

A Forrester Consulting
Thought Leadership Spotlight
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Power Your Firm's Intelligent Digital Workplace With Digital Document Processes



Building an intelligent digital workplace is critical to survive in the 2020s.



Future-proofing their technology requires organizations to rely on reimagined platforms.

Introduction

In 2020, the pandemic forced companies to shift to remote working and accelerate their digital transformation efforts. Leading firms have responded by employing technical agility, deepening their customer understanding, and adopting new models of work. With the future of the work being virtual and digital, it became critical for businesses to build an intelligent digital workplace to survive in the 2020s and accelerate out of the crisis.

The vision for these new intelligent digital workplaces: a digital work environment where employees can develop and communicate content between one another and their customers in a highly automated and responsive way. Forrester has shown empirically that creating such an environment fosters business growth, improves employee experience (EX), and enables continuous business operations.¹ But for most companies, elevating their digital experiences by converging digital content and collaboration functions hasn't come easy, with suboptimal and disconnected technologies hindering true success.

Adobe commissioned Forrester Consulting to research the challenges facing organizations and what firms can do to accelerate successful intelligence digital workplaces. Forrester conducted an online survey with 450 senior IT and business decision-makers based in North America, western Europe, and APAC with responsibilities for digital document processing at their organizations to evaluate how contemporary platform-oriented solutions are transforming the workplace for the future of work and to explore the importance of digital document processes in doing so.²

KEY FINDINGS

- › **The workplace transformation is accelerating, but outdated technology is a major challenge.** The sudden need to support hybrid work styles and delivery models highlighted the disconnects and inefficiencies of legacy enterprise collaboration (EC) and communication solutions. Organizations are now prioritizing technology platforms and bundles over these individual technologies.
- › **Connecting content and communications using digital document processes can deliver a seamless intelligent digital workplace.** Future-proofing their technology requires organizations to rely on reimagined platforms, practices, and partnerships that ignite innovation, automation, and collaboration from all corners of the organization. Within that, digital document processes can contribute to connecting and automating content creation and communications — two foundational elements enabling an intelligent digital workplace.
- › **Integrating pragmatic intelligent capabilities within digital document processes with collaboration tools is fundamental to success.** With the growing adoption of this platform model, the expansion of digital document processes will continue. For instance, 42% of APAC respondents say the pandemic has caused their organizations to accelerate adoption of e-signature capabilities, and one in three ranks document analytics and insights capabilities as a key benefit of digital document processes in a post-pandemic world.

Workplace Transformation Has Accelerated

Rapid digital transformation, the increase of remote working, and recessionary cost pressure have accelerated the workplace transformation to become more digital and intelligent and extend the home office and beyond. This has pushed organizations to look for new technology solutions and equipment to support hybrid work styles and to leverage emerging and reemerging intelligent technologies to prepare for the future of work.

- **APAC firms were less prepared to support remote work than firms in other regions.** Only 13% of APAC respondents consider e-signature to be a standard protocol in their organizations vs. 62% in North America. As a result, they had to adapt to the surge in remote workers by adopting more collaboration and productivity tools: 90% of APAC respondents say their organizations have provided employees with technologies to assist or improve remote work — or planned to by the end of 2020.
- **Among various intelligent workplace technologies, organizations are prioritizing technology platforms and bundles over individual technologies.**³ Integrating digital document processes with everyday productivity applications has become very important or critical for 59% of APAC respondents (see Figure 1). They do not consider digital document processes as a “point solution” anymore but as an integral part of the IT landscape.
- **The convergence of content and communication pushes decision-makers to rethink their enterprise collaboration technologies.** A deep integration between systems of record and systems of engagement with collaboration assets is a key requirement for an intelligent digital workplace. On one hand, it generates insights these systems can respond to for more effective business processes, and on the other hand, it enables employees to efficiently develop, collaborate on, and share content within and outside their organizations.
- **Document creation and consumption are evolving and will require new technologies.** Reading experience on mobile devices is improving, laying an important part of the foundation for future intelligent extraction of data and structure from static PDFs.⁴
- **Businesses are leveraging new forms of data analytics and insights.** For instance, one in three business leaders in APAC rank document analytics and insights capabilities as a key benefit of digital document processes in a post-pandemic world (that increases to 62% of decision-makers in Hong Kong).

