

FUTURE WAYS OF WORKING

Trends in Healthcare, Retail, and Technology
in a Post-Pandemic Environment

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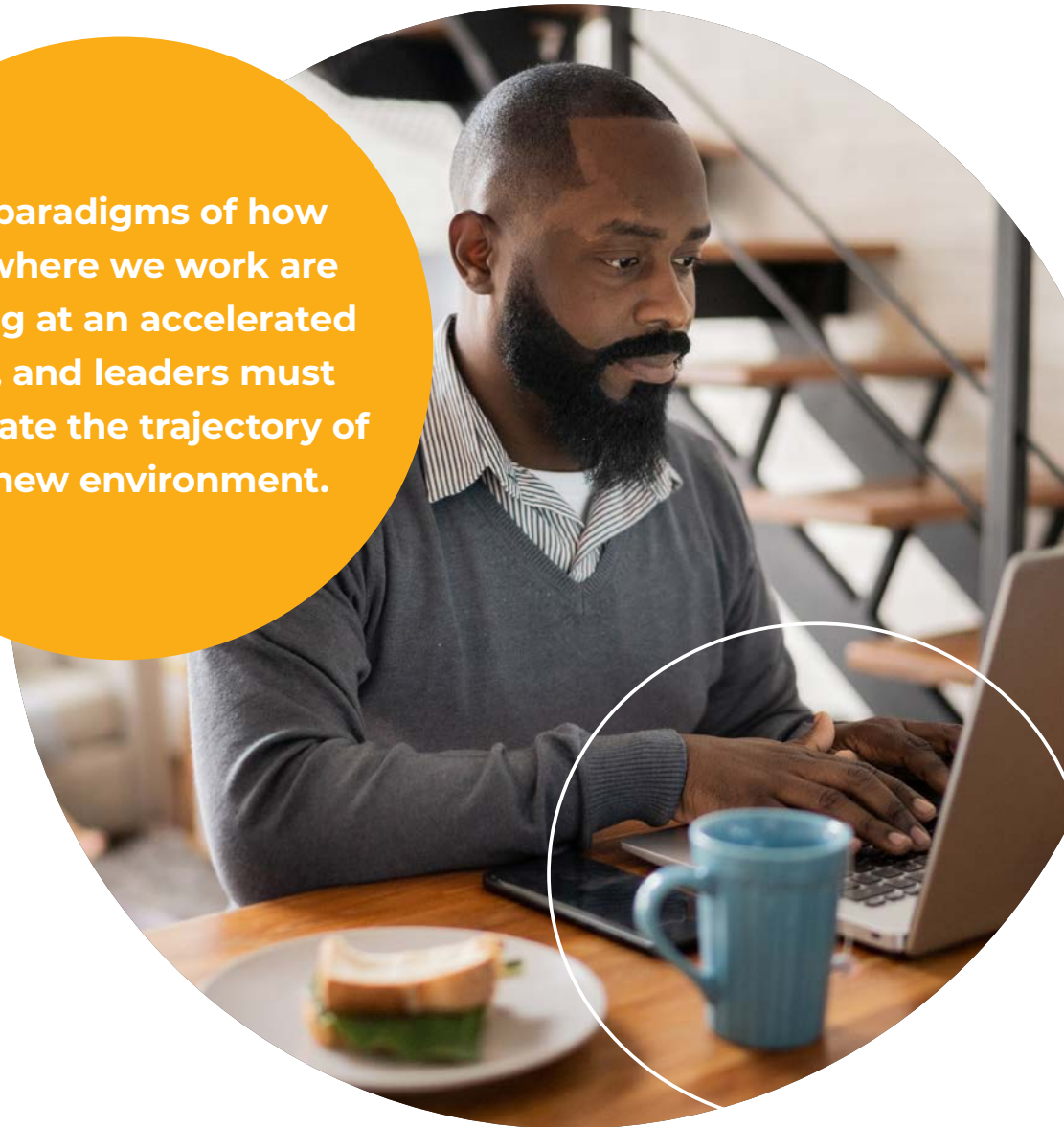



Work has been transformed—the where, how, and attitudes around work culture look drastically different post-pandemic.

