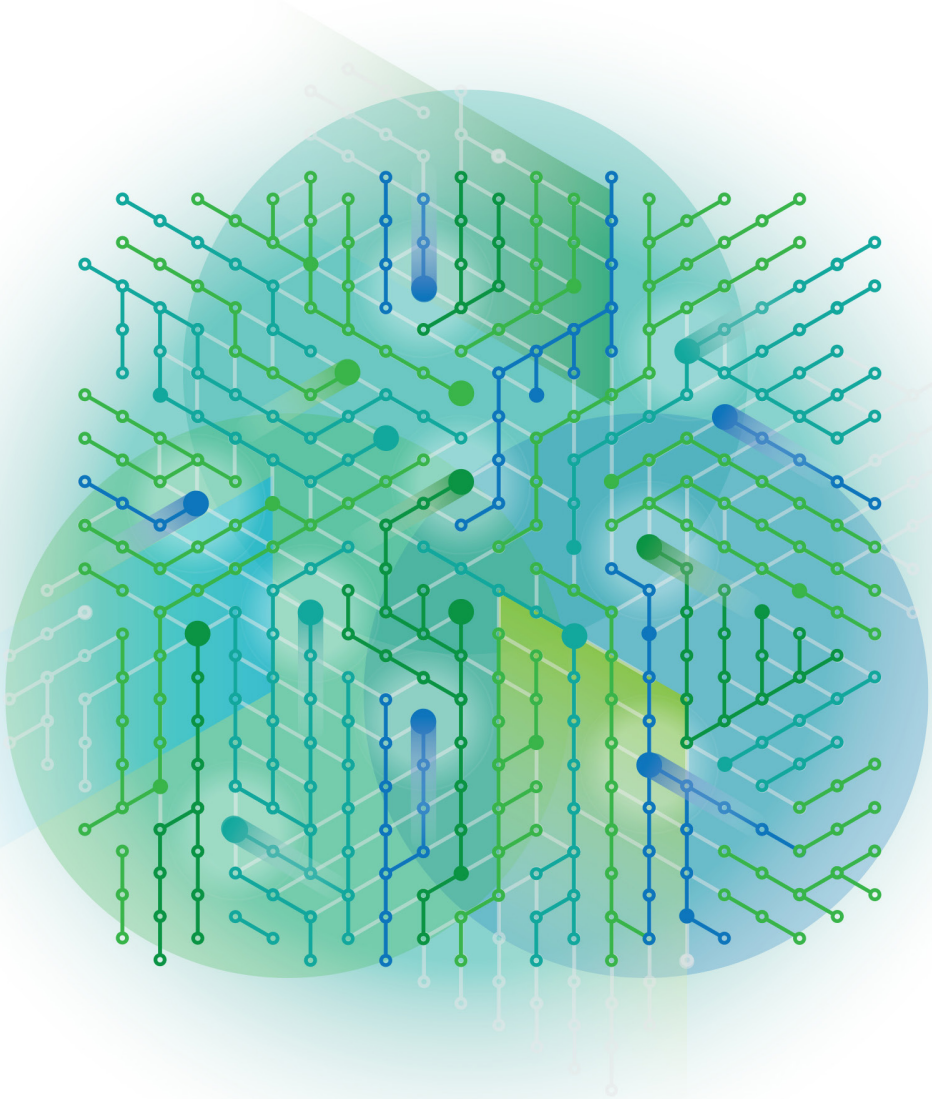
Deloitte. Insights

A report from the Deloitte Australia Centre for the Edge and NTT Ltd

NTT



Negotiating the digital-ready organization

Digital work is most productive when teams embrace a shared understanding of how, where, and by whom work is done

About the Deloitte Australia Centre for the Edge

The Deloitte Australia Centre for the Edge, which is part of our global research network, is designed to help businesses profit from emerging technology opportunities. Technology developments strike at the very heart of a business and finding strategies for corporate growth is essential. Our mission is to identify and explore opportunities that aren't yet on senior management's agenda but should be. While we're focused on long-term trends and opportunities, we also look at the implications for near-term action.

About NTT Ltd.

