The Platform Issue
Building connection, revenue, and resilience through digitized workflows

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Welcome to the Platform Issue

BY BILL MCDERMOTT

The Platform Issue

Welcome to the Platform Issue of Workflow Quarterly from ServiceNow. We can all agree, 2020 has brought unimaginable change to the world. Though meetings may currently be virtual, it has provided CEOs around the world the unique opportunity to defy time and space. These leaders all share the same goals today: to double down on speed, value, and the need to deliver beautiful experiences for their customers and employees.

Now more than ever, those experiences matter. Behind every one of those great experiences, is a great workflow. And great workflows run on digital platforms.

In fact, according to two out of every three C-level executives we surveyed, an enterprise-wide digital platform is important to the future of their organization. The flexibility of the cloud paired with integration and automation enables their business to be proactive and move faster. Technology is no longer supporting the business; it is the business.

Welcome to the Platform Issue of Workflow Quarterly from ServiceNow. The 20th-century IT architectures are not suitable for today’s ever changing environments and leave companies unprotected to sudden disruptions. COVID-19 has simply highlighted the existing weaknesses in global value chains. While it’s important for leaders to keep their hands on short-term challenges, they also need to keep their eyes on the future. Global pandemics, climate swings, and trade wars are all part of the new normal—and they will continue to test the resiliency of our organizations.

To that end, companies are increasingly relying on the partnership between people and technology to deliver an agile response to real-time market conditions. The result is nothing less than a workflow revolution—the clearest manifestation of digital transformation.

As the “platform of platforms” for more than 80% of the Fortune 500, ServiceNow is proud to be powering this revolution. The ServiceNow advantage is the power of one. We enable data to flow seamlessly across applications and existing systems while also being quick to react to the external market. Disney+, as an example, was able to quickly implement the Now Platform to support its customer requests by using our Customer Service Management.

Within just 5 months, they reached 90 million subscribers.

If you’re wondering whether your business is built for agility and resiliency, Workflow Quarterly and the new C-Suite Center are packed with insights to find out.

Workflows are versatile—they can help leaders solve the challenges of our new normal and help organizations build digital resilience. Workflows are the defining business innovation of our time.

As we say here at ServiceNow... Let’s workflow it!

Bill McDermott is the president and CEO of ServiceNow, publisher of Workflow Quarterly. He guest edited The Platform Issue.
C-Suite Insights: Is your business built resilient?

Digital platforms drive growth

Organizations with more developed digital enterprise platforms report higher revenue growth and a range of other competitive advantages over those less digitally advanced industry peers, according to an independent survey of 600 C-level executives.

Our research suggests that digital workflows running on a single enterprise platform will be key to business agility and success in the post-Covid era.

What benefits are you seeing now from your digital enterprise platform?

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<tr>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Beginners</th>
<th>Intermediates</th>
<th>Leaders</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decreased costs</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>56%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased customer satisfaction</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>42%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improved decision-making</td>
<td>34%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greater market share</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>43%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improved employee engagement</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater shareholder value</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>47%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Better risk management</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>41%</td>
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<tr>
<td>High revenue growth (10%+)</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>19%</td>
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How leading organizations optimize workflows

A digital enterprise platform creates more productive and efficient work by seamlessly integrating processes, applications, data, and people across an organization. It is the foundation for digitized workflows. Almost two-thirds of the senior executives surveyed agreed that an enterprise-wide platform will be a key to the future of their businesses. So, how do the highest-performing organizations take advantage of the opportunity to digitize?

1. They invest in platforms significantly—about twice the average in absolute terms and four times what beginners are spending. However, as a percentage of revenue, leaders are spending less than other firms.

2. They first implement an open-source cloud platform and robotic process automation or artificial intelligence. Then, they upskill employees, align business models with a digital platform, and build a personalized customer experience.

3. They are more likely to have digitized or automated IT service management, customer service management, human resources, finance, risk management, employee training, strategic planning, operations management, sales management, and asset management.

4. Once processes are digitized, they integrate them to create more seamless experiences for employees and customers. Processes they report integrating on a single platform include Employee Resource Planning (ERP), Customer Relationship Management (CRM), Enterprise Risk Management (ERM), Human Capital Management (HCM), and Integrated Financial Management (IFM).

Percent of digitized workflows largely or fully integrated

To what extent have you integrated your digitized workflows into your digital enterprise platform? Largely or fully integrated responses shown.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Leaders</th>
<th>Intermediates</th>
<th>Beginners</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IT service management</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer service</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>70%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Human resources</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance/accounting</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>70%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Risk management/compliance</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>75%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employee engagement/training</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>58%</td>
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Is your business built resilient? It’s an important question business leaders must ask today in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our research indicates that organizations in the strongest position are those that have digitized workflows on a single enterprise platform.

Researchers at ESI ThoughtLab created a maturity model based on a survey of 600 C-level executives to examine the progress organizations are making in platform technology and the benefits they are deriving. The model considers 11 key dimensions to determine whether an organization is a beginner, intermediate, or leader. Dimensions include whether workflows are integrated, workers are equipped with the right digital skills, and if platforms are designed for the cloud.

The top-performing companies, roughly 25% of the survey pool, are more likely to report higher revenues, better decision-making and risk management, increased customer satisfaction, and greater shareholder value. Answer six quick questions below to learn more about your maturity level.

**Take the quiz to learn if your organization is ready for what’s ahead**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall progress on digital enterprise platform</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Not considering or not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Planning/starting to implement</td>
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<tr>
<td>C Partly implemented</td>
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<tr>
<td>D Largely implemented</td>
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<td>E Fully implemented</td>
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<th>Equipping workers with the right digital skills</th>
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<tr>
<th>Integration of workflows across the organization</th>
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<td>A Not considering or not applicable</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Aligning business models with new digital platform</th>
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<td>A Not considering or not applicable</td>
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<td>B Planning/starting to implement</td>
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<th>Building an immersive and personalized customer experience</th>
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<td>A Not considering or not applicable</td>
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<td>B Planning or starting to implement</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Integration of data, permitting cross-departmental access to data</th>
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<td>A Not considering or not applicable</td>
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<tr>
<td>B Planning/starting to implement</td>
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<td>D Largely implemented</td>
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<td>E Fully implemented</td>
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Score yourself: A = 0
B = 1
C = 2
D = 3
E = 4

Results

**Beginner**

Beginner organizations have hard work — and great rewards — ahead of them. While they spend less per year on digitization than leaders, as a percentage of total spending, they actually spend more. It’s time for you to make the most of your budgets, and gain confidence in the value that digitized workflows will create for your organization. To be sure, beginners face significant organizational and technical challenges ahead. Changing processes and bringing people onboard is hard work. However, based on the reported experiences of leader-level organizations, beginners have dramatic returns on investment ahead if they stay the course and build strong digital competencies.

