Tech

J O U R N A L ™ EMEA

The Metaverse
Stronger, faster, better, meta?

The sky's the limit for Rabobank with Azure cloud migration

"Collaboration with Insight has enabled us to accelerate our growth faster than we thought possible"

Be ambitious

Stories of hunger for achievement, transformation and success

Insight

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Letter From the Editor

It goes without saying that the last couple of years have been challenging for organisations across the globe. The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic and increased market competition has meant businesses have needed to pull out all the stops to continue operating with as little disruption as possible. But with a new year upon us, there is a renewed sense of optimism in the air. At Insight, we hear regularly from our clients that this is the year they're keen to really step up their technological game and thrive. That's why we're badging this as the year of ambition, and so it seems only fitting that the theme of this edition of the EMEA Tech Journal, the first of 2022, should reflect this.

In this edition, you will hear from some of our clients who have used technology as an enabler to advance their business and support their digital transformation – from establishing remote working during the pandemic to testing immersive technology for future advancements. You will find insights from some of the brightest experts in our business about how your organisation can be even more ambitious in 2022 within cybersecurity, adoption and change management.

This Tech Journal issue also casts a light on future technology trends, exploring the opportunity the Metaverse could present organisations, as well as Mixed Reality trends such as Microsoft HoloLens 2.

We hope you enjoy this edition of the EMEA Tech Journal and that it will inspire you to not only be ambitious in the new year, but also walk away with some understanding as to how these ambitious plans can be realised.

Jill Murray
Vice President
Marketing, EMEA

If you would like to be kept up to date with the latest technology trends and digital transformation success stories of EMEA-wide companies, make sure you subscribe to the Tech Journal here.

EMEA Events

Austria	**Webinar** **Microsoft Lizenzprogramm Update 2022 Q1** Tuesday 01 March 2022
Belgium	**On-Demand Webinars** **How to secure the Azure Cloud with the Microsoft WAF** Watch now **Discover 2022** Watch now
France	**Move to the Cloud with Citrix (Paris)** Tuesday 22 March 2022 **Microsoft M365 & Surface with our Solutions & Services** (Paris - Lyon - Bordeaux)
Germany	**Microsoft Lizenzprogramm Update 2022 Q1** In our update, our Microsoft licensing expert Andreas Rohne shows you which recent innovations you should pay attention to. Tuesday 1 March 2022 10-11 CET
Italy	**Governance Digital Day** Tuesday 22 March 2022
NL	**Security HealthCheck** More information here **Microsoft Teams HealthCheck** More information here

Spain	**Webinar** **Azure Arc: One ring to rule them all.** Hybrid and multi-cloud environments are becoming more and more common, presenting many benefits in terms of cost, efficiency and fault tolerance, providing better access to the latest available technologies. Wednesday 23 February 16:00 Spanish time
Switzerland	**Webinar** **Microsoft Lizenzprogramm Update 2022 Q1** Tuesday 01 March 2022
UK	**Modern Surface Workshops** Join us to experience how Surface devices can bring hybrid working to life when combined with Microsoft 365. This 60min live and interactive experience will guide you the latest products, and how to use them, and show you practical applications of collaboration which can be used across any workplace.Hybrid working is fast becoming the new normal, and we are here to help your business in this journey. 15th February 2022 2:00 – 3:00 pm 15th March 2022 2:00 – 3:00 pm 19th April 2022 2:00 – 3:00 pm **Azure Workshops** Develop your skills and uncover business growth opportunities by attending one-day workshops on specific Azure products and workflows. AI Wednesday 16 February 2022 Azure Virtual Desktop Friday 4 March 2022 Cloud Native Apps Friday 11 March 2022 .NET App Modernisation Friday 25 March 2022 **On-Demand Webinars** Overcoming Resistance to Change *Jack Barnes* What Dangers Await in the Digital Jungle *Rob O'Connor*

AI, Automation and the Intelligent Edge:

How Organisations Are Solving Their Most Ambitious Challenges

Conversation with

Joyce Mullen
CEO and President, Insight

IT teams face a long list of priorities for 2022 — as well as substantial challenges. How are organisations overcoming the talent shortage and stepping up in an increasingly competitive market? I sat down with Insight President and CEO Joyce Mullen to find out.

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> **I think if you approach a conversation with curiosity, big ears and an open mind, you get to better answers.**

When I arrive at Joyce Mullen's new Phoenix home for our interview, I'm greeted by her husband, Todd, who smiles warmly and tells me Joyce is on a call with a client. A crew sets up lights and plans camera angles to capture new photos of Joyce. Todd watches the production from the kitchen, a small smile of pride and amusement fixed on his face. All this hubbub for his wife, his partner, who followed her own ambitious pursuits and is now about to be documented for the next chapter of her career as Insight's new CEO and successor to Ken Lamneck.

Joyce enters the room with a big smile and hello to everyone and asks what we need from her. A young employee who joined the video team just a few months ago sets up a microphone nearby. I observe as Joyce walks toward him, introduces herself and asks him his name.

There are two things you should know about Joyce Mullen. First, relationships are vital to her being. Since becoming president of Insight North America in October 2020, Joyce has flooded her calendar with appointments to build personal connections with Insight's clients and teammates, never missing an opportunity to ask questions.

"I think if you approach a conversation with curiosity, big ears and an open mind, you get to better answers," she tells me later.

The second thing you should know is Joyce is ambitiously positive — and passionate — about the power of technology used for good.

When we sit down together, I have a lengthy list of curiosities for the 35-year technology veteran. But since this Tech Journal issue is dedicated to being ambitious, we start first with the ambitious goals IT teams will tackle in 2022.

Big results require ambitious goals.

In partnership with IDG, Insight conducted field research to survey 400 IT decision-makers for the Insight Intelligent Technology Report 2022: IT Ambitions for Business Transformation. The report captures the bold moves organisations made in response to the pandemic and uncovers the opportunities and challenges facing IT in the coming year.
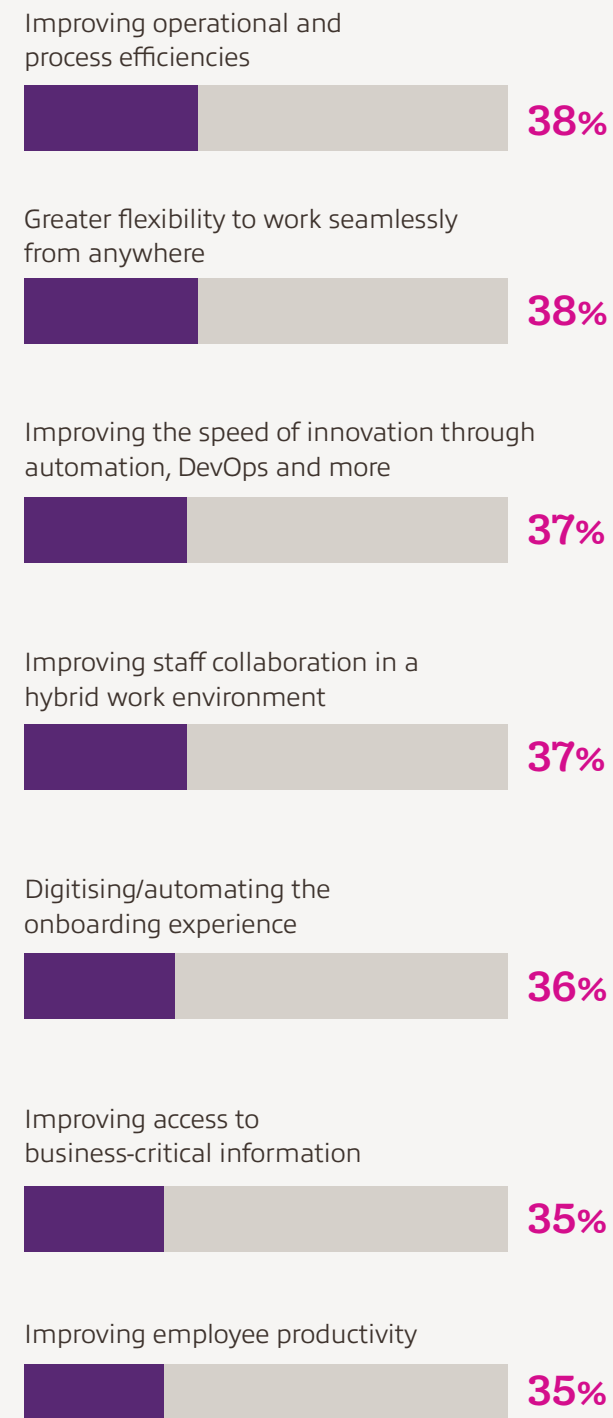
The pandemic undeniably accelerated digital transformation. In fact, "95% of North American enterprises report that the pandemic accelerated business transformation, highlighted gaps in their transformation roadmaps or pushed them to create a roadmap in the first place," according to the report.

But the work is far from over.

Organisations remain under pressure to modernise IT and respond to increased competitive demands. Top business priorities for IT departments in 2022 span everything from improving operational efficiencies and employee productivity to driving the speed of innovation and creating greater flexibility for working anywhere.

And complicating the long list of priorities is a significant talent shortage. IT took on additional

Top business priorities IT department are expected to support:

Improving operational and process efficiencies
38%

Greater flexibility to work seamlessly from anywhere
38%

Improving the speed of innovation through automation, DevOps and more
37%

Improving staff collaboration in a hybrid work environment
37%

Digitising/automating the onboarding experience
36%

Improving access to business-critical information
35%

Improving employee productivity
35%

"I have to say, while I feel like we've had tons of ambitious projects at various companies and in various roles, probably the most ambitious thing that we've done — my husband Todd and I — is raise four kids. That seemed like a lot when we were both working all the time. And it was a lot at the time. And now I look back at it and think, how in the world would we do it? It was really, really fun and really, really tough. And I'm very proud of our kids."

Cont.

responsibilities in cybersecurity, cloud architecture, procurement and analytics in 2021. At the same time, 45% of respondents reported skills and talent gaps specifically related to these areas. Understandably, over half (56%) said that sourcing talent will be a top priority over the next 12 months.

Joyce nods knowingly as I read the statistics out loud. I suspect she can't help but smile wryly because the challenges I'm listing off are so widely shared. So I ask her, how can organisations succeed?

"First of all, you have to prioritise. You can't do everything at once," she says. "But what we often see is a very logical progression of work, starting with: What can we do to reduce operating expenses? If you want to free up money to do things better, you have to reduce the costs of running the core systems."

The "Great Resignation" is an opportunity for both employee and employer.

You have to be excited about attracting teammates who really want to build value for clients over the long-term and do it in a great environment.

Beyond IT roles, the pandemic disproportionately created a labor shortage among retail and quick service restaurants. "Help wanted" and "Now hiring" signs are everywhere. But my personal favorite is this one: "The whole world is short staffed. Be kind to those who showed up."

What's being dubbed as "The Great Resignation" is an opportunity for employees to seek meaningful, fulfilling work that also pushes organisations to look inward.

"You have to think, how do we make this a really compelling place to contribute to and recruit, and then to retain people? And this has a lot to do with not only with the quality of the work and the pay and the benefits, but also with the company purpose and values. What are the values that we exude every single day? You have to be excited about attracting teammates who really want to build value for clients over the long-term and do it in a great environment," says Joyce.

A lot of companies have shifted budget dollars to attract and retain talent. In doing so, they're re-evaluating and investing in better employee experiences.

Solution integrators like Insight haven't traditionally worked closely with clients' employee experience teams, but unique challenges call for creative solutions.

As an example, Joyce tells me about a large retailer that worked with Insight to provide employees with smartphones. The familiar devices made work intuitive and simple, with functions like clocking in and out or getting real-time inventory. But the unique added value in this scenario is that employees were encouraged to take the devices home for personal use, too.

Computer vision
is a rapidly growing technology that takes visual inputs from sources, such as images or videos, and analyses them using algorithms, machine learning and artificial intelligence. The analysis becomes important data to help other systems make decisions.

Another way companies are solving for the labour shortage and improving employee experiences: adopting greater automation.

"I think we have an opportunity and an obligation to automate many processes," says Joyce. "This is a world of self-service and e-commerce. There are a whole lot of opportunities to take steps and cycle time out of process and touch points. And if we can automate the work, it's generally work that people don't love doing anyway."

Such was the case for one client, which was expending countless hours and manpower to manually scan and sort approximately 31,000 documents (300,000 pages) every month. Someone had to review each document to scan for details such as claim numbers, type of claim, number of illnesses and so on. The process was tedious and, as you might imagine if you had to review hundreds of documents each day, quite error-prone.

It was the perfect use case for automation.

Insight built an automated process utilising cognitive services, or computer vision, to scan the documents and extract pertinent information. Machine learning worked to classify each file and automatically route it to the proper department. All in all, the solution drastically reduced lag time for processing, increased accuracy and reduced labour costs.

Automation is also key for our increasingly digital-first, self-service culture.

As we talk about this, Joyce reminds me about the introduction of the airport self-service ticketing kiosks.

I nod and laugh at the truth of this example, remembering also when the first self-checkout stations appeared at the supermarket and how appalled we were at their arrival. What about customer service? But now, when I'm determined to rush in and out for toilet paper and a pack of gum, I'm grateful for expedited self-service.

I think initially, when we got to an airport and we saw those kiosks, we went straight past them and got in line to talk to a person. But now, we've learned that the kiosks are way faster than the people and, because we've learned we can trust what happens at those kiosks, we prefer them.

In practice, great customer service doesn't require a person-to-person experience. Between a growing consumer market of digital natives and pandemic-induced zero-touch service, organisations are reconciling the need for increased digital experiences.

