

Decade of Courage Manifesto.

DWG's 12 action points for essential
workplace transformation



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DWG's 12 action points.

01.

Significantly reduce the size (and human density) of centralized urban offices and shift to local workplace physical pods close to where clusters of staff live.

02.

Ensure hyper-resilient business continuity through advanced (and at times hyper-remote) digital workplaces for every employee and contractor.

03.

Radically improve digital readiness and digital literacy across your organization enabling much higher levels of ease and dexterity in digital worlds of work.

04.

Embed a new experience of accelerated decision-making by connecting leadership directly with the frontline, supported by a diluted layer of management and administration.

05.

Reduce all work travel (including commuting) by setting annual work miles budgets as environmental policies begin to take a central role.

06.

Place humans front and centre with confidence and commitment as automation, robotics and AI move into overdrive.

07.

Leaders at all levels must become adept at demonstrating digital presence.

08.

Reimagine and redesign your organization: from machine to living system, from organization to organism – ready for a fluid, networked and living world.

09.

“One size fits all” does not work and instead a range of approaches should be based on regional, cultural and demographic differences.

10.

Saturate the frontline with the most advanced technology and services possible; enabling, supporting and empowering this essential first-line workforce of your organization.

11.

Liberated from physical workplace constraints, you can hire from a broader geography to create a more diverse, efficient and adaptable workforce.

12.

Amplify the new, more human-centred, empathetic and responsive culture, habits and ethics.

Discovering what's essential.

COVID-19 closed most physical workplaces in a sudden, unexpected and totally unprecedented way.

But imagine for a moment the opposite scenario: one in which most digital rather than physical workplaces had been shut down; where governments had mandated that with immediate effect no one could enter their digital workplace and were instead required to work only in a physical place devoid of technology.

So, let's say at the time you were working for an international energy company and could still commute to its German HQ, but en route and in the building itself you had zero technology. How much work would you have got done? The answer is obvious. Within minutes of the "closure" of the digital workplace, work would have ground to a shuddering halt.

This is the kind of truth that crises reveal. The power of such emergencies is that they bring to our awareness who and what really matters. We learn what we rely on.

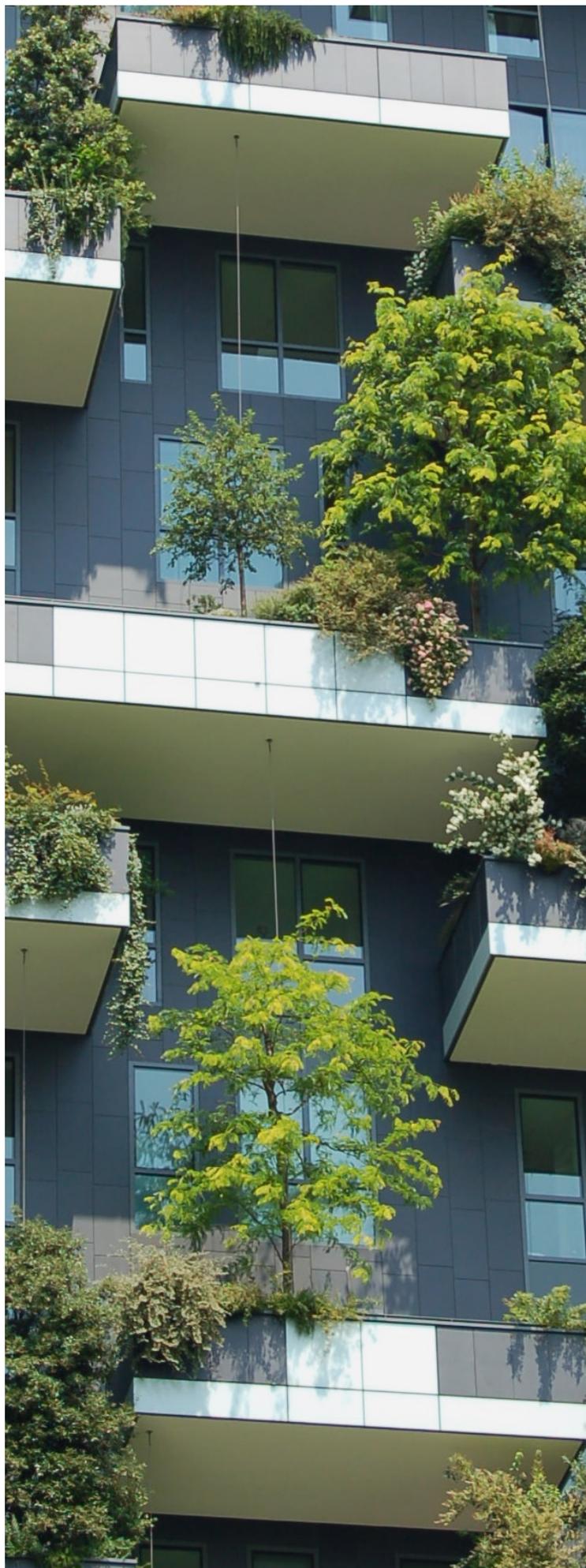
Recognizing what is essential

As country after country entered degrees of lockdown to enable physical distancing between their citizens, the people still required and often mandated to keep working were

rightly named essential. Those now dubbed "key workers" encompassed many formerly ignored heroes – the care workers, hospital porters, supermarket staff, delivery drivers and refuse collectors.

And, in the same vein, when most physical workplaces were forced to close (offices, factories, shops, restaurants, hotels, etc.), we discovered what is really essential in work when the only place where we can work is inside our digital workplace.

