business **nbn**™

Digital resilience:
How to plan for an uncertain future

Dealing with unknown unknowns

While the past year has been challenging for many businesses, we've also seen rapid uptake of new digital innovations and the acceleration of existing trends.

Companies have needed to adapt more quickly than ever before to succeed in this constantly changing world. McKinsey estimates five years' worth of digital advancement happened in just eight weeks in 2020.[1] Many of the companies that performed best across a variety of industries, were digitally innovative and leveraged emerging technologies to their advantage.[2]

A swift transition to remote work and widespread behavioural changes saw Australia fare better than most countries. But as we emerge from lockdowns and begin to return to workplaces, businesses have a chance to reflect on the changes this past year has made to the concept of 'business as usual'.

With many factors still in flux – from supply chain insecurity to economic uncertainty – now is the time for businesses to focus on building digital agility and responsiveness to better face whatever challenges might come next.

A key element to enabling agility is robust and flexible network infrastructure solutions that allow them to respond quickly to changes in business conditions to help take advantage of opportunities and build long-term resilience.[3]

The next few years are likely to be characterised by change and uncertainty. Rather than wait and see what happens, businesses can look for opportunities to leverage the **nbn**™ network to arm themselves with the skills and tools needed to make the most of this next phase of digital acceleration for future growth.

Using digital trends to adapt to a changing world

Digital has played a crucial role in many of the major business changes of the past year.

Whether it's a change to the way we use physical spaces, changes to the way businesses connect with employees, customers and stakeholders, or changes to the infrastructure needed to sustain and grow our businesses – digital transformation has been at the centre of the solution.

Here are three of the most significant trends from the past year that are shaping the future of work:

In Australia[5]

14%
of people want to work only from home

61%
of people want a hybrid work life

25%
of people want to work only in the office

1 Decentralisation

Decentralisation was already occurring, but the pandemic accelerated both the speed at which it was happening and the speed at which we accepted it.[4] As thousands of businesses rapidly moved to all-remote workforces, they had to consider whether their infrastructure and systems were set up to meet the needs of their workforce.

Businesses that can leverage a strong network foundation such as the **nbn**™ network to enhance digital connectivity might be better equipped to meet changing expectations, manage security risks, and boost productivity through tools such as VPN, video conferencing or cloud applications.[6] This investment could see benefits like ease of attracting new talent, retaining existing talent and enabling more efficient work practices.[7]

As offices in CBDs become less attractive, a 'regional renaissance' is underway, with satellite hubs and regional areas seeing an increase in migration of almost 200% since the start of the pandemic.[8]

Infrastructure investments such as the **nbn**™ Business Fibre Initiative, which includes the creation of 240 **nbn**™ Business Fibre Zones across Australia, are simultaneously improving access to premium fibre options with business-grade features in regional areas.[9]

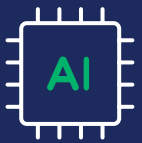**Learn how enhanced network connectivity is putting decentralisation within reach of more businesses**

Read more

During 2020:[11]

55%
of CIOs and CTOs accelerated adoption of cloud computing

51%
of CIOs and CTOs accelerated adoption of AI and machine learning

42%
of CIOs and CTOs accelerated adoption of IoT

2 Physical and digital worlds blurring

The past year saw an acceleration in the uptake of technologies like cloud computing, big data and the Internet of Things (IoT) – both in terms of business adoption and also the ease with which customers, clients and employees invited them into their daily lives.[10]

'Digital twins' – or replicas of physical things in the digital world – are a manifestation of this acceleration of IoT, data and related technologies. Digital twins can help businesses in many ways, including de-risking large-scale system changes, improved real-time tracking, enhanced customer and employee safety through remote monitoring, and manipulation of systems.[12]

3 Industry disruption and increased competition

As companies transition more of their business into the digital world, the barriers to entry for new companies are decreasing, the lines between industries are blurring and geographic locations are becoming less of a boundary.

