Workforce Flexibility Can Drive Greater Engagement & Productivity

Cloud technology is changing how we work

Wakefield Research and Citrix

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Introduction

As the Future of Work continues to evolve in the enterprise, it's become clear that flexibility (in terms of where, when and how work gets done) within a work environment can improve employees' experience, productivity and efficiency. In order to uncover the latest trends and employee expectations around the Future of Work, Wakefield Research partnered with Citrix to survey nearly 1,300 office professionals in the U.S. The study sheds light on how the nature of work is changing for office professionals as a result of cloud-based technologies, new devices and evolving work practices.

Research Findings Summary

The world of work is being transformed by accelerating changes, including rapid technology innovation, a generational shift as Baby Boomers retire and Millennials begin to dominate the workforce and increasing dynamic market conditions. To compete, businesses increasingly need a workforce that is more agile, productive and efficient. Which means employees increasingly need flexibility (in terms of where, when and how work gets done) within their work environment, which improves employees' experience and productivity.

Flexible work environments better align work policies to the lives and values of employees. As a result, employees become more engaged and productive. However, providing this kind of flexibility introduces new security and management challenges. To stay ahead, employers will need to find new strategies for managing and securing their technology infrastructure.

One of these strategies is to embrace cloud-based apps and services. The researched revealed the following insights about the use of cloud-based technologies in the enterprise:

> Cloud-based apps can spur productivity in a flexible work environment. This is likely why **57%** of office professionals at companies with a flexible work environment are currently using cloud-based apps, compared to only **38%** of companies without a flexible work environment.

> Among office professionals from companies that do not use cloud-based apps, they believe their company would increase efficiency (**43%**) and improve accuracy (**20%**), product quality (**17%**) and creativity (**17%**) by adopting cloud-based apps.

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Additional findings from this survey uncover valuable insights into what other aspects of a flexible work environment are most important to employees. For example:

87% of office professionals whose company has a flexible work environment report their company has experienced positive outcomes from the model.

75% of office professionals believe that in five years, businesses with a flexible work environment will not be competitive without using cloud-based apps.

69% of office professionals report employees in their office regularly work remotely. The top outcomes are:

Increased employee morale (**51%**)
Increased employee productivity (**50%**)
Reduced employee turnover (**35%**)
Attracting more talented job candidates (**34%**)

50% of respondents who do work in flexible work environments note it has increased productivity.

40% of office professionals would turn down a job opportunity if the company doesn't have a flexible work environment.

Cloud adoption is largely dependent on industry, however. Some industries are embracing cloud-based tech new technology more than others. Specifically, 4 in 5 (**80%**) office professionals working in science and technology report their company is currently using cloud-based apps. This is significantly higher than office professionals in the public sector (**36%**), heavy industry (**40%**), healthcare (**42%**) and finance (**48%**).
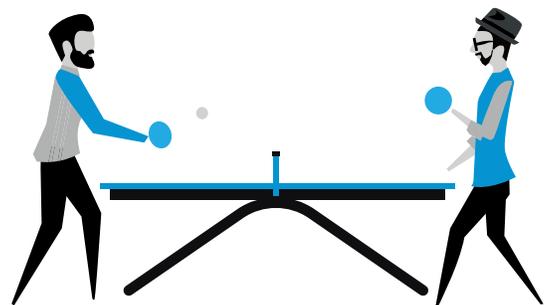
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Citrix Cloud Fuels Workforce Flexibility

As technology continues to impact how we work, Citrix helps companies embrace the opportunities in constant change so they can stay ahead. Through the Citrix Cloud management platform, enterprises can provide employees with a unified, secure digital workspace that delivers the apps, files and data people need to get their work done, whenever they need to, wherever they are located.

While a flexible work environment comes with its own set of risks, Citrix offers a set of secure app and data delivery products and services that can ensure a secure digital workspace, connecting people, technology and physical spaces. This technology gives IT visibility into the person's unique identity and rights, where they are located, whether that has an impact on accesses and data rights provided, and the ability to monitor what each employee is doing. By recognizing the context around each identity, device profile and location, Citrix Cloud services use that contextual information to recognize potential risks and provide appropriate levels of access and security.

Flexible Work Drives Productivity and Cost-Savings
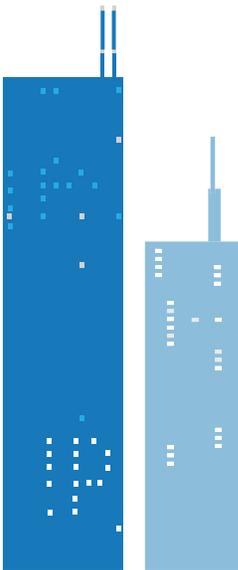
Flexible working environments are increasingly becoming the way of the future, redefining the concept of a traditional office space. In fact, 2 in 5 (**40%**) office professionals would turn down a job opportunity if the company did not have a flexible work environment.