Through the COVID-19 effect, we discovered that large sectors of work actually could continue quite well (maybe after a few stuttering days or couple of weeks), despite the absence of offices and other physical work locations. There were exceptions, of course, but these were specific to industries where physicality is part of the service or product, such as hospitality, leisure, travel, hair and beauty. COVID-19 finally revealed to us that, beneath our feet for more than 20 years, the digital workplace has been gradually and persistently becoming the *essential* (and, in lockdown times, only) workplace.



So, this is the moment to recalibrate. We have new experiences, new evidence and a new economic, social and health reality to navigate. This article is deliberately named a “manifesto”, meaning a statement of beliefs, aims and policies designed to support, stimulate and encourage digital leaders in all organizations as we attempt to take the crucial decisions that will affect ourselves, colleagues and companies.

The Decade of Courage

In late 2019 I labelled the decade ahead “The Decade of Courage”. Even pre-Coronavirus there was already a long list of reasons (increasing climate events, shifting politics, rise of automation, new demographics in work, etc.) for suggesting that “courage” was going to be important – and then along came the virus with the 2020s barely even underway.

We need to find courage in ourselves, our colleagues and our organizations to work through the challenges we already face – as well as those yet to come. We also need to *encourage* each other (and ourselves) to become stronger and more capable.

The word “courage” comes from the Latin for heart [cor] and we each need to find the courage in our own hearts, in our teams, units, regions and companies, to move ahead individually and, most importantly, collectively, to address the challenges we face; to do all we can to bring into reality the immense opportunities that are now open to us.

Opportunities from challenges

- What is the true value and purpose of physical workplaces, given that many of us have been able to work well without them?
- And if offices are not essential to work, why do we expend such vast sums and resources on them?
- How should and could we change our work travel and commuting?
- How can we ensure better business resilience for when COVID-19 and other health scares or climate events arise?
- What should we retain from the COVID-19-driven work changes? Where should we revert? Where could we innovate?
- If we aren't going to think ambitiously now, when will we?

In this manifesto, we outline our 12 action points inspired and enabled by the new ways of thinking unleashed and empowered by the COVID-19 crisis that can enable organizations, leaders and individuals collectively to make the most of the Decade of Courage.

Paul Miller

CEO and Founder
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DWG's 12 action points for essential workplace transformation

01.

Significantly reduce the size (and human density) of centralized urban offices and shift to local workplace physical pods close to where clusters of staff live.

The [New York Times](#) recently featured views on what tomorrow's physical workplaces will look like. The article envisaged surfaces that can be cleaned easily, doors that open themselves and more space between workstations to make sure the office is safe and secure in both pre- and post-vaccine worlds.

All sensible changes but what about the elephant in the room?

The broader issue is not one of hand sanitizers and new interior designs but rather that large centralized physical workplaces no longer make sense. Why routinely bring hundreds, and often thousands, of people together in a single location at all? Especially now, when so many people have discovered that working remotely (and even from home) can work well.

Smaller, local hubs over large HQs

Barclays' CEO Jes Staley has said on the [BBC](#): "The notion of putting 7,000 people in a building may be a thing of the past." Instead he suggests revitalizing the bank's numerous retail branches as places where groups of call centre staff and colleagues can work physically together in small communities.

During a transitional period, while the company still has the overheads of an expensive building, the goal can be to reduce numbers working there but longer term, in the knowledge age, a large workforce commuting from a wide geography to then occupy one shared space,

mostly in a major urban centre, now looks outmoded and, for the time being at least, also fraught with danger.

Who will work in an office, if they don't feel safe there?

Counter-intuitively, working remotely can increase connection

The main work challenge (albeit mostly in Europe and North America) during COVID-19 has been less about the lack of physical proximity to colleagues but more that of children being at home when normally they would be at school. In fact, we have all been surprised at how well many types of work have continued while working from home. [Corteve CEO Jim Collins](#) goes further: "I have been so much more connected to 20,000 employees in the last six weeks than in the past six months, thanks to the technology we are using."

Large city-based offices require draining commutes and amplify health risks as human beings are so densely packed, while their key value of providing physical connection can actually be achieved much more safely, and often more effectively, either digitally or within small, decentralized physical spaces located close to where clusters of staff live. This is the time to reduce the footprint of centralized offices drastically. These buildings can still play a corporate brand role but with far less physical space and significantly fewer people involved.

Instead we should be considering multiple small physical pod offices, located close to where clusters of colleagues live – and the inventiveness of Barclays reveals how this could be achieved by breathing new life into under-used high street spaces. For other organizations, taking over empty buildings in local high streets, away from main cities, currently denuded of retail space (either solo or in collaboration with other companies) seems a natural transition and one worthy of government support.

Establishing workplace pods along these lines would offer an attractive alternative to working from home, reduce commute times and bring

a level of physical connection with colleagues (which is still an important and enjoyable aspect of work). As a side benefit, this has the potential to invigorate local economies and communities.

Related to this could be the provision of “working from home” kits to support people in configuring their home environments to enable improved ways of even more remote working.

These new workplace formats can foster climate-positive action, beneficial effects on work/life balance and significant real estate cost savings (and these are savings that multiply when considered over several years).

Questions to ask:

- How much space do we really need and what can we release?
- Who needs to be co-located and can this be achieved closer to where people live or do some workers still need to come to one large location?
- If we reduce our larger offices, can we use the space we no longer need for other innovative uses, such as:
 - creating live/work homes for younger staff who do want to work together but minus a commute into expensive areas of the city
 - providing secure-tenancy, low-rent accommodation for those key workers who held us together during the virus emergency
 - allocating 5% of the space for initiatives to house the homeless as part of social schemes in conjunction with other corporates, city bodies and government
 - providing space for economic regeneration for those just coming into the working world post-education in an economy blighted by unemployment.



DWG's 12 action points for essential workplace transformation

02.

Ensure hyper-resilient business continuity through advanced (and at times hyper-remote) digital workplaces for every employee and contractor.

