



## THE FUTURE OF WORK BLUEPRINT: 4 KEY STRATEGIES FOR LEADERS

The future of work should be on the minds of all companies. Emerging from a pandemic, organizations are finding they cannot go back to the way things were before. Basic models of communication and collaboration will be forever changed.

Designing the workplace of the future requires immense forethought and planning – and ideal solutions will vary from one company to the next. Company leadership must answer questions about what the organization wants to achieve in the years ahead and, in turn, invest in that vision with the right technology and processes. As companies adopt new operating models and accelerate their digital transformations, leaders are focusing on important questions:

**What working models will be sustainable for their organization?**

**How should productivity and employee engagement be measured?**

**How can they retain talent and create a positive culture?**

In a recent Diligent [webinar](#) titled, “The Future of Work in a Distributed Virtual Environment”, a panel featuring Satya Nadella, CEO of Microsoft, and Carmine Di Sibio, Global Chairman and CEO of EY, envisioned a future of work from which four key strategies emerged. This guide reviews those strategies and provides recommendations for company leaders driving future-of-work discussions at their own organizations.

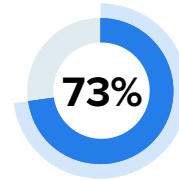
## 1. TRANSITION TO HYBRID WORKING MODELS

Weighing the risks and benefits of a return to the office has been challenging for many companies. Some have decided to go fully remote but, for most, the true challenge will be striking the right balance with a hybrid model.

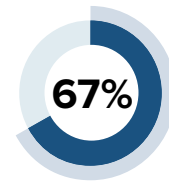
The transition to hybrid working models must be thoughtful and long-term-oriented. Management teams must define the role of the office, then leverage technology to bridge the gap. As organizations design these solutions, they must keep in mind important aspects like company culture and talent strategies. What kind of environment are we trying to build? Who are we trying to attract?

As Nadella notes, “Work going forward will not just be measured in a narrow output sense. It’s going to be measured by looking at how social capital is being built through collaboration, how knowledge capital is being built, and by the wellness of the people and their ability to participate.”

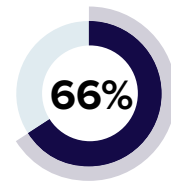
Like the organizations they oversee, boards will also be navigating hybrid working models of their own. According to Diligent Institute’s Director Confidence Index, only 32% of board members expect to go back to fully in-person meetings. Board meetings and leadership meetings will increasingly be conducted remotely or in hybrid settings. Consequently, digital transformation plans will need to extend to leadership collaboration as well.



workers who want flexible remote work options



workers who want in-person time with their teams



businesses that are considering redesigning physical spaces for hybrid models

[Source](#) 

### Recommended Actions

- ❑ **Spend time designing the hybrid solution.** Revisiting goals and defining the role of the office should be the strategic priority of every executive team and board. Understand employees’ needs and provide them with digital tools to help them be effective in their preferred environment.
- ❑ **Build the technology infrastructure.** Provide the infrastructure needed by employees to collaborate and communicate securely, whether in person or remotely. Pay special attention to boards and leadership teams, whose tools will require additional layers of security.
- ❑ **Listen to employees.** Organizations should establish a regular mechanism (e.g., employee surveys) to stay tuned into employee feedback. Where are needs not being met? Most companies will need to entirely redesign employee onboarding and training to account for a hybrid model.

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“When we think about work going forward, the fundamental change is going to be about: How does one define productivity? How do collaboration and the nature of collaboration change? How does learning on the job change? How can we improve the feedback cycle between what the job requires in terms of skills, how one acquires those skills and employee well-being?”

**Satya Nadella**  
CEO, Microsoft

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## 2. SPARK INNOVATION AMONG DISTRIBUTED TEAMS

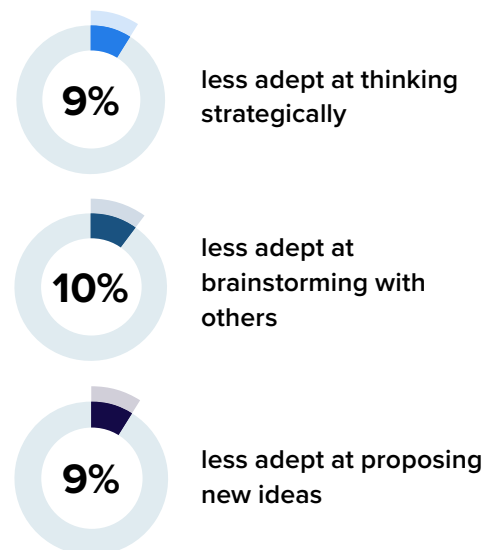
The shift to remote work has raised concerns about shrinking employee networks and their impact on innovation. Companies need to create an environment that enables better collaboration across the organization. While the cross-cubicle chats and watercooler conversations can never be fully replaced, digital tools that enable better communication and collaboration can promote innovation across teams.

A [recent report by Microsoft](#) shows that remote working has created a significantly exhausted workforce, which could imply a lack of bandwidth to focus on creative problem-solving or innovation. By increasing meaningful automation and digitizing manual tasks, companies can not only maximize employee efficiency, but also provide them with more time and better avenues to foster innovation.

