

# A practical guide to digitising business communication

We asked Ade McCormack, Digital Transformation Advisor and Analyst, to share his expert views and advice on major global trends impacting and influencing every business leader in the country.

This guide has been created to help you develop a plan to digitise your communication strategy for the short, medium and long-term.





# Welcome to Pitney Bowes' practical guide to digitising business communications

Despite what the media tells us, disruption is only just taking off its tracksuit. Transformation is neither a project nor a programme, it is an operating model. It is certainly much more than a technology makeover.

The guide is, in part, a methodology as the chapters follow a logical order. Firstly, we explore the nature of disruption followed by the impact of innovation. We then explore the importance of focusing on assets, rather than profit. The remaining chapters address leadership and people respectively.

In this guide we are going to present the extent to which organisations must adapt and how this is achieved in practice. You will find this guide both surprising and uplifting.

*All the best,*

**Ade McCormack**

Digital Transformation Advisor and Analyst

**Ade McCormack is a former technologist, now focused on helping organisations and societies thrive in the digital age.**

He has worked in around forty countries across many sectors, has lectured at MIT Sloan School of Management on digital leadership, and currently works with Cambridge University on their executive education programmes.

Ade is a former FT columnist, has written six books on digital matters, and has worked with many of the world's leading brands.

Ade's perspectives can be found on his blog at:

[www.ademccormack.com](http://www.ademccormack.com)





## Hello,

We've seen huge things happening in the business world and beyond, and we're seeing more unfold every day. We may not like it, but change is inevitable, so we've just got to learn to live with it.

Honestly though, the last couple of years has had all of us lost for words and not knowing which way to turn on more than one occasion. And yes, we might just be the franking machine people, the inserter people, the mailing people – but we are people nevertheless. And we've seen first-hand how difficult it's been for some of our customers' businesses. It's suddenly a world where data is a valued asset, leadership is judged on responsiveness, work is defined by output not location, and prosperity (or even survival) will not be possible without taking a few risks.

So that's why we've put this guide together. It's our attempt to make sense of some of the changes we're seeing all around us. And hopefully, it's a way to shed some light on how processes, that can so often be ignored, can easily be changed to support your business as it deals with other – maybe even bigger – priorities.

Much as it hurts to admit it, we do know that mailing isn't your whole world, but bear with us because it can really make a difference. And when things get tough, you need every process to work that little bit harder. Right now, just doing ok, is not good enough. All of us need to be on-it, and we really hope this guide helps.

We're always here if you have any questions or want to talk stuff through.

*All the best,*

**Your Pitney Bowes team.**

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# Chapter 1: Disruption



A foreword by  
Ade McCormack

## Turning change into a competitive advantage

The industrial era was in itself a feat of engineering. We managed to create what might be termed 'synthetic certainty' in respect of taming our environment. The primary goal was to create the economic stability.

World wars and global pandemics perturbed but did not destroy the industrial era model. Certainty was resumed as a priority. However, the industrial era was inadvertently setting itself up for its own demise courtesy of the 'new technology' industry. It is not just companies, but industries that have become victims of the so-called digital revolution. Such is the exponential nature of technology growth that its ongoing impact is increasingly impossible to predict.



But again, digital is only one of the primary macro-environmental forces at play. Many organisations conduct **PEST** analysis to consider the implications of the Political, Economic, Social and Technological factors they face. One might say that **PESTILENCE** is more appropriate.

In this extended acronym for the forces at play, 'I' represents innovation, particularly the upward pressure we all face in this respect. Increasingly fickle customers want better, shinier and faster. 'L' stands for legal, for example, international trade agreements. 'E' represents environmental. Climate change being a high profile example.

'N' represents natural resources. The upward pressure of consumerism coupled with the Earth's limited supply will lead to increasing economic, political and environmental tension. 'C' stands for cognition. This is the fuel that drives innovation.

The war for talent is not new, but it is becoming more acute. Finally, 'E', extra-terrestrial, the space race. This is driving the behaviour of nations and business and will have a significant impact on the other forces.

'Abnormal' and thus continual disruption will be the backdrop to our lives going forward. As the aforementioned forces interact and compound, the future becomes essentially unknowable.

Whilst digital, at least before Covid-19, was considered the primary source of disruption, it is important to be aware of the wider forces at play.

