

Reimagining service for the new world

A framework for tomorrow's
successful customer-focused
operating models



gobeyond

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Foreword

Service has changed forever

When considering the seismic change that COVID-19 has already driven for businesses on a global level, it is heartening to note that many brands have responded remarkably: creating new delivery models, adapting to rapidly shifting customer demand and rethinking propositions at an unprecedented pace. Unfortunately, many have also already suffered significant damage, which in some cases will be irreparable.

As the urgency for change and transformation intensifies in our new reality, it raises some pivotal questions. How different will service look and feel in the future? How will businesses and their operations need to adapt? And how can employers engage and support their colleagues to deliver on new customer promises?

By combining Webhelp's expertise in global customer management with Gobeyond Partners' customer-journey design, alongside our research with 500 senior business leaders, we are able to provide a unique perspective.

This paper explores how consumers are now demanding more human experiences, even in digital environments, and why organisations must balance agility and adaptability against a clear focus on maximising value from investment in transformation.

Managing the tension between these characteristics will be crucial to the future of customer experience and the relationship between brands and customers for years to come.

We would love to hear your views on the future, so please do engage in the discussion. [#servicereimagined](#)



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**Chief Commercial Officer
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The current landscape

1 New online citizens are emerging

People who have never adopted digital channels have suddenly needed to do so. They may have initially found this difficult, but having successfully overcome these difficulties they are unlikely to return to the channels they used to use. And, as a consequence, brands must evolve their communication and delivery strategies, not just for customers, but with each other.

2 Ways of working are evolving

Employees are demonstrating an increased appetite to work remotely. In some countries, this has accelerated pre-existing trends, whilst in others it represents a more radical change. But these changes are not going to be for everyone - the type of work, type of company culture and individual preferences will all come into play when deciding what the future looks like.

3 The global economy is more vulnerable

Whilst this seems self-evident, it can't go without being said – there will be a global recession and consequently an increased sensitivity to cost. Both organisations and individuals will also be aware of the need to build cash reserves in case a similar event occurs again in the medium term. We should also recognise that people and clients will have a decreased ability to service debt which will in itself reduce capital expenditure and lending.

4 People feel less comfortable in public

Bricks and mortar retail is expecting a decrease in footfall vs pre-COVID. Which has been reflected in the near 95% share price reduction in many of the organisations operating large retail centres. Companies, employees and customers alike will have a reduced appetite for travel, with the realisation that it takes up time, is expensive, bad for the environment and often unnecessary. Finally, businesses will need to find solutions to help employees and customers feel safe, and in the cases when work must happen in an office, factory or warehouse this consideration will have a profound impact on the size of their footprint.

5 Government intervention is becoming more normal

COVID-19 measures have made this almost routine in many countries, and this is likely to continue as Governments and regulating bodies try to safeguard the global economy from further damage. Moving forward, we expect this to play a larger part in shaping the future landscape. Basic economic freedoms have been restricted for the greater good, with business and operating models being forced to adapt. Those who chose to avoid corporation tax with tax friendly HQ locations have not been afforded the financial support expected, and furlough has not supported those who focused on remuneration based on dividend rather than salaries.

6 We need to build for resilience

The scale, speed and depth of recent events have highlighted the importance of resilience at an economic, business, and even individual level. In many cases, resilience is neither inherent nor proactively planned for, and there are too many single points of failure.

Business continuity scenario planning will have to evolve and the definition between what constitutes business continuity versus disaster recovery will have to become much clearer. Digital transformation must be prioritised, however the financial burden of this could be eased by utilising innovative, supplier based commercial models.

