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Mastering the next evolution of work

The future of work is both dynamic and complex. All at once, it must respond to the needs of worker, team, leader and customer. To create or even just maintain a competitive advantage, we need to recognise *change is inevitable*. What's important is how we act in the moment – how we use disruption and uncertainty as a *catalyst for truly intentional transformation*.

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Deloitte and Lendlease have explored emerging scenarios shaping future work, workforce and workplace models

We've considered how you can:

- **Embrace** the power of choice
- Enable boundaryless ecosystems
- **Experience** the new purpose of the workplace
- Elevate human performance with technology
- **Engage** people through new worlds.

We asked ourselves the 'what ifs' – those that will most profoundly impact your organisation, your people and the world around you. And as we explored the answers to shaping modern work, three key themes shone through.

Rethink work, workforces and workplace, reimagine their purpose, break needless boundaries and find comfort in constant change.

Put people first through flexibility, the power of choice and by prioritising their experience at work.

Embrace emerging technology, the possibilities it creates and how physical and digital spaces can exist in harmony.

We believe in starting from a place of curiosity, approaching each decision as an experiment, and asking questions that engage people about future possibilities, generate new insights and make a bigger impact, sooner. Through this paper, we challenge you to ask yourself: as the world experiments with new ways of working and living, how can we think differently to ensure the changes have a positive impact on people, business and society?

The next evolution of work: It's better

The future of work is dynamic and complex. All at once, it must respond to the needs of worker, team, leader and customer.

To create or even just maintain a competitive advantage, we need to recognise change is inevitable.

What's important is how we act in the moment – how we use disruption and uncertainty as a catalyst for truly intentional transformation.

We all know change in work has been accelerating for years. When the pandemic began, the organisations able to respond quickly were already embracing digital transformation and moving towards more progressive, flexible ways of working. Others took weeks or months to catch up, scrambling to roll out technology changes and order scarce equipment held up in lengthy supply chain delays. Where executives had failed to lead organisational transformation, the pandemic forced significant change.

Even organisations able to transform early didn't necessarily achieve the benefits they anticipated. Only those that took a holistic approach were able to uplift their people, process, structure and technology.

The pandemic sharpened our focus on what's truly important to workers. Wellbeing, the organisation's purpose, equitable career growth, virtual access, personalisation and transparent leadership all came to the fore.

Organisations can transform by making work better for people and people better at work. To see how, we've considered some future scenarios that may be closer than you think.

The superpower of choice

The boundaries once dictating when, where and how work is performed are being undone by advancing technologies, discontinuity and disruption.¹

For many workers, these boundaries separated colleagues from friends, work from personal life and career from personal identity. Now, they're connected in ways we've never seen before.

We're starting to see an approach to work where its increasingly entwined with our home lives. People are sharing more than ever, partly due to the shared trauma of the pandemic and our human instinct to band together, survival style.² Even as some people return to on-site work environments, flexibility and hyperlocal engagement continues.

Flexibility has always been synonymous with the power of choice, but it means more than working from home on a Monday or a Friday. In exchange for flexible work, many people relinquish boundaries to ensure they are available, approachable and creating value. While this feels like a fair exchange for some, not everyone would agree.

In a hyperlocal approach to work, it's important to give people the choice to

blend, integrate or separate their work and home lives in a way that works for them. This includes allowing some to work with firmer, more traditional boundaries that separate work from home. These boundaries might be physical, such as working exclusively on-site; temporal, by setting fixed hours of work; or social, by directing conversation away from personal topics.

Freedom of choice allows people to elevate experiences and outcomes for themselves, the organisation, its customers and society at large.

Mandates, team rhythms or cadences are great when collectively agreed on – but, like anything, allowances need to be made and boundaries must be acknowledged and respected.

Organisations that put people first, adopt a human-centred approach to work³ and co-create personalised ways of working will be better equipped to seize new opportunities in a flexible, hyperlocal future. In the workplace itself, enabling both in-person and virtual teamwork and accommodating varying needs and preferences will help build a seamless and supportive space in which workers can thrive.

