How CIOs Can Help Build a Resilient Hybrid Organization
The hybrid organization is here to stay. Learn from CIOs who have fortified their teams and culture during the pandemic and have managed to thrive in the past year.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a catalyst that has accelerated the shift to hybrid work. It’s clear now that hybrid work is far from a temporary situation driven by crisis — it is here to stay. Three-quarters (75%) of the workforce expect flexible working arrangements and 39% would leave their current positions if their employers were to go back to a fully on-site model. ¹

However, many organizations cannot continue with hybrid work as they have begun. Ninety-six percent of HR leaders report they are increasingly concerned when it comes to employee well-being, and 93% are more specifically concerned about employee burnout. ¹ Key business outcomes such as innovation and productivity rate far lower on the scale of concern — at 53% and 59%, respectively. ²

CIOs must work with the leaders of their organizations to help build and establish a resilient and adaptive approach to work, culture and collaboration that will help their employees thrive in a hybrid future.

Here are three approaches CIOs have taken to help their teams and organizations thrive in the past year:
1. Use Team Charters to Build an Adaptive and Resilient Work Culture

Even before the pandemic struck, Thales North America had embarked on a journey to shape the enterprise’s working culture so it could flex and adapt to business, customer and team members’ needs while optimizing performance and maintaining motivation. An essential part of its “smart working” solution was to allow its teams to define their own ways of working in the new environment so that the changes made sense for the individual employee, the business and its customers (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Thales Team Charter Discussion Framework

**Team Charter Discussion Framework**
Illustrative

A facilitator guides teams through team charter discussion questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How We Collaborate</th>
<th>How We Work</th>
<th>How We Manage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Building the Team:</strong> How do we build and maintain team cohesion while making the customer a priority?</td>
<td><strong>Managing Flexibility:</strong> How do we make flexibility the norm while serving the customer?</td>
<td><strong>Monitoring and Measuring Performance:</strong> Do we manage by outcomes that prioritize customers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communicating:</strong> What do we expect for communication between the team and with customers?</td>
<td><strong>Sharing Space in the Workplace:</strong> Does our workspace represent us positively with customers?</td>
<td><strong>Managing Information Securely:</strong> How do we protect customer data in the extended workspace?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ensuring Colleagues’ Well-Being:</strong> How do we support our colleagues’ health and well-being wherever they are working?</td>
<td><strong>Holding Effective Meetings:</strong> How do we challenge meetings culture to deliver on customer needs more effectively?</td>
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Adapted From Thales

By allowing each team to build its own team charter that outlines the team’s new approach to work, Thales helped increase employee buy-in while granting a sense of ownership and accountability. This approach also builds cultural resilience as teams become empowered to make decisions and respond when business or customer needs change.
Thales North America CIO Kevin Neifert was part of the committee that implemented this initiative and found it to be highly beneficial to his own IT organization. “Thales’ Smart Working initiative has made our IT organization more flexible and effective and, at the same time, it has improved morale, which has helped keep attrition low in the current competitive market for IT employees,” said Neifert.

2. Use Shared OKRs to Foster Trust and Enable Resource Sharing

The IT team at Co-operators realized that, in order to be able to quickly realign resources as enterprise priorities changed, it needed to develop the right leadership mindsets and resource management processes. Jean-Francois Gingras, VP, corporate solutions and IT business office at Co-operators, tackled this need by defining a common set of performance objectives, aka objective and key results (OKRs), for his entire group (see Figure 2). The OKRs are then cascaded down the levels and, as such, get more personalized, depending on the nature of the work and capabilities. These shared OKRs are also incorporated into individual performance assessments so leaders are more open to reassigning staff to shared priorities.
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Adapted from Co-operators

Gingras also established a work backlog that is shared by the entire function so all teams’ priorities are more transparent. This approach enabled teams at Co-operators to change and modify their objectives on the fly as business needs change. Shared OKRs also improved collaboration among interdependent teams by aligning their goals while providing individual employees with a sense of purpose aligned to the organization's strategic goals.

3. Help Organizations Shape Hybrid Work

CIOs have a key role to play in shaping return-to-work policies organizations will need to be resilient as they move to a hybrid work model. The CIO of Evonik worked with the CHRO and Evonik’s hybrid/remote work committee to survey employees for valuable insight. The results were used to help the committee plan for a future in which it anticipates that around one-third of its workforce will continue to work remotely at least part of the time.
The survey sought to understand employee expectations about work beyond the pandemic to tailor communications around new work policies. It also measured employee commutes to find opportunities to reduce the stress and environmental cost of travel — a key consideration as employees are asked to return to the office. Evonik's CIO used this data to support the funding for building improved collaboration platforms for Evonik's employees.

by Emily Tan

Endnotes

1 2021 Gartner Hybrid Work Employee Survey

2 2021 Gartner Hybrid Work HR Leader Survey
Actionable, objective insight

Position your IT organization for success. Explore these additional complimentary resources and tools for CIOs:

- **Resource Center**
  - CIOs Role in Digital Transformation
  - Insights, advice and tools to help CIOs address their top challenges.

- **Research**
  - The Gartner CIO Agenda
  - Leadership, organizational and technology priorities CIOs must address.

- **Tool**
  - Gartner BuySmart™
  - Reduce costs, avoid pitfalls and buy technology with confidence.

- **Webinar**
  - The Art of the 1-Page Strategy: Storytelling Enables Business Growth
  - Use storytelling to accelerate business growth and drive digital.

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