**Intermediate**

Intermediate organizations have set the critical groundwork for future growth, but might not be reaping the benefits of things like data integration, cross-functional management, and software deployment. Moderate investment hasn’t stopped Intermediates from making good progress toward digitization, with the most progress in cloud-based, open platforms designed to accelerate collaboration and integration, followed by enterprise-wide use of robotic process automation and artificial intelligence. Intermediates are most likely to say that the key challenge standing in the way of developing an integrated digital enterprise platform is developing and acquiring new skills and talent. Intermediates shouldn’t be discouraged by this and other challenges you are well on your way!

**Leader**

You see a significant performance boost, with more than 70% of leader organizations enjoying significant performance lifts from cloud-based open platforms, robotic process automation, artificial intelligence, and equipping workers with the right digital skills. More than half, 60%, of members of the leader group are reaping large dividends from building a personalized customer experience and aligning business models with digital platforms. Leaders excel by forming digital and business teams deeply familiar with the process, analyzing customer needs and behaviors, and creating pilots to confirm gains. However, there are areas where you could do more, such as working with employees to understand their concerns and making sure the underlying processes are in good shape before automating them.
Most CEOs are slow to digitize. Here’s why they need to act—now.

CEOs undervalue digital platforms compared to their C-level peers. Closing that gap is critical to business resilience.

BY HOWARD RABINOWITZ

Companies that have made the most progress adopting and implementing digital enterprise platforms tend to have higher revenue growth and are seeing other benefits—yet less than half of chief executives today consider digital platforms a major priority. CEOs value digital enterprise platforms less than any other C-level executive, according to a new global survey of 600 executives by ESI ThoughtLab and ServiceNow. Just 4 in 10 CEOs say platforms are important to the future of their business versus an average of 64% for all other senior executives surveyed.

Survey data suggests that this perception gap at the top can handicap revenue growth, market share, risk management, and other important benchmarks, all at a time when many organizations are struggling to maintain agility and resilience in the wake of a global pandemic.

Platform advantages

Unlike software applications designed for a specific business function—such as those for customer relationship management (CRM) or IT asset management (ITAM)—digital platforms integrate workflows, manage data, and connect people across an organization. Revenue growth isn’t the only benefit that adopters of digital platforms are seeing. Companies surveyed report decreased costs (52% of respondents), improved profitability (47%), better decision making (43%), greater market share (42%), improved customer satisfaction (42%), and other benefits.

“CIOs perceive digital platforms more as methods to optimize their current business—rather than an opportunity to open up new markets and revenue,” says Dejan Slokar, global lead alliance partner at Deloitte. “That creates a blind spot for CEOs. By not integrating your digital processes, you may become vulnerable to disruption and unable to create new revenue models.”

Gaining an edge with customer satisfaction might be the biggest advantage of all, says Yoni Assia, CEO of multi-asset investment platform eToro.

“Digital platforms are all about learning how to improve the customer experience,” says Assia. “Every interaction a customer has with a company is a data point. The more a company can use that data to improve the customer experience, the better they become.”

Behind the disconnect

Many CEOs, however, may not have as much insight into their business operations and digital capabilities. For example, when asked to identify what specific business functions their organization has digitized and fully automated, more than half of all C-level executives identified strategic planning. Yet just 28% of surveyed CEOs mentioned the same. The survey found a similar disconnect in CEOs’ knowledge of digitization in finance, risk management, and compliance.

That awareness gap can be dangerous, says Slokar. “You may be investing in digital as an organization already, but without alignment within your executive team, that investment may not be realizing the value that it should,” he says.

By failing to see the benefits of digital enterprise platforms, CEOs may be less likely to invest in them—and fall behind competitors in the process.

Howard Rabinowitz is a business and technology writer.

Why CHROs are earliest adopters of digital platforms

CHROs are more bullish on enterprise digital platforms than any other C-level executive, including CIOs. According to a new ESI/ServiceNow survey, 77% of CHROs say that digital platforms are significantly or vitally important to their company’s success, compared to 72% of CIOs and 66% of CEOs.

While that 20 percentage point gap may be surprising to some, it suggests that digitization isn’t about technology but instead about improving human connection and work outcomes. Integrating data, applications, and employee workflows on a single digital platform is critical, for instance, in processes like employee onboarding, which cuts across IT, finance, operations, and legal business functions.

As the chief designers of employee experience, HR leaders are uniquely situated to recognize, and evangelize for, the value of digital platforms. They’re also attuned to what emerging talent wants from prospective employers.

“Gen Z and Gen Ys are who are coming into the workforce are digital natives, and they expect a consumer-level digital experience where they work,” says Matt Parrish, director of digital talent experiences at ServiceNow.

The ESI survey reveals some of the main reasons why CHROs have become the biggest digital-platform advocates in the C-suite.

Major platform benefits

• Boosting collaboration: 73% of CHROs say cloud-based digital platforms are improving collaboration across the company, compared to 61% of all other executives.
• Broader adoption of new tech: Three out of four CHROs believe that digital platforms are promoting enterprise-wide adoption of AI and automation.
• Faster upskilling: More than half of CHROs credit platforms with allowing the business to equip its workforce with the right digital skills to succeed.

Customer experience benefits: CHROs also see those benefits getting passed along to consumers. More than half of CHROs believe that, thanks to digital platforms, their companies provide more personalized customer experiences.

The platform ‘priority gap’

While all senior execs are generally enthusiastic about digital platforms, CHROs diverge from their peers when it comes to deciding where the greatest immediate needs are for platform integration of workflows over the next three years.

This “priority gap” is a window into how companies will wrestle with strategic investment in digital platforms in the coming years. It also highlights how they are leveraging talent strategy to increase revenue, decrease inefficiencies, and innovate for the future.

Here’s a look at where CHROs’ priorities will fall, according to the study.

Major platform benefits

• CHROs: 73%
• Others: 65%

What explains the biggest gaps? Parrish offers one explanation: “HR is seeking efficiencies,” he says. “CHROs are looking for a solution that they can scale talent through automation, digitization, and workflow integration.”

CHROs, he adds, are keenly aware that digital platforms can save HR resources in the supply chain, finance, marketing, and other areas. “If they find those savings, then they don’t need to grow their workforce in proportion to the growth of the company,” says Parrish.

In the eyes of CHROs, at least, one thing is clear: They see digital platforms as a primary means of corporate success for years to come.

Howard Rabinowitz is a business and technology writer.

