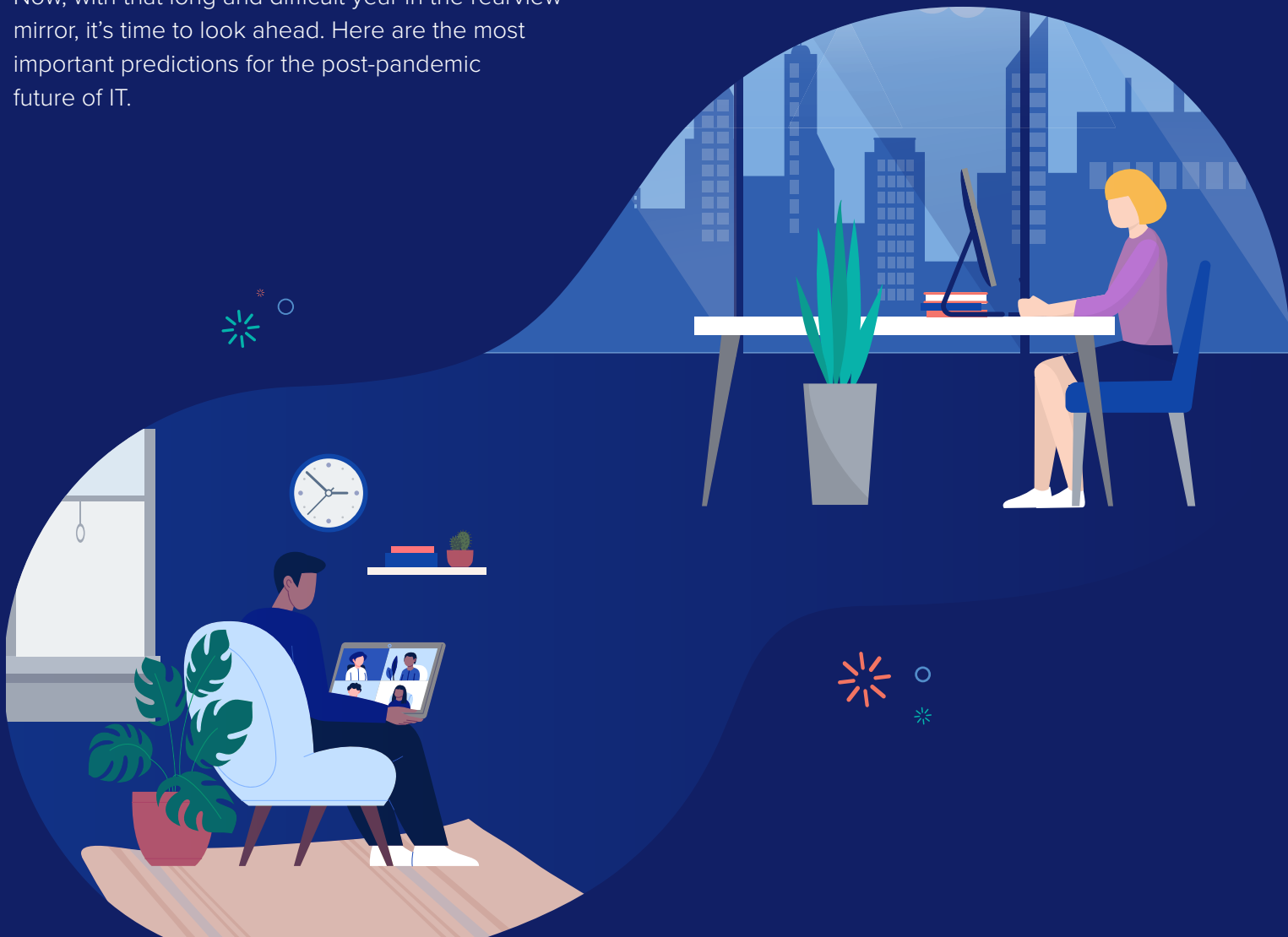


# Top IT Trends and Predictions for the New Way of Working

The events of the past year turned the digital work world upside down. Practically overnight, the laptop became an office unto itself. And as a result, IT support had to pivot quickly and approach strange new work problems from a different, more intuitive angle.

Now, with that long and difficult year in the rearview mirror, it's time to look ahead. Here are the most important predictions for the post-pandemic future of IT.



