The changing workforce:
A new kind of team

Great things in business are never done by one person.
They're done by a team of people. —Steve Jobs

The workforce has never been as varied as it is today, with full-time and part-time employees, and contingent, freelance, gig, and crowdsourced workers all working in a variety of settings. These new workers are quickly changing the shape of the workplace and teaming with their colleagues to do “great things.”

Deloitte’s 2018 Global Human Capital Trends report found that only 42 percent of respondents’ organizations are primarily made up of salaried employees. In addition, the majority anticipate their reliance on alternative workers (contract, freelance, and gig) to increase in the coming years (see figure 1).

This new workforce ecosystem has many benefits—for employees and employers alike—but it also brings challenges. So how can organizations ensure that their distinct “team of workers” is productive, engaged, and working together for the benefit of the company?

Figure 1. When asked to forecast the makeup of organizations’ workforce in 2020

The new team members

Just a few years ago, the perception of contingent workers was that they may have been forced into short-term gigs in response to a crisis or economic downturn. But that’s no longer the case. Today, there are many options for workers. And in this on-demand economy, many workers are opting for nontraditional work for a variety of reasons—flexibility, opportunities for varied projects, even higher wages. Meanwhile, advances in technology (think: smartphones, laptops, tablets, video conferencing, instant messaging, email, social media, etc.) have made it all the more possible.

Millennials now represent one-in-three American labor force participants, and that percentage is growing. Deloitte’s 2017 Millennial Survey found that millennials believe flexible working arrangements support greater productivity and employee engagement while enhancing personal well-being, health, and happiness. But millennials are not the only employees with high expectations for their places of work. Competition for skilled resources is high, which gives the advantage to the players: they have leverage to negotiate perks that matter to them, such as alternative work arrangements and flexibility.

And this new, hybrid workforce offers benefits to employers as well. Organizations now have access to an array of workers—whether they are full-time on-site, full-time remote, part-time, seasonal, contractors, or gig workers. Still others are relying on crowd workers to meet varied requirements. As disruptions occur and types of work change, employers have options on how to best staff their roles. Some roles are suited for full-time employees, whether working remotely or in an office, while some are best for contractors or temps. Organizations can leverage alternative roles to tap into new markets, meet seasonal demands, discover new expertise and talent, and, of course, save resources. Additionally, many occupations require employees to work outside of the office, such as traveling sales executives, consultants, event coordinators, buyers—and the list goes on.

There is no secret sauce for the perfect team, but that is the beauty of today’s model: staffing is customizable—bespoke for each organization.
Playing to the team’s strengths

For workers, flexible arrangements are not simply nice to have. They are linked to improved performance, employee retention, and higher levels of loyalty. In fact, Deloitte’s 2018 Millennial Survey found that, among respondents who intend to stay with their current employers for at least five years, 55 percent say there is more flexibility in where and when they work compared to three years ago. Among those looking to leave within the next two years, the figure is just 35 percent.  

Organizations that do not make efforts to attract and engage the new workforce may risk losing theirs workers and, in the process, opportunities for growth. Seasonal workers may flee to competitors because of poor processes (a lack of communications, support, and comprehensive onboarding). Contractors may feel disconnected from the organization, prohibiting them from making positive contributions. Remote workers may not feel like a part of the team or motivated to be productive if they don’t feel a strong sense of connection and community. On the flip side, those organizations that adapt to meet the needs of the new workforce will likely reap rewards.

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HR leaders are beginning to understand that workers have very distinct needs, and as such, they need to create a better employee experience. In fact, research from Deloitte’s Bersin™ found that higher-performing HR organizations emphasize engaging worker experiences for everyone—making the design of flexible, worker-centric offerings a primary focus.

Digital platforms can make a difference—better managing and engaging a diverse population of workers in a way that is rewarding as well as value-additive to employers. Deloitte’s ConnectMe, a digital workplace product that helps the workforce access what they need, when and where they need it, can help make that connection—meeting needs across all kinds of workers, while also improving HR service delivery.

Among the potential benefits of a digital platform:

- **Agility**: Digital platforms offer flexibility to employees and their employers. Today’s employees—all kinds—expect the same conveniences they’ve come to enjoy in their personal lives, and digital enables that. At the touch of a button, employees can access HR information and resources, 24/7.
- **Onboarding**: All employees—including nontraditional workers—need to be provided a positive onboarding experience. Digitizing the process can make it simple for everyone, automating much of the process. Employees can easily ask questions in preparation for their new position. This helps allow for an effective first day in their new role, during which the new employee can add immediate value.
- **Communications**: The workforce can be segmented in a variety of ways—by department and geography, and also by employee type, for example—and set up to receive personalized communications that apply and appeal directly to them.
- **Personalization**: A digital platform can foster user-centric design, which enables organizations to deliver content and information that is relevant to all employee types.
- **Training**: Many of today’s alternative workers are highly skilled professionals who need access to development opportunities; still others need access to basic training to fulfill their role responsibilities. Digital platforms can enable workers to simply access online courses.

The composition of the workforce will continue to evolve. Successful organizations will likely be those that continuously improve the way they team with workers of all kinds.

**ConnectMe™** is a digital workplace product that helps the workforce access what they need, when and where they need it, by enabling employees to access all of their HR-related information through a personalized dashboard with content specific to their needs.
Endnotes

5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.