

## VELDHOEN + COMPANY ON COVID-19 AND THE NEW FUTURE OF WORK

An activity-based approach has never been more relevant to achieving organisational adaptability.

The multitude of challenges born from Covid-19 are varied, evolving and unique for every organisation. This pandemic has accelerated the global transition from fixed to flexible, predictable to emergent, and simple to complex. Entire industries now question whether their old way of working serves them post-Covid-19 and into the New Future of Work.

The essence of **Veldhoen + Company's** ambition has always been to co-create new, activity-based ways of working and thinking that encourage teams to connect, individuals to flourish and organisations to thrive. We help organisations transform the way they work through their behavioural, physical and technological environments.

Covid-19 has disrupted each of these environments. As a result, workstyle transformation is no longer only for aspirational organisations; it is essential for every organisation.

Such transformation must be holistically understood in the context of organisational adaptability. Organisations who embrace the changing nature of the world - and durably adapt - will be more responsive to disruption and better equipped to survive and thrive in the New Future of Work.

This paper posits that an activity-based approach has never been more valuable for organisations to progress beyond short-term reactions to this crisis, and realise long-term, organisational adaptation. [veldhoencompany.com](https://veldhoencompany.com)



*We unlock knowledge as to how people work and behave.*

### Why adaptability and activity-based are critical in The New Future of Work.

Adaptability is reactively and proactively responding to external changes which threaten our capacity to survive and thrive<sup>1</sup>. The flexibility required to adapt can be unlocked by removing a reliance on structure and control to embrace a learning, evolving ecosystem<sup>2</sup>. In this sense, adaptive organisations are living and breathing enterprises organised around *understanding how people work and behave*. Adaptability is holistic and scalable: team adaptability shapes and reflects change across all levels, from the individual to the organisational<sup>3</sup>.

Our activity-based approach examines the effectiveness of the activities we perform to achieve individual and organisational goals. In understanding these activities (and their context) we unlock knowledge as to how people work and behave. An activity-based approach is critical in assessing how the activities people need to perform are supported - or not - highlighting the precise pivot points to adapt. Equipped with this knowledge, organisations can adapt around the most meaningful criteria, and directly maximise their human potential: the core to the continued success of the whole organisation.

An activity-based approach to adapting to the New Future of Work sharpens organisations' awareness of the interdependencies between their culture, technological support, and physical workplace. Without this awareness, organisations risk unconscious reactivity; sacrificing creativity, trust and choice in favour of predictability, simplicity and a sense of control. In a rapidly changing world, this trade-off is no longer tenable.



<sup>1</sup>Boylan, S. & Turner, K. (2017) Developing Organizational Adaptability for Complex Environments, Journal of Leadership Education, DOI: 10.12806/V16/I2/T2

<sup>2</sup>Rahnema, A., et al (2018) The Adaptable Organization: Harnessing a networked enterprise of human resilience <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/global/Documents/HumanCapital/adaptable-organization.pdf>

<sup>3</sup>The National Academies Press (2018) Adaptability of the US Engineering and Technical Workforce: Proceedings of a Workshop <https://www.nap.edu/read/25016/chapter/5#23> (p.26)

## AT VELDHOEN + COMPANY WE CREATE A BETTER WORLD OF WORK

We have always done this by partnering with organisations according to our shared goals and values. Our impact has been in service of people to give the best of themselves, and always will be.

**This is our mission.**

'Normal' no longer exists. Rather than predict unknowable 'New Normal' scenarios, our approach to post-pandemic working is to co-create adaptability.

We approach this through 3 lenses:

**Security,  
Self-Direction and  
Universal Compassion.**

Together we pioneer a new, activity-based, way of working.



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V I E W E D   T H R O U G H   O U R   T H R E E   L E N S E S

## WHY LENSES ARE NEEDED TO GROUND OUR APPROACH

We are a values-based organisation who exist in service of others.

