DEVOPS
WHITEPAPER

2022

risual   Microsoft

CONTENTS

YOUR ONE MICROSOFT PARTNER

risual has been a strategic Microsoft Partner for more than 15 years and hold prestigious accreditations which further enhance our extensive experience and capabilities. Accreditations include Azure Expert Managed Services Provider (MSP), FastTrack Ready Partner, Cloud Solution Provider and more.

The Azure Expert MSP is a global competency that highlights the most skilled and proficient Microsoft Partners. Globally, Microsoft has recognised only 72 companies and we are very proud to one of them! The program ensures risual has met a world class set of requirements, including verified proof of excellence in client delivery, technical expertise, and a successful completion of an independent audit of our managed services, people, processes, and technologies.

As a FastTrack ready partner our aim is to accelerate your move into the Cloud with no added cost. The FastTrack initiative will provide you with expert advice, tailored delivery and project co-ordination to help you move towards the cloud in the most efficient way.

Our relationship with Microsoft means we have access to exclusive programs and initiatives allowing us to provide market leading services and a unique experience for our clients. Our current available funding is: Cloud Accelerators for Microsoft 365, Catalyst Funding for Power Apps, Azure Migrate and Modernization Programme and Microsoft Licensing Health Check.

Let us help you get started on your digital transformation journey with the support of Microsoft. Find out more today.

Gold

Microsoft Partner

Azure Expert MSP

Cloud Solutions Provider
FastTrack ready partner
Identity and Access Management Advanced Specialization
Change and Adoption Advanced Specialization
Teams Calling Advanced Specialization
Windows and SQL Server Migration Advanced Specialization
Teamwork Deployment Advanced Specialization
Windows Virtual Desktop Advanced Specialization
Threat Protection Advanced Specialization
Information Protection and Governance Advanced Specialization

Application Development
Application Integration
Cloud Platform
Cloud Productivity
Collaboration and Content
Communications
Data Analytics
Data Platform
Datacenter
DevOps
Enterprise Mobility Management
Messaging
Project and Portfolio Management
Security
Windows and Devices
Small and Midmarket Cloud Solutions

ABOUT THE REPORT

risual has produced the annual IT Landscape Report since 2017, and we're back this year with more insights, industry focussed research, behavioural and technology findings to help your organisation be the best for employees and clients.

In usual fashion, we like to keep things simple and easy to consume. Throughout 2020 we have seen many organisations react urgently to the COVID-19 outbreak, focussing on keeping the lights on and working remotely. Following those changes, 2021 left organisations building a flexible workforce with security built from the foundations up and automating manual processes.

In this report, our aim is to provide you with insight to the upcoming trends, support your business to grow, and achieve its goals. All previous reports can be accessed here.

SECURITY FOR THE FUTURE

Cybercrime continues to be a global threat and should be something everyone, and especially every decision maker, whether at the corporate or national level should be focussing on. A recent article by the World Economic Forum Global Risks Report 2020 states, *"over the next 10 years, cyberattacks will be the second greatest risk businesses will face".*

A recent assessment by INTERPOL of the global cyberthreat landscape shows cybercriminals are evolving their attacks at an alarming pace, exploiting the fear and uncertainty caused by the unstable social, economic and health situation around the world.

Previously, having an internet firewall, PC antivirus, and email filtering were more than sufficient in protecting businesses. However much has changed since. Employees are using different platforms and personal devices to access company data, therefore there are more points of risk to consider. Data can easily be leaked outside of your organisation, devices that connect to sensitive business information can be lost or stolen, and people can make mistakes. It's imperative for organisations to build a secure organisation during this time.

Many people and organisations underestimate the threat and likelihood of becoming the next victim against cybercrime. The effects of cybercrime can be extremely damaging, and just as devastating as physical crimes, leaving a powerful impact on individuals and organisations globally.

Cybercriminals are targeting end users in increasingly sophisticated ways including advanced phishing attacks which are harder than ever to recognise (ransomware twists the power of encryption to work against you). These individuals are taking critical files hostage and social engineering attacks can take advantage of people who are just trying to be productive.

Law enforcement agencies worldwide are actively investigating cybercrimes with the aim of prosecuting cybercriminals. Although agencies and organisations around the world are doing more to protect you online, it's critical to address this threat and create barriers of entries with immediate action.
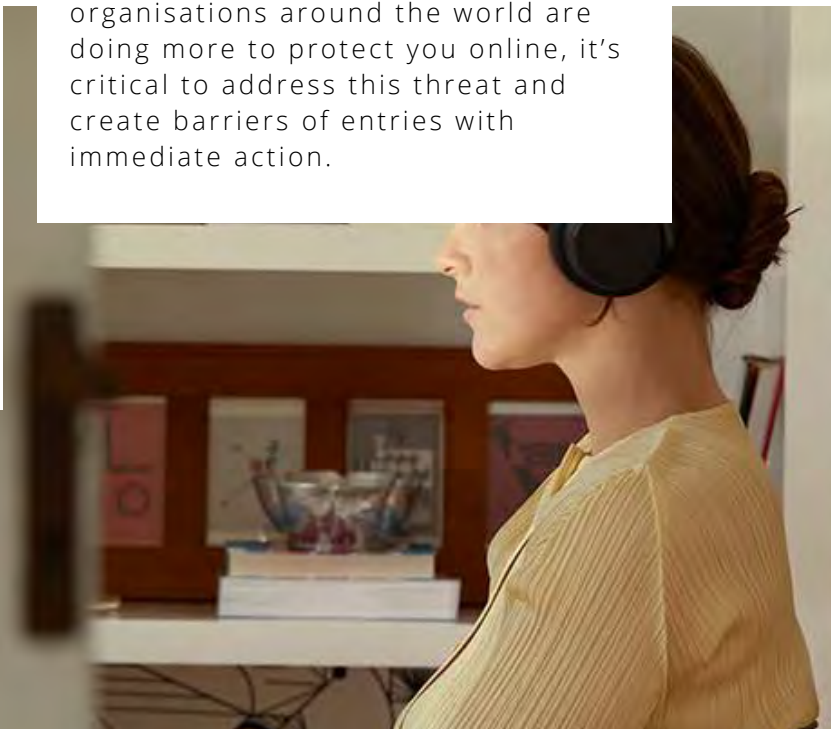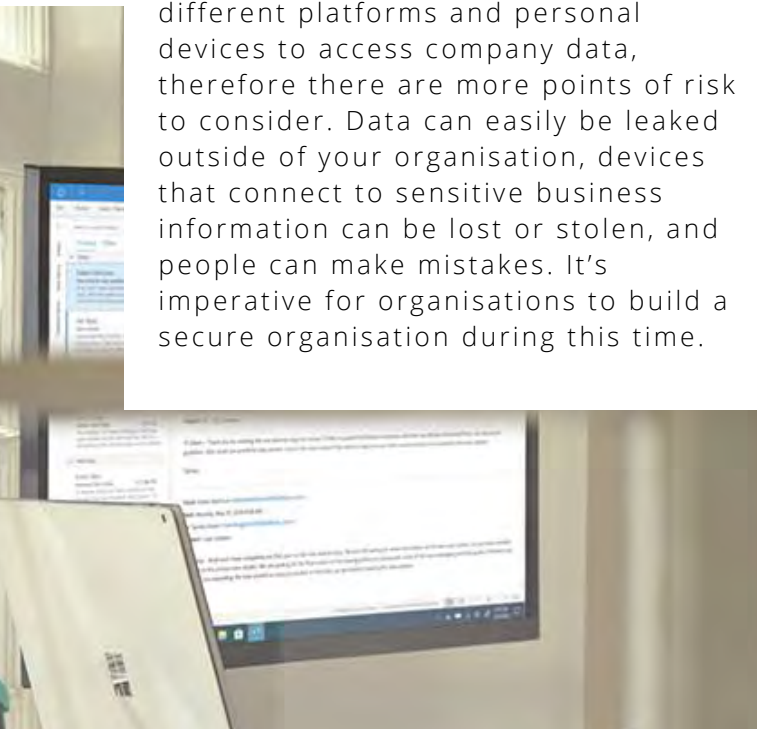
It's estimated that 4.66 billion people globally are currently using the internet, which has soared and will continue to do so since connectivity has become more accessible. We are in a digital era, constantly evolving and the world relies heavily on the internet, yet not enough is being done to protect people, data, devices and infrastructure from cyberthreats.