During the past 20 years, the digital world of work has been advancing, but often despite sustained challenges from the C-Suite: *"What's the actual return on investing in the digital workplace – and anyhow, what's wrong with what we already have?"* they would ask.

But the digital workplace is now a matter of business resilience and continuity:

no digital workplace =
no work =
no organization at all
in any viable way

We have discovered through our recent struggles that organizations of all sizes need the ability to switch to alternate modes of hyper-remote working within hours. Those that had already made significant changes reaped the rewards. For example, one US insurance

company had invested over many years in a range of technologies and kit – and was therefore able overnight to move 30,000 people to remote working from home. After just a few stressful days, the company quickly morphed into a new normal routine.

We need to establish "distributed work chains", in the same way that we are all used to distributed supply chains. And early signs are that the risk and insurance industry will be mandating such an intrinsic capability as a condition of their policies. They will simply refuse to insure or pay out if organizations have not put in place highly adaptable and resilient digital worlds of work.

So, accelerate advances in your digital workplace for everyone (including frontline workers). This will not only lock in the benefits that have been brought to the fore during this crisis but also ensure that digital workplace services provide business continuity and resilience.

Questions to ask:

- How can the digital workplace make us more resilient the next time a crisis arises?
- Can we have a “two-speed” way of working so that we can switch gears and work remotely within hours?
- What could this digital world of work allow us to do that would enhance our capability day to day?
- How can the digital workplace evolve to match or exceed the experience of being physically together?
- What would we need to do if the digital rather than the physical workplace became our centre of gravity for work?



DWG's 12 action points for essential workplace transformation

03.

Radically improve digital readiness and digital literacy across your organization enabling much higher levels of ease and dexterity in digital worlds of work.

One facet of organizational strength and weakness from this period of enforced remote home working has been the varying levels of digital dexterity and digital literacy revealed within organizations.

Sustained training and development in this essential form of literacy across the workforce are required to build business resilience during any future spikes in virus-related remote working mandates. And raising the quality of digital capability generally for people is a net benefit for any organization as it allows greater flexibility and adaptability, as well as enhancing a culture based on outputs rather than inputs.

One global bank discovered that, while its technology systems were at a basic level of functionality and operating better than they had expected, they saw stark variations in digital skill abilities, not only by region but at the individual level too. Within teams, digital literacy could vary widely.

We expect good levels of literacy in other standard areas through our education system but what is the minimum digital literacy level required to work in your organization? Training, education and coaching systems are needed to raise the digital IQ of every person and every team.

Questions to ask:

- How digitally literate are we as an organization now?
- What does digital excellence in skills look like?
- Who is strong in this area and where are the weakest points?
- What do we expect from new hires?
- How can we progressively raise our literacy levels?



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04.

Embed a new experience of accelerated decision-making by connecting leadership directly with the frontline, supported by a diluted layer of management and administration.

Time and again I have heard from senior leaders that one positive experience to emerge from this time of crisis and emergency has been the speed at which decisions have been taken and then implemented. Most companies have been stunned as they watched leaders work beyond traditional divisions and politics to decide what was needed – and then equally surprised to see those decisions turned into action within days or weeks.

In the UK we watched in awe as China built a large new hospital in a week, but then were equally impressed when, through rapid collaboration, decision-making and management across a range of industries and organizations, the 4,000-bed Nightingale Hospital was created and ready for patients within nine days. Fortunately, it has so far been barely needed.

When it was necessary to convert one European country's judicial system into a virtual operation, complete with online courts

and adjudications, again leaders worked across normally separate silos to take rapid decisions and watch on as the systems fired up in ways that worked surprisingly well.

Leadership has tasted what it is like to work at speed; to plunge into the service or product delivery of their companies and make change happen. This has placed the most senior people far closer to the frontlines of their organizations – and I have been told repeatedly how satisfying and refreshing this experience has been.

Why return to the pre-virus world of detached leadership, office politics and bureaucracy, when a new model and process for work has been proven in action? Digital acceleration brings the strategic decision-makers closer to the frontline employees, and to the areas where services and products happen, with many stories of increased productivity and effectiveness.

Questions to ask:

- What have you learned about decision-making during COVID-19?
- Where has leadership found new strengths and how can that be retained?
- Why were you able to enact change so rapidly and successfully when it was needed?
- What and who gets in the way of this greater efficiency in “normal times”?
- How should we reorganize and restructure to harness what we have learned?

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05.

Reduce all work travel (including commuting) by setting annual work miles budgets as environmental policies begin to take a central role.

Even the normally cautious are sounding like radicals now. Take Edmund King, President of the UK's Automobile Association, the leading body representing motorists, who told the [BBC](#): *"The current crisis has shown that most companies can continue working from home and that it is more efficient."*

He advocates taking £160 billion committed to the UK rail and road infrastructure and instead spending a fraction of that to achieve remarkable levels of digital connectivity throughout the British Isles. *"People travelling to hold meetings is inefficient, expensive and damages the environment, and we expect road, rail and bus use to reduce permanently after the crisis,"* adds King.

He is in good company. As one CIO from a leading European manufacturer expressed to me: *"We will never return to the travel and commuting patterns of the pre-virus period. So many of us have discovered we can easily work*

remotely. The technology has held up well and we now enjoy freedom from the stress of travel with a better work/life balance. But having the kids back at school would be nice!"

He added that his company with 150,000 staff will now start to scrutinize all business travel far more closely (especially air travel) for health security, cost and climate reasons. Yes, you can request to travel from Chicago to Berlin for a conference, but the approval needed will be made at several levels above your grade and you better have an overwhelming justification. His view is that people will just stop asking.

