



BREAKTHROUGH

Breaking through barriers to digital transformation
at the intersection of people and technology

DELL Technologies



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FOREWORD

Our world is undergoing a profound digital transformation. We see it at work, in school and at home—and it intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, students learned from home, families video conferenced over the holidays (when they would have gathered in person) and many businesses rapidly shifted gears to accomplish what they'd planned to do over several years, in just days—to create a digital workforce.

While traditionally we find incremental steps are the best way to achieve real change, we didn't have that luxury two years ago. Employees had to quickly adapt to virtual work while leaders were asked to show great empathy and help their teams through the dramatic changes. We did it to get through a crisis.

We learned quite a bit in the process. We made real progress and saw things happen in a ways that we might not have seen for years. As continuous learners, we know that we're moving in the right direction. As technological advances continue to transform the way we live and work, businesses will need a structure to sustain the ongoing change.

Dell Technologies surveyed 10,500 respondents from around the world and collaborated with behavioral experts to examine how to navigate transformational change from a human perspective. This paper summarizes the findings and recommends businesses build their breakthrough, with people at the forefront, by focusing on greater connectivity, productivity and empathy.

Read on for expert advice on how to build your breakthrough at the intersection of people and technology.

Thank you,

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SECTION 1:

The great restoration imperative

It is no secret that businesses feel an imperative to modernize. The pandemic only increased that sense of urgency. What could have been a marathon became a sprint, with timelines compressed and strategies rewritten.

Businesses achieved a great deal under these extraordinary circumstances. But the pace of progress has taken a toll.

This new research—based on insights from 10,500 respondents from 40+ locations—shows that human barriers to digital transformation are creating significant friction, and fatigue.

Over half of our respondents say they don't always have the motivation or energy to act on digital transformation in the workplace.

41% say their employees are struggling with burnout or poor mental health that's affecting their ability to do their work well

"The question is not if burnout has happened. It has," says Dr. Jessica Rimmer, leadership and culture expert and partner at GiANT Worldwide with a specialty in improving the corporate culture with healthy leadership behaviors. Rimmer posits that helping employees process and recover from burnout is not just the right thing to do; it's also necessary. "Businesses must recognize that their competitiveness is tied to people that no longer have the resilience to navigate organizational change."

Matt Baker, Dell Technologies' senior vice president of Corporate Strategy, cautions: "The pandemic created a kinetic energy that overcame inertia. But what happens after the crisis, when the adrenaline has worn off? They'll still need to make lots of time-sensitive decisions. If they're also tired and battle worn, businesses may have a problem on their hands."



85%

of business leaders believe their people are their “greatest asset”

THE HUMAN PARADOX

The study illustrates a tension between the ways that people can both facilitate or hinder transformation.

On the one hand, there is an innovator in all of us, not just a select few. Moreover, respondents recognize that technology holds the key to progress, and when technology and human ingenuity are aligned, they can have a powerful transformative effect.

We see this in the more than seven in 10 respondents that believe there is always a technological answer to a problem, just waiting to be uncovered. And the 85% of business leaders who believe their people are their “greatest asset”. In the right conditions they see people as the fuel that drives the company forward.

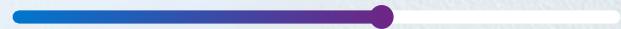
On the other hand, people can also be a company’s undoing. Most of us can recount times when technology and people haven’t aligned, with troublesome consequences. The margin for error can be quite wide. After all, as Jessica Rimmer notes, “We’re complex creatures. We commonly act in ways that are contrary to who we say we are and what we say we do.”

For instance, 48% say they are creatures of habit who like routine. Our experts estimate that many more people probably could be categorized as such, but they’re less inclined to self-report.

Regretfully, rather than advancing innovation, people regularly (unwittingly) hold their companies back.

64%

of respondents report the failure of their digital transformation programs is often due to their people



However, none of this is to say that people are a problem. A business will only go as far as their people can take them. Rather, the key takeaway is to make complex human needs the cornerstone of a transformation strategy. “Change can be uncomfortable, and the uncertainty it brings can trigger a variety of emotional responses. Which is why you really can’t over-communicate the personal benefits of planned change,” says Meghan M. Biro, HR tech strategist and founder of TalentCulture. “Empathetic communication is key.”



