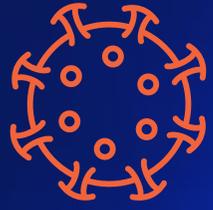


Special COVID-19 Edition



the future of your work

# fromto

everything you wanted to know but were afraid to ask

**Cognizant**





This special edition of *From/To* is a snapshot of how millions of people around the world are living and working today — and for the foreseeable future — as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We've taken 21 of the 42 ideas from our original report and updated them for our strange current times.

# The Future of Work Is Now the Present of Work

In the summer of 2019, we published a major report, *From/To: Everything You Wanted to Know About the Future of Your Work But Were Afraid to Ask*, that described “a state of the union for the future of work.” In it, we examined 42 trends — ranging across technology, demographics, culture, business models and collaboration styles — that we argued will be important for anyone interested in the future of their work.

Fast-forward to the summer of 2020. Many of these trends no longer represent the future of work but are entirely central to the present of work. Working remotely, working on a couch, wearing a hoodie, leveraging the cloud, collaborating over video, using AI-based solutions, talking to technology, worrying about privacy, fretting about always being “on” — things that had seemed on the edge of many people’s radars a mere 12 months ago are now, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, right bang in the middle of them.

As a result, it’s probably time to amend one of the most oft-quoted observations about the future from science fiction writer William Gibson: “The future is here. It’s just unevenly distributed.” Instead, it looks like the future is here; *it’s just much more evenly distributed*.

In this Special COVID-19 Edition of *From/To*, we’ve selected 21 of the 42 ideas from our original report and updated them for our strange current times. (The other 21 ideas remain somewhere away in the future.)

We’ve maintained the architecture of the 2019 report, keeping its five main chapters:

- **The Way We Work:** How we do what we do.
- **The Tools of Work:** The apps, systems, networks, tools and processes that we use to work.
- **The Aesthetics of Work:** What work looks like; how it feels.

- **The Issues with Work:** When and why work is work.
- **The Meaning of Work:** What gets us out of bed and makes us proud.

We’ve also kept the original report’s format and structure: “From” describes where we are, and “to” describes where we’re going. But the “to” is now not off in 2023 or 2027 but visible right in front of us in this year of our Lord, 2020.

As we noted in the introduction of the original report, the French writer Simone de Beauvoir once wrote that, “To make something good of the future, you have to look the present in the face.” Those words seem eerily prescient now, as we deal with the biggest existential threat to our way of life — and way of work — since the ending of the Second World War.

It is safe to say that although the future of work is always, by definition, in the future, the future of work that we at Cognizant’s Center for the Future of Work have been analyzing and evangelizing for close to 10 years is now something that everyone needs to be paying attention to. Whether they like it or not.

This Special COVID-19 Edition of *From/To* is not a field guide to the future, as we characterized the original report. It is snapshot of how millions of people around the world are living — and working — today. And for the foreseeable future.



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50% of the  
Future of Work

Is Here Right Now



# From 8x5 to 10x4

# from

# to



## THE ELEVATOR PITCH:

The working week is dead. Long live the working week.

The 40-hour, five-day work week is a product of the First Industrial Revolution.

Robert Owen, one of the 19th century founders of the cooperative movement, marketed his radical idea of ending the excessive, abusive work practices of the day with the slogan, “Eight hours’ labor, eight hours’ recreation, eight hours’ rest.”

So successful was Owen’s campaign that the notion of a standard working week has become ingrained in our concept of what work fundamentally is. The working week *is* five days — 9 to 5, Monday to Friday, followed by a weekend. This seems so platonically right that those who don’t work to this rhythm seem to operate in an odd netherworld that doesn’t smell quite right. We sort of feel sorry for the nurse on the nightshift; we’d look at someone who chose to work from 2 pm to 10 pm and took Wednesday and Thursday off as a bit of a weirdo.

So normal is the “9 to 5” that we can all hum the song, and most British people of a certain age know that “a Mars a day helps you work, rest and play.” (Owen’s utopian dream reduced to a slogan of capitalism; how ironic.) Forty hours as the standard unit of human labor was further solidified by the “commute” — another product of the First Industrial Revolution; “going to work” literally implies work is elsewhere. If the commute eats into “our” 16 hours, then work better stay in “its” eight hours. In its five days.

But now, in the midst of this grand work-from-home experiment the world is experiencing, work is everywhere and anywhere and all the time — when we’re at our desk and in the socially distanced checkout line. In the conference room we hope to soon be back to, and in the bleacher seat watching our kids play sports — an experience we all so desperately hope is not gone forever.

Since the beginning of the latest industrial revolution but particularly now, many of us now work “5 to 9” (am to pm), checking email first thing in the morning and last thing at night — in bed.

Work is literally and metaphorically in the palm of our hands. Unchained from a physical place and a punch clock, we no longer go to work (“on time”) at all — work comes to us, at all hours of the day. This diffusion of work — away from the factory, away from the office — breaks the very idea of a standard unit of human labor.

But yet, the 40-hour work week is still so deeply embedded in our sense of the contract between employer and employee that abandoning it altogether feels an unnatural act. The compromise emerging — that recognizes the fluidity of work but also the need to stop it from eating us alive — is the four-day week. Ten hours a day, four days a week. *Some* structure, but more time *unplugged*. The digital Sabbath (Friday naturally) is all the rage. /BP



## THE BOTTOM LINE:

Every weekend should be a long weekend.

## From PAs to RPAs



# from to



**THE ELEVATOR PITCH:**  
Robots won't steal your job; their help will make it way better.

From the king's retinue 1,000 years ago to the loyal butler Mr. Carson in *Downton Abbey* — assistants have always made work easier for us.

After 1950, every executive from *Mad Men's* Don Draper to MI6's James Bond had a personal assistant.

But by 2000, Microsoft Office made office typing pools, secretaries and personal assistants redundant. Individuals did their own scheduling, typing and printing. Cost-cutting contributed to this trend, but for senior executives back then, getting access to a local-area network and an email address to “do it yourself!” seemed cool. Who needed a PA when you had a PC?

The tradeoff for the “department of do-it-yourself” was, of course, extreme inefficiency. The amount of time you can spend booking travel, doing expenses, getting a presentation template or obtaining a factoid on your corporate intranet is a time-suck. Instead of “Welcome to the future of work,” too often it's, “Welcome to the office intranet — your password was denied.”

Increment by increment, critical time for thinking strategically gets whittled into 30-minute buckets on your Outlook calendar.

Rather than preserving this status quo, we should liberate individuals to do more fulfilling, more enjoyable, more lucrative work.

In short, your new PA will be an RPA: a robotic personal assistant. The term “RPA” can convey the wrong impression; Robby the Robot or “the Borg” aren't running around the office — yet. Still, “Beat the bot!” remains a battle cry across wide swaths of workers.

And yet we use Siri, Alexa and GPS tools today — they're all essentially robotic personal assistants. Imagine going from LaGuardia Airport to Newark and crossing midtown Manhattan during rush hour to catch a connecting flight. Would you ever try this (and catch your flight, on-time) without using GPS?

Marvel's J.A.R.V.I.S. didn't wait for an email to save Iron Man — he predicted needs. As “bots not apps” gathers momentum, a J.A.R.V.I.S.-like robotic personal assistant aggregating software layer — with voice as the default interface — will emerge as the dominant model. Already, robotic assistants like Google's Duplex voice bot (for reservations) and x.ai's Amy Ingram (for scheduling meetings) are yielding huge productivity and creativity gains.

When we recently asked over 2,000 senior leaders what skills they need in five years, without exception, every skill was a *human* skill — and they needed an average of 15% *more* of *all* of them. So why doesn't every doctor, lawyer, teacher or rental car agent start using robotic personal assistants to “find their 15%”?<sup>1</sup>

To beat the robots, we'll need to join them. Robotic personal assistants will help buy back at least that 15% capacity (or more) needed for the skills of tomorrow. /RB



**THE BOTTOM LINE:**  
Your new favorite assistant at work will be fueled by ones and zeros, not coffee.

# From Buying to Leasing



# from



# to



## THE ELEVATOR PITCH:

The cost of ownership exceeds the point of ownership.

Ownership has long been a bedrock of the modern world.