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Howard Rabinowitz is a business and technology writer.
Leaders make smart bets by digitizing critical workflows

BY LAURA RICH

Companies approach digital transformation projects in countless ways today, but best practices are converging around certain areas of strategy. In a new survey by ESI ThoughtLab and ServiceNow, CIOs report that foundational elements—such as digitization of core business functions and consolidating data and systems—come first. To achieve business outcomes, however, CIOs need to make tech investments that build effectively on that foundation to meet organizational goals. As the survey suggests, some companies are better at this than others.

In the study of 600 companies with revenue of $500 million and up, “leaders” were defined as those that have already brought digitization and automation to multiple business functions, and are integrating those through digital enterprise platforms. On the other hand, just 25% of surveyed companies qualified as “leaders,” so most CIOs are playing catch up in the years to come.

How should CIOs decide where to make the right investments and find success in implementations? The survey offers them a number of strategic insights.

Identify smart use cases

Leaders are intentional where they place their bets. They look at digital processes, use cases, and projected ROI before making investments. At least 54% of them form digital and business teams who are deeply familiar with the process and can analyze customer needs and expectations. Followers fall well short of that mark. And don’t forget the important role pilots can play in the success of IT investments. Sometimes it’s worth walking before running, and leaders reported they were able to confirm projected gains with this testing tactic.

Digitize core workflows

It may come as little surprise that the path to full digitization starts largely with IT. Among surveyed CIOs, 73% say they have invested in digitizing and automating workflows in IT service management. Human resources, customer service, finance/accounting, and employee engagement rounded up the remainder of the top five primary areas of workflow digitization.

But implementation rates aren’t uniform across industries. For example, 94% of financial services companies report that they have successfully digitized finance and accounting functions, but just 36% of health sector businesses have done the same. Another gap emerged in digitizing customer service operations: 89% of telecom companies report making significant progress, while just 41% of manufacturing organizations say they’ve digitized the same functions.

Areas seeing increasing digitization include risk/compliance, strategic planning, sales and marketing, and operations.

Build your digital platform foundation

Best practices are emerging when investing in and implementing a digital enterprise platform. Leaders are relying mostly on open-platform cloud designs and robotic process automation (RPA) and artificial intelligence (AI) to get started.

In the survey, 39% of all surveyed companies say they have largely or fully implemented cloud-based open platforms, with 66% planning to implement in the next three years. Enterprisewide use of RPA and AI are also in place for 34% of surveyed companies, while 64% say they’ll get there within three years.

To get a sense of what sets leaders apart, consider that 74% say they’ve already implemented open-platform cloud and 73% are using RPA and AI across the enterprise. These are the foundations upon which CIOs can begin to put more tactical tech investments in place.

Target the right technologies

Leader organizations aren’t just investing in automating workflows across the enterprise; they’re targeting their dollars in specific areas to create competitive advantage. Leaders, for example, are making some of their biggest investments in cybersecurity (88%), data management (89%), AI (86%), and mobile apps (74%). Followers lagged behind at 74% for cybersecurity, 64% for data management, 53% for AI, and 38% for mobile apps.

Cybersecurity has become a critical priority, says Mark Settle, a former CIO of Okta, Staples, and several other companies. Every company’s attack surface, for example, “has expanded significantly as a result of sending everybody home to work,” he says. Increased security needs, he adds, “will persist in one form or another.”

Move toward a unified platform

Leaders are also identifying ways to make these technologies work together seamlessly. In the areas where workflows have already been digitized (such as IT, customer service, HR, finance/accounting), more than two-thirds of leaders have already integrated them across a unified digital platform. Nearly the same percentage have digitized risk management/compliance, and more than half of leaders have integrated planning, operations, employee engagement, and sales/marketing into a single platform. The gap between leaders and others is greatest in IT service (30%), asset management (24%), customer service (22%), and planning (20%).

Keep pushing for better data integration and usability

Even with the rapid progress many CIOs have made in moving their companies toward digital platforms, data management remains a huge challenge. Even when data is integrated into enterprise systems, according to the survey, it is often inaccessible to users or incompatible with other systems. In HR, for example, 67% of companies say they’ve successfully organized and integrated relevant data, but just 24% have made it accessible to users. Some CIOs are finding ways to solve this problem, such as using RPA tools to pull data (58%), using dashboards that combine data (53%), or leveraging analytics platforms (44%). In a connected world, all workflows will need to be digitized and integrated, supported by data that is accessible. Best practices are emerging that will point CIOs in the right direction.

Laura Rich is a business journalist with a focus on tech, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

Where CIOs are investing to build an enduring enterprise
Reimagine the way work, works

Start building top-line growth with an agile enterprise

BY DAVE WRIGHT

Many CEOs today are focused on reducing costs in the wake of COVID-19. But this crisis has presented a bigger opportunity: grow top-line growth by reimagining the way work, works.

Now is the time for operational workflows

We know remote work isn’t a fleeting experiment, but rather a lasting byproduct of the global pandemic. To support the shift, our ways of working must catch up. For example, digital workflows and automation are already tracking incidents or requests in many IT and HR functions. Now, it’s time to apply their ability to track and orchestrate to everyday knowledge work within the enterprise.

Digital workflows can adapt to support what I call “operational workflows” — those that sit close to the customer and drive the product or service at the core of an organization’s business.

These workflows are everywhere. In manufacturing, they bring product from the factory floor through to shipping and distribution. In retail, they process orders, schedule deliveries, and create happy customers. In banking, they push loan applications through pre-approval to underwriting and closing.

By reimagining these processes as digital workflows, we impact the bottom line just as we do when automating within IT, HR, or customer service. But we also grow the top line by creating a more efficient, more productive organization.

The value of a platform approach

These workflows rely on a single system of engagement that shield the complexity inherent to enterprise systems. As an example, recruitment agency Alexander Mann consolidated its recruitment process into a single platform that drives the discrete tasks within it.

The automation of scheduling 1,000s of interviews, while sounds simple, saved the company hundreds of hours, freeing employees to focus on their core business of talent acquisition. Allowing employees to focus less on administrative tasks and project management and more on delivering creative, innovative work, the focus is on better care of customers.

By simplifying its process, the agency saw capacity rise, even as the customer received a higher-touch service. When capacity, quality and efficiency all improve through operational workflows, this then impacts the top line.

Working smarter requires rethinking and that starts with a single platform for modern day knowledge work, because, while automated workflows originated in IT, ultimately a workflow is a workflow wherever it occurs.

Dave Wright is chief innovation officer of ServiceNow.

BY SIMON GRICE

CIOs may be overwhelmed by the requests to build solutions in the wake of COVID-19, as their organizations operate in new ways. However, there are now tools available for IT to relinquish some of the work hours required — but not the oversight necessary.

