

# The Future of Work:

Reimagining Workforce and Customer Experience



## Foreword

As the world exits the global crisis, a window of opportunity opens for businesses to capitalize on an economy returning to growth. For organizations, that means adapting to the profoundly changed expectations of workers and consumers. To be successful, companies must reimagine the employee and customer experience.

This study aims to help CIOs by providing use cases, examples, and advice from IT executives who realize success in implementing the future of work. Our goal is to help organizations act on the imperatives and overcome barriers that prevent engagement and discourage loyalty.

The IT Media Group (ITMG) undertook this project with sponsorship from Salesforce Canada. This report contributes to ITMG's mission of supporting and adding value to the IT executive community in Canada. Our goal is to provide a wide range of opportunities for direct engagement between IT vendors and industry executives, enabling them to share knowledge and opinions, provide thought leadership, build relationships, and engage in a dialogue of benefit to both parties.

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## Executive Summary

Leading organizations build modern environments to capitalize on a global economy returning to an accelerated growth trajectory. To be successful, enterprises use digital-first and hybrid work models to enhance the linkage between employee experience, customer experience, and improved business outcomes.

## Scope

This report provides CIOs with insights into how they help create a decentralized and boundless organization that engages employees and customers. We describe the imperatives that drive loyalty and the roadblocks preventing organizations from implementing the new work model. We also include the approaches and strategies leaders use to unlock performance. Finally, we conclude with a section on sustainability and its importance to the corporate agenda.

## Methodology

The IT Media Group leveraged its wide-ranging relationships with the Canadian CIO community to prepare this document. Our research included analysis of ITMG's extensive content repository along with interviews with more than a dozen senior IT executives. We also examined a broad array of external resources focused on the future of work to substantiate our analyses.

## Key findings

Our research revealed that Canadian companies lead the world in meeting the evolving expectations of workers and consumers. These businesses trailblaze a path to increased engagement between customers and employees from all parts of the organization.

We documented more than 20 use cases that describe how companies successfully implement the future of work to overcome challenges and roadblocks. The examples provide support for approaches and strategies that CIOs use to transform their organizations. Among the cases, we found the following successful tactics:

- Translate business strategy into an enterprise architecture to reduce technical debt, ease data consolidation, and enable technology changes at speed.
- Take an active role in introducing vendors to business leaders. This approach demonstrates the value of IT and accelerates the introduction of innovative technologies into the organization.
- Explain the benefits to stakeholders in business terms to communicate the value of the organization's technology investments.
- Sponsor proof of concepts for the use of AI and ML to validate business and operational value.

We encourage CIOs to explore the use cases described in this study. Our goal is to promote conversations and spur action between technology leaders, business units, and service providers to reimagine the workforce and customer experience.

## The rise of the business-first CIO

Numerous research studies<sup>1</sup> confirm a direct link between employee engagement and happy customers. Consequently, organizations require the implementation of a new work model that increases outcomes in both areas. With technology playing a critical role in improving employee experience (EX) and customer experience (CX), CIOs find themselves in a unique position to help establish the future of work.

Companies need to operate faster than ever to satisfy increasingly complex demands for products and services. CIOs enable business objectives through the effective use of technology. They understand the need to shift to a decentralized work model that requires connection to customers, suppliers, and employees. CIOs champion discussions and ideation about engaging their customers and providing a technology view of the customer experience.

To be successful, CIOs must be business leaders first and technology leaders second. Dan Dickinson, Executive Vice President and CIO at Arterra Wines Canada, describes his role: “It’s important to be seen as a trusted advisor around the executive table and to also be in alignment with the CEO. Bring ideas to the table by showing how the business realizes operational benefits through technology. Also, introduce architecture concepts by using language that the business can understand.” Dickinson points out that technologies like ML have tremendous potential for business efficiency, and CRM is top of mind to achieve a single view of the customer. To prevent the creation of siloes, he recommends that CIOs exert some level of control over the technology roadmap.

**“Fundamentally, the C-Suite expects CIOs to deliver capabilities that help achieve financial benefits, to define the costs for those capabilities, and provide a timeframe for when they will be available.”**

*David Landry, Senior Vice President of Business Value and Enterprise Architecture, Salesforce*

Taking a strategic business and architecture focus allows CIOs to provide objective views around the organization’s ability to deliver and achieve desired results. David Landry, Senior Vice President of Business Value and Enterprise Architecture at Salesforce, provides more clarity: “CIOs have highly strategic roles. They wear a business hat and bring an architecture-first lens to the table. Fundamentally, the C-Suite expects CIOs to deliver capabilities that help achieve financial benefits, to define the costs for the capabilities, and provide the timeframe for when they will be available.” Landry advises CIOs to set proper expectations and to treat the customer journey as a program. He concludes, “This is an exciting time to be a CIO because organizations are looking to grow faster than ever, and there is pent-up demand. The pressure is on, but that is when things are the most fun.”

## How digital is driving employee and customer experience

In 2020, worker productivity increased more than in the past decade<sup>2</sup> as organizations adapted to history's most extensive digital connected ecosystem expansion. For individuals, that meant working differently, with technology used to augment processes and enable collaboration to create positive organizational change. For businesses, that meant taking advantage of the power of decentralization to access and develop talent.



