

# DIGITAL WORKPLACE TRENDS 2021

Creating a digital employee  
experience for the hybrid  
workforce.





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## INTRODUCTION

Employee experience has always been important, but it has never been as critical as it is today.

For many of us, 2020 has been very challenging, and 2021 looks set to be just as difficult. To get through this, we need continuing resilience, efficiency, community, clarity, continuity, inventiveness, intelligence and empathy. We need strong leadership that listens. We need effective tools that allow people to carry out their individual roles and remove associated barriers. We need people to be able to connect to their colleagues effortlessly. We need to continually focus on the health and wellbeing of the workforce. We need to celebrate and amplify positive organizational culture.

A strong employee experience delivers all of the above, because it starts with the employee at the center, and then prioritizes those elements of the workplace that really matter. By applying this focus in a coordinated way, organizations ultimately reap the benefits with better productivity, stronger talent retention, fantastic customer service and happier employees. And here, the digital workplace can play a very significant role.

In our digital workplace trends report from last year, I wrote that 2020 was “going to be a pivotal and exciting year for the digital workplace and the teams behind them.” Collectively, digital workplace maturity has advanced more in the last six months than it has in six years. Digital workplace and intranet teams have made an essential contribution to employee experience during 2020 and will continue to do so in 2021.

In this year's report, we detail the 2021 trends across the digital workplace and digital employee experience that provide opportunities for practitioners to make a difference. Drawing inspiration from LiveTiles customers, we cover three main themes – the Connected Workplace, Improving Productivity and the Human-Centered Workplace.

You can use the report to aid your planning for 2021, to open conversations with stakeholders or just to kickstart your own thinking. At the back of the report, we've included a summary of questions for 2021 to help with all of the above.

Eventually, better times will be on the horizon. Digital workplaces and strong employee experiences will help us get through the difficult months and set us up for success when post-pandemic life resumes.

**Karl Redenbach**  
CEO LiveTiles  
November 2020

## 2021 DIGITAL WORKPLACE TRENDS

Main theme	Trends	
The connected organization: Connecting the entire workforce for the smooth and efficient flow of knowledge, information and data, enhancing enterprise-level processes and culture.	<b>1</b>	<b>Focusing on the frontline</b> Extending access to the digital workplace to firstline and deskless employees, principally through personal devices.
	<b>2</b>	<b>Ramping up collaboration</b> Taking collaboration to the next level, making better use of the tools already launched and introducing advanced capabilities.
	<b>3</b>	<b>The hybrid workplace</b> Continuing to support remote and homeworking, while optimizing physical workplaces to navigate new challenges.
The human-centered workplace: A shift to a more people-centric and empathetic culture, with employees at the heart of every decision made.	<b>4</b>	<b>Wellbeing gets an upgrade</b> Prioritizing employees' health and wellbeing, reflected in tools and content across the digital workplace.
	<b>5</b>	<b>Moments matter even more</b> Focusing on the moments that matter in the employee lifecycle, such as onboarding and learning, ramping up digital experiences.
	<b>6</b>	<b>Communications reimaged</b> Reimagining and evolving internal and leadership communications, with greater emphasis on personalization and targeting, informality and dialogue.
Enabling productivity: Using technology and tools to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of an increasingly dispersed workforce during a very fragile business climate.	<b>7</b>	<b>The effortless digital workplace</b> Moving towards a single coherent digital workplace experience targeted to the needs of each employee which is available everywhere across different applications.
	<b>8</b>	<b>Rise of the intelligent workplace</b> Leveraging AI to power the intelligent workplace in increasingly visible ways, driving efficiency across everyday use cases.
	<b>9</b>	<b>The new analytics</b> Developing new practices around analytics to help teams drive productivity, particularly in the new reality of scaled-up remote work.

## WHY EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE MATTERS

Employee experience and the related digital employee experience are essential, with a range of organizational-level benefits.

### What is employee experience?

While there is no standard definition of employee experience, most observers agree that it represents a more holistic, strategic and joined-up view of the workplace that focuses on the everyday experience of work from an employee's point of view. Similar to definitions of customer experience, it covers all the touchpoints between employer and employee.

McKinsey's definition emphasizes what good employee experience looks like, and its relative benefits, describing it as "companies and their people working together to create personalized, authentic experiences that ignite passion and tap into purpose to strengthen individual, team, and company performance".<sup>1</sup>

Leading HR expert Josh Bersin also reminds us that "employee experience is a journey, not a solution", emphasizing the broad nature of the term, as well as the reality that a holistic, long-term approach is required. There is no single quick fix or magic ingredient for employee experience.<sup>2</sup>

### Seven key elements of employee experience

With employee experiences potential to be wide in scope, it is helpful to look at some of the elements that impact and influence how employees experience work.

Seven key elements, all of which are strongly interconnected, are:

1. The physical workplace and related environment
2. The digital workplace and related digital employee experience
3. The leadership of the organization
4. The organizational culture, reflected in the way employees behave
5. The purpose, policies and actions of an organization: what it says and does
6. The immediate team around a person, including the relationship with a manager
7. The individual's role and what they do on a day-to-day basis

In this report, we focus on the role of the digital workplace, but we also touch upon the influence it has on some of the other elements of employee experience.

#### Reference:

1. [www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/the-organization-blog/employee-experience-essential-to-compete](https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/the-organization-blog/employee-experience-essential-to-compete)
2. Reference: [www.joshbersin.com/2020/01/create-a-meaningful-employee-experience-workdays-global-impact-employee-life-team/](https://www.joshbersin.com/2020/01/create-a-meaningful-employee-experience-workdays-global-impact-employee-life-team/)



## Why does employee experience matter?

Employee experience has a major impact on the performance of organizations and the way they operate.

### 1. Employees want more from work

There has been a shift in what employees expect from work - a good salary is simply not enough. Much has been written about the influence of millennials and Gen Z, and how they have helped to raise expectations about what we all want from work. Employees want to feel they are making a difference beyond driving shareholder value, but also want opportunities for contributing to meaningful outcomes, personal growth, flexible working and more. In terms of digital employee experience, our powerful experience of apps in the consumer world means there are heightened expectations about workplace technology too.

