



# From Necessity to Strategy: How an urgent reaction to the pandemic is helping HR and the business to reimagine the future of work

HR professionals, alongside their colleagues in IT, Facilities, and Health and Safety, are spearheading the return to work. Successful strategies include selecting the technologies that connect employees, customers, and business partners and establishing a safe working environment.



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# Under the Spotlight

Human Resources is under the spotlight like never before. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, how do you reconstruct the workspace in a way that protects the physical and psychological health of all employees? As the old saying goes, 'no one size fits all'. Businesses will need to accommodate the needs of home office workers as well as those who can only work on-site.

Another challenge, often overlooked, is the protection of customers and business partners. Again, how does the business establish a safe environment for visitors where on-site visits are indispensable?

As well as supporting the return to work, and putting in action plans in the case of local outbreaks, businesses will be planning for a future where lockdowns may be as much a part of the yearly cycle as the winter and summer holiday season. Such strategies must also accommodate traditional employee-centric activities including hiring, onboarding and performance measurement reshaped by the needs of remote workers and the expectations of a digital savvy workforce.

Consequently, HR executives find themselves increasingly collaborating with CIOs, Facilities, and Operations, as together they redraft business models and develop hiring strategies to match.

In many ways this is a chance to increase influence and further shape business strategy. But to seize this opportunity, HR requires an uninterrupted, real-time view of business performance as it relates to their responsibilities.

## From Legacy Data To Edge Applications

There's more to this than data buried in long-established legacy databases. Critical business decisions now rely on the data derived from remote working applications and may also depend on future 'edge' devices. These include facilities access systems such as thermal vision and facial recognition technology. The challenge is to extract and integrate these disparate sources of data and then combine them to engineer faster, seamless employee experiences, while using performance data to influence decision making at the C-suite level.

In this document we'll consider the options available to senior HR decision makers, including the critical role played by cloud-based platforms, that enable data integration and accurate, near real-time reporting derived from applications old and new. In addition, we will see how this approach increases the flexibility of the business, especially in the deployment of adaptive workflows that respond to the needs of digitally savvy employees.

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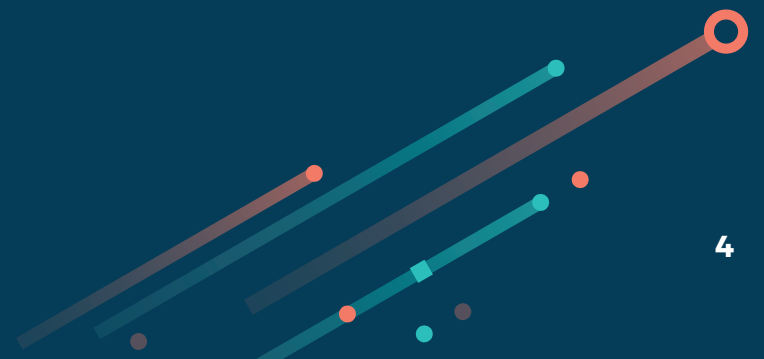
“We've seen two years' worth of digital transformation in two months. From remote teamwork and learning to sales and customer service, to critical cloud infrastructure and security.”

Satya Nadella,  
Microsoft CEO

# The New Normal

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the trend towards remote working while forcing businesses to reimagine workspaces, from open plan layouts and factories to the home office.

As buildings reopen, HR executives and their colleagues find themselves responsible for urgent adjustments to the physical workspace, while helping to build an agile infrastructure, alongside platforms and services that are both secure and and highly productive — all while managing the employee lifecycle reshaped by the pandemic and the expectations of younger staff.



# The Challenge: Planning for the Future

It's not just businesses that are being transformed. Months of lockdown have forced many employees to rethink their personal and professional lives. With finances, careers, and relationships under pressure, many will return to work with new priorities and a fresh outlook on their career. One of the first tasks, when stabilizing the business, is to secure the physical and emotional environment for each individual.