SECTION 2:

People-related transformation challenges

There are many technological reasons why digital transformation is not easy. But peel back the layers, and many of these obstacles can be traced to human behavior. For example, one might choose a public cloud option as opposed to a hybrid cloud configuration, not because it's best for the business, but because it seems less intimidating at first glance (even if the longer-term implications are more vexing).

Our study found three broad categories of “human barriers” that can stifle digital transformation:

1. Lack of digital skills & aptitude
2. Lack of vision and a people-first strategy
3. Lack of an innovation culture



Most sought-after traits

- 1 Future-lookers
- 2 Agile and flexible
- 3 Curious, love learning new digital skills
- 4 Experimenters and calculated risk-takers
- 5 Educators and coaches

01.

LACK OF DIGITAL SKILLS & APTITUDE

A majority (69%) of respondents worry they don't have the necessary skills for digital transformation. It's certainly known that there's a dearth of people skilled in DevOps, continuous integration, continuous delivery (CI/CD) pipelines, cloud knowledge, automation, edge, artificial intelligence, data science and more. But 'innovation-ready' character traits related to mindset, resiliency and attitude are also in short-supply.

Jenn Saavedra, Dell Technologies' chief human resources officer, clarifies: "Today's employees understand we are in a very fast-changing, dynamic time. A willingness to learn and an agile mindset are critical for success in our quickly moving world."

The study results confirm Professor Eaves's hypothesis: 74% say their teams could use either more curiosity and a love of learning, the ability and desire to look to the future, and/or the capacity to easily learn from mistakes.



"With so much technological change, the future is largely unknown. Which makes learning for life more important than ever. Soon, the single greatest skill will be agility on an individual, team and organizational level."

Professor Sally Eaves, former CTO, author & global strategic advisor in emergent technologies

These are not traits one can learn in an online course. Rather, they must be part of the company culture, nurtured and encouraged by empathetic leaders. If employees are worried that they don't have what it takes to thrive in a transformed workplace, they are likely to resist the change. Leaders can anticipate and avoid that resistance by making sure employees have opportunities to evolve their skill sets, and by modeling a productive mindset.

As Helen Yu, digital transformation author and advisor, CEO and founder of Tigon Advisory, says, "Amidst unprecedented change, it's absolutely vital that business leaders create a safe space for employees to say, "I don't know how to do this"—and to furnish them with learning paths, tools and encouragement to succeed."

Leaders who are committed to continued learning and improvement, promoting and sharing these values with the team, can help ensure their employees are prepared for transformation.

Part of this evaluation may encompass how they describe and approach digital transformation. For many people, the very word 'transformation' doesn't sit comfortably. It suggests massive, paradigm-shifting change. With iterative wins being more palatable, Rachel Ivers, business psychologist and consultant at GiANT London, advises leaders "not to despise small beginnings. Incremental improvements soon add up. Whereas big execution plans, without a clear path forward, can overwhelm certain people and paradoxically lead to inaction".



02.

LACK OF VISION AND A PEOPLE-FIRST STRATEGY

As the study shows, leaders are worried that their teams are not equipped for transformation. Ironically, employees feel the same about leadership. Half of respondents said they worry that their organization doesn't know what it takes to transform their workers.

53%

worry their business will be shut-out of the evolving digital world due to a lack of people with the right authority/vision

It's likely that the problem is not a lack of vision on leadership's part, but a lack of communication of that vision. Leaders can address the issue by taking time to build consensus. According to our research, over half (55%) are participating in advisory boards to consult with people from different parts of the business throughout a technology implementation. That's a good place to build from.

They can also ensure that employees feel a sense of ownership in the strategy, that they are part of not only executing the vision, but also refining and improving it.



"Hands-on collaboration is a crucial part of building that organization-wide consensus. We need to move away from a command-and-control style of leadership. It's not conducive for digital transformation. Collaboration is the watchword of the digital era."

Dr. Sam Mather, organizational psychology and resilience expert and leadership lecturer

Dr. Sam Mather, organizational psychology and resilience expert and leadership lecturer says, "A good leader is self-aware and confident enough to check themselves and cede control or influence. They're comfortable with team members coming up with great ideas, and in that moment, promoting and serving them. Their humility doesn't erode their status, it cements it."

