

MEDITARI

Global Innovation x Local Opportunities



The 6 Components of Organisational Success with Hybrid Work Arrangements

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In collaboration with

GRAVITEAMS

The 6 Components of Organisational Success with Hybrid Work Arrangements

As the business world is on its way to adapt to the post pandemic reality, profound changes brought up by COVID-19 will likely permanently transform the way we work. At the peak of the restrictions associated with the virus, many people embraced Work From Home and it has become an unexpected and great boost to virtual work. Most companies have successfully managed to engage their knowledge workers from home and continued their business operations during the weeks of the lockdowns.

Not returning to the office during the lockdowns has put businesspeople into a temporary “crisis response mode” as most business activity shifted down to the lowest gear. Management and employees were doing whatever needed to be done to keep their business afloat, putting off the rest till better times and hoping to still have their businesses and jobs when things go back to normal.

Somewhere down the road, we have realized that the COVID-19 Pandemic will influence our social, personal and professional lives far beyond the next few months. According to some estimates social distancing and requirement to wear a face mask will go as far as 2022¹. This means, that businesses will need to move from firefighting mode to a more moderate and more balanced approach to staying safe on the one hand and take action to revive the world economy on the other hand.

¹ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/coronavirus-social-distancing-how-long/>

² <https://www.gensler.com/uploads/document/695/file/Genler-US-Work-From-Home-Survey-2020-Briefing-1.pdf>

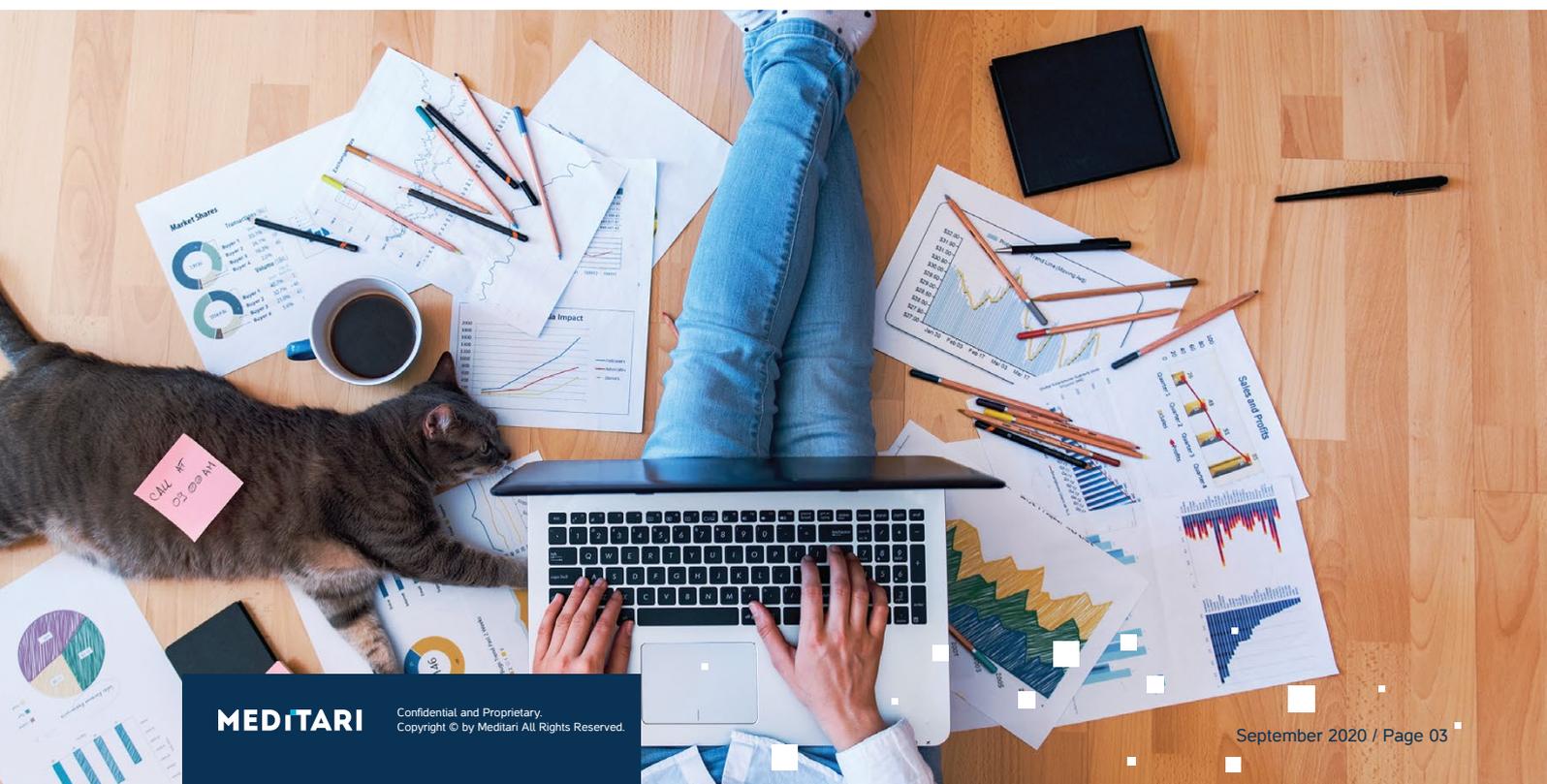
Official COVID-19 restrictions are now being relaxed, but all efforts remain focused on health and safety. Businesses blend into a hybrid mode of Work From Home and the ability to carry out some activity from their offices or customer premises. We are looking into the future, where people prefer to telecommute more frequently but also wish to have the flexibility to work from the office or any other location of their choice. Many companies announced they are maintaining remote work after the pandemic restrictions are removed; however, studies suggest that no-office organizational structures might not be desirable or sustainable in the long run², as the social component of a healthy workplace as well the possibilities for talent development might suffer. Businesses that manage to offer the flexibility of remote work in the long run, combined with building a strong collaborative and trustful culture in this hybrid environment, will be able to attract and retain the best talent.