And finally he said (in words repeated to me from dozens of senior leaders across different regions and sectors): *"We can tangibly see the positive effect that reduced travel has had on the environment and, as a company already seeking to ramp up our climate action, this shift supports our growing climate commitments."*

Questions to ask:

- How much did we travel as a company for work in 2019 roughly?
- What “miles budgets” should we set for this year and next?
- How can that cascade across the company?
- How can we engage our workforce in this mission and use gamification to spur action?
- Where do we want to be in five years’ time?
- Who needs support in order to make this shift?



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06.

Place humans front and centre with confidence and commitment as automation, robotics and AI move into overdrive.

One of the inevitable outcomes of COVID-19 is the expedited progress of robotics, automation and intelligent systems. The combination of human physical proximity now being deemed a health hazard, coupled with the unprecedented economic challenges to be faced, has resulted in a recipe bound to increase rapidly the development of automated activities and services.

While this wave of automation may be unstoppable, it is vital that all organizations ask themselves some fundamental questions about their purpose, values and beliefs. For example, if you could run your 5,000-person company with no humans at all, would you – and, if so, why? And if you did, would anyone want to buy from you? Perhaps your stance ethically would make your business highly fragile to changes in consumer, legal or cultural practice and policy?

Pre COVID-19, the digital world had been advancing. But we were also developing a greater appreciation of the value of humans.

As the World Economic Forum said in its [Future of Jobs Report 2018](#), huge amounts of work would disappear – but even greater volumes would appear. It was all about balancing human and machine.

Now, COVID-19 has presented us with a new ethical challenge that goes to the heart of any organization. What value and importance do we place on humans? The answer should be to increase both human capability and digital services. We should plan for a world of work that is both “hyper-digital” and “hyper-human”; not either/or, but both.

In order to create the kind of organization we want/need, it is essential to give humans the central and critical roles in work – but alongside and in collaboration with advanced technologies. We should enhance both our human and digital worlds in tandem.

Questions to ask:

- What roles and activities in your organization are best led by humans?
- As you define your social and economic ethos, how will you prioritize human beings?
- And where might robotics and automation make you safer and more effective?
- What is your ethical policy when faced with choices between humans and technology?
- How might your business become fragile if digital systems are superior in all ways to humans?
- Do you have an ethical charter in these areas?



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07.

Leaders at all levels must become adept at demonstrating digital presence.

I remember walking round the Pfizer HQ in New York City several years ago and talking to a senior executive about a question he had posed: *"The problem is that we have fewer and fewer leaders actually here in person on any given day. But when everyone is on the road, how are you supposed to lead when we don't see each other?"*

So we talked about the importance of making your leadership presence felt in the places where people work. For years this has meant being digitally present when physical presence was no longer reliable or sustainable.

For myself, as CEO of DWG (which has 100 people and has had no offices since 2012), being present in all the digital channels has been both crucial and made leadership far easier and more efficient. Wherever I am, I can connect with the team – which uses everyone's time better, including my own.

In the new world of work, becoming skilled at making your digital leadership felt is now a core leadership capability. The days when this was an optional extra or a personal preference as a leadership style were already receding before COVID-19 and the virus has only accelerated this movement.

This means live-chats, live-streams with Q&As, videos or audios shared and, perhaps more importantly, it means inserting your digital presence into collaborative, social and business unit spaces. This can be across G Suite, Microsoft 365, Workplace from Facebook, Teams, Slack – the technology may vary, but those you lead need to "see you" there and feel your personality and insight.

Those who don't, will become invisible – and no effective leader can afford to be invisible.

Questions to ask:

- What does digital presence look like?
- Who is good at this and why?
- What support can we give leaders at all levels?
- How do we stay current as the technology develops?
- What are the benefits for individuals of becoming more skilled in this area?



DWG's 12 action points for essential workplace transformation

08.

Reimagine and redesign your organization: from machine to living system, from organization to organism – ready for a fluid, networked and living world.

Examples for this section were numerous and easy to find, but to pick just one: Ebay software engineers working globally with the UK National Health Service, UK Government and Army to create a portal enabling frontline healthcare workers to order personal protective equipment (PPE), in under three weeks.

Companies, public bodies, both small and large organizations, competitors even, have during the crisis been using their interconnecting digital workplaces to achieve what only weeks before would have been considered impossible. Fast collaboration, accelerated decision-making and new processes have evolved, despite a stressful environment, to achieve shared objectives.

For years we have been improving technology for how we work, while leaving Industrial Age structures largely unchanged – pouring innovative digital services into existing systems and structures, and therefore failing to realize the true benefits on offer.

A living age rather than a machine age

But to fully exploit the potential of these innovations, radical changes are needed in how we organize, no longer drawing on the machine metaphors of the Industrial Age but instead on the organic, natural ones of this evolving living age.

COVID-19 has revealed that companies consist of human beings and are living systems. Global bank ING realized this several years ago and led the way by reducing its eight levels of hierarchy down to four with agile teams and new ways of sharing power across the bank. More recently, KPMG has been undergoing similar levels of advanced restructuring.

The pandemic has also exposed a deeper reality of modern organizations. While some have struggled to adjust rapidly to changing events, mired in politics, silos and bureaucratic decision-making, others have been able quickly to adapt and respond in more natural ways. For example, one global payments system had senior vice presidents shifting targets for credit control managers from financial to relationship, while other senior execs hand-delivered configured laptops to the homes of call centre staff.

My colleague Shimrit Janes and I are busy working on a new book called “Nature of Work”, due for publication later this year. We began this in May 2019 and its main thesis is that we are moving from “organization to organism”, from “machine to living system” – that organizations are in fact living ecologies more akin to forests than machines. We are not moving from an industrial age to a digital age but instead to a “living age”. The urgency to reimagine and redesign structures to suit this new age has now intensified.

