

# THE EVOLVING WORKPLACE:

HOW GLOBAL TRENDS ARE HITTING HOME FOR SMBS

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## What might the *now normal* of work look like?

You walk around your office on a typical Monday morning. The floor is not buzzing with business conversations or idle chatter. Desks are socially distanced, most of which sit unfilled, some with tall plexiglass partitions in between. You swing by the lonely coffee station, just before your meeting knowing there won't be a line of people waiting. There's no leftover box of donuts, croissants, or pastry of choice to scavenge. You enter the conference room to lead your weekly team recap. Few employees are scattered about a large once crowded table. The rest of your key

staff members are virtually congregated in little boxes filling the monitor attached to the wall.

The above scenario is a far cry from what many office environments looked like prior to 2020, but not too far-fetched from how they might look now or in the coming future. While we don't know what the final state of work will look like, one thing is clear, we are no longer operating with the same linear office model with everyone in the office at the same time.

Whatever the future brings, three factors are clear:

- Many corporate offices will look a lot different than they did in 2019
- More employees are expecting to work from home (at least part of the time)
- Digital collaboration platforms will be more essential than ever before



## Remote work is growing in global proportions

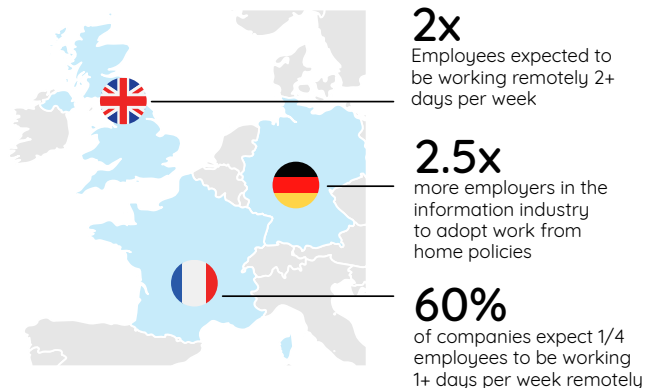
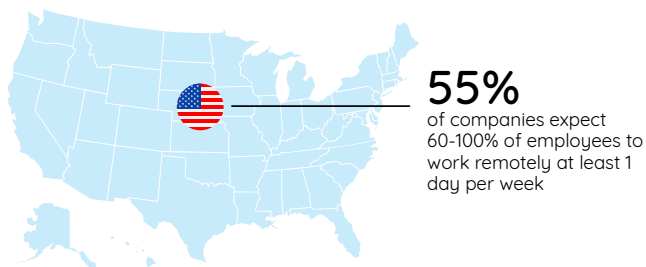
Based on a global study by Tata Consulting, on average 40% of the (corporate) workforce expects to be working from home five years from now. In particular, this refers to knowledge workers whose jobs are primarily completed on a computer. Experts say that businesses will be operating with a hybrid workforce at least for the first part of this decade as study after study echoes similar predictions:

Vertical	Employees working primarily remotely before 2020	Employees working primarily remotely by 2025	% Growth in Remote Workforce
Life Sciences/ Healthcare	4.6%	36.4%	+691%
Utilities	8.8%	42.6%	+384%
Insurance	11.8%	37.8%	+220%
Public Services (Gov't Agencies)	12.5%	38.3%	+206%
Banking & Financial Services	14.8%	44.1%	+197%

Source: <https://www.consultancy.eu/news/5273/research-40-of-employees-will-work-from-home-by-2025>

Across several verticals globally, executives are expecting exponential growth in the number of employees splitting their time between home and office. On average 3X as many employees will be working primarily

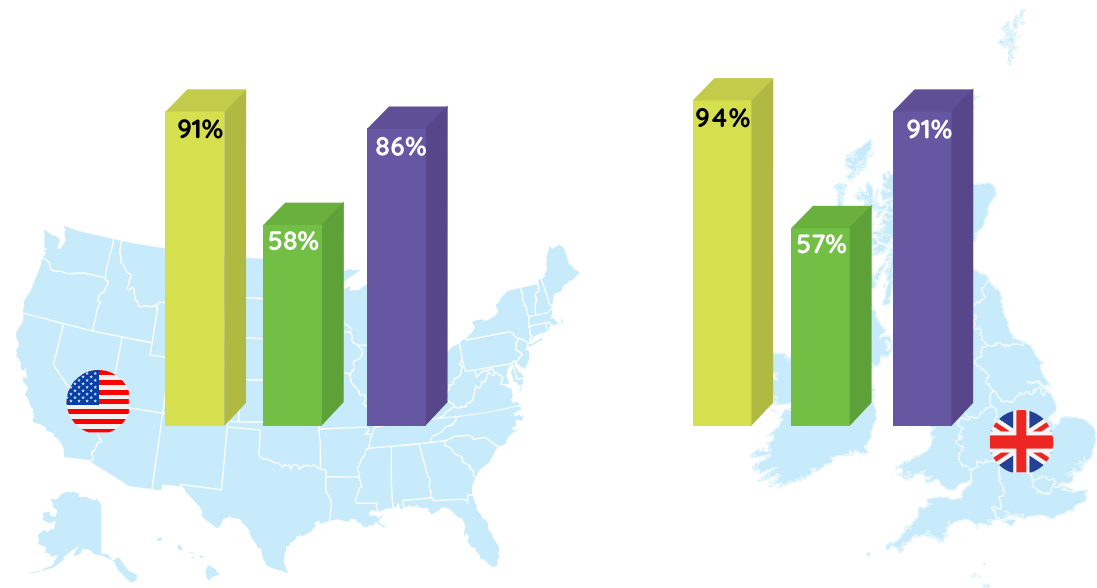
remotely by 2025. Even industries that may not lend themselves as easily to a remote work environment are adapting and anticipating changes in their employee infrastructure.



