Navigating the Disruption of Work

The five major accelerations
happening right now

slack

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**Introduction**

What has just happened?

One of the many shocking things about a pandemic is how quickly the unimaginable becomes the inevitable.

In less than 72 hours, even the world's most traditional companies transitioned from office-based to working from home. Everyone could see that the word 'work' was about to be redefined.

The transition was head-spinning. In those first hours, days and weeks, companies across every industry stepped through what looked like a playbook (if only a pandemic playbook existed).

They moved, in sequence, from 'keeping the lights on' to imagining whole new business models in a high-speed scramble. Businesses re-evaluated their hierarchy of needs, establishing the basics first, much like they were running up Maslow's psychological needs pyramid ().

And as they did, the changes were so fundamental to how their teams operated, any notion of reverting back to normal quickly fell away.
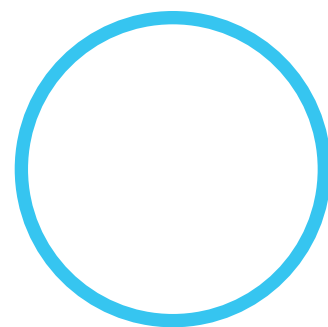
In it together.

So many of the companies we admire followed a similar path as they grappled with their new priorities. And, even though companies started at different stages of the journey, we noticed some common themes and issues emerging.

Because we're students of the way people work together, we started to talk with the leaders of these companies and began to notice the changes happening within Slack.

These conversations were and continue to be fascinating and energising. They're a testament to the resilience of the best business leaders (as well as their integrity and sensitivity).

This piece is itself the start of an ongoing conversation about all this: about how work is changing, why it's changing and what the people who lead companies and teams can do about it.

We hope it spurs some new ideas for your organisation and we invite you to share these ideas with us on the **Slack Twitter feed** (@SlackHQ).

In a word, faster.

If we had to choose a single theme running underneath all the many changes we're seeing in the world of work since the pandemic started, it would be this: acceleration.

The emerging ideas about work are not really about total transformation or radical pivots (though there are many examples of these too). They're about things we already saw happening – only now they're happening much, much faster.

Rather than seeing a total transformation of work, we're seeing a head-snapping acceleration of the changes that were already underway.

But first, a look at the lessons hidden inside the transition period that got us here.

Running up Maslow's pyramid

When companies are hit by any kind of macro crisis, they go through a series of stages that seem to mirror psychologist Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

We saw the pattern progress rapidly during the first few weeks of the global pandemic.

For Maslow, human needs build from the bottom up, from physiological needs (like food and shelter), to safety, belongingness, esteem and self-actualisation.

For companies in crisis, it looks more like this:

For many companies, progressing through these stages underlines the importance of resilience, agility and preparedness. So that, during the next crisis, you're not starting at the base of the pyramid and can work back to the peak faster and in better shape.

Now let's dig into the ways that work transformation is speeding up – and what we believe to be the five most important things every business should be focussing on right now.

