



Virtual Ways of Working

**Creating a thriving digital
culture for nonprofit organizations**

COVID-19: What to do Now, What to do Next

June 2020



As the health and humanitarian impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic evolve, so do the workplace and economic challenges the crisis has brought on. While the crisis unfolds, nonprofit organizations need to prepare for what is coming next. But not the next “normal.” Normal isn’t available to us anymore.

The new reality combines complexity, uncertainty and opportunities. To adapt and thrive, NPOs must become resilient and agile. They need to balance their immediate needs with longer-term opportunities while continuing to support the populations they tend to.

Many NPOs provide critical relief to people directly impacted by the spread of COVID-19, including food banks and medical services providers. Accenture can help leaders and organizations manage the deep changes needed in this new environment. This is the moment to reinvent the operating model to protect the value nonprofit organizations provide to a new societal landscape.



WHY YOUR WORKPLACE SHOULD “GO DIGITAL”

Traditional places of work are evolving as we speak. These days, and particularly during the global COVID pandemic, the most efficient and adaptable organizations work in unison from almost anywhere in the world. This is a vital consideration for nonprofits. The work you do is important and needs to continue despite difficult times. NPOs are facing everything from drops in contributions to increased costs in supplies and services, to the many difficulties of travel restrictions.

It's time to devise a new work dynamic. One that allows you to care for your people—employees, volunteers, donors, partners, beneficiaries—while stabilizing and even growing your operation. Nonprofits can embrace digital tools and reimagine work practices in a secure, reliable, future-ready model and be empowered to continue making a difference today and for years to come.

INSIDE OUR PLAYBOOK

This toolkit includes practical guidance for working virtually, across three key chapters

**01 CULTURE AND
LEADERSHIP**

**02 ELASTIC
COLLABORATION
TOOLS**

**03 VIRTUAL WORK
SESSIONS**

01

CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP



ESTABLISHING A VIRTUAL CULTURE

- Consider that a virtual culture is just as important as your team culture in the office
- Prioritize a solid virtual culture as an investment in the future. Remote working is here to stay
- Create your digital culture intentionally. It prepares you for the economic recovery and to scale up at a lower risk
- Mobilize now that the environment has forced it. This is an opportunity to create business resilience for the future

Virtual culture is based on shared values, mindsets & team rituals. It needs to be supported by the right connectivity tools.



THE BENEFITS OF A VIRTUAL CULTURE

**There is no better time to
set your organization up
for success than NOW**

You can advance to the future, experiment and de-risk

- Digital everything is becoming the norm and virtual work is no exception
- This is a time to experiment with virtual working. Your learnings help inform your organization on what to de-risk when you are ready to scale virtual working further in the future
- Business travel is known to be costly and taxing on our environment. Working remotely drives lasting reductions in business travel budgets and is more environmentally friendly

It's an opportunity to foster innovation during economic downturns

- During the toughest months of the last recession, start-up activity actually surged. In 2009, more than 550,000 new businesses launched in the UK
- British economist Christopher Freeman found evidence that innovations accelerate and pile up during economic downturns. They unleash powerful new waves of technological change as the economy begins to recover

It increases employee happiness and safety

- 91% of employees choose to work remote because they feel they can achieve a better work/life balance
- Allowing your employees flexibility and prioritizing their safety eases anxiety during difficult times

HOW TO START ACTIVATING YOUR VIRTUAL CULTURE

TIME TO GO “VIRTUAL”

Workplace culture fulfills people’s **need for connection and belonging**. It can **boost morale** by fostering mutual support and guidance.

These days, many people join organizations because they share **their values** and a larger **purpose**. For geographically disperse nonprofits, those values and purpose need to shine through brighter than ever. A clear, intentional culture is the basis for workers’ sense of connection to **something bigger than themselves**.

To shape a strong virtual culture, you need to take this vision and enable it remotely. Effective remote work is achieved through optimized technology, clear communication plans and policy guidance. Your culture needs to **promote trust**, create a **sense of belonging**, be led from a **human-centric perspective** and offer the tools for **successful virtual work**.