Businesses must also plan for the future. The economic impact of the pandemic will reshape the property market for individuals and businesses alike, determining where we work, how often, and with whom. Remote working — along with on-premises edge technologies such as thermal vision and facial recognition — must also take into account data privacy regulations and the concerns of employees.

## Offices on the Edge: Reconfiguring the Physical Environment

Preparing the workplace for the immediate and long-term future presents several challenges. At the outset, businesses will focus on reducing office traffic by staggering the start times of employees and limiting the number of days in the office to reduce the risk of infection.

HR also has a leadership role to play in preparing for longer term changes: the switch from open plan to secure meeting spaces; installing hygienic surfaces; touch-free devices such as lifts, taps, and flushes; and even the relocation to smaller premises as remote working reduces the need for office space.

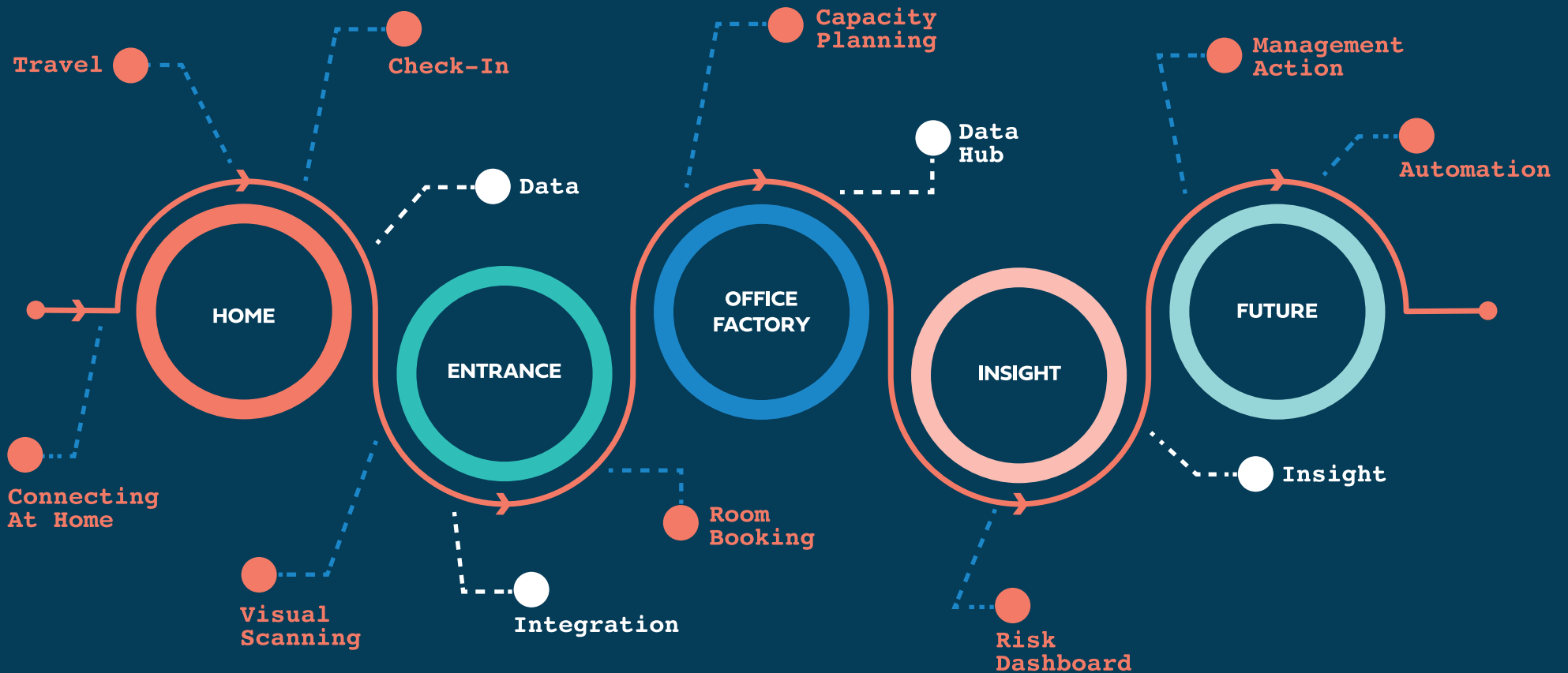
New 'edge' technologies such as thermal vision and facial recognition cameras will monitor the arrival and departure of employees, assisting track and trace when required. But businesses will also need to integrate data from existing systems including security gates and swipe card readers. Here, HR needs to collaborate with IT to establish the right balance between employee well-being, data privacy, and the overall performance of the business.

