A digital workplace enables next-generation public service experiences

White Paper

Alcatel·Lucent
Enterprise

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New expectations require a shift to the digital workplace

Long before the pandemic created a worldwide retreat from physical workplaces, governments around the world recognised the need to undertake a digital transformation of some kind. Many governments had started to build transformation strategies that would support the gradual adoption of digital technologies to improve efficiency, increase productivity and enable better resource management. The main goal behind these strategies was to create the next generation digital infrastructure that would improve the delivery of services to citizens, from personalised administrative services to tailored health services, safer care for all and customised education. Some governments had started the transformation process. Then the pandemic changed everything.

Almost overnight, governments were forced into a new reality that didn't fit with mid- and long-term digital transformation objectives. Shutdowns changed the world from a largely in-person experience to a virtual experience for government workers and citizens. Government workforces had to quickly move entirely to remote working and governments had to adapt to find new ways to deliver services to citizens. Luckily, the availability of digital tools made the shift possible. So, while the pandemic continued to impact society, governments at all levels were able to shift operations and service delivery online.

Digitalisation addresses expectations

As a result of the shift to virtual work and service delivery environments in the private and public sectors, societal expectations about how the world should work have changed. The 2021 EIB Investment Survey revealed that 34% of companies in the European Union used the pandemic crisis as an opportunity to start their digitalisation journey, 46% have become more digital and 55% of the companies surveyed say the pandemic has prompted a greater need for digitalisation.[1]

This focus on digitalisation reflects the expectations of workers. Because of the changes created by the pandemic, hybrid work environments have become the most favoured way of working and government workers want to keep the flexibility hybrid work models provided during the pandemic. Based on a 2021 study, McKinsey reports that:

- In describing the hybrid model of the future, more than half of government and corporate workers say that they would like to work from home at least three days a week once the pandemic is over
- Across geographies, U.S. employees are the most interested in having access to remote work, with nearly a third saying they would like to work remotely full time[2]

Since private and public sector employees are also citizens, it's not surprising that the mindset shift about how the world should work impacts expectations about how governments should deliver services. Citizens around the world now expect they will be able to access the government services they need online from anywhere and that their governments will be able to deliver those services efficiently.

1 EIB Investment Survey 2021, European Investment Bank, 2021
2 What employees are saying about the future of remote work, McKinsey & Company, 2021

Hybrid work models must evolve

To meet government workers' hybrid work expectations and citizens' service delivery expectations, governments at all levels must now accelerate their digital transformation strategies. The hybrid workplace should be a short intermediate step to a digital workplace. In a digital workplace, advanced data and digital technologies will enable more communications and collaboration among government employees and between governments and citizens to support new, more participatory, innovative and agile forms of governing and delivering services.

The evolution to a digital workplace requires governments to overcome a variety of challenges. Developed and implemented properly, with technology and functionality that enables the inclusion of citizens who have not yet made the move to digital environments, the digital workplace will ultimately lead to the intelligent workplace, which will benefit governments, employees and citizens well into the future.

Creating the digital workplace

To accelerate digital transformation strategies, governments must look beyond immediate hybrid work requirements to ensure they are positioned to meet the expectations of workers and citizens long after the pandemic is a distant memory. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), creating the digital workplace will require the full digitalisation of the public sector.[3]

Digital workplaces transform work experiences

At its core, the digital workplace is all about transforming government employees' work experience. In defining the vision, the European Commission explained that the digital workplace:

"Will provide staff with the right IT tools, platforms and services, enabling users to work and collaborate anywhere, anytime with a fit-for-purpose security and optimising their work experience and productivity. It will be adaptive and flexible to incorporate different types of users, new behaviours and new technologies."[4]

This future work environment will be clearly independent of place and time. Employees will leverage a single platform for unified communications, collaboration, mail, calendar and task management tools. These tools will be accessible from anywhere employees choose to work. Ultimately, employees will benefit from more flexibility and gain the autonomy they need to work in a structure and process that best suits them.

The digital workplace vision aligns with what employees are saying they want from the workplace of the future. As noted by the McKinsey study:[5]

- 52% are more interested in flexible working models
- 51% want a better work-life balance
- 47% are now more focused on their well-being

Employees are also more interested in having the right tools and skills to take advantage of new work models. The McKinsey study noted that:

- 29% say they want robust, standardised and integrated virtual-collaboration tools
- 25% say they want training on the digital technologies and tools that enable remote work

3 Digital Government Index: 2019 results, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2020
4 Digital Workplace Strategy, European Commission, 2017
5 What employees are saying about the future of remote work, McKinsey & Company, 2021

Digitalisation improves service delivery

Of course, full public sector digitalisation applies equally to external government processes. Self-serve digital portals should become the norm for most government services that do not require citizens to connect directly with government employees. This will enable citizens to access the services they need faster, whenever they need them and from wherever they are without having to worry about channelling their service requests into standard business hours.

