

# WHY **DIGITIZATION** IS NO LONGER AN OPTION

As businesses acclimatize to a work-from-home culture, digital process solutions that enable workers to focus on the job at hand are becoming essential to business operations



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The world has changed dramatically in recent months. Covid-19 has forced societies across the planet to adapt to a “new normal” and businesses to evolve their offerings to cater for clients and employees who no longer spend five days a week in the office.

While the shift from paper to digital has been ongoing for years, many businesses and industries remain behind the curve. Embracing digital transformation is no longer an option – it has become an essential strategy. Yet many business owners and decision-makers remain apprehensive of the perceived scale that comes with such a transformation.

As noted in a recent interview, FlowForma CEO Olivia Bushe says that it took Covid-19 to “truly break down office walls”, providing the tipping point for businesses to abandon the familiar and embrace change.

“With people losing their jobs and so many companies struggling to survive, it’s hard to take positives out of coronavirus,” notes Bushe. “But the crisis is forcing organizations into new ways of working that will benefit them and their employees in the long run.”

Focusing in on those organizations that will inevitably stick to what they know, Bushe argues that Covid-19 should provide a compelling business case to jump onboard the digital transformation journey, “even though they’re not sure if they can afford a ticket”.

The truth is, however, that a business with a clear vision on what it wants to achieve from implementing a digital process solution can easily afford to put the tools in place to start onboarding for a digital transformation journey. No-code and SaaS tools are among the most attractive to such businesses, as they do not require developer resources, while their rapid time-to-value has already been proven.

“With ubiquitous networks, better communications and cloud services comes digital enablement – a ‘hot tech topic’ that’s topped CEO to-do lists for many years,” Bushe remarks. “I suspect there will be no turning back after the next few months, and changes in the way companies operate and their employees work will become permanent.”

“By streamlining our processes and adding value to how our customers interface with Maverick, FlowForma Process Automation has been a game-changing solution which will separate us from our competition and increase our profitability.”

**Michael McNally, CEO of Maverick Corporation**

# Finding a solution that empowers collaboration

Worldwide, a work-from-home culture has developed almost overnight. Data from polling company Gallup from a seven-day period at the end of April 2020, found that 63 per cent of US employees had worked from home due to coronavirus concerns, doubling from 31 per cent just three weeks earlier. In the UK, a British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) poll found that at least 54 per cent of businesses in the UK were opting to use remote working to maintain business continuity during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Remote working solutions have become business essentials without which operations for many companies would simply cease. A wave of digital solutions are demonstrating that many long-standing bastions of business, from an abundance of paperwork to having an office, could crumble.

In order to improve their efficiency and broader organizational structure, businesses and the staff who work for them require access to tools offering 360-degree visibility of processes and tasks.

As the world adapts to an enforced work-from-home culture, processes previously considered non-essential in the office are now more essential than ever before and the key, according to Shay O'Connor, Head of Solutions at digital process automation software supplier FlowForma, is digitization.

"The concept of digitizing processes forms part of the global push for digital transformation and the cross-industry approach taken by solution providers in 2020 means that the Covid-19 pandemic will lead to many different and essential requirements," says O'Connor.

Among those requirements, reducing admin tasks and paperwork will provide workers with more time to spend on value-added tasks. Digital processes

and automated workflows are moving documents and forms away from office printers and filing cabinets, while also breaking down silos that traditionally separated departments within the same business.

"At TOUCH Community Services, we had already digitized our key processes using FlowForma Process Automation. Covid-19 hit us hard and all of our staff have been forced to work from home. We are very glad that digitization has allowed our staff to work from home without any hindrance, thanks to the FlowForma Process Automation tool."

**Puay Meng Lim, IT Manager at TOUCH Community Services**



# Hurdles to change

Office culture is changing. Businesses such as Twitter and Square are among those to have virtually told all employees to work from home forever. Whether they work for large multinational organizations or SMEs, many employees are finding themselves working from home more often – some sporadically, others periodically and many permanently.

Businesses have to act to empower remote users and address processes managed on paper or spreadsheet software that are neither agile nor adaptable.

Many businesses have, however, begun viewing process excellence solutions as essential. According to FlowForma's O'Connor, the biggest indicator of this mindset change has been from those who have already implemented FlowForma Process Automation and now want to use it more. Many

customers are finding that their current requirement is to expand digital process automation initiatives at speed due to the value they found after digitizing a limited number of processes.