NTT Ltd. is a leading, global technology services company. To help our clients achieve their digital transformation goals, we use our global capabilities, expertise, and full-stack technology services delivered through our integrated services platform. As their long-term strategic partner, we help them enhance customer and employee experience, transform their cloud strategy, modernize their networks and strengthen their cybersecurity. And across their transformation priorities, we automate their business processes and IT, drawing insights and analytics from their core business data. As a global ICT provider, we employ more than 50,000 people across 57 countries, trading in 73 countries and delivering services in over 200 countries and regions. Together we enable the connected future. Visit us at services.global.ntt.

Our Virtual Office brings together the best of physical, virtual, and hybrid environments through people, places, and technology. It's a set of solutions that makes it simple for your organization to shift between existing and emerging ways of working.

Our solutions range across virtual employee experiences, virtual customer experiences, and increasing organizational adaptability. They cover everything from the role and requirements of office space to workforce strategy and people engagement, talent distribution, and adaptability, as well as business resilience and cost sustainability.

We can support you with your biggest virtual enablement challenges and opportunities. Read more about our Virtual Office expertise on Deloitte.com.

Contents

Teams knit together with digital technology

AMID THE BUSTLE of a popular local café, a solitary blue-clad figure quietly sips her coffee, a tablet propped up on the café table. It's her break, but she's still keeping one eye on the situation display on the tablet: a live map of the autonomous bus routes her team is responsible for. She can see the position of each bus on its route, current and anticipated route changes, incidents being managed by the team, and so on, while listening to the team's group chat on her wireless earbuds.[1]

One reason she's tuning in on her break is that one of the team's remote bus drivers, working from home to balance work more easily with caring for an ailing parent, has had to virtually take command of a bus, steering it through the chaos of a traffic accident. Usually, when something like this happens, she'd hop on her scooter and head directly to the scene to calm the passengers and help them find alternative routes. But it *is* her break, after all—and besides, a coworker similarly charged with responding to on-site incidents has just informed the group chat that he can be there in a few minutes. Confident that the situation is under control, she turns back to her coffee, making the most of her downtime to recharge and take stock of the larger situation.

Autonomous buses may be some years in the future, but the way our hypothetical transportation team works together is emblematic of how many real-life teams must work today.[2] The transportation team—which includes Incident Responders, Remote Drivers, and other necessary roles such as Route Coordinators and Mechanics—is knit together with digital technology. They rely on digital tools to discover what needs to be done, where and when it needs to be done, and who is best placed to do what, and they use digital media to communicate and collaborate. The very nature of the team's work is defined by digital tools and the norms and practices built around them.

Autonomous buses may be some years in the future, but the way our hypothetical transportation team works together is emblematic of how many real-life teams must work today.

It is natural to assume that making such a team productive is just a matter of giving team members the right tools and training them in their use. Technology adoption and utilization—ensuring employees have the right technology as well as the know-how to use it—are consequently the top areas of focus in enabling workplace strategies.[3] There's also a growing interest in digitizing employee

support and workflows—using process automation and artificial intelligence (AI), self-service, and e-learning to help employees get the most out of the technology they use.

But experience shows that it's not so simple. The movement of work to the digital world is changing work in fundamental ways, amplifying and evolving the challenges that can sabotage team productivity. Work is becoming more complex, shifting to being designed around outcomes rather than activities, and pulling in knowledge and skills from far beyond the traditional workplace.[4] Organizational strategies for improving productivity need to evolve accordingly. They need to go beyond tools and technologies to address the ecosystems—the set of relationships between workers in teams, teams and other teams, and workers and teams with the firm—that shape work outcomes.

In this essay, we explore how firms can support the smooth functioning of three ecosystems that are central to how the digital-ready organization performs: the digital ecosystem, the place ecosystem, and the human ecosystem.