When citizens do have to connect live with a government agent, they can get more efficient and effective service from employees who are equipped with the digital tools they need to access information and respond to questions and requests immediately. The result will be a higher quality of experience for both workers and citizens.

Key organisational and policy challenges must be overcome

"To make the digitalisation of the public sector possible, governments must begin by addressing a variety of governance and technological challenges that will inevitably arise from having employees working from multiple locations in a hybrid work model."

— Xavier Mongin, Global Director Government Sector, Alcatel-Lucent Enterprise

With a decentralised organisation, traditional management structures will no longer be viable. New policies and procedures must be created to establish a working framework for managers and employees, one that defines expectations for availability, communication, collaboration and work delivery. Within that framework, new approaches for monitoring and managing employee workloads, workflows and productivity must be defined. Administrative processes must be simplified to keep employees on task, rather than distracted and bogged down by internal administrative requirements. And all this must be structured with employees' well-being and work-life balance expectations in mind.

In addition to structure and processes, governments must also address funding challenges. New or additional funds will be needed to purchase the hardware and software that will enable digitalisation. New digital tools can then be integrated to support the digital workplace.

But the challenges that must be overcome go beyond addressing the needs of government employees who interact directly with citizens. Although it's natural to think about front-line worker requirements first, other public sector employees must also be considered. Policy makers and their teams who do not have direct interactions with citizens have a significant impact on decision-making, the delivery of services, and ongoing interactions with the public. Therefore, the work of these teams must be aligned with digitalisation objectives and the needs of citizens. This can only be achieved with the input and collaboration of public sector employees and citizens.

OECD recommendation to address organisational and policy challenges:[6]

- **A consistent and comprehensive approach** to designing and implementing coherent digital government reforms
- **Solid governance** arrangements for an effective, coherent and sustainable implementation of digital government strategies
- **Political support and capacities** to develop data-driven public sectors
- **The involvement of users and stakeholders** in digital government reforms
- **Policy measures and mechanisms** to monitor advances in digital transformation reforms

6 Digital Government Index: 2019 results, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2020

Technological challenges must be addressed

While the OECD recommendations make sense from an organisational and policy perspective, all roads in a digitalisation process eventually lead to the underlying technologies needed to enable the digital workplace. Without the right technologies and digital tools, a digitalisation effort cannot achieve its full potential. Therefore, to create a digital workplace, governments must also consider a variety of technological challenges including:

- **Cloud configuration challenges** associated with ensuring employees and citizens always have secure access to applications and important data wherever they are through public, private or hybrid cloud environments
- **Connectivity challenges** associated with ensuring that both employees and citizens have access to the network, applications and data that enable a digital workplace to operate
- **Security challenges** associated with protecting government networks and data at all points in the communications and collaboration process
- **IT challenges** associated with streamlining IT silos that have been created over time by dividing responsibilities for desktop tools, citizen interfaces and network and communications services among multiple internal teams

By addressing these challenges, governments can build a robust technology foundation for a digital workplace that meets the needs of employees and enables them to deliver on the service expectations of citizens.

Building the right foundation

Ultimately, efficient and effective communications and collaboration is the overarching goal of any technology foundation governments build to enable a digital workplace. Foundations built with multiple disparate elements cannot provide the seamless technology integration needed to support immediate requirements and ensure a smooth evolution to more complex workplaces in the future. A single, resilient digital foundation, built on the following three core elements is required:

- An integrated communications and collaboration environment
- Inclusive connectivity
- Ubiquitous security

Focus on an integrated communications and collaboration environment

The ideal technology foundation will streamline communications between employees and enable more efficient communications with citizens. Structured properly, it should provide workers with direct access to all the digital tools they need to break down barriers and communicate and collaborate more easily with colleagues, access information from databases and interact with citizens using whichever communications channel citizens prefer. It should also be flexible enough to support the integration of specialty applications to enhance communications and collaboration in the workplace and with citizens.

This single, integrated environment will make it easier to incorporate Internet of Things (IoT) objects, as well as processes and services such as common calendars and directories, chatbots and more complex cognitive technology that leverages Artificial Intelligence (AI). Ultimately, this will allow governments to automate the delivery of a variety of routine services.

For example, chatbots could be used to provide opening hours and assist with location information for a variety of public venues, such as museums and art galleries. Self-guided processes on government websites could be introduced to help citizens find the right forms to complete, offer the option to receive automated notifications when expected official documents are ready, or send reminders about appointments. Interactive menus could be leveraged to connect citizens directly with the right team to solve problems or access information about service disruptions or changes.