Our house, our car, our land. Ownership is *the* marker of affluence and success for many in Western society. Think of the joy you experienced when you bought your first car (no matter what condition). Or the pride and trepidation you felt when receiving the keys to your first mortgaged home. These are milestones in many individuals' lives that give them a measure of achievement.

Car ownership is often the first signpost on the journey to adulthood and represents a taste of true adult independence. Walk down any suburban street to see how this has played out — driveways and garages packed with cars.

Of course, the car is just one indicator of obsession with ownership; Western consumer-based economies have traditionally fetishized the need to own things — watches, paintings, koi carp, houses, software. If you're not buying and conspicuously displaying your trophies, you're either moderately poor, extraordinarily rich or simply not playing the game. In the immediate wake of 9/11, President Bush extolled us all to go shopping. To buy and *own* things.

However, the tide has shifted, and our current lockdown limbo and impending economic depression has and will continue to cast a stark light on our consumer-driven behaviors of old.

Buyers are questioning, why spend \$40,000 on something that sits idle for 23 hours a day? Why buy a \$1,000 suit to only wear it four times a year? Why strain my finances to rent office space in Manhattan when [Remotopia](#) is the new normal? Why spend the time and trouble running my own servers? It used to be that these things made sense. There was no alternative. But increasingly now there is, and they don't.

When I need a car, I book it on my Zipcar app. When I need to look sharp, I click on Rent the Runway. When I need more space, I speak to my WeWork community manager. When I need an extra terabyte, I click an API.

For a generation of consumers who will never be able to afford their own home, thanks to the house-price-inflation/pass-the-parcel game their parents have played, not to mention today's economic uncertainty, this model will become increasingly attractive — indeed the norm. Ownership is becoming a bug in late-stage Western capitalism, not a feature.

While many might question how quickly this cultural step change will play out, remember that in addition to the seismic shift we're experiencing today, the move from physical maps to Google Maps, from snail mail to email, and from cable to Netflix happened in the literal blink of an eye. Keep yours open. **/MC**



## THE BOTTOM LINE:

The linkage between ownership and wealth is withering. Soon it will be broken.



# From the Thumb to the Voice

# from

# to



## THE ELEVATOR PITCH:

This may be the digital age, but digits are becoming superfluous.

The graphical user interface innovations of Xerox in the late 1970s gave birth to the mouse, which combined with the keyboard to become the ultimate tag team in computing.

We've been tapping keys, clicking and scrolling ever since. With the rise of smartphones 30 years later, those inputs gave way to thumbs furiously typing and swiping on touchscreens. As phones grew ubiquitous, touchscreen interfaces expanded to our cars, restaurants, banks and any other instance that calls for digital interaction. The intuitive design of touchscreens enabled computer literacy for young and old, as well as unprecedented mobility and accessibility to computing — so much so that the rest of our lives began to bend to the will of it.

As a result of our phone addictions, “sore thumbs” don’t stick out at all anymore. Pain and stiffness of the thumb has become a fact of life for some and a recurring nuisance for others. Our vision is worsening, and our posture grows more hunched and stooped by the day. The hand-eye coordination required to use touchscreens prevents us from engaging in other activities while using them. After a decade of zooming, pinching and swiping right, the future of computers calls for a resounding thumbs down on these tactile interfaces.

## Did you ever see Captain Kirk type?

Of course not! He just talked to the computer. In our unending search for convenience, the clickable interface is old hat, replaced by voice-activated interactions with devices that listen to us, enabling operations without touching or even looking at them. Personal home assistants led the charge of voice-activated appliances, but the technology is swiftly expanding to all manner of devices. Mics are now tinier and cheaper than ever. Voice processing technology is steadily improving. The most advanced systems are able to discern specific voices amid the cacophony of a crowded room.

Major appliance makers already tout their intentions to fashion all their products with microphones. Voice UX designers will need to forge the path forward by designing interfaces that account for accents, colloquialisms, differing languages and all the other idiosyncrasies of the human voice.

Fully shifting to a screenless, touchless future will return our attention to things that matter most and reinstate a modicum of safety to activities like driving. The technology is of particular use in the post-COVID-19 climate, where touching unsanitized surfaces poses a great threat to a more hygiene-conscious populace. But what does a world of always-on microphones sound like? Ubiquitous voice activation further erodes any sense of privacy remaining from the smartphone era. No need to whip out your phone and hit “record” when the refrigerator is already fixated on every uttered word. Now if a tree falls in the forest and nobody hears it, we’ll just ask Alexa if it actually happened and what it sounded like. /DD



## THE BOTTOM LINE:

The winds of change are blowing, and your devices hear it all.

# From Microscopes to Datascopes

# from



## THE ELEVATOR PITCH:

Just as microscopes changed medicine, AI is a “datascope” that will give new insight to solutions previously thought unimaginable.

In 1831, Manchester Royal Infirmary in the UK used 50,000 leeches per year to treat ill citizens of the first great industrial city.

Twenty years later, John Leonard Riddell of Tulane University invented the first practical binocular microscope. By 1930, Manchester Royal Infirmary finally closed its leech aquarium.

Why? Riddell’s technology allowed doctors to see — at a cellular level — what was truly causing the problem. A microscope could detect the bacteria causing illnesses like tuberculosis, an intestinal infection that would lead to cholera, a cell mutating into a cancer. The medical microscope not only made the leech redundant but also created an industry that today employs millions of people around the world, and in the process made the world a better place.

In the transformation from leeches to microscopes, did Riddell destroy anyone’s job? Yes, probably. But microscopes were central to the explosive growth of healthcare that led to the population and economic growth that made the modern world.

Nobody today would argue that we should have stayed in a leech-based paradigm. Of course, if your current business model is a modern version of leech breeding or retailing, then AI *is* bad news. You may be able to eke out a living for a generation or two, as leech magnates did until 1930, but nobody mourned their passing, and nobody will mourn the passing of their modern equivalents.

# to

Just as Dr. Riddell’s microscope yielded new things to do, our new AI tools will function as “datascopes” — in medicine and every other industry — allowing businesses to see more data, integrate it with other data and make decisions faster than ever before.

The next generation of lawyers will likely argue that doctors who don’t use AI tools are guilty of medical malpractice.<sup>2</sup> In another generation, using non-AI-infused technology will seem as anachronistic as using leeches does today.

AI will allow radiologists to see more data (e.g., pixel biopsies), integrate that with other information sources (“multilayered data” in medical parlance) and make faster decisions. This approach is also transferable to many more disciplines and business processes.

Think of AI not just as a tool that reduces the labor component of a process, but also as a means to increase the overall scale of the process. AI will allow us to grapple with a world awash with information that is denser, more complex and coming at us faster than ever before. The search for a COVID-19 vaccine will make the use of datascopes even more important. AI will open new opportunities for commercial growth and levels of employment for billions, and make the world a better place. /BP



## THE BOTTOM LINE:

New tools don’t just “automate people away;” they allow people to do things they’ve never been able to do before.

# From Insecurity to Security



# from

# to



## THE ELEVATOR PITCH:

The future of work rests on flimsy foundations.

We are on the cusp of a “great digital buildout,” in which technology becomes embedded in, and central to, every aspect of modern society.

This wave of development rests, though, on one fundamental assumption: that the technology on which the future is built is safe.

One would have to be a very good advocate to argue that today. The 2016 U.S. election was hacked. Pentagon satellites have been hacked. North Korea’s missile launch program is repeatedly hacked. Film studios are forced to pay ransoms to stop criminals releasing movies before their official launch. Pacemakers are hacked. Cars — both of the human-driven and autonomous variety — are hacked. It is clear that the computer technology we are using today is entirely unsafe.

Fortunes and fates rest on the flimsiest of foundations; even the bluest of blue-chip corporations (and the most deep-pocketed) admit (off the record) that they have been (and continue to be) repeatedly hacked. Our ability to function amid this truth stems from our individual and collective ability to ignore and deny it.

Personally, most of us take comfort in “security through obscurity.” Collectively, most of us take comfort in, “That’s John — or Vivek’s — problem, not mine.” No one and nothing is really safe. If you’re wondering if you’ve been hacked, you probably have been.

As Aaron Levie, CEO of Box, put it, “If you want a job in five years, study computer science. If you want a job for life, study computer security.”

Making our connected homes, buildings, planes, operating theaters, parliaments, bank vaults, classrooms and virtual reality environments safe and secure is the most important (and limitless) job of the future. Something even more urgent — the pandemic-induced rush to get everything online — has created a hacker’s field day. How do we secure it all? Well, start by taking your cybersecurity budget and quadrupling it.