A THRIVING CULTURE NEEDS YOU TO

FOSTER CONNECTIVITY & PRODUCTIVITY

- Cloud platforms, project reporting tools and video conferencing all help accountability by highlighting progress
- Feedback, game and polling tools keep remote sessions interactive

DRIVE ENGAGEMENT

- Include employees from all levels into the process and reinforce purpose (a bottom-up implementation)
- Encourage making connections to build the virtual community and stay human
- Adapt team rituals to a virtual environment and embrace “face-to-face” interactions

LEAD BY EXAMPLE

- Create a sense of belonging and trust by having accessible leadership and people-centric interactions like video calls
- Communicate with clarity and context in townhalls and webcasts, schedule virtual “water cooler” breaks and office hours

SUPPORT THE TRANSITION PROCESS

- Allow for flexibility and adjustments as employees find what works for them
- Send personal thank-you notes, gift cards, or walk the virtual floor
- Be understanding of potential issues with Wi-Fi connections, or distractions from kids and pets

LEADING A REMOTE WORKFORCE

Develop a trusting environment, with flexibility and clarity for everyone's success

- **Remain warm and approachable** to show your people that you *genuinely* care and understand them
- Have a **plan to address the “pyramid of needs” all employees have**—from physical, to mental and finally relational needs—so all levels are sustained
- **Support the new way of working and building community.** From selecting the right tech tools and training the workforce in their use, to providing clear guidelines and industry-preferred practices



LEADERSHIP CAN FEEL CLOSE, EVEN FROM A DISTANCE

Responsible leadership has taken on an even deeper meaning, as our workforces and our customers find themselves in an unfamiliar, fast-moving global environment. COVID-19 has changed the way we live and work already, with far-reaching impact. Leading with compassion and caring for our people and communities is more essential than ever.

Most organizations are still determining how the way we work has changed, short and long term. But speed is essential for virtual adaptation, as our workforces and communities try to function and perform while struggling to cope with other challenges in their daily lives.

Our research highlights what workers need from leaders in three basic areas: physical, mental and relational.

These needs apply at all times, but they are magnified during a crisis. When leaders rise to the challenge of fulfilling them, they help their people develop the ability to adapt and engage through difficult times.

Review your leadership approach now

To ensure that your workforce feels seen and guided

THE CRUX OF IT—TRUST

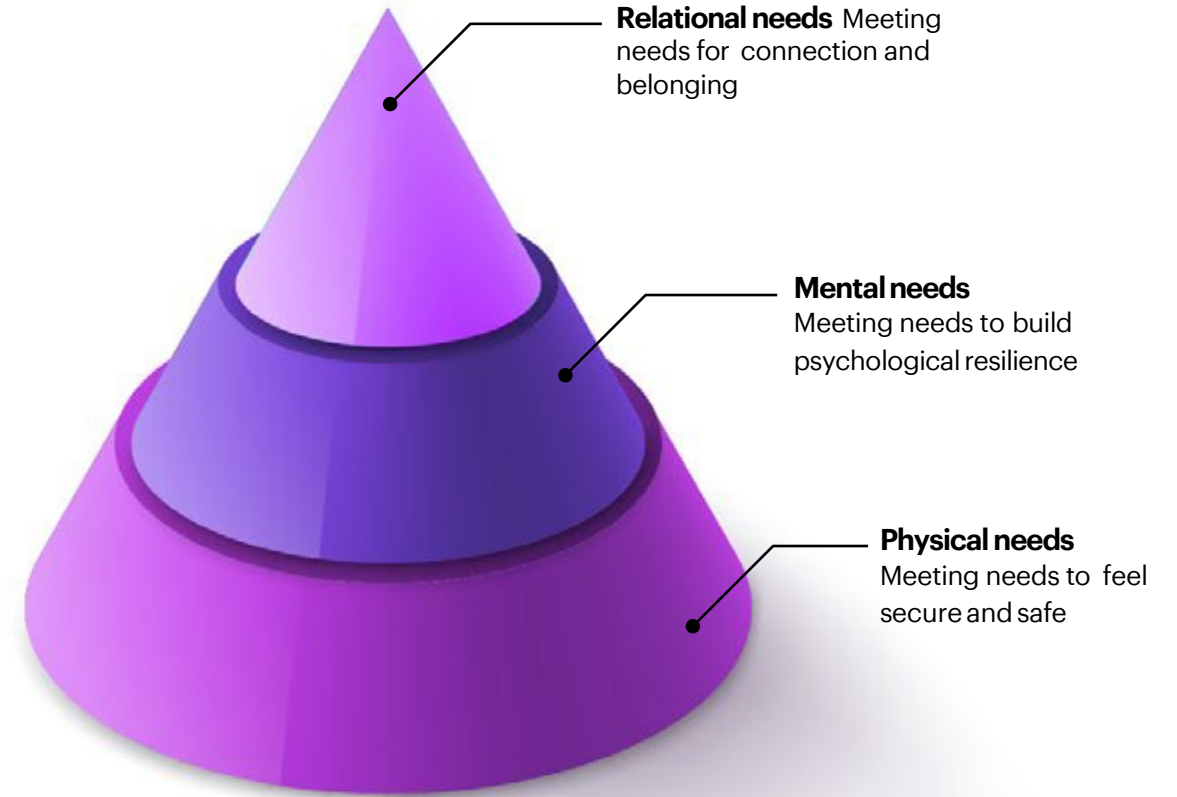
Workers shared two overarching needs that take precedence over all else:

