

Key Issues for the High-Performance Workplace, 2009

Tom Austin

The high-performance workplace focuses on how to increase the performance of people, whether they are employees, partners, suppliers, distributors, agents or customers. High-performance workplace strategies go beyond productivity to encompass effectiveness, innovation and business transformation.

ANALYSIS

This document is related to five others, all of which highlight our research agenda for the high-performance workplace (HPW). Gartner clients that want to understand our research agenda further should review all five documents to determine if our research plans coincide with their needs.

This research note establishes context by providing a high level overview of what HPW is about. It also highlights the two key client-investment areas (projects) on which we are focusing our research — Measuring Workplace Performance and Improving Workplace Performance. It also enumerates the specific, difficult questions we plan to address in our research over the coming year.

If the HPW context, projects and Key Issues listed there are of interest, clients should also review our more detailed research perspectives on those two projects in "Key Issues for Measuring Workplace Performance in 2009" and "Key Issues for Improving Workplace Performance in 2009."

The other two notes enrich the context of this agenda.

"The High-Performance Workplace Defined Update" details what we mean by the term. It is an important primer.

"Key Issues for High-Performance Workplace Scope and Point of View, 2009" details the topic areas for our HPW research and the topic areas to be covered in other agenda areas. It summarizes some of the key assumptions of this agenda; key assumptions derived from decades of work in this and related fields.

In the scope and point of view document, we state that:

An HPW strategy is designed to make people (workers, suppliers, partners, distributors, agents and customers) as effective as possible. It results from balancing investment in people, process, physical environment and technology. Beyond process automation, a HPW strategy enhances people's ability to do that which we cannot automate, for example discover, innovate, team, lead, learn and relate to one another. By enhancing that which we cannot automate, we can improve both business efficiency and competitiveness.

We characterize our view of HPWs as being integrative; four different dimensions (technologies, processes, practices and management) are combined to maximize the value people can create.

Technologies

A HPW approach integrates different technologies, including collaboration support, social software, information access, content management, search, messaging, unified communications, business intelligence, content analytics, corporate performance management, portals, e-learning, selected HR systems (such as employee performance management), hardware- and software-based productivity tools, and emerging technologies related to these. HPW also impacts business applications, particularly as horizontal workplace tools are integrated with business applications; for example, social software integrated with CRM. This broader scope is discussed in the scope and point of view note.

Another key aspect of driving workplace performance is putting in place the right performance management and measurement framework, including analytics. Business intelligence and analytics play a many-faceted role, including efforts to facilitate discovery of threats and

opportunities (leading to innovation and the establishment of new competitive advantages), to measure the performance of existing systems (including personal, team, organizational and process efficiency), and to facilitate various reward systems and make more informed critical decisions. We also include conceptual disciplines such as knowledge management in our HPW research.

Processes

An IT strategy for the HPW focuses on enabling business transformation and creating competitive advantage. IT can be a "great enabler," even if it is not the enterprise's strategic investment focus. Many of these strategies are also crucial for improving efficiency. Both efficiency (as reflected in profit) and competitive advantage (as reflected in revenue or tax receipts) are central to sustaining and improving the position of the enterprise. Innovation — both sustaining (as in product-line extensions) and disruptive — is vital for long-term competitive advantage. Much of what we are researching regarding processes has to do with ad hoc and informal processes (Business Process Management Suites are covered in other research.)

Practices and Management

IT's biggest contribution to business performance during the next two decades will come from augmenting that which cannot be automated to maximize employee impact and enable enterprise transformation.

2009 Research Agenda

We have two views of our HPW research agenda. First, we are focusing our energies on two key projects (Measuring Workplace Performance and Improving Workplace Performance) that we believe most clients either are or should be pursuing in 2009. In focusing on these two key projects, we will be explicitly addressing a number of key issues that are applicable both in the context of these two key projects and in other cases as well.

Target Projects

To achieve the business benefits we believe are available from an effective HPW strategy, organizations need to develop awareness and understanding of the key aspects of workplace performance, key trends driving workplace performance, the ways in which technology can serve as an enabler and inhibitor of workplace performance, and the strategies and tactics that contribute to success and failure in a workplace performance optimization approach.

Organizations also need to be able to measure where they are in terms of developing a HPW strategy, their relative level of maturity (via a documented maturity model) and how they compare to their peers (via empirical norms — who is doing what).

From measurement, awareness and understanding comes the opportunity to develop an action plan. As part of the broader technology strategy of the enterprise, the HPW action plan needs to fit into the bigger technology picture. More importantly, as part of the broader business strategy of the enterprise, the HPW action plan needs to focus in on business benefits, and not start and end with technology.

Awareness, understanding and measurement are the key aspects of the first project (Measuring Workplace Performance), while relentless intelligent execution (from strategizing through post-mortem operational analysis and measurement) are the hallmarks of the second project (Improving Workplace Performance).

In addressing these two projects, we plan to cover the following Key Issues during the next 12 months.

Project — Measuring Workplace Performance

- "Megatrends" — What megatrends will have the biggest impact on workplace technology users and implementers, and what should they do about it?
- Social aspects — How and where will skills and practical knowledge about the social sciences be more important than technology in evolving a workplace technology strategy?

Project — Improving Workplace Performance

- Which workplace technology markets and vendors will thrive, and which will be left behind as the overall area continues to change?
- What are the best practices for raising workplace performance?

Shared Across Both Projects

- Impact — How do workplace technologies deliver real business value? (Projects 1 and 2.)
- Measures — What are the key indicators of various workplace maturity levels and which maturity levels are most appropriate for each client? Normatively, what is everyone else doing and when does it make sense to lead, match or follow market trends? (Project 1 and Project 2.)

We describe these Key Issues in more detail in "Key Issues for Measuring Workplace Performance in 2009" and "Key Issues for Improving Workplace Performance in 2009."

RECOMMENDED READING

"Key Issues for Measuring Workplace Performance in 2009"

"Key Issues for Improving Workplace Performance in 2009"

"Key Issues for High-Performance Workplace Scope and Point of View, 2009"

"The High-Performance Workplace Defined Update"

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS

Corporate Headquarters

56 Top Gallant Road
Stamford, CT 06902-7700
U.S.A.
+1 203 964 0096

European Headquarters

Tamesis
The Glanty
Egham
Surrey, TW20 9AW
UNITED KINGDOM
+44 1784 431611

Asia/Pacific Headquarters

Gartner Australasia Pty. Ltd.
Level 9, 141 Walker Street
North Sydney
New South Wales 2060
AUSTRALIA
+61 2 9459 4600

Japan Headquarters

Gartner Japan Ltd.
Aobadai Hills, 6F
7-7, Aobadai, 4-chome
Meguro-ku, Tokyo 153-0042
JAPAN
+81 3 3481 3670

Latin America Headquarters

Gartner do Brazil
Av. das Nações Unidas, 12551
9º andar—World Trade Center
04578-903—São Paulo SP
BRAZIL
+55 11 3443 1509