But implementing intelligent digital workplaces comes with challenges. Organizations tend to rely too heavily on legacy technology and subpar technology selections. The result is a collection of point solutions with no single consistent platform. This is hindering remote employees and making it impossible to effectively collaborate or access work resources. So what key features should organizations prioritize to create an intelligent digital workplace?



The convergence of content and communication pushes business leaders to rethink their enterprise collaboration technologies.

Figure 1

“In your opinion, which of the following features provided by digital document processes and tools are the most important in supporting your organization’s business continuity and agility?”

(Displaying “Very important” + “Critical requirement”)

59% Document data integration with critical business systems

60% Document process integration with everyday productivity applications

Base: 200 senior IT and business decision-makers based in APAC with responsibilities for digital document processing at their organizations
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Adobe, June 2020

Better Integrating Content And Communications: A Key Feature For An Intelligent Digital Workplace

Seventy percent of respondents in Australia and New Zealand report improving employee collaboration as a top challenge. This shows the urge to get ready for the future of work and set the technology foundation for enterprise collaboration — by integrating digital documents creation and e-signatures with employee instant messaging tools, for instance. Steering away from “point solutions” to instead connecting these assets and adopting a platform approach eliminates repetitive and mundane tasks and contributes to the transformation of the workplace to become people-centric, intelligent, and digital.

- **Improving enterprise collaboration is top of mind ...** Global software technology decision-makers say that enterprise collaboration (EC) is critical: 36% of those who are adopting collaboration software have implemented it or are in the process of doing so; a further 25% are upgrading or expanding their current software.⁵ Solutions such as e-signature are following a similar trend, but adoption in APAC is slower than in other regions: 42% of respondents say the pandemic has accelerated the adoption of e-signature capabilities at their organizations vs. 63% in North America and 56% in Western Europe. A key barrier in APAC is the perception that regulatory support does not exist despite the presence of supporting legislation in almost all jurisdictions; 28% of APAC respondents report the lack of regulatory support for electronic approvals as a barrier to deploying digital document processes vs. 16% in North America.
- **... and leads to direct business results.** In 2020, respondents from organizations with no digital document processes reported 10x more at-risk customers and 2x more at-risk revenue than those from other companies. Forrester’s Employee Experience Index (EXi) also shows that 90% of employees who are satisfied with their collaboration technologies are highly engaged.⁶ More specifically, improved employee collaboration (55%) and increased customer satisfaction (48%) rank among the top three benefits linked with digital document processes post-pandemic in APAC.

ENTERPRISE COLLABORATION ECOSYSTEMS MUST BECOME HIGHLY AUTOMATED AND RESPONSIVE

Firms used to focus their automation efforts on disruptive, transformational efforts, but the shock of the pandemic has revealed weaknesses in neglected back-office processes. For instance, only 11% of permits, registrations, and licensing processes; 22% of new account opening processes; and 22% of loan application operated in APAC are fully digitalized (see Figure 2). Even more alarming: A fifth of loan applications conducted in India today are fully paper based.



“We are seeing an acceleration in user adoption of digital document processes. The key factor driving it is the need to increase collaboration and keep projects moving.”

HR director, advertising and marketing company, Germany



Figure 2

“To the best of your knowledge, please indicate the level at which each of the following processes is managed using digital tools (vs. paper based).”