### 2. Talent attraction and retention

The shift in employee expectations of what they want to achieve through work means companies are working harder to deliver experiences that will attract and retain the best talent. Having the best people gives companies advantages over competitors, raises the bar in terms of services and innovation, and more besides. Recognizing the contribution of digital employee experience to talent attraction and retention, forward-thinking HR teams are focusing on the 'moments that matter' in the employee life cycle, particularly during the recruitment and onboarding experience.

### 3. Better customer experience

Organizations with a strong employee experience also tend to have a better customer experience, directly impacting the bottom line. The link between better employee and customer experience is down to a range of factors, including a more motivated workforce, the ability to respond more quickly to customer needs, the advantages of being able to access the right information to service customers, and heightened opportunities to drive innovation.

### 4. Increased efficiency and productivity

A strong employee experience can result in increased efficiency and productivity in various ways, including helping employees get things done more quickly, supporting employee engagement and even reducing the number of sick days. Here, intranets and the digital workplace play a significant role by ensuring employees find what they need to effortlessly complete tasks and transactions, making the experience of each working day that bit smoother.

### 5. Business continuity and crisis management

Those organizations with strong foundations to support a good employee experience have had a head start in providing business continuity for operations and supporting staff wellbeing during the COVID-19 crisis. Here, the importance of the digital workplace in scaling up remote working is obvious, but intranets and collaboration platforms have also provided a way to drive community and connection, preserving company culture during an unprecedented period of change.

### 6. The competitive edge

Employee experience is one of the areas where companies can take action and make a real difference. Not enough organizations are focusing on it - there is an exciting opportunity to differentiate your company here.

## DIGITAL EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE: 2020 IN REVIEW

2020 will be synonymous with the COVID-19 pandemic for decades to come; it has impacted every aspect of our lives, including the way we work.

### Rapid maturity in the digital workplace

2020 has been the year that the digital workplace has stepped up to the plate and proved its worth beyond doubt. Without the rapid scaling-up of communication and collaboration tools such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom to support mass remote working, and the continued operation of the humble intranet to provide trusted and up-to-date information, many organizations and their employees would simply not have been able to establish the necessary business continuity to navigate the crisis.

Of course, the speed with which the change to remote and home working was forced upon many organizations was very challenging, but in hindsight, perhaps not as difficult as expected. A typical story we have found among LiveTiles customers is that despite a few bumps in the road, the roll-out has been relatively smooth, and easier than might have been anticipated.

In this way, the crisis has proved to be a catalyst for the connected organization. By a connected organization, we mean one with a smooth flow of information and data in multiple directions, resulting in a reduction in silos, facilitated by a far more networked workforce with access to the right tools.

Many organizations find themselves far more “connected” at the end of 2020 than they were at the beginning of the year. Collectively, we have a new baseline in terms of digital workplace maturity with numerous possibilities going forward. Here, it is important to note that this advance is not necessarily a new trend, but the speed and scale at which it has developed is truly unprecedented.

We see organizations becoming more connected in three different ways. Firstly, the scaling up and standardization of digital workplace tools across enterprises means it is simply far easier for employees to communicate and collaborate with co-workers, wherever they are located.

Secondly, more employees are able to access digital tools and services than ever before. During 2020, some frontline, disconnected or deskless employees have been able to access channels for the first time, principally through dedicated apps available on personal mobile devices.

Thirdly, there has been a corresponding shift in mindset in recognizing the value of being connected. Many stakeholders and users who previously weren't necessarily advocates of either digital workplace tools or the value of dialogue have experienced their value first-hand. They are now more likely to use tools such as Teams or access the intranet and encourage those around them to do so too.

## Enabling employees to be more productive

One of the enduring challenges for organizations and digital workplace teams is how to drive efficiency and improve productivity for employees; there is an expectation that the digital workplace and major tools within it, like the intranet, will produce time-savings and support more effective processes.

The events of 2020 have meant that the focus of discussions about enabling productivity have shifted towards the impact of remote working. Anecdotally, some people have found themselves more productive working from home, and others have said they find themselves less productive; here, a variety of different factors and individual situations can affect our ability to work.

During 2020, our new circumstances have raised a lot of different questions about the best way to drive productivity. Do we now spend too much time in online meetings? How can we use personal, team and organizational analytics to help us become more productive? Are we using collaborative tools in the right way? How do we best design digital employee experiences to support effective work? What is the role of artificial intelligence? What about frontline workers who do not have the opportunity to work remotely? 2021 may start to provide some of the answers to these questions.

## The shift to a more empathetic organizational culture

It can be difficult to find positives in any review of 2020, but adversity can bring out the very best in people. There have been many inspiring examples of individuals helping others during the COVID-19 pandemic, and within organizations, employees, managers and leaders have shown great empathy and support for others.

At the organizational level, we've observed a shift in culture towards a more human-centered workplace, reflected in the messaging from leaders, the policies implemented to support employees and the interactions within teams and across networks which emphasize:

- A greater sense of community
- The power of listening
- A more empathetic mindset
- A focus on helping customers and fellow employees
- More visibility on wellbeing
- Taking responsibility and making things happen.

Much has been written about how aspects of the pandemic and the associated working-from-home have helped to create a more level-playing field. When employees see the CEO's pet dog "ruining" a live video town hall broadcast from his front room, they can see the person behind the job description - during the pandemic, people have got to know their co-workers a bit better.

