

5 Digital Workplace Myths That Limit Progress — And How to Overcome Them



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Introduction

Is Your Organization Preventing Itself From Cultivating a Digital Workplace?

Business leaders broadly say that they want engaged and connected employees who take full advantage of technology to achieve business outcomes — in other words, they want their employees to have digital dexterity. Yet business leaders as a rule aren't connecting those wants to the organization's digital workforce vision.

In fact, it is common for stakeholders across the enterprise to have inaccurate and conflicting ideas about what a digital workplace is and its potential for positive impact on employee engagement and productivity. That lack of alignment is halting progress.

Here we highlight five common myths that prevent organizations from building a digital workplace. These myths touch on different, human-centric aspects of the organization, including culture, the role of citizen developers and technology adoption. By understanding them and the actions to counteract them, digital workplace leaders can drive progress.

Myth No. 1

Digital Workplace Is the Same as Digital Transformation

How does this myth show up?

A digital business transformation aims to exploit technology to create new business models. The digital workplace leverages an engaging and intuitive environment to boost workforce digital dexterity. They aren't the same — even though each benefits from technologies, such as cloud, or methodologies, like Agile.

A digital workplace is crucial for achieving a digital transformation, leading business leaders to believe that investments in the latter by definition contribute to the former. They don't.

Why is it a problem?

Conflating the two can stymie digital workplace progress when you fail to prioritize employee-centric workplace digital initiatives due to the mistaken belief that they're redundant or competitive with the transformation agenda.

What can you do about it?

- Use internal surveys and employee experience sentiment data to understand what teams need to operate in a more engaging and intuitive workplace.
- Deploy or adopt products that make it easy for workers and managers to optimize when, where and how much they work.

Myth No. 2

5 Digital Workplace Myths That Limit Progress — And How to Overcome Them

Teams Will Adopt Digital Workplace Technologies Without Culture Change

How does this myth show up?

The pandemic transformed remote work and its enabling technologies from nice-to-have to necessary. According to a Gartner survey, 67% of organizations increased the use of digital platforms since 2019. But organizations haven't met the moment with a similar embrace of digitally optimized processes and methods to help teams get their work done.

Why is it a problem?

When organizations use digital technologies such as video-based meeting solutions and digital whiteboards to mimic analog work processes, they capture only a fraction of the possible benefit. Instead, organizations should aim to leverage these technologies to enable new ways of working and thereby capture greater value in the form of higher employee productivity and innovation, to name two potential benefits.

What can you do about it?

- Nominate peer advocates and champions to coach team members in support of the cultural and process changes needed in a digital workplace.
- Identify employees who need extra encouragement or motivation.
- Use all of the functionality in the digital workplace technologies you've implemented.

Myth No. 3

5 Digital Workplace Myths That Limit Progress — And How to Overcome Them

Collaboration Only Happens When Team Members Work Synchronously

How does this myth show up?

Many leaders are clinging to the belief that creative thinking, team building and innovation ideally happen in person — when team members are working at the same time. This myth is part of what's driving certain organizations to push a wholesale return to the office.

Yet even before the pandemic, distributed work teams proved that synchronous and asynchronous modes of collaboration have a near equal impact on innovation.

Why is it a problem?

Employees have said they want to spend less time in meetings, and they have proven they can be as productive and innovative using modern, coordinated collaboration methods. Organizations that fail to acknowledge those realities risk eroding trust and losing high-quality talent to more agile competitors.

What can you do about it?

- Experiment with new collaboration styles and grow community with social networking collaboration tools.
- Accelerate the adoption of new collaboration practices with collaborative work management applications.
- Ensure equitable access to collaboration with a purpose-built new work hub.

Myth No. 4

5 Digital Workplace Myths That Limit Progress — And How to Overcome Them

Citizen Developers Can't Produce Useful, Compliant Applications

How does this myth show up?

Business units have been asserting independence from IT for more than two decades now, yet some IT departments continue to hold the misplaced notion that business-led technologies are substandard.

In fact, 62% of business technologists have high levels of technical dexterity and are advanced users of specialized technologies such as low-code and no-code development tools. Citizen developers in particular are contributing technological solutions that improve business processes, decision making and customer-facing capabilities.

Why is it a problem?

IT organizations that shut down efforts by business technologists and citizen developers suppress innovation and lose opportunities to improve outcomes or save money. Heathrow Airport, for example, has saved an estimated £2 million (\$2.6 million) by allowing business units to build digital solutions independently.

Rejecting business-led technology initiatives also risks pushing them into the shadows, where IT won't be able to enforce governance requirements around quality, standards adoption and security.

What can you do about it?

- Help business technologists create effective and compliant solutions by providing access to training, data and other resources.
- Form fusion teams with IT and business to redesign and redefine technology delivery models and responsibilities.
- Facilitate a community of practice for citizen developers across departments to share knowledge and solutions to enable scale.

Myth No. 5

5 Digital Workplace Myths That Limit Progress — And How to Overcome Them

Microsoft 365 Is the Only “New Work Hub”

How does this myth show up?

The “new work hub” assembles productivity applications to serve diverse needs. The Microsoft 365 suite includes components in new work hub categories like visual collaboration, content services, meeting solutions and so on, and many organizations will adopt it.

The myth arises when organizations default to Microsoft for everything, rather than analyzing the capabilities needed to produce results and solving for them. For example, Microsoft 365 may not be able to fulfill all of the data privacy, compliance and security requirements for external content collaboration.

Why is it a problem?

Enabling workforce dexterity requires organizations to understand the capabilities each functional department, business unit and employee group needs to achieve business outcomes. Failing to do so cultivates a technology-first approach that emphasizes different priorities than an employee-centric and outcomes-focused approach would.

What can you do about it?

- Educate colleagues on the communication and collaboration marketplace so they can provide options that will meet employee needs.
- Create journey maps to pinpoint capability gaps.
- Gartner clients can leverage Gartner Market Guides and Gartner Magic Quadrant™ research related to the new work hub.

Conclusion

The pandemic-mandated shift to work from home and “hybrid work” has diminished the role of the physical workplace to bring people together and inspire them. The digital workplace must now fill the gap. Organizations have responded with new tools and ways of working. Yet 67% of employees still feel that the technologies they use for work require more effort than they should.

This is just one way in which the digital workplace of today is failing human employees, its primary constituents. The recommendations we highlight in this eBook aim to reposition employees at the center of the digital workplace, and focus efforts to counteract the five common myths with approaches that use a human-centric lens to drive cross-organizational alignment around a digital workplace vision and its execution.

Gartner experts will be convening with clients virtually for **Gartner Digital Workplace Summit** to provide actionable, objective insight to help you make progress on mission-critical priorities related to the digital workplace.

Attend in EMEA: 15 – 16 May 2023

Attend in the Americas: 12 – 13 June 2023