Which challenges do the organizations need to address on their way to success?

The most obvious Covid-19 related challenges on the side of the employees are:

- the lack of freedom in choosing where to work from and the feeling of being chained to one's own living room,
- the need to multitask and juggle the children and the household along with the desperate desire to stay productive,
- the ability to maintain self-discipline and self-motivation.

These will be the first ones to be remedied, as we move into hybrid work environments where each organization finds its own sweet spot between the Home and the Office.



While the employee-side challenges are relatively straight forward to solve, there are many other challenges of organizational nature need to be addressed strategically and will determine the success and future relevance of the companies in the business world.

First and foremost, these are the challenges:



Legislation and policies

As the scenario of remote work was rarely explicit on the corporate agenda, there is often a lack guidelines and processes to govern its implementation. Insufficient or unclear legislation on the national level – such as workplace health insurance coverage, legal requirements for workplace conditions, labour migration and tax issues are just some the details, companies now need to think of and cater for.



Document handling

Despite much talk about the paperless office for decades, many organizations still use hard copies and wet signatures for important documents. In a hybrid environment, there are additional challenges of a logistical nature – where can the employees securely print their documents and how do these reach their intended recipients? If several signatures are required, couriering documents adds risk, time and costs.



Cybersecurity and data privacy

It was a great challenge for some organizations to secure thousands of VPN connections overnight for their employees to be able to connect from home, and to provide reliable 24/7 IT-support for their staff. But there are more challenges to this, for instance the risk of misusing communication channels, such as WhatsApp, for corporate communication opens vast loopholes in terms of cybersecurity and data privacy.



Technology integration

This challenge is closely connected to the question of data privacy and cybersecurity. Most organizations had not pro-actively implemented a strategy of connecting people via technology and integrating it among all tools, processes and workflows. When doing video conferencing, file sharing, CRM or management of the knowledge database – are all tools integrated? Do they provide secure data transfers? Do they provide integrated and efficient process flow? Often it is not the case.