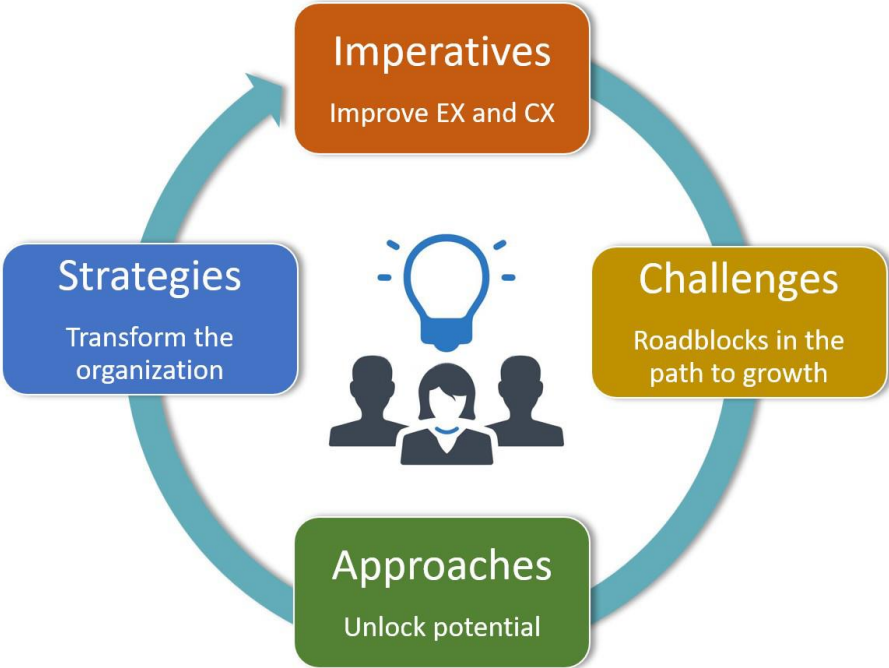
**“There are 500 billion transactions that flow through our global Commerce Cloud, and Canada had the highest year over year growth of all 50 countries that use our services.”**

*Vala Afshar, Chief Digital Evangelist,  
Salesforce*

While workers were more productive, global online sales grew by 24.1%, exceeding 20% of retail sales<sup>3</sup> as customers turned to digital channels for their products and services. Successful Canadian companies capitalized on this shift by providing a comprehensive and engaging digital experience for their customers. Vala Afshar, Chief Digital Evangelist at Salesforce, says, “There are 500 billion transactions that flow through our global Commerce Cloud, and Canada had the highest year-over-year growth of all 50 countries that use our services. Technology enabled a frictionless space with extended boundaries that allowed companies to focus on the currencies that matter most for their organizations.”

## A playbook for CIOs

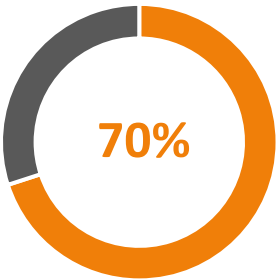
Since 2011, The IT Media Group has continued to be a prolific content and event producer for the Canadian technology sector. Through hundreds of conversations with technology executives, we captured a wealth of best practices they use to deliver successful digital transformations. This study taps into that storehouse of knowledge gathered from private roundtables, workshops, and interviews across Canada. To supplement that, we completed extensive research and interviewed over a dozen technology leaders representing exceptional Canadian companies trailblazing a path to the future of work.



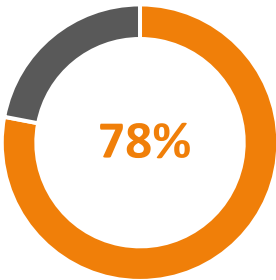
This strategic insights report explains the imperatives organizations must satisfy to improve EX and CX and the challenges that prevent progress. We describe the approaches leading Canadian companies use to unlock potential and strategies they employ to transform their organizations. Finally, as a unique use case, we illustrate the importance of sustainability to the corporate agenda.

Hybrid work environments are here to stay

The new work model involves equipping employees to collaborate and be productive while enabling optimal customer engagement. As the spectre of future disruptions looms across the globe, organizations must also take steps to maintain health and well-being for their physical spaces. Furthermore, companies need to develop best practices for remote working and returning to the workplace to adjust to the new operating environment.



of Canadians feel remote work empowers people to live where they want



of Canadians think that technology has helped them feel safer as remote workers

The enterprise will need to embrace flexibility in its work strategies while delivering the digital-first experiences that employees expect. The key to this approach is the formalization of a hybrid environment that combines remote work and in-office experiences to unlock greater flexibility. The Global Stakeholder Series<sup>4</sup> research database consisting of responses from 20,000 global citizens supports this mandate. Querying this database reveals that 70% of Canadians feel that remote work empowers people to live wherever they want, and 78% think that technology helped them feel safer as remote workers.

### Winning with remote work: Flexibility fuels productivity and growth

The benefits of combining remote work and technology allow flexibility for people to fit their schedules better. In addition, it can provide a level of autonomy over how to complete assignments, leading to increased productivity and job satisfaction. For employers, remote work allows companies to tap into diverse talent pools by broadening searches to new communities and geographies.

**“Our focus is on global growth, so we’re looking for a global talent pool. We can find emerging talent anywhere, and we have the ability to perform labour arbitrage to optimize our expenses.”**

*Paul Lewis, Chief Technology Officer, Pythian*

Pythian, a technology services firm that does business in 30 countries with only four physical offices, provides an example of workforce flexibility. Founded in 1997, the company has been operating with a virtual/remote workforce almost from the start. Paul Lewis, Pythian’s Chief Technology Officer, explains, “Our focus is on global growth, so we’re looking for a global talent pool. We can achieve collaboration and creativity because we have a single standard for our workplace tools.” The benefits of this approach are significant for organizations willing to adopt this model. Lewis adds, “We can shift workloads across a variety of time zones, and we are able to do virtual onboarding of our staff. We can find emerging talent anywhere, and we have the ability to perform labour arbitrage to optimize our expenses.”