# Introduction

Every year, analysts and thought leaders look back on the previous twelve months and offer predictions that speak to where we're headed next. These predictions are backed by data, research, and a strong understanding of developing trends in the industry and the world at large. And then came 2020 – a year that even the most forward-thinking innovators couldn't have possibly predicted.

The coronavirus pandemic sent shockwaves through businesses across the globe, displacing tight-knit teams into isolated remote offices and forcing business leaders to adapt at an alarming rate. The plans we all entered the new year with were put on hold, abandoned altogether, or replaced with new strategies tailored to our digital-only work environments.

Many of these changes posed tremendous challenges, as individuals and organizations alike battled financial hurdles, safety concerns, and the long-term stresses brought on by an unpredictable and unfamiliar collective problem.

But with difficult challenge comes positive change – and the IT field underwent a remarkable period of evolution as a result of the pandemic. From the acceleration of digital transformation to the rise of employee-centric IT strategies, the innovation that took place through 2020 laid the foundation for a new era of IT.

We're beginning to recognize the long-term effects the pandemic has had on modern businesses and IT teams specifically. Keep reading to learn what trends IT leaders must take note of as their teams emerge from the pandemic to an entirely new workplace reality.



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# 01. Digital Employee Experience Will Emerge as a Key Performance Indicator for IT Departments

The importance of Digital Employee Experience (DEX) within the broader employee experience domain has dramatically increased as a result of the pandemic. Where digital experience was just one among many elements of EX in the past, the shift to remote and hybrid work means that digital experience is now the heartbeat of the entire employee experience.

As a result, Digital Employee Experience has gained traction as a top priority for IT departments. When employees and job candidates think about experience, they're no longer just thinking about culture, commute times and office perks – they're thinking about what kind of digital workspace a company provides to keep them productive and connected.

“In an economy where organizations are battling for top talent and the world has shifted to a ‘work from anywhere’ model, providing a reliable digital workplace and proactively preventing disruptions will be seen as table stakes for IT to enable the business,” says Michael Applebaum, VP of Product Marketing at Nextthink.

Many leaders in the IT space have gained new perspectives on the value of Digital Employee Experience. In fact, according to the [Nextthink Pulse Report](#), 96% of IT executives say DEX is essential to their IT department – up from 49% in 2019, before the pandemic.

“Digital Employee Experience will be continuously measured and serve as a KPI on which IT is evaluated among most large enterprises by 2023.”



**Michael Applebaum**

VP of Product Marketing,  
Nextthink

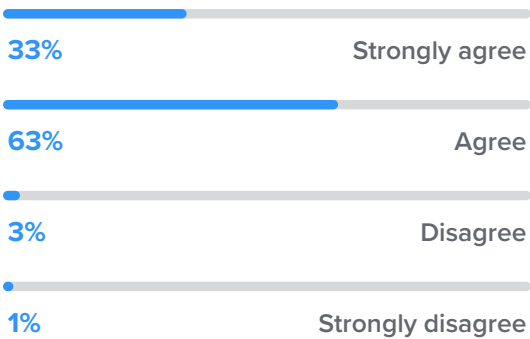


However, there’s still a lot of ground to make up when it comes to quantifying DEX: roughly 1/2 of IT executives surveyed in the Pulse report admit they can’t measure it.

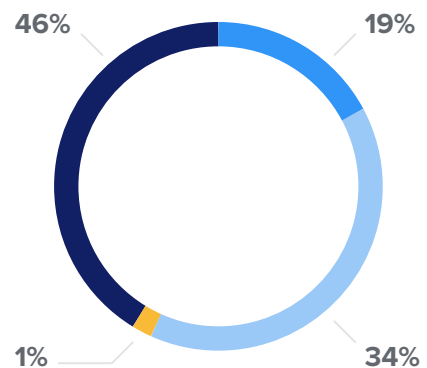
Quantifying DEX relies on IT’s ability to gather and analyze real-time data related to the performance and experience of the full range of employee-facing technologies – including devices, applications, virtualization, and networks. It also requires the measurement and monitoring of employee sentiment to reveal any issues that aren’t apparent from technology monitoring alone. Over the next two years, we’ll see DEX measurement become a key focus among IT departments across the globe.