### Recommended Actions

- ❑ **Reduce “distance” between teams.** Build channels for increased and open communication to facilitate better collaboration. Ensure conversations are not only enabled between counterparts but happen with the wider organization as well.
- ❑ **Focus on automation and data integrity.** Creativity builds on the fundamentals. Make sure teams are all working from a single, accurate data source. Automate manual and administrative tasks to reduce the burden on employees, enabling them to channel their time toward more strategic tasks.
- ❑ **Set the tone at the top.** Foster a culture that encourages employees to launch and test new ideas and strategies. Within these new hybrid working models, employees will look to leadership for cues on how to operate. Use this opportunity to develop an innovation culture.
- ❑ **Establish a transparent framework to measure and report on innovation.** Traditional metrics predominantly capture the effort aspect of innovation such as number of active innovation projects, ideas submitted, etc. Instead, create a framework that captures the input efforts, value of output and measurable impact, including metrics such as ROI of an innovation investment.

### Employees with weak workplace relationships are less likely to thrive at activities that lead to innovation



[Source](#) 

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“The social network is really important. It’s how we pass on our culture, how we onboard people, how we mentor people, and how we get people to understand our vision and mission and stay connected to our company. The social network is part of how we ideate, innovate and problem solve.”

#### Betsy Atkins

Board Member, JAMF, SL Green Realty, Volvo Cars, Wynn Resorts, Diligent

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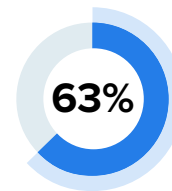
### 3. WIN THE TALENT WAR BY DRIVING DIVERSITY

In an era of borderless work, companies are witnessing a new challenge: the talent war. Increasing connectivity and diminishing geographical constraints have opened up new opportunities for skilled workers to pursue positions, regardless of an office location. Companies need to focus on addressing workforce issues at a strategic level and be proactive in the retention of valuable employees.

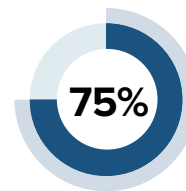
The positive aspect for companies is that talent acquisition teams can now expand their search to go after the best talent regardless of where they live. This provides an opportunity to build a diverse workforce unlimited by location-related restrictions – not just for employees, but for leadership as well. Succession planning for boards and executives can leverage wider networks based purely on the unique skill set and the value a candidate brings, rather than their ability to access or relocate to be near physical offices.

#### Recommended Actions

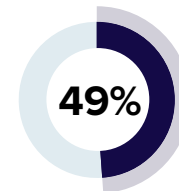
- ❑ **Consider implications for DE&I.** As you build a hybrid working model, think through the potential unintended consequences for diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I). Consider that every employee may not have the means to work from home productively. How will you bridge this gap?
- ❑ **Develop new strategies to retain talent.** Within the hybrid working model, provide new opportunities to grow, invest in helping employees improve their skills, and provide virtual learning programs.
- ❑ **Leverage technology to enhance diversity.** How can technology expand your candidate pool? If you are still leveraging a limited set of recruiters and personal networks, consider leveraging tools designed to expand the reach and diversity of your network. This is equally important for board diversity and recruiting.



companies who say retaining employees is harder than hiring them [↗](#)



employers with recruiting difficulties who say it's challenging to find candidates with the skills they need [↗](#)



workers who would look for a new job if employers ignore their work-from-home preferences [↗](#)

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“The workforce, going forward, will be incredibly important. Retraining, upskilling your workforce and recruiting are incredibly important. It’s the year of the CHRO (Chief Human Resources Officer) because that’s going to be the difference between a successful company and a company that’s not successful.”

**Carmine Di Sibio**  
Global Chairman and CEO,  
EY

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## 4. ACCELERATE ESG GOALS

As more organizations adopt hybrid models, they have an opportunity to focus on environmental, social and governance (ESG) goals. Although remote working has brought quick wins such as reduced greenhouse gas emissions and decreased air pollution, companies still need to demonstrate a serious commitment to sustainability initiatives that isn't dependent on employees staying home. Starting with the hybrid model, companies can reengineer their physical spaces and digital strategies to have a positive environmental and social impact – and to make themselves more attractive to workers in the process.

Companies are making strides in ESG, driven by increased scrutiny from investors, the media, customers and employees. Be it an environmental, social or racial issue, today's companies must take a stance, and more importantly, follow through on their commitments. ESG will continue to rise as a corporate priority, and companies will need to demonstrate more than intent; they will need to act on it.

### Recommended Actions

- **Identify where ESG goals overlap.** The goals you establish for a new hybrid working model should naturally overlap with your ESG goals. Focus on these commonalities. How can your action plan for the office drive important environmental and social initiatives?
- **Reference existing frameworks.** Sustainability frameworks like those from the World Economic Forum consolidate metrics from SASB, TCFD, GRI and others. Use these frameworks to identify opportunities in your hybrid model, whether decreasing water consumption at the office or achieving employee equity with remote-work stipends.
- **Leverage technology to track progress against ESG goals.** Social and sustainability success stories should be shared with company stakeholders. As you transition to hybrid work, how are you tracking, measuring and reporting on progress against ESG goals? Consider how technology can make this process more seamless.