The Center for Strategic and International studies say, *"Cyber criminals steal an estimated $600 billion per year from governments, companies and individuals, while the overall loss of company revenues over the course of five years, from 2019 to 2023, will reach $5.2 trillion. In fact, cybercrime is one of the most disruptive and economically damaging criminal activities. Not only does it cause substantial financial damages and pose a serious threat to society and the global economy, it also has indirect effects in undermining the public's confidence in digital transformation and overall trust in technology."*

According to the Microsoft Digital Defense Report 2020, cyberattacks and ransomware was the top common reason for incident responses from October 2019 to July 2020. Microsoft invest heavily in its security portfolio and during this time blocked more than 13 billion suspicious emails. And the first half of 2020 saw a 35% increase in IoT (Internet of Things)attacks compared to the second half of 2019.

To address the rising threats, it's important for organisations to build barriers to minimise vulnerabilities.

A cloud environment gathers all the data of a business into one connected platform that can be accessed through the internet. As part of the cloud environment, it's important to consider the appropriate security measures to ensure employees are safe from cyber threats. There are many security solutions available but the difficulty relies with selecting the one suitable for your organisation . With Microsoft security, you can integrate advanced features of automation that monitor and detect all kinds of threats within your environment.

Employees are using different platforms and personal devices to access company data:
- This means you have more points of risk to consider. Data can easily get leaked outside your organisation, devices that connect to sensitive business information can be lost or stolen, and people can make mistakes.

Cybercriminals are targeting end users by:
- Phishing attacks are becoming increasingly difficult to recognise.
- Ransomware twists the power of encryption to work against you, taking critical files hostage.
- Social engineering attacks can take advantage of people who are just trying to be productive.

MICROSOFT DEFENDER FOR BUSINESS, CLOUD APPS AND IOT.

According to Microsoft research, almost **60% of small and medium businesses said they didn't feel equipped to maintain cybersecurity hygiene, citing insufficient resources and lack of specialised security skills**. Microsoft Defender for Business has been launched to bring the power of enterprise-grade endpoint security to small and medium businesses with up to 300 employees.

Microsoft state, *"Small and medium businesses will be empowered to elevate their security by moving from traditional antivirus to next-generation protection, endpoint detection and response, and threat and vulnerability management—all while taking advantage of simplified setup and management.".*

Microsoft Defender for Cloud adds a new application governance capability providing security and policy management to help identify, alert, and protect against risky behaviour across data, users, and applications.

Microsoft Defender for IoT integrates with Microsoft 365 Defender to bring IoT protection into the same workflow as the rest of your XDR.

SOCIAL ENGINEERING ATTACKS

Social engineering targets your employees through email or when they browse online. Common social engineering attacks are:

