job training and certification programs, companies will need to explore peer mentorships, open knowledge sharing, on-demand learning, and other new approaches.

Shrinking shelf life of information

While much has been said about information overload, the rate and speed at which new information is created drives an even greater sense of urgency for companies to rethink their information management strategies.

The increased speed of information now results in its shrinking “shelf life.”

These days, information comes in bite-sized tweets and posts, and speed and immediacy are often more important than quality and depth. The ability to quickly turn information into insight and action can be overwhelming, yet it has become the key to almost everything—from improving productivity and driving innovation, to understanding customers, expanding into new markets, and much more.

We now have more data than ever about our customers, products, operations, and market conditions. However, it is estimated that less than 0.5 percent of digital data is ever analyzed or used to enhance business performance.

Growing impact of artificial intelligence

One of the hallmarks of the current era is how quickly artificial intelligence and machine learning is augmenting every aspect of business. It’s not just in manufacturing where robots are doing physical labor on the factory floor. AI systems are already preparing our taxes, helping doctors diagnose diseases, and enabling lawyers to search vast databases of legal decisions to pinpoint the precedent they need in seconds instead of days or weeks.

But this is just the start. In recent years, great strides have been made in a number of key areas of AI research. Increasingly, we are able to create digital devices that recognize what they see in images, video, and in the physical world; identify the words and sounds they hear; interpret the meaning of language; and even reason by inferring relationships between people,

objects, places, and events. With these capabilities, how computers understand and interact with the world is becoming more natural and responsive than ever before.

According to PwC, by 2030, AI is expected to provide a \$15.7 trillion boost to global GDP. It will also have major implications for how we work. Before long, many of the mundane and repetitive tasks that take up so much of a knowledge worker's time will be handled automatically by AI. Machines will also empower people to analyze vast amounts of data and discover patterns that would be difficult or impossible for humans to detect. And artificial intelligence will help us do more with one of our most precious commodities: time. Soon, personal digital assistants will be trained to anticipate our needs, help manage our schedule, prepare us for meetings, assist as we plan our social lives, reply to and route communications, and drive cars.

Fostering Digital Workplace

As companies continue to use the power of technology to automate, simplify, and integrate many aspects of work, there are a few essential questions each one will need to answer, such as:

- What would boost the agility of my people ?
- How do I develop a cohesive and diverse team ?
- How do I deliver seamless customer experience ?
- How do I move from data to insights ?
- How do I use AI to make my people more productive ?
- How do I secure my digital workplace ?

Around the world, forward-thinking companies are beginning to find answers to these questions.

We reproduced below excerpts from Microsoft's article - "The Future of Work - Empowering people and organizations to achieve more" to share how organizations could foster and embrace a modern workplace to achieve the full benefits of the future of work.

Collaborative Workplace – foster cohesive teams

Companies should also reimagine the way people get work done with computers. People can now interact with devices and digital content the same way we interact with each other.

People have always worked in teams. But the nature of teamwork has changed and companies need to give people the right tools for the right tasks. Teams come in all different shapes and sizes. Teams can have two people or 200. Projects can last for two days or two years. Team members can be local or spread across the globe and include vendors and external contractors along with full-time employees.

And it's not just how people work together that has changed but also how often. According to the Harvard Business Review Analytic Services, there has been a 50 percent increase in collaboration demands over the past eight years.

Now, a new generation of unified communication technology is transforming some of our most basic concepts of how teams are formed and deployed. People now can brainstorm with colleagues from around the world with vigor and engagement like they are in the same room together.

Connected Workplace – straight through processing

The emerging technology of today will be powering the customer experiences of tomorrow. And many of those technologies would need to be seamlessly integrated for building a Connected Workplace able to deliver straight through processing in real-time for a seamless customer experience and journey.

Straight through processing (STP) allowed companies to have the same information be streamlined through a process seamlessly across multiple touch points along the customer journey. This limits the manual process for employees to keep entering the information over and over again or checking to ensure a transaction fully processed, which raises chances for errors.

With the emergence of straight through processing technology such as robotic process automation (RPA), companies can now build a connected workplace for sharing and processing information in a quicker, more effective, and secure manner.

Intelligent Workplace – empower smarter decisions

Advances in digital technology can now help us extend our ability to think and create. Machines have become a lot smarter, not only carrying out tasks we give them but doing so in a more personalized way. They learn from our behaviours and adapt accordingly to our preferences, giving us proactive insights such as suggesting people we should connect with or additional content that might be helpful for us to review. AI and machine learning technologies can now process data with such granularity that they can learn from employees' digital interactions and deliver personalized assistance.

