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The Digital Workplace:

How Digital Tools Can Transform Your Business

Introduction

Today, innovation, productivity and maintaining a competitive edge depend, to a large extent, on driving business agility. Designing a digital workplace is the key to a new, modern way of working – one with processes that are effective, flexible and error-free. It's a long-term strategy that promotes growth and positions your company to respond to an unpredictable economic climate. It also improves employee engagement and minimizes the effects of the shortage of skilled workers.

Are you wondering how the digital workplace will shape the business of the future? Read our guide to find out what to keep in mind when introducing and designing it, what benefits it will bring you and what challenges you may face on your journey towards digital transformation.

"We've learned a lot over the past few years, including how to continue our business without restrictions by going digital. Our employees are able to easily access our digital document pool while working from their homes across the country. Thanks to faster processing times, we can offer our customers better service. At the same time, we can handle a higher volume of business with the same resources."

Paul March President,
Horizon Underwriting Managers

What is a digital workplace

A digital workplace is a cloud-based platform that transfers a company's documents, data and workflows into a virtual space. It contains applications, tools and collaboration functions that provide secure document storage, instant permissioned access and automated workflows that free employees from tedious manual tasks. These capabilities work together seamlessly and are used via a secure, online connection that can be accessed from anywhere, any time.

Explore the possibilities

The digital workplace plays to its strengths in almost every organization across departments. These are a few examples of the role of the digital workplace:

- **Government agencies** provide citizens with electronic forms rather than requiring in-person visits.

- **Universities** share student information between the admissions and financial aid departments and the registrar's office while easily meeting the privacy requirements outlined in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

- **Manufacturers** improve communication between the engineering department and employees on the factory floor.

- **Field service personnel** can collect information on-site with a customer and share it with the central office in real time.

- **Financial institutions** use online forms and digital signatures to open new customer accounts more quickly.

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The advantages for your business

The benefits of a digital workplace have a significant impact on organizations of all sizes. Companies that can effectively implement the shift towards a mobile workforce are well-positioned to enhance agility and productivity. Factors such as streamlined processes and a more adaptable technology infrastructure can provide an advantage over more complex, traditional systems. And as operations become more efficient, it drives further adoption – businesses quickly recognize that a mobile workforce can rapidly outperform their industry peers. Here are some key aspects to consider.

Keeping costs low: Companies, especially small businesses and start-ups, generally have little financial leeway. Experience has shown that recruiting additional employees to cope with growing demand inevitably leads to higher requirements for office space, workstations and software. The budget required for this often presents expanding companies with a Herculean financial task.

Strengthening customer loyalty: Online and mobile technologies open up new opportunities to increase customer loyalty. Any business that is in close contact with its customers can benefit from providing customer-friendly online services, quicker answers to their questions and the ability to offer products and services tailored to meet the needs of different market segments.

Increase productivity: With a digital workplace, employees are able to more productively use time that was previously spent traveling to meetings. Modern mobile collaboration tools create the flexibility to participate in meetings from any location, share data securely and stay in constant communication with colleagues and superiors. The result is a significant increase in productivity because up-to-date information is available to everyone involved at any time, regardless of location.
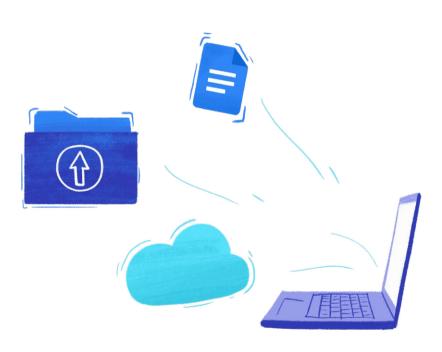
Three additional benefits of the digital workplace

These are three ways in which your company can realize a quick ROI.

Reduce paper: Digitalization in the business world is here to stay. Regardless of this, many core business processes such as customer onboarding, accounts payable and human resources are still paper-based. Digitalizing these processes is the first step towards digital transformation. It paves the way for a hybrid workforce and process optimizations.

Eliminate unorganized file sharing: Don't depend on a file-share solution like Google Docs or a file sync-and-share product like Dropbox. Without clear guidelines for document and data management, controlling information becomes a challenge. As the volumes of digital data grow ever-faster, becoming more diverse and complex, this situation can lead to greater problems than those associated with paper-based processes.