Emergence

Creativity

Culture

Productivity
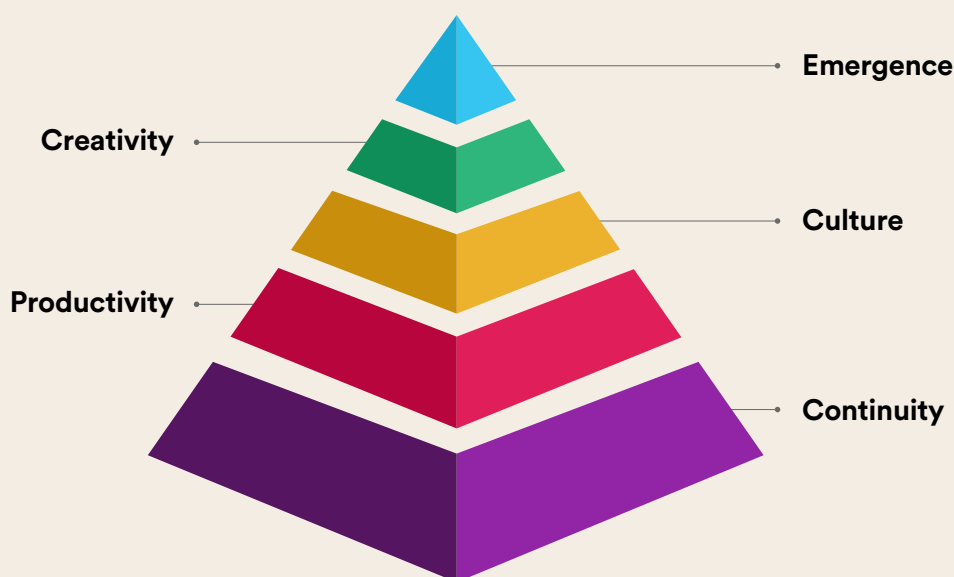
Continuity

● **Continuity**
Connectivity, communications, the ability to serve customers

● **Productivity**
Goals, alignment, project continuation, collaboration

● **Culture**
Employee experience, well-being, values, leadership, engagement

● **Creativity**
New solutions, workarounds, pivots

● **Emergence**
Innovation, new business models, new opportunities

The Five Accelerations

Acceleration 1

The Age of the Office is ending

For generations of knowledge workers, the office is where work happens.

It made sense: if you have things to do and you need other people (and things) to do those things, it's a good idea to get those people (and those things) together in a central place. So towns swelled into cities and open-plan offices filled up with cubicles.

Then work started to evolve (internet, email).

And that evolution took off (cloud, SaaS).

But we still crammed ourselves into trains and traffic jams to commute to our offices.

When new collaboration tools emerged, they were always sold as making remote workers 'as productive as if they were in the office!' As if the office were the ideal context for teamwork instead of a legacy idea struggling to keep up with the things that happened inside it.

Well, the office isn't the gold standard of productivity anymore – there's much less efficiency, cost-effectiveness and work-life balance.

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'Our beds are empty two-thirds of the time. Our living rooms are empty seven-eighths of the time. Our office buildings are empty one-half of the time. It's time we gave this some thought.'

R. Buckminster Fuller
*Architect, systems theorist, author, designer and inventor*

Away from HQ does not mean remote

In the last ten years, three huge forces started to shake the assumption that the office had the ideal conditions for effective work:

– **Mobile networks, smartphones and laptops** meant we were no longer tethered to our towers.

– **Cloud computing and VPNs** meant *all* of our essential applications and data were available from anywhere – securely and with authentication.

– **Collaboration platforms** meant all of our *colleagues* and *conversations* were also accessible from anywhere.

These forces were already loosening the grip of the office on our work lives. We just didn't notice it for a while.

The pandemic brought that transition forward by five or ten years – and did it in a few *months*. That's making an impact on every aspect of work, especially culture (the fifth Accelerator, below).
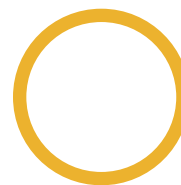
The next normal:
Hybrid work

The pandemic highlighted some compelling truths that many companies were already starting to discover:

Many employees like the flexibility and autonomy of working from home. Parents see more of their kids. Caregivers find the flexibility they need. Commuters get their lives back…

80% of employees want to work from home at least some of the time.

Source: **State of Remote Work 2019,** *Owl Labs*

Productivity often *increases* in WFH mode. Fears about lost productivity have proven unfounded for many companies. Quite the reverse: remote work often turns out to be significantly more productive work.

Prodoscore research showed a 47% productivity increase in 2020, despite the coronavirus lockdown.

Source: **Prodoscore**

It's not just about home. It's about working from anywhere. Airports. Cafes. Customer premises. Grandparents' back gardens. Hotel lobbies…

Satellite offices and telework hubs that are closer to customers or near employees' homes are increasingly popular alternatives to the monolithic HQ.

Remote work can save a lot of money. Office expenses, transport fares, parking, food and travel time are real costs but they don't drive direct value for customers.