You may think you’re spending a lot of money already, but you’re not. Large banks spend hundreds of millions of dollars on cybersecurity — which sounds good — but in truth, those amounts are typically less than 1% of their entire IT budget (which in turn are typically less than 10% of annual revenues). Given that market capitalizations of hundreds of billions of dollars rest on these foundations, this makes no sense.

Unless you’re long on pigeons and Faraday cages (or your play is simply to have a high-end crisis management firm on retainer) you have no choice but to upgrade your cyber defense. Next step: Ask your local friendly Mossad agent for the contact info of one of the leading Israeli service providers and arrange an after-hours sales call. You’ll be horrified by what they tell you (from an exposure and remedial cost perspective), but a drop of prevention is still worth an ounce of cure. As it is, the future of your work rests on quicksand. You need some graphene rebars pronto. /BP



## THE BOTTOM LINE:

You can’t spend enough on cybersecurity; quadrupling your current number is a start.



# From 4G to 5G



# from

# to



## THE ELEVATOR PITCH:

The latest bandwidth spectrum will be the next phase of the digital revolution.

## The higher the G, the faster the connection.

1G phones let us talk to each other on the move, 2G phones let us send messages, 3G gave us the mobile internet, and 4G made it a whole lot faster. We use 4G networks to stream music, listen to podcasts and watch live TV on the commute home — all unthinkable 10 years ago. Even the simple Facetime app that beams cousin Susan in New Zealand onto your phone? Impossible until the arrival of 4G.

The promise of blazing-fast data transmission speeds 10 times faster than 3G is the reason we addictively watch, tap, poke, pinch or swipe our smartphones as much as we do. Beyond the consumer experience, businesses understand the benefits of 4G. The speed of decision making in the field means much higher rates of productivity across departments, with sales, customer service or logistics citing the financial benefits from always-on connectivity at 4G speeds.

For those who can remember the hiss of a dial-up modem, 4G speeds have been astonishing. But in time, G's 4 through 1 will come to be regarded as quaintly as the Flying Scotsman train was in the middle of the aeronautical age.

## The advent of 5G massively accelerates the data transmission speeds generated from a 4G network.

5G networks will be 10 times faster than today's cable internet, and 100 times faster than our current 4G phones. Imagine streaming your favorite Netflix movie in HD to your phone vs. streaming 400 of your favorite movies in 8K (16 times the resolution of HD) all at the same time. 4G connectivity gave so much, but more is to come.

5G supercharges every action, device or place with zero-lag interactivity. Brace for a wave of innovation as 5G data fuses with machine learning and sparks a world of incredible possibilities. Real-time interactions and synchronous processing will run with no lag whatsoever. The data transmission and its interpretation will happen instantaneously — you won't just see cousin Susan on a screen; you'll be sitting next to her avatar, in a shared virtual home and watch her speak.

Imagine putting on your headset and driving a car, administering medical care or piloting a train as you sit on the other side of the country. You could be a farmer for the 21st century, commandeering a fleet of drones and soaring over the plains of the American Midwest, using sensors on the ground to sort, pick, feed and water every single individual plant. 5G will usher in a revolution in how value is created and how work gets done. /ED



## THE BOTTOM LINE:

Fusing 5G with AI superscales the Internet of Things.



# From Centralized to Decentralized

# from

# to



## THE ELEVATOR PITCH:

In the wake of the internet, new platforms threaten disruption, but decentralization will help the center to hold.

Modern technology gave people, businesses and societies tools for greater centralization and (especially) control.

But centralized anything – whether bureaucracies, governments, planning or governance – is often disjointed at best, and disruptive at worst.

Take the advent of ERP software: It promised to connect “islands of information.” But with the elongated timelines to meet such ambitions, the initiatives tended to fall short of their intended benefits. And breaking that rigid, centralized legacy became tough in the aftermath.

Meanwhile the internet appeared, and sought to decentralize and open *everything*, be it in business, society or government. It’s 2020. Look around. You’ve never been surrounded by more technology. But has it bred optimism – or just “optimization?” How do your co-workers or neighbors – or *you* – feel about it?

At work, LinkedIn became the *de facto* org chart, but it also opened an escape hatch for the departure of great talent. At home, the family reunion’s now on Facebook, but so are Uncle John’s divisive politics. At city hall, Twitter keeps constituents informed of potholes but also blows up into vitriol and corrosive comments.

Nobody – yet – has gotten a handle on how to respond to the speed, intensity and breadth of change spawned by these digital usurpers. When the inability to respond is compromised, resilience is too. And when businesses, societies or individuals aren’t resilient, you get “disruptions” and even outright chaos.

Decentralized expressions of free will, hope and trust are what make liberal democracies – and confidence in commerce – work.

And without them, the digital economy will fall apart.

Amazon, Netflix and Zoom succeed because of their convenience and/or cost-effectiveness. They also eliminate intermediaries. Peer-to-peer platforms like TransferWise for currency exchange, or GitHub for sharing computer code, are following a similar trajectory.

Meanwhile, blockchain may infiltrate the typical Fortune 500 company’s operations – like finance – and eliminate the need for the “middle man.” Entire industries – like banks, brokerage houses, insurers or legal firms – also lay in its path.

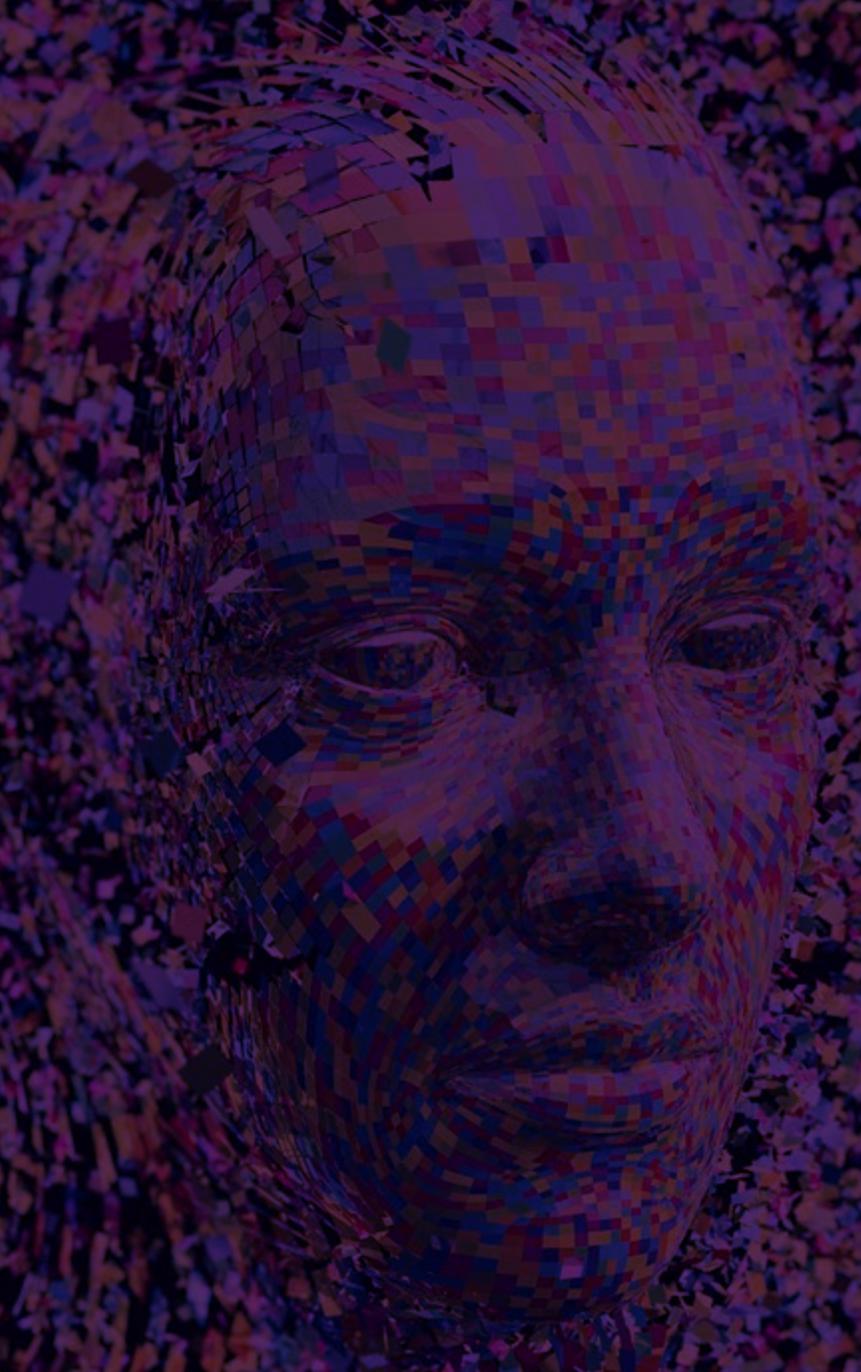
Playing out at massive scale, millions – billions – of times per day, how do you police bad behavior? If the “block” in the “chain” isn’t verified, it’s nullified. Among Gen Z online gamers, transgressors on platforms like Steam get exiled by community-initiated VAC bans that are permanent and non-negotiable. With potentially thousands of dollars in gaming fees at risk, it’s enough to put a damper on any malefactor’s plans to “disrupt.”