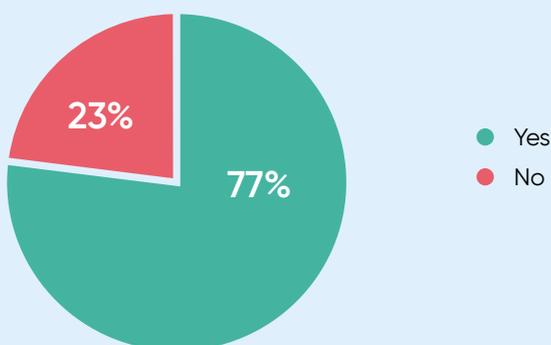
"Having taken care of a few core processes and finding the software is already paying for itself, many are now wishing they had digitized more processes – especially in hindsight of Covid-19," O'Connor observes, adding that while many businesses have no concept of how much digitization costs, they should counter any additional cost by looking at how much they are currently losing.

"There is zero downside to digitizing your processes," he states. "You get far more bang for your buck, you get so much more efficiency and you can operate much more effectively."

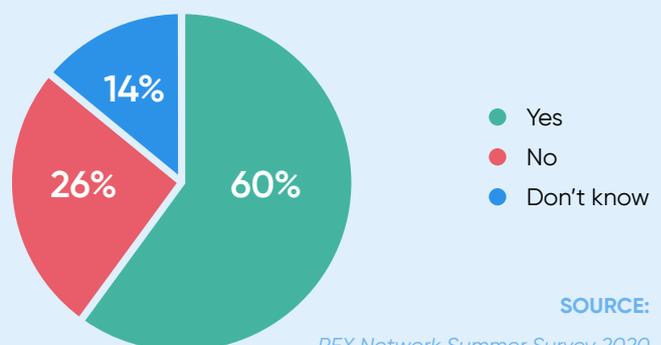
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**Shay O'Connor, Head of Solutions at FlowForma**

**Has Covid-19 changed your company's investment priorities?**



**Considering the current economic climate due to the global coronavirus pandemic, is now a sensible time for organizations to increase their expenditure on innovative process excellence?**



SOURCE:

PEX Network Summer Survey 2020

Among the concerns many companies have about digitizing their processes are whether it will work on both mobile and desktop, how well adept remote workers will be when they use the software and the cost of automating processes. Many organizations are also concerned about the potential scale of transforming processes that have been carried out in same manner for many years.

Regarding scale and apprehension about introducing digital processes, Grant Thornton IT Manager William McCann remarks: "As with any new software there's a mindset change for people, but it helps that they can see tangible benefits straight away. The more processes I've automated, the more the business sees the benefits, and the more we want to use it and bring more processes online."

Abingdon & Witney College in Oxfordshire, UK, introduced seven digitized processes via the FlowForma Process Automation tool on Microsoft Office 365, which its staff were able to create for themselves. In just one year, the institution saved more than 5,000 employee hours.