Digital work creates new conditions for productivity

DIGITAL WORK IS work done primarily with and via digital tools, networked through cyberspace in ways that allow teams to carry out tasks, manipulate information (and, increasingly, real-world objects),[5] and collaborate. Many will recognize this as the way they worked during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the need to isolate and quarantine forced many workers to leave the office and work entirely digitally. Millions of people, who would otherwise have physically gone to work, were able to work from home instead. In fact, this shift to digital work is almost always framed in terms of a change in *where* people work. This focus is evident in how many employers are thinking about their postpandemic work arrangements: Should people work from home or on-site, or perhaps split their time between the two in a hybrid model? Employee views are split on this question—when given the choice, approximately 30% of employees say they would prefer to work remotely, 30% from company premises, and 30% want to alternate between the two.[6]

However, the question of whether work is best done on-site or from home misses the larger opportunity that digital work creates: the ability to unbundle the office and reconstruct work to make it more productive, fulfilling, and equitable.[7] Being able to work from anywhere *is* an important benefit of digital work, but realizing digital work's full potential requires a far more nuanced *place* ecosystem than the choice between home and office. Meanwhile, the centrality of digital tools makes an effective *digital* ecosystem essential as well. Finally, digital technology is changing work's *human* ecosystem as organizations use technology to create more diverse teams across boundaries and work becomes less transactional and routine.

We contend that for these three ecosystems to enhance, rather than sabotage, productivity, teams must be equipped to negotiate among themselves how they will behave in each. Organizations can help by providing support and guidelines to help make these negotiations effective; but beyond a certain point, the best results rely on trusting teams to arrive at workable solutions on their own.

One important reason for this is that an increasingly volatile, uncertain, ambiguous, and confusing business environment is pushing organizations to arrange work around problems and outcomes instead of processes and tasks.[8] Solving problems often means addressing unpredictable and unforeseeable situations that require deviations from the usual approach, and it's almost always the people on the ground, not those formally in charge, who best understand the need and how it might be addressed. Further, on-the-ground workers best know their *own* needs and those of their teammates. These personal needs are not irrelevant to productivity. For example, knowing where team members live and when they need to take their children to school makes scheduling in-person meetings more efficient, and can also spare workers from long, energy-draining commutes or the stress of finding someone else to drop off the kids.

That said, organizations still play a critical role. It's not a question of leaving teams wholly to their own devices, but of empowering them to negotiate productive norms and practices. Striking the right balance between centralized control and team autonomy is imperative, and this balance will likely be unique to each organization and even each team.

The digital ecosystem

SUPPOSE THAT THE coffee-sipping Incident Responder in our opening story had turned off her tablet and earbuds so she could catch up on her personal email while on break. Suppose further that no other Incident Responder had been within easy scooter distance of the accident that needed attention. In that case, would it be appropriate for someone monitoring the situation—say, a Route Coordinator coordinating several different bus routes—to contact the first Incident Responder via social media? Would the Route Coordinator be able to find the Incident Responder's personal number? If so, would the Incident Responder be more apt to respond to a text or a call? Does the transportation authority even condone the use of personal devices, and if not, is the situation urgent enough to warrant breaking policy? (Of course, this is separate from whether asking the Incident Responder to cut her break short would be acceptable in the first place—the type of question that arises in the human ecosystem discussed later.)

Teams working digitally must continually negotiate answers to questions like these as they navigate the tools and technologies that underpin their work. The outcome, if the negotiations go well, is a coherent digital ecosystem:[9] a collection of digital tools and platforms, along with habits and practices for using those tools, that empower everyone to fully contribute. Everyone understands what tools to use, how the team will use them for various needs and tasks, and under what circumstances it's acceptable to break the "rules." Our research on working during the pandemic verifies that this kind of understanding makes digital work more effective: The more cohesive a team's digital ecosystem, the more successfully it operated when members were working from home.[10]

A team's digital ecosystem is increasingly likely to span organizational, geographical, political, and cultural boundaries. Teams may thus be faced with integrating a number of "corporate digital worlds"—the transactional platforms, portals, applications, and collaboration platforms provided by the organizations that teams are creating value for—into a coherent whole. This is often no easy task as the digital environment is becoming more and more balkanized as growing cyberthreats drive firms to fence off the chaos of the public internet. Cross-organizational teams must often determine which elements of the work will be hosted by which organization, with different aspects of the work residing in different tools and databases. Valuable insights and institutional knowledge can be buried in supplier and partner platforms, captured in email conversations, and recorded on documentation and analytics platforms beyond any single organization's purview.

