BT

Digital office

**Building a more intuitive
digital workplace**

Contents
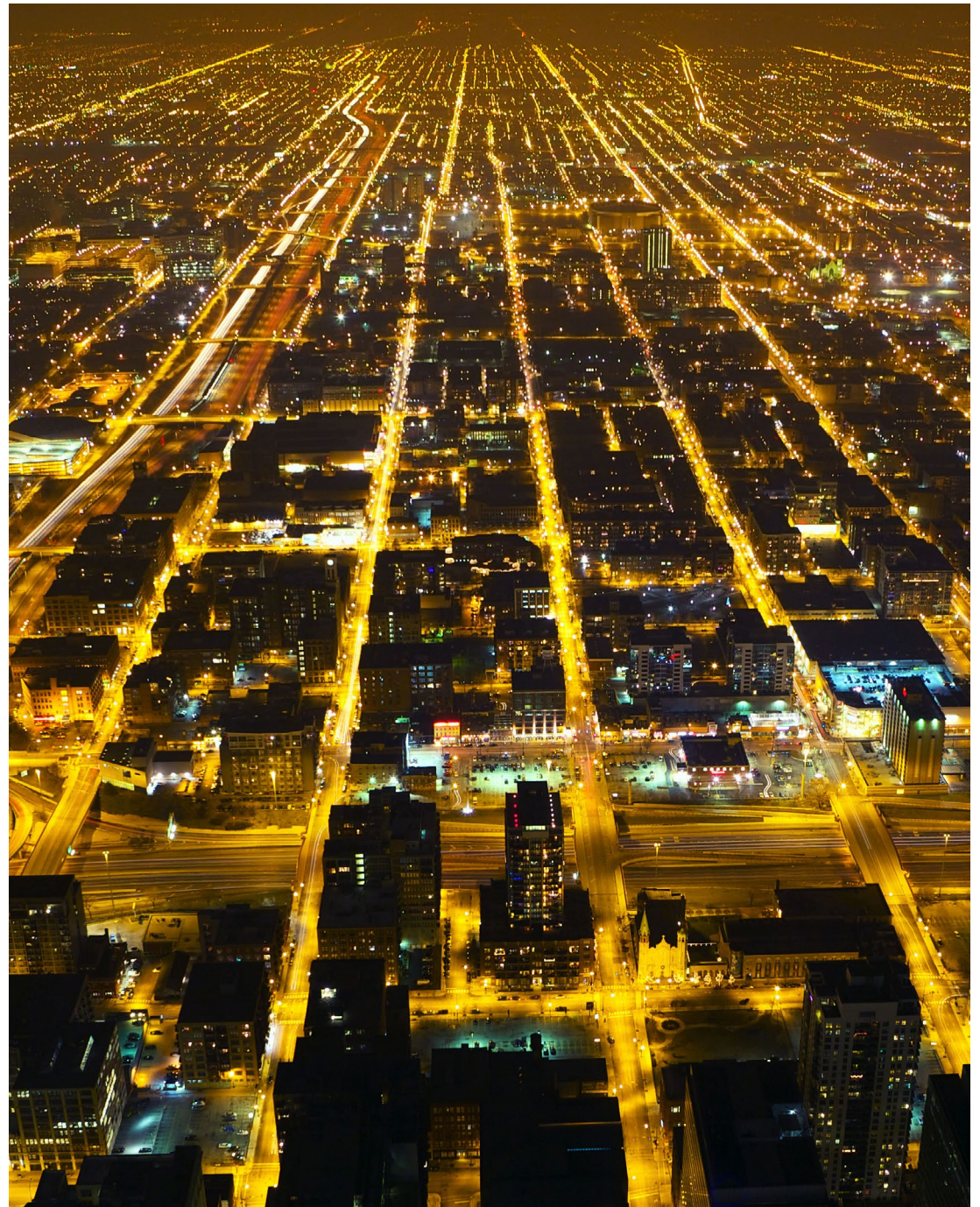
Foreword

Building a more intuitive digital workplace

Across the globe, organisations are resetting their workplace strategy. The world has changed. Technology is evolving at an unprecedented rate, but user experience is still king when it comes to driving value.

You want to give your people the right experience – whether they're homeworkers, starting to go back into the office or somewhere in-between.

Employees have never been so enthusiastic about embracing a more digital, more productive way of working. They know what they want: good connectivity, robust security and easy access to the systems and collaboration tools they need to do their jobs.