For example, Accelare, a ServiceNow partner, quickly configured an application to assist in the safe reopening of a city’s local restaurants. It enables restaurants to easily apply for a government health inspection, and then they are automatically assigned to a mobile field inspector via a backend workflow. Though originally aimed at restaurants, its configurable for a variety of return to workplace needs.

Digital solutions like this are possible because of low-code/no-code platforms (LCNC), which allow non-technical employees to build enterprise-grade applications with minimal programming effort or experience.

Though many clients began using LCNC as a temporary stopgap during the pandemic, its value is now skyrocketing as an alternative to traditionally slow, costly development processes.

LCNC offers the agility needed today, when companies are desperate for digital workflow apps to maintain business continuity. But as much as organizations need these digital solutions, they also need them to meet enterprise standards for security and scalability. That’s what sets ServiceNow’s App Engine apart. The App Engine lets non-expert developers use enterprise-grade, pre-built components to accelerate the programming process — a departure from typical app development that requires hand-coding from scratch.

For example, the restaurant application reused common ServiceNow workflows, such as in the customer service management and field service management applications. The team simply reconfigured these existing technology stacks into a novel application.

Besides speed, the use of pre-built components allows for the existence of a new type of programmer: the citizen developer. What citizen developers lack in programming skills, they make up for in understanding their team’s or customer’s needs. The benefits are business resilience and agility — what every CIO needs to deliver today.

Simon Grice is director of innovation at ServiceNow.
How to keep up morale while keeping your distance

Job burnout has been a significant occupational hazard in recent years—most recently among Gen-Z workers in tech. The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated it.

According to an August 2020 survey of 1,500 employees by FlexJobs and Mental Health America, 75% say they are experiencing burnout brought on by the pandemic. Their top reasons include a lack of separation between work and life, crushing workloads, and worries about job security.

These trends are themselves a significant worry for HR leaders. In this expert roundtable, we asked four enterprise leaders to share helpful strategies and insights.

1. Take a breath

There are two essential ingredients to maintaining morale during this “new normal.” First is the need to think about the “whole person” as we work together and serve each other. Everyone is under stress of different types. Employees often have family or home-related issues, and some people are just worried. Right now, we all need to listen, have patience, and care for each other, so everyone feels safe, supported, and heard.

The second is to “take a breath.” There are so many distractions, new programs, risks, and uncertainties at work that we constantly feel barraged by surprises. It turns out we can ignore much of this information, so it’s important leaders and teammates encourage everyone to pace themselves. Use a little humor, go for a walk (distanced of course), listen to some music, and try to focus on the most important things. If we all take time to “take a deep breath” several times a day, we’ll get through this uncertain time with a sense of growth and progress.

— Josh Bersin, HR technology expert and founder of Bersin Academy

2. Find new ways to listen

At a time of great uncertainty, authentic leadership is more important than ever. Empathy and transparency have been critical tools to lead the workforce through the fear and the transition to remote work.

The most tactical lesson in this environment is that we can’t guess how employees are feeling and the ways that they might be struggling. We need strategies to continuously listen to them. According to Deloitte’s 2020 Global Human Capital Trends report, at a time when workforce shifts are happening at warp speed, only 1 out of 10 respondents are producing workforce insights in real time. When employees are faced with emotional challenges and a business stops performing well financially, engagement can suffer. Create clarity around the organization’s strategy and then over-communicate that strategy. Everyone should know what your top objectives are and what role they play in achieving those. Purpose and alignment are the best antidotes for the stresses of challenging times.

— Annie Dean, vice president of workforce transformation, Deloitte

3. Let managers set the right tone

Managers set the tone for their teams, and their influence on culture and behavior is immeasurable. Companies must provide managers with tools, support, and flexibility to manage remote employees with empathy. Here are a few tactics to consider:

- Give them the mandate to encourage teams to take time off, and be sure they are doing that. This will help avoid burnout and set an example for other team members.
- Knowing that recognition is a morale booster, find ways for managers to reward and recognize employees, either using an online recognition tool, a company shout out, or even a token of appreciation delivered to their home.
- Acknowledge that there is a lot of anxiety around job security right now. In the absence of information, employees can often jump to negative conclusions. Work with managers on communication skills and stress the need for an open, ongoing dialogue. The more inclusive managers can be of the individuals on their team, the better.

— Melanie Lougee, leader of employee workflow strategy, ServiceNow

4. Create clarity by tapping into core values

The biggest lesson from the past five months is how important it is to leverage your organization’s values to solve problems. If you can’t use your core values to address the enormous challenges of remote work during a pandemic, it’s time to refresh them or create new values. Your business culture must evolve as the world does.

— Shane Metcalf, co-founder and chief culture officer, 15Five

Tech talent leaders weigh in on how to keep employees engaged amid the stress of the pandemic

BY HOWARD RABINOWITZ

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Digital transformation should be top of mind for every C-suite executive these days. Why? Because digitizing manual processes can drive exponential increases in employee engagement, fierce customer loyalty, better scale, and of course, higher profitability. While no one knows exactly what work will look like after the pandemic, I foresee a hybrid future where most companies will need to support customers and engage employees through both centralized and virtual work. Companies that are further along in their digital transformation will be better equipped to manage these evolving experiences.

Focus on business outcomes

CFOs want to know exactly how digitalization will boost customer loyalty and employee productivity. The majority of us are data driven. While cost always matters, measurable business outcomes are just as important. Chris and I agree that the opportunities we discuss must be credible and must solve real business problems. We focus on proven methodologies, value frameworks, and best practices as we evaluate existing and future digital transformation investments.

When IT met finance

That’s where CFOs (like me) come in. I believe the CFO-CIO relationship is a critical piece of a successful digital transformation journey. In fact, I partner closely with our CIO, Chris Bedi, to ensure that ServiceNow prioritizes and funds digital transformation programs that increase customer success, unlock productivity, and drive ROI. Through this partnership, we work to maximize business value, sharpen our competitive edge, and identify new opportunities to transform business functions across our company.

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Digital workflows are the core of any digital transformation model. Let’s be honest, though. Digital transformation isn’t easy, nor is it free. Companies worldwide will spend nearly $7.4 trillion on digital transformation programs between 2020 and 2023, according to Gartner. If you’re a CFO, how can you have confidence in your digital strategy, and how can you advocate for the necessary budget?