In addition, employers are likely to have significantly more access to employee health data including the presence of COVID-19 antibodies. For this reason, HR leaders must be equipped to provide an ethical perspective on the use of employee data for health purposes and engagement across a remote workforce.

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# From Front Door to the Future

Steps on the journey from the home office to data dashboards and strategy planning



# Preparing for Local Lockdowns

All these elements matter more than ever if businesses are to be fully prepared for further lockdowns at a local or national level. Questions that need to be asked include:

- **How many employees are unable to work remotely?**
- **Can you continue to pay salaries, or, at the other end of the spectrum, will there need to be redundancies in the absence of a long-term furlough scheme?**

HR will need to think strategically about these decisions.

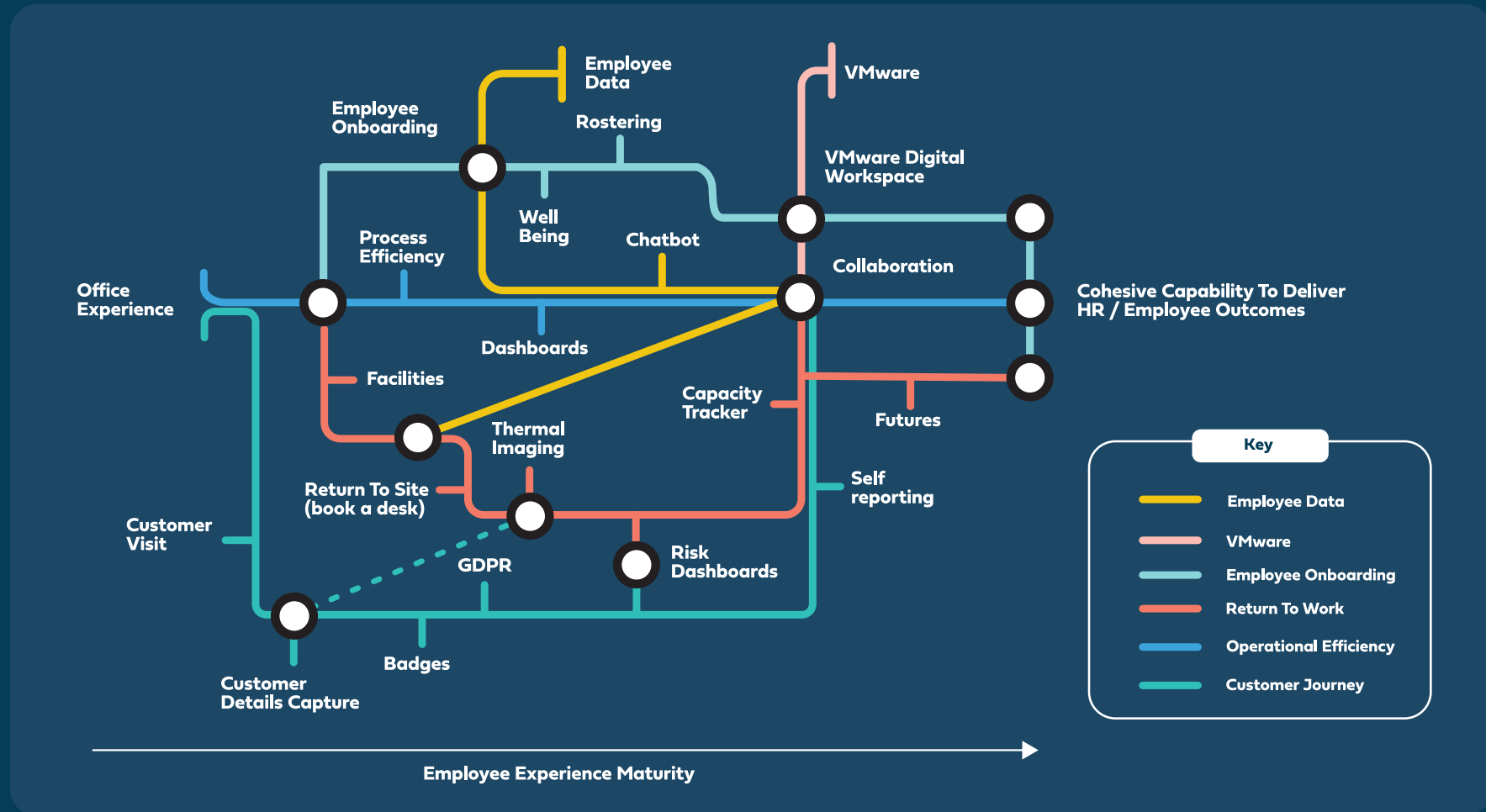
- **If a factory is closed in one city, but open in another, can employees from a lockdown travel to work in the available workspace?**
- **Is there the opportunity to negotiate a shorter work week, unpaid leave, or a reduction in vacation time during the stoppage?**
- **How long will the lockdown last?**
- **If it is for less than a month, does it make better long-term sense to continue to pay employees and look after their physical and mental well-being rather than pursue short-term savings?**

