

Why the Future of Work Looks Different for Everyone

The Future of Work is *now*, and everyone is involved.

By Suz O'Donnell

The Challenge

Adapting to the future of work is no longer optional. In many industries, it's quickly becoming table stakes to remain competitive.

Because of its name, a lot of organizations punt the problem to their human resources department. For those that realize it involves facilities and IT, they may send initiatives to them, but most companies end up with siloed programs that waste money and valuable time.

To truly create productivity today and gain market share in the future, Future of Work must be seen as a way to optimize your human, digital, process, and space goals in a coordinated way across departments.

Every company has different starting points, end goals and operational cultures. That means there are no cookie-cutter solutions. Launching new initiatives requires getting stakeholders involved from across the enterprise to create the best outcome that engages employees, increases productivity, and optimizes ROI all at the same time.

Point B's Perspective

To make the vision a reality, companies need to form alliances across departments. This is the only way to gather insights into what everyone's doing and how you can best collaborate.

The Future of Work is about seizing opportunities to be more efficient, strategic and to gain market share. If your workforce is optimized and engaged, they're more likely to connect with customers, create innovative solutions, and provide overall business effectiveness.

Repeat this mantra: The Future of Work is *now*, and *everyone* is involved.

This Is Everyone's Job

It's time to bust a big myth: The Future of Work is not just HR's job. Instituting bold initiatives that will juice your operational effectiveness requires every department to have a seat at the table.

Too many companies operate in silos, with each department focused on its own budget and objectives. The result is an enterprise that is missing out on opportunities that can only be reaped through collaboration.

If you say you want to transform a workplace, the kneejerk reaction from many companies is to assign the task to facilities. Want a work from home policy? Human Resources will draw up the standards. Telecommuting is seen as IT's domain. That's the wrong way to think about the Future of Work, it perpetuates the departmental mindset.

By aligning these projects under a single Future of Work program, you'll get higher quality results at a lower cost and better adoption by all.

Of course, HR is important. They ensure that employees are on board and excited about the changes. But there's a big part of the puzzle that needs to be solved by IT, real estate services, and other departments.

Respecting Your Management Culture

Every company's operational style is unique. When it comes to Future of Work initiatives, organizations generally take one of two paths: promote an enterprise-wide vision or build a movement one department at a time.

Top-down solutions require a program sponsor in the form of an executive leader who will work with a steering committee from every department.

This approach has the benefit of a clearer vision and budget from the outset – plus, the power of scale. At the same time, simply rolling out blanket solutions isn't an option. You need to be sensitive to what works best for different teams.

The bottom-up approach typically means going department by department. Your early-adopter departments will have the challenge of forming new partnerships with IT, facilities and others to implement Future of Work initiatives. But there may also be efficiency gains by piloting with a small group first.

As your pilot department starts to realize the fruits of their labors, others will start clamoring for their own Future of Work programs.

However you go about it, aligning people across departments can't be accomplished passively. You need advocates throughout the company who are demanding Future of Work initiatives. They're the ones who will ensure the needs of their team are met.

Finding Your Firm's Entry Point

Without a doubt, every business has its own priorities. And it makes sense to start with programs to address those issues. But many companies find that implementing one Future of Work initiative naturally dovetails into other, complementary programs.

For example, a company that wants a work-from-home policy will soon find that they also need collaboration tools, remote office setups, and inclusion rules that define who's able to take advantage of the policy.

Firms that invest in automating their processes often realize that they need a change management program in place to help employees shift to more strategic work and to reduce the fear of layoffs.

If your company pursues one Future of Work initiative, others will naturally follow. Going after your immediate needs, as long as you have an eye on the bigger picture, can get you where you need to be.

The Future of Work is about promoting initiatives that make your organization efficient and forward-thinking, resulting in revenue growth and cost savings. These programs ensure your company will be better able to meet market demands, compete for the best talent and, ultimately, gain market share.

The Bottom Line

When it comes to the Future of Work, what you choose to pursue and how you get there is up to you. However, the need to collaborate across departments is critical to capturing all the efficiency and cost-saving benefits. If your company or department isn't addressing the Future of Work today, it's probably behind the times.