'A typical employer can save an average of $11,000 per half-time telecommuter per year. The primary savings are the result of increased productivity, lower real estate costs, reduced absenteeism and turnover and better disaster preparedness.'

Source: *Global Workplace Analytics:* **Telework Savings Calculator**

Offices have huge carbon footprints. Beyond their construction, the heating and cooling of many offices – plus the commuting – are a collective climate furnace.

'If those who have a work-from-home compatible job and a desire to work remotely did so just half the time, the greenhouse gas reduction would be the equivalent to taking the entire New York State workforce off the road.'

Source: *Global Workplace Analytics:* **Telework Savings Calculator**

Taken together this is a strong business case – and businesses have taken notice.

The global view

'Everyone who wants to and whose workplace allows it should be able to work in a home office – even when the coronavirus pandemic is over.'

Hubertus Heil
German Labour Minister
Reuters, 26th April 2020

'For Groupe PSA, the number of employees who regularly or occasionally worked remotely grew to 18,000 (from 2,500 in 2016). That represented over **3 million teleworking hours and nearly 500,000 hours of commute savings.'**

Groupe PSA, 6th May 2020

'As of today, Shopify is a digital by default company. We will keep our offices closed until 2021 so that we can rework them for this new reality. And after that, most will permanently work remotely. Office centricity is over.'

Tobi Lutke
CEO, Shopify
Twitter, 21st May 2020

'[The lockdown] has really enabled us to accelerate some of the programs that we had in our plan... including our 'experts at home' program, which is about [enabling] contact centre staff to work from places that are not an office space.'

Mark Baylis
VP of customer care, Optus
The Australian Financial Review, 17th April 2020

'The notion of putting 7,000 people in the building may be a thing of the past.'

Jes Staley
CEO, Barclays
BBC News, 20th April 2020

'I don't fear any slowness as we work to distribute our workforce now, and I do think we have to build a company that's not entirely dependent on San Francisco.'

Jack Dorsey
CEO, Twitter
The Telegraph, 12th May 2020

'The common assumption is that remote workers are less productive than those who are in a traditional office. But our ability to capture, integrate and analyse workplace data shows otherwise.'

Crisantos Hajibrahim
Chief product officer, Prodoscore
BusinessWire, 19th May 2020

'82% of working professionals would like to work from home one day a week or more, with 57% wanting to work from home three or more days.'

LinkedIn, Censuswide Survey, September 2019

'Before the forced confinement, home working was generally seen as a choice for people who are not particularly serious about their careers. [...] This stigmatisation went against the research, which shows that *flexible working is more productive* than being in the office every day.

Now, the bosses who sidelined flexible workers are themselves experiencing how productive home working can be and seeing that the technology exists such that we don't need to be in the office all the time, nor need to travel for work so much.'

Jennifer Petriglieri
Associate professor, INSEAD

The next imperative: Learn to facilitate remote work

Few companies may be ready for 100%-remote work. But more and more are seriously considering a mix of office work and remote work.

It's about attracting and keeping talent, increasing productivity, cutting costs and reducing environmental impact.

Now is the time to at least explore a hybrid work model that includes 'work from anywhere' options. That means getting better at facilitating this 'more distributed' work style.

- **Survey your employees –** See how many would welcome a work-from-home or mixed model and how many days they'd like to work away from the office.

- **Look at other employers –** A more flexible working model might be a major advantage in the competition for talent. Or it might just be a way to catch up!

- **Think of the sudden move to remote as a pilot –** Find out what worked well and what didn't work well in the months when everyone was working from home. Capture and share that learning to shape your new guidelines.

- **Create new rituals –** Overcome the downside of a distributed workforce with new ways of connecting people, from executive AMAs to virtual coffee hours.

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'Now you can be productive in all types of locations, and [moving] between them, whether you're on your tablet or mobile device. [That means] office hours have become more fluid too.'

Tom Price
CTO, Man Group

Acceleration 2

Agility is the new scale

For hundreds of years, economies of scale were the dominant force in any market: the first companies to grow big grabbed the best resources at the lowest cost and ate up market share. Scale also created a moat, discouraging new entrants and preserving the status quo.

