

**Title Title**

Day Month Year / Location

an executive knowledge-sharing roundtable  
hosted by **Company** and **The Ortus Club**

# the synopsis

In this exclusive invite-only roundtable, business leaders discussed the challenges, learnings, and opportunities tied to organisational agility and collaboration that have surfaced over the past year.

Industry experts shared thoughts and ideas on:

- How companies can enhance cross-functional collaboration for a distributed workforce
- What business initiatives can help increase visibility and enable greater productivity
- How organisation-wide reporting can lead to faster, more effortless work

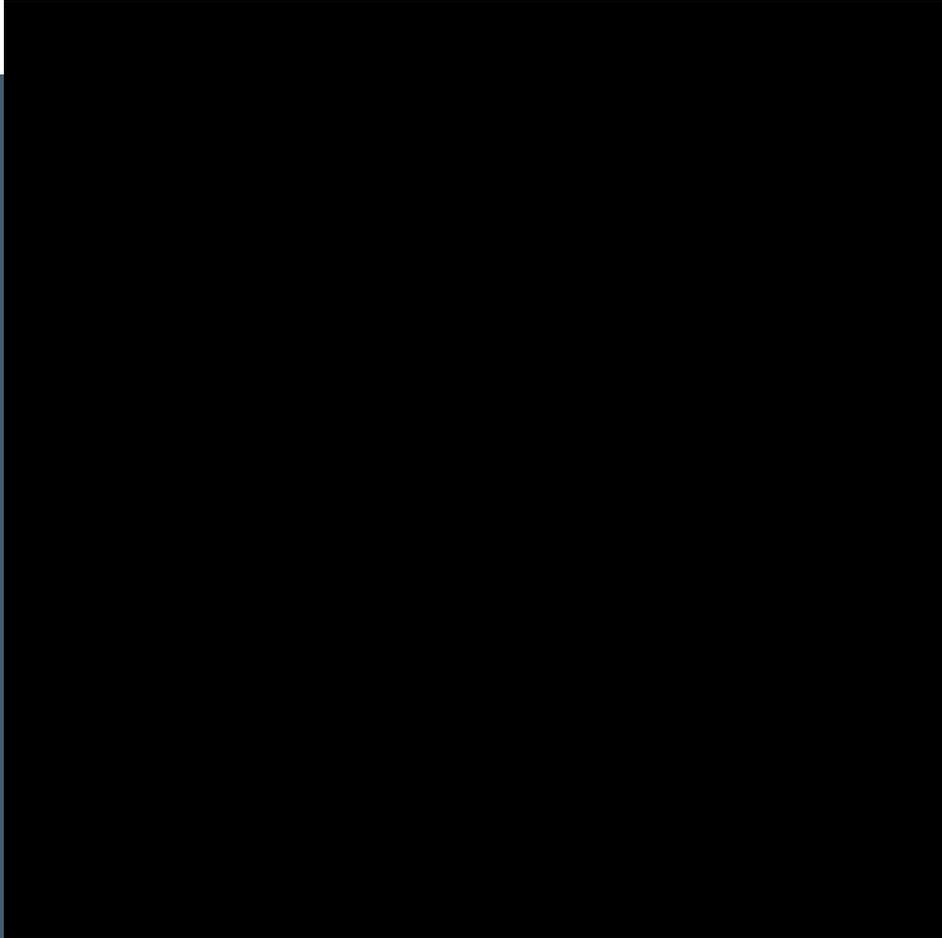
This report includes data on:

- The challenges organisations have faced in the past 6-8 months
- The measures they have taken to address these issues
- The role technology played in improving efficiencies over the past year

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# the moderator



## **Name Name** | Position at Company

Name Name is a partner in Company Southeast Asia office. He has 15 years of consulting and industry experience in industrial goods and services and consumer products. He has held a number of leadership roles within the firm, including contributions to starting up Company's Indonesia office and leading INSEAD recruiting. He currently leads Company APAC.

## the topic

### **Winning the future of work: enabling organisational agility and true collaboration through work management**

For many organisations, the abrupt shift to remote work triggered an increase in the adoption of collaboration tools and an acceleration of digital transformations. But despite their best efforts, teams are struggling to collaborate effectively due to a lack of clarity and inefficient processes.

How can organisations address the challenges from the past year and become more agile, resilient, and innovative moving forward?

