

The Future of Work: What You Need to Know

To get moving on your path toward Future of Work transformations, create an overall strategy that aligns to corporate goals

By Kai Andrews

Do any of these statements sound familiar?

- » My organization must learn to transform in order to survive.
- » We are in an ongoing war for talent, shifting our culture and modernizing our technology to attract the next generation of workers.
- » Our IT department is moving toward cloud-based technologies to improve employee efficiency and collaboration.
- » Our facilities team is looking to optimize floor layouts to save costs and improve the work environment.

Chances are that each statement above applies in some form or fashion to your business. Now consider this next statement: My organization is taking a coordinated, holistic approach to these transformations to ensure desired outcomes and guard against disruptive impacts.

Enter the Future of Work.

4 dimensions

Often interpreted as an end-state, the Future of Work is actually a transformational mindset and approach to enable the value-driven outcomes your business depends on. To approach business transformations holistically, leaders need to view them through four critical dimensions.

- » **Human:** Representing the people who do the work. This dimension encompasses the way you define and promote your organization's culture by hiring and motivating top talent and determining the right workforce mix (hired vs. contract; full time vs. part time).
- » **Machine:** Including all of the business processes that determine what work is done. Whether manual or automated, business process optimizations are the table-stakes for continued viability. The challenge is minimizing disruption and maximizing employee engagement in adopting and owning the change.

- » **Digital:** Describes the inventory of tools that determine how your teams work. It defines desired behaviors for knowledge sharing, enhances content management, optimizes team interactions, and promotes task efficiency.
- » **Physical:** Represents the space where the work happens. Organizations today must embrace new ways of integrating work within employee's homes, social gathering spots and other virtual locations, in addition to the traditional office environment.

For a variety of reasons, most companies embark on transformational thinking for just one or two of these dimensions. Experience has shown that without all four, at least in some measure, you're missing out on the full ROI of a sustainable transformation.

3 outcomes

A holistic, four-dimensional approach enables your organization to realize three main outcomes in return for your investment in time, energy and resources:

- » **Flexibility:** Building a center of excellence around the four Future of Work dimensions promotes a culture that embraces and accepts continuous improvement and change. Your operations can better adjust to both internal and external influences, quickly adapting your capacity and workforce capabilities to emerging priorities.
- » **Flow:** Operational knowledge and information can be more readily assimilated and deployed across a distributed and changing workforce. Employees can learn new tasks more readily and spend less time repurposing outdated materials.
- » **Focus:** Combining a well-defined strategy and change-adaptable culture with optimized and automated processes enables your distributed workforce to stay more aligned and focused on what's most important right now.

Getting started

Are these outcomes desirable? Definitely. And yes, the four-dimensional approach even sounds sensible. But where to start? We recommend the following three steps to get moving on your path toward Future of Work transformations.

- » **Strategize:** Create an overall strategy that aligns to corporate goals, articulates which of the four dimensions are your primary entry points, and force-ranks the three outcomes.
- » **Pilot:** Find the right place in your organization to deploy a Future of Work model as a test environment. This can be a team, department, function or even a geography. Keep the size to under 300 employees if possible. Gather the identified team's needs, prioritize outcomes and implement a solution that takes no more than six weeks to execute. Make sure to incorporate planning across all four dimensions, even if not all four will be part of the first iteration. Reinforce with your team that additional capabilities will be implemented over time, and be transparent about big picture planning.
- » **Scale:** Inventory lessons learned from your pilot, and use them to define a phased set of objectives and implementation sprints for the rest of the organization. This collective set of sprints represents your long-term roadmap, giving your teams a view to how the transformation will happen over time. Consider running multiple implementations in different focus areas at one time, to leverage collective learnings for phases yet to come.

Workplace transformation is not so daunting when broken down into its component parts. Now is the time to seize the competitive advantages that remain locked up in your workplace.

The Future of Work is here.