DIGITAL BY DEFAULT

DPL's TRANSFORMATION DURING COVID-19

DPL

INNOVATION AS A SERVICE

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AT HOME

The sudden emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic left companies scrambling to adapt to the new reality. After settling into the new routine of remote work, companies are now looking for new models to work effectively during COVID-19.

This new situation calls for a complete transformation of business models and operations to become lean and agile in the face of uncertainty. Even technology companies that help businesses in Digital Transformation have to go through the same transformation themselves.

One thing we can safely assume is that this period of uncertainty is going to last much longer than anticipated and temporary measures will not suffice. Working from home (WFH) for an extended period of time introduces a host of problems, from employee burn-out to an overall sense of disassociation from their employers. On the other hand, working from office (WFO) is a gamble at the expense of employee health and safety.

DPL has been a thought leader in Pakistan when it comes to Agile, Flat Culture and Lean Thinking. In adapting to this new situation, DPL is going through another major transformation to tackle the challenges presented by this pandemic.

In this document, we present our insights, experiences and strategy to come out on top of this global crisis.
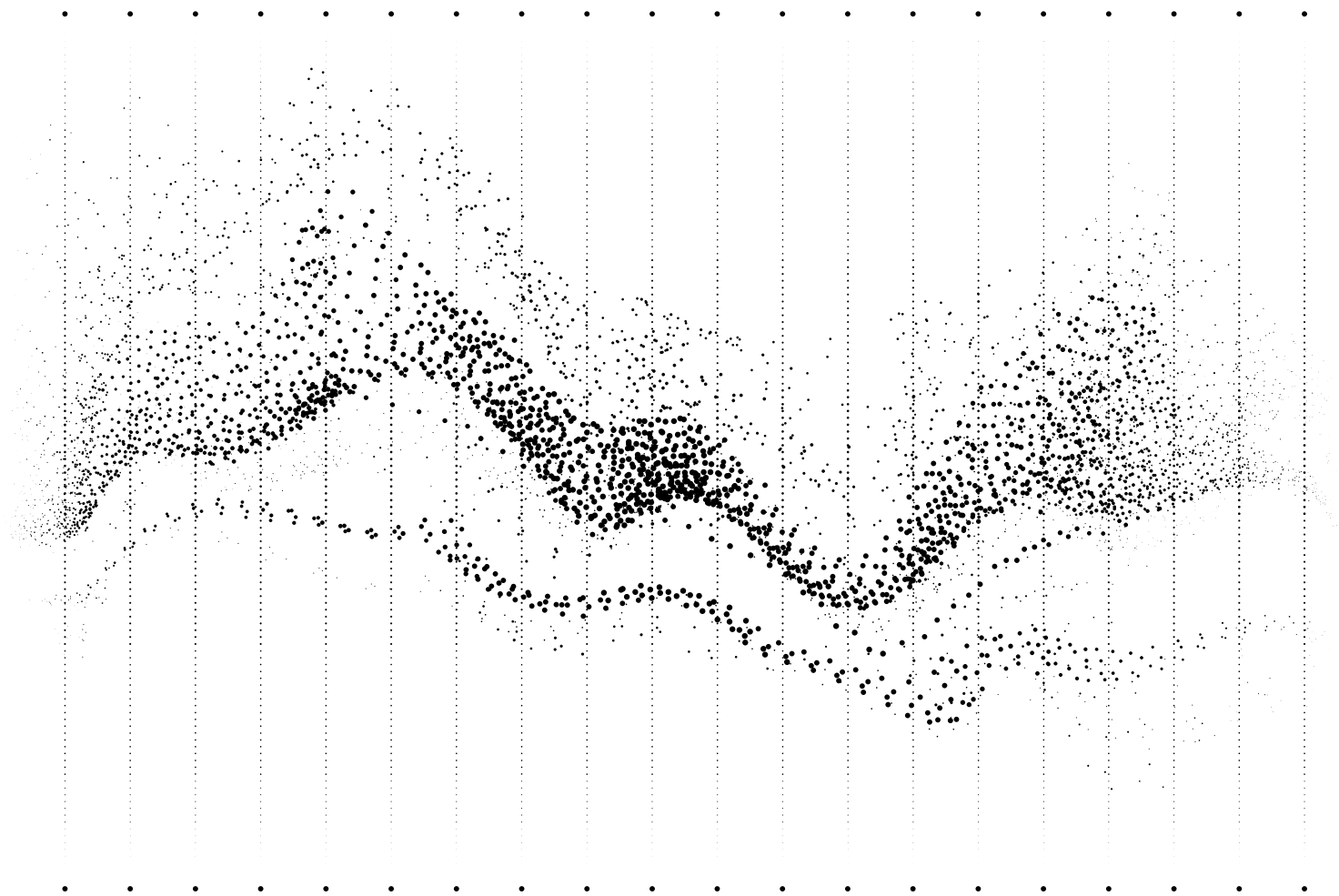
EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCES

As soon as the pandemic hit, it was clear that DPL had to immediately shift to WFH. Having independent agile teams made this shift easier, with each team taking their own decision on how to proceed with this shift. Within a couple of days, the whole company had successfully transitioned to WFH without any interruption to work. This was the perfect moment for self-organized and empowered teams to demonstrate their strengths and resilience.