Integrate advanced tech

An important component of digital transformation is the ability to apply machine intelligence to make work, work better. CFOs are more likely to fund digital solutions that leverage AI and machine learning because they power more intelligent and forward-looking decisions, which leads to faster and easier solutions. And yes, save money along the way. These advanced technologies, when integrated into core platforms, accelerate the effectiveness of your digital workflows. For example, our internal IT support teams use our Virtual Agent chatbot to enable self-service for common tasks like password resets and knowledge base searches. We’ve saved a total of 4,578 hours with Virtual Agent. Employees experience an 83% success rate in obtaining answers.

While companies were shifting to mobile platforms before the pandemic, because employees and customers were increasingly demanding work experiences that match the ease and simplicity of their favorite consumer apps, digital transformation is the ability to apply machine intelligence to make work, work better. CFOs are more likely to fund digital solutions that leverage AI and machine learning because they power more intelligent and forward-looking decisions, which leads to faster and easier solutions. And yes, save money along the way. These advanced technologies, when integrated into core platforms, accelerate the effectiveness of your digital workflows. For example, our internal IT support teams use our Virtual Agent chatbot to enable self-service for common tasks like password resets and knowledge base searches. We’ve saved a total of 4,578 hours with Virtual Agent. Employees experience an 83% success rate in obtaining answers.

Work after COVID

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Lawless Research conducted a global study of 6,000 workers last year that proves this point. In the research, about 80% of employees in highly digitized companies said automation simplified work processes, increased efficiency, and boosted productivity. And 72% of employees from highly automated companies said digital workflows improved customer satisfaction.

Keep in mind that Chris and I are a bit of an anomaly. We both report to our CEO, Bill McDermott. But what about the 50% of CFOs who report to the CFO? The complexity and criticality of these conversations increase significantly.

So, how can you navigate a conversation with your CFO about digital transformation, regardless of your reporting hierarchy? Follow these five tips, and I think you’ll hit on the main points your CFO cares about.

If you ask me to fund a digital program that only benefits one business unit, you won’t get more than five minutes of our next Zoom meeting.

—Gina Mastantuono, CFO, ServiceNow

Solve cross-company problems

A CFO wants to see solutions that can help break down departmental silos and solve problems across the enterprise. If you ask me to fund a digital platform that only benefits one business unit, you won’t get more than five minutes of our next Zoom meeting. Trust me, the conversation will go much better if you propose a cross-organization platform that integrates with existing software to improve business outcomes.

For example, we’re currently piloting a digital service delivery solution for our legal team, which serves every department in the company. Early results have been encouraging. On average, the new digital workflow eliminates five emails for every intake form. This reduces ramp-up time for new legal projects by 80%. Contracts get drafted and executed faster, which reduces time to value across ServiceNow. That’s a conversation I want to have.

I tease Chris that he channels his “inner CFO” when he talks about the difference between “interesting” and “compelling” business conversations. CFOs don’t really want to hear about how upgrading some legacy IT tool will make your team marginally more efficient. We care much more about tangible business outcomes, strong ROI, and fast time to value.

How are you improving productivity? Will there be return we can reallocate? Can we count on these benefits long-term (at least five years ahead)? At ServiceNow we’ve achieved $40 million in IT productivity gains through automation. We’ve shifted 13% of our OpEx from keep-the-lights-on to growth initiatives. And we’ve seen a 7% improvement in IT cost as a percentage of revenue.

That’s a compelling conversation right there. So next time you’re in a budget meeting with your CFO, figure out how to focus the dialogue on success outcomes. At the end of the day, that’s how your digital transformation project will get funded. More importantly, that’s how you’ll create value for the business.

Gina Mastantuono is chief financial officer of ServiceNow.

Articulate your path to business value

Tell Chris that he channels his “inner CFO” when he talks about the difference between “interesting” and “compelling” business conversations. CFOs don’t really want to hear about how upgrading some legacy IT tool will make your team marginally more efficient. We care much more about tangible business outcomes, strong ROI, and fast time to value.

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Prepare for the next normal

The pandemic will end, but work will never be the same

BY CHRIS BEDI

In a few short months, the COVID-19 virus has infected millions around the world. Nobody knows when the pandemic will end, or what its true economic impact will be. I'm certain, however, that work will never be the same.

By now, more than one-third of all U.S. workers (34.1%) have responded to the pandemic by shifting to remote work, according to a new MIT study. When you add the 14.4% of workers who were already telecommuting before the pandemic, it appears that nearly half the U.S. labor force is now working remotely. In a sign of things to come, younger workers are more likely than older people to switch from commuting to remote work.

Going forward, learnings from this experience will cause new employee behaviors and business practices. For many employees, the traditional office and desktop workspace will become a pre-COVID artifact. For these employees, their new office will be wherever they need it to be. Employees will replace their assigned cubicle with their choice, deciding for themselves where, when, and how they want to work and stay productive.

I've seen this play out at my own company: ServiceNow has 11,000 employees worldwide. We've all been working from home since mid-March. Former road warriors are calling on clients via Zoom while their children and pets wander past in the background. And the concept of the workday has changed drastically. Many of us are logging on and off work throughout the day and night, as childcare, elder care, and other domestic responsibilities permit. We're spending a lot less on travel, even while employee productivity and customer engagement remain high. This frees up resources to invest in other areas that support our strategy.

As the company CIO, it's my job to make sure we all have the technology needed to stay productive and serve our customers in these trying times. Our employees are using digital workflows on the Now Platform to get work done remotely. For example, employee use of our Virtual Agent chatbot rose by 12% from February to March 2020, and use of our Now Mobile app grew by 10%.

One day, the pandemic will end and workplaces will reopen. But work will be different. Agile, distributed, "anywhere, anytime" workplaces will become the norm rather than the exception. In this next normal, managing complex digital workflows will be critical to providing employees the services and experiences needed to do their jobs seamlessly and efficiently.

Here are 5 themes for CIOs to consider as they help their workforce adapt to the next normal:

- **Leaders will work together in new ways.** I predict we'll see HR, IT, facilities, and security leaders collaborating much more. These functions may even merge into employee experience teams led by a chief experience officer.

- **Your mileage may vary.** There will not be a consistent employee experience across industries and geographies. The digital infrastructure needed to keep employees safe and productive in an office building is different from that of an oil rig, a factory, or a hospital. In communities where domestic privacy is at a premium, knowledge workers may be more reluctant to give up their office space.

- **AI & mobile will be key.** Workers will expect to access anything and everything via mobile devices. AI will help leaders make smarter decisions about workforce management. Use cases include AI for smart badges and managing physical space so that appropriate social distancing can be maintained.

- **Office life will change.** Open-plan offices will disappear. New cubicle layouts and staggered occupancy plans will emerge, optimized for social distance and employee health. There will be less business travel, which is good news for families. And thanks to advanced digital workflows, even C-level executives will be able to troubleshoot their own IT issues.

