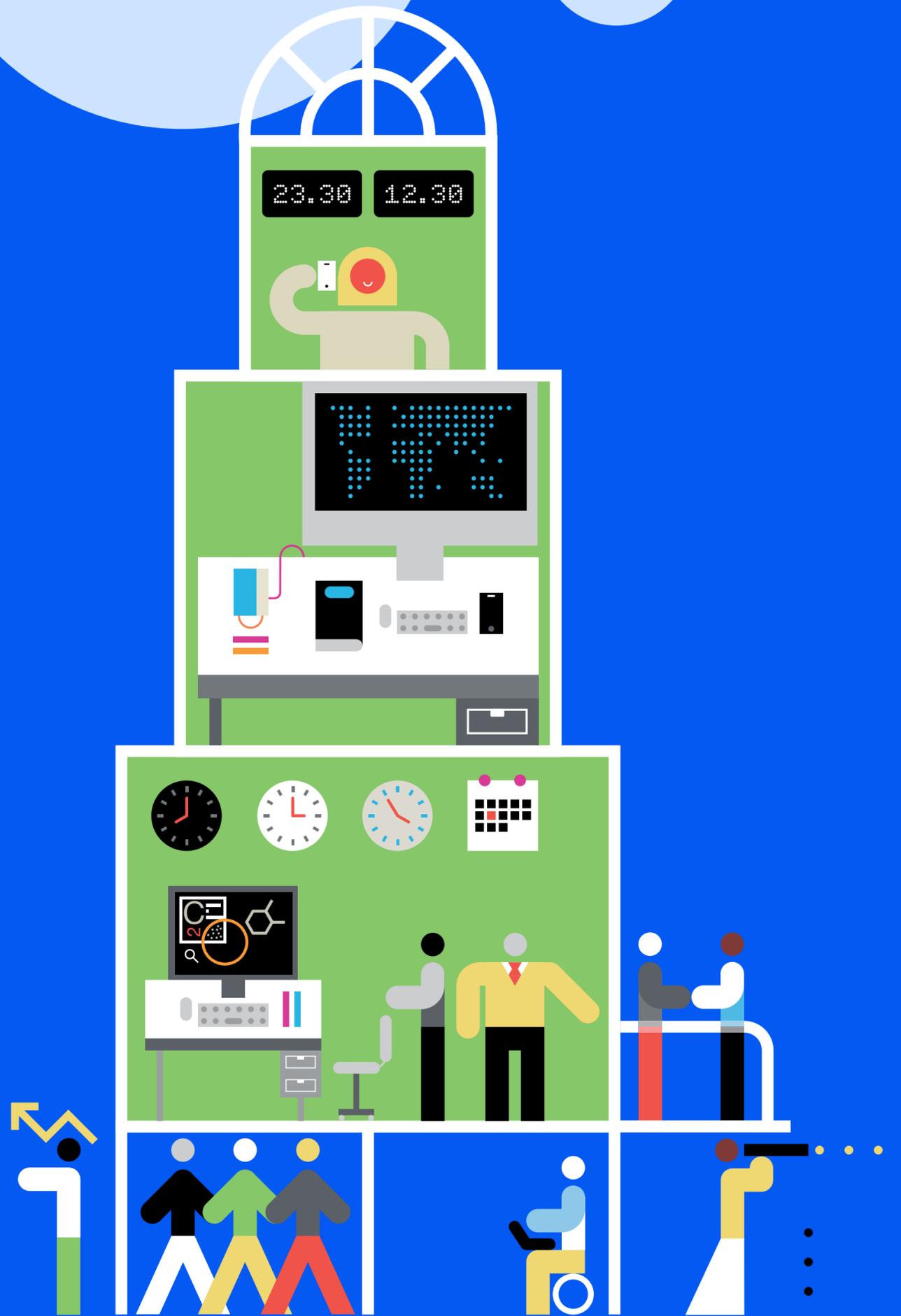




# Three ways IT leaders can prepare for the next-gen workforce



Today's competitive landscape leaves no room for complacency. Companies must constantly innovate and evolve to stay relevant and keep pace. But as technology changes rapidly, skills become outdated more quickly and needs for new competencies can't be met fast enough. This is especially true for IT organizations where advancements in automation could replace the need for traditional IT roles and skills. **In fact, 62 percent of executives globally believe they will need to retrain or replace more than a quarter of their workforce between now and 2023**, due to advancing automation and digitization. This threat is even more acute in the United States.<sup>1</sup> That's why it's critical for IT leaders to invest in themselves, and to cultivate an adaptive workforce that can pivot, learn and grow quickly.

