



Top 6 Strategies Preparing for Hybrid Workplaces



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As the pandemic begins to fall behind us, we're left with some very valuable lessons learned. We were forced to respond to adversity, and we're still here.

Employees learned that remote work left some things to be desired while employers learned it was actually more productive than they ever could have imagined. Who ever would have thought?

New questions about hybrid and remote working are being addressed, especially those about how to properly begin thinking about it.

It is only through the analysis of these lessons that we can begin to rebuild our future workplace landscape in a logical and sustainable manner. There is a lot riding on the decisions in the near future, we take this very seriously and can help you.

Where Will the Cloud Take You?
Let's Find Out Together.



Demetrius Cassidy
President/Founder

"As a Cloud Services Provider (CSP), I am very encouraged and even excited about the changes I see in remote and hybrid workplaces. There are patterns of success emerging and we've already incorporated them into our processes."



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Top 6 Trends in Transitioning to a Hybrid Workforce

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Let's Find Out Together!

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Fundamental Changes to Longstanding Workplace Processes

It's not often that an event comes along and disrupts a major, longstanding workplace process. And globally at that.

Yet this is exactly what happened in 2020, Covid came around and everything just got thrown out the window.

Suddenly, we were forced to rush and adapt and quickly provide for a **much** larger, remote workforce. All at once, it seemed remote working was the norm and going into the office was uncommon! Talk about a very abrupt turnaround.

But we did it, and we survived and here we are. Might not have been pretty, but we got through it and we learned a lot about handling adversity, our resolve and being flexible in all areas of our lives.

We learned about ourselves, about our employees and about the things that really mattered. A sustainable reorganization of priorities, based on logic? Possibly...

"When 2020 came around, everything just got thrown out the window."

As the immediate pandemic crisis seems to be falling behind us, a new question has appeared that we're struggling to answer.

"Where do we all go from here?"

There is no better way to answer this question, than to look back at the lessons we just learned. And to acknowledge that results were, well... mixed.



THE FUTURE OF WORKPLACE MAKEUP

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99%
want to work remotely
at least some days.

.....

80%
of Creatives and
Marketing types are more
likely to work remotely
indefinitely.

.....

55%
would look for another
job if they were no
longer allowed
to work remotely.

Statistical Sources

The Future of Workplace Thinking

Lessons Learned on Both Sides

Employees realized remote working was a lot more demanding than they thought it would be and employers found virtual management worked much better than they ever would have ever thought. Employees missed workplace interactions but got more family time, while employers felt less in control but saw financial overhead plummet.

These conflicting signals from both workers and employers alike question how can each organization determine what their optimal practices are as they move forward?

With the value and benefits of remote working still fresh in our minds, we are absolutely transitioning to more of a hybrid approach, combining hand-picked aspects of remote and office work. This model is quickly picking up speed and becoming the go-to strategy as major companies begin to move towards a post-pandemic makeup.

Wasting no time, companies like Google, Twitter, Ford, Morgan Stanley, and many others have recently announced work-from-home options. While their plans vary greatly as to how best approach them, one aspect holds true. We all now have a chance to ideally and optimally reorganize our future processes. And we can do it, together.

Don't Risk Losing Employees

This period of reorganization is reported to be paramount because employers are already risking the loss of employees to the competition for being locationally ridged and even overly traditional. Employees have never been more in tune with workplace technology, and now view it as a major consideration when choosing employment.



The goal of this eBook is to focus on steps and guidelines for innovative work redesign technology that blend remote and in-office work. And the steps involved that help provide lasting change that is as minimally taxing on employers and employees alike. To begin, let's examine the feedback received regarding remote workers over the last year.

Surprising 2020 Remote Work Feedback



Why Do People Want Remote Work?