The current landscape

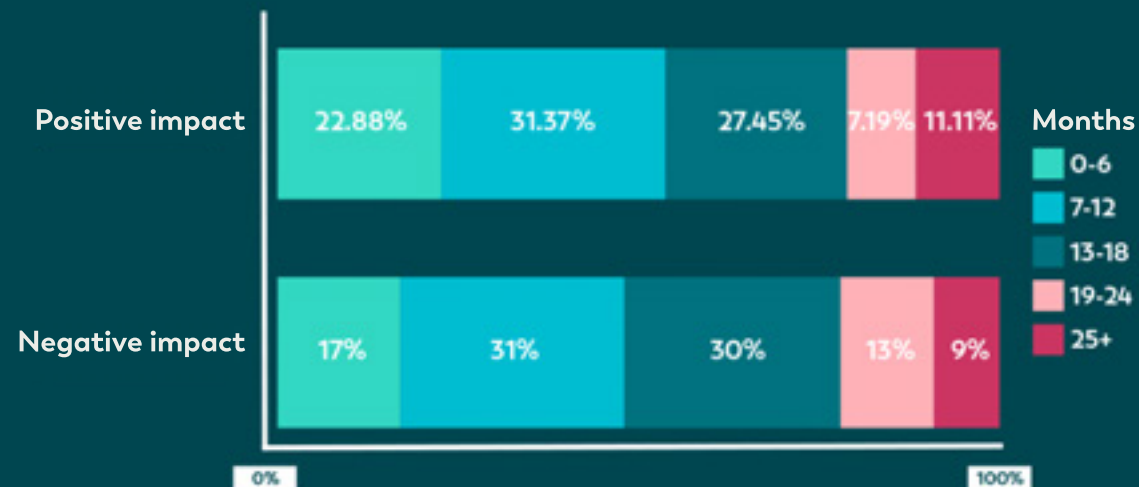
Over 70% of businesses have seen a direct impact to their bottom-line as a result of COVID-19, with more than half of those being negatively impacted.

And these effects are expected to last, with more than 80% of respondents believing those impacts will last for 6 months or more and around 50% expecting their finances to be affected for more than a year.

Overall, how have/will your company finances be impacted due to the COVID-19 situation?



How long do you expect your company's finances to be impacted by the COVID-19 situation?



A model for the future

Brands and organisations need to be:

More adaptable

Develop an inherent agility that enables them to adjust course and flex to an ever-changing environment

More focused

Prioritise change efforts to deliver rapid, effective change – making the most out of limited resources

More digital

Deliver seamless, technology-enabled, and experience-led service across multiple channels

More human

Demonstrate transparency and create genuine and deep emotional connections with customers and colleagues

A natural tension between these elements exists, and must be carefully balanced to ensure focus doesn't render the business unresponsive to change, and a desire to be more human doesn't add unnecessary friction into a digitally-led customer journey.

More adaptable

Adaptable work arrangements and practices

Whether work is delivered at home or in the office will become a far more irrelevant distinction. Instead we'll see more flexibility in when work is delivered, how and by whom, with greater scope to shift work between geographies and people to adapt to external changes. This will have a huge impact on location and sourcing strategies as well as talent development.

As flexibility becomes standard practice, a much healthier focus on outcomes will emerge. This must be underpinned by data-driven performance management as colleagues at all levels increasingly understand the critical relationship between behaviours, outputs and outcomes.

Adaptable physical spaces

As a response, office spaces must become more purpose driven and aligned with flexible working practices. Meeting, collaborating, and maintaining emotional connection between colleagues will emerge as a core purpose, with spaces designed around this. Despite the immediate impact of health-and-safety requirements on office spaces, we see the future of workspaces feeling more like lounges built for creative collaboration than the banks of workstations with which we are all more traditionally familiar.

With decreased footfall and capacity restrictions due to social distancing, bricks and mortar will become less relevant as a primary sales channel. This means that estates will need to take on a new role which is built around experience and more closely aligned to the overall customer journey. For example, this might see opening hours, locations and staffing adapting and shifting as the shape and scale of customer demand changes throughout the year.

Adaptable service delivery

As ways of working and spaces become more adaptable, so will the approach to delivering the best service for customers. Skills such as active listening, problem solving, customisation and forming emotional connections with the customer, no matter what channel, will become crucial and should be focused on an understanding of customer journeys relevant to the new world, not just a re-engagement of existing pieces.