Today, scale may still confer real advantages but it's just as likely to prove a liability (for instance, a bank that's carrying 900 retail branches might struggle to defend against the all-digital, mobile banking startup).

Well before the pandemic, it was clear that agility had become the new scale: the winners in every market would be the companies that stayed closest to their customers and pivoted fastest to serve them better.

Today, in every market, the push to increase agility has accelerated dramatically. The good news: even the most legacy-bound global companies have just discovered that they're far more agile than they thought they were.

Fewer than one in ten of the non-financial S&P 500 companies in 1983 were still in the top tier in 2013.

Source: **McKinsey & Company**

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'Bienvenue en incertitude!'

Philippe Silberzahn
University of Lyon

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'In an increasingly dynamic world, the fundamental business advantage is *organisational agility* – the ability for individuals, teams and organisations to maintain alignment while continually transforming to meet evolving challenges.'

Stewart Butterfield
CEO and co-founder, Slack

The next normal:
Nimble wins

The more dynamic and uncertain the times, the greater the value of organisational agility. But while agility as a business advantage has been understood for many years, it's only recently emerged as a methodology or set of behaviours.

The agile methodology has already made a big impact on the most complex disciplines – from manufacturing to software engineering. Now, the ideas captured in Scrum, Kanban, DevOps, Design Thinking and Agile Project Management have escaped into the wider world of work. And the results speak for themselves.

Instead of simply rushing to return to the way things used to be, we're seeing business leaders double down on agility, looking for ways to design work to be more lean, agile, resilient and 'anti-fragile.'

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'Antifragility is beyond resilience or robustness. The resilient resists shocks and stays the same; the antifragile gets better.'

Nassim Nicholas Taleb
Author of Antifragile: Things that Gain from Disorder

The next imperative: Rethink your business to optimise for agility

The best companies in the next decade will be the most agile and responsive. But it won't be by accident; they're already the companies that are taking active steps to increase their agility.

It's time to optimise for these agile-driving dimensions:

– **Faster decision-making.** Removing hierarchy and bureaucracy to speed up time to action.

– **Power to the front line.** HQ's job isn't to make every call. It's to empower the people doing the work with the data they need to make better calls.
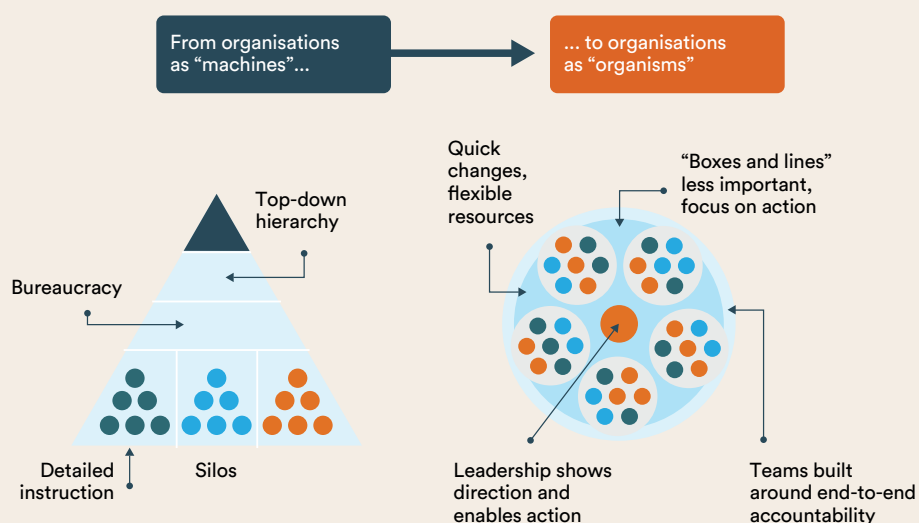
– **Strategic alignment.** Agility can only work when you're pivoting from a stable place. The whole organisation needs to be aligned around things like values, mission and strategy.

– **An agile mindset.** Training for resilience and agility is different from training for productivity and efficiency. New skills and a new orientation toward continuous improvement are needed.