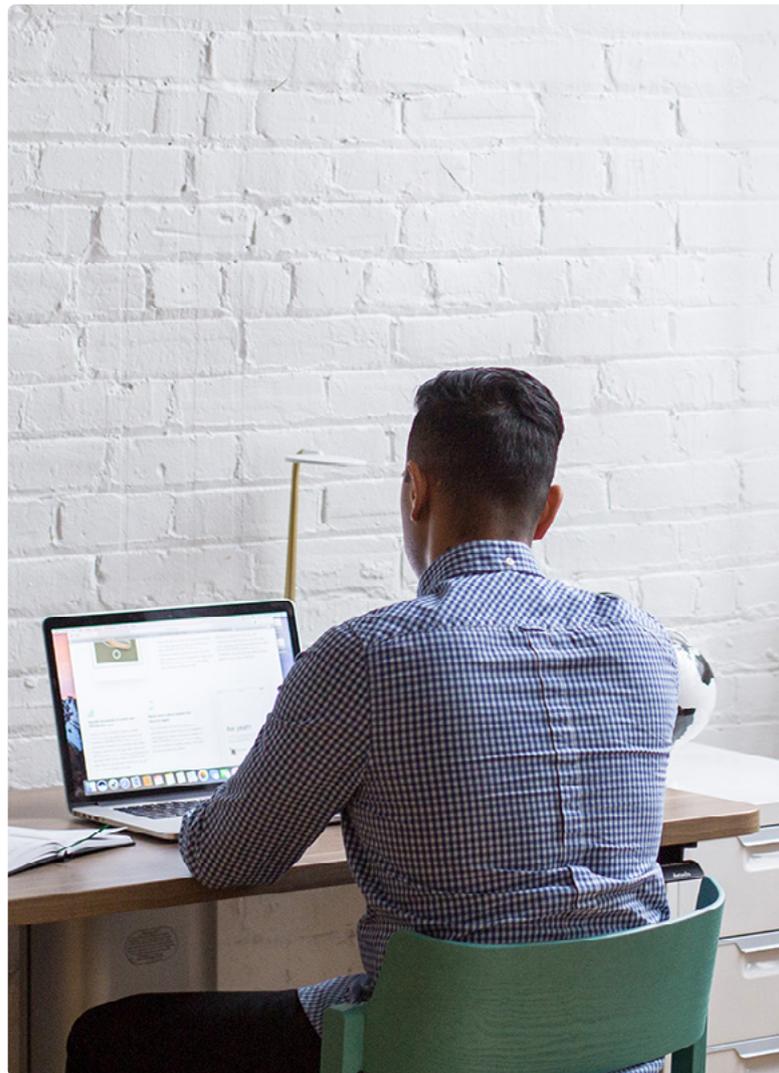
As well as additional and hefty savings in accident and incident reporting and expense claims, the college was also able to free up both employee and student time with new student risk assessment processes saving 370 hours of staff time. Processes to automate student update forms saved a notable 1,325 hours.

The college tracked the seven processes before and after they were digitized and saved two and a half personnel based on the equivalent options, demonstrating the power of digitizing processes and providing employees with the time to do the jobs they were employed to carry out.

Administrative staff at the college also found that having its processes online with FlowForma Process Automation augmented its shift to working from home due to the Covid-19 pandemic. >>

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**William McCann, IT Manager at Grant Thornton**



Mark Lay, Finance Director at Abingdon & Witney College, remarks: "Students and staff could input to vital emergency processes such as trips and visits, risk assessment and incident reporting.

"Having these types of processes available anywhere, at anytime, is absolutely crucial in an emergency," adds Lay. "We're planning on building lots of return-to-college processes on the FlowForma tool to help us as we prepare for the 'new normal' at the college."

Other concerns businesses tend to have when introducing digital processes include the complexity of setting up such processes and unleashing difficult-to-navigate dashboards on their workforces. For FlowForma's customers, however, this is not the case.

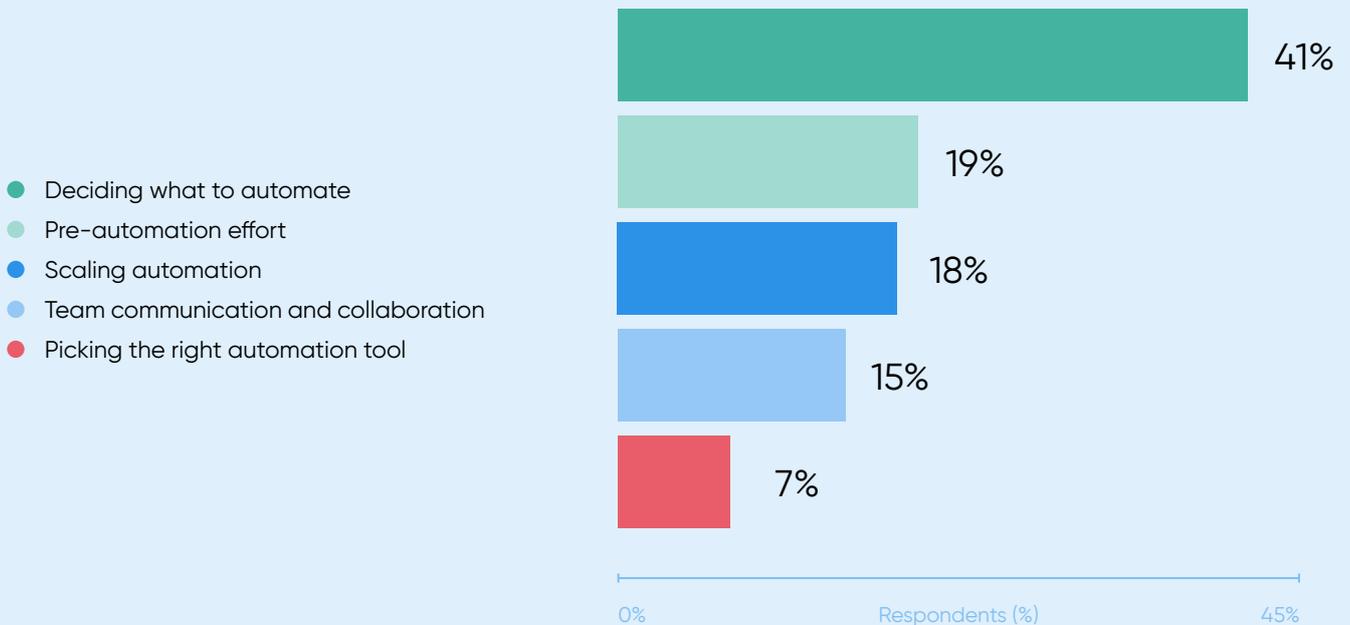
FlowForma worked with insurance brokers Aon at