Transparency, open communication and collaboration are all essential components of modern leadership. Leaders who model all three of these practices can make sure employees and management are aligned and primed to make meaningful change.



03. LACK OF AN INNOVATION CULTURE

It's easy to say that one's organization prizes innovation and risk-taking. But it can be difficult to make sure people feel empowered and supported to try, fail and learn from these failures, in order to move the business forward. The divide between theory and practice is substantial:

60% of respondents say their organizational culture is restricting employees' ability to innovate

To compound the challenge, if faced with change they disagree with, over half say they would offer "invisible resistance." This could mean offering minimal input into the discussion, taking a "wait and see" approach. Or it

could mean finding excuses not to participate at all. At the extreme end, it could mean actively (but covertly) stalling and undermining change.

The solution lies in fostering a culture that truly encourages taking risks and challenges conventional wisdom. People can easily distinguish between a genuine mandate to explore and innovate and lip service to the same. "To foster an innovative culture, firstly leaders must drive home the mantra that there is no such thing as a bad idea—each idea could spark something extraordinary," says Rachel Ivers. "At the same time, they should coach people to welcome clarifying and sometimes challenging questions and adapt accordingly. Secondly, leaders should ensure that everyone is heard, not just the loudest or most persistent. The quietest of people could be the authors of the most dynamic ideas (or most creative ideas)."

SECTION 3:

Measuring readiness for transformation: 4 S's

It's clear that the success of a digital transformation initiative hinges on people: Whether they're prepared, informed, and excited for change can make all the difference.

The study's benchmark looks at respondents' attitude towards change and scoring is informed by:

- Their instinctive response to automation (augmenting human capacity with technology)
- Their approach to investigating and deploying emerging technologies in the workplace
- How they oppose change they disagree with
- Their motivation/energy to act on IT transformation

Our study found that people tend to fit into one of four categories:

SPRINT: Trailblazers ready to chase after innovation

10%

STILL: Take a pessimistic view of innovation based on perceived risk

5%

STEADY: Ready to adopt technological change selected by others

43%

SLOW: More inclined to observe than take action

42%



Those in **SPRINT & STEADY** groups are more likely to:

- Be future-looking/trend spotters
- Seek change
- Try to make every day different
- Commit to something and stay the course
- View their job as a core part of their identity
- Feel a strong sense of belonging to the company
- Desire working for a company that uses technology to innovate
- View obstacles as a challenge to overcome
- Perceive the pressure to act urgently
- Say they love to learn new skills
- Experience purpose in their job
- Experience fair, merit-based decision-making and equal opportunities
- Can cope with ambiguity

Those in **SLOW & STILL** groups are more likely to:

- View work as an activity that they clock in and out of
- Lose interest quickly
- Find change stressful
- Gravitate to routine/habit
- Need more time/support/incentives to change habits and learn new skills
- Find it hard to commit/perform when the outcome is uncertain
- Show concern that technology could replace them

SERVING ALL GROUPS

While Sprinters are more likely to innovate and Steady folk are more likely to adopt progress, it's up to leaders to ignite that flame. They should also be more intentional about coming alongside workers in the Slow and Still groups to hear what they have to say. Their questioning and caution may be warranted. There is great merit and wisdom in interrogating an idea and taking the time to learn from past failures. In the modern workforce, everyone is welcome. The key is to ensure they feel that too. Because with sufficient encouragement and autonomy, they can adopt Steady or Sprinter characteristics. In fact, as is typical of most

behavioral based groups, the boundaries are porous and people's life experiences will often shape their propensity for change, to varying degrees over time.

Hence, a one-time snap poll won't suffice. Leaders need to be continually in tune with their workforce, as loyalty and advocacy can change quickly. To remain relevant, transformation strategies must respond in-step. Who they actively listen and consult with also matters. A business will only be able to capture the full picture if it gathers feedback from diverse viewpoints. Anything less would just serve as an echo chamber.



“Diversity is essential. In the workplace we need all groups to feel valued. The key is to create an equitable environment in which everyone's voices are heard. Achieve this and you will find synergy and a robust culture of resilience.”