Data Democratization will empower more employees to make strategic decisions. Employees at all levels of companies will have greater access to quality data and actionable insights—enabled by powerful AI, machine learning, and analytical tools. As such, more workers will be authorized to make business-critical decisions. In short, data is becoming democratized, which could have long-term implications for organizational hierarchies.

Agile Workplace - advancing creativity and innovation

In the digital economy, people's most important contribution to the creation of corporate value will increasingly be their ability to come up with new ideas.

Every person in every role will be expected to employ creative and innovative thinking, whether they are giving a sales presentation, doing financial analysis, or drafting plans for deploying new technology. And instead of mostly relying on text to convey ideas and information, people will use visuals, voice, and video into most communications and almost every presentation.

In his best-selling book *A Whole New Brain* published in 2005, Daniel Pink predicted that in coming decades, there would be a growing emphasis on “right-brain” qualities, such as inventiveness, creativity, strategy, empathy, play, and meaning. Recent LinkedIn research confirms much of Pink's prediction, noting that skills such as empathy, curiosity, adaptability, and open mindedness are consistently among the most sought after.

Companies should look to digital technology to help humans do more innovative work. Today, for example, knowledge workers spend more than 20 percent of their time struggling to find information.

Technology will give people more thinking time simply by making search easier. As technology handles routine and time-intensive tasks, people can spend more

brainpower on innovative inquiry—questioning.

Secured Workplace – protection across clouds

As companies embrace more dynamic forms of teamwork and open information sharing, it becomes even more important for organizations to protect company assets and sensitive customer data.

At a time when more and more of business is becoming digital (according to one estimate, 85 percent of corporate assets are already digital).

We are witnessing an unprecedented rise in cyberattacks. In 2017, the number of security breaches more than doubled compared to the previous year. For businesses, the stakes couldn't be higher.

Even more important is the potential impact on trust—breaches that expose sensitive customer information can be devastating to a company's reputation and its bottom line.

Cloud computing enables companies to adapt their available computing power by adding or subtracting capacity and services as demand fluctuates.

By the end of this year, it is projected that 80 percent of all enterprise IT spending will go to cloud-based apps and solutions.

With a secured and efficient cloud environment, companies can now bring all their systems, services, and data for easier access and sharing, opening the door to much more effective and productive teamwork and collaboration.

Digital Workplace Implementation – Lithan’s Case Study

As the nature of work is changing, the tools workers use in their jobs are evolving to meet new needs and provide new capabilities.

At Lithan, we aim to future ready talents and enterprises with digital workplace technologies designed to help them seamlessly connect with one another, implement innovations to support future workplace, democratize data and analytics capabilities for everyone, and weigh important enterprise considerations like security and compliance.

At Lithan, we envision a digital workplace that uses digital infrastructure, devices, cloud services and modern workplace technologies to create a world- class, integrated experience for our people and customers. We want to build a collaborative, connected, intelligent, agile and secured digital workplace.

Our digital workplace is deeply integrated with Microsoft’s integrated modern workplace technologies covering AI chatbot, unified communications platform, business intelligence tools, robotic process automation technology, business applications builder and ERP software. Microsoft technologies we implemented include Microsoft 365, Azure Cloud Services, Dynamic 365, MS Teams, Power Automate, Power Virtual Agents, Power Apps, Power BI.

Our digital workplace implementation has enhances our productivity, creates efficiency, enables accessibility, and eliminates friction. It fosters connections and collaboration; it provides safety and security. It accommodates and facilitates : it delights and inspires.

At Lithan, our digital workplace investment has delivered tremendous benefits to our business and is creating a leading example to inspire and guide other enterprises to transform their workplaces.

In this section, we will share our experience on how we build and implement our digital workplace leveraging on Microsoft’s modern workplace technology and services. Additionally, we will identify and showcase digital skills training required to support the implementation of your digital workplace.

Collaborative Workplace

At Lithan, we are using Microsoft Teams to implement a collaborative workplace without physical boundary. Our people collaborate within and across teams and organizations, and with customers, partners, vendors, suppliers and guests.

We want to empower our people before they get to work and continue empowering them throughout the day in a friction-free, fully-featured, and inclusive digital workplace where everyone can joined and represented.

Leveraging on Microsoft Teams channels, we have replaced isolated one-to-one communications with open and transparent group conversations to dramatically increase the level of engagements amongst our people.

With the ability to capture important information (such as documents, meetings, conversations, plans, and presentations) and make it all easily searchable and accessible has ensured each team member stays fully connected to every task and activity for improved team co-ordination and project management.