**Nonetheless, digital technology is something that our organisations can harness to tilt the pitch to our advantage.**

In many respects, given that disruption is on the increase, the aim of the game will simply be to stay in play. Thus we find ourselves today as participants in what might be termed an infinite game. The arthritic factory model of the industrial era has no choice but to transform or perish.





# What this means for businesses day-to-day

We live and operate in a world of disruption. Rising tides, shifting sands: whatever your analogy, businesses of all kinds can't risk sitting still for fear of being swept away. Good communication is fundamental to staying ahead of any disruptive change. Of course, we would say that, but good communication can really make a difference.

We also think it's an opportunity ripe for the taking. After all, people (and businesses) can connect far more directly and deeply with other people than ever before.

**Closer connection helps build understanding and trust – so you're a short step from helping people take the actions you want or need them to take quickly and correctly.**

The data at your disposal plays a big part in making communications punch above their weight – and we very much include physical mailing here. It can drive business-critical action and clarity inside and outside a business, helping every cog in the machine turn effectively and efficiently. No 'siloes thinking' here, thank you.

Such openness keeps the business operating at speed while being able to adapt to shifting customer and market requirements at the same time. And, because disruption has a tendency to breed further disruption, we need as much foresight as possible to course-correct when faced with the unforeseen or the uncontrollable. This doesn't necessarily mean a complete change of direction, just one that keeps you moving alongside customer expectations, wherever they are going.



That's why those critical communications (and why we can't stress enough how much this includes mail, and inbound and outbound documents!) need to get to the right people when they need them, fast. Securely, accurately and efficiently. On demand.

This is the frontline of business data, after all. Get it wrong and it can compromise the speed, consistency, growth and efficiency of a business. Unfortunately, the business mailroom has traditionally worked on a hard and fast set of manual processes and physical labour. It often ticks along seemingly without issue, but it's still labour-intensive and therefore potentially error-prone.

We think there is another way, one that will speed things up but won't impose self-inflicted disruption just for the sake of it (although this chapter is about the importance of opening up to business disruption).

The pace of innovation (of restructuring business models and portfolios, even changing employee attitudes to work) applies just as much in mailroom operations as it does elsewhere in the business.

Just think about it: most businesses are pushing to become more 'customer-first' – so why not continue this with how you handle mail and incoming documents? With the right kind of digital mailroom platform in place, it's perfectly possible to move to being a more information-rich business quickly and smoothly without disrupting your day-to-day.

## What others are saying

### Disruptive Communication in Today's Digital World, USC Annenberg

<https://bit.ly/2YAewqy>

A US perspective on how digital transformation and customer/citizen communication can and should go hand-in-hand, including the different ways this can affect big companies versus start-ups.

### Public Sector Readiness in the Age of Disruption, PwC

<https://pwc.to/3C9zBWB>

Extensive report from a recent World Government Summit that outlines, among other things, how different public-sector bodies around the world are tackling the many and varied ways of communicating with citizens more effectively.

### A leader's guide: Communicating with teams, stakeholders, and communities during COVID-19, McKinsey

<https://mck.co/3Hd5xgE>

While this report is in most ways specific to 2020, there are still some important insights here around how businesses should use communication to give people the information they need, when they need it and in the way they can best consume it – to establish a relationship built on clarity and trust.

### National Data Strategy, UK Government

<https://bit.ly/3ooBMAV>

A useful insight into how the UK Government is seeking to use technology hand-in-hand with responsible, accessible data foundations to better engage with the millions of UK citizens every year.

### What is digital business transformation? The essential guide to DX, i-Scoop

<https://www.i-scoop.eu/digital-transformation/>

Delves into the importance of a holistic approach to digital business, including speaking the same language as customers to enable hyper-awareness, informed decision-making and faster execution.

## How to build a data-led business

### Data strategy



Develop a data strategy with focus on maximising the value in your data assets

### Culture, people and processes



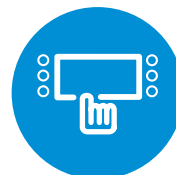
Lead by example – encourage an entrepreneurial mindset and shared accountability

### Winning as an ecosystem



Recognise the power of the data network – a shared connection between customers, partners and your business

### Technology



Tap into the new generation of technologies that help deliver quality, scale, connectivity and speed of data

### Execute fast



Start small. Test and refine. Focus on business outcomes and scale from there

NOTES

**TAKE ACTION!**

*What businesses can do to respond*

### Right now:

**Automate key mailing processes** – optimising reliability and efficiency, as well as reducing human error.

Review your inbound and outbound mailing processes.

