

WRK LYFE

Exploring
a new
generation's
impact on
corporate
culture.

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*How to help your employees feel
more connected to their work.*

*To hug or not to hug?
Navigate the workplace.*

LETTER FROM EDITOR

Just 100 years ago, less than 35% of U.S. homes had electricity, and it took a minimum of three and a half days to steam from London to New York. Clearly, things have changed. Not only has global access to power come to define 21st century life, but we're currently engaged in the debate over what the next generation of smart-grids looks like. We barely tolerate a six-hour transatlantic flight, knowing that we are inherently capable of moving so much faster. And with this unshakable belief in the inevitability of rapid innovation, adaptation will continue to become a way of life.

Ironically, offices, for much of that same century, changed very little. People congregated in rooms with desks for eight to 10 hours per day and generated documents meant to track where the company was and where it was going next. But what worked when our fathers were in business just isn't going to work anymore. For small- and medium-sized businesses, adaptation isn't just how they adjust, it's how they'll stay alive.

Today's best indicator of positive business growth isn't cash flow or profit margin, but "employee experience." A recent study by Globoforce and IBM found that organizations who score in the top 25% on employee experience report nearly 3x the return on assets and more than 2x the return on sales as organizations in the bottom 25%. More than just a passing trend, what we're seeing is a fundamental shift in what it means to be a successful employer.

Driving this shift are two generations that grew up working, creating, and communicating on the Internet. While many bemoan a diminished work ethic amongst younger staff, the truth is, they crave meaningful employment. In fact, many of them put career above just about everything else in their lives, save for family. When we're complaining about laziness or entitlement, what we're actually saying is, "I can't seem to inspire the most educated, most driven workers in history."

With a new labor force that blurs the lines between work, life, passion, and purpose, the old cog-in-a-wheel system just won't meet their needs. To put it bluntly, companies that don't consider employee experience will be non-competitive when it comes to recruiting and retaining top talent within the next decade.

So, what makes a company worth working for?

The impending workplace revolution is the very question we tackle in this issue of WRKLYFE. We'll explore what matters to employees today and see what businesses can do to attract the right people. Above all, we'll demonstrate that a profitable and employee-friendly way forward is available for anyone with a bit of curiosity and a willingness to evolve.

Michael Littler
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How to Have a Great Office Culture

Words By John McDermott

When Not Everyone Works in the Office.

People often look to science fiction for clues about how we'll live in the future, even though science fiction is a notoriously bad prophet. If it were accurate, we'd all be commuting by jetpack and have robot maids named Rosie by now.

There was one sci-fi author, however, whose prognostications have been spot on. In 1974, Arthur C. Clarke—co-writer of the screenplay for *2001: A Space Odyssey*, the seminal work of science fiction cinema—predicted with stunning accuracy how personal computers would revolutionize how we live and work:

"[Computers] will enrich our society because it will make it possible to live anywhere we like. Any businessman and executive could live almost anywhere on Earth and still do his business...We can live wherever we please and still carry on interaction with other human beings."

Some 40 years later, the future Clarke envisioned is upon us. People are no longer bound to desks and offices and jobs are no longer limited by geography. Employees increasingly expect the option to work remotely some days (if not all the time), and research shows they are just as, if not more, productive than their desk jockey counterparts.

But the growth of remote work runs counter to another major shift in office life, and that's the importance of culture. Companies frequently cite their company's culture as their biggest key to success. Being a "culture fit" is now the top criteria for many hiring managers. Likewise, bosses no longer scold employees for "wasting time" fraternizing with their colleagues; in fact, they encourage it, as they well should. Research shows that people perform better when they make social connections with their colleagues. When your team members like each other, the entire company benefits.

This poses an obvious dilemma, though: How do you simultaneously grant the freedom to work remotely,

and cultivate a vibrant office culture that gets people excited to come to the office every day?

Many managers think they can achieve this balance with a ping pong table or the occasional office happy hour. But culture is bigger than that; it's something that permeates every level of the organization, and imbues it with identity, meaning, and purpose. It motivates employees and lifts overall performance, regardless of where it is they're working.

