



liveops®

## REVOLUTIONIZING THE WORLD OF WORK

**A THOUGHT LEADERSHIP  
WHITE PAPER BY  
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For the first time in history it is technologically possible for every one of the earth's six billion people to be connected in real time at a relatively nominal cost due to the rising use of network computers and the decreasing cost of communications. The ability to exchange digital data with anyone anywhere at anytime has changed the way we talk to each other (email and chat), how we access information (web browsing and search), how we shop (electronic commerce) and how we socialize (social networking). Technology has brought many changes to the world, but perhaps the most profound is its effect on the world of work. When once it was the norm for people to go to work to provide food and shelter for their families, the advent of the Internet now makes it possible for the work to come to them.

The barriers to flexible work have been removed benefitting both workers and the companies they serve. People now have the freedom to structure work around family, environmental and physical needs. Workers are now empowered, with new opportunities for those who have traditionally been left out of the workforce. The physically disabled, veterans, retirees and stay-at-home moms who have a vast array of skills can now offer their services to companies that are increasingly engaging with an independent

workforce for the elasticity it offers in getting jobs done as efficiently as possible. Companies now know that they can turn out better products by outsourcing many of the jobs that they used to do themselves.

To help companies produce products and services, an ecosystem of out-sourcers is forming made up of free agents—a segment of the workforce that is comprised of independent contractors, temporary workers, contract workers, leased workers, part-time workers, on-call workers, day

laborers, and the self-employed, many of whom are based “at home.”<sup>1</sup> There are 42 million of them in the U.S. today—nearly one-third of the workforce and often they can do a specific job more efficiently and with greater expertise than a generalist office-based employee. Employers who often struggle to find and retain great people can take advantage of this trend by engaging this growing segment of the workforce.

This developing virtualized workforce operates as a kind of meritocracy. Workers have their personal reputations and the skills they’ve developed to bring to bear and employers can choose the best resource for the job that must be done. It is now becoming possible for businesses to identify a task or business process and crowdsource it to a distributed, global community of experts. Buyers and sellers of talent are beginning to do

business together in this way and a marketplace for the world’s work is emerging.

LiveOps, a company that has developed the leading on-demand call center platform, uses this platform to operate a virtual work community of 20,000 agents in the call center space.

LiveOps is in a unique position to create the next-generation technology platform that could revolutionize the world of work with an electronic marketplace that enables groups of free agents to sell their expertise and services to buyers of labor. This networked community of workers would serve as a central market for buyers and sellers to convene, create work teams, converge and transact business.

The company’s CEO, Maynard Webb, is already at work on the technology platform for a marketplace that would provide services that both employers

and employees need and want. Such a marketplace would offer employers quality work and accountability and free agents would be assured a sense of security that a job well done will be compensated accordingly. In addition, both companies and workers would be able to count on efficiency as well as community. Mr. Webb intends to do for the world of work what eBay did for commerce.

Technology has advanced to the point that such an endeavor is possible. At the same time, three world-wide trends are converging to create a perfect environment for a marketplace for the world’s work: ever-increasing productivity, globalization and environmental stewardship.

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<sup>1</sup>U.S. Government Accountability Office, “Employee Misclassification,” Tuesday, May 8, 2007

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# REVOLUTIONIZING THE WORLD OF WORK

## TECHNOLOGY AND THE WORLD OF WORK.

Technology's march has had a profound effect on the cost of communications—and every other aspect of modern life. As early as the 1950s, the pace of change began to accelerate.

Technology adoption cycles shortened dramatically—it took electricity 50 years to be adopted by 50 million users; it took television just 11. As computers became ubiquitous, the acceleration continued. It took just four years for the Internet to reach 50 million users<sup>2</sup> and, in the age of Web 2.0, Facebook, having achieved 80 million worldwide users in just four years, now doubles in size every six months.<sup>3</sup>

Since the build-out of the Internet—and the proliferation of wireless devices that provide anytime, anywhere access to it, the cost of communications and the latency associated with accessing information have been effectively reduced to zero. As a result, the familiar hierarchical construct upon which organizations have been based is yielding to a network model, which has flattened the vertical paradigm and spawned a revolution in the way we work and the way we do business.