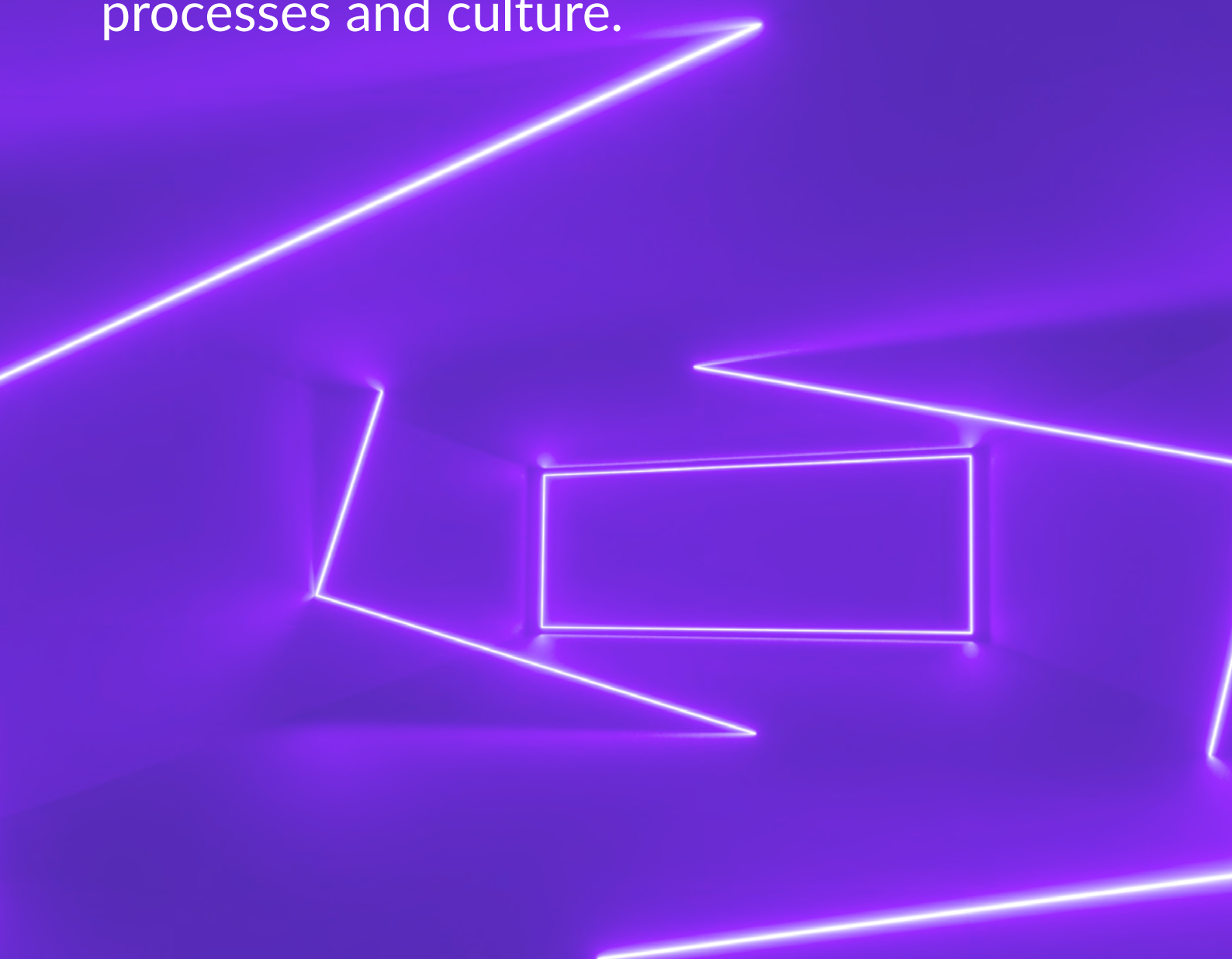
We'd also like to think that the move towards a more empathetic way of working is shining a light on the fact that most workplaces are actually kinder environments than perhaps we all realized; when people are vulnerable and in trouble, actually, we tend to pull together and support one another. That reminder is perhaps a positive from 2020 that we can draw upon going forward.



# THE CONNECTED WORKPLACE



Connecting the entire workforce for the smooth and efficient flow of knowledge, information and data, enhancing enterprise-level processes and culture.





# ONE

## FOCUSING ON THE FRONTLINE

Extending access to the digital workplace to firstline and deskless employees, principally through personal devices.

During 2020, many firstline and customer-facing staff who previously had limited access to digital communications and services were connected for the first time, receiving critical updates about the pandemic and supporting business continuity.

Because many have no corporate digital identity and very limited access to a computer during the day, access has primarily been achieved through employee-owned mobile devices.

In 2021, we see this focus on the frontline continuing in two principal ways. Firstly, frontline employees will continue to access the digital workplace via dedicated apps, helping them to navigate the continuing challenges of the pandemic.

Secondly, organizations which have already rolled out these tools will build upon and extend their value, driving both efficiency and engagement across the frontline. This can happen in different ways, including:

- Extending communications and conversations with frontline employees to support a positive, more grassroots and organic organizational culture
- Running mass online events targeted at frontline employees

- Running pulse checks and surveys to gain insight into issues that need to be dealt with
- Inviting insights and ideas from customer-facing employees on how to improve customer service
- Extending access to relevant digital services, such as roster timetables, and digitizing remaining manual processes
- Increasing access to learning resources and enabling knowledge-sharing processes.

#### Questions for 2021:

1. Do all your frontline and customer-facing staff have access to the digital workplace? Are there any gaps to fill?
2. Are there ways to extend the relevance and value of the digital communications and services that frontline employees currently access?
3. How can you leverage conversations with frontline staff and utilize their insights to generate authentic storytelling, value and engagement?

“ The challenges created during COVID-19 have given us a great opportunity to further focus on our digital transformation both internally and externally. From a colleague perspective, we have enhanced our digital experience to ensure colleagues feel included, engaged and motivated regardless of whether they are working remotely or at our dealerships. Now more than ever we need to connect our colleagues, keep them up to date with the latest news and promote our inclusive culture across the board.”

**Amanda Mogan-Wilson**

*Head of Communications and Engagement*

Jardine Motors Group, the UK's largest premium luxury motor retailer

Overall **70%**  
of employees do not sit at  
a desk every day\*

Companies that are  
**HIGHLY  
CONNECTED**  
are twice as likely to have a favorable  
market position compared to those  
who are not\*\*

#### Source:

\* Deloitte, [www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/focus/technology-and-the-future-of-work/untethered-workforce-mobile-workers.html](https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/focus/technology-and-the-future-of-work/untethered-workforce-mobile-workers.html)

\*\*Source: Harvard Business Review Analytic Services, The Connected Workforce Pulse Survey, 2018





# TWO

## RAMPING UP COLLABORATION

Taking collaboration to the next level, making better use of the tools already launched and introducing advanced capabilities.

A traditional conundrum for intranet and digital workplace teams has always been how to achieve adoption of digital workplace tools at scale, and then drive new ways of working. With the pandemic hugely scaling-up usage of Microsoft Teams, the “adoption” riddle appears to have been answered. Digital workplace teams are now turning their attention to generating more value from the platforms they have rolled out.

The sheer pace at which tools have been rolled out in 2020 has led to some issues. Due to the “need for speed”, some governance measures may have been bypassed, for example, processes around site provisioning to avoid the duplication of collaboration sites, or standardizing approaches such as site naming conventions that support findability.