"We are all creatures of habit and informed by our experiences of the past. Our future however is a product of the choices we make today."

Andrew Hill
Global HR Transformation Leader, Deloitte

Breaking boundaries to achieve the incredible

Diversity in the workforce, be it in opinion, experience, gender or culture, is known to unlock innovation.⁴

And if there's one thing the world needs in the coming decades, it's large-scale innovation in products, systems and solutions to address the big challenges coming our way.⁵

As innovation precincts receive significant attention and investment from across all sectors, it's increasingly likely you'll need to think about how your organisation collaborates to achieve its objectives. How will your people work with others, inside and outside your organisation, to solve these challenges?

The emerging generation of talent represents lifelong learners who continuously upskill and reskill to face new challenges. They're nimble, gravitating towards priority work and readily collaborating and ideating to drive innovation. As skills replace jobs as the driver of workforce decision-making, organisations can develop peoples' careers through joint public and private sector initiatives and commitments. This can result in a more motivated workforce, improved productivity, greater access to highly skilled talent pools across business units and strengthened internal capabilities and ecosystems.

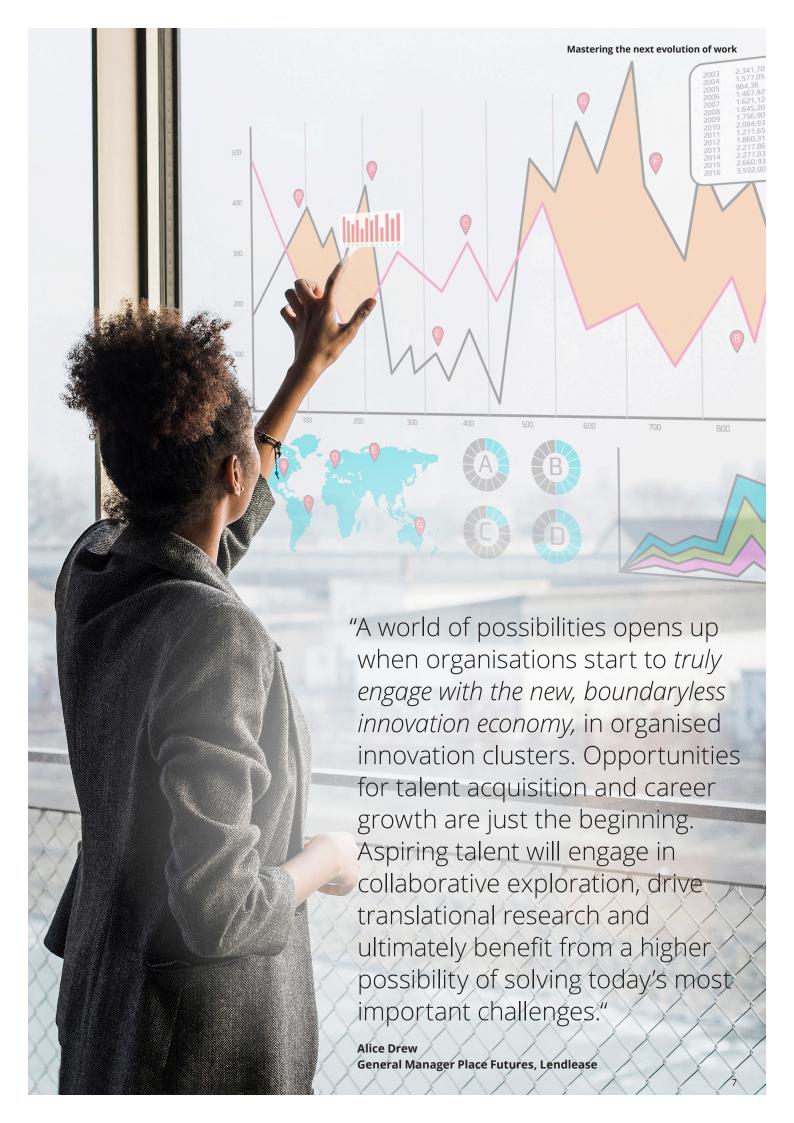
When we harness human potential and think outside the box, incredible things can happen. During the pandemic, car manufacturers like Ford and General Motors pivoted to designing and distributing ventilators. Fostering an environment that supports an organisation's public and private sector relationships in this way can dramatically improve the experience of customers and the workforce. Customers benefit from new product and service innovations; workers access better support networks and coaching opportunities, increasing growth and capability.