This could result in increased competition, making it harder to spot where – and from which industry – your next competitor will emerge. However, there are steps businesses can take to help ensure they are ready to seize opportunities as they arise, including investing in flexible, scalable and resilient digital connectivity that is designed to help businesses move at the speed of change.
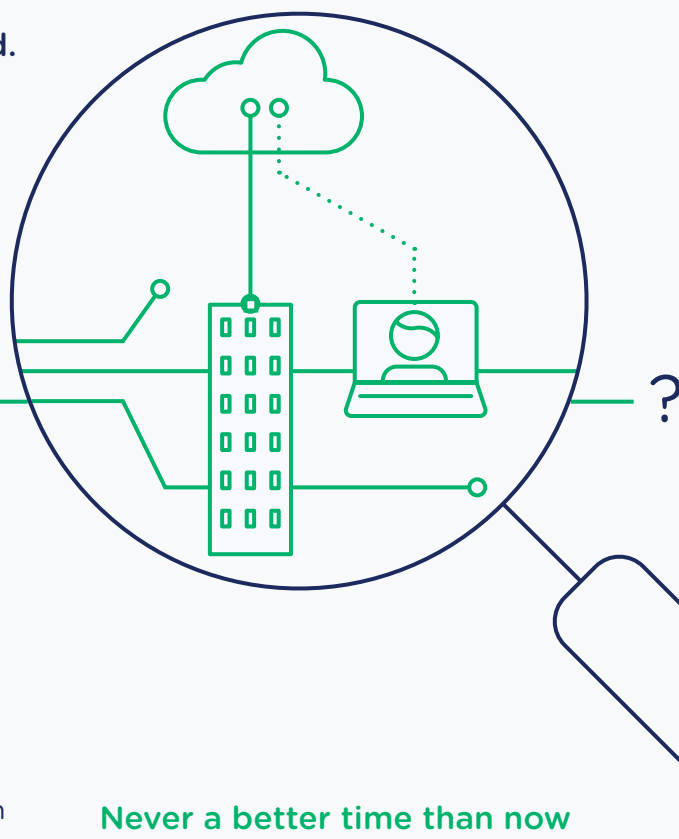
Key takeaway:

Whatever the playbook was on how to be a successful business – **it's out the window.**

What might happen next?

The pandemic has changed the business community's ideas about what it means to be prepared for change and expect the unexpected.

2020 — 2021 ... ?

The disruptions of the past year have also made it incredibly difficult to predict what the next few years will bring.

Some things, however, we can predict with greater certainty. Based on the business community's response to this past year, and the unifying traits that saw some thrive through extreme disruption, it's become clear that in the future a resilient business will be a digital business.[13]

Right now, one of the steps businesses can take to help themselves stay responsive through uncertainty is to assess their network strategy for resilience, flexibility and adaptability. This can help companies to better absorb whatever shocks might come next, pivot quickly, and find new ways to transform disruptions to their advantage.

Never a better time than now

Digital transformation has historically been slow. Many companies have embarked upon ambitious transformation projects, but found that holistic change is not only difficult to execute, but also presents challenges when it comes to stakeholder buy-in. A 2018 Capgemini study found that it took most companies (59%) longer than two years to realise the benefits of their digital transformation strategies.[14]

The world of business now moves too fast for this pace to be acceptable. However, one silver lining of the past year is that although an immense amount of change was forced upon everyone in a short space of time, it has made individuals, businesses and government more open to transformation.
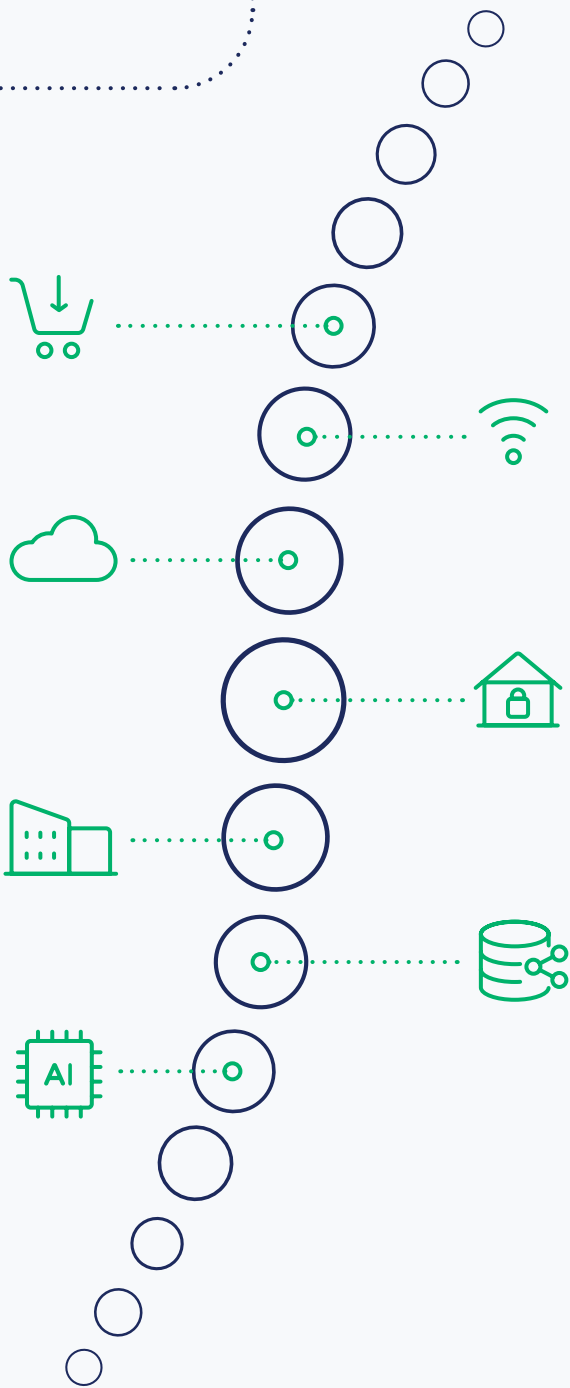
Risks remain, but Australia's business community is beginning to rebound, and companies need to have the right systems and supporting digital infrastructure in place so they can spring into action as opportunities present themselves.

