

# The Ultimate Guide to Adapting to the Future of Work

The way of work is changing. Or maybe it's more accurate to say that it already has. Earlier this year the world was struck by a mysterious new illness, and organizations that could work remote, did.

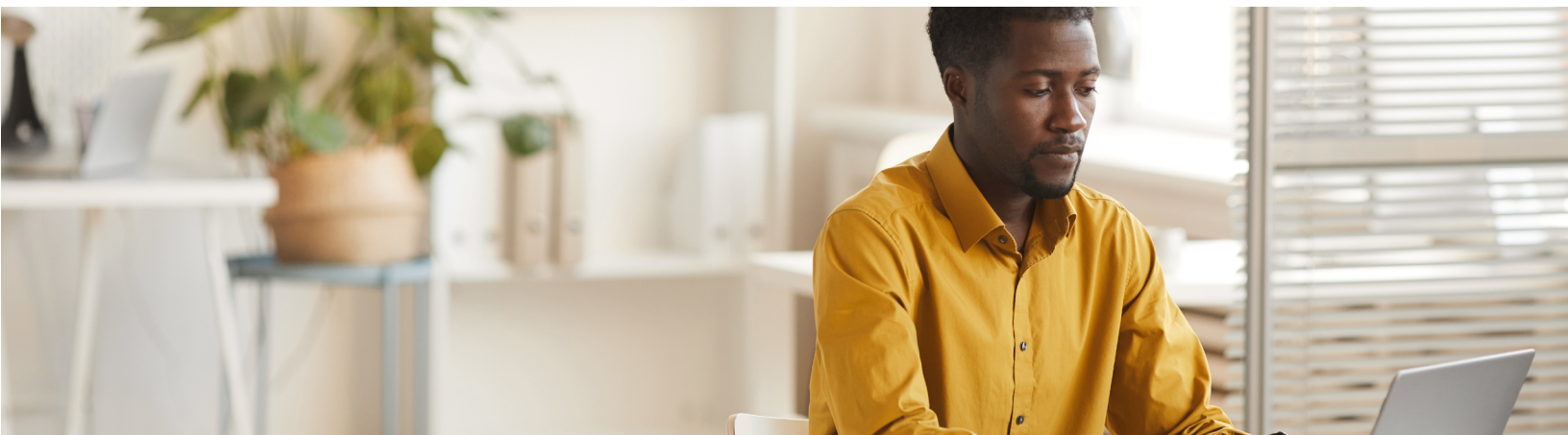
Headlines soon shouted, "the Future of Work is here!" While it's true that fewer businesses will return to traditional office environments, the future of work is more than remote teams. It's a different way of approaching work. We must move away from strict 9-to-5 jobs and office cubicles, archaic annual performance review, and debilitating hierarchy. And the reality is, many organizations aren't prepared.

**Returning to work will look different for every business. All firms planning for the 'new normal' need to take a truly strategic approach to their workforce planning and avoid jumping in at the deep end if they are to future-proof their company"**

GUIDANT GLOBAL

### The future of work is...

- ✔ Remote
- ✔ Resilient
- ✔ Human-centric leadership
- ✔ Agile
- ✔ Inclusive
- ✔ Focused on the employee experience



# Remote

The COVID-19 pandemic was, among other things, a massive experiment in telecommuting, wrote Brookings Institute's Kathering Guyot and Isabel V. Sawhill.

In less than a month, North American businesses had their blinders torn off like a roof during a tornado. **Companies that thought it would take a year to develop remote-working guidelines and infrastructure did it in a matter of days.** Retailers that didn't see a need for an online experience launched e-commerce. And they rolled these solutions out in just weeks.

While the jury is still out on whether fully remote work is better than a centralized office, what we do know is that flexible work options win the vote almost every time. Giving your people the autonomy to choose the environment that suits them best and trusting them to do their job well wherever they are can dramatically increase levels of engagement and loyalty.

# Agile

Agile companies invest highly in innovation, utilize operational frameworks such as [OKRs](#), Scrum (even in non-tech teams), and are obsessed with both customer and team member experiences. [Design thinking](#), [growth mindsets](#), and hackathons are in their DNA. They regularly challenge their assumptions and are obsessed with solving problems.