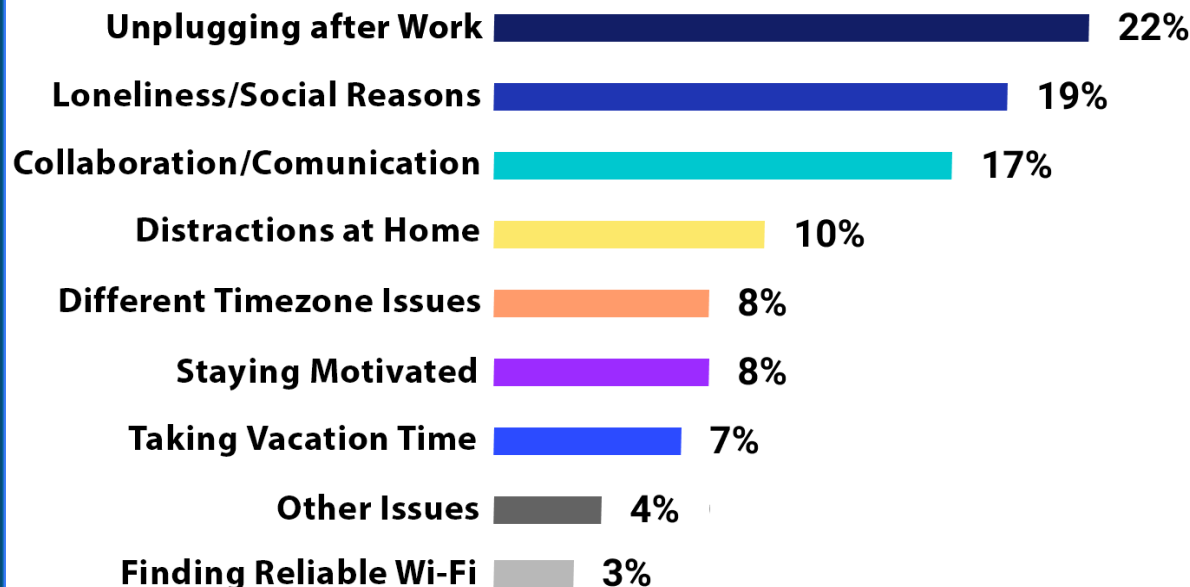
Nearly 80% of respondents say it's mainly the commute. People save, on average, 40 minutes a day that they can spend enjoying a cup of coffee, reading the morning news, watching TV, or taking the dog for a morning walk. Economically, it saves the average employee roughly \$700 a month, so at face value, acceptance and buy in were huge.

When you examine the data, employees definitely want to keep the flexibility they found over the last year. However, it wasn't completely satisfying, and employees cited numerous difficulties as to why they would prefer a more hybrid approach.

They also noted mixed results from remote working, saying many felt overworked and exhausted, primarily due to the dramatic increases in digital collaboration like remote meetings, chats, emails, and document platform sharing. Other notable remote stats and feedback include:

- 80% stated that they face challenges in-office workers do not.
- 85% had technical or Wi-Fi issues at meetings.
- 60% missed info communicated in person.
- 38% received no training on working remotely.
- 75% said their company did not pay for internet
- 23% said they are willing to work longer hours than they normally would on-site.

Difficulties Remote Workers Experienced in 2020



80%
of talent consider the
use of modern digital tools
a key factor for new
job employment.

30%
of employees reported
leaving a job as it
did not offer remote
work options.

92%
say flexibility is nearly
twice as important
to remote workers
than in-office staff.

Statistical Sources



THE FUTURE OF WORKPLACE MAKEUP

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**By 2028, nearly
73% of all global
work teams will have
remote workers.**

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**By 2030, almost
66% of workers
believe traditional
office settings will
be obsolete.**

.....

**91% of Asia's
Top 200 Firms are
now considering
flexible workspaces
and 56% are already
using them.**

Statistical Sources

Successful Trends Are Now Emerging

When asked to consider if they were no longer allowed to work from home, 44% of respondents would expect a pay increase to make up for the additional costs associated with working from the office. Additionally, when it comes to home office setups, only 20-25% of companies pay or share the cost of home office equipment and furniture.

Remote work has mental health and work-life balance benefits, as well. 72% of all survey respondents agreed that the ability to work remotely would make them less stressed and 77% report that working remotely would make them better able to manage work-life balance.

One thing everyone agrees on, is how much communication and work remains. How do we identify needs and concerns for development of custom hybrid and remote strategies?

