▶ Taking Stock of the Digital Dividend

Where are EBMOs on the digitalization journey and what's next?

Introduction

Where are we on the digitalization journey?

❏ 80% of EBMOs have adapted their service delivery (according to ILO ACT/EMP & IOE survey). Digitalization is at the heart of this change.

❏ The majority of EBMOs are now offering virtual advisory, legal and consulting services (83%). Over 50 per cent moving their training offer to an online platform.

❏ The pandemic has accelerated digitalization trends for EBMOs and across the wider business community. with a Twilio study on digital engagement and 68 per cent saying the pandemic sped up their digital transformation "a great deal".

❏ Organizations are at different stages of the digital journey and have different priorities going forward. This is reflected in the core questions we are seeking answers to in this guide.

Where are we on the digitalization journey?

> **As digital technologies increasingly pervade different spheres of business activity, businesses and EBMOs alike will need to develop new capabilities to respond and innovate at the pace of constantly changing technology and market conditions [3].**
>
> ▶ Dr Deborah Soule, University of Massachusetts Lowell's Manning School of Business

> **The most important thing for employer organizations is to be really clear on where they are now in terms of their digital offering and how members are experiencing it. This will help set the course for where you want to get to.**
>
> ▶ Kate Shoesmith, Deputy Chief Executive, REC (UK)

## Aims and scope

The aim of this report is to explore what digitalization looks like in practice for EBMOs, through a global stock-take of experiences to date. Highlighting (first) lessons learned will also help provide a roadmap for future changes.

Our focus is on finding answers to the three following core questions:

1. **What works?** What are the drivers of change and the current state of play in terms of digital adoption within the global EBMO Community?

2. **Why does it work?** What are some of the common themes and implementation tips we can extrapolate from specific examples of digitalization in the areas of governance, products and people?

3. **What's next?** How will digital and data technology evolve over the coming years and how can EBMOs ensure that they are ahead of the game?
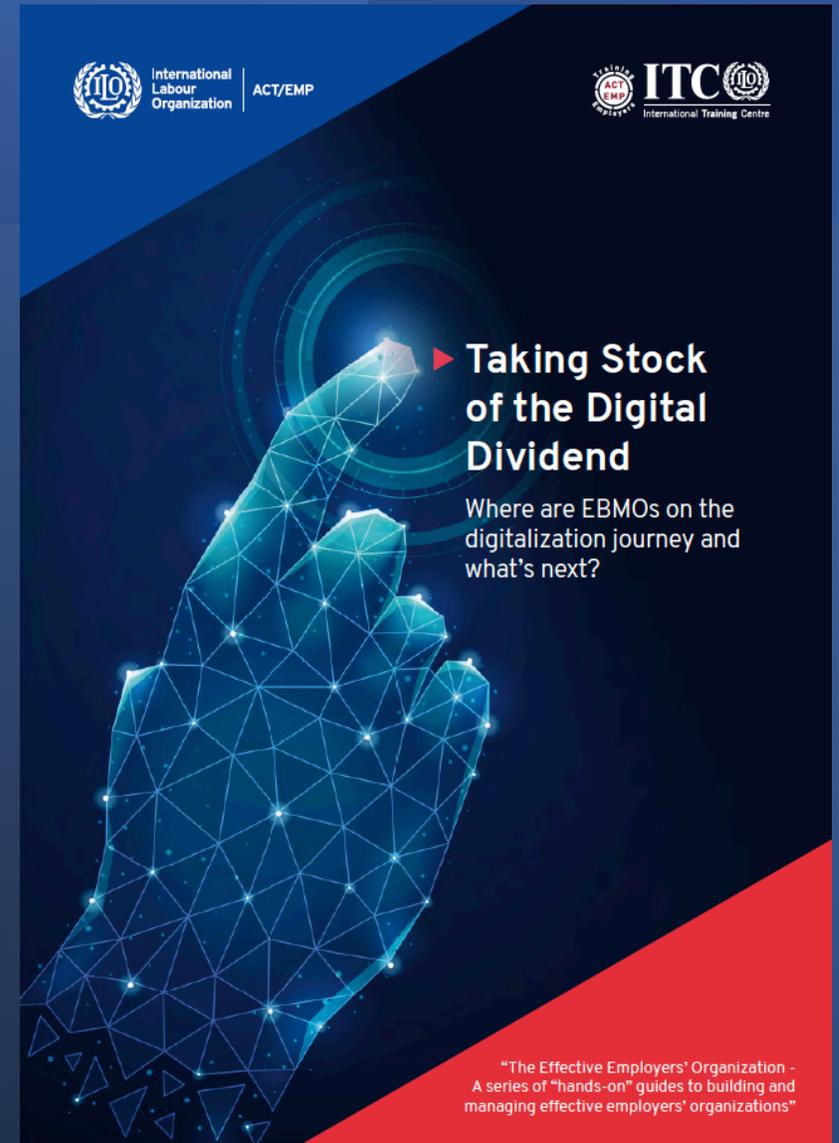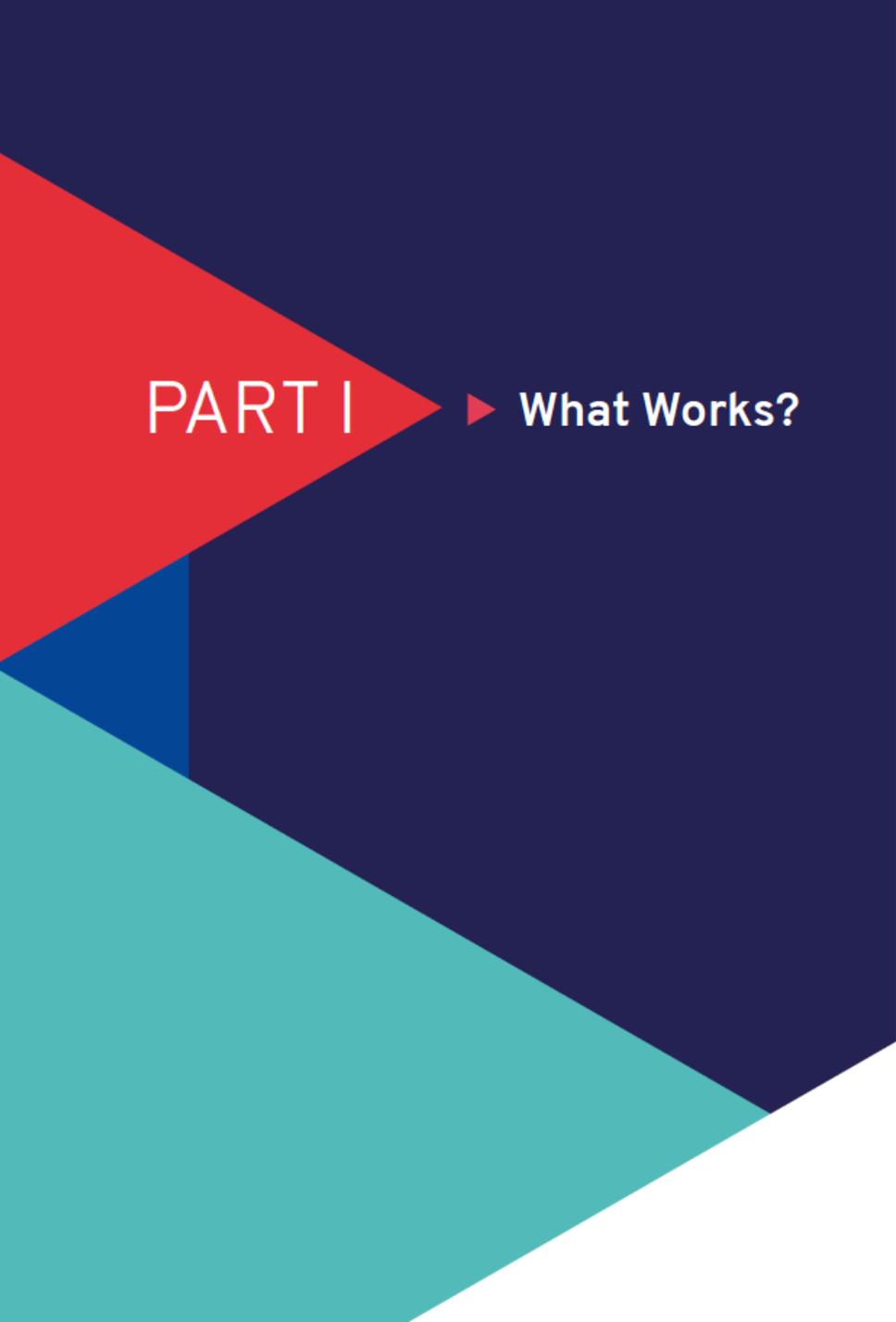
PART I ▶ What Works?