## the discussion

Senior decision-makers shared the challenges they faced in the past 6-8 months, the measures they took to address these issues, and the role technology played in improving efficiencies in the past year.

They also discussed insights and experiences on how they enhanced cross-functional collaboration for a distributed workforce, the business initiatives that helped increase visibility and enabled greater productivity, and how organisation-wide reporting can lead to faster, more effortless work.

### **How does your company increase visibility and enable greater productivity? What were the results?**

Automate data monitoring—build control tower to better understand staff processing, demand managements, and capacity managements. Weekly cadence at top management level with team leads. Conduct staff dipstick survey, encourage best practices. Conduct skip level—pivot our operating model where needed.

We have used a lot of collaboration tools, architected smaller teams to enable better visibility and care that have all worked well.

Social media engagement, participation in online webinars/events, and greater use of technology for collaboration to support work from home.

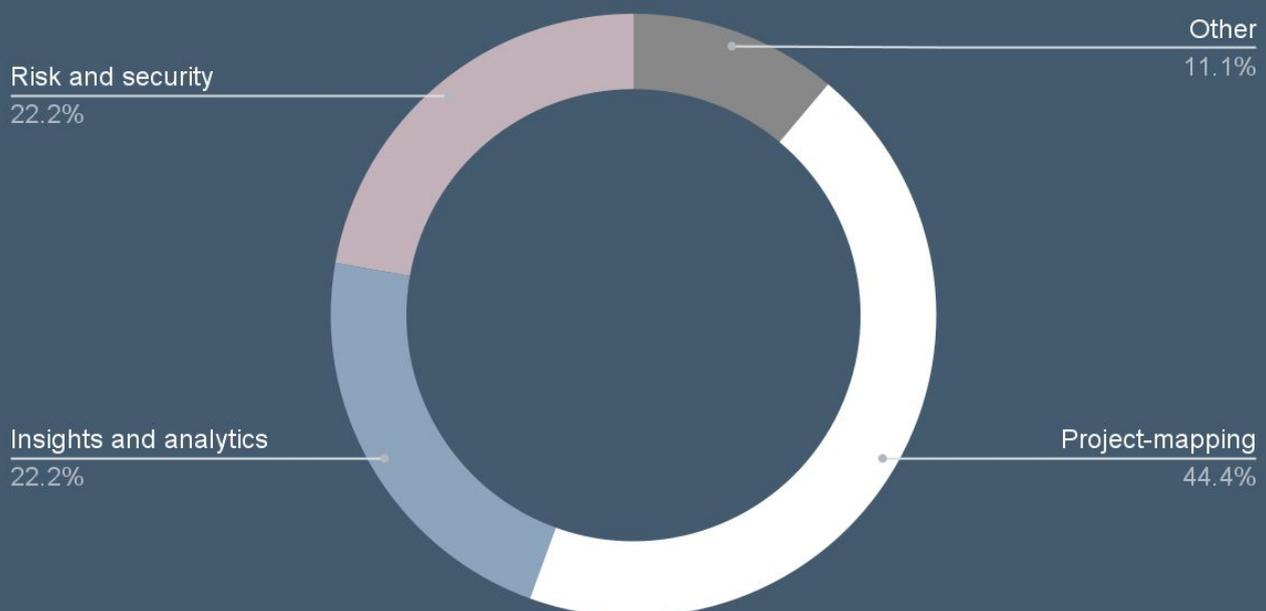
Use of collaborative tools like GDrive, daily and weekly catch-up calls, instant messaging features besides the usual e-mails.

Daily stand-ups, use of Teams to share information and collaborate.

Over a year since the outbreak of COVID-19, leaders are still learning about new ways to transform their organisations, thrive in the new normal, and achieve missions faster. Technology has played a key role in enabling these developments, as companies deployed innovative tools to bring both their people and their consumers closer together. It is no surprise then that many digital initiatives were fast-tracked throughout the course of the pandemic, and decision-makers now look to the challenge of how they can become more resilient while empowering a remote workforce.

‘While there is significant consensus at the board level on the need to go digital faster, I think the challenge is customer adoption as well as taking your workers along,’ said Guest 1. In response to a rapidly changing landscape, their group accelerated its roadmap to align with a broader market segment, migrating fully to virtual training and drawing increased attention to the importance of defining workplace culture. ‘The good thing about technology is that it reduces friction. But in reducing friction, you also increase the amount of time needed to do everything else,’ they concluded.