In the old way of working, being agile meant an organization could adopt new technology in under 2 years. Organizations have seen that they can move quicker than they previously thought possible, but there's more to be done.

With pace and uncertainty growing, [OKRs](#) are more valuable than ever. Combined with a scrum methodology, teams (not just technical ones) can elevate their levels of collaboration, focus, and transparency in work. Teams become naturally self managed, get more high-value work done, and develop a mindset that allows them to pivot quickly alongside the broader organization.



# Resilient

Organizational resilience covers a number of things: a strong balance sheet; secure supply chains; and a digital-first approach, but mindset may be the most important element.

People and organizations that embrace challenges, welcome feedback, and understand that mistakes and failures are a natural component of learning, are well positioned to perpetually grow and evolve. We have seen that this mindset is easier to develop in non-managers than it is for executives.

## 5 Critical Mindset Shifts to be Resilient

### 01. Think beyond what you know

It's important to think beyond what you know about pace, modern company culture, and innovation. Too often we default to comparing ourselves to our own past behaviors, or of those closest to us. When you open your mind to a broader set of inspiring companies and regions, you'll realize that your relative definition of what pace, innovation, and agility are will likely need to be adjusted.

### 02. Innovate in multiple horizons

Most companies don't really innovate. Those that do tend to focus on innovating their current products and services. While that is important, Rocky coaches his clients to use McKinsey's three horizons of growth and concurrently invest resources in each horizon. Wait-and-see is a terrible strategy. Instead, look at opportunities in multiple horizons, socialize them throughout your organization, and take greater control of your future.

#### HORIZON 1

Maintain and defend core business. 70% innovation resources.

#### HORIZON 2

Nurture emerging business. 20% innovation resources.

#### HORIZON 3

Create genuinely new business. 10% innovation resources.



### 03. Support innovation ecosystems

Creativity lives in all areas of your business and the more you bring diverse people and teams together, the more powerful the ideas become. The same holds true in your external ecosystem. Collaborating with other actors trying to solve a similar problem is more productive and impactful than trying to do so with only your company's talents.

### 04. Value progress over perfection

Building minimum viable products that are measured against key indicators and customer feedback can be much more valuable than overthought business cases. You learn (and fail) faster and can get closer to what your customer actually wants quicker. Progress over perfection reduces procrastination, elevates team confidence through microwins, and encourages risk taking on truly creative ideas.

### 05. Be customer obsessed

Understanding your customer's journey with your company and the experiences they seek can keep you focused on improving what truly matters. Build a customer advisory board that isn't afraid to challenge you; find those employees that point out ways your organization could be more customer friendly; and make sure you have metrics to reflect your customers' feelings.

It should be no surprise that resilient organizations are **MORE LIKELY** to achieve business results, attract investors, and retain top talent. What was compelling pre-COVID has now become a table stake. There are four organizational archetypes with varying degrees of resiliency.



# Which Archetype is Your Organization?

## First movers

These companies are the first to establish themselves in a given market. They're committed innovators. Companies such as [SpaceX](#) are obvious, but companies that are singularly focused on technologies, such as [quantum computing](#) and [fusion energy](#) could be considered a first mover too.

## Fast followers

These organizations quickly imitate the innovations of their competitors. Fast followers are companies that are agile enough to quickly respond to black-swan events, such as global pandemics, minor market shifts, or new technologies. So if SpaceX is the organization that can enable humans to live on Mars, the fast follower might start a second colony there.

## Inclusive

The benefits of an inclusive workforce are numerous. Having a variety of backgrounds and opinions results in faster problem solving, more innovation, increased productivity, reduced turnover, higher engagement, and a better company reputation. While diversity is a fact, inclusion is a behavior, and it's a cultural element that many companies don't yet understand.

## Impeded

Impeded companies are ones that generally "get-in" but aren't able to pivot at the pace of the fast follower. The most common impediments are an absence of discretionary capital, talent constraints, lack of modern capabilities, and [organizational bloat](#) (aka bureaucracy). A misaligned executive team and having unhealthy [shiny object syndrome](#) can also stand in the way. The vast majority of companies today fall into this archetype.

