



CXO FOCUS

HYBRID WORK AND THE CIO'S ROLE IN ENTERPRISE TRANSFORMATION

—
ROUNDTABLE TAKEAWAY



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Hybrid isn't without its challenges, and ensuring success requires significant transformation in the enterprise at multiple levels.



Enterprises have undergone historic changes over the past two years, not the least of which is the shift toward the hybrid work environment. Although the transition to remote working was unplanned, it proved successful in most cases, and in some cases, profitable.



Employees have demonstrated increased levels of productivity, greater job satisfaction, and the ability to collaborate effectively leveraging a wide variety of cloud-based solutions. Today, 74% of U.S. companies are using or plan to implement a permanent hybrid work model – and 44% of U.S. employees prefer it.

But hybrid isn't without its challenges, and ensuring success requires significant transformation in the enterprise at multiple levels. Cultural change is equally important as implementing the technology infrastructure to enable secure, continuous access to company resources from remote locations. Recently, Keith Ferrazzi, founder and chairman of Ferrazzi Greenlight, led two intimate roundtable discussions with CIOs from industry-leading organizations, including Nutanix, CVS Health, FedEx, Lumen, Abbott, Liberty Mutual, Verizon and others to understand how the CIO can be a champion of transformation and help to ensure the success of the hybrid work model. This article looks at highlights from the discussions.

The Challenges of driving alignment around digital initiatives



According to Roshan Navagamuwa, CIO of CVS Health, it's not just COVID that accelerated digital transformation initiatives in organizations across industries, but the rising-tide phenomenon of the digital consumer. "Consumers were already compelling us to change from traditional experiences," he said. "They were expecting us to make it just as easy to engage with CVS Health, as was already the case in other parts of their lives." However, Sabina Ewing, CIO and vice president of business and technology services at Abbott, said COVID was the "digital defibrillator." "It accelerated digital transformation and pushed organizations to build technical acumen," she said.

Still, implementing technology to support the hybrid workplace model isn't the only mountain to climb. Panelists expressed frustrations around educating employees about necessary process changes that must accompany the adoption of any new technology.

In their hurry to transform and ensure business continuity, organizations deployed technologies but didn't leverage their full capabilities because they failed to adopt new processes, as well. "You don't just pick the technology and that's it," said Dirk Propfe, president and CEO of ET Group. "Everything needs to change."

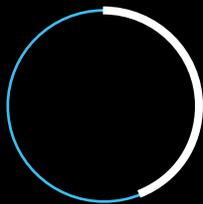
Fletcher Keister, executive vice president and chief transformation officer at Lumen Technologies, agrees.

“Say there’s an objective to move sales processes into a digital flow,” he said. “If there isn’t the same investment of energy into redefining the business process around digital marketing, you won’t extract the potential value from the technology. You have to care about all parts of the experience, not just the technology piece.”

According to Propfe, employees often don’t even know what technologies and tools are available to them to facilitate the hybrid model. “Educating folks on the technologies that are already available in the stack and how those may be leveraged to support different types of business processes is essential,” he said. “About 70% of the technology that exists within an organization is not being used to its full potential.”

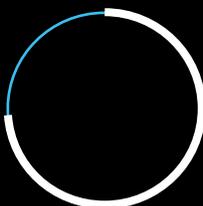


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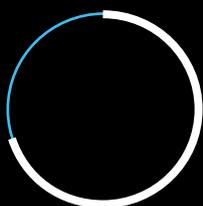
44%

of U.S. employees prefer hybrid work



74%

of U.S. companies plan to implement hybrid work



70%

of the technology within an organization is not being used to its full potential.

Finding serendipitous moments

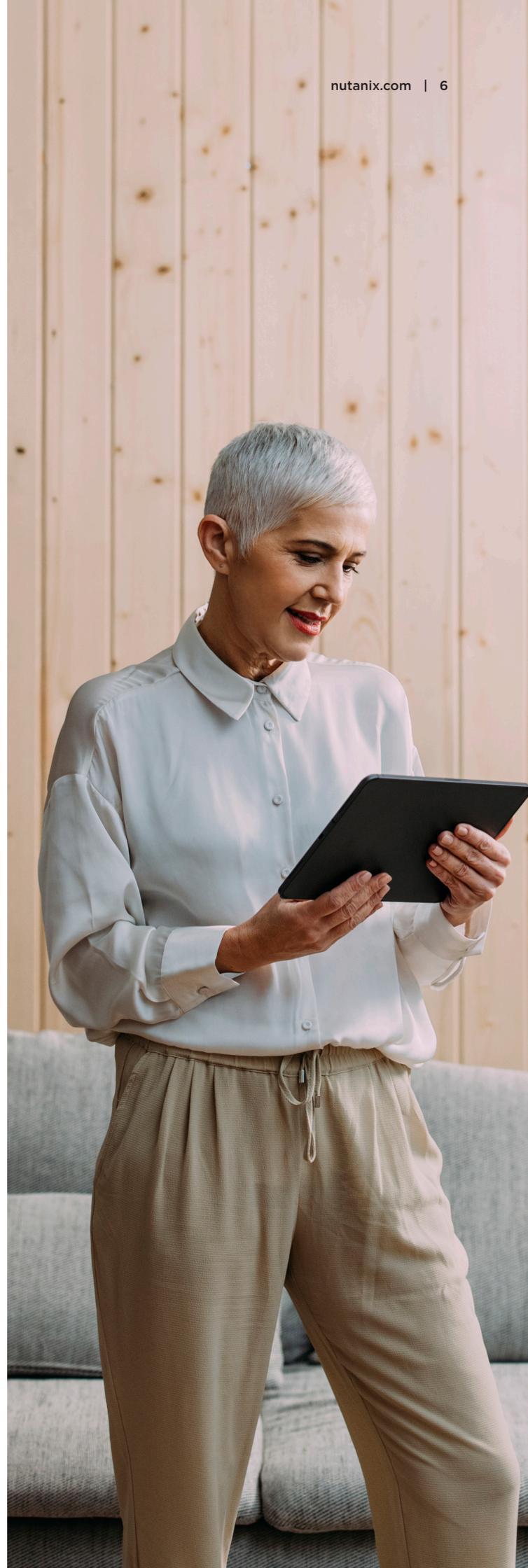
Communication is also a big concern when transitioning to the hybrid model. Panelists cited a lack of understanding around how to coordinate and collaborate effectively, since the age-old ways of office life such as one-on-one ad hoc conversations by the water cooler are gone.