Ask yourself these quick questions...

1. Are they as streamlined and efficient as they could be?
2. Are you able to extract vital business information from them (digitally and automatically)?
3. Are they 100% compliant?
4. Do they allow for your teams to access the data and mail remotely?
5. Can you be sure the right person in your organisation gets access to the data in their mail within 'X' days?

If you answered NO to more than two of these questions, a digital and automated mail process could see business-wide benefits to your organisation.

Contact us: 0800 748 639

### In the coming months:

**Extend customer focus into mailing operations** – connecting to valuable insight from legacy and digital processes across the business.

### In the next year:

**Establish a digital/cloud-based mailing operations environment** that improves team communications, delivers better digital tools for collaboration, and eliminates information bottlenecks.



## Chapter 2: Innovation



A foreword by  
Ade McCormack

# Cultivating a culture of innovation

As we have seen, innovation is critical to an organisation's ability to remain market relevant. Increasingly fickle customers are forcing organisations to become more innovative in order to attract and maintain the inbound flow of the market's cash. Innovation enables the organisation to provide differentiated experiences that command a high margin or high market share, or both. The background and often foreground noise of disruption will similarly drive the innovation imperative.

A new approach is required for every 'disruption architected' scenario an organisation faces. Traditionally, once an organisation had stumbled upon an idea, the goal was to build a factory and dominate the market. Such dominance often lasted for years and so the leaders could go through extended periods of 'cruise control'. Today dominance is transient at best and so the innovation velocity needs to rise to reflect this increasingly chaotic world.

As mentioned earlier in this guide, innovation requires people, so, perhaps ironically, people are more important than technology as we enter the digital age. Smart organisations will be focusing on humans AND tech. Not so smart organisations will be focused on replacing people with tech.

Innovation doesn't just apply to products and services. The biggest gains will be in the creation of new business models, including new 'go to market' approaches and financial models. The creation of new business models needs to become a core element of every business. Organisations that have only one business model are at risk.

Multiple business models mean there is no single point of failure. For this business model portfolio to be effective, it needs to be suitably diverse.

**Thus, these models need to sit not only within the organisation's primary market sector, but also in adjacent and non-adjacent markets.**

*Sounds obvious but not very many organisations operate in multiple markets from the get-go.*

*The speed at which change is happening forces companies to spread their bets from the off.*



*As previously said, efficient processes per se are not bad but if pursued too rigorously they will act as a straitjacket that stops you from evolving and staying in touch.*



The industrial era approach was like betting on one horse in the race. The post-industrial approach is betting on an array of horses.

The problem for industrial era birthed organisations is that this innovation-oriented approach is not suited to their efficiency-process oriented principles. Innovation necessitates experimentation. A consequence of experimentation is failure. Failure does not sit well when efficiency is part of the organisation's DNA.

Going forward, business leaders will need to cultivate a culture that embraces risk-taking and failure. At least this needs to be the case in respect of the new business models that are created alongside the original factory.

*Clearly there needs to be a balance here between taking a more positive attitude to risk and playing it safe. Perhaps the answer is to allocate certain individuals a budget you can afford to lose to pursue and develop new ideas. A personal R&D allowance if you like.*





# What this means for businesses day-to-day

Business leaders must foster a culture of innovation to succeed in the new data-led era.

Whisper it softly, but paper is on its way out. To those who work in the mailroom or any paper-centric role this is nothing new. People have been saying this for a good twenty years or so. Yet we're still here. The difference this time is that the pandemic ushered in wholesale changes to people's habits that saw much of our reliance on paper replaced by digital practices overnight. For example, locked down and unwilling to handle cash, stalwarts of the weekly shop switched en masse to online and mobile payment methods. Retailers responded by upping their home delivery services and offering click-and-collect alternatives to visiting a crowded store. Necessity, one might say, is the mother of innovation.

If anything, the pace of change is accelerating. In Europe a record-breaking number of trademark applications for innovations were registered in the first half of 2021 (source EU IPO). According to McKinsey, the past 18 months has seen the adoption of data-led technologies speed up by several years. They go on to say that by 2023 most companies will need to build new digital businesses to stay economically viable.