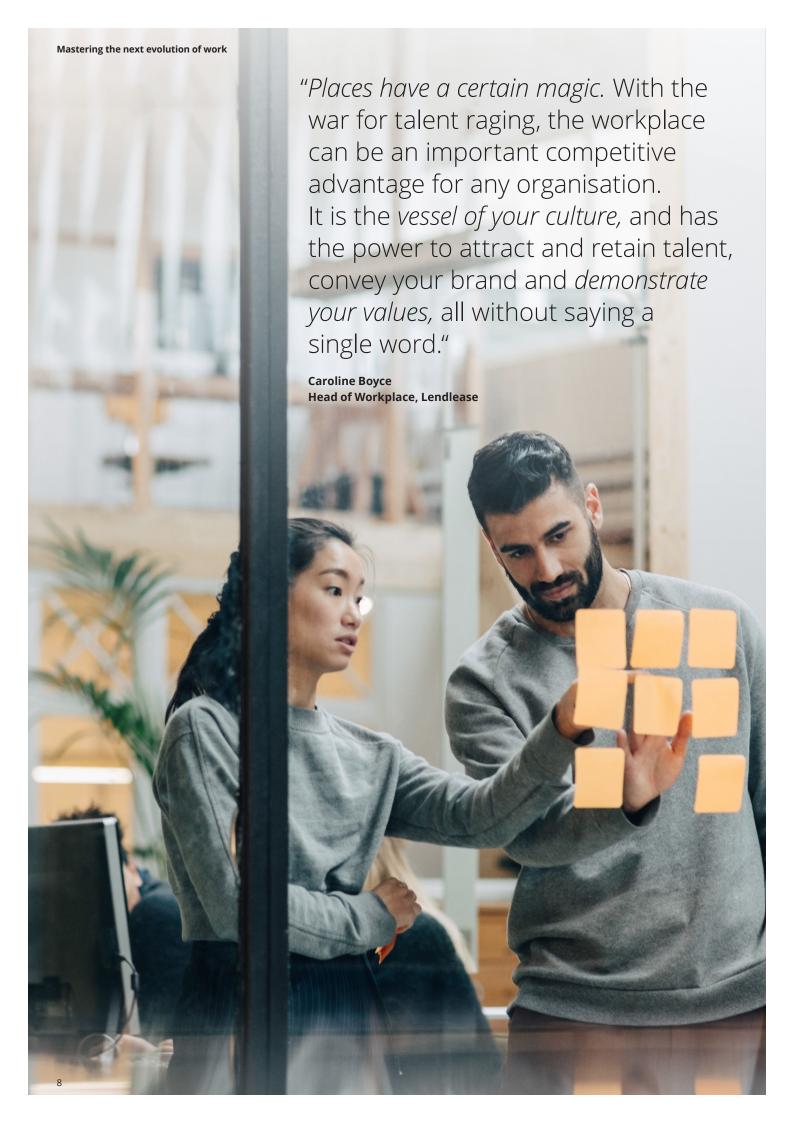
To create this environment, your organisation must be open to unexpected partnerships and prioritise transparency, which can uplift trust and reliability while improving your ability to build internal and external relationships. It also gives stakeholders better access to the information that matters, leading to more timely and informed decision-making.

The potential benefits of crossorganisational work are clear, but one of the greatest threats to transparency comes from worker data and intellectual property (IP). Who controls their data and how will it be used? How is content and conduct regulated, especially in this ecosystem-enabling environment? How are your organisation's IP and digital assets protected? Bloomberg Law identifies IP as "one of the most misunderstood and elusive issues that businesses need to resolve",8 and rightly advises to invest in correctly securing the IP they should own to avoid mistaken or undesired ownership in the future.