**Helen Yu, digital transformation author and advisor,
CEO and founder of Tigon Advisory**

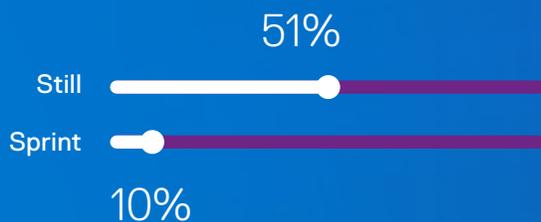


THE IMPORTANCE OF CONFIDENCE IN AN EVER-EVOLVING WORLD

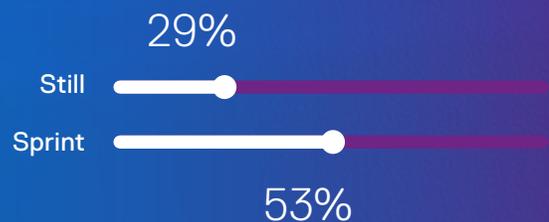
When we look at the behavioral response questions in the survey, we can clearly see that Sprinter and Slow groups have distinctly different confidence levels about emerging opportunities.

RESPONSE TO EVOLVING TECHNOLOGY

“I worry our people won’t be able to keep up with the pace of technological change.”



“In the next 1-2 years, we plan to speed up change to keep pace with technological change.”

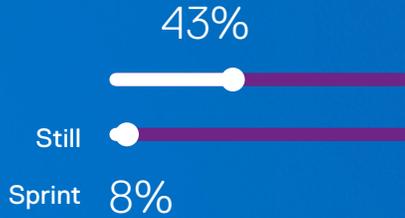


“Employees are often attracted to the promise of change. But when the solution is finally unveiled, there is usually resistance, tacit or otherwise. Always factor in emotional attachments to legacy IT and processes—even the ones people complained about not so long ago.”

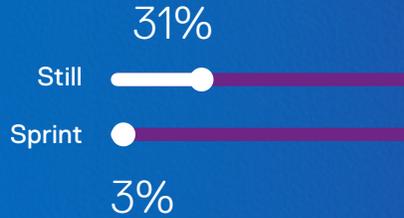
Baskaran Ambalavanan, HR technology expert and Principal at Hila Solutions, LLC

RESPONSE TO THE EVOLVING NATURE OF **WORK**

“I’ll struggle to remain engaged and motivated while working remotely.”



“I worry I might be forgotten about/overlooked.”



“I’ll be more productive by working and collaborating remotely.”

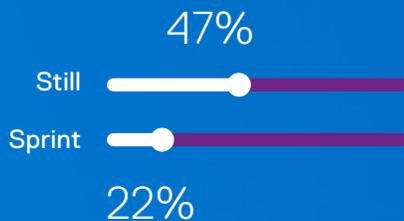


“To respect everyone’s boundaries and reduce the expectation to be “always-on”, think about deploying project management tools that allow for asynchronous communication, with parameters. Empathetic technologies and respect for people’s wellbeing go hand in hand.”

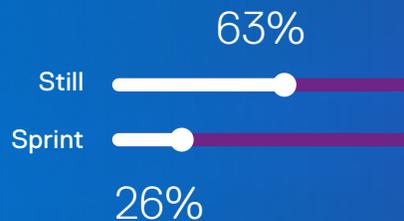
Meghan M Biro, HR tech strategist and founder of TalentCulture

RESPONSE TO THE EVOLVING NATURE OF **DATA**

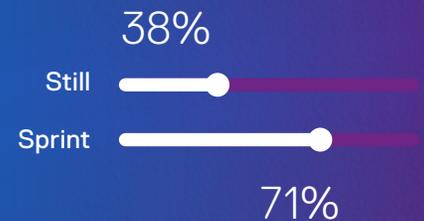
“I worry our people will be overwhelmed by the velocity, volume and variety of data.”



“I worry that the opportunity to become a data-driven business will pass us by.”



“I expect that data insights will make us more entrepreneurial and we’ll be better able to spot new opportunities.”