The good news is that as we enter this new data-led age the role of people is becoming more, not less, important. As Ade McCormack puts it, smart organisations are the ones that focus on people and tech together. That's because despite the unlimited innovation possibilities of digital, it amounts to nothing without human experience and ingenuity to nurture and harness it properly.

To keep pace with rapid change, companies will need to adopt new business models and an open mind to new ideas. In this new age flexibility is everything. This may mean developing two or three different product lines for related or even for non-related markets that can be quickly scaled up or down to avoid having all eggs in one basket. It also means fostering a more tolerant culture where talent is given licence to try out new ideas and approaches even at the risk of failing to meet pre-ordained performance indicators. If the experience of Covid has taught us anything, it is that innovation is essential to survive and thrive. You only have to look at the high street to see the fate that awaits those who fail to adapt and innovate fast enough.



# 5 tough conversations your business needs to have. Now.



1. How do we change management mindset to embrace experimentation and potential failure?



2. How do we encourage innovation and employee buy-in?



3. How does our organisation need to change to become more agile?



4. How can we better use partners and suppliers to drive transformation?



5. How could technology help us deliver meaningful change faster?

## What others are saying

**How Technology Will Change The Way Business Is Run In 2021 – Forbes, 4 April 2021**

<https://bit.ly/3ksrzlK>

As technology changes, so do the skills a company needs to run a future-proofed business and find long-term success.

**What Covid teaches us about innovating fast – Financial Times, 9 May 2021**

<https://on.ft.com/3n670Nx>

How a culture of experimentation saved companies in this crisis – and may in the next.

**The new digital edge: Rethinking strategy for the postpandemic era – McKinsey, 26 May 2021**

<https://mck.co/3n5Ujm1>

McKinsey survey confirms that the future will belong to companies that put technology at the centre of their outlook, capabilities and leadership mandate.

**Top Strategic Technology Trends for 2022 – 12 trends shaping the future of digital business, Gartner**

<https://qtnr.it/3c5Q17T>

## NOTES

**TAKE ACTION!** *What businesses can do to respond*

### Right now:

**Ask your staff for feedback.** What are the biggest challenges they face? How would your employees solve these problems? Encourage your staff to think big and propose the changes that will help your business grow.

### In the coming months:

**Establish partnerships** with industry experts who can help you understand new technologies and how they can be applied to your business challenges. Their knowledge and experience will help to plug gaps in your own.

### In the next year:

**Work to develop a blame-free culture** where employees are encouraged to experiment, refine processes and products, and to develop new ones. Fostering a culture of innovation will allow you to better meet the changing needs of your customers.



## Chapter 3: **Assets**



A foreword by  
Ade McCormack

# Why data is now the biggest business asset

In the famous Stanford marshmallow test, children were offered the option of having one marshmallow now or waiting a short period and then having two. The study showed that the children who were able to delay gratification went on to have better life outcomes. Organisations that focus on making profits, rather than on growing assets, are like those children who were more interested in instant gratification.



*We certainly agree with this! How much of a return do you think your data could bring to your business?*



*This is the really important bit. Everyone has lots of data – and lots of potentially valuable insight – sitting in their mailroom, waiting to be unleashed. So, how are you going to do this?*



Profits are of course attractive, but by focusing on assets organisations can create a buffer against an unknowable future.

Looking at each asset class in turn:

- **Financial capital** covers cash/cash equivalents. This is the primary currency of business.
- **Physical capital** includes, for example, property, computers and vehicles. These need to be kept to a minimum. In a disruptive world, the need to radically pivot quickly is hindered if physical assets need to be offloaded. Everything as a service is the way forward. The Cloud will be central to this.
- **Brand capital** might be defined as the difference between the cost of building the organisation and its market capitalisation. Thus, brand cultivation is the most effective way to generate value.
- **Human capital**, in particular cognitive capital, is key to delivering the innovation that organisations need to stay in play.
- **Data capital**, perhaps the new kid on the asset class block, is a largely untapped resource. All organisations are thus sitting on an 'oil field'. However, many organisations do not recognise this or have poor extraction and refinement mechanisms. Data is the fuel for harnessing the power of artificial intelligence. AI is fuelled by data. However, some leaders believe that they have a serene, glistening data lake, when in fact it is closer to a data swamp.