### What challenges does your company face in cross-functional collaboration for a distributed workforce?



## ‘How do we design a more mindful way of working?’

Research shows that a majority of people spend most of their time on activities beyond what they were initially hired for, on what experts are calling ‘work about work’. These include managing emails, engaging in online chats, attending meetings, making phone calls, and coordinating other tasks.

In Singapore, employees are more likely to experience burnout, especially given that the country has the longest average work week across the globe. ‘We have this misconception that being overwhelmed is about having too much to do, whereas that’s usually not the case. It’s actually about not knowing where to start,’ said Guest 2. ‘How do we design a more mindful way of working?’

### **In your opinion, how can organisation-wide reporting lead to faster, more effortless work?**

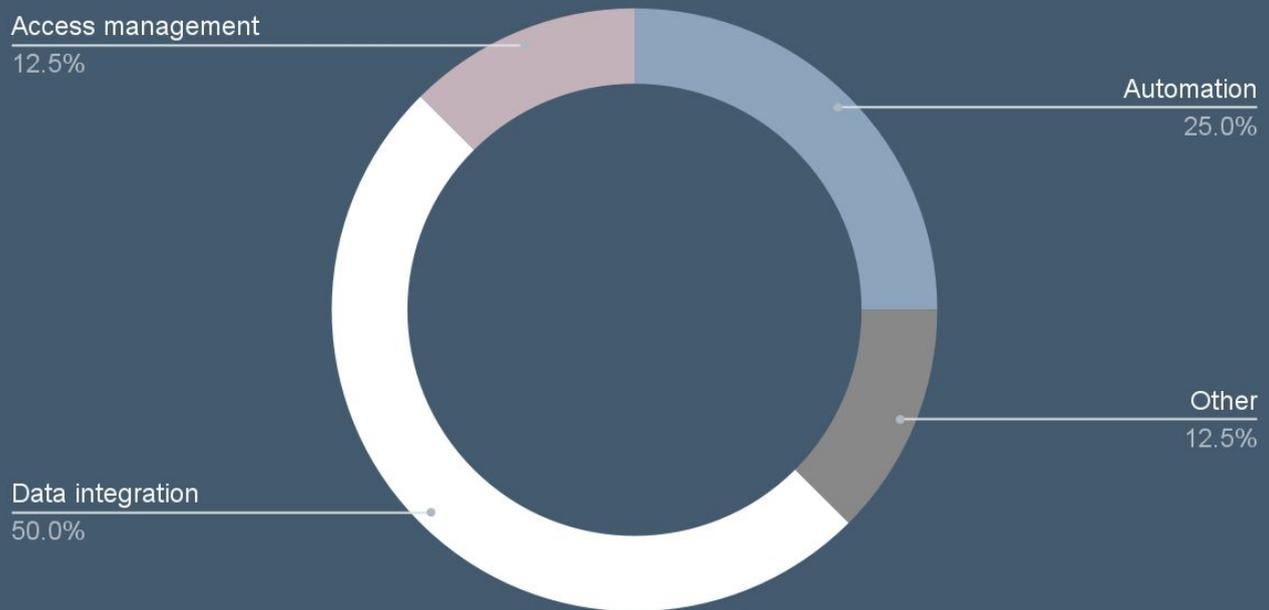
Investing in organisation-wide reporting tools, being data-driven, and increasing staff communication are important towards identifying issues and addressing them to help build a seamless process.

If reporting is designed to promote collaboration, transparency, and accountability, it aids better teaming.

Greater visibility across different departments to enhance collaboration. Better mapping of the different work streams in the organization.

Allowing employees to access reports across departments helps them in understanding the business goal and align their own personal objectives accordingly. This also helps if there is a need to course correct.

## What measures have you taken to address issues on cross-functional collaboration?



According to Guest 3, 'It comes down to aligning how we can solve the human challenge as well as the business challenge.' They considered the example of multinational workers who previously spent most of their time travelling around the region or the world, but ongoing restrictions have made that impossible. As a result, flexible operating models were introduced in order for them to continue working, even in different timezones.