As cloud technologies make cost-saving, flexible work policies more popular, employers are finding that they're also better able to attract and retain talent. While some fear flexibility leads to lowered productivity, the opposite turns out to be true. Because flexible work better aligns work policies to the lives and values of the workforce, employees become more engaged and productive.

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Flexible work environments are not only tools for attracting top talent and reducing employee turnover, however. Among their many benefits, flexible work environments are also a tool to help companies cut costs in the long run by decreasing physical office spaces and implementing smart conference tools that keep employees connected and productive.

In fact, more than two-thirds (**69%**) of respondents reported that employees in their offices regularly work remotely in some shape or form. This means that companies don't necessarily need large office spaces for their employees. Also, due to flexible work schedules and environments, **23%** of respondents said that they experienced decreased physical office space, such as downsizing to a smaller office or fewer floors.

Additional benefits seen as a result of a flexible work environment:
> Increased employee morale (**51%**)
> Increased employee productivity (**50%**)
> Reduced employee turnover (**35%**)
> Attracting more talented job candidates (**34%**)

Cloud-based apps are one way to transform a traditional office into a modern workspace, as this technology connects people, technology and physical spaces, allowing employees to work from wherever, whenever they want. Most (**57%**) office professionals at companies with a flexible work environment are currently using cloud-based apps, as it enables them to choose where and when they get their work done.

Flexible work also allows companies to cut back on travel costs because the need for in-person meetings have been dramatically lessened. Cloud-based environments enable virtual conference rooms, which bring employees together from different offices.

Some industries are embracing cloud-based tech new technology more than others. Indeed, 4 in 5 (**80%**) office professionals working in science and technology report their company is currently using cloud-based apps. This is significantly higher than office professionals in the public sector (**36%**), heavy industry (**40%**), healthcare (**42%**) and finance (**48%**).

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Regulated Markets Embrace Modern Workspaces

Of the sectors surveyed, the public sector was the earliest adopter of a flexible work environment, an average of 14 years ago, compared to the healthcare, financial services, and science and technology industries. Public sector employees report experiencing increased employee morale (**35%**), increased employee productivity (**36%**), and reduced employee turnover (**31%**) from having a flexible work environment. In fact, **48%** of public sector employees acknowledge a flexible work environment attracts more talented job candidates. Yet, with all these benefits, **30%** of those surveyed believe a flexible work environment would make their office open to data security risks.

Public sector employees are aware of the benefits of a flexible work environment, but **30%** still believe it would make their office vulnerable to data security risks. Yet, despite risks, **73%** of public sector office professionals confess their company should have implemented a flexible work environment sooner.

The study also found:

> Almost 1 in 4 (**23%**) public sector office professionals don't solely work at a traditional office location.

> **60%** of public sector office professionals report employees in their office work remotely.

> Almost half (**49%**) of public sector office professionals report never having met a coworker in-person.

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The Western US is Leading the Workplace Flexibility Revolution

While levels of adoption and sentiments toward flexible work environments may differ between U.S. regions, it is clear that cloud is the enabler of this way of the future. With the cloud, employees are getting more freedom to choose where they get work done. Flexible work is an increasingly important subject for office workers and a growing part of today's work culture.

According to the research, more than 1 in 5 respondents (**21%**) combine traditional and flexible work environments by working both in an office and somewhere else. This shift in work environments is made possible by cloud-based solutions, as most (**57%**) office professionals at companies with a flexible work environment are currently using cloud-based apps.

However, the definition of flexible work environments and importance of cloud-based apps depend on the U.S. region where office workers are based.

West Coast, Flex Coast? Since cloud enables office professionals to take their work wherever, this also means being able to choose hours that allow them to balance work and life by working whenever. Unsurprisingly, office professionals in the West (**44%**) are more likely than those in the South (**32%**), Midwest (**32%**) and Northeast (**29%**) to describe their work schedule as having flexible working hours.

Is the West a leading indicator for how the Future of Work will continue to evolve for all companies?

Office professionals in the West (**48%**) would be more likely than those in the South (**37%**) and the Northeast (**38%**) to turn down a job opportunity if the company did not have a flexible working environment. Not to mention, office professionals in the West (**80%**) are more likely than those in the Northeast (**70%**) to agree that in 5 years, businesses with a flexible work environment will not be competitive without using cloud-based apps.

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What makes the West so progressive when it comes to the Future of Work?
In fact, the West has been a region of innovation dating back to the 1800's:

- **In the late 1800's,** San Francisco's port helped **make it a hub** of the early telegraph and radio industries.

- **In 1933,** the Navy **purchased** Moffett Field and made it a major hub in the early days of the aerospace industry, attracting many scientists and researchers to the area.

- **In 1939,** William Hewlett and Dave Packard **founded Hewlett-Packard** in Palo Alto, which originally made oscilloscopes, then transitioning to radar and artillery technology during World War II.

- William Shockley won the **1956 Nobel Prize for Physics** with John Bardeem and Walter Brattain for the invention of the transistor, now considered one of the greatest breakthroughs in technological history. His company was based out of Mountain View, CA.