Being in the office from nine to five has been replaced with Zoom calls and hybrid work, which brought unique challenges to all levels of organizations. From CEO to frontline worker, everybody had to reevaluate how to best manage resources, exhibit resiliency, and engage with others. *Great Resignation*, *Great Reshuffle*, and *Quiet Quitters* are part of our vocabulary in this new era of work where business leaders are reassessing and realigning their organizations' goals to respond to rapidly evolving needs of staff and customers.

The paradigms of how and where we work are shifting at an accelerated pace, and leaders must anticipate the trajectory of this new environment. We expect high-performing organizations to go beyond the wait-and-see approach and actively navigate to define their success in three areas: **cognitive services leveraging data and AI (artificial intelligence)** to enhance productivity, comprehensive programs **prioritizing the well-being of staff** on and off the clock, and the strategic use of **gig work** to expand existing capabilities. We see these trends having wide-ranging impacts on the healthcare, retail, and technology sectors, and will explore how they apply to each.

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1 Supercharge Your Teams with Data and AI Cognitive Services

Implementation of data, AI, and cognitive services is about driving insights through the data you already own and providing excellence to customers and staff.

For customers, a personalized experience translates to loyalty and brand affinity. For staff, when data literacy improves, so does the quality and accuracy of work. Implementing AI is not about staff replacement but their enablement—freedom from the mundane and the ability to maximize their time and talents for what matters. Here, we examine how organizations can get more done with increased accuracy while gaining strategic insights through AI and automation.

Healthcare

Healthcare systems can be fragmented, born from legacy infrastructures and protocols that coexist alongside today's most innovative research and discoveries. Digital transformation in this space assists providers and support staff to deliver superior end-to-end patient experience and better health outcomes.

Cognitive services used in a clinical setting have the potential to transform patient-doctor relationships. One application is **virtual assistants**, powered by the largest names in AI, that can extend the healthcare providers capabilities during the precious few minutes they have to spend with patients. AI can record and take notes during exams, provide real-time translations, and make suggestions based on patient history.¹ AI detection in tandem with human decision-making also delivers incredibly accurate diagnoses. Ellipsis Health, a mental healthcare organization that partners with providers, uses deep learning AI to analyze a voice's semantic and acoustic patterns to determine the severity of an individual's stress, anxiety, and depression.² Research from the NYU Grossman School of Medicine's Department of Radiology also found increased accuracy in detecting early signs of breast cancer when AI was used in tandem with clinic supervision.³

In the back office, administrators and staff will see efficiencies through data and AI. For example, chatbots can be a helpful tool to field general questions, provide appointment availability, and triage inquiries to the correct resource.

Scott Schuster

Senior Director, Healthcare
Concentrix Catalyst

Retail

The pandemic birthed new avenues of procurement and gave rise to a different shopping experience.

In turn, customer expectations concerning ease and personalization have greatly increased, meaning seamless shopping between online and in-store experiences are now table stakes.

Enabling online purchases and in-store returns requires investment in an organization's digital infrastructure. Leveraging consumers' preferences and shopping habits to provide curated and frictionless shopping experiences—both online and in store—cultivate brand affinity and loyalty. To do this, infrastructure needs to be able to follow the consumer, delivering a tailored experience along with products or services. Personalization and the expectation of personal relevance

continue to advance. Curated experiences can be enhanced by focusing on customer experience and creating space for self-service.

At its peak, these hyper-personalized experiences can look like an Amazon Go store, but for more cost effective or low-coded automation, this could mean simply adding inventory checks (that is, if and where items are available in store) to products on your website. Using data to pool inventory insights across channels, such as fulfilling online orders with inventory from physical stores and distribution centers, is another way to supercharge your organization, where traceability software can reach into supply chains and help lay a foundational understanding of the entire product life cycle.⁴ Insights from this information provide valuable customer touch points for front-facing products, suggestion analysis, and inventory forecasting.

“The trick is to do this in a way that does not feel like a job is being offloaded onto consumers. Self-service should be smooth, easy, and collaborative. Consumer involvement should be based on convenience, which means the right tools are built right into your infrastructure.”

Martin Mehalchin

Executive Vice President of Loyalty Solutions
Concentrix Catalyst





“What’s more exciting in the sales space is that cognitive services are already supporting specific business functions. You can make a virtual assistant that captures sales data and provides real-time suggestions to account managers in terms of what might be of interest.”

Jennifer Winter

Executive Vice President of Technology
Concentrix Catalyst

Technology

The future of work is hybrid. AI and automation tools will establish seamless work experiences for staff and organizations.