- **Phishing and Spear Phishing:** Scammers send emails to your employees from what appear to be a colleague, friend, or reputable person or company containing a link or attachment. If the employee clicks the link or opens the attachment, the attackers can gain access to your systems.
- **Vishing:** Similar to phishing, but using phone calls to retrieve personal information from people, such as bank details
- **Baiting:** When the attacker offers a fake prize for responding to a phishing or vishing attack.
- **Browser attacks:** These attacks may appear as pop-up ads or suggestions to install a browser extension.
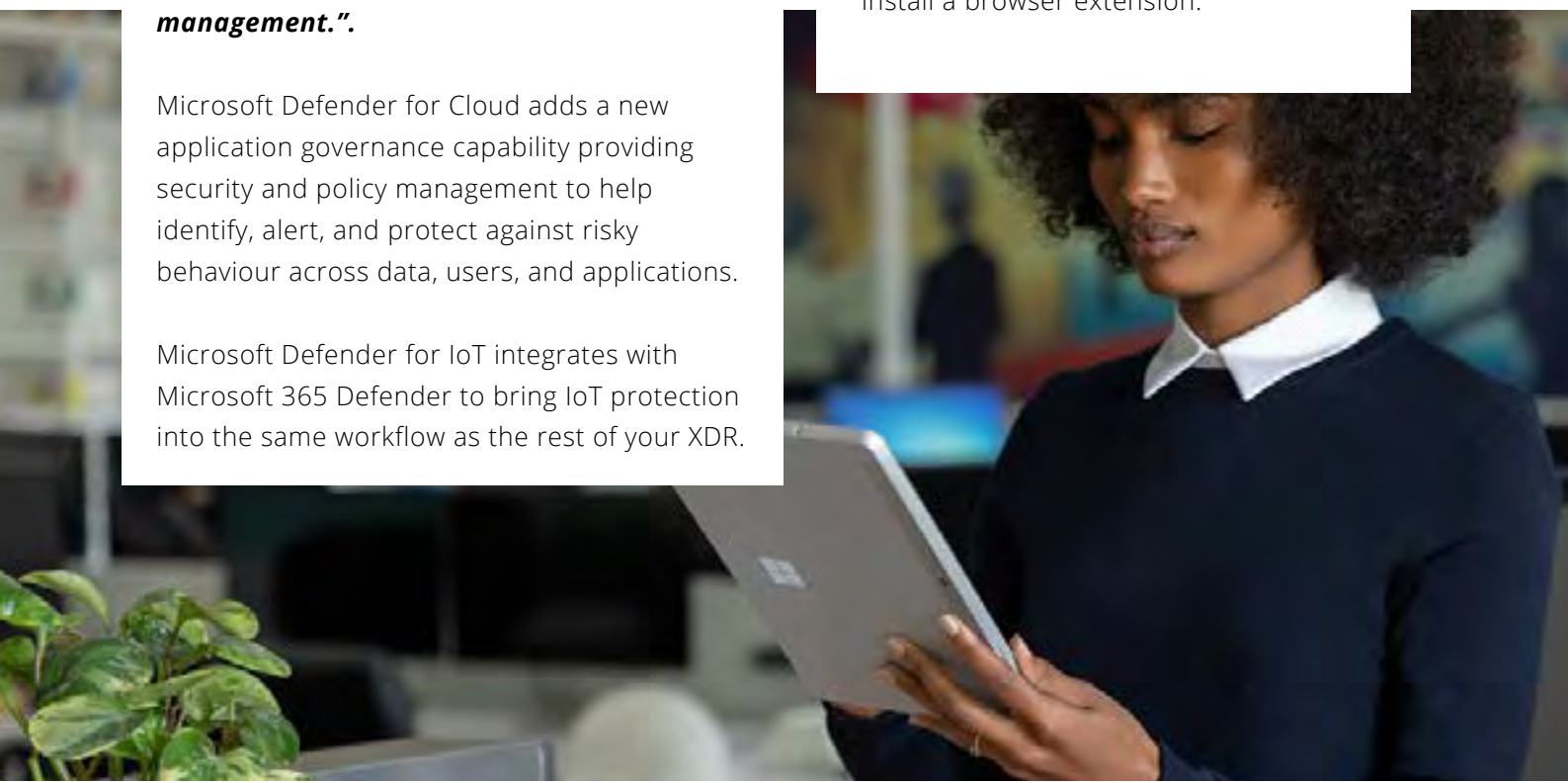
10 ways to protect your employees:

1. Provide your employees with training on safe email and browsing use.

2. Raise employee awareness of potential risks when online.

3. Offer your employees attack simulation training in Microsoft Defender for Office 365.

4. Go passwordless and use multi-factor authentication.

5. Ensure all company devices use the latest version of Windows and internet browser.

6. Enforce corporate file saving protocols. Store and encrypt company data securely in the cloud.

7. Educate employees on the importance of using secure connections such as HTTPS.

8. Make it a practice with employees to check website certificates to verify the identity of the website.

9. Enable pop-up blockers by default.

10. Use cloud-based antivirus solutions like Microsoft Windows Defender.

CLOUD-NATIVE SIEM USING AZURE SENTINEL

Protect your organisation from threats across devices, identities, apps, email, data and cloud workloads with Intelligent security analytics for your entire enterprise. Azure Sentinel is a security information and event management (SIEM) solution designed to collect information from all cloud devices used within an organisation and analyse it for security automatically.

The integrated AI technology investigates all suspicious activity for the organisation, backed by decades of cybersecurity research at Microsoft. Security and IT department need to get more done, faster, with less budget. On-premises SIEM solutions can't keep up with these demands and are expensive to maintain. By embracing a cloud-native SIEM like Azure Sentinel, you can save money and enable your security operations team to be more effective.

According to an IDG survey of IT leaders, cloud-based **SIEM solutions cost 11 percent less to support than on-premises solutions**, since they drastically reduce infrastructure, licensing, and labour costs. Plus, that same survey found that cloud-based SIEM users missed fewer threats—only 43% of cloud SIEM users reported concerns about missed threats, compared to 66% of traditional SIEM users. This is likely because cloud adopters were twice as likely to utilise automation.

"ONLY 43% OF CLOUD SIEM USERS REPORTED CONCERNS ABOUT MISSED THREATS, COMPARED TO 66% OF TRADITIONAL SIEM USERS"

PASSWORDLESS AUTHENTICATION

Passwords tend to be an area where ransomware and cyber-attacks occur. Despite their weaknesses, passwords are still widely used. Often people will use easy-to-guess and reused passwords for both professional and personal use.

You can implement a passwordless approach in two ways:

- **Biometric authentication.** Consider using touch ID and facial recognition rather than weak legacy passwords.
- **Multi-factor authentication** (MFA) provides that extra layer of security to prevent any cyber breaches by using mobile push with a local PIN.

Organisations can further eliminate weak passwords with a regular audit. A password security audit will run a non-intrusive review against all domains in the organisation to help protect it from identity threats. The audit will identify weak and/or duplicate passwords and look for common errors that attackers are likely to target. Taking advantage of a password audit will give the business peace of mind to know that users and systems are secure.

BY 2022, GARTNER PREDICTS THAT 60% OF LARGE AND GLOBAL ENTERPRISES, AND 90% OF MIDSIZE ENTERPRISES, WILL IMPLEMENT PASSWORDLESS METHODS IN MORE THAN 50% OF USE CASES.

MANAGED SECURITY

"FROM 2020 UNTIL 2026 THE GLOBAL INVESTMENT FOR MANAGED SERVICES IS EXPECTED TO INCREASE BY 80%".

As organisations continue to focus on embedding security, digitalisation and automation it's important to ensure you have the appropriate IT support. Companies may struggle to understand all the complexities found in its implemented technology and could miss out on useful features to support its transformation For this reason, many organisation lean towards a annual contract with a trusted Managed Services Provider (MSP). Statista recently released a statement, "From 2020 until 2026 the global investment for managed services is expected to increase by 80%".

A trusted MSP can minimise your internal teams time on supporting the implemented technology and systems by taking care of it for you. MSP's are able to offer many different services ranging from security, administrative issues, training and more. some managed services providers are adapting their services consistently to offer the most relevant services for their clients.

With CEOs focussing on achieving growth, digitalisation and efficiency an MSP can help clear time, and resources across your organisation to ensure end users are concentrating on the tasks which drive business growth, and the MSP will manage, maintain and support your systems.

"COVID-19 continued to have a tremendous impact on businesses in early 2021, meaning that many business leaders shifted their mindset or accelerated their future plans to enable hybrid work, allowing their businesses to perform and grow through this challenging time. Organisations needed support to ensure that they could achieve the most value from their new hybrid working environments, preparing their business for whatever else the pandemic might bring.