Questions to ask:

- How has the virus revealed strengths and weaknesses in our organizations?
- How would we redesign our organization if we had the courage to act boldly?
- What are the sacred cows that we never address out of fear?
- Where are we structured differently in ways that suit us better?
- Where could we pilot a new approach in a safe space?



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09.

“One size fits all” does not work and instead a range of approaches should be based on regional, cultural and demographic differences.

When COVID-19 spread in China and the wider region in January 2020, one major pharmaceutical firm at first took a traditional approach to the enforced roll-out of working from home. It started out expecting adherence to normal working hours, required attendance at meetings, and business as usual. Within a couple of weeks, the tangible experience of colleagues in stress, confusion and struggle was all too apparent to those asking them to work in this way.

In cultures wholly unused to working from home in cramped living conditions, alongside elderly parents and with children at home from school, the disruption was profound. The company quickly switched from mandate to listening, empathy and support. Its initial top-down stance had felt cruel, and a new culture based on humanity and flexibility was quickly discovered for the organization.

One key learning is to listen and adapt to what is needed based on regional, demographic and business variations. What works for one team may not for another.

In China, the concept of homeworking might increase gradually but is unlikely ever to be as popular as it is in Northern Europe for logistical reasons, with homes typically much smaller than in Europe.

While people with children or elderly relatives requiring levels of care may enjoy the option of greater remote working and flexibility, younger generations in tight living spaces may well favour a short trip to the office at least some days of the week. It is important to stay highly flexible to meet the range of local preferences and realities.

Questions to ask:

- What are the various demographic differences in the organization?
- What are the cultural and regional factors here?
- What levels of flexibility are we comfortable with?
- What have we learned from COVID-19 about what helped us in this aspect of work?



DWG's 12 action points for essential workplace transformation

10.

Saturate frontline employees with the most advanced technology and services possible, enabling, supporting and empowering this essential first-line workforce of your organization.

The differences were stark. Those organizations that already had digitally enabled frontline workers in logistics, delivery, retail and manufacturing, etc., were shown to be at a huge advantage when economies went into lockdown. In response to the crisis, whole swathes of frontline workers in healthcare, for example, had to be quickly upgraded with better digital workplace services – and loved the experience of connection and capability.

This shift has been long overdue. It has been a source of corporate embarrassment for years that the best technology was typically provided for office- and knowledge-based workers rather than those on the frontline. This “digital divide” has been cultural as well as technical, harking back to an industrial and managerial age when

power and superiority were denoted through access to better tools.

What is needed now is to build on the positive experiences driven by the virus to provide the best possible digital services to the frontline (and often in societal terms most essential) workers, so that this group can use this technology to service customers and operations in the most empowered and informed ways possible.

This will mark a rebalancing of the digital and operational power and capacity within work and show that the company is investing in those it considers essential. It will also embed greater efficiency and adaptability in organizations.

Questions to ask:

- What digital workplace services are most needed at the frontline of your company?
- Who in your industry does this in ways that impress you?
- Where is the digital empowerment of your organization working well already?
- How can that be extended?
- How can you fully engage the frontline in service design and experience so that you provide what is most useful?



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11.

Liberated from physical workplace constraints, you can hire from a broader geography to create a more diverse, efficient and adaptable workforce.

The intelligent liberation of work from physical constraints into broader-reaching digital environments allows your HR practice and policy to be transformed. In fact, HR has surprised itself at how well it has adapted to rapid remote working and can now use this “proof of concept” to extend its horizons in hiring policy.

The more you work in digital workplaces and shift your structure away from physical locations, the more you can hire from a far wider geography. This affords the opportunity to bring in higher quality people for less cost and with greater timezone flexibility.

An example is Automattic, the company behind WordPress, which powers 30% of all websites, has 1,200 people and no offices, and hires from

a global marketplace. Why restrict yourself to hiring from people living in or near Paris, when you can look far wider and gain cost and skill efficiencies, as well as broadening the culture and innovation of your organization?

DWG has 100 people and is growing by recruiting from across many regions, bringing in people with very strong backgrounds in running global digital workplaces for household-name companies, who thrive in a more agile, output-driven and enjoyable working environment.

The business gains for Automattic and DWG are significant, and this approach can be applied appropriately in larger organizations in ways not possible even three months ago because of the watershed moment COVID-19 has presented.

Questions to ask:

- Where do the skills you need exist?
- How wide an area can you hire from given your timezone needs?
- What could a more diverse and cost-efficient workforce bring to you?
- How should your HR function change itself to operate in this new way?
- Where are you too rigid or struggling to find talent?



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12.

Amplify the new, more human-centred, empathetic and responsive culture, habits and ethics.

One of the many extraordinary aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic has been the way in which organizations across multiple sectors have shown levels of what can best be described as kindness to their customers, marketplace, communities and workforces.

Unilever is typical in showing understanding to its customers, support for essential workers, and empathy and tolerance to its workforce by shifting sales teams towards relationship management, donating heavily to social causes and allowing greater flexibility for newly remote workers. Executives have been quietly surprised and impressed at how their organizations have collectively acted during the crisis.

One comment I heard from a digital leader in a large fashion group summed this up: *"We had*

our values and thought we were pretty strong ethically, but this has shown that we really are a great company. It's been quite emotional seeing what people have been doing."

This is the time to embed this more humane way of working. Cultures in organizations have been softened in ways that until now felt impossible. Maybe we always need an emergency to find our individual and collective strength.

But now that we have, this is the time to make sure this more balanced approach, where financial success sits alongside workplace well-being, more ethical practices, greater connection with local communities, and partnerships even among competitors, becomes embedded in how we work day to day, and plan long-term.

Questions to ask:

- How has your culture changed for the better during COVID-19?
- What has surprised or encouraged you from what you have seen from your colleagues?
- Which aspects of your newly revealed culture and practices do you want to grow and embed?
- How has this experience affected you personally?
- Has this positive experience been happening across all parts of the organization and, if not, what can be done to address that?