Once settled in, we at DPL decided to take a holistic view of this new way of working and carried out a number of surveys to gather information on everything from employee wellbeing to team performance and client satisfaction.

WORK FROM HOME INSIGHTS

Three months into COVID-19, we conducted a number of surveys to quantify the impact of work from home.

Here are some highlights of what we've learned from our employees, the DPL Rebels.

Top 5 things Rebels love about WFH

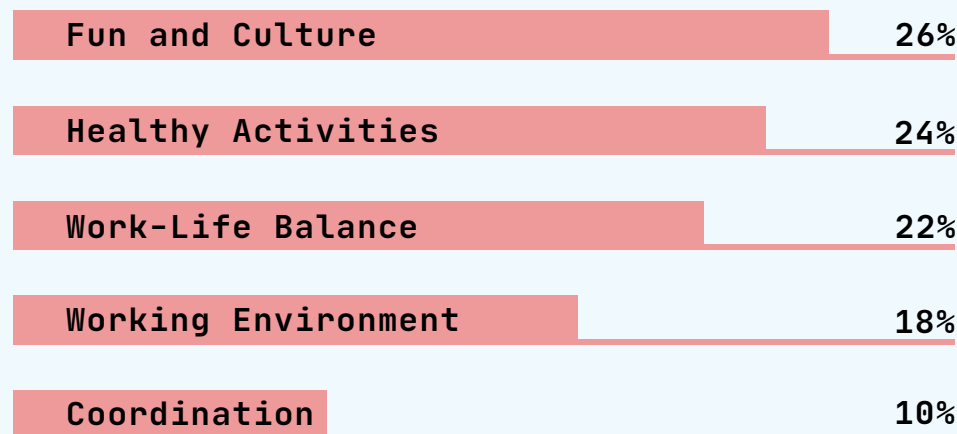|	
No Commute	42%
Family Time	27%
Home Made Meals	20%
Focus	18%
Flexi-Work	16%
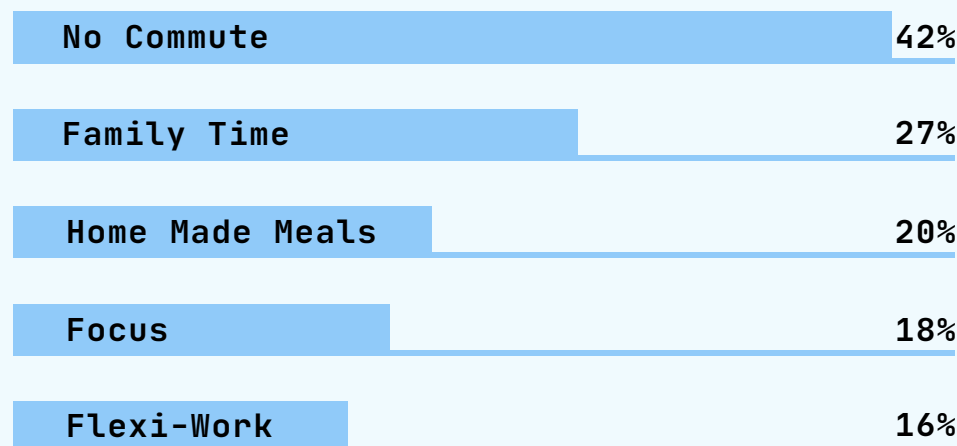
Not having to commute to work is a clear favourite for DPL employees. The time saved from commutes goes toward more time to rest and leisure.

Getting homemade meals and spending more time with families is another benefit many appreciate.

Having more flexibility in working hours lets Rebels balance their chores and work more effectively, which leads to better focus towards work.

Top 5 things Rebels miss about WFO

|	
Fun and Culture	26%
Healthy Activities	24%
Work-Life Balance	22%
Working Environment	18%
Coordination	10%

Our Rebels miss the company's fun culture and social interactions in the office. There is little chance or motivation to pursue healthier activities at home. There is a longer-term risk of burn-out as well.

For tasks involving significant technical challenges, coordination is proving difficult for some.

Many do not have a proper computer desk or chair and some are using makeshift arrangements, exposing them to possible health risks. Background noise is also a major issue.

WFH, WFO or a hybrid?

WFH Until COVID-19 Ends	80%
Hybrid 1 Week/Month in the Office	19%
WFO with SOP's	2%
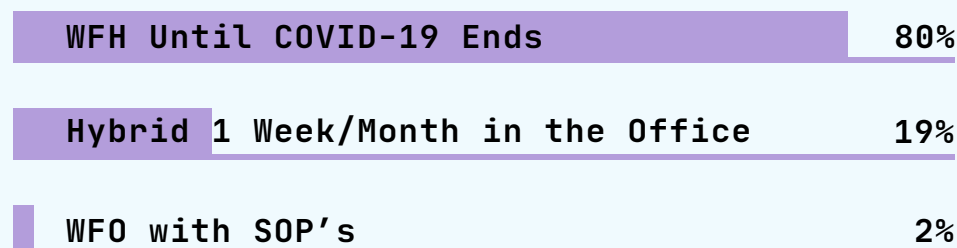
Only 20% of the employees are ready to return to the office during COVID-19 while 80% of DPL employees showed a preference to work from home until the crisis ends.