Given how technology is increasingly permeating our lives, data is the asset class that will give us the greatest return. However, data, per se, has no intrinsic value. The value is in its derivatives.

With the right database tools, it can lead to insight.

With the right collaboration and messaging technologies this insight can be converted into knowledge, which in turn leads to wisdom and thus better decision-making.

**The future is too unknowable not to have the protective buffer of a value creating asset.**

*We don't want to get all scary, but this is a good point. Keep your data safe!*





# What this means for businesses day-to-day

In this world of disruption, businesses are having to be much more open-minded about how to use the various assets at their disposal. Of all these assets that Ade McCormack mentioned, it is data capital where the largest gains can be made. And mail management is a critical component here (obviously, we would say this but we do think it's the case).

As discussed in the previous chapter, digitisation plays a big role in helping businesses deal with disruption effectively. Of course, we shouldn't forget that this applies to the mailroom as much as other departments. Think about it this way; a digital mailroom helps standardise communications as well as providing a way of tracking individual items. This can help eliminate errors, delays and wastage, so the right communications get to the right people as quickly as possible.

It's also the focal point for your in- and outbound data. We think, by digitising this resource, you can maximise the value and critical insight that your data can deliver to different people throughout the business. A good example of this that we've seen make a real difference in organisations involves applying AI and autonomous capabilities to core operations in order to open up business-critical information and analysis to different teams in a digestible way. This can help spread clarity over performance, including how customers are engaging with communications, how promptly this drove the intended response and the cost-effectiveness of particular campaigns.



So, that's why we think data capital has become your biggest business asset. There are loads of opportunities you can chase when you have a strong grasp of it. And we've found that, when a business makes the most of its data, this also helps enhance other areas of the business too. The best example we can think of is how shifting to a completely digital mailroom frees up 'physical capital' (traditional mailrooms tend to take up a fair bit of office space, after all). Really making the most of data from a digital mailroom can have a positive impact elsewhere in the business too.

Just think what different teams can get from plugging into all the untapped insight that's available. It can help marketing teams better understand customers (which is a shot in the arm for boosting your 'brand asset'). It can provide finance teams with the information they need to clear invoice payments as quickly as possible (never a bad thing for keeping your 'financial assets' running smoothly). Really, clever use of data is a sure-fire way of empowering your people, your 'human asset'. All possibly – we humbly suggest – from your mailroom.

## What others are saying

### **What is Data Capital and Why is it Important? Redapt**

<https://bit.ly/3D9MTDJ>

The different types of data capital and how businesses can apply technology to it to enhance its economic capital.

### **Data Assets, CFI**

<https://bit.ly/30lswp1>

Provides an overview of types of data asset and how businesses can measure returns on those assets.

### **Why Your Company Doesn't Measure the Value of its Data Assets, Douglas B. Laney, Forbes**

<https://bit.ly/3C6Pugx>

A US perspective on value and the 'modern data measurement imperative' – and how getting a handle on the economic value of data can drive new investment opportunities.






### **Understanding the value of your data assets, Deloitte**

<https://bit.ly/3bZmkp0>

A good overview of how the importance of data and its value to businesses has grown since the unique challenges of Covid-19 and disparate workforces.



# 5 steps to developing a more data-centric business

-  1. Identify what new data would be most useful and relevant to your business model and your competitive position in the market – where do you have gaps in data or no data at all?
-  2. Complete an audit of data initiatives that are already in place within your business
-  3. Identify a shortlist of quick-win or small proof of concept projects
-  4. Select a project to implement and continuously monitor, so you can gather learnings along the way
-  5. Include a cross-departmental team to allow for sharing of information and learnings to help create a culture of innovation and ideas

**TAKE ACTION!** *What businesses can do to respond*

## Right now:

**Plug the rest of the business into the mailroom** – need to boost your people’s creative and problem-solving capabilities? This is where the largely untapped data insight that flows in and out of the mailroom is really important. Investigate how to connect with it, analyse it and understand it.

## In the coming months:

**Retain your IP while transforming your mailing operations** – what about if you could transform the speed and efficiency of your mailing processes with a cloud-based, digital approach without also giving up control of your data? This is where a digital mailroom platform can be invaluable, freeing up how your mail is sent and received, without giving up any control over data insight to a third party.