Adopting more automation and self-service solves for both labor shortages and better customer service. Case in point: a financial institution client recognised a need to alleviate their staff's ordinary, routine customer-facing tasks while also delivering a preferred customer experience.

In partnership with Insight, they developed a virtual customer assistant, or chatbot. Insight already had the foundation of the

intelligent bot and deep learning models created. Through a pattern of transfer learning, the bot was tailored further to meet the client's specific needs.
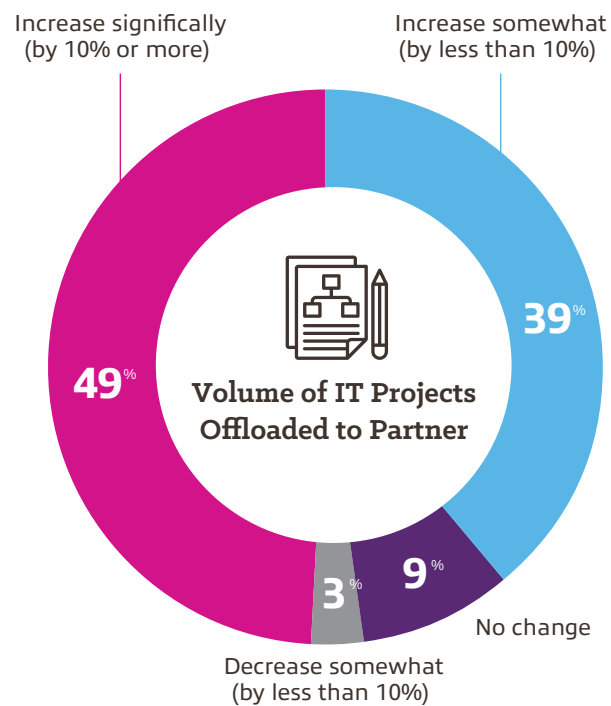
The financial institution experienced a 72% increase in digital account opening after deployment.

And, when the chatbot struggles to correctly understand and respond to an inquiry, the question or conversation gets routed to a human to determine what should have happened. Then, that information is added to the code so the bot is always getting smarter.

But, to harken back to Joyce's ambition of tech for good, there are other human factors for deploying automation and the intelligent edge. When I ask about ambitious possibilities here, she lights up.

"I have a lot of confidence that with access to technology, we can solve almost anything," Joyce says, and she begins to tell me about a recent meeting with a client in the medical research field. They see the potential for personalised medicine using Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the intelligent edge. Before I know it, I'm engrossed in a medical research and data science lecture rolled into one.

"The human genome contains something like three billion base pairs," she explains. "So, to map a human genome takes an amazing amount of computing power. And then you have to use AI to make sense of it (because no one can think about three billion anything). Cancer institutions may look at the 22,000 genes that are most often affiliated with the disease. But what if you could map out all three billion base pairs? So instead of covering about 90% of the likelihood of finding the answer, you cover

Volume of IT Projects Offloaded to Partner

- Increase significantly (by 10% or more)
- Increase somewhat (by less than 10%): 39%
- 49%
- No change: 9%
- Decrease somewhat (by less than 10%): 3%

100% of the likelihood of figuring out what's going on with those genes.

The work this organisation does is amazing and it's ambitious, certainly. But you need that combination of computer brain power and human brain power to consume the data and make decisions about treatment."

AI can also conduct a rapid, scrupulous quality check of every single product on a factory line, as opposed to a random sample — which is reassuring when you're producing medical devices or treatments.

To do this, cameras set up on production lines, using computer vision, follow training models on what a

"good" product looks like vs. a "bad" product.

In some tests, Insight has seen these computers identify bad products among the "good" population that human eyes had missed. When you're producing for medical purposes, quality is critical. Why leave quality to chance with a random sample when you can ensure 100% inspections with precision?

Ambition isn't a solo venture — but it should be your driving attitude.

Joyce tells me that as she's gotten to know more Insight clients, she's seen two subsets of clients. Some organisations have a large internal team dedicated to envisioning the business transformation and just lean on Insight to help with execution.

But, she notes, "More often than not — especially when it comes to the power of data — organisations just don't have the skills, or they haven't dedicated the time and effort to think about business transformation. So we spend time with them to workshop and identify what their opportunities are.

And we love those because we can really help them shape their strategy."

According to the Insight Intelligent Report 2022, 95% of IT leaders indicated their organisations will rely on third parties for their business transformation strategy (53% to a great extent) and most (89%) expect the volume of IT projects offloaded to a third party to increase over the next 12 months.

"Growth stops when you stop investing in the company," Joyce says. "Leaders need to make the commitment to be better. If you're not curious and excited to innovate and to make the investment — and I'm not even talking about what you buy — but making the commitment to be better, then your company's growth is stunted. Now is not the time for complacency. You have to be hungry for transformation. You have to be ambitious about IT."

END

Written by **Jillian Viner** Senior Writer, Insight

Discover the impact of automation
Forrester: Predictions 2022- Automation

Alder Hey Children's Hospital pioneers remote clinical care with mixed reality solution

Conversation with

Rafael Guerrero, Director, Heart Unit, Clinical Director of Innovation and Chief of Congenital Cardiac Surgery

More than 330,000 children, young people and their families rely on Alder Hey Children's NHS Foundation Trust for essential medical care every year. As one of Europe's biggest and busiest children's hospitals, the Trust delivers life-saving procedures to its patients while pushing the boundaries of medicine with ambitious new treatments.

Rafael Guerrero, Director, Heart Unit, Clinical Director of Innovation and Chief of Congenital Cardiac Surgery talks about how the team at Alder Hey has used a mixed reality solution to enhance surgical practice, keep patients safe and train the next generation of clinicians.

All photos courtesy of Alder Hey Children's Hospital

Alder Hey Children's NHS Foundation Trust manages one of the country's leading children's hospitals as well as providing cardiac care and treatment for up to 8 million patients in the northwest region of the UK. With so many patients presenting with complex medical needs, Alder Hey is always seeking ways to enhance its clinical care while pioneering future developments in medicine.

Keeping staff and patients safe through challenging times

Clinicians engaging in complex and intricate surgery often need to consult medical experts in the course of their work. However, the more people present in the operating theatre, the greater the risk of spreading infections including Covid-19 and MRSA. So, the team at Alder Hey wanted to enable clinicians to consult fellow experts quickly and easily, to secure a better outcome for the patient while keeping physical contact in the operating theatre to the minimum.

Similarly, Alder Hey wanted to reduce the number of people physically present at the bedside during ward rounds. As Mr Guerrero explains, "The pandemic highlighted the compelling case for conducting virtual ward rounds which would keep contact to a minimum and reduce the strain on PPE, while allowing multiple clinicians to assess patients on our wards."

As a pioneer in medical care, Alder Hey needed a way to enable medical trainees to observe cutting edge clinical procedures without having to be in the room. "We wanted to find a way to increase the number of people who could view live procedures together without crowding into one small
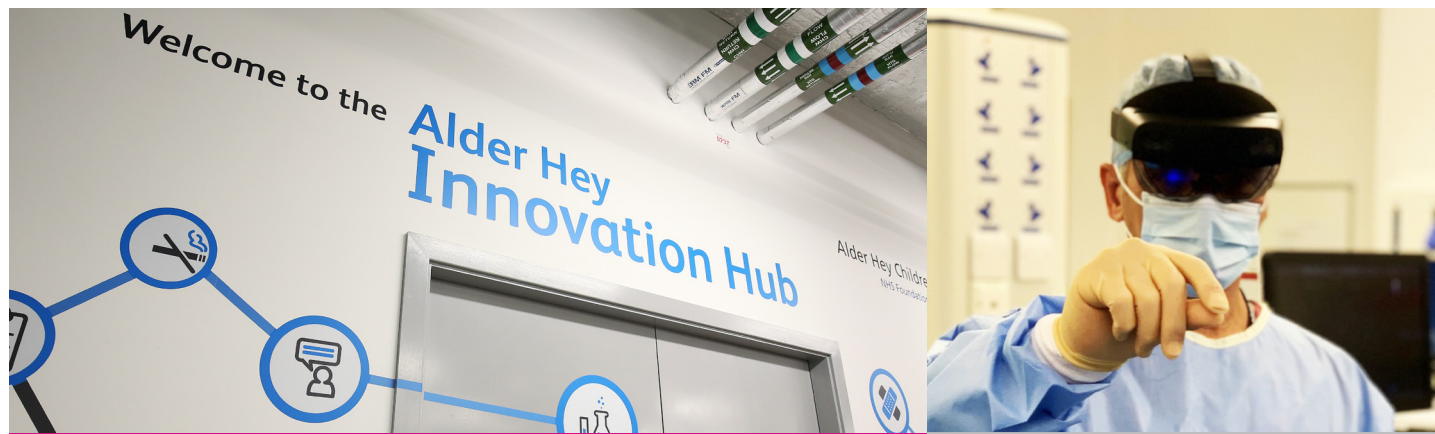
About the Alder Hey Innovation Centre:

The Alder Hey Innovation Centre is one of the largest, dedicated, purpose built, hospital led innovation centre in the UK. We have a 7-year maturity with an expert team and an impressive award winning, portfolio of tangible outputs which puts us ahead of our hospital led innovation peers. Our brand and reputation are now nationally recognised and internationally known for our unique unrivalled approach to healthcare innovation.

Find out more here: **alderheyinnovation.com**

room," says Mr Guerrero. "We were also keen to enable our trainees to access recorded sessions for on-demand viewing to support their learning."

Alder Hey therefore needed a way to communicate and share images, as well as real life scenarios, with other practitioners through video and audio in real-time, 24/7 regardless of the participants' location.

Expert collaboration opens the door to innovation

The Insight team worked directly with Rafael Guerrero to implement a mixed reality solution combining HoloLens 2 and Dynamics 365 Remote Assist. The proof of concept involved Mr Guerrero along with Paediatric Cardiology Consultant, Dr Phuoc Duong.

Insight provided a detailed overview of the features and functionality of the HoloLens 2 device combined with the remote assist software. The next step was for Insight to work with Alder Hey's IT team to guide them through device and application considerations, the licensing process, setting up user accounts and assigning roles. Insight then advised on connecting securely to Alder Hey's network.

At all stages of the process, Insight provided 'hand holding' for Alder Hey, from the initial out of box experience, right through to their first remote assist calls with HoloLens 2. Once the hospital had the new technology up and running, Insight scheduled further sessions to ensure everything was operating smoothly, and to answer any new questions which arose while the team explored the technology.

Using technology to share expertise on critical care

The HoloLens 2 and Dynamics 365 Remote Assist solution enables clinicians to communicate hands-free and share information in real-time.

"A simple but very effective use case for us is our ward rounds," explains Mr Guerrero. "Clinical assessment in the cardiac ward requires the presence of several specialists, so there are usually multiple people on the round. Wearing a HoloLens 2 device running the remote assist software means just one clinician can perform the round. Other specialists can join in using Microsoft Teams, and they see exactly what the clinician sees. They also have two-way audio-visual communication and can share other visual content.

"While one specialist is making the round, we can redistribute other tasks, such as updating patient records to different members of the team, which saves time."

HoloLens 2 with Dynamics 365 Remote Assist also reduces the number of clinicians needed in the operating theatre.

"Previously, if I wanted to consult fellow clinicians during a procedure, they would need to put on gowns and PPE, enter the operating theatre, review the imaging and have the discussion face-to-face. The HoloLens 2 headset which I can wear with PPE equipment, and even a visor, allows me to share high quality images with colleagues and communicate with them while continuing to operate on my patient."

> **Wearing a HoloLens 2 device running the remote assist software means just one clinician can perform the round...**

HoloLens 2 has also helped the hospital continue with vital surgical procedures during the pandemic, as Mr Guerrero explains, "I am able to share images and make calls, completely hands free while I am wearing the HoloLens 2. As well as reducing the number of clinicians in the room, which has been especially important when working with Covid positive patients, the technology has reduced the pressure on our stocks of PPE."

Gaining valuable life-saving moments

HoloLens2 enables medical experts to provide advice remotely by sharing images, which is already helping to enhance the way clinicians carry out complex operations with the best advice to hand.

Dr Duong was able to guide a colleague working in the Cath Lab by sharing images using HoloLens 2 and Dynamics 365 Remote Assist. A surgeon needed to place a tiny stent inside a blood vessel of a small child while a colleague used x-ray imagery to ensure it was in the correct position before he expanded it.

"I was able to drive the model from my laptop and say, 'actually from this angle, from this view is where you can best see the structure', so that my colleague could tell the radiographer where to place the camera," says Dr Duong.

In this way Dr Duong took pressure off his colleague who needed both hands for what he was doing. As it can often take quite some time just to get the x-ray camera in position, working with the HoloLens 2 solution helps gain back valuable life-saving moments.

The technology can bring medical experts together at the most critical times, as Mr Guerrero explains. "I was in the operating theatre performing a complex repair on a little heart, no bigger than the size of a strawberry. By using the HoloLens we were able to transmit live the view of the heart to other colleagues, as well as reviewing the echocardiogram at the same time."

HoloLens 2 has enormous potential to support education and training by enabling a clinician to film a medical procedure. "If a surgeon was performing an unusual operation, they might want to share this with their colleagues," says Mr Guerrero. "The fixed

camera in the operating theatre doesn't provide a perfect solution as the surgeon often physically blocks the camera's view of the operation. The HoloLens 2 provides a way to record and share delicate operations without having more people in the operating theatre than absolutely necessary."