A leadership team that is focused on **compassion and the care of its people.**

Confidence in their organization's capabilities to **navigate the future.**

A leader's ability to address people's physical, mental and relational needs is the foundation of trust for their workforce. While all of these needs have equal importance, there is an order in which they make the biggest difference, starting at the base of the pyramid.

Think of it as similar to Maslow's hierarchy. If employees are worried about physical needs like safety and food supply, they will have a very hard time focusing on productivity or a new way of working.



YOUR PEOPLE'S BASIC NEEDS

PHYSICAL NEEDS

Meeting people's needs to feel secure and safe

Empower me to take responsibility for my **health and well-being**.

Provide **a working environment where I feel safe**.

As many usual freedoms are being restricted, people need to feel empowered to do what is necessary to keep themselves and their families safe and well. Work certainty is a common concern and people in physical locations will worry about no-contact service and protective equipment.

Asking early and often what people need or are concerned about will help your leadership team to determine your best actions.

MENTAL NEEDS

Meeting people's needs to build psychological resilience

Give me **permission to work differently so I can achieve the productivity that helps my mental health**.

Communicate the information I need to do my job, **so I can respond to change with resilience**.

In this new reality, consecutive hours of uninterrupted work may not be possible. Managers have communicate work rules for more flexibility, based on people's individual needs. This can help empower their teams to adapt.

Consistent, transparent and clear communication of your expectations is essential to keeping your team productive and mentally healthy.

RELATIONSHIP NEEDS

Meeting people's needs for connection and belonging

Show me **my connection to our larger mission and purpose**, to give me **a sense of mission and belonging**.

Provide me with the **tools and ways of working** that will help me **co-create our new reality**.

These days, many people join organizations because they share values and a larger purpose. In times of crisis, your people want to understand their new work experience and contribution in light of the disruption happening around them.

Ask them to co-create with you an adjusted workplace reality that better fits the new world we're in and stay in touch as this happens.

02

ELASTIC COLLABORATION TOOLS



FOSTERING ELASTIC WAYS OF WORKING

- Identify the essential technology needed to work remotely
- Consider software options to base your digital collaborations on
- Remember that data security is key. Use trusted tools and download from an official site to avoid security risks
- Look for a balance between cost and continuity. Choose versatile, cost-effective tools that support recurring needs and consider options for one-off needs as well

Your team can stay productive and connected with the right tech, software and industry-preferred practices.