Embrace the cloud: Cloud-based software solutions make it possible to meet the needs of a hybrid workforce while providing further digital efficiency gains. Cloud solutions can be implemented without substantial infrastructure investment and can be up and running much faster (and more easily) than on-premises systems. They provide secure information exchange and seamless communication between employees working in the office and those working remotely.

The digital workplace in action

Century Fence, a family-run business established in 1917, has evolved from a scrap metal brokerage to a custom fencing provider and pavement marking contractor. The company sought to enhance efficiency and reduce reliance on paper-based processes.

To achieve this, Century Fence implemented DocuWare as the first step in their paperless journey. The primary goals were to speed up workflows, ensure records were searchable and transparent, and provide field superintendents with remote access to project documentation. DocuWare's flexibility, mobile app feature and seamless integration with the company's ERP and accounting systems made it the ideal choice.

The implementation was staggered across three locations, starting with the accounting department for electronic invoice approvals. In the following months, the solution expanded to digitize all project documentation and provide mobile access to field superintendents via tablets. This ensured that superintendents could access project files quickly, whether onsite or remotely, maintaining business continuity.

DocuWare's Intelligent Indexing feature significantly reduced the time spent on manual tasks by learning to locate index fields on documents and integrating with the ERP system for consistent and accurate information storage. As a result, the time superintendents spent on cost approvals decreased from four hours to just 30 minutes per week.

"DocuWare allows us to keep superintendents in the field, where they are most valuable, rather than in the office doing paperwork. Time in the field enables them to oversee the work and keep projects on time and on budget."

Matt Powell, VP Business Development

Implementation of the digital workplace

Remote work and the use of mobile technology have evolved from a trend to standard practice. This highly adaptable approach enables modern, progressive and productive business operations. The following steps will help you achieve your goals:

1. Assessment of the initial situation:

Before you implement the essential elements of a digital workplace in your company, you should carry out a thorough analysis of the status quo. Find out how well your company is prepared for the requirements of a digital workplace.

2. Define your goals:

Understanding your current status will help your team define your initial objectives, establish a budget and decide on the software components and features you need to start building a digital workplace.

3. Software selection:

The next step is to look for software solutions that best meet your requirements. Compare your expectations with the offerings of various providers, do your research and use free trials to test drive the software. In the end, you should be able to make an informed decision in favor of a tool that offers all relevant functions as well as service, support and training from a single source.

4. System implementation:

Your provider should accompany you throughout the entire design phase, carry out the implementation and ensure the integration of the tool into your existing software landscape. You can then start to fill your digital workplace with data by digitizing and migrating paper-based information.

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5. Employee integration and authorization management:

Your employees are now the focus of the digital workplace implementation. Define individual permissions so that employees can only access the information for which they are authorized. In the backend, you can precisely control which content is visible to each user.

6. Testing and training:

Create a test system outside your production environment to avoid surprises that could cause business disruption later. Uncover and resolve remaining issues in your test system and begin to train IT administrators and power users. Then provide hands-on training for all employees who will use the system. Don't forget to set up ongoing technical documentation. Include design choices, system configuration settings, post-implementation changes and contact information for system administrators.

7. System introduction and everyday use:

Once your employees are confident in using the digital workplace and any initial issues have been resolved, the system can be officially rolled-out for day-to-day operations - taking your business to a new level of efficiency and collaboration.

The relevance of the digital workplace

Digital transformation is a worldwide phenomenon. Many organizations are on their way, others are preparing to begin. Taking the best route toward your objectives requires new strategies and skills that go beyond traditional business management approaches.

With careful planning, the digital workplace can be an important building block for your company's success. Now it's up to you. Evaluate providers and partners who have the right mix of expertise, competence and vision and help your hybrid teams perform at their best.

Find out how we can make your digital workplace a reality

DocuWare specializes in the digitalization of the work environment. We will accompany you on your journey into the digital future. Would you like to learn more about how the digital workplace can make your company fit for the future?

Contact us – we're happy to help!

Contact us

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About DocuWare

DocuWare is a leading provider of document management and workflow automation solutions. Together with its 800+ strong Partner network, DocuWare has helped approximately 20,000 customers across 100+ countries simplify their work through digitizing, automating and transforming key processes.

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