“The data burden is real and businesses are feeling it. And yet, as one of humanity’s unique characteristics, many are still resorting to manual processes, because it’s what they know, and they haven’t yet embraced the personal change needed with a new system—even if it will make their lives infinitely easier.”

John Reese, global chief technology officer at Dell Technologies

SECTION 4:

Building breakthroughs

The challenge ahead is clear: Leaders need to bring an often-overwhelmed workforce up to speed, empower and motivate them, and drive the change that leads to growth.

Breakthrough transformation happens at the intersection of people and technology. Companies can promote innovation by seeking breakthroughs on three frontiers, which together form a holistic approach:

1. BREAK THROUGH WITH CONNECTIVITY

The do-anything-from-anywhere economy will unleash new creativity and zeal for work. Flexible work has always been an important and often emotive agreement between employees and organizations. But it hasn't always been granted. Over recent years, employees have started demanding to work on their terms, expressed in decisions to enter and exit the workforce or move from employer to employer based on how much flexibility they needed or wanted. The pandemic made working-from-anywhere less discretionary and more commonplace.

Now that we're moving into a different phase of the pandemic, businesses should resist simply reverting to "traditional ways of working".

"That's not a model for progress as there is a lot to be learned from our experiences of working from home/anywhere over the last few years," says Jen Felch, chief digital officer and CIO at Dell Technologies. "Businesses should take advantage of this opportunity to listen to employees' desire for ongoing flexibility and restructure work in ways that offers secure, equitable, productive, connected experiences from anywhere. From an IT perspective, a good takeaway is that we always need to stay current and be ready for anything. For example, to remain secure at all times in a flexible environment, businesses can't regress to delaying tech upgrades for another day."

Part of that includes equipping employees with "as-natural" ways to collaborate virtually, so employees can connect with colleagues and stakeholders near and far. At present, 58% of respondents in the Still



"Technology is allowing us to create connections for employees no matter how, when or where they work. It's not about recreating what used to exist when the majority of employees were in office buildings but working towards the same outcomes in new ways. Spontaneous moments of connection are going to look different,"

**Jenn Saavedra, chief human resource officer
at Dell Technologies**

and Slow groups are finding it difficult to collaborate remotely and/or connect relationally. Some people may need extra coaching here, to use the collaborative tools to their full effect.

Glen Robson, CTO for Dell Technologies' Client Solutions Group, shares this belief in technology's ability to unite people, teams and cultures together for the betterment of the human experience. To that end, he urges firms to seek answers to the following questions: "Amidst all this change, explore: How do people work together? How do they consume media or collaborate using the technology they already have available to them? It's important not to let assumptions or ill-informed IT strategies be the reason why people can't grasp technologies that could hold the promise of a far superior experience. It could cost them the opportunity to participate in new levels of balance and productivity. And once you have those answers, employ the power of innovation across your strategy, technology, business, research and design teams to excel in employee satisfaction, productivity, talent acquisition and retention. These are your differentiators."

At the core of that exploration, organizations should place their workforce's experiences first—by basing their IT strategy on what their teams need to work without interruption or frustration. Currently, 44% of employees want their leaders to empower them to choose their preferred working pattern and provide the necessary tools and/or infrastructure.

“The way people work has shifted and will continue to evolve as teams and individuals find a process and lifestyle that works for them,” says Brooke Huling, vice president, Modern Compute Solutions Group at Dell Technologies. “The foundation of successful hybrid work models will involve personalized, consistent, disruption-free experiences, and will rely on a human-centric IT strategy. People will need easy access to the right tools to get the job done, wherever they are working for the day—whether that’s their kitchen table, the office, or from an undisclosed tropical location.”

42% of employees want their leaders to be better equipped to equitably manage remote teams



40% of employees want their leaders to provide clarity regarding an ongoing commitment to flexible working and the practicalities of making it work



Employees also need to be afforded greater clarity, guidance and support. At present, there is still some uncertainty around how businesses will ensure equality and transparency when “where and when” someone works are somewhat ambiguous.

To realize the full potential of doing-anything-from-anywhere, it’s up to leaders to establish and maintain healthy boundaries and democratize work for different needs, interests and care responsibilities. With 58% of respondents not yet experiencing a better work-life balance, there’s some way to go there. It’s also incumbent on employees to earn employers’ trust to work responsibly and diligently wherever they are.