Agility has always been a virtue. Now it's become a systematised methodology – as seen in dev teams everywhere.

An **influential article** by the McKinsey Agile Tribe introduced the idea of a company as an organism, built around accountability and a bias toward action:

Source: McKinsey, The five trademarks of agile organisations, 2018

Rather than organisation as machine, the agile organisation is a living organism

From organisations as "machines"...

... to organisations as "organisms"

Top-down hierarchy

Bureaucracy

Detailed instruction

Silos

Quick changes, flexible resources

"Boxes and lines" less important, focus on action

Leadership shows direction and enables action

Teams built around end-to-end accountability

Acceleration 3

The rise of openness

In most countries, modern work grew out of a historically top-down business culture inherited from the Industrial Revolution.

– Decisions were made by the most senior people, in closed rooms.
– Access to information was tightly controlled and released carefully. Workers weren't expected to need context to perform their highly specialised tasks.
– New colleagues needed to be 'read in' or onboarded using high-overhead methods (meetings and calls).

Email was the natural heir to this style of work and an enabler of it. One-to-one messages and closed threads, initiated and prioritised by the sender, were a good way to keep tight control of information and to insulate the workforce from decision-making.

Today, a bottom-up work culture is emerging in many countries and the pandemic has accelerated this trend. Here, the default is openness, as more decisions are made in public forums – and email is rarely the medium of choice.

The pressure to deliver great customer experiences has been a major driver of the new open work culture: if a customer service agent is forced to work through five levels of approval just to give a customer a refund, the customer simply goes elsewhere.

HubSpot is a well-documented example of an open, transparent culture that has scaled up successfully because it's built around the customer. For more on the HubSpot culture, **read the case story**.

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'As part of getting the culture right, my goal has always been to make sure we continue valuing transparency and autonomy across all our teams globally.'

Jeetu Mahtani
SVP of international operations, HubSpot

The next normal:
Work opens up

The trend toward more included and empowered employees feels inevitable. The dividends are just too great:

– **Better decisions** made by better-informed people.

– **More engaged people** who feel like they're a part of the company mission.

– **Greater alignment across teams** because everyone can see the company strategy and team priorities.

– **The ability to pivot faster** in response to changes for the customer or in the market.

– **More efficient, lower-cost onboarding of new team members** because all relevant conversations are available in one place.

– **Better collaboration across departments and companies** instead of data, knowledge and process silos that inhibit work.

Old-school, command-and-control leadership styles will be with us for a while – and for some environments (like offshore oil rigs) they may be essential. But even here, the trend is accelerating toward open inclusiveness.

Share channels across company borders

The rise of the extended enterprise – where value is increasingly delivered by ecosystems, not just single corporate entities – has led to the need to securely collaborate with partners, suppliers and customer organisations. (**Sharing channels** is a simple way to achieve this.)

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'If you're interested in connecting with people, moving faster and improving engagement, then open up the conversations – don't keep them closed in email.'

Andrew Walsh
CEO, Iress

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'Providing information to the people closest to the actual work gives the organisation more speed.'

Mr. Riu Tanaka
President and CEO, Kakuichi Co

The next imperative: Let the light and air in

In many of the companies we admire most, the executive team doesn't feel that their employees work for them. The best leadership teams feel that they work for their people. The **Servant Leadership** movement pioneered by Robert K. Greenleaf and Simon Sinek's influential **Leaders Eat Last** are both built on this idea.

Serving your people starts with giving them the information they need to do their jobs and creating an open workplace that promotes knowledge sharing.

– **Include everyone, wherever they work –** instead of favouring those who happen to work at HQ.

– **Rethink internal comms –** the tools you use to collaborate inevitably shape the work itself.

– **Increase all-hands communications –** and preserve them for future reference. (See **Twitter Hosts Global All-Hands in Slack.**)

– **Make listening as easy as talking –** openness goes both ways.

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'The key to making new employees productive quickly [...] is to help them immediately build an informational network with coworkers.'

MIT Sloan Management Review

Email is 50 years old.

