nexthink

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO

Supporting Hybrid Work Experiences in the Post-2020 World

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Introduction

As more and more countries start to pull away from the coronavirus, workers across the world are beginning to look to the future. If we're not yet breathing sighs of relief, we are at least preparing to turn the page on the pandemic and plan for the next chapter in our shared professional journeys.

But turning the page does not mean a return to the status quo. The way we work, collaborate, and communicate has fundamentally changed during the course of the pandemic – and those changes have laid the foundation for an entirely new approach to digital work.

Though the sudden shift to remote work brought its struggles, we learned so many valuable lessons about what employees can achieve when given more control over their work environments. Now, we're poised to enter the era of hybrid work – confident that in the near-future, a number of employees will blend working from home, in the office, and on the go.

We're heading into this next chapter with much more stability, and much more optimism, than we had when we rushed into the unknowns of remote work. With that being said, the transition to hybrid work poses its own unique challenges. In many ways, these challenges are just as complex as the obstacles that remote work presented us with. IT teams must once again adapt, evolve, and innovate in order to meet these new challenges head-on.

In this eBook, you'll find 10 unique examples that show how IT can solve the most complex, frustrating hybrid work scenarios of the post-2020 world.

Read on to learn how your IT department can work smarter and rise to the challenge.

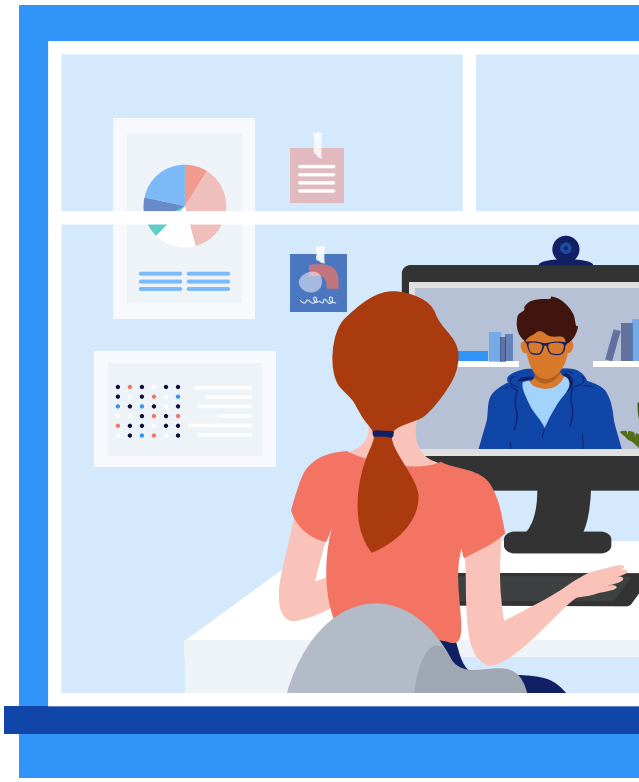
Replace that One-Size-Fits-All Approach with Tailored Personas

During the pandemic, organizations spent millions on hardware and software in a hurry to facilitate the shift to remote work. The same is happening now, as they prepare to bring some employees back onsite, launch new hybrid work environments or sustain existing ones.

Without a personalized approach, however, employees don't always end up with the technology that fits their unique needs.

IT departments preparing for hybrid work must embrace intelligent personalization, so they're able to understand the intricacies of each employee's experience and provision technology to meet their needs. And this is only possible if IT teams operate based on extensive employee computing personas.

Segmenting employees based on demographic data and basic job function is just a drop in the bucket when it comes to supporting a complex, hybrid workforce.



"In order to understand an employee and set them up successfully, IT needs to be able to continuously understand the employee's interaction with IT assets," says Yassine Zaied, CSO at Nexthink. "From where they are connecting, to how they interact with applications, and also the sentiment they're expressing."

If IT wants to deliver tailored services that fit employees like a glove, they must create rich and dynamic personas based on not only who employees are but how they experience their work technologies – using data related to app usage, resource consumption, technological proficiency, and other behavioral attributes can help equip IT will the full picture and eliminate any digital disruptions for employees.

Ensure New Hires Receive a Superb Onboarding Experience, Regardless of Location

No matter where they work, employees deserve to have the most rewarding experiences possible – and that begins on day-one.