Such decisions can only be made with accurate, up to date information as well as close collaboration with the rest of the business. This matters more than ever where local lockdowns have been announced at extremely short notice, and where the need to comply with temporary or long-term regulations requires rapid, transparent reporting.

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# Return to Work Route Map

with the intersection of workflows and data





# Navigating the Emotional Landscape

The world is changing before our eyes. Recent movements including #MeToo and now #BlackLivesMatter are inextricably linked with the employee experience. Diversity and inclusion have been front of mind for months and even years, but recent events have shown how even the most progressive employer can fall behind popular opinion.

HR is in a better position than most teams to reshape attitudes, but this is more challenging in the fragmented workplace. This is especially true when employees are anxious that both they and their colleagues are employed, appraised, and rewarded in a fair and equitable fashion.

At the same time, the pandemic has reminded business leaders of general weaknesses in the appraisal and rewards processes. Survey after survey indicates that business leaders are dissatisfied with their ability to identify high performers, while most employees don't believe that the performance-reward system fully recognizes their contribution.

Such anxieties, especially in an increasingly remote workforce, require HR to redouble its focus on employee wellbeing. For all the benefits of a flexible schedule, remote working increases the risk of isolation among certain demographics.

Organizations that can protect the mental as well as the physical health of employees, and measure such outcomes, are more likely to attract prospective candidates.

Businesses also need to fast track training programs to help employees benefit from online communication as well as new collaboration tools. These programs will also play a role in attracting new hires now that remote working and flexible schedules are less of a unique selling point.

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# The Remote Working Roadmap

Home working has changed overnight from a lifestyle choice, to the new normal. We are likely to see more people of working age moving away from city centers and nearby suburbs to locations further away from the office where property is less expensive, and a one-day-a-week commute is more tolerable.

That said, many organizations already have business continuity plans and remote working as part of the employee benefits package. Both can be scaled to match the needs of mass home working, as long as businesses match the logistical needs of the business (secure networking technologies, collaboration platforms, work-ready hardware) with the needs of employees (coaching, protection against feelings of isolation, knock-on financial pressures).

Taking these factors into account, HR practitioners should be able to plan with confidence for the virtual workspace safe in the knowledge that such an infrastructure insulates the business against future disruption, be it from further lockdowns or an unforeseen event.

