FUTURE OF WORK

We all have the potential to do great things when the barriers to innovation are removed and people work in an open collaborative way.

But most businesses don't work in an open way.

After digital transformation, information is still hidden or isolated in multiple silos and the flow of information between teams and departments doesn't happen. Big ideas are not being heard or passed around. The result is lower productivity, high staff turnover and time wasted by countless repetitive meetings.

But it's the simple things that makes the difference. Here are some practices smart companies are incorporating.

The workforce needs to work differently

Millennials will make up 75% of the workforce by 2028, so businesses are in a scramble to attract, engage and retain them.

But what do they really want and need? It's not beanbags, sticky notes and table tennis. The new generation of smart workers are outcome driven. **They demand tools and systems that free them up to think, collaborate and contribute.**

These digital nomads are engrossed in tech and don't want to be chained to a desk. But this is great news for both them and smart companies. Space saving, less overheads, pay for work when it's needed. **The emerging workforce thrive on creativity, connectivity and community** and if you can build a culture and environment where they can flourish, they will be the most connected, engaged resource you could hope for.

But you'll only be able to attract and engage with the best of them by doing things in the most efficient of ways. They live for being efficient and productive and yesterday's systems will not cut it. They'll use their own apps or march on mass to the nearest smart companies.

Smart companies are turning to collaboration tools to help them transform their business. The benefits are obvious and instantaneous, providing faster access to knowledge, better teamwork with an improved culture, better products and services and a much better understanding of projects throughout the organization and beyond.

But this is also a balancing act. You must get the right mix of a great experience that provides all the familiar tools without losing control of your information and work. Companies that jump on the app bandwagon using separate apps for messaging, file sharing, task management, workspaces and cloud file storage are getting lost in the cloud, as is their information.

How smart organisations are addressing the change
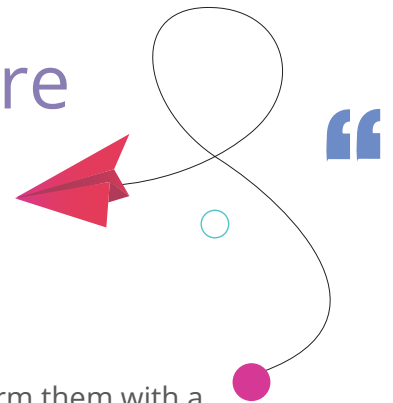
One way is building high performing remote teams. By now most of us will have had some experience with working remotely whether at a café, while on the road or working from home. The experience has been met with mixed results for both the workforce and management. That's because successfully running a remote team requires just two key ingredients. The right people and the right tools.

From a management perspective, the biggest obstacle to overcome is trust with the perception being that unless you can see your teams, you don't know if they're working. Will they be doing the gardening, cleaning the house, watching TV, shopping? The truth is that if they are that way inclined, you can bet your bottom dollar they'll be no different if they're in or out of the office.

Productive people and teams are good at getting things done from anywhere and don't need to be watched. The challenge is to make sure they are truly "connected" to the business as well as each other. Smart companies review the productivity tools they are using because they simply want to get the best from their remote teams.

So, with the right people on the job the next step is setting up the right systems and processes to make sure that your remote teams are able to perform.

It's not enough to arm them with a smartphone and communication or messaging apps alone to fill the gaps.

Effective remote teams need to have access to all relevant information – documents, files and data so they can do their job.

They need tools that provide everybody with a single source of the truth. A place where work can be updated and monitored, tasks can be created, projects visualised, information captured and categorized. It helps if it includes familiar tools like messaging and file sharing as long as it's structured and in the context of work.

Done right, there shouldn't be any difference between working right next to someone in the office or the other side of the world. Done wrong, it'll be back to email, meetings and phones calls. Do it right and you have a smart company.

So with the right people, the right technology and a culture built on outcomes, adapting to new ways of working isn't really that difficult.

Don't drown in digital chaos

Companies who too quickly bypass their current IT systems in order to break down the barriers to working in a new way are doomed to stay in the past.

In less than an hour you could download several free apps with the purpose of creating a working model for your remote workforce. Cloud file storage, file sharing, messaging and communication apps, task walls and projects tools.

But there are several pitfalls with this approach.

Where is your information?

We're already struggling with lost information (link to other blog) and now you've introduced several new unmanaged places for information to get lost.

User distraction

Single purpose social type apps love attention. After all, social apps are designed to distract but do you really want this in your business?

You have no single source or the truth

Without a single view of what's going on, how do you track progress and find out what's really going on?

Security

With information and work scattered across several apps, who owns the data, who has access and where will this data reside after the work or project has been completed? If you can't answer these questions, how can you secure your information?

User fatigue

Digital chaos is causing companies to lose the benefits that technology can deliver to the workplace. They're struggling to get the balance right between communication and information and people are now pushing back on the tools provided because they are hindering true collaboration and employee engagement.

Businesses must provide a more structured and engaged approach to encouraging a more collaborative culture. They must be able to manage the frequency and types of communications as well as the channels that deliver them. They must provide a single source of the truth where information flows but is also managed like it's a valuable company asset – which it is.

The art of collaboration

High performing companies are breaking down silos and building cross functional collaborative teams. Your brand, your business and your people all work towards a common goal – to serve your customers better than your competition. So information, ideas and work needs to flow more openly. Transparency is king, so building connected teams, departments, supply chains and customers is just the smart thing to do.

To achieve success with collaboration, the most engaged and productive people are those who have the ability to work in more natural and familiar ways and can basically design their own working experiences. This is even more important when collaborating outside the organisation. The trick is allowing this without losing control and visibility. The right approach and tools provide flexibility and personalization that let ideas and work flow without barriers.

Thankfully there are more achievable and practical steps that organisations can take now to succeed.