### The digital experiences customers expect

Customers expect the companies they buy from to have a 360-degree view of them from all parts of the organization that market, sell, and provide services. As the digital channel increasingly becomes the preferred mechanism to interact with businesses, organizations must create a unique online experience that rivals their physical outlets. These demands require the ability to send customer insights to developers, marketing, operations, and business improvement teams for immediate analysis and action.

**“During the crisis, we saw ten years of digital transformation in just a few months as companies extended their boundaries further than ever before. To deliver value at optimal speed, organizations must design for movement.”**

*Vala Afshar, Chief Digital Evangelist, Salesforce*

The push to digital means that organizations need to also become hyper-agile in developing and deploying technologies that allow information sharing and the delivery of virtual experiences. Businesses require value delivery within hours, days, and weeks instead of the years digital transformation programs typically take. Vala Afshar describes this imperative: “During the crisis, we saw ten years of digital transformation in just a few months as companies extended their boundaries further than ever before. To deliver value at optimal speed, organizations must design for movement.” To highlight how his company embodies this principle, Afshar explains, “We have been a cloud-first company for 20 years, and that means we are designed for movement. All our business applications are in the cloud, so we already have the security and scalability that customers need. In addition, our enterprise applications are accessible by mobile and tablets so that we can deliver far-reaching stakeholder experiences.”

### Three steps to driving deep customer engagement

Digital transformation is a vital enabler of the new work model for engaging customers. To survive, brands must rapidly go digital to be where their customers are. CIOs help their organizations to find new ways to stay connected and engaged with customers by focusing on meaningful experiences delivered through technology.

**“We employ a customer-first approach to build a trusted relationship. We leverage technology to automate the understanding of our customers ... to continue to drive deep engagements with them.”**

*Janet Lin, Senior Director Customer Engagement Technology,  
Loblaw Companies Ltd.*

An excellent example of customer engagement in action is Loblaw Companies Limited, a sprawling enterprise with more than 2,400 locations offering financial, health, and retail services across Canada. Its PC Optimum rewards program has more than 18 million members, providing foundational elements that allow the company to understand customer behaviours at an enormous scale. Janet Lin, Senior Director Customer Engagement Technology at Loblaw, describes their three-step process, “We employ a customer-first approach to build a trusted relationship. We start by knowing who our customers are; second, is to engage them by creating a virtual or in-person interaction; and third, is to leverage learnings and our personalization capabilities to drive long-term relationships.”

The Loblaw engagement approach seems intuitive, but there is process complexity behind the scenes. Lin adds, “There are many channels we use to interact with our customers. We employ application reviews, surveys, panels, call centers, and our Customer [Centre of Excellence]. We leverage technology to automate the understanding of our customers through their transactional and non-transactional behaviours to continue to drive deep engagements with them.”

These engagement imperatives require Canadian companies to continue to build trusted relationships with their customers at all interaction points to thrive in the evolving new state of work. Organizations must also recognize the importance of being a boundless company that is digital-first and able to provide differentiated experiences to both employees and customers. However, before forming approaches to achieving these objectives, enterprises need first to understand the challenges and roadblocks that stand in the way.

## Building a culture of employee and customer growth

The rapid return to growth is imperative for Canadian organizations. To achieve this objective, companies must remove the roadblocks that prevent them from implementing the new work model for their employees and customers. Understanding these challenges is critical to developing practical approaches for eliminating barriers that hinder employees from effectively engaging with customers.

To begin the journey, organizations must cultivate a digital-first workplace culture yet also include a hybrid component. Creating an influential culture is difficult during regular times, but the challenges are even more daunting during a crisis. Tara Tokatly, Vice President of Solution Engineering at Salesforce, provides perspectives from working with executives across Canada: “Workplace culture amplifies a company’s voice. It empowers employees to accomplish their goals and keeps employees engaged because they’re all moving in the same direction. When workers believe in the culture, they are very loyal.” To describe where companies should focus their efforts, Tokatly adds, “The solution is building a culture of trust. We have built this culture internally and with our customers, which allows us to share best practices that help stakeholders innovate and reimagine their futures. We also provide tools and resources that support the return to growth.”

## The balance employers must strike to boost employee retention

Research<sup>5</sup> conducted during the widespread shift to remote work identified the top Canadian work challenges:

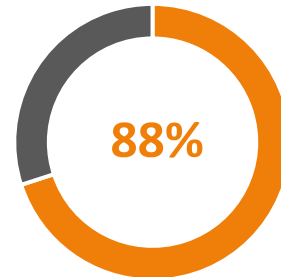
- Work/life balance
- Maintaining productivity
- Team communication and connectivity
- Collaboration within teams



These findings highlight the need to find the right balance of direct personal engagement and communication to offset the loss of connection between individuals and their leaders. While it is complicated to replicate the experience

of teams sitting together and collaborating, organizations need to prioritize this effort because more than 40% of the global workforce is likely to consider leaving their current employer within the next year<sup>6</sup>.

### Health and safety considerations for a positive employee experience



of Canadian organizations  
expect to have a physical  
location for their employees

An element of the employee engagement model is to return to a physical space where in-person interactions can provide social connection, ad hoc communication, and spontaneous idea generation. Research<sup>5</sup> reveals that 88% of Canadian organizations expect to have a physical location for their employees to return to as part of a full-time or hybrid work arrangement.

**“The anxiety that employees feel about being near others threatens the traditional model of work. We focus on workplace technologies that ensure that areas are safe, secure, monitored and free of viruses.”**

*Maria Aiello, Global Head, Real Estate & Mortgages Technology,  
Manulife Investment Management*

The challenge is how to ease the anxiety of returning to a physical office space. Manulife Investment Management has prioritized this, focusing on making its global portfolio of buildings safe for its workforce and commercial property tenants. Maria Aiello, Global Head, Real Estate & Mortgages Technology at Manulife, explains, “We are committed to creating an environment to which employees want to return. The anxiety that they feel about being near others threatens the traditional model of work.” Describing their initiatives to alleviate these anxieties, Aiello adds, “We focus on workplace technologies that ensure that areas are safe, secure, monitored, and free of viruses. We also want to create transparency around who is in the building, report the occupancy rate, and manage the opening of common areas.”