Concerns about infection and simply preferring the WFH experience are the main reasons they do not wish to return to the office.

EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

DPL has been successfully practicing Agile methodologies for many years. Our teams are empowered, cross-functional, and self-organized. We have long been proponents of employee mobility through the use of cloud services for our data and tools as well as using mobile equipment.

That is why when the pandemic started, we were able to immediately move 100% of the company to WFH within a few day's notice. The WFH data shows that our employees not only sustained their work during WFH, but even improved overall performance.

PRODUCTIVITY

Measured improvements

up to

42%

- Improved team collaboration and focus
- Team agreements established
- Focus shifted from output to outcome
- Improved use of cloud tools and technology

VELOCITY

Measured improvements

up to

30%

- Small and independent story writing
- Improved team collaboration and focus
- Improved transparency and expectations e.g. DoD

COLLABORATION

Measured improvements

up to

33%

- Less hesitance to ask for help
- Alignment with team goals instead of individuals
- Improved communication and availability
- Cycle time improved

MEETING EFFECTIVENESS

80%

Rebels reported

significant improvements

- Collaboration meetings other than Daily Scrum
- More focused, structured and time boxed meetings
- Impromptu team huddles
- Improved participation

FOCUS

70%

Rebels reported

significant improvements

- Reduced social check-ins
- Uninterrupted time slots increased
- Flexi working style

Globally, companies are reporting higher productivity while employees work from home. Here at DPL, we have similarly found that there are significant performance improvements reported by our teams and acknowledged by our clients as well.

These improvements are due to the benefits afforded by WFH including more time, increased focus and fewer distractions. Employees were less hesitant to reach out for help online on a one-to-one basis.

Meetings have also become more productive as participants tend to stay on topic. There is also a sense of solidarity and wanting to fully contribute towards the company's success in a time of crisis.
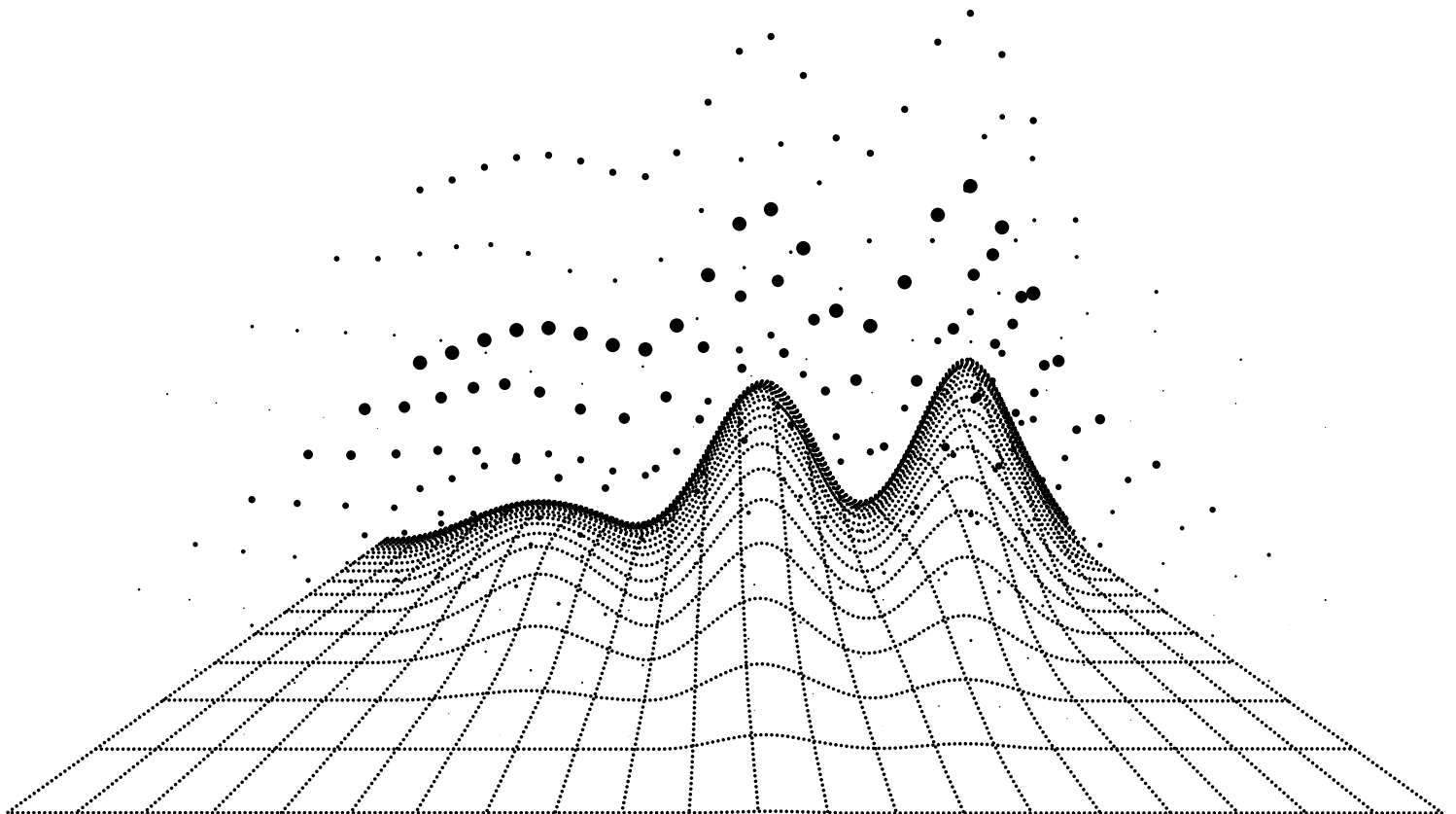
TRANSFORMATION TO A