Recent phenomena like email, chat, web browsing, electronic commerce

and social networking have made it possible for people to collaborate in new ways that have proven immensely popular and have fueled the advent of the Web 2.0 era. These new paradigms have changed the way people live, work, play and learn. iTunes has become the largest retailer of music in the world; MySpace adds 350,000 new members to its 185 million member community every day;<sup>4</sup> and Facebook, already the number-one photo sharing application on the Web, adds over 140 new user-developed applications every day.<sup>5</sup>

Traditional work itself has become quite flexible in accommodating the new work paradigm: Nearly 80 percent of U.S. businesses currently have employees who spend at least some time as mobile workers.<sup>6</sup> It is estimated that by 2010, there will be 100 million telecommuters in the U.S. alone. Employers are seeing the need to shift the management of employees from command and control methodologies to managing by rules and rewards, based on an individual's performance.

Not surprisingly, the notion of the lifelong career under the patriarchal tutelage of a single company is fading fast. Work environments have become far more fluid with respect to both employee and employer expectations. In fact, today, a person can expect to

have 10-14 jobs by the age of 38.<sup>8</sup> One out of four workers has been with his or her current company for less than one year, and more than half are working for a company that has employed them for less than five years.

This shift is only the beginning of the story, though, for while the age of gold watches for 50 years' loyal service are long gone, most people still think of employment as being on a company payroll for some period of time. The future of work, however, lies not with traditional employment at all, but with something far more attuned to our exponentially evolving world: Free agency. Workers are enthusiastically and independently coming online at home to help companies outsource the production of goods and services economically.

The advantages of a home-based workforce are evident: less overhead for enterprises and more productivity from workers. Workers have the freedom to structure work on their terms and new opportunities exist for those who are not in the standard workforce. And companies are able to engage with this new workforce because it gives them more elasticity in getting work done efficiently.

A generation from now, the workforce

<sup>2</sup> *Management Quarterly*, "Do You Believe in Magic? An Otherworld of Incredible New Technology," June 22, 2006, by Steve Collier

<sup>3</sup> Mike Murphy, Facebook Vice President, Media Sales, "The Power of Social Media for Brands," Keynote Presentation, Canadian Marketing Association, October 26, 2007

<sup>4</sup> Comscore Media Metrix

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics>

<sup>6</sup> Yankee Group

<sup>7</sup> Kiplinger, 12/00

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of Labor

in the developed world will look very different from the way it looked a generation ago. Thanks to advances in technology that have conquered physical barriers, millions of people will be the architects of their own careers as free agents, independent contractors, part-time or full-time employees operating in a global market from wherever they happen to be.

The effect of this transformation will be to foster a true, borderless meritocracy, where employers can shop around for the skill sets that are most important for particular projects. Workers will have control over where, when, and what they do to produce value. Workers will also be able to choose which companies they want to work with while companies will need to build their own online profiles and reputations so that they will be viewed as “good” companies to work with by the free agent community. Employers will be able to cherry-pick talent. Ineffective or superfluous employees will become artifacts of business history and enterprises will be able to seek out individuals whose prior efficacy has been documented on the platform that brings them together. Thus the virtual workforce is born into an environment ripe for a marketplace for the world’s work.

At this point, such a marketplace is nascent, but the shift to maturity is well underway due to three converging trends in the world: ever-increasing productivity, globalization and

environmental stewardship—all of which are driving employers to do whatever is necessary to get the best most efficient talent and employees to work from home where they can be productive on their terms from anywhere in the world.

#### EVER-INCREASING PRODUCTIVITY

As information technology has continued its advance on the developed world, manufacturing – the engine of the industrial economy – has faded as more outsourcing, automation and efficiencies are implemented. At its post-war peak in 1950, manufacturing’s share of total employment in the U.S. was 33.1 percent. By 1989, it was down to 18.2 percent and, by 2003, it was 10.7 percent.<sup>9</sup> The din of workers on the factory floor that typified a booming economy fifty years ago has given way to the clicking of keyboards in cubicles and Wi-Fi hot spots around the globe.

