The Future of
Work… is NOW

Since the dawn of the 21st century, many corporations have been forced into a state of flux, with disruption emanating from unknown quarters. Corporate leaders are grappling with a multitude of priorities, to reinvent and to be relevant in the marketplace. While most organizations initiated transformation programs, focused on customer engagement, products & services, process & methods, the returns fall across the continuum. The success of such transformations is underpinned by aligning the organization with a focus on employees and investment for a conducive culture.

Organization's strategies are built and executed by people, and focus on people determines the success of transformations. In this era of mass disruption, people are an organization's biggest competitive advantage and must be at the core of a company's strategy. Engaged employees bring more passion, purpose, and accountability to make the difference. There are innumerable studies suggesting improvement in profitability, market capitalization, as a result of employee-focused strategies. Engaged talent fast tracks an organization toward success. It's obvious that every organization wants to attract and retain the best talent to enable transformation.
The question is – How?

In this paper, we'll look at how talent as a C-suite priority is shaping tomorrow's organizations. We highlight how new ways of working are making the case for tailored workplace solutions and why technology is the key enabler for 'people first' organizations. We also give a guide to technology adoption that will help companies cut through the clutter and invest in technologies that can deliver the required impact. Finally, this paper is intended as a guide for companies looking to embrace the future of work. **Are you ready to dive in?**

Talent as a C-suite priority

Winning organizations recognize how employees feel at work and enable every employee to partner toward the shared purpose. Talent-related priorities are on top of a CEO's to-do list and talent engagement and experience are taking center stage in the modern workplace.

CHROs & CIOs are coming together to partner on ways an organization should shape its talent strategy as workforce needs change, new ways of work emerge, and digital technology enables readiness for the future of work.

Modern Workplace Needs – Consumerization & Personalization

Advancements in medical sciences have increased our life span allowing more years at work. Ease of travel and technology advancements that enable remote work has broken geographic barriers. As a result, the modern workforce is truly unique. It is multi-generational with 5 generations working together. The workforce is also multi-cultural, truly diverse, and a significant portion are digital natives. The workforce today prefers gigs, who prefer working from home.

The new workforce wants an always-on enterprise that can give them consistent and location-agnostic access to tools and resources they need to get work done. Collaboration is high on the agenda for millennials and Gen Z, and they respect the freedom and flexibility to work on their terms, in their space, and on their devices. Employees now demand a fully loaded experience, similar to the one they are accustomed to as consumers in their personal life.

For many organizations, structured traditionally, accommodating these new demands is not easy. Especially since the talent needs are morphing so quickly! It seems like yesterday when BYOD (bring your own device) was the in thing; today it's a norm. Today's challenge is to manage the blended workforce, where humans and AI are working together, and to find ways to integrate the dynamics.

An organization cannot provide a one-size-fits-all solution, but can personalize services. All services & touch points need to be reimagined as new ways of working. Consumerization of workers puts the responsibility squarely on CIOs, and CHROs to work collaboratively and find future-ready solutions.

Technology fuels talent-centric priorities

To embrace the future of work, the C-suite is working together to find solutions and exploring technology opportunities that will shape the human-centric workforce. Recently, we partnered with the CIO of a large technology major, to create a future-ready modern workplace.

Imagine, what if at the workplace, all you needed to provide is a place to sit and a power connection? What if everything else is virtually enabled? Imagine walking to your office, where our smart office solutions guide you to the right parking slot. You check-in using your mobile for a hot desk using a QR code, and the workplace morphs to your personal preference. IoT sensors change the color of the lights, your phone auto-configured to pick your voice mails, a virtual desktop with all data and applications on cloud and you have a fully functional workplace, personalized for you. Sounds like science fiction? Au contraire. It's very real and all this technology is available today.

While the priorities are well understood, and a plethora of technologies available at our disposal, the enterprise transformation is not about selecting & implementing technologies. There are 3 critical steps before selecting tools and technologies. Let us step back, and consider 3 tenets

1. Take people-centric approach

Understanding what your people need is where the biggest challenge is. A PwC study found that while 90% of CXOs say their company pays attention to employee needs when introducing new technologies, only 53% said employees actually agree with that.

Instead of blindly following technology trends, CXOs need to invest in understanding the unique needs of their workforce. Are most of your people remote workers? Do your employees need a lot of customer interaction? Interest groups, employee surveys, social platforms etc. are a good place to start to assimilate the needs & sentiments of your employees.

As we mentioned earlier, there is no one-size-fits-all approach. With people at the center of your transformation journey, spend good time to understand the needs of your employees.