A study of more than 31,000 people in 31 countries analyzed trillions of aggregate productivity and labor signals has uncovered hybrid work trends that every business leader needs to know as we enter this new era of Remote and Hybrid workplaces.

Top Hybrid Tips and Trends for 2021

- Invest in technology for a uniform foundation bridging the physical and digital worlds.
- Create a plan to empower people for flexibility.
- Combat digital exhaustion with mutual policies.
- Prioritize rebuilding social capital and culture.
- Rethink the employee experience to compete for the best and most diverse talent.

As a Cloud Services Provider, we have learned quite a bit about this and can offer insight into several aspects that help build a solid foundation.



Build A Unified Foundation for Success

Teams and the Hybrid Work Model

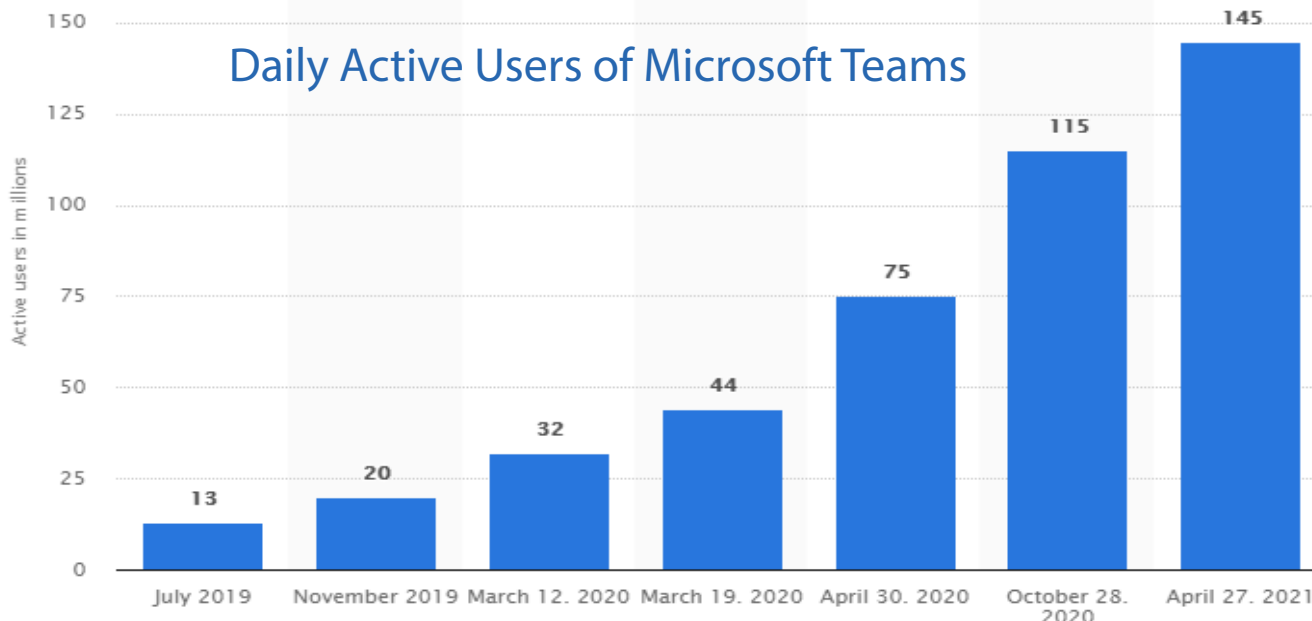
Video is the core connective tissue for organizations to enable hybrid work. Video conferencing and online collaboration quickly became paramount as organizations of all sizes, across all sectors, quickly deployed new collaboration technology or built upon their existing technology.

Initially, the focus was on determining what foundation could provide a uniform communications experience. What could ensure communication channels remained open and worked for both the small minority still in the physical workplace (those in certain job roles and sectors) and the vast majority working remotely? Is that even possible?

As the pandemic continued, companies accelerated their plans drastically and the consensus, based on immediate growth and market penetration showed incredible advancements by Microsoft, particularly through their Teams platform.

According to Microsoft, Teams advanced digital transformation so much, that two years worth occurred in just under two months! The daily usage of Teams doubled, multiple times. Currently, the daily active usage of Teams has increased over 230% over the last year, with a base of **145 million daily users** who praise the platform ability to communicate and collaborate across entire organizations.