With the completion of the initial volume of the **nbn**™ network rollout* and increased investment in business-grade, fibre based connectivity, **nbn** is building the digital backbone that will allow more Australian businesses to access a network connection that's designed to meet the unique needs of modern digital businesses now and into the future.[15]

Already, businesses have been using enhanced network connectivity to adjust to the changing business landscape. For example, **nbn** usage data starting in 2020 showed that businesses have enthusiastically adopted digital technologies, resulting in a 300% increase in the use of real-time communication apps and 250% increase in tunnel/remote access apps over the network.[16]

This strong digital backbone has coped well with the surge in traffic and has given Australian businesses confidence that they can make further investments in building their presence, mitigating the risk of future disruptions and readying themselves for change.

*****nbn's** initial volume build completion commitment was that all standard installation premises in Australia would be able to connect to the nbn™ access network as at 30 June 2020. This excluded premises in future new developments which would be an ongoing activity for nbn beyond 30 June 2020. It also excluded a small proportion of premises defined as 'complex connections' – which includes properties that are difficult to access, culturally significant areas and heritage sites – where connection depends on factors outside of nbn's control such as permission from traditional owners, and where network construction to allow such premises to connect would be an ongoing activity of nbn beyond 30 June 2020.

Key takeaway:

Digital transformation will become less about changing human behaviours to adapt to technology, and instead focus more on **technology being used to connect to the market and people in a more compelling way.**

Creating a fit-for-the-future network

For businesses looking to capitalise on digital acceleration, a crucial first step is selecting a scalable telecommunications access service that can grow with your business.

Your digital network is the nerve centre of your organisation, connecting everything and allowing it to function as an integrated unit. To be confident about your organisation's digital future, your underlying telecommunications infrastructure needs to be resilient, flexible, agile, scalable and adaptable.

Consider these important aspects of a future-ready network:

1 Symmetrical speeds

For many cloud-based applications like video conferencing, enterprise resource planning (ERP) software or customer relationship management (CRM) systems, upload speed can be just as important as download speed – and in some cases even more important. Without fast, symmetrical speeds these applications often run slowly and stop-start, hampering their performance and effectiveness at supporting critical business functions.
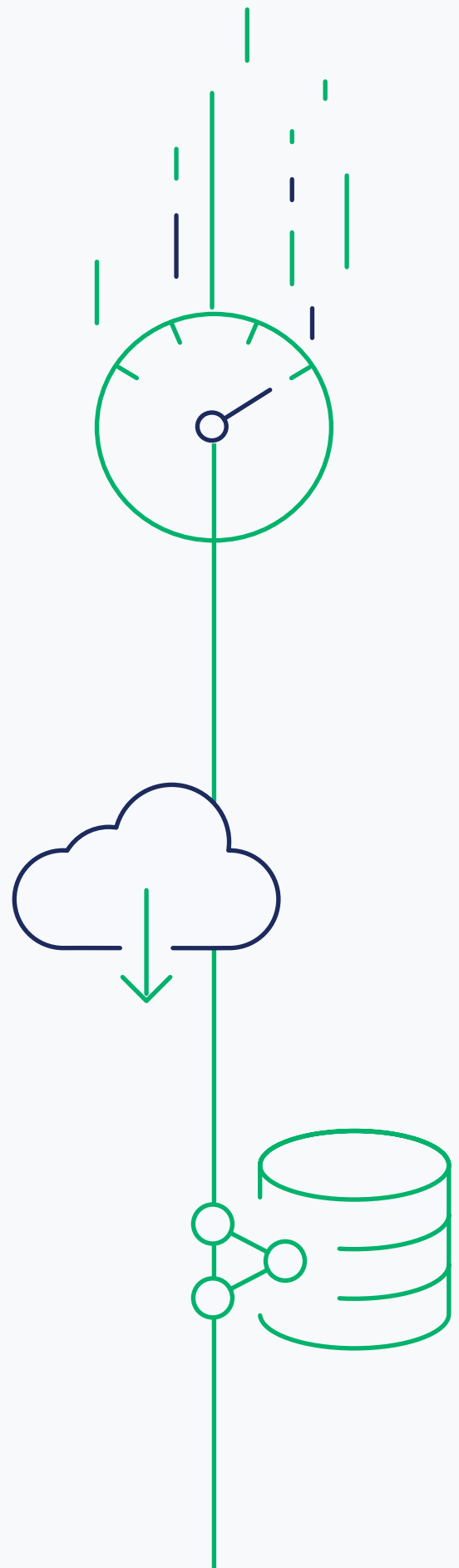
2 Prioritised data pathways

