

UNIT 8 – The Future

Reading 1

Skills:

- Details
- Summarize ideas
- Vocabulary in context
- Understanding negative facts
- Insert sentences into the passage

Getting started: Are you optimistic about our future and how we can use technology for our own benefit?

HOW TECHNOLOGY WILL SHAPE THE FUTURE OF THE WORKPLACE



Organizations often find it challenging to carry out business transformation projects successfully, and shaping the future of the workplace is no different. Businesses have learned that a major change project that would normally have taken six months to a year, such as enabling everyone to work remotely, can

be done much faster. Necessity is indeed the mother of invention. Innovation happens when people and organizations realize they have to act fast to stay competitive.

The pandemic has given companies around the world permission (and in many cases forced them) to take risks they were reluctant to, such as allowing people to work from home. It's presented organizations with a chance to reimagine their workplaces. Thus, the workplace has been **heading** for a future where technological solutions and human talent blend, but the pandemic has accelerated the realization of this reality. Office workers and their managers now know the full benefits and challenges of working from home. Businesses have needed to find quick solutions to these challenges to remain competitive, adapting themselves for smooth virtual operation.

What does this mean for the nature of work?

[5A] The pandemic has helped businesses become less risk-averse, and now it seems the word change is big part of corporate lexicon. **[5B]** Digital transformation and the introduction of automated tools were often projects that took months or years in the planning. **[5C]** Businesses know they have to be more agile than this. Customers now have more digital knowledge, and they expect efficient service from the companies they work with. **[5D]** Thus, employees will dedicate more time to elements that deliver genuine value for the business, like building relationships with customers, while automation will allow businesses to scale their services easily.

How can technology support the workforce of the future?

Several studies have shown that people can be more productive, and happier, working from home. But there are also problems such as a dependence on home broadband suppliers. As virtual working becomes less novel, more businesses will explore ways to support their employees and keep the team working efficiently. We'll also start seeing a re-evaluation of what working means. The days when it was defined that a good worker was who sat in front of their computer the longest had already started to fade before the pandemic hit. Now, with the freedom that the lockdown granted business leaders, companies are starting to look beyond hours worked and things produced and towards the quality of that work and the effect it has on the goals of the business.

What is the future of the office?

The pandemic forced most office-based workers into their homes, but not everyone has a spare room to use as an office. Many people are working around the kitchen table with their spouse or roommates. People are working lying on their beds, with their laptops on top of tables sustained by books. It's an emergency solution, but not ideal for the long-term. The future workplace will be more of a solution where businesses hire space for regular creative collaboration, giving people a good mix of time around their colleagues and time working from home. Right now, businesses are starting to plan how to manage this process. The technology will need to be in place to support this kind of model and provide the business, and its employees, with the best experience possible.

Maintaining digital culture in the workplace of the future

Before the pandemic, leaders could sometimes seem distant and out of touch with their employees. However, with video conferencing bringing us into the heart of each other's homes, managers and leaders are realizing how beneficial it is to connect on a more human level. Technology's playing a major role in facilitating cultural **shifts**, and it will continue to do so in the future.

The future workplace will be founded on agility and resilience. Technology, such as automation, will help create a future where businesses can impeccably work with distributed teams and maintain the culture and creativity that helps the business achieve its goals.

**Adapted from <https://www.information-age.com/how-technology-will-shape-the-future-of-the-workplace-123492020/>*

Answer the following questions:

1. What is stated in paragraph 1?
 - a. Not all businesses find it easy to implement changes.
 - b. Carrying out a major project usually takes six months to a year.
 - c. To stay competitive, organizations have to think and plan carefully what to do.
 - d. Companies have always known that making adjustments can be done very quickly.
2. What is NOT mentioned in paragraph 2?
 - a. Before the pandemic, companies refused to take certain unusual decisions.
 - b. Technology and humans mix to give shape to the new workplace.
 - c. Working from home brings advantages and some difficulties.
 - d. Most office workers now work from home.

3. The word **heading** in paragraph 2 is closest in meaning to
- thinking
 - hitting
 - going
 - managing
4. What sentence summarizes the main idea of the **highlighted** part in paragraph 3?
- Corporations are not interested in making big changes.
 - Businesses are not so opposed to taking risks as they used to be.
 - The most important aspect in business policies is helping people at risk.
 - It does not seem that implementing major changes in the business world will take long.
5. Look at the squares in paragraph 3. Where can this sentence be inserted? → **As a consequence, we'll start to see more organizations introduce automation, augmenting their services to take the work out of their employee's roles and speed up services for customers.**
- 5A
 - 5B
 - 5C
 - 5D
6. According to paragraph 4, what belief has been demystified?
- That a good employee is the one who spends the whole day sitting at their desk.
 - That working from home makes a team work more efficiently.
 - That quality is so much more important than quantity.
 - That a person must depend on fast broadband.
7. What is NOT a problem described in paragraph 5?
- Not having enough supplies makes workers improvise office furniture out of home objects.
 - Some people do not have an extra room that they can use as a home office.
 - Working while lying on the bed can lead to a medical emergency.
 - People may face awkward situations as relatives or friends are around while they work.
8. The word **shifts** in paragraph 6 is closest in meaning to
- gears
 - changes
 - fluctuations
 - reallocations
9. What is stated in paragraph 6?
- Leaders have always kept distance from their employees.
 - The virtual world has brought personnel and managers closer.
 - Managers feel the need to know what is happening inside a worker's home.
 - Companies have realized they must have constant video conferences to assess their staff.

What do you think?

Will more and more people be working from home over the next decade? What are the pros and cons of working from home?