How embracing anywhere can help you future-proof your business today

The world has changed irrevocably in the past 18 months. To say we've all adjusted might be a stretch. There's still a distinct sense of suspended animation - as if we're all waiting for normality to return. But, there will be no return to normality, simply an adjustment of what normality means.

Temps de lecture : minute

1 July 2021

So what will this new normal look like? In truth, no one knows. But that doesn't mean we can't begin to build new safeguards into our daily lives. You can't anticipate every possible outcome, but you can build resilience into your business model. And that starts with embracing anywhere.

Stay agile to prepare for new challenges

As the old saying goes, "by failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail." The truth is, every company should consider the long-term impact of a _work-anywhere policy_ on their business. But this planning isn't just for use in emergencies.

This is about ensuring your business is agile enough to respond to changes in work processes without losing customers, disrupting service, or damaging productivity.

Switching from a fixed-location model frees you up to explore opportunities beyond your usual boundaries. But perhaps most

importantly, it also allows you to build a greener, fairer and more robust business.

Cut the commute to protect the planet

We are facing a major environmental challenge - the consequences of which will have lasting ramifications for future generations. Although commuting makes up just a small percentage of global carbon emissions, it represents one of the easiest ways to make an impact on CO2 levels.

A _study by Transport for London_ attributed 40,000 early deaths each year to air pollution. Motor vehicle traffic hit a _record high in 2019_. Commuters in the UK covered a whopping 356.5 billion miles by motor vehicle. Over 25% of these miles were for commuting or business purposes.

NO2 concentration levels in some major cities fell by more than half during the early months of the pandemic. But each time lockdown eased, pollution levels began to rise. By allowing your team to work anywhere, you can take more cars off the road and shrink your collective footprint.

Drop the office to limit localised dangers

We all know office work increases the risk of exposing your team to airborne pathogens. But there are other risks.

In the case of natural disasters, office work represents a danger to your team and your business processes. Extreme weather can disrupt transport networks, damage office buildings and shut down local internet. Under the fixed-location office, your team could be unable to work for weeks following an extreme weather event. And with the rise in global temperatures expected to bring an increased risk of extreme weather, businesses will almost certainly face more disruption in the coming years.

Of course, even working from home, some of your team will experience connection issues, and people are at risk of exposure to illness or natural disasters no matter where they work. But working as a distributed team limits the scale of that risk. Even if some of your team fall ill, or lose connection, you can continue to operate in some function.

Again, the key here is flexibility. By having the necessary measures in place to respond in the event of a natural disaster or contagion outbreak, you'll be able to protect your team's health while maintaining your business operations.

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Hire anywhere to build a diverse team

Regardless of your objectives, diversity is essential to the balance of your team. Studies have shown that performance and team morale increase when businesses incorporate a wide range of voices in decisions.

A 2018 *McKinsey Diversity Matters report* found that diverse teams are

more likely to yield above-average financial returns. Businesses have begun to recognise that diversity brings with it more knowledgeable, creative and dynamic teams.

Despite this, many workplaces are limited in their capacity to build diverse teams by the nature of their location. The reality is, the majority of your team will live in the surrounding area. Those geographic limitations can seriously impact the diversity of voices in your team.

By expanding your hiring pool to encompass the whole world, you can build a unique team with an array of voices.

Outsource key services

Outsourcing hasn't always had the best reputation in business. But, in truth, engaging third parties - particularly for customer support - is increasingly common. That's because outsourcing is a pivotal step to building scalability into your business model.

Flexibility is vital for businesses of all sizes - but particularly for startups who need the freedom to scale rapidly. Facing a sudden influx in calls? You can scale an answering service plan a lot faster than you can hire in-house employees to answer them. Likewise, it's a lot easier to scale down during quiet periods when your customer support is handled on a usage basis rather than in-house.

