Digital Workplace Applications Primer for 2021

By Analysts Gavin Tay, Michael Woodbridge, Mike Fasciani, Irina Guseva

Initiatives: Digital Workplace Applications

Distributed workplaces in the new normal will rely on applications and technologies that support a composable business architecture. Application leaders responsible for the digital workplace need to scale workforce digital dexterity in order to achieve maximum business impact.

Scope

Use this initiative to implement digital workplace applications that deliver frictionless experiences and help employees establish new ways of working in the new normal.

In addition to applications and software engineering leaders, other roles involved in this initiative are:

- Chief information officers
- Enterprise architecture and technology innovation leaders
- Infrastructure and operations leaders

The topics covered in this research include:

- **Cloud Office**: Platforms (such as Microsoft 365 and Google Workspace) that provide the foundational technologies for a “new work hub” that supports a composable business architecture.

- **Content Services**: Platforms that provide a set of building blocks that can be tailored to composable enterprises, helping them to manage and derive enhanced value from content assets.

- **Emerging Applications and Technologies**: New technologies and capabilities that augment the digital workplace (including workstream collaboration, workspace and resource planning, and digital experience platforms [DXPs]).

- **Unified Communications and Collaboration**: Tools that plug into the composable architecture to facilitate real-time communications and collaborative activities among a distributed workforce of employees, partners and customers.
For most organizations, workplace technologies support the most common capabilities (such as email, conferencing and content creation). In the new normal, a distributed workforce will be hindered by reliance on legacy productivity approaches and tools.
Gartner’s 2020 CEO Survey revealed that cost management was the most common downturn response, but digital acceleration has also been critical. Anticipated changes are technology-related and generational issues. AI is predicted to have a significant impact on business in the future.

The digital workplace is key to digital transformation. A digital workplace requires a continuously evolving application portfolio that is used in support of specific business objectives. Organizations must shift their business capabilities using a composable business architecture. According to the 2020 Digital Workplace Survey, 89% of organizations have adapted smoothly (or had already adapted) to work anywhere, anytime (including working at home) in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Composable business architecture enhances your current business architecture — it is not a replacement. For employees to effectively use digital workplace applications, the organization must do more than roll out new technologies. Traditional applications are being replaced by an ever-changing portfolio of cloud-based applications that are mobile, collaborative, analytical, integrated, and imbued with artificial intelligence. Supporting these applications requires a digital workplace infrastructure of systems, devices, security and management.

As users become familiar with digital collaboration tools, the range of capabilities expands. IT organizations may struggle with issues such as how to encourage adoption, provide effective governance and control costs. IT must drive effective application portfolio management and change the way employees work.

In the context of a digital workplace strategy, organizations must balance the need to support well-established service categories with the drive to introduce emerging technologies such as AI. The digital workplace framework will form the backbone of an organization's digital strategy.

**Topics**

Applications that support a digital workplace strategy span a wide range of technologies. They affect every employee in almost every organization. Application leaders for the digital workplace must plan and coordinate activities across the organization in order to choose, deploy, manage and use them effectively. Organizations that can overcome these challenges will be well-positioned to achieve greater resilience, agility and effectiveness.

Our research centers on the following topics:

**Cloud Office**

Driven by COVID-19, an increasing number of organizations have accelerated their move to cloud office platforms, which represent their new work hub. Analytics, integration and automation services will be fundamental elements of a continuous work transformation strategy. A new work hub represents an evergreen collection of personal productivity applications. It will also integrate with domain and situational applications. This shift will require employee-facing change management, IT support, infrastructure and governance.
Questions Your Peers Are Asking

- How can moving to a cloud office improve resilience and effectiveness?
- How can digital dexterity be embraced with the adoption of a cloud office solution?
- How can a cloud office interoperate with another cloud office in a hybrid deployment?
- Will shifting to a cloud office hamper agility as technology choices expand beyond a singular platform?
- What is the future of collaborative workstream solutions in a distributed workforce?