Looking forward, we are seeing a huge push for organisations to focus on digitalisation and business growth, it's vital to ensure their organisations are supported throughout to be able to achieve their goals. Whether it be support for your end users with daily fixes, or something more complex to help proactively prevent against a cyberattack, a Managed Service Provider will help organisations through the next phase of accelerating business growth."

Amanda Sharp
Director of
Managed Services
risual ltd

DATA AND AI

Throughout 2021 data has continued to be a valuable part of achieving success in any transformation project. It is predicted that £5.3 trillion will be invested in digital transformation in 2020-2023.

A key trend that will drastically change the work environment in 2022 is data and AI. Organisations will begin to change the way end users work by redesigning business processes, core systems, and operational strategies with AI at the heart of it all.

According to Gartner,

"BY 2025, THE 10% OF ENTERPRISES THAT ESTABLISH AI ENGINEERING BEST PRACTICES WILL GENERATE AT LEAST THREE TIMES MORE VALUE FROM THEIR AI EFFORTS THAN THE 90% OF ENTERPRISES THAT DO NOT."

AI IN THE WORKFORCE

In our 2021 IT Landscape Report we discuss the ideas of process automation and robotics automation further increasing the pace of user adoption across AI in organisations. Looking forward Forbes state, *"There have always been fears that machines or robots will replace human workers and maybe even make some roles redundant. However, as companies navigate the process of creating data and AI-literate cultures within their teams, we will increasingly find ourselves working with or alongside machines that use smart and cognitive functionality to boost our own abilities and skills."*

We will continue to see the rise of organisations turning to data and AI to better enhance their overall mission and strategies.

AI FOR CYBER SECURITY

From the same article, we learn about the maturity of connected devices, networks and the complexity of protecting end users. AI can play a role by analysing network traffic, learning to recognise patterns in cyber-attacks, building smart algorithms to help identify and proactively prevent potential cyber-attacks.

GARTNER SUGGESTS THAT CEOS ONLY WANT THREE THINGS IN 2022: GROWTH, DIGITALISATION AND EFFICIENCY.

HYPERAUTOMATION

Automation is a significant component when digitising your organisation. Gartner suggests that CEOs only want three things in 2022: growth, digitalisation and efficiency. Hyperautomation is a business-driven approach enabling organisations to automate and make the imaginable possible. Hyperautomation will reduce the need for human interaction. Discovering, scoping, mapping and creating, and measuring the success of business processes is what AI and hyperautomation is all about.

Organisations started to automate processes and operational activities throughout 2021 and this trend will only continue throughout 2022 and onwards. Automating as much as you can allows end users to develop their skills, drive business growth, progress , explore new opportunities and benefit from a new way of working. Once you have started automating, you can use a series of business applications to support end users to work smarter, more effective and productive.

DATA AND ANALYTICS

Organisations that fail to effectively use data within its strategies will be left behind. Many organisations are already seeing the huge success from using data across their business, but the time is now for all organisations to make this step, and understand how clear, modern and relevant data will strive us into the future. Data, analytics and AI can be challenging but the results are powerful.

Data is critical for organisations to remain competitive. Use data to understand what outcomes can be improved and base your future decisions on the reliable data. A clear strategy which includes data quality, data governance and data literacy is essential to the success of investing in data.

"A SUCCESSFUL INITIATIVE REQUIRES A CULTURAL AND MINDSET SHIFT BY WHICH DATA AND ANALYTICS MOVES FROM SUPPORTIVE AND SECONDARY TO FUNDAMENTAL FOR DIGITAL BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION. IT BECOMES CENTRAL TO HOW ORGANISATIONS DO WHAT THEY DO, EVERY DAY, EVERY TIME."

Gartner.

"The use of data and artificial intelligence to make business decisions has become normal for forward-thinking organisations. Many of our clients are acknowledging the benefits that data-driven decisions can make to their organisation. However, understanding and unlocking the potential in the data that an organisation holds can seem difficult to start with. It can feel like a leap of faith. Once you are there though, the results are insightful, powerful, and transformative.

Process automation takes the tedium out of processes. It can improve accuracy and allows people the time to focus on the things that can't be automated. Organisations are finding that using automation can improve employee experience and customer satisfaction. Combining data decisions with automation becomes exceptionally powerful. It allows organisations to significantly transform their businesses."

Brian Cain
Director of Consulting
 risual ltd

SUSTAINABLE, COMPOSABLE AND RESILIENT WORKFORCE

We know organisations were focussed on resilience and agility to remain afloat during the hight of the global pandemic. However, there is still work to be done. Organisations should be focussing on building sustainable resilience and adaptability for the future. Gartner also echo this trend in a recent article, sharing that the pandemic has driven increased need for organisational resilience and agility within businesses.

"By definition, agile requires an environment of trust that doesn't lend itself to traditional hierarchies. The increase in hybrid workforces reveals that a large portion of managers lack the skill set necessary to manage employees in remote or hybrid situations, and only 47% percent of employees believe that their manager can lead the team to success in the future."
– Gartner.

Becoming a composable business will allow organisations to quickly adopt new ways of working and build resilience. A composable business is an organisation that delivers business outcomes and rapidly adapts to business change. It applies to all industries and is the use of applying digital as the fundamental basis in this digital era. Through the digital era we will see more and more businesses quickly and effectively adapting to change to encourage overall business growth.

According to Gartner, those that have adopted a composable application architecture will outpace competition by 80% in the speed of new feature implementation.

In the recent Microsoft Playbook discussing The Future of Business Resilience, there are two significant quotes which put into perspective the need to embrace the digital era, build a composable business, and focus on resilience.

"We've seen two years' worth of digital transformation in two months."
- Satya Nadella, CEO, Microsoft

"80% of business leaders, across all industries, intend to accelerate their digital transformation."

Across this Playbook there is a significant amount of insight to how organisations can get the most out of Microsoft technology to accelerate its journey to digital. There are business applications to help your business to quickly adapt and automate including Microsoft Power Apps, Automate and Virtual Agents. If you're supporting your employees on a safe and efficient return to the workplace, Microsoft Power Platform, Azure IoT, Microsoft 365 and Microsoft Teams can help. There's also applications to help empower employees with the delivery of better and tailored services such as Dynamics 365 (Marketing, Sales and Customer Service, Commerce, Field Service, Customer Insights and more) and Microsoft Teams.

EMPOWER YOUR PEOPLE

Microsoft recently introduced Viva, a digital platform that's built on Microsoft 365, and designed specifically for the employee experience. It's Integrated with Microsoft Teams which is now the #1 collaboration tool in the world, Viva is seen as a platform to leverage a company's investment in existing systems and Microsoft technology.