An ambitious future in pioneering healthcare

The communication and image sharing capabilities of HoloLens 2 and Dynamics 365 Remote Assist are already demonstrating their value in healthcare, and they offer even more exciting possibilities for the future.

The technology could be used for collaboration between medical professionals working in different hospitals and even in different countries. It opens new possibilities for education, both for clinicians and for patients, helping the medical profession understand complex surgical procedures and the way medicines work.

> **We wanted to find a way to increase the number of people who could view live procedures together without crowding into one small room...**

There is also the possibility of using its full 3D image projection capabilities to give an enhanced view of the patient.

"HoloLens 2 and mixed reality may, in the future, enable me to have a patient's scans in front of me while I'm doing the operation," says Mr Guerrero. "If I can use technology to obtain that information, to see those images in front of me, that helps me tremendously and improves the outcome for my patient."

INSIGHT VIDEO

Alder Hey Children's Hospital Pioneers Remote Clinical Care

All photos courtesy of Alder Hey Children's Hospital

END

L'Erbolario stays true to its roots while supporting remote work through digital transformation

Conversation with

Fabrizio Dal Passo, L'Erbolario CTO

The boutique cosmetics company L'Erbolario is steeped in local Italian traditions. When the pandemic hit, the business had to act fast to enable staff to work from home and continue to support clients around the globe.

With Insight's help, L'Erbolario met the challenge by implementing digital collaboration tools, while at the same time using the opportunity to support its ambition to grow into a modern, flexible, and connected business.

Founded in 1978 in Lodi, just 30km from Milan, L'Erbolario has grown from a small artisan herbalist into Italy's leading producer of plant-based cosmetics, with over 5,000 points of sale worldwide. The company has always prided itself on its Italian roots and its ethical values and creates all its own products onsite to maintain full visibility of its supply chain. According to Fabrizio, "The company has always had a strong focus on animal welfare, sustainability and respect for nature. But we are not against change. If technology helps us on our path, we will adopt it."

Turning a challenge into an opportunity

When the pandemic struck, Fabrizio faced a challenge: to swiftly enable all office-based employees to work from home. Suddenly being unable to go to the office turned employees' daily routines upside down and made it extremely difficult for them to access the apps and data that they needed to do their jobs. He therefore needed

"The company has always had a strong focus on animal welfare, sustainability and respect for nature. But we are not against change. If technology helps us on our path, we will adopt it."

a solution that would give staff a remote work experience that was as close as possible to being in the office.

Fabrizio also had to reassure some members of the management team that with the right solution employees would work just as productively outside of the office. However, rather than seeing this as a problem, he realised that, despite the downsides of lockdown, it provided an opportunity to transform L'Erbolario into a more collaborative, secure, resilient, and modern digital business.

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> **"**
> **"The company has always had a strong focus on animal welfare, sustainability and respect for nature. But we are not against change. If technology helps us on our path, we will adopt it."**

respecting them and listening to their needs," says Fabrizio. "By giving them a remote working experience that is as close as possible to what they were used to in the office, we have minimised the disruption to their lives, and, at the same time, helped them to stay productive."

But Insight's solution has done much more than just fix L'Erbolario's immediate objective – it has also given the company room to grow. "One major benefit for me," says Fabrizio, "has been the opportunity to improve security. I can now see exactly who is accessing data and apps and manage access privileges accordingly – something that is even more important now that access points have multiplied."

The project has also demonstrated to the leadership team that employees can work effectively and be productive outside of the traditional office workplace. As the threat of Covid subsides, L'Erbolario employees may well return to working in the office. However, Fabrizio has no plans to return to the old processes. "The pandemic was a terrible thing," he says, "but it gave us a rare opportunity to advance our ambition to become a more grown-up, digitally aware business."

More than anything though, Fabrizio felt that the experience taught him the importance of working with the right partner. "Insight went beyond our expectations as a technology provider to help us define new ways of working and plan for the future. My ambition now, is to ensure that L'Erbolario continues its path of digital transformation, while staying true to its ethical beliefs and, of course, supplying Italy's finest plant-based cosmetics."

Insight therefore proposed another solution. Instead of providing employees with access to virtual desktops, L'Erbolario supplied them with secure work laptops and then enabled access to work apps remotely using Azure Remote App and Azure AD Application Proxy. Insight also helped to set up L'Erbolario's employees with Microsoft Teams and OneDrive – enabling them to collaborate and communicate effectively from any location. Fabrizio explains, "Insight listened to our needs and helped us find the best way of working for staff. Thanks to their help with the remote app solution, our employees can simply log into their work laptop, and access our ERP platform by clicking on the same icon they used before."

Room to grow

"Working with Insight has made it easy for us to achieve our immediate goal of enabling employees to work safely and securely from home, while

Developing the solution organically

The switch to remote working was so sudden that L'Erbolario's office staff had to begin by making do with their own technology and devices. But they soon ran into problems, particularly when it came to accessing internal apps and data – such as the ERP system. Fabrizio needed to find a better solution – and fast – so he turned to Insight for help. "Insight has been our preferred software supplier for many years, but more recently the team have been helping us to plan our public cloud adoption strategy," says Fabrizio. "I was impressed with the way they worked alongside us to understand our problems, so I knew that they would help us to identify the best solution for our employees and support us in adopting new ways of working."

Insight began by holding discussions with Fabrizio and the rest of L'Erbolario's leadership team to understand the company's working practices, needs and expectations. Insight then worked with Fabrizio to plan a transformation roadmap and help the business realise its digital ambitions.

The next step was to properly configure L'Erbolario's Microsoft Azure cloud environment and its Office 365 tenant. "Insight's scaffolding activity on our Microsoft Azure infrastructure allowed us to implement virtual network, which laid the foundations for several remote working solutions, as well as for future projects."

L'Erbolario initially looked at deploying Windows Virtual Desktops (WVD) to enable employees to log into their work computers from home and access essential work apps (such as the ERP system) remotely. However, as Fabrizio notes, the management team wanted to make the remote working experience as close as possible to being in the office. "We liked the virtual desktops, but we felt they could be confusing. For example, an employee might not realise that the virtual desktop was separate from the actual machine they were using. So, they might log into Teams from within the virtual desktop, instead of from their own machine. And of course, it would not work as there is no microphone on a virtual machine."

Looking to accelerate your own digital journey?

Let Insight help you re-imagine the future of your workplace.

END

The sky's the limit for Rabobank with Azure cloud migration

Image credit: Rabobank

Conversation with

Guy de Maes Janssens
Interim IT Lead,
Rabobank

Michiel van der Geest
IT project manager,
Rabobank

A cooperative bank with its headquarters in the Netherlands and over 90 local banks, Rabobank combines a socially responsible outlook with ambitious growth plans. Already active in 40 countries, Rabobank wanted to deliver cutting-edge financial products to an even wider audience.
Insight helped the team at Rabobank migrate its virtual desktops from on-premise infrastructure to Azure cloud, making it scalable and flexible and removing the limits to the bank's aspirations.

Rabobank is a cutting-edge digital bank with a strong customer focus. A part of the employees work on virtual desktops, hosted on on-premise IT infrastructures at various offices around the globe. To support its ambitious growth plans, the bank wanted to move these virtual desktops to the public cloud so that it could scale its operations up and down quickly as circumstances changed. Michiel van der Geest, IT project manager at Rabobank, oversaw the project. He had been impressed with Insight's support on a previous big project, so he knew exactly where to go for help with migrating to the new cloud-based virtual desktop environment.
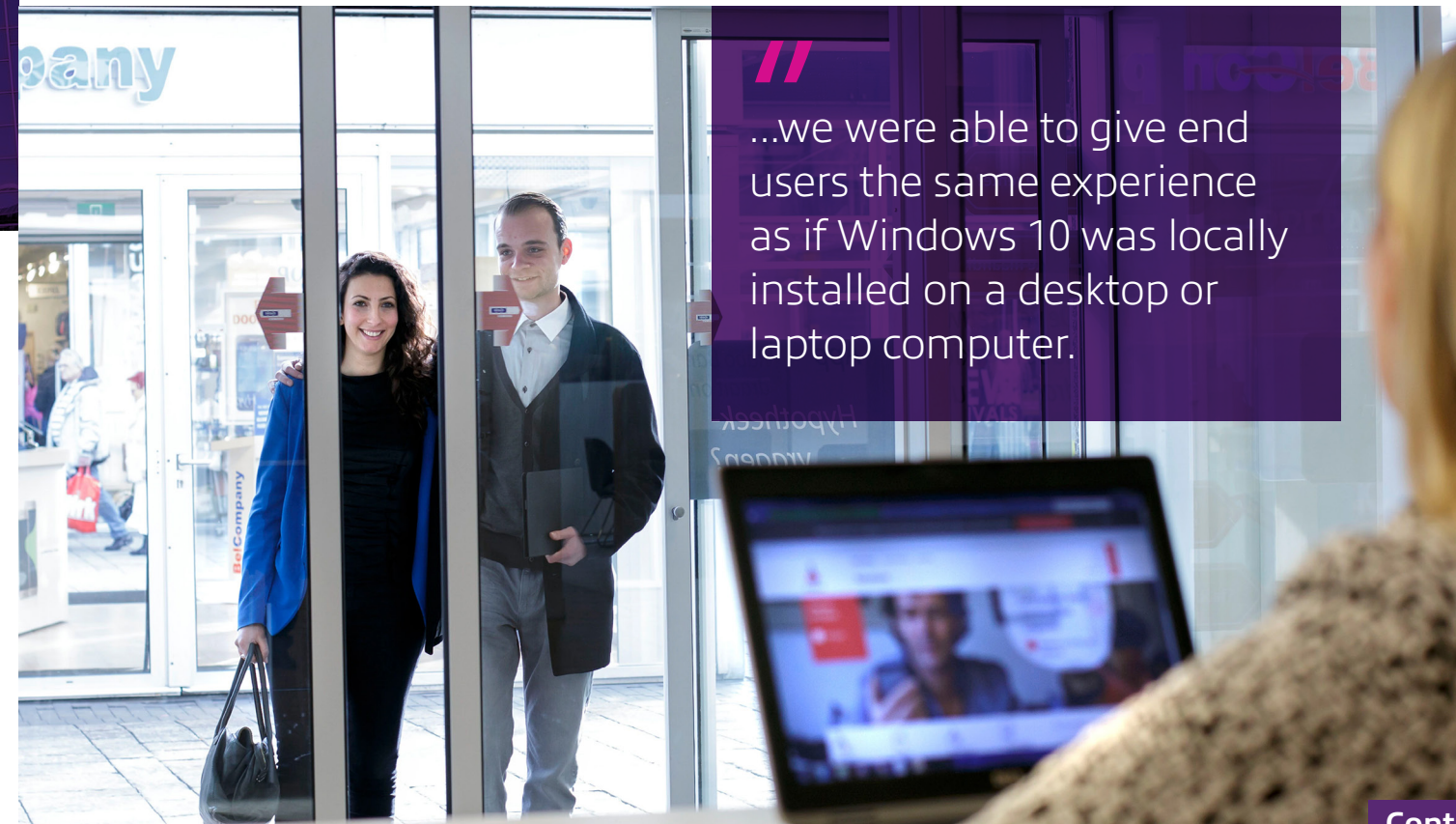
Investing in the future

As Rabobank is rapidly growing and expanding into new markets, it needs to be able to deploy new virtual desktops at pace. Interim IT Lead at Rabobank Guy de Maes Janssens explains, "Suppose we've decided to offer financial services in a new country and we need to onboard 200 new employees tomorrow. Sourcing and setting up the on-premise hardware to support the project could take months – especially with the current chip shortage. So, we decided to move to a cloud-based infrastructure that would enable us to scale up quickly, anywhere in the world."

But creating virtual desktops at scale within Microsoft Azure and Citrix Cloud Services presented Rabobank with another challenge. The in-house IT teams were used to building virtual desktops within a Graphical User Interface (GUI) using a simple 'drag and drop' procedure. But to get the full benefits from Azure – the ability to automate the creation of new desktops and machines to end-user requirements – the team would need to learn to write 'Infrastructure as Code'.
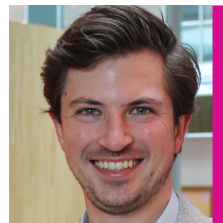
> **Insight had worked with us as external consultants on a previous project, so we knew that they could support us during a big transformation**

Rabobank therefore needed to upskill its IT team, effectively re-training them as developers. The bank knew that both the move to Azure and Citrix cloud, and the retraining of its IT team were ambitious projects – and so it turned to Insight for help. Michiel van der Geest, IT project manager at Rabobank, notes: "Insight had worked with us as external consultants on a previous project, so we knew that they could support us during a big transformation".

> **...we were able to give end users the same experience as if Windows 10 was locally installed on a desktop or laptop computer.**

Image credit: Rabobank

Rabobank

Image credit: Rabobank

"
Collaboration with Insight has enabled us to accelerate our growth faster than we thought possible.

Image credit: Rabobank

A smart investment for the future

To give them the scalability and flexibility they needed, Rabobank had decided to migrate to a new virtual desktop environment, based on Microsoft Azure Virtual Desktop (AVD) technology with a Citrix Cloud Management layer. Guy de Maes Janssens notes, "By moving to a Microsoft Azure environment, we were able to give end-users the same experience as if Windows 10 was locally installed on a desktop or laptop computer," notes Guy de Maes Janssens. "Plus, we could create customised virtual desktops matched to the needs of each user and deploy them automatically, at scale. Our on-premise environment would no longer limit what we could do."

"
...the ability to create Infrastructure as Code within Azure has given us a scalable and global presence that we never had before.