Email has had a good run and will continue to support some kinds of communication. But for today's faster, cross-functional collaboration, it's no longer the right tool.

We'd be remiss if we didn't say that channel-based messaging (the kind Slack enables) is rapidly replacing email in companies that want an open, inclusive culture.

Slack CEO and co-founder Stewart Butterfield captures the idea: 'Once all communication is moved into channels, everyone knows where to go to ask their question, to give their update, to get caught up. The impact of this is transformative.'

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'There is no physical barrier between our leadership team and the frontline employees and that's very intentional. That literally means you can access our CTO and co-founder and ask him a quick question about a project you're working on.'

Katie Burke
Chief people officer, HubSpot

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'When lockdown started, I started doing a two-minute video every workday for the first eight weeks. I also started a #CEO channel on Slack, where I share this video every day – just observations, what's going on, how we're going, how we're tracking against plan. It took the pandemic to trigger this kind of openness, but the advantages apply in every context.'

Didier Elzinga
Founder and CEO, Culture Amp
In an Australian **'Slack Session,'** *May 2020*

People crave connection.

The Slack **State of Work** study found that understanding the big picture is no longer the sole domain of the C-suite. We found a direct correlation between regular communication of company strategy and people rating their companies as 'excellent' against a long list of attributes: career progression; collaboration; communication; effective use of technology; productivity; morale; training; work-life balance; culture; and openness to feedback.

Acceleration 4

The last gasps of analogue work

'Digital transformation' was well underway long before the pandemic hit. But, in a few months, the overnight move to 100%-remote work accelerated many companies' transformation by years.

One reason seems to be that the 'pandemic pivot' exposed the processes that most needed to change: manual, analogue processes that relied on things like paper and whiteboards.

What so many companies saw was that processes that were already digitised transitioned to WFH-mode seamlessly while manual, paper-based ones didn't.

It was true for 'back-end' processes (when, for instance, the payables team had to go into the office twice a month to write cheques) and for more critical customer-facing ones (when providing refunds or processing claims proved extremely unwieldy).

For many leaders, the light had been switched on: well-designed digital processes are resilient, agile, transparent. And manual ones tend not to be.

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'The balance will shift for a priority and a speed around digital transformation that we've never seen before. This [crisis] has demonstrated that if you digitally transform, you're prepared for these things. If you didn't, you get stuck in the old world where the world has changed and you're no longer able to even operate.'

John Roese
CTO, Dell Technologies
ZDNet, May 2020

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'Business models will have to be rethought. There is so much waste in every system.'

Mark Drasutis
Chief digital officer, IAG
In an online Slack Session, May 2020

The next normal:
Leave no process untouched

The acceleration of digital work will change every department and discipline from sales, customer service and marketing to HR, engineering and finance.

But it's not digitisation for its own sake. It's a considered transformation strategy that takes into account the new realities of work and the new expectations of both customers and employees.

That means a wave of new processes that are:

– **Automated –** with increasingly zero-touch workflows

– **Integrated –** so that applications communicate and share data with other applications

– **Cloud-enabled –** without the on-premises admin, overheads and security risks

– **Mobile-first –** designed for smartphones, not just desktops

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'According to recent OECD estimates, *nearly one in ten jobs could be automated*, while another 25% could undergo significant change as a result of automation. At the same time, *new jobs are emerging* elsewhere, including for big data specialists, app developers, social media managers and Internet of Things architects.'

OECD, Going digital: Making the transformation work for growth and well-being, April 2018

The next imperative: Integrate your work stacks

Manual processes are the easy targets to find. But there's another wave of transformation breaking right now: correcting the fragmentation of work caused by application proliferation.

As every department solved its own problems first, software and cloud services took off. The results were remarkable within each swim lane, but we ended up creating even more silos – of data, knowledge and process. The costs of fragmentation were already apparent, but the pandemic put them in a glaring light.

The next wave is all about the integrated work stack, where more and more applications are joined up. Think about new ways that applications can work together so that:

– A threshold crossed in one app can trigger an alert in another.

– A change in status can propagate across all relevant systems, automatically.

