Welcome to Remotopia
An Emerging (Work) Place of the Future
How Did We Get Here?
Plunged head-first by the pandemic into a future of work few had prepared for
But the novel coronavirus pandemic has forced a global rethink of where work happens. Overnight, working from home has become a sudden necessity for vast numbers of employees who’d never done so before. Before the pandemic, many digital tools for remote work existed; we just weren’t trying them.

Now, though, the virus has vaporized work-from-home falsehoods about “tele-shirking” or beliefs that certain work could never be done remotely.

Where once working from home was a privilege for the few, it’s suddenly become a necessity for many. Everything that can move online, must move online. With #WFH now firmly established, it would be foolhardy to assume we’ll ever go back to the old ways of working.

Remotopia will have important, lasting significance as a place where we’re empowered with networks and platforms to connect, create and accomplish. It’s a place where we can self-isolate and still stay connected with the entire world.

Nobody imagined the remote work revolution arriving quite like this...
We've been well on the road to Remotopia ever since digital tools and techniques began transforming how we live, shop and play.

In the early 1990's, before the Internet was even widely used, French economist Jacques Attali predicted a future in which rich elites would embrace a nomadic lifestyle, traveling the world for work opportunities.

Thankfully, the prediction extends beyond the rich. The archetypes of Remotopia are the young tech workers “crushing it” on a project for a few weeks in exotic locales, and then retreating to the nearest Instagrammable ecosanctuary to decompress. Imagine 21st century hunter-gatherers, armed with iPads and helipads.

But Remotopia isn’t found just on the beaches of Bali or Phuket. It’s also happening in small towns, where life moves slower and earnings stretch further, and in bustling cosmopolitan cities, where there’s no need for a draining daily commute.

No matter the lifestyle, people all over the globe are finding ways to make remote work fit their needs, both professionally and personally.

Organizations must learn to keep pace if they are to reap the benefits of a more engaged and agile global workforce. A growing number of workers won’t have it any other way.
Welcome to Remotopia, the most productive place on the planet. Represented by both every place and no place at all. The term draws from the Latin root, Remotus (removed or far apart) and Greek word, Topos (place). It’s not to be confused with the lauded Utopia nor the loathed Dystopia. Challenges and triumphs both take residence in Remotopia.

Any “remote place” is relative. Thus organizations and individuals must continuously update their understanding of Remotopia as a dynamic concept as opposed to a static location. In sickness and in health, in horrendous or gorgeous weather, work tools will accompany Remotopians from their home office and bedroom to their couch (and if it’s nice outside, to their lawn chair).

Because of the coronavirus, a more focused picture of what Remotopia looks like is coming into view. Caregivers will remain gainfully employed. Older workers will extend their careers from the comforts of home.

It’s not difficult to imagine homes of the future being built – or retrofitted – with dedicated home offices: routers in the right place, soundproofing, and flattering lighting for video conferences. Perhaps we’ll even see advanced child locks to keep them out of the office for those all too important calls.
Seeing the Light
How your organization benefits from remote working
Simply put, remote working makes all parties involved more agile. This agility is noted in the many benefits that remote workers cite for preferring it to traditional work arrangements.

For some, it comes in the form of greater time flexibility. By eliminating the daily commute, they can spend more time with family, and the reduction in miles driven helps decrease their carbon footprint.

Others enjoy being able to travel the world without putting their career on hold. Daily explorations bring new experiences and insights that keep them fresh and motivated to do their best work.

Additionally, remote working allows many more people to enter the workforce. Those suffering from chronic conditions or disabilities can remain productive without the challenges of traveling to and navigating a far-off workplace.

While these benefits improve the lives of workers, their employers also benefit from remote work policies.
Cutting costs

Cost savings for workers and employers: Remote work arrangements can save employers up to $11,000 per employee. Workers stand to save $7,000 by lowering wardrobe, transportation and childcare costs. Taking millions of commuters off the road significantly reduces greenhouse gases.