As a result, the need for computer-literate workers has exploded. As recently as 1991, fewer than 50 percent of US jobs required skilled workers. By 2015, 76 percent of American jobs will demand highly skilled employees.<sup>10</sup> Virtually every job already requires some degree of computer literacy.

As disruptive as the shifting worker profile is, a more momentous shift is happening with respect to how goods are produced. Information technology is not about increasing productivity of industrial-age work, but transforming how work is done altogether.<sup>11</sup> Since



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<sup>10</sup> Educational Testing Service report, “America’s Perfect Storm: The Forces Changing Our Nation’s Future,” by Irwin Kirsch, Henry Braun and Kentaro Yamamoto of ETS and Andrew Sum of Northeastern University, 2007

<sup>11</sup> “The Jobs Revolution: Changing How America Works,” by Steve Gunderson, Roberts Jones and Kathryn Scanland, 2004

the mid 1990s, computer technology has delivered efficiencies, economies of scale and automated business processes to organizations of every size, freeing human capital and driving productivity to heights unimagined just ten years before. Indeed, so robust have productivity improvements been in that time that the U.S. economy overall has survived the dot-com crash, the recession of 2001 and the aftermath of 9/11, with productivity growth averaging about two-tenths of a percentage point higher than in any recovery since World War II.<sup>12</sup>

Even with the current economic pressures caused by skyrocketing energy prices, the credit crunch and the weak dollar, the U.S. Labor Department recently announced that U.S. worker productivity increased at a 2.2% annual pace in Q1 2008, well above the 1.7% Bloomberg News survey consensus estimated.<sup>13</sup>

In the industrial economy productivity was, to a great extent, a function of how well enterprises managed ever-dwindling resources. In the information age, however, the primary resource is information, a commodity that grows. And grows. Human beings now produce more than five exabytes<sup>14</sup> worth of recorded information per year in the form of documents, e-mail

messages, television shows, radio broadcasts, Web pages, medical records, spreadsheets, presentations and books. That is more than 50,000 times the number of words stored in the Library of Congress, or more than the total number of words ever spoken by human beings.<sup>15</sup>

Therefore, in today's economy, it is not information that is precious to organizations. It is the ability to synthesize, manage and communicate it that gives them an edge. Information technology continues to reshape the competitive landscape at such a breakneck pace that, according to former Education Secretary Richard Riley, the top ten jobs in demand in 2010 didn't even exist in 2004.<sup>16</sup>

Since jobs are entering a state of perpetual reinvention, organizations increasingly place value on individuals' high-level cognitive skills, adaptability, abstract reasoning, problem solving, communication and collaboration.<sup>17</sup> In a very real sense, these are the raw materials that drive productivity in the information age. Not surprisingly, these qualities thrive in a networked environment.

As connectivity becomes more ubiquitous, enterprises become real-time entities. Information no longer flows primarily as a downstream trickle from corporate

suites; now it is a tsunami hitting from all sides twenty-four hours a day. Out of competitive necessity, then, these operations become decoupled from the corporate structure. For example, this decentralization allows supply chain managers to maximize productivity and wring inefficiencies out of their operations. Now almost a \$1 trillion industry and representing 8.5 percent of the U.S. economy,<sup>18</sup> supply chain management has been entirely virtualized, literally opening up a world of resources and thus spurring more and more competition, irrespective of geographical proximity. The resilience and flexibility of the network that revolutionized supply chain management has changed the way enterprises approach all of their business processes.

Another example lies in today's call center space, LiveOps works with its enterprise customers to harness more productivity by using a work-from-home agent community. Vforce, a LiveOps customer that exclusively handles AAA membership renewals through its call center, cites a 20% productivity gain when using remote agents armed with the necessary technology.