- **Emergency measures will become permanent.** More companies will be willing to accommodate remote work arrangements. Many will continue to hire, onboard, transfer, and offboard employees remotely.

All these trends were in motion before the pandemic, but they are now accelerating. Companies that had already deployed digital strategies and operating models are weathering the crisis more successfully than digital laggards. Many laggards are stuck on old technology, with too much tech debt, yesterday’s software, and slow, outdated processes.

Digital workflows have made it possible for ServiceNow and many other companies to maintain business continuity during the pandemic. We continue to hire, onboard, and serve customers from home. We’re putting mobile to work in the enterprise with apps that digitize new employee workflows and make it easy to join or leave a company.

The companies that survive this pandemic and thrive in the next normal will be technology-enabled and digitally transformed.

Chris Bedi is chief information officer of ServiceNow.
How industries transform

Many industries have digitized their operations. Now comes the hard part.

BY PETER BURROWS

As Asish Ramchandran lay in a hospital bed recovering from a punctured lung, his thoughts kept drifting to how the hospital used technology to improve his care. He couldn’t help it: As a principal in the technical services consulting practice at Deloitte, Ramchandran spends much of his time thinking about the digital future.

During his stay at Stanford Hospital, which had opened just weeks before, Ramchandran could order meals, turn off lights, adjust shades, and view test results and doctors’ notes—all from his phone.

“Executives in every industry can learn something from what’s going on there,” he says. “Looking back, the experience reinforced a lesson companies often overlook. While it’s natural to follow industry trends and keep a close eye on competitors, there’s often more value to be gained by applying lessons between industries.”

There’s no lack of opportunity to experiment. Last year, research firm IDC said it expected organizations across all industries to spend more than $7.4 trillion on digital transformation initiatives between 2020 and 2023, more than half of all corporate technology spending.

Nearly twice as many companies as last year are embracing the concept of open data, a practice that helps seed innovation with artificial intelligence applications.

Where can CIOs find outside inspiration? We took a close look at four major industries—financial services, telecommunications, healthcare, and government—to see what lessons they offer.

These industries share some interesting characteristics:

• They tend to be farthest along at digitizing back-office processes to cut costs.

• They are increasingly embracing automation to these workflows.

• They can all do more to improve the experience of their customers.

Yet there are also sector-specific innovation trends worth mining:

• Financial firms tend to be standouts in cybersecurity, but relative slackers on rolling out new features and services.

• Government agencies do a good job creating broad visions for how services should be delivered, but struggle to free themselves of legacy systems and workflows.

Ramchandran urges executives to be on the lookout for lessons out of the way places. “Nine out of 10 CEOs ask me to tell them something they don’t know,” he says. “They know their industries cold.”

Finance: From operational efficiency to digital products

In many ways, the financial services industry has been the pace car of digital transformation. With billion-dollar IT budgets, sky-high privacy and compliance requirements, and products begging to be digitized, banking leaders have been among the most aggressive implementers of data analytics, blockchain, and machine learning.

More than half of financial services firms (55%) say they’re using AI to automate finance and accounting tasks such as report generation and fraud detection, and 45% are using it for predictive analytics, according to a survey by ESI ThoughtLab and ServiceNow. Both results are far ahead of other industries. Ramchandran, who works frequently with financial service customers, says he routinely sees 30% to 35% improvement in operational efficiency from digital initiatives.

Banks now hope to apply the same wizardry to one of their biggest challenges: customer experience. Nearly half of bank customers say they would use financial services from tech companies such as Apple or Amazon if they provided a better experience, according to a recent poll. More than 80% of executives in the industry say improving the customer experience is their No. 1 long-term business goal, according to BDO.

Workday Quarterly: The Platform Issue

Smart money

Banks are most likely to use AI in cybersecurity and accounting.
Before banks can offer these seamless customer experiences, they must first understand how their consumer data and their sprawling infrastructures shape their experiences. Keith Pearson, who recently joined ServiceNow after serving as head of technology resilience at Lloyds Banking Group, faced this challenge when he arrived at Lloyds in the mid-2000s: “If you looked at the way we managed resilience, capacity, cloud migration, the same problem manifested itself, he says. “We didn’t have a clear, real-time view.”

The solution, says Pearson, is creating a reliable, scalable way of holding data, managing infrastructure, and the thousands of applications that run across it, and finding a great analytics platform that brings these things together.

**Healthcare: Turning more data into better care**

No economic sector faces a higher degree of difficulty with digital transformation than the $3.6 trillion healthcare industry. The stakes are life and death. The regulatory requirements are byzantine. Processes for managing patient care, electronic health records, and billing are often fragmented, complex, and costly. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, doctors found that many were exiting the profession. Technology is making a big difference: Healthcare organizations are more likely today use AI than other industries and lay the field many times over when it comes to adopting of robotic process automation, according to the ESI/ServiceNow survey.

“In healthcare, mission-critical means life-critical,” says Deloitte’s Ramon Sharma. “Whatever industry you’re in, you can learn a lot by looking at what leaders in healthcare are doing.”

Stanford Hospital spent 10 years and $2 billion planning and building its new state-of-the-art facility, which operates a data management system letting doctors and clinicians reach another, and sophisticated digital workflows ensure patients’ calls to the hospital are routed to the most appropriate clinician—saving hours of frustration and wasted dollars. This system proved valuable in the COVID-19 crisis, as callers fearing infection were quickly advised whether to stay home, come by for drive-through testing, or prepare for an emergency room visit.

Some customer experiences today can be important eye-openers—for the companies, come by for drive-through testing, or prepare for an emergency room visit.

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Recent history suggests telecoms can make the leap. It’s an industry that has sidestepped major obstacles over the years. Wi-Fi, once seen as a threat, became a way to offload soaring cellular traffic. Streaming services like Netflix went from a scourge that was going to bring the internet to its knees to a partner for many carriers. And while the cloud remains a threat to carriers’ once-lucrative sales of corporate IT services, many telecoms have exited the data center business and found other ways to add value.

“In the future, carriers should be reaching out to make sure people are happy,” says Johnson. That means creating a more seamless omni-channel approach that balances effective self-service options with the occasional proactive outreach when the customer has a problem or need that’s not being addressed. “It pre-empts problems and creates sales opportunities.”

Public sector: Vision for the people

Digital transformation is never easy, but it’s especially tough for governments, large universities, and other public organizations. They serve millions of people and face a gauntlet of bureaucratic, regulatory, and cultural obstacles. Not only do they need to envision how the world will be in a decade or more, they must also prove the people are on track every year to keep their programs funded.