THINGS WILL BE TAKEN AS NOTES, REWRITTEN IN EMAILS, THEN COPIED INTO FILES AND FINALLY SAVED IN SOME CLOUD STORAGE DIRECTORY. RELEVANT COLLEAGUES STILL NEED TO BE CONTACTED TO FIND OUT WHERE THE LAST VERSION IS SAVED. WILL BE PROVIDED WITH A SCREENSHOT; NOT WITH A LINK TO THE FILE, WHICH CAN BE QUICKLY AND SECURELY UPDATED.

The paradigm shift

Furthermore, a whole string of managerial and business-related challenges unveiled itself at the time of the paradigm shift:

- **Need to adopt the business model to the new normal.** Whole industries, such as travel and hospitality, transportation and logistics of all kinds, physical retail business, entertainment events and many more were hardly hit by the pandemic. The paradigm changes in preferences and lifestyles post COVID-19 would require many businesses to strategically reposition.
- **Need to set goals and advance on them.** The current short-term view gives just enough energy and discipline to pull through the next commitment. The strategic agenda remains in the back of our minds till the good times are back.
- **Need to be able to properly evaluate performance and develop human talent.** In the firefighting mode you just fight the fire! Human development goes hand in hand with corporate strategy, vision execution and market positioning. Right now, many companies are still paralyzed, waiting for the New Normal to arrive.
- **Need for efficient communication.** Written communication is prone to misunderstanding and misinterpretation. If not accounted for and not resolved in a timely and proper manner, conflicts, mistrust, alienation within teams and among departments might follow and snowball into organizational disasters.
- **Need for more clarity.** Insufficient crisis communication due to unclear strategy in the short-run and beyond, impedes management decision-making processes and spirals into confusion, low cohesiveness and poor motivation among employees, customers and other stakeholders.

Transition to the long-term hybrid working environment will top the corporate agendas in the near future.

Despite all these challenges, workplace flexibility seems to know only one direction – forward. Flexible work arrangements fundamentally grew in importance for both employers and employees. It should be seen as a sure trend, that organizations will put the transition to a long-term flexible, hybrid or remote working environment on the top of their corporate agendas.

But such a transition is neither automatic nor effortless. Companies need to show commitment to creating and improving their technical, processual and cultural infrastructure in order to allow their employees workplace flexibility as a part of their business model. Most probably such a model would still include headquarters, maybe a number of smaller regional offices, where people could meet and socialize and hopefully frequent corporate outings for fun and bonding.

We are all social beings and truly personal connections are best built through deep personal interaction aside of the technological mediation.



But what does it mean, to have a good technical, processual and cultural infrastructure for cohesive, productive and high performing virtual organization?

These strategic components were identified in practice and experience through our recent projects, for example with Graviteams at Meditari:

one

Build a virtual work ecosystem. Businesses, that want to give their employees the possibility of remote work while optimizing productivity, should invest into building top notch virtual work infrastructure and a remote team culture with strong corporate purpose as a centre of organizational gravity: a strong team with clear roles and a good amount of trust and transparency at all levels.

two

Adopt a long-term perspective. Organizations have seen a surge in productivity and business activity, as all of a sudden, decisions that would have taken weeks in the pre-pandemic times, would be made now within an hour, and working prototypes rapidly developed and made available by next Friday! But in order to be successful and better equipped for adaptation in this quickly changing, and uncertain business environment, companies must adopt a long-term perspective, and look beyond the current challenges. Neither waiting for the storm to pass, nor quick-and-dirty solutions will help you to be relevant and successful in the long run. Instead, concentration on a solid business proposition and creating maximum value for your customers in a sustainable manner are the only ways to a lasting success.

three

Invest in human capital. The long-term strategy should be geared first and foremost towards your people. The current crisis takes a toll on your employees' professional ambition, personal organization and emotional wellbeing. Research shows, that average life satisfaction in Europe, fell during the current pandemic to the lowest level since 1980 and this needs to be addressed as a top priority while going forward.