As technology's continuing evolution increasingly allows for the compartmentalizing of business processes, decentralization will

<sup>12</sup> "Enhancing Productivity Growth in the Information Age: Measuring and Sustaining the New Economy," National Research Council of the National Academies, special report edited by Dale W. Jorgenson and Charles W. Wessner, 2007

<sup>13</sup> U.S. Department of Labor press release, "Productivity and Costs, First Quarter 2008 Preliminary," May 7, 2008.

<sup>14</sup> 5 trillion megabytes

<sup>15</sup> "Glut: Mastering Information Through The Ages" by Alex Wright, 2007, page 6

<sup>16</sup> Former Education Secretary Richard Riley, as quoted in "The Jobs Revolution: Changing How America Works," by Steve Gunderson, Roberts Jones and Kathryn Scanland, 2004

<sup>17</sup> Catounbound.com (Cato Institute blog), "The Future of the American Workforce in the Global Creative Economy," by Richard Florida, June 4, 2006.

<sup>18</sup> Steve Georgevitch, National Contract Management Association, "Supply Chain Management" April 19, 2005.

continue to move toward the core of the enterprise and incorporate ever more mission-critical work. Once this permeates the business culture, the network itself will become the critical mass around which orbit the myriad decoupled processes that used to define the organization. Soon, instead of the enterprise defining the network, the network will define the enterprise.

#### GLOBALIZATION: THE WORLD REALLY IS FLAT

“In the flat world, more and more business will be done through collaborations within and between companies, for a very simple reason: The next layers of value creation – whether in technology, marketing, biomedicine, or manufacturing – are becoming so complex that no single firm or department is going to be able to master them alone.”

“Any activity where we can digitize and decompose the value chain, and move the work around, will get moved around. Some people will say, ‘Yes, but you can’t serve me a steak.’ True, but I can take the reservation for your table sitting anywhere in the world.”

– Excerpts from *The World is Flat*, 2005, by Thomas Friedman

The decentralization of supply chains led the modern enterprise into globalization—the increasingly free flow of goods and services, as well as capital in human resources and intellectual property across borders. However, it was the widespread and highly visible practice of off shoring of IT functions that first captured the attention of the public. The largest

percentage of jobs being outsourced today is in the IT sector at 28 percent. More powerful software, combined with more robust networks, have allowed companies to reconfigure ever more mission-critical business processes into “plug-and-play” modules that can be outsourced seamlessly. Thus we see 15 percent of human resources jobs being outsourced, followed by sales and marketing at 14 percent and financial services at 10 percent.<sup>19</sup> This trend will only accelerate as business process outsourcing moves all the way up the value chain. And as it does, it completely changes the working landscape.

Although the free-agent working model is a logical – and beneficial – outgrowth of the decentralization that is overtaking the modern enterprise, it introduces some challenges. Chiefly, one must now compete in the global marketplace as workers not tied to physical locations (i.e., knowledge workers) compete with similarly qualified workers around the globe. Conversely, it offers U.S. companies a larger labor pool from which to select workers thereby initially driving down the cost of business. But eventually, labor arbitrage will cease to be a factor as over time, wages will stabilize across industries and professions and it is individual talent that will determine salaries.

As a result of the exploding worldwide economic activity enabled by real-time networks, it is becoming impossible to think of a single country in terms of dominance any longer; the global



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<sup>19</sup> Cyfuture.com

economy has fostered planet-wide interdependence. In the U.S., total global trade activity (exports plus imports) has increased from about one-tenth of U.S. GDP in 1960 to a quarter today. Globalization is changing the world order to such an extent that it is predicted that, by 2040, the combined economies of Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRIC) could have a larger GDP than the G6 (U.S., U.K., Italy, France, Germany and Japan).<sup>20</sup>

Globalization delivers goods and services to places that would never otherwise have them. It shores up local economies with disposable incomes and capital infusions; facilitates the cross-pollination of ideas and best practices; and brings sorely needed infrastructure to once-impoverished areas, improving the quality of life for millions. Globalization has also created a worldwide labor pool.

Consider China and India. To get an idea of how large that labor pool is in China alone, the U.S. could transfer every job within its borders to a worker in China and China would still have a labor surplus.<sup>21</sup> It is that vast labor pool that has fed China's 10 percent annual growth the last decade.