As top academics Andy McAfee and Erik Brynjolfsson put it, “Overcentralization would create an economy that is simultaneously Orwellian and Kafkaesque.” Like Newton’s third law, technology is also empowering countervailing innovation and regulation that will render the “middle man/business/government” less relevant. Our future opportunity with decentralized platforms is to keep the best and junk the rest. /RB



## THE BOTTOM LINE:

Decentralization – done right – will be the antidote to the polarizing disruption of the digital age.



# From the Suit to the Hoodie



# from



# to



## THE ELEVATOR PITCH:

The suit no longer fits these disruptive times.

The “office” and the “suit” have gone together like Laurel and Hardy since, well, Laurel and Hardy.

Picture someone sitting at a desk in an office in virtually any part of the modern world, and your mind’s eye goes to a jacket on the back of a chair, a slightly loosened collar and tie, a yellow sticky note — “don’t forget the milk” — placed on the edge of the computer screen.

The suit — from the Latin *sequor* “I follow” — has been ubiquitous for as long as any of us can remember. A serious, somber, professional wears a suit. Can you imagine a senior director at Dawes Tomes Mousley Grubbs Fidelity Fiduciary Bank (*ref* Mary Poppins) not wearing a suit? Impossible. Even David Brent — hardly a serious, somber professional — wears a suit in *The Office*.

Take a random walk down Wall Street (or the financial district of any major capital), and the masters of the universe are wrapped in their Brooks Brothers, their Armani, their Ozwald Boateng. The suit is armor. The suit is a signifier (if you can’t recognize Brioni across a conference table, you can’t be worth knowing), the suit is a symbol that I’m considerably richer/smarter/hipper than you.

The Japanese salary man is the epitome. Squeezed into a too-crowded, too-hot subway carriage for a two-hour commute to a nondescript office building, these workers’ suits represent the high-water mark of allegiance to an ideal of hard work, competence, results, relevance, belonging — *following*.

Except that “exceptional following skills” is the last thing Acme, Inc. is now hiring for.

In these post-digital disruptor days, Acme doesn’t want to be stuffed with suits but with innovators, mavericks and creatives who are building the future of work (even if that work is offering mortgages, *a la* George Banks). Suits are for “suits” or awards shows, as long as they’re matched with Yeezy Boost 700s. Creative, mold-breaking leaders don’t wrap themselves in the conformity of an idea or a drape. The suit no longer fits.

Take a peek inside Goldman Sachs. Sure, you can still spot Tom Ford and his pals Domenico and Stefano (that’s Dolce & Gabbana to you). But the real power is now off to the side of the room, invisible behind a 27-inch Mac, clad in a hoodie. Spending 70 hours (minimum) a week writing Perl in a grey flannel suit does not compute — particularly if you’re now just working from home.

That a DJ (DJ D-Sol) now runs the world’s most powerful financial institution is proof (if proof is needed) that every company is now a technology company, and every company now dresses like a technology company. Or should. Hoodies (the \$3,500 type from Loro Piana, not \$19.99 from Target) rule. **/BP**



## THE BOTTOM LINE:

Software rules the business world, and the suit is collateral damage.

## From the Cubicle to the Couch

# from

# to



### THE ELEVATOR PITCH:

Workers of the world, awake. You have nothing to lose but your cubicles.

As I write this, I'm stretched out on the family room couch, listening to the soaring melodies of Mozart's "Symphony No 24 in B Flat Major."

At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, I would have been accused of loafing. Now, this is just a regular shift at my particularly coalface.

Back in the day, getting to work was a serious matter. We arose early, showered and suited up. We dashed to a city center high-rise or exurban office park via crowded train or bus, or circumnavigated clogged highways and byways in gas-guzzling cars. The maniacal monotony of Monday through Friday commuting and overtime became increasingly expensive, contributed significantly to the depletion of the ozone layer, and took immeasurable years off our lives.

And once we arrived (senior leaders notwithstanding), we took our place among the vast rows of desks and cubes where focusing on work was mentally challenging amid incessantly ringing telephones, clacking computer keyboards and drive-by co-worker tittle-tattle.

The upside was that we were part of a work culture tribe — but one, sadly, where misery loved company. We arrived beat-up and exhausted, wondering why we put ourselves through the death-defying rigmarole of the twice-daily commute to and from home to office.

There had to be a better way, we lemmings woefully noted. Technology could be the tonic — but only if our top managers entrusted us to work differently. Once COVID-19 intervened, #WFH became more than a cute hashtag — it became the only way to work.

Now, #WFH is transitioning to #WFA (work from anywhere), with a laptop, mobile or tablet computer in the coffee shop, the airport lounge, the hotel room, the TV room. Even the office ... with proper social distancing and physical-world hygiene.

And forward-thinking managers don't miss our physical presence — as long as we deliver the goods. The explosion of cloud-based functionality, used properly, makes us more productive than our in-the-office colleagues. In sickness and health, our work tools accompany us — from home office and bedroom to couch (and if it's nice outside, on a lawn chair). Caregivers can remain gainfully employed. Older tech-savvy workers can extend their careers, particularly those with COBOL programming experience whose bit-twiddling skills have come in handy keeping antiquated government and commercial systems up and running.

Collectively, work from home saves money and gives us more time and consciousness to contribute business value. It helps shrink our personal carbon footprints and lessen road congestion.

As the COVID-19 crisis reinforced, remote tools can keep us connected and working productively. But they remain a work in progress as cloud outages and kludgy video connections attest to. Moreover, they can miss or mask our hypercritical paralinguistic cues, hindering effective collaboration. And we still don't know how the march of digital nomads will impact organizational culture and collaboration over the long term.

But veal fattening pens are going the way of the Dodo, and being seen to be stuck in one might mark you as a dodo, too. /AA



### THE BOTTOM LINE:

Just as farms of old emptied out, so will our modern cubicle farms.

# From Glass and Steel to Bricks and Wood



# from

# to



## THE ELEVATOR PITCH:

New ideas come from old buildings.

The Swiss/French modernist architect Le Corbusier proposed an incredible 1925 plan for Paris: Tear down the historic Right Bank and replace it with 18 identical glass towers, all over 650 feet tall and with elevated highways for cars.

Thankfully for Paris, it didn't happen. But looking at The Bund in Shanghai or the stunning audacity of the Burj-Khalifa in Dubai, and they're as close to Le Corbusier's dream as you can get. Glass and steel stretching upwards, outwards, onwards.

Shanghai is the epitome of the modern city, built to impress and signal China's economic resurgence. The once narrow streets lined with shops have been bulldozed for a 10-lane boulevard, stuffed with cars crawling through an incredible forest of glass and steel that snakes out to the horizon. The Bund at night is spellbinding, but these monolithic structures of steel and glass represent the high-water mark of modern globalization — not just China.

Priorities that occupy city planners and building owners everywhere are density and efficiency rather than humanity. They create a playbook for modern cities everywhere. Whether in Shanghai or Dubai, they're constructed the same way, using the same materials and design techniques, with the same CAD software and probably the same clutch of statement architects. There might be a twist or curve here, or an atrium added there, but outside the old historic quarters, our cities look the same.

What counts for cool now isn't glass and steel: It's reclaimed, reconditioned and rejuvenated.

