

RESPONSE DOCUMENT
BY
GLOBAL TECHNOLOGY & BUSINESS SERVICES INDUSTRY ON
DRIVING BUSINESS CONTINUITY AMIDST COVID 19 AND VALUE CREATION IN
THE NEW NORMAL

The COVID-19 pandemic is the defining global health crisis of our times and the greatest humanitarian challenge the world has faced since World War II. It has entailed business disruptions and affected millions globally. It is becoming increasingly clear that our era will witness a dramatic restructuring of traditional economic and business order as we seek the “next normal.” Needless to say, technology will play a key enabling role in evolving us to this new normal.

The global technology and business services industry has demonstrated remarkable agility, commitment and resilience in responding to the crisis; ensuring business continuity for global clients and prioritizing safety of its employees. Global Technology & Business Services Council (**GT&BSC**), an alliance of 12 international associations representing tech industries across **Bulgaria, Egypt, Germany, India, LatAm, Malaysia, Poland, Russia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, United Kingdom, United States and Ukraine**, directly representing the interests of more than 10,000 organizations, have come together to highlight the importance and the innovative quotient of this industry; the overwhelming feedback it has received from clients across the world; the critical support it provides to various sectors including the governments, banks and healthcare; the absolutely critical role of highly skilled tech workers and the “essential services” they provide. More importantly, why it is critical to preserve the global, interconnected and collaborative nature of this industry.

EMPLOYEE SAFETY AND BUSINESS CONTINUITY; twin drivers for the industry during the pandemic

Functionally, the global technology and business services industry is a data driven knowledge industry; a mix of large MNCs, indigenous tech companies, SMEs and Start-ups cutting across traditional IT services, BPMs (Business process management), CX services, Engineering and R&D services, Global Capability centres, software product companies and tech start-ups including those working in deep tech area leveraging technologies like AI, IOT, AR/VR etc. The 12 regions represented by the alliance are estimated to be home to over **750,000** technology & business services companies.

The broad spectrum tech industry in totality has demonstrated high levels of commitment in ensuring safety for its employees and business continuity for clients, both domestic and international. Respectively across the globe, the industry has been working on enabling work from home (WFH) since lockdowns have been announced in various countries, shifting tech assets and configuring networks to make this possible. Broadly the industry has ensured stable technical connections between teams, customers, IT support, audio and video meeting platforms, safe server connections, invoking cyber-security measures and providing hardware devices to employees at home.

Customer service delivery, particularly of critical or essential services, has used this tech backbone and the IT capabilities and solutions to keep society connected, to provide social services, to enable governments across the world to respond to COVID-19, and to meet customer service requirements even in lockdown.

Overall the global industry has managed to shift to WFH in a very short period of time for the majority of its workforce. For instance Serbia reported 60% shift to WFH, Croatia 69%, North Macedonia 80%, Bulgaria close to 90% and Egypt about 85% in the first two weeks of

lockdown. In Poland close to 90% workforce shifted to WFH within the first week, a spectacular 58% of companies continue to make progress on their growth strategies and recruitments plans in the Czech Republic reach as high as 97%. About 87% of the industry in Sri Lanka had minimum impact, and majority of employees were able to WFH. Whereas, Indian IT industry shifted almost 90-95% of its 4.36 million technology workforce to WFH, a remarkable achievement making it one of the largest WFH scale projects in the world. Enabling WFH with least disruption meant the industry had to create a dashboard for real-time and integrated visibility into IT operations, customer health, employee productivity, resource allocation, services, support, delivery status and most importantly keeping clients updated regularly.

In the Southeast European countries WFH has influenced productivity positively, with 81 % of companies finding productivity to be even higher than during BAU (business as usual). In Malaysia over 70% of employers are of the opinion that employees are more efficient and productive while working from home rather than in the office. Aviva witnessed a 15% increase in productivity of essential services (5% of all services) when India entered lockdown. Anecdotal feedback from operators and clients in South Africa has been encouraging with most stating that WFH productivity levels remained at least the same as on-premises and in some cases were even better. To reiterate the trend, is Amazon's recent announcement for South Africa to employ 3,000 tech workers from home for supporting clients in US & UK.

Kate Lister, President of Global Workplace Analytics estimates that "25-30% of the workforce will be working-from-home multiple days a week by the end of 2021. WFH will save U.S. employers over \$30 Billion a day in what would have otherwise been lost productivity during office closures due to COVID-19".

TCS has announced that by 2025, only 25% of its workforce will work out of TCS facilities at any time.

