

Introducing the High-Performance Workplace: Improving Competitive Advantage and Employee Impact

**Tom Austin, Rita E. Knox, James Lundy, Betsy Burton, Gene Phifer, Toby Bell, Kathy Harris,
Waldir Arevalo De Azevedo Filho, Debra Logan**

Our new research area, High-Performance Workplace, focuses on raising the impact of people on the business, as well as how methods and tools influence that. Our ambitious research agenda will help you address the broad challenges that this goal involves.

ANALYSIS

Demands on the IT-enabled workplace have undergone a major transformation since 2004. Four years prior, cutting costs was paramount, but now companies are investing in growth again. Augmenting "nonroutine" activities to improve business results has become at least as important as automating "routine" activities to reduce cost and improve efficiency. High-performance workplaces augment the capabilities of their skilled staffs for activities such as exploring data, developing innovative processes or products, and working with suppliers to respond to requests for proposals. This support helps workers locate the right people, find the right content, support the right communication channels and focus on where to create the maximum return. In some cases, combining automation and augmentation may generate the biggest return — for example, adding expertise location to call center applications.

The evolution of the workplace shows no sign of slowing. High-performance workplace best practices, requirements and technologies will evolve as people evolve, and their needs, behaviors and motivations will change. Consider the level of technology-enabled interactivity that students have today vs. 10 or 20 years ago. To maximize current and future employee talents, and to keep these employees engaged, we'll have to continually revisit and revise our workplace strategies.

To address this challenge, we've defined a new research area, the High-Performance Workplace (see "High-Performance Workplaces Promote Revenue Growth and Productivity"). We'll address not only traditional workplace issues, but also the relationship between technology and business strategy, the factors that contribute to "performance" (vs. mere productivity) and the human challenges of using technologies (such as search) that enhance users' performance. The high-performance workplace integrates a broad range of technologies, including business intelligence, collaboration support, business process management (BPM), content and knowledge management (KM), communications, e-learning, productivity tools, and the physical workplace and related infrastructure (see "Client Issues in the High-Performance Workplace, 2005").

Ideas and Collaboration

In the high-performance workplace, innovation is key to creating competitive advantage. Facilitating innovation is a natural complement to automating processes and raising productivity. Although a few companies stand out for their capability to turn innovation into business success, the factors that determine success aren't clear. We'll analyze what companies must do to foster innovation — in particular, how to manage and measure innovation programs (see "Client Issues 2005 for Business Innovation: Imperative for Success"). Mining innovation for revenue and profit is part of this agenda. We'll also explore the technologies and vendors that companies can use to support their innovation efforts.

The discipline of KM recognizes that intellectual capital is a key driver of economic value for every company, and that as such, it must be identified, created, managed, measured and leveraged. KM helps target IT investments to augment the processes and behaviors that will give the maximum return of unique intellectual capital that the company needs to compete.

By this time, most leading organizations have implemented KM to support at least one critical business process, and many have enterprisewide KM programs. Vertical industries have started generating their own best practices for KM. Gartner research will focus on these success stories to illustrate the lessons learned in these fruitful KM programs.

Many challenges remain, however. As companies focus on innovation as a source of competitive advantage, KM programs will become more critical than ever. Globalization and outsourcing have dispersed the operations of many companies, and some have found that indiscriminate outsourcing has robbed them of intellectual capital that they should have retained. This ongoing

dispersal of the workforce, combined with growing numbers of mobile or intermittently connected workers, makes it more difficult to coordinate tasks.

KM efforts also must change to address the requirements of different levels in the organization — for example, individual workers need a different kind of support from workgroups vs. the company as a whole. Companies also will need to extend KM programs to cover work done in collaboration with suppliers, partners and customers. All of these trends pose challenges for KM programs, and we'll research them (see "Knowledge Management Client Issues for 2005 and Beyond").

Innovation is also a key goal of collaboration efforts. We'll focus our collaboration research on the needs of business decision-makers who are responsible for teams that must work together to produce, create, manage, share and innovate (see "Client Issues 2005: How to Approach, Encourage and Support Collaborative Work").

We'll provide clients with practical and concrete advice on collaboration-related decision making to drive tangible benefits. We'll also explore ways to measure and maximize the value of collaboration (see "To Measure the Value of Collaboration, Follow the Effects, Not the Ends"), and describe best practices for supporting collaboration.

We'll also focus on the technology decision-makers who are responsible for IT investments to support collaboration. Vendors have become more aware of collaboration support as a distinct product category, yet IT planners must do more than simply buy technology and distribute it to users. IT buyers must consider how these technologies will be used, and how the technology will evolve and fit within the company's overall IT environment.

Although business needs and user demands will drive all of these efforts, the IT organization will have to deliver the systems and infrastructure needed to support them. However, the IT organization is changing rapidly as, for example, companies outsource many of their functions and consumer IT sets the expectations of workers. We'll examine the behaviors, roles and relationships that the successful IT organization will need to foster (see "IT Workforce Management: Prepare for a Future Unlike the Past"). IT organizations also will need a new kind of leadership, and will face greater challenges in obtaining the necessary talent.

Content and Process

Enterprise content management (ECM) is at the heart of the high-performance workplace. It doesn't represent a monolithic system to handle the documents and content of the whole company; rather, it's an enterprisewide approach to managing content and the technologies that produce and use it. ECM strives to make content available to workers who need it, regardless of where they are and in what applications the content was created. Gartner research will focus on the technologies, architectures and vendors that can help make this happen (see "Client Issues for Enterprise Content Management, 2005"). However, before companies make decisions about these issues, they must know more about using ECM to address business problems, best practices and metrics. Our research will address these topics within the larger context of business trends affecting the ECM market.

ECM will prove especially valuable in automating processes. Today, 80 percent of a company's information is unstructured data (such as Word documents, presentations and rich media files) that computers can't process. XML metatagging enables computers to process this content, and more tools are becoming available to help with this task. The work of exploiting this capability will occur within the framework of ECM (and elsewhere). ECM suites will become application development platforms on which companies can build software that enables business processes and workers to access and use content. To help firms choreograph these processes, ECM vendors will add BPM functions.

To keep up with new business processes, new products and the always-changing business environment, an increasingly dispersed workforce needs e-learning. E-learning will cease to be a stand-alone system and instead will draw training content from frontline business applications. Companies will also use e-learning to create new businesses. Thus, e-learning investments will pay compelling dividends. Vendors continue to convert their products to standards so that e-learning systems can ultimately form an integral part of a company's total software stack. Our e-learning research will help companies navigate a consolidating e-learning market, and we'll advise them how to advance in the world (see "2005 E-Learning Client Issues").

Users in the high-performance workplace will continue to depend on portals. The portal is the platform — at least as far as users' eyes can see. Gartner research will continue to analyze long-term trends — for example, companies still invest in portals as one of their favorite technologies, the technology continues to evolve and portals have become part of some of the suites that characterize the high-performance workplace, particularly smart enterprise suites (see "Client Issues for Enterprise Portals and Portal Technologies, 2005"). Companies must know how portals will adapt to emerging service-oriented architectures. Another big challenge is portal proliferation, which works *against* the goal of the high-performance workplace to make content available enterprisewide. Certain trends will exacerbate the problem, such as user-created portals and personalization, so we'll recommend ways to manage proliferation.

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