First, we all need to understand that investments in employee experience are massive. Fuelled by the pandemic, companies are spending billions on collaboration tools, well-being apps, training and development offerings, and all forms of surveys, knowledge management, case management, and employee support. Until Viva, any organisation that wanted to build a seamless employee experience needed to build complicated 'employee portals'.

Microsoft believe that there has never been a bigger need for technology, data and insights designed to enable a great employee experience. Employees want to feel more connected, more aligned to their company purpose and mission. They want to grow, make an impact and make a difference.

- Leaders need a modern way to engage and develop their employees.
- IT needs to be able to quickly enable this modern employee experience without having to replace all their existing systems.

Creating an employee experience doesn't have to be costly or challenging. With Microsoft Viva business leaders can create a seamless experience, with less complexity, less failure in delivered services and generally build a better user experience for staff.

Viva brings together communications, insights, knowledge, and learning within the flow of everyday work and collaboration in Microsoft Teams. Microsoft Teams is where most remote and hybrid work happens these days. Teams has become a hub where we can bring all these resources together into an integrated system of engagement, what Gartner calls a new work nucleus or digital workplace hub.

Importantly, with Microsoft 365 we already have foundational capabilities in each of these areas like Yammer, SharePoint, Stream, Workplace Analytics, Microsoft Search, LinkedIn, Glint and more. Microsoft Viva builds on this foundation by adding innovative new services and insights focused on people development and success.

UPSKILLING AND TRAINING

Building an effective training program into your overall strategy is crucial to provide employees the opportunity to better existing skills, and learn new ones. A LinkedIn article shows that more than 15 million people have left their job since April 2021 in what's being called the "great resignation. This will continue to accelerate into 2022.

Some organisations are increasing their salary package, providing better and valuable benefits, wellness initiatives and concentrating on upskilling. With more hybrid work and new working environments, it's becoming difficult for employees to spare designated hours for training. Learning in the flow of work enhances the retention rate of information and eases employees into new processes and technologies.

We're in a digital era where new skills are emerging, and evolving while yesterday's skills are expiring. Business leaders and HR are finding employees' skills are not future-proofed and may also lack the required skills needed to meet the evolving digital business. Here's a few things Gartner suggests you can do to ensure your business has future-proof skills.

- Look for skills adjacent to what you need.
- Leverage stepping-stone skills to provide cross-function mobility.

Business leaders need to invest in training and upskilling employees to ensure their skill sets are fully aligned with the needs of a digitally transformed business.

Engaging the right talent pool to drive digital transformation initiatives is also critical to ensure accountability and inspire the rest of the organisation. It is also up to each business to provide the right digital adoption tools to help employees learn and utilise the technologies at their disposal. This is not a one-size-fits-all approach; training should be diversified as employees require digital training with multiple formats of content for better retention and absorption of information.

Gartner has recently launched an article discussing how best to upskill employees in a crisis. One of the prominent features in the article discusses how end users can find good opportunities to develop their own training path from home.

- Prioritise learning skills based on their usage and demand in the organisations.
- Take advantage or leaning with your colleagues, or external groups.
- Select skills that are relevant to your experience and are likely to improve business value.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Climate change isn't just for individuals to take action. Businesses must hold themselves accountable for their own environmental impact and act upon it.

From a recent Deloitte article, it highlights that ESG (environmental, social, and governance) is changing business, moving markets, and driving regulation. Leading professionals including the World Economic Forums International Business Council and others have been working to identify the ESG themes and metrics that should matter to business. Organisations should begin to hold themselves accountable, measure and demonstrate how they are integrating considerations relating to people, planet, and prosperity into the core of their business.

Veronica Poole, Vice Chair of Deloitte and Kristen Sullivan, US Sustainability and ESG Services Leader UK, Deloitte said:

"THE COMPANIES THAT HOLD THEMSELVES ACCOUNTABLE TO THEIR STAKEHOLDERS BY INCREASING TRANSPARENCY WILL BE MORE VIABLE—AND VALUABLE—IN THE LONG TERM."

Integrating ESG into your organisation will drive new opportunities to refine, protect and create business value. Social demands and market trends will be prompting organisations to re-imagine its existing offerings and ensure ESG is a part of it all. Investors, board members and decision makers will begin to question organisations on how they are managing environmental issues and its investment in long-term sustainability.

Through the process of reducing your carbon emissions or achieving net-zero emissions its crucial to adopt a transparent and honest approach.
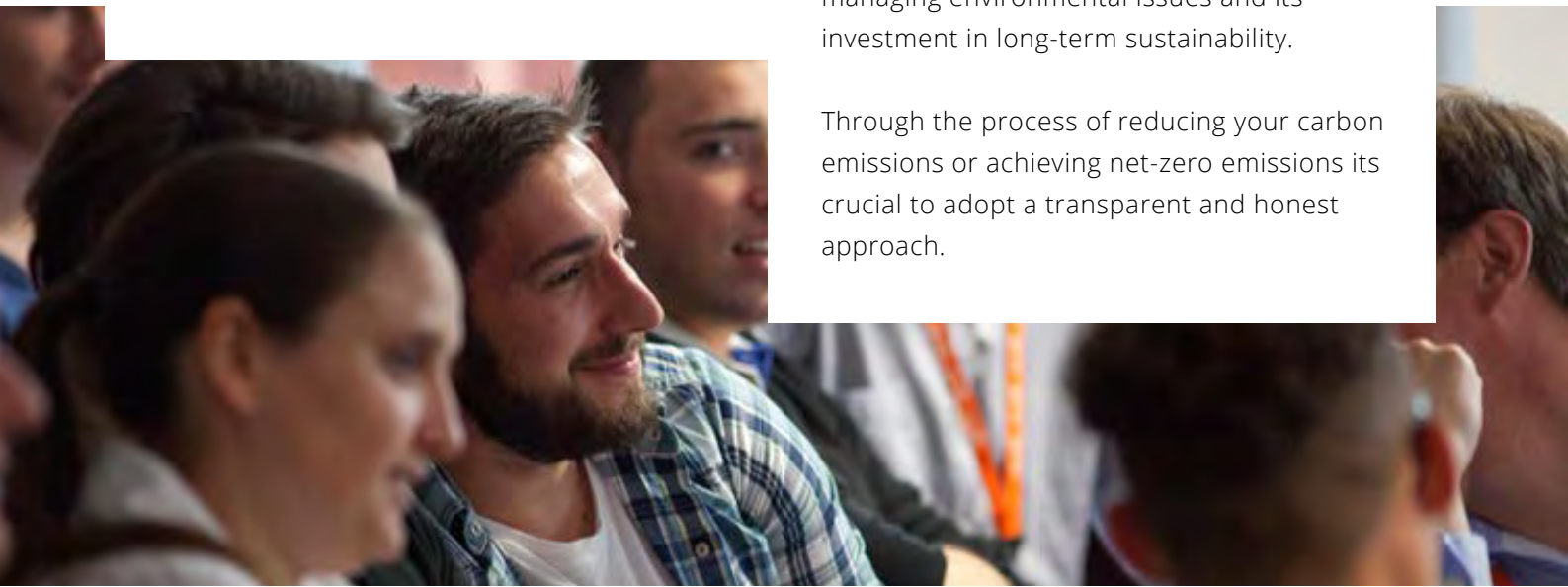
"Considering ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) factors is now critical for business success. The drive towards becoming an environmentally and socially responsible business means a transition for a business in all aspects, from procurement and supply chains, internal operations to reviewing their products and their services. As businesses engage with the mission to achieve net-zero, ESG forces an organisation to hold themselves to account and to be transparent to all stakeholders, on how their business activities impact the world and how their company contributes to society."