Research shows 90% of workers are happy for their employer to collect and use data about them and their work, but only if it provides them with personal benefit.9 By co-creating the way data is collected and used, organisations have an opportunity to humanise and elevate its experience and outcomes for workers, the business and society. They should also consider information security, remembering human error is the biggest cause of data leaks - not phishing or cybercrime.10 Some will find that tools, such as data loss prevention software, will help avoid these errors while keeping collaboration with third parties efficient.

Even the physical workplace can support cybersecurity, from hosting mini data centres to building safeguards into the design of the space itself. It can also foster a culture of innovation – what if your workplace encouraged people to walk in, brainstorm and get creative together, including those from other organisations? How could your organisation participate in the broader innovation ecosystem as one of many contributors to research, development and commercialisation in areas that really make a difference?





The workplace: Somewhere to go, or an experience to be had?

The workplace has been the cornerstone of work life for decades. Traditionally, it's been defined as the physical place where people go to perform their work, with their experience largely characterised by what happens there from nine to five.

Today, it means so much more. It's the experience of how work is performed across an ecosystem of on-site, virtual and hybrid work environments. The lifestyle of work. The flexibility, the commute, the leadership, the digital experience, the workplace itself – even how it integrates with family life – all viewed in aggregate. A great workplace has the power to attract and retain talent and influence the way people behave. It can make people feel valued, energetic, inspired, engaged and connected.

Like everything, the workplace is constantly evolving. How and where we work has changed significantly in recent years, and data shows many people do their focused work at home. 11 This raises a critical question being pondered globally: what is the new purpose of the workplace?

Looking to the experience economy, people are increasingly valuing memorable experiences over possessions. And the more immersive and memorable an experience is, the more likely people are to recommend it or come back for more.12 This rings true in the workplace, where it's clear most people aren't going in for the desks, the technology or even the free food. They want to collaborate, to socialise, to network and to learn.¹³ There are also many health benefits associated with in-person interaction, with research confirming that being socially connected improves physical health and mental and emotional wellbeing.14

Given many now prefer to do focus work at home, the on-site work environment could become a place specifically designed for other interactive, high-value activities like networking and learning. In which places do you do these activities most effectively? Is it a traditional meeting room, or would you get more out of gathering in a museum, eating at a restaurant, or walking around a garden?

The workplace should make work better. Your organisation must be laser focused on the work that needs to be done, the moments that matter in doing that work, and the environments needed to fit people's needs, respect preferences and meet broader objectives of culture, community and teamwork. And what if work could be improved by blending more thoroughly into other spaces and experiences? The Lego resort in Billund, Denmark styles the workplace as a fullservice resort, which Lego workers attend with their families for a few intensive days at a time. BMW's omniverse manages automotive factories by blending reality with virtual worlds, robotics and Al.

The co-working or 'flexible space' sector has been leaning into the experience economy for decades, and it could take up 30% of all commercial real estate by 2030.15 The offering is so compelling, the likes of Spotify and HSBC are moving thousands of their people into spaces run by a flex provider.

Sophisticated organisations know it's not just about the physical space. It's how that space interconnects with the digital environment, in-person events, amenities, collaborations with other organisations and services, and ondemand virtual access to the experiences that create the lifestyle and culture of the modern workplace.

Today, views on the purpose of the workplace are diverging more than ever. Some organisations are all in, all the time, and give workers very little choice about it – think Elon Musk's "hardcore" edict. Others, like Atlassian, only require attendance a few times per year, and many are experimenting with something in between. The physical workplace is very much alive for most organisations, regardless of how often people attend; it just means the focus of what happens there is now a little different. There's no one-size-fits-all solution, because every person feels differently about how work should be done.

Creating a modern workplace is about the means as much as the end. The solution can, and should, look different for every organisation. A sophisticated workplace strategy is one that's cocreated with leaders and workers, using a range of feedback and data to develop evidence-based solutions for place, technology and experience. Whether your space is a traditional office, one with no desks, a resort-style campus, a lease in a coworking space or something resembling a garden bistro, the most important thing is that it reflects your culture and vision. A compelling lifestyle experience will influence people to be at their best.