A lot of businesses are operating in a strange twilight zone. They’ve lifted and shifted office-based work to the home, without tracking the ramifications and changing the operations model accordingly. The overlay doesn’t fit. They’re two different models and they require different governance, management and reward structures.

With that, Yu believes workers are due a complete reappraisal of their roles and responsibilities: “The environment is very different now. By revisiting their roles and mapping their skills we can redefine the workplace. We need to rethink the way we measure work to be people and outcome focused, not logged hours.”

Taken altogether, it’s clear there is more ground to cover, but there is also cause for optimism: 80% of respondents say that the shift to distributed work can create a more inclusive working environment.

HOW MCLAREN BREAKS THROUGH WITH CONNECTIVITY

McLaren Group has a fast-paced working environment and ensures its employees have the equipment they need to collaborate immediately, wherever they are. That includes seamless access to telemetry data or computer-aided dispatch (CAD) systems. Team members might be near or far but they feel like they’re sitting next to the person they’re collaborating with.

Its CIO, Chis Hicks, celebrates the shift to doing-anything-from-anywhere, and believes the company is more iterative and agile now. “There used to be a stigma to working from home. You almost felt you were doing something naughty,” says Hicks. “But now it’s just part of life and for McLaren, it’s opened up a wealth of opportunity around creative freedoms. There are no boundaries anymore. At McLaren, work from anywhere literally means, from anywhere [including my McLaren 600LT].”

BREAKING THROUGH WITH SECURE CONNECTIVITY

“

“Security is everyone’s responsibility. With the rising security threat, businesses need to arm their employees with the right knowledge and an understanding they can help thwart cyber-criminals if they follow the security requirements their organization has put in place. Businesses must also make that behavior the default through the deployment of intrinsically secure technologies and technology processes. Permeating the shared security responsibility message into the culture is paramount. Generally, people need to hear a message several times, in different ways, before it trickles down to behavior.”

John Scimone, senior vice president and chief security officer at Dell Technologies

Providing fast, secure access to the network is one thing when workers are all in the same office building, using company-approved devices. It’s quite another to secure and equip a distributed workforce who are frequently using their own phones and laptops.

When the “Bring Your Device” (BYOD) into work trend kicked-off all those years ago, IT professionals had to grapple with the acute risk of granting unsecured personal devices access to the company network. The work-from-anywhere reality has intensified that threat by orders of magnitude: 72% believe that the changing working world has exposed their organization to even greater risk. Now CIOs have to secure data and applications no matter where it travels and update their security protocols in line with accelerated digital transformation initiatives across the business (including shadow IT accelerations). They also need to factor in human behavior that’s hidden from view. All of which is unsettling, given businesses have known for some time that a company’s greatest source of vulnerability is often their people: 62% regard employees as the weakest link across their cybersecurity defenses.

While businesses address the human factor in cybersecurity, employees need to know the organization has their back—that security is intrinsic to the products they use/are issued to do their jobs. This is not a small ask. Securing the hyper-connected world is one of the most urgent, pressing concerns of our day.

2. BREAK THROUGH WITH PRODUCTIVITY

Part of empowering employees to do their best work is providing them with modern and intelligent technology that increases their productivity. So, rather than being burdened by repetitive tasks, they can be freed to focus on higher-order, more fulfilling work, that in turn generates more value for the business.

The challenge for leadership is to create a culture that embraces these changes, says John Roese, Dell Technologies' global CTO, "While automation will free companies to capitalize on the most innovative available digital technologies, and lift the load on staff—so basically a win-win situation for employers and employees—another piece of research also shows that the main barriers to embracing automation, and by that I also mean progress, are cultural. When I combine market research with the conversations I have on the ground, it's clear that more work is



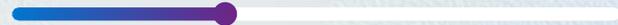
"With the pace of exponential change, people are worried they'll lose their jobs. The message from leadership should be that integrating machines into the workforce actually creates more humane businesses as people can be freed-up to pursue their human interests."

Dr. Mark van Rijmenam, future tech specialist, author and founder of Datafloq

needed to encourage adoption of these new technologies and operating models."

