DEMYSTIFYING DIGITAL: MODERN WORKPLACES

What is the modern workplace?

Often defined as a philosophy, rather than a specific operational setup, the concept of a Modern Workplace is not just about introducing video meetings and conferences.

It's about data gathering and analysis, embracing digital solutions and providing a centralised workplace service. A modern workplace should meet the physical and technological needs of each and every colleague.

The pandemic accelerated change

Teams and **Zoom** are probably the two most high-profile examples of recent changes in this area. Used sparingly pre-pandemic, the vast majority of meetings now take place using these services.

Hybrid working is a model that many organisations have taken forward since the end of lockdown and people are now being given the choice of where and how they want to work.

A by-product of these changes in workplace culture are a decline in social interaction, a team spread across many locations, and many organisations searching how they can best nurture the creation of a collaborative work culture.

One way organisations tried to encourage collaboration was through **centralised collaborative working** systems. With documents stored in the cloud, accessed and worked on at the same time, it helped foster a culture of remote collaboration.

The move towards more centralised working has only highlighted the essential need for improved internet connectivity, and ensuring those who aren't as technologically savvy are given the opportunity for training and development.

Technology providing solutions?

Telepresence robots are one way to bridge that sense of disconnect from the work environment, giving a sense of presence within the room to both the remote worker and those in the room. This move will require greater integration with technology, a shift in our thinking and an understanding of how we socialise and interact.

The **Metaverse** also allows us to bridge the gap between remote working and in-person interactions, while introducing an element of fun at the same time. It's a great example of how the modern workplace is transforming existing experiences while creating new ones.

Widespread adoption of the Metaverse could bring new meaning to the virtual meeting – worldwide collaboration through personalised avatars with the ability to point and present. Regardless of your location, a version of yourself can be present and become involved in discussions while contributing to virtual team work.

The **gamification of work** is another concept to engage team members and use the technology at our disposal. This can be as simple as awarding badges or leader boards on training or other mandatory initiatives.

It can also go a lot further. The Environment Agency recently deployed **Minecraft** maps which consider flood risk and how the impact of climate change will affect individuals bringing gaming to the working environment.

Increased **digital skills and education** will inevitably move to furthering our understanding of how digital technology can support the modern workplace. In the future it will more likely that digital and programming skills become a core requirement to many roles, as will be the ability to understand and manage these processes.

Author:
Jake Busby (Curtins)

Digital advancements have enabled modern employees to work more dynamically and efficiently but these sit alongside the challenge of embedding new skills to support new ways of working.

Learning and development is a strategic business function that facilitates innovation by creating a culture of lifelong learning and collaboration. We should recognise that our digital transformation needs to support our staff how and when they want to learn - in this modern professional world, knowledge is at a premium.

We are actively moving towards social and micro learning to allow a more flexible approach to development. Digital can provide excellent self-learning opportunities, however, the power of being around colleagues and gaining tacit knowledge will remain central to the application and deeper understanding of learning.

Businesses must place a focus on choice and flexibility for staff when delivering digitally, however, caution must be placed on being "data driven". Rather it is about being "data informed" and to ensure an effective and progressive modern workplace and staff must be an integral part of the change and feedback process.

Overall, the theme of 'human' in a digital world is crucial to enhancing the modern workplaces that we would like to see where the personal skill sets of employees embellish the digital processes and add value to our offering."

Rebecca King, Director L&D at Curtins

Key takeaways

1 The pandemic accelerated the use of virtual meetings and conferencing and centralised collaborative working.

2 The future will focus on using new technology and tools to increase collaboration - wherever people are based.

3 We will need to bring people on the journey and ensure we don't forget the human side to technology, while maximising the opportunities for learning and development.

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