When new hires have poor onboarding experiences, they're more likely to feel lost, confused, and undervalued. And in the convoluted world of hybrid work, these negative sentiments weigh even heavier on employees. This results in higher turnover rates – which can wreak financial havoc on an organization: it's estimated that losing an employee can cost 1.5 to 2 times the employee's salary. [1]

This is an area where organizations and their IT departments have much room for improvement. In fact, studies conducted during the pandemic revealed that only 33% of businesses had a strategy in place for remote onboarding.

It's not enough to deliver the right technology to new hires in a timely manner. IT departments have to take a proactive approach to guiding employees through all phases of the onboarding lifecycle.

Working alongside HR, IT teams can deploy targeted campaigns to engage with new hires quickly – and stay engaged throughout every step of their onboarding journey. These engagement campaigns can improve the onboarding experience in a myriad of ways – from getting new hires trained and achieving productivity quickly, to integrating new hires into the company culture from the moment they arrive.

Hybrid work is dynamic and complicated for all employees, but new hires in particular. It's imperative for IT teams to bridge the gap and forge strong relationships with employees from the moment they join the workforce.

[1] Referring to this article.

Align One Digital Employee Experience Across Multiple Computing Environments

To enable remote work, organizations have increasingly moved to some form of Virtualization – whether it be Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI) or Session Based Computing (SBC).

In a hybrid work model, it's likely that a portion of a company's workforce will continue to utilize VDI or SBC while others are accessing networks and apps through VPNs, remote Wi-Fi, or in-office local area networks.

Different computing environments often come with the risk of creating different digital experiences for employees.

How can IT ensure that your experience in a VPN environment is the same as your colleague's SBC environment?

Fortunately, when equipped with workplace experience dashboards and the right data visualization tool, it's easy for IT teams to cross-reference the same experience metrics across multiple computing environments. Tools with DEX scoring capabilities that combine hard metrics and employee sentiment can help IT work off one source of "truth" and proactively intervene when an employee's experience score drops.

Under this approach, IT teams will be able to see deeper into each computing environment their employees are using, identify weaknesses before they impact performance, and create more flexible and consistent experiences across their entire hybrid workforce.

Analyze Scheduling to Avoid Meeting Overload

To Zoom or to email?

The shift to remote work increased the number of meetings the average employee attends during each workday, with 45% of employees attending significantly more meetings during the pandemic.

Recent studies suggest that a large number of these meetings decrease worker productivity: have done little but decrease productivity:

- 67% of employees complain that the amount of time they spend in meetings hinders their productivity. [2]
- More than 35% say that they waste between 2 to 5 hours per day on meetings that they gain no benefits from. [2]

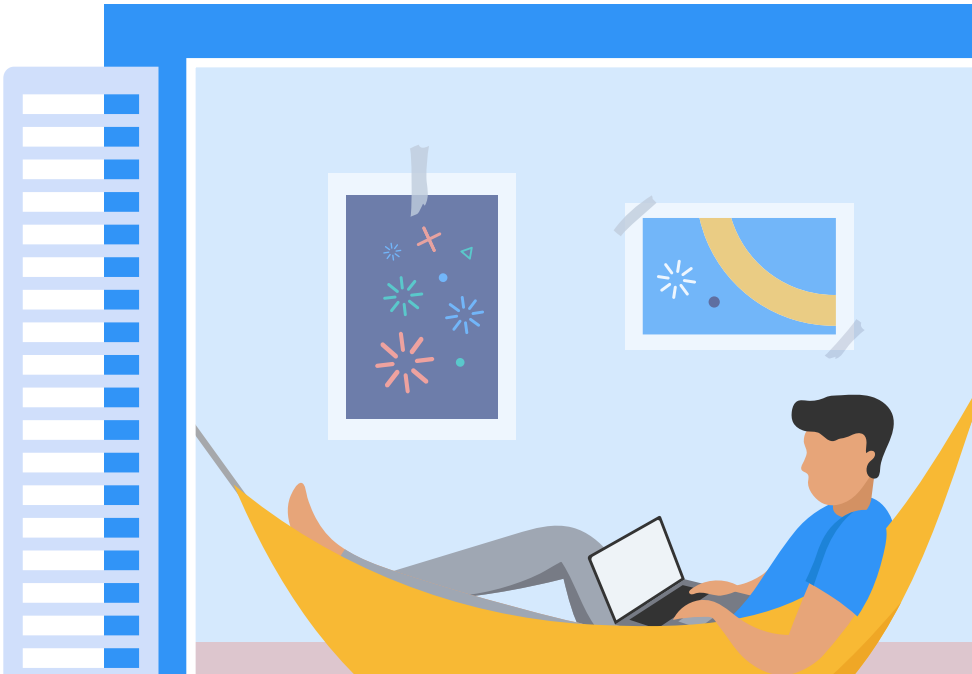
With businesses now making another transition into hybrid work, IT departments can help sanity check that company-wide urge to increase meeting frequency and not quality.