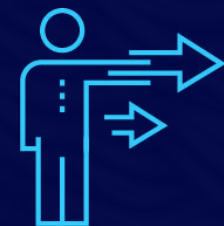
Daily Active Users of Microsoft Teams



High Definition
Audio and Video



Multi-Locational
Full Collaboration



Scalable
Service Levels +/-



Leading
Unified Platform



Integrated
Fully with Office 365



Unified
Technology Equality

Everyone, Everywhere Sees the Same Thing!

Teams is a Comprehensive Solution

Teams is a leading meeting, organization and communications platform that additionally allows for chat, file sharing, storage, and calendars. This is well beyond the ability to have HD video and voice call meetings. It is fully integrated with the 365 Suite of programs and supports a full spectrum of unified communication needs. From small internal meetings to large virtual events, MS Teams will easily organize and conduct meetings and even interactive webinars for people with up to as many as 1,000 attendees.

The richness of features provided by Teams can include end-to-end experiences—like custom registration, rich presentation options, host controls and post-event reporting. Teams has now introduced more than 100 new features over the past year, all built with flexibility.

Industry opinion is that Microsoft Teams responded and earned their spot as the leader to provide for real time collaboration. As video is THE main function enabling hybrid work, Teams provides reliability and crystal-clear HD audio and video, which provides the ability to note body language when communicating.

Teams can now also be used in Telephony, further unifying an organizations communications platform, and providing enormous benefits enterprise-wide.

Now we know the deep connection video can provide. And we know that employee expectations have shifted. We know that remote work can be as, if not more, productive than being in-office. And we know that employers need to pay attention to both maintain employee productivity, and to continue to retain and recruit top talent.





THE FUTURE OF DEVICES AND APPS

**75% of remote
and hybrid workers
say their company does
NOT pay for internet.**

**62% of companies
are currently working
on remote and hybrid
policies for apps and
devices.**

**52% of hybrid
workers are limited to
the devices and apps
available on company
hardware.**

Statistical Sources

Mobile Device and App Management

New methods of accessing company information and resources without sacrificing security are paramount in hybrid workplace modification.

Just as Teams has filled the Collaboration and Communications needs for hybrid workforces, Microsoft Intune is a cloud-based service that focuses on mobile device management (MDM) and mobile application management (MAM).

With Intune, the user controls how your organization's devices are used, including mobile phones, tablets, and laptops. You can also configure specific policies to control applications. For example, you can prevent emails from being sent to people outside your organization. Intune also allows people in your organization to use their personal devices for school or work.

On personal devices, Intune helps make sure your organization data stays protected, and can isolate organization data from personal data. Intune is part of Microsoft's Enterprise Mobility and Security (EMS) suite and fully integrates with Azure Active Directory (Azure AD) to control who has access, and what to. Intune also integrates with Azure for data protection. It can be used with the Microsoft 365 suite of products and you can deploy Microsoft Teams, OneNote, and other Microsoft 365 apps to devices.



With Intune, users manage devices using an approach that's right for them. For organization-owned devices, you may want full control on the devices, including settings, features, and security. In this approach, devices and users of these devices "enroll" in Intune. Once enrolled, they receive your rules and settings through policies configured in Intune.

With Microsoft Intune, You Can:

- Choose to be 100% Cloud or be co-managed.
- Set rules and configure settings on personal and organization-owned devices to access data and networks.
- Deploy and authenticate apps on devices -- on-premises and mobile.
- Protect your company information by controlling the way users access and share information.
- Be sure devices and apps are compliant with your security requirements.

Managing Hybrid Work Collaboration



Moving to the Cloud without Compromising Security is Essential

To support hybrid work effectively, every process across the organization—from operations to engineering, sales, supply chain, and finance—needs to be reimagined to accommodate the shift to a digital workflow. Cloud-based infrastructure is critical for supporting that shift.

As organizations adapt to the future of the workplace, the demand for new technology will only increase. Staying up-to-date with communications platforms may be difficult if you choose features that do not automatically update with their parent programs.