When it comes to technology, HR will collaborate closely with IT and innovation teams to ensure constant and robust connection to the virtual office workspace, while addressing technical issues that impact employee privacy, security, and general wellbeing.

# Data, Data, Data

While the COVID-19 crisis presents numerous challenges to busy HR teams, data is the foundation of almost every solution. An ability to track, consolidate, and share information will determine the success of most 'back to work' projects and enable decision makers to balance risk in the interest of employees and the business.

Critical sources of data include employee demographics, performance, payroll, and engagement. External sources also play a role: job market data, the local population of working age, and social networks such as LinkedIn.

This new world of fluid, integrated data also needs to be seen within the context of digital transformation. Long heralded as the means by which an organization adapts to change and opportunity, digital transformation is only effective when the underlying data is clean, consolidated, and available. As the sources of data increase via remote working and edge devices, the questions increase:

- **Where does the data come from?**
- **Who owns it?**
- **How is it being made accessible and is it secure?**

With the data at its disposal, HR plays a more central role, helping organizations to fully understand the employee experience and action responses. This information makes HR a first point of call for information that backs up robust leadership decision-making.

# Solution

## From Isolation to Integration

Unfortunately, the HR technology landscape often consists of disparate systems. Multiple solutions can't provide a single view into HR data nor do they deliver a trusted system of record. Processes are isolated and can require current and prospective workers to enter data multiple times. Such inefficiency is frustrating to workers and HR teams alike.

For HR to fulfill its potential as a people and business driver, it must address the integration of disparate HR processes, often isolated as employee touchpoints across the organization.

Such touchpoints include:

- **Recruitment and staffing**
- **Preboarding and onboarding**
- **Performance management**
- **Compensation and benefits**
- **Talent management and development**
- **Training and development**
- **Employee lifecycle management**

### What's Next?

There are three important questions to consider.

- **First, is all your employee information up to date?**
- **Second, how do you integrate data that supports informed decision-making, from all HR and related systems?**
- **Finally, how do you turn that data into actionable information and insights?**

Speed to insight is also critical. Today, when annual business cycles have been compressed into months or even weeks, near-real-time availability of structured information that impacts remote working and back-to-work strategies is the difference between your success — or the competition's.

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# Integration at Ease Information at Speed

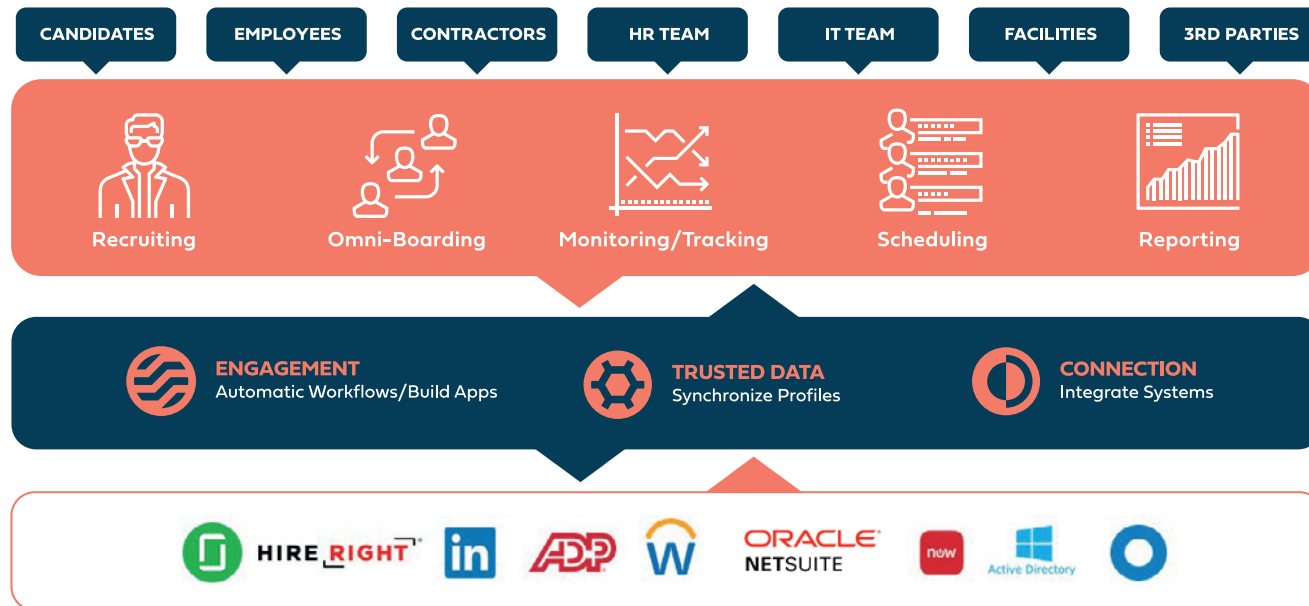
From a strategic and financial perspective, integration platform as a service (iPaaS) is the logical step for many organizations. It supports the synchronization of data from multiple applications whether they run on-premises or in the cloud. This includes edge applications and facilities access management systems such as thermo sensors and facial recognition systems.