four

Streamline operations by optimizing processes. COVID-19 gave every organizational process a good stress test. Some things probably worked quite well; other aspects were really painful. Use the knowledge you have gained now to optimize in the future. Clear ways of reporting, task allocation, information sharing, knowledge accumulation among others will become even more important when people spend less time in the office and voluntarily work remotely. If these processes show to have many bottlenecks or loopholes, leading to delays and inefficiencies, it makes sense to fix them first. It might help to visualize a flowchart where activities and tasks are shown in a sequential manner and start making changes from there.

five

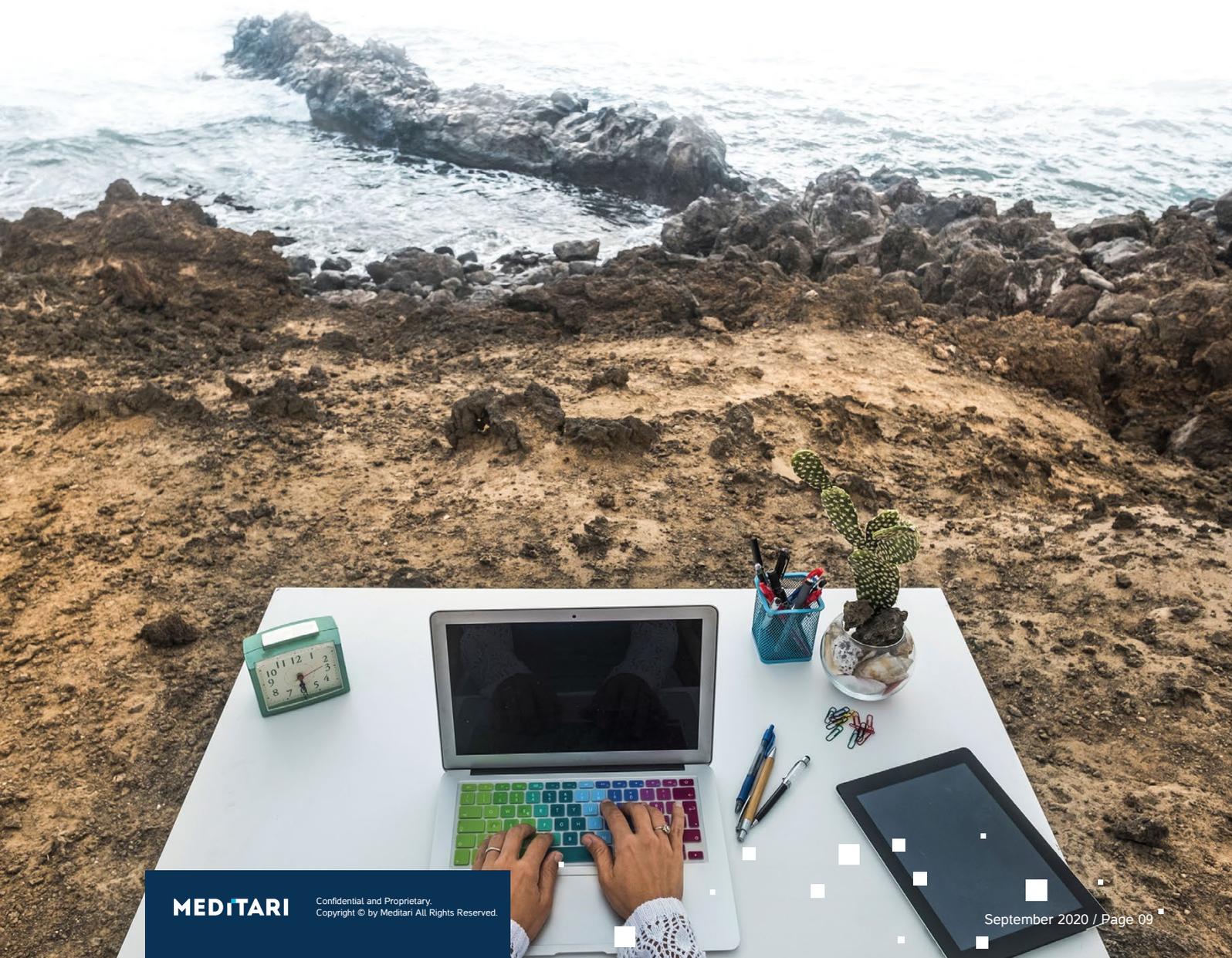
Digitize processes. As operations become more complex due to interconnectedness and multiple locations, digitization of business processes becomes a task of the utmost importance. The pressure comes from both – your competition, as well as your customers. But only clear and efficient processes will bring advantage; a bad process – digital or analogue – is still a bad process.

