



SAP Concur 

## How automation will drive the human-centric workplace

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The new workplace model is characterised by hybrid work and the anytime, anywhere workforce. When organisations had to quickly move workers from offices to home to contain the pandemic that changed the world in 2020, they gained new insights into the human aspect of work and how this can be applied to optimise efficiencies.

Over the next decade, uncertainty will be a continuing theme of doing business, so executives need to adapt to an ever-changing economic landscape while managing employee expectations. Those who take a more holistic and lateral approach to doing business in the new world of work are likely to achieve greater success with improving business agility, retaining top talent, effectively managing spend, and identifying new opportunities for innovation and capital investment. However, achieving this relies on a deeper understanding of challenges and opportunities that will emerge across the Australian and New Zealand markets over coming months.

## Emerging challenges for enterprises

There are three key challenges that enterprises face in the new normal. These are: economic challenges; legislative change; and sustainability requirements.

Economic challenges are emerging as the global economy continues to stagnate due to the lingering effects of the pandemic.

A recent survey conducted by SAP Concur and The Economist Group found that 93 per cent of global executives agreed that maintaining organisational agility was the only way to navigate the current economic uncertainty. From the survey, executives were focused on containing cost and managing spend, with 95 per cent using real-time data analytics to help their organisation ensure that spend and operations aligned with company goals. Ninety-one per cent of executives said technology-driven expense management systems were key to the consistent application of policies and protocols across the business.<sup>1</sup>

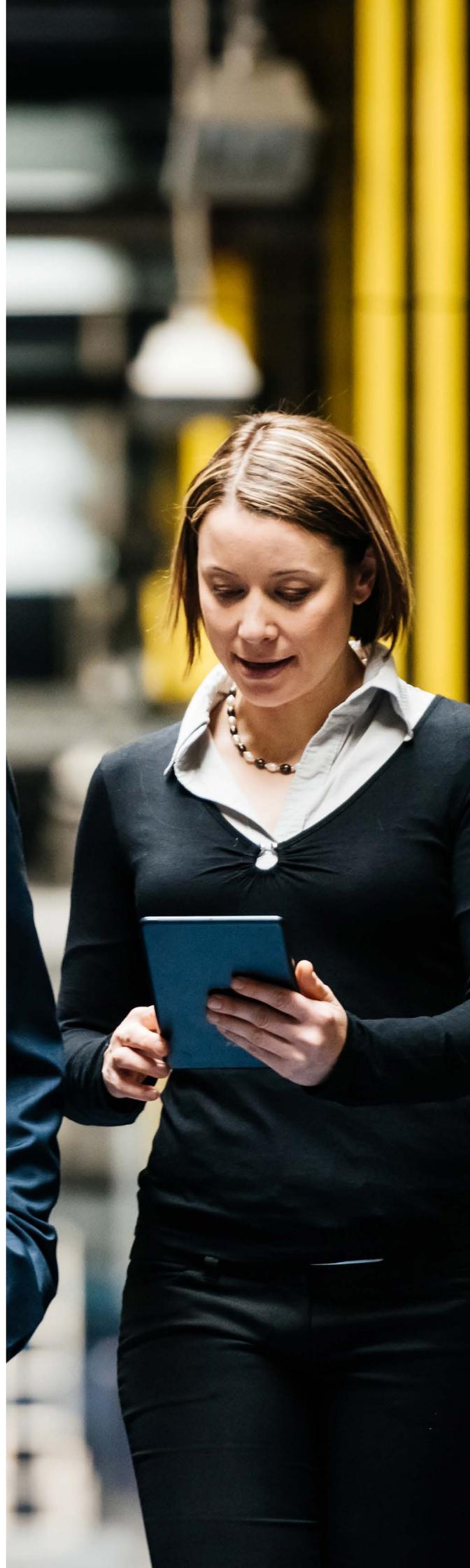
However, another SAP Concur survey found that only one in 10 organisations used fully digital and intelligent processes to submit business expenses, with 32 per cent in Australia and 47 per cent in New Zealand still completely relying on manual processes.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, SAP Concur found that, since the broadscale move to remote work, organisational visibility into employee spend had declined. This places a high risk on many Australian and New Zealand companies when it comes to cyberthreat and fraud, since malicious external factors and unscrupulous employees can operate in the shadows to steal money, engage in unauthorised spending, or simply make expensive mistakes that get overlooked.

The call for smarter spend management is only growing stronger. This highlights a need for tools such as sophisticated expense management software that can strengthen a company's ability to better manage spending. Expense management software does this by delivering business outcomes in three areas: increased efficiency and productivity; greater visibility into spending; and hardwiring of processes that ensure adherence to spending policies.

Legislative change is also a key area to watch. For example, the Australian government will mandate that all public-sector agencies use e-invoicing from July 2022 as part of its overall digital transformation strategy.<sup>3</sup> This demonstrates that spend management has become a key priority for governments in Australia and New Zealand as a result of the economic fallout of the pandemic. This has raised the bar for both government agencies and private-sector organisations to not just track spending, but to ensure that tracking is delivering true visibility into spend. Visibility leads to data-driven decision-making that increases productivity, efficiency and accountability. This is especially true when visibility is accompanied by effective processes that align spending with organisational policies and strategic priorities.

The third key challenge for organisations is the greater focus on sustainability, with organisations under more pressure to demonstrate environmentally friendly practices. This means organisations must address the significant environmental impact of paper-based, manual processes. Digital and automated processes effectively remove the need for paper-based invoices, receipts, expense claims, and more.

Many organisations are locked into a cultural mindset that believes things will one day return to normal. Yet, the fact is that organisations now face a new reality and will continue to face new realities with every emerging market challenge into the future. Nothing will snap back to the way it was before. Organisations that maintain a traditional workplace mindset, and don't focus on building autonomous and self-learning business processes that support flexibility and help unlock data through automation, will only continue to fall behind.