But improving motivation and productivity doesn't have to clash with your need to reduce costs. The right approach to digital transformation can deliver all three.

The biggest obstacle to better digital productivity is how much you're already dealing with. You're juggling the demands of keeping existing systems and processes performing well, with the demands for new digital investments.

We're here to make your life easier and share our insight on how to give your employees what they need to be more productive and embrace a more digitally intuitive workplace, now and into the future.

Andrew Small,
Digital solutions director, BT
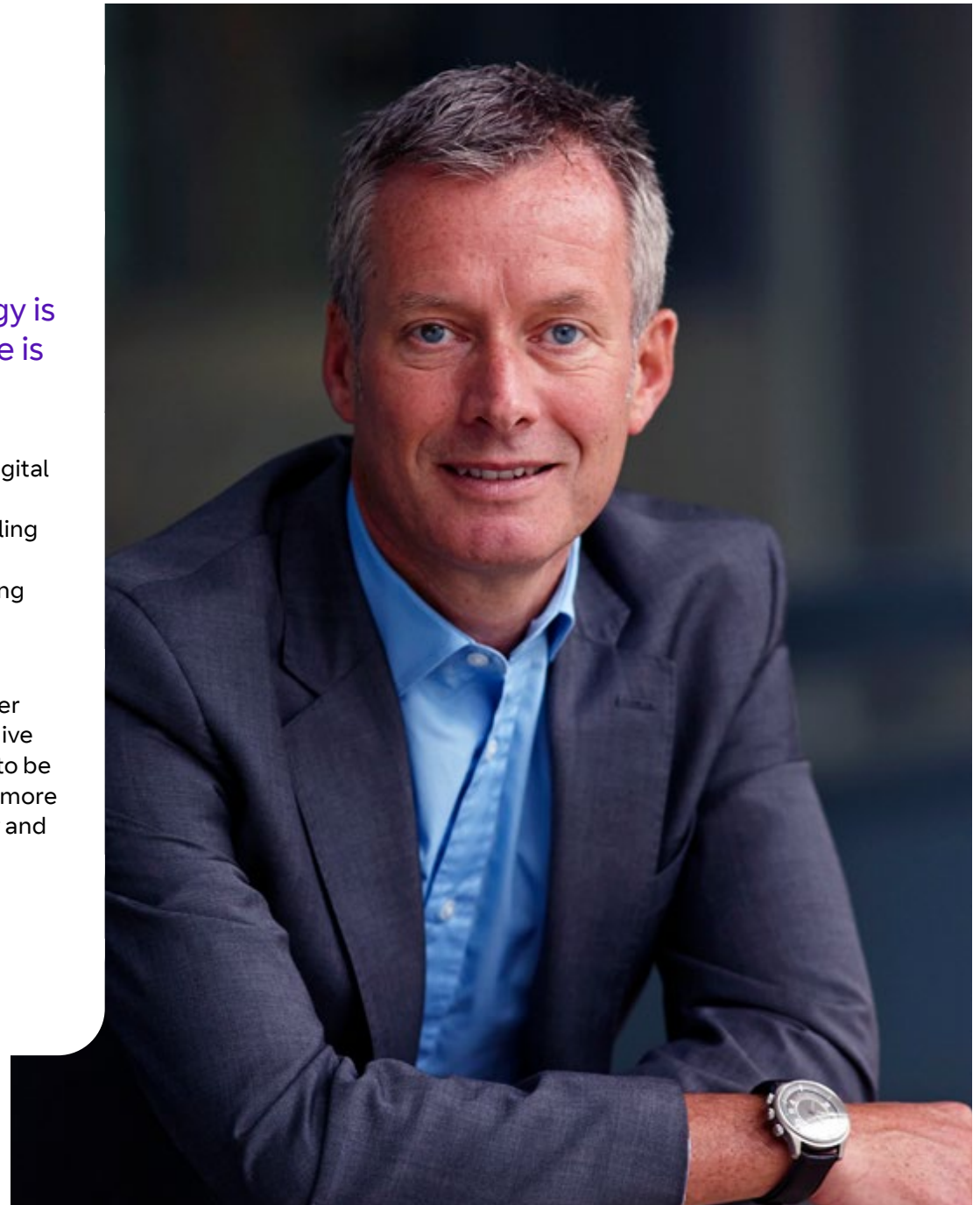
Executive summary

How to boost productivity has long been a problem for both the public and private sectors. Now more than ever, everyone recognises that cloud-based collaboration technologies can help make the difference.