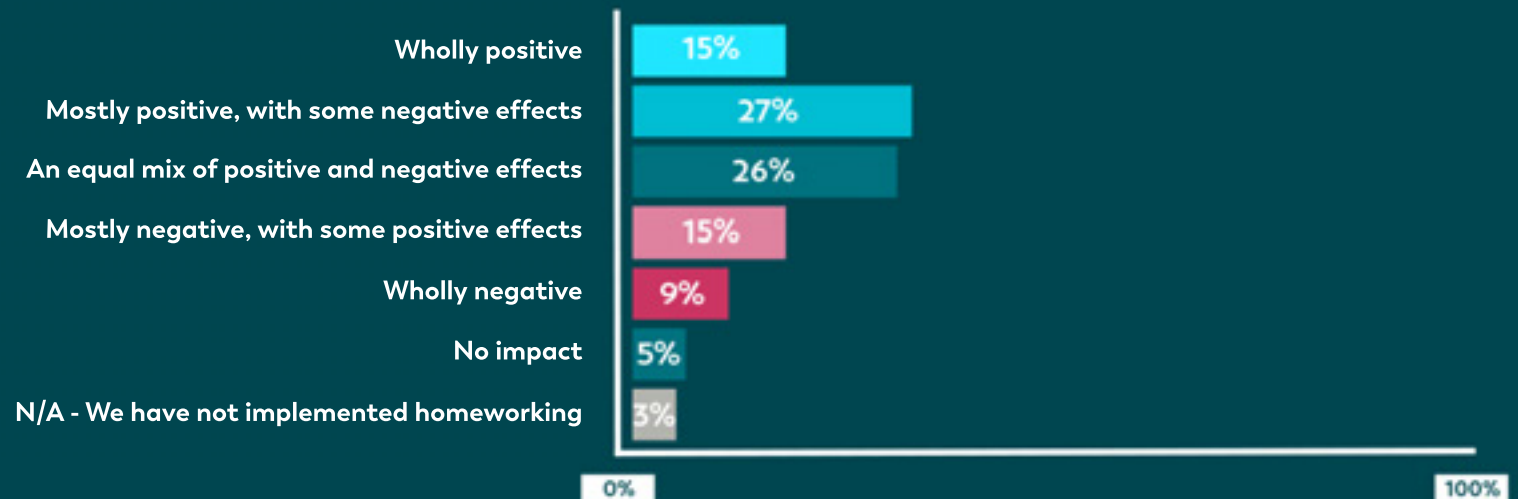
This will create a need for more pervasive scenario planning, enabling a more accurate modelling of risk and the impact of change on service levels. Therefore avoiding a repeat of the early pandemic response where major service components were unable to adapt and 'went offline'.

More adaptable

With over half of business leaders reporting that homeworking has either had a positive or neutral impact on their productivity, it seems flexible working is here to stay.

As restrictions to work ease, we expect that blended models will emerge, taking advantage of the positive effects of home-based working and mitigating its negative side.

How is homeworking impacting your company's productivity?



More focused

From top 10 to top 3

Overall budgets may reduce, however, spend on individual change and transformation programmes should not be reduced commensurately. Instead, the entire change portfolio should be reviewed, reduced and reprioritised. Now is the time to focus on and invest in a critical, clear and concise set of priorities, which the whole organisation can communicate and contribute to. This will ensure that the most critical agenda items will accelerate - without depleting vital cash reserves.

Focus in the face of complexity

Some areas of business, such as contact centres, display relatively mature capability in workforce management, logistics and planning capacity. Areas with traditionally looser management should rapidly adopt these methods or risk losing control of service outcomes.

Focus on getting it right first time

As resources become a precious commodity, tolerance for functions that previously existed to resolve failure elsewhere will dwindle. As colleagues take on greater trust and ownership than ever before, businesses must reduce hand-offs between teams and clearly understand customer problem statements to deliver rapid service that is right first time.