Kate Lincoln
Director of
Corporate Resources
risual ltd

WELLBEING IN THE WORKPLACE

It's important to understand that investing in technology is critical for any organisation to modernise and grow, but it's also essential to explore and recognise the behavioural aspect of your business. Empowering employees and creating a safe and motivated place to work has always been vital.

Employers will see value when they provide employees with the mental wellness support they need. Discussed in a recent McKinsey article, employers can achieve this by reducing the stigma of mental health issues, addressing disparities in their incidence and treatment, and providing support through formal structures and programs. Addressing mental health and wellbeing can make a huge difference in the workplace, and according to recent studies it's found that wellness programs can improve employees' performance, mental health, self-efficacy, and deliver other self-reported health benefits.

WELLBEING PROGRAMS

Gartner has published an article suggesting five emerging trends to help employers and HR teams get the most out of its wellbeing programs. *"It's clear HR leaders see these programs as critical to talent outcomes, such as engagement and employee wellness,"* says Brent Cassell, VP Advisory, Gartner. *"Still, well-being programs are only valuable if they are effective and employees actually use them."*

- **Increased tracking of effectiveness and return on investment (ROI).** To see the real value of the programs, measure its effectiveness by tracking program participation rates, employee engagement, employee mental health, employee-reported behaviour changes and employee productivity.
- **More mental well-being options**. Since the coronavirus outbreak there has been a reported increase of counselling services, education, mental health assessments, smartphone apps and support groups.
- **Virtual solutions physical well-being.** With the support of exercise competitions, nutrition and diet programs being distributed at the start of the coronavirus pandemic, organisations have turned towards providing app subscriptions for virtual classes and virtualising any existing offerings.
- **Financial planning and community engagement.** Gartner research shows many employees increasingly want to improve community well-being through volunteering and charitable giving. Employers are, therefore, offering more opportunities such as work sponsored volunteer projects, charitable donation matching and paid time off for volunteer work.
- **Opportunity to boost participation.** Gartner research shows that "96% of organisations say they offer mental/emotional well-being benefits, but only 42% of employees believe their employer provides them." To bridge this gap, managers need to know what exists and actively and openly discuss well-being services with employees when appropriate. This contributes to increasing awareness and reduce stigma around mental health.

WEARABLES AND DIGITAL BIOMARKER APPLICATIONS

Digital devices and wearables such as smartphones, fitness trackers and tablets have enabled many in-person programs to shift to digital formats, and now account for the majority of employer sponsored health offerings, according to McKinsey. Digital biomarker apps are used to measure and monitor physiological and behavioural data collected from wearable devices. Employers can now encourage employees to use their smartphone and other devices to self-report their mood, voice as a means to gauge their emotional state, track heart rate, temperature and electrodermal activity to monitor their wellbeing.

If employers are building programs supporting the use of digital devices and wearables, it's important to deploy an analytics tool in conjunction. This ensures individual employees receive an alert when they should consider taking time to recharge, and managers can also receive alerts when teams may be experiencing high levels of stress. To drive more value, employers can work with solution providers to measure the connection between wellbeing and productivity across the organisation.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Organisations are embedding diversity and inclusion into their overall strategies with plans to ensure they go above and beyond to create a diverse and inclusive workplace for all. In articles across sources such as Gartner, McKinsey and Deliotte the idea of organisations trying achieve everything at once in this space is one of the challenges preventing organisations from seeing value and success.

"As much as companies have been investing in D&I for years, the conversation fundamentally changed in a multitude of ways this past year. Like many companies, we're engaged in conversations that we've been having for some time, but the tone, the tenor, and the urgency has increased. And the sensitivity to inequity has become that much more critical. Our ongoing and sustained commitment to this work requires accountability and prioritization from leadership. Yet achieving progress also requires that we listen, engage, and learn from employees. That sense of urgency and sense of commitment give me optimism that we will make the world more inclusive and diverse." - Kathleen Hogan, Chief People Officer at Microsoft.

In June 2020, Microsoft outlined a series of commitments designed to address the racial injustice and inequity experienced by racial and ethnic minorities in the US, including Black and African American communities.

Microsoft is committed to:
1. Increasing representation and strengthening a culture of inclusion.
2. Engaging our ecosystem.
3. Strengthening our communities.

INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

Gartner share 80% of leaders agree its important to foster a climate where employees know they are expected to voice different points of view and feel comfortable doing so, however the same report also states only 31% of employees agree their leaders promote an inclusive team environment.

In our previous IT Landscape Report, we discussed the implementation of an unconscious bias training. This is a good start, however more needs to be done to ensure effective change is made. HR teams and business leaders need to focus on enabling leaders to adopt and maintain more inclusive behaviours. Based on research from the same Gartner report, successful inclusive leadership programs are achieved by doing the following:

80% OF LEADERS AGREE ITS IMPORTANT TO FOSTER A CLIMATE WHERE EMPLOYEES KNOW THEY ARE EXPECTED TO VOICE DIFFERENT POINTS OF VIEW AND FEEL COMFORTABLE DOING SO

- Use organisation-specific examples to increase relevance and receptivity.
- Make inclusive behaviours feel actionable, not additive.
- Embed bias mitigation efforts into existing processes to sustain behaviour change.