six

Adopt flexibility. For most companies, it is not the change, that poses a challenge, but the speed of change. Successful business today is characterized by the ability to make faster decisions, adopt new technologies, penetrate new markets and retrain talented staff. This is only possible within the culture of inclusiveness, open feedback and high tolerance to error.

The current pandemic has been jokingly named the strongest driver for organization digital transformation, stronger than the CEO with the corporate strategy or the customers' demands. Every joke is partially true, and it is great to see that amid the crisis many enterprises are searching and finding new opportunities. There is no way back, but there is a way forward, to more flexibility in working arrangements, organisational structures and business models.

Businesses, that manage to create corporate identity around a strong purpose, clear digital processes and flexible organizational culture, if they manage to hire and retain the best people and to find the fastest way to the customer, will have all cards on their hand to play it big in any kind of economic circumstances.



About this Report

This report was commissioned by Meditari, a virtual advisory network bridging between Global Innovation and Local Opportunities in the Telecommunications and Emerging Technologies world.

The report was developed by Graviteams, a consultancy dedicated to helping companies and teams to work virtually and develop a forward looking transformational leadership style, aligning the business strategy of the company with the personal development of the team members.

For a more thorough analysis and bespoke engagement, please contact us directly at nataliya@graviteams.com or hello@meditari.com.

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Nataliya is a virtual leader, trainer and advisor. She is dedicated to promoting digital and virtual teamwork and fostering a forward-looking transformational leadership style in distributed teams. She has 15 years of experience of working in international environment as a project manager, business consultant and advisor with clients in Europe, Middle East and Asia. Nataliya helps leaders and teams to identify the most suitable tools and approaches for outstanding virtual performance.



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Ziad is a seasoned technology executive with a track record of 20+ years in global telecom companies during which he served as Head of the Middle East and Central Asia at Qualcomm, growing the region's wireless and digital ecosystem. Prior to that, Ziad held various technology and sales roles at Ericsson across the Middle East and Africa region. In addition to advising and mentoring entrepreneurs, he is also an angel investor sitting on the boards of various companies.

About us

MEDITARI

We are Meditari, a Digital Advisory Network leveraging the know-how of our global network of partners and advisors to offer our clients trustworthy advice in the Strategy, Technology and Innovation domains across the internet and telecommunications space.

Headquartered in Dubai, United Arab Emirates - we bridge between global innovation and local opportunities through our deep understanding of the technology space, as well as our strong knowledge of the Middle East and Africa markets.

For more info, contact us at hello@meditari.com

GRAVITEAMS

GRAVITEAMS is a professional management consultancy for better remote, distributed and virtual work. We are dedicated to helping organisations to succeed in the digital work environment and to tap fully into potential of virtual collaboration.

GRAVITEAMS' services include advisory on organisational success criteria, such as use of tools, building a digital infrastructure, creating sustainable processes and efficient organisational governance; as well as on the soft criteria of organisational psychology, leadership, mindset, corporate culture and trustful & open communication.

Be it by drafting a virtual roadmap from scratch or by fine-tuning certain elements of an already advanced remote culture - we create tailored solutions for the specific challenges and priorities of our clients for their long-term sustainable organisational success.

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