– People can easily 'see into' relevant apps without leaving the one they're already in.

Single, app-to-app integrations may work, but they don't scale. For many companies, a channel-based messaging platform is how a unified work stack comes together.

The new security challenge

The rise of remote work has coincided with the explosion of work applications, a new generation of cyberattacks and a wave of data privacy laws. It all adds up to a new threat landscape for every company. Security must be woven into the very fabric of the integrated work stack – if it's an afterthought, it's too late.

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'Companies are going to be *going digital much faster*, they're going to be automating much faster.'

Jake Schwartz
Co-founder and CEO, General Assembly

Acceleration 5

Culture comes first

The pandemic illuminated it for all to see: the businesses with strong cultures aligned around clear values are faring better, pivoting faster and emerging in better shape.

While it's true that a strong culture was always a good predictor of success, the importance of culture rises in a world of dramatic change and uncertainty – and a world where distributed work is the norm.

Because leaders are now seeing the power of culture in action – or the drag of a misaligned or dysfunctional culture – the culture acceleration is on.

But creating and feeding a strong culture in a world of remote work is a real challenge – one that all managers are figuring out right now.

Today, culture isn't just an HR issue. It's a boardroom and HR and every line-of-business issue.

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'Determine what behaviours and beliefs you value as a company, and have everyone live true to them. These behaviours and beliefs should be so essential to your core, that you don't even think of it as culture.'

Brittany Forsyth
SVP of HR, Shopify

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'Culture guides discretionary behaviour. It picks up where the employee handbook leaves off.'

Frances Frei and Anne Morriss
Harvard Business Review

The next normal:
Culture moves to the top
of the boardroom agenda

The companies we admire most make culture seem effortless, as if it were just an inevitable result of strong leadership and mindful hiring.

But look under the surface and you'll always see that great cultures are actively and consciously designed, built and maintained. Great cultures come from *investing* in culture.

With the rise of remote work, many leaders we've talked to are more concerned about preserving and evolving their culture than any other issue. As the next normal emerges, they're discovering new ways to create and transmit culture.

To accelerate your own cultural transformation, consider concrete steps to make progress on these issues:

– **Psychological safety –** Creating an environment where it's safe to share ideas.

– **Experimentation –** Building a culture that finds out by trying; one that's OK with the right kinds of failure and even celebrates mistakes.

– **Autonomy –** Pushing decision-making out from the centre; letting culture and values guide decision-making instead of explicit rule books.

– **Diversity –** Discovering the magic that happens when you combine people with different backgrounds, perspectives and experiences (see cognitive diversity below).

Of course, culture is far more than these issues, but we're seeing more emphasis on these fronts.

The next imperative: Invest in culture

Just as every company culture is unique, every company's cultural acceleration is different too.

But a handful of issues are bubbling up a lot more in our conversations with customers and other business leaders.

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'It's happening today by default. But tomorrow, leaders can shape their cultures… by design. Leaders and organisations that count on their core – culture and values – and make a difference while pivoting to solve for the future will emerge from the fires of this crisis and thrive.'

Rose Gailey
Global managing partner, Heidrick Consulting

It's time to invest in:

Employee experience
Always a critical driver of success, EX is taking new forms that don't depend on everyone being in the office. And the lip service paid to 'work-life balance' is starting to turn into real action.

Continuous feedback
It used to be OK to measure engagement by walking around or to confine performance reviews to an annual sitdown. That's changing fast and it's fuelling a boom in engagement apps and continuous feedback platforms.

Employee-driven learning and development
As we decentralise, we're seeing learning programmes evolve from 'how to do' content toward 'how to think' content. Soft skills, informal micro-learning and self-guided careers are all accelerating.

Remote hiring and the global talent pool
Distributed work dramatically expands your potential talent pool – but you'll need to master remote hiring and creating a great candidate experience.

Distributed culture vectors
Culture doesn't just happen in meetings, over lunch and by the water cooler. For example, we're seeing a boom in engagement in Slack channels that are essentially culture carriers (everything from #ceo's_ama and #parenting_from_home to #lgbt_forum and #podcast_recos).