THE RIGHT TOOLS FOR YOUR TEAM

**Success in virtual collaboration
depends on selecting platforms
that work for YOU**

Define your budget and the primary needs of your team

- What your team needs from a collaboration tool needs to be clear
- Your budget, if any, will then guide you in choosing from among the tools that can satisfy these needs for your workforce
- Prioritize your core, day-to-day needs and consider a separate tool for one-off instances (external broadcasts, online events)

Consider tools for managing teams

- There are separate tools that facilitate the admin part of your work and they can be as vital for team work as the collaboration platforms

Be guided by data security

- Different tools will have their own strengths and weaknesses. Be clear on your organization's data security requirements to guide your selection
- Most modern collaboration tools are quite intuitive to use. However you need to consider what type of training is needed to ensure the best possible utilization and data security

FIT-TO-PURPOSE SOFTWARE OPTIONS

Microsoft Teams is an all-in-one option that fits the bill for many different organizations. Microsoft offers **discounts and even donations** on their packages for qualified nonprofits. For example, Teams may be free of charge for nonprofits with a recognized charitable status.

OUR CHOICE



With Teams you can:



Create group conversations, organized by channel and have private group chats



Add IM, audio, video, desktop sharing, send files and take notes



Provide quick access to frequently used files and work on documents right from the tool



Connect with other tools and have access to file and chat history at any time, so everyone is in the know

And there are **other tools—many free of charge**—that can be used based on your needs and budget.

OTHER ALL-IN-ONE TOOLS



OTHER PRODUCTIVE MEETINGS TOOLS (NO FEE)

Video conferencing

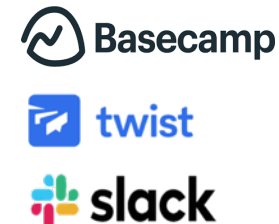


Workshops, Design thinking, polling



MANAGING TEAMS TOOLS (NO FEE)