We've all witnessed an unprecedented change in the way we work, but remote working isn't just about keeping business afloat. Nor is it just about productivity. We're facing a new era.

The IT department has always been keen to make things happen. And now there's an army of departments in support of this change. But they need help.

IT decision-makers frequently manage lots of different things at once – old systems, new projects, integration, security, day-to-day operations. But dealing with the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic layered in yet more urgency and complexity. Having handled the initial requirements, it's now about making those assets and investments work hard, integrate easily and help deliver a better digital employee experience.

Key building blocks to a more intuitive digital workplace:

- having the right connectivity and infrastructure to support your new normal

- providing your users with the best cloud-based collaboration tools for remote working

- protecting your people and securing your data.

Creating a better digital experience for your users doesn't need to be challenging or expensive. And the benefits will multiply as your people become more productive.

It starts with putting your people first and helping them make the most of collaboration and digital services. But you also need to consider the integration, connectivity and security to make sure you deliver a truly digitally intuitive workplace.

The business case for cloud-based unified communications (UC) extends beyond productivity alone. Tools enable flexible collaboration, easy adjustment to new ways of working, and delivers benefits to business transformation in terms of sustainability and carbon footprint reduction.

With the right solutions, it's possible to find the balance between sustainability, security and efficiency that works best for your organisation. With lockdown necessitating the use of UC across the board, these solutions and systems have proved a robust and effective way of maintaining business. And as lockdown eases and you evaluate your new ways of working, the benefits of an end-to-end approach may become even more apparent.

Organisations, employees, customers, the economy and the environment can all benefit from embracing a digital office strategy.

All about productivity

Productivity matters. It matters to nations, to industry, to families – to every single one of us. But at the same time, it has fallen massively across developed economies since the financial crisis ten years ago and has been put under increased pressure from the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Confronted with this crisis, many businesses had to send people home at very short notice. Something that's put pressure on individual workers and IT teams alike. But while many organisations were already set-up to let their people work from home, most weren't prepared to do so on such a large scale and so quickly.

As such, many companies struggled with providing bandwidth for all areas of their operation. Not everyone had the right tools, licenses and / or security measures in place. And many employees didn't have the right training to make the most of remote working tools, including the basics of how to use them easily and effectively.

With a digital workplace now a necessity, it's vital to get practical advice on how to make this new normal work.

At a time when economies across the globe are suffering, boosting productivity is vital.

Short-term, being productive can help keep your business afloat, retain your staff, serve your customers, and keep vital revenue streams alive.

Longer term, being more productive can help you reduce your costs, pay higher salaries and give your investors a better return. That's why improving productivity is typically the number one goal of many digital transformation programmes.

It's well-recognised amongst business leaders across every geography and every region that a more digital experience for employees contributes to productivity, lower costs and better staff retention.

The overstretched IT department

Improving employee productivity is a priority for all departments, but none more so than IT.

They're faced with an array of different tools that are easy to get hold of and easy to put into place, but not so easy to monitor and control.

It's a particularly tough time for IT decision-makers. They're under enormous pressure to help their businesses stay operational, whilst also addressing all the requirements that come from such new ways of working, at scale and at pace.

On top of this, digital workplace plans have been accelerated.

Everywhere, IT departments are being expected to move more and more to the cloud, develop more hybrid networks, keep legacy systems up to scratch, and all this while defending against increasingly frequent and sophisticated cyber threats.

Add in the need to make it all work well together and we're asking a lot of our IT departments when security can't take a backseat to speed or user experience.

With large remote workforces, security is a significant challenge. And the speed of transition means it's vital to make sure it hasn't exposed a wider attack surface. It's important to be in control, giving your employees and suppliers the right levels of security. This approach can help your people keep your business and data safe and secure.

IT decision-makers have a lot to juggle:

- getting the right connectivity and infrastructure to support your new normal

- transforming your network for the new normal

- providing your users with the best cloud-based collaboration tools for remote working

- protecting your people and securing your data

- understanding your new security posture

- refreshing meeting room technology

- developing mobile apps

- getting everything to work seamlessly and securely together.