Part I – What Works?

In this section, we take stock of what works (and what does not) in the following three areas:

1. **Internal procedures and efficiencies** – How are digital tools and new technology being used to facilitate process improvement within EBMOs as well as internal co-operation and project management?

2. **Member services** – How is digitalization supporting innovation and expansion of services such as training, legal guidance, business support, events and commercial partnerships? What tangible benefits are being delivered and how are these being measured?

3. **External impact** – How is digitalization enhancing advocacy and campaigning activities and providing new ways of building relationships with policy makers, journalists and other influencers? How can digital channels be used to impact wider public opinion?

What works?

Internal procedures & efficiencies

Specific (and quantifiable) examples of how digitalization has enhanced internal processes within the secretariat include:

- *Increased speed of processing* **and online purchasing –** E.g: Digital booking for training & events, online 'shop' for purchasing membership and services and downloadable certificates.

- *Improved accessibility* – Web-site improvements have enhanced navigability & made it easier for members (and stakeholders) to find information they need.

- *Self-service facilities* – E.g: Using chatbots to answer basic questions and signpost members to where they can find information. Members are also able to amend contact details and 'opt-in' to mailing lists and specific interest groups.

- *Member insight and feedback* – Digital tools and social media channels are a tool for capturing insights and views of members. This can complement traditional e-mail surveys and helps EBMOs to 'get closer' to their members.

> ▟▟ Focusing on the end-user is always key. For online training this involves everything from making payment as easy as possible to sending written and video guidance on how to enroll and helping with any technical issues that participants have on the day.
>
> ▶ Ray Tadeo, Training & Development Manager, ECOP (Philippines)

What works?

Internal procedures & efficiencies

Examples of how EBMOs are measuring and demonstrating progress in terms of digital investment leading to enhanced internal procedures and efficiencies include:

- Increased take-up of these additional services and additional revenue streams

- Page views and number of downloads

- Fewer inbound calls from members who cannot find what they are looking for!

- General increase in member awareness and satisfaction (as measured through annual surveys and ongoing interactions)

- Enhanced internal communication & project management (see case studies below)

In summary, investment in digitalization is being manifested in increased efficiency and a more user-friendly experience for members. More people inside the EBMO have access to data which in turn leads to a better understanding of member needs.

> The core aims of our digital transformation have been to improve our internal governance, strengthen the effectiveness of our advocacy activities and enhance member services.
>
> ► Vincent Kouette, Deputy Executive Director, GICAM (Cameroon)

CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDIES - Using digital tools to enhance internal communication and project management

- **FEC (DRC)** has used digital platforms as an alternative to physical meetings to enhance exchanges between the different FEC offices spread over the whole country's territory. This has improved consistency and speed of decision making.

- **REC (UK)** has made use of WhatsApp to share information quickly with the senior leadership team and to speed up decision making on emergency issues.

- **CGEM (Morocco)** has taken a lead on a series of high-profile issues by establishing bespoke 'Commissions' involving both members and external stakeholders – for example, the Human Capital Commission and the E-Government Commission. Digital platforms provide a means of managing and coordinating these multi-stakeholder initiatives.

What works?

Member services

Increasing use of digital channels to deliver services and information was a priority pre-pandemic; the crisis has accelerated this process. Necessity is the mother of invention; it has also been the mother of rapid implementation! The need to adapt and innovate is recognised, and the most commonly cited benefits for member services include:

- ***Better and more streamlined communication with members*** – E.g: web-site redesign and the creation of specific information 'hubs' and mobile Apps to boost visibility and accessibility of information.

- ***Improving relationships*** – E.g: generating better insight into member needs through strategic use of CRM and business intelligence software, resulting in better decisions on services and investments.

- ***Creating new communities*** – Digital tools have facilitated peer-to-peer networks. These are especially valued at a time of crisis will play a key role in helping members to seize new opportunities during the recovery phase.

- ***Ensuring financial sustainability*** – All of the above is aimed at boosting member retention and acquisition. There is an urgency around this, with 8 out of 10 EBMOs globally reporting a drop in income (ACT/EMP and IOE survey).

EBMOs will need to further adapt and innovate to help shape the future for people, businesses and society as a whole.

► ILO/IOE Changing Business report

CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDIES - Creating bespoke hubs and issue-specific web-pages

- **SEIFA (South Africa)** have created a number of independent web portals, covering areas such as targeted support for SME's, training, industry awards and the collective agreement between employer organizations within SEIFA membership and trade unions.

- **NHO (Norway)** have a dedicated portal called Arbinn for employer-related information. Through Arbinn, NHO members have access to practical guidance on topics such as the recruitment, employment and termination of staff, collective agreements and HSE requirements. Members can make use of templates and sample contracts that have been drawn up by in-house lawyers and also have access to risk management tools on occupational health and data protection.

- **VNO-NCW (Netherlands)** 'Corona Calculator' helps businesses navigate the COVID19 crisis with regular updates on allowances, credit options and tax deferrals available. It also enables employers to check their liquidity position and quickly identify what support they are entitled to, from financial institutions, as well as from government.

CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDIES - Developing mobile apps and using external platforms

- **GICAM (Cameroun)** launched a new mobile application called MyGicam which is available to download on PlayStore and AppStore. The App enables employers to join and become members in just one click and provides ongoing news on GICAM activities.

- **The Lewiatan Confederation (Poland)** App includes regular updates, with members receiving a weekly report every Monday, access to social media feeds and signposting to Lewiatan experts. The App also provides a voting function for members to feed into live consultations.

- **MAI (Israel)** make use of their own Telegram page for real-time updates, as a means of raising awareness of their activities and of engaging with both members and non-members as well as with external stakeholders and partners.

- **CCILCI (Ivory Coast)** created a WhatsApp group to improve communication and engagement with members. The aim is to share important information and circulate urgent updates at speed; it is also to drive better interaction with members. the response rate on this WhatsApp group is 10 times higher than it was when information was circulated purely by email.

What works?

External reach and impact

Reaching a new audience (and attracting new members)

- Driving member acquisition and promoting the take-up of services remains a priority. Digital channels are a platform for a new and proactive approach to raising visibility. This is encapsulated in the concept on *inbound marketing*, as an alternative to traditional, purely *outbound marketing*.

- *Inbound marketing* (focused on attracting customers through relevant and helpful content. This in turn helps to build trust and credibility. The challenges for EBMOs lie in:

  - Identifying and articulating the right 'hooks' that will speak to the EBMOs target audience;

  - Having the internal skills and capacity to sustain the regular generation of topical content and to 'curate' and filter information;

  - Effectively using search engine optimization to drive inbound traffic;

  - Capturing data through this inbound traffic and effective follow-up processes.

The broad concept behind inbound marketing - creating compelling and relevant content that draws people in - applies to other priority areas for EBMOs, particularly campaigning and advocacy and showcasing the positive role of business in society.

Practical tips – Harnessing 'inbound marketing' approach

NEW OUTREACH APPROACHES: INBOUND vs OUTBOUND MARKETING

INBOUND MARKETING

Inbound marketing is a business methodology that attracts the attention of prospects and new customers, by:

▶ Creating strategic content and experiences that are tailored to unique needs;

▶ Forming connections, answering questions, and solving problems;

▶ Using this quality content to pull people **IN** to your business and brand and build lasting relationships.