its Irish offices to replace legacy processes with automated processes. The aim was to save time and money, but the initiative went much further with at least 30 processes built.

With a large workforce to attune to digitized processes – which ranged from HR onboarding and GDPR requests, to an insurance vetting system and a complaint process – the look and feel of the platform proved almost as important as the functionality. Robbie Molloy, Product Manager at Aon, attributes the success of the platform's introduction at Aon to FlowForma's Design Manager.

Molloy says: "We didn't have to go off and buy infrastructure; we could pretty much slot it into the systems we had and it gave us much greater control. SharePoint isn't at its best when trying to do workflows, so having the customization option in FlowForma Process Automation is great."

### What is the most relevant pain point in the automation journey?



SOURCE: Process Mining Live 2020 (PEX Network)

With digitized processes in place, the line of responsibility also becomes clearer to all involved within a process chain, with staff able to fully focus on roles that are no longer admin-burdened. The chain can be effectively audited with responsibilities being much clearer for all involved in the process. Another major benefit is that, as staff adapt to working remotely, the ease with which colleagues can gather in an office to discuss a solution can be replicated and staff can be trusted by their managers to deliver.

Among the other hurdles is ease of use, which FlowForma has addressed by ensuring its platform is designed for a broad range of employer skill levels. Whether working in a position that does not require extensive IT skills and capabilities or running a team of engineers, business users are empowered via FlowForma Process Automation's award-winning end user interface.

O'Connor offers the example of a construction company he worked with where the pressure was on to digitize a process quickly.

"The client thought it would take weeks to turnaround," says O'Connor. "I explained that we would have it up and running within three

days by implementing a no-code app. That's the difference between a no-code environment and a coded environment.

"Some of these processes are quite significant such as sign offs for work carried out. They had been sending emails or physically signed documents to get something approved or validated. When they digitized it, it became instantly available.

"In a no-code environment, if the customer is up to speed on how to create new processes, then they can create their own. You're not going to get that with a coded solution, because in no-code software, approved users can make a simple change."

## Visibility and no-code

As witnessed in some of the previously mentioned case studies, solutions such as FlowForma's app help businesses digitalize their processes quickly and with limited effort, ultimately leading to faster improvements throughout organizations. By transferring manual processes to digital processes through the use of no-code tools, businesses no longer have to rely on outsourcing to costly programmers or developers.



One such no-code solution using FlowForma's App which sits on Office 365 was introduced at professional services company Grant Thornton. FlowForma Process Automation was introduced to replace the company's fragmented paper trails with an automated digital 'flow'. Grant Thornton's job appraisals paper trail was replaced by a single digital journey that encompassed trainees, managers and administrators.

The solution implemented at Grant Thornton meant staff had no need to code, as the simplified workflow brought three tools into one – the relevant forms, the workflow process and document generation. FlowForma's O'Connor says that the simplicity of having a system in place that gives all relevant parts of the process visibility, enabling everyone involved in a process to know exactly what they are required to do.

"You don't have to trawl through your inbox to find your to-do list," he says. "If you're late or delayed on a task, it will remind you – it's like everyone having their own PA who taps them on the shoulder reminding them not to forget to do a task."

Another major benefit is the scale of visibility available to employees, no matter whether they

are on the same office floor or in another state or country. Once a company has digitized, employees will be able to view all tasks and processes at the same time, which will prove hugely important during the current period of global economic uncertainty.

