

# Three ways COVID-19 has transformed workplaces

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**By John Baker**

This pandemic that we are all living through has put pressure on every market and in every industry. But long after we have forgotten the pain of this year's business results, it is the cultural changes that we have adopted that we will remember. How teams are adapting to get their work done during social isolation is changing how they work, what tools they use, and how they track their performance. Even the most traditional firms have had to innovate and adapt in order to keep their businesses running.

## **Working from home has become the norm**

All agree the remote working during lockdown has accelerated digital transformation across companies -- even firms like ours that already embraced digital tools and processes. We have all become familiar with video conferencing, team IM tools and cloud-based file sharing. We have all learned to build relationships, negotiate contracts and even attend industry conferences -- without leaving our homes. Whether the client is an executive at a Silicon Valley tech firm or a very traditional family based in Mumbai, India, we have learned how to give advice, build trust and support people making life decisions about U.S. immigration and investment visas without meeting in person.

## **Adopting digital tools is a foundation**

In our view, adopting digital tools is allowing us to take advantage of even more technology. Artificial Intelligence, digital process improvements, machine learning can only work if your client data and team's activity is captured in your business systems. Across industries, remote working and distance management is opening up the use of robotics and fundamentally changing how companies work. All of this helps industries

grow more resilient to pandemics as well. This is why we believe we need to continue the momentum we are building. When the coronavirus has passed and we can travel and conduct meetings over meals, we can't forget what we've learned from our webinars and video meetings. We won't go back, we'll mix the tools and get better. In effect, we are becoming a FinTech business.

For leadership, the global lockdown has forced us to change how we measure performance. Like many businesses we have always measured based on results, not time in the office, but this year it goes without saying time in the office is not part of the review! Our investment in digital tools like HubSpot for global CRM; GSuite for email, calendaring and file sharing; Slack for internal messaging and video meetings; and GoToMeeting for external meetings was originally about efficiency. Now it is the foundation for how we manage our business.

### **Online hiring**

Many companies, previously adopted video conferences only in the initial steps of the hiring process. However, since the pandemic and social isolation started, companies have been forced to manage the whole process through video conferences only. The benefit is that hires can include more geographically dispersed teams and we've reset our hiring process to embrace this. Video works to build relationships and evaluate people. Interviews done via apps like Skype, Zoom ,and even WhatsApp, are here to stay and are incorporated into our routine. When hiring, companies need to make sure the person is aligned with the organisation's core values and is a good fit for our fast-paced entrepreneurial environment. Traits such as behaviour in video meetings and showing fluency with social media have become part of any company's interview process. Again, it is about having a digital culture that allows the team to move from an office-based delivery culture to an any-place delivery culture.

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