With the right culture and strategy in place, workers can be readied to collaborate with technology and embrace automation:

37% say they are currently experiencing mentally stimulating, non-repetitive work



When faced with the opportunity to automate more, 77% look forward to mitigating human error and 69% look forward to learning new skills and technologies and elevating their role.

However, it's important for leadership to manage this change: 26% of the respondents in the Still and Slow groups are worried they might be replaced by technology. While this is a perception without basis—given that intelligent solutions create more jobs and job retention—the research does show that some people will naturally levitate towards a dystopian viewpoint. They can't be ignored, they're still a quarter of the workforce. Rather, they need to be engaged with and reassured.



HOW FOUNDERS FEDERAL CREDIT UNION BREAKS THROUGH WITH PRODUCTIVITY

Founders Federal Credit Union wanted to respond rapidly to the evolving needs of its members at over 30 locations and counting. Its first move was to off-load the burden of back-office administration and support to intelligent automation. With this newfound agility, it freed-up IT staff to provide more value-added strategic and operational contributions to its member base.

Founders also embarked upon a journey to democratize data science for employees and other average end-users, irrespective of their technical skills. At the same time, leaders were armed with the insights they needed to evaluate whether employees were being incentivized to do the right things.

No longer distracted by managing the enterprise architecture, Founders was able to support its IT Pros' development, giving them free rein to innovate with confidence. Now, customers are receiving superior service and employees' job satisfaction and morale have never been higher.

3. BREAK THROUGH WITH EMPATHY

While the majority of leaders see employees as their greatest business asset, individuals don't always feel trusted and valued. A culture of empathy—the ability to share and understand others' emotions—should inform everything, particularly change management programs, to drive excitement and purpose for those affected.

Glen Robson sees empathy as the engine that drives innovation. “Focus on our human experiences,” he says. “Be in tune with how people interact with the world around them. Technology is a conduit into that world, so it needs to be bestowed thoughtfully, carefully. They'll pull back if they can't see themselves in the processes and technologies that are forcing them to work in a certain way. And this will disturb the delicate balancing act that is teamwork.”

Our study shows that when it comes to empathetic leadership, there is a lot of ground to make up.

83% of respondents said their leaders overlook divergent perspectives and viewpoints

Even more concerning: Over a third say their leaders treat staff as dispensable. It's fair to say, most leaders wouldn't intend to leave this impression. Few would proudly say they ignore divergent opinions or treat staff as replaceable cogs in a machine. In most cases, these assessments would fly in the face of company values.

The issue, then, is not intent but execution. Leaders need to show how much they value employees collectively and as individuals. For example, 59% of workers say their leadership does not tailor change to match individual skills and aptitude to handle change. A one-size-fits-all approach to implementing transformation means many individuals will be left behind. An empathetic approach would seek to understand employees' needs and meet them with a more personalized and adaptive strategy.

In doing so, they would vet programs for usability. Many programs are still not designed for the end-user, with nearly half of workers overwhelmed by complex technologies. Leaders can show empathy by soliciting worker feedback, being sensitive to the challenges they're facing, adapting, and providing training and support. That way, leadership can design programs that are inclusive to how individuals best learn and work.

Essentially, says Ambalavanan, “People need to be heard and know they're being heard. One way of doing this is to build committees across all levels and business units.” And, of course, it's not enough to just solicit these opinions—all of this feedback should then be evaluated and incorporated into planning the company's future.



HOW DELL TECHNOLOGIES BREAKS THROUGH WITH EMPATHY

Dell's [Experience Innovation Group](#) has a vision to drive human progress with technology. To fulfill this vision, it applies empathy to human challenges and a responsive technology strategy that overcomes these challenges, to create the best possible experiences for end users and liberate them to do what they do best. So, rather than spending a small amount of their time doing what they want to do (and what they embarked upon their career hoping to do), they can be happily productive nearly all of the time, with technology as an enabler and a multiplier, not a constraint or frustration.

The principle applies to all professions. The end user could be a data scientist that just wants to dig into data, software engineers that just want to code, teachers that just want to teach, doctors that just want to help their patients get better. Via carefully curated tools, people can discover their unique value.