**62%**  
of executives globally believe they will  
need to retrain or replace  
more than **1/4** of their workforce  
between **now** and **2023**



# The hurdles ahead

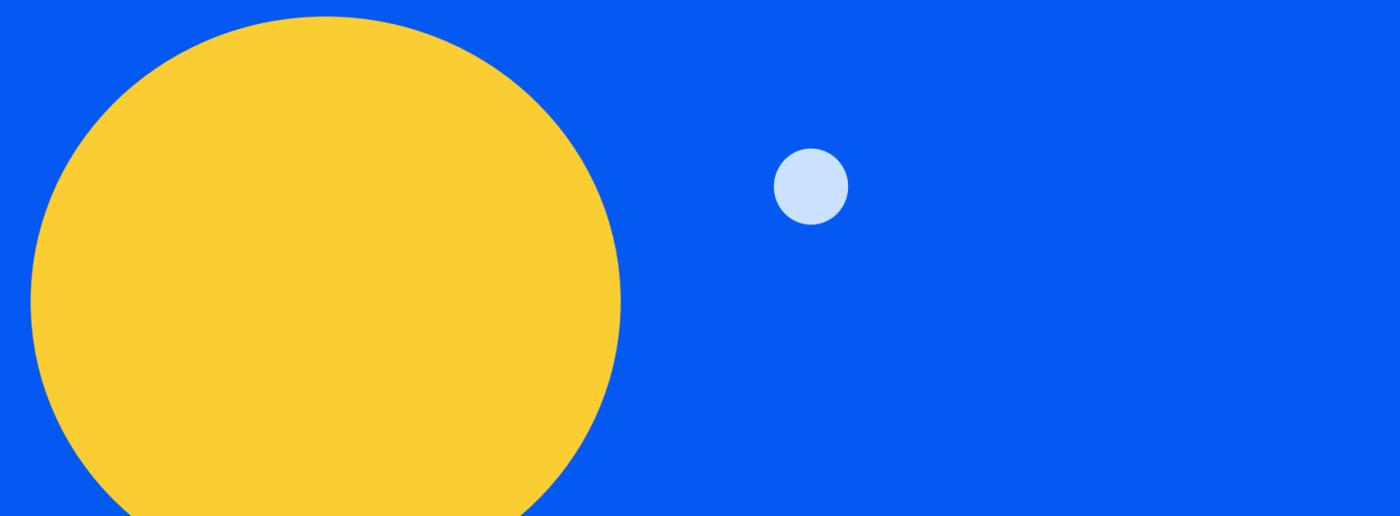
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Generational shifts in the workforce including changing employee perspectives and expectations are reshaping the world of work as we know it. Organizations must be able to appeal to the more tech-savvy digital nomads like generations Y and Z and at the same time accommodate employees who are less digitally dexterous. It has become critical for organizations to design talent transformation strategies to address recruitment, retention, and skills gap challenges.

Further, the explosion in automation and AI brings its own challenges—especially with regards to the

widening skills gap. In fact, 53 percent of businesses say improving process efficiency through automation is a key objective for their digital strategy,<sup>2</sup> while McKinsey researchers argue that employers making the most of workplace automation will need to manage “complex transitions” and “make adept decisions that include talent needs and training.”<sup>3</sup>

The entire C-suite must be prepared to address these skills, technology and employee experience challenges. Applying three tech-led strategies and supporting tactics can provide a framework for the future.