With its budget tight and essential services to deliver, one company that wanted to improve its processes and ensure work was passing through the organization effectively was Tui Ora, a New Zealand community-based health and social services provider which uses Microsoft Office 365. Tui Ora wanted to improve its referral process with an 'out-of-the box' SharePoint workflow, but its complex system was proving expensive to maintain.

"It took a lot of bespoke coding and wasn't sustainable. We had to contract a developer every time we made changes," says Tui Ora Business Systems Analyst Steve Perry.

Aware that it was in need of a new solution, Tui Ora soon deployed FlowForma's no-code application, which rapidly brought 11 processes online. The end result was employees who had greater visibility of where processes lay within the business, easier reporting lines and improved overall efficiencies.



# Championing empowerment

By building platforms that support self-service processes and that are easy to set up, digital process automation software suppliers such as FlowForma are providing businesses with simple solutions to complex problems at testing times. The self-service element of solutions like FlowForma Process Automation is supporting employers to empower their remote staff with powerful tools via simple interfaces.

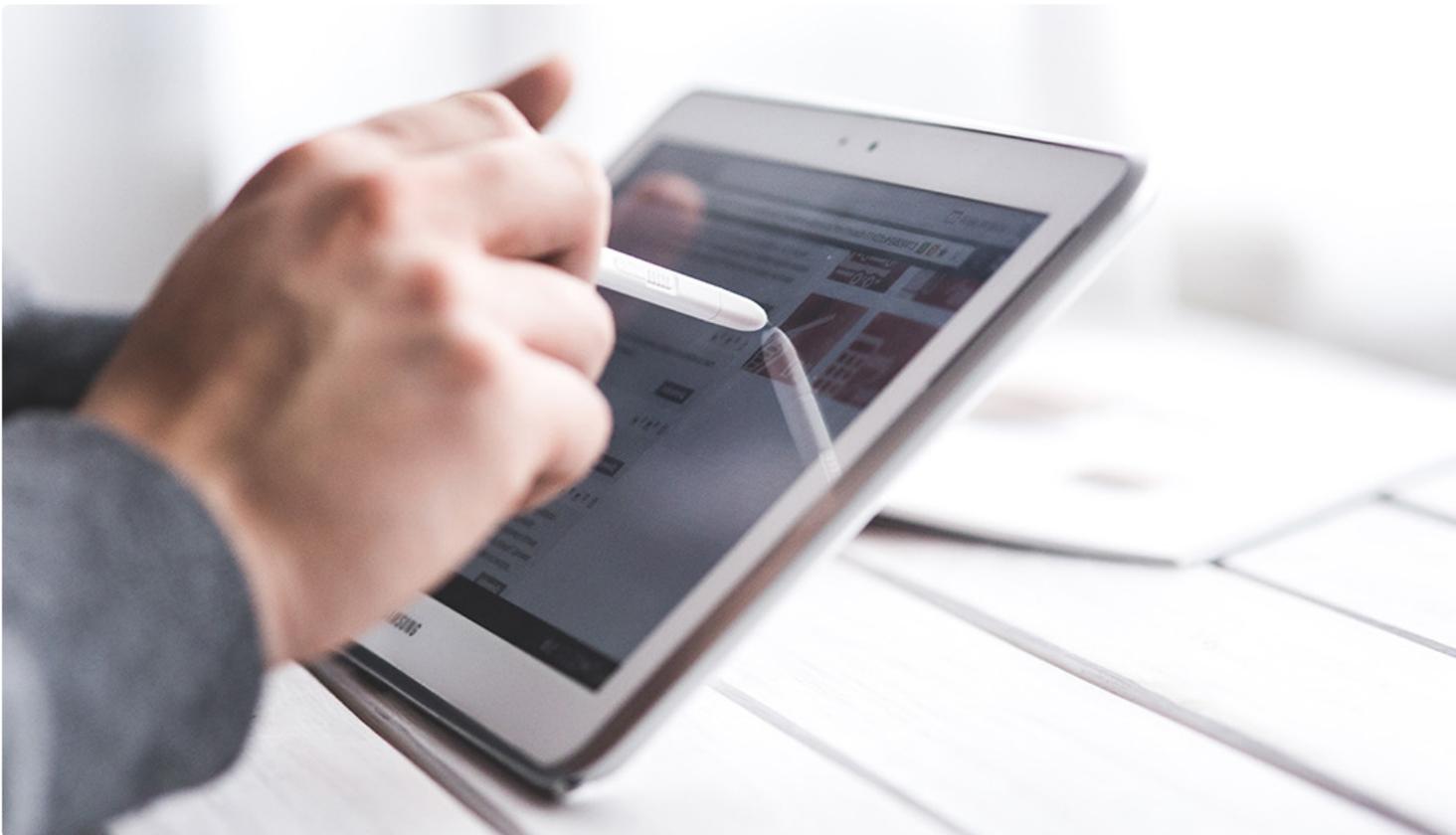
FlowForma's O'Connor believes that the biggest hurdle facing any company looking to embrace digital solutions is taking that first step. One solution to help a company get over that perilous line is for it to have a technology champion.