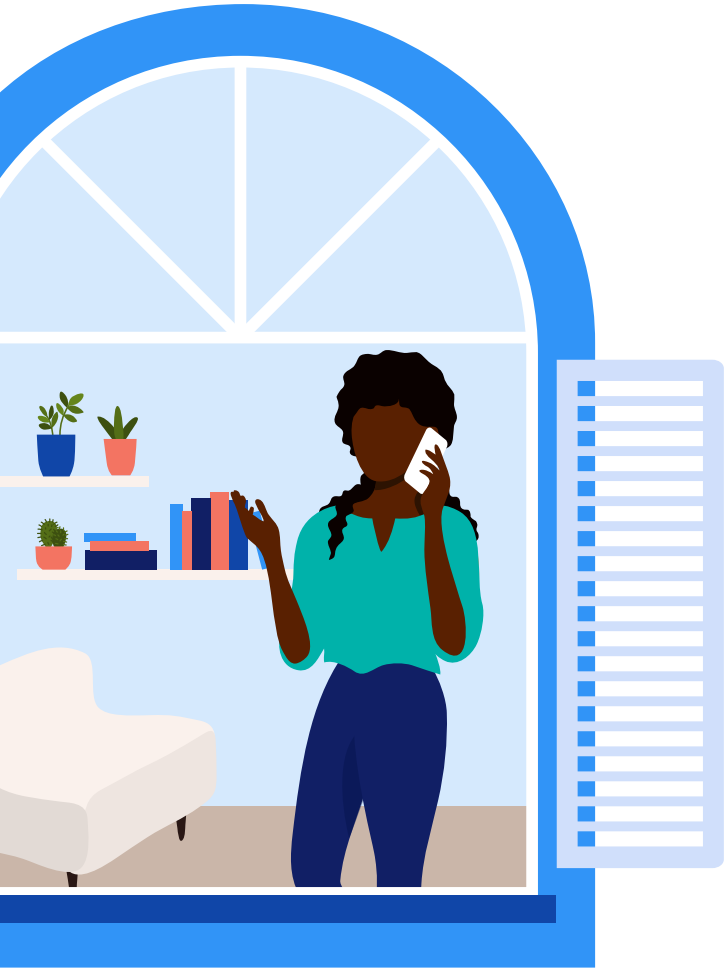
The first step to curtailing excessive meetings is to analyze scheduling data across the organization. From there, IT teams can uncover trends related to meeting frequency and timing before employees suffer a prolonged decline in productivity. They can then offer targeted solutions, both company-wide and tailored to specific teams or departments, in order to reduce the quantity of time employees spend in unnecessary meetings.

Beyond hard data, it's essential for IT teams to gather employee sentiment related to meeting quality and quantity – and not just once, but continuously.

Quarterly satisfaction surveys won't yield actionable or even accurate results. Instead, IT teams can deploy automated campaigns that serve up smart, nonintrusive on-screen notifications to employees at the right time and under the right computing context. Campaigns like these can ask employees about the quality and usefulness of the meeting they just attended.

[2] Referring to this article.





Make Digital Meetings Less Painful and More Impactful

With virtual meetings taking the place of, and sometimes complementing, in-office conversations, it's important to consider the varying psychological and emotional impacts of the two.

There's evidence to suggest that virtual meetings are more taxing on employees; a recent study revealed that 40% of employees experience mental exhaustion from video calls while working remotely. [3]

IT teams can lead the charge in reducing the negative impacts of virtual meetings by offering additional guidance to remote workers. Deploying helpful tips related to noise reduction, backgrounds, camera positioning, and other subtle technical details can make meetings more engaging and prevent remote employees from feeling alienated when meeting with on-site workers.