Team members may also find it useful to insert parts of their personal digital worlds—the collection of tools they use in their personal lives, which often bleed over into work—into the system. This would make negotiating a cohesive digital ecosystem even more complicated, not least because organizations' security protocols may limit the extent to which personal devices and external applications may be used.[11]

Difficulties in creating an effective digital ecosystem may well underlie the struggle many organizations face with using technology to increase productivity. A 2021 NTT survey of executives and line workers found that only 54.6%

of respondents[12] said that workers have access to technology that enables and augments performance when working digitally.[13] Only 56.1% said the same for the technology on company premises. Just two in five believed that their organization's employees were able to effectively brainstorm, collaborate, and socially interact when working digitally.[14]

To improve on all these fronts, organizations can help teams establish a cohesive digital ecosystem by:

- **Thoughtfully composing teams so they have both the technical skills and interpersonal dynamics required to be successful.** A team of digitally competent but cantankerous workers might struggle with the transition to working digitally, unable or unwilling to compromise and find a digital common ground. On the other hand, a team of digitally incompetent but congenial workers might find that, collectively, they have the knowledge and skills required to be effective. More importantly, the congenial team has the psychological safety that enables team members to tap into this collective knowledge and negotiate a shared digital workspace that works for all.

- **Encouraging teams to adopt behaviors that facilitate digital interaction.** A simple example is for an organization to train workers on when to use email, text, or phone calls to get in touch with colleagues. (Which technologies are used is less important than establishing common conventions on when each technology should be used.) More generally, workers can be taught the importance of negotiating a shared digital workspace along with specific negotiation techniques and trade-offs, helping ensure that teams are digitally competent rather than digitally dysfunctional.

- **Acknowledging that people will inevitably go off-platform.** Mandating that all workers draw from the same official suite of technologies doesn't align with the emerging digital reality of multiple possible platforms and tools. A better approach for organizations would be to consider their platforms to be part of a broader digital ecosystem, and to provide an extensible "kit of parts" that teams can assemble and reassemble depending on their needs. Among other things, this kit should enable workers to *export* some or all of the organization's internal capabilities into digital workspaces hosted by collaborating organizations, as well as to *import* tools from collaborators into their own digital workspaces.

- **Recognizing that many team members will not work for you (and your employees will work in external teams).** Digital work may require organization to *import* external collaborators into the team. Similarly, it might be necessary to *export* employees into shared digital workspaces hosted by other organizations. If a team spans several organizations, explicit conversations are often needed to decide how to work across disparate platforms.

- **Stepping in to help with the technology.** When a team tries to integrate its various tools into a coherent digital environment but finally throws up its hands, it's time for the organization(s) involved to invest in getting the digital enablers correct. Digital platforms can also be designed with a degree of redundancy and flexibility, providing teams with alternatives when a preferred approach is not available due to organizational, technical, or political restrictions.

The place ecosystem

MENTION *WORKPLACE* AND most of us will conjure an image of a physical place, such as an office building where people gather to work. We might joke, for example, that a bus driver's office is the bus they drive. But is this true when work is digital rather than physical? Our Remote Driver might work in the spare room at home while the bus is where the work is realized, on its route. So is the work of driving the bus done in the physical world, on the bus, or at the desk where the bus driver sits—or in the digital world where bus and driver meet?

Is the work of driving the bus done in the physical world, on the bus or at the desk where the bus driver sits—or in the digital world where bus and driver meet?

Some work, such as tending to irate passengers on a delayed bus, may always be best done in person—the worker must go to the work. But when the work lives not in the physical world but in digital tools and the links between them, it becomes possible to *send the work to the worker*. And, when we can send the work to the worker, the best place for them to work is the place where they can perform at their best. Unbundling the workplace, considering place from the perspective of where workers would be most productive, instead of an arbitrary location, makes location a lever for improving performance instead of a constraint. It allows organizations to make use of many more and potentially better options than just home, office, or a "hybrid" mix of the two.