# 1. Modify IT from transactional to transformational

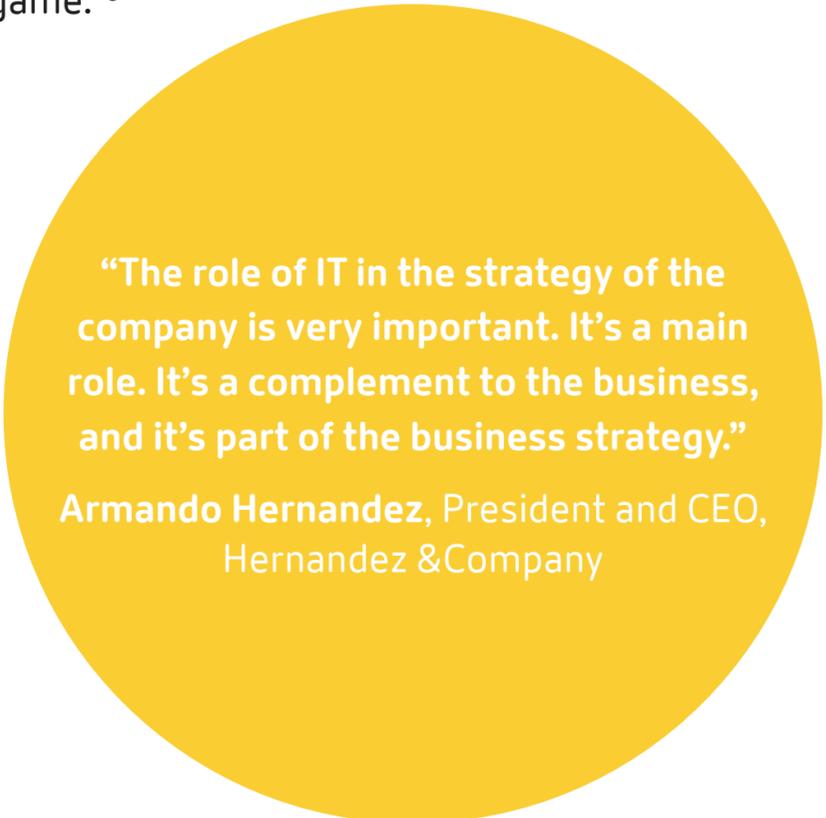
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For IT to claim a seat at the leadership table, and influencing skills and experience, IT leaders must transform their organization from an executional “cost center” to a customer and employee-centric team of experience enthusiasts, architects and strategists. According to Deloitte, CIOs of the future should move from being purely operationally focused, to being champions of business transformation and growth.<sup>4</sup> But how should they make that change?

**Tactic 1: Partner with the C-Suite.** CIOs should seek to influence other senior executives, to work collectively on a combined strategic approach.<sup>5</sup> They can use their own digital knowledge and their team’s to become more engaged with business initiatives to drive real change.

A close partnership with the CHRO in particular is crucial, and will allow CIOs to influence key employee experience initiatives. More and more, IT is involving HR—and vice versa—in some of these experience conversations, whereas in the past they may not have partnered. This close collaboration will be of particular value when IT leaders reach out to employees across the organization to understand their challenges and assess needs. CIOs should ask, “What are the ways of working that we want to foster, and how can we design technology to help foster that?”

**Tactic 2: Take responsibility for change.** There’s still a fair amount of educating here that needs to be done in terms of accepting responsibility for employee experience—and adopting the right technology that really empowers and prioritizes it. #CIOChat facilitator Myles F. Suer notes on CIO.com that, “CIOs stress that in defining business transformation targets, IT leaders need to focus upon things which provide value to customers whether it is CX, digital business services, or other needles that must be moved.” He adds, “CIOs need to think like a coach preparing for a championship game.”<sup>6</sup>



“The role of IT in the strategy of the company is very important. It’s a main role. It’s a complement to the business, and it’s part of the business strategy.”

Armando Hernandez, President and CEO,  
Hernandez & Company

## 2. Provide a frictionless employee experience

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The growth in business apps and platforms has led to work being more complicated than it needs to be. A unified digital experience that allows for more streamlined workflows will give employees more time to do what they need to do<sup>7</sup> and free up crucial time to focus on learning and development.

**Tactic 1: Empower employees with the right technology.**

Leaders agree that digitizing the business is key to being competitive in the next decade,<sup>8</sup> and their own internal experiences shouldn't be forgotten in this change. To get there, implement a secure, unified digital workspace that allows the organization to connect, collaborate and innovate together, across any app, any device and any cloud at any time. Seek out solutions that are technology-agnostic and can bring the whole experience together to empower employees.

**Tactic 2: Prioritize employee feedback.** Listen to users during discovery, build and implementation.

**Employees who believe their voices are heard are nearly five times as likely to feel empowered to do their best work, so there are hidden advantages to getting them involved.<sup>9</sup>**



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# 3. Embrace **new skills** and talent transformation

As the workforce evolves, digital skills are becoming a necessity across roles and functions, and non-technical skills - such as creativity and collaboration - are being prioritized for technical teams. As a result, there is a widening skills gap that must be addressed with a thoughtful talent transformation strategy. While retraining and upskilling programs are a popular solution<sup>10</sup>, consider incorporating the following tactics to strengthen your strategy and develop a digitally dexterous workforce.