Insight assisted Rabobank with the migration to Azure and upskilled the IT team, teaching them to use code to build and customise Azure

Virtual Desktops. For the IT team, this has been transformational. The teams embraced the opportunity to be more ambitious in their career aspirations. "I didn't want an outsourcing company to do our project" says Michiel van der Geest. "We wanted our people to learn new skills."

But the 'infrastructure as code' approach goes beyond deployment and maintenance of the virtual desktops. Infrastructure as Code provides a foundation for managing the entire infrastructure in the cloud – from configuring firewalls to building storage networks and everything in between.

According to Guy, "the ability to create Infrastructure as Code within Azure has given us a scalable and global presence that we never had before. Say we look at a project that we already have running here in the Netherlands, and we want to do a similar thing in India. In the past that would have meant finding a datacenter in India or securing the equipment to build our own – with all the associated time and expense. Now we can just copy and paste the code, and the next morning it will be working in India. And we can do the same in North America or anywhere that Microsoft has a data centre. We just look up which data centre is closest to the team we want to support, select it and then its 'click and go'.

Pushing the boundaries

"We've always been early adopters at Rabobank," says Michiel van der Geest. "For example, we were using Microsoft Intune, to manage end-user devices, before it was even known as Intune. But to stay at the cutting edge of technology, we need a tech partner that understands our needs, has the best expertise in the business and can support us 24/7– and that's where Insight comes in."

"Throughout this project, Insight Enterprise consultants worked closely with our DevOps teams, teaching them the skills they needed to build Infrastructure as Code and enabling us to continue with our ambitious growth plans unhindered. We started working with Insight in January 2021. By the end of June 2021, we were able to spin up the first new cloud environment and virtual desktops at scale anywhere in the world, almost overnight. Collaboration with Insight has enabled us to accelerate our growth faster than we thought possible."

Looking to accelerate your technology adoption journey?
See our cloud service options.

END

The Great Resignation

…giving rise to a new era of working and recruiting

Conversation with

Angela Hughes
EMEA HR and People Leadership Director, Insight

Over the past 12 months, record numbers of people have reportedly left their jobs in a phenomenon experts are coining 'The Great Resignation'[1]. In Europe, a study by SD Worx suggests resignation rates are highest in Germany at six percent, followed by the UK at almost five percent, and the Netherlands and France close to three percent[2]. Another study by Microsoft revealed 41 percent of employees worldwide are considering leaving their jobs – many seeking jobs with remote working models.[3] With this global phenomenon continuing into 2022, tech organisations need to adapt to ensure they not only retain their employees, but are attractive to new hires, remaining current in the face of changing employee expectations and workspace setups. We spoke to Angela Hughes, EMEA HR and People Leadership Director at Insight about the current trend.

The past two years have seen a trend for mass resignations and reshuffles as people are leaving and changing jobs globally. In your opinion, what are the causes and catalysts for the Great Resignation/Reshuffle phenomenon?

The recent COVID-19 pandemic, associated lockdowns and restrictions of movement have undoubtedly given people time to reflect on their life, situation, hopes and ambitions. In many cases there has been a shift in what people value in family life and work life, reassessing their priorities and understanding what works well for their personal situation. Based on this, individuals have made the decision to downsize, upskill and laterally move jobs - causing a wave of resignations and some disruption in the workplace.

However, the movements of job-seekers and changers we are seeing are also partly down to pent up activity - moves that were postponed or delayed through circumstance or choice. For many, their job was a constant in a time of change, so individuals hung onto their jobs when in normal, less extreme times, they may have made a move sooner. Coming out of the heavy lockdown periods from 2020/2021, many are now actioning this move as we return to a new normal.

> **With globalisation and the opportunities for digital nomads to work in different geographies and time zones, companies need to be even more open about the working expectations of employees, and the new preferred ways of working.**

Coming out of a time of great change, how do you feel workplace expectations are shifting? And who is driving this?

From an employee standpoint, there is definitely an increase in the expectations for hybrid working, as well as expectations of flexibility within the working day itself. Remote working during the pandemic has shown individuals that family life and personal commitments can symbiotically work with your job, to the point that some are even more productive outside the traditional "normal working hours". As a result, employees are requesting and seeking a workplace setup that meets their needs.

While employees are influencing workplace expectations, organisations need to recognise that remote working, hybrid working, and flexible hours do not equate to less work being done, or employees being less productive. In many cases, the opposite is true. While hybrid working may have seemed unimaginable for some organisations a few years back, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced them to trial and implement a more flexible working model.

With globalisation and the opportunities for digital nomads[4] to work in different geographies and time zones, companies need to be even more open about the working expectations of employees, and the new preferred ways of working. We are entering a new workplace era and organisations and recruiters need to be ready for it.

Cont.

If the future working model is (or has) changed, and many employees are re-evaluating their priorities and job itself, what can organisations do to retain their workers in the face of The Great Resignation?

I believe investment in the development of your employees is key to ensuring staff are content where they are. A study by education services company Lorman suggests that "70 percent of employees would be somewhat likely to leave their job to work for an organisation known for investing in employee development and training"[5]. So, in order to keep your staff, companies will need to invest not just with training and development, but also in wellbeing programmes for them. At Insight, we take the role of a positive workplace culture very seriously, making our employees the number one priority and always looking for ways to offer more room for development and wellbeing services. We are confident we're onto a winning formula, which was proven with a Great Places to Work "Best Workplaces in Europe 2021" award recently.

Another important factor in retaining employees is listening to your workforce and being flexible enough to accommodate changes. This is made much easier when you have platforms set up in your organisation to encourage conversations. A positive working culture within your company is also vital to success. I believe this is one of our winning formulas at Insight, since our employees are a reflection of the culture and truly live our company values of Hunger, Heart, and Harmony. For the employee, this makes them more invested in the organisation itself, actively partaking in its success.

How do HR teams and recruitment processes need to adapt to find and hire new talent – especially in the technology space where skill shortages are becoming more and more apparent?

In the tech sector especially, there needs to be a shift in recruitment towards more creative and open hiring processes. While the Great Resignation trend has made recruitment of new talent more competitive than ever, the Tech Skills Gap trend suggests there are less employees with the necessary tech skills available to hire.

If companies invest in personal development more, this can result in career progression for existing employees. Recruitment can therefore focus more on entry-level and concentrate on building the skill sets in future employees. Casting a wider net helps here to ensure you create a broad search network – hiring based on attitude and potential, rather than existing skills. This, combined with various initiatives, can allow university leavers, career-changers, and those not familiar with the tech industry to enter this field and build knowledge and skillsets.

One such example of a programme started at Insight is the Skills Academy. This initiative is designed to give people with no prior experience in the tech sector the opportunity to kickstart their career in tech in the new workplace era. The Skills Academy allows individuals to learn new skills and grow into a role in our organisation with a 24-month programme. There are commercial roles in sales as well as technical roles, and it is a fantastic opportunity for anyone who has a genuine interest in a career in tech. The programme is inclusive and covers Business & Commercial Acumen, People & Communication Skills, Technical Skills & Knowledge, and Function-Specific Skills. The Academy teammates will get to put their learning and skills into practice as they progress through the two years, ensuring they are confident and ready to move into their Insight job at the end of the programme duration.

Another important aspect to mention is that through technology, hiring people that are located in other countries has become a real possibility. Known as "digital nomads", these are employees that can work from anywhere. With ever increasing connectivity and virtual meeting platforms now the norm, there are no real geographical limitations to hiring new staff. This is particularly true for tech firms – increasing the talent pool for HR teams to recruit from.

It is certainly an exciting time to be in Human Resources. In the past years, we have seen organisations facing a lot of challenges to the old ways of working. Similarly, employees have been confronted with new workspace setups. While experts predict that the Great Resignation trend will continue in 2022, it is also putting pressure on organisations to rethink their workplace. At Insight we are seeing this as an opportunity to continue to listen to our employees, remain flexible in the face of change, and develop creative recruiting and hiring opportunities to encourage new talent. We are ready for the new workplace era – are you?

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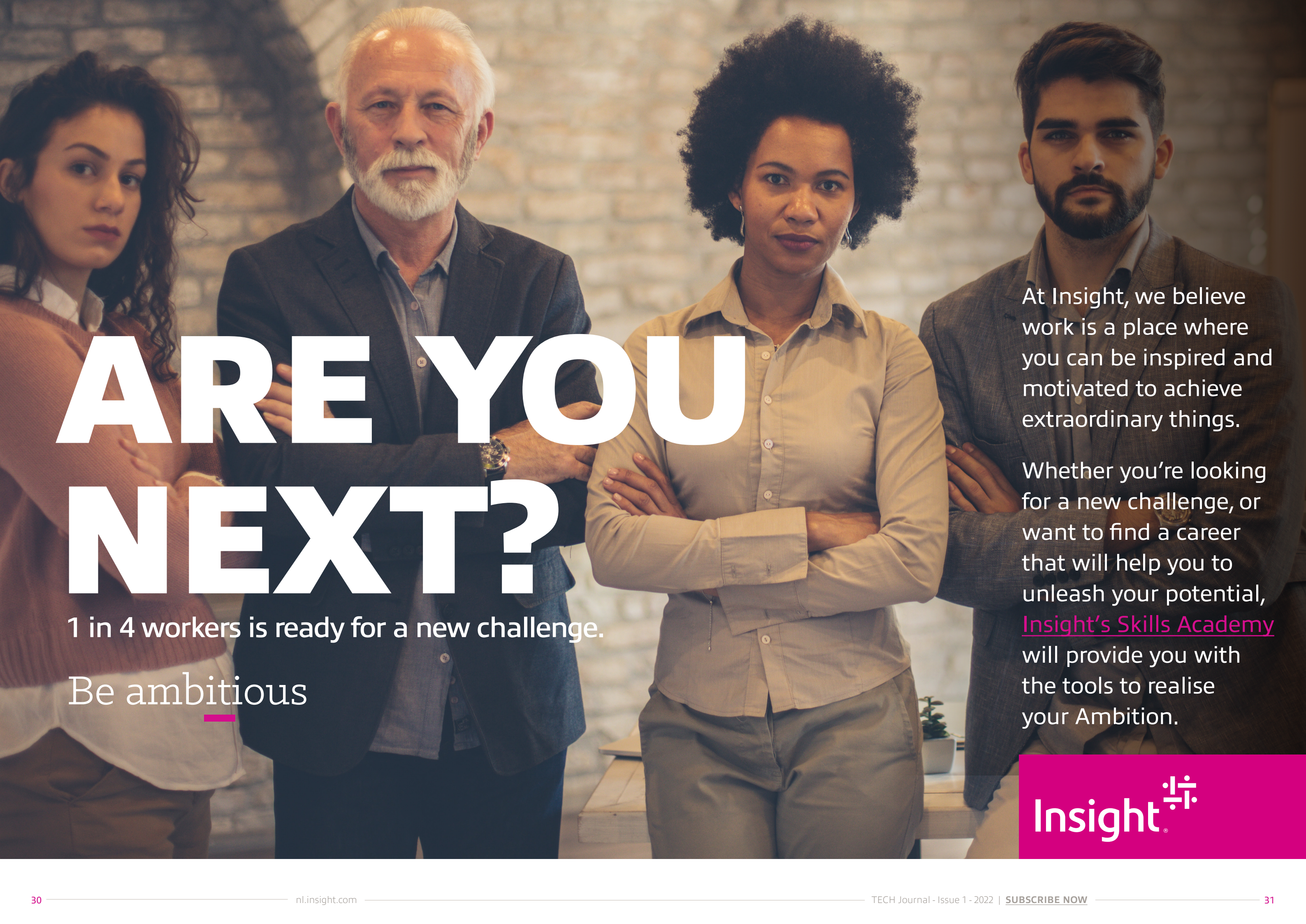
1. https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-05-10/quit-your-job-how-to-resign-after-covid-pandemic
2. https://itsupplychain.com/pandemic-fuels-great-resignation-in-uk-job-market-as-workforce-rethinks-career-priorities/
3. https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/worklab/work-trend-index
4. "digital nomads" movement - people across the globe looking for remote working opportunities
5. https://www.lorman.com/blog/post/39-statistics-that-prove-the-value-of-employee-training

END

ARE YOU NEXT?

1 in 4 workers is ready for a new challenge.

Be ambitious

At Insight, we believe work is a place where you can be inspired and motivated to achieve extraordinary things.

Whether you're looking for a new challenge, or want to find a career that will help you to unleash your potential, Insight's Skills Academy will provide you with the tools to realise your Ambition.

Insight

Promoting Diversity and Inclusion in your Business:
a Personal Journey

Conversation with

Paula Giles
EMEA D&I Specialist
Operational HR

> *Our organisation has always taken pride in its values of 'Hunger, Heart and Harmony'.*

Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) should be at the heart of every organisation to create a friendly, modern, open and successful working culture. Paula Giles, EMEA D&I Specialist at Insight, talks about her experience as a D&I Officer, her department's ambitious work at Insight, and how businesses can onboard D&I practices in their organisation successfully

Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) is a journey for all. There is no doubt that to understand this topic even at its basic level can feel challenging. In the beginning it possibly means that we have to face our learnt behaviour and attitudes, only to turn them on their heads to understand that some of our views are maybe non-truths.

Not all people understand what this agenda means and that is fine. What is important is that they then go on a journey of exploration in this space. I myself was one of those people. I am a middle-aged, white, able-bodied, female with little or no drama in my life - so knowing what I know I have to recognise that I have lived a life of privilege. Many people from different backgrounds don't have the same privilege, so their perceptions of life are different to mine. Everyone's perceptions are different.