## Using data to meet customers where they are

**“Customer engagement requires a shift in mindset that there is no return to normal but an ongoing transition to the next normal.”**

*David Hodge, Area Vice President, Salesforce*

Another focus area of the new work model involves removing barriers that hinder engagement with customers. Based on conversations with executives across Canada, David Hodge, Area Vice President for Salesforce, provides some valuable insights, “Customer engagement requires a shift in mindset that there is no return to normal but an ongoing transition to the next normal. This definition will constantly evolve, requiring organizations to adapt continuously.”

Many organizations don’t have a single source of truth to orchestrate a connected and differentiated experience for their customers. There is a perception that heavy lifting is required to get to this outcome, but the reality is that the availability of agile platforms and API strategies reduce the time to results. Therefore, CIOs need to evaluate new technologies and vendors as part of their innovation agendas to raise the awareness of available customer engagement solutions within their companies.

## The legacy challenges CIOs will overcome

These insights underscore that organizations will find it difficult to do business in the new state of work if they don’t have a comprehensive customer engagement strategy. Hodge describes the challenges Canadian companies face, “Everybody has the objective to understand their customers and ultimately win their loyalty. But unfortunately, it is complex to gain an understanding of the customer perspective because of antiquated processes, organizational structures, infrastructure, and data technology that has not kept up with the pace of change those customers expect.”

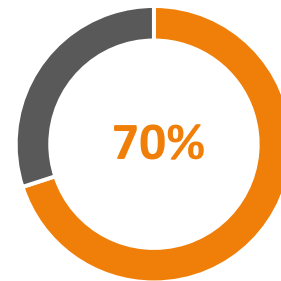
**“We had to re-engineer processes that assumed you were sitting beside the person that had to perform the next step.”**

*Dan Dickinson, former CIO for Equitable Bank*

An example of overcoming legacy challenges is Equitable Bank, the 9<sup>th</sup> largest schedule 1 bank in Canada. In 2016 Equitable launched EQ Bank, a 100% digital offering, quickly gaining traction in the marketplace, growing to more than 200,000 customers in only five years. The digital side of the business was able to adapt well to remote work and increased volumes, but the company experienced challenges in their legacy business. Dan Dickinson, former CIO for Equitable bank, explains, “We had to re-engineer processes that assumed you were sitting beside the person that had to perform the next step. We quickly implemented updated processes using queuing technology that allowed us to scale and execute asynchronously.”

The goal for enterprises is to smooth the way for employees to make interactions even easier for their customers. Focusing on the challenges and roadblocks will better meet the organization’s goals. In addition, this approach helps to ensure that the techniques companies use will satisfy the demands of the evolving work model.

## A fresh approach to unlock organizational potential



of executives believe that improved EX leads to improved CX, leading to rapid revenue growth

For organizations to win in the new state of work, the conversation needs to focus on both employee experience and customer experience and how they are more interconnected than ever. For example, 70% of executives believe that improved EX leads to improved CX, leading to rapid revenue growth<sup>7</sup>. Further analysis reinforces this linkage by confirming that high EX and CX companies are growing almost twice as fast as the laggards in these critical areas<sup>8</sup>.

The key question for CIOs is, “where should they invest?” There is an opportunity to reimagine culture and norms by leveraging technology to create a better way to work and serve customers. To meet increasingly demanding expectations and overcome barriers to the new work model, IT leaders must implement approaches that enable collaboration in the workplace and help their enterprises engage their customers better.

### Reimagining work with a people-centric strategy

Companies should strengthen collaboration in a hybrid environment while ensuring high employee engagement. Rather than returning to the old routine, the task for organizations is to rethink the way teams work. Our research uncovered many approaches that leaders use to engage their employees. We grouped them by clarity, performance, and trust using The Future Forum’s framework<sup>9</sup>, whose objective is to create a people-centric and digital-first future of work.

#### Standardizing tools and workplaces to create clarity

Clarity is about aligning talent with a shared purpose so that teams synthesize and share information. It involves creating environments that share knowledge across the organization giving cross-functional teams the ability to act.

The first approach is to implement flexible collaboration tools that can accommodate asynchronous and synchronous work styles, available to everyone, everywhere. Paul Lewis describes Pythian's tactics, "Because we've been virtual for most of our heritage, we have had to encourage creativity, productivity, and collaboration in a remote environment. Our focus is on cloud-native tools for workplace, video, documentation, development, QA, client engagements, analytics, and market presence." To optimize the deployment of their tools across global operations, Lewis recommends that organizations standardize these tools and ensure 100% compliance with using them. This approach helps to ensure consistency with customers, eases onboarding, and makes it easier for employees to switch between assignments.

**"Proximity breeds innovation and collaboration. As people shift work to hybrid environments, our view will be 60% present but 100% participation."**

*John Comacchio, Senior Vice President and CIO, Teknion*

Remote work is only part of the equation because most organizations will be adopting a hybrid work model. As a result, they add physical workspace approaches to the mix. For insights on this topic, we spoke with John Comacchio, Senior Vice President and CIO of Teknion. Headquartered in Toronto with 20 manufacturing plants and 30 offices worldwide, Teknion is an engineer and build-to-order provider of high-end office furniture to the Fortune 2000. Comacchio explains, "Proximity breeds innovation and collaboration. As people shift work to hybrid environments, our view will be 60% present but 100% participation. To do that, you need the right kinds of rooms and areas. The office will become an event center where people can participate physically distanced and safe; where they can hear, see, and speak with people anywhere." According to Comacchio, it's crucial to have a mobile-first strategy that enables employees to work anywhere on the campus and around the world. He adds, "We can't forget the digital collisions. We've already got physical collisions in the office, such as bumping into someone at the water cooler. In the digital world, we have to put more emphasis on technologies that encourage people to communicate."