"You need a champion," O'Connor asserts. "You need somebody who's going to say "we need this, it's unequivocal". That will help get everyone over the line, because they will trust somebody in charge of the change.

"By digitizing, the data you get will always be better, have more integrity and will improve reporting," O'Connor adds. "But you have to make a change as an organization and the only way to do that is to prove the point."

Both cost and adoption are among the fears companies have of digitizing their processes, but it is key to keep early process automation simple by targeting more obvious changes such as onboarding. The next processes to be digitally transformed will, in comparison, become easier to implement.

An example of this springs from the £1.5bn (\$1.8bn) A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Improvement Scheme in the east of England. The first process took three months to get up and running in its digitized form. Within 15 months, 76 processes had been updated.



James Morgan, IT Manager on the A14 development, says: "The adoption of IT is quite poor in construction. We still rely on a lot of paper-based processes, people meeting face-to-face and sharing documents to get things done."

The collective impact of FlowForma Process Automation saved the scheme days in time and cut down paperwork through the automation of processes such as attaining permissions to dig, site visits requests, material requisitions, and joiners' and leavers' documentation.

"You can complete processes much quicker and with mobile access you're enabling people in the field to work on forms from anywhere – you're not waiting for someone to get back to their desks," Morgan adds.



Microsoft Teams has more than **75 million daily active users** worldwide



### Using Teams



According to Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella, Microsoft Teams has more than 75 million daily active users, having added 31 million in just over a month since the coronavirus pandemic forced many more businesses to operate remotely in March 2020. Teams has enabled businesses and their partners to continue collaboration, with FlowForma's App for Microsoft Teams empowering users to instantly access processes awaiting their input and collaborate on documents.

O'Connor says that many more companies who have never used FlowForma's product are now actively looking into it, with many concerned that they are currently unable to communicate digitally in a remote environment.

"Those that did embrace the idea of digitizing their processes did so, not because they were

aligned internally, but because they were in an innovation headspace," comments O'Connor. "Even if they weren't aware, they were already set up on Microsoft Teams and were set up for mobile or remote working."

And one final benefit of FlowForma Process Automation is that external collaborators are also able to access and use the system in a safe and secure environment.

"One of the core selling points of these processes is their ability to include third parties and external contributors," notes O'Connor. "This means that you're not restricted to who you deal with; there are lots of companies who want to enable their suppliers, contractors and customers to input to their business processes. FlowForma makes it easy."

Companies and organizations have been shocked by the speed at which coronavirus has transformed their business landscapes. Change is no longer about keeping pace but staying afloat, while social distancing rules force many workers to remain at home and collaborate remotely. Digital transformation is, therefore, no longer something that can be ignored or delayed. The rapid time-to-value seen in the organizations that have embraced digitization, such as those mentioned in this report, show that that deploying digital processes is not only affordable, but can generate huge savings in terms of time and cost.

“Our clients have a real competitive advantage over their peers who haven’t digitized, because if your processes were on paper, they will have all been broken now that the vast majority of staff are working from home,” says O’Connor.

Process automation removes many of the blind processes businesses have traditionally adhered to. By digitizing processes companies can now achieve process transparency, efficiency, accountability and time savings.

As FlowForma CEO Olivia Bushe says, even in the event that little changes in the post-Covid-19 world and we experience huge growth as we come out of lockdown, “my hunch is that it will be a small blip at the start of huge change”.

The way we work may never be the same again.



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- [Click here to read key use cases for \*\*FlowForma Engage\*\*.](#)
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