The redevelopment of Hudson's Yard in New York, Granary Square in London's Kings Cross or Station F in Paris — all once derelict — are now abuzz with hipsters hanging out at the independent coffee bars and taking lunch at the latest pop-up eatery. Rather than glass and steel, it's the West's once-derelict factories, rail yards and warehouses, left over from a once proud industrial era, that act as a magnet for the digital in-crowd.

These spaces attract the startups of the 21<sup>st</sup> century like they did the industrial entrepreneurs from before. Western de-industrialization bequeathed scores of empty buildings in cities that once housed manufacturing and heavy industry. The next step in the story is familiar: Regeneration takes hold, the pressure for housing (and profit) rises, and if the former industrial structures don't get knocked down, they're turned into stylized high-end housing, offices and restaurants. The WeWork aesthetic is everywhere, with exposed brick, steel and wood dominating, and an eye for ergonomic design encouraging people to hang around, chill and work.

Our built environment expresses the transformation of work culture and vice-versa. The future sees a reaction against the overwhelming digitization of our lives, with design mores rooted in the past making a comeback — and with them, the desire for makerspaces, workshops and fabrication labs where the cools kids are. /ED



## THE BOTTOM LINE:

To find the future, look for where clicks originate from bricks.



# From Originals to Digit-alls

# from

# to



## THE ELEVATOR PITCH:

The IT industry has never been more important. Now it's breaking in two.

Roughly 20% of the global workforce develops or builds high-technology products and/or services.

But with technology central to almost every aspect of business, society and life itself, the once homogeneous IT “tribe” is breaking in two.

The first tribe — the “Originals” — are those tending to the servers, databases, compiler code and Ethernet cables that make the techno-centric world tick. They are the proverbial nerds, the geeks, the math savants who loom large in the public imagination whenever the phrase “IT” is uttered. Think the “PC guy” in the Apple adverts, think Steve Wozniak, think Bill Gates.

This group provides something we take for granted, like electricity. The only time we pay it (and them) any attention is when it vanishes. Then we grumble, but not that much, because we know it will soon be there again. This is the paradox of success — the better you get, the more invisible you become. And the more anemic your price-to-earnings ratio.

The Originals find this all somewhat confusing. On the one hand, they're glad that geek is suddenly chic. But on the other, they're disappointed that the Cobol seeds they planted turned into Twitter and sexting apps. The Originals are still important. Of course they *matter*; the world wouldn't function without them.

But the new tribe — the “Digit-alls” — matters a lot.

They're the folks writing dating apps, music distribution platforms, accommodation websites, augmented reality filters, e-games and machine learning algorithms.

They're the new masters of the universe, dating the girls who used to date movie stars and rock 'n' rollers. Think Daniel Ek (Spotify), think Brian Chesky (Airbnb), think Evan Spiegel (Snapchat). Meanwhile, the Originals are sinking into the bowels of the IT infrastructure, embedding deeply into the electric utility industry.

The Digit-alls are moving up the food chain, increasingly shaping the *zeitgeist* and, in the process, becoming part of the fashion industry. Thirty years ago, the 4.0s flocked to management consulting; 20 years ago to banking; 10 years ago to private equity. Now, they're all on Route 101 or in ZIP codes 02138 through 02238. To paraphrase Willie Sutton, they're writing code because that's where the money is. The Digit-alls are building the future — of work, of business, of growth, of society, of human beings. The Digit-alls are doing stuff that has never been more important; you know the riff — IT used to support the business ... now, IT is the business. The Digit-alls tribe is taking over everywhere and everything. **/BP**



## THE BOTTOM LINE:

The Originals will be with us until all the world's infrastructural workloads are automated. The Digit-alls will be with us until they go out of fashion.



# From Free WiFi to WiFi Free



# from



# to



## THE ELEVATOR PITCH:

WiFi-free spaces restore calm and sanity to our addled brains.

A mere few years ago, the first thing we looked for as we walked into a café or a bar or a hotel was the “Free WiFi” sign.

Now, we no longer look because we know it’s there.

We are surrounded by WiFi. Trillions and trillions of data bits fly around our heads as we calmly hook up to the internet, input a code, click and connect, anywhere and everywhere we go. Who needs an office or a movie theater? We can work or relax where we are, rather than where we used to be trying to get to.

The explosive growth of work café culture and the rise of the digital nomad all correlate to ubiquitous free WiFi. Silent people, headphones in, laptops open, beaver away, all free from the annoying distractions of the noisy office. Kids nearby in strollers, glued to *Dora the Explorer* while their parents scroll through bottomless oceans of Instagram pictures or email.

Free WiFi is a marvel, bringing us instantly into our digital environment precisely where we last left off, and never leaving us forlorn and alone in the real world.

But this very ubiquity is now starting to drive us mad.

24x7, heads-down connectivity (for working or playing) is sucking the life out of us and creating a digital panopticon — uncontrollable and inescapable. Humans are beginning to recognize the need to detox, free from the never-ending digital distraction of modern life. Some of us now opt for a digital sabbath to give our addled brains a break from the constant distraction of texts, requests and funny memes or the sheer horror from the MailOnline or *Washington Post* comments page.

Many places are now experimenting with WiFi-free zones to enrich the customer experience. Amsterdam’s Rijksmuseum actively discourages visitors from using their phones and cameras, and encourages them to sketch the artwork they’re gazing upon (with free pen and paper) rather than sharing selfies on Instagram or Snapchat. Self-locking Yondr bags are given out at concerts to break the temptation of watching a live event through a screen. It might sound Pollyanna, but more WiFi-free zones will emerge to restore our concentration levels and calm our hectic lives.

So, walk into the workplace of the future, and check your device at the door. The mindless talk about what to have for dinner and the endless Whatsapp chirps would disappear. The move could spark a post-pandemic “back to the office” movement, restoring workplace concentration to 2010 levels before they were shot to pieces by the barrage of app notifications. Go further, and perhaps we can imagine WiFi-free cafes, streets, towns and even cities. “Come to the beautiful Guatemala City, proudly WiFi-free forever, where you can be sure to relax thoroughly. That’s our Guatemalan promise to you.” /ED



## THE BOTTOM LINE:

WiFi is like whiskey. Too much of a good thing is a bad thing.

# From Privacy Is Dead to Long Live Privacy



# from

# to



## THE ELEVATOR PITCH:

Big tech is in the crosshairs as the clamor for privacy grows.

Subscribing to newsfeeds and doing online quizzes shines a light on the hidden corners of our personalities.

The simple act of loading a webpage generates information about us, and the result paints a sophisticated picture of what makes us tick. Cameras scan the crowds at football matches, and facial recognition technologies pick out the trouble-makers and predict the hotspots where police need to be deployed.

Amazon, Facebook, Google, Netflix, Instagram, etc. know more about our lives and our nearest and dearest than we do — and we let them. Our *Code Halos* (as we describe it) — or *behavioral surplus* (as Harvard Business School's Shoshana Zuboff describes it) — have been the wellspring of some of the greatest fortunes ever known to humankind.

This model has been at the core of the internet's explosion (so far) because we happily hand over our likes, swipes and thumbs-ups in exchange for free stuff — email, music (with ads) and content tuned exquisitely to our tastes. It's our data (so we're told), and as long as it's free, well, no need to dive too deeply into how and why it's free.

The demise of privacy has been a gradually, gradually, suddenly thing, and we've been following the advice of Sun Microsystems cofounder Scott McNealy: getting used to our zero privacy. Short of deciding to live "off-grid" on a remote Scottish island without the accoutrements of Western living (smartphones, Netflix, ATMs, UberEats), we've come to accept there's no way that we, as individuals, can prevent marketers, governments or malicious actors from knowing who we are.

But now, the wheel is turning, and people are beginning to question (if not yet reject) the data free-for-all.

The clarion call for more digital privacy gets louder and louder as proof grows about the downsides of *surveillance capitalism* (Zuboff again). People don't want ads following them around the web; they don't want their data exposed in a breach or to experience some form of identity theft. Yes, they'll hand it over *in extremis* (COVID), but they want it back. And they certainly don't want their data to propagate misinformation, discrimination and polarization.

New movements are gaining traction, with the growing realization that something has gone wrong with the free-wheeling sharing of data. None other than Tim Berners-Lee, inventor of the World Wide Web, now believes that the web needs to change the world *again*. He's launched "Solid" (Social Linked Data) to radically change the way web applications work, returning privacy and control to the user.