DISTRIBUTED ORGANIZATION

As we analyze our current performance levels, we are also charting a path to continue our transformation journey. Building on the success we have seen in the past four months, we are ready to embark on the next leg of our journey, Transformation 2.0.

Transformation isn't just an added layer of software on existing processes and ways of doing business. It is a shift in the way we think about how we do business.

DPL ANNOUNCES WORK FROM HOME UNTIL MARCH 2021

Offices have become redundant for the foreseeable future. WFH, either fully or partially, is going to be a long-term feature post COVID-19. It is important to embrace these facts and transform the way we think about running a business. This transformation means a change in our mindset and culture while implementing processes and tools to support this shift.

In times of uncertainty, bringing clarity to people's minds is paramount. By making the decision to go 100% distributed and digital until March 2021, we at DPL have sought to remove any uncertainty so that our people can focus all their efforts towards the new dynamics and challenges of doing business during COVID-19.

DPL will be focusing on developing three key areas while being a distributed organization.

1	2	3
CULTURE 2.0	**DIGITAL BY DEFAULT**	**AGILE 2.0**

CULTURE 2.0

DPL's inimitable culture has been one of the driving forces that has made it stand out amongst all its competitors. The unrivalled focus and attention given to the promotion of a healthy, innovative and creative culture was materially manifested in our office.

Now that same enthusiasm and sense of rebellion is being channelled into our efforts to develop an equally engaging and empowering culture while we transition to remote working.

What follows are some of the principles we have chosen to dedicate our attention to.

ALIGNMENT WITH MISSION

Keeping everyone aligned towards our common mission and values. Understanding and empathising with employees and setting clear but flexible expectations.

COMRADESHIP

We are encouraging and incentivizing our people to increase safe social interactions and to share their experiences with others using the nGAGE platform.

The aim is to foster social connections that are meaningful and provide much needed solace to the physical and mental challenges people face.

OPEN COMMUNICATION

Proactive and transparent communication through company news, social channels and all-hands meetings to keep everyone informed.

Creating online groups that act as a nerve centre to provide quick, organization-wide feedback for decision making. Frequent use of polling and surveys for employees.

We have already been using MS Teams as our standard communication platform rather than email.

LEAN AND INNOVATIVE

Promote innovative ideas to come up with lean approaches towards operations and people management.

Consolidating resources which are not bringing value to the company and redeploying them to areas which can increase value for the company and its people.

For example, optimising office space and investing in employee health and wellness.

MAKE THE VIRTUAL VISIBLE – VIDEOS

Video calls have become a new norm for the company. Not only are official meetings being conducted on video calls (people are required to turn on cameras), but people are also sharing personalized experiences through video messages and images, enabling social chatter within the company.

Microsoft Teams, the nGAGE platform and Stream have been effective in implementing such a cultural change at DPL.

PEOPLE CENTRIC

People over processes is the key mantra of the Agile manifesto. Employees are no longer sitting in a uniform environment and have unique challenges and situations.

This calls for more accommodating and personalized HR policies rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. DPL's nGAGE platform provides this personalized people centred HR framework.

CULTURE 2.0

MOTIVATION

Motivation is the pull strategy towards people management that we believe works much better than push (enforcement) strategy.

We are using various mechanisms to motivate people towards all elements of our strategy by immediately recognizing their actions (through feedback app), incentivizing through gamification, social sharing (nGAGE platform) and other such means.

FOCUSED ON HEALTH AND SAFETY

DPL is making health and safety as part of our core culture which means incentivizing and motivating people towards healthy activities and balanced lifestyle. Health and Wellness program is being launched to provide support in the changed lifestyle/ environment.

10x FOCUS ON PERSONAL GROWTH

It is time to develop leaders and that requires well rounded growth especially in areas of EQ, soft skills, creative skills and self-discovery.

People, especially in desi cultures don't get enough exposure and opportunities to hone many of these skills.

Hence DPL is focusing 10x more on personal development using Learning Experience Platform and nGAGE platform that sets short-term achievable goals in front of people to achieve, and giving them rewards and incentives on success.

10x 2x

2x FOCUS ON PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

Using a Learning Experience Platform (LXP), DPL will invest 2x in professional development of its employees by empowering them to choose their own learning paths and skills aligned with organizational goals.

FLAT AND FUN

DPL's flat and fun culture has built an environment ideal for innovation and creativity. However, chance encounters and cross-pollination between teams has minimized due to WFH.

Leadership and HR aided by digital platforms (nGAGE) and social media (MS Teams) will work towards new ideas to keep the culture alive in the digital realm.