Embracing D&I, or DI & Belonging (DI&B) as it is known here at Insight, is or should be the top of the corporate agenda for businesses. There has been a change in the tide for a while on this topic, but that conversation has grown and gained momentum over the past few years for good reason. We all want to be valued for who we are, for being our authentic selves and the skills and experience we can bring to the table.

Our organisation has always taken pride in its values of 'Hunger, Heart and Harmony'. Teammates are recruited with our values in mind to ensure our culture maintains its people-first approach. Having worked for Insight now for coming up to 15 years, I see these values in action everyday – and this is why it came relatively naturally for us to elevate our position on the agenda.

> *There has never been a more pivotal time to embrace D&I for business.*

When I say 'it came naturally', that doesn't mean it was without challenges. DI&B – ensuring our people are at the heart of what we do – covers a multitude of different aspects of the teammate cycle, from (but not limited to) recruitment, benefits to wellness activities and development opportunities. So where does an organisation start? There has never been a more pivotal time to embrace D&I for business. The workforce is now empowered in deciding who they would like to be employed by. It's a workforce market. At Insight we have always embraced evolution, change, progress. We understand the importance of being relevant in the technology industry and we always placed our teammates needs at the heart of what we do - but could anyone have predicted the shift in workforce attitudes towards their career choices last year? Maybe not.

Thankfully, in my opinion, we at Insight embraced our DI&B agenda in good time. This year, however, we are looking to take it to new levels. We want to be ambitious to truly create an inclusive environment where teammates, no matter their background, feel they belong through enhanced programmes and external collaboration with other like-minded organisations. Sheila Callaham, contributor in a recent Forbes article on D&I, said: 'One of the best ways to recruit, engage and retain employees is to create an inclusive workplace culture.' And this is so true, organisations that don't take that stand will fall behind and worse, fail. People are our businesses.

It is therefore vital that companies listen to their employees. Insight has always invested in listening to its teammates through various channels, but the most prominent one is the yearly 'Teammate Satisfaction Survey' - and following the feedback up with notable and promoted actions. More recently

> *For companies looking to do more within D&I, my first recommendation would be to lead from the top.*

we have added the 'Great Place to Work®' surveys, which have consequently won us awards in various areas, which we are extremely proud of. Over the past two years we have taken the time to listen to our teammates further by creating four 'Teammate Resources Groups' (TRG) for those in a minority in our business. The aim of these TRG's is to listen to the challenges the group members face, as well as have them support the organisation through various activities, such as reviewing our recruitment practises or educating teammates on different DI&B awareness days. These TRGs have a voice, and supported by an Executive sponsor who acts as an advocate, are really adding value in driving inclusion for these groups.

For companies looking to do more within D&I, my first recommendation would be to lead from the top – without leadership understanding 'why', how will you change that tide and create positive change? As a second step, lead from the rest of the organisation to drive the change – some examples would be to create a taskforce, ask for volunteers to help create an agenda for change - you may be surprised on how many of your colleagues jump at the chance - and 'Be Ambitious' with your attitude.

Listen to your fellow colleagues and research what other organisations are doing. It is true that all businesses are on this journey, and in my experience, companies are willing to share best practise and collaborate for the greater good. A great example of this is the recent creation of TC4RE (Technology Community for Racial Equality) starting out in the UK. Insight Direct (UK) is one of nine founding members which include Microsoft, Computacenter, Protiviti, Softcat and Software One. The companies have come together to make a stand for racial equality by creating a platform to support other organisations elevate their D&I positions. This year promises to be an ambitious year for us as we enhance our website and drive several objectives.

There is no time like the present to action positive change, be ambitious and integrate more D&I practices into your business.

If you need further inspiration, there are some great D&I festivals out there as well as workshops, articles, Ted Talks and many more options.
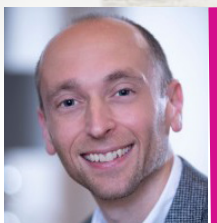
For more information on the TC4RE initiative can be found on our website – https://tc4re.org/

END

TCM Living uses technology to unite brands, improve data security and support growth

Image credit TCM Living

> **The Azure cloud migration has delivered over and above our expectations.**

Conversation with

Nik Hall,
TCM Living CIO

Even if you haven't heard of TCM Living, you've probably sat on one of their sofas. The successful business already owns four prestigious UK furniture brands – and has ambitious plans for further expansion.

CTO Nik Hall talks about the challenges of integrating the four separate brands into one efficient and secure business, and how a migration to the cloud has given the company room to grow.

The furniture group TCM Living brings together four of the UK's leading furniture manufacturing companies. When CIO Nik Hall joined the company in 2019, the four brands were all using different versions of Microsoft Office – making it difficult for teams to collaborate, and causing complications with licensing, and support. Furthermore, the business wanted to expand – but each of the brands was tied to its own legacy on-premises infrastructure. Nik set out to modernise the company's communications platforms and infrastructure so that employees would be able to collaborate efficiently, and the business would have room to grow.

The challenge

Upgrading the Office suite

The four different versions of Microsoft Office inevitably led to problems communicating, collaborating, and sharing documents, and made it difficult to optimise license costs. With each brand paying for its own on-premise Office license, TCM Living was not getting the best value.

To add to the problem, each brand was also using its own on-premise IT infrastructure and its own set of business tools and apps. According to Nik: "The legacy IT infrastructure badly needed future proofing. We wanted to move to a single, cloud-based IT infrastructure that could scale to support our growing business and enable us to consolidate the technology that staff were using across the group. With 200 TCM staff collaborating across four different premises, we needed to optimise our security posture, too."

Putting TCM Living in the driving seat

Nik didn't have to look far to find the right partner for the project. He already had a good relationship with Insight – which had been supplying the furniture manufacturer with office equipment, such as PCs and peripherals, for years. He was confident that Insight would be able to support TCM Living on its digital transformation journey.

"The Insight team worked closely with me and other business leaders at TCM Living and ran a workshop, helping us understand which technologies would best suit our needs and meet our business objectives," said Nik. "It quickly became clear that we needed to migrate from on-premise Office software to Microsoft Office 365 – but we still needed to determine the best licensing model."

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Based on the Connected Workforce Discovery Workshop findings, Insight recommended that TCM Living move to a Cloud Service Provider (CSP) model, allowing the business to package its own tools, products, and services, and combine them into one monthly or annual customer bill. Crucially, the CSP model also gave TCM Living the flexibility to scale up its business and add new users as required.

Once the plan was in place, Insight performed the Office 365 migration for TCM Living on a brand-by-brand basis. By ensuring the success of each one before moving to the next, Insight minimised disruption to TCM Living's business operations. "I can now support all four brands with a single Microsoft licensing agreement", says Nik, "and better still, I can just add new licenses and tools as required".

Getting ahead in the cloud

Having achieved his first goal of enabling staff to communicate and collaborate on a single productivity platform, Nik turned to Insight for help with moving TCM Living's four legacy on-premise infrastructures to a single cloud environment.

Insight built a scalable, reliable, flexible, and dynamic Azure architecture for TCM Living, and then methodically migrated workloads from each of the four brands across to the new cloud infrastructure. The new cloud infrastructure is much easier to manage and has boosted workload performance – leading to improved productivity across all TCM Living teams.

"The Azure cloud migration has delivered over and above our expectations," says Nik. "As well as improving performance and simplifying maintenance, it enables all TCM Living brands to use the same work applications. Plus, we can now scale up our infrastructure quickly and easily if TCM Living makes any new acquisitions."

Nik was clear from the start that any new infrastructure solution should lead to an improved security posture. To achieve this goal, he again worked with the Insight team to conduct an Infrastructure Security Assessment. Following the assessment, Insight recommended and installed Sophos software. A cloud native security solution,

Sophos monitors and analyses both networks and end user behaviour to block and remove threats from the network – boosting TCM Living's security in the cloud. "Sophos is easy to manage, and, like our new Azure infrastructure, fully scalable – which is vital, as TCM Living has ambitious plans for the future," says Nik.

The benefits

Better together

Thanks to the collaboration with Insight, Nik has achieved his initial ambition of bringing the four furniture brands together and prepare TCM Living for further expansion. Now that all TCM Living employees are equipped with Office 365, they can communicate far more easily, enabling the four brands to operate as a single efficient business. Plus, Nik now only has one Microsoft license to manage. The new Azure environment has also improved workload performance and given the business virtually unlimited opportunity to scale

up its infrastructure as the company acquires more brands – while only paying for what it uses. The adoption of Sophos cloud-native security software has improved the company's security posture – protecting the business against the increasing threat of ransomware and other cyber-attacks.

"We began by looking to Insight for a solution and ended by finding a partner that could fully support our ongoing ambitions for growth," said Nik. "Insight helped us through all the stages of our cloud migration and their consultants now work with us two or three days a week to manage our network across multiple sites – giving us dedicated, specialist support and keeping the team productive."

The legacy IT infrastructure badly needed future proofing. We wanted to move to a single, cloud-based IT infrastructure that could scale to support our growing business and enable us to consolidate the technology that staff were using across the group

Image credit TCM Living

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The Insight Intelligent Technology Report 2022:

IT Ambitions for Business Transformation

Insight

CIO FROM IDG

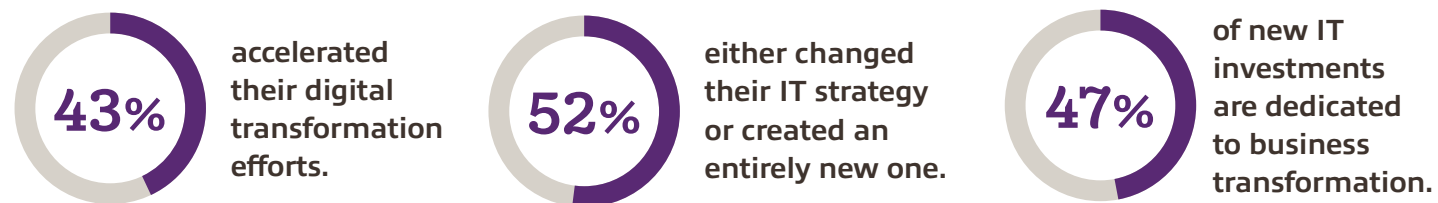## The IT landscape shows no signs of slowing down.

Is your business equipped to outpace it?

In the wake of COVID-19, organisations responded to significant challenges and deep uncertainty by driving bolder agendas on tighter timelines than ever before.

But where do they plan to go from here? We commissioned the Insight Intelligent Technology Report to find out. We talked to 400 IT leaders across a wide range of industries, and here's a sneak peek at what we learned:

1. Transformation has become the new normal.

In 2020 and 2021, enterprises balanced managing the new concerns of COVID-19 with ongoing digital transformation efforts.

43% accelerated their digital transformation efforts.

52% either changed their IT strategy or created an entirely new one.

47% of new IT investments are dedicated to business transformation.

2. IT teams are doing more with less.

Among the many internal challenges leaders are facing in 2022, these are the most urgent:

- Security and data privacy deficiencies
- Shadow IT
- Competing internal priorities
- Upfront costs
- And more

3. And external disruptions remain.

91% said their organisations are impacted to at least some extent by IT supply chain issues. How are they planning to mitigate this?

44% plan to shift application processing requirements to the cloud.

43% intend to avoid last-minute, ad-hoc IT purchases.

42% seek to improve forecasting for longer-term visibility into needs.

But these challenges won't stop their modernisation efforts.

Organisations are planning bold steps in the next 12 months, including:

- Hiring new skilled IT talent
- Leveraging DevOps, IoT and edge computing
- Modernising their cloud environments
- Energising the intelligent use of data
- Collaborating with third parties
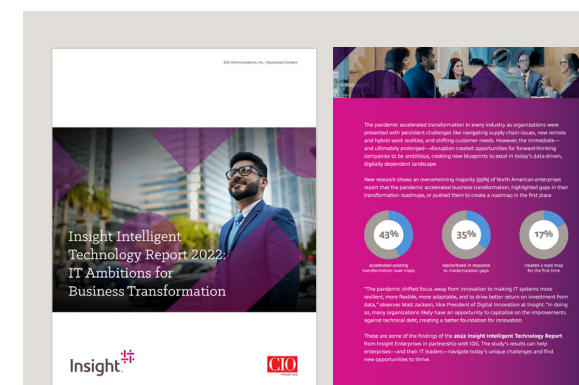
Ready to learn more about how IT leaders are handling today's operational challenges while laying a foundation for their ambitious goals for the future?

Explore the full report.

A New Year, a New Start:
It's time to be ambitious with your Adoption and Change Management plans

Miranda Webb is a Senior Adoption & Change Consultant at Insight. With 13 years' experience in driving change programmes in the IT industry, she is passionate about sharing futures and solving problems through technology. In her column, Miranda looks at the role Adoption & Change Management (ACM) can play in supporting and improving businesses, leading future trends and transforming business operations.

Miranda Webb
Senior Adoption & Change Consultant at Insight

It was Benjamin Disraeli who said "Change is inevitable – how people adapt to it is not." The last couple of years have brought more rapid change in business and in our personal lives than we could have ever imagined. The importance of technology in our lives has come to the fore, and it probably goes without saying that Adoption & Change Management (ACM) teams have certainly had their hands full to support businesses on their digital transformation journeys.

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Another key trend in 2022 for businesses will be flexibility in the workplace

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...I feel proud of the fact that I have helped students continue their education through a period of profound disruption.