As for India, it is the third largest economy in the world.<sup>22</sup> It has progressively improved its ability to compete globally, jumping from

42nd to 27th place in 2007.<sup>23</sup> Over the last four years, India has experienced eight percent annual GDP growth. The main drivers of that growth are IT and IT-enabled services, which employ four million people. More than 400 business process outsourcing companies were operating in India as of 2005.<sup>24</sup>

For many emerging countries, a virtuous circle has emerged among the developing middle class: the influx of economic activity has increased employment and wages, which has driven domestic spending, which in turn increases output. The fact is that these trends take the shape of a global marketplace for work that operates on traditional supply-and-demand principles. The net result is higher quality work at the world's best price.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

While globalization has brought countries from a pre-industrial status into the information age in a generation, it has also produced an emerging consensus from all corners; modern life is taking a toll on the earth. There are six billion people on the planet and more are becoming consumers every day, thanks to globalization.

In fact, more than 80 percent of the world's six billion people live in emerging economies. By 2010, China and India alone are expected to have 123 million middle-class households.<sup>25</sup> This is more than the total number of

households in the U.S. Worldwide, emerging economies are expected to account for more than half of global consumption by 2025.<sup>26</sup>

That consumption will add to what is already widely considered a worldwide problem: the destruction of the earth's environment. Landfills are overflowing, highways are clogged with more vehicles, deforestation continues unchecked, industrial giants are pumping pollutants into the atmosphere and the consumerism that has been such a boon to developing economies is also creating an unprecedented amount of trash, using huge amounts of fossil fuels and denuding great swaths of once pristine land.

While this is true, it is also true that it is the wealthiest countries that tend to invest in newer, cleaner technologies. The U.S. has cleaned up countless rivers and lakes since the height of the manufacturing era in large part because our economy advanced beyond the industrial age and capital exists to invest in once-exotic sustainable technologies. Under these conditions, profit can be made from environmental conscientiousness. A recent study<sup>27</sup> found that, by early 2009, American businesses will have reached a tipping point in embracing green practices as a cornerstone of their corporate philosophy. At that point, 82 percent of the companies will

<sup>20</sup> Goldman Sachs White Paper, "Dreaming of the BRICs" The Path to 2050, by Dominic Wilson and Roopa Purushothaman, October 1, 2005.

<sup>21</sup> Calculation made by Karl Fisch using statistics from the U.S. Department of Labor.

<sup>22</sup> Rediff News, January 8, 2007, "India to be the Third Largest Economy," by Indrani Roy Mitra

<sup>23</sup> International Institute for Management Development's World Competitiveness Yearbook, 2008

<sup>24</sup> Nasscom.com

<sup>25</sup> Accenture.com, "Emerging Consumers," (no date).

<sup>26</sup> Accenture.com, "Emerging Consumers," (no date)

<sup>27</sup> SmartMarkt Report: The Greening of Corporate America released by McGraw-Hill and Siemens Building Technologies, 2007.

have greened at least 16 percent of their building stock.<sup>28</sup>

Many companies recognize that they can help reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions by allowing their employees to work from home. Not only is fuel conserved (as well as reduced wear and tear on the vehicle and the road), but time is saved. A 40-minute commute equates to eight working weeks per year.<sup>29</sup> LiveOps, with its community of independent, work-from-home agents, saves 1.6 million gallons of gas a year and reduces greenhouse gases (CO<sub>2</sub>) by 14 million metric tons employing the work-from-home model.

And, according to the Green Building Council, offices consume 70 percent of the electricity load in the United States. They account for roughly 38 percent of all greenhouse gas emissions here and over the next 25 years, carbon dioxide emissions from those structures are projected to grow faster than any other sector, at 1.8 percent a year.<sup>30</sup>

However, if half the employees at a given enterprise are free agents working from remote locations and meeting in cyberspace, the need for extravagantly watered office parks and hermetically sealed, climate-controlled high-rises will be diminished significantly. As the carbon footprint gets smaller, costs to businesses go down. The average worker costs a business \$10,000 annually for office space alone.<sup>31</sup>

Once the number of individuals working as free agents reaches critical mass, the days of profligate carbon usage by corporations will be a thing of the past. Just by taking charge of their careers, free agents will be helping to preserve the planet for generations to come. And businesses will be doing their part by outsourcing jobs to home-based workers.