Peter Burnett, Director of Operational Finance, Surrey and Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust, said: *"Thank you for your outstanding efforts during this challenging COVID-19 period. I can only imagine how difficult it has been to keep services fully functioning when faced with the staffing issues you have been faced with. Throughout this period your F&A services have always been there. Like a constant electricity supply, one push of the switch and the lights always come on."*

A mid-sized Indian IT company serving one of the largest Finnish players in metal, mining and chemicals shared a quote from its client which says *"I have been impressed by the level of ease we have moved to this new normal way of working. Instead of seeing any negative impact we can actually see an improvement in our 30-day customer satisfaction rating. It cannot get much higher now being 4.9/5 and we are more than pleased with this result. Good satisfaction rating equals happy internal users!"*

HIGH SKILLED TECH WORKERS AND THE ESSENTIAL SERVICES THEY PROVIDE; helping the world innovate and keeping the lights on

Tech workers support key IT infrastructure, manage data and global processes for some of the most critical sectors of economies worldwide - including healthcare, government, banking, ecommerce, supply chains & logistics, telecom, and the internet, among others. There are plenty of examples across the globe on how the industry has developed apps and dash boards to enable Governments to strengthen their fights against the pandemic. App like ViruSafe (Bulgaria), MySejahtera (Malaysia), Aarogya Setu (India), "StopKorona!" (North Macedonia), Andrija (Croatia), #Drive-thru C-19 testing (Egypt) have proven to be of high digital assistance to Governments, frontline health workers and healthcare systems. A number of technology innovations such as printing 3D protective masks, dashboards to enhance the efficiency of screening processes; track and tracing; generating heat maps on the number of reported cases, hospitalization, and deaths have helped the Governments across the world take quicker and more informed decisions.

Every nation needs access to technology workers who are keeping critical infrastructure operating, ensuring that hospitals and first responders have the IT systems they need, building and maintaining the systems to help children learn remotely, helping industries like banks/ insurance to remain open and playing key roles in efforts to develop treatments and a cure for the disease. Realising the importance of the technology industry, many Governments across the world quickly classified tech services as "**Essential services**" to enable the industry to work amidst unusual circumstances for example letting a select percentage of the workforce come to office premises during the lockdown for managing processes that could not be attended to from home, boosting bandwidth, enabling VPNs and other protocols to ensure a seamless shift to work from home. Correspondingly the industry has been deeply conscious of the risk of on-premise work and continues to take every possible precaution from recommissioning facilities, more rigorous cleaning routines, to implementing social distancing best practices and maintaining readiness to evacuate, the industry is committed to making workspaces safe for its employees.

A key challenge of the COVID-19 induced lockdowns is school and university closures. UNESCO estimates that 1.37 billion children risk having their education interrupted. Amidst the COVID-19 crisis, industry is engaging with the youth to understand their fears, concerns and requirements, and is making various course materials available online for free to ensure continued learning, deploying the best of their technology innovations to support schools, students, families, and communities across the world. The industry has also come forward in multiple ways to provide immediate relief via distribution of relief material, donation to national relief funds, donations of spare servers, providing global educational resources for teachers, students and parents for free, acquiring personal protective equipment (**PPE**) and medical equipment for medical staff, donating office equipment and examples of industry helping industry and converting office facilities into hospitals have also come forward.

Today there is enough data and C- level surveys to say that the pandemic will accelerate the pace of digital transformation and adoption of emerging technologies like Cloud, AI, AR/VR, Cyber security, Business automation, Virtualization etc will witness a sharp rise. Companies have already started up-skilling, re-skilling and investing in building the capabilities for the future to ride the new wave of disruption.

THE TRULY CONNECTED AND COLLABORATIVE NATURE OF THE INDUSTRY; a must to preserve for the global good and societal evolution

The global technology and business services industry delivers strategic value through a global eco-system comprising of more than 10 million highly skilled and talented workers around the world, operating flexibly, transparently, collaboratively and utilizing best practices to deliver thought leadership, technology-led transformation and continuous business improvements. The industry is recognized as a significant positive contributor to the national and global economy including employment, particularly for youth. For instance, the UK has more than 2.1 million workforce in the sector, whereas Malaysia's Global Business Services sector consists of 80% foreign MNCs.

In Singapore, where open government data has enabled detailed mapping of the outbreak, robots are delivering meals and medication to patients. In China, robots are disinfecting hospitals, drones are delivering medical supplies and AI is being used to sort scans to spot the infection. In South Korea, authorities are tracking potential carriers using cell phone and satellite technology. Each of these examples have dedicated teams of technology professionals working from across the world in the background – coding, developing solutions, building the customer interface and ensuring their scalability.

It is this Council's firm belief that technology, collaboration and access to a global talent pool will be key to driving business and Governments out of the inevitable downturn. Sharing best practices, thought leadership and collaborating on new operating models on a global stage will accelerate the speed and the depth of the recovery around the world. At the same time the search for high-skilled talent as digital and automation opportunities explode will be even more critical and challenging for countries. The on-going development of a global talent pool to fill the needs of companies facing a new normal will be a critical strategy for stability and even growth over the next several years. Ours is a truly global industry; one that can add tremendous value to the world economy by retaining its very nature.

Just as the crisis has been global, recovery efforts must be as well. Companies that are reporting early signs of recovery in most cases have a strong strategic sourcing function that transcends the business, finance, IT, operations and procurement, driving real transformation and value through partnering. Strategic partnerships formed out of highly blended ecosystems demonstrated the ability to be agile, lean, adaptable and embrace teamwork across buyers and providers. We saw trust increase between providers and buyers, creating a more agile, value-rich and cost-effective way of working for businesses the length and breadth of the globe. We will continue to see a new version of sourcing, which is not of the 'your mess for less', characteristic but transparent, value output-based services highly enabled by automation and cloud, which will not only minimise the risks and exposure to such unprecedented disruption as caused by COVID-19 but also significantly boost process efficiency, support innovation and overall business performance.