Expediency has also meant that there hasn't always been detailed and targeted support around the specific needs of different groups of users, such as providing specific guidance on how to select the best collaboration sites for very specific use cases.

In 2021, we expect teams will spend more time on optimizing collaboration platforms and driving better use through:

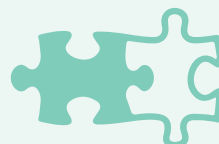
- Creating governance processes around collaboration tools to avoid duplicated sites, minimize risks, increase findability and ensure the best tool is used for the appropriate use case
- Creating central collaboration hubs with a directory of sites to help employees find and join groups they need, with easy access to how-to resources
- More advanced training on how to get the best out of tools, inspiring more asynchronous collaboration
- Encouraging more external collaboration
- Rolling out new collaboration tools or capabilities, such as accessing Planner in Microsoft Teams, or using whiteboarding software.

### Questions for 2021:

1. Did you cut corners with your collaboration governance? Are there processes you can now introduce to help standardize and optimize the use and findability of collaboration tools?
2. What resources and training do you provide for employees? Are there any gaps to fill to encourage better use of collaboration tools and spaces?
3. Are there any capabilities and features in your collaboration toolset that are not being used, but could be valuable?

**By October 2020  
Microsoft Teams has reached**

**115MILLION**  
daily active users\*



**According to analysis of LinkedIn data**

**COLLABORATION**  
is the third most in-demand soft skill sought  
by companies\*\*

#### Source:

\* Microsoft, [www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365/blog/2020/10/28/microsoft-teams-reaches-115-million-dau-plus-a-new-daily-collaboration-minutes-metric-for-microsoft-365/](https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365/blog/2020/10/28/microsoft-teams-reaches-115-million-dau-plus-a-new-daily-collaboration-minutes-metric-for-microsoft-365/)

\*\* LinkedIn Workplace Learning Report 2020)



# THREE

## THE HYBRID WORKPLACE

Continuing to support remote and homeworking, while optimizing physical workplaces to navigate new challenges.



Lockdown conditions have dramatically scaled up the degree of homeworking and remote working undertaken during the pandemic. While this pattern may continue for the foreseeable future until it is safe to return to offices and other premises, many observers do not see us returning to pre-COVID arrangements. Instead, they believe that the proportion of employees homeworking and remote working will remain high, and in the future, we will see much more of a “hybrid workplace”, with people working both from home and at an office or premises, often switching between them from day to day.

Of course, these working patterns are already happening, but 2021 and beyond will likely see the scaling-up of this more flexible approach to work location.

In 2021, we expect digital workplace teams to support hybrid patterns of work where employees can work in more than one location. We see this happening in different ways:

1. Providing tools that help employees track when their colleagues are in the office so they can plan meetings
2. Working closely with colleagues in the real estate function to ensure physical workplaces are optimized for increased virtual meetings with colleagues not in the office, as well as ensuring any social distancing measures required are maintained
3. Providing necessary support and guidance to employees in navigating the challenges of hybrid working patterns
4. Providing any necessary tools and information required to book or gain approval to book desks and spaces inside the office.

#### Questions for 2021:

1. Are you working closely with your real estate function to ensure your physical and digital workplaces are aligned and optimized to support both safe and hybrid working patterns?
2. What tools and information can you provide to employees to support and plan hybrid working?

“The Convenient. Enjoyable. Meaningful. These are the principles needed to guide all employees in a hybrid workplace design. The events of this year have highlighted the need for inclusive and accessible design principles. This new way of working means whether you’re on the road, in the office or at home the level of experience needs to be consistent for all those collaborating.”

#### Tariq Moanah

Digital Product Lead responsible for Digital Workplace Experience  
Legal & General

**55%** of organizations believe there will be a substantial increase in remote working going forward\*

In the long term **64%** of workers want to spend some time in a physical workplace rather than working entirely remotely

#### Source:

\* SMG State of the Digital Workplace Survey 2020

\*\* Salesforce Global Workforce Survey, [www.zdnet.com/article/future-of-work-hybrid-home-and-workplace/](https://www.zdnet.com/article/future-of-work-hybrid-home-and-workplace/)

# THE HUMAN-CENTRED WORKPLACE

The background of the slide features abstract, glowing white geometric shapes on a dark blue gradient. In the upper right, there is a simple L-shaped line. Below it, a series of interconnected, irregular polygons create a sense of depth and perspective, resembling a stylized architectural structure or a series of nested frames. These shapes are composed of thin, bright white lines that stand out against the dark blue background.

A shift to a more people-centric and empathetic culture, with employees at the heart of every decision made.



# FOUR

## WELLBEING GETS AN UPGRADE

Prioritizing employees' health and wellbeing, reflected in tools and content across the digital workplace.



Employee health and wellbeing has been a priority for HR functions for a while, and formal wellbeing programs are a prominent feature of corporate life. However, health and wellbeing has come into even sharper focus during 2020 due to the stress of the pandemic, uncertainty around job security, isolation felt from working remotely, and other pressures associated with working from home.

A good digital employee experience supports employee health and wellbeing. During 2020, we've seen this manifest in multiple ways:

- Providing opportunities for employees to connect with each other, reducing loneliness and facilitating support
- Encouraging the use of community spaces for non-work purposes for those with common interests, and yes, even for sharing cat videos
- Providing informative content and discussion groups that promote health and wellbeing
- Running participative events and initiatives that promote exercise, mindfulness and other positive practices
- Promoting outlets that support wellbeing, such as counselling services and advice helplines
- Providing a coordinated digital workplace experience to reduce information overload and technostress
- Running regular polls, surveys and wellbeing check-ins to collate data on employee health and guide any necessary actions.

In 2021, we don't necessarily see health and wellbeing measures changing that much from 2020. We believe digital platforms have a positive role to play in reducing stress and supporting employees through uncertain times, and this will continue to be a priority in the coming year.

#### Questions for 2021:

1. Does your digital workplace provide a sense of connection and community for employees?
2. Do you have dedicated content and spaces that directly support employee health and wellbeing?
3. How could you use polls, surveys and apps to collect data about the state of employee wellbeing which can then be acted upon?
4. Are there initiatives that could leverage the digital workplace to promote wellbeing and / or reduce technostress?