Culture and autonomy don't have to come at the expense of each other though. And you can avoid that fate by following these steps on how to build a strong culture when your team isn't in the same office.

Implement an EQ training course

A good culture starts with individual employees, and adds up to something significant. And there's no better way to build culture on an individual level than to put your organization through emotional quotient training.

EQ, or emotional intelligence, is a person's ability to properly judge their and others' emotions and adjust their behavior accordingly—and it's an increasingly important skill for the office. Many experts say EQ is even more important than IQ, or traditional intelligence, when it comes to professional success. Many organizations have incorporated EQ training into their internal development programs. A company can't have a thriving culture if its individual employees aren't conscious of their colleagues' emotions and reacting to them appropriately.

HR departments have taken to bringing in EQ consultants to conduct workshops in the office, making EQ training part of the onboarding process and incorporating EQ assessments into annual employee evaluations.



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Prioritize video chat

Email, chat, and text help people stay connected when away from the office, but the tone of those messages can be easily misinterpreted. Many employees resort to using unnecessary exclamation points, just to avoid coming off as rude! And the fact these conversations don't occur in real-time detracts from a collaborative office environment.

One way to avoid these awkward situations altogether is to prioritize video conferencing. When video chatting, team members are able to pick up on each other's facial expressions, voice inflections, and all other non-verbal cues that are lost in text-based communications.

Some managers even suggest holding certain meetings where everyone, whether they work remotely or in the office, attends via video conference, so as to put everyone on the same playing field, and not have the remote employees feel like second-class citizens.

Invest in collaborative software

One of the primary concerns for remote workers is feeling out of the loop. There are certain offline conversations—whether they be at the water cooler, over lunch, or between cubicles—remote workers aren't

privy to, and knowing those conversations are going on without them can leave them feeling anxious about not knowing important details about a project. The best way to allay those remote worker anxieties is to make sure they're aware of every new development in a project. The best way to do that is with collaborative software.

By combining the latest in laptop and mobile device technology with collaborative, cloud-based software, employees won't have to deal with the angst of sending Excel attachments back and forth and worrying whether they have to the most up-to-date version of the document. Updates can be seen in real-time, giving everyone on your team, regardless of their location and schedule, a constant connection to the main office.

Impose a communication curfew

Technology might have liberated us from the office, but not even Clarke could have foreseen the effect this would have on work-life balance. The downside to employees taking their tasks outside the office is it inevitably intrudes on personal time, and that can leave employees feeling anxious, alienated, and resentful of their colleagues and employer (not good if you're trying to promote a strong company culture).

Feeling appreciated is the single most influential factor in employee happiness.

Companies are more sensitive to this problem, and many of them have instituted limits on when employees can communicate with one another. Healthcare consulting company Vynamic has a policy it calls zzzMail, for instance. Employees are forbidden from emailing each other from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. Monday through Friday, and entirely on weekends. If there's something urgent, they call or text.

Communication is key to a healthy office culture, but so is giving your employees time to recover. Imposing limits on communication, especially in today's constantly connected culture, will afford your workers a much-needed respite, and engender them to the organization.

Publicly praise your employees on social media

One of the biggest proponents of having a strong culture is Danny Hughes, president of Hilton Americas, who attributes much of the company's continued success to its high employee satisfaction rate. To show just how much he appreciates their contributions, Hughes frequently praises his employees in posts on LinkedIn.

Feeling appreciated is the single most important factor in employee happiness (more important than salary even). But it's hard to show employees the appreciation they deserve when they're not in the office and you can't give them a casual "atta boy" in the hallway.

Social media offers the perfect venue for celebrating your remote workers. A digital shout-out is the remote work equivalent of the Employee of the Month plaque hanging above the water cooler. A traveling salesperson can show the celebratory LinkedIn post to his network, crow about his recent accomplishments, and feel like an integral part of the operation.