To me, ACM is all about building meaningful connections between technology and people to make a positive impact. For businesses, investing in technology is one thing, but empowering the workforce to change their ways of working, enabled by new technologies, is another. Looking back at the past year, I am most proud of leading Insight's Adoption and Change Management end-to-end involvement in the high-profile national programme between the Department of Education and Microsoft, fully transitioning schools from 100% classroom teaching to 100% digital learning. This project not only showed the power of ACM in supporting digital transition, but was special to me on a personal level. As a STEM Ambassador, I have a keen interest in inspiring children and young adults to work with and in technology. IT has come such a long way in such a short period of time. It is important to encourage future generations as to the benefits technology can bring. When I think of this project, I feel proud of the fact that I have helped students continue their education through a period of profound disruption.

But it's not just schools we have helped during the pandemic. We have been on-hand to provide support to businesses navigating the minefield of challenges that the shift to remote working and forced office closures have presented, supporting our clients to ensure business can continue running effectively. With the start of the new year, we are seeing society rebuilding and technology playing a more important role than ever before, with companies looking to not simply survive, but thrive.

In 2022, ACM can support your business to be more ambitious than ever before. The improvement of end user experiences, when it comes to IT tools and services a business offers, will be a major theme in the new year. At Insight, our ACM team will be focusing on helping clients really understand different user groups (business, IT and third-party suppliers). This will support clients in understanding what the needs, challenges and expectations of the people in their organisation are and how this impacts the IT solutions they offer. These efforts will be launched in a brand-new service: "Persona Research and Development" which includes a future-fit IT services catalogue that matches user groups needs with the right IT tools.

To find out whether your business is effectively controlling and spending IT costs to improve end user experience, ask yourself:

- Does your organisation fully understand how hybrid working and flexible working impacts on user experience of IT systems and tools?
- Does your company understand the different user groups (internal and external), their needs, ways of working and expectations from their IT tools?
- Does your business have the right IT tools for those different user groups to perform their roles in a way that is optimal for their needs, context and working environment?
- Does your organisation match appropriate IT costs with different user needs and with existing and future IT solutions offered?

If not, then our "Persona Research & Development" service could be a great fit for you to ensure your end users have the right IT tools to perform their role.

Another key trend in 2022 for businesses will be flexibility in the workplace, and ACM teams can

As a STEM Ambassador, I have a keen interest in inspiring children and young adults to work with and in technology.

be integral to ensuring a successful workplace environment. The workplace has radically changed, and businesses need to keep up with diversifying their operations, understanding and addressing the shift for more flexibility while maintaining an inclusive and accessible environment. The implementation of the right technology will be key – whether that is ensuring the right usage of a videoconferencing platform across the company or investing in Microsoft Surface laptops to benefit interconnectivity and accessibility in your workplace. Whatever changes 2022 brings with it, the role of Adoption & Change Management within your organisation will be key as you seek to ambitiously future-proof your business.

ACM at Insight

END

TAKING A CLOSER LOOK:
the new M365 Continual Adoption Solution

Insight recently partnered with digital enablement company Nulia to launch the M365 Continual Adoption solution.

We sat down with **Jack Barnes**, Senior Manager Adoption & Change Management Services at Insight, to understand what it's all about.

Jack Barnes
Senior Manager Adoption
& Change Management
Services at Insight

Q: Can you provide some background on the solution itself?

This solution brings the power of Insight's Adoption and Change Management consultants and Nulia's 'Nulia Works' digital enablement platform together, to ensure our clients end users fully adopt Microsoft 365. This enables them to be more proficient, collaborative, and productive with the Microsoft toolset. Thanks to the power of the Nulia Works platform, end users will gain personalised digital skills based on their requirements, and clients can benefit from ongoing professional end user support.

Q: How did the partnership with Nulia come about?

We support many clients with their adoption of Microsoft 365 by working with them to create full adoption plans. As part of this we deliver training courses to educate end users on how to use the Microsoft tool set most effectively. We came across Nulia's one-of-a-kind platform and realised it was a perfect fit for a partnership. Together, we can support clients

to get the best return on investment from their Microsoft 365 purchase. The ongoing personalised learning pathways in the tool allows our clients to focus their time and money on the business outcomes they are trying to achieve.

Q: What market need are you trying to address with this solution?

According to leading industry research, "75% of adoption projects that use only training do not work" (McKinsey & Company), and "70% of traditional adoption solutions fail" (Forbes). With this in mind, we ensure that all our solutions aim to stop this happening - and this solution is no different.

> ## 75% of adoption projects that use only training do not work

We focus on ensuring the plans that are in place are strong so adoption is quick and efficient. We also make sure the focus is not just on training, and all elements of adoption are included (i.e., setting up sponsor networks, champions networks, coaching managers, resistance management, etc). The goal is to ensure users don't slip back into their old ways of working after learning something new. When we are successful in these endeavours, we ensure our client's end users are more collaborative and more productive. This results in our clients getting a much quicker return on their investment of Microsoft 365.

Q: Who is the target audience for this solution?

This solution is perfect for anyone that has Microsoft 365 licenses and is ambitious about its adoption within their business. It doesn't matter how big or small the organisation is, there is always an improvement that can be made on how the end users are utilising the tool set. Even if a client has their own in-house adoption and change management teams, we are confident this

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solution will enhance their teams' abilities to effectively adopt Microsoft 365. Not only will they get better insight into how they are using the toolset (thanks to the rich data set from Nulia Works), but they will also have access to a pool of Insights Adoption and Change Management consultants. These consultants can advise and support in ensuring the right business outcomes are set and achieved by the organisation.

> "
> **An organisation, no matter how well designed, is only as good as the people who live and work in it.**

Q: In a world where remote working for businesses and employees is still the norm, why do you believe this solution is fit for purpose?

This is exactly what this solution was built for. Classroom-based training has not been possible over the last couple of years and is unlikely to be reintroduced in the future, due to the shift for businesses to remote working. End users will have access to Nulia directly inside teams (or online), the organisations leadership and Insight will have access to the data it provides. Insight and our clients can work together (virtually) using the rich data set and ensure we are meeting the business outcomes that we set out to achieve throughout the year.

Q: Why do you feel businesses should be investing in this solution?

Dee Hock (founder of Visa Inc.) once said "An organisation, no matter how well designed, is only as good as the people who live and work in it". Our clients are often spending a lot of money on tools (such as Microsoft 365) and expect their people to know how to use it. Even if you do have very proficient people using the technology, new features are added constantly and keeping up to date with the changes is hard. This solution will ensure people are using Microsoft in the way it was meant to be used and that everyone is as productive as they can be.

Q: For those interested in the solution, where can you go to find out more/get in touch?

You can download our "one-pager" on our website or contact us via the Insight website.

Microsoft   **NULIA**

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The Audacious Ambitions of an Idealist CTO

If a daunting challenge is clouding your optimism for success, now is the perfect time to meet Danny Allan — a self-proclaimed idealist at heart with radical ambitions to change the world, one insurmountable challenge at a time. From combing oceans for lost shipwrecks to educating the world on data security, Danny is a leader of titanic ambitions.

Danny Allan
CTO & SVP of Product Strategy, Veeam

What's the most ambitious thing you've done in your career or in your life?

I'm an idealist at heart. I want to change the world. At every company I go to, I have this big, hairy, audacious personal goal to change markets. My first company was a security company, and my bold vision was "we are going to secure every application that exists in the whole world." It was a very exciting, successful endeavor for me. Eventually, we were acquired by IBM.

At my next organisation, I set out to secure all the desktops. My belief was that if you took every desktop and you put it in the cloud, then you could enable the required controls that even if a user did something by mistake, they were protected. With this idea, we started a whole new category of Desktop as a Service (DaaS) and the objective to deliver secure desktops from the cloud. And again, it was an ambitious goal, but it was very exciting. We changed the market and ultimately we were acquired by VMware. In some ways I'm doing the same thing that I did at the start of my career — securing applications and securing desktops. Except now, I'm securing data for organisations.

The most ambitious thing I've ever done in my personal life is an interesting story.

> The most audacious goal I've ever set was deciding that, with three of my friends, we were going to find the shipwreck the Navy couldn't find.

In 2009, I read a book called *Due to Enemy Action* about a lost shipwreck off Portsmouth, Maine. It was the last U.S. Navy warship sunk in the Atlantic Ocean during World War II, two weeks before the end of the war. There were 13 survivors, and a few said they saw a German U-boat after their ship exploded. But the Navy said no way, there's no U-boats operating off the coast of the U.S. a few weeks before the end of the war. The Navy looked for the sunken ship for several years but never found it.

I'm a technical scuba diver and I find shipwrecks in my free time. The most audacious goal I've ever set was deciding that, with three of my friends, we were going to find the shipwreck the Navy couldn't find. And we were going to answer the question of whether it was torpedoed by a German U-boat, or did the boilers explode?

After five years of searching, we found the ship. Ultimately, it was data that helped us find the wreck. But finding that shipwreck and determining it was not the boilers changed lives for both the victims and their families. I'm very proud of that.

In March of 2020, the global workforce went virtual. What was that experience like for you?

When the pandemic first hit, we decided we wouldn't just pick up the in-person events we'd been doing and just move them into the virtual format. Instead, we would tailor it for the virtual format. For example, we would give keynotes on stage, and that was very much a one-direction communication. When we switched to virtual, we said, okay, let's moderate all the sessions and interact live with the audience. We've pivoted very successfully in that area.

When you look back on it in hindsight, what was the best decision you made? Anything you wish you had done differently?

I do wish I had realised earlier how much impact the pandemic was having at a human level. I wish I'd focused a bit more on mental wellness and ensuring that teams and individuals were doing well. Of course, now we're very focused on that. In fact, we just gave everyone at Veeam a day off for mental wellness.

How are you positioning Veeam to stay ahead of these challenges, both internally and for your clients?

We are focusing on both internal needs and customer needs — that's an important point, but we had an unfair advantage. One of the things we've been doing internally even before the pandemic

Insight just released our annual **Intelligent Technology Report**.

In partnership with IDG, we surveyed 400 IT decision-makers, and found...

40% said that security and/or data privacy deficiencies is the top inhibitor of IT modernisation.

and...

45% also ranked upgrading security technology and processes as a top priority for 2022 to support business goals.

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1,000,000
Active Veeam Backup & Replication installations

was to secure our systems. Even though we're not offering direct services, we went through the process ourselves of getting an ISO 27001 certification. And we were in the process of launching something known as Veeam Government Solutions, which required a lot of security certifications. On a software level, we were doing things like making sure the components we use were FIPS 140-2 compliant and going through numerous security certifications and process validation internally.

But one of the things I'm most proud of is what we've done for our customer base. At the same time as COVID-19 hit and the world changed, ransomware and malware started attacking the market. And what does Veeam do? We protect data. In fact, you could argue that backup is your last and best line of defense. We're focused on making sure that our customer data is protected.

We're putting reporting and analysis within our product that help our customers have better outcomes and be more intelligent about their own business. For example, we're adding reporting right in our product that tells clients which data should be made immutable so that if you do get ransomware, bad actors can't come in and delete your backups or encrypt your backups themselves. I do expect that the threat that we face will continue to increase, but Veeam is in a very strong position to help the industry.

We've seen companies do some impressive transformations over the last year or so.

What's the most ambitious work you've seen from clients?

I'd say a company that most impressed me is Leidos. Leidos is a Fortune 500 information technology company. They were delivering services the traditional way where it took months to create a service. But they moved to the cloud and completely reworked how they develop applications, using something known as portable DevSecOps. Essentially, it's a way of using continuous integration, or continuous development, where they could deliver services in hours — not days, not weeks, not months, but literally could deploy services within hours and still be fully compliant and secure and doing all of the things that they needed to. I was very impressed with their story. They essentially completely reworked and transformed their business and Veeam was a part of that casting. And those are the kinds of stories that are very exciting because it's companies that are disrupting themselves and delivering solutions more quickly and more securely than they ever had in the past.

Are there areas in IT or opportunities in the market where you believe companies are not being ambitious enough?

Maybe in data privacy. I really believe that the big challenges that face society today — think healthcare, climate change, sustainability, education — a lot of these things can be solved if, as an industry, we were more willing to share our data with one another. But of course, the challenge with sharing our data with one another is that we're sharing our data with one another. Users have a right to privacy to their own data. And 40 years ago, right after the RSA encryption technology came out, there was a thesis put out around something known as homomorphic encryption.

The idea was that you could manipulate data without decrypting the data. And I think we're missing an opportunity as an industry to find ways to share data, but to do it in a secure way that is fully compliant for homomorphic encryption. We've come a long way in the last 40 years. But I think we could be more ambitious as an industry. And I think we need to be. I think we need to share data to solve some of these big problems.

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What do you see as the next big digital trend in transformation?

I think the next generation, the next big wave is going to be containers, and Kubernetes specifically for orchestration of containers. Everyone said that the biggest shift in the industry was from physical to virtual to cloud. Actually, I think the better way of looking at it is, the big shift is from physical to virtual to containers. The cloud was really virtualisation on someone else's hardware. It was a go-to-market model, and I'm not discounting that in any way. It's a massive benefit to have a go-to-market model where you can pay on a consumption basis. But I think containers do something that is unique and extremely valuable for the organisation.

To be honest, it's still complex. We still have to cross the chasm, but I believe we will. There's enough very smart people that are looking at this that I have no doubt that we will cross that chasm.

The role of IT has expanded. The list of priorities has grown. IT supply chains are lagging. IT talent is hard to come by.

What's your advice for IT decision-makers facing ambitious plans amidst so many challenges?