How workers use those options will depend on a range of factors. The nature of the task at hand, such as its sensitivity, might require work to be done in the privacy of a corporate office, home, or private office in a coworking space. Other tasks might be suitable for a café such as the one where our Incident Responder often sits. Personal preference is a consideration too. Work is part of our human experience, so work experiences must be designed around what motivates and empowers humans. Some workers may do best in a secluded home or office, while others may find the bustle of a busy café or open-plan workspace inspiring.

A worker's responsibilities outside of work can also shape where they can be most productive. The Incident Responder's café may be conveniently located near the doctor's office where she has just had an appointment. The Remote Driver's spare room allows him to keep a watchful eye on his ailing parent. The Route Coordinator's bus depot might be around the corner from her toddler's day care center.

We're emphatically not saying that all work that can be done remotely *should* be done remotely. When activities are viable in both the physical and digital worlds, the decision of when to use which should be driven by their relative drawbacks and benefits. Being in the same physical environment remains an important option, as it provides an opportunity for workers to build relationships and benefit from on-the-spot coaching and mentoring. For instance, teams can socialize over video to cultivate the psychological safety needed for smooth team interaction, but most would agree

that socializing in person is much more effective for building trust. Another challenge of working digitally is creating opportunities for serendipity, the "water-cooler conversations," where people share experiences, trade tips, and learn from each other. Digital practices are emerging that attempt to replicate these kinds of interactions in cyberspace, but they remain poor substitutes for physical presence.

Many C-suite executives are already primed to begin approaching the place ecosystem with an eye on work effectiveness, rather than physical location. In a 2021 NTT survey, 49.1% of C-suite executives felt strongly that the workplace was no longer a physical building but rather a variety of environments where groups of workers collaborate.[15]

To help teams negotiate an effective place ecosystem, executives can:

- **Create guidelines based on the organization's understanding of work needs, but not be overly prescriptive of behavior within those guidelines.** Prescriptive company policies that curb flexibility and choice are likely to cause conflict and pushback. A more effective approach is to provide guidance that acknowledges local cultures and work styles. For instance, an employer may stipulate that particular meetings must take place in person but leave the time and place up to the team.

- **Provide a range of work locations.** An organization whose workers need access to touchdown workstations spread across the city could rent desks in several appropriately located coworking spaces. Partner organizations can give each other's workers easy access to both facilities. An organization could also make home a more productive place to work by, for instance, subsidizing ergonomic chairs or standing desks.

- **Furnish technology that allows workers to choose their most effective place.** Giving consultants laptops to take to client sites is an obvious example. So is providing remote bus drivers with driving rigs at satellite offices convenient to their home, not just at the depot. In other cases, the technology may need to stay at a specific location, such as when a firm's cybersecurity protocols can't be fully implemented on a laptop or over a virtual private network. Organizations should ensure that any allocations for equipping home offices are adequate, as the alternative is for employees to fill the gaps with their own, and not necessarily approved, solutions.

The human ecosystem

WHILE WORKERS HAVE always had to navigate relationships with colleagues, digital technology is driving two trends that make team dynamics at once more important and more challenging. One, digital automation allows us to delegate routine computational work to technology, making much human work more concerned with addressing problems and opportunities than with prosecuting tasks. This can make work more interesting and engaging, but because no two problems or opportunities are alike, teams must be collaborative and flexible to address them instead of following fixed protocols. Two, communications technologies allow us to form more diverse, cross-boundary teams drawn from different organizations, geographies, and cultures. These teams benefit from a broader mix of skills and perspectives, but they may also find it harder to work harmoniously together.

Organizations are taking two general approaches to this situation. One is to make work more flexible by breaking it into smaller parcels, fractionalizing projects and tasks into atomic units that require particular skills. Algorithms then match these atomic units to workers, considering the needs of the work, the worker's abilities, and their interests and availabilities. Teams are formed around well-defined goals, with each team being custom-built to include the necessary skills, and then dissolved when the task is complete. In theory at least, this model promotes flexibility at the cost of increased complexity. Workers' skills and interests can be closely mixed and matched to the work; but doing so can easily become an administrative nightmare.[16]

The second approach is to embrace the broadening of work beyond tasks by giving workers more general problems to solve instead of narrow tasks to complete. Organizations install guardrails specifying the outcomes to be achieved, issues to be resolved, or new sources of value to be developed, while giving workers and teams the autonomy to determine how best to get these things done. This shifts workers to work *on* the business rather than *in* the business, dealing with unexpected situations, looking for improvements and opportunities, and building relationships with customers and clients.