Collaboration tools



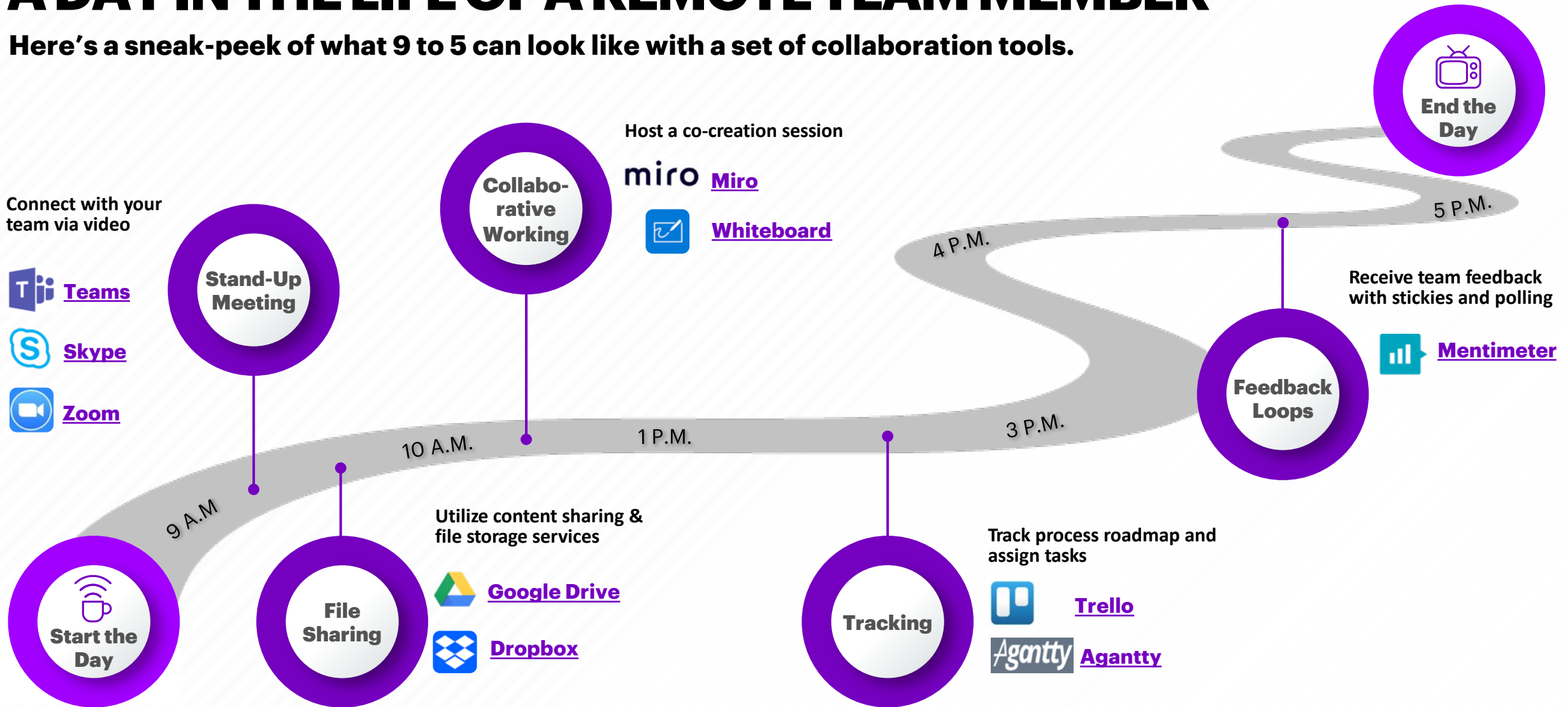
Project management



*All third-party products referenced in this document are included for demonstration purposes only, not as a recommendation or endorsement by Accenture.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A REMOTE TEAM MEMBER

Here's a sneak-peek of what 9 to 5 can look like with a set of collaboration tools.



THE TWO VITAL SIDES OF LEVERAGING TECH

Your chosen virtual workforce tools and solutions need to support both sides of the coin

KEEPING TRACK



Manage project progress remotely

Centralize tasks, foster accountability and help progress tracking with planning and task management tools.



Share files from anywhere, instantaneously

Work with a cloud-first mentality and use file-sharing services to upload team documents.



Centralize communication channels

Deploy a one-stop-shop design for team communication on all project-related work.



Co-author deliverables

Drive progress on deliverables across teams, time zones and skillsets with multi-user editability of project content.

STAYING CONNECTED



Engage your team through video

Leverage video conferencing tools by turning on your camera and improve emotional connection during virtual meetings.



Connect through instant messaging

Touch base (quickly) with one or more team members via chat and convey emotion with punctuation and emojis.



Gather team input via polling

Aggregate team feedback for key decisions and scheduling with real-time polling platforms.



Co-ideate with brainstorming tools

Make virtual meetings more engaging by integrating Design Thinking and Whiteboarding tools.

03

VIRTUAL WORK SESSIONS



RUNNING VIRTUAL SESSIONS

- Plan your virtual sessions as thoroughly as you would in a non-remote setting—and perhaps even more so
- Define the necessary steps for before, during and after the session and assign owners for each. Clear assignment helps each phase of a meeting run consistently
- For more involved sessions or workshops, anticipate tech support and have this point-of-contact person available for workshop success
- Using engagement practices and gathering feedback after sessions boost the impact

Keep your virtual sessions effective and human while leveraging tools for collaboration and co-creation.

USE LEARNING RESEARCH TO BOOST YOUR VIRTUAL SESSION

Collaborative
activities
are more engaging
than lectures.

Well-structured
stories
increase engagement.



Mind wandering
begins at
6 mins.

Brain needs to
reset every
20 mins.

Retention
increases by
25%
when people spend
the time to think and
reflect about
what they've learned.



It's proven that
trust leads to
better performance.

We feel safe to share,
take risks
together and even fail
together.