Inclusive connectivity

Of course, to optimise service delivery, the digital workplace must provide both workers and citizens with access to the networks that enable connections, support advanced applications, and facilitate the flow of information. Therefore, wired and wireless connections for both workers and citizens are a given. With direct, secure connections to internal networks from wherever they are, workers can use the communications and collaboration services and solutions that allow them to communicate with colleagues and deliver services to citizens. Likewise, with readily available connections to government services, citizens can access the services they need whenever they need them and from wherever they are.

However, governments must also look beyond the obvious to bridge the digital divide by ensuring the transformation process provides inclusive connectivity for citizens who may not have the tools they need to access digital services. This may require governments to create publicly available digital access points, such as kiosks or service locations equipped with computers and tablets citizens can use when they need to connect with government services.

An example of inclusive connectivity in action is currently operating in Metz Eurometropolis in France. Metz Eurometropolis recently modernised its metropolitan network infrastructure to enable remote working for government workers and enhance the delivery of services to citizens. The municipal police, the city's technical services, vaccination centres, arts and cultural venues and many public spaces, such as swimming pools and town halls, all use the Eurometropole network.

"The Alcatel-Lucent Enterprise solutions have provided us with simplicity, consistency and robustness. Our agents now have access to a global solution that includes all the functionality they need to be effective on a daily basis in the office, on the move or during remote work. ALE's support allows us to go even further thanks to the evolving service and the implementation of training for our teams."

— Alain Crescimbeni, Head of Network and Telecom, IT Systems Department, Metz Eurometropolis

As part of its modernisation effort, Metz Eurometropolis is introducing a digital inclusion program. Digital advisors are being trained to assist citizens with digital administrative procedures. Once training is complete, neighbourhood town halls will offer digital support meetings to citizens. During the meetings, citizens will be guided through the process of connecting to the Wi-Fi network to access digital government services using tablets, smartphones and computers. With this effort, Metz Eurometropolis will ensure all citizens benefit from the network enhancement strategy.

Ubiquitous security

To deliver all the benefits of digital workplaces, governments must also ensure that the most advanced security practices are integrated across the communications and collaboration environment. Policies, procedures and practices must be updated to protect the network itself from potential intrusions and to ensure the integrity and privacy of all data. Ubiquitous security must go beyond today's network intrusion detection and prevention efforts to provide highly secure environments for workers and citizens at all points in the service delivery chain.

At the network level, ubiquitous security will require secure connections between on premises and cloud infrastructures that leverage the most advanced authentication and encryption technologies within a zero trust security framework.

At the data level, ubiquitous security will require a focus on confidentiality using strong, standards-based encryption in all software and hardware elements of the technology foundation. This should include:

- Data privacy and protection with role-based access control and encryption of stored data to ensure all data in the digital workplace is fully protected from end-to-end
- Compliance with regulations and standards, such as (but not limited to) General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

Plan for an evolutionary process

The solution that addresses these criteria may require a combination of on premises and cloud-based technologies. Initially, a hybrid cloud solution may provide the environment needed to support both worker and citizen requirements. Over time, and as needs change, the hybrid cloud may evolve to a full private cloud that supports both workers and citizens in one integrated digital workplace environment.