(Displaying “Fully digital”)

22% New account opening processes

24% Policy support and service

22% Loan application

11% Permits, registrations, and licensing processes

2% Tax collection forms

14% Law enforcement, corrections, and court forms

Base: 200 senior IT and business decision-makers based in APAC with responsibilities for digital document processing at their organizations
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Adobe, June 2020

As a result, organizations have reprioritized projects overnight with solutions that leverage existing platforms or apply general-purpose technologies rising to the top as part of recovery efforts. When this strategy is applied to the workplace, organizations are looking at better integrating and automating content development and communications functions through a reimagining of processes supported by low-code/no-code office productivity and e-signature tools.

- › **In 2020, firms shifted their automation focus to back-office processes and business resilience.** In 2019, firms focused their automation efforts on transformation and growth, but a year later, the COVID-19 pandemic uncovered weaknesses in back-office processes that have been neglected. Shoring up these weaknesses has become a strategic priority. Decision-makers want to know where their operational processes are most exposed and what emerging technologies they need to fix them.⁷
- › **Workflow automation is a central piece of intelligent workplace technologies.** Sixty percent of APAC decision-makers consider document workflow automation an important feature to support business continuity and agility. It helps to connect and automate content creation and collaboration — two foundational elements enabling an intelligent digital workplace.

Digital Document Processes Are Fundamental To Succeed In A Post-Pandemic World

Forrester research established that the 2020s will be different: “In the 2010s, the cloud created a predictable pattern of digital disruption; however, by 2019, digital sameness had set in. At the same time, firms were recognizing the rising power of the employee and planning for the future of work influenced by AI and automation. The COVID-19 pandemic put an exclamation point at the end of the 2010s and catalyzed the 2020 change imperative.”⁸

- › **New work models are emerging in a post-pandemic world.** Sixty-five percent of the APAC workforce is now working remotely on a regular basis.⁹ That’s up from 15% pre-pandemic. And remote working is here to stay with respondents anticipating 36% of their workforce continuing to work remotely on a regular basis. Organizations must pick and provide technology to support the three work models coexisting in a post-pandemic world (back to the office, hybrid, and mostly anywhere).¹⁰
- › **Pragmatic intelligent capabilities such as digital document processes are taking center stage.** Over the next three years, practical intelligent and AI capabilities will elevate the capabilities of both robotic process automation (RPA) and digital process automation (DPA) technologies, leading to resilient and scalable back-office processes through intelligent automation.¹¹



Despite global economic uncertainty, expansion of digital document processes will continue.

DIGITAL DOCUMENT PROCESSES CONTRIBUTE TO AN INTELLIGENT DIGITAL WORKPLACE

In this environment, organizations must equip their digital workplaces with intelligent technology to become more resilient, agile, and scalable. They are looking for low-code solutions that can connect to their existing enterprise applications and automate their processes. Being more adaptable allows them to respond to unexpected situations more efficiently — from hiring and onboarding employees remotely to circulating and approving an emergency procurement plan. For that, they must get their basics right with strong digital document processes capabilities.

- › **Despite global economic uncertainty, expansion of digital document processes will continue.** In fact, APAC organizations will increase their spend on digital document processes by 51% on average in the next 12 months. Over the same period, adoption will increase too, with nearly half of APAC organizations (46%) implementing these solutions for the first time or expanding their current use. This is a significant increase at a time when business leaders are tasked with reducing spend; even so, this growth remains slower than in other regions (63% in North America and 56% in western Europe). Prior to the pandemic, APAC organizations had not digitized their document processes on the same scale of other regions (only 40% of surveyed knowledge workers said their organizations used digital document processes vs. 57% in North America) and now need to double down their efforts to accelerate their transition to digital document processes.
- › **Digital document processes are key to create an intelligent digital workplace and elevate your organization's digital maturity.** Decision-makers now view digital document initiatives at much higher levels of importance, equal to or greater than previous leading initiatives such as expanding automation capabilities, moving to the cloud, and developing agile capabilities (see Figure 3). Due to the far-reaching business impact and potential for business acceleration of digital document processes, decision-makers now see them as foundational elements required for continuity, agility, and ongoing resilience.



“Digital document technologies enable mobility for workers, applications, and data.”