TIPS TO KEEP IN MIND FOR TEAM E-MEETING SUCCESS

WHAT	WHY	HOW
Provide a roadmap	Brain structures responsible for both creative and logical thinking can fire on all cylinders if they have certainty. Keep content connected for one flow.	Communicate the agenda at the start of session. Provide cues as to what comes next. Thread learning outcomes from topic to topic.
Limit one-way communication	Focus is most vulnerable during passive receipt of information. Attention for on-screen content wanders at 6 minutes.	Structure content as a dialogue rather than a monologue.
Leverage multiple modalities	Different modalities engage different parts of the brain, resetting attention and increasing the durability of the learning.	Include combinations of video, polling, markup, etc. Provide a hard copy notebook to serve as a session map and for reflection.
Protect breaks	Fatigued brains do not learn well. Period.	Provide a 10-15 minute break every 60-90 minutes.
Insert questions throughout	Asking for information is one of the most effective ways to strengthen neural connections.	Use polling, multiple-choice questions and open-ended reflection questions.
Incorporate callouts	Small amounts of stress accelerates learning. Keep attention tuned to the session.	Ask for perspectives from people in different functions, geographies, etc.
Pause to reflect	Allow for content to be absorbed.	Plan for reflection time in a printed journal.
Repeat key learning points	Repetition reinforces learning.	Wrap each topic with the key takeaways.

DESIGN YOUR VIRTUAL WORKSHOP

DETERMINE A FRAMEWORK

Less is more for virtual sessions. Keep everyone engaged and able to voice their point of view. For larger sessions, plan for breakouts with facilitators.

FOCUS ON MAXIMUM ENGAGEMENT

Find ways to have everyone heard. Briefly say their name and where they are joining from at the start. Prepare icebreaker activities at the beginning and throughout.

BE MINDFUL OF SESSION LENGTH AND TAKE BREAKS

No more than a 4-hour session in one day. Don't create a jam-packed agenda and avoid complicated technology. Allow a 10 minute break per 60 minutes of session.

FOCUS ON 2-WAY COMMUNICATION

Plan to have more discussion than presentation for the content. Include reflection questions. People learn best when they engage and contribute.

PLAN WITH OUTCOMES IN MIND

Design first for outcomes and then plan how to get to them. First think of what you want the audience to learn and then create activities for them to learn it.

DO YOUR RESEARCH

If you will need to refer to a previous session, find out what was covered and make sure there is continuity to what you need to cover today.

ASK PEOPLE TO BE VIDEO-READY

This creates more engagement, give attendees a heads-up. Presenters should always be on video when talking unless bandwidth is an issue.

VIRTUAL WORKSHOPS ROADMAP

BEFORE THE SESSION



READY FOR THE UNEXPECTED?

Have a Plan B in case everything goes down

Make tech support available during the session

MAKING VIRTUAL WORK FOR YOUR TEAM

CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP



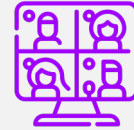
Skill leaders to understand team dynamics, create a virtual team culture and identify what works best when managing from a distance.

ELASTIC COLLABORATION TOOLS



Enable remote workers to be more productive and secure by selecting tools aligned with the team's needs.

VIRTUAL WORK SESSIONS



Virtual sessions can be effective and productive if you follow best practices and keep your audience engaged to collaborate efficiently no matter where they are.

In conclusion, **resilient organizations are creating technology-enabled connectivity** for their contributors. There is a solution for every need, so your team can stay on-purpose and thrive. While COVID has precipitated this reality, nonprofits can use the opportunity to **apply proven digital strategies** and create a sustainable virtual culture that **can mark the difference between staying on course or falling behind**.