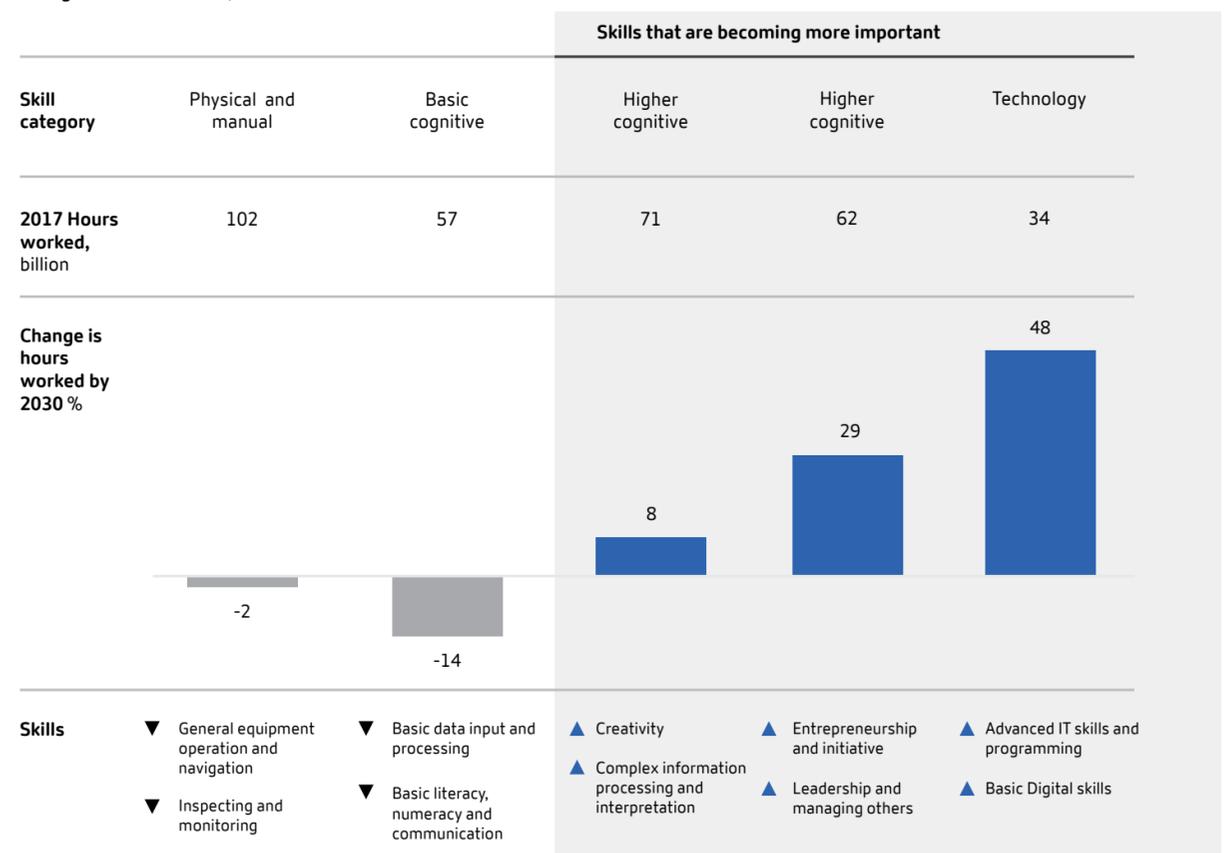
**Tactic 1: Assess technology’s impact on skills requirements.**<sup>11</sup> Tackle right away the growing need for softer and uniquely human skills among technical employees, particularly with the surge in workplace automation, which could be a key driver in shifting demand for different skills, according to McKinsey.<sup>12</sup>

As Bhushan Sethi, joint global leader of People & Organization at PwC, has stated, “While technical skills certainly matter in the fourth industrial revolution (4IR), they don’t come at the expense of or eliminate the need for human skills. **A staggering 91% percent of business leaders in our Global CEO Survey say they need to strengthen their organization’s soft skills alongside their digital ones.**”