Recommended Content

Some recommended content may not be available as part of your current Gartner subscription.

- Help Employees Select the Right Microsoft Office 365 Tools
- A 6-Step Checklist for Effective Deployment of Microsoft Teams in the Digital Workplace
- Adapt the IT Operating Model to Deliver Indispensable Digital Workplace Services
- How to Organize IT to Support Office 365, G Suite and Other Digital Workplace Applications
- Cool Vendors in Cloud Office Security

Planned Research

- Market Guide for Cloud Office Migration Tools
- Toolkit: RFP Sample for Cloud Office Migration Tools
- Migrate remote workers to a new work hub with a people-centered approach
- What to do when cloud office technology is not enough
- How to evaluate Google Workspace versus Microsoft Office 365

Content Services

In the composable enterprise, content services provide building blocks that organizations can tailor to their needs. Organizations must implement modern, adaptable content services as part of an effective content service strategy. They must be embedded where people (and increasingly machines) work day to day. This strategy must balance the need for cost optimization and rationalization of sprawling technology landscapes, with the need to solve business problems rapidly and support digital dexterity.

Questions Your Peers Are Asking

- How can the organization rationalize my content services portfolio?
Emerging Applications and Technologies

Organizations must look beyond mature technology markets, default choices and incumbent vendors. Delivering compelling digital experiences for internal customers will help organizations deliver compelling experiences for external customers. Organizational and architectural agility is critical amid unprecedented disruption in an accelerated digital era. Organizations must support a composable business architecture via a digital workplace framework allowing for extended capabilities and continuous adaptability across internal and external facets of the organization.

Questions Your Peers Are Asking

- How can the organization balance the need for greater openness alongside the need for greater levels of information governance protection?
- With an increasing reliance on remote working, how can the organization increase its digital resilience?
- What factors should the organization consider when deciding whether to extend the current content platform or buy a new, business-specific application?
- How can the organization make most effective use of a cloud office platform to support content-centric initiatives?
Unified Communications and Collaboration

Unified communications and collaboration (UCC) solutions help increasingly distributed and mobile workforces to work together. UCC solutions are part of the new work hub, allowing employees to build relationships and collaborate. COVID-19 created unprecedented demand for collaboration services. Organizations quickly pivoted, but now, IT support efforts, security policies and budgets are being revised. Organizations that implement cloud-based UCC solutions will enable agile business operations and sustainable growth in employee productivity.

Recommended Content

- Some recommended content may not be available as part of your current Gartner subscription.

- Don’t Wreck Digital Engagement With Bad Deployment Decisions for Your Digital Experience Platform
- Market Guide for Collaborative Work Management
- Market Guide for Employee Communications Applications
- Support Remote Work by Understanding Attitudes About Work Location

Planned Research

- 2021 Strategic Roadmap for a Composable Digital Experience Platform
- Adopt a composable digital experience platform (DXP) to future-proof your technology stack
- Introducing the digital workplace framework
- How to decide on an employee communications applications vendor
- The rise of collaborative networks (linking teams and communities to drive change and performance)
Questions Your Peers Are Asking

- How can UCC strategies meet the evolving needs of digital workplace initiatives?
- What are the best strategies for ensuring positive collaboration experiences in a hybrid working environment?
- How do we use maturing workstream collaboration technologies to improve organizational performance beyond general productivity?
- How do we use employee communications applications to improve employee experience, promote organizational insight and enable operational effectiveness?
- How do we effectively manage collaborative work and its associated activities across a distributed workforce?