Embracing technology that propels people

When it comes to human performance, technology is the next frontier. People are in control of making work *work* for them, with technology on hand to unleash their potential and elevate performance.

A positive digital environment is key to the worker experience and can help attract and retain top talent. The last decade has seen the rise of work tech - HR initiatives, policies and technology as a collective – to improve and support flexibility and wellbeing. But in many workplaces, technology is both the most important tool for work and the least satisfactory in performance. A 1E survey discovered 98% of US knowledge workers found device performance critical to their ability to work remotely, but 53% reported devices were slower outside the office.16 In this case, technology selection and performance undermined the experience of their people.

Using technology, organisations can hyper-personalise work for the individual. Prescriptive, inflexible ways of working are in decline as some workers seek the freedom to self-organise, and traditional corporate hierarchies are being reimagined to give people the flexibility and choice to decide where and how they work.¹⁷ Salesforce, for example, uses technology to enable flex team agreements, empowering teams with effective digital environments to decide how, when and where they work - including how often they come into the office and what kind of work they will do at home.18

People enablement platforms like Microsoft Viva, Google Workspace and Facebook Workplace are also evolving to provide workers with personalised and data-driven insights, learning, content discovery and more. Through curated dashboards, these platforms can improve transparency between an organisation and its people while using data to keep workers informed, motivated and performing well.

In the same way wearable technology has transformed our understanding of health, emerging work tech can let workers track individual and project goals in highly personalised ways and make informed decisions about how they spend their time. Japanese manufacturer Denso uses Al-based action recognition technology to generate real-time insights on production tasks, empowering both managers and workers to elevate performance and the work experience.¹⁹

If set up correctly, one of technology's greatest benefits is how it enables equitable outcomes.²⁰ For example, engineering firm Ultranauts is using Teams and Slack bots to eliminate barriers that made it challenging for neurodivergent people to find a home in tech companies.²¹ More commonly used work tech can facilitate leaders to tailor their approach for each person and support unique development needs.

By embracing intelligent technology, and thoughtfully managing its challenges, organisations can enhance the experience of both the workforce and the customer²² in physical and digital workplaces.

"The impact of human and technology collaboration is now extending far beyond helping make work better for humans and humans better at work technology is powering human impact, helping us to become better humans empowered to contribute our full potential to meaningful work that *elevates* experiences and outcomes for ourselves as workers. as well as our customers. businesses and society at large."

Nicole Scoble-Williams Global Future of Work Leader, Deloitte

Connecting with people through new worlds

Imagine your workday starts by opening an app, checking a digitised leaderboard and selecting 'play'.

You're off and racing – today, your avatar is a race car driver. You hit a red light and a notification chimes, telling you the light will turn green once you enter your three priorities for the day and rank them by social and financial impacts. You do this quickly and jump to the top of the leaderboard. Meanwhile, the algorithms do their magic in the background. Onboarding the recruit is race one, the highest priority. With a bing, the light turns green and you start the onboarding race.

Gamification is nothing new. It's all around us, even if we don't always realise it.

Accumulating points, gathering badges and climbing leaderboards are all forms of gamification, appearing in everything from frequent flyer programs to fitness trackers and stamps on your coffee card. At work, gamification is particularly useful as a change management tool. Digital nudging, for example, applies behavioural science principles to organisational change; it can significantly

increase uptake of desired behaviour, shape positive experiences and engage workers to achieve the desired outcomes. Deloitte's 2023 Global Human Capital Trends survey found 42% of business leaders expect that over the next two to four years, technology will help drive better organisational outcomes through nudging workers and teams to perform better.²³

If embedded seamlessly and intelligently, gamification can also make work more fun – something long considered a measure of positive workforce experiences. But to create an entirely gamified workplace, today's organisations must be tech-savvy. They also need to prioritise wellbeing, given workers feel more engaged when organisations respect them and their worklife balance ²⁴

These ideas extend to the metaverse, where people are spending time socialising, shopping and working.²⁵ Atari, Nike and Burberry are buying space in the metaverse, creating shops and experiences to increase brand awareness and revenue. Virtual designer handbags cost almost as much as the real deal,

and nearly US\$2 billion has been spent on this 'metaverse land' in 2022.²⁶ As some organisations recreate their workplaces and onboard new talent in virtual galleries, it's possible this will become an increasingly popular option to build brands and help people collaborate – particularly in an increasingly global talent pool. Through a range of gamified and immersive experiences, organisations can provide a broader range of people with equitable access to work and the workplace.