RACIAL EQUITY

In a recent McKinsey article it highlights the disconnect between companies' growing commitment to racial equity and the lack of improvement we see in the day-to-day experiences of women of colour. From the same article, McKinsey states, *"Women of colour face similar types and frequencies of microaggressions as they did two years ago —and they remain far more likely than White women to be on the receiving end of disrespectful and "othering" behaviour.".*

To help address the issues moving forward, organisations can take bold steps to address burnout, recognise and reward women leaders who are driving progress, and dig deep into the cultural work required to create a safe diverse and inclusive workplace.

We have seen the distribution caused by the global pandemic, but we know that a hybrid workforce is here to stay. The increasing growing cultural focus on employee wellbeing and racial equity will continue to increase. Organisations need to invest in building a more open, connected and inclusive workplace. To achieve this, McKinsey suggest this can only be achieved by pushing for a higher representation of women, recognising and rewarding women's contributions and doing the deep cultural work required.

"We continue to improve, invest, and educate the whole risual team about Diversity and Inclusion. Since risual was formed we have worked hard to empower our people and enable everyone to achieve the most they can. Technology is crucial to support modern ways of working which drives business growth, but there must be a balance. We encourage and reward people, creating open and genuine environments which all positively contribute to diversity and inclusion."

Richard Proud
Chairman
risual ltd
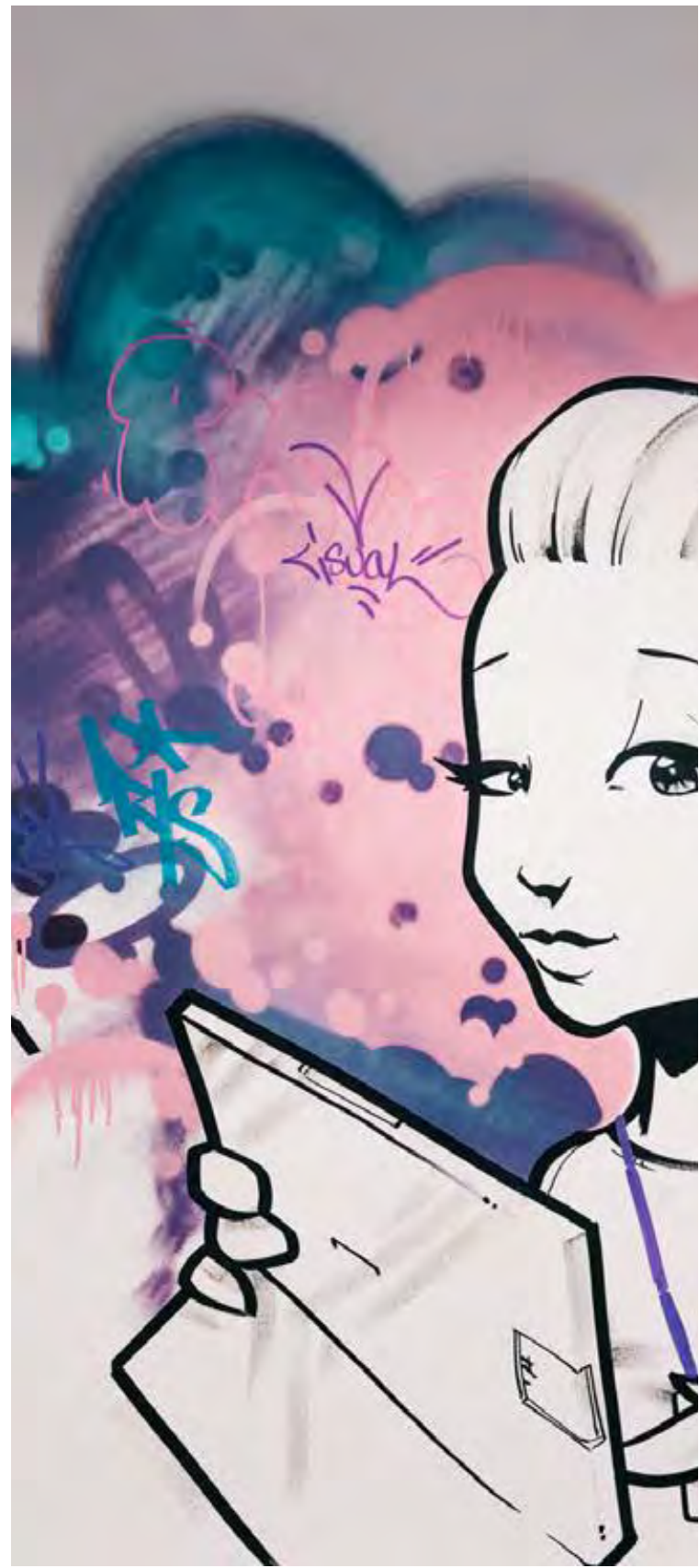
SOCIAL VALUE

The Government has shared a report discussing the new measures which businesses must follow to deliver value to society through public procurement and how they will also deliver social value priorities. Read the full article here. Government departments will now use the launched social value model to assess and score suppliers on the wider benefits they bring by delivering the contract.

"This will mean that value for money for the taxpayer can be maximised while also building a more resilient and diverse supplier base." – UK Government.

- New measures in place to promote new jobs and skills, encourage economic growth and prosperity, tackle climate change and level up the UK.
- New approach will mean more opportunities for SMEs and social enterprises to win Government contracts.
- Value for money will still be paramount, but a bidder's social value score will be incorporated into assessment of contracts.

The Government is using the social value model as an opportunity to level up the country, support business and communities, including in places that feel left behind. The social value model includes:

- Business and community support to help recover from the impact of COVID-19.
- Creating new businesses, jobs and skills to help tackle economic inequality.
- Reducing waste and fighting climate change.
- Driving equal opportunity.
- Reducing the disability employment gap.
- Tackling workforce inequality.
- Improving health and wellbeing and community integration.

The article states, *"Commercial teams in all government departments will also be expected to complete training courses in implementing the new model and how to ensure the maximum social value is derived from each contract."*

This change ensures government contracts are delivering more than just 'value' by price, and will consider social value, environmental, investment in people, and the number of local jobs or apprenticeships a contractor will provide.