For many businesses, not all data is equal, and neither should it be given equal priority over the network. By using wholesale committed information rates, select network traffic can be prioritised over the **nbn**™ network by retail service providers (RSP) to help ensure mission-critical applications continue to operate smoothly, despite bursts in demand over the network.

3 Enhanced service level agreements (SLAs)

Although network faults can still occasionally occur, for business confidence, high-level support and fast rectification of errors is critical, as every minute that a network is down can affect profits, brand and reputation.[17] A business's bundle or package through their RSP could be based on enhanced service level agreements (eSLAs), like those held between business **nbn**™ and service providers, so they can be more confident that issues are addressed quickly.**

business **nbn™ is not available on the **nbn**™ fixed wireless network. Not all providers offer plans based on the full range of wholesale business **nbn**™ products, product features and services. Availability of wholesale business **nbn**™ products, product features and services depends on an end customer's access technology and area. Ask your preferred provider if they offer plans based on these wholesale business **nbn**™ products, product features and services in your area. An end customer's experience, including the speeds actually achieved over the **nbn**™ broadband access network, depends on the **nbn**™ access network technology and configuration over which services are delivered to their premises, whether they are using the internet during the busy period, and some factors outside of nbn's control (like their equipment quality, software, chosen broadband plan, signal reception, or how their provider designs its network). Satellite end customers may also experience latency.

Why is prioritised data useful?

Here are some examples of applications where wholesale committed information rates can bring benefits:

- Retail point-of-sale devices
- Large or time-sensitive payments
- Front-end CRM systems
- Real-time data monitoring
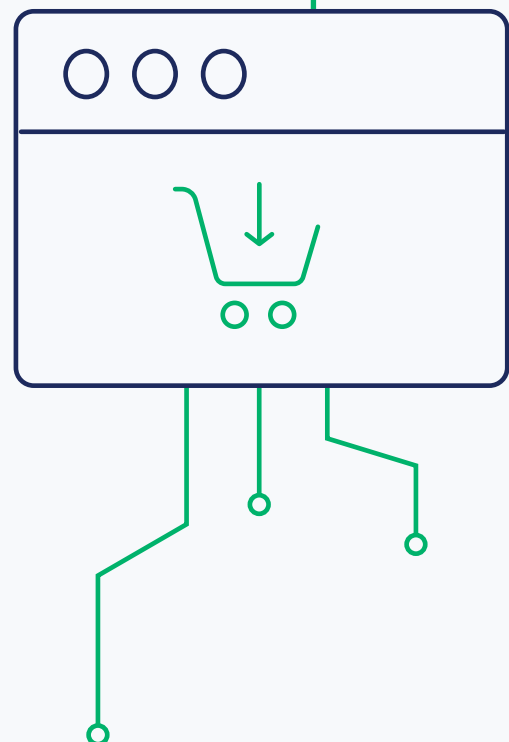
In Australia, access to this type of future-ready network is now available to a majority of businesses across major cities and regional areas with a business nbn™ Enterprise Ethernet connection, nbn's flagship business fibre product.# It's available through a growing range of retail service providers, allowing businesses to access customised solutions that suit their particular needs through their service provider. Crucially, business nbn™ Enterprise Ethernet is designed with flexibility in mind to help enable businesses to increase speeds or implement additional business-grade network features to help meet new demands as they arise.