### The correlation between ESG and talent



Employers with an attractive image among young talent also have better ESG performance [↗](#)



Companies with higher employee satisfaction and greater attractiveness to young talent also have high female representation on their boards [↗](#)



Leading employers in terms of employee satisfaction and attractiveness to young talent also have lower carbon emissions than their peers [↗](#)



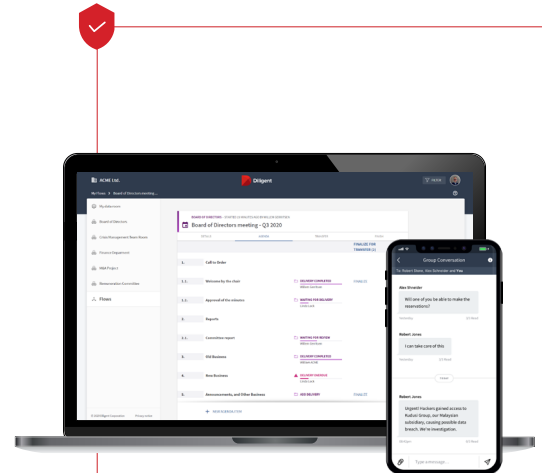
## TRANSITION WITH THE RIGHT TECHNOLOGY

Transitioning to a hybrid working model requires the right technology. Look for solutions that integrate and keep data secure in a distributed virtual environment.

### Board & Leadership Collaboration:

Maintain security without sacrificing seamless collaboration.

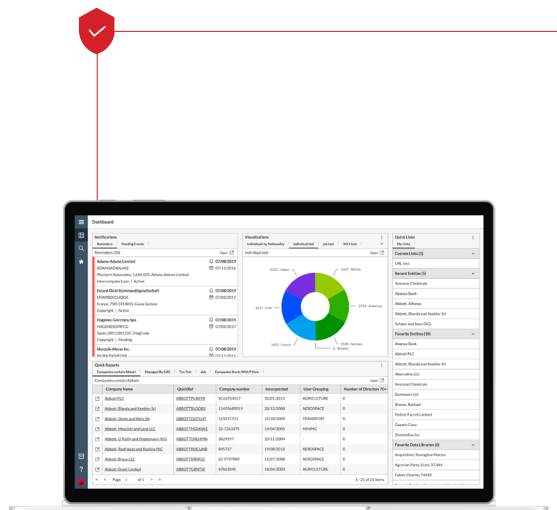
- **Secure all sensitive communication.** Diligent Messenger mitigates the risks of email and text messaging and helps leadership teams communicate in real time on an encrypted, uncluttered channel.
- **Safeguard communication with third parties.** With Diligent Secure File Sharing, sensitive information can be shared securely with trusted third parties – auditors, legal counsel, financial advisors and others.
- **Lock down meeting workflows.** As virtual meetings become more frequent, Diligent Secure Meeting Workflow allows internal teams to collaborate on sensitive documents, also eliminating pain points around version control.



### Operational Governance:

Automate manual processes and centralize the corporate record to drive strategic growth.

- **Create a single source of truth.** Diligent Entities enables you to create a centralized repository of vital information across your organization's subsidiaries to build trust in data, simplify compliance, reduce reporting deficiencies and boost data efficiency across teams.
- **Stay nimble to seize opportunities.** Enable your organization to act swiftly when presented with organic or inorganic growth opportunities, knowing that your corporate record and subsidiary data are accurate and up to date.
- **Enable self-service data requests.** Enable organizational departments including tax, accounting, compliance, legal and finance to access the information they need, when they need it, from one central corporate record.





## Advanced Governance Analytics:

Leverage critical insights to inform key decisions, improve stakeholder relationships, manage risk and drive strategy.

- **Operationalize ESG goals.** Diligent's ESG Solution helps organizations track progress against standard ESG frameworks, monitor for regulatory developments and benchmark governance practices against their peers.
- **Access the same data as investors and proxy advisors.** Be better positioned to meet stakeholder demands through Diligent data partner CGLytics, by accessing the same governance data and compensation tools used by proxy advisor Glass Lewis.
- **Deliver insights and information to the board.** Diligent Governance Intel equips the board with curated news and insights to mitigate organizational and reputational risks and gain a competitive edge over their peers.



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## About Diligent

Diligent is the pioneer in modern governance. Our trusted, cloud-based applications streamline the day-to-day work of board management and committees, support secure collaboration, manage subsidiary and entity data, and deliver insights that empower company leaders to make better decisions in today's complex landscape. With the largest global network of corporate directors and executives, Diligent is relied on by more than 19,000 organizations and nearly 700,000 leaders in over 90 countries. With award-winning customer service across the globe, Diligent serves more than 50% of the Fortune 1000, 70% of the FTSE 100 and 65% of the ASX.

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