Successful organizations use tactics to create physical spaces that entice stakeholders to commute in by reimagining these spaces as community hubs and places of innovation. They equip meeting rooms with creativity tools and intelligent audio/video capabilities that replicate the physical space in the virtual space. As a result, the office is transformed into a place to create, rather than just do work.



## Developing skills and capabilities to unlock performance

To unlock potential, organizations support diverse perspectives and remove obstacles for workers to increase their productivity, help them solve complex problems, and compete globally. In addition, companies use approaches that promote continuous talent development through the entire employee life cycle.

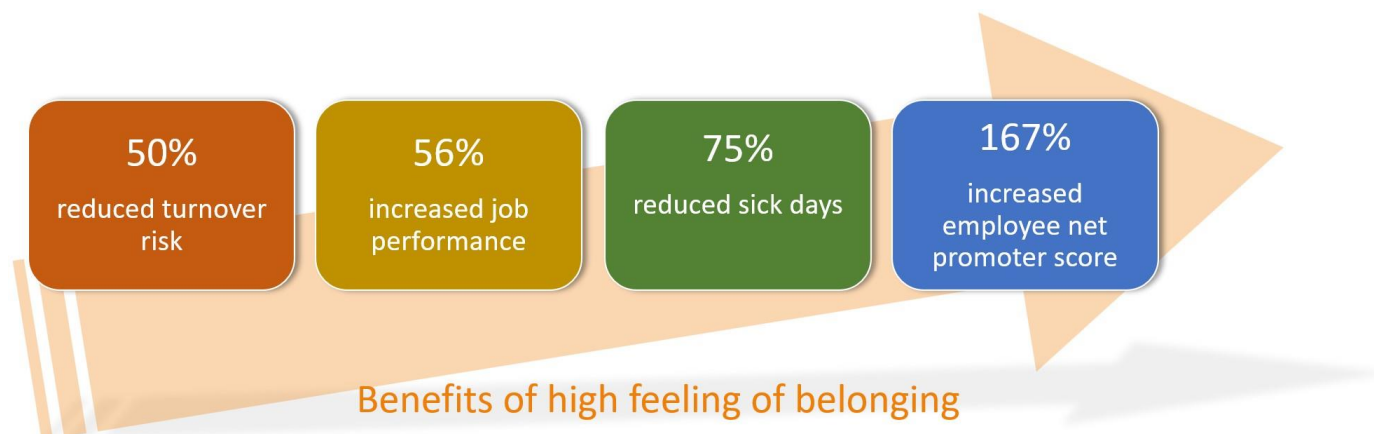
For the new state of work, 53% of organizations<sup>11</sup> believe that between half to all of their workforce requires new skills and capabilities over the next three years. As a result, they implement strategies that upskill workers to take advantage of the new processes and tools deployed in the hybrid environment to improve productivity and job performance.

**“We can’t simply take what happened in a conventional environment and try to copy it online. We need to build on our learnings to influence how we’re going to do things in the future.”**

*Dr. Peter Carr, Department of Management Science,  
University of Waterloo*

Dr. Peter Carr of the Department of Management Science at the University of Waterloo explains, “There wasn’t much guidance in the movement to online. To create an effective virtual learning environment, we must have a conscious design of the collaboration aspects. That includes how people work in teams to complete projects and interact with others.” Dr. Carr believes that an effective method is to take a constructivist approach to provide a richer educational experience. He adds, “We can’t simply take what happened in a conventional environment and try to copy it online. People need to be educated about how they will behave and their role in this new way of working. Then, we need to build on our learnings to influence how we’re going to do things in the future.”

## Connecting with employees to build trust



Building trust is about investing in people to build resilience in the face of adversity. Modern enterprises use tools and processes that allow employees to build networks, create trust, and support each other. The goal is to increase the feeling of belonging throughout the organization. Research<sup>11</sup> indicates that companies with high belonging realize a

56% increase in job performance, 50% reduction in turnover risk, 75% reduction in sick days and a 167% increase in employee net promoter score.

**“We’ve conducted roundtable discussions with our teams covering wellness topics to address isolation, work/life balance, and to encourage collaboration.”**

*Tara Tokatly, Vice President of Solutions Engineering, Salesforce*

Salesforce’s Tokatly provides some insights around building a culture of trust to realize these benefits. “We’ve connected with many customers that needed to evolve and transform. Sharing our learnings with stakeholders has been the best way to help them. In our engagements, we share best practices and equip our customers with the same solutions that allow our employees to be productive anywhere.” For leaders, this means leveraging approaches that increase connectedness by looking for ways to have meaningful relationships between teams and individuals. To support this, Tokatly adds, “We’ve conducted roundtable discussions with our teams covering wellness topics to address isolation, work/life balance, and to encourage collaboration. To fill the need for human interaction, our approaches find new ways for employees to connect and collaborate.”

## Three steps to remove friction and create holistic customer experiences

Organizations are feeling the inevitable shift to a digital-first, customer-centric world. The need to create a frictionless experience for both the customer and the workers supporting them drives this shift. David Hodge offers some advice to CIOs: “It’s not a matter of what we did before, but what we can do in the future. At the heart of this approach is embracing innovation and leveraging technology in a strategic manner.” Hodge believes that companies need to adopt new technologies like advanced analytics, AI, and bots, across all their digital channels. He provides some further insights: “Engagements shouldn’t be thought of as individual one-offs. To truly meet customer expectations, think of individual engagements as part of a holistic experience where each interaction informs the next.”