## In the next year:

**Investigate pay-as-you-go mailing services** – is your fixed-asset mailroom the most efficient use of both resources and real-estate? What if you could send digital files from anywhere to be securely printed and mailed to your customers? This is certainly one way of freeing up financial and physical capital.



## Chapter 4: Leadership



A foreword by  
Ade McCormack

# What senior executives must do to lead the way in data-driven business

Traditional leadership was more a position on the company organogram than a set of behaviours. The role of leadership was to create the strategy and to be involved in any related decision-making. Industrial era leaders were (still are) risk averse and believed that past successes were indicative of future successes. They were thus loathed to deviate from a winning formula.

Unfortunately, as we have learnt, we are leaving the era of synthetic certainty, and thus past successes are no longer indicative of future success. The ensuing chaos is making the traditional command and control model look somewhat arthritic. Consequently, the window to capitalise on unforeseen opportunities is increasingly missed. Perhaps even worse, unforeseen threats are not effectively dealt with. It only takes one existential threat and its 'game over'.

Thus, to improve organisational agility, we need to move to a more decentralised model. If we take the view that a leader is anyone who influences others, whether they be a large team, a client or simply an intern, we can devolve decision-making accordingly. This has the added benefit of distributing responsibility and thus risk more evenly. We might even call this model ubiquitous leadership.

*It's almost embarrassing to keep bringing this up but there's nothing as ubiquitous as data in this day and age: that's why it's so important for leaders to have the best intelligence at their fingertips.*



*We've said it before  
and we'll say it again:  
be ready by using and  
understanding the insight  
you have lying around  
in your mailroom.*



*Because the "workplace"  
no longer means one  
office. People can work  
anywhere – but can your  
traditional mailroom keep  
up, wherever they go?*



Traditional leaders hold on to their strategic plan like a comfort blanket. In doing so, they, again, ignore unanticipated threats and opportunities. We are moving into a post-strategy world, where situational awareness is key. The fighter pilot who plans their manoeuvres in advance of entering a dog fight will not be in many dog fights. Whilst it might be too strong to say that strategy is dead, it is fair to say that business strategy increasingly needs to resemble military strategy in respect of operating in an unpredictable and chaotic theatre.

This requires a new type of leader. One who is less boss and more 'cognitive coach'. Thus, leadership will be less about the title on the business card and more about whether the leader has any genuine followers.

It may take some time for this more enlightened approach to permeate into the business world. We need the business schools and management consultancies to embrace this new approach to leadership. But they are reluctant, given their investment in the industrial era model. This is a major problem.





# What this means for businesses day-to-day

We've already mentioned change and disruption several times in this guide (sorry, but it is the way things are nowadays). Of course, this means businesses are regularly needing to restructure and consolidate what they sell and how they sell it. This is the sharp end of business evolution, and leadership needs to keep up with the changes.

As Ade McCormack rightly points out here, traditional, top-down leadership no longer cuts the mustard. How can it when leaders need to have their fingers on the pulse to respond at speed when the business heartbeat quickens. Ade calls this 'ubiquitous leadership' – a grand term for what we like to think of as always-on, ready, willing and able management. And knowledge of what's happening, what customers are thinking, what markets are doing, how behaviours are changing is vital for these new kinds of leaders. Yes, they're data-led leaders.

Which is where the mailroom comes in (but you were expecting that, weren't you?). There is so much business, market and customer insight here that data-led leaders must be connected to and empowered by. At the same time, data-led leaders must be ever-aware of regulations and compliance. The quicker you can shore up those connections with a robust digital mailroom platform in place, the faster you can reap the rewards of new levels of business clarity at your fingertips.

Just as leadership is becoming more decentralised in this way, so too are our physical work locations. The past 18 months have really put remote working on the map through necessity, and it's proven it works. Many businesses have weathered the storms of recent disruption. Now's the time to plan for the longer term, with a more flexible, open and collaborative approach to digital data and mail. Just think where you can lead your business next, with simplified, data-led processes that make it easier for more of your people to deliver value more of the time.