Tom Davenport’s take:

Leaders in
• Setting big but realistic long-term visions
• Embracing open data
Challenges
• Moving beyond legacy systems
• Breaking down agency silos

“We see a lot of public sector leaders painting a vision for the future, along with tactical plans to get the money they need,” says Deloitte’s Ramchandran. While many private-sector companies focus on particular services or platforms, government teams, he says, “are a lot more thoughtful about how to invest in platforms for a wide variety of services.”

One striking example is Arizona State University, the largest university in the U.S. During the COVID-19 outbreak, ASU was able to shift its 60,000 students to remote learning setups in a matter of days, thanks to a forced march to the cloud over the past two years.

ASU made 5,000 courses, from public speaking to nuclear engineering, available online. Between March 14 and 21, the number of daily classes and other meetings held on Zoom jumped from 603 to more than 10,000. Pulling that off without a major hiccup was the result of a digital-technology transition that started a decade ago, says ASU Chief Information Officer Lev Gonick. For years, the campus IT team had experimented with a variety of cloud strategies. When Gonick arrived in 2017, one of his first moves was to implement a single strategy to address all of the university’s IT needs.

Since then, the team has moved hundreds of other applications to the cloud, including the learning management system for delivering classes electronically, and the student information system for tracking student’s grades, scholarship, and other data. “Not a single major piece of that digital, remote-delivery system sits inside the campus. That gave us a pretty amazing ability to flip the switch to the cloud,” says Gonick, who notes that traffic on the old enterprise network fell to 25% of the norm as cloud-traffic spiked.

A wide variety of government agencies are making similar progress in digitizing citizen services.

Estonians do their taxes from a pre-populated form, rather than a blank one, and can vote and see their health records online. The governments of India, the EU, and the state of Utah are working on digital identity systems that make it easier for citizens to access public services with far fewer authentication headaches.

AI-powered chatbots help citizens get help with non-life-threatening health issues, while a virtual assistant named Roxy answers roughly 88% of the questions typically asked by callers to Australia’s Department of Human Services.

The United States Digital Service, created after the disastrous launch of the healthcare.gov website in 2014, has helped several agencies rethink essential services and adopt modern software-development methodologies such as Agile and DevOps.

Still, the public sector has a long way to go. Even as many government agencies spend more than half of their budgets on obsolete legacy systems, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed glaring weaknesses.

For example, limitations on the number of checks that IRS systems can process could delay emergency stimulus payments to Americans by as much as five months.

Gonick remains an optimist about the digital transformation of government, if only because governments are rapidly running out of other options. Once agencies realize the benefits of cloud-based platforms and more automated, integrated workflows, he says, they won’t go back. “We’ve burned the bridge on 99% of what we do,” he says. “Anything that’s in the cloud as a result of COVID is going to stay there.”

Peter Burrows is a technology journalist and author.
How to bolster IT resilience, before the next crisis

4 ways to ensure business resilience before the next crisis hits

BY DAN TYNAN

1. Invest in a hybrid, multi-cloud strategy

The pandemic changed working from home from a perk into a requirement. Even when the crisis finally passes, not much is likely to change. Global Workplace Analytics predicts that 25 to 30 percent of the U.S. workforce will continue working from home multiple days a week through 2021.

Now is the time to begin or continue investing in hybrid and multicloudbased strategies, says Jake Smith, the director of data center technologies at Intel. Combining private and public clouds gives enterprises the ability to scale up quickly, as they did during the initial March lockdown, while keeping legacy workloads and sensitive data safely on prem.

“Before COVID, you might have had 1,000 employees but only 100 needed to access your network remotely,” says Smith. “Now, suddenly all 1,000 are working from home. You need to rethink everything, from upgrading the network to how you do backup and recovery to implementing new security procedures, all while keeping the business running.”

“In a situation like today’s,” he adds, “where IT staff can’t work inside facilities, you need to create environments they can manage remotely.”

2. Automate security and other workflows

The sudden surge in people working from home also puts enormous stress on security resources that were already stretched thin. Now, in addition to protecting the corporate network, CISOs have to worry about every employee’s laptop and home Wi-Fi setup at a time when COVID-era attacks are accelerating.

“The uptick in attacks right now is historic,” says Mark Campbell, chief innovation officer for Evotek, a digital enterprise solutions firm. “CISOs are asking, ‘How do we secure all those BYOD devices connected to our mission-critical assets? How do we implement zero-trust and password-less access, or newer endpoint protections like Secure Access Service Edge (SASE)?’ How do we audit the shadow IT that was necessary to make connectivity possible?”

Security teams, already overtaxed, will need to rely more heavily on automated processes to identify threats and respond to them, says Deborah Golden, Deloitte’s U.S. cyber and strategic risk leader.

“We now have an exponentially larger threat landscape with more networks, more data, and more people than any security organization could possibly monitor,” Golden says. “The only way to do that with fewer people and less money in a short window of time is to look at robotic process automation, machine learning, and AI.”

The pandemic is also pushing enterprises to begin automating other workflows to reduce costs and increase efficiency, says Campbell.

“They’re looking at workflows that may have been considered sacrosanct in the past—like operations, business intelligence, and supply chain,” he says. “And many enterprises are finding out that they’re not as automated as they thought they were.”

The uptick in attacks right now is historic. — Mark Campbell, chief innovation officer, Evotek

3. Stress test business continuity plans early and often

The COVID crisis put every enterprise’s business continuity plans to the test—and not every organization passed, says Sue Bergamo, CIO/CISO for Episerver, a global e-commerce company.

“There are three kinds of companies during this pandemic,” Bergamo said. “Those that were prepared, those that were semi-prepared, and those that weren’t. I was a little surprised to learn that in 2020 we still have companies that don’t have business continuity plans in place.”

But even the most comprehensive plan isn’t worth much if it’s not routinely tested, reviewed, and refined.

“Your business continuity plan needs to constantly evolve,” Bergamo says. “You need to be ready for anything and have the technologies in place to respond.”

Episerver utilized ITIL and ISO 27001 frameworks as guidelines and tests its business continuity plan every month, doing live failovers of critical operations between its five major global offices during company holidays.

“We don’t just test once a year, like a lot of companies do; we test all the time,” Bergamo says. “We have redundancies across the globe, which is the only way you can make business continuity happen on a worldwide basis.”

4. Invest in your team

With IT teams running full speed 24/7 since March, burnout is a real concern, says Intel’s Smith.

“The only way your organization is going to survive is if you and your team do,” he says.