iPaaS can help cut the time from data entry to business intelligence so the business can monitor real-time data about its operations and make decisions that are accurate and effective. Because iPaaS runs in the cloud, decision makers can access data from a range of devices and any location with a secure online connection. This builds confidence and trust into group decision-making processes.

It's also future-proof. New applications, along with data, can be added to the platform, while successful technologies can be expanded as demand increases.

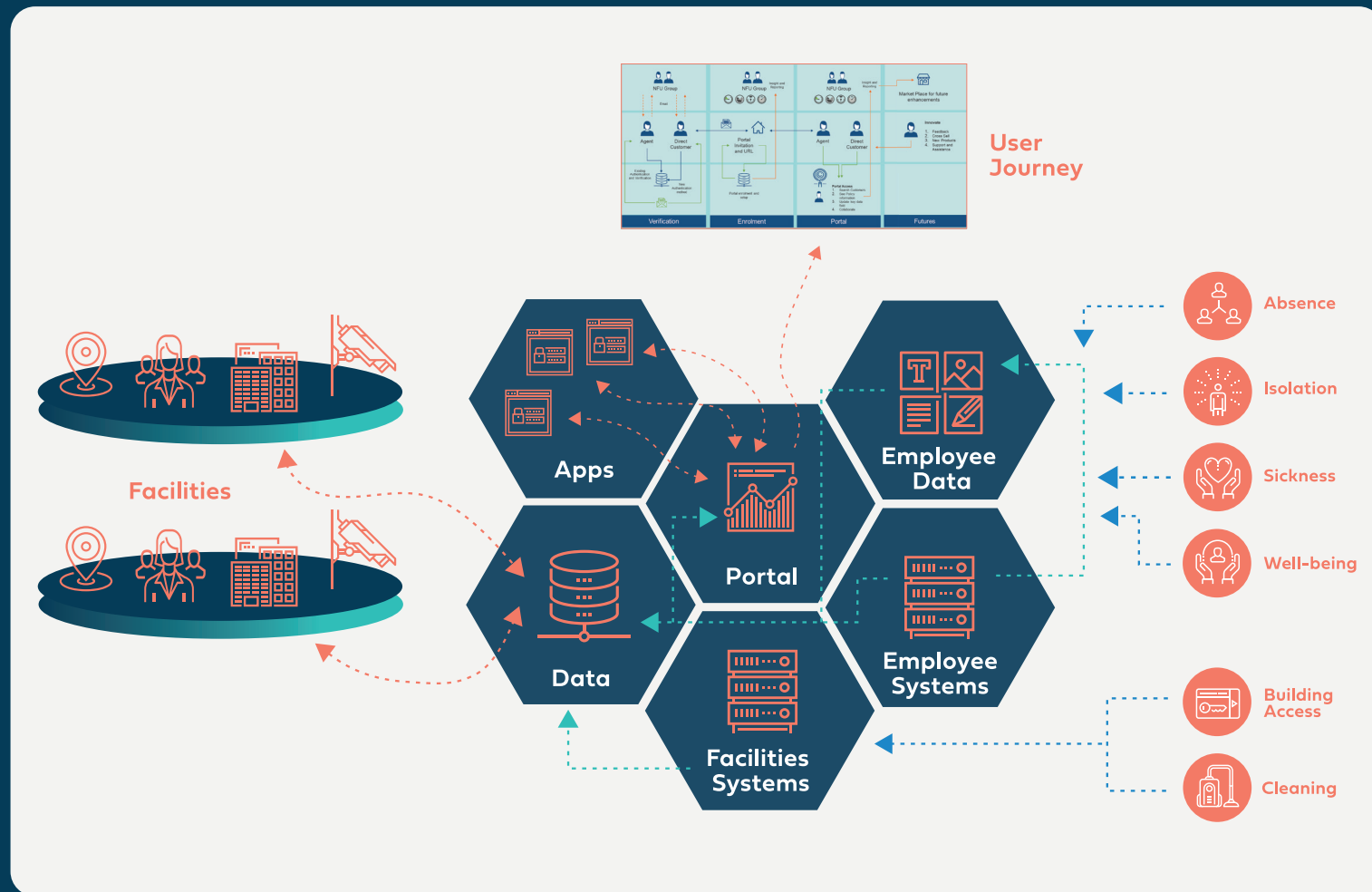
This enables an organization to:

- **Spin up custom apps on any device quickly**
- **Create responsive worker journeys**
- **Eliminate isolated processes that were needed to capture and track status changes**
- **Integrate diverse systems and build optimized business processes**
- **Leverage a single platform optimized for connecting and orchestrating processes to improve operations and experience**



For employees, this means a seamless experience from hiring and onboarding to training in new remote technologies that boost productivity in the digital workspace. Other teams, especially IT, innovation, and operations also benefit from a consolidated view of data that supports cross-functional processes and projects. And for HR itself, this represents a massive opportunity to increase influence by improving employee wellbeing, retention, and productivity.

# Employee Risk Management



Integration also offers a 360-degree view of workforce risk, essential for planning a return to the workplace:

- Integrate and connect various data sets to gain a multi-dimensional view of the workforce.
- Enable employees to self-manage and self-roster, especially in the service and manufacturing industry.
- Undertake risk scoring, prioritize actions, and develop rapid digital workflow applications through a low-code approach to help employees and managers.
- Automated workflows with approval points as required to support tasks, actions, and communication across teams to support operational resilience.

# Boomi: The Key to Productivity

Let's look at this approach in action. Specifically, a 'back to work initiative' aimed at welcoming employees back to the workplace post-COVID-19, as well as a flexible remote working environment. Many businesses have succeeded in operationalizing such an environment, but now there's an opportunity to look at the bigger picture.

What additional steps are needed, what processes should be industrialized to help employees back to the workplace safely and efficiently, whether factories, offices, schools or universities? Boomi, a Dell Technologies business, has developed several assets that enable an organization to return to work swiftly while fully preparing for another outbreak or local lockdowns.

This approach is critical from a return to work perspective:

- **Connect data from multiple data sources to achieve a single view of data and deliver a centralized 'risk dashboard'.**
- **Connect data from data sources across the cloud, on-premises, and edge devices.**
- **Manage all the interconnections required for digital transformation in a single platform including connecting, managing, governing, and automating data, people, and processes.**
- **Achieve quick time to value by minimizing the need for time-consuming and heavy coding.**
- **Build low-code apps and automate processes quickly, including employee/contractor onboarding, risk assessment processes, and self-service apps for hospitality.**
- **Cybersecurity: HR is increasingly called upon to help determine and enforce employee data permissions, train and enforce cybersecurity policies and procedures, and help respond to cyber events involving employees.**