Inconsistent meeting quality is another potential side effect of hybrid work. As many employees will attend some meetings in-person and others remotely, it's important that the structure and value of those meetings remains unchanged.

One way IT teams can ensure consistency is to impose an "agendas upfront" mandate for each meeting. They can integrate this practice directly into the meeting applications employees use, or send out simple prompts with open text boxes or single-click options for users to fill out before logging into a meeting.

Under methods like these, all in-office meetings should have shared agendas attached to their invitations, so participants who might attend remotely can more effectively contribute regardless of location. IT can deploy personalized messages to meeting organizers during scheduling to ensure that agendas are sent out to all participants.

[3] Referring to this article.

Prevent Energy Waste and Inadvertent Remote Office Costs

As companies strategize for remote work, IT departments should not forget to prioritize sustainability and energy efficiency.

IT has the ability to analyze power consumption and help limit its carbon footprint and save remote workers from having to pay high electricity bills.

With targeted messaging, IT departments can help reduce energy consumption whether or not an employee is using their device in the office. For example, they can deploy a personalized message to a remote worker at the end of their workday, reminding them to shut down their computer for the night.

These small steps may seem insignificant, but they can actually have a tremendous impact on both cost reduction and energy consumption:

- According to the U.S. Department of Energy, a machine in use for four hours per day would save $70 a year compared to a machine that's left on 24/7. For a company of 10,000 workers, that's $700k. [4]
- Shutting down the machine would also reduce its CO2 emissions by 83%. [4]

Smart IT outreach can also cut down on digital software waste.

If a specific application hasn't been used on an employee's device, for example, deploying an automated message reading "Are you still using this license?" can provide IT with useful data to streamline app usage without inadvertently disrupting the employee's workflow.

[4] Referring to this data by the U.S. Dept. of Energy.

Help Employees Solve their Problems and Understand their Digital Experiences

In certain situations, employees can solve their own computing problems without submitting a ticket or calling the helpline. It just requires a little change in technique by IT.

When employees work in the office, they grow accustomed to visiting the help desk to resolve even minor issues. At home, that level of immediate contact isn't there. That's why self-help and self-healing techniques are essential to maintaining consistent employee experiences in hybrid work environments.

Self-help campaigns can significantly improve productivity, whether by sending a simple tutorial to clear hard drive space or an automated message with guidance on how to handle an application crashing.

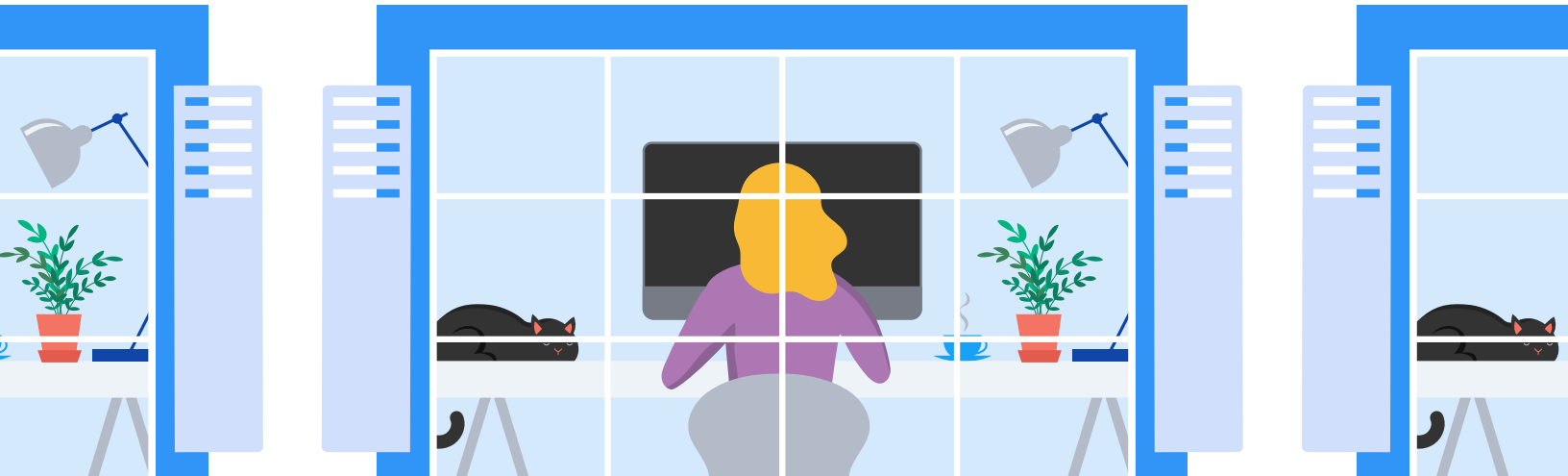
With that being said, it's crucial for IT departments to approach self-help from the perspective of empowering employees, rather than simply streamlining the support process.