To achieve a frictionless end-to-end digital experience, consider a three-step methodology: enhance processes, digitize the processes, then add AI/machine learning (ML). Approaches taken by leading Canadian organizations illustrate how they use this methodology to serve their customers better.

### Map the customer journey and enhance processes

**“If we start with the digitization of existing processes, we might not address underlying flaws and inefficiencies. Start with enhancing processes... then use digitization to make those process even faster and more productive.”**

*Nastaran Bisheban, Chief Technology Officer, KFC Canada*

To begin the digitization effort, companies must map customer journeys to understand the underlying processes that support their entire life cycle with the organization. To emphasize this, Nastaran Bisheban, Chief Technology Officer for KFC Canada, explains, “It’s important to acknowledge what we are building on. If we start with the digitization of

existing processes, we might not address underlying flaws and inefficiencies. As technology leaders, we want to avoid falling into the trap of digitizing what is already there.” CIOs need to take heed of this advice. If business process improvement isn’t made first, then siloes will persist in the organization. Bisheban provides some additional guidance, “Start with enhancing processes, making sure they are as efficient as they can be, then use digitization to make those processes even faster and more productive.” She also encourages organizations to leverage change management techniques to ensure that solutions are adopted, sustained, and supported.

Best practices endorse creating a data model during the process evaluation phase to provide end-to-end insights that allow the organization to connect systems. This model guides how to market, sell, and support customers across their entire journey. The redesign phase is also an opportune time to reimagine the key performance indicators used to determine business success. To better ensure that processes align to improve CX, organizations contemplate changing measurements to focus on customer engagement. For example, instead of KPIs based on raw production numbers, consider using metrics focussed on customer satisfaction outcomes.

### Break down silos and satisfy customers through digitization

After process optimization, the next step is to remove business silos by collecting, collating, analyzing, and delivering customer data via a common user interface. This effort requires a combination of build and buy, depending on available skills and capabilities. In this way, businesses use solution providers to accelerate the delivery of base capabilities and then integrate their industry-specific components. By taking this approach, Canadian companies leverage vendor investments in development, integration, and partnerships while taking ownership of their intellectual property.

Loblaw Companies Limited investments in digital capabilities provide an exceptional example of agile digitization. To satisfy evolving customer expectations, Loblaw rapidly deployed several new or enhanced customer-centric services across their enterprise. These included:

- Shoppers COVID-19 Vaccine and Testing services.
- Loblaws Online Grocery to take advantage of the customer shift to online grocery shopping.
- The PC Financial no fee Mastercard and Money Account to capitalize on the surge in digital banking.
- The PC Chef meal kit delivery service to accommodate the desire for restaurant meals cooked at home.
- PC Health to provide telehealth services with dietitians, doctors, and nurses to leverage the connected health ecosystem.

Janet Lin explains that Loblaw observed changes to customer behaviours and patterns via their data capture and analytics capabilities. They then leveraged their digital infrastructure and business units to deploy the needed services to satisfy those changes. Says Lin, “These are examples of our customer-first approach in action. We understand our customer needs, and based on that, we offer them the solutions that help them to live better.”

### Maximize the full potential of AI and machine learning

Adding AI and ML into the mix is not really the last step because many vendors already embed AI into their solutions. It may just be a matter of learning how to leverage the capability and then turning it on. AI and ML are called out as a separate step because it is essential that Canadian companies embrace these technologies to remain competitive and deliver new levels of customer service.

Vala Afshar explains why this approach is so important: “There is a paradigm shift when we think about extended boundaries, decentralization, and digital-first. Our own Salesforce roadmap shows that every significant feature coming out will be powered by ML. As systems become more complicated and autonomous, they begin to resemble a business circulatory system that uses AI to filter out the noise.” Afshar points out that this changes relationships with service professionals because they will no longer tolerate mundane tasks and instead prioritize soft skills like creativity and negotiation to enhance customer engagement. He believes that over 50% of the interactions through a contact center can be automated with almost no human touch.



Afshar says that there are many approaches and derivatives under the AI umbrella that enhance the customer experience. These include deep learning, natural language processing, smart robotics, and computer visioning, to name a few. As AI becomes embedded in all enterprise applications, organizations should prepare themselves for the technology's changes to employees and customers.

## Strategies: Transform the organization

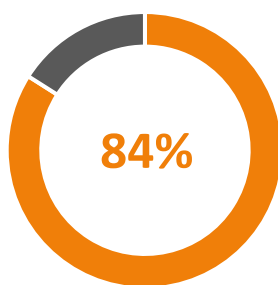
To be truly effective, organizations need to plan strategically. For example, chasing a singular use case or point solution without looking at complete integrations may produce sub-optimal results. In addition, a tactical approach may move problems around to other groups. On the other hand, strategic thinking allows leveraging technology to improve the end-to-end employee experience and improve customer engagement across their entire journey.

### Become data-driven to put the customer at the centre

Transforming to a data-driven organization is a primary strategy for thriving in the new state of work. By laying down the proper foundations, organizations acquire the ability to analyze data from customers, partners, and employees. As a result, they can create personalized products and services for customers while increasing engagement with the workforce. John Comacchio describes how Teknion became data-driven: “The connected customer is all connected by data. When we started our journey, we created dashboards and integrated all our systems so that our salespeople had a single pane of glass to access needed information. Once we made our data readily available, we turned that into a self-service model to let customers look up the information themselves. We deliver this capability through all of our digital channels.”