Additionally, as the hybrid and remote workforce continue to grow, an upfront investment that adapts to your team's mobile needs will pay off in the long run. While securing the right strategy for your present team is important, choosing a collaborative and communicative solution that anticipates and responds to your organization's future needs will ensure long-term success.

Teams is at the heart of video and audio collaboration, for both office-based and home-based workers. Intune is there to ensure mobile users and applications adhere to company standards, allowing collaboration and communication without sacrificing security.

Investing in services that deliver a consistent, multi-device, UI and UX platform can free your organization from the need to download, install, and learn new software.

With the right provider, all your communications are streamlined, reducing friction within your organization. While freedom is an essential feature of hybrid working, you should not jeopardize your company by investing in a service that may put your business at risk.

Before investing in any Cloud provider or service, make sure that you speak with a qualified representative about security features and encryption services, as well as refined user controls, privacy, and transparency.



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80% of all remote workers reported that they don't intend to return to an in-office setting.

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57% of remote workers use at least one non-company approved app.

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51% of remote employees avoid sharing work documents because they either can't find them or it would take too long!

Statistical Sources

Flexible Policies Bring New Results

Create Policies that Empower Employees with Maximum Flexibility

The choices being made today will likely impact an organization for years to come. This is one of those moments that require clear vision and well-intentioned, smart decisions.

First, a company would be wise to develop and implement plans and policies that put companies on the path to being very, very flexible. These decisions will impact everything. From how your culture is being shaped to how you attract and retain talent. How you respond to change is very important in the environment of future innovation.

As many leading organizations have already stepped forward with strong stances on flexible work, it's clear the bar has been permanently set. Created as flexible policies, Twitter declared its workers could work remotely "forever." Dropbox announced it will essentially eliminate office space for "focused" work, transforming physical locations to cater to meetings and collaboration. Spotify hopes to pick up talent with New York and San Francisco-level salaries for employees working remotely and at Microsoft, employees can now work from home up to 50 percent of the time.

Empowering people for maximum flexibility begins with answering critical questions.



Flexible policies will lead the way, providing clarity and guidance to employees as hybrid work becomes practices. Predicting employee questions and concerns, be prepared to answer the following from employees:

- Can I work both remotely and in office?
- Is this decision my choice? Can I change it?
- Can I choose how many days I spend away?
- Am I required to work set hours?
- Am I locked in the office on certain weekdays?
- Do I need to schedule ahead of time?
- Will I be required to come in for meetings?
- Will I have a dedicated workspace?
- Are my pay and benefits the same?

By predicting these concerns, an organization can mutually prepare policies, documentation and guidelines that are fair, clear, and uniform.



Develop Flexible Policies



Ask Critical Questions



Predict Employee Concerns



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**Build Cultural
and Social Equity**



**Know Your Needs
Will Evolve**



**Solve for Technical
Work Equality**

Reimagine Your Physical with New Purpose

Reworking Physical Spaces for Success

Once you have determined your policies for maximum flexibility, use them to guide your approach to physical space. From now forward,, we can no longer rely solely on physical spaces to collaborate, connect, and build social equity.

That is not to say physical space isn't still important, because it is. People are social beings, and they want to get together, bounce ideas off one another, and feel the energy of in-person discussions. To have the ability to read body language and communicate live.

Microsoft has been researching their employees and looking at everything from graphs, to habits, and employee traffic patterns. Just to understand how best to equip teams with the spaces they need, while knowing those needs will evolve over time.



Working Towards a Technical Equality

Attempts are being made at how to reimagine physical settings because everyone does not have the same home-based opportunities. Some simply do not have an ideal home environment for remote work, be it unreliable internet, distractions from family/roommates, or even that they do not have enough space for a designated work area. These notions of technical equality are important, so some employees are not at a disadvantage.

A successful transition will have mitigated or even eliminated these issues about how they implement hybrid work. For example, sales teams who need to come to the office infrequently can use a hoteling model to book workstations for the day or hour, while engineering teams may need dedicated collaboration spaces and workstations. To accommodate remote workers, some companies are considering offsite coworking hubs or onsite communications rooms.