Crises are times of great change – no business will emerge from this pandemic the same as it was before. They are also times of great opportunity. Forward-thinking businesses are using this pandemic to make strategic changes to their ways of working that might otherwise have been more difficult to implement under normal circumstances.

Given the momentum that's behind digital acceleration efforts, it's clear that digital connectivity is a critical factor for future success. Businesses of all sizes should be assessing their digital and network capabilities now to see how business-grade, fibre-based speeds can help make them more resilient, more flexible and more ready to capitalise on whatever the future brings.#

business nbn™ Enterprise Ethernet is only available in the nbn™ Fixed Line network footprint and at limited premises served by the nbn™ Fixed Wireless and Satellite networks.
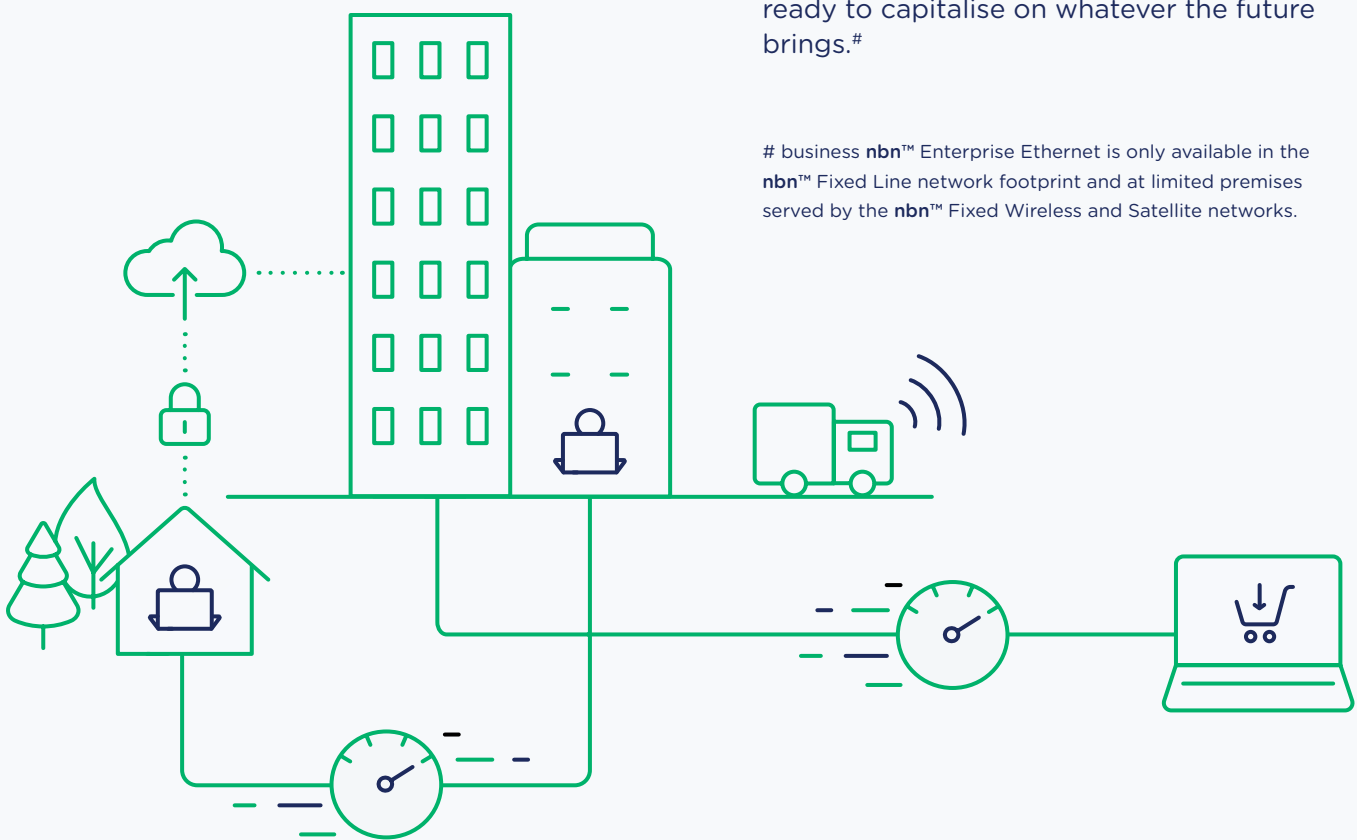
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Find out more about business nbn™ fibre

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