“75% of hybrid or remote workers agree their expectations for working flexibly have increased, there is no doubt that the future is hybrid. In fact if an organization were to go back to a fully on-site arrangement, it would risk losing up to 39% of its workforce.”⁵

Evaluate current workflows and consider if they are still working in this new era of work. **There is technology available** that looks for ways to make sales processes and the people delivering that process more intelligent, saving time so staff can facilitate efforts better.⁶ There are pre-trained cognitive services available right now, and with the right ingredients you can create an automated experience tailored to your company needs. Identify and engage your Citizen Developers to **use low-code tools** and automation to streamline work in a hybrid model.⁷

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2 Solving the Productivity Puzzle: Staff Well-Being Is Key to Engagement

Amid unprecedented social isolation we saw a rise in anxiety and depression, and as a result burnout, bore-out, *quiet quitters*, labor shortages and early retirements have contributed to what has been coined “The Great Resignation.”

With the rise of remote work, talent acquisition is now global. Competition for the best talent or really any talent is widespread. Compounding the problem is that while seeking new talent, companies are also faced with retention issues as many in the current workforce seek to actively balance maximum wages and generous benefits with other considerations like schedule flexibility from their employers. Staff are also much more likely to take note of how organizations are investing in the community and issues that are important to them. If companies want their staff to represent your brand or business well, companies must begin considering this a two-way street and engage in thoughtful and authentic Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts.

The pandemic also shined a bright light on how well-rounded our lives were—or were not—on a day-to-day basis, and we believe the future of work will revolve around this collective awareness. Gartner® also found that 52% of staff claim the pandemic made them question the purpose of their day-to-day jobs, with many acting on those questions.⁸ For example, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported over 4.5 million people voluntarily left their jobs in November 2021 alone.⁹



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Healthcare

Healthcare staff were especially impacted by the pandemic.

The American Association of Critical-Care Nurses found 67% of nurses plan to leave their position within three years,¹⁰ while the Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA's) Bureau of Health Workforce projects that by 2025, 37 states will have a shortage of primary care physicians.¹¹

Technology can alleviate some of these burdens; another opportunity is through telemedicine. We anticipate telehealth will play an increasing role in providing care to patients but only if the tools can continue to be both more **patient-centric and provider-centric**.¹² Telemedicine can help overcome geographical barriers so patients can see the most appropriate provider regardless of either the patient or provider's location. It can also aid in the distribution of labor across multiple healthcare providers to ease their patient load. We see that healthcare systems who implement strong digital-first primary care delivery options will have better patient experience and better outcomes while relieving the burden on healthcare staff.¹³

Retail


When stores reopened, staff responsibilities grew beyond traditional retail duties to include health and safety policy enforcement.

And with the rise of omnichannel, retail staff must often transition between the floor and stockroom. Retailers are in a challenging position and are having trouble attracting and maintaining staff.

“What’s difficult is that the definition of many retail jobs has expanded at the same time it’s gotten *harder* to attract people to these jobs. On the floor, staff are expected to do more in terms of flexibility and work expectations while performing more roles inside of their job description than what was true prior to the pandemic.”

- Martin Mehalchin

Staff retention is higher in places where people feel taken care of. Traditionally, low wage workers are offered few perks, but with the expansion of their job descriptions, employers must consider expanding their benefits to attract and keep good staff. Proper training and growth opportunities can motivate staff and provide an overall better experience. For brick-and-mortar retailers that still experience low customer traffic or have trouble attracting customers to physical spaces, consider using a more experiential approach versus a strictly transactional one to your space. What is attractive to your customers, aesthetically or experientially, can benefit your teams as well. Prioritizing the experience of your store can motivate customers to come in, as well as provide an engaging environment for staff on the floor.



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A photograph of a person's arm wearing a smartwatch, resting on a desk. A cat is sitting on the desk next to the arm. There are green plants in the background. An orange circular graphic is overlaid on the top left of the image.