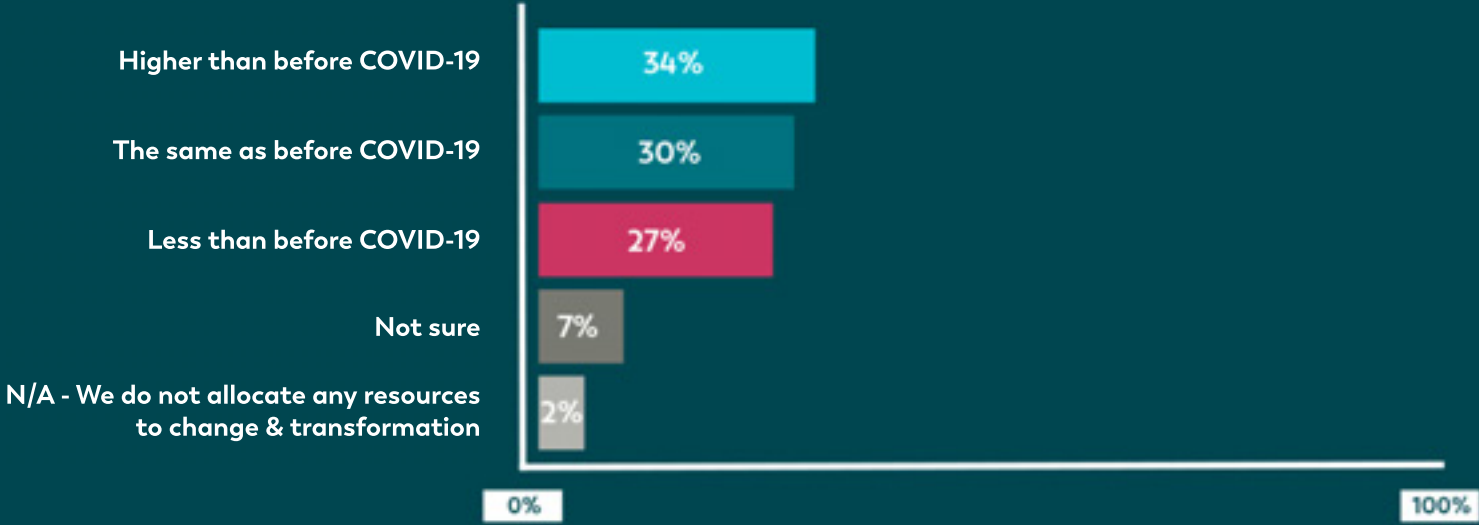
More focused

Over 60% of business leaders are re-evaluating how much they will be investing in change and transformation.

Companies that have been affected negatively by COVID-19 are twice as likely to expect cuts to their transformation budgets after the pandemic has subsided.

Intelligent use of rightsourcing will be crucial in establishing the most cost effective and relevant solution to support the flexibility and speed needed during this transformational period.

Once the immediate COVID-19 situation has subsided do you expect the amount of resources your company allocates to change and transformation to be:



More digital

Leaving legacy behind

With over half of leaders expecting customer interactions through digital channels to increase it is clear that legacy technologies and infrastructure, must finally be left behind. These issues have often been swept under the carpet of the digital transformation roadmap, but it is now time to address these head-on. Existing programmes should be revisited with renewed scrutiny, and customer journeys must be rethought against the backdrop of new digital adopters. It's clear digital delivery must rapidly embrace a strategic and wholesale change to match the pace of change. However, simply layering digital solutions over sub-optimal customer journeys or outdated operating models will ultimately fail to deliver commercial objectives. This will only be achieved by obtaining an acute understanding of genuine customer need. Deep analytics, modelling of behaviours and expectations and real time customer feedback and engagement will help realise long-term benefit as we rebuild for a post COVID-19 world.