Dell Technologies has also rethought its people, processes and technology with the [Dell Digital Way](#) and can attest to the power of putting empathy at the heart of digital transformation. The average software developer across the industry spends only a small part of their day writing code (less than 20%) and a lot of time working on administrative tasks. Three years into our journey of creating a world-class developer experience, our developers in Dell Digital, Dell's IT organization, are now spending between 70% to 75% of their time writing functional code and using their innovative talents to introduce new solutions and add value to our company.



SECTION 5:

Conclusion

Many businesses have achieved astonishing transformation over the last few years. John Roeser reflects that, “during the pandemic IT teams stepped in as the great unifiers, connectors and engines of progress. But the pace of change was dizzying at times—for those in the driver’s seat, and their passengers.”

Amidst the imperative to adapt and innovate at pace, there was limited space for the human aspect of digital transformation—which is understandable given digital transformation is not easy, particularly under pressure. Matt Baker describes digital transformation “like being pulled through the knothole—there will be scars. Now is the time to start the healing process and turn a human capital deficit into a credit.”

This extensive and seminal piece of research underscores the importance of preparing people for change, while shedding light on the complexity of driving through transformation. By understanding human behaviors and learning preferences, and taking appropriate action, businesses can turn employees from a source of friction into a source of fuel—essentially partners in driving change.

As a starting point, businesses would do well to remember that people are, and will remain, their greatest source of creativity. With a thoughtful human-machine partnership, they can ignite their workforce and release the innovator in each of them.

To learn more, visit: www.dell.com/breakthrough.

About the study methodology

The research was commissioned by Dell Technologies and undertaken by Vanson Bourne; an independent research company based in the UK. Ten-thousand five hundred senior business and IT business leaders as well as knowledge workers, from small to large enterprises and across 14 industries, were interviewed across 40 locations. The study surveyed a random representative sample of companies. Fieldwork was conducted in August through October 2021.

LOCATIONS SURVEYED

North America

Canada, US

Latin America

Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, NOLA (Panama, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Puerto Rico, El Salvador)

Europe, Middle East & Africa

Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Spain, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom

APJ

Australia, Japan, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, S. Korea, Thailand, Vietnam

Greater China

China Mainland, Hong Kong, Taiwan

INDUSTRIES SURVEYED

Automotive

Government

Education

Financial services

Insurance

IT & Technology

Life Sciences

Manufacturing

Media & Entertainment

Oil & Gas (Energy)

Private Healthcare

Public Healthcare

Retail & consumer products

Telco

The research explores people's outlook/approach to change, as well as specific learning and development needs. Independent experts helped design the survey and then ran correlation analysis to ascertain which outlooks/approaches impact their enthusiasm for change/likely sense of agency in a hyper-digital world. We'd like to thank:

Prof. Sally Eaves author and global strategic advisor in emergent technologies and founder of Aspirational Futures

Rachel Ivers business psychologist and consultant at GiANT London

Dr. Sam Mather organizational psychology and resilience expert and leadership lecturer at Henley Business School

Dr. Jessica Rimmer leadership and

culture expert and partner at GiANT Worldwide

Dr. Shannon Rogers epidemiologist and behavioral scientist at Dell Technologies

Dr. Rachel Watson-Jones cognitive scientist and user experience researcher, formally distinguished technical staff member at Dell Technologies

The study results were then peer reviewed by the previously mentioned experts as well as a set of additional experts across workplace, technology and business:

Baskaran Ambalavanan HR technology expert and Principal at Hila Solutions, LLC

Meghan M. Biro HR tech strategist and founder of TalentCulture

Dr. Mark van Rijmenam future tech strategist, author and founder of Dataffoq.com

Helen Yu digital transformation author and advisor, CEO and Founder of Tigon Advisory

ABOUT DELL TECHNOLOGIES

Dell Technologies helps organizations and individuals build their digital future and transform how they work, live and play. The company provides customers with the industry's broadest and most innovative technology and services portfolio for the data era. www.delltechnologies.com

ABOUT VANSON BOURNE

Vanson Bourne is an independent specialist in market research for the technology sector. Their reputation for robust and credible research-based analysis is founded upon rigorous research principles and their ability to seek the opinions of senior decision makers across technical and business functions, in all business sectors and all major markets. www.vansonbourne.com