These scenarios may seem like a distant future. But innovations move fast – just a few years ago, most of us would be stunned to have a computer that fits on our wrists. Today, wearing a smartwatch seems as common as owning a car. It's imperative we face the possibilities of the future by exploring ways to interact with gamification and mixed reality. Iterative experimentation, even when concepts may feel at odds with our current way of living and working, will help organisations grow, learn, adapt and keep workers engaged on the journey.

"In today's digital-driven world, technology has become the bridge that connects us all. We can now reach, collaborate with, and learn from the best across the globe with the click of a mouse, a touch of a screen or a walk through a digital environment. Embracing technology is now not only important, but imperative to thrive regardless of whether you're at your home office, working from the road or at corporate HQ. The possibilities are endless, and the only limit is our willingness to explore and experiment with technology."

Dr. Kellie Nuttall Artificial Intelligence Lead, Deloitte

Ask questions, and the answers will follow

What if we start from a place of curiosity and ask ourselves bigger questions? What's possible now? What's possible next?

What does success look like for workers, customers, businesses and the societies we work and live in? How can we create a culture of continuous transformation? How do we put humans front and centre, paving the path for a more sustainable, equitable and inclusive world of work?

Realities change, and how people engage with their work will continue to evolve. We can embrace hyperlocal approaches to global collaboration, engage beyond the boundaries of our ecosystems, prioritise the human experience and explore the power of

technology. Then, we have our fingers on the pulse today while thinking about what's possible tomorrow.

Remain obsessed about the future and the art of the possible. Expect and assume perpetual disruption in the world of work is the new reality, and then predict and plan for it with data-driven structure and an open, creative mindset. In doing so, we surface countless possibilities for exploring the unknown. The challenge being solved is an important one: as the world experiments with new ways of working, living and collaborating, how do we ensure it has a positive impact on people, business and society?

The future of work is evolution, not revolution. We know purpose, personalisation, unlocking talent equity and empowerment are the key performance and engagement levers needed to harness an organisation's full potential. Future-focused work, workforce and workplace strategies are about iterating and even consolidating these levers, not shaping a dramatic reinvention. As the world of work continues to evolve, it's imperative to experiment and refine as we identify and navigate the pathway to success.

No matter the answers, bringing curiosity and bold optimism to the future of work, workforce and workplace will strongly position your organisation to create positive, lasting impact.

It starts with intent

Transformation may seem like a daunting task, but it can begin with a single goal. We've distilled our thinking into five actionable steps that can position any organisation to become a leader in modern work.

and key metrics.

1

Continuously listen

inside and outside your organisation. Be attuned to your workforce and its broader ecosystem. Be curious about connections and intersections that might challenge the norm. Be flexible and challenge your way of thinking.

2

With a future-thinking mindset, use these insights to inform **business outcomes** like organisational strategy, purpose, mission, benefits

3

Consider the workforce experiences that will enable these outcomes – such as different habits, behaviours and ways of working, as well as the end-to-end employee journey – and how to realise these in physical and virtual environments.

4

Define how your newly defined, future-inspired business outcomes and workforce experiences impact existing **capabilities and solutions**. What tools, people, technology or competencies need to be considered? Should any existing capabilities or solutions be stopped or modified?

5

Experiment. Pilot a new experience for your workforce. **Iterate, innovate, and evolve** as you continue listening to your workforce and market.

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- ²⁰ Equitable outcomes are when all people have fair access, opportunity, resources and power to thrive, with consideration for and elimination of historical and systemic barriers and privileges. Equality, by comparison, is when all people are treated identically, without consideration for historical and systemic barriers and privileges.
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