Winning talent

Attracting and retaining talent: Remote work has become so attractive that 80% of workers said they’d turn down a job that didn’t offer it. Companies that already offer remote work arrangements decrease employee attrition rates by 50%. Catering to digital nomads will be essential in the future fight for talent.

Proving productive

More present, more productive: Despite less direct oversight (or perhaps because of it), remote workers have been found to be 13% more productive than their counterparts at the office, and they also take fewer sick days. The time gained from eliminating a commute allows workers to be more present with their family and community outside of work.
The Human Touch
Maintaining connection on an island of isolation
Thankfully, new collaboration platforms are emerging like Krisp (bye, background noise!), Muzzle (bye, embarrassing screen pop-ups!), Trello (way better virtual team huddles) and Betterworks (for frictionless, distraction-free remote team collaboration).

Data convincingly shows people working from home are happier and more productive. Companies lagging behind on work-from-home capabilities risk losing the talent acquisition arms race (i.e., Yahoo!’s botched remote non-policy of, “If I can’t see you, I can’t control you”).

**What about isolation and loneliness?** With the blending of the “first place” (home) and “second place” (work), the need for a “third place,” is essential: anchors like coffee shops, libraries and bars.

---

**The lack of a centralized workplace presents new challenges.**

Gone are the opportunities to fraternize around the watercooler or see the nuances of facial expressions and vocal inflections.
Third places are critical to society, since they foster opportunities for empathetic and creative connections.

Offices won't die out completely. But the notion of spending 40, 50, 70 hours there a week will. The co-working spaces that have sprouted up in recent years serve as a model for how work culture and HR practices can accommodate the workforce they’re courting. That is, workers should be able to leave the proverbial nest when it suits them but always feel welcomed back when they return to HQ for in-person engagements.

What was once the province of the minority will be an enduring – and amazing – place where the future of work happens for the majority. Workers of the world, awaken; you have nothing to lose but your cubicles.

**What is your favorite remote workplace?**

- Cafe or Restaurant
- Library
- Nature (park, beach, etc.)
- Transit (bus, train, airplane)
- Home

SEE RESULTS
Empty farms – Just as the farm was supplanted by the office in the 1900s, today’s cubicle farms must confront the existential fate of their agricultural equivalents. Most tasks performed in offices can be done remotely. As a result, entire swaths of urban geography need to be reimagined for the future of work.

Great good places – Social interactions can get lost with remote working. Whether it’s libraries, coffee shops or pubs, a proliferation of “great good places,” as sociologist Ray Oldenburg dubbed them, are an absolute must to foster thriving public discourse, vitality and cohesion.

The nest – For most people, work is a combination of solo activities and team-based projects. A hybrid approach of two or three days of teleworking provides a needed balance. Consider workplaces of the future to be akin to “nests,” where nomadic workers can return and feel welcomed.

From the cubicle to the couch – While remote work remains far from a mainstream occurrence, Remotopia is, by every indication, the future of work. Leaders that embrace it now have more time to perfect the implementation of remote work and all the competitive advantages that go along with it.
Beyond #WFH
Digital nomads and the future of work
While the majority of Remotopians do their work from home, the most conspicuous of them log their hours while jet-setting across the globe. These digital nomads have mastered the art of seeing the world without pausing their careers. And while they do so, they are changing work as we know it.

Digital nomads typically work in creative or IT functions as freelancers or contract workers. But they present a compelling case for regular inclusion in the corporate workforce. These workers are highly talented and have firsthand experience with international populations given the nature of their living arrangements. Their global perspectives and insights meet the global needs of companies that increasingly hire talent internationally and serve clients or customers in foreign markets.

Still, many large corporations have yet to invest into the people, processes and tools needed to make the agile workforce a reality for themselves. In doing so, they run the risk of losing ground on talent acquisition to more nimble organizations. Embracing this emerging paradigm shift positions all parties to succeed in the future of work.

But Digital nomad lessons on the future of work aren’t just for companies...
Those largely working from home can learn a thing or two from Digital nomads.

If you have been able to work from home, have you ever tried it (just for an hour or two, online or offline) from a beach? Or a hammock? Or a hiking trail?

