

DIGITAL STRATEGY IN A POST-COVID WORLD

MAY 2020



There and Back Again is the title Bilbo Baggins gave to the memoir of his adventures with the dwarves reclaiming their realm. The title suggests a return to the known and the familiar from where he had departed, but nothing was really the same. The Quest had changed everything. Bilbo, Bag End, everything!

Returning to our offices and workplaces in the sunset of COVID-19 will not simply be about reversing our departures. Everything will have changed. We left our offices in a rush, focusing our energies on ensuring remote connectivity, enhancing (and in some cases developing) remote workflows and managing new evolved remote work cultures. Technology teams bore a meaningful portion of the pressure of paving the transition. The initiated among them could proudly script a seamless transition story, but for many, the road to remote work remains paved with potholes. In returning to the office, our focus will initially be prioritized by team member anxieties, managing social distancing and health considerations in a shared spaces. The transition back to the workplace will be longer, but likely no less bumpy than our departures.

Some have suggested we are entering a paradigm shift with words like reset and the *new normal* being noodled around, while others point to the accelerated adoption of the “Future of Work”. However we initially

perceive it, there is a sense that some sort of band-aid has been ripped off and the law of unintended consequences will make sure that the shocks and ripple effects are far-reaching and complex. The echoes of the COVID-19 experience will undoubtedly occupy the agendas of many executive management meetings and serves as fodder for white papers and academic studies yet to be conceived.

We will think differently about our businesses, workspaces and the way in which technology animates all aspects of our operations. We have new terminology that has risen to prominence during this period that needs to be properly understood and digested. Businesses as a whole are just learning to speak “WFH” (Working from Home) and “Remote Work”, and like all new terminology, it will require time to seep into our corporate consciousness. For some, WFH will be a memory to be suppressed, but most will seek to fully understand the varied experiences of colleagues and employees and healthily integrate them into our evolving business environments.



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Business Strategy, Culture, Digital Transformation and Workspace

For many legacy businesses, not conceived in code or born in the cloud, the terms “strategy”, “culture”, “digital” and “workspace” were distant relatives that met at the odd family gathering. Now, they are now close family members living under the same roof. Traditional businesses generally considered digital transformations and remote workforces as strategic initiatives at the fringe of the overall corporate strategy to be pursued cautiously and incrementally. Beyond the raw cost of the investments, the disruption to legacy culture, systems and operations needed to be carefully and incrementally managed.

The conversation has changed, and COVID-19 has reprioritized that conversation. Digital transformations and remote workforces will no longer be discussed in the comfort of tech-forward or discretionary initiatives but will be intensely scrutinized and debated under the headings of organizational resilience and business continuity. Digital transformation and remote workforce initiatives will no longer be pushed down to HR or IT departments but will occupy the minds of senior executives around management tables and will feature more prominently on the agendas of board meetings.

Strategy First

Pragmatism may instinctively drive legacy businesses to seek tactical solutions to the technology and operational wounds that COVID-19 inflicted on their businesses. Longer term success, however, will require a reexamining of traditional business models through a digital lens and business strategies will need to be reimaged. COVID-19 has shone a spotlight on a number of (with a little sense of humour) #WFH_PTSD issues that will require careful study and patient examination. This is by no means a complete list, but the following considerations jump to mind:

- Client relationships, expectations and channels for engagement
- Reimagining customer journeys
- Contactless transactions
- Remote access to office
- Employee collaboration and engagement
- Workspaces – a far more extended concept with traditional brick walls coming down
- Management culture
- Remote workforce management
- Remote workflow management
- Channels for communication and content delivery
- Education and development

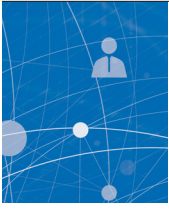
Re-Thinking Digital Transformation

The “Journey to the Cloud” and the “Pursuit of Paperless” are no longer adequate strategies. They are tactical operational initiatives. **Being Digital** means understanding how digital informs all aspects of the business, from client relationships to workflows and operations, workforces and workspaces.

Digital Transformation requires knowing the current organizational digital profile and a vision of a digital destination. The **Digital Journey** will emerge from a well-articulated business strategy that describes the road of getting from *here to there*.

In the post COVID-19 world, **Remote Work Culture** will acquire a prominent seat at the strategy table. Remote work culture is a broad subject which will permeate many aspects of a digital strategy. It will be challenging to develop a workspace strategy that contemplates a reduced office footprint and a larger WFH workforce in the absence of a confident Remote Work Culture.

The COVID-19 experience will serve as a reminder to businesses that the conversation has changed. The road ahead, whether a reset or a *new normal*, will be disruptive to legacy businesses. Digital journeys must



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be supported by organizational change management and will require new management, people and technology skills not currently resident in most organizations.

There is much legacy business leaders can learn from the playbooks developed by technology and other startup companies who have traveled this path and continue to innovate.

About Fuller Digital

Fuller Digital helps businesses design, navigate and travel the journey from thinking about digital to being digital. We are part of Fuller Landau LLP, an accounting, tax, and advisory firm with a team of over 125 people. Our clients are leaders of private businesses, high net worth families, and the advisors who serve them. Work together with people excited by your goals and eager to address your unique business needs. You'll get straightforward advice and proactive solutions from a team whose professional commitment is also personal.

COVID-19 RESOURCES HUB

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fullerllp.com/covid-19-resources/

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