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Finding courage

Bold, imaginative and resilient approaches are essential for the Decade of Courage: find the courage in yourself and your colleagues to move forward with confidence and a positive outlook.

We all need encouragement

From the first point when the virus arrived, there was the sense that we were entering a significant moment and that we would never return to the pre COVID-19 world. Now the debate about what will constitute the "new normal" continues – and for organizations this conversation requires courage and ambition.

In November 2019 I called the 2020s the "Decade of Courage" and each organization of any size can now play an important part in this. We will be challenged as we move forward but we have seen that collective action can produce radical changes in weeks.

What else could your organization achieve (not in weeks but in years) if it continues to show the bold, ambitious and courageous spirit that you have found was just waiting to be released?

Now is the time to ask some essential questions of work:

- From what we have experienced through COVID-19, what changes do we want to retain, where do we want to revert and where should we innovate?
- If we want to embed the climate benefits we have witnessed, how far should we reduce our work travel? By 5%, 20% or even 50% year on year?
- When the next crisis comes, will we play catch-up or be able to adapt to alternate modes of working effortlessly?
- If unexpected new partnerships across science, manufacturing and government etc. can achieve such rapid results, what else could we as an organization achieve in collaboration with others?
- How were we able to make decisions so quickly and why are we so slow normally? What or who gets in the way in "normal times"?
- What new structures and systems would allow us to be the best version of ourselves?
- And what is needed so that our greater digital dependence doesn't create another single point of failure?



Related resources.

Reports

Nature of Work: Designing at the interface of the physical and digital workplace

[> Download report](#)

This thought leadership report explores the interface of the physical and digital workplace through a much bigger concept that DWG is planting: the Nature of Work and the evolution towards a more natural workplace.

Remote Working 2020: Distributed working in times of disruption

[> Download report](#)

This report, produced for Avanade by DWG, is intended to bring direction, good practices and confidence to the many organizations across the world trying rapidly to embed remote working for the 2020s in these times of disruption.

Raising your organization's digital IQ: How to improve digital skills

[> Download report](#)

(Excerpt only)

Major research studies are indicating the importance of equipping the workforce with the skills to work digitally. However, many organizations are failing to address this challenge. This report corrals together a selection of examples of best-practice digital skills initiatives inside a range of organizations.

The Inside-Out Digital Leader: Digitally transforming your organization from within

[> Download report](#)

(Excerpt only)

Transforming yourself as a leader is the starting point for digitally transforming your organization. In this research we set out the skills, mindset and approach it takes to lead in the digital workplace as well as lead the digital workplace itself, with examples from inspiring leaders and self-assessments to track your progress.

Podcasts

Will we ever 'go' to work again?

While returning to an office may still be some time off for many, organizations are now thinking about how they can welcome people back in a safe and viable way.

Follow this fascinating and encouraging conversation as Sam Fisher gives practical advice on how organizations can start to plan for a successful reopening and shares her perspective on the longer-term future.

[> Listen](#)

100 people and no offices – the new normal?

Today, there are about 100 people across Europe and North America, who work anywhere and everywhere for the Digital Workplace Group (DWG). In this episode, Paul Miller interviews two of his colleagues about what it is like to work for DWG and to work remotely.

[> Listen](#)

How to work – when (pretty much) everyone's at home

Paul Miller and members of the DWG team discuss ways in which remote working can be approached from an individual, team and organizational level; how this crisis has the potential to change company culture; and what opportunities there may be for work in the wake of COVID-19.

[> Listen](#)

COVID-19: Remote working becomes the new normal

In this episode, two thought leaders, Dion Hinchcliffe and Paul Miller, come together to compare and contrast their digital workplace predictions for 2020. What neither of them predicted was this current dramatic shift to remote working, and so they take time to reflect on the possible longer-term implications of coronavirus on work.

[> Listen](#)

Driving Stagecoach to the mobile frontline

Stagecoach is one of the largest bus operators in the UK, and employs 25,000 people, the majority of whom are frontline workers. From an under-used, desk-orientated intranet to a much-loved mobile app, Ricky Sickelmore and his team have been able to deliver real benefits to drivers and engineers.

[> Listen](#)

What 7-year-olds need to learn now to thrive in an AI world of work

When the topic of AI and the future of work arises, the picture painted is often a bleak one. But Calum Chace and Angus Knowles-Cutler have a much more optimistic outlook on the future. Paul Miller asks them both: What should children be learning today to equip themselves to work alongside machines?

[> Listen](#)

Articles

20 areas organizations need to consider to embed remote working in the long term

[> Read more](#)

Leadership and digital workplace teams need to be thinking about the medium term and even the long term when it comes to embedding remote working, not only to be able to deal with a sustained crisis but also potentially to meet the demands of the “new normal”. Here are 20 areas that digital workplace teams need to consider.

Why the COVID-19 crisis is the turning point for remote working

[> Read more](#)

The COVID-19 crisis will be a watershed moment for the digital workplace and the acceptance of remote working. In many ways, it's an extraordinary and unprecedented catalyst for a trend that was already happening, but with a likely impact that will be deep, long-lasting and significant to working patterns.

Coronavirus: 20 little lessons for successful remote working – based on (almost) 20 years' experience at DWG

[> Read more](#)

Digital Workplace Group (DWG) has no offices. With COVID-19 now front and centre in the thinking and planning of all organizations, we have been able quickly to adapt – as we have done many times before in response to unforeseen situations. Here are 20 little lessons relating to remote working, learned since the start of DWG in 2002.

Action!

Join the DWG Work Miles Movement

[> Join](#)

DWG wants organizations and employees all around the world to commit to reducing their travel, in a similar way to DWG, to create the sustainable world we all want environmentally.