Despite the hurdles, we've helped many customers to quickly extend their remote working without compromising their user experience. While VPN and securing your company devices are important, it's also vital that your employees understand the policies and risks. Secure, friction-free working shouldn't hinge on cost, either, because most collaboration tools are flexible, with variable costs that can be made back through improved productivity.

To benefit from a more digital intuitive workplace and great user experience, you need the right solutions and the right expertise to make all your big demands simple, smooth and easy to deliver.
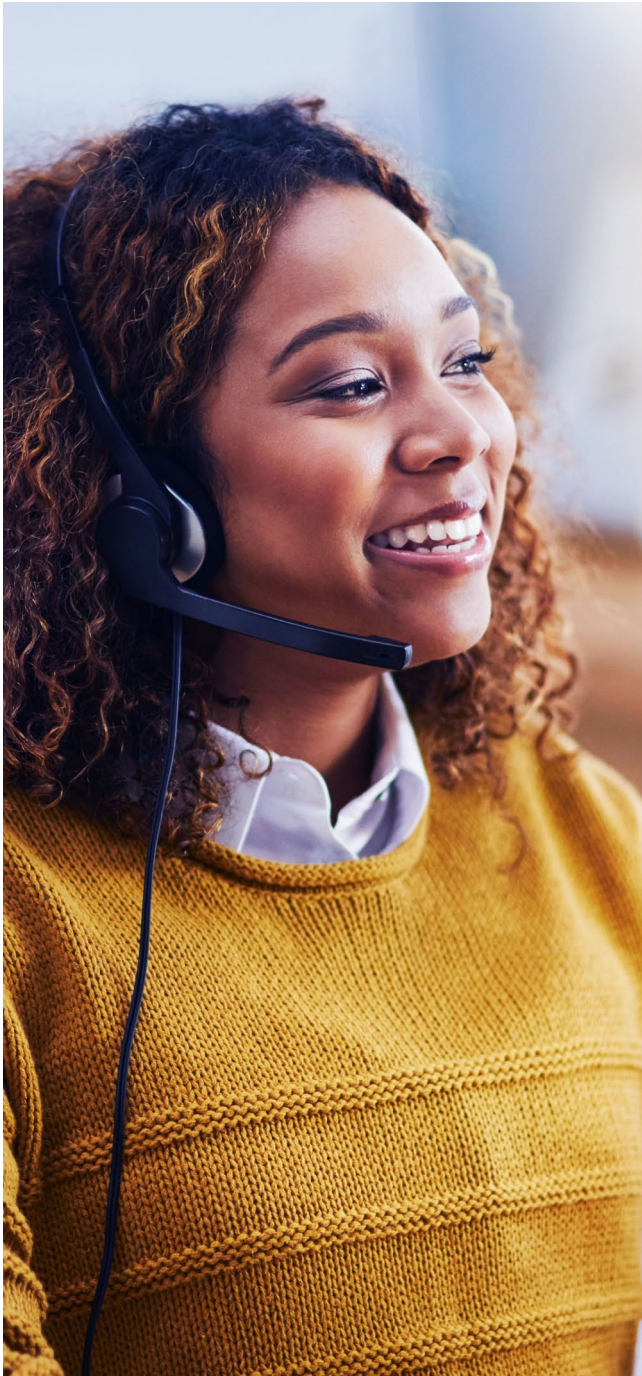
The dos and don'ts of the digital office

The world has gone through a seismic shift in the way we work. But we mustn't lose sight of the fact that these changes need to be sustainable and ones that will work for us both now and into the future. The key pillars of a digital workplace strategy before lockdown are still true going forward: connectivity, collaboration and security.

Put your people first, technology second

It's more vital than ever to put people first. If you focus on your people in a considered and ethical way, and you listen to their needs, it'll pay dividends in terms of loyalty, team spirit and resilience. We've all been through a massive upheaval and the way ahead will be much smoother and more successful if people feel valued and supported.

Technology is vital to keeping businesses operational. But more importantly, it's your people, how they use your technology and how you help them use it to maximum effect which will truly decide your organisation's future.

Building a digitally intuitive workplace doesn't have to mean massive investment. Essentially, it's prioritising your people and giving them the tools to work flexibly and be as collaborative and productive as possible.

When it comes to connectivity, all teams are different. There are so many UC and collaboration tools, all offering different functions and features. So, depending on the work you do and how your team likes to communicate, different products will suit you better – one size doesn't fit all!