## Opportunities that will drive growth and innovation

A key opportunity for organisations in the new world of work is to become human centric. The ability to be agile, adaptable, flexible, sustainable and innovative are distinctly human traits. This means that, for organisations moving from survival to growth mode, success is no longer about predictable algorithms and equations. The new world is, and will remain, unpredictable. Organisations that aim to thrive need to approach business from a human angle, using secure, accessible tools such as real-time data analytics that will empower employees to develop and implement innovative solutions for the future.

Considering that working remotely is likely to remain a part of life for the long term, and the adoption of more human-centric workplace models is needed to attract and retain the best talent, organisations must provide the proper support for people at work outside of the office.

Artificial intelligence (AI) and automation will be the leading enablers for the new organisation, which includes supporting diverse employment models and empowering employees no matter where and when they work. These tools will increasingly allow executives to move away from a narrow focus on cost and efficiency, and instead provide greater value by focusing more on employee satisfaction, innovation and growth.

Automation, in particular, will allow organisations to unlock real-time data, such as expenditure, and use it as an asset to drive strategy. Organisations that leverage automation and

use their data as an asset have a greater ability to securely share data with teams across the business to improve decision-making, which ultimately helps these organisations outperform businesses that rely on siloed, manual processes.

Companies such as Cisco Systems are already reaping the benefits of using automated solutions to capitalise on data insights and improve employee satisfaction. Prior to automating travel and expense management, this leading IT company suffered from poor user satisfaction and data quality, and it left a large carbon footprint due to paper receipts. By implementing an automated, cloud-based solution, Cisco Systems has gained greater visibility into spend management, unlocked new data insights, and significantly increased employee satisfaction from 48 per cent to 77 per cent. It has also eliminated the need for paper-based processes.<sup>4</sup>

Honda New Zealand is also achieving success through automation in the form of cost savings on mail service and invoice storage, improved compliance and governance, increased accessibility to and visibility over spend data, and a better ability to support its newly remote workforce in the wake of COVID-19.<sup>5</sup>

Southern Cross University is using real-time data insights provided by automation to align expense management more closely with business objectives rather than budget management. Automation has allowed the university to increase capacity and efficiency, freeing up employees to focus more on strategic, value-adding activities.<sup>6</sup>

The common thread in successful organisations such as these is that automated spend management tools have given them the flexibility, agility and cyber-security they need to safely and reliably operate with geographically dispersed work teams. It also provides real-time data insights that are invaluable in driving business direction. Data is the new currency, and automated expense management tools provide the capability for organisations to capitalise on it.

To thrive in the new normal, organisations cannot afford to be complacent and stay idle with systems and processes. Now is the time to invest in automation that will drive innovation and support new human-centric working models into the future. Organisations must either disrupt current organisational and workplace models now, or face disruption within five to 10 years due to ongoing market and economic changes.

## Three key things an automated solution must deliver

To build an effective human-centric workplace, save costs, improve business agility, and support sustainable business practices, there are three key things that organisations should consider when implementing automated tools and processes.

### 1. A highly accessible, user friendly interface.

If a process or workplace tool is not accessible and easy to use, employees simply won't use it, which negates the investment in the technology. Automated tools must have a user-friendly interface that helps guide new users through the system. It must also be accessible through

mobile and internet-connected devices so that employees can submit data and update actions from any location, and at any time of the day that suits them.

### 2. Security is paramount

Australian and New Zealand public and private sector organisations must be more vigilant than ever about targeted cyberattacks. Hybrid workplace models mean that employees need to access workplace systems and tools from geographically dispersed locations. It's imperative that automated solutions are accessible to employees while maintaining high levels of cybersecurity that keep pace with emerging security threats. Working with a technology partner that focuses on organisational security mitigates security risks.

### 3. Support from a trusted and experienced IT partner

Automation is designed to free up employees and IT teams from manual tasks so they can focus on strategic business objectives. Therefore, the solution itself needs to be highly available, reliable and backed by 24 x 7 support from an experienced IT partner. Avoid choosing an automated solution based on price and features alone, as this could end up costing the organisation in time, money and security breaches if it is not provided by a trusted IT partner that offers ongoing customer service.

To learn more about how to drive efficiencies, save costs and improve the employee experience for your organisation in the new normal, contact the SAP Concur team today.

## About SAP Concur

SAP® Concur® is the world's leading brand for integrated travel, expense, and invoice management solutions, driven by a relentless pursuit to simplify and automate these everyday processes. The highly-rated SAP Concur mobile app guides employees through business trips, charges are directly populated into expense reports, and invoice approvals are automated. By integrating near real-time data and using AI to analyse transactions, businesses can see what they're spending and avoid possible blind spots in the budget. SAP Concur solutions help eliminate yesterday's tedious tasks, make today's work easier, and support businesses to run at their best. Learn more at [concur.com.au](https://concur.com.au) or the SAP Concur blog. The Bureau is now looking forward to increasing its analysis of the data and reporting captured through the Concur system. This will help to provide greater financial insight for the organisation, to assist in strategic planning and long-term management of the Bureau, and be integral to the development of further digital capabilities as the organisation continues to execute on its business transformation program.

Learn more at [concur.com.au](https://concur.com.au)  
or call us on (02) 9935 4500

### Notes

- 1 <https://www.concur.com/en-us/resource-center/reports/in-tech-led-pursuit-of-sound-financial-footing>
- 2 <https://www.concur.com.au/resource-centre/whitepapers/finance-in-the-new-world-of-work-in-australia>
- 3 <https://www.dta.gov.au/digital-transformation-strategy>
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