This is a positive step. Consumers don't necessarily feel they have anything to hide — but they don't want corporations excessively profiting from their personal information, or being unfairly treated through misuse of that information. Now, politicians are gearing up to take the fight back to the data barons.

The French data protection authority has imposed record-breaking fines on Google for failing to abide by regulatory requirements for transparent, adequate and accessible information concerning data consent. Other countries are stepping up to follow the UK's lead in charting and codifying the ethics surrounding the use of personal data for profitable gain. Ultimately, users are slowly waking up to the Faustian bargain they unknowingly struck a decade or two ago. A great reckoning awaits, for us *and* our digital overlords. /ED



## THE BOTTOM LINE:

Privacy's not dead. It's just resting.



# From Mind Your Language to Speak Your Mind

# from



## THE ELEVATOR PITCH:

We're cutting  
the pleasantries.  
Prepare to clutch  
your pearls.

You enroll in the requisite Business Communications 101 course to refine your writing for the workplace, debate the merits of the Oxford comma, memorize Strunk & White's *The Elements of Style*.

You even match the tone of your resume to that of the company website, picking up on corporate jargon along the way. All to prepare yourself for rubbing elbows with the *literati* and working professional class. The preparation and attention to detail lends an air of credibility to your *bona fides* and maintains a tone of seriousness in the workplace.

Such strict adherence to proper linguistic conventions in business has historically formed a proverbial moat to keep out the uninitiated. Minding your language has long been a way to cross that moat. The formal, staid communication protocol bleeds into the rest of the work day – formulaic, predictable, consistent, uniform. And what could be more important than uniformity with the team culture? Rocking the boat puts you at risk for reprimand or ostracism.

Speaking through a filter, diminishing your eccentricities and hiding your quirks for one-third of your waking hours can wear down even the most loyal company man or woman. But for the sake of social graces and decorum (and a paycheck), we have typically learned to just grin and bear it. Cover the tats, mind your language, pay your dues. That's the formula, traditionally, for career advancement in the corporate world.

# to

LMAOOO WTF happened?! 🤔

Now we are awash in a sea of emojis, abbreviations and GIFs that convey breadth of emotion and thought with far greater nuance and lightness than the King's English could ever come close to replicating. And who could possibly keep up the charade after their third Zoom call of the day, working from the couch in pajamas? While traditionalists wring their hands and gnash their teeth over the diminishing seriousness of workplace communication, the shift leads to employees who more comfortably express their viewpoints and ideas. This process enables greater diversity of thought in ideation sessions and drives innovation. Communicating in more natural language requires less effort so people can focus more energy on solving relevant problems at work.

This transition to authentic and transparent communication styles at the office gives a sense of ownership to the urgent work at hand and purpose behind the tasks of the day. The chief planning officer will harness that energy to galvanize organizations and the public at large around mission-driven work. Coworkers and consumers alike expect you to take a stand. Whether it be a stand for ethics in AI, equal pay or data privacy, the challenger mindset is the ethos of the era.

Empty promises and pleasantries are a thing of the past. With so many voices vying for attention, heartfelt communication cuts through the clutter. The rules of rhetoric are being re-written. Let your inner maverick flourish because speaking your mind is more valued than ever. /DD

OMG!

## THE BOTTOM LINE:

With our stoked  
appetite for  
authenticity, dry  
dialog is done.

## From Career to Careers



# from to



### THE ELEVATOR PITCH:

A one-career mindset is becoming a liability.

“I have over 20 years of proven experience as a banker.”

This is the kind of sparkling resume headline that gets recruiters’ attention and hopefully results in a job interview. Starting in childhood, people grow up dreaming of their ideal job and set out to pursue it until they retire. As they acquire the needed skills and gain more experience and tenure in their various organizations, they move up the ladder, getting promotions and making more money. Finally, after several decades and a nice watch “in appreciation of 40 years of service,” they ride off into retirement to live a peaceful life.

This mentality has been the norm in social and business circles for decades because jumping careers meant having to start again at the bottom of a new ladder — tough for a middle-aged person with a family’s spending needs burning a hole in their pocket. The logic led to the one-career long haul.

The rise of automation and AI is set to make the traditional linear model of education-employment-career inadequate.

As these trends invade our working lives, many individuals will need to adapt to changing work tasks or switch to new occupations entirely and point themselves in multiple career directions. These days, skills have become like mobile apps that need frequent upgrades, making multiple careers (rather than just jobs) the norm for a 60-year span of labor.

A generation ago, management thinker Charles Handy wrote of the “empty raincoat,” a symbol of the drudgery many people feel climbing a career ladder, unable to jump to a more purposeful direction. Soon we’ll see CEOs leave the corner office to teach high school. (Lucy Kellaway, ex of the *Financial Times*, is evangelizing this path currently in the UK.) Imagine an accountant who is also both a drone operator and a ski instructor.

While automation will take away some job possibilities, many more new jobs and careers have yet to be created (who’s game for becoming a flying car developer?) that will provide tremendous opportunity for workers to create a diverse portfolio of careers and roles.

The new world of work demands that our roles be continually augmented. To get the most out of their careers, people are now exploring new ways to broaden their horizons by increasingly making use of sabbaticals, secondments and educational time-outs. Today’s career path options seem so endless that one day even our grandchildren will laugh at the idea of spending their entire work life in just one career. **/MB**



### THE BOTTOM LINE:

There’s more than one way to be successful — it just might take a few careers to make it happen.

# From Green Is Red to Green Is Green



## THE ELEVATOR PITCH:

Capitalist, meet Conservationist. You're going to get along just fine.

## Renewable energy. Recycling. Public transit.

These are just a few of the known levers to mitigate the danger posed by climate change. We know their benefits. We feel good using them. So, why haven't these approaches taken off?

In a dollar-driven world, these solutions simply don't make sense. There are cheaper or more convenient alternatives. This paradigm is especially critical in emerging economies. After decades of polluting policies drove activity in developed economies, emerging economy nation-states can't afford to play by industrialization's new rules. Ethical waste disposal, responsible emissions reductions and sustainable sourcing of raw materials challenge the budget for businesses everywhere.

The inertia of acting sustainably is so strong that forward-thinking investors are already funding businesses that benefit from the calamity of climate change, like designers of flood walls for rising sea levels and desalination technology for drought-ravaged regions.

The cost of sustainable practices is a burden to companies and consumers alike. The emissions-friendly switch to public transit comes at a significant price of lost time for commuters in most cities. And the electric vehicles that reduce carbon footprints are still priced beyond the range of most municipal budgets. Environmentally-safe consumer goods cost more and are more difficult to find in stores. Living green for the sake of tomorrow puts us in the red today.

# to

## Thankfully, new technologies and shifting public sentiment on sustainability are making green business initiatives more attainable than before.

The rise of conscious capitalism shifts the narrative from strictly a profit and loss discussion to one that considers the broader global community as key stakeholders in large corporations.

The jobs popping up in the sector also bring value to all stakeholders while putting dollars in the pockets of individuals. Carbon farmers use technology to help corporations turn their emissions into useful carbon inputs for ecosystems. Solar panel installation has become one of the fastest growing blue-collar jobs in recent years. And as the cost of solar energy continues to fall, entirely new business models arise for the utilities industry. Capturing the value of the most powerful known energy source poses significant opportunities and challenges.

Entire business models now exist around recycling, and the resulting products are items that consumers already clamor for. Adidas has developed a shoe made entirely from recovered plastic sea waste. Waste collectors in Seoul, South Korea, convert food waste into biogas for additional revenue.

The desire to reduce emissions also drives innovations that are not as readily aligned with sustainable business practices. Plant-based protein proprietors see health as a top consideration, but their products also aim to cut back on the significant carbon footprint of the traditional animal farming industry. The value of recycling and green business initiatives has moved beyond the \$0.05 or \$0.10 per bottle saved and advanced into a full-on economic driver. /DD



## THE BOTTOM LINE:

Sustainability is finally making sense (and dollars).

# From Mass-Produced to Me-Produced



# from

# to



## THE ELEVATOR PITCH:

Rapid prototyping and short-run production paves the way to personalized, print-it-yourself products.

One of the first recorded uses of school uniforms in England was 1222.