**The majority of tech leaders agree: Digital Employee Experience is a key priority right now.**



**But most cannot even measure their DEX, and if they do, they rely on manual methods!**



- Yes, we measure metrics manually
- Yes, we have a tool
- No, we don't currently measure employee digital experience
- Unsure

## 02. CIOs Will See Expanded Roles and Leadership Opportunities

The challenge of adapting to the pandemic impacted employees in every role, but none more so than the Chief Information Officer. The sudden pivot to remote work put a strain on IT infrastructures, created an immediate need for new technology investments, and increased the risk of security and performance issues across entire organizations. Many of these burdens fell squarely on the shoulders of CIOs.

Faced with the monumental task of enabling digital workspaces at a rapid pace, many CIOs rose to the occasion. By overseeing successful work-from-anywhere strategies, CIOs “helped save their enterprises” according to Gartner’s 2021 CIO Agenda — which is no exaggeration.

The pandemic has emphasized CIOs’ abilities to drive digital transformation when given more strategic power. And CEOs have taken notice. Over the next two years, CIOs will continue to gain influence within their organizations and play a larger role in developing business strategy, particularly when it comes to implementing new systems for remote and hybrid workforces.

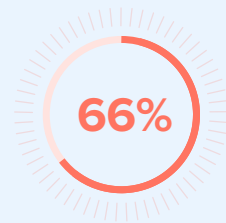
“The pandemic has made CEOs see the value of technology investments in an area where they previously have not,” Martha Heller, CEO of Heller Search Associates, told Nextthink. “Any time you get a CEO who has an appetite for increased technology investment and adoption within their companies, that’s good for the CIO.”

“By 2024, 25% of traditional large-enterprise CIOs will be held accountable for digital business operational results, effectively becoming ‘COO by proxy.’”

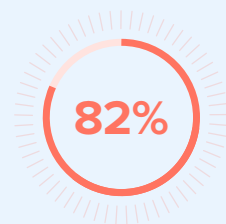


Gartner Top 10 Strategic  
Prediction for 2021 and Beyond

### CIO Corner:



66%  
of CIOs have strengthened  
their relationships with CEOs  
as a result of the pandemic



82%  
say they have implemented new  
technologies, IT strategies, and/or  
methodologies due to the pandemic



96%  
of CIOs say their role is expanding  
beyond IT responsibilities

### 03.

## Adoption of Desktop Virtualization-as-a-Service Will Continue to Rise

The market for desktop virtualization services saw substantial growth in 2020. Driven by the rapid migration from corporate offices to work-from-home models, business leaders realized that desktop virtualization was critically important to their success. Virtual desktop technologies provide agility to employees, maintain security and compliance for the organization, and harness the cost effectiveness, speed, and scalability of cloud services.

The benefits of virtualization for remote workforces include:

- Improved employee flexibility for work-from-anywhere
- Increased security through data centralization
- The ability to centrally manage and patch desktops
- Better access to cloud applications
- Reduced hardware costs

While virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI), session-based computing (SBC), and desktop-as-a-service (DaaS) all grew, DaaS adoption saw [the highest growth rate at 95%](#).

Why would that be?

For one, DaaS places the desktop experience in the public cloud. As many companies were already pursuing cloud-first initiatives, DaaS provided the most scalable and flexible option for companies transitioning into remote workspaces. Additionally, the desktop experience existing in the cloud creates a closer proximity to the cloud-based applications remote workers are accessing.

Expect to see DaaS continue to gain traction as businesses continue to invest in the digital experience of their remote workforces.



“The number of users for DaaS will grow by over 150% between 2020 and 2023.”



**Gartner Research**

Why COVID-19 Drove an Increase in DaaS

## 04. Personalization Will Be a Key Focus for IT in 2021

IT spent the bulk of 2020 adapting on the fly, facilitating the rapid shift to remote work with as little damage caused as possible.

Now that we're a year removed from the start of the pandemic, IT leaders are beginning to recognize the holes in their strategy and making long-term adjustments to improve employee experience.

Personalization will be one of those top priorities for IT teams moving forward. A one-size-fits-all approach to support employees is no longer sufficient. This is particularly true when employees are isolated in remote offices and using a higher quantity of complex technologies than ever before. According to the [Nextthink Pulse Report](#), IT tickets have soared since the pandemic, with 43% of IT leaders saying increased support tickets is their biggest challenge – and this finding drives home the importance of efficient, personalized support as we continue to navigate our digital workspaces.

In 2021, we'll see an increasing number of IT departments focus on creating employee personas to accurately segment their employee base. Personas enable IT to cater to employees based on their specific job functions, technology requirements, and more specific attributes such as app usage, technical proficiency, resource consumption, and more.