Is there an essential business book – or podcast – you’ve been meaning to read or listen to, but just haven’t because you’ve “simply got too much work to do” or feel constantly, always, sidetracked by “more important things,” like email?

Let Remotopia set you free. Change your energy. Take a hike with an Audible business book that gives you strategic insights into the work you do; if a thought-bubble comes to mind, catch it quick! Use the digital tools at hand (like Audible’s bookmark feature and Siri’s voice notes) to your advantage, and put those ideas to strategic work when you get back to your desk.

Consider these daily motion-activated thinking sessions as a critical part of work.

They might happen on the treadmill, with a blank wall or a mirror ahead (no TV or second screens), glasses off. Run. Walk. Hike. Think. What’s it all about? Some days you might not have a clue. Other days, “eureka” or “bingo,” and the answer will be clear. The value to you – and your employer – will be self-evident.

And in Remotopia, it’s all possible.

From the cubicle to the couch or a cabana in Cartagena, the “office of the future” can’t be found on any map. But as long as WiFi is available, it’s everywhere you want to be.
The Building Blocks of Managing Remotely

Lessons for life in Remotopia
Remote work isn’t just a short-term, social-distancing solution. “Out of an abundance of caution,” it has become the de facto arrangement for many of us, but Remotopia was already emerging as a place of the future. If you’re new to town, be aware that the going isn’t always easy. Especially at first.

As technology, social norms and individual needs shift, your implementation of #WFH will continue to evolve. Now is the time to experiment and perfect your company’s approach to remote working. Because in the future, Remotopia is where everyone wants to be.

The Center for the Future of Work has a century of collective experience working from home. From the nascent days in Silicon Valley to our current reality of globally dispersed team members, we have had times to try, fail and learn the best practices for remote work. We’ve found the following lessons to be a useful guide for working remotely ...
Don't overstep boundaries
Build trust with team members by nurturing individual relationships through empathy and instilling confidence through the consistency of your actions.

Don't silo remote workers
Instead, establish a rhythm. That could be weekly check-ins or a daily standup that brings team members together and encourages collaborative problem solving.

Don't forget to mute
It seems like we lose at least a few minutes of every video call due to tech issues. Pick a system that’s simple to use and secure. For big calls, always set the default to mute each line except the host.
Beyond Remotopia

Where else is the future of work happening?
In our reporting on the future of work, we set out to explore where exactly that future will happen. As evidenced by Remotopia, some of that future will take place wherever the WiFi takes us. But experience has shown time and again the power of convening in physical spaces to germinate new ideas and develop world-changing concepts.

Much like Detroit 100 years ago or Silicon Valley at the turn of the century, innovation tends to spring up in hotspots of innovation and ingenuity. We have identified a global list of places that show promise to evolve into such hotspots in the years to come. They are the places of your future – and the places where the future of your work lies.

Our **21 Places of the Future** report will explore where these places are and what factors make them ripe for shaping the future of work. To accompany our report, we’re creating a series of short films that feature seven of the places we’ve researched and written about. The films were all made by individuals living and working where they shot – a diverse and talented cadre of young, up-and-coming cinematographers who helped us get inside their hometowns and tell the important stories that make them special places of the future.

The films and the report illuminate important lessons for all towns to learn while navigating the Fourth Industrial Revolution. By training a telescope on the places of the future today, we can try to figure out how work will look – and where it’s happening – tomorrow.
Useful Links
Further Reading on Remote Working
CFOW Whitepapers

- After the Virus
- From & To: Everything You Need to Know About the Future of Work
- 21 Jobs of the Future

Outside Media

- Work From Home Policies are not Enough
- The Impact of the Coronavirus on HR and the New Normal of Work
- Nomad List

Cognizant Latest Thinking

- Amid Crisis, It’s Ok to be Vulnerable
About the Author
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.
About Us
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 or contact Ben Pring, Cognizant VP and Managing Director of the Center for the Future of Work, at Benjamin.Pring@cognizant.com.
Cognizant

Cognizant (Nasdaq-100: CTSH) 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 193 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 or follow us @Cognizant.
Thank you for reading

Remotopia