#### A VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF WORK

Today, the model that most closely aligns with the free agency of the future is the virtual call center. Call center agents, once confined to a cubicle in a building, are now free to work from home on a time schedule of their choice. LiveOps operates the world's largest virtual call center serving over 200 enterprise and media companies and taps the skills of more than 20,000 agents across the country. The pool of talent operates much like a marketplace where employers buy time and employees sell it. This marketplace, while in its infancy, has evolved to a meritocracy because the technology enables the most successful agents to get the prime assignments. Their abilities are monitored in an advanced performance-based tracking system. The better they perform, the more money they can make.

LiveOps has developed a leading-edge technology platform built from the ground up for virtual work. LiveOps' On-Demand Call Center Platform leverages the power of the Internet to



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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> The Colorado Telework Coalition

<sup>30</sup> EnergyBiz Insider, "The Greening of Corporate America," by Ken Silverstein, May 14, 2007

<sup>31</sup> The Telework Coalition: Telework Facts, 2005.

enable customers to manage and operate enterprise-grade virtual call centers. It helps customers run their call centers efficiently and effectively at peak performance and is optimized to manage home-based agents to deliver superior customer service. LiveOps has continually innovated, tested and honed its unique platform and applications to serve as a flexible, cohesive service that can handle extraordinarily high call volumes. Calls are distributed intelligently across a single call center, multiple call centers, branch offices, or thousands of agents working from their homes.

The future of work in general is likely to follow the path that work in the call center did. A technology platform enabled a marketplace to emerge, enabling businesses to get top quality, account-able talent for the jobs that need to be done. The marketplace for the world's work will serve as a central market for buyers and sellers to convene converge and transact business. Services that both employers and employees need and want will be available and a community will coalesce. Then it will be possible to transform the world of work with an electronic marketplace and do for the world of work what eBay did for the world of commerce.

As technology becomes cheaper and the world becomes flatter, the need for facility-based employment will be a thing of the past. The result will be accelerated productivity, even more globalization and a cleaner, greener world.

## CONCLUSION

Thanks to cheap communications and the Internet, the traditional vertical business model is collapsing. Technological evolution has produced a more adaptive, responsive and flexible construct: the network. The network model is neither vertical nor horizontal; it exists multi-dimensionally and as such, the rigid command and control structure necessary to industrial-age organizations is irrelevant to the modern virtual enterprise.

As technology-fueled disruption continues to redefine our lives at an ever-faster rate, our concepts of work must be reinvented as well. Because of the rise of the Internet, and all of the sub-networks it enables – it is now possible to modularize virtually every component of the modern organization. The data center, HR, accounting – even processes further up the value chain, such as product development and competitive strategy – will be capable of being outsourced.

The rise of networks has put the three forces into play that will produce a free-agent rich work force: ever-increasing productivity, globalization and stewardship of the environment. As these forces come together, the number of individuals who join the global bazaar as free agents will skyrocket. In an age where networks will have modularized every aspect of the enterprise, free agency will be as logical a choice for a career path as joining a firm at 22 and waiting 50 years for the gold watch once was. And the reason is clear. This workforce of the future enables people to work on their own terms, spend more time with

family, have access to more opportunity and actively participate in caring for the environment.

The fact is most people are already operating to one degree or another in a free agency mode. In addition to 1/3 of the population already working as free agents, the rest of the population changes jobs more frequently than ever before and is coming to rely on sources other than employment for healthcare and social benefits. The stereotypical work model most people embrace today is becoming obsolete. And while perception tends to lag behind reality, we are just beginning to see this new breed of worker enter the workforce in significant numbers. The flashpoint for this change is the virtual call center. And its future is the LiveOps marketplace for the world's work.

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