



Resilient Leadership: Perspectives from Boyden's Technology Practice Experts

As the grip of COVID-19 continues to impact us globally, Boyden is tapping into the deep knowledge base of our collective partners to bring industry insights and prescriptive learnings to the forefront.

In this issue of *Resilient Leadership*, Boyden shares the expert opinion of Lindsay Landsberg, Global Leader, Consumer Digital and Sébastien Zuchowski, Global Leader, Software & Applications.

In conversation with Boyden's Technology Practice Global Leader, Pierre Fouques Duparc, Lindsay and Sébastien explore the demanding reliance on digital in business and at home, and what transformations will have lasting effect across industries and leadership teams.

Duparc: Reliance on digital platforms (e-commerce, entertainment, communication) has seen a tremendous surge. Were tech organizations prepared to handle this rapid growth? Where might they have experienced gaps?

Landsberg: Organizations offering these solutions were not well prepared to handle growth at this extreme level. For example, Zoom, a sudden video conferencing darling, had significant security issues that they had to scramble to address. Facebook Live could not handle the volume of churches attempting to "broadcast" on Sundays at 10 am and churches had to adjust their schedules. Websites set up to handle unemployment claims and SBA loan applications all crashed within minutes of launch.



From the user/consumer perspective, organizations are way behind in their usage and deployment of digital platforms. If you compare the way we as consumers use technology to search, compare, shop, purchase, connect, consume content to the way in which we work, there is a world of difference. Most companies were not well prepared for their entire workforce to work offsite and had to scramble to provide secure access to systems and databases, and video conferencing. More than that, workers were not well trained in how to use these technologies.

Zuchowski: Yes, I fully agree that companies were not prepared for full dependency reliance on their digital platforms. Even those who owned digital tools or platforms, often they too were not deployed and/or used technology to the full potential. E-commerce and Video conferencing solutions as an example, were used as back up or occasionally for many organizations. Many didn't establish a "disaster plan" where people can't work from their office. Another basic example would be using the desk telephone. Again, many organizations are not using VOIP, which could give them the ability to work from anywhere and conduct/receive calls. Companies are still using the traditional landline which causes obvious challenges when you cannot access your office.

Find more on the topic: 

Duparc: E-commerce and logistics platforms have been put to the test. What changes can we anticipate in this particular segment in order to effectively deliver going forward?

Zuchowski: That was especially the case for companies selling physical products or solutions who require a third party for installation. The challenges in front of us in e-commerce and/or logistics platforms are two-fold. First, companies will need to refine their internal processes by assessing more business cases (i.e. how to handle spike of demand or the opposite, communication with clients, receiving, shipping) to ensure they are ready for changes and our new reality (i.e. more people and companies ordering online). Secondly, the full ecosystem of suppliers and partnerships will need to be reassessed (i.e. *can my suppliers support accurately in growth or when business decreases; do I partners who can properly deliver my "physical" products*).

Landsberg: Most e-commerce and logistics platforms were unprepared for the surge in orders the pandemic brought on. They could not work at 'surge capacity' without quickly hiring and/or radically changing how they delivered their goods (example: Amazon delivery windows or long delivery delays). Also, demand for reliable fast Wi-Fi has exploded. Expect lawmakers to open up more bandwidth and internet providers to bolster current offerings. We'll see greater momentum to roll out 5G.

Find more on the topic: 

Duparc: E-health tools are fast becoming a reliable source of connection and information. Can we anticipate further growth in this space to meet a new, permanent increase in demand?



Landsberg: Yes, absolutely. After much resistance, tele-health is here to stay. It will become a cheaper, safer way to deliver routine care. Once on the fringes, it has been proven essential during the pandemic and will continue beyond.

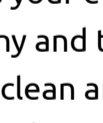
Zuchowski: As an example, in Canada, Dialogue - a leading platform offering virtual healthcare services - is growing rapidly. In order to attract talent, companies will need to provide e-health services to their employees more and more. Such a platform offers so many advantages for employees and employers. Easy to use and easy to access to healthcare professionals and will only route patients to hospitals when required. This is one example, we can expect many organizations to develop new products and solutions who could connect to your mobile devices to increase the data points for health professionals to make more accurate evaluations (i.e. various testing, leveraging wearable tracker data, etc).

Find more on the topic: 

Duparc: Some cultural COVID19 effects, especially in the virtual realm, are anticipated to remain. What does this environment mean for technology-focused functional leaders?

Landsberg: All technology-focused leaders are likely under pressure to deliver: CTO, CIO, CISO, Chief Digital Officer etc. There have been new demands placed on them by a surge in consumer demand for e-commerce delivery, food service delivery, entertainment downloading etc. Some cultural effects: now Boards or digitally-resistant leaders will have woken up to the new reality, that digital is here to stay and business disruptions (from pandemic or global warming effects) will be a constant going forward. There will be greater openness to digital transformation projects and the capital required to make them happen. The COVID-19 crisis has accelerated the need to streamline operations, enable a remote workforce and deliver flawless e-Commerce.

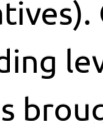
Zuchowski: Board and CEO will need to assess their leadership team and if they don't have a leader focused and accountable daily on the Digital strategy (ex: Chief Digital Officer) they will need to act. A few years ago, a Chief Digital Officer was an interesting concept, now it's becoming more serious than ever to have a digital strategy and an Executive who is responsible to deploy, improve and maintain the digital strategy. Do you really believe COVID 19 is the last virus we will face? Clearly not. Pivoting a company to digital is more than buying a few tools and having a database. All your internal business processes (ex: is your ecommerce correctly integrated with your ERP, CRM and your WMS systems?) of your company and the entire digital client journey need to be reviewed, re-assessed and improved. Do you have a clean and usable database with meaningful data? Yes, it is a lot of work, and unfortunately if you don't do it and your competitors do, it could impact your business seriously.

Find more on the topic: 

Duparc: Many leadership lessons will be learned in the post-crisis era. What do you feel will be one of those top lessons?

Zuchowski: One of the top lessons will be adapting legacy leadership to a "digital / remote" leadership. How to keep employees engaged, how to properly communicate, cadence of internal meetings to ensure alignment, etc. Leaders will need to learn from this crisis and figure out ways to fix the gaps the crisis has exposed.

Landsberg: We will all reevaluate the need to get on planes for in-person meetings, conventions, and large gatherings. We'll also reassess the need to have large offices with expensive leases. Smaller office spaces with "hot desks" and telecommuting flexibility will be the new norms. The pandemic, and the ensuing economic downturn, has caused leaders to strip out as much cost as possible (salaries, rents, new initiatives). Once leaders are burned by a crisis and learn new frugality, it takes a while for corporate spending levels to return. In addition, succession planning will become more important as the crisis has brought a sense of human vulnerability. And finally, the fragility of off-shore supply chains and too much reliance on China, for example, will lead us to bring some manufacturing back locally.

Find more on the topic: 

Technology Practice

Technology is driving evolution in the executive population. Success in the digital domain depends on hiring people with the right capabilities in a shifting commercial context.

Meet members of Boyden's Global Technology Practice:



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Learn more about Boyden's Technology Practice 