The lenses - introduced in our stance - encompass three critical perspectives to help clients clarify what they most value when making decisions on their New Future of Work.

Our client Iain Graham aptly summarises this sentiment:



*Values will ground us through the uncertainty.*

- Iain Graham, CEO Red Energy, Lumo Energy and Direct Connect

Indeed, the sheer volume of challenges born from this pandemic require the adoption of specific lenses to drive efficient decision-making; beyond surface-level responses.

### How do we know?

We've tried approaching the 'top of mind' topics undermining organisations' productivity without grounded lenses so that you don't have to...

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...take technology as a crucial aspect of the New Future of Work. Our confinement and newfound reliance on technology may cause us to increase video-calls from home in preference of face to face meetings. But, this reaction impacts our innate need for human connection. Have you thought about how your organisation will balance the value of technology and face-to-face engagement going forward?

### Grounded Lenses enable choice beyond reactions.

Decreased reliance on technology

Increased reliance on technology



TECHNOLOGY IN THE NEW FUTURE OF WORK

## OUR THREE LENSES

Organisations more effectively navigate changing social and business landscapes by adopting grounded lenses.

In taking the time to build this foundation, they carve a clearer direction for future decision-making. From securing how they survive; organisations can develop how they thrive.

Activity Based Working has always focused on answering the question: How does the workplace serve its people? In uncovering this, the purpose of the workplace emerges and consequently, the elements which misalign to this purpose - the topics to adapt - are revealed. Organisational challenges can be addressed through redefining how people work together and where they do so. Veldhoen + Company consider three lenses as critical to this process: **Security, Self-Direction and Universal Compassion.**

But how do these lenses relate to activity-based approaches? These three lenses are sharpened when applied with an activity-based approach. Our *Activity Based Working: Measurable Outcomes and Key Indicator*<sup>4</sup> research paper found that organisations must achieve two elements to deliver Activity Based Working successfully:

1. Provide the correct mix of work settings for people to choose from.
2. Enable individuals to work in a mobile and flexible way.

If organisations can provide these elements for their people through workstyle transformation, they are equipped to be higher performing and, crucially, more adaptive to future disruption.

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## 1. Security

Security is the foundation of adaptability; it describes the human need for safety<sup>5</sup>. People have experienced an abrupt plummet in job security, simultaneously increasing stress, damaging their mental health, exacerbating difficulties in managing workload, and lowering productivity<sup>6</sup>. This cumulation means people feel less comfortable to embrace the New Future of Work and 'carry on'. We've learned that security extends beyond physical spaces and ownership to feelings of belonging, trust and connection to the organisation<sup>7</sup>. Individuals' perception of safety should not passively rely on ownership of any environment but must be actively sustained in their connection to the inherent, organisational activities which maintain a foundation of trust and belonging.



*Our competitive edge comes from the way we work together – so we've built an Activity Based Working workplace to enable that objective.*



- Susi Fiedler, MSD President Europe & Canada

**Activity-based and Security** - Activity Based Working prioritises that trust in our choices (at minimum) promotes survival, and (at maximum) actualises our full potential. Activities that promote this non-physical security are paramount in times of disruption. They foster long-term, human and organisational resilience.



<sup>4</sup>Veldhoen + Company (2020) Activity Based Working: Measurable Outcomes and Key Indicators research paper  
<sup>5</sup>McLeod, S. A. (2007). Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs <http://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html>

<sup>6</sup>CIPD (2020) Health and Well-Being at Work Survey <https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/culture/well-being/health-well-being-work>  
<sup>7</sup>Veldhoen + Company (2020) Activity Based Working: Measurable Outcomes and Key Indicators research paper

## 2. Self-Direction

Self-Direction is at the heart of adaptability, harnessing individuals' and teams' inherent desire for autonomy. This requires awareness of unprecedented and evolving transitions where people feel constrained by rigid guidelines designed for different situations. An adaptive way of working dynamically balances these factors, meaning that self-direction is always active and conscious.