# 4 key management skills

Understanding the skills you need to master the digital future



### 1. Humility

Willing to accept ideas and input from any source – internal or external



### 2. Adaptability

The ability to change your mind as new ideas and evidence emerge



### 3. Vision

Communicating new and existing business goals clearly to your people



### 4. Engagement

Collaborating with customers, partners, suppliers and employees to improve your products and services

## What others are saying

### Developing a New Leadership Mindset for Data, MIT Sloan Management Review

<https://bit.ly/3wC4nWY>

A series of executive guides, covering many aspects of data-led business and how leadership can and must seize the opportunity (n.b. some content is behind a paywall).

### Chief Data Officer to Build Data & Analytics Leadership Traits, Gartner

<https://gtnr.it/3c0KwXY>

A useful insight into how the rise of data-centric leadership roles is growing in influence and impact across many businesses.

### Data Leadership: The Key to Data Value, Dataversity

<https://bit.ly/2YB8w0I>

An interview and key observations with Anthony Algmin, author of *Data Leadership: Stop Talking About Data and Start Making an Impact!*, including discussion around the framework for business data leadership that covers areas such as maximising value, ensuring governance and the importance of tying data to business outcomes.

### Three Key Steps to Prepare for Data and AI Leadership, INSEAD

<https://bit.ly/3n6QmgJ>

An excellent outline of the strategy steps that data-led business leaders must take to ensure success.

## NOTES

**TAKE  
ACTION!**

*What businesses  
can do to respond*

### Right now:

Lead the way with **compliant, data-rich digital mailing** – what if your inbound and outbound mail had a full digital audit trail? This is one way that you can make data-driven business leadership a reality – and make sure your business is in control.

### In the coming months:

Free up your people to **communicate to customers wherever they are** – what if your teams could send consistent, compliant mail from anywhere? Data-driven leaders can make a real difference by empowering their whole workforce with a data-led workspace that doesn't have to be tied to a physical mailroom, thanks to item-level tracking.

### In the next year:

Deliver **differentiated services through mailroom savings** – what would your people do with the time and effort saved from seamless, efficient, digital mailroom operations? How about reinvesting that extra resource into working on new products and services that can help differentiate your brand? That's long-term leadership thinking right there.



## Chapter 5: People



A foreword by  
Ade McCormack

# The importance of people for digital business

The industrial era model is not known for its people-centricity. The factory is a machine that turns raw materials into value. Today the raw material is often data. But do not be deceived by the 'state of the art' glass and steel architecture and soft furnishings. It belies the reality that it is still a factory. Factories, in whatever guise, are, by their design, process oriented. Efficiency is always front of mind, given the profit motive.

In this model, the HR function is largely an extension of procurement in that it is the job of HR to acquire 'living automatons' and ensure they dovetail neatly into the machine. Compliance trumps all other traits of the employee.

As mentioned elsewhere in the guide, innovation is now critical to business success. Robots and algorithms, for all their capability, cannot muster innovation. Consequently, people are now back in fashion. Innovation has been critical to our survival as a species. Cognitive capability is increasingly core to the worker's value proposition. If organisations are going to thrive in the post-industrial world, they need to move away from the efficiency/process cog model to one that is more experimental/cognitive.

Hybrid working is currently a major theme in respect of talent management. If we look at this from the cognitive management perspective, we can think of it in terms of where people will do their best work. It then becomes apparent that the place of work has to be considered on an individual basis.

*This is high up the list of must-haves for most if not all of the younger workforce nowadays. Is there flexibility in places such as the mailroom to allow people to tailor how they work to bring out the best in them?*



**Some people enjoy the high degree of autonomy that comes from working from home. Others are energised by the office buzz. A blanket policy that favours one group will have a cognitive cost.**

In some cases, the policies in respect of where the talent works is less about optimising cognition and more about showing who is boss.

This is not necessarily good news for everyone. The growing need for people to bring their brains to work will not sit easy with those of us who have 'happily' followed the process manual on a daily basis. It is imperative to realise that the new definition of talent is in being able to do something that the market values that cannot be done by a robot or algorithm.





# What this means for businesses day-to-day

There's been a lot of big numbers being thrown around when it comes to Work (with a capital W). While the past 18 months or so has been a challenge for all, many businesses have kept going by rolling out remote working policies. The thing is, while this was the case of needs must for most of 2020 and 2021, the idea of full-time, in-the-office working has lost much of its lustre now businesses are pressing the 'return to work' button.