## In denial

Finally, there are those companies that are out of touch with macro-economic indicators and are arrogant about the state of their business. These are organizations that believe the world will completely return to pre-COVID times. These companies will face an uphill battle to survive in the coming years.



# 4 Cultural Practices for Creating an Inclusive Culture

## 01. Encourage a culture of listening

Listening is one of the easiest ways to show respect. When people feel like their opinions are valued they are more likely to speak up and discuss, which leads to higher creativity and more innovation.

## 02. Get to know teammates personally

Learn about people's strengths and backgrounds through personal one-on-one conversations. Leaders should set an example that everyone else can follow.

## 03. Have healthy conversations when disagreements occur

When you bring together different backgrounds, opinions, and priorities, friction is normal. Don't shut it down. Instead help your people have productive conversations about differences.

## 04. Promote candor by talking about successes and failures together

Celebrating wins can be a wonderfully positive experience that brings people together, but talking about what didn't work can be just as beneficial.

## Focused on the employee experience

Sure, the flexibility to work from anywhere can fall under employee experience. But we're talking about something larger. Focusing on employee experience means paying attention to the moments that matter in an employee's day, year, and overall career. Providing a strong employee experience enables individuals to do their best work and makes them want to come to work.



# Human-centric leadership

Human-centric leaders put their people first. To succeed in this new world of work leaders will need new personal qualities, like vulnerability, and survival qualities, such as lifelong learning, which were not associated with leadership in the past.

## Human-centric leaders...

- ✓ ARE TRUSTWORTHY
- ✓ ARE FULLY ENGAGED
- ✓ ARE COACHES, MENTORS, AND TEACHERS
- ✓ ARE COMMITTED TO PERSONAL GROWTH AND LEARNING
- ✓ CREATE (AND MAINTAIN) A PSYCHOLOGICALLY SAFE ENVIRONMENT SET A CLEAR DIRECTION AND VISION
- ✓ INSPIRE THEIR PEOPLE AND TEAMS
- ✓ PROVIDE MEANING AND HIGHER PURPOSE TO WORK





# Preparing for the future today

Asking people to be efficient or resilient doesn't work. It's common for organizations to hire experts to accelerate organizational change and enhance chances of success. Still, there are a few tips we're happy to share that can yield some serious results:

- Invest in frameworks and methodologies. We're big fans of **OKRS** because of their ability to focus people and teams on what's important. When authored well, the measurable key results drive behaviors you seek, such as transparency in work, self-managed teams, and cross-functional collaboration. Scrum can result in big changes too and not just for your software engineers. NoW has a system that combines the best of these methodologies and has proven to dramatically improve business results.
- Commit to **continuous feedback**. Resilient organizations have cultures of trust, open communications, and leaders committed to lifelong learning and coaching. Change is hard, so as you embark on your transformation, stay close to your team.
- Invest in powerful tech tools. Tech fatigue is real. We all have so many apps on the go. A tool, like **15Five**, that enables OKR tracking and continuous feedback can be a game changer. When used effectively, the ROI is massive.
- Consider the creation of a "Future-Focused" team. This group of cross-functional, customer obsessed, growth minded yielding team members will help predict the future of the organization. History has shown us that executives benefit from insights and innovation from their people. A team that is tasked with scanning the environment, developing possible scenarios of the business/sector, and starting to build products/services and mindsets can set an organization up to thrive in the future.

## ROCKY OZAKI

Rocky Ozaki is the Founder and CEO of the **NOW OF WORK**, a business transformation firm that's primary focus is inspiring executive leaders and helping them build truly resilient organizations. He's obsessed with creating frameworks that empower companies to master the art of innovation and agility.



## About 15Five

15Five is a continuous performance management solution that helps employees grow and develop, in just 15 minutes each week. Through a lightweight weekly check-in, 15Five delivers everything a manager needs to impact employee performance, including continuous feedback, objectives (OKR) tracking, recognition, 1-on-1s, and 360° reviews.

To learn more, visit [www.15Five.com](http://www.15Five.com)