



THE FUTURE OF WORK: HOW WILL THE WORKPLACE LOOK AND RUN IN A POST COVID-19 ERA?

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Since March, businesses in every industry have experienced drastic change. Shelter-in-place (SIP) orders made remote working mainstream, fast-tracked digital transformation, and forced organizations to take a long, hard look at developing viable business continuity plans that may not have existed prior to the pandemic.

New McKinsey research revealed that companies have accelerated the digitization of customer and supply-chain interactions as well as internal operations by about 4 years. The research also noted that digitally enabled products have accelerated by as much as 7 years. In other words, the future is now, and the workplace looks a lot different than it did just a few short months ago.

Although globalization had already given a boost to digital transformation initiatives, widespread digital adoption has been fueled by the need for contactless interactions, as well as the potential cost savings that can help offset the economic impact most businesses felt this year. The road ahead is not without challenges from streamlining operations, ensuring business continuity, and to supporting employees through all of the disruption.



Welcome to the Hybrid Workplace

A record number of people work remotely and will continue to do so. The fear of lost productivity held companies back from giving employees the flexibility to work remotely, but that myth has now been completely debunked. In the U.S., employees have saved more than 89 million hours each week in commute time alone since the start of the pandemic — or 44.5 million full workdays. That's just one of the reasons Tech giants such Microsoft, Dropbox, Twitter, and others have already informed their employees that from now on, they have the option of working from home permanently.

As such, it's likely that a flexible, hybrid working environment will be a hallmark of the new normal. This is great news for companies and employees alike. With the ability to work anywhere, people can accept positions at companies anywhere on the map and enjoy a better work/life balance.

Organizations have a much broader talent pool to choose from, since they can hire employees regardless of where they live, and they can save on real estate and operating expenses by having fewer people on-premises.

But with these benefits come significant challenges, as well. Security, collaboration, and employee engagement could be barriers to the success of this new workplace model. In their rush to connect remote workers virtually when SIP orders were issued, many organizations were not able to address these challenges adequately. Only the businesses that had already modernized their infrastructures were equipped to transition employees to remote work without compromising essential issues such as security and seamless access to applications and resources on the corporate network.





Digital Transformation is an Imperative

To support the growing trend of hybrid working environments, digital transformation is no longer a nice to have — it's a must-have. McKinsey reported that 85% of businesses have somewhat or greatly accelerated the implementation of technologies that digitally enable employee interaction and collaboration. And that's good news, since it probably made the transition a little less daunting. PwC reports that companies that invested in technologies such as cloud computing, identity and access management, and modern network infrastructures prior to the pandemic were better suited to pivot to support remote working.

