

THE DEBRIEF:
**THE FUTURE OF
WORK: NEW DIGITAL
EXPERIENCES**

thebusiness|year

THE FUTURE OF WORK: NEW DIGITAL EXPERIENCES

COVID-19-related market disruption has shifted workplace digitalization into top gear, accelerating ideas that were only in their infancy. And while some are concerned about the long-term impact of a remote workforce, companies such as Twitter are embracing the change and making permanent adjustments. No matter what side of the debate you are on, the future of work has arrived.

As part of our digital roundtable events series, The Business Year brought together a panel of experts from ServiceNow to discuss solutions to digitalize workflows, drive business growth, increase resilience, and enhance employee output.



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How has COVID-19 impacted your business?

DAN GREENBAUM COVID-19 has been a major business disruptor, and we have identified four trends and challenges in the market. We have found that CEOs are not ready for disruption. While nine out of 10 CEOs say they have a digital strategy, only four out of 10 say they are prepared for disruption. In the pre-COVID-19 world, managers recognized the need to transform. But now that we are entering the post-COVID-19 world, it is clear we must be digital to survive. And with COVID-19 as a catalyst, we foresee an investment of over USD7 trillion in digital transformation in the next three years. Another trend I would like to highlight is that COVID-19 has accelerated the need to speed the transformation. Months or years to implement software are no longer acceptable; the pace has sped up to days and weeks. Disney+, Disney's video streaming business, is a good example of this. It joined ServiceNow at our global user conference and talked about how it is using technology to manage its rapidly growing customer subscription base—it has gained more than 55 million subscribers in just a few months after launching the service in late 2019. Another challenge that companies face is legacy architectures and systems that slow down processes. The pandemic has exposed weak links in supply chains, as well as companies that struggle to deliver great experiences fast. People are realizing that the 20th-century system cannot support the 21st-century digital environment.

What are the main challenges that businesses face in Spanish-speaking countries in terms of the digitalization of the work process?

RICARDO SANDOVAL I would like to start with a statistic. In February 2020, the Inter-American Development Bank said digital transformation is a crucial factor for Latin America's economic and social development. The pandemic started in March, and that month, there was a sudden acceleration of the digital transformation processes. This gave way to a huge movement toward digital transformation in Latin America. Now, the challenge is how this process will evolve. Investment surveys show that most users plan to continue spending in a digital environment. The working environment must follow the new present, not the new normal. This is the new reality for workplaces.

What are the main challenges that companies are facing to digitalize**their business models?**

EDUARDO MARTÍNEZ There are many challenges. Companies have been digitalizing themselves since the 1970s. But, today, many companies have a vertically integrated process that limits communication across the structure. Businesses today need to make sure that communication within the company flows. We help companies automate their channels to ensure streamlined communication. Businesses must be effective and efficient. Companies must curb operation costs. We help companies in their quest to automate operations across all their digital transformation processes. Challenges will not change—they will be even greater.

GABRIEL GARCÍA It is interesting to see how companies are facing the digital transformation trend. A few years ago, digitalization was seen as a sluggish train, but it has become a bullet train. In project management, we are concerned about the so-called iron triangle. The digital transformation process could also be integrated into a triangle because it consists of three parts: first, the people; then the processes; lastly, the technology. Technology is at the top of the pyramid. I was working on a project for the digital transformation process of Grupo Bimbo, for which we focused on technology—the top of the pyramid. Now, after the pandemic, Grupo Bimbo is focusing on people, the base of the pyramid. This shift looks for a transformation in user experience. The success of digital transformation does not need to be connected to technology. Digital maturity has more to do with people than technology.

What strategies can companies use to safely plan for the return of their employees to the traditional working space?

EDUARDO MARTÍNEZ The safe return of employees to the workplace is the most important aspect. Companies must have a sanitation protocol that guarantees the well-being of workers and visitors. There are other challenges that companies are facing, such as productivity performance indicators. These need to improve. We help companies to identify and solve these issues. Communication must be quick. The experience needs to be good, and we can help in that area. We can help in supporting customers to improve their customer experience. Our tools can increase customer satisfaction and boost productivity. In short, we can help firms improve their quality and optimize costs.

The retail industry was one of the hardest hit by COVID-19. What are the main challenges facing companies in this sector that are digitalizing their processes?

GABRIEL GARCÍA The pandemic will have a short-term effect as the retail sector experiences many challenges, including logistics, marketing, sales, cash flow, and others. The priorities of digital transformation will shift toward engagement, which is a key word. Today, we have many channels to reach out to customers in the retail sector, which poses a challenge in the companies' decision making process regarding workforce requirements. The leaders who have started the transformation can now prepare to make the most out of their operation when the situation returns to normal. Lately, we have seen that resiliency is essential for the retail sector. These companies must be able to deliver their products regardless of the situation. There are also changing consumer trends, such as contactless home delivery, for instance. With this focus on end customers, Service-Now has developed tools to support customers in four areas. First, we help them validate how they are managing the large volume of calls from clients who seek information to buy in a different manner. Secondly, we explore the problems that companies have when monitoring their stock levels. Thirdly, we have a conversation with them to integrate information from different origins. Fourthly, we discuss the client's challenges to monitor the health of their employees and their capacity to work. To sum it up, and as short-term recommendation, I want to stress the components of the digital transformation pyramid. We focus on the experience of clients and employees. We need to provide a satisfactory purchase experience for clients; otherwise, it is useless.

How prepared are companies to implement digital strategies, and what are your recommendations to speed up the process in LATAM?

EDUARDO MARTÍNEZ Unfortunately, companies were under-

prepared for these situations. Some businesses are still lagging behind, and many are not yet ready for potential future events. Uncertain events will continue to happen in the future, and companies need to be ready. I would recommend businesses automate their functions. Digital transformation is connected to work automation. The decisions need to be made automatically, and the bottlenecks that could generate inefficiencies should be avoided. We help companies do their job better through automation. We can help businesses plan for uncertain events and learn how to cope with them. We are seeking indicators that allow us to forecast demand, supply, and the challenges that might come in the near future. In the telecommunications sector, which is a sector that has experienced huge demand in recent months, we help companies ensure they are providing their services at the highest quality possible.

RICARDO SANDOVAL We are not sufficiently prepared. In recent years, we have transformed the way we work. Now, I can use my cellphone to check the weather or go to work in an Uber, for instance. This is a change that has taken place in recent years. Companies were already starting to see a gap between personal and work lives, but they did not consider that almost everyone would suddenly have to work remotely. We were all aware of this trend, but the pandemic speeded up those changes. We knew it would happen, but not this soon.

GABRIEL GARCÍA Companies that were not prepared to offer their products and services online were not able to adapt or act quickly. This is particularly the case for businesses that depended on physical interactions. On the other hand, companies that were already embracing the idea of change were able to quickly implement the digital transformation process. Some businesses are implementing this process well, due to their positive mentality toward change. This forward-looking mindset has been the most important factor. ✖

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