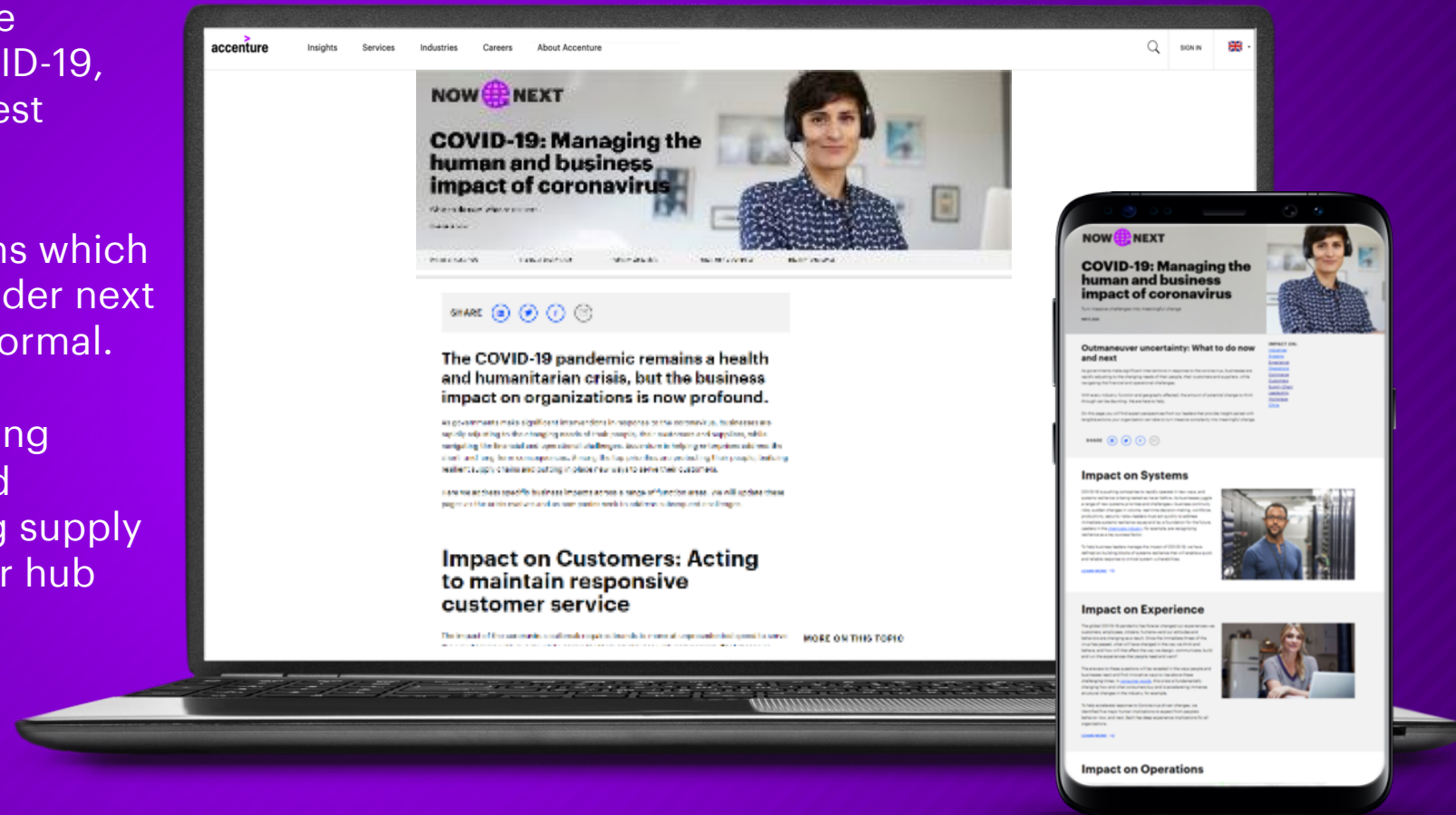
An innovative mindset in adopting a digital workplace experience will have **lasting benefits**, not only for your workforce, volunteers and partners, but also for **the health and resilience of your organization and the recipients of your ever-important work**.

To help our clients navigate both the human and business impact of COVID-19, we've created a hub of all of our latest thinking on a variety of topics.

Each topic highlights specific actions which can be taken now and what to consider next as industries move towards a new normal.

From leadership essentials to ensuring productivity for your employees and customer service groups to building supply chain resilience and much more, our hub will be constantly updated. Check back regularly for more insights.

[VISIT OUR HUB HERE](#)



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