Rewiring the Remote ENTERPRISE

The role of workplace analytics in digital transformations

By Brad Killinger

The disruption we have experienced with COVID has been unprecedented. Practically overnight, the workforce transitioned to de facto work from home. Not only were organizations struggling to determine how to right-size and right-site the post-pandemic workforce, but they are also challenged to find new ways to manage the distributed workforce.

Companies radically shifted their operations and business models – reconfiguring manufacturing lines for jet engines to ventilators – from gym shoes to masks. The ability to understand work activity and capacity in the organization has never been more critical as companies need to navigate, shift and pivot to finetune operations to match the organizations' work capacity and talent base with the work volume and business requirements.

Organizations also have had to radically shift how they manage work in the work-from-anywhere era. In the post-COVID era, digital transformation is now being practiced near daily. More than 80 percent of companies say accelerating digital transformation is a strategic necessity, according to a BCG report.

Business leaders must seek to transform their operations day by day – making continuous improvements and incremental changes to stay one step ahead of needs and requirements. But digital transformation at the pace of change can be overwhelming. How can IT and business leaders keep up with the velocity of change?

About three years ago, Forrester analysts talked about the emergence of the "insights-driven business." This prestigious group of companies, they observed, were growing eight times faster than the global GDP, and at 30 percent year-over-year were tracking to amass $1.8 trillion in earnings by 2021. These organizations were systematically harnessing insights across their organization and implementing them for ultimate competitive advantage.

Back then, we were aggregating and analyzing customer data to improve customer acquisition and retention. But today, organizations are in a race to disrupt themselves and turning the power of analytics internally to optimize workforce effort.

Previously, anything related to labor or "the workforce" was the domain of human resources – professionals who were mainly focused on recruiting, interviewing, hiring and firing and employee wellness. Today, organizations are realizing the need for strategic and holistic talent management strategies. A focus on employee experience, employee engagement and employee device
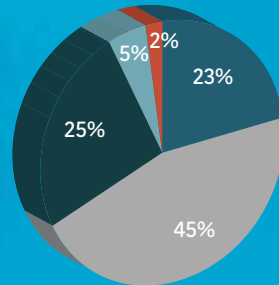
In light of recent global events, how much would you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Our organization is scrambling to adjust to current changes

2% / 23% / 45% / 25% / 5%

Our digital transformation strategy anticipated disruption on the scale of current events.

3% / 18% / 42% / 28% / 9%

Our digital transformation strategy was too rigid to allow us to adapt or flex to current events.

3% / 13% / 43% / 34% / 7%

■ Strongly Agree　■ Somewhat Agree　■ Somewhat Disagree　■ Strongly Disagree　■ I'm not sure where we are on that

Source: Futurum Research

experience management – and the need to value and support employees – is now seen as crucial for success.
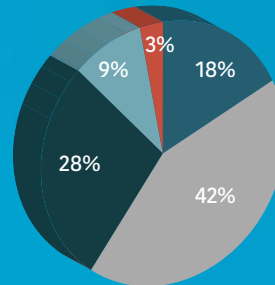
Today in the remote-first way of working, workforce analytics adoption is crucial to reveal insights of how work is being performed across the enterprise. These insights are the foundation for process improvement, understanding work "wastage," uncovering training and coaching needs, shifts in software utilization, and employee engagement trends and opportunities. It's now critical to harness work data for the prediction of future work/talent trends, so businesses can proactively plan for what's ahead in addition to learning from past performance. As such, workforce analytics has moved from an HR tool to a line of business transformation tool.

"At the end of the day workplace transformation is about enabling change, the ability to adapt, and preserving and growing the workforce needed to thrive and remain competitive in a global economy that is increasingly under pressure and increasingly competitive," said industry analyst firm Futurum Research in its report on workplace and digital transformation. "Most organizations are focused to some degree on workplace and digital transformation, but there is ample opportunity for improvement. The process is a journey, and its ultimate success is predicated on balanced investments in the areas of people, processes and technology."
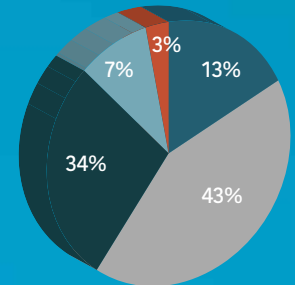
Today, technology gives companies the ability to aggregate thousands of data points from every corner of the enterprise to provide an unprecedented level of operational visibility around people, processes and technology. With these analytics, organizations can obtain multifaceted insights into enterprise effort, to understand next best actions to support data-driven digital transformation.

The automated collection of data can then be analyzed to determine key performance indicators, trends and other key insights. As a result, organizations can now measure productivity, time utilization, who's working, where they're working and how they're working. The more we work, the more data we have. The more data we have, the better decisions can be made by leaders.

With this information, organizations can understand specifically what efforts and activities generate the most return on investment – to then prioritize those activities. They can also understand organization drag – what issues or processes are creating bottlenecks, and even what resources are being underutilized. They can also improve employee engagement, collaboration and

workload balancing and understand what technology is being used in the organization, and how it's being used.

Digital transformation is about enabling change, creating the ability to adapt and preserving and growing the workforce needed to thrive and remain competitive. The ability to understand work activity and capacity in the organization has never been more critical as companies need to navigate, shift and pivot to finetune operations to match the organizations' work capacity and globally located talent base with the work volume and business requirements. And yet, they need to turn the ship without leaving employees drowning in their wake. Being attentive to the quality of life for employees has never been more paramount, given the fact that many workers are under a great deal of stress, working longer hours and at risk of burnout.

With analytics, organizations can rise to the challenge with the right resources in real-time, while forging a people-first workplace. ◆

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