ALE delivers digital workplace solutions

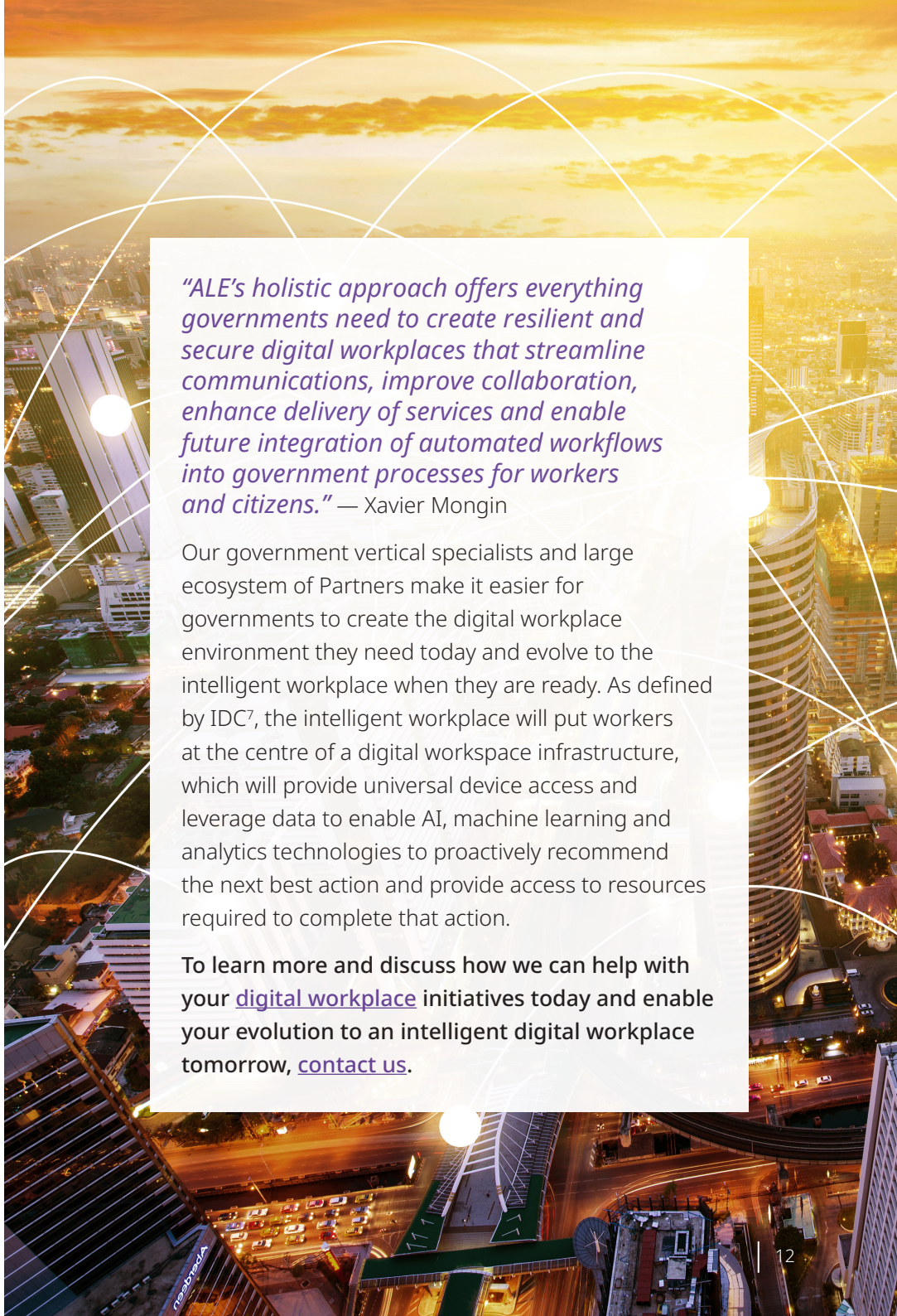
Alcatel-Lucent Enterprise understands the challenges governments face as they embark on digitalisation efforts that will address the needs of employees and citizens. We support digital transformation strategies with solutions that connect people, objects, machines and processes by focusing on:

- Communications and collaboration solutions that streamline communications between government workers and enable more efficient communication with citizens
- Connectivity solutions that optimise communications and collaboration, enhance service delivery and bridge the digital divide
- Security solutions for network cybersecurity and data privacy in digital workplaces

Our three-pillar approach enables governments to create digital workplaces with digital age:

- **Communications**: On premises, in the cloud or hybrid — that are resilient and highly available with a range of features, devices and collaboration capabilities, and which can be used to simplify communications in a digital workplace ecosystem that connects people, objects and services
- **Networks**: On premises or cloud managed — with integrated security features that go above and beyond current security practices and standards to ensure the security of all hardware and software in a digital workplace foundation, verified by third-party validation of the underlying code in our network switches
- **Security**: With privacy by design built on a zero trust framework, with all relevant data privacy certifications in the countries in which we operate

In addition, our digital workplace solutions are built on open APIs that enable customised integration of all elements into existing government infrastructures.



"ALE's holistic approach offers everything governments need to create resilient and secure digital workplaces that streamline communications, improve collaboration, enhance delivery of services and enable future integration of automated workflows into government processes for workers and citizens." — Xavier Mongin

Our government vertical specialists and large ecosystem of Partners make it easier for governments to create the digital workplace environment they need today and evolve to the intelligent workplace when they are ready. As defined by IDC[7], the intelligent workplace will put workers at the centre of a digital workspace infrastructure, which will provide universal device access and leverage data to enable AI, machine learning and analytics technologies to proactively recommend the next best action and provide access to resources required to complete that action.

To learn more and discuss how we can help with your digital workplace initiatives today and enable your evolution to an intelligent digital workplace tomorrow, contact us.

7 Intelligent Digital Workspaces and the Future of Work, IDC, 2021