It's probably not groundbreaking what I'm going to say, but it would be prioritisation. Prioritise, prioritise, prioritise. I'm not going to say what I believe is the top priority because frankly, I think it's different for every organisation. But as a leader,

one of the things I challenge myself with every day is to answer, what are the top three things that I care about? And I'll focus on those. There are more things to distract us than ever before. Inflation, pandemics, cloud, Kubernetes, security, malware, talent shortage, talent drain and now, the "Great Resignation." We should be figuring out how to not lose that talent, but still give them what they need to be mentally well.

> I think the next generation, the next big wave is going to be containers, and Kubernetes specifically for orchestration of containers.

How are you — and Veeam — going to be ambitious in 2022?

One of the things that we're very focused on is data protection and protecting the data within the cloud. There's good, broad awareness that if you have a data center, you need to protect the data within it. But that understanding isn't true for the cloud. And I'm grouping a whole lot of things in cloud — certainly the hyperscale public cloud, but also SaaS cloud services. If you look at Office 365 or Salesforce or Workday or ServiceNow, less than 10% of cloud-hosted workflows are being protected. And I look at that and think, we need to protect the data. So, my ambitious goal is to create awareness within the industry that we need to protect the data that's not just in your data center, but also when it's out in the public cloud.

Explore IT solutions and new technology for business

veeAM

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5 TOP TIPS in *Cybersecurity*

How businesses can enhance their security in 2022

We live in a time where remote working has become the norm for many businesses globally. Gartner forecasts that in 2022, 31% of the global workforce will be working remotely (hybrid or fully).

For European countries, the predictions of employees working remotely are as high as 52% for the UK, 37% in Germany, and 33% in France, to name a few examples[1].

In this environment where business operations are decentralising, cybersecurity is not just becoming a trend topic, but an essential for companies to operate. But what can enterprises do to ambitiously enhance cybersecurity in their operations in 2022?

I have outlined some top tips to keep in mind to start 2022 "securely".

Rob O'Connor is Technology Practice Lead (EMEA) at Insight

With a background in networks and security, he has a deep understanding for the IT industry. In this article, Rob looks at key security trends, and addresses the questions and challenges around security that businesses face today.

1 Take another look at visibility

The saying 'you can't protect what you can't see' may be used a lot, but it is more true now than ever. The recent log4j incident, a software vulnerability which exposed millions of devices to remote attackers, has left organisations reeling, trying to find out where they may have used this component, and which of their purchased software may contain it. Time is of the essence when responding to an exploit which is 'in the wild', so do as much work up-front before the pressure is on.

Asset management is critical as organisations move from on-premises, where boxes in the datacentre can be easy to audit, to public cloud services which can be much more opaque. More people now have access to create infrastructure, with developers able to spin up production infrastructure quickly and easily. Some assets, such as containers and serverless, have a lifetime measured in minutes or seconds, which mean managing by manual process and spreadsheets just won't work anymore.

Extend your visibility beyond corporate owned assets to anything which touches your data, after all it's the data that is important, not the device.

2 Vulnerability Management and Patching

Patching may not be exciting, but it's a proven way to reduce your attack surface. Decreasing the time between a vulnerability being known about and closed down is critical for risk reduction. The first step is discovery – you need to detect 'new' assets and get them into your vulnerability management process. This needs to be an automated process, removing those manual steps which are easily forgotten about when rushing to complete a project. The scope of this should be all your important assets – endpoints, servers, network equipment, web services and even APIs. Continuous improvement and hardening your estate are foundational security tasks, not a 'nice to have', so take time early in the new year to make sure your processes and toolsets support your business as it is now, not as it was before.

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4 Human Factors in Security

We spend a lot of time talking about technology, but ultimately, people have a large part to play in the security of your organisation. Security is always a balance between having just enough security to keep us safe, but not too much security which prevents people from doing their jobs. As security professionals we need to manage this balance. Every decision in security should be a risk-based one. Of course, a 30-character password is more secure than a 12-character one, but how would that impact your users? What negative unforeseen consequences could it result in?
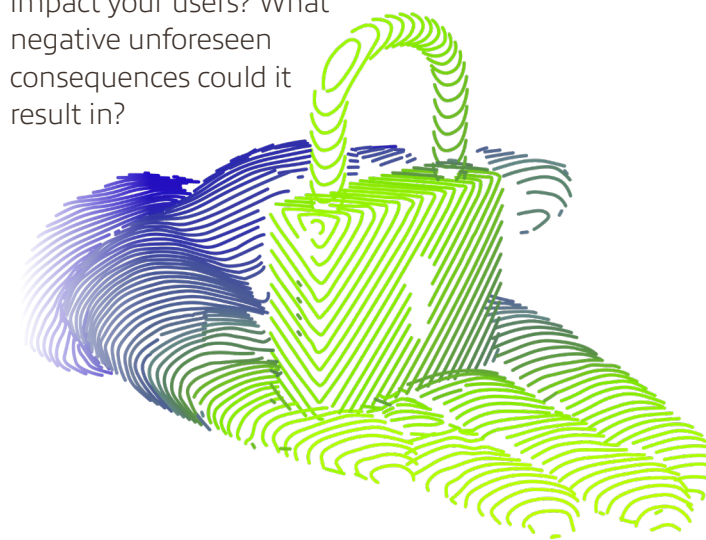
Are there technologies which will help mitigate security risks while increasing usability? As security professionals, we must help the rest of the business by walking in their shoes and explaining the rationale behind our decisions.

Consider implementing a continuous training and testing programme to address risks of phishing. This should not be a blame culture! Like everything else we do, detecting and reporting phishing risks is a skill which needs to be built over time. Training shouldn't just be limited to business users, technical users like developers have a critical role in helping to ensure security in the applications and services they create for your business. Secure coding is a skill that needs to be developed and by fixing problems before they reach production reduces costs and delays in launching new services. Think about where security awareness needs to be improved across your organisation and target these areas first. Ensure these programmes run continuously and are supported into the business through champions who understand security, and the business processes they are trying to protect.

5 Consider your Zero-Trust Approach

Zero-Trust has been talked about for many years, but the move to hybrid working has meant zero-trust is now the norm, not the exception. Zero-Trust is a great way to introduce a step change in your security maturity, but also to make your IT services more usable. The most important step in moving towards a Zero-Trust approach is to understand what you are looking to achieve. If you are working through this list in order, you will have already collected a lot of great information to help define this. You should now have a list of your visibility gaps, you now have a way to detect assets, assess their posture and automate their patching. You know which IT systems are most important to your organisation and you have a plan to recover them after a major incident. You may have identified a number of critical services which are based in your data centres, and which don't fully meet your hybrid working strategy. You

may have determined that the level of patching which is required to keep your controls up to date is unsustainable. You may be missing key controls around cloud services or have found that having multiple identity sources is creating visibility gaps or excessive admin overhead. Adopting a Zero-Trust approach, using models like "Secure Access Service Edge", can help solve many of these problems – and while implementing Zero-Trust end to end can be a complex problem, breaking it down in to manageable pieces, driven by closing down the risks you have identified, is a solid approach.

In the end, businesses do not need to be held back by security. In fact, organisations making cybersecurity a priority to business operations in 2022 should be able to be even more ambitious than before.

1.https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2021-06-22-gartner-forecasts-51-percent-of-global-knowledge-workers-will-be-remote-by-2021

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3 Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery

During the pandemic, we have all had the need to exercise our business continuity plans and ensure our business operations can continue through staff illness and enforced working. It is important that we don't sit back, but we consider the risks of secondary disruptions to our operations. The threat from ransomware continues to increase – do you have the ability to detect incidents and rebuild devices remotely? Have you actively tested your backup and recovery plans? It is probably a good time to

reconsider the most critical risks to your business and check you can respond to these in conjunction with working from home. How do you check? Run simulated exercises which are not pre-announced and watch these closely for learning opportunities. Continuing the theme of visibility, map your business processes onto the IT functions which support them, and consider any third parties you need to maintain operations.

Empowering Remote Collaboration

With Mixed Reality Technologies

Virtual Reality (VR) technology is on the rise. How can you harness the power of Microsoft HoloLens 2 to fuel growth and innovation for your enterprise?

Extended Reality (XR) technology is a gaming mainstay, yet research indicates that the use of VR, Augmented Reality (AR) and Mixed Reality (MR) is steadily increasing in other industries. In fact, nearly 59 million people will use VR technology once a month by the end of 2021. And, more than 93 million people will use AR once a month by the end of this year. Some economists estimate that

VR will increase the global GDP by $1.5 trillion by the end of this decade.

With nearly 18% and 28% of the U.S. population already using VR and AR respectively each month, the time is right to explore how your enterprise can benefit from immersive technology that equips dispersed and remote workers with new ways to collaborate.

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Why is HoloLens 2 considered the most comfortable, immersive, collaborative MR technology?

Recently, I wrote about how Microsoft HoloLens 2 technology empowers geographically dispersed teams to work together to solve complex problems in real time, eliminating unnecessary travel and reducing risks, costs or delays. By providing a platform for virtual collaboration, HoloLens 2 offers coworkers the chance to train together from any location, replicating the energy and dynamics of group sessions without the time and cost of travel.

Let's explore some of the workflows available to drive remote collaboration.

Remote Assist training

The ideal solution for instructing a single person or larger group, Remote Assist training with HoloLens 2 and Microsoft Teams incorporates a first-person approach to simulate in-person training sessions.

The technology enables workers with mobile devices to connect to remote collaborators via Dynamics 365 Remote Assist mobile or Microsoft Teams. Then, using a mix of live video calling, MR annotations and high-resolution snapshots, members of the team share what they see with remote collaborators so they can solve problems faster and more efficiently. This is especially helpful for situations in which access is constrained — for example, if the job site includes hard-to-reach spaces or if technicians need to solve problems on-site in real time under the guidance of remote experts.

Guides workflows

When machinery is available but people are not, employers can use Dynamics 365 Guides and HoloLens 2 to build holographic workflows that overlay steps, instruction and information on top of physical machinery to train workers.

With Guides, you can create training structures from existing programs that walk users through procedures and protocols on machinery while allowing them to remain hands-free thanks to the use of voice and head-based gestures.

Digital Twins

In situations when neither people nor machinery are available for training purposes, HoloLens 2 and Digital Twins allow employers to use a full digital twin for training and collaboration purposes. This full-scale virtual replication allows you to build whatever you need, wherever it's needed, so you can keep innovation and collaboration moving forward.

Empower collaboration. Drive innovation.

MR technology offers organisations the ability to not only harness human critical thinking but also amplify it with the power of computing. By bringing together workers, information and expertise across locations, businesses access new possibilities to drive innovation in industries from manufacturing to education and beyond.

HoloLens 2 also incorporates the reliability, security and scalability of cloud and Artificial Intelligence (AI) services from Microsoft, allowing you to accelerate, transform and innovate with confidence. Plus, when you partner with Insight to bring HoloLens 2 to your enterprise, you access full lifecycle services and workshops, training and support tailored to meet your organisation's specific needs. From envisioning and planning to readiness, support, innovation and integration, Insight's team of experts help you realise the collaborative benefits of HoloLens 2.

MR technology

offers organisations the ability to not only harness human critical thinking but also amplify it with the power of computing.

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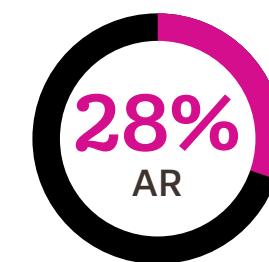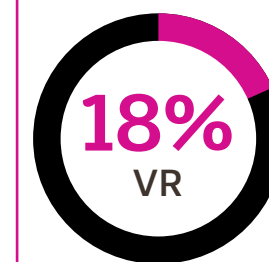
18% VR

28% AR

With nearly **18%** and **28%** of the U.S. population already using VR and AR respectively each month, the time is right to **explore how your enterprise can benefit from immersive technology** that equips dispersed and remote workers with new ways to collaborate.

Interested in exploring virtual reality, augmented reality or mixed reality solutions?

Learn more about HoloLens 2 and the latest innovations from Insight and Microsoft.

The author
Matt Fedorovich
National Lead for Immersive Technology, Insight

Sponsored by:

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The Metaverse… stronger, faster, better, meta?

The concept of the Metaverse has started a dialogue of companies and experts across all industries. This evolving and growing virtual dimension is an ambitious plan for designing the future, and will undoubtedly effect most businesses and individuals at some point. Wes Platel, UK Digital Innovation Lead at Insight, breaks down the idea of the Metaverse for us to demystify the questions around it, and clarify the opportunity it could present.

Wes Platel, UK Digital Innovation Lead, Insight

The Metaverse is a complex topic – so it can be quite overwhelming knowing where to even start the conversation. After spending lots of years doing Solution & Enterprise Architecture, I've always been a big fan of the Zachman Framework as a way of capturing key information about something new, asking the 6 key interrogating questions of What, Why, Who, When, Where and How.

What

So, let's start with what is it? Many have given their own definitions, and some would agree/disagree or say it's still to be defined, or can't be defined by one individual entity. It feels a bit like when 'Cloud' came along the hype cycle to become a mainstream term, despite being present in various guises for years. Perhaps someone like the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) will come up with a definition for Metaverse at some point to at least give the majority of less argumentative people something to go with.

The term 'Metaverse' is a portmanteau word (which is a morph of two other words relating to a particular concept to create a new word). So we have:

- **Meta** - which means 'beyond', combined with
- **Universe** - all of space and time (plus the contents of these) as we know it today

The Metaverse for now is a collection of experiences being created by individual organisations or people, and in the future will be a culmination of different experiences that interact, where relevant, or integrate, where possible.