- **In the 1980s,** Silicon Valley became the **widely accepted** center of the computer industry. eBay, Yahoo, PayPal, and Google are just some of the companies founded in the area, with Facebook, Twitter, Uber, and Tesla joining them the following decade.

The survey points to how the West continues to lead the nation in innovation and technological developments, as office workers are more comfortable with implementing and taking advantage of flexible working environments.

Cloud Cover from West to East The cloud enables organizations to deliver the right set of apps and data with the best possible experience, in every situation and location, and this sentiment is shared on both coasts. Office professionals in the West (**80%**) are more likely than those in the Northeast (**70%**) to agree that in five years, businesses will not be competitive without using cloud-based apps.

Water Cooler Talk in the Midwest Despite advancements in technology, in-person relationships still rule in the Midwest. Out of all the regions, the Midwest had the most amount of workers (**60%**) who have met all of their co-workers in person. This is not to say they are lagging when it comes to cloud adoption - almost half (**49%**) of office professionals note that their company uses cloud-based apps.

Southern Charm The South doesn't lag far behind when it comes to flexible work options. In the South, **21%** say they work both at a traditional office location and somewhere else.

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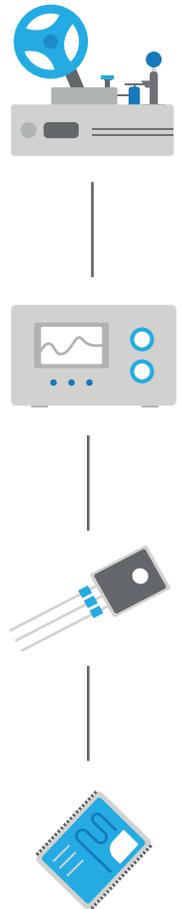
# How the Definition of Flexibility has Evolved Over the Years

The concept of flexible work has evolved over the years. In fact, the Public Sector was the earliest adopter of a flexible work environment - an average of 14 years ago, while the heavy science and technology industries implemented their flexible work environments an average of seven years ago. In tandem, almost half of survey respondents noted that their companies were beginning to use cloud-based apps around the same time they implemented flexible environments.

While flexibility in the workplace isn't a new trend, the definition of "flexible" has evolved over time. For those in the public sector, flexible work environments date to the shift in flexible hours - 10 hour shifts for four days, instead of the traditional "9 to 5" for five days a week. Meanwhile, in the tech industry advances in mobile and cloud computing have led to a dramatic change in the physical work environment which has led to being "always on" when it comes to work.

Here are some of the historical milestones that led to the flexible work we see today:

- **1999** The first BlackBerry device was introduced in 1999 and supported email and limited HTML browsing. Over the next few years, BlackBerry would become the preferred mobile device for professionals.

- **2005** Laptops outsell desktops for the first time in the US, providing workers a new way to take their work whenever, wherever.

- **2007** The first iPhone came out, which inevitably reinvented the way consumers connect with one another.

- **2010** By this time, **67-69%** of surveyed employees were using web and audio conferencing to connect with colleagues outside their offices.

- **2012** SaaS begins to cannibalize on-premise applications, allowing workers to access their key applications on any computing device.

- **2015** Millennials surpass Gen Xers as the largest generation in the U.S. labor force. The smartphone-touting, Snapchat-taking generation inevitably influence the way work gets done with a "work from anywhere and everywhere" mindset.
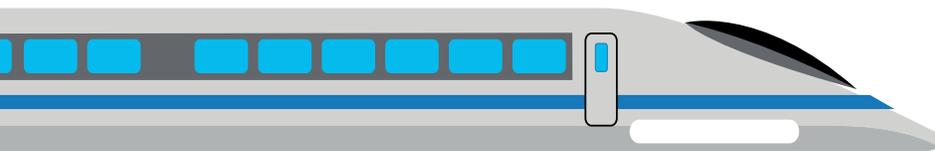
All of these forces combined have translated into a workplace that is no longer limited by the traditional 9 to 5 workday. Rather these advances in technology are empowering employees with the flexibility to work at a time that is of most convenience to them - while balancing the needs of their employers.

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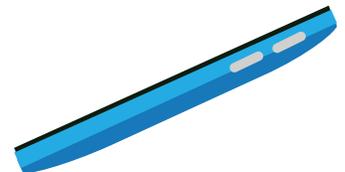
Reimagine the Future

As businesses face dynamic market conditions, accelerating technology innovation, and generational changes, they need a workforce that is more agile, productive and efficient. Organizations that give employees more flexibility (in terms of where, when and how work gets done) can gain a competitive edge through people who are more engaged and productive. One way companies are effectively making the transition to a more flexible workforce is by turning to cloud-based applications and services.

To explore workforce flexibility strategies and approaches, and obtain more information on the future of work, visit https://www.citrix.com/about/future-of-work.html.

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