*Chief operations officer,
state government institution,
Australia*



Figure 3

“In your opinion, how important are each of the initiatives and technologies below in elevating your organization's digital maturity?”

(Displaying “Very important” + “Critical requirement”)



69%

Adopting digital document processes and tools



59%

Expanding automation capabilities



66%

Strengthening and monitoring regulatory compliance



64%

Developing agile and DevOps capabilities



56%

Migrating to the cloud

Base: 200 senior IT and business decision-makers based in APAC with responsibilities for digital document processing at their organizations
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Adobe, June 2020

Key Recommendations

Forrester's in-depth survey of 450 senior IT and business decision-makers based in North America, Europe, and APAC yielded several important recommendations:



Reduce technology impediments by prioritizing supporting remote/hybrid working arrangements. Corporate EX, technology, and facilities stakeholders must ensure exceptional technology experiences regardless of location. Invest in cloud-based alternatives to remote working technology and in modern collaboration tools to support your anywhere-work strategies/hybrid workforce.



Develop an enterprise collaboration roadmap for maximum business impact. Isolated pockets of EC technologies will only take your firm so far. To fully realize your potential to transform the way your business works, you must develop a unique EC strategy that drives an integrated, contextual engagement workplace.

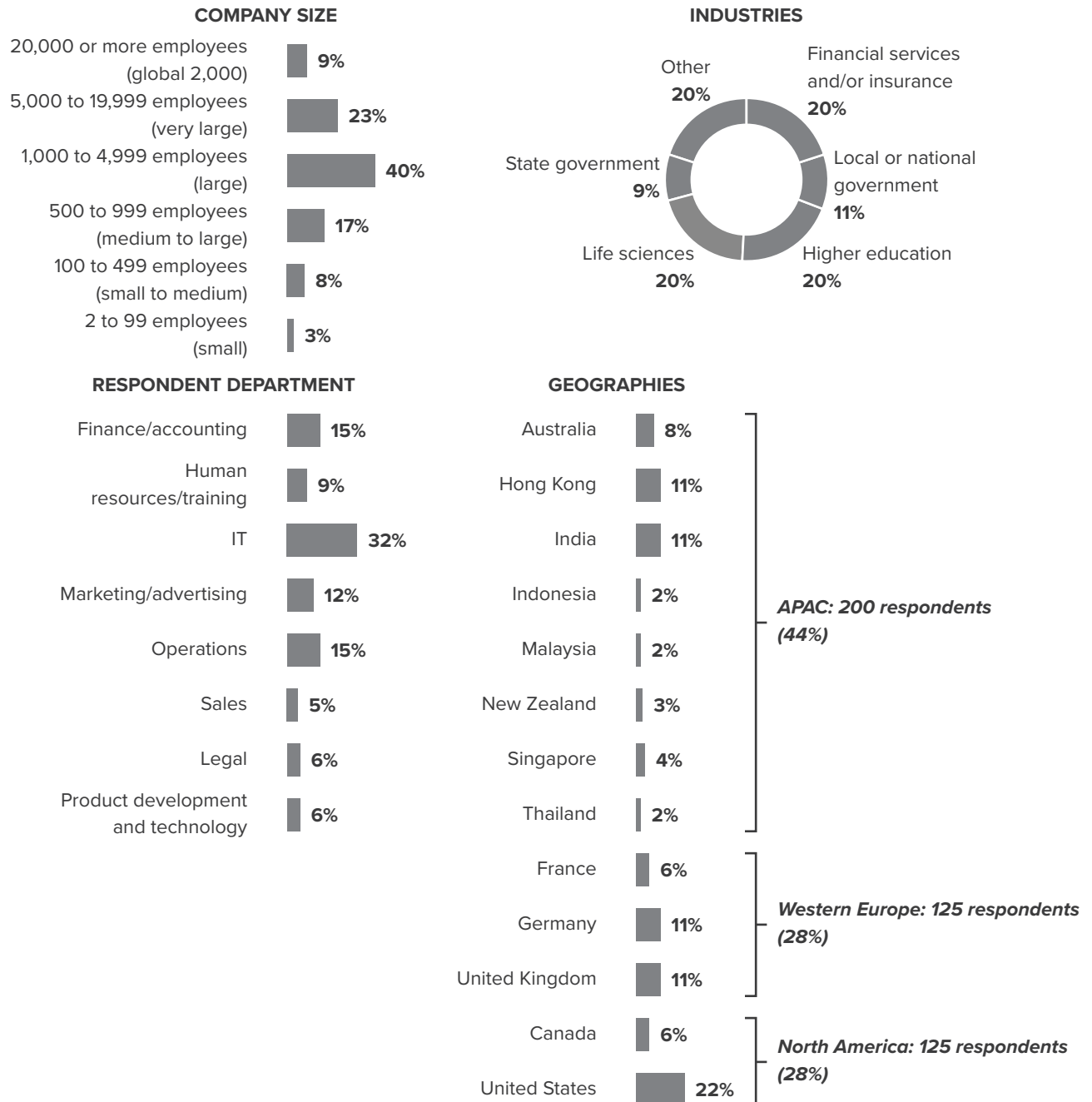


Start by extracting and digitizing documents at scale. Bring immediate benefit to your organization by identifying and digitizing key use cases that slow or delay business value due to manual or paper-based steps. For that, prioritize highly integrated and pragmatic solutions over “point solutions,” which will maximize collaboration capabilities and scalability.

Appendix A: Methodology

In this study, Forrester conducted an online survey of 450 senior IT and business decision-makers based in North America, Europe, and APAC with responsibilities for digital document processing at their organizations to explore how digital document processes are supporting business continuity. The study began in May 2020 and was completed in June 2020.