By implementing this strategy, organizations democratize information by empowering people to explore and communicate with data. This capability allows employees to know more about their customers to support continuous conversations throughout their life cycles. Consequently, data literacy skills become foundational for every role in the business, and they also prepare the organization to leverage the promise of AI. Says Comacchio, “Using AI allows us to find out what’s going on in our plants, order and shipping status, and what we are committed to. It also enables us to discover what our customers are doing by scrubbing social media. Having that knowledge allows us to stay connected with the client and leverage that information to support the buying process.”

### Reimagining the customer experience



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*Catherine Chick, Senior Vice President of IT,  
Canada Goose*

Businesses need to do something more than just a transaction to get the attention of the customer. They need to offer an experience that the buyer remembers. Successful companies view each transaction as an opportunity to learn more about the customer and improve their interactions with them. This strategy is vital because 84% of customers feel that the experience is more important in the digital world than the underlying product or service<sup>12</sup>. Just as critical, one-third of customers will abandon a brand after just one bad experience.

Canada Goose provides an example of an effective strategy to translate the unique experience from their retail stores to their fast-growing eCommerce channel. Catherine Chick, Senior Vice President of IT, explains, “Delivering a better customer experience is not just about meeting needs but also anticipating needs. Technology plays a huge role because an enterprise architecture view of the systems, processes, and data allows us to anticipate the needs of our customers. The biggest challenge CIOs have is the plethora of available platforms and siloed solutions. Having an enterprise view with technology governance is what allows us to create solutions for the business.”

These are sage words of advice. To reimagine the customer experience effectively, organizations must select a common integration platform. This strategy provides a single place to track customers and enables integration with other solutions to create a seamless, differentiated experience that minimizes context switching for customers and employees. It also allows the organization to rethink the business model to better engage with customers by focussing on services built on top of products across all levels of the enterprise.

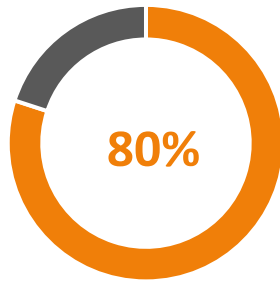
**“We have digital-twin technology that takes a 3D model of a city and provides an interface that allows customers to interact with it. The model... allows customers to add their avatars and personalize their experience.”**

*Martin Jepil, Global Vice President of Enterprise Architecture, Avison Young*

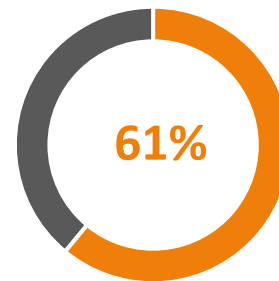
Avison Young is increasing its portfolio of technologies in real estate to design and deliver the future workplace. They want to set the tone for the commercial hybrid work environment experience. Martin Jepil, Global Vice President of Enterprise Architecture, provides a glimpse of what this strategy delivers: “We have digital-twin technology that takes a 3D model of a city and provides an interface that allows customers to interact with it. The model is hyper-realistic and allows customers to add their avatars to personalize their experience.” According to Jepil, this enables an immersive experience that allows virtual tours of the workplace and the surrounding neighbourhood. He adds, “Without physically being there, customers can enter a building, push the elevator button, see floor plans, and make changes to furniture, lighting, and décor.” This solution's applications are extensive and allow Avison Young to enhance their relationships with suppliers that service the commercial property ecosystem.

## Realizing the sustainability mandate

Employees and customers will readily align themselves with a brand that shares the same values. In particular, the environment is a significant concern for stakeholders, with sustainability increasingly being a prerequisite for investment. Companies slow to make progress face the wrath of activist investors and suffer from substantial fines.



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The topic of sustainability warrants special attention because our research reveals a broad impact on the new work model. The importance of commitment is evident, with 80% of consumers prepared to switch to a brand with high social value and 56% willing to pay more for them. The opposite is just as critical because 61% of consumers stopped doing business with a company whose values weren't aligned with their own<sup>12</sup>.

A formal program can pay off because many companies include sustainability and certification prerequisites for suppliers before doing business with them. Having a well-documented commitment to reducing emissions also allows a company to differentiate itself from its competition.

### The Canada Goose sustainability story

An iconic brand respected worldwide, Canada Goose needs to demonstrate to their consumers and the investment community that they are reconciling the materials they use. Catherine Chick explains, "Sustainability of our products is core to the mission at Canada Goose. We have a published report available to the public that documents the accountability for our environmental goals." She says that technology supports this work by tracking raw materials all the way to finished goods. Canada Goose is also considering how to gain visibility to the full product life cycle to inspire reclamation and recycling possibilities.

This approach leverages the company's ERP and data lake capabilities, coupled with BI analysis performed across the organization to create cross-functional views. Chick adds, "This initiative is great for technology because it's an all-business approach. It involves retail, supply chain, finance, operations, and product teams, all working with our technology teams to achieve results."

## The CIO role in leading sustainability

Organizations need to avoid paying mere lip service to sustainability as part of their overall Environment, Social & Governance (ESG) mandates. Public health, social equity and the global economy have become top priorities in the new work state. In addition, sustainability brings tangible benefits to organizations regarding operating cost reductions, tax incentives, customer acquisition, and employee satisfaction.

CIOs can support commitments around reducing carbon emissions and setting net-zero goals by defining the targets and metrics that need to be part of the core IT systems to perform carbon accounting and reporting. In addition, they can make sustainability programs interactive and organic, elevating the level of reporting and communications beyond quarterly and annual reports. For example, David Landry describes how Salesforce manages sustainability: “Our carbon-neutral cloud means that all the operations that our customers run are carbon neutral. Recently, we’ve added a sustainability exhibit to our supplier contracts, where every supplier needs to make demonstrable commitments to how they are reducing their emissions. This exhibit not only impacts our thousands of suppliers, but we also want it to be a model for other companies to make it their own to create a profound impact across the globe.”