Start a company Instagram/Twitter account, and let a new employee control it each week. In a similar vein, companies can improve their company culture by starting a corporate Twitter or Instagram account, and rotating the responsibilities to a new employee every week.

This might seem like a scary proposition for some companies, and indeed, there are no shortage of brands who have made embarrassing social media flubs. But the potential dividends, both in terms of culture and marketing, are huge.

Culture-wise, letting your employers man the company Twitter or Instagram is great way for them to feel empowered and publicly showcase their personality, all

while promoting the company. Managers can even track metrics—such as retweets, views, likes, and shares—and start a friendly competition over which employee can generate the most engagement for the company.

It's great marketing, too. Social networks are meant to be fun and light-hearted, not self-serious and stiff. When people see your employees having fun on social media, they'll recognize your company as great place to work and a great company to work with.

Consistently provide your team with the best software and devices

There's a line in Steven Spielberg's 2002 con man romp, *Catch Me If You Can*, that goes: "You know why the Yankees always win? 'Cause other teams can't stop staring at those damn pinstripes."

Anyone who's ever suited up for competition knows there's something transformative and empowering about wearing the same sharp uniform as all of your teammates. The workplace is no different. Outfitting employees with the same cutting-edge tools, be they devices or software, creates a feeling of togetherness, cohesion, and pride in the organization that is nearly impossible to replicate any other way.

Have scheduled, non-work related check-ins

Some managers still have the faulty perception that remote employees don't work as hard as those in the office (indeed, the opposite is usually true). Unfortunately, this manifests in remote micromanaging—managers constantly checking in with their remote workers.

Micromanaging communicates a lack of trust. That alienates employees and at a huge cost to the employer. Highly engaged teams are 18% productive and 12% more profitable for their companies, according to Gallup research.

One of the best ways to keep your workers happy and dedicated to their work is to conduct regular check-ins with remote workers where you discuss anything but work. Hobbies, interests, family. Whatever it is, it can't be job-related.

Going out of your way to avoid discussing work may seem counterintuitive. But like all the tips here, investing in the parts of your company that don't deal with work directly will, ironically, make your company even stronger.



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Millennials, Gen Z-ers

and What We Really Want at Work

Millennials are the generation born of the Internet, and gen Z-ers are the first full-blown digital natives. And as a result, both groups communicate, solve problems, and create differently than every generation before them. How do I know this? I am one. And speaking as one of them, we turn to the Internet first for answers. We prefer real-time messaging to emailing. We have no patience for traditional, do-as-you're-told ladder climbing, and all in all, have a completely new set of expectations for both our work and personal lives.

Words By Amanda Wallace

As 40% of the workforce and rising rapidly, millennials as old as 39 and gen Z-ers as young as interns are driving the workplace revolution. Yet all too often, positive systemic change has been oversimplified to the cringe-inducing idea of infusing “playtime” at work. This often-ridiculed method of building “culture” comes straight out of Silicon Valley from a time when young people were flocking to tech startups, driving innovation, and working around the clock with little to no personal life. From nap rooms in the Bay Area, to free stays in Italian villas for UK-based firms, to some Asian startups bringing women in to “mother” their all-male developers, flashy perks (both sane and insane) became a major selling point for companies as they raced to recruit the best talent.

But long gone are the days where kombucha on tap and a bean bag chair can feasibly pass as culture. In 2019, progressive workforces have moved beyond superficial gestures, and while shiny perks can be appreciated, what millennials and gen Z-ers actually want has gone a bit deeper. We might come with a reputation for being lazy and self-entitled, but if you can believe it, a lot (if not most) of us are focused and grounded, and what we seek in a job is far from frivolous.

So what it is that we actually want?

More than anything, millennials want to be properly equipped to do innovative work. CEO Michael Bush says, “The best workplaces for millennials give employees the tools they need to succeed.” Rather than intently seeking out distractions, we seek opportunities to achieve something, and to us, the tools we need translate to two things: technology and environment—the core elements that empower us to thrive.

Millennials and gen Z-ers are saddled with the reputation of always being on the