For many types of work, the second approach is likely far superior. Atomizing work into a codified, static set of tasks and responsibilities might well be impossible, especially for the complex problems that organizations face today. Nor is there a single "best" way to execute a particular task,[17] meaning that there can be no such thing as an ideal fractionalized task definition. Dependencies between tasks will also complicate fractionalization, as any nontrivial task will likely require a worker to collaborate with others anyway. For instance, workers may need to negotiate to clarify the order of operations, with the outcome depending on their ability to agree on the sequence of tasks.

As work defined around problems and opportunities is more free-form and less predictable than work defined around transactions and tasks, a team's ability to agree on roles and responsibilities can make or break the quality of its work. All must understand who is responsible for doing what and, just as important, how the team makes decisions about who is responsible for doing what.

That's not to say that everyone needs to be happy with how things fall out for these agreements to be effective. Workers may still find themselves stuck

with work they don't like or aren't particularly good at, if that's what's best for the problem at hand. Some workers may even refuse (or be temporarily unable) to do what the initial negotiation points to, requiring renegotiation. But negotiations that go "well" will minimize these situations.

Organizations can help teams negotiate a productive human ecosystem by:

- **Defining roles that balance specificity versus generality.** Governance and reporting requirements will always require particular individuals to be held accountable. The monthly performance report from our bus-route management team, for example, might be assigned to the Route Coordinator. Similarly, some tasks, such as driving a bus remotely, might require the worker to have particular certifications. However, there are many other tasks that could easily be done by any member of the team. Just as we can divide tasks into *somewhere* and *anywhere* work, we can also divide tasks (and their associated knowledge and skills) into *someone* and *anyone* work.

- **Setting the explicit expectation that teams will need to negotiate roles and responsibilities within these parameters.** Distinguishing between *someone* and *anyone* work enables teams to define roles that are both narrow (where the role is responsible for particular things) and broad (where the team determines who is responsible in each instance). Each worker should explicitly understand that there are some things that they themselves are responsible for, and other things that the team needs to address collectively. This understanding enables workers to reach out to another team member when they encounter an *anyone* task that they cannot accomplish—an example of social knowledge, where a worker knows which team members have what kinds of expertise so they can learn something they must know.

- **Creating forums and other opportunities for explicit negotiation.** A team should understand that it can and should negotiate some aspects of the work it is responsible for. Forming a coherent digital ecosystem is a great example. Rather than rushing headlong into the work, teams should be given time when they are formed (or when new members join, or if there is a significate change in team structure or responsibility) to settle on the digital tools and media that they will use to work together.

- **Forming and resourcing teams so they have both the requisite skills and the requisite resources and enablers.** Organizations should form and resource teams so that all *someone* tasks have an owner and that the team has sufficient coverage for *anyone* tasks. When teams simply don't have the right tools, knowledge, or resources to solve the problem, no negotiation will be able to get around the constraints of an unfavorable reality.

- **Supporting workers and teams who are asked to step too far outside their skill set or the responsibilities they are comfortable with.** Every worker, and every team, has a breaking point. When pushed too often or for too long to do work that is unpleasant, beyond their abilities, or otherwise unsustainable, performance, engagement, and retention will suffer. Workplace analytics, wellness, and nudge technologies can help head off these issues by monitoring trends in employee engagement and encouraging healthy work behaviors such as taking regular breaks.

Healthy teams and healthy negotiations power the future of work

THE FUTURE OF work is typically framed in terms of the future of the worker, how they will change in response to shifting circumstances. This is a mistake. The digitization of work has collapsed physical distance and, as a consequence, work has shifted from being (largely) a solitary affair to being something we do together, digitally. The future of work is teamwork, and if we're to understand how to make work more productive, it is teams that we should put at the center.