Companies should consider creating new touchpoints among employees and between employees and their managers. These could include digital “watercooler” sessions and more frequent one-on-one meetings, so managers can keep tabs on individuals’ well-being. Other approaches include more frequent celebration of milestones and team successes, as well as mandatory breaks as part of the daily or weekly routine.

“You need to find time to step away to be the best you can be for your enterprise,” Smith says. “Otherwise, you’re going to be overworked, and you’ll miss something important.”

Dan Tynan is the former editor-in-chief of Yahoo Tech and a freelance writer.
Welcome, virtual interns!

Tips on filling your talent pipeline in the age of social distancing

BY PETER BURROWS

Every spring, thousands of college students wait to hear about internships they’ve lined up for the summer. This year, however, as companies navigate major challenges brought on by a global pandemic, many are on the fence about whether—or how—to manage virtual internship programs.

ServiceNow, the publisher of Workflow, recently announced that its entire 2020 intern class would work remotely this summer. “We can do digital internships because we are a digital workflow company,” said chief talent officer Pat Wadors. “We’re putting the power of our own Now Platform to work to create an amazing digital experience for our interns, to keep their productivity up, and to make them feel like part of our team.”

Students hoping to intern at other companies this summer may not be so lucky. As of April 17, 16% of companies had rescinded their internships, according to a National Association of Colleges and Employers poll, and that number is on the rise. (There’s even a real-time tracker.)

Thirty-eight percent of college students tracked by Handshake, a website that pairs students with companies, say their internships are off. Half the 200 students polled by InternQueen say the same, says founder Lauren Berger. Ultimately, she expects 75% of U.S. companies will cancel their 2020 programs.

“This is a really difficult time,” says Meira Kolasinski, associate director for employer connections at Santa Clara University. “I have great empathy for the students that were looking forward to these internships, and for the talent recruiters that care deeply about them.”

Many have good reasons to do so, obviously. Some companies have more urgent priorities during the crisis, while others offer internships that don’t translate well to a virtual experience. “Companies should take into account whether or not it is realistic for managers to provide a positive experience,” says Kolasinski.

If maintaining a remote program is feasible, companies should follow through to help keep their talent pipelines from running dry. Given the chance, 84% of college students say they would participate in a remote internship, according to Handshake. “Everything you can do to keep your internship going, you should do,” says Wahab Owolabi, founder of URx, which holds conferences for recruiters focused on serving minority and underserved communities.

“The challenge, of course, is how to create a virtual internship that still offers a positive, meaningful experience for students, and allows companies to keep their recruiting strategies alive during tough times. Here are some guidelines and emerging best practices that experts recommend.

Go big, or go micro
One rule of thumb for employers is to avoid trying to virtualize the in-person experience. It’s important, of course, to have some initial video calls to connect interns with each other and employees. But loading students up with, say, Zoom cocktail parties can backfire if they feel like they’re mandatory activities.

Rather, leave room for inventiveness. Microsoft, for example, is developing a virtual experience for 4,000 interns this summer, its largest group ever. As part of the experience, interns are urged to “co-create their summer experience” by hosting TED-style talks or launching volunteer projects, according to chief people officer Kathleen Hogan, who explained some of the details in a recent blog post.

Another option is the micro-internship, a concept pioneered by Jeffrey Moss, CEO of Parker Dewey, an online service that connects college students and recent graduates with short-term remote assignments. Rather than a full-time, 10-week summer program, micro-internships involve assigning specific projects, such as cleaning up a customer database or preparing marketing materials for a product launch. Typically, these are jobs that take from 5 to 40 hours to complete.

The idea is to match managers who might otherwise hire a contractor with an ambitious student “who is probably going to do a better job anyway,” says Moss. For employers, there’s less mentoring, housing, and other program costs. Managers can get valuable work done and identify possible full-time hires.

For students, micro internships offer advantages over a conventional experience. Rather than work in marketing for one company all summer, they can try a variety of projects at different companies at any time of the year. Parker Dewey pays students around $20 per hour. “It’s not a replacement for the full 10-week experience, but it’s something,” says Moss.

Case in point: Zachary Kahtava, a senior at the University of Kansas, who has completed 14 micro-internships through Parker Dewey since he switched majors during his freshman year from music education to finance. Projects ranged from scouring the web for sales leads to doing market research on sports betting for a venture capital firm. The contacts Kahtava made led to a dozen better-paying freelance projects, further padding a resume that helped him land a summer internship after his junior year. After he graduates this summer, Kahtava will start a $60,000-plus, full-time job as a business intelligence associate. “I’m truly thrilled with where I am,” he says. “Micro-internships paved the way for me to find my niche.”

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Whether companies settle on micro-internships or a full-blown virtual program, here are some other guidelines companies should follow:

- **Emphasize the most meaningful human interactions.** Interns covet face time and rigorous feedback from people they respect. Each of SurveyMonkey’s 42 remote interns this summer will have weekly one-on-ones with both their manager and a mentor.

- **Rethink requirements and logistics.** Going remote requires adjustments from multiple departments, says Owolabi. If you have foreign students, for example, your legal team will need to get them to sign new offer letters showing they will be employed in their country of origin. If not, employers should use these funds to help other students who do.

- **Tap into this year’s deeper talent pool.** Right now there’s a glut of talented students looking for opportunities. Online resources are popping up to help you find them, such as “Intern From Home” and “Is My Internship Cancelled.” Take advantage.

- **Over-communicate, then do it again.** Students will appreciate knowing as soon as possible if they need to make other plans for the summer, or to adjust to changes in the program. They won’t appreciate the opposite. “It’s a branding issue,” says Owolabi. “Two years from now, students will remember how you treated people this summer.”

Linda Shockley, managing director of the Dow Jones News Fund, dreaded having to tell some of this year’s aspiring journalists that their internships had been canceled for the first time in the program’s 60-year history. While the interns will still get two weeks of classes, memberships in journalism professional societies, and a $1,500 scholarship, she couldn’t guarantee they’d find a new internship. “The first one I called said they were thriled” to hear they were getting anything, Shockley says. “Here I’m feeling awful, and she said she felt blessed.”

Peter Burrows is a technology journalist and author.

- **Provide clear daily structure.** Managers should break down projects into discrete, actionable tasks. Project management and communication tools—such as Asana or Slack—can help interns stay on track. Berger also suggests companies keep structured and consistent hours.

- **Pay interns full freight.** Coveted internships in Silicon Valley often pay up to $8,000, which some students need to pay next year’s tuition. Pay all or a portion of that stipend, if possible. If your company can’t afford this, it’s a good sign that you should probably cancel your 2020 program, says Owolabi. Many intern offers include housing stipends. Companies should ask interns if they need these funds to pay for alternate housing. If not, employers should use these funds to help other students who do.

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