For example, groups based on common interests, dubbed Circles, help create communities around hobbies.

COMPANY WIDE SOCIAL NETWORKING

No culture can survive in a distributed working environment a without living, breathing company-wide social network.

Enterprise massaging like MS Teams provides a communications nerve center for the whole organization, where transparency allows even new comers to join in and get up to speed quickly.
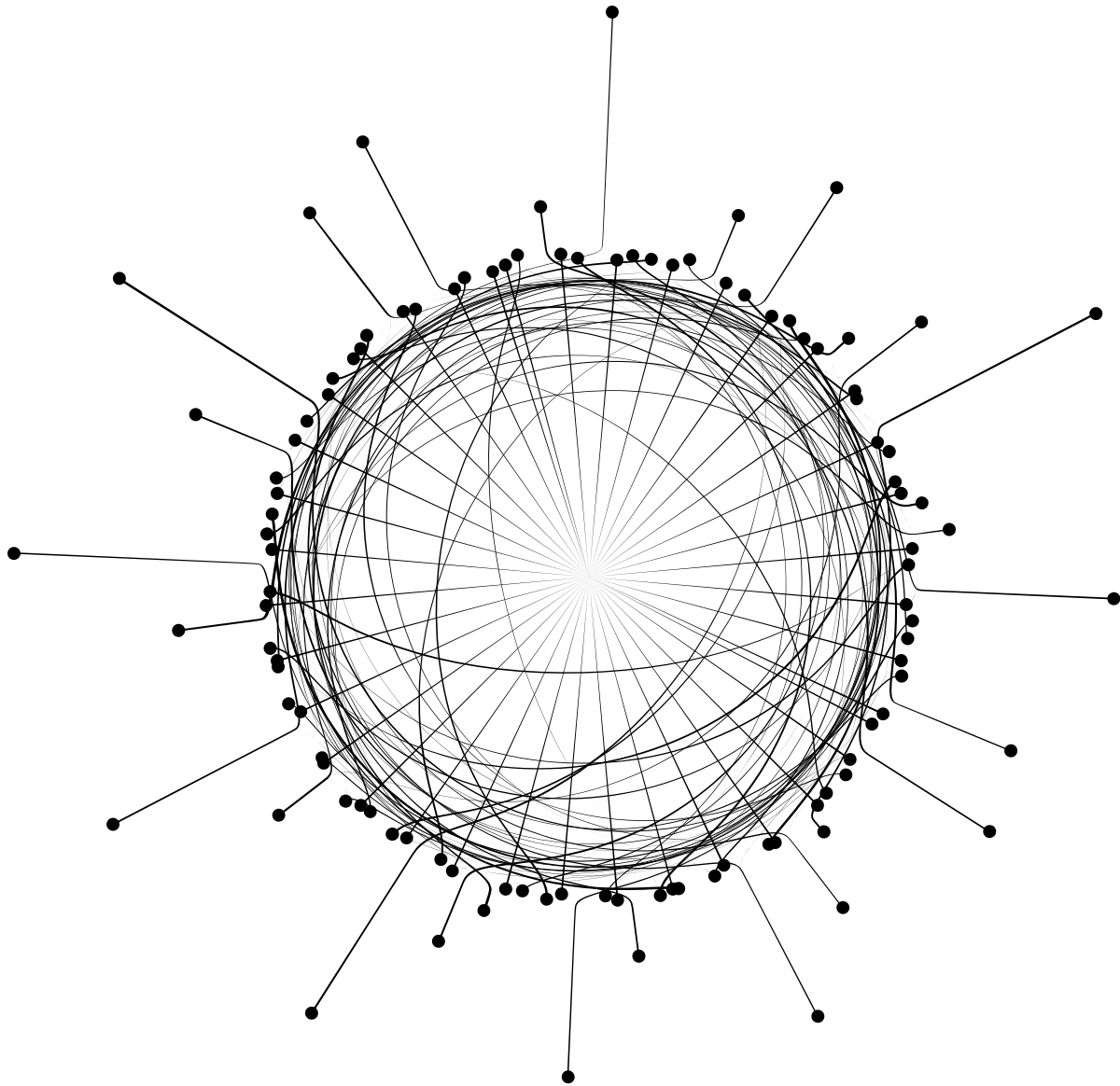
DIGITAL BY DEFAULT

As organizations embrace WFH, employees may feel increasingly demotivated, isolated and disengaged from organization, weakening the bond with employers.

Left unchecked, this may lead to low productivity, burnout and attrition. Pre-COVID-19, most companies did not have robust systems in place to measure employee wellbeing, during COVID-19, this has become indispensable.

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The questions that need answers to deal with

WFH scenarios

- Working remotely, how does an organization differ from another from an employee's perspective?

- How does a professional in a well-reputed organization differentiate from a freelance remote worker as both work remotely?

- Does the organization continue to deliver value for personal and professional growth to its employees?

- What is an employee's takeaway apart from pay and project experience (which can be similar or better elsewhere)?

- In short, how will you ensure employee engagement with your organization?

Companies with the answers to these questions will have the advantage over others who will struggle with HR issues, resulting in lower value delivered to clients.

Line managers responsible for employee engagement and career growth often lack adequate people and leadership skills. The challenge is even more pronounced for a distributed workforce due to a lack of direct supervision, monitoring and policy enforcement.

