

Chapter 18

Technology and Organizational Change: Harnessing the Power of Digital Workplace

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the changing dimensions of the workplace and highlights the relationship between technology and organizational change. The chapter begins by briefly reviewing some key perspectives that have emerged in the information systems (IS) literature to account for the relationship between technology and organizational change. It highlights the importance of smart workplace technologies, identifies determinants of successful workplace transformation, proposes a conceptual model for implementation, identifies key factors to consider, and covers some of the potential benefits. The chapter argues that digital transformation is more than just implementing digital technologies. Successful digital transformation occurs when business strategies or major sections of an organization are altered.

INTRODUCTION

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 productive work practices (Igloo, 201, 2019). Therefore, increases in information related productivity need to be the focus of modern organizations, as much as industry automation used to be in past decades. “Information Mastery” was considered the Industry Automation of the 21st Century.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-8933-4.ch018

Companies are realizing the importance of workplace transformation which reflects modern work styles, user preferences, and maturing technologies. A large portion of work today is “Information Work”—work that requires information to be executed, and in which information often determines the outcome of the work (Dority, 2016). Many enterprises do not consider information as an organizational resource and therefore do not manage it as such. It is erroneously assumed that information is managed automatically through technology. This mis-treatment of information oftentimes has immense effects on employee productivity, efficiency, effectiveness, and profitability (Avanade, Inc. 2017).

On the other hand, the proper treatment of information as an important organizational resource is key in gaining a competitive advantage in a globalized economy. According to widespread research, quality and productivity are affected by employees not having access to the right information, such as where, when, and which information is required for the respective tasks (Igloo, 2017, 2019). A meta-analysis of nine studies on wasted employee time found that an average of 1.1 hours per day was lost on unproductive information searches. This is a tremendous waste of time and productivity, considering that 1.1 hours per day is more than 12 percent of total work time summing up to more than 30 work days per year per person (Schillerwein, 2011). In a study conducted by IDC and commissioned by the Information Overload Research Group, significant numbers of employees indicated that less than half of the information they need is searchable and that searching is time consuming and frustrating (Gantz, Boyd, and Dowling, 2009).

This study also found that employees waste 25 percent of their time dealing with information overload related interruptions and distractions. Reducing the time wasted by 15% could save a company with 500 employees more than \$2 million a year. According to this study, a large percentage of managers and business leaders are also affected by information overload. They do not have sufficient information across their organization to do their jobs. Over 40 percent of surveyed managers said they use incorrect information at least weekly and had the information they needed less than 75% of the time (Gantz, Boyd, and Dowling, 2009). A mature digital workplace has the potential to revolutionize both the way information is treated in the organization and the way work gets done.

The Evolution of Digital Age

The world of business is rapidly evolving. Several studies highlight the differences which characterize organizations and work within the industrial and information age (Schillerwein, 2011). According to these studies, industrial age or traditional organizations are efficient but both rigid and hierarchical—they are frequent users of chains of commands.

The digital workplace allows employees to work flexible hours and connect to people and information anytime, anywhere, and on any device. This means that an employee can work from a home office, a satellite office, a co-working building, or a coffee shop. Employees can share their ideas, thoughts, and content, and have the unique opportunity to become leaders by sharing what they know and what they care about. Employees have a voice within their organizations, can be recognized for their contributions, and ultimately shape their own career paths.

Traditional organizations are formed like silos and are fragmented. It is challenging to find the right people and information to get work done as employees in different departments or geographies oftentimes do not communicate and collaborate with one another, nor do they share information. Digital-age organizations are internetworked, flexible, and have high level of uncertainty. Employees are organized around flexible cross-functional teams where they are dynamically linked to each other, in ways that

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