## Dell Technologies: Return To Work



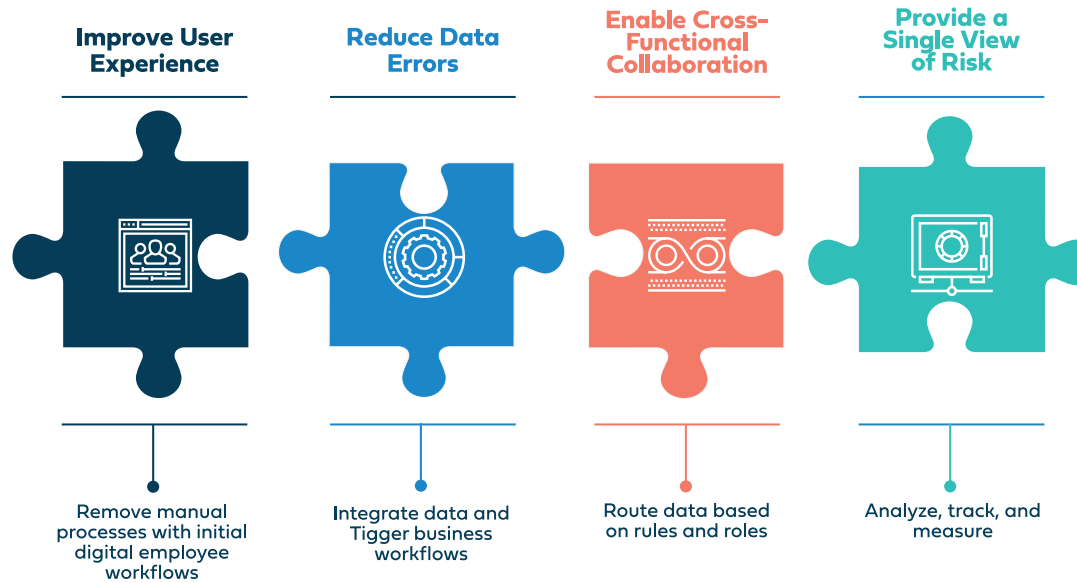
Boomi customers also benefit from the company's partnership with Dell, whose Return To Work solutions support today's collaborative, fluid, and dynamic workspaces and provide the components for a safe, trusted, and productive environment.

- **Safety:** Solutions that enable you to assess and monitor the physical space of your people and customers, creating a safe and secure environment.
- **Trust:** Solutions that secure your technology infrastructure to create a protected and resilient workplace. Build trust in your organization by safeguarding your data.
- **Productivity:** Create a secure digital workspace, anywhere, redefining how and where you work.

# Boomi: The Key to Productivity

## Strategic Considerations

- Driving productivity and efficiency through digital processes to streamline and time optimize onboarding of employees.
- Ensure the data is accurate, trusted, and managed. Provide a single view of an employee, enabling data to be synchronized across the enterprise and external systems.



## Productivity Outcome

- Automated process, accelerating the onboarding experience from weeks to minutes.
- Connected experience with new recruits and the ongoing management of employees.
- Improved ramp-up and productivity of employees joining the business.
- Increase in employee and customer satisfaction scores.

# Conclusion: No Going Back

While 'back to work' after the pandemic is one of the greatest challenges facing HR in decades, there is no question that it also offers a once in a generation opportunity for this profession and the wider business:

- **Adapt and enhance workflows and environments for the new world of work including employees, customers, site visitors, and business partners.**
- **Deploy a future-proof, agile platform which scales and contracts to spikes in demand including local lockdowns.**
- **Faster processes for employee management including onboarding, training, and performance reviews.**

This approach builds trust and credibility between HR professionals and other business leaders including CIOs, Facilities, and Operations. It means that HR is fully equipped with the data, information, and dashboard that shape business strategy and contribute to its success.

Perhaps HR teams have been overlooked in their contribution to the sharp end of business achievements. They now have the opportunity to raise their profile, while protecting the interests of staff and the business. At a time of massive disruption to employee lifestyles and the wider economy, now is the time for HR to step forward and take center stage.

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Learn more about how Boomi's unified platform can help you connect everything.

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