In this situation, an organization's HR function needs to be re-imagined. Pull (motivation) rather than push (policy enforcement) strategies with a trust based relationship with employees needs to be introduced.

A data-driven, personalized digital HR platform may provide actionable support to keep employees motivated and engaged. The platform becomes a nexus to connect all initiatives and provide a streamlined approach towards incentivizing a range of activities, from employee productivity to their health and wellbeing.

DPL is using its award winning HR platform called **nGAGE** that provides the framework and tools for HR transformation.

DIGITAL BY DEFAULT

nGAGE: A DIGITAL PLATFORM FOR AGILE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

DPL is going through another phase of transformation, especially transforming key functions of HR, operations and project management (overall performance management).

A digital platform, **nGAGE**, becomes the backbone of all HR functions where HR works in a supportive role. The platform is largely data driven and empowers employees to set their own goals and career growth objectives.

nGAGE is a gamified employee engagement and performance management platform that democratises and decentralises HR and people management in the organization. It is an award-

winning platform that uses the principles of gamification to engage employees and provide them with growth and direction while recognises their efforts. This includes concepts such as:

AGILE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Accelerated Feedback

Clear individualized Goals

Challenging/Achievable tasks

Structured performance management designed by self, line managers and HR

REWARD AND RECOGNITION

Immediate rewards and recognition

Points/Badges

Personalized rewards

Organization-wide social visibility of achievements

LEARNING AND CAREER GROWTH

Incentivized personal & professional growth plan

Career lattice/paths/skills

Learning Experience Platform (LXP)

DATA ANALYTICS-BASED HR MANAGEMENT

Centralized data lake

Employee empowerment with data analytics

Benchmarking

AI based suggestions

- All data is available in nGAGE is a reminder for one's self progress, company goals while also serving as a challenge to do better than before.

- People can see performance benchmarks of other employees to get inspired and set targets to improve personally and professionally.

- Team members (PO, etc.) provide continuous feedback on an employee's work.

- DPL leadership makes sure that everyone knows what is expected of them in the next month, the next 3 months, the coming year and their performance is measured against their future performance rather than past year.

- Employees control their perks, HR benefits, JD and career growth.

- Incentivize and recognise all kinds of desirable activities including social interactions, health and wellness goals.

- An all-in-one self-service portal provides performance management, career growth, HR benefits etc.

DIGITAL BY DEFAULT

EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND WELLNESS PROGRAM

The COVID-19 pandemic is here to stay for a while. The environment that our employees work from at their homes must help them achieve better focus, foster collaboration with their colleagues and above all, be an environment that keeps them healthy and safe.

To ensure this, DPL is taking steps so that every employee has a proper, dedicated workspace set up at their home.

PRODUCTIVE WORKING ENVIRONMENT AT HOME

Three factors are important when setting up a productive working space in a constrained environment, **workspace, communication** and **connectivity.**

DPL is investing in best possible work experience by providing:

- Carefully selected ergonomic chairs and tables to provide an **ergonomic workspace**

- High quality, noise cancellation headsets for **focused communication**

- System and network support at home for **uninterrupted connectivity**

INCENTIVIZED HEALTHY ACTIVITIES

DPL has initiated a company-wide program to encourage and incentivize healthy activities among employees. These activities are managed through our proprietary Agile-centred employee engagement program, nGAGE. Some of the activities included in the program are:

- Physical exercises

- Creative activities

- Safe social interactions

- Circles – groups of employees centred around their hobbies or interests

PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT

Studies are showing that the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown situation has put considerable pressures on our mental wellbeing.