"The driver should not be to outsource the service desk to the employees," says Nexthink CSO Yassine Zaied. "IT should advance self-help even further, so that it's something more like 'self-experience'."

In other words, self-help outreach must extend beyond teaching an employee how to troubleshoot common problems.

There needs to be a higher degree of transparency in the IT-employee relationship – so employees can develop a true understanding of their own Digital Employee Experience.

If IT teams deploy more targeted self-help campaigns, ones that offer actionable knowledge and show employees the deep insights they've collected about DEX, employees will feel a greater sense of control over their workday. Not just to fix issues – but to make better use of their devices and applications, make more informed decisions, and ultimately to feel like they truly command their digital experience.



Leverage Analytics to Avoid "Hot-Desking" and Other Workspace Confusion

As employees adopt hybrid working habits, physical office spaces will also change dramatically in the post-pandemic world.

Many office buildings will transition from traditional layouts – which emphasize individual desks or cubicles assigned to specific employees - to "hot-desking", a first-come first-serve system in which free spaces are used by different employees at different times.

Hot desking can create more problems than solutions for workers coming into the office: an employee arriving a half-hour late often ends up with nowhere to work from but the front lobby.

In the absence of an exhaustive and strict plan for flexible workspaces, employees suffer the consequences. They show up and find that all desks are taken, the equipment they require is unavailable – the list goes on. After enough bad experiences, the benefits behind a flexible work culture can pale in comparison to the frustrations and productivity losses for employees.

In the new era of hybrid work, IT teams must take steps to facilitate flexible workspaces without subjecting employees to the downsides of hot-desking.

Employee personas are critical in this instance, as they enable IT teams to segment based on three distinct employee experiences: in-office; remote; and hybrid.

With this information, organizations will be able to optimize space accordingly and prepare infrastructure so that in-office workers will have access to the right equipment when they come in.

IT teams can also deploy engagement campaigns targeted towards hybrid workers, sending sign-in sheets and helpful information regarding the current layout of the office.

Over time, IT teams can collect sentiment data from hybrid workers to uncover inefficiencies and continue to improve the in-office experience.

Back to the Office, Pt. 1: Facilitate Relevant Health and Safety Outreach with Remote Workers

As the vaccine roll-out continues, many organizations will use hybrid work as a transitional period as they plan for all, or most, of their employees to return to the office.

First and foremost, these organizations must prioritize the health and safety of their employees. While management handles the majority of action planning and safety procedures, IT departments can aid the process through smart communication with their remote workers.

If a company's return-to-work strategy includes mandatory health check-ins, IT teams could then deploy recurring engagement campaigns with instructions and sign-up information for remote workers. Additionally, they can send information on vaccine availability and general updates related to the pandemic, tailored to an employee's geographical location.

It's also essential that organizations collect constant feedback from employees to help inform their return-to-office strategy. IT teams can deploy campaigns to gather sentiment throughout the process, ensuring that no questions, concerns, or fears go unresolved and negatively impact a single employee's experience.

Back to the Office, Pt. 2: Ensure Remote Workers' Devices are Safe, Current, and Ready

When workforces went remote, IT teams had to make sure all devices were secure and safe for off-site use. The same process applies to employees who are returning to the office.

For all technology being brought back to the office, IT teams should perform thorough analysis to ensure that each device is secure and compliant.

With access to detailed dashboards and remediation capabilities, they will be able to monitor and act on key compliance components, including:

- Device encryption
- Antivirus and security tools versioning status
- Password renewal verification
- Certificate expiration
- Application versioning status

While IT departments may have been monitoring these components throughout the remote work lifecycle, it's still imperative to perform a thorough analysis before employees and their devices come back to the office.

