the future impact of technology on the workplace

Historically, there has been a technology lead–social system lag relationship played out in the workplace.

Technology enables new opportunities and ways of getting work accomplished more productively, and humans adapt over time to these opportunities, gradually learning how to exploit the functionalities the new technology offers. We are currently in a golden age of technology where, on one hand the reach and extent has never been so pervasive but on the other hand, the social system lag is widening.

70% *of people own a mobile phone*

One hundred and seven trillion emails were sent out last year. Over 255 million websites were created, and we are averaging 21 million new websites each year. We have written 152 million blogs and created 50,000 new blogs every single day. 20 million people bought iPods, in just two years, and 70% of the world's population has a mobile phone. We are adopting technology at an amazing rate, but not necessarily does this societal rapid adoption of technology apply to the workplace. Capturing the full potential of these technologies to improve collaboration, communication, and employee productivity will require

organisational change and new management approaches to workplace design.

Early workplace shifts resulting from social technologies have shown-up in the increase of working from home with corporate hot-desking arrangements and video-conferencing. Organisations are also moving towards work-shifting, where people identify the best time and the best location to get things done based on when they are most productive. Video-conferencing and communicating will continue to expand, but these collaborative technologies will not substitute for the importance of face-to-face communication and continued relationship building.

New tools are emerging like wikis, microblogging, ideation tools, and collaborative decision tools in next-generation project management.

These collaborative tools provide a central place to talk, review documents, and conduct an 'ideation' to advance the interests of the project. Due to the virtual and pervasive nature of these technologies, how the work gets done is pushing against the boundaries of hierarchical practices to a more horizontal global network structure, which is

107 TRILLION *emails sent last year*

adaptive and innovative in nature. This shift will necessitate shifts in structure, leadership roles, and reward systems to incentivise and recognise the right behaviours.

Productivity gains from the effective use of social technologies are typically through a design process which alters internal workflows, defines work as an adaptive

**20 MILLION** *people bought iPods in just two years*

process, and provides meaningful real-time interactions with fellow employees and customers. The work system is based on principles of continuous innovation and fast time to value. Reconfigurable work units can shift directions with agility, altering plans in small increments, on an on-going basis, while adapting and adjusting to customer and competitive changing needs. Some entrepreneurial firms are experimenting with social networks to co-create new services with their clients thus speeding up knowledge access and implementation.

Social strategies and designs appropriate to one organisation do not necessarily succeed in another with a different workforce, competitive context, or customer base.

152 MILLION *blogs have been written*

50 THOUSAND *new blogs every single day*

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over 255 MILLION *websites exist*

21 MILLION *new websites created each year*
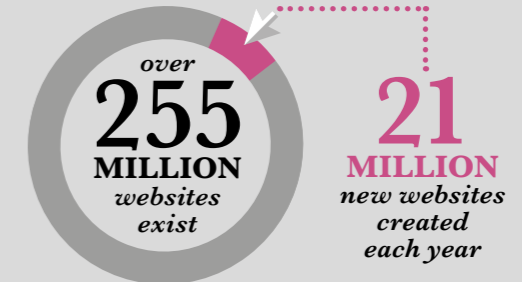
Purposeful experimentation that tests an array of work practices and technologies will therefore be crucial. The companies that have the greatest success will be those with the cultures conducive to broad collaboration and sharing. Bottom-up use of social technologies is essential but also senior managers need to role model and provide vocal support. Leaders need to develop new social-technology skills and help their organisations do the same.

The implications for the Human Resource function are to focus on leadership development in organisational media literacy. Executives must understand the nature of different social-media tools and the power in workforce performance they can unleash. Leaders need to excel at co-creation and collaboration - the currencies of the social-technology world. From an organisational perspective, leaders must cultivate a new, technologically linked social infrastructure that by design promotes constant interaction across physical and geographical boundaries, as well as self-organised discourse and exchange.

This interplay of leadership skills and related organisational-design is a new emerging area of designing the new high-performing workplace, rather than letting the technology gap widen by default and not design.

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