Rapid response remote working – 12-week support program

[> More info](#)

DWG's advisory service, rapid response remote working is a 12-week program to counsel and coach organizations that are trying to accelerate and embed remote working in reaction to the COVID-19 outbreak. We draw upon our research, knowledge and expertise from more than 17 years in the digital workplace industry, in addition to the new resources we are gathering in real time as developments happen across the world.

The Digital Workplace Diagnostic tool

[> Start](#)

This free, quick, confidential diagnostic analyses the maturity of your digital workplace and takes only 10 minutes to complete. Once you've submitted your responses, your scores will be analysed and compared with our extensive benchmarking dataset. You'll receive your results via email within a few minutes, which you can then use for stakeholder conversations. Why not use it for your digital workplace project start point!

Workbook.

For your essential workplace transformation.

1. Significantly reduce the size (and human density) of centralized urban offices and shift to local workplace physical pods close to where clusters of staff live.

Questions to ask	Notes
How much space do we really need and what can we release?	
Who needs to be co-located and can this be achieved closer to where people live or do some workers still need to come to one large location?	
<p>If we reduce our larger offices, can we use the space we no longer need for other innovative uses, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creating live/work homes for younger staff who do want to work together but minus a commute into expensive areas of the city • providing secure-tenancy, low-rent accommodation for those key workers who held us together during the virus emergency • allocating 5% of the space for initiatives to house the homeless as part of social schemes in conjunction with other corporates, city bodies and government • providing space for economic regeneration for those just coming into the working world post-education in an economy blighted by unemployment. 	

2. Ensure hyper-resilient business continuity through advanced (and at times hyper-remote) digital workplaces for every employee and contractor.

Questions to ask	Notes
How can the digital workplace make us more resilient the next time a crisis arises?	
Can we have a “two-speed” way of working so that we can switch gears and work remotely within hours?	
What could this digital world of work allow us to do that would enhance our capability day to day?	
How can the digital workplace evolve to match or exceed the experience of being physically together?	
What would we need to do if the digital rather than the physical workplace became our centre of gravity for work?	

Workbook.

3. Radically improve digital readiness and digital literacy across your organization enabling much higher levels of ease and dexterity in digital worlds of work.

Questions to ask	Notes
How digitally literate are we as an organization now?	
What does digital excellence in skills look like?	
Who is strong in this area and where are the weakest points?	
What do we expect from new hires?	
How can we progressively raise our literacy levels?	

4. Embed a new experience of accelerated decision-making by connecting leadership directly with the frontline, supported by a diluted layer of management and administration.

Questions to ask	Notes
What have you learned about decision-making during COVID-19?	
Where has leadership found new strengths and how can that be retained?	
Why were you able to enact change so rapidly and successfully when it was needed?	
What and who gets in the way of this greater efficiency in "normal times"?	
How should we reorganize and restructure to harness what we have learned?	

5. Reduce all work travel (including commuting) by setting annual work miles budgets as environmental policies begin to take a central role.

Questions to ask	Notes
How much did we travel as a company for work in 2019 roughly?	
What "miles budgets" should we set for this year and next?	
How can that cascade across the company?	
How can we engage our workforce in this mission and use gamification to spur action?	
Where do we want to be in five years' time?	
Who needs support in order to make this shift?	

Workbook.

6. Place humans front and centre with confidence and commitment as automation, robotics and AI move into overdrive.

Questions to ask	Notes
What roles and activities in your organization are best led by humans?	
As you define your social and economic ethos, how will you prioritize human beings?	
And where might robotics and automation make you safer and more effective?	
What is your ethical policy when faced with choices between humans and technology?	
How might your business become fragile if digital systems are superior in all ways to humans?	
Do you have an ethical charter in these areas?	

7. Leaders at all levels must become adept at demonstrating digital presence.

Questions to ask	Notes
What does digital presence look like?	
Who is good at this and why?	
What support can we give leaders at all levels?	
How do we stay current as the technology develops?	
What are the benefits for individuals of becoming more skilled in this area?	

Workbook.

8. Reimagine and redesign your organization: from machine to living system, from organization to organism – ready for a fluid, networked and living world.

Questions to ask	Notes
How has the virus revealed strengths and weaknesses in our organizations?	
How would we redesign our organization if we had the courage to act boldly?	
What are the sacred cows that we never address out of fear?	
Where are we structured differently in ways that suit us better?	
Where could we pilot a new approach in a safe space?	

9. “One size fits all” does not work and instead a range of approaches should be based on regional, cultural and demographic differences.

Questions to ask	Notes
What are the various demographic differences in the organization?	
What are the cultural and regional factors here?	
What levels of flexibility are we comfortable with?	
What have we learned from COVID-19 about what helped us in this aspect of work?	

10. Saturate frontline employees with the most advanced technology and services possible, enabling, supporting and empowering this essential first-line workforce of your organization.

Questions to ask	Notes
What digital workplace services are most needed at the frontline of your company?	
Who in your industry does this in ways that impress you?	
Where is the digital empowerment of your organization working well already?	
How can that be extended?	
How can you fully engage the frontline in service design and experience so that you provide what is most useful?	

Workbook.

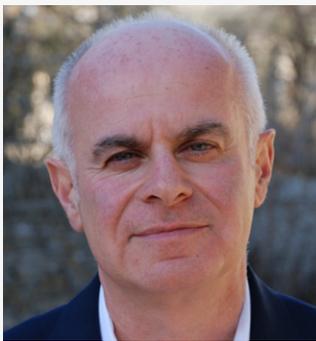
11. Liberated from physical workplace constraints, you can hire from a broader geography to create a more diverse, efficient and adaptable workforce.

Questions to ask	Notes
Where do the skills you need exist?	
How wide an area can you hire from given your timezone needs?	
What could a more diverse and cost-efficient workforce bring to you?	
How should your HR function change itself to operate in this new way?	
Where are you too rigid or struggling to find talent?	

