

Working Futures

This series considers three aspects of our working future – Human, Digital and Physical – examining emerging trends and the changes they'll mean for us all.

We explore how Productivity, Collaboration and Efficiency are impacted in each of these contexts, and offer takeaway tips to help you prepare for what's to come.

The Digital Workplace of the Future

How often do you use social networks to communicate with friends and family? To Skype or Facetime an associate? Digital tools have become indispensable extensions of how we engage with each other every day, and our working lives are no different.

But rather than just being 'part of the furniture', the ubiquity of digital technology in our everyday lives has created an opportunity for our workplaces to become a strategic asset. To face down a challenging world, businesses are harnessing a range of smart digital technologies to reduce waste, lower costs, streamline workflows, and connect disparate systems to improve outcomes for their people and customers.



Productivity

We're learning to be more flexible, so our tools have to move with us. Organisations want ecosystems that interface seamlessly with the cloud and provide Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) other parties can customise. An robust Enterprise Content Management (ECM) is often at the heart of these ecosystems, providing a digital home for the most important parts of doing business, integrated with the humans that make business happen.

The need for rapid access to information where and when it's needed calls for powerful search capabilities. Enterprise search has struggled to keep pace with the smooth experience consumer search offers. Businesses need to connect people with the right information and the right colleagues, and smart digital systems can facilitate this.

Your content needs to move without barriers, and your people without borders.

The concept of anytime, anywhere has also influenced our expectations for device accessibility. We need our printers and scanners always-on, like us. Konica Minolta, for example, provides a mobile printing app which enables staff to print from their smartphone to the most handy local device, even when visiting an interstate office.

This level of accessibility is underpinned by cloud-based print management to simplify support and configuration of remote output devices from an IT operations point of view. Nothing's perfect, but cloud based services come close for reliability. Distributed and off-site, most cloud services are operating and available 99.99% of the time (often called the four nine's of availability). Minimal downtime means maximum efficiency.

Finally, it's important not to overlook the impact digital workplaces have on accountability, an important facet of a results based business culture. When conversations, projects and goals are visible, they're more likely to happen, and digital tools offer unprecedented capability to monitor and measure.





Businesses will adopt ecosystem models of content management that compress and automate cumbersome processes, while offering humans the freedom to access and deliver work from anywhere.



Digital enablement, for individuals and the business, is critical for collaboration in this new era. The workforce of the future expects enterprise tools that are lean, social and device agnostic, like those in their everyday lives.



Collaboration

The nature of collaboration is changing. We still bounce and spark off one another, brainstorming ideas and solutions. But the channels and mechanisms we use to come together and harness those outputs look increasingly different. Digital toolkits of chat applications, cloud document storage and project management mean that collaboration can be instantaneous, simultaneous, even asynchronous across almost any distance and geography.

One major trend driving this revolution is the ascendancy of millennials in the workplace - a group internet researcher Mary Meeker describes as 'tech innate'. Her 2016 Trends Report found this generation multi-screen by instinct (up to five screens at once) and are adept at filtering non-relevant or non-engaging information. Messaging applications now reign supreme, surpassing the popularity of social networks like Facebook (Meeker, 2016).

And it's not just younger people. 2017 social media usage stats show that a whopping 70% of Australians use Facebook - and 1 in 6 use Snapchat daily (even more than use professional network LinkedIn). This is further driving a shift in the way the modern worker communicates - images, video and short form text versus emails and longer formats.

Today's enterprise is comprised of smaller communities of purpose and practice, so it need tools that are innately modular and mobile.

Efficiency

Making the shift to a digital-first workplace can unlock previously hidden opportunities. Deloitte Access Economics discovered that keeping your best people happy and working for you is high on the list - with average large-sized businesses saving several million over 10 years in staffing turnover and disengagement via the implementation of flexible IT policies and adoption of portable, digital tools.

The digital workplace also offers flexibility for information management; something all too important in an age of consistent change. Our business needs change daily and even our business models evolve more quickly than they once did. To keep up, and to keep things safe, we need to define, secure and archive key information and content assets over time.

Remember when a tall pile of paperwork was code for, 'I'm busy, can you come back later?' Not anymore. Recent AIIM research found 43% of enterprises are decreasing usage of paper throughout their organisation.

A further 30% of organisations say they are migrating to a single cloud system for efficiency (AIIM, 2016). Though paper itself isn't likely to vanish, reliance on paper for important work processes is no longer sustainable from a competitive perspective.

Machine learning and AI are starting to add another layer of efficiency for businesses. Rather than replacing humans, they are helping relieve repetitive and menial workloads and optimise the working environment. IBM's Watson Workspace, unveiled in late 2016, utilises cognitive APIs to understand worker behaviour. The super-AI then relays this knowledge into the automation of everyday communication tasks, and helps with message prioritisation and consolidation.





Digital transformation that harnesses cloud, mobility, analytics and machine learning are set to produce unmatched operational efficiencies for employers and their employees. This in turn creates a better customer experience, allowing humans to apply their time, talent and brainpower to the thorny problems and the bigger picture.



Takeaway Tips

- 1. Mobile first** – Invest in the apps and systems that let your people work on the go, on their own terms; if it's not primed for mobility, it won't do the job.
- 2. Lean is good** – Lightweight technology like messaging apps are on the rise in the workplace, after mass consumer adoption. Use them to reduce email bloat and promote dynamic collaboration amongst your people.
- 3. Think end-to-end** – Re-engineer your operations for efficiency using intuitive Enterprise Content Management and intelligent work flow automation.
- 4. Transform your mindset** – Onboarding new technologies alone doesn't guarantee a well-oiled digital workplace. Ensure your culture fits your tools, get used to change, and remember it's a journey.



Always run new technology through a decision making lens: how will it increase productivity, collaboration and efficiency for your people, your business and to the benefit of your customers.

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The Physical Workplace of the Future

Next up...

Next in the series we'll look at our Physical working future, and how it's evolving to meet the needs of 21st century businesses.

Konica Minolta is invested in your working future, and can help you meet emerging challenges by streamlining work flow and creating mobility for employees.



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