Employees satisfied with social connectivity during remote working during the pandemic are

# TWO TO THREE TIMES

more likely to report unchanged or improved productivity on collaborative tasks\*

Harvard research suggest that every dollar spent on wellness programs generates savings of

# \$2.73

due to reduced absenteeism among employees\*\*

#### Source:

\* BCG survey, <https://www.bcg.com/en-ca/publications/2020/valuable-productivity-gains-covid-19>

\*\* Health Affairs, 2010, <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/pdf/10.1377/hlthaff.2009.0626>



# **FIVE MOMENTS MATTER EVEN MORE**

Focusing on the moments that matter in the employee life cycle, such as onboarding and learning, and ramping up digital experiences.

**CUSTOMER STORY:****Raising the bar on employee experience for new recruits at BDO Australia**

Thousands of young accounting graduates contact BDO every year to learn about the company's recruitment programs, and with the flood of applications and queries the human resourcing team becomes uncomfortably stretched. By mapping out the wide range of student queries, LiveTiles built a powerful Bot from the LiveTiles Bot Assistants, that handles questions from people all over the world, at any time of day or night, and offers the company profound insight into its recruitment process. BDO now has a clever and friendly Bot – called Buddy – built from LiveTiles Bots.

Available 24/7, BDO's Buddy the Bot, built with LiveTiles Bots, fields queries and frees up the human resources team to untangle more complex problems, relieving them from an eye-watering backlog. Buddy has produced a 36% reduction in information request administrative overheads, a 28% drop in online enquiry submissions, and a 22% increase in customer satisfaction with the recruitment process.

"Our LiveTiles chatbot has not only given our teams back their time, it's allowed us to understand what customers need to know and is a friendly first point of contact for BDO."

**Peter O'Sullivan**

*Head of People and Culture*  
BDO Australia

Learn more about the BDO Australia story here.  
[www.livetilesglobal.com/customer-stories/global-tax-accounting-firm/](http://www.livetilesglobal.com/customer-stories/global-tax-accounting-firm/)

**Source:**

\* Work Institute, 2017 Retention Report)

\*\* Clear Company, [www.blog.clearcompany.com/criinge-worthy-stats-to-crush-your-onboarding-disbelief](http://www.blog.clearcompany.com/criinge-worthy-stats-to-crush-your-onboarding-disbelief)

It costs **33%**  
of an employee's salary to  
replace that person if they  
leave a company\*

Formal employee onboarding  
programs can increase  
employee retention by

**25%\*\***

A critical part of employee experience is how organizations support the "moments that matter" across the employee life cycle, such as employee onboarding or promotions, as well as pivotal life events like starting a family. Some of these moments are ongoing, including opportunities for personal development and learning.

Investment in strong digital employee experiences has been a direction of travel for HR teams for a while, but in 2020, the "digital" side has become even more important. With opportunities to interact face-to-face either diminished or impossible, the ability to provide a good digital onboarding experience or online learning has become even more of a priority. During the year, many organizations have had to quickly transition HR processes to being delivered entirely online or bring forward existing digital employee experience plans.

In 2021, we expect HR and digital workplace teams to either build upon advances made in 2020 or introduce more well-thought-out onboarding and learning experiences. Here, central intranet and digital workplace teams can play a significant role in working with HR colleagues to improve the digital employee experience for moments that matter. The kind of measures that make a difference include:

- Providing access to areas of the digital workplace for new hires before their start day to complete pre-joining processes and interact with colleagues
- Using personalization to target experiences to new starters, with resources to help them get settled and feel welcome
- Creating a community site for new starters to interact with each other or ask questions
- Using a dedicated chatbot to answer common HR questions, especially for new starters
- Creating a user-centered hub on the intranet to guide employees towards self-service resources relating to HR topics
- Creating an internal talent hub within the intranet or digital workplace to encourage employees to seek out and apply for new positions across the organization
- Integrating learning into the heart of the digital workplace to help employees identify development opportunities and access courses and on-demand learning.

**Questions for 2021:**

1. What are the "moments that matter" for your employees? Are you working with your HR function to optimize the digital employee experience across each use case in the light of more remote working?
2. How can you use the digital workplace to improve and streamline the employee onboarding experience, both before the first working day and for the months that follow?
3. Are there improvements to be made to support employee self-service relating to HR processes?
4. How can you bring learning into the core of the digital workplace, helping employees to manage their own learning and development?
5. Can you target relevant digital experiences to different groups, such as frontline employees who may be accessing digital channels via their smartphone?





# SIX

## COMMUNICATIONS REIMAGINED

Reimagining and evolving internal and leadership communications, with greater emphasis on targeting, informality and dialogue.

Internal communications and the way leaders communicate with employees have evolved significantly in 2020. For some organizations, this was something quite new and internal communications is now seen as a critical strategic priority which needs the tools and tech normally associated with external comms.

Leaders are no longer delivering formal and obviously rehearsed corporate messages at carefully orchestrated town hall meetings; instead, they were sharing informal, authentic, off-the-cuff and far more powerful messages, often by video from their kitchen or dining room. Sometimes, they were also engaging in dialogue with employees in comment threads, discussion groups and online ask-me-anything sessions.

This has created a sense of connection between employees and leaders which didn't necessarily exist before; authentic messages resonate stronger, and dialogue helps change perceptions. For some frontline employees connected to the digital workplace for the first time, it was a new experience to actually see or hear their CEO; it might have been the first time they felt they had met the real person behind the CEO label. This is important because perceptions of leadership are a component of employee experience.

This more authentic messaging is powerful for employees but can be even more so for leaders. Having more direct conversations with employees and getting feedback can be extremely valuable, and some CEOs have found expressing media coverage themselves in a different way to be genuinely liberating.

In 2021, we expect that this will have some lasting impact on the way internal and leadership communications are delivered. They will likely be more informal, with a potential for greater use of video, involving more opportunities for two-way conversations. The actions of leaders will also influence approaches to communication from other C-suite leaders, senior managers, and even middle managers.

The evolution of digital workplace tools is helping this reimagination of communications. For example, it is increasingly easy to run virtual live events at scale and reach all employees who have access. The cost of running digital events is also considerably more cost-effective than organizing a physical or hybrid digital event.

### Questions for 2021:

1. What worked well and less well during 2020? How does that impact your approach to communications?
2. Do your leaders need help and support to improve the way they communicate?
3. Could you run a live virtual event in 2021 using the digital workplace tools at your disposal?