It's true that when people work remotely, those serendipitous moments in which ideas are shared and problem solving accelerates are few and far between. Innovation happens in unplanned conversations and meetings, but in a hybrid world, almost everything must be planned.



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“Moving to a hybrid work environment allows us to create moments that matter with colleagues, where we can collaborate on the spot or have an ad hoc conversation. It also allows us, through virtual meetings, to engage with a wider range of employees, and not just those we see physically in the office,” said Shankar Arumugavelu, senior vice president and global CDIO at Verizon.





| Hybrid is more than ‘context switching’

While the option to work remotely has enabled employees to find a better work/life balance, it comes at a cost, and this cannot be overlooked. People are working at all times of the day and night, and this could have long-term impacts on employees' mental health.

“Over the past two years, many people are in meetings and taking care of kids with COVID at the same time, and they're overwhelmed,” said Nava Davuluri, CTO at Huddl.ai. “They have a limited amount of time to get work done.”

“But as people come back into the office it's expected that there will be a lot more stress, because they're trying to figure out how to operate in this new normal,” he added. “They need to find daycare for their children and navigate traffic several times a week. The transition can be even more overwhelming.”

Whether employees thrive in the hybrid model may depend on tenure with a company, as well.

“If you've known each other longer, you need to get together less,” said Greg Moore, CIO at KB Home. “People that don't have that history of working together over a long period of time are often a little bit hesitant and unsure and may need to spend a bit more time in the office until the team reaches that level of trust.”

“We have to remember that hybrid isn't just about context switching,” said Wendy M. Pfeiffer, CIO at Nutanix. “We're proficient at synchronous communications, and we've become skilled at working remotely during the pandemic, but we haven't mastered how to be good in mixed-mode.” Pfeiffer added that the transition to hybrid represents a paradigm shift in how organizations are run.

“We're blowing up the systems of gravity,” she said. “Traditionally we worked by time zones and org charts, but in a hybrid model, those constructs are no longer required. The new center of gravity needs to be the goal and the network of people working towards it.”

What does it take to be a world-class hybrid leader?

Panelists agree that ensuring the success of the hybrid work model is essential. But it will take time and considerable effort. Following are some best practices proposed by panelists:



MIND YOUR PROCESSES

Implementing new technology will not facilitate change unless the processes change, too. “It’s important to understand that you must change how you work, and technology isn’t just layered on top of current processes,” said Pfeiffer. “If you deliver the tech stack and don’t change the behavior, you can’t take advantage of what it offers.”



DISCUSS EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY

“Conversations about employee productivity are essential, especially as it relates to the knowledge workers in your organization and the effects of the hybrid work model and the technology required to enable it,” Pfeiffer said.

Overall, productivity has been about 30% better since the transition to remote working, but Pfeiffer pointed out that that’s not true across the board. “Some teams were actually less productive, and may need to return to the office,” she added. “Others will prove to be more productive working remotely. A data-driven strategy can help clarify those differences.”



CHECK IN MORE FREQUENTLY

“When you’re in a hybrid environment, you don’t have the luxury of seeing people face-to-face and reading body language,” said Danny Meyer, global head of CIO practice at Anaplan. As a result, you might be unaware of hardships team members are facing before it starts to play out at work. Leading a team in a hybrid world requires a different level of intentionality. “You must be creative about how you check in with people and rebuild a sense of community that’s critical to retention,” Meyer noted.



WORK WITH HR TO ENSURE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND SATISFACTION

Hybrid is here to stay, so it’s important to get good at asynchronous communication and adjust to new ways of collaborating effectively with team members.

As Arumugavelu pointed out, employees may have career development challenges or become disengaged which challenges our people leaders to learn and embrace new methods of engaging with employees and ensuring their needs are met. “It’s critical that the CIO and HR leader work together to solve these challenges – and it may take some experimentation.”

Implementing a hybrid cloud infrastructure is essential to enable organizations to leverage these best practices to their fullest and strengthen collaboration and communication among teams that are working in a distributed, hybrid environment. To learn more about how Nutanix is helping organizations transition seamlessly to a hybrid work model, read about our solutions for remote, branch and edge sites.

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