OUTBOUND MARKETING

Traditional marketing methods are about creating outbound messages and collateral, which involve:

▶ Buying advertising and email lists to distribute these outbound messages;

▶ Using other channels such as cold-calling, or sponsoring booths at tradeshows;

▶ Pushing marketing messages **OUT** to a given audience hoping for a response, leads, and new business.

What works?

External reach and impact

Boosting advocacy and stakeholder engagement

- *94% of EBMOs have increased their advocacy activities during the crisis, despite having to strip back to their financial and human capacity* (ILO-ACT/EMP / IOE survey). Digital channels have provided a way of engaging with members and rapidly identifying the most pressing challenges as well as proposed solutions.

- Digital tools have also provided a means of enhancing direct engagement with policy makers (It is easier to arrange an open discussion between a Minister and a selected group of EBMO members if the meeting is a virtual one rather than a physical!).

- Digital technology is being leveraged by EBMOs to work with stakeholders to provide practical support and products for members – for example, in areas like insurance.

- The feedback and insight from EBMOs around the world have identified 6 specific areas of opportunity in terms of digitalization as a means of boosting advocacy and campaigning impact (these 6 factors are outlined below).

Digital technology can be used to design new insurance products at a competitive and how to leverage digital tools to reach more people even in the rural areas.

▶ Reine Mbang Essobmadje, First Vice President of GICAM and President of the Digital Economy Commission[7]

1. **Enhancing data collection and evidence base** – Digital tools can support the creation of a strong evidence base to support policy calls to action and influence regulatory change. This includes capturing regular insight from business leaders, whilst avoiding 'survey fatigue' – for example by using online events and webinars to generate 'live' feedback.

2. **Spreading the word and telling good stories** – Digital channels are also a means of disseminating positive stories that showcase the role of business in society. As part of this, organisations are increasingly making effective use video as a means of making an emotional impact and of reaching out to a larger audience via social media channels.

3. **Direct engagement with policymakers and other influencers** – Digital channels are providing an additional means of engaging directly with political figures and other influencers. Journalists in particular use Twitter and other tools to monitor responses to government announcements and to identify points of view that are worth covering.

4. **Bringing members closer to the policy arena** – Digitalization is creating new ways of facilitating direct dialogue between members and policy makers. Digital channels have played a key role during the COVID19 crisis in ensuring that member could relay concerns and priorities to government officials; this in turn helped to shape support packages for businesses.

5. **Collating insight and intelligence** – In the same way that CRM systems are used to log information on members, they can also be used to maintain records of interventions with policy makers. Over time, this can generate data on common responses from different government departments and outcomes resulting from different types of advocacy approaches.

6. **Taking a lead on the digital economy** – Nurturing a sustainable and inclusive digital economy is a priority in most countries. FBMOs can play a leadership role here and in related areas such as the
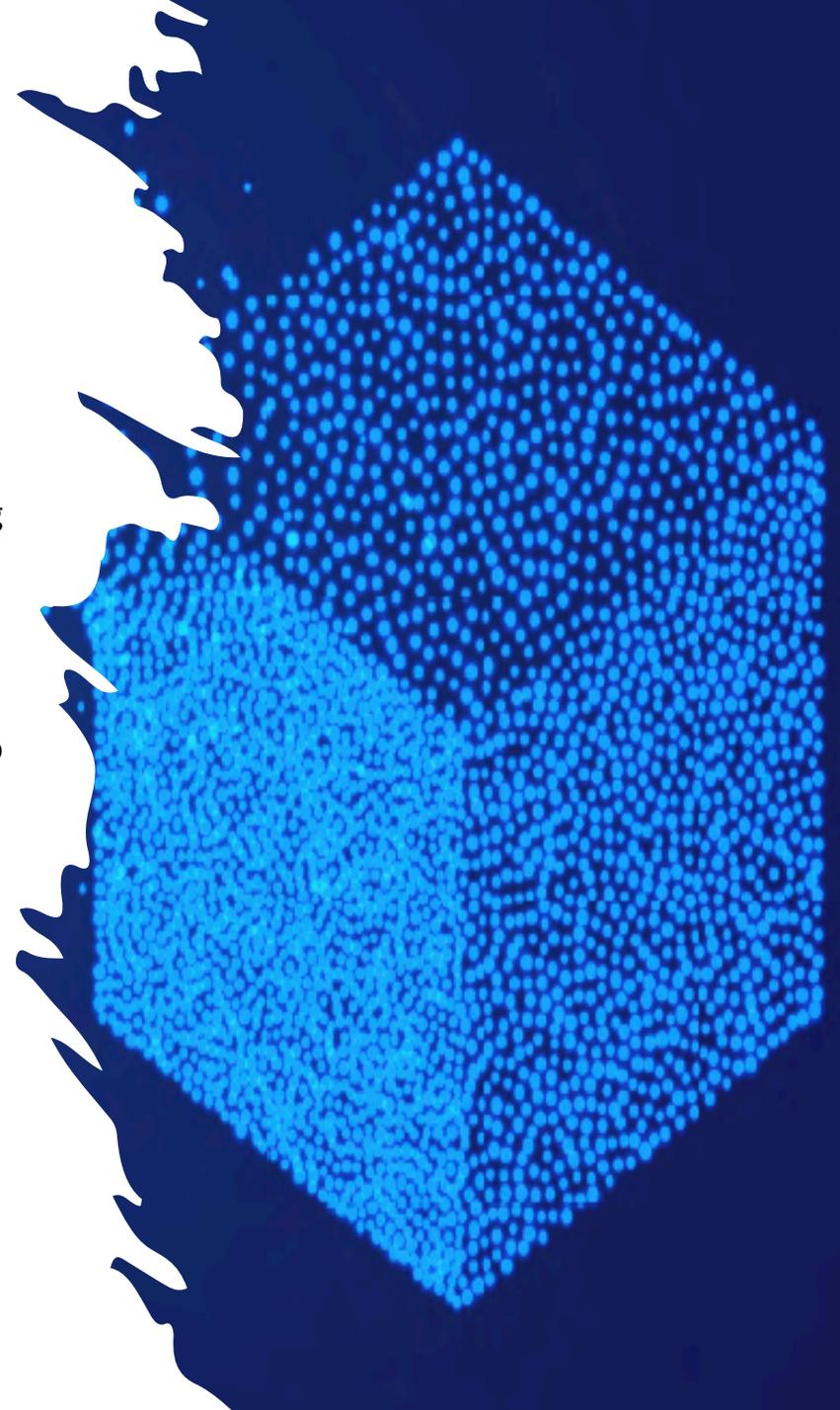
CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDIES – Using digital channels to boost advocacy and stakeholder engagement?

- **FKE (Kenya)** produced a digital member survey which proved crucial to better understanding of how businesses can emerge from the pandemic and the support required from government. Cash flow was the most urgent concern for 84% of businesses; digital tools also generated qualitative feedback to inform policy proposals around reducing corporate taxes, a 'Wage Support Fund' and credit facilities.

- **CBI (UK)** hosted the 'CBI at 10' webinars twice a week (Mondays and Wednesdays) as a means of driving regular engagement between members and policy makers/ Although the core themes were initially Covid-focused, the webinars have also focused on other priority issues for members, including the net-zero agenda, inclusion and diversity, Brexit developments and international trade.