Teams are the locus of work. It's the team that is most capable of determining how problems, opportunities, or even just the unexpected should be confronted. It's the team that can then best decompose work into tasks and figure out who's going to execute them and how, deciding how best to use the mix of virtual and physical space along the way. The figuring is simply too complex to do beforehand, as strictly defined procedures assume a static environment rather than the fluid one we experience today.

The role of the organization in this future of work is to create the scaffolding that teams require to be successful. Helping workers construct a digital ecosystem that accommodates workers outside the office and workers who are not employees allows workers to accomplish more and do it more effectively. Providing facilities and policies that help workers to negotiate an effective place ecosystem improves outcomes by enabling them to work where and when they are most productive. And building a healthy and diverse human ecosystem will provide insight into the moments that matter to individuals and how to shape these into connected experiences that build human engagement and healthy teams.

Endnotes

1. The Deloitte Centre for the Edge has used this scenario, or variations of it, in previous essays that this essay builds on. See Peter Evans-Greenwood, Sue Solly, and Robbie Robertson, *Reconstructing the workplace: The digital-ready organization*, *Deloitte Insights*, July 12, 2021; Peter Evans-Greenwood, Alan Marshall, and Matthew Ambrose, *Reconstructing jobs: Creating good jobs in the age of artificial intelligence*, Deloitte Insights, July 18, 2018.
2. This dynamic team-of-teams nature of modern work is discussed at length in Jessica Watson et al., *Building the peloton: High-performance team-building in the future of work*, Deloitte Insights, July 1, 2020.
3. NTT's *2021 Global workplace* report data shows that technology adoption and utilization—ensuring employees have the right technology as well as the know-how to use it to collaborate effectively—are the top areas of focus in enabling workplace strategies. See Alex Bennett et al., *2021 Global workplace report: Connecting your hybrid workforce,* NTT, accessed January 4, 2022.
4. Ibid.
5. Real-world objects such as forklifts, for example; see Chris Baraniuk, "The forklift truck drivers who never leave their desks," *BBC News*, October 20, 2020.
6. Voice of the employee feedback from NTT's *2021 Global workplace* report points to a clear gap between employee work style preferences and what organizations are driving. Close to 79.1% of organizations say their employees would prefer to work from company premises than from home, when safe to do so. But it's not as simple as that. The feedback data indicates a general "30-30-30" split in work-location preferences—when given the choice, approximately 30% of employees would prefer to work remotely, 30% from company premises, and 30% want to alternate between the two (figure 17, p. 32). Salary excepted, employee choices are most heavily dictated by work/life balance and flexibility, commute times, and the company's brand values. And, despite employees wanting more flexibility, the majority of organizations are planning to return, or have returned, to their prepandemic operating models: Nearly two in three organizations say they have returned (31.8%) or will return (33.0%) to their workplaces as they were before the pandemic (figure 18, p. 33)
7. Evans-Greenwood, Solly, and Robertson, *Reconstructing the workplace.*
8. See Figure 1 in Susan Cantrell, "Beyond the job," *People + Strategy Journal* 44, no. 3 (2021): pp. 32–39.
9. Workers can be considered as navigating three types of digital workspaces: their personal workspace, which they view the broader digital world through, the corporate workspace of company portals and applications, and multiple individual team workspaces for the cross-functional and cross-organization teams that they are part of. See Peter Evans-Greenwood, Rosemary Stockdale, and Tim Patston, *The digital-ready workplace: Supercharging digital teams in the future of work,* Deloitte Insights, May 27, 2021.
10. Ibid.
11. The negotiations required to form a shared digital workspace can be either implicit or explicit. For instance, a Route Coordinator may draft an incident report online and send a link to the document to team members for additions. This makes it easy for contributors to click on the link and edit the document directly, rather than taking the extra step of downloading the document onto a local device and emailing back their changes to be merged (often a problematic process). Because it's so easy, sharing and editing documents online becomes the default without its ever having been discussed. At other times, the negotiation must be intentional. If a team spans several different organizations—the Incident Responder in the city transportation authority, the Route Coordinator at a tech solutions provider, and so on—explicit conversations are often needed to decide how to work across disparate platforms.
12. NTT's *2021 Global workforce* report, p. 34.