Unconscious biases, exposed.

For alert leaders, the pandemic exposed a lot of biases we didn't even know we had. When you can see the extra pressures of parenting while working full time, or being a caregiver, or living in challenging conditions, it's harder to ignore them as employee-experience issues.

The impact of 'presenteeism' and favouring people who work in HQ over remote workers has also risen to the surface.

EX pays dividends

Samual Stern, principal analyst at Forrester, identified three big benefits of great employee experience:

- **Better business results** from better work performance and more discretionary effort from employees.

- **Lower employee turnover** and reduced recruitment costs. Starbucks estimates that it saves $1.7 million for each 1% reduction in turnover.

- **Better customer experience.** A 2016 Yale study showed that employee engagement made a significant impact on net promoter score for a car rental company.

Source: 'If You're Not Prioritizing Employee Experience Improvement, You're Doing It Wrong', Forrester, October 2018

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'For too long companies have focussed on engagement. Yet it is not the cause, but the effect. 92% of employees told us a great workforce experience was the single biggest driver for productivity. Great workforce experiences drive engagement, which improves performance.'

Paul Burrin
VP, Sage People

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'It's clear that job seekers are seeking more meaningful workplace experiences. They want to be paid fairly but they [also] want to work for a company whose values align with their own, and whose mission they can fully get behind.'

Christian Sutherland-Wong
CEO, Glassdoor
In Changing Face of HR report, 2020, Sage

On cognitive diversity

Different people have different ways of thinking.

A striking dimension of post-pandemic conversations about work is a growing awareness of the value of cognitive diversity.

While often oversimplified to being about 'introverts' and 'extroverts,' the reality is far more nuanced.

The important thing is that the rapid shift to distributed work has shown leaders that different work modes advantage and disadvantage people differently.

– People who may not shine in a live meeting may prove to be absolute superstars in messaging channels.

– People who hate 'brainstorming' may be the best contributors in a 'brainwriting' session.

– People who love Zoom are no better than people who hate it. They're just different.

At Slack, we've always known that more introverted people can blossom in the context of a channel-based messaging platform. Today, more leaders are seeing this for themselves – and they're pushing for more cognitively diverse teams and new collaboration options to support them.

> *The most striking outcome of Twitter's first virtual all-hands meeting? Involvement skyrocketed among employees who had been reluctant to pipe up with questions in front of a crowd. 'It engaged the people who weren't as comfortable approaching a mic,' said Jennifer Christie, Twitter's vice president of people.*

Excerpted from '**Twitter goes remote and hosts global all-hands in Slack**'
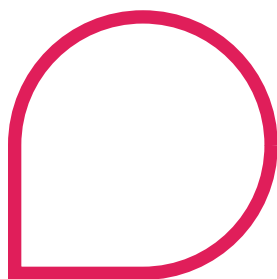
Conclusion

Go forward faster

We're convinced that these accelerations are five of the most important things every business should be focussing on right now.

They all came out of the conversations we're having with our customers and with other business leaders whom we admire a lot.

None of them was *created* by the pandemic.

But all of them have been dramatically accelerated by it.

Some of the accelerations may resonate with you more than others.

Some may take more work than others to get your company up to speed.

But one thing is clear: work is changing faster today than it ever has.

We believe the winners in every market will be the companies that best understand the changing shape of work, that let go of legacy thinking and that fully embrace the opportunities created by 'the next normal.'

We hope you're one of these companies. And we'd love to help you make the change.

The people at Slack

Share your thoughts.

We'd love to hear them.

We'll be tracking these accelerations and other work themes on **our blog**, in social media and in our **Slack newsletter**. We'd love to hear about your thoughts and experiences. So please do engage with us on the **Slack Twitter feed**.

About Slack

Slack makes work simpler, more pleasant and more productive. It's a channel-based messaging platform for enterprise that brings the right people, information and tools together to get work done. From FTSE 100 companies to corner shops, millions of people around the world use Slack to connect their teams, unify their systems and drive their business forward.

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