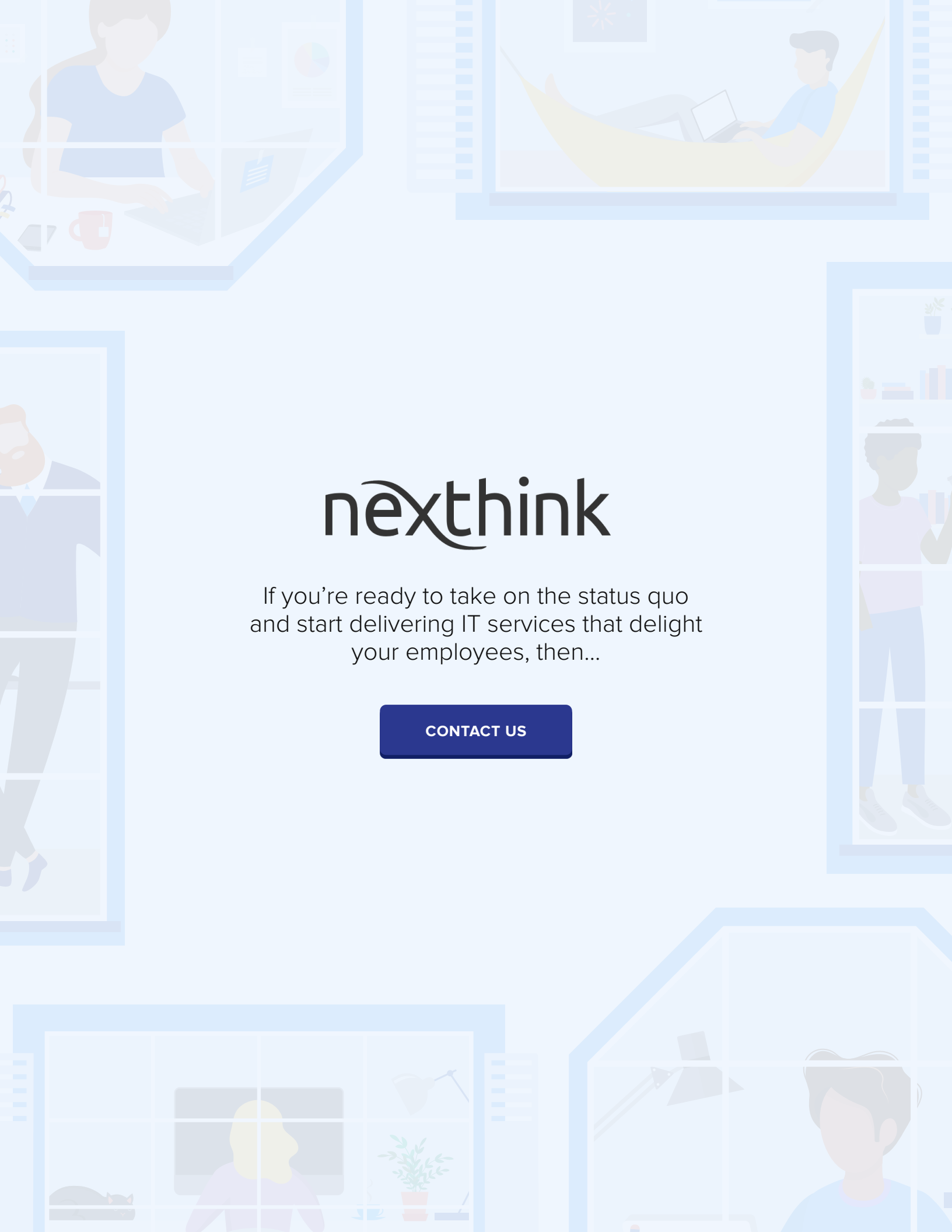
Conclusion

In the era of hybrid work, employees will have more flexibility and autonomy over their experiences than ever before. IT must rise to the occasion by doing away with old assumptions and moving towards complete and continuous understanding of each and every employee's unique journey.

Here at Nexthink, we strive to help employees realize the most rewarding and engaging experiences, no matter where they are and how they work. Whether you want to create rich, dynamic personas, gain the visibility you need to offer better support, or build the foundation for a flexible workspace, we're here to guide you on your journey to improving the experience of each and every employee.

About Nexthink

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.



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