Recommended Content

- Some recommended content may not be available as part of your current Gartner subscription.
- Top 3 Considerations When Moving From Premises-Based Unified Communications to Cloud-Based UCaaS
- How to Pick the Right Virtual Meeting Portfolio and Save Money
- A Strategic Framework for Communicating With Frontline Workers in Times of Anxiety
- Improve Remote Work Effectiveness by Rising to These Top 10 Meeting Challenges
- Make Your Internal, In-Person Event or Gathering Virtual by Following These Approaches

Planned Research

- Understanding communications culture and its role in shaping a UCC portfolio
- Unified communications portfolio strategies in digital workplaces are shifting
- Too many online meetings requiring IT support? Here's a plan to manage the workload and policies
- Microsoft Teams work governance trends
- Five ways to have the best meetings you’ve ever had because no one is in the same room

Suggested First Steps

- Observe, Measure and Assist: Three Emerging Ways to Drive Workforce Digital Dexterity
- Survey Analysis: Accommodate Different Meeting Cultures and Technology Expectations for a Digital Workforce
Essential Reading

- Predicts 2020: Digital Workplace Applications Led by the New Work Nucleus
- How to Select Collaboration Technology Using Gartner’s ACME Framework
- A 6-Step Checklist for Effective Deployment of Microsoft Teams in the Digital Workplace
- How to Organize IT to Support Office 365, G Suite and Other Digital Workplace Applications
- Magic Quadrant for Unified Communications as a Service, Worldwide
- Magic Quadrant for Meeting Solutions
- How to Pick the Right Virtual Meeting Portfolio and Save Money
- Improve Employee Experience to Drive Improvements in Customer Experience

Tools and Toolkits

- Toolkit: RFP Template for Unified Communications and Collaboration Solutions
- Toolkit: Sample RFP for Content Services Platforms and Content Collaboration Platforms
- Toolkit: Collaborative Work Management Vendor and Product Data
- Toolkit: How to Shortlist Web Content Management Vendors for Your Digital Business Strategy
- How to Select the Best-Fit Vendor for Your Digital Experience Platform

Evidence

1 Gartner conducted the 2020 CEO and Senior Business Executive Survey from September through December 2019 to examine CEO and senior business executive views on current business issues, as well as some areas of technology agenda impact. Gartner qualified and surveyed 444 business leaders using an online survey (362); telephone interviews (70), and self-administered paper surveys (12). All respondents were screened for active employment in organizations with more than $50M in annual revenue. For more information, see 2020 Gartner CEO Survey: The Year of Recession.

2 Gartner’s 2020 Digital Workplace Survey was conducted online from 28 April through 11 May 2020 with 131 Gartner’s Research Circle Members — a Gartner-managed panel. Respondents were asked: “Which of these digital workplace application topics do you expect will be most important to your
organization through YE21?” With 125 respondents (excluding “not sure”) ranking the following within their top three:

- Workstream collaboration (58%)
- Meeting technologies (57%)
- Cloud Office (50%)
- Unified communications and collaboration (42%)
- Content services platforms (23%)
- Content collaboration platforms (18%)
- Collaborative work management (12%)
- Intranets and employee communications (10%)
- Employee engagement and communications (9%)
- Insight engines/enterprise search (6%)
- Digital adoption solutions (3%)

The survey was developed collaboratively by a team of Gartner analysts and was reviewed, tested and administered by Gartner’s Research Data and Analytics team.

The results of this study are representative of the respondent base and not necessarily the market as a whole.

Document Revision History

Digital Workplace Applications Primer for 2020 - 21 January 2020
Digital Workplace Applications Primer for 2019 - 16 January 2019

Related Priorities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiative Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technology Innovation</td>
<td>Technology innovation will increasingly provide the “strategic spear” organizations use to understand and implement their strategies as they explore and invest in digital business transformation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiative Name</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CRM Strategy and Customer Experience</strong></td>
<td>CRM and CX are critical priorities, but strategies must adapt as the organization, its customers and its environment evolve. Failing to get the fundamentals right puts the organization at risk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Customer Service and Support Technology</strong></td>
<td>Numerous technologies and best practices are needed to create a leading customer service organization and its associated operational, customer experience and employee experience aspirations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>