"The changes mean that central government will now be required to go further than the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 to ensure that all major procurements explicitly evaluate social value, where appropriate, rather than just consider it." – UK Government
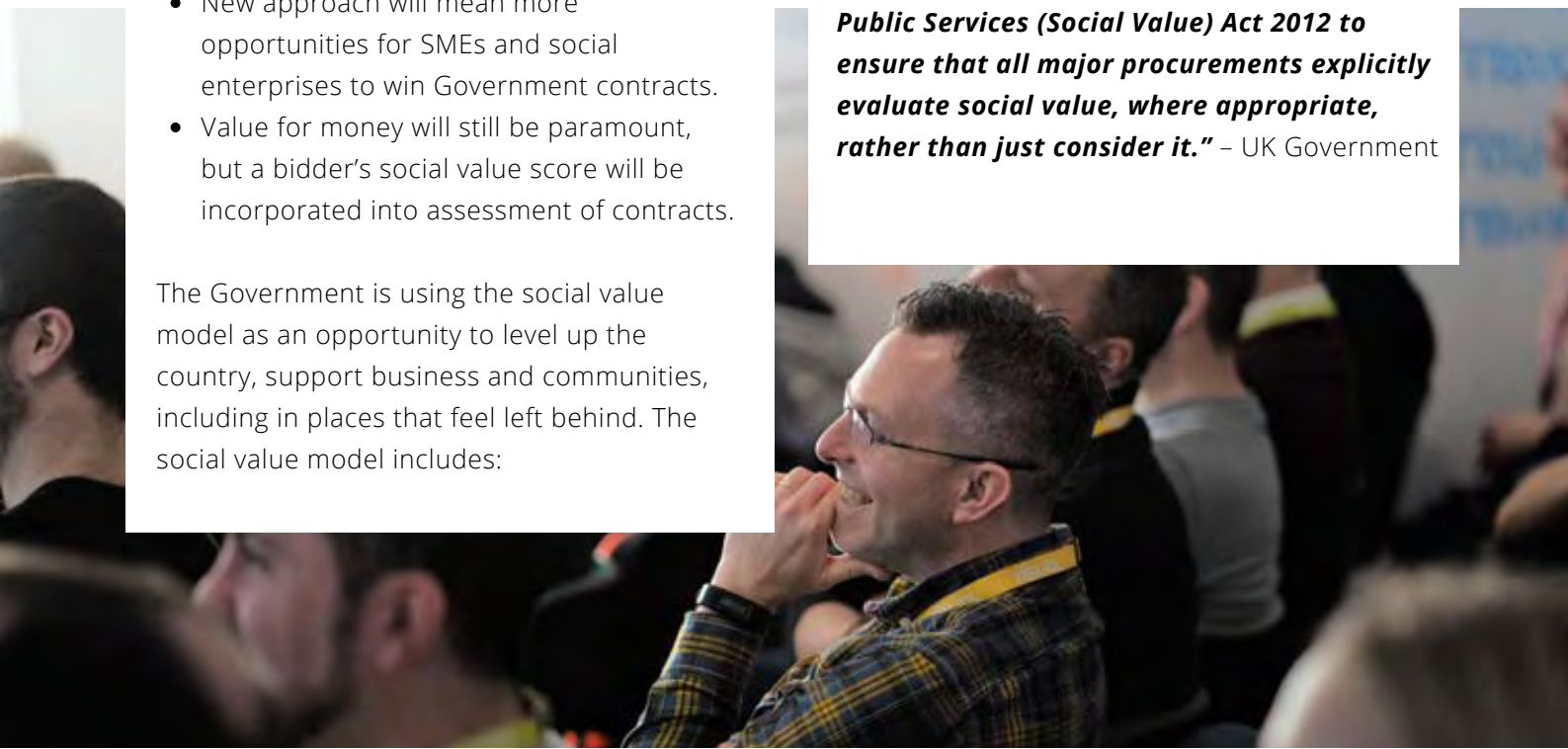
TECHNOLOGY TRENDS FOR 2022

According to Gartner's 2022 technology trends, CEOs want three things: growth, digitalisation and efficiency. Summarising the highlights throughout this report and Gartner's 2022 technology trends, here's what we've found to be the most strategic technology trends for 2022.

Data and AI

Data and AI continues to be leading the way through 2021 and onwards. The value driven by data has never been more clear. Many organisations data remains siloed within applications, and we are encouraging those organisations to make that data available and unlock true value.

"By 2023, more than a third of large organisations will have analysts practicing decision intelligence, including decision modelling." - Gartner.

"By 2024, data fabric deployments will quadruple efficiency in data utilisation while cutting human-driven data management tasks in half." - Gartner

Digitalisation and composable technology

As previously discussed, the organisations that have adopted a composable application architecture will outpace competition by 80% in the speed of new feature implementation. It is absolutely critical to digitalise, automate and implement composable technology where ever you possibly can.

Cybersecurity

Cybersecurity continues to be one of the top trends organisations are talking about. If you are not doing more to ensure you have a secure organisation then you will be at risk of a cyberattack and falling behind.

"By 2024, organisations adopting a cybersecurity mesh architecture to integrate security tools to work as a cooperative ecosystem will reduce the financial impact of individual security incidents by an average of 90%." - Gartner

Cloud-Native Platforms

It's important for organisations who are considering a move to the cloud to minimise the basic lift-and-shift migrations, and take full advantage of cloud attributes including security, automation and SIEM.

"By 2025, cloud-native platforms will serve as the foundation for more than 95% of new digital initiatives — up from less than 40% in 2021." – Gartner

Hyperautomation

To achieve the desired business growth, digitalisation and efficiency hyperautomation will play a crucial part. Hyperautomation enables organisations to reimagine its process and automate as much as possible. Minimising human effort, and increasing overall productivity across the business.

"By 2024, diffuse hyperautomation spending will drive up the total cost of ownership 40-fold, making adaptive governance a differentiating factor in corporate performance." – Gartner

LOOKING FORWARD

Looking forward risual are facing many of the same opportunities and challenges our customers face, such as challenges in the labour market, growth in demand, and the acceleration of digital transformation.

Traditionally, risual has recruited ahead using its own apprenticeship scheme, and many other business are now having to turn to apprenticeships as a way to upskill and bring net new people into their industry. And in the coming year we too will scale up our apprenticeship efforts as we continue to increase our headcount to meet ever increasing demand.

We consistently observe our customers' digital transformation plans as they continue to accelerate. Changing working practices drive the need for better access to data and systems are becoming data-driven.

Organisations will build on the successes of digital efforts and begin or continue to glean insight from their data to respond to changing economies and market demands.

Our customers see an increasing role for technology to play as they become more optimistic about the potential for technology to help address local and global issues.

These trends adds pressure on the provision of technology and is further driving the need for greater emphasis on security as organisations become ever more reliant on digital systems and reliable access to good quality data.

risual Executive Board
Alun Rogers (CEO), Richard Proud (Chairman), Kate Lincoln (Director of Corporate Resources), Richard Heaviside (Chief Revenue Officer), Amanda Sharp (Director of Managed Services) and Brian Cain (Director of Consulting).

Left-right - *Alun Rogers (CEO), Kate Lincoln (Director of Corporate Resources), and Richard Proud (Chairman).*

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