Only **13%** of employees strongly agree that their leadership communicates effectively\*

In September 2020  
only **36%** of employees in the US considered themselves engaged\*\*

#### Source:

\* Gallup, [www.gallup.com/workplace/297545/crisis-communication-great-leaders-stop-rumors-start.aspx](https://www.gallup.com/workplace/297545/crisis-communication-great-leaders-stop-rumors-start.aspx)

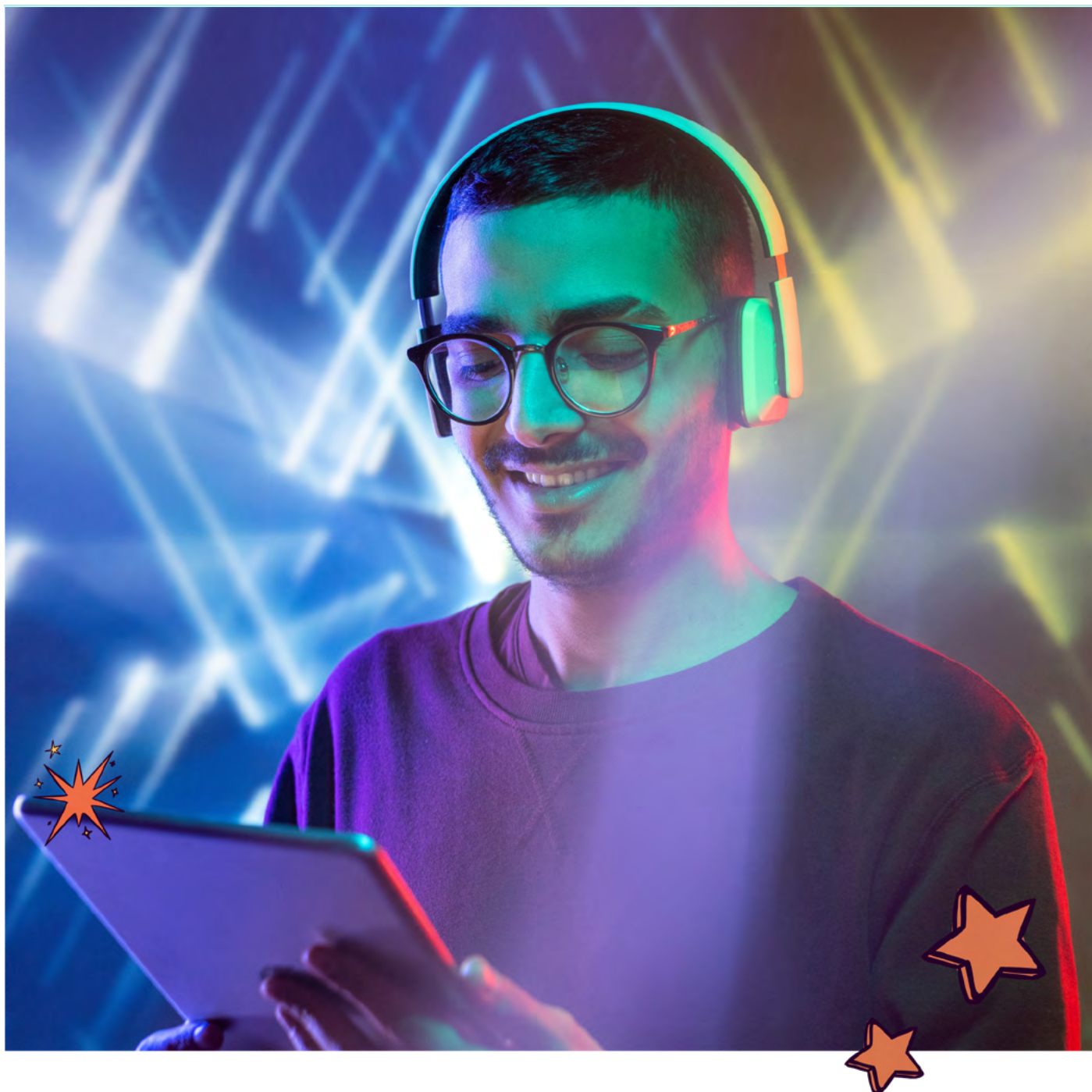
\*\* Gallup, <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/321965/employee-engagement-reverts-back-pre-covid-levels.aspx>

## **ENABLING PRODUCTIVITY**

The background of the slide features abstract, glowing white geometric lines on a purple gradient. These lines form various shapes, including a large L-shape in the upper right, a series of nested trapezoids and rectangles in the lower half, and several sharp, pointed lines extending towards the bottom right corner.

Using technology and tools to boost the efficiency and effectiveness of an increasingly dispersed workforce in a very fragile business climate.





# SEVEN

## THE EFFORTLESS DIGITAL WORKPLACE

Moving towards a single coherent digital workplace experience targeted to the needs of each employee which is available everywhere across different applications.

A common pain point for employees is that there are simply too many systems, applications, websites and channels which they have to access on a day-day-day basis in order to carry out their roles and get things done. Multiple passwords, inconsistent interfaces, siloed systems, broken workflow and confusion over which application to use and when are just some of the challenges that lead to chronic inefficiency, daily frustration and even technostress.

This is not necessarily a new problem for 2020, but with more time spent in the digital workplace leading to a bigger focus on health and wellbeing, it is increasing in importance as a factor in employee experience.

The digital employee experience solution that employees consistently want is a coherent and consistent one where there is no longer fragmentation; they want to be able to enter one integrated experience where they can access the content and applications they need during their working day.

Recently, intranets have evolved as the “front door” to the digital workplace, providing an essential entry point to different applications via links, integrations, central directories of collaboration sites, and advice on how to use different tools. In 2021, we certainly expect intranets to continue performing this role.

However, one issue is that intranets are often where not all everyday work is completed. Many of us are in Microsoft Teams all day, for example, and want to be able to access the wider digital workplace from whatever application we are in.

In 2021, we believe organizations will be seeking opportunities to provide a more effortless digital workplace experience that goes beyond the traditional notion of an intranet, and provides an easy way to navigate to essential systems and view content from wherever they are. A digital workplace experience that is delivered where users are actually working, saves time, reduces information overload and supports better work. By minimizing the amount of contextual changes required to complete tasks it means users don't have to break the flow of concentration and creativity.