- **FEU (Ukraine)** developed, in partnership with Danish Industries (DI), a Business Confidence Index Tool to assess the confidence of Ukrainian enterprises with regard to the preservation of existing jobs and the creation of new jobs. This provided a unique platform for engaging with policy makers. Digital tools provided the means to use 'a dripping strategy' – i.e. collecting regular insights and data throughout the year rather than focusing everything on annual think data collection.
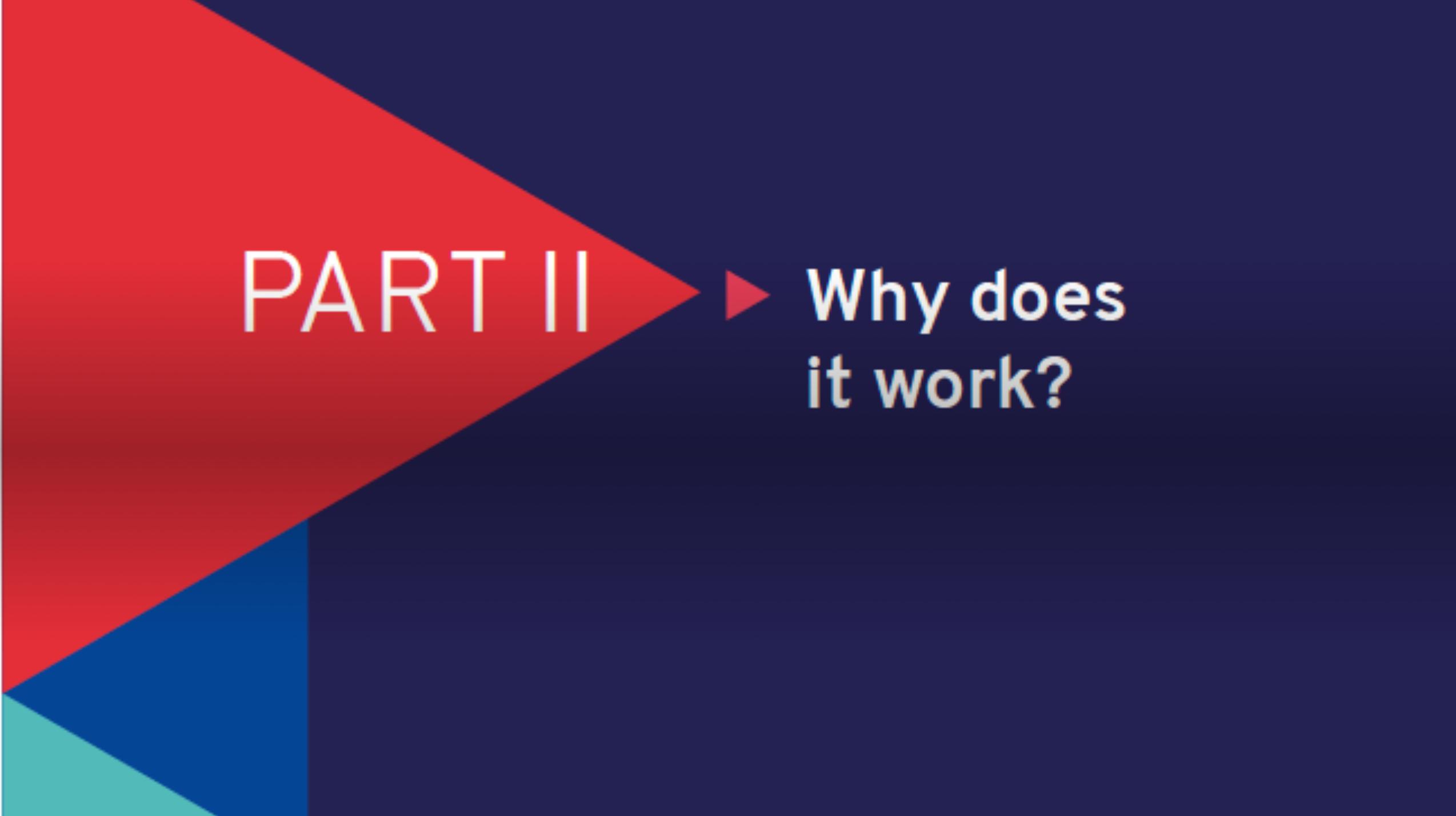
PART II

▶ Why does it work?

Part II – Why does it work?

In this section, we will also look beyond the EBMO ecosystem at digital lessons and experiences we can reflect on and learn from. We will break this analysis down into the three following priority areas:

1. **Governance** – What governance and decision-making infrastructure do EBMOs need for an effective and sustainable digitalization? What does an EBMO decision-making roadmap for digitalization look like?

2. **Products** – What have EBMOs done to determine what specific EBMO products and services are most amenable to digitalization? What new types of products and services are emerging? What infrastructure is needed?

3. **People** – How have EBMOs managed internal capability and capacity issues around digitalization? What are the implications for skills, EBMO leadership and organizational culture?

Governance and planning

Building plans and managing risk

Effective governance and decision-making infrastructure is needed to drive effective and sustainable digitalization. This is what underpins the kind of dynamic capability that EBMOs need in the fast-changing digital era.

- Strong strategic planning with clear milestones and a focus of incremental progress have also been flagged as big success factors by representative bodies at the forefront of making digital change happen.

- Good governance in EBMOs is about democratic and efficient decision-making but also effective risk management. And this is especially important within the context of the potential financial and reputational pitfalls associated with digital projects.

In this section we look at some of the key components of the 'digital roadmap' as flagged by EBMOs across the globe, specific practical tips for ensuring buy-in from the Board for harnessing external expertise and an overview of risk management procedures.

A digitalization roadmap (part 1)

Based on the aggregated feedback from EBMOs around the globe, below are examples of the practical steps that organizations have taken along the digital journey and lessons learnt in the process.

Starting from the right place	*Getting the green light*	*Building the operational plan*	*Ensuring collective buy-in*
EBMOs must be clear on where they are now and where they want to get to. The end-goal is better services / representation for members. This is the 'anchor'. Absolute member-centricity remains the driving force for all activities, whether digital or analogue!	Strategic plans and budgets will need to be approved by EBMO governing boards and committees. Securing this internal buy-in is essential and requires clear planning, persuasive communication and a compelling vision.	Having the right internal & external conversations will for part of this, and crystalize not only a clear vision of the end-goal but also staging posts along the way, clear Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), timescales, budgets and contingency plans.	Ensuring buy-in from the wider membership and – crucially – from EBMO staff is a vital component of the roadmap. People need to an opportunity to feed in and to understand why changes are needed what difference they will make.

A digitalization roadmap (part 2)

Staying 'in-step' with member needs

Regular 'check-ins' and progress reports will ensure that members are engaged throughout the process. This is also the opportunity for regular reminders of why it matters and the 'pain' of change is worth it!

Measuring progress to accelerate change

Robust data collection and analysis, learning from the results, and
quickly innovating at scale can make a huge difference to the long-term sustainability of the EBMO. This also accelerates change in overall mindset and organizational culture

Embracing Continuous improvement

Making the most of digital evolution requires regular upskilling, re-allocating resources and ongoing changes to operational delivery. A genuine commitment to continuous improvement is more important than ever.

1. ***Build context*** - Clearly explaining the need for digital evolution and investment is one immediate priority. EBMOs have built context by referencing examples of how other organisations are harnessing enhanced digital infrastructure and underlining the need to 'not be left behind'.

2. ***Creating an evidence base*** - EBMOs have used survey data from members to support they need for change and investment. Using external research on how the wider business community is investing in digital tools provides a further evidence base.

3. ***Using external experts -*** Harnessing the expertise and knowledge of digital experts can play a key role in making the case to the EBMO Board. The key here is to ensure that digital experts understand the specific needs of a membership organisation.

4. ***Creating an inner working group*** - EBMOs have created small working groups of selected Board members with a specific interest in digitalization. This working group can ensure that the rest of the Board is up to speed and accelerate change through peer-to-peer exchanges.

5. ***Establishing clear milestones and measurement*** - One way to reassure the Board is to present a credible strategic plan with clear milestones that the board can use to regularly take stock of progress and ensure that things are going in the right direction.

6. ***Selling an aspirational vision*** - Part of making the case can involve arguing that digital investment and organisational change are essential and is non-negotiable. There is also a positive hand to be played, which involves creating us a vivid and aspirational vision.