One thing we know is how we work will continue to evolve, so we greatly recommend building flexibility into every space that is designed or reimaged.

Moving forward, office space needs to bridge the physical and digital worlds and meet the unique needs of every team and specific roles.

Connecting the Physical to the Digital



Bridging the Gap with Teams Rooms

Initially, it's critical is to begin bridging the gap between in-person and remote experiences. Working together when everyone is in the office is practiced and straightforward, but now we figured out how to get things done anyway. For less money. Isn't that the point?

What remains now, is how best to handle that middle area, combining the people physically together, and others are joining virtually. That is surely going to be the real challenge. As remote and hybrid workers now leave a lot of empty office space, one trend has been towards building what's being referred to as a "Teams Room." This adaption of space is being used to provide an amazing quality collaboration and communications atmosphere that can serve multiple purposes.

Investing in Foundational Uniformity

Today's state-of-the-art Microsoft Teams Rooms include high-quality audio and video to help everyone be seen and heard. Meeting room cameras deliver high-definition video streams and optimize the view by framing the people in the room or following the active speaker. Intelligent speakers identify who in the room is speaking, and individual names and profiles are represented in meeting transcripts.

People onsite can write directly on a Surface Hub or even from their own phone or laptop, while remote participants can draw on the same shared digital canvas. In addition, Intelligent Capture cameras can capture, focus, resize, and enhance analog whiteboard images and text, so remote attendees can clearly see brainstorming, even when someone is blocking the whiteboard.

40% of remote workers are able to currently conduct at least half of their total work on a smartphone, tablet, or other mobile devices.

Working remotely helps the Dell U.S. team avoid 136 million miles of travel per year.



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Email (88%) is the most used method of digital communication for remote workers followed by instant messaging (47%), video conferencing (36%), and VoIP (32%)



Unified Communications - Same User Experience



Along with physical spaces, your plan for extreme flexibility should include technology that enables teamwork and creates a new, unified digital employee experience that's exactly the same for everyone and follows employees everywhere.

Videoconferencing will always be important, but it is just one tool, and does not alone provide the communication and collaboration infrastructure needed to power hybrid work. Microsoft Teams is the one solution that combines meeting, chatting, calling, and collaboration in a single place—all integrated with 365 Office apps and other business process automation tools.

Teams opens collaboration between knowledge workers and frontline workers and blends synchronous and asynchronous work naturally. It is the leading and only application that does it all, providing an organizing layer that supports the flow of work across the organization.

Research shows that remote workers are often more productive than their in-office counterparts, yet it's very common for leadership to give more credit to in-office employees because they are much more visible.

Not only is that a potentially damaging perception, but it is also a sign that the initial shift to a hybrid workforce has been somewhat superficial rather than a true strategic, cultural, and operational shift. It is this superficial aspect that needs to be reexamined by some and avoided by all.

Work is evolving rapidly, and there is just no going back to our pre-pandemic world. As vaccines begin to roll out globally, business leaders everywhere need a plan for this new operating model and one that contains maximum flexibility.



Demetrius Cassidy

President/Founder

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Where will the Cloud Take You?

While we're all still learning as we go, what we hold true for success is that every organization is going to need at least the following three things for success:

- A Unified and Flexible Communications and Collaboration Platform
- New Employee Policies that Address Well-Being and Hybrid Working
- Re-configured Physical Spaces that Bind Everything Together

Our own prediction for a not-so-distant future is where meetings become immersive experiences that allow us to 'be there'—from anywhere and at any time. These leading, flexible trends include minimal costs to meeting room layouts; the addition of multiple screens, dynamic views of participants, chat, whiteboards, content, and notes.

Microsoft is constantly working on even more enhancements to in-room technologies, especially those which will help remote participants track and participate in the flow of the meeting. And standardize the experience for everyone, providing an intuitive, brilliant and flexible platform.

There are still challenges ahead, but we are very optimistic about creating a future that empowers people to connect from anywhere, at any time, and to bring their best effort each day. Only through being flexible and adopting a platform of a true unified communications experience can we hope to find ourselves ahead of the curve and ready to take on the new issues as they begin to be revealed.

You can plan for the future and be ready.
We can help.



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