But whatever you choose, creating a digitally intuitive workplace is certainly not a job for the IT department alone. To deliver a phenomenal user experience, HR and other internal teams need to be involved too – from figuring out what's needed, to follow-up communications and training.

Focus on giving your users a great experience

Customer experience has long been a priority for global organisations. Creating a digital office is about making the employee and end user experience just as important.

By creating this focus, you can reshape how your people work, and with more and more of us working remotely, and it's never been more obvious how important connectivity tools are.

Collaboration tools are not only helping families and friends stay in touch, they're helping employees work together and businesses stay afloat. They're key to keeping economies going.

Employees want business apps that are easy to use, and work like the apps they use in their personal lives. They want to be able to do everything they can do on their work computer on their smartphone.

Because consumer apps like Slack, Apple Messages and WhatsApp are so easy to use, many individuals and organisations have already adopted these and use them proficiently. This means that there's now a demand – even an expectation – for workplace tools to be just as intuitive.

There's a huge choice of tools to consider and potentially learn to use. As you move accelerate your digital workplace plans, remember that the experience your users have with the tools you choose is king. How they feel about and use them will drive the real value in any investment you make.

Focusing on delivering a great end user experience isn't just important, it's a key differentiator.

Help your people fully adopt their new digital workplace

Transformational collaboration tools are here. But it's one thing to get the right connectivity, security and collaboration tools in place; the challenge is adopting these and developing best practice so that they improve our working lives.

The best way to encourage users to adopt and embrace a digital workstyle is with a plan that addresses human behaviour, as well as technology.

When the Coronavirus pandemic hit, HR teams around the world worked hard to introduce the right polices and guidance to protect employees and support remote working. But it's been the IT departments who've had to ensure 'technical readiness' to enable this.

The next step is making sure employees have the support they need to adapt to the new ways of working - clear and open communications on remote working and security policies (don't assume they know), easily accessible online education, bite-sized best practice coaching, etc. An expert user adoption team[1] can be a great way to achieve efficiency and confidence quickly.

Irrespective of what the future of work holds, people want better connectivity and collaboration – whether inside or outside of the office. Without the right tools, some people look for their own solutions, but this can lead to an integration nightmare,

as well as potentially cause new security issues.

This is one of the reasons that we're seeing larger organisations restricting choice and guiding people to a smaller range of options. For some, this means quickly extending pilots, or adding new cloud solutions to legacy infrastructure.

For others, the best collaboration tools for now are legacy audio and conferencing – a reliable solution that works well on home broadband. Current technology decisions are being made with our present reality in mind, but next, we need to explore how to create a more sustainable, digitally intuitive workplace.

Don't forget about sustainability

Going digital isn't just about making our working lives easier and more flexible. ICT solutions have the potential to help lower global CO_2 emissions by 20 per cent by 2030[2].

We're already seeing some of the environmental benefits of digital working. Our products and services helped customers avoid 11.7 million tonnes of carbon last year – that's the equivalent carbon emissions of nearly 3 million UK households.

With the right solutions, it's possible to find a balance between sustainability, security and efficiency that works for your organisation.

There's evidence to support a balanced approach to digital working, with some roles remaining face-to-face, for example in hospitality, and others 'going digital'.

Before Coronavirus, the move to digital working was typically a slow one. The key to success was deciding how digital working could add value and where there was still a need for a human touch. Under the current lockdown, many of us have quickly moved to a digital work environment but once things return to normal, the right digital working balance will be found by organisations using digital technology more flexibly.

Companies with a competitive technological edge are likely to do better than their peers but equally, sustainability is an important market differentiator[3].

In fact, it's becoming so integral to business that investors see a lack of interest in sustainability as a risk to their investment. So, by combining a leading technology platform with sustainable ways of working[4], organisations can lead the way in their market.

Employees are another key consideration. In order to reach net zero by 2050, companies need to recruit talented people who understand the importance of sustainability. The more sustainable an organisation tries to be, the more likely they are to recruit people who'll help them achieve this goal.

In fact,

40%

of millennials have taken a job because of a company's good sustainability credentials!

Build a business case that realises your return on investment

A digital workplace can solve a lot of problems – both internally and externally. But unless you can show the business benefit financially – both in terms of lost revenue from the problem, as well as the ROI for the solution – it can be difficult to get the executive backing and investment you need.

Digital transformation is about fundamental change, so your business case needs a joined-up approach with all key stakeholders involved.