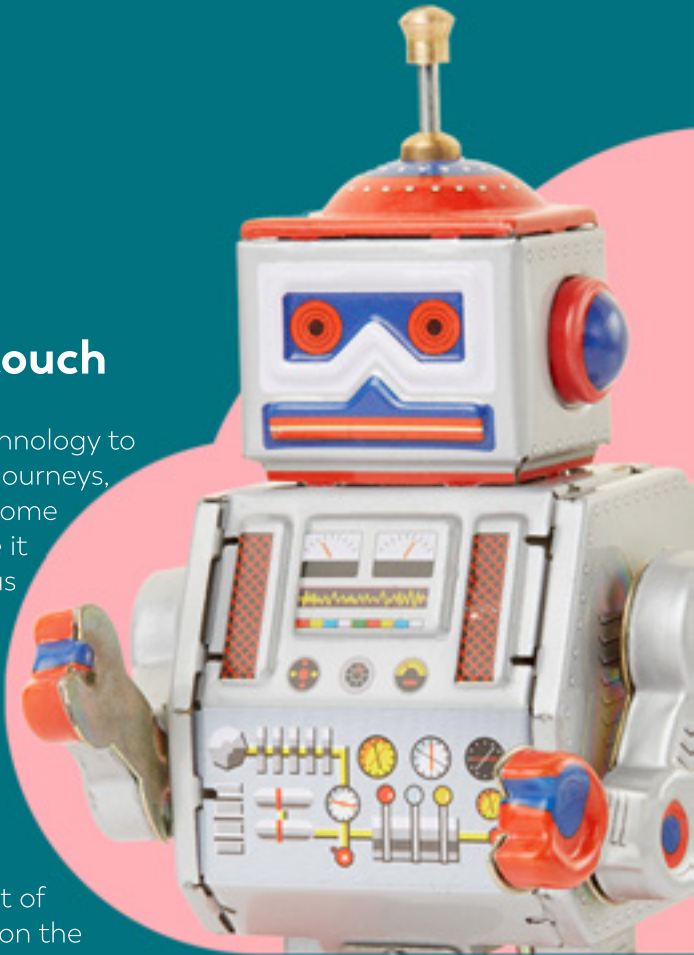
Breaking the digital divide

Of course organisations will have separate digital functions, with differing goals and priorities to their other channel counterparts. However, now is the time to embrace a truly omnichannel operating model and organisational design, with common purpose and priority, ensuring customers really do come first. As brands seek to increasingly target and acquire customers through digital channels, acquisition costs will naturally increase. Closer alignment across the entire customer lifecycle will become more important than ever, with reduced cost-to-serve and improved retention critical to achieving profitability.

Digital service, with a human touch

While integrating new technology to deliver intuitive customer journeys, organisations have to become clearly focused on the role it plays alongside humans as part of seamless, multichannel journeys.

Ensuring close alignment of each component to the business strategy and value proposition will enable the development of experiences that deliver on the brand promise, regardless of the chosen channel.

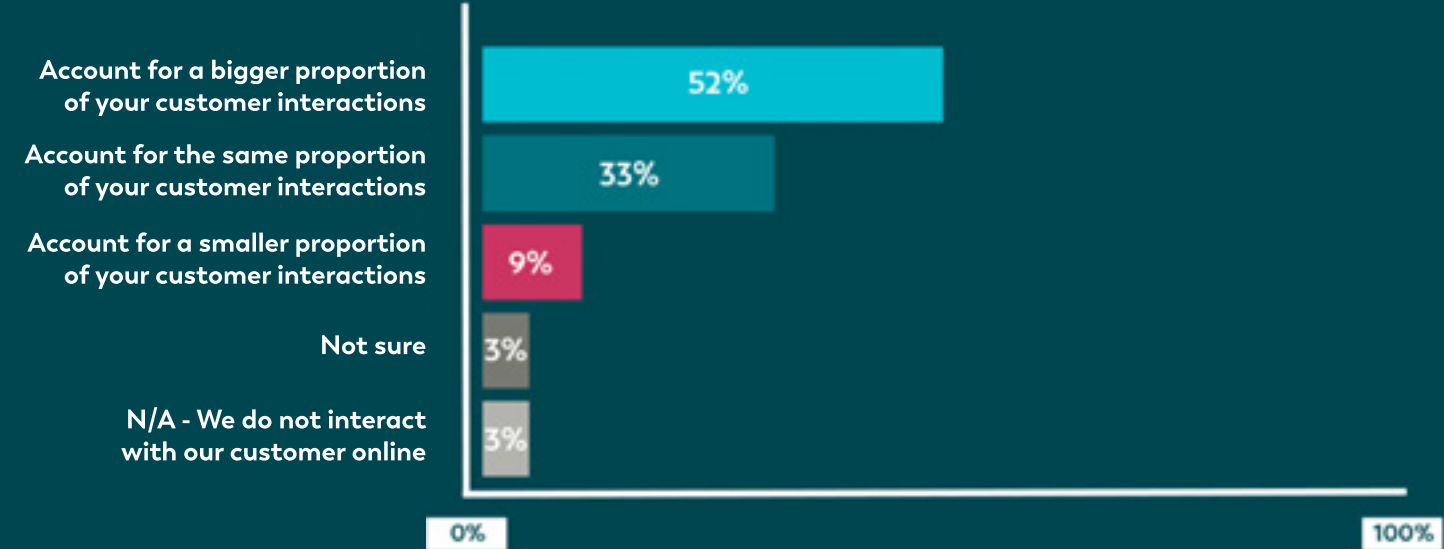


More digital

52% of the interviewed business leaders believe that COVID-19 has significantly changed how customers interact with their business, with an increased preference for online channels.

Delivering a positive customer experience across online channels that is consistent and coherent with what customers expect from the brand, and what companies expect from each other, is now more important than ever.

Once the immediate COVID-19 situation has subsided (and more under control), do you expect online channels to:



More human

Technology is changing the way service is approached, created and delivered, but people and the human experience will still make the crucial difference.

Creating more human connections with brands

Brands that seek to differentiate have to be willing to go above and beyond 'faceless' digital experiences, using stores and physical states to deliver on brand promises in fresh, exciting ways through events and promotions or delivering outstanding face-to-face advice and after-care.