Connected Workplace

At Lithan, we envision a connected workplace without physical constraints to deliver an outside-in customer journey and experience.

Although we have reasonably mature business applications and processes, it was disparate and not tightly integrated to deliver optimum efficiency. Beside operational effectiveness, we want to deliver seamless customer experience.

With Microsoft's Power Automate, our non-technical operational users streamline repetitive tasks and paper processes through digital and robotic process automation. We build time-saving workflows into everything from individual tasks to enterprise applications using prebuilt connectors.

With Microsoft's Power Apps, our non-technical operational users rapidly build low-code business applications that modernize processes and integrate applications for straight through processing across organization.

Today, our business applications and processes are streamlined and seamlessly connected to deliver an outside-in customer journey and experience.

Intelligent Workplace

At Lithan, we envision an intelligent workplace with a data-driven culture that enable business intelligence for all. We want everyone at every level to make confident and intelligent decisions using up-to-the-minutes data analytics.

With Microsoft's Power BI, we go from data to insight to action. We unify data from many sources to create interactive, immersive dashboards and reports that provide actionable insights and drive business results. Our people find and share meaningful insights with data visualizations, build-in AI capabilities, tight Excel integration, and pre-build and custom data connectors.

With Microsoft's Power Virtual Agents, we solve common customer and internal-facing issues automatically, freeing up staff to focus on complex requests and high value interactions. Our people create powerful intelligent chatbots – without the need for developers and data scientists – by using a guided, no-code graphical interface.

Agile Workplace

Accompanying the adoption of advanced technologies into the workplace will be an increase in the need for workers with finely tuned 21st century soft skills including agile mentality, innovation mindset and has social & emotional skills – skills that machines are a long way from mastering. They must have the agility to work in an ambiguous environment where one “Fail-Fast, Fail-Safe” for responsiveness rather than perfection.

At Lithan, we envision our people to be lifelong learner with multi-disciplinary skills including broad competencies and deep domain skills. We foster an agile workplace where our people have an optimum balance of tech and innovation skills that drives competitiveness.

Our innovation for developing an agile workplace is CLaaS® - Competency Learning as a Service. It leverages advanced educational technology with innovative learning pedagogy to deliver workplace skills utilization for improved career outcomes and business performance.

Secured Workplace

As companies embrace the opportunities presented by cloud and mobile computing to connect with customers and optimize operations, they take on new risks. One of the biggest challenges in digital transformation is ensuring security, privacy & compliance.

In the first half of 2019, 4.1 billion customer records were compromised. Average dwell time to detect a cybersecurity breach is 78 days, and companies spent an average of \$17 million to recover from a cyber security breach⁵.

At Lithan, we have moved 95% of our IT infrastructure to the cloud and we practice BYOD for our employees. To implement a safe and secured workplace for our students, employees, faculty, industry partners, we leverage on Microsoft Enterprise Mobility + Security as our intelligent mobility management and security platform.

We adopt Microsoft Cyber Security Risk management approach to identify our security objectives and provide guidance, recommendations, and best practices on how to successfully implement Microsoft 365 security features.

Our investment in Microsoft security solutions helps protect and secure our IT computing infrastructure and create a secure workplace that empowers our employees, students and faculty to work in new and flexible ways.

Lithan – Digital Skills Accelerator

We are a peer2peer digital learning and talent platform with a mission to develop future-ready talents and enterprises for the new digital economy.

We connect higher education students, working adults, enterprises, industry practitioners, and Institutes of Higher Learning to mitigate mismatches in supply and demand for digital skills and talents across Asia.

We disrupt traditional class with CLaaS®, which stands for Competency Learning as a Service, and leverages on innovative applied learning pedagogy with advanced education technology to support digital skills acceleration, workplace digital upskilling, just-in-time talents development and enterprise digital transformation.

We have a proven track-record of delivering tangible skills outcome for learners and enterprises alike, serving over 20,000 learners and 2,000 enterprises with above 90% completion rate.

We are recognized for our learning innovations with local and international awards including the Microsoft Global Learning Partner of the Year Award (Finalist), Pearson's College of the Year (Bronze) Award in Asia, and IAL's (Institute for Adult Learning Singapore) innovPLUS Flame Award, amongst others.

Lithan is an accredited digital skills academy from Singapore with presence across ASEAN and the Indian subcontinent. Its Singapore office is Edutrust certified by the Council for Private Education (CPE), a government agency that regulates private education in Singapore. It is also a Centre for Continuous Education and Training (CET) appointed and certified by SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG), a government body under Singapore's Ministry of Education. We are also accredited training centers for Pearson BTEC and Scottish Qualifications Authority.

Annex

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