According to Landry, to be effective, companies need to find a way to track, analyze, communicate, and collaborate on sustainability program data. It is also essential to align all parts of the organization in the effort, including the board, executives, employees, and the supply chain. He explains how Salesforce solved this challenge: “We launched the Sustainability Cloud to help companies track their carbon footprint and perform the accounting associated with it. This solution enables this mandate to permeate through the entire organization.”

## Next steps for business-focussed CIOs

As the global economy returns to growth, organizations must recognize that the modern work environment is decentralized, digital-first, and boundless. Companies that adapt to this new reality realize improved employee and customer loyalties, resulting in significant business benefits.

### Follow this roadmap to build a better employee and customer experience

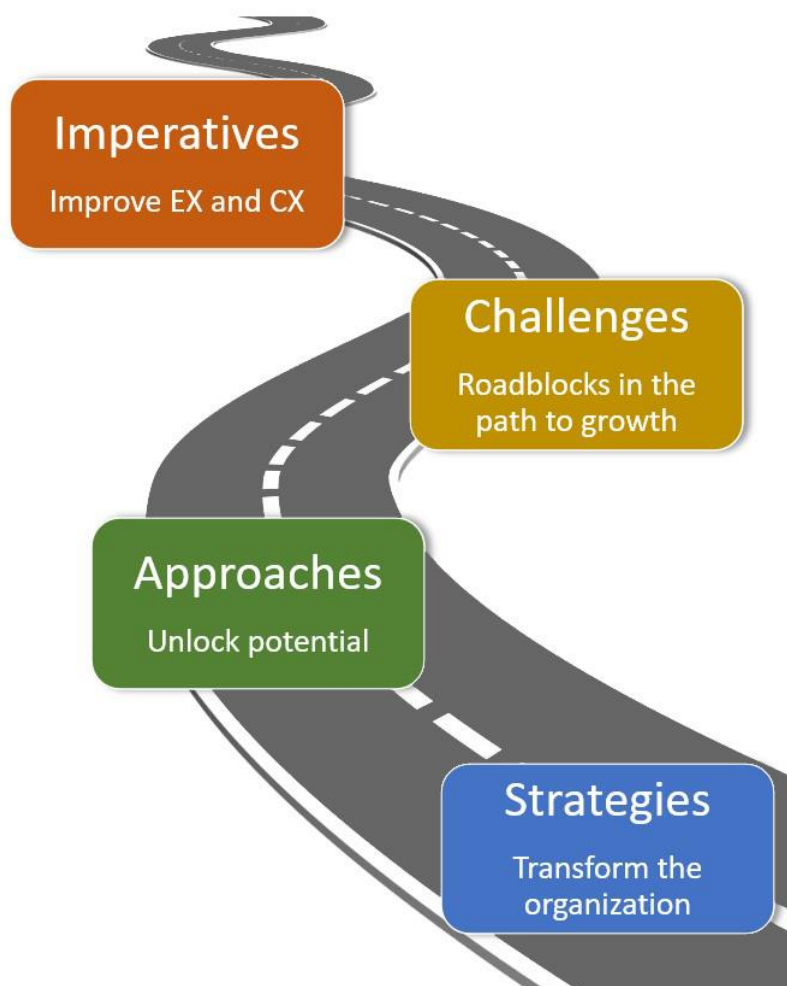
Our findings provide a roadmap that leading Canadian companies use to enable the future of work. We encourage IT leaders to follow a similar journey by reviewing the use cases and reflecting on how best to apply them within their organizations.

#### Understand the imperatives

The journey starts with understanding the employee and customer imperatives that drive loyalty and growth. The enterprise embraces flexibility in its plans to enable a decentralized hybrid work environment for employees. The organization also acknowledges that its customers expect a digital-first experience consistent across all business areas that interact with them.

#### Internalize the challenges

In the next step, the company internalizes the roadblocks that prevent it from implementing the new work model for all stakeholders. This mandate compels leadership to evaluate the maturity of the organization's culture and determine whether the environment is a safe place for employees. The CIO assesses technology capabilities to provide a differentiated experience for consumers and identifies the required changes to legacy environments to improve customer interactions.



### Invest in approaches that strengthen EX and CX

The organization invests in approaches that strengthen the link between employee experience, customer experience, and accelerated growth. The enterprise implements standardized tools and configures its physical spaces to promote flexibility and collaboration. Leadership unlocks performance by upskilling workers to take advantage of new processes and tools designed to build networks and create trust. To achieve a frictionless end-to-end digital experience for customers, the company re-engineers its processes, digitizes them, and implements multiple derivatives of artificial intelligence.

### Execute with an eye towards innovation and transformation

In the final leg, the organization initiates strategic transformation programs to become data-driven and reimagine the customer experience. The CIO translates business strategy into an enterprise architecture while also prioritizing innovation. The organization develops capabilities that efficiently identify emerging imperatives to kick-start a new cycle of transformation.

### Prioritize sustainability to improve business outcomes

The company recognizes the importance of sustainability to the corporate ESG mandate. As a result, leadership sponsors a formal program of initiatives that increase engagement with employees and customers. Furthermore, the organization aligns executives, staff, and the supply chain through structured tracking and reporting mechanisms.

## Final thoughts: No limits to learning, leading, and growing

We enjoyed speaking with the Canadian organizations leading the way to the new state of work. It was reassuring to observe that Canada is a world leader in digitization to engage employees and deliver customer value. Enterprises in every segment are enjoying the benefits of strategic digital transformation. We encourage Canadian CIOs to continue to be leaders for their businesses by championing the effective use of technology to reimagine the employee and customer experience.

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