12. Amplify the new, more human-centred, empathetic and responsive culture, habits and ethics.

Questions to ask	Notes
How has your culture changed for the better during COVID-19?	
What has surprised or encouraged you from what you have seen from your colleagues?	
Which aspects of your newly revealed culture and practices do you want to grow and embed?	
How has this experience affected you personally?	
Has this positive experience been happening across all parts of the organization and, if not, what can be done to address that?	

Acknowledgements.



Paul Miller

Paul Miller is the Founder and CEO of Digital Workplace Group (DWG), a company which has been revolutionizing how people work since its start in 2002.

Paul leads the company's strategic direction and key relationships. He has given many inspirational talks on the digital future of work at Microsoft, IKEA, Google, Accenture, Harvard Business Review, Cisco, European Commission, Adobe and Oxford University.

Paul is Executive Producer of the 24-hour global digital experience Digital Workplace 24 and hosts the influential industry podcast "Digital Workplace Impact".

His relationships include:

- senior leaders in government globally
- CEOs in global organizations
- executives within large consulting firms
- Harvard Business Review, Bloomberg, Google, Microsoft and Cisco
- key figures in the global not-for-profit and NGO sectors.

His ground-breaking second book, "The Digital Workplace: How technology is liberating work" popularized the term "digital workplace" to the world. His most recent book, "The Digital Renaissance of Work: Delivering digital workplaces fit for the future", co-authored with colleague Elizabeth Marsh, was shortlisted for the CMI Management Book of the Year 2016 Award.

Pre-internet Paul was CEO of communications company The Empowerment Group; founded social and digital innovation magazine "Wave"; and ran the Ideas Café salon.

Paul is an ideas enthusiast from music to philosophy, history to science. From his teens, he has been a keen tennis player, yoga practitioner, sporadic meditator and, more recently, an enthusiastic but inexperienced cook and gardener. He has two daughters, one stepdaughter, a Welsh terrier called Hector, and lives with his partner Ali in the Cotswolds in the UK.

Other acknowledgements

The report production team included:

Alison Chapman (editorial); Toast Design (design).

With thanks to:

- Andrea Brant
- Steve Bynghall
- Beth Gleba
- Nancy Goebel
- Shimrit Janes
- David Lucas
- Elizabeth Marsh
- Edward Taylor

Overview of services.

Digital workplaces (now) = Essential workplaces

Why journey alone?

The digital workplace has become the essential workplace for thousands of organizations around the world, as teams have had to rapidly implement advanced remote working from home.

Digital Workplace Group (DWG) is a strategic partner, covering all aspects of the evolving digital workplace industry through membership, benchmarking and consultancy services.

“We’ve found Digital Workplace Group to be invaluable partners in our journey toward a more effective digital workplace.

Whether we need insights, benchmarks, or just a quick sanity-check, the DWG team is there for us. It’s almost as if they’re ‘riding shotgun’ for us as we move the stagecoach along the digital trail.”

Pete Fields

Head of Digital Experience

Wells Fargo

Membership
A confidential member forum for improvement and networking

Benchmarking
Objective data for making critical decisions

Consulting
Independent expertise to guide strategy and plans

An expert partner to transform your company’s workplace

DWG provides independent guidance to more than 80 Fortune 1000 and equivalent companies as well as public-sector organizations to advance their digital workplaces through peer learning, impartial evaluations, research and practitioner expertise.

DWG has been recognized by the Financial Times as one of the UK’s leading management consultancies in digital transformation for 2020.



Sample members and clients



Overview of services.

How do DWG's three services advance your workplace?

Member Forum

Confidential learning, ongoing improvement

The DWG Member Forum is a confidential, members-only group. Membership combines online and in-person peer learning with expert research and practical insights into how others have solved challenges, based on more than 700 evaluations of major organizations.

Peer learning

Rich interaction and sharing with teams from other major organizations.

Expert research

New members-only reports every quarter and a vast archive of papers and videos.

Members-only events

Live online Q&As with experts, research-driven webinars, member meetings.

How to contact DWG



Edward Taylor

Director of Client Services

[> Email](#)

Consulting Services

Strategic interventions, discrete projects

DWG Consulting Services provides vendor-neutral, unbiased, high-quality advice and practical hands-on support for digital workplace and intranet programmes, such as:

What does "good" look like?

External insight into industry best practices – to inform strategies and plans.

Define vision, strategy & roadmap

Methodology and expertise to establish the road ahead.

Facilitated workshops

Engage stakeholders across a global organization or within a function – so the whole team starts on the same page.

Annual Benchmarking

Strategic evaluations, baseline performance measurement

DWG Benchmarking provides in-depth analysis of your sites and/or digital workplace environment, and comparison with other similar organizations. We have a range of benchmarks to choose from:

Intranet

- Modern Intranet Management
- Digital Communications Channels
- Intranet Usability

Digital Workplace

- Digital Workplace Management
- Digital Collaboration
- Digital Workplace Experience
- Digital Workplace Maturity

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Why do so many leading companies choose Digital Workplace Group?

Large company expertise: We've worked with Fortune 1000 / FT 500 (and comparable) organizations for more than 18 years. Our expertise and insights focus on the successes, challenges and needs of such major organizations.

Measurement and research focus: Our consulting and evaluations rely on measurement derived from more than 700 benchmarks and our robust research programme, to provide a unique reservoir of statistics and case studies.

We provide "data and metrics in a world of opinion".

Real-world practitioners: Our benchmarkers and consultants have previously managed intranets and digital workplaces at major organizations. Our expertise is rooted in experience.

Independence: All our work is vendor neutral and our consulting and evaluation framework is proudly technology agnostic.

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