These solutions are more critical than ever as new competitors continue to enter the market, driving changes in customer expectations and redefining how organisations can remain relevant. 'What surprised us is that business did not slow down,' Guest 4 added. Successful programs are now measured by how well they enable collaboration, focus on employee engagement, and ensure that teams are well-connected and comfortable in a hybrid setup.

Mental health has become a key consideration towards improving visibility on productivity. In acknowledging the privilege and luxury of working from home, companies begin to understand the need for 'protected time'. Employees experience first-hand how the line between professional life and personal life is blurred. They feel compelled to stay constantly connected, which negatively impacts their sense of autonomy and flexibility. 'In 18 months, my team has not taken any time off. Even if they did, they don't know what to do with it, so they end up doing work,' Guest 5 mused. Digital transformation has continuously pushed boundaries, often leading to information overload, and Guest 6 asked, 'Are we changing at the cost of the employee? Not everyone is suited for unlimited connectivity.'

'How do we make sure that not only do we deliver, but we ensure the space for different ways of working that still allow for an exchange of ideas and critique?' asked Guest 7. 'We need to get people out of the zone to think creatively.'

In sectors considered 'essential work', strides are being made on leveraging digital tools to maintain team engagement, with leaders curating virtual activities that encourage the use of free time to build new best practices into the company culture. The potential of simple mandates like no meetings past noon on a Friday are being explored to drive innovation.

In developing more personal connections, organisations reflect on the importance of spontaneous interactions. 'The thing that we have lost somewhat are the "watercooler chats". Alignments these days are typically task-focused,' said Guest 8, while Guest 9 expressed their concern over the concept of 'Zoom fatigue', with employees beginning to stare at their own faces instead of the other person's. Both guests agree that 'accidental meetings' in the past had a positive effect on the quality of work, stimulating new ideas. Moving forward, they insist on being conscious of the social impacts as the gap between tools and people is bridged and more deliberate improvements are pursued.

‘Everybody has lunch at a different time,’ Guest 10 said in reference to not setting the same expectations for different individuals. This thought process is but one example of how some businesses are utilising a three-pronged strategy for continued growth in the new normal: think, feel, and do. The first involves hard data and analysing it.

**Are we changing at the cost of the employee? Not everyone is suited for unlimited connectivity.’**

The second tackles connecting with consumers, building empathy, and understanding the software aspects of each. The third and last covers overall execution, the drumbeat of work and how information is shared towards enabling agility and collaboration. Only time will tell if remote work continues to be the standard, but leaders are well underway to not just adapting but thriving in this new environment.

## supplementary research

### What opportunities do you foresee as more work management tools and techniques are developed?

Develop more integrated tools, drive digital adoptions, rollout of Demand Driven Data operating model (DDOM). Staff training—digitised our workforce with tools and training.

As we have learned over the past 16 months, I think technology has played a critical role to ensure work collaboration, which was essential during lockdowns and social-distancing environments. These tools are going to be further enhanced through AI capability, which will further drive better efficiencies and smarter work environments.

Convergence of video conference, data sharing, data storage, and the relevant data security.

More purposeful employees' engagement activities. Reduce friction between silos.

More diversity and inclusion. Access to a wider and global talent pool. Increase in productivity as several tools reduce time needed for reviews with real-time updates.

### If you could ask one question to all participants during the discussion, what would it be?

Does your organisation see WFH to be part of your operating model in the long run? What key skill sets shift are needed in the FOW?

How are you navigating people engagement when markets begin to open up?

How do we onboard new employees effectively in a true digital environment?

How will we enhance employee engagements without physical presence? While it works in building productivity, I do see some scope and opportunity in building a platform that provisions for casual meets, employee activities, and much more.

# the participants

**Guest 1**

Director at Company

**Guest 2**

General Manager at Company

**Guest 3**

Head at Company

**Guest 4**

Director and Head at Company

**Guest 5**

CEO of Company

**Guest 6**

Chief Digital and Technology Officer  
of Company

**Guest 7**

VP at Company

**Guest 8**

Director at Company

**Guest 9**

Deputy Area Managing Partner  
at Company

**Guest 10**

Managing Director at Company

**Guest 11**

Director at Company

**Guest 12**

VP at Company

**Guest 13**

Managing Director at Company

**Guest 14**

Managing Director at Company

**Guest 15**

Head at Company

**The Ortus Club**

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