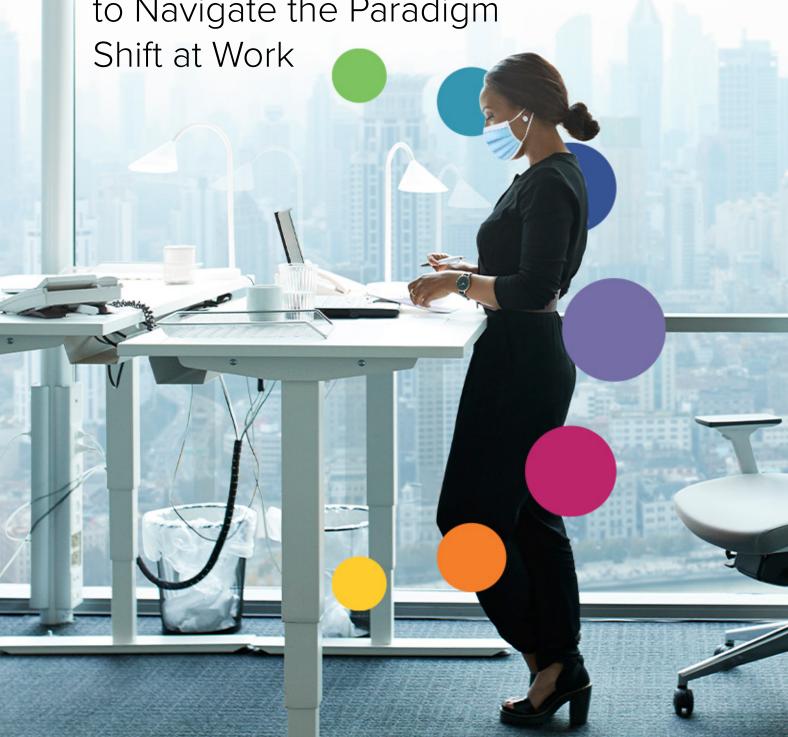# The Digital Workplace in the New Normal

How to Empower Employees to Navigate the Paradigm Shift at Work

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"If the rate of change on the outside exceeds the rate of change on the inside, the end is near." — **Jack Welch**

Outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has led to unprecedented acceleration of adoption of technology across businesses and organizations. The emerging trend from the recent developments is that remote work is here to stay, and we may never have 100% workforce working from office in future, even after the end of the pandemic. Consequently, digital transformation, which was being adopted for increased efficiencies, has now become a matter of survival at workplaces. This is true for IT as well as non-IT organizations.

Some of the major changes for IT firms have been the way support systems work, additional costs on internet, power and mobile charges, and significant reduction in travel. Similarly, for non-IT sectors, the impact is even more prominent as there is reduction in available workforce and they need to adopt to technology at the earliest in terms of automation.

Overall, this pandemic situation has completely changed the way employees function and collaborate in a workplace. The modes of communication have radically transformed and the need for data privacy and security has amplified. In spite of these challenges, it is important for us to recognize and utilize the boundless opportunities that this situation has unraveled.

While the scope of digitally transforming the workplace is enormous, several challenges stand in the way of its success, as it is also a very complex process. Crucial aspects need to be addressed beyond the implementation specifics to help employees embrace technology for higher productivity. The key aspects to consider are:

Helping adapt to changes in working environment

While flexibility in location and schedule is a primary benefit of a digital workplace, this also requires the employee to be more self-organized. Further, here the environment is more "networked" rather than "hierarchical".
The key is to move employees from extrinsic reward to intrinsic motivation, which happens if they are empowered rather than controlled in their work. It is important the employees are made responsible to their commitments as they enjoy the freedom of a digital workplace.

Professional development through continuing education

A major resistance to technology is because the employees are not equipped to use or keep pace with the change in the technology. Employees need to recognize that fluidity is part of the digital workplace. Many a time they panic that their work is being taken over by digitization; they need to be supported to see technology as an opportunity to focus on more rewarding tasks. Relevant as well as regular professional development programs are crucial. It will lead to increased job satisfaction among them.

New metrics and performance indicators

New metrics and key performance indicators that are relevant to digital workplace are an integral part of the strategy. These are essential for employee motivation as well as responsiveness. There needs to be clarity on how an employee's performance is measured in this transformed environment. These metrics, if appropriate, will in turn be the motivation. Apt metrics and key performance indicators are critical as a digital workplace is more collaborative and strategies/processes need to be in place to recognize individual's contributions.

Access to right information

Technology is a double-edged sword; while it can open access to a huge amount of information, it can also cause an overload at times. This can be a deterrent to employee performance. It is essential to have fast access to relevant information in the workplace with a strong information management system and appropriate structure.

Effective communication and employee engagement

It is important to involve employees in the digital transformation with a clear vision and effective communication. They need to be part of the evolution, sharing responsibilities as well as rewards.

In conclusion, an effective digital workplace would require **strategies to drive relevant competencies as well as behavior change among people** and it is very important to work towards the same in a structured and innovative manner.

Wipro helps organizations transition to the future of work with an effective digital workplace strategy.

About the authors

Dr. Sujatha J holds a doctorate from IISc Bangalore, and has over 30 years of teaching, research, and training experience across various renowned organizations. Currently, she is a senior consultant with the CTO office at Wipro. Her work is centered on the areas of AI, cognitive systems, and custom robotics. She has 17 international publications, and 11 patents filed, out of which five have been granted and the remaining are pending. Dr. Sujatha also serves as a member of the industry advisory board for academia and is a member of IEEE, IETE, and ISTE, India.

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