The Technology-Enhanced Workplace

How Innovation Will Affect Your Business & People

Apple revolutionized the cell phone industry by introducing the iPhone just 5 years ago. Today there are over 6 billion cell phone subscribers worldwide. GoToMeeting.com went live in 2004. LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are all less than 10 years old. Google went online in 1998. A huge percentage of the technology used in a typical, modern business did not exist a generation ago. At an increasing rate, technological advancements have been the driving force in improved business processes, capabilities and opportunities. As breathtaking as recent innovations have been, the future will be even more stunning. New technologies will have a huge impact on business communication, collaboration, relationships, cultures and more. If well-planned, carefully implemented and skillfully managed, the benefits will be extraordinary for businesses and employees in an array of workplace environments.

Forbes magazine recently featured an OP/ED (Mark Fidelman, 5/24/2012) that forecasts a workplace that utilizes technology to transform the way companies and employees do business. If the accelerating adoption of technical innovations continues, these predictions and more seem very probable.

Real-Time Reinforcement of Goals and Strategies – Keeping everyone on the same page, buying into the same goals and pursuing the same strategies, is essential for achieving maximum success. This is a perennial challenge. In future workplaces, smart data systems will keep everyone up-to-date on goals, strategies and tactics, and continuously reinforce them by detecting what people are working on, who they are meeting with and what reports and materials they are generating. Enterprise systems will have all that information in the cloud for analysis and proactive management.

Continuous Communication and Feedback – One of the biggest challenges leaders, managers and executives face is communicating with workers. This is a huge bottleneck and weak point for many organizations that harms productivity, effectiveness and business success. Smart data systems of the future will replace highly limiting linear communication channels with real-time, simultaneous communications with anyone and everyone who needs it in their jobs. Leaders will instantly have decision-making information they need to manage better. Employees will get direction, feedback and other information as they work, enabling them to make immediate adjustments, rather than later.

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Getting the Right Information to the Right People – Massive and ever-increasing volumes of information are being continuously created in today's businesses. In many cases, it is virtually impossible for workers at all levels to seek out, sift through and evaluate this volume of information to access what is most important to them and their jobs. New information management systems (some of which exist now) will create smart data that finds workers who need it through aggregating platforms like SharePoint, email, workplace sensors and mobile devices. The technology will know what you need by what you do, how you do it and with whom you interact.

Smart Data Makes Smart Organizations – Just like people, organizations must learn to become smarter. They have to adapt and improve their functionality based on what the organization has experienced in the past. The faster this can happen, the better, and smarter, they can perform. New technologies will collect and process data, information and analysis on a real-time basis, and then share it with anyone who needs it, based on their current or recent activities. Organizations will instantly adapt, without the need for management initiation.

Workplace "Gamification" – The proper use of comparative information can create healthy competition among employees that results in self-directed improvement in performance. Future workplaces can leverage this gamification by continuously sharing performance information that shows teams and individuals how their results are comparing with others. It will also enable them to immediately see how others are achieving better results by displaying strategies, tactics, motivators and other information. This is made possible by the aggregation and enterprise-wide accessibility of real-time data, input through an array of devices and sensors.

Managing Through Relationships – The way effective leaders manage is rapidly changing. Instead of dictating solutions and activities they create an environment where their people develop the solutions and feel motivated to implement them as effectively as possible. A key to achieving this is connecting the right people with the right skills and resources – other employees, purveyors, partners and customers. The collaborative power of these relationships is extraordinary. New technology will make this process easier, automatic and instant through the use of smart data and cloud-

based information-sharing and processing systems.

If these innovations sound like they may be replacing managers and their decision-making roles, not to worry. They will only change their roles, and for the better. New technology will free up leaders from having to deal with many process-related details and enable them to focus on planning, strategies and development of human capital. Managers will still be in charge, and they will be brought closer to their people.

They will also be able to relate to them in a more positive, nurturing and productive way.

Of course there are many more significant changes that technology will bring to the workplace, but these are among the most exciting to those of us who seek to optimize the effectiveness of organizations and their people through proactive change that is positive, embraced and long-lasting.