

Technology—

The New Normal Post-Covid-19



►►► By Elaine Gower

COVID-19—Long before schools were closed, employees ordered to work from home and the internet strained under the weight of Netflix binge-watching, connected technology was changing the modern world.

How fast those changes came depended on which part of our society was being disrupted. For those who worked in now-decimated shopping malls, it came all too quickly. But those hoping that all the resources of prestigious universities would be available with the click of a mouse were disappointed.

Now, by avoiding a virus for which humanity has no natural immunity, these changes are accelerating. The internet has become a critical factor in coping with the coronavirus pandemic. And when this is over, whenever that might be, we will come out of this changed—more reliant than ever on being connected.

Just over a century ago, a much less-connected world underwent a similar pandemic and also emerged from it changed. The Spanish flu of 1918 infected 500 million people, killed an estimated 50 million and confined people to their homes.

The coronavirus pandemic is already considered the story of this generation, and it will have lasting impact. Many of those changes involve connected technology.

Working

Walk into any office building, and chances are its floors are not the busy, bustling workplaces they were before mid-March, when businesses got serious about COVID-19 and sent employees to work at home. Stay-at-home orders were put into place. The offices are now in apartments, townhouses, high-

rises and homes. We have been forced into making adjustments and learning new tools and new ways of getting our jobs done. Dining tables are being retrofitted as workspaces, stacks of boxes and books take the place of standing desks. Control-freak managers and tradition-bound executives are learning it's not the productivity apocalypse they feared.

These are abnormal times, people are struggling to work from home, and it's not the normal situation. There are kids at home, and there are child care and schooling issues. We are worried about our loved ones, especially the elderly and compromised. Even when you work from home, the best practice is to get out and socialize. We are experiencing the opposite of that. And once workers get a taste of it and managers see that, yes, work-from-home employees are often more productive, it will become the newer normal. I do not think things will ever go back to the way they were.

Education

Online education has been around for a while, and some universities are built entirely on it. But many colleges and particularly K-12 schools had not embraced it. Online learning understandably was easier to implement as a new concept than as a practice. Many teachers trying to master online teaching tools and then providing tech support to parents and students unfamiliar with the technology now had to put it into practice. Students who didn't have or couldn't afford a computer or internet access were at a disadvantage. Schools and cable providers got together to help the less fortunate with what they needed. The strain is on the parents to work at home, remotely educate their children and prepare additional meals that would normally be given at school.



For parents unable to work at home, distance learning for their children is hard to conceptualize, let alone implement.

Pros:

- No commute time or expense
- Increased productivity
- Improved technical skills
- Improved communication skills
- More flexibility to take care of appointments and errands
- Fewer interruptions from meetings and chitchat

Cons:

- No physical separation between work and leisure time
- Easy to misread cues via electronic communications
- You have to make the effort to get a change of scenery.

It is hoped that we will find a vaccine soon so the children can go back to school and we can go back to a new normal, which will continue to be mostly technology-driven. Remote working and/or hybrid options will be the way—and Zoom, Teams, other remote meetings are probably here to stay.



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- Balconies & Decks
- Soil Movement
- Water Damage
- Windows & Doors
- Stucco
- Plumbing & Electrical
- Roof Systems
- Structural Components

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