

The Future of Work



Exploring the
Transformation of Where,
How and Why We Work

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The 'Future of Work' is such a potent topic as it spans multiple dimensions, of a major evolution of cultural, business and technological trends.

With the advent of the Metaverse our futures may see an entirely immersive virtual environment for our office work, [a world](#) where you could have a beach-side conversation with your colleagues, taking meeting notes while floating around a space station.

For more immediate, practical considerations there is the very tense tug of war between belief systems, between those that think working from home is an essential dynamic for modern organizations, versus those who insist it is still essential for employees to be present in the office. LinkedIn reported that the ['Remote vs in-office battle continues'](#).

Similarly the Gig Economy promised a realization of a vision of a more flexible, rewarding working life where you enjoy more freedoms and choice, but has actually been described as a slave labour-like nightmare of even worse [job insecurity, stress and anxiety](#).

Executive Strategy

McKinsey asks ['What is the Future of Work?'](#) and explores a detailed analysis of these trends, where they foresee a decline in middle- and low-skill jobs such as food service, production work, or office support roles, with job growth concentrated in high-skill jobs, for example, in healthcare or science, technology, engineering, and STEM fields.

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A few job categories could see more growth than others. The rise of e-commerce created demand for warehouse workers; investments in the green economy could increase the need for wind turbine technicians and aging populations in many advanced economies will increase demand for nurses, home health aides, and hearing-aid technicians. Teachers and training instructors will also continue to find work over the coming decade, while robotics used to process routine paperwork may lessen demand for some office workers.

They see a continuing adoption of remote working however suggest there are still limitations to this, where key activities like negotiations, brainstorming, and providing sensitive feedback are activities that may be less effective when done remotely. Therefore it's best addressed through clear identification of the tasks best served by this approach, and employing approaches like 'hybrid working', recommending executives build strength in five areas:

- **Expand executives' focus on strategic clarity, coaching, and empathy.** The leading driver of performance and productivity isn't compensation or stretch goals but rather the sense of purpose work provides to employees.
- **Foster outcome-based management of small, cross-functional teams.** This is both more human and more effective as performance management practices shift from being about controlling employees' work to empowering and enabling teams and people to perform.
- **Increase talent velocity, especially with reskilling.** Being able to staff teams across organizational siloes is a hallmark of agile models.
- **Find new zero-cost, high-optionality ways to collaborate.** It can help to define a model to increase how quickly your organization can discover and adopt better modes of collaboration, both physical and digital.

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- **Increase the rate of technology adoption.** It's imperative for companies to seek out new tech and use data to drive optimal results and make better decisions.

Most notably they emphasize the critical role of HR in leading this new culture and working models:

Although HR was once considered a stodgy support function, it's now poised to serve as a strategic partner to the business, as relevant to success as R&D, sales, or production. But fulfilling that role will require nothing less than a transformation of HR itself.

The Future of Work with AI: Harnessing the AI Workforce Revolution and The Augmented Future

In March of 2023 Microsoft shared [this talk](#) from Satya Nadella and Jared Spataro focused on how AI will power a whole new way of working for everyone.

AI, in the form of 'Copilots', is ushering in the next generation of enterprise technologies and will radically advance how it can augment and enhance modern work practices.

The best way to understand how AI will transform office work is simply to apply the same principles that always have been for new business technology.

Since the very first computers and mainframes IT has been used to automate mundane tasks to free up people to work more creatively, and at a capacity and speed far beyond humans; and the central value of the Cloud has always been that it enables organizations of any size to tap into computing power on a shared basis that they couldn't afford or have the skills to adopt directly in-house.

AI represents the pinnacle of this. The ultimate evolution of massive, intelligent computing capability, made accessible to even the smallest of organizations via Cloud services like Zoom and Microsoft 365.

AI Can Now Attend Zoom Meetings for You: The Advent of the Copilot Era

With the rapid advancement of technology and the recent shift towards remote work, companies like Zoom have become instrumental in enabling seamless communication and collaboration, and so offer a unique perspective on the future of work and how it is shaping the way we work and collaborate.

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As the [Washington Post reported](#) Ai can now attend Zoom meetings for you, just one example of the primary feature of this trend, the era of the 'Copilot'. These are Ai agents that can intelligently automate various aspects of your office work.

The [Zoom AI Companion](#) is a Generative AI Digital Assistant designed to simplify and streamline daily tasks. By leveraging AI technology, it can understand and respond to user commands, providing real-time assistance and information. It can help users boost their productivity by automating repetitive tasks and providing quick access to information, valuable time and effort, and can even send and receive messages, make phone calls, and even facilitate video conferences.