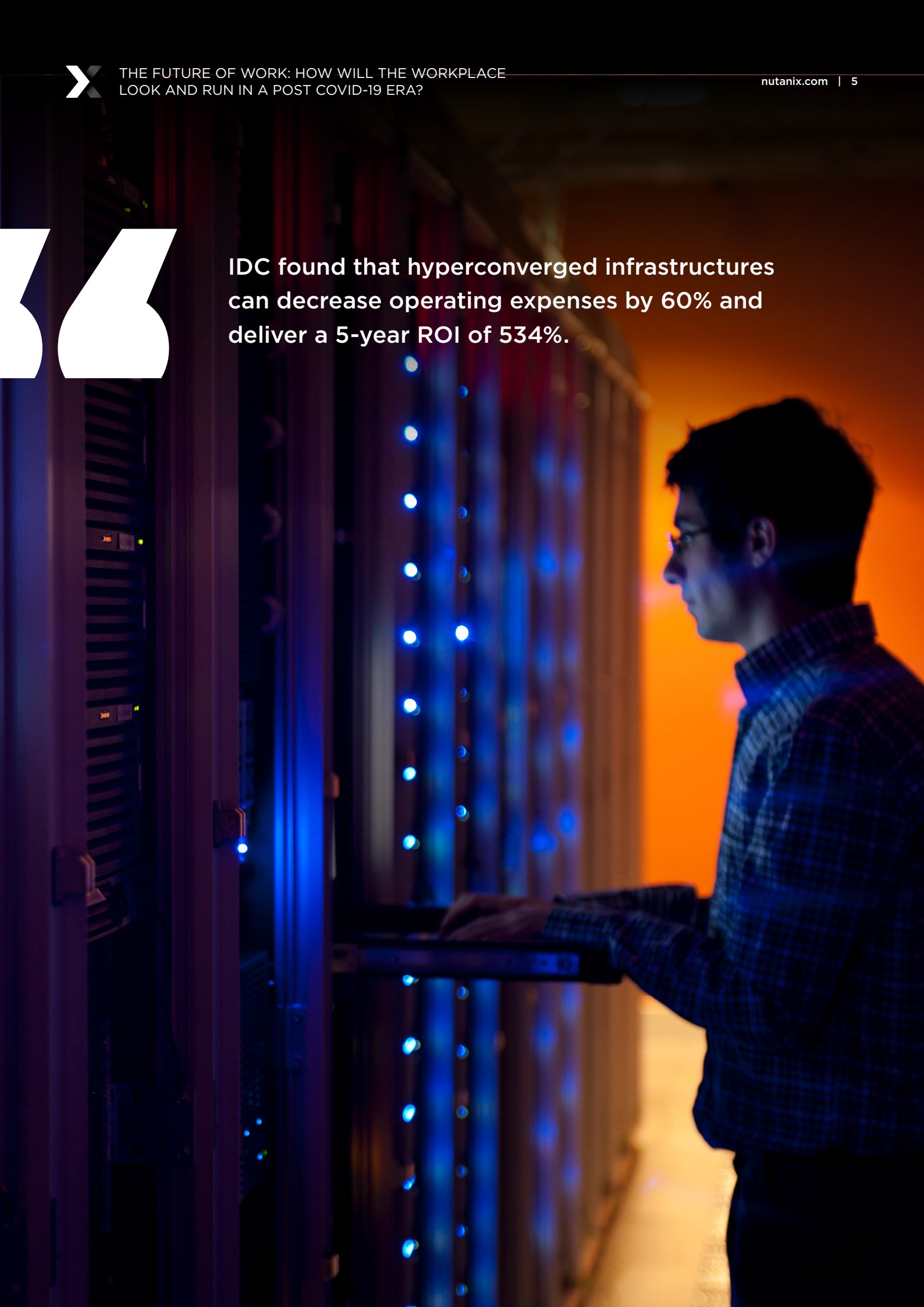
One area of particular concern is End User Computing (EUC). Legacy infrastructure and poorly designed implementations pose security, business continuity and disaster recovery risks, and will need to be revisited to ensure that remote workers can securely and reliably access corporate applications and resources. Moving forward, more companies will need to adopt virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) and Desktop-as-a-Service (DaaS) models, as well as digital tools and technologies that simplify collaboration and communication with colleagues and stakeholders.

Enterprise IT infrastructures are under pressure to handle increasing workloads and storage needs. Given that budgets are shrinking and businesses are being forced to do more with less, IT departments must find ways to reduce operational overhead and costs. Managing separate silos for compute, storage, virtualization, and networking is slow and labor-intensive, and often requires organizations to hire pricey IT specialists.

On-demand, secure cloud-based infrastructure and software-defined network architectures will be key enablers of the new hybrid work environment, giving organizations the flexibility to scale up and back as needed. Many enterprises IT organizations are turning to hyperconverged infrastructures that provide agility, intelligent operations, and financial savings. IDC found that hyperconverged infrastructures can decrease operating expenses by 60% and deliver a 5-year ROI of 534%. This level of efficiency will enable organizations to digitally transform without delay, while realizing substantial cost savings and productivity gains that will help them weather the economic uncertainty of the Covid-19 era.



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Supporting Employees through Change

As businesses grapple with adopting new hybrid workplace models and digital technologies, employees will struggle with change. Managing that change — and supporting employees through it — is critical to success. All the technology and work flexibility in the world won't matter if employees feel disconnected and disengaged.

According to Donna Kimmel, Executive VP and Chief People Officer at Citrix, defining the new way of working isn't simply a cost-savings initiative, but a means of enabling employees to work how they work best. "It's about understanding what's important to our employees, leading with empathy and understanding, and providing what they need to work as effectively as possible," she said in a recent [Cloud Council episode](#) hosted by Nutanix. Kimmel added that culture, physical space, and digital space are the three key elements that go into driving the right kind of employee experience. In today's new hybrid work environment, "digital wellness" will be particularly critical to ensuring employees feel connected and empowered to perform at their best.

To that end, Citrix has taken steps to support effective collaboration and help to drive a sense of balance and unity, such as [providing secure remote access to desktops and applications over the Nutanix hyperconverged infrastructure](#). Having the right infrastructure and digital tools in place ahead of time helped Citrix transition smoothly into a remote working environment when the pandemic hit. Not only do they use this solution internally, their customers use it to create secure digital workspaces for their employees, to drastically reduce VDI costs, and to prepare to support hybrid workplace initiatives post-pandemic.

The Time is Now

No one could have anticipated how quickly the future of work would collide with the present conditions, but here we are. And if your organization is late to the game, that's ok — there will undoubtedly be more challenges down the road. To seize the opportunity, be proactive in adopting enabling technologies and infrastructure, so you'll have what it takes to support your employees and achieve business continuity no matter what the future holds.



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