To support our employees in these unprecedented times, DPL is introducing individual, employee-focused programs through engaging external coaches and forming internal focused groups.
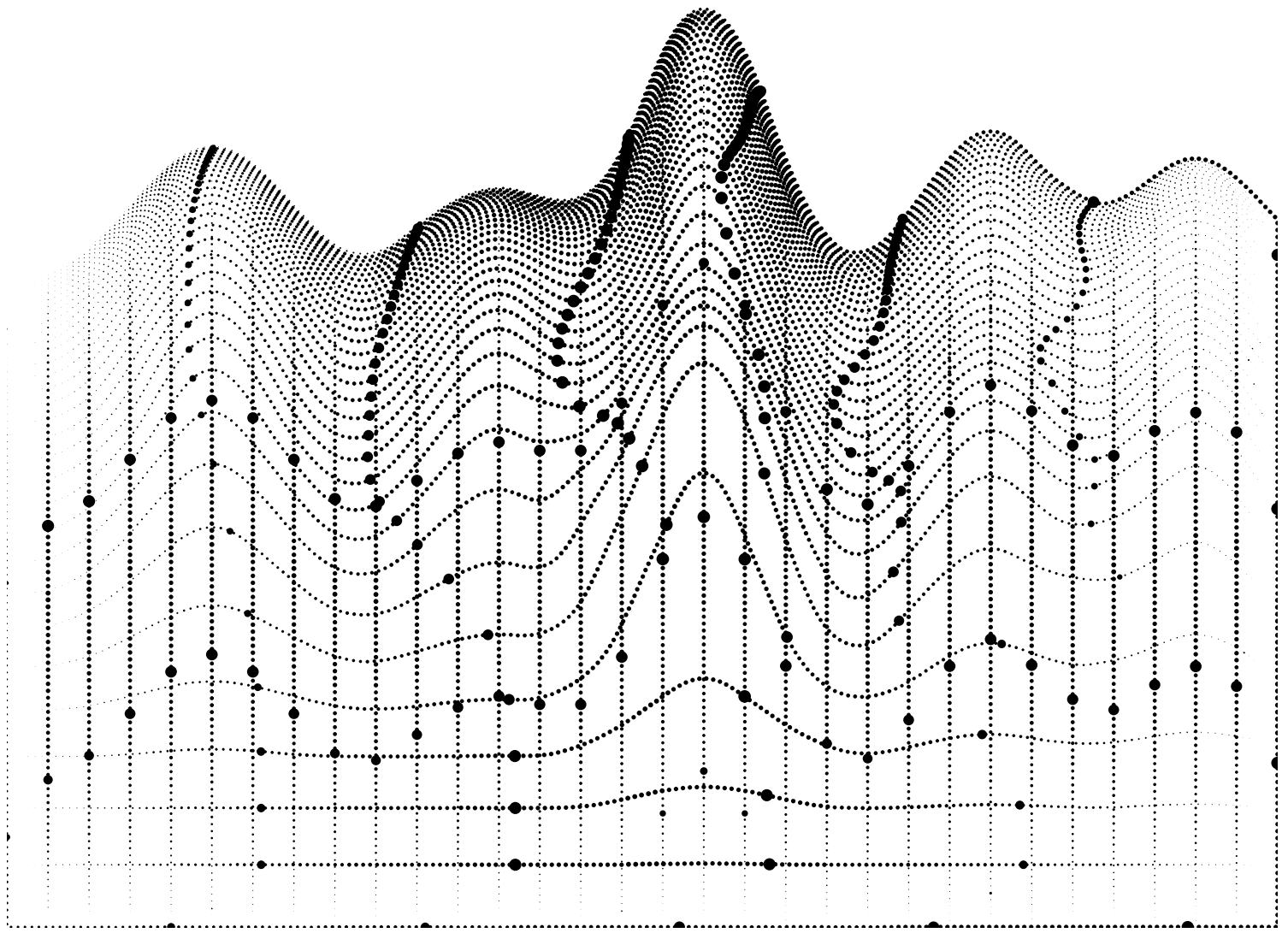
AGILE 2.0

When DPL started the Agile journey in 2011, we introduced Agile project management in our company to ensure a proper enabling environment for creating an Agile mindset. We transformed our company culture into a flat and fun culture called Rebel Ethos. To further aid this enabling environment, we created an open office environment that incubates the right kind of culture and behaviors.

In **Agile 2.0**, DPL is taking Agile compliance to the next level due to its relevance in the current remote working environment.

AGILE 2.0
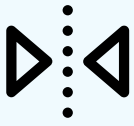
RE-EMPHASIZE GOAL ALIGNMENT

The current situation demands that goals be re-emphasized at both company and team levels. This constant exercise of realigning teams with company and project goals has started to result in increased performance as shown by our performance numbers.

PROCESS IMPROVEMENT AND OPTIMIZATION

Scrum events have been optimized by introducing online tools like **Planning Poker** for estimations and **Trello, Miro, Reflector**, and **Reetro.io** for retrospective. User stories are being broken down into smaller chunks to allow more independent work. An interrupt buffer has been introduced to ensure support and urgent cases are responded to quickly and without impacting sprint goals.

Operational processes are being improved by allowing immediate, two-way employee feedback through DPL's nGAGE platform.

EXTENDING CONNECTIONS

Extending connections with remote team members through social and technical channels. We are continuously monitoring the team morale, quality, pace, velocity and reestablishing connections in case of any drop in quality or any other metric.

IMPROVED COLLABORATION

Maintaining rhythm and effectiveness of the meetings in WFH environment by constantly aligning team members with schedules and standardising asynchronous communication to a single source of truth. Focusing on improving instant messaging within MS Teams and agreeing on the best possible response time for each team. All our data and tools were already in the cloud but remote working has pushed our teams towards more efficient use of cloud tools like **MS Teams, JIRA, TFS**.

PAIR PROGRAMMING

We promote pair programming because it is an effective Agile practice and is proving to be more valuable during WFH. We are adopting tools like Use **Together, Cloud 9,** and **Visual Studio Live Share.**

HIGHER QUALITY

Agile and Scrum teams deliver higher quality products and WFH demands even more attention to quality. DPL has already improved the following practices:

- Definition of Done (DoD) has been adapted to the WFH setup by making it more stringent as we make unit test code coverage and peer reviews a part of it.

- As communication complexity increases, automation has been incorporated as a mandatory part of the development life cycle and online mobile testing tools like **BrowserStack** have been adopted.