Depending on who your market analyst of choice is, a good two-thirds of employees consistently say they want remote/hybrid options to be a significant part of their working life. And the majority of these people will look elsewhere if it's not on the table. What seemed like a short-term approach to surviving a unique and serious challenge has actually shown a lot of people that the 9-5 office isn't the only way to get things done.

What's more, the pandemic shone a light on wider issues, such as businesses that take their corporate responsibility seriously. That includes being more ethical, more sustainable, more caring. Ade McCormack talks about the shift from the industrial revolution to the digital revolution and beyond. What this shift has arguably done is put a much greater emphasis on people.

We're certainly not suggesting that you'll lose 66% of your workforce if you don't offer remote or hybrid work (talk to Gartner, McKinsey et al about that). What we are saying is people are expecting, nay demanding, safer, more fulfilling and more flexible work options. And this means the cornerstones of business, including the draughty mailroom, must adjust to the times.

- Bringing people together wherever they are with a smoother flow information
- Supporting more consistent and secure communication for your employees and customers where they want and need it
- Building a more appealing, flexible and human work environment for all your people

What if you could do this within your mailroom and make its complex processes simpler at the same time? Now there's a thought.





# 5 workforce trends to watch



## 1. Workforce composition

Teleworking, flexi-working and the use of gig workers will allow you to build flexible operations



## 2. You will have to restructure

As operations change, so will jobs, roles and responsibilities. You will need to restructure to accommodate



## 3. Your management styles will change

Top-down governance stifles innovation and creativity. You will need to develop a flat-management style to avoid stagnating as a formalised process-driven organisation



## 4. Your organisational culture will change

Encouraging experimentation and innovation will mean embracing frequent failure – and that will require a top-down change of culture



## 5. Your workers will need constant re-training

The pace of business is accelerating, and employees will need to be trained and re-trained to ensure they can adopt new technologies and techniques quickly



## NOTES

**TAKE  
ACTION!**

*What businesses  
can do to respond*

### Right now:

1. **Assess roles and responsibilities** that can realistically be performed remotely – including those on a flexi-time basis.
2. **Engage your employees** to understand what does (and does not) work when they are away from the office. Draw up a requirements list that can be used to identify technologies and solutions that will empower your workers to do more.

### In the coming months:

**Agree and implement policies** that enable and improve flexi-work for existing employees and which will also attract new talent.

### In the next year:

**Re-assess performance** against expectation and to determine skills shortfalls. Organise training or re-training where required. Look for technology to automate or outsource repetitive, low-value tasks – or any activity that draws your people away from their core responsibilities.



# In conclusion



## Conclusion

You now have a strong sense of what is required to prepare your organisation for an increasingly volatile and uncertain future. You may be surprised by the extent to which your people are central to this new model. You may be uplifted by the transition from a short-term focus on profits to a more sustainable assets building approach.

Ultimately, we need to build organisations that are optimised for all stakeholders, including the planet. In many respects, disruption has not come to destroy us, but to save us.

It is important to realise that a technology makeover in and of itself will not save a dying business model. In many cases, it's a profound transformation that's required. It's also natural for leaders to try to hold on to their old business model like a comfort blanket, but we need brave leaders who are not only willing to enter the unknown, but who are braced to make mistakes.

We are entering the infinite game where the goal is to simply stay in play. Innovation is core to this and so are your people.

*Good luck on your onward journey!*

**Ade McCormack**

Digital Transformation Advisor and Analyst



## Conclusion

We really hope you've found this advice and guidance useful. The practical steps we've outlined should help ensure your business is fit for the digital future – or at least trigger the conversations you need to get underway.

We know the mailroom is just a tiny part of your overall operations, but that's what makes it a good place to start your digital journey. An ideal opportunity to test out disruption, assets, leadership, people, and innovation and realise some disproportionately large benefits too.

Think of mailroom transformation as a relatively low-risk experiment – a chance to prove the value of innovative thinking and to score a quick win, maybe even set an example for other areas of your business.

Over the last five chapters you'll probably have noticed a common trend – change is coming. And the only way to deal with change – is to change, so we hope this guide goes some way to help you start building out ideas and plans for your digital future.

And please do contact us if you have any questions or want to discuss making the first steps towards digitising your vital business communications.

We're always here.

*All the best,*

**Your Pitney Bowes Customer Team**

Call us on  
0800 748 639  
and quote 'Digitisation'





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