More human connections between colleagues

Close bonds and relationships prior to the crisis helped teams transition to remote environments more effectively. Keeping people connected during the transition to blended working practices will assume increased importance in maintaining a human touch in the virtual work environment.

More human work practices

As the significance of health, wellbeing and safety intensifies, a culture of responsibility towards one another will emerge, bringing associated shifts in the balance of trust and control.

Employees, who are more empowered than ever before, will raise new questions and challenge as lines between work and home are further blurred. Considerations like optimal home working setup, wellbeing and how to maintain and establish close bonds between colleagues, which enable adaption to new environments will need to be thought through.

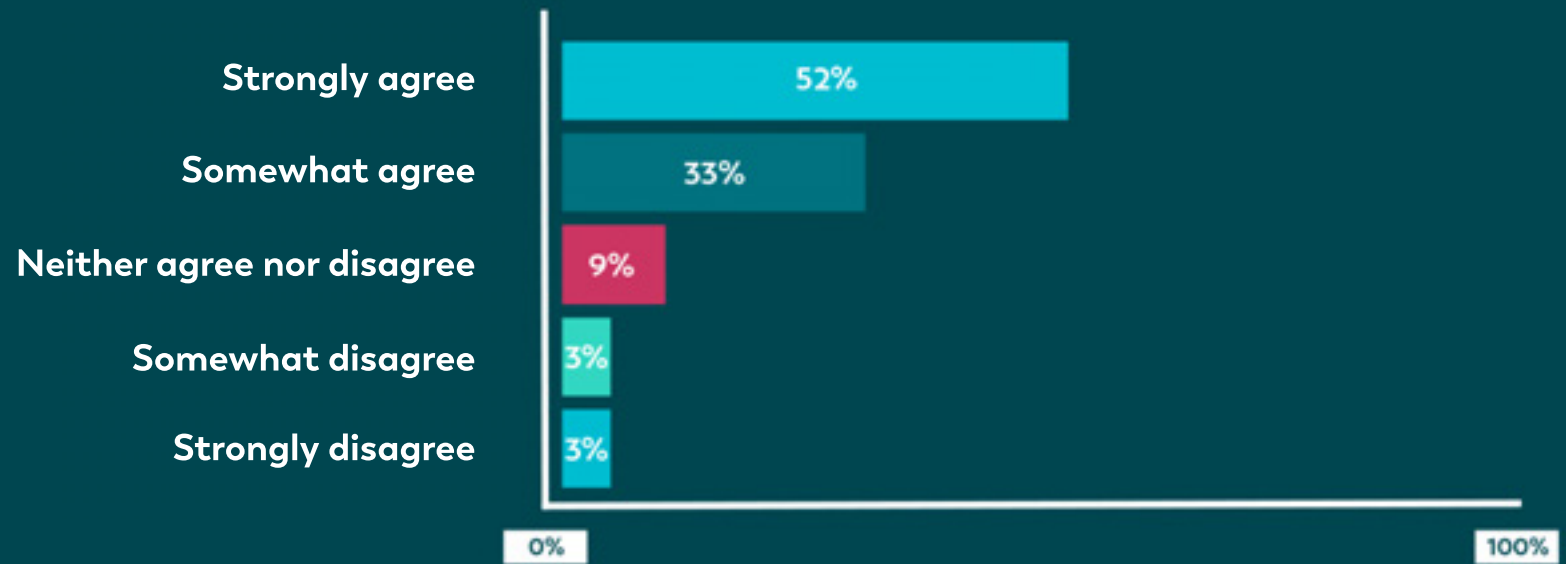


More human

Particularly in the early stages of the crisis, social media feeds were awash with examples of brands accused of behaving irresponsibly.

With 78% of leaders agreeing that customers will be paying much closer attention to their business practices, being human is more important than ever now.

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statement:
'Customers are paying more attention to how responsible my/our business practices are, compared to before the COVID-19 situation'



Your next steps

Assess your adaptability

How hard was it to adapt first time round? Could you do it again?

If work needs to be moved, scaled up or scaled down, do your people have a broad enough skill base to enable this?

How embedded is business continuity scenario planning?

How often are plans actively reviewed and the impact modelled?

Set priorities

What are your top three priorities and does every level of the organisation understand why?

How can you deliver on your focus areas and maintain vital cash reserves? What spend should be reallocated?