Gary Sorrentino, Global CIO for Zoom, shares [Four Predictions for the Future of Work](#), describing that organizations will embrace hybrid working as the norm, Ai will be applied to automate repetitive meeting tasks and similarly the technologies for virtual meetings will become both smarter and more transparent.

Microsoft Copilot

Similarly for Microsoft at the centre of this revolution is the Copilot concept and applications, which Microsoft CTO and President of AI Kevin Scott describes in this keynote talk: [The Era of the AI Copilot](#). In [this talk](#) Microsoft describe Becoming an AI-Powered Organization with Microsoft Copilot.

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Jared Spataro, Head of Microsoft's Modern Work team, sets the scene in [this Harvard Business Review interview](#), which looks at the future of work and the technologies that will get us there, and in [this WSJ interview](#) he discusses how the company is expanding access to OpenAI tools and the growing capabilities of ChatGPT.

In this video Microsoft [introduces the 365 Copilot](#) and in this one [How It Works](#). There is one for each major product, such as Copilots for [Teams Meetings](#), [Outlook](#), [Word](#), [Excel](#), [Powerpoint](#), [Security](#) and [Power Apps](#).

The core ideal is one of intelligent work augmentation, where the copilot accelerates and magnifies the end result of what a person is trying to achieve, automating the mundane and enhancing the output.

For example imagine you missed an important meeting. You can [use the Teams copilot](#) to 'follow' the meeting, and be sent a summarized recap of what you missed. Consider the billions of other interactions like this one that office workers participate in, and how much of an overall productivity boost can be achieved with all of them enhanced this way.

We can view this trend within an overall context of a broader digital transformation of work, that encompasses many other aspects including skills and culture.

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Dion Hinchcliffe, a renowned expert in digital transformation and enterprise IT strategy, has shared valuable [insights on the future of work](#), emphasizing that the digital transformation of work involves more than just implementing new technologies. It requires a fundamental shift in how organizations operate and how employees collaborate and communicate. The integration of digital tools and platforms enables greater flexibility, efficiency, and innovation in the workplace.

In the digital age, continuous learning and upskilling are essential for both organizations and individuals. Hinchcliffe emphasizes the need for organizations to invest in employee training programs that focus on digital skills and emerging technologies. Additionally, individuals must take ownership of their learning journey and actively seek opportunities to acquire new skills to remain relevant in the evolving job market.

Generative AI is poised to play a significant role in the future of work, [according to Hinchcliffe](#). While it presents exciting opportunities, it is crucial to address the associated challenges and ensure responsible and ethical use. As this technology continues to evolve, it will reshape industries, empower workers, and unlock new possibilities.

Dr Mark van Rijmenam, a Strategic Futurist Digital Speaker, describes the overall theme as one of [“The AI Workforce Revolution: The Augmented Future”](#). He explores various aspects of the of the [‘Augmented Workforce’](#), how AI is augmenting human capabilities and enabling organizations to automate repetitive tasks, improve efficiency, and make data-driven decisions.

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He also addresses the concerns and challenges associated with the AI workforce revolution, discussing issues such as job displacement, ethical considerations, and the need for upskilling and reskilling the workforce to adapt to the changing landscape. He emphasizes the importance of continuous learning, collaboration between humans and AI, and the need for ethical frameworks to guide AI implementation.

In [this video](#) Gerd Leonhard discusses the future of work and jobs in the era of artificial intelligence, exploring the potential impact of AI on various industries and provides insights into how the world might look like by 2030.

Leonhard discusses how AI is likely to replace certain jobs that involve repetitive tasks and data analysis, however he also emphasizes that AI will create new opportunities and jobs that require human skills such as creativity, empathy, and critical thinking. He suggests that individuals should focus on developing skills such as emotional intelligence, adaptability, and complex problem-solving, as these skills are less likely to be automated.

The AI-Powered Organization

In conclusion Mike Walsh, CEO of Tomorrow, a global consultancy on designing companies for the 21st century, explores [Generative AI and the Future of Work](#), and in [this talk](#) a broader picture of AI-enabled transformation overall.

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Mike is a visionary in the field of The AI-Powered Organization, where he says ChatGPT and the rise of generative AI platforms are just the beginning of a much bigger algorithmic revolution that is set to reshape the future of work itself.

The future of work is bigger than AI chatbots, remote work, or the inevitable arrival of some kind of corporatized metaverse. True – technology is changing how we do things, but that is only part of the story.

There has always been a creative dynamic between new tools and the impact that has on the nature of work. Think about electricity. Over a century ago, this new energy source represented not only a new way of powering factories, but as Henry Ford would demonstrate with his moving assembly line innovation, a different way of thinking about designing work environments and processes as well.

We learned how to work in new ways during the pandemic. Now the question is, what do we work to be?