7. ***Managing expectations and risk*** – There is always a need to flag potential challenges and problems and to manage expectations accordingly. The feedback from EBMOs is that most Boards will be understanding as long as the right contingency plans are in place.
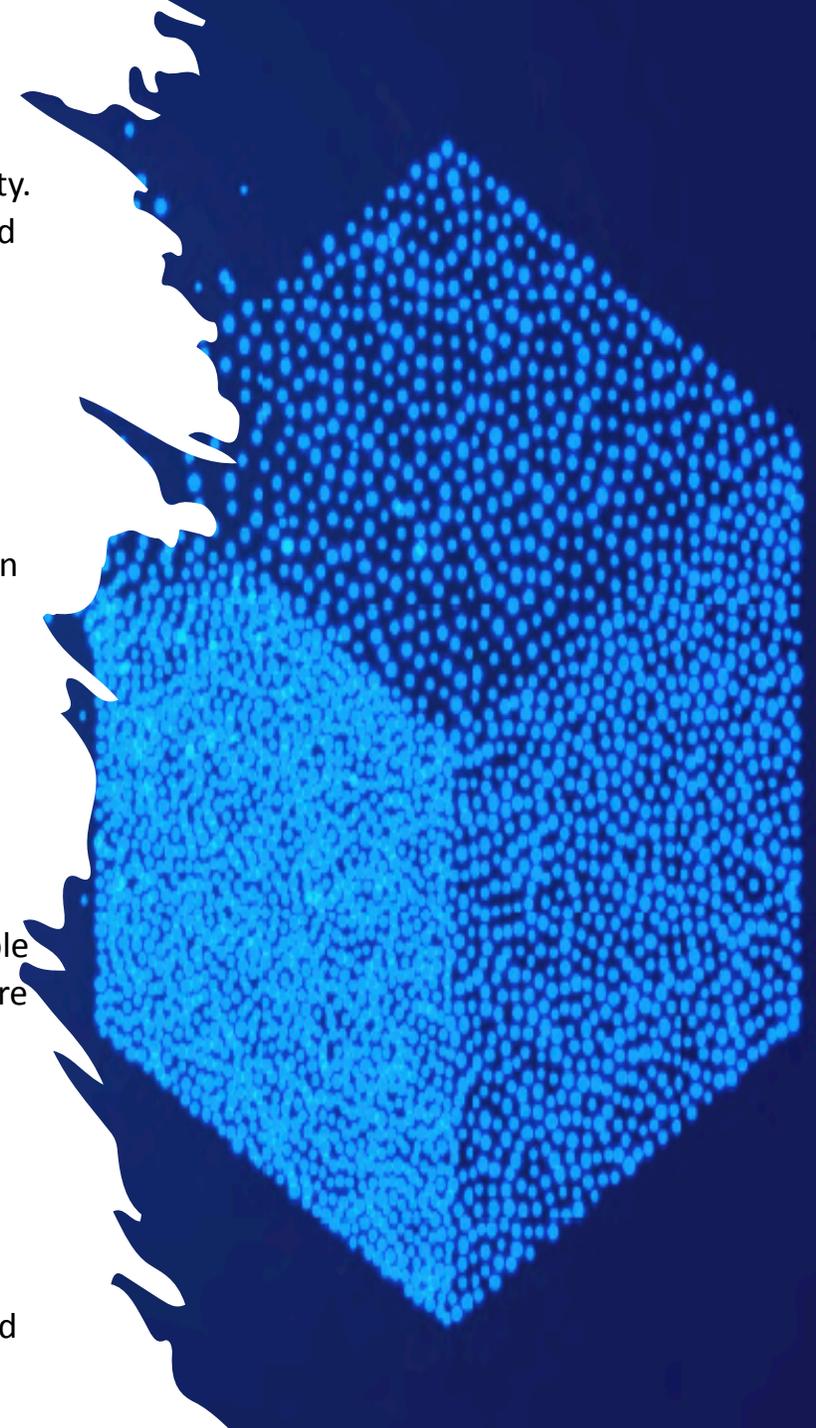
Practical tips: Managing the risks of digitalization

What are some of the specific risks that increased digitalization can create and how are EBMOs looking to mitigate these risks? The table opposite picks up on some of the main risks and concerns flagged by EBMO leaders, as well as examples of mitigation responses.

MANAGING AND MITIGATING DIGITALIZATION RISKS FOR EBMOS	
RISK	**MITIGATION**
▶ Cyber-security (risk of being hacked, risk of members being hacked)	▶ Reputable IT partner to help manage risk and conduct regular reviews ▶ Crisis management protocols and contingency plans
▶ Data protection breach by the EBMO (ie non-compliance with legal requirements, unauthorized use of data from CRM)	▶ Staff training, regular reminders and briefings ▶ Using external data protection experts to review current procedures
▶ Data protection breach by members, resulting in reputational damage	▶ Member guidance and regular legal updates ▶ Codes of Practice and internal disciplinary procedures ▶ Media management expertise
▶ Budget over-spend and unforeseen costs	▶ Effective and realistic budgetary planning ▶ Clarity in contractual terms with external providers ▶ Contingency budget
▶ Obsolescence, emerging technical problems	▶ Due diligence on technology partner ▶ Clarity on 'break clauses' with technology providers ▶ Horizon scanning on emerging digital tools and options.
▶ Lack of internal skills and capability	▶ Internal skills audit and recruitment of right staff and skills to address gaps ▶ Upskilling and retraining for existing staff ▶ Use of contract/contingent labour

Practical tips: Identifying the right external providers

Good governance also involves conducting due diligence on potential partners and leading a thorough tendering process. For EBMOs, one of the biggest challenges is finding the right technology or digital experts to work with.

BOX 10 - Harnessing external expertise: Practical tips

Based on the experiences of EBMOs around the world, here are some practical tips on how to identify and select external experts to work with:

▶ **Run a competitive tender exercise** – whilst this may be time-consuming initially, this can also play a key role in demonstrating due diligence and in selecting the external providers to work with. Typically EBMOs will identify a shortlist of three or four potential suppliers.

▶ **Be clear on the selection criteria** - what are you really looking for from your external providers? This will usually include evidence of 'cultural fit' and a clear understanding of the needs of a membership organizations as well as a proven track record and expertise.

▶ **Be clear on budgetary constraints** – this may mean that some suppliers opt out of pitching for the work, but it is crucial to be clear on budgets from the outset. Pre-empting potential risks and external factors that could cause delays and overspend is also a key element to bear in mind when selecting who to work with (ie how have they responded to setbacks and unforeseen obstacles in other projects they have worked on?).

▶ **Take up references** - speaking to existing or previous clients is an important part of the process. One of the challenges is ensuring that at least some of these external clients have similar needs and budgets to those of the EBMO. The key here is to ensure that the level of service provided is replicable and will meet the very specific requirements of a membership body.

▶ **Be clear on who you will actually be working with** – the success of the project will ultimately come down to the individual person or people leading it from the provider's perspective. Often this is not the same people as those who are actually pitching for the work. It is crucial to have confidence in the individuals who will be working with you on a day-to-day basis and to be reassured that they will work well with the individuals leading the project from the EBMO side.

▶ **Pre-empt maintenance and support provisions** - With most digital technologies, vendors make most of their money through the after-sales maintenance and support. For example, building a website is a one-time sale, but maintenance will be needed for years. It is easy to underestimate these costs; EBMOs need to factor this into initial discussions with potential external providers.

Why does it work?

Products

Building plans and managing risk

For many EBMOs, the digital journey is still at an early stage and the focus is on quick-wins and incremental changes to existing products and services. Enhancing current products and services will mean having the right conversations at an early stage of any new digital revamp, in particular:

- Conversations with members, including members of different sizes and from different industrial sectors. What is your experience engaging with the EBMO? What would improve your membership experience and how can we make things easier for you to access information and services?

- Conversations with EBMO staff across all departments. What frustrations and 'blockers' do you currently experience in your day-to-day work? What would make your working life better and easier?

These two elements will help to answer the 'where are we now?' question. Representative organizations have used other tools and mechanisms for gaining practical insight on the effectiveness of current processes and information flows. Examples include the ILO ACT/EMP Transformation Readiness Assessment (TRA) tool.

