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Digital is the new normal for India Inc

PLUGGED IN From connecting employees to clients to boosting productivity, digital tools are helping companies stay ahead of the competition

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Going digital is the new normal that is getting corporates, startups and other organisations to sit up and take notice of the importance of creating a digital workplace and a tech-savvy workforce. The ability to work from anywhere, stay connected through smartphones, tablets, laptops and other devices are some of the advantages for employees. For employers, this means access to a wide network of employees virtually via Skype, VoIP and email, and using digital methods to stay ahead of competition. According to a recent 2016

Nagina Singh, chief human resource officer at Bharti AXA Life Insurance, says, "The digital workplace is meant to be a virtual equivalent to the physical workplace. Initiatives can be as simple as using communication tools like emails or video conferencing to as complex as HR information systems. Digitisation has a huge potential for revolutionising workplaces. A well-defined digital workplace simplifies a lot of transactional processes and helps an organisation focus on strategic and growth activities. This in-turn has a direct impact on productivity and innovation. Digital platforms nowadays are extensively used for employees



TECH IMPACT

- The latest Randstad Workmonitor survey reveals interesting findings regarding the consumption of technology at the workplace today. A majority (95%) of the survey respondents agree that today, technology and digitalisation have a major impact on their jobs
- As many as (89%) indicate that they need more training to keep up with technological developments and make them work to their advantage
- A very high percentage of the survey respondents (91%) state that they feel face-to-face meetings are the best way to interact with someone

■ The ability to work from anywhere, stay connected are some advantages for employees.

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methods to stay ahead of competition. According to a recent 2016 report by Deloitte on digital workplace and culture, companies no longer need to send workers on expensive trips to visit clients or collaborate with other teams. Today's workforces are free to choose where they want to work instead of staying where work originates. Easier access to skill development resources is making vertical moves easier, too, for both people and organisations. The growth in computing speed and storage is making virtual and global collaboration possible in more fields.

TECHNOLOGY, A CATALYST

Many HR experts believe digital practices help increase productivity and boost employee engagement and innovation at the workplace. Companies are able to save costs, build a more mobile and agile workforce that is more flexible and adaptable to different work requirements.

Digital platforms nowadays are extensively used for employee engagement, reward and recognition and organisation communications. We have a platform called One which helps all the entities across 64 countries to stay connected." Monica Gupta, co-founder, Craftsvilla.com, agrees. "Digital workplaces leverage digital assets to assist in functioning of processes. Digital assets bring in transparency and reduce the interaction time between stakeholders. This results in freeing up operational time of an employee which can be focused on value-added activities. As a domino effect, it results in increase of productivity, engagement and innovation at work."

For many companies, digitisation makes the entire system more accessible and real-time with faster processing time. As Sriram Vaidhyanathan, chief human resource officer, Bankbazaar.com, says, "Tedious paperwork is being replaced by digital forms. Connectivity and

■ The ability to work from anywhere, stay connected are some advantages for employees.

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coherence between teams is much higher because of technology's ability to connect discrete teams. The silos culture is going away and collaboration is becoming the norm."

TECH IMPACT AT THE WORKPLACE

The latest Randstad Workmonitor survey reveals interesting findings regarding the consumption of technology at the workplace today. A majority (95%) of the survey respondents agree that today,

technology and digitalisation have a major impact on their jobs and an even higher percentage (96%) say they see this trend as an opportunity. As many as 89% indicate that they need more training to keep up with technological developments and make them work to their advantage.

Moorthy K Uppaluri, MD and CEO, Randstad India, says, "Just having the right technological tools will not transform an organisation. Tools are only effective when the right envi-

ronment, the right culture and the right support are in place."

WHAT IT MEANS FOR COMPANIES

Companies across sectors are adapting to digital practices in various ways. DP Singh, vice president and HR head, IBM-India, South Asia, says, "We have used digitisation across functions to enhance employee experience. IBM offers HR services via mobile app for the convenience of our employees. Training, chat, social networking, application access while out of office, digital calendar and video conferencing are a few to name."

Newer technologies such as cognitive, smart devices, artificial intelligence, internet of things and augmented reality, are making headway into mainstream adoption for many companies. The HR at IBM is leveraging technologies available to

improve employee experience. "IBM has an integrated talent acquisition solution, which provides greater flexibility to engage with internal and external candidates and collaborate better with hiring managers," he says.

Another example of digitisation has been around the employee performance management system - Checkpoint. This system is designed to watch the way the employees work. Checkpoint was created by the employees for the employees. With Checkpoint, an online evaluation tool, IBM employees will set shorter-term goals, and managers will provide feedback on their progress, at least once every quarter.

Sectors such as life insurance, which are sales driven, are also going digital. In order to ensure better management of its sales force, Bharti AXA Life has decided to create android applications that help in monitoring and tracking of its sales employees.

➤ Digitisation has potential for revolutionising workplaces. A well-defined digital workplace simplifies a lot of transactional processes and helps an organisation focus on strategic and growth activities. This has a direct impact on productivity and innovation

NAGINA SINGH, chief human resource officer, Bharti AXA Life Insurance