We also expect digital workplace teams and IT functions may work to try and reduce the number of different tools in operation, again supporting a better employee experience. In 2020, many organizations tried to standardize the systems in use across their enterprise for collaboration and communication (often Microsoft Teams and a SharePoint intranet), and now there may be opportunities to retire any duplicate tools. Rationalizing applications in use will also help to reduce costs - a plus in the current fragile economy.

#### Questions for 2021:

1. Are there opportunities to provide an “omnipresent” digital workplace experience available from your intranet, Microsoft Teams and other tools like Salesforce?
2. Are there opportunities to rationalize your current portfolio of applications?

“

Rolling out a digital workplace for our global employee base of 180,000 people has allowed us to communicate internally in a more consistent, inclusive and targeted way for the first time. This brings greater value and relevance to the corporate communications received by our employees as they are getting what is really needed and of interest to them. It means that all of our communication channels are now aligned and optimized and we are fully future-proofed to provide a digital workplace that truly engages and supports our employees, evolves to meet their changing needs, while delivering a best-in-class digital employee experience.”

**Philip Martuci**

*Global Head of Enterprise Communications Content and Channels, Novartis*

Over **80%** of employees do not feel that increased technology at work has resulted in improvements to business performance\*

Only **32%** of employees who expect some automation will come to their role believe it will actually lead to an improvement in job quality\*\*

#### Source

\* CIPD Workplace Technology: Employee Experience Report 2020, [www.cipd.co.uk/Images/workplace-technology-1\\_tcm18-80853.pdf](http://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/workplace-technology-1_tcm18-80853.pdf)

\*\*CIPD Workplace Technology: Employee Experience Report 2020, [www.cipd.co.uk/Images/workplace-technology-1\\_tcm18-80853.pdf](http://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/workplace-technology-1_tcm18-80853.pdf)



# **EIGHT**

## **RISE OF THE INTELLIGENT WORKPLACE**

Leveraging AI to power the intelligent workplace in increasingly visible ways, driving efficiency across everyday use cases.



For some, Artificial Intelligence (AI) still sounds slightly futuristic; this can mean that its current impact can be subject to exaggeration, both positively and negatively, leading to either utopian or dystopian predictions about what the future may hold.

While the future impact of AI may well be profound, the present and near-future impact is pretty mundane, but actually far more useful!

In 2020, AI was working quietly behind the scenes, delivering value through various tools and applications, but in ways that weren't necessarily immediately obvious. AI is ensuring digital workplaces are evolving gradually into intelligent workplaces; we see this as a key trend for 2021, helping to support efficiency and increasing employee productivity through the automation of repetitive tasks, allowing employees to find the content they need more quickly and more.

There are various reasons why we believe we'll see more visibility from AI in 2021, including:

- The emergence of a high-profile initiative from Microsoft called Project Cortex which leverages AI frameworks to automatically deliver knowledge and content on specific subjects
- More emphasis on AI to help reduce costs in a difficult economic climate
- The continuing evolution of no-code solutions that leverage AI and are thus easier to implement
- Increased adoption of digital workplace tools, providing more opportunities to generate ROI from AI-driven products
- Increasing sophistication and consequent acceptance of chatbots, both in our consumer world and in the workplace.

In turn, AI will add value across a number of use cases, including:

- Supporting IT and HR helpdesk functions
- Giving answers to questions on specific topics, such as employee onboarding and new hires
- Finding items through advanced search
- Providing suggestions for content targeted to different individuals
- Providing suggestions for tagging content.

### Questions for 2021:

1. What are the AI capabilities in your current products and are you exploiting all of them?
2. Are there any use cases where a chatbot may provide value and drive efficiency?



It's not about trying to get people to adopt an intranet or digital workplace anymore...it's about the solution adopting your people. This is fundamental to the concept of the intelligent workplace."

**Peter Nguyen Brown**

Chief Experience Officer & Co-founder  
LiveTiles

**56%** of digital workplace professionals believe AI will have a transformative or significant impact in the next two to five years\*

Between 2018 and 2019 the proportion of people using AI at work in some form grew from

**34%-50%\*\***

Source:

\* SMG State of the Digital Workplace Survey 2020)

\*\* Oracle/Future Workplace AI at Work 2019 Survey  
[www.oracle.com/corporate/pressrelease/robots-at-work-101519.html](http://www.oracle.com/corporate/pressrelease/robots-at-work-101519.html)



# NINE

## THE NEW ANALYTICS

Developing new practices around analytics to help teams drive productivity, particularly in the new reality of scaled-up remote work.

Digital workplace and people analytics have been evolving in recent times, with new opportunities to derive data from applications and systems that can then be used to support decision-making; this covers not only improving productivity, but other areas such as employee wellbeing, building efficiency and safety. Analytics can provide insights at the organizational and team-level, and even for individuals, as long as data privacy guardrails are strictly preserved.

Several trends have influenced this evolution, including the rise of the Internet of Things, an increase in digital workplace interactions, maturity in big data platforms, and the evolution of data analytics capabilities. For example, Power BI within the Microsoft 365 suite has enabled data to be brought together in visually appealing ways, while the MyAnalytics capability gives individuals an overview of their digital usage.

Additionally, poll and survey features in intranets and digital workplaces allow teams to easily form a snapshot of employee sentiment, opinion and satisfaction, again providing invaluable data.

In 2020, the profound changes in working patterns mean it's necessary to look at digital workplace analytics again. Firstly, there is an increase in the range of digital interactions taking place, meaning there are opportunities to use new data to derive insights.

There is also an urgent need for new indicators to reflect the reality of scaled-up remote working. What are now the right indicators to measure performance? How do we measure collaboration? Which analytics suggest wellbeing issues? How do we measure the use of offices with more hybrid working patterns?

In 2021, we believe more advanced digital workplace teams will refresh and recalibrate their analytics strategies and reporting approaches to reflect new working patterns and opportunities. This is still an emergent area of practice, and in general, most teams do not exploit the data that they hold, but there are interesting opportunities to use analytics to increase productivity, improve digital workplaces and intranets, and ameliorate employee wellbeing.

#### Questions for 2021:

1. Do you need to refresh your analytics approach and reporting, particularly to reflect changes in working patterns?
2. Are you exploiting all the data you hold?
3. Can you work with colleagues from other support functions to bring data together to derive valuable insights?
4. Are you safeguarding data privacy in your approach to analytics?

