Delivering Business Value With a Digital Workplace

Published: 28 August 2015

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Delivering business value from a digital workplace requires a multidisciplinary strategy addressing people, process and technology. Our Special Report pulls together the latest research on using a digital workplace to boost workforce agility and engagement.

Analysis

The digital workplace is a business strategy to boost employee engagement and agility through a more consumerized work environment. The idea is that substantial business value can be created by exploiting and encouraging employee digital dexterity, which is critical for three primary reasons:

1. Most jobs now require substantial use of technology, and the digital component of labor is growing all the time.

2. Many organizations are pivoting to a digital business model, requiring large parts of the employee base to adroitly participate in the digital business value chain.

3. It is increasingly obvious that the ability to quickly exploit emerging technology will be a significant source of competitive advantage as technology evolution accelerates along with business cycles.

One of the best ways to foster digital dexterity in the workplace is to more fully embrace the technology that employees use in their personal lives. These consumerized services make it easier for employees to learn and exploit existing and emerging technologies through, for example, the use of apps, user experience design services, embedded social tools, and self- and community support options.

This pivot to a more consumerized work environment can boost employee engagement by facilitating greater ability to meet challenges from a rapidly changing work environment. Work changes include the rise of smart machines, the broader use of a freelance workforce, flatter organization models pushing decision making to the edge, more dynamic (as opposed to routine) work, and the need to frequently switch roles and responsibilities. Engaged employees are more likely to embrace these changes, which are critical to continuing business success.
Organizations, therefore, have a great opportunity to use technology investments to promote employee engagement. The links between engagement and technology include:

- Enabling employee-friendly work-life balance through an anytime/anywhere computing infrastructure
- Supplying new ways of recognizing employee contributions through a content and collaboration infrastructure that is more open and more social
- Promoting continuous learning and skills acquisition through a concerted effort to teach digital literacies
- Improving health and safety with wellness programs, immersive technologies and Internet of Things (IoT) networks
- Increasing transparency and trust by changing the default content and process working mechanisms from private to public
- Boosting individual and team agility through more choice in devices and apps, and a focus on easy-to-use analytics

The digital workplace is a multifaceted endeavor involving many parts of the IT organization, as well as other business units including human resources, corporate communications and facilities management. The breadth of the digital workplace can be seen in this multidisciplinary collection of new research, with highlights listed below.

**Research Highlights**

At the heart of the digital workplace is digital dexterity, which is a core employee cognitive ability and social practice to drive digital business success. Digital workplace leaders should assess their organization’s digital dexterity against projected requirements, and implement a strategy to attract the optimum mix of talent (see "Defining Digital Dexterity — The Core Workforce Resource for the Digital Business").

We recommend that digital workplace leaders explore the use of strategic workforce planning services to more closely tie digital dexterity to business requirements. Workforce planning has traditionally been used exclusively by the HR group (see "Apply Strategic Workforce Planning to Digital Workplace Initiatives"). HR can also contribute to digital workplace success by rethinking how employee performance reviews are conducted (see "Rethinking Employee Performance Management in the Digital Workplace").

One of the critical elements of digital literacy is the democratization of analytics, which can greatly improve business insight, transparency and results. The move to a culture that embraces data-driven decisions, however, requires a long-term plan (see "How to Establish a Data-Driven Culture in the Digital Workplace"). Organizations can also promote agility through the use of citizen development (see "Citizen Development Is Fundamental to the Digital Workplace").
One critical digital literacy is the requirement to make more employees customer-focused, which can ease the transition to digital business. Leaders of digital workplace initiatives can connect employee engagement to customer experience in ways that have a positive effect on both (see "Leverage Digital Workplace Initiatives to Better Connect Employee and Customer Experience").

One of the most critical digital literacies is the ability to willingly and quickly embrace new technologies, some of the more important of which are smart machines, IoT and virtual personal assistants. We explore the implications of the third of these in "IT Strategists Must Prepare for the Rise of Virtual Personal Assistants in the Workplace."

A digital workplace roadmap highlights the order to reach important milestones along three tracks: people (aiming at engaged employees); process (aiming at responsive management practices and governance); and technology (reimagining workplace capabilities). IT leaders should use this roadmap to plan their digital workplace strategy (see "2015 Strategic Roadmap for the Digital Workplace").

Digital-literate employees are more empowered to exploit IT services of their own choosing. Rather than rigidly requiring a standard build and device types, digital workplace leaders increasingly are open to more heterogeneity in endpoint devices and apps. We explore the options in "Scenario: Enabling End Users in the Digital Workplace" and "Outlining an Approach to Bring Your Own Apps."

Mobility is one of the key enablers of the digital workplace, but deciding what apps to write and what apps not to write requires combining knowledge from three areas: digital literacies, technology choice and business issues. We weigh in on this challenge with "A Decision Framework for Mobile App Prioritization" and "Use Mobile App Analytics to Drive Positive Change in the Digital Workplace."

Digital literacies require a new approach to IT infrastructure, ranging from security to application integration to identity and access management. We explore the latter two infrastructure elements in "Building Your Workgrid to Power the Digital Workplace" and "Managing Identities, Access and Trust for Digital Workplace Success."

Finally, one of the keys to business success from the digital workplace is the ability to exploit emerging technologies coming from the consumer space for competitive advantage. We explore a wide range of these technologies in "Hype Cycle for Digital Workplace, 2015." Organizations should also be proactive in applying consumerization techniques to internal operations (see "Consumerize Your Enterprise Software Before It Consumes You" and "Four Steps to a More Personalized Digital Workplace").

In the recommended research section below, we highlight 10 other new research reports that are part of this Special Report on the digital workplace.

Gartner Recommended Reading

Some documents may not be available as part of your current Gartner subscription.
"Kick-Start the Conversation on Digital Ethics"

"Build Clusters to Deliver Talent for a Bimodal World"

"Content Is a Critical Dimension to Digital Workplace Success"

"Give It a Try! Experiment Your Way to Digital Business"

"How the Personal Cloud Impacts IT Organizations"

"Smart Agents Will Drive the Switch from Technology-Literate People, to People-Literate Technology"

"Successful Digital Workplace Programs Require Agile Information Governance"

"Tools for Measuring Satisfaction With the IT Service Desk"

"Use Net Promoter Score to Measure Business User Satisfaction With the IT Service Desk"

"Your IT Self-Service Strategy Must Be Driven by Your Business Culture"
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