How can you align your people at all levels?

Get closer to your customers

What do your customers really value and need now? How can you reposition your capabilities to deliver against these?

Have their expectations and channel use changed too?

What new customer journeys are emerging and how should you organise to deliver on them?

Final thoughts

**The future is
adaptable
focused
digital
and human**

We believe these four themes create a powerful starting point for the new world of customer-focused operating models.

Currently, there is the immediate danger that those who drag their heels about 'going digital', will swiftly become out of alignment with future consumer trends.

This is particularly important as consumers will bring a more human lens to their interactions with companies, especially in areas around conduct and ethics. As we have explored in our previous Whitepaper the strongest brand connections are often emotional, and this can be enhanced by reputation and by providing a truly empathetic customer experience.

The engineering of an authentic human experience in the digital world will require a delicate balance, and companies will need to work hard to create service transformation that satisfies this need. This may expose a lack of capability and flexibility inherent in many organisations, due to a lack of investment. And, for brands to survive, leaders can no longer pay lip service to digital transformation. Digital must be fully integrated into the overall operating model.



The ability to be adaptable and flexible, yet highly focused will assume much greater importance, as these two seemingly diametric opposites must combine to deliver against the complex challenges that operational transformation will bring.

COVID-19 has illustrated, with unfortunate clarity, that businesses need to be able to think on their feet, using the best and most relevant insight to create a laser sharp focus on what needs to be done, and have the adaptability to swiftly make it happen, as the need arises.

If you would like to discover how to design, transform and operate highly innovative and flexible end-to-end solutions in the new normal, join the conversation at forthcoming events, which will be taking a deeper dive into reimagining service for the new world. Read our forthcoming blog series and reach out to either of us on our LinkedIn pages.

About the authors

Craig Gibson

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to connect



Over his 25-year career, Craig has been responsible for growing retail, enterprise and customer solutions for Vodacom, Ernst & Young, JD Edwards and Dimension Data in South Africa. He led the development of investment in the SA Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry and generated the first offshoring investments into SA from the UK, the USA and Australia. At the annual BPesa awards in May 2011, he was named Leader of the Year. His consultancy, a joint venture with Adcorp, launched in 2012 and was incorporated into Webhelp late in 2013. Craig moved to the UK from South Africa in 2016 and now holds the role of Webhelp Chief Commercial Officer, UK Group.

Mark Palmer

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Mark started his career in France in 1992 working for the French Automotive systems supplier Valeo where he established, in 1995, one of the very first Operations Excellence Academies seen in Europe. This Academy, called the Ecole 5 Axes, still thrives to this day. After running a UK Division of Valeo as its MD he went on to become Management Development Director at HQ in Paris. He returned to the UK in 2001 and joined OEE Consulting. Here he started the process of translating world-class operations thinking into the service industry. In 2008 he became Managing Director at OEE prior to the merger with gobeyond to form Gobeyond Partners.

About Webhelp

Webhelp is committed to making business more human, they embed this vision to enrich customer experience and design business solutions that create value for the world's most exciting companies.

Hundreds of brands across the world trust Webhelp because of their people, the culture they work in, and the ideas and technology they put to work. And, adding a human touch to the right technology makes a real difference for their clients. They partner Fortune 500 companies across a range of services including customer experience solutions and social media moderation through to payment services.

With over 60,000 game-changers from more than 140 locations in 36 countries, Webhelp invests in people and the environment they work in, as they know that when people thrive, it has a powerful impact on customers and on their partners' business.

A European leader in their industry, with a revenue of €1,5B in 2019, they aim for a global leadership position.

webhelp.com

About Gobeyond Partners

Gobeyond Partners are a collective of talented people working alongside some of the world's best known organisations. They are a highly creative and solutions driven team always willing to go the extra mile. And they are an organisation committed to working together to positively transform human experience.

Part of the Webhelp group, they have forged a powerful new operation by integrating the strengths of OEE Consulting and Gobeyond into a vibrant new business with global reach. Bringing together 20 years of experience and expertise with a dynamic new approach, they combine award-winning consulting and training with innovative technology and next-generation managed services.

Their 350 experts work closely with clients to shape their business for the better. Their sector leadership events inspire innovation, whilst an award-winning approach to client service and value has built significant advocacy. With major project experience across 30 countries, they have solved clients' most complex customer journey challenges.

gobeyondpartners.com