It's not just about the network department alone, it needs to be business-focused and aligned to your broader business strategy. Investment funds aren't forthcoming when collaboration projects focus on the technology or on having proof of concepts (PoCs) that don't align to the business need or success criteria.

Getting the wider community engaged as early as possible is critical. Consult them on what they need from a digital workplace to support their business priorities. Understand and be able to clearly explain how low adoption rates of UC investments are impacting your bottom line. Explore how your choice of business tools may be impacting your reputation when it comes to attracting talent.

As with any successful business case, it's important to list out the concrete benefits of your investment. With a digitally intuitive workplace, your organisation could:

- improve collaboration
- reduce costs
- increase agility
- generate more business opportunities
- enhance its reputation
- attract and retain of top talent
- gain a competitive advantage
- increase automation
- improve its innovation.

But always consider the pros and cons for the route you want to take. It doesn't have to be either 100% fully managed service or a DIY approach. Although if you're considering the latter, make sure you consider the potentially hidden costs of having to fund new skills to deliver and maintain a fully enabled collaboration platform in-house. A compromise could be considering whether you can buy managed services for non-differentiating activities.

Why BT as your digital office partner

The most important things in creating a digital office are connectivity, collaboration and security. These are all well established and available in even the remotest of locations. But old technologies and a fixed infrastructure can make it hard to introduce on-demand, seamless digital services that meet today's expectations – both from customers and employees.

When creating new ways of working, or implementing new tools, successful adoption by your workforce is the key to realising any productivity or efficiency gains. Adoption requires a good experience by your end users – smooth migration, tools that your people understand and want to use, and clear, quickly demonstrable benefits.

Migration. It's difficult to migrate to the cloud without disruption and risk. We can move you to a global cloud collaboration solution with a broad ecosystem to give you choice and keep it simple. We've developed migration tools because we've done this so many times. We're also vendor-agnostic, giving you genuine choice. Our solutions are pre-integrated, so you can get up and running, and you can benefit from our innovation, experience and roadmap.

Adoption. With human-centred design at the heart of the experiences we orchestrate, your end users won't use disparate and confusing tools. We make sure your users get the experience they need, adopt the services you offer and have a consistent experience wherever they are, using whatever device. We deliver coaching and education, using a persona methodology, so your people can understand how collaboration solutions can dramatically improve their working lives. We've helped many customers deliver 70% adoption, globally, within three months. You can get a consistent global experience, with a choice of vendors as part of an ecosystem so you can optimise the experience for each user. And using standard APIs means you don't have to waste time on integration.

Business case. You're under pressure to reduce costs while improving productivity. We understand how to help you create a compelling business case. We offer commercial innovation – a single global price per user that lets you predict costs. You can flex up and down on user numbers, so you pay for what you use. And our migration approach means the value of your investment is realised more quickly, with rapid adoption and a fantastic user experience. You could be saving money (demonstrating value) up to 80 percent faster with us.

In our experience, the best results come from putting people first. We draw on our broad range of technologies, management and service capabilities to develop a great digital experience for every employee and follow up with an adoption plan to make sure everyone gets the support and skills they need, quickly.

We help organisations around the globe connect easily and securely to the collaboration tools, data and third-party cloud providers they need.

And we can use all the knowledge and expertise we've gained from defending our own network and corporate assets to help you secure your digital workplace and all the tools, solutions and platforms that makes it possible.

