

The Future of Work

At a basic level, the WorkSpace of the future is an open, flexible, and highly connected working environment in which employees enjoy mobility, offsite collaboration, and secure access to the right tools and data to fulfill their roles with speed and ease. This is critical for employee happiness and their overall quality and productivity. Failing to equip employees with modern tools and resources in general leads to their frustration and eventual departure.



Many organizations have already begun implementing the WorkSpace of the future. Intel's SRR3 building in Bengalur is a smart building with employee satisfaction as its ultimate goal. It uses machine-learning algorithms that control air conditioning and ventilation systems, renewable energy sources, and intelligent hot desking. The latter integrates data from occupancy sensors installed in each workstation and triangulates it with the cubicle reservation system. In Amsterdam, Deloitte's the Edge building combines a smart collaboration working environment with sustainability. The building system ensures optimum use of resources (such as water and energy) and is equipped with personalized workspaces. Via a mobile app, employees can find parking spaces, free desks, and other colleagues, as well as customize temperature and light levels.

MOBILITY: FLEXIBLE WORKING ENVIRONMENTS

While most enterprises have a traditional mobile workforce (for example, the field and sales force), the wave of digital technology adoption is creating a new type of mobile workers who are not bound to their office desks as they were in the past.

The benefits are multiple. A Deloitte survey shows flexible working is strongly linked to improved performance and employee retention. At least 80% of Millennials in highly flexible environments believe it has a positive impact on well-being, productivity, and work engagement. Flexibility is not for all companies, but it can play an important role in employees' decision to take or leave a job.

In the WorkSpace of the future, employees adopt a device-agnostic approach and use spaces as they see fit. Regular PCs are still a valuable working tool, especially for complex and demanding tasks, but there's a growing interest in mobile form factors, such as convertibles, tablets, and smartphones.

HIGHLY COLLABORATIVE WORKING ENVIRONMENTS

The African proverb "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together" fits well with the future of WorkCulture.

Collaboration is the essence of productivity and innovation in the workplace, and it is the glue that keeps employees highly engaged and motivated towards a common goal. It is the heart and soul of corporate WorkCulture.

According to the Harvard Business Review Analytic Service Survey, March 2018, companies with a high degree of connectivity and collaboration are more than twice as likely to report a better market position than their peers. Furthermore, 40% of highly connected companies say their revenue grew more than 10% over the past two years, versus only 29% of those with poor collaboration. A connected and collaborative workforce empowered with the right data helps companies to operate at speed.

The same Harvard survey shows that a collaborative culture must be enabled by technology, confirmed by 70% of their respondents with highly engaged environments. In companies with low connectivity and collaboration, 72% strongly agree that having outdated technology is making it harder to retain employees with high-value skills and experience.

Solutions are becoming highly sophisticated platforms through some advanced features:

- Intuitive content-sharing solutions to enable people to share information and work together more effectively and help new hires find resources easily.
- Intranet and social networks to motivate employees to make social connections and build fellowship.
- Intelligent conferencing solutions supporting functionality such as digital assistants and voice recognition technology to perform tasks such as auto wakeup of a communications device upon entering a room, auto login, calendaring, and scheduling meetings. Looking ahead, more advanced functionality could include background noise suppression, augmenting solutions with leading-edge technology such as AI, biometrics, facial recognition, virtual/augmented reality, and intelligent voice/video framing.

Conferencing solutions are vital for employee collaboration. Since employees spend around 16% of their working week in meetings and 65% of them collaborate multiple times a day, intelligent conferencing solutions can effectively deliver a positive user experience in the way workers schedule, set up, access, and work together.

INNOVATION AND TALENT DEVELOPMENT

Employee training is an important part of career progression. Employees of all ages and qualifications are brushing up their skills whenever they can and however they can. Adaptability is essential for organizations as they navigate the changes ahead, and individual employees are responsible for acquiring new skills and experiences throughout their careers.

Organizations are developing their own training programs and participating in digital cooperatives that advance digital skills. The goal is not only to bridge the talent gap and bring innovation, but the opportunity for employers to better engage with their employees. Training programs are increasingly using open community platforms, such as hackerspaces and fab labs for advanced technologies (for example, Chevron and GE are investing in their own fab labs), and are partnering with schools and universities to engage with top talent early.

The ability of companies to drive innovation across their organization is vital, which places greater emphasis on the skills, management, and people supporting this process. According to IDC surveys, organizations prefer to use internal programs for innovation, particularly through innovation centers and internal crowdsourcing (often used by high-profile companies such as Coca Cola, Hyundai, and Unilever), while customer participation is only used by a third of companies. Partnerships with startups are also becoming a common practice for large and well-established organizations with a need for speed, disruption, and diversity thinking in their WorkCulture.

NEW TECHNOLOGY CONSUMPTION MODELS

The switch to a subscription-based consumption model of technology is gaining wide acceptance across many organizations and reveals a cultural shift from “owning” to “using” assets. This is manifest in the growing demand for software as a service (SaaS) solutions, dominated by application purchases (e.g., ERM, CRM, and collaborative applications) and for infrastructure as a service (IaaS).

MORE THAN A TECHNOLOGY REVOLUTION

While many technologies are playing a part in the concept of the Future of Work, mobility and collaboration solutions are the most empowering at present.

As companies transform their workspaces, we are witnessing not only a technology revolution, but also fundamentally a cultural and organizational transformation with employees at its heart. A successful Future of Work strategy takes a holistic integrated approach and addresses questions such as how to empower and trust employees to work anywhere and connect with customers and partners alike, how HR can retain top talent, how organizations can retrain skills and bring innovation, and how robotics and cognitive computing can augment the future workforce.