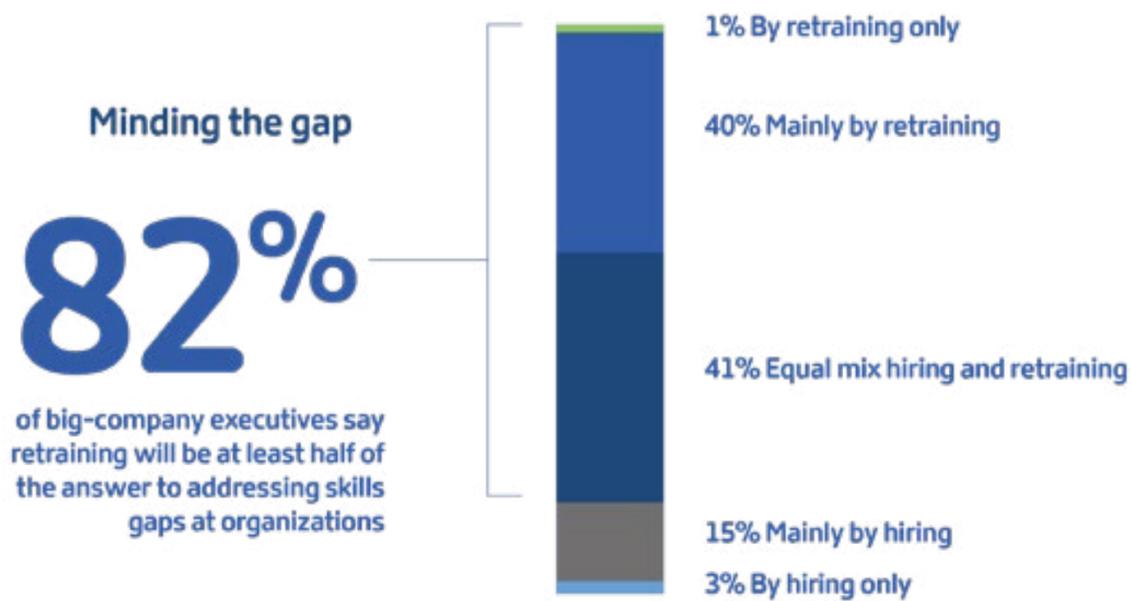
Technology is an obvious tool for learning and development, but human interaction is key as well. Focus on developing people with

an aptitude for business skills, creativity, cognitive flexibility and emotional intelligence.<sup>14</sup> Use time freed-up by automation and AI to foster people’s abilities, and allow the team to be strengthened from within. Prepare for the rise of the “superjobs”, Deloitte’s term for roles created from the need for both technical skills and a human-centered approach, or soft skills.<sup>15</sup>

Exhibit 16  
**Automation and AI could shift demand for different types of workforce skills.**  
Change across all sectors, 2017-30



Source: McKinsey global institute analysis



Source: McKinsey panel survey, November 2017

**Tactic 2: Encourage a growth mindset.** CIOs must find digital champions to help develop skills, support and conduct in-person training programs. Work at encouraging and nurturing a digital mindset, and instill a willingness to experiment with technology. Fear of the unknown is the enemy here, so give employees the confidence to test and learn.

**Tactic 3: Prioritize digital dexterity and diversity.** Use new relationships with HR and the wider leadership team to promote an organizational and operational culture that promotes the new digital adaptability. Gartner analysts Matthew Cain and Mark Gotta wrote, “Talent transformation—to embrace digital dexterity—is a shared responsibility of IT, HR, and the functional business units.”<sup>17</sup> As the MIT Technology Review Insights paper points out,<sup>18</sup> “What’s clear is it’s not enough to hire a workforce full of tech-savvy learners. Companies also must create an environment where they can exercise their dexterity.”



## 4. Get ahead for the **future**

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It may sound like a long road ahead for IT leaders, but the upsides of addressing digital workforce challenges are worth the effort.

The right strategy, skills and an optimized employee experience will not only improve productivity but will also support employee well-being. In today's world, the pressure to be “always available” and “always on” is ever-present, “and providing a unified digital workspace that allows workers to manage this challenge could be of great benefit.”

**89% of workers at companies that support well-being initiatives more likely to recommend their company as a good place to work.<sup>19</sup>**

The extra opportunities for retention and attraction are hard to ignore.

When technology allows time and space for creativity and a new mind-set, it creates an exciting opportunity for leaders to measure workplace productivity in terms of value, rather than volume. This aligns with IT leaders being seen as strategic partners, and not being

measured on the more menial tasks they were once responsible for. With this in mind, leaders will have to learn to measure a different set of metrics inclusive of outcomes like creativity and innovation.

Finally, nurturing a culture of digital dexterity will pave the way for creating adaptive leaders of the future. The CIOs who drive this successful people management will find themselves at the heart of the organization. As Forrester notes, “Leading CIOs will take this as an opportunity to step forward as business leaders, showcasing their tech-driven innovation [and] ecosystem-building skills.”<sup>20</sup>

Ultimately, IT leaders who recognize the opportunities, tackle skills challenges and take a strategic role can be the force behind the successful employee experience of the 2020s.

**Discover how you can transform work and keep business moving at: <https://www.citrix.com/perspectives-by-citrix/>**



“We want to be more digitally minded—we want... a digitally enabled workforce.”

Ben Spencer - Chief Information Officer, Beazley

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