2. It's all about the process

Most organizations have well-articulated processes and methods. With changing times, it is a great opportunity to question the relevance of our processes, and ask why we are doing things the way we are doing them. Are there new ways of working to deliver much better outcomes? As they say, "A fool with a tool is still a fool". Unless we reimagine employee journeys, taking employee needs into account, and fix process gaps, companies cannot leverage digital technology to deliver returns.

Workforce transformation considers all business and employee processes, to simplify, standardize, harmonize across units, geographies and functions. Reimagining workflows, with a key focus on business outcome is a critical step before deciding on the tool and technology. We've done it within Wipro, by reimagining the hire to retire process, and moved all our employee-related services on a mobile app based delivery. We've also used service design principles to reimagine employee journeys and processes for our clients and helped them identify opportunities to impact experiences.

3. Integrate, Integrate & Integrate

Once you've plugged the process gaps, the next thing is to ensure a seamless experience across the employee lifecycle. Over the years, organizations end up investing in varied tools to serve different purposes. A tool for learning management, another for people data management, another for applicant tracking, time management, and so on. Over time, these systems become siloed, and start delivering a broken experience & redundancies.

When conceptualizing a modern workforce, companies must aim for an integrated architecture with a single source of truth, focused on delivering unified & ubiquitous experiences. We've worked with CIOs and business stakeholders to envisage and create the future of connected workplaces by building the enabling architectures across tools throughout the employee lifecycle.

Supported by these tenets, CXOs can shape a workplace transformation strategy. It's obvious that technology will play a key role in transforming this vision to reality.
The question is- where should you invest now?

Technology areas that should lead your workplace transformation efforts

Today the market is full of technology products and solutions that make grand promises. Companies need to prioritize their technology investments to ensure optimal usage of the IT budget as well as maximum impact on people and processes.

Here are our top three recommendations for hot technologies to invest in.

1. **Go mobile –** Mobility, access, seamless workflow, and choice of device are necessities of a digital workforce. In a study, 68% respondents claimed that choosing their own device (CYOD) makes them more productive. Mobile platforms make engagement easier and encourage peer collaboration. Imagine the first impression of a new hire on-boarded in a few clicks via a mobile platform. Or the time and effort an employee can save by a mobile expense reimbursement app. Top it up with conversation assistants.

2. **Harness data –** People analytics and data discovery across structured and unstructured data sets provide invaluable insights to determine top drivers of happiness, productivity, and retention. Use data science to determine productivity bottlenecks, predict & prescribe hiring & upskilling efforts, optimize & intelligently allocate workforce to strategic priorities. There is huge potential in harnessing data to build a data-driven, decision-making organization.

3. **Infuse intelligence –** When you know your people's needs, you can assist them better – even pre-empt their questions and provide proactive support 24x7. We see immense potential in using automation & AI to left shift, self-help, self-heal most of the employee support processes. We implemented 600 bots in the shared services center, delivering significant savings. AI & ML will change the game for being an exceptionally responsive organization & building an employee-centric culture.

Consider these technologies in your workforce transformation journey. The use cases would differ based on your organization fabric, employee demography & needs. Contextualize implementation based on the need, but ensure that these investments deliver business outcome.

Entering a new era of people first businesses

While many organizations have carved out a budget for investments on CX (Customer Experience), the realization for equal, if not more on EX (Employee Experience) is emerging. Happy employees, happy customers. Workforce transformation, enabled through digital technologies, is essential for a company to be relevant to their employees, care for their needs, help them deliver to the best of their abilities, to differentiate themselves from the competition.

This is the era of 'people first' businesses, and the time to act is now. The endeavor needs to be ably sponsored and supported with leadership buy-in, approach as change management effort, and the right partnerships to orchestrate this transformation.

"How prepared are you to embrace the future of work? Do you know your talent's needs? Do you have a workplace transformation roadmap in place? How much of your digital transformation budget is allocated to employee-facing priorities? Do you think you are doing enough to enable the future of work?"

About the authors

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Saurabh Govil in this role leads all Human Resources functions for Wipro. In this capacity, he has contributed significantly to improve processes and introduced many new initiatives. Saurabh was instrumental in Wipro's transformational journey and shaped people, processes and organization structure to help Wipro prepare for the next spurt of growth. He has been a HR practitioner for over two decades. He is on the advisory board of SHRM India. Saurabh has been a regular speaker at NASSCOM's HR summit. He also contributes to NHRDN's journal as an author.

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Kannan is a digital futurist & experience evangelist. As a strategic technology executive, he counsels on transformation journeys for hi-tech clients using applied digital solutions, competitive distinctions & differentiated experience to fuel growth and profitability. He helps fortune 100 companies build robust business-focused IT strategy & adopt new ways of working. With over two decades of global experience, he coaches global teams to build organizational capabilities

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