#### CUSTOMER STORY:

##### Smarter real-time decisions at Flinders University

The team at Flinders University in Australia had a vision to provide data and insights so that leaders could make better decisions informed by real data in real time, rather than decisions based on assumptions or out-of-date information. Equipping and empowering the leadership with relevant data via a simple and intuitive interface positions Flinders University to seize the future with greater assurance than before.

The LiveTiles-powered Flinders Intelligence Portal (affectionately known as FLIP) has been central to realizing this vision and a big hit with the leadership group. Luke Havelberg, Associate Director, Planning &

Analytical Services, led the vision to bring a new self-service capability for insights to the leadership at Flinders University:

"We envisaged FLIP being the Google for Flinders staff, an intelligence portal that rolled up all of the University's relevant data and delivered it via a simple interface – allowing important business questions to be answered. We now have a single source of truth that delivers both generic pages of data and, more specifically, curated data sets that are updated daily – for example, student numbers and revenue projections off the back of that, all of which are now feeding into critical decision-making and

planning. Every senior person at Flinders has access to the platform from the Vice-Chancellor down, with access centrally governed by the team to ensure only the right people are seeing the data they should. Data governance is a big focus for us and FLIP enables the team to manage data governance in a consistent and scalable manner."

#### Luke Havelberg

Associate Director, Planning & Analytical Services, Flinders University

Learn more about the Flinders Story here: [www.livetilesglobal.com/customer-stories/flinders-university/](http://www.livetilesglobal.com/customer-stories/flinders-university/)

Organizations who focus on analytics with an employee engagement survey program are likely to have

**10%-30%**  
better levels of engagement\*

**73%** of  
organizations use three or  
less types of analytics when  
tracking success in the  
digital workplace

#### Source:

\* PwC, [www.pwc.com/us/en/services/hr-management/people-analytics/analytic-applications/workforce-surveys.html](http://www.pwc.com/us/en/services/hr-management/people-analytics/analytic-applications/workforce-surveys.html)

\*\* SMG State of the Digital Workplace Survey 2020



## QUESTIONS FOR 2021

<b>Focusing on the frontline</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do all your frontline and customer-facing staff have access to the digital workplace? Are there any gaps to fill?</li> <li>Are there ways to extend the relevance and value of the digital communications and services that frontline employees currently access?</li> <li>How can you leverage conversations with frontline staff and utilize their insights to generate authentic storytelling, value and engagement?</li> </ul>
<b>Ramping up collaboration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Did you cut corners with your collaboration governance? Are there processes you can now introduce to help standardize and optimize the use and findability of collaboration tools?</li> <li>What resources and training do you provide for employees? Are there any gaps to fill to encourage better use of collaboration tools and spaces?</li> <li>Are there any capabilities and features in your collaboration toolset that are not being used, but could be valuable?</li> </ul>
<b>The hybrid workplace</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are you working closely with your real estate function to ensure your physical and digital workplaces are aligned and optimized to support both safe and hybrid working patterns?</li> <li>What tools and information can you provide to employees to support and plan hybrid working?</li> </ul>
<b>Wellbeing gets an upgrade</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does your digital workplace provide a sense of connection and community for employees?</li> <li>Do you have dedicated content and spaces that directly support employee health and wellbeing?</li> <li>How could you use polls, surveys and apps to collect data about the state of employee wellbeing which can then be acted upon?</li> <li>Are there initiatives that could leverage the digital workplace to promote wellbeing and / or reduce technostress?</li> </ul>
<b>Moments matter even more</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the “moments that matter” for your employees? Are you working with your HR function to optimize the digital employee experience across each use case in the light of more remote working?</li> <li>How can you use the digital workplace to improve and streamline the employee onboarding experience, both before the first working day and for the months that follow?</li> <li>Are there improvements to be made to support employee self-service relating to HR processes?</li> <li>How can you bring learning into the core of the digital workplace, helping employees to manage their own learning and development?</li> <li>Can you target relevant digital experiences to different groups, such as frontline employees who may be accessing digital channels via their smartphone?</li> </ul>
<b>Communications reimaged</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What worked well and less well during 2020?</li> <li>How does that impact your approach to communications?</li> <li>Do your leaders need help and support to improve the way they communicate?</li> <li>Could you run a live virtual event in 2021 using the digital workplace tools at your disposal?</li> </ul>
<b>The omnipresent digital workplace</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are there opportunities to provide an “omnipresent” digital workplace experience available from your intranet, Microsoft Teams and other tools like Salesforce?</li> <li>Are there opportunities to rationalize your current portfolio of applications?</li> </ul>
<b>Rise of the intelligent workplace</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the AI capabilities in your current products and are you exploiting all of them?</li> <li>Are there any use cases where a chatbot may provide value and drive efficiency?</li> </ul>
<b>The new analytics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you need to refresh your analytics approach and reporting, particularly to reflect changes in working patterns?</li> <li>Are you exploiting all the data you hold?</li> <li>Can you work with colleagues from other support functions to bring data together to derive valuable insights?</li> <li>Are you safeguarding data privacy in your approach to analytics?</li> </ul>

## ABOUT LIVETILES

In 2014, Karl Redenbach and Peter Nguyen-Brown co-founded LiveTiles with the intention of disrupting the status quo and leading organizations into a new era of digital transformation. After 20 years of working in the tech space together, including running their own SharePoint consultancy firm, they realized that end users needed to be empowered to build their own intelligent workplaces without relying on the expertise of others.

From the beginning, Karl and Peter envisioned a different kind of company, based on mutual respect, where employees enjoy an inclusive workplace that is open to forward-thinking ideas and tolerant of diversity. These core principles have guided Karl and Peter's decision-making and helped establish LiveTiles as one of the fastest-growing SaaS companies in the world.

With an office network across North America, Europe, and Asia Pacific, LiveTiles is a global software company that provides solutions and tools to build intelligent workplaces through AI, analytics, and user interface design. What began as a friendship between two aspiring entrepreneurs has evolved into one of Australia's most accomplished tech companies. LiveTiles is rapidly growing to serve global customers across all industries and its intelligent workplace design suite has been adopted by some of the world's most iconic brands.

Discover more about LiveTiles' intelligent workplace solutions at [www.livetilesglobal.com](https://www.livetilesglobal.com)



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[www.livetilesglobal.com](http://www.livetilesglobal.com)