Practical Tips – Delivering 'quick wins'

**BOX 12 – Practical tips for delivering quick wins and making incremental progress**

Based on the latest feedback from EBMOs around the world, the most common areas for incremental progress include:

▶ **Getting social** - Enhancing visibility and presence on social networks and adapting existing publications for digital platforms.

▶ **Visual impact** - Using more 'dynamic' graphics and visuals to grab attention and make an impact, including using high quality photos to enhance visual impact and convey the personality and culture of the EBMO.

▶ **Video and live streaming** - Making more use of video to convey messages as an alternative (or to supplement) written updates and live streaming of member meetings and events on Facebook, YouTube and other platforms.

▶ **Refining online training and blended learning** - Continuing to refine and enhance delivery of online and blended training, with the aim of increasing uptake, revenue and positive feedback from participants.

▶ **Segmentation** - Better segmenting of member support services, to reflect specific needs of different types of member (for instance by sector, size or growth aspiration) and targeting specific functions within these businesses or member associations – for example through the creation of targeted portals, networks and support services.

CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDIES – Taking stock of current digital products and services

- **REC (UK)** used the 'Hot Jar' tool to track how members were currently accessing and navigating the organization's website. The tool essentially helps to 'shadow' members using the site to clearly map their browsing through the site and to identify any accessibility issues.

- **SNEF (Singapore)** use social channels and digital tools as a 'listening' mechanism, to review the member experience and understand what is working and what can be improved in the future. This ongoing feedback loop is crucial as the view is that EBMOs have 'no choice' but to continue driving digital adoption to remain relevant.
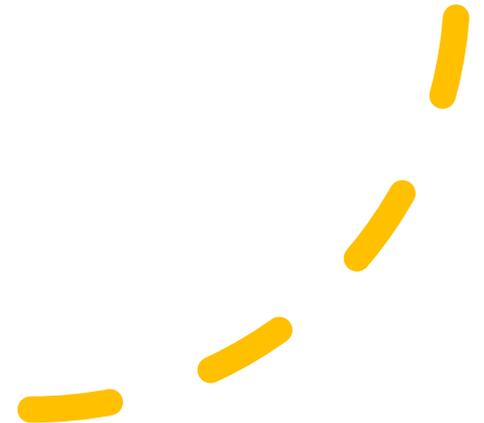
CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDIES – Using digital tools to improving advice to members

- **BUSA (South Africa)** partnered with the Commission for Conciliation Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA), the independent dispute resolution body, to develop a new Web Tool aimed specifically at small business leaders and providing up-to-date information on latest Employment Law changes, as well as contract templates and information sheets.

- **FCEF (Fiji)** helped to develop a bespoke support offering for small businesses - the Fiji Enterprise Engine (FEE). In partnership with Market Development Facility Fiji and Australia Pacific Training Coalition, this initiative includes free online business coaching as well as a business webinar series to help businesses seize new opportunities.

- **EFP (Pakistan)** run a series of online Forums aimed at experts in industrial relations, HR and Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) working for member businesses. The aim is to encourage peer-to-peer exchanges between functional experts, including through WhatsApp Groups.

- **OEM (North Macedonia)** developed a new salary survey tool to help enterprises determine competitive pay levels for specific job categories. The survey provides valuable benchmarking information and provides a means for the EBMO to actively engage individuals and HR teams within member companies.

Why does it work?

People

People at the heart of change: Skills, leadership and the digital mindset

One of the biggest success factors in any tech-driven change is not about the technology itself: It is about getting the people side of things right.

This is a consistent theme raised by EBMOs around the world and at different stages of the digital journey. It is also a common concern across the wider business community with demand for digital skills, external expertise and implementation support growing exponentially. Digitalization has significant implications for organizational culture and structure as well as for the skills and attributes of senior leaders as well as other staff.

In this section, we seek answers to the following questions:

- What does ongoing digital evolution mean for internal skills needs and for how EBMOs are structured?
- What global networks can EBMOs tap into for good practice intelligence on people-centric issues such as recruitment, internal skills development and leadership?
- What are the wider implications of digitalization for the culture of EBMOs and their ability to stay relevant at a time of accelerating change?

CASE STUDIES

**CASE STUDIES – How are EBMOs approaching evolving digital skills needs?**

- **SNEF (Singapore)** have instigated a reverse mentoring program (i.e. young people mentoring more senior ones) so that skills and awareness can be spread across the organization and to ensure that senior leaders are up to speed with digital trends. SNEF see digitalization as a means of enhancing internal infrastructure and of modernizing the organization in a way that also helps to attract new talent.

- **CGEM (Morocco)** have boosted internal skills as a means of managing the digitalization process and ensuring that progress is sustainable over time. This has been a case of making incremental steps forward, by initially training one staff member up and subsequently disseminating some of this this new expertise across the organization.

- **ECOP (Philippines)** have not only focused on skills development for internal staff, but also on the evolving competency needs of associates – particularly trainers delivering ECOP training. Online delivery has created a need for new approaches, not only linked to the practicalities of digital delivery tools but also to the challenge of maintaining participant engagement when training is delivered on online platforms rather than face to face.

Practical tips – Addressing internal digital skills needs

BOX 14 – Practical tips for addressing internal digital skills needs

The insight from EBMOs across the globe has identified a range of proactive responses to the internal skills challenges that form an integral part of the digital journey:

► *Conducting internal 'skills-audits'* – The permanent secretariat within many EBMOs is relatively small, but reviewing what skills can be tapped into or built on to facilitate the implementation of increased digital delivery is an important step for organizations of all sizes. This can be done through a process of self-assessment. For larger representative bodies, line managers have been tasked with reviewing digital literacy and technological skills within specific teams and departments. Organizations with an internal HR function have used this to conduct a full skills audit to identify gaps and training needs.

► *Evaluating collateral skills needs* - Digitalization not only intensifies the need for technological expertise and specific digital skills; it creates a series of collateral skills needs. For example, the more digital channels are used to capture data points, the more scaling up data analytics expertise become paramount as an enabler of increased revenue and targeted member engagement. Adapting communication skills to suit increasing use of digital channels (including the whole 'Tone of Voice' evolution highlighted in Part I) is a further example of the domino effect on organizational skills needs.

► *Creating a reality check* – Skills issues are not just an after-thought; in some instances they will be a determining factor in whether an organization gives the green light to any new digital project. This is a theme across the wider business community and is seen as one of the main 'drag factors' on digital adoption and technology-driven transformations. For example, 42 per cent of respondents to the global McKinsey say they have stuck with the digital status quo because of the huge difficulties in sourcing the talent they need.

► *A gradual approach to re-skilling* - Making incremental steps forward has been a way of boosting the internal skills and ensuring that progress on digital implementation is sustainable over time. Specific examples from EBMOs include initially training one staff member up to the required level of expertise, before rolling out development opportunities to other colleagues. Other examples include promoting internal sharing of expertise, through internal briefing sessions and 'working lunches'.

► *Harnessing external expertise* – To compensate for a lack of internal skills and expertise, the option for organizations is to use external consultants or contract staff who are bought in for a limited period of time to manage the implementation of a new digital initiative. The challenge of finding the right external expertise to help at the initial strategic development stages of a digital project are outlined in Part 2.1. Using contract and freelance for ongoing implementation of activities or specific projects is also an option.