Appendix B: Demographics



Base: 450 senior IT and business decision-makers based in North America, Europe, and APAC with responsibilities for digital document processing at their organizations

Note: Percentages may not total 100 because of rounding.

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Adobe, June 2020

Appendix C: Supplemental Material

RELATED FORRESTER RESEARCH

“Trend: Intelligent Automation And AI Change The Organizational Structure As We Know It,” Forrester Research, Inc., August 13, 2020.

“The Forrester Tech Tide™: Digital Workspace Tech For Employee App Enablement, Q2 2019,” Forrester Research, Inc., April 16, 2019.

“Predictions 2021: Automation,” Forrester Research, Inc., October 21, 2020.

Appendix D: Endnotes

¹ Source: “Gain A Competitive Advantage Through Enterprise Collaboration,” Forrester Research, Inc., September 4, 2020.

² Digital document solutions include any processes, workflows, or platforms to manage the creation, collaboration, distribution, and storage of digital documents and records within the guardrails of corporate policies. This includes solutions that allow for reading, editing, signing, and sharing PDFs and other documents.

³ Source: “Your Future Fit Technology Strategy: Adaptative, Creative, And Resilient,” Forrester Research, Inc., October 14, 2020.

⁴ Source: “The Future Of Documents,” Forrester Research, Inc., December 9, 2020.

⁵ Source: “Setting The Technology Foundation For Your Enterprise Collaboration Strategy,” Forrester Research, Inc., July 10, 2020.

⁶ Source: “Rethink Your Smart Office Strategy,” Forrester Research, Inc., September 28, 2020.

⁷ Source: “Top Trends And Emerging Technologies, Q3 2020,” Forrester Research, Inc., September 22, 2020.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ By working remotely, we mean a workforce (e.g., home worker, teams split geographically, etc.) that works remotely on a regular basis (e.g., at least once a week).

¹⁰ Source: “Use The Lessons Of 2020 To Create Your Anywhere Work Strategy,” Forrester Research, Inc., November 17, 2020.

¹¹ Source: “Top Trends And Emerging Technologies, Q3 2020,” Forrester Research, Inc., September 22, 2020.

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