Uniforms indicate participation in a system, organization or institution: retail workers, police officers, armed forces, medical staff. They can also denote a hierarchy; managers wear a collared shirt instead of a T-shirt, a general's insignia shines brighter than an officer's, even older school kids find ways of customizing their uniform to show the young who's boss.

But hang on a second. Is anyone *not* wearing a uniform? Aren't a person's age, status, income and even political views made clear by their clothing? While our High Street clothes have been designed by the Dior's, McQueen's and Balenciaga's of the world, they're still mass-produced.

Except for the few who make their own clothes or have the luxury of a personal tailor, we march to work, to the shops, to the party, wearing the same clothes — the same uniform — as the next follower.

Now, recent trends are indicating a shelving of the uniform once and for all.

We want uber-personalized, one-of-a-kind, perfectly tailored clothing that also fits with our budget needs.

Nike has famously started using 3-D printing for customized sport shoes. Adidas customers can take a picture via an app and have their body measurements taken and the data sent to the nearest Sewbot (a mixture of AI, robotics and 3-D printing), which will create the item of clothing to fit perfectly. No more ordering three versions of the same item to test the size and sending two back. Returns will diminish as will the extended supply chain, which COVID-19 has shown to be wanting.

The hope for a more environmentally sustainable model of clothing and footwear production is fast becoming a reality. Shoetopia, a project similar to the Adidas model, allows consumers to take pictures via an app and have shoes custom-made in a local digital fabrication center. The shoes are even biodegradable.

The next step is to bring these production centers into our own homes, with personal 3-D printers, eradicating the need to don the mask and risk bumping into other shoppers. Imagine a 3-D food printer in the kitchen, a clothing printer in the walk-in wardrobe and a toy printer in the kids' playroom.

Forgot about that upcoming birthday party? Print a gift yourself. Can't find the right shade of foundation to match your skin tone? Print it yourself. Forgot your sports socks at the gym? Print them on your portable 3-D printer in the locker room. Never again will we be without our very own just-for-me, ready-to-wear, purpose-fit goods. /CS



## THE BOTTOM LINE:

Print-it-yourself is the eco-friendly future of manufacturing and retail.

## From Retired to ‘Re-Tired’



# from

# to



### THE ELEVATOR PITCH:

The age of 65 used to be work’s finish line. Now we need to go a few extra laps.

For the last century, the arc of a working life has been pretty clear.

Go to school, get on a career ladder, knuckle down for 40 years, relax for a decade or so, and then die. Most of us have worked to live rather than lived to work, hoping to save enough to enjoy our sunset years and reward ourselves for the long years of work.

For millions of people, this model worked pretty well. Rising stock markets and house price inflation created a wealth explosion that the “greatest generation” was all too happy to enjoy — until the pandemic hit. Then, travel bans, volatile equity markets and declining commercial real estate valuations brought the party to a sad and sudden end.

Despite the COVID-19 crisis — thanks in part to major medical advancements — we are living longer, and the century mark is well within the grasp of people with good genes (not to mention immune systems), good luck and healthy lifestyles. Now retirement, a phase of life that used to last 10 or 15 years starting in the early- to mid-60s age range, stretches out ahead for 30 or 40, with a later induction age. If we quit work in our 60s, have we saved enough money to last us that long?

For many people, the answer is no.

The cost of living — housing, healthcare, insurance, leisure activities, food — has soared, leaving our already fragile nest eggs in danger of cracking before their expiration date. If there ever was an existential challenge (beyond COVID-19), this is it. Live long enough to live forever, says Ray Kurzweil. Sure, but how am I going to afford it?

Fortunately, the rise of the gig economy and work-from-home/anywhere opportunities offer a potential lifeline. With flexible work setups that suit shorter term projects, occasional hours or ones requiring specific skills, we never need to fully retire, or we can un-retire as circumstances dictate. Gigs can put food on the table as long as we can keep in the game.

“Re-tired,” we can seize the types of work opportunities that are blossoming across the gig economy. Platforms such as Upwork (for writing, accounting, design and other such services), Guru (for IT and engineering skills) and Amazon’s Mechanical Turk (for expert business skills) all offer the post-65 crowd a way to keep the money coming in.

With unemployment figures from conventional roles rising, the expanding talent cloud that powers the gig economy shows no sign of drying up. And as global business declines, gig workers provide workplace scalability and flexibility regardless of how fast or slow the economy tumbles.

The golden age of retirement —1950 to 2000 — is over, pandemic or not; defined benefit pensions are a thing of the past. We can lament that, but we have to deal with the facts. Solutions have emerged, just in time. /AA



### THE BOTTOM LINE:

The gig isn’t up when retirement dawns.

## From CEO to She-EO



# from



# to



### THE ELEVATOR PITCH:

By the time I become a CEO of a huge public company, maybe it won't hit the headlines.

I went to the same all-girls school in the remote English countryside as my mother.

When she left in 1981, less than 10% of her class went to university. When I left in 2011, 95% of my class did. There, the student population was 52% female, 48% male. When I graduated, I didn't consider the fact that I was applying for the same jobs as men. I'd been raised and educated to believe that men and women were equal.

Then I started work, and reality set in.

The working world was built by, and for, men. As an extroverted, passionate and self-deprecating female, I do not fit in. I've had to learn to be more serious, less emotional and more arrogant in order to succeed. "Professionalism," it turns out, is inherently masculine.

To make it even more difficult, I chose to work in tech. The average percentage of women in the top 10 tech companies is 36%. The percentage of women in actual tech jobs in these companies is 23%. Far from parity.

This industry was built from scratch in the last few decades and has proved to be the most transformative for humanity, period. But it was also built by men and is still led by men. Every corner of the tech industry is littered with gender inequality — from the biased products we build, to the salaries we're paid and the STEM educations we receive. How did we let this happen?

So, what can I aspire to over the next 40 years of my career? What does success look like for me?

Maybe I'll become a female founder or a "She-EO." Who should I look up to on this journey? The 25% of senior leaders who are female? The 4% of She-EOs in FTSE 500 companies?

Here's what I want out of my career. I want to be paid the same as my male colleagues who have the same responsibilities and produce the same work. I never again want to attend a conference and have someone tell me I look hot. I want it to be normal for my co-parent to take the same amount of parental leave. I shouldn't be expected to work like I don't have children and to raise my children as if I don't work.

I don't want it to stop there. 2020 should not be the year that equality took a back seat just because a different crisis hit.

When my daughter enters the workforce, I want her to be allowed to be herself. I want her to have loads of powerful women in leadership roles who she can aspire to. I want her jaw to drop when I tell her stories about being a woman at work in 2019. In the same way that my jaw dropped when my mother told me that maternity leave was called disability leave when I was born.

In short, I want it all. Give me one *good* reason I shouldn't. /CS



### THE BOTTOM LINE:

Work is still a man's world. Enough already.



# From Diversity to Belonging



# from



# to



## THE ELEVATOR PITCH:

The token approach to diversity has run its course.

Diversity and inclusion. It's top of mind. It's tip of the tongue.

Every university touts its diverse student body on admission brochures and social media posts. Every Fortune 500 company promotes the inclusive policies and procedures meant to increase the diversity of its workforce. And with good reason. The world is growing ever more diverse.

Minority populations and women want to see themselves represented in the messaging of their favorite brands. And the organizations that hire more diverse teams have been shown to be more profitable than non-diverse organizations. But much of that value slips right through the cracks. Underrepresented minorities are 3.5 times more likely to quit than their colleagues in the majority, taking with them all the business value gains of diverse teams.

Affirmative action and Title IX launched modern efforts on diversity — and all the criticism that comes with it. Complaints of quotas or hypothetical “lowering the bar” for underrepresented candidates are the most common refrains. Despite a great deal of wailing and gnashing of teeth over diversity in recent years, not much has changed. “Manels” (panels composed entirely of men) are a mainstay of professional conferences. Black and Latinx workers combined represent less than 7% of the tech workforce in Silicon Valley. We’ve tried diversity and inclusion, but it hasn’t worked.

For lasting results, our efforts must aim higher. What good is an invite to the party if you’re not asked to dance, and the bouncers glare at you the whole time?

Unfortunately, workplace dynamics for women and underrepresented communities can often feel like a snobby club.