► *Recruiting new staff* – Some representative organizations have recognized the need to recruit new permanent staff with the technological and project management expertise needed to drive effective implementation and continuous improvement. Digitalization is also impacting on the recruitment and selection criteria for more traditional roles with EBMOs - for example, marketing and communications staff with a track-record of harnessing digital tools or events staff with specific expertise in running online events. The challenge for EBMOs is how to compete for skills and expertise that are in high demand across most sectors of the economy.
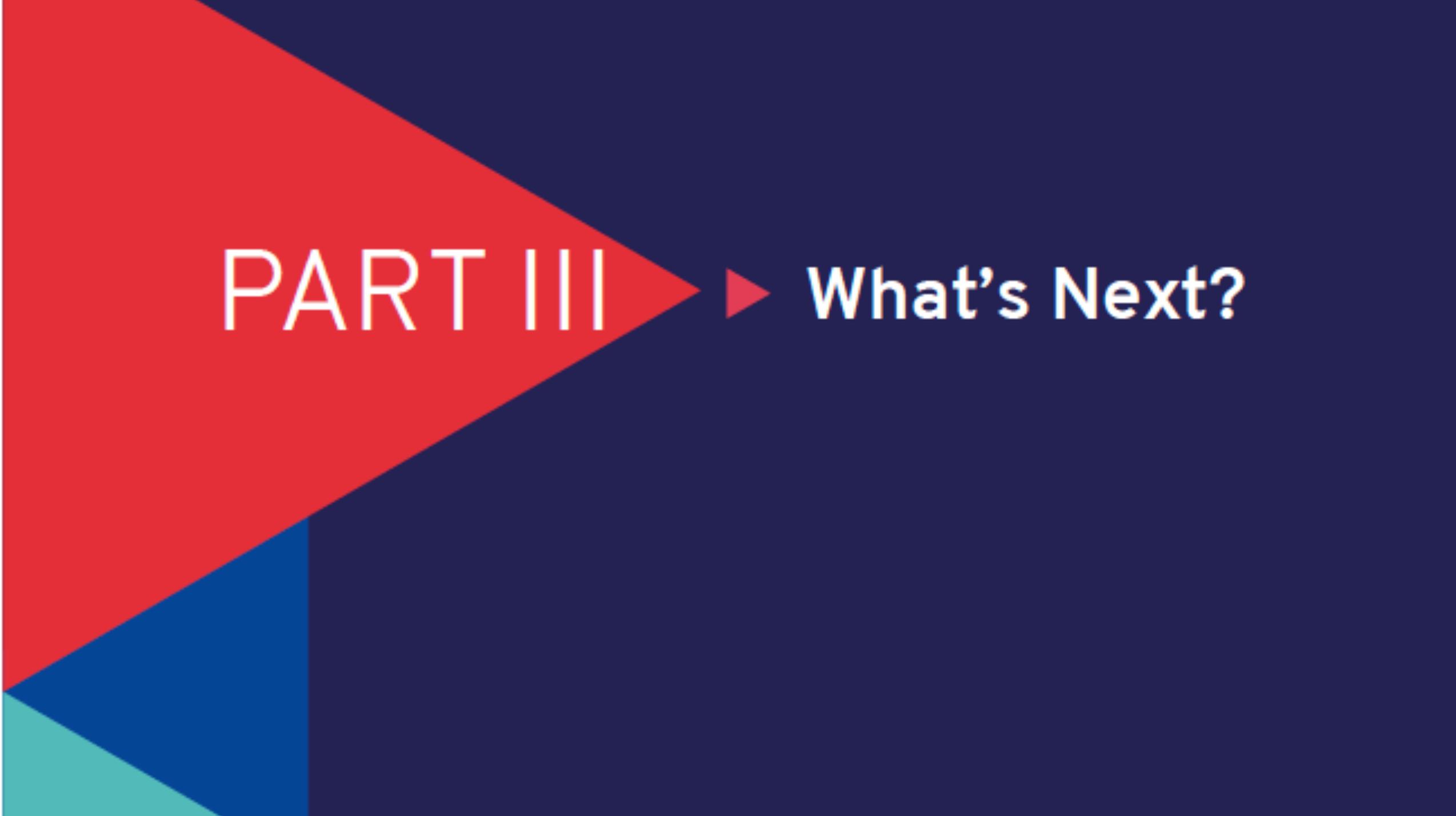
PART III ▶ What's Next?

Part III – What's next?

How will digital technology evolve over the coming years and how can EBMOs ensure that they are ahead of the game in pre-empting new delivery channels as well as evolving needs of members? The priority is also to ensure that new tools and channels work alongside more traditional service delivery models. In this section we focus on:

- *Priorities for future digitalization* – What's next on the change agenda and what specific services and procedures are likely to see a digital make-over in coming years?

- *Taking a lead of the (digital) future of work* – The practical implications of a fast-changing world of work has been a hot-topic for several years. This presents an opportunity for EBMOs to ensure that the voice of business remains at the forefront of debate and to relay latest intelligence on digital trends as a service to members.

- *Recommendations for action* – Based on the emerging challenges flagged by representative business organizations around the world, what are some of the actions that EBMOs, in co-operation with national governments and international institutions, can take to ensure that digital adoption drives inclusive and sustainable growth?

PART III ▶ What's Next?

What's Next?

Priorities for future digitalization

Digitalization as part of the wider digital transformation

Digitalization will continue to form part of the wider fundamental transformation process of how organizations operate and deliver value; a process EBMOs increasingly recognize as necessary in order to remain relevant in a fast-changing business and social landscape. The need to continuously innovate and adapt is fully recognized.

The ILO's DaaSA research found the "60/30/10 rule" to be commonly accepted by EBMOs: 60% of the recipe being the result of people buy-in, 30% the result of adjusting business processes, and 10% the result of finding the right technological solution. This echoes the findings in the 'Why it Works' section.

> The current focus on digitalization signals a profound shift in attitude and outlook within many EBMOs. It is about adopting a new mindset predicated on the fact that change is inevitable and will only accelerate.
>
> ► Mohammed Touzani, CGEM (Morocco)

Priorities for future digitalization

What's next for online learning?

Is remote learning a sustainable concept going forward? Yes, particularly as the shift to online platforms predates the pandemic. At the same time:

- EBMOs have underlined a number of emerging challenges linked to costings, content, quality of the online delivery (including training the trainers) and adapting to potential barriers to participant engagement that is inherent in remote learning.

- Some EBMOs feel that they will need to show a clear price decrease for courses that were previously delivered in a classroom. One way forward is to reframe the debate around outcome : The quality and value of the learning is what really matters, not how it is delivered.

- EBMOs are working with ITCILO to harness 'Asynchronous' learning programs. These enable participants to leverage technology and interact directly with the content in their own time, without real-time interaction with a facilitator/trainer.

> Digitalization in practice is an ongoing process, including technology upskilling for internal teams and enhancing digital skillsets of trainers. Check-ins and feedback from delegates and trainers is also critical[32].
>
> ▶ Lisa Lynn, Senior Executive, Operations & Projects, Ibec (Ireland)

What's Next?

Priorities for future digitalization

The new frontiers: Artificial Intelligence (AI), Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR) and Blockchain

- Some EBMOs are looking to AI-powered chatbots to answer relatively common member questions (including legal queries). There are many things to consider with this, particularly with regards to insurance that covers legal advice.

- How might other high-profile forces of change like Blockchain impact? As well as the more obvious impact on accounting, cyber-security and supply chains, Blockchain has potential implications for HR management, in areas such as employment-history checks, data security, certifications and payroll management. An example of adoption benefits is the ITCILO's own use of blockchain technology to certify its digital certificates, using the [Accredible platform](#). This is potentially something that national EBMOs could use for the own training and qualification certifications.

- Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) are already being used to replicate physical settings for training purposes. It is especially useful when the settings are remote and as a way of immersing participants in a virtual environment using holograms. AR and VR are likely to have the greatest impact on business functions such as training, work collaboration, service delivery and engagement with customers. These are strategic areas of work for EBMOs.

CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDIES – How are EBMOs planning to take online learning to the next stage?

- **IBEC (Ireland)** have harnessed tools for online voting and active engagement (Kahoot, Padlet, Mentimeter, Mind Mapping), conducted a resources review (inclusion of mixed media, videos, Ted Talks and articles), optimised delivery materials and reframed structure and course duration.

- **ECOP (Philippines)** will continue to drive delivery and engagement through the pioneering eCampus platforms that were developed with ITCILO. Future plans include the development of asynchronous learning programs (where participants leverage technology to interact directly with the content in their own time, without real-time interaction with a trainer.)

- **CGEM (Morocco)** have instigated a number of new initiatives in the training arena, with a specific focus on peer-to-peer learning. This includes the launch of a social academy that will be largely driven by digital delivery. Other initiatives include a new academy for entrepreneurs which will be a hub for sharing new ideas and providing support to new start-ups and to the next generation of business leaders in Morocco. Digital tools provide the means of delivering these new initiatives.

CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDIES – *Using AI to enhance member services*

- **MEF (Malaysia)** - The Amelia 'Virtual Assistant' chatbot is geared up to answer questions that MEF members have pertaining to employment law and regulations. The underlying aim is to promote well-being and equality in the workplace and to ensure that 'fair and just practices are being carried out by all employers'.

- **NHO (Norway)** – As part of the work to provide members with access to information whenever they need it, NHO is looking at AI driven chat-bots as a means of answering most common legal and regulatory questions.

> ❝❝ AI powered chatbots are a means of complementing the work of industrial relations experts and of providing member companies with easy access to information on employment law and regulations.
>
> ▶ Musfirah Liyana Mustapa Kamar, MEF (Malaysia)

Practical tips: Developing a 'digital mindset'

BOX 21: Practical tips for EBMOs - How to develop a 'digital mindset'?

Based on the insight from EBMOs and sectoral organizations, here are six ways that representative employer organizations are looking to embed a 'digital mindset' within their organization:

▶ *Continuous improvement* - Building a culture of continuous improvement - reflecting member feedback and a changing external environment – is already a priority for EBMOs. This includes a focus on personal development as well as a culture of regularly reviewing activities and performance. This is a crucial building block for continuing to harness new digital opportunities.

▶ *New approaches to recruitment and development* - Hiring for digital mindset and on a willingness to learn and adapt are important ways forward. Providing learning and development opportunities for staff on digital adoption and on making the most of new delivery channels are tools for embedding new approaches and mindset.

▶ *Leadership and governance* - Any sustainable mindset change must be modelled from the very top of the organization. Embracing digital evolution and being sufficiently informed to ask the right questions are hallmarks of future leaders. On governance, some representative organizations are evolving the composition of their advisory board to include external experts - Including from the digital arena.

▶ *Looking outwards to drive innovation* - As well looking inwards at how digitalization is benefiting members, EBMOs are looking outwards at how other types of organizations are using digital adoption to boost the client and customer experience. Learnings and innovation will come from regular exchanges within the EBMO ecosystem as well as by looking beyond it.

▶ *Recognizing the importance of data* - Digitalization is a means of generating new data to enhance the performance of EBMOs and their understanding of evolving member needs. A recognition that more consistent and focused data management practices can boost services and increase EBMO membership, resources and influence will fuel the digital mindset.

What's Next?

Taking a lead on the (digital) future of work

How can EBMOs take a lead on the (digital) future of work?

The practical implications of a fast-changing world of work for employers, workers and for policy makers has been a hot-topic for several years. But, the global pandemic has radically accelerated the pace of change and greatly intensified the focus on workplace trends and the role of digital innovation.

- This presents a unique and multi-faceted opportunity for EBMOs to ensure that the voice of business remains at the forefront of the future of work debate, in a way that impacts positively on public policy and on the reputation of business.

- EBMOs are developing and/or curating research on how digital developments will impact on services and the workplace and using this intelligence as a practical service to members. This same intelligence can inform EBMOs' own digital strategies.

- A survey from the Boston Consulting Group shows that a a significant proportion of managers and employees – just under 50% – are unsure of how the digital transformation will affect them personally when it comes to their jobs, career prospects, and pay. EBMOs and the wider business community can be a source of thought leadership and reassurance.

CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDIES – Taking a lead on the digital future of work

- **GICAM (Cameroon)** have established a Digital Economy Commission. The core aim is to develop concrete proposals for accelerating the digital transformation of the Cameroonian economy, including evaluating specific training and support needs in areas like web-site management, social media and data protection, promoting new business models and encouraging online exchanges between companies.

- **Confindustria (Italy)** has positioned the voice of business at the forefront of the future-focused agenda through a high-profile thought-leadership publication entitled '*The Courage of the Future. Italy 2030-2050'. T*he core message is that the economic and social fortunes of the Italy of the future will be defined by today's choices and behaviours. The publication includes concrete proposals with regards to the impact of technologies on work, as well as on other areas such as climate change and demographic trends.

- **FEC (DRC)** have consistently made the case for high-speed bandwidth connectivity and for reducing the cost of a broadband connection which is seen as prohibitively high with telecommunication companies. Part of this campaigning work on the digital environment has seen FEC underline the barriers being created for specific groups within the business community such as women entrepreneurs.

What's Next?

Recommendations for action

Recommendations for action

Based on the aggregated insight from EBMOs around the world, here are some common 'calls to action' that can boost digital adoption as part of the broader recovery agenda:

For EBMOs' work with national governments

- ***Business support will unleash the digital dividend*** - EBMOs across the globe are working with national governments to create vibrant post-pandemic digital economies. This requires targeted support for the business community; and this should be seen as an investment rather than a cost. Going forward there is a strong case to be made for this support infrastructure to include specific provisions for EBMOs who can create an ongoing trickle down and multiplier effect amongst the businesses they represent.

- ***Enhance working relationships with business*** – The pandemic has acted as a reminder of the key convening role that EBMOs play and the benefits of tripartite and bi-partite collaboration. But, the overall picture is mixed with regards to the relationships between government and business. A successful reboot of national economies and labour markets will hinge on positive relationships based on respect, evidence and trust. This in turn will fuel the kind of digital adoption that can boost productivity, competitiveness and job creation.

What's Next?

Recommendations for action

Recommendations for action

For EBMOs' work with global support programmes and institutions:

- *Drive the great digital exchange* - One of the opportunities going forward is to facilitate bilateral or multilateral exchanges between EBMOs at different stages of the digital journey. This will build on and drive forward existing capacity building activities and peer to peer support mechanisms.

- *Develop new tools to support new approaches* – A number of EBMOs referred to the huge benefits they had gained from turn-key data collection and management tools, learning platforms and regular training programs. To be successful support interventions need to be based on needs, allow for iterative process and peer learning, build in quick incremental solutions within a medium-term strategy.

What's Next?

Recommendations for action

Recommendations for action

For EBMOs' work with members and the private sector

- ***Pre-empt the evolving business and leadership landscape*** – The question that many EBMOs are asking themselves is 'what will future business leaders expect from a membership organization?' The challenge is to remain relevant in a fast-changing business landscape and to future-proof services and membership benefits. Digitalization forms an important part of this.

- ***Rise to the intensifying communications challenge*** – The digital era has implications for the way people want to receive information – shorter bite-size chunks available on a 24/7 basis, with rapid responses to specific queries and more personalized engagement opportunities. As well as implications for the channels and tools that EBMOs use, it is important to not lose sight of the fact that this may impact on the content and substance of what future business leaders require.

- ***Take a breath*** – EBMOs have been responding to the needs of members and to the evolving COVID19 landscape with absolute urgency. The pace has been unrelenting. But it will be vital to take a breath, to create some space, to reflect on what services need to be prioritized and what channels should be used to deliver them. In an innovation-rich environment it is important to pause, review what works and what doesn't and take decision on that basis.

Some final thoughts…

- The collaborative activities taken forward over the course of the global pandemic must be built on during the recovery phase to ensure that the digital era is one in which individual workers as well as employers (and the EBMOs who represent them) can thrive.

- Peer-to-peer exchanges between EBMOs across the globe and the collective activities undertaken by ITCILO and other global actors will be more important than ever as a mechanism for learning from good practice and from each other.

- The "Taking Stock of the Digital Dividend' report is intended to support and complement other guides for EBMOs such as the Manual on Membership strategies and policies published by the ITCILO and the Dutch Employers Cooperation Programme (DECP), the ILO-ITCILO ACT/EMP Guide "Driving up Resilience" as well as the ILO ACT/EMP project on data as a strategic asset for capacity building of EBMOs (DaaSA).

More info: https://www.itcilo.org/teams/employers-activities

Taking Stock of the Digital Dividend

Where are EBMOs on the digitalization journey and what's next?

"The Effective Employers' Organization - A series of "hands-on" guides to building and managing effective employers' organizations"