The Metaverse brings additional dimensions to the physical world or dimensions that exist in parallel. It will enhance the physical world, as well as offer alternate realities, to enable more to be seen or done. It will be created by many different parties, meaning interoperability is a key principle, so that as a result the different components can work together.

For me, the Metaverse is still in its infancy, but will also always be a living thing that will keep expanding and evolving, like the internet does today.

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Why

You'll probably hear the term used more and more going forward, both socially and in business.

Why is it important to business? At this point you're going to want to know what's relevant to your business and what your business should consider for the future within the Metaverse - such as whether or how you'll be present in it.

Why is there so much investment going into it? Meta announced last year that they were investing $50m into global research and program partners to ensure responsible development of the Metaverse. Along with immersive technology in general (Virtual/Augmented/Mixed Reality devices), the Metaverse has seen increased attention and adoption since the pandemic, where some people have been forced to stay at home, work remotely, or stay at home and/or work remotely.

Who

We have major software and hardware creators, building platforms, tools, apps and services that will all be relevant to the Metaverse, such as:

- Microsoft
- Meta (previously known as Facebook or Oculus)
- Magic Leap
- HTC
- Nreal
- Lenovo
- Nvidia

System integrators/immersive service providers like ourselves already provide Digital Consulting, end user enablement, solution implementations and on-going managed services for components relating to Metaverse as they exist today.

Then there are some hugely talented Independent Software Vendors, who are bringing immersive experiences to life already, including:

- Jenson8
- Mesmerise
- VRPilot
- Fracture Reality
- Velicus
- GigXR
- SynergyXR

> **The Metaverse for now is a collection of experiences being created by individual organisations or people and in the future will be a culmination of different experiences that interact, where relevant, or integrate, where possible.**

When

Virtual and Augmented/Mixed Realities have existed for years, including gaming worlds as well as individual worlds for hosting entertainment, social interaction, or business activities too.

Right now, there are early versions of platforms such as Microsoft Mesh, or Meta's 'Horizon' collection including Home, Worlds, Workrooms and Venues.

In the next year or two, we will start to see more experiences arriving, and we will also see how the integration between experiences starts to pan out, with early creators starting to bring collective parts together. Within that timeframe, the definition of Metaverse will start to be more defined and accepted too.

> **In the next year or two, we will start to see more experiences arriving.**

Beyond the next couple of years, we'll have collective parts of the Metaverse becoming more widely adopted, as well as pathways into more complete communities within the Metaverse. By this, I mean that there will be common integrated experiences that particular people use and get value from being integrated. Imagine working from home in your virtual office space, with others who are in their own homes, whilst collectively deciding on what you're going to eat for dinner. This would mean virtual menus being discussed and viewed together, the connected food provider (local takeaway, family member or friend, or AI-powered cooker in the kitchen) to have it ready when each of you are individually ready to eat. A great early example of this is Meta recently announcing updates to virtual avatars, where you can now use the same avatar across multiple platforms, giving you a consistent presence in different usage scenarios. Another example is digital currencies such as Bitcoin and Ethereum that are in use across digital platforms (and in the real world).

Where

Most of the interaction within the Metaverse will happen on the internet, using Cloud computing, so the increased bandwidth of mobile (5G onwards) and home/office connections will support this.

The Metaverse has been described as the next iteration of the internet. However, I feel that the internet is an enabler for the Metaverse to do certain things, such as connect to remote data sources, or connect us with other people (real or AI-based). Offline experiences will also be part of the Metaverse.

The Metaverse will also enable more to be done remotely, such as remote participation in experiences, such as working in virtual office environments to collaborate, or attending entertainment events virtually together.

How

People will interact with the Metaverse across a variety of devices, with consistency and continuity being important to the overall experience. Devices will be your desktop/laptop, your mobile phone or tablet, i.e. the common ways we interact with the internet today, but extending further into other 'screens' that already give us interaction with certain services. Examples here are TVs, smart fridges or the Portal+ device that sits on my desk connecting to Microsoft Teams (when it's not playing music from Spotify or creating fun Augmented Reality pictures and videos for my youngest daughter).

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Then, we're seeing the continued growth of Immersive Technology and eXtended Reality (XR), including Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR) and Mixed Reality (MR). These devices are used in both consumer and enterprise environments already today, allowing us to bring holograms or other contextual data into the real world, across various industries. Alternatively, they will enable us to enter virtual worlds for entertainment, or to allow workers to experience high risk situations, or just places that don't yet physically exist.

Cameras and other sensors on all of these devices will (and already do) enable us to use natural interactions and gestures. This brings more realism to virtual environments, or just makes it more ergonomic to complete a task in the Metaverse – such as reaching out to grab something and moving it or pressing a virtual button. Another example is smiling or blinking in real life and your virtual avatar doing the same in the Metaverse. These are all here now and will only get more realistic over time.

Another key part of how I expect us to interact with the Metaverse will be with seamless blending of physical and digital things. Holograms in Mixed Reality know where the wall, floor and tables/other furniture are, so we can interact with them. We can open up a holographic hole in a real wall to visualise the electrical cabling behind it, or gas piping under the road.

The Metaverse brings us the opportunity of greater connectivity between physical and digital worlds. We are yet to fully witness the scale and detailed opportunities is holds for companies and individuals, but it is already clear to see that it holds a lot of potential for those looking to be ambitious in the coming years.

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> ### The Metaverse brings us the opportunity of greater connectivity between physical and digital worlds.

The Metaverse — a Business Opportunity?

The world is abuzz with the term "Metaverse" at the moment and there is a lot of discussion about what it is and what it isn't (as my peer Wes Platel has outlined in detail). Beyond this, it is worth looking at what this trend could mean for businesses (specifically those consuming Metaverse services and offerings) in real terms, and what you can get started with in the immediate future rather than in the next few years.

Whether we see a fully decentralised Web 3.0 take the internet browsing experience 3D and immersive, or whether we shop on Amazon by walking around a virtual supermarket chatting to strangers (how big would that virtual supermarket be!) is still to be decided, but ultimately the drive of the Metaverse and what most of these companies visions have in common is a connected and/or immersive experience.

One term you'll hear a lot around the topic of the Metaverse is the idea of the Digital Twin, whether that's you making an avatar of yourself so you can go into a collaboration experience and communicate with others, or massive undertakings like building 1:1 scale Digital Twins of your whole manufacturing operation. Digital Twins are key to understanding and realising business value.

Right now, you can get involved with software like Fracture Realities **JoinXR** application, Cisco's upcoming "**Webex Hologram**", **Meta's Horizon Worlds** to name but a few of a large selection of offerings in this space. By using a tool like this you're able to remove barriers and get different types of work done that you would have categorically said "didn't work unless you're in a meeting room together physically". Importantly, it brings in tools that you would find in a meeting room like whiteboards, sticky notes and presentation screens for video content. It also allows you to do things you couldn't do before, like hover a 3D-render of your latest product design in the middle of the room for people to pick up, move around and even expand/slice through to see additional detailing.

So what could this type of connected experience practically mean for some companies? Let's take, for example, a design team for a clothing or backpack manufacturer, that is creating physical prototypes for design iteration at great expense. With the option of virtual prototypes in a space like the Metaverse, the manufacturer can reduce costs in the design stage and enable decision makers to put on their immersive technology goggles to get easy, early feedback on look/design/colour schemes in an agile and mobile way.

At the other end of the Digital Twin spectrum, I mentioned creating whole locations, which is an incredible industry development in many fields like manufacturing. By having 1:1 scale immersive environments and feeding in live service data from your machinery and/or processes, you can use data and immersive technology to help train new staff, spot potential problems early, find efficiencies in processes. **You can even modify and change layout of some elements to see what would happen without having to alter things in the physical world, which could lead to massive reductions in total cost of service.**

These are just two examples of what you can do today from opposite ends of the spectrum of connected immersive experiences – the potential opportunities will only grow with time as the Metaverse expands and takes shape. If you would like to know more about how Immersive Technology, Big Data, AI, Machine Learning and Connected platforms can help you solve key business challenge, and help you drive business process improvement and internal costs down, then please reach out to your Insight account team to ask to speak to one of our team.

Antony Taylor is a Technology Lead at Insight

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RNLI tests the waters of immersive technology to future proof work in remote locations

Relief Shannon class lifeboat John Metters 13-26 Credit: RNLI/Nathan Williams

Conversation with

Christian Flux,
Head of Digital & Technology Futures, RNLI

The Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) is a UK and Ireland-wide charity that saves lives at sea and on inland waterways. RNLI Head of Digital & Technology Futures Christian Flux, explains how his team ambitiously looked at the potential of mixed reality solutions to improve future operations for engineering teams in remote working locations.

The RNLI provides essential lifesaving services through its search and rescue fleets, beach lifeguards and flood rescue teams. With its 24-hour rescue service, RNLI crews and lifeguards have saved over 142,700 lives since its foundation in 1824. In 2020 alone, RNLI lifeguards and lifeboats aided more than 30,000 people who had found themselves in difficulty.

To ensure the safety of RNLI volunteers during their working day, all lifesaving equipment – including boats – must be maintained to safe standards. However, many RNLI crews work in very remote locations, and expert support staff often must travel long distances to help with maintenance of critical equipment. Since the pandemic hit two years ago, it became even more difficult to get expert staff to remote

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locations to maintain equipment. This led the RNLI to look for new ways to enable technical support staff to attend a site. One ambitious solution Christian Flux and team wanted to explore was immersive technology.

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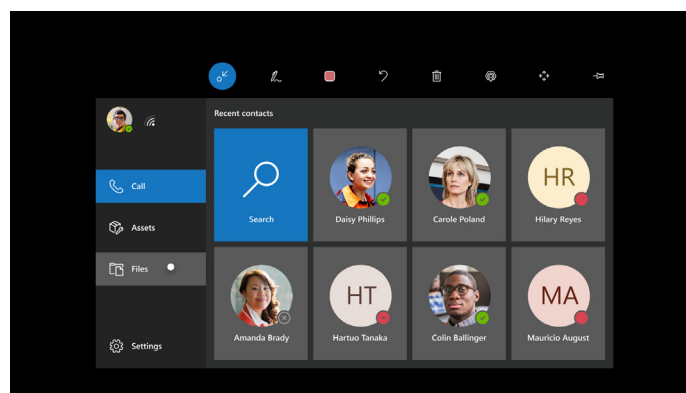
Navigating the waters

As the RNLI is funded by members of the public through donations, any investment of its supporters' money for a new solution had to be carefully considered. Testing the immersive technology before proceeding was therefore imperative, as well as determining whether it would deliver significant cost reductions, and reduce the time spent travelling to fix equipment. The RNLI also wanted to identify any challenges it might face and use these findings to inform its digital transformation roadmap.

During discussions between the RNLI and Microsoft's philanthropy division, the idea of using Microsoft HoloLens 2 and Remote Assist to provide expertise at remote locations arose. Microsoft offered to fund the pilot study and recommended Insight as the best partner to implement it.

As part of the pilot study, Insight and Microsoft loaned the RNLI five HoloLens devices to use at its Lifeboat Stations on the south coast. The Insight team helped the RNLI to set up user accounts, assign roles and connect securely to its network – assisting the team at every step, from the unboxing, to making RNLI's first Remote Assist calls with HoloLens 2.

"The suggestion of using HoloLens devices to remotely assist our engineering teams was of great interest to us, as it allows us to explore mixed reality technology and the

potential benefits this can offer our charity," comments Christian. "The HoloLens devices where unlike anything we had ever encountered before, so the support we got from Insight in working with the technology effectively made a great difference."

Setting up the solution was just the first step in Insight's three-part plan to deliver a mixed reality 'Proof of Value' engagement: to deliver a mixed reality pilot solution for a select number of RNLI users and use cases; to gather feedback on the experiences gained in a very practical and hands-on environment; and to apply the feedback to determine the opportunities for the charity. The engagement was also designed to show how the solution could meet RNLI's immediate challenge, identify any blockers it might face, and realise any further benefits that the technology could bring.

"The pilot study helped us explore the possibility of using Microsoft HoloLens 2 and Remote Assist to provide expertise at remote locations, without us having to invest in expensive technology", explains Christian.

During the pilot, one major issue was network reliability, particularly in difficult to reach locations, such as below deck on boats and in engine rooms. Insight helped the RNLI overcome this issue by loaning NETGEAR mobile internet routers.

"It was particularly important for us during this project to practically explore the opportunities and challenges the HoloLens and Remote Assist technology presented the RNLI in their daily work," adds Wes Platel, UK Digital Innovation Lead at Insight. "The pilot study proved an optimal format to explore the added value the technology could provide the RNLI, and whether the investment would present a best spend of charity funds."

Exploring new possibilities

The pilot study showed the RNLI that mixed reality tools such as HoloLens and Remote Assist could help experts to cut down on travel, saving both time and money getting to remote locations. It also highlighted further benefits, such as training new volunteers.

"The pilot also revealed some key insights, such as the fact that a successful solution would need to work well in noisy and unstable locations," says Christian. "It also allowed us to identify network improvements that would be required before successfully adopting a scaled Remote Assist deployment across the locations."

"Insight's Proof of Value approach went beyond loaning and setting up the technology, to include gathering and analysing feedback, helping us to fully evaluate the solution and determine the next best steps for our charity in our plans for digital transformation," says Christian.

"This pilot showed us that technology can support our ambition to optimise our operations even more, and we hope to continue this journey of exploring new technologies and the benefits they could bring our charity."

> **The pilot also revealed some key insights, such as the fact that a successful solution would need to work well in noisy and unstable locations...**

Find out more about the RNLI and their ambitious projects

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