*An activity-based way of working has taught us to be adaptable and mindful. As most of us are working from home, while the physical environment has changed, we are still equally ready to embrace change, and adjust ourselves.*

- Martin Low, Managing Director Sennheiser Electronic Asia Pte Ltd



**Activity-based and Self-Direction** - Activity Based Working speaks to the ability for people to choose how they enable themselves, their team and their organisation to flourish at that moment. **Veldhoen + Company** research highlights that 'higher internal mobility correlates with higher overall impact and perceived productivity'<sup>6</sup>, therefore a workplace strategy which fosters flexibility and adaptability supports this innate human desire, weaving it into team and organisational contexts.

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## 3. Universal Compassion

Universal Compassion is the aspirational output of adapting effectively, it speaks to our desire to improve the well-being of those around us. A sense of kindness and citizenship to a broader (even global) community emerges in response to a crisis. People can hold an organisation together during tough times if they have a sense of belonging beyond their own teams and can feel the significant impact their organisation has on wider society.



*My belief is that we actually end up with a better community if more people are more effective at their work.*

- Peter Maher, Former Division Head Macquarie Bank



**Activity-based and Universal Compassion** - Activity Based Working aims to encourage those 'above and beyond' actions by supporting connections between people 'above and beyond' business functionality. In this way the approach seeks to broaden individuals' sense of belonging further than their own teams and connect with the organisation as a holistic system. Deeper and healthier connection breeds channels of compassion. Compassion elevates organisational purpose, articulating the bigger impact that the organisation has on society, in the most human way.

Given the changing nature of the world of work, an activity-based approach enables the adaptivity required to understand the evolving functional requirements of organisations.

<sup>6</sup>Veldhoen + Company (2020) Activity Based Working: Measurable Outcomes and Key Indicators research paper

## CONCLUSION

**Veldhoen + Company's mission to Create a Better World of Work hasn't changed, but the focus, conditions and priorities have shifted as a result of this pandemic.**

Covid-19 has been a catalyst for organisations to become deliberate about why their old ways of working no longer serve them. Never has an activity-based approach been more valuable. Instead of merely putting out fires and hoping for survival, an activity-based application of our three lenses helps to pioneer more adaptable organisations. With adaptability, organisations can ensure survival, while building the capability needed to thrive in an increasingly unpredictable world.

At **Veldhoen + Company**, we are a global consulting firm with teams in APAC, Europe, and North America. It is our mission to leave a lasting impact by creating a better world of work. We help organisations prepare for and adapt to a New Future of Work through activity-based orientations to design, teaming, and leading.



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**Do get in touch if you would like to know more. We are your thinking partner for the New Future of Work.**

### Authors:



**Jon Gausden**, Workstyle Consultant,  
Email: [jon@veldhoencompany.com](mailto:jon@veldhoencompany.com)



**Jarryd Gillen**, Consultant,  
Email: [jarryd@veldhoencompany.com](mailto:jarryd@veldhoencompany.com)

### Editors:



**Julian Chender**, Consultant,  
Email: [julian@veldhoencompany.com](mailto:julian@veldhoencompany.com)



**Una Mapes**, Marketing Director,  
Email: [una@veldhoencompany.com](mailto:una@veldhoencompany.com)

### Contact:



**APAC: Iolanda Meehan**, Managing Partner,  
Call: +65 818 10841  
Email: [iolanda@veldhoencompany.com](mailto:iolanda@veldhoencompany.com)



**EUROPE: Roel Geenen**, Managing Partner,  
Call: +31 6 150 25 788  
Email: [roel@veldhoencompany.com](mailto:roel@veldhoencompany.com)



**NORTH AMERICA: Luc Kamperman**,  
Managing Partner. Call: +1 929 437 9290  
Email: [luc@veldhoencompany.com](mailto:luc@veldhoencompany.com)

