

# The Need for Digital Workplace: Increasing Workforce Productivity in the Information Age

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## ABSTRACT

Advances in communications, combined with lifestyle trends, point to a future workforce that is more productive and more capable than ever before. Employees are becoming increasingly dissatisfied with workplace capabilities as communications and productivity technology advances. Employees feel that their workplace is not smart enough and they are ready for a workplace that can accommodate their changing lifestyles. The past few years have seen an explosion in the use of smart workplace technologies. Interest in exploiting digital workplaces and smart offices is increasing, and deployments are gaining momentum. Yet the adoption rate is slow, and organizations are only beginning to scratch the surface in regard to the potential applications of smart workplace technologies. Implemented properly, the business benefits of digital workplaces can be substantial. This article explores the changing dimensions of the workplace. It highlights the importance of smart workplace technologies, identifies determinants of implementation success, and covers some of the potential benefits. Finally, this study reviews the successful implementation of smart workplace technologies in a small service industry.

## KEYWORDS

Cloud Computing Technology (CCT), Digital Workplace, Digital Workplace Solutions (DWS), Information Work, Mobile Working, Software-as-a-Service (SaaS)

## PURPOSE

There is no particular research stream on the digital workplace although scholars have conducted much research on the related topics. The purpose of this research is to do a systematic literature review and explore the practical implications of digital workplace technologies.

## FINDINGS

The traditional office is transforming and will become obsolete in the near future. Digital workplace technologies, as portrayed in the sparse academic literature, as well as the wider trade literature, are

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found to be able to reshape and decentralize the traditional office. Effectively planned and implemented, the digital workplace provides more effective ways of working, increases productivity, and raises employee engagement. The digital revolution is under way however, our research suggests many companies remain confused about what they need to do to realize these benefits. We found compelling business results, including increased productivity and revenue growth, realized by organizations that have adopted digital tools. We also found that most organizations are unprepared for the arrival of digital workplace. Companies that are not adopting an integrated approach and training employees with new skills, are failing to capitalize on a significant opportunities digital workplace could deliver.

## **RESEARCH LIMITATIONS**

Although the journey to digital workplace has already started, very few examples of the business benefits of a truly digital workplace realized by leading-edge companies are reported, and therefore effects are often anecdotal and notably, are often not fully tested. In our literature search we found few papers published in peer reviewed academic journals nor as academic working papers exploring advantages and limitations of firms implementing workplace digital technologies. We urge future research to test the enabling and constraining effects of digital tools and search for more empirical evidence of successful implementations of digital workplace in varied organizations. Research is needed to also recognize the downsides of digital technology usage for close relationships and effective collaboration.

## **PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS**

A dramatically changing workplace or a true digital workplace is at its very early stages of adoption. There is a widespread confusion in the marketplace about the true definition of a digital workplace. A good number of businesses incorrectly believe that email and social media capabilities are the requisite tools required for a digital workplace. A recent commissioned research found that only 44 percent of companies thus far have adopted digital workplace tools. Based on the business applications presented in this paper, practitioners would be wise to choose to better understand the potential enabling and constraining effects of implementing digital workplace technologies in different organizations.

## **ORIGINALITY/VALUE**

Implementing a digital suite of tools, communications technologies, and enterprise social networks are by no means a panacea for many organizations. This article presents an important early academic contribution to a field dominated by narratives and of promises made by consultants. It also delivers condensed information for practitioners regarding the adoption of an integrated approach for the design and the implementation of digital workplace.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The 20<sup>th</sup> century has seen a massive increase in industrial productivity, including a fifty-fold productivity growth in manual labor. But in most organizations, workplace productivity has not improved in such a fast pace. Fifty years ago, Peter Drucker said that “knowledge work” is the most important aspect of work in the advanced economy (Drucker, 1968). The world has changed drastically since then and the amount of digitized data is increasing at an exponential rate. Additionally, in the past ten years, office work has been shifting from repetitive tasks to knowledge based, flexible, and adaptive tasks. It has been proven that employees waste significantly less time and company resources when they have access to the right information at the right time, and by working in accordance with

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