All the hype and excitement to be there never lives up to legend, and you’re left feeling like you wasted your time and talent. As a result of that dynamic, fatigue has set in. People are tired of talking about diversity and seeing no meaningful progress on the subject.

The diverse workforce isn’t enough. Lack of diversity at the executive level is the first indicator that underrepresented talent groups will not be taken seriously for advancement or given the types of assignments that groom them for growth. Organizations must strive to instill a culture of belonging among all members.

Belonging is that sense that you can bring your authentic self to work — that feeling of comfort in contributing your opinion and individual perspective, even if it doesn’t tightly hew to the established cultural norms of the organization. We are wired at our most primal levels to seek this state. Research shows that fostering a strong sense of belonging for underrepresented team members reduces their stress levels and improves performance.

So while so many businesses continue to flounder in diversity efforts, leaders can take the next step by establishing programs for diversity, inclusion *and* belonging among the workforce. /DD



## THE BOTTOM LINE:

No matter the demographics, we all long to belong.

Ideas to take you from  
“um” to “om”

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> “The Work Ahead: Mastering the Digital Economy,” Cognizant, 2016, [www.cognizant.com/whitepapers/the-work-ahead-mastering-the-digital-economy-codex2115.pdf](http://www.cognizant.com/whitepapers/the-work-ahead-mastering-the-digital-economy-codex2115.pdf).
- <sup>2</sup> Malcolm Frank, Paul Roehrig and Ben Pring, *What To Do When Machines Do Everything*, Wiley, 2017, [www.amazon.com/What-When-Machines-Everything-Algorithms/dp/111927866X](http://www.amazon.com/What-When-Machines-Everything-Algorithms/dp/111927866X).

# About the Authors



## Ben Pring

Vice President, Head of Thought Leadership and Managing Director of Cognizant's Center for the Future of Work

Ben Pring is the Head of Thought Leadership at Cognizant, and co-founded and leads Cognizant's Center for the Future of Work. He is a co-author of the best-selling and award-winning books *What To*

*Do When Machines Do Everything* (2017) and *Code Halos; How the Digital Lives of People, Things, and Organizations are Changing the Rules of Business* (2014). His latest book, *Monster: Taming the Machines that Rule Our Lives, Jobs, and Future*, will be out in late 2020.

Ben sits on the advisory board of the Labor and Work Life program at Harvard Law School. In 2018, he was a Bilderberg Meeting participant.

Ben joined Cognizant in 2011 from Gartner, where he spent 15 years researching and advising on areas such as cloud computing and global sourcing. In 2007, he won Gartner's prestigious Thought Leader Award. Prior to Gartner, Ben worked for a number of consulting companies, including Coopers and Lybrand.

Ben's expertise in helping clients see around corners, think the unthinkable and calculate the compound annual growth rate of unintended consequences has made him an internationally recognized authority on leading-edge technology and its intersection with business and society. His work has been featured in *The Wall Street Journal*, *Financial Times*, *The London Times*, *Forbes*, *Fortune*, *MIT Technology Review*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *Quartz, Inc.*, *Axios*, *The Australian* and *The Economic Times*.

Based near Boston since 2000, Ben graduated with a degree in philosophy from Manchester University in the UK, where he grew up.

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## Alan Alper

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In his role as a corporate Vice President, Alan Alper is responsible for much of Cognizant's thought leadership, globally. This includes white papers, case studies, blogs, short-form content that appears in the Latest Thinking section of [cognizant.com](https://www.cognizant.com) (and Digital Perspectives app), videos, podcasts, live-streaming video webinars and specialty publications, such as

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Previously, Alan was the online editor of *Managing Automation* magazine and served as editorial director at Gomez, Inc., an internet performance monitoring/benchmarking/advisory services firm based in Waltham, MA. Prior to this, he was news and features editor at *Computerworld*. He also was on the founding team at *Computer Industry Daily*, the information technology industry's first online daily publication, launched by Ziff Davis under the tutelage of industry "gadfly" (now venture capitalist), Esther Dyson.

His freelance articles have appeared in *Datacommunications*, *Datamation* and *Venture* magazines, as well as *The Improper Bostonian*. Alan cut his teeth in the daily newspaper business at the *Albany Times-Union* and *Saratogian*, and served as news editor at *The Wyckoff News*, a weekly newspaper in Wyckoff, N.J.. After finishing college, Alan interned for Jack Anderson, the world-renowned columnist.

He earned his bachelor's degree in rhetoric and communications (minoring in journalism) at the State University of New York at Albany.

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Robert Hoyle Brown is a Vice President in Cognizant's Center for the Future of Work. Since joining Cognizant in 2014, he has specialized on the topics of robotics, automation and augmented reality and their impact on business processes. He has worked extensively with the Cognizant Digital Operations

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Prior to joining Cognizant, he was Managing Vice President of the Business and Applications Services team at Gartner, and as a research analyst, he was a recognized subject matter expert in BPO. He also held roles at Hewlett-Packard and G2 Research, a boutique outsourcing research firm in Silicon Valley. He holds a bachelor's degree from the University of California at Berkeley and, prior to his graduation, attended the London School of Economics as a Hansard Scholar.

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Euan Davis leads Cognizant's Center for the Future of Work in EMEA. A respected speaker and thinker, Euan has guided many Fortune 500 companies into the future of work with his thought-provoking research and advisory skills. Within Cognizant's Center for the Future of Work, he helps ensure that

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Manish Bahl is a Cognizant Associate Vice President who leads the company's Center for the Future of Work in Asia-Pacific. A respected speaker and thinker, Manish has guided many Fortune 500 companies into the future of their business with his thought-provoking research and advisory skills. Within Cognizant's Center for the Future of

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Michael Cook is a Senior Manager in Cognizant's Center for the Future of Work in EMEA. In this role, Mike identifies the changing dynamics that will shape the business ecosystem of the future, delivering original research and analysis of work trends in Europe. Mike also collaborates with a wide range of

technology thinkers and academics about what the future of work will look like as digital changes many aspects of our working lives. Mike is an established speaker with broad experience across the services market, including customer experience management, buy-side advisory, talent and workforce solutions, and cybersecurity.

Prior to joining Cognizant, Mike served as Global Research Director with HfS Research, where he worked across multiple research topics and led HfS's buy-side focused research program. Mike earned his bachelor's of economics and econometrics and postgraduate qualification of international trade and development from the University of Johannesburg.

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Caroline Styr is a Research Analyst in Cognizant's Center for the Future of Work in Europe. In this role, she develops thought leadership to challenge perceptions of the future of work. Above all, she is dedicated to demystifying what the individual needs to succeed in the modern organization.

Prior to joining the CFoW, Caroline was part of Cognizant Consulting, working in international digital services and transformation across the retail and healthcare industries. She has a bachelor of arts degree (Hons.) in German from the University of Bristol, alongside which she certified in theatre and performance at Bristol Acting Academy.

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Desmond Dickerson is a Manager within Cognizant's Center for the Future of Work. Leveraging his experience in digital transformation and marketing, Desmond consults with clients on optimizing digital strategies that prioritize user experience and engagement. His research with the CFoW focuses on

the human impact of decisions related to technology development and deployment. He has an MBA (data analytics) from Georgia Institute of Technology, and an undergraduate degree in marketing from Georgia State University.

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### About the Center for the Future of Work

Cognizant's Center for the Future of Work™ is chartered to examine how work is changing, and will change, in response to the emergence of new technologies, new business practices and new workers. The Center provides original research and analysis of work trends and dynamics, and collaborates with a wide range of business, technology and academic thinkers about what the future of work will look like as technology changes so many aspects of our working lives. For more information, visit [www.cognizant.com/futureofwork](http://www.cognizant.com/futureofwork), or contact Ben Pring, Cognizant VP and Managing Director of the Center for the Future of Work, at [Benjamin.Pring@cognizant.com](mailto:Benjamin.Pring@cognizant.com).

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### About Cognizant

Cognizant (Nasdaq-100: CTSI) is one of the world's leading professional services companies, transforming clients' business, operating and technology models for the digital era. Our unique industry-based, consultative approach helps clients envision, build and run more innovative and efficient businesses. Headquartered in the U.S., Cognizant is ranked 194 on the Fortune 500 and is consistently listed among the most admired companies in the world. Learn how Cognizant helps clients lead with digital at [www.cognizant.com](http://www.cognizant.com) or follow us [@Cognizant](https://twitter.com/Cognizant).

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