In addition to improving employee experience, personalization also has significant cost benefits. In the rush to facilitate the shift to remote work, IT organizations spent large amounts of money on equipment and peripherals – and without a targeted approach, many fell victim to over- and under-provisioning. Intelligent personalization helps IT deploy the right resources to the right people, improving experience and saving costs at the same time.

“Remote working has taught us that, for employees, being digitally savvy has become a must,” says Pierre-Loïc Kuhn, Product Marketing Manager at Nextthink. “Moving forward, IT departments will be responsible for ensuring employees are truly comfortable with their digital work tools and actually have a need for them.”



### The Benefits of Specialized Personas:

Persona-based segmentation allow IT to understand the subtle differences of their end users' needs and behavior. Whether catering to a tech-savvy content marketer or a strategy-minded sales director, IT will be able to craft tailored messaging and offer personalized support to remedy issues more efficiently.

Nextthink's Persona Insight library pack helps IT create specialized personas based on a variety of key experience-driven Persona Traits. These Persona Traits are highly specific in their analysis of an end-user's behavior and technology usage, giving IT a holistic perspective of how each persona behaves in their day-to-day workflow.



## 05. IT Will Have to Adapt to Powering Hybrid Workforces After the Pandemic

As the vaccine rolls out and we near the hopeful end of the pandemic, the future of remote work has been a leading topic of conversation. Will companies stay fully remote? Or will employees return to the office when it's safe to do so? In reality, neither of these outcomes is entirely likely.

Instead, the future of employee experience will be a hybrid experience – a blend of remote work and in-person collaboration.

According to [Pew Research](#), 54% of employees say that, given the opportunity, they would want to continue working from home after the pandemic ends. Additionally, companies placed less emphasis on geography when hiring in 2020 as a result of the uncertainty surrounding a return to the office.

Conversely, there's no way for the remote experience to truly replicate the collaborative benefits of in-person interaction. When the pandemic is finally in the rearview mirror, face-to-face collaboration between employees will return – but it'll look very different to how it did prior to the pandemic.

Most companies will have a portion of their employees in-office while others continue to work from home, some of them in different states or different countries than their main headquarters. Others will elect to save costs by transitioning from large central offices to smaller, temporary collaborative workspaces where employees can meet up and work on specific projects.

In many ways, this transition will be just as demanding for IT as the shift to remote work in March of 2020. IT leaders will have to develop strategies to improve the digital experience of remote workers while supporting collaborative spaces for in-person interaction.

The future of employee experience is one in which employees will have more power to drive decisions about their workspaces and workplace technology. Over the coming years we'll see IT and employees work together to create productive work environments, both remotely and in-person.



“By 2023, 75% of G2000 companies will commit to providing technical parity to a workforce that is hybrid by design rather than by circumstance, enabling them to work together separately and in real time.”



**IDC**

FutureScope: Worldwide  
IT Industry 2021 Predictions



## Conclusion

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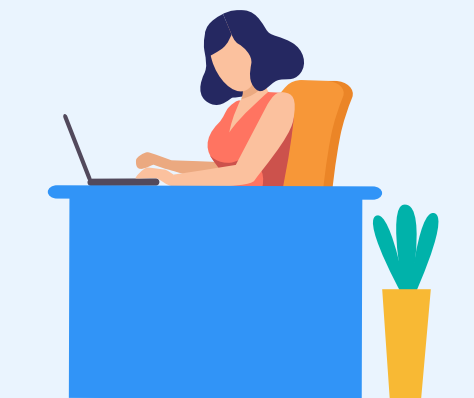
The events of the pandemic have accelerated IT innovation in ways that would have previously seemed impossible. As we emerge from the pandemic, we move towards a bright future where IT teams and employees work together to reach new heights.

Here at Nexthink, it's our mission to help employees realize the most engaging, productive, and rewarding digital experiences possible. Whether you're crafting specialized personas or deciding on the right Desktop Virtualization option, we're here to guide you on the path to providing the best IT support and enabling great work experiences for each and every employee.

## About Nexthink

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Nexthink is the global leader in Digital Employee Experience management. The company's products allow enterprises to create highly productive digital workplaces for their employees by delivering optimal end-user experiences. Through a unique combination of real-time analytics, automation and employee feedback across all endpoints, Nexthink helps IT teams meet the needs of the modern digital workplace.






# nextthink

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Nextthink platform?

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