Data from
LinkedIn found a

60%

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Technology

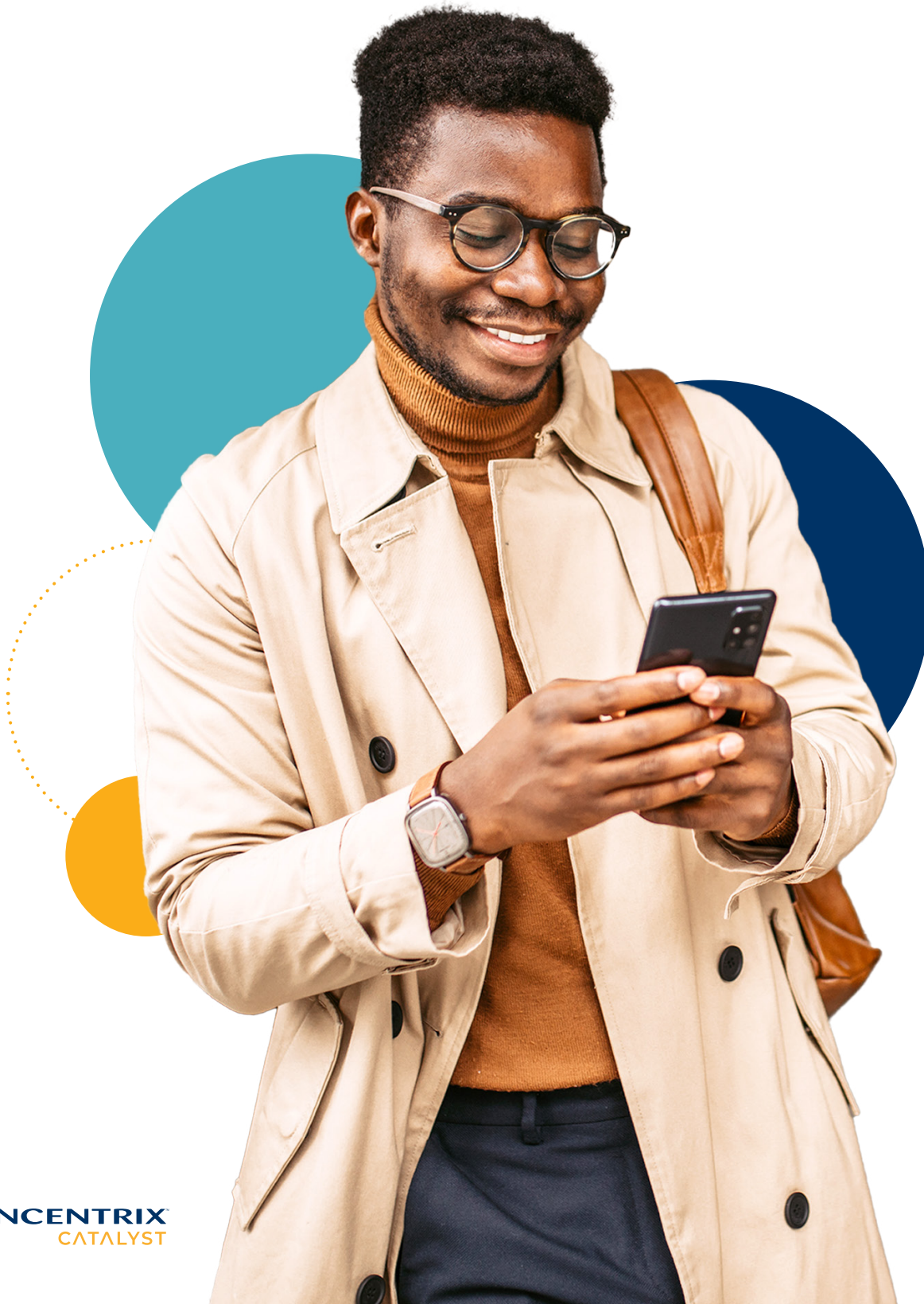
The future of work is hybrid. AI and automation tools will establish seamless work experience for staff and organizations.

Providing remote and hybrid work options will be a huge draw where talent acquisition and retention is concerned. Data from LinkedIn found a 60% increase in job titles related to the future of work and a 304% spike in titles that reference “hybrid work” since the pandemic began.¹⁴ Companies are appointing positions such as “Director of Hybrid Working,” “Flexible Workspace Operations Manager” or “Head of Employee Engagement & Flexible Work” to oversee operations and ensure smooth hybrid process flow.