Some businesses are looking to AI to fill the gap in their customer service. Despite major developments in automated answering, _78% of UK consumers_ prefer to interact with a real person when contacting a business. In times of limited social interaction (hello lockdown), that connection becomes even more integral to building a rapport with customers.
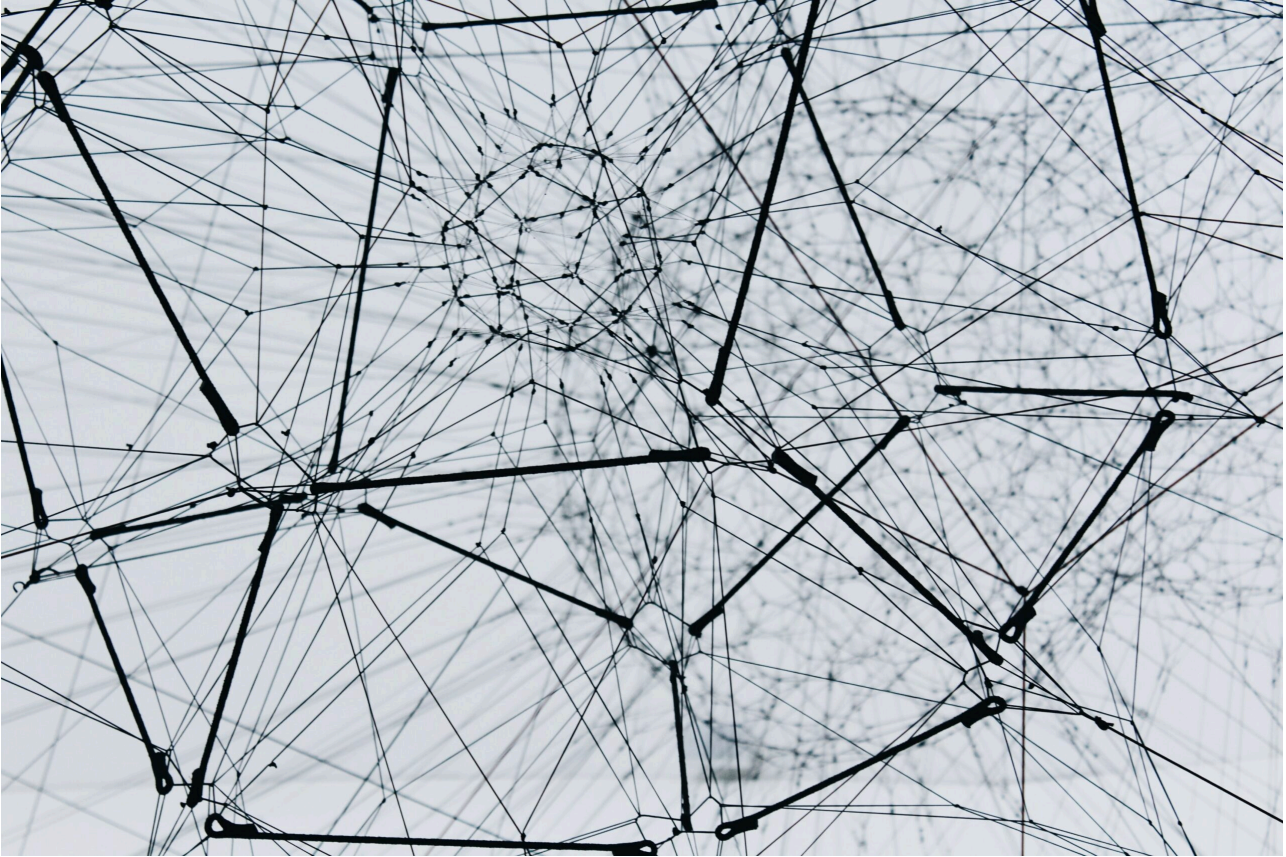
How to embrace anywhere

Transparency is central to collaboration, so look at creating a shared digital space where everyone can post updates and discuss strategy. Remote communication platforms like Slack, Microsoft Teams or Anywhere App offer instant messaging and collaboration tools to keep your entire team on the same page.

Choose your project tracking tools wisely. You may need to use several project management tools in tandem, including a master sheet of all existing projects and project management software such as Trello or Jira for different departments.

But it's not all about work. You need to grow an inclusive social space too. When developing your internal comms infrastructure, create a few channels purely for socialisation. Not only does this help foster cohesion (which could otherwise be lost in an anywhere environment), it also encourages interaction between different departments.

If the past year has taught us anything, it's that flexibility is now an essential business asset. As Darwin said in the Origin of Species, "It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is most adaptable to change."

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