13. This figure is higher for leaders (64.1%) and organizations that have defined and agreed upon their future workplace strategy (61.6%). It's significantly lower for nonleaders (27.3%) and organizations that have not defined and agreed upon their future workplace strategy.
14. NTT's *2021 Global workforce* report, p. 34.
15. NTT's *2021 Global workforce* report, p. 44.
16. In practice, fractionalizing work can create less flexibility, rather than more. This is something we have seen in the information technology (IT) world, with the rush to service-oriented architectures (SOAs) and (more recently) microservices. Both of these movements attempted to create a more flexible IT estate by breaking the functionality it provided into a catalogue of (small) services, enabling the services to be reorchestrated to quickly create new processes, new functionality. This anticipated flexibility was never realized though. While SOAs and microservices enabled one service to be replaced with another that was functionally identical, the dependencies between services would commonly prevent them from being reorchestrated. We can see a similar dynamic with fractionalized human work, with the need to negotiate between manager and worker to clarify the task, and between workers to manage dependencies, constraining our ability to freely fractionalize work.
17. Variance in work, worker, and workplace means there is often no single approach to prosecuting a task that is ideal in every instance. The best approach will depend on the particular nature of the work, the skills and abilities of the worker, and the affordances (and constraints) of the workplace they find themselves in, and is likely something that the worker will need to discover for themselves. This is similar to the idea (and problem) of motor abundance where there are typically multiple (redundant) approaches to coordinating an action. Coupled with variance in the environment and our own bodies, this means that there is typically no single best technique for prosecuting a task. See Mark L. Latash, "The bliss (not the problem) of motor abundance (not redundancy)," *Experimental Brain Research* 217, no.1 (2012): pp. 1–5.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank **Debra Bordignon** for her contributions to this report.

About the authors

Peter Evans-Greenwood | pevansgreenwood@deloitte.com.au

Peter Evans-Greenwood is a fellow at the Deloitte Australia Centre for the Edge—helping organizations embrace the digital revolution through exploring, understanding, and applying what is happening on the edge of business and society. Evans-Greenwood has spent his career at the intersection of business and technology. These days, he works as a consultant and strategic adviser on both the business and technology sides of the fence.

Alex Bennett | alex.bennett@global.ntt

Alex Bennett is an expert in new ways of working and helps organizations around the world improve employee experience, productivity, sustainability, and work/life balance. Bennett, senior vice president of Integrated Offers, is the global spokesperson for NTT on Workplace and regularly contributes to press articles, industry blogs, and webinars as well supporting executive sponsorship programs with global technology companies.

Sue Solly | ssolly@deloitte.com.au

Sue Solly is a spatial strategist and interior architect with 25 years of experience leading project teams in the design and delivery of workplace, education, and retail spaces. She has a passion for working on projects that transform the user experience by aligning space, technology, people, policy, and culture to improve business and individual performance. Solly brings knowledge and insights into how space influences behavior, and the importance of strategy and change alignment to ensure successful outcomes.

Contact us

Our insights can help you take advantage of change. If you're looking for fresh ideas to address your challenges, we should talk.

Practice leadership

Robbie Robertson
Partner | Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Pty Ltd
+61 431 000 024 | rorobertson@deloitte.com.au

Robbie Robertson is a design partner in Deloitte Australia's Consulting practice and the managing partner for Deloitte's Virtual Office.

Deloitte Australia Centre for the Edge

Peter Evans-Greenwood
Principal | Deloitte Center for the Edge| Deloitte Services Pty Ltd
+61 439 327 793 | pevansgreenwood@deloitte.com.au

Peter Evans-Greenwood is a fellow at the Deloitte Australia Centre for the Edge.

Deloitte.
Insights

Sign up for Deloitte Insights updates at www.deloitte.com/insights.

Follow @DeloitteInsight

Deloitte Insights contributors

Editorial: Junko Kaji, Preetha Devan, Arpan Kumar Saha, and Rupesh Bhat

Creative: Kevin Weier and Nagaraju Mangala

Audience development: Nikita Garia and Hannah Rapp

Cover artwork: Kevin Weier