Mobile working and collaboration technologies are relatively easy to deliver. But where there's existing infrastructure and old systems, it can be a challenge that's difficult to solve overnight. That's where our extensive roadmap expertise can help you with your transformation journey.
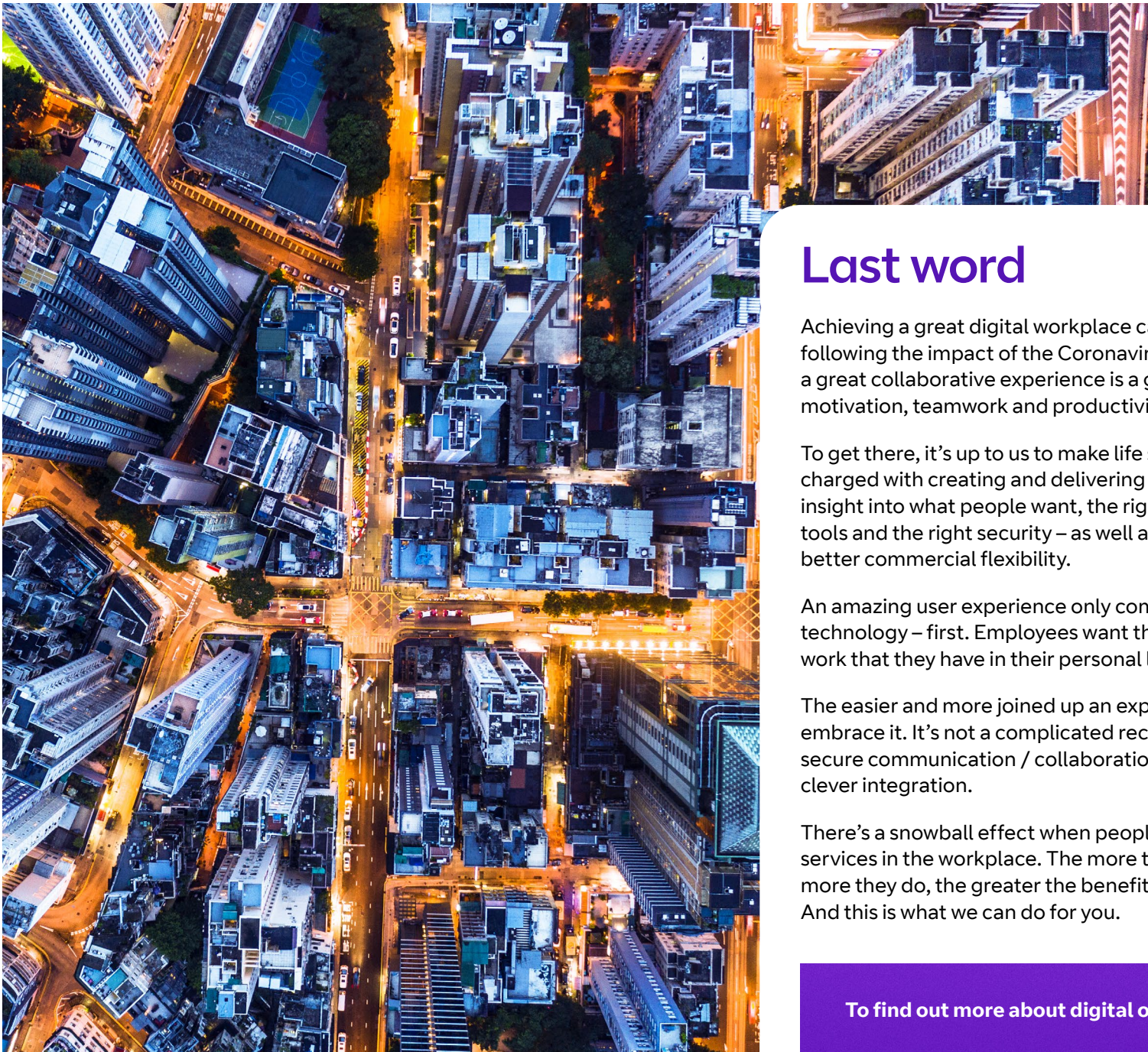
So, whether you're taking small steps or a giant leap, if a more intuitive digital workplace and end user experience are on your list of digital transformation goals, we can help you get there – quicker, smoother and more successfully.

We've helped many customers deliver

70%

adoption, globally, within three months.

Last word

Achieving a great digital workplace can seem overwhelming. Especially following the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic. But giving your employees a great collaborative experience is a great place to start. It can help with motivation, teamwork and productivity.

To get there, it's up to us to make life simpler for your IT team – the people charged with creating and delivering the digital experience. They need more insight into what people want, the right connectivity, the right collaboration tools and the right security – as well as easy integration, seamless migration and better commercial flexibility.

An amazing user experience only comes when we put our people – not technology – first. Employees want the same ease, convenience and flexibility at work that they have in their personal lives.

The easier and more joined up an experience is, the more people will adopt and embrace it. It's not a complicated recipe – it's about connectivity everywhere, secure communication / collaboration services, business apps, and some clever integration.

There's a snowball effect when people really get to grips with collaboration services in the workplace. The more they do, the more they want to do. And the more they do, the greater the benefit to the business. This is the digital office. And this is what we can do for you.

To find out more about digital office, visit www.bt.com/global

References

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2. GeSI: ICT Solutions for 21st Century Challenges, 2015

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