MAINTAINING TIME-TO-MARKET

Keeping short Time-to-Market is essential for validating ideas and WFH has disrupted existing processes to achieve that. We have made it mandatory for every project to implement a CI/CD pipeline and incorporate TDD, which has allowed our teams to reduce time normally wasted in collaboration.
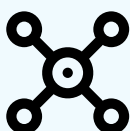
PROACTIVE AND INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

Pandemics demand even more from leaders and DPL's leadership has been more communicative and transparent reagarding company-wide decisions. As soon as we moved to WFH, we also adapted our open communication strategy to this environment.
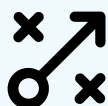
### AGILE COACHING FOR WFH TEAMS

The Scrum Mastser's role as a coach has become pivotal. One-to-one and small group feedback meetings and live coaching sessions are essential. We are also moving away from cognitive-based decisions to data-driven decisions.

ABOUT DPL

One of the leading IT consulting and services company based in Islamabad, with clients based in the US, UK and Europe, DPL is a technology partner of various startups and fortune 500 companies. We are a Microsoft Certified Partner and have won various awards. Software development is at the core of our DNA.

Being a thought leader in agile culture and digital transformation in Pakistan we thrive with a people-centric culture called "Rebel Ethos". This culture has enabled us to deliver innovative solutions to our customers. With our "Innovation as a Service" model, we have set up partnerships with various startups which have graduated to successful funding rounds and exits at tens of millions of dollars. DPL has not only transformed itself into Pakistan's first truly Agile company but is also helping various corporate companies in their Digital Transformation efforts.
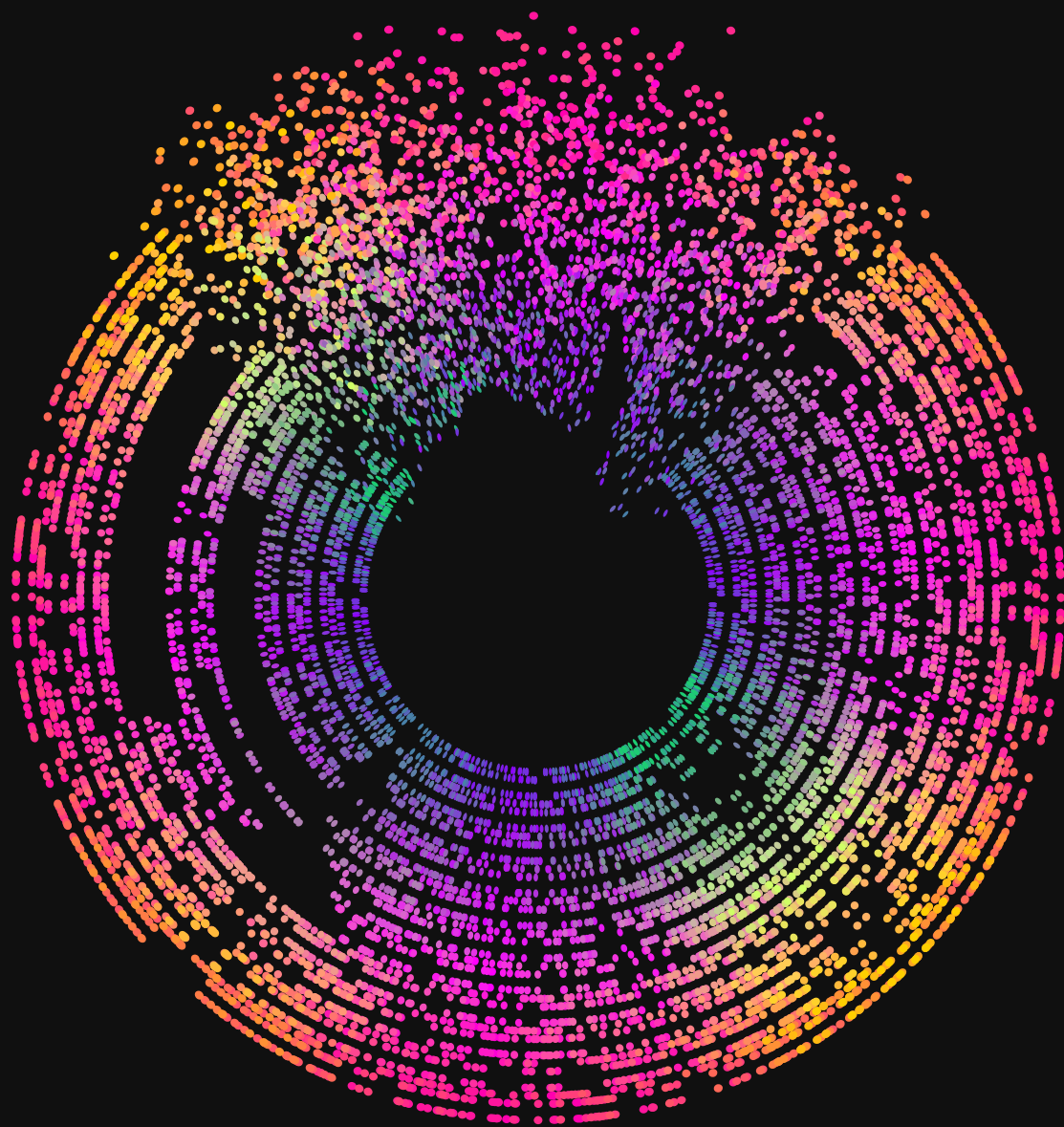
For more information and future insights, visit:

www.dplit.com/insights.html

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