Creating benefit options so staff can curate where and how they would like to experience the perks available to them is an incredible way to retain people in general, and technology companies set

a particularly high bar. This has been and continues to be a proven way to attract top individuals in a competitive market. It is not unheard of for companies to have pet-friendly offices, provide free snacks and drinks, offer gym memberships, or move to four-day work weeks. Considering staff well-being and the future of work for the technology industry, companies will have to continue to provide benefits—traditional and out of the box—to attract and retain top talent. “As a hybrid work environment becomes the new norm, employers will need to continue to innovate in providing physical well-being support, whether that is virtually, in homes or while in coworking spaces.”¹⁵

Caring for staff and their well-being goes beyond providing benefits; it is rethinking the work-life balance and developing a partnership with staff. The focus on staff-centric policies will translate to retention and loyalty which in turn engages staff and increases their productivity and sense of purpose.



3 The Next *Gig* Thing

Given the diversity of non-standard work, the term “gig work” can encompass any income-earning tasks outside of the traditional, long-term employer-staff agreement.

For now, less than half of those who participate in gig work rely on it for their primary income, according to the most recent Contingent Worker Supplement administered by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.¹⁶ By nature, the characteristics of such work encourage autonomous scheduling, flexibility, and lack of direct oversight. Globalization and technological advances both pressure and enable companies to react much more quickly to market changes. With non-standard labor arrangements and the evolution of online platforms, companies can flex the size of their workforce and readily respond to changes in demand.

The healthcare, retail, and technology verticals each face unique challenges—and therefore, opportunities—to capitalize on this upcoming workforce upheaval.

Healthcare

Gig work in healthcare may not be the most obvious concept, but the practice of using so-called “traveling nurses” to optimize staffing on medical units has been standard practice at many hospitals for years.

As the toll of the global pandemic has reduced the workforce through burnout, early retirement, and mortality, what has become more commonplace is leveraging traveling nurses and other clinicians to manage severe staff shortages. Outsourced clinical labor in general is more costly and potentially disruptive to care which in turn may lead to worse health outcomes. We believe that companies that can convert gig workers into staff by providing them a compelling package of pay and flexibility along with other benefits not available to gig workers will be critical to a health system’s ability to provide quality care and services.

Additionally, new models for care may provide renewed satisfaction for a cohort of clinical staff as telemedicine providers and in the burgeoning field of in-home care. Lastly, it’s been said many times that running a hospital is like running a small city, and many ancillary positions are ripe for gig workers, including digital management, informatics, logistics, research, device delivery and operation, and finance, among others.



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Retail

In the last decade, retail has seen a boom in opportunities for gig workers. Last mile and delivery services, inventory, stocking, and seasonal staffing are the norm within this industry.

There is a rise in internal labor market development with processes, “norms and infrastructure that facilitate the mobility of staff from their current roles to other existing or newly created roles within the organization.”¹⁷ Mehalchin advises reskilling those on the floor to also take care of back-room duties when the need arises. One such example of reskilling retail workers is the men’s clothing brand Bonobos, who sought to avoid layoffs and provide better customer service by having staff in its retail stores engage with customers in online chats during the pandemic and sent corporate and retail workers to help move packages through fulfillment centers. This helped relieve call waiting times as well as shipping delays.¹⁸

Technology

Remote and freelance work has become a staple thanks to, and largely consolidated within, the technology field.

Many tech firms utilize online marketplaces to find convenient contracted work or have AI match skillsets with jobs they are looking to fill. Gig workers can provide specialized skills when it comes to troubleshooting technology. Because those skills are not always needed, gig workers are perfect for providing temporary support.

Closing Thoughts

Work has transformed tremendously in the past three years, and all of us have faced unexpected changes to our lives due to the pandemic.

This new trajectory has compelled organizations to reevaluate how to effectively manage resources, their staff, and deliver goods and services. Ongoing changes in the way people work have permanently transformed the staff-employer relationship, along with the expectations of work. If you want to assess how these trends affect your business and where specifically you can take proactive steps to meet them, [contact us](#).

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ABOUT CONCENTRIX CATALYST

Concentrix Catalyst is the experience design and engineering team of Concentrix, a leading global solutions company that reimagines everything CX through strategy, talent, and technology.

At Concentrix Catalyst, we are committed to helping clients face what the future of work looks like for you, whether you are in the retail, healthcare, or technology space. Our Strategy & Design team can help you make sense of your data and curate a tactical roadmap through proven tools like current-state assessments, customer journey frameworks, loyalty blueprints, and deep consulting expertise. With a range of innovative digital and technical solutions, we help clients solve today's most pressing business challenges while building durable strategies to enable future growth.

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