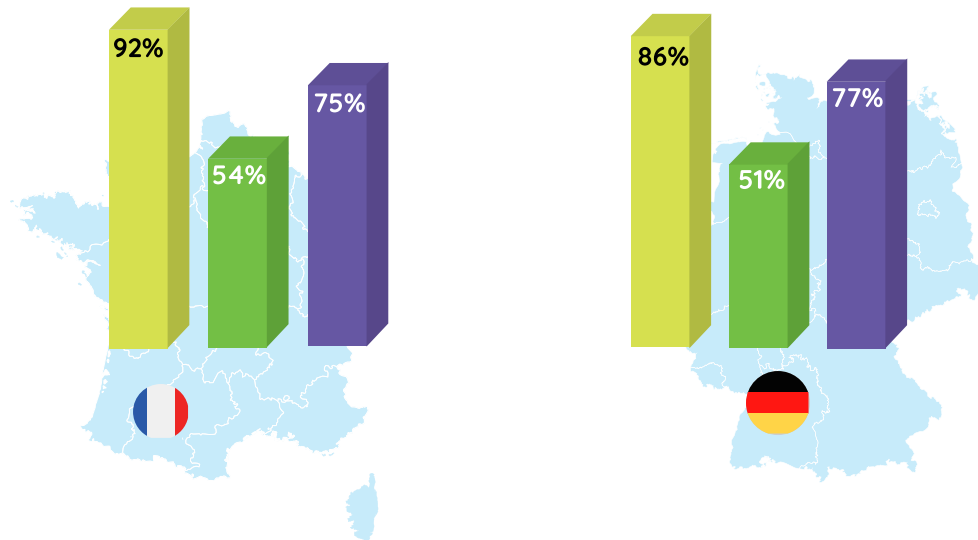
## Top business priorities shifting in light of remote work trends

As a result of this shift to remote work, businesses have adjusted their operational priorities to make a hybrid workforce model sustainable. According to the World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report, accelerating digitalization of work processes and automating tasks are top priorities currently being addressed by enterprises worldwide.

The same goes for small to medium businesses who are taking the initiative and following their enterprise-level counterparts. Many SMBs have realized that digital transformation or implementing digital tools into their workflow is no longer a choice but a necessity.



■ Accelerate Digitalization of Work Processes    
 ■ Accelerate Automation of Tasks    
 ■ Provide more opportunities for remote work



The Small Business Digitalization and COVID-19 Survey conducted by IDC found that investing in technology that supports employees when working remotely is one of the top strategic objectives being employed by SMBs to ensure and maintain organizational resilience. In fact, cloud-based collaboration tools were the number one priority investment for small businesses regardless of the organization's stage of transformation.

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CLOUD TECHNOLOGY, ADVANCED ANALYTICS, AND AUTOMATION – SAW A SPIKE IN INVESTMENTS FROM 30% TO 50% OF ORGANIZATIONS (IN 2020). THE DIGITAL IMPERATIVE WAS KEY TO COMPETITIVENESS BEFORE THE PANDEMIC, AND IS KEY TO SURVIVAL NOW

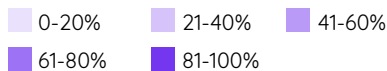
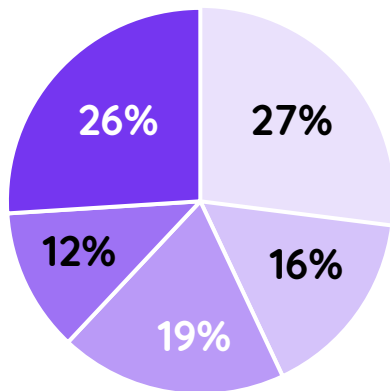
Tata Consultancy Services, Remote Working Survey, November 2020.



## Remote possibilities for SMBs

Quadient asked attendees of a recent webinar dedicated to small to medium businesses to project where they see themselves working by 2022. As illustrated below, there was no clear answer. The headline, based on these results, is no one is exactly sure. But it is evident, 100% aren't going back to pre-2020 office models once this pandemic is behind us.

How much time do you anticipate working in the office in 2022



Source: Hybrid Communications for a Hybrid Workforce Webinar Poll, March, 2021.



The landscape is still evolving and most SMBs are still uncertain as to what the future might bring and what their workforce might look like. The key takeaway is that agility and flexibility will

be essential to navigating what lies ahead. However, the advantage of being an SMB, versus a large enterprise, is you can turn the ship quicker.

## Shattering the myths of remote work

There are, however, some company leaders that may still have reservations about how productive a hybrid workforce can be going forward and would like nothing more than to get things back to “normal.” Historically, the perception in many organizations has been if employees were not seen, they weren’t working—or at least not working as effectively as in the office. Employers were hesitant to have employees working from home, due to their fear that it would significantly cut their productivity. A few key studies have debunked this long-standing hypothesis and ironically revealed opposite findings. A recent Gartner survey observed 83% of employees were as productive or more productive prior to 2020.

According to Gartner, 2020 was the “world’s largest remote work pilot.” This unintentional experiment on a global scale shattered one of the most enduring myths among organizational leadership: You can’t trust employees to do their jobs if you can’t see them. In fact, 44% said they were slightly to significantly more productive than the prior year.



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Source: Gartner HR Lessons Webinar  
Poll, December 2020



You could argue, well, of course, employees are going to say they were more productive. However, 94% of 800 employers surveyed by Mercer, a human resources and workplace benefits consulting firm, said that employee productivity was the same or higher than it was before the pandemic, even with their employees working remotely.

What Mercer found was that productivity remained strong amid the worst conditions for working remotely, considering initially remote workers had to deal with the intense stress of a worldwide global health crisis, compounded responsibilities of having children, partners, spouses, or roommates at home, and yet they were able to remain productive or increase their productivity.

Gartner also observed that remote work did not dilute corporate culture. 76% of newly remote employees felt that their organization's culture improved for the better since they started working remotely versus only 24% that believe it got worse. In a way, the addition of collaborative technology ironically humanized the colleagues that we used to only see in the office. Having a peek into their lives as they juggled the challenges that came along with lockdowns, as well as having the shared experience of this worldwide event, gave many a new perspective and new respect for their co-workers which actually helped deepen relationships.

For now and the near future, many businesses will have teams that will continue to work at least partly remotely. For some, it will be a tougher cultural shift. Some executives believe those new to the workforce like Generation Z will lose out on the benefit and inherent learnings that daily on-site interaction brings. But as stated earlier, this did not seem to be the case for many employees. Keep in mind Generation Z are more accustomed to having technology as a part of their lives than any other demographic.



## Adding agility and flexibility with digital platforms

The ability to respond to market changes while remaining efficient and delivering the best customer experience is more important than ever before. But how do you build an effective outbound document process when your employees are working virtually? How do you manage outgoing customer communications to ensure materials are clear, consistent, and relevant? An outbound document automation platform can help bridge any gaps. With cloud-based technology, the software is accessible from anywhere. For SMBs there are automation platforms that are equally as robust and accessible as those used by large enterprises, but intuitive enough and easily implemented into your existing ERP or infrastructure.

As you anticipate the longer-term effects of the “now normal”, your ultimate success will rely upon your organization’s ability to stay nimble and navigate unforeseen changes. Flexible, scalable, and affordable outbound document automation solutions put your SMB on the digital fast track allowing you and your organization to collaborate virtually as well as or even more effectively than before.

**THE ADVANTAGE OF BEING AN SMB,  
VERSUS A LARGE ENTERPRISE,  
IS YOU CAN TURN THE SHIP QUICKER**



## Building your organization for the future

There are many ways a single outbound customer communication platform can support and streamline your outbound document process. Expanding to digital delivery channels like email, SMS text or a dedicated customer portal not only lets you communicate with customers according to their preference but reduces your reliance on paper-based processes. If paper-based communication is still essential to your business you can assign that task to a secure outsourced facility and reallocate internal staff to higher value projects.

Automating business-critical processes helps offload low-value tasks and utilize employee skills to their fullest. By integrating simple applications into your back office processes you will enhance and accelerate employee productivity, deliver a better customer experience while driving operational efficiency. Ultimately you will help your employees to be as productive and engaged whether they are working on or off-site.

A hybrid workforce doesn't have to be a challenge or a daunting concept. Think of it as an opportunity to redefine and reinvent how your organization conducts business. Once you have a cost-effective, flexible

and scalable solution, you can support employees wherever they are. Consider the many advantages of having remote employees. From a financial perspective, remote workers cost less because companies can maintain a smaller office footprint, reduce electricity bills, and/or do not need to buy as much furniture and equipment.

Automating manual and menial mail-related tasks will not only make your business more nimble but will help you make the best use of your resources. In addition, as a more digitally mature

business you will be able to respond faster to fluctuating market conditions and rebound quickly from whatever might come your way.

Factor out the stress of a global pandemic and it could be the work situation many seasoned employees have been dreaming of for years. Think of it as a sound investment in the future of your business that will deliver many great returns down the road. The cultural shift may not be easy at first, but if your business survived 2020, you can pretty much accomplish anything.



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## About Quadient®

Quadient is the driving force behind the world's most meaningful customer experiences. By focusing on Intelligent Communication Automation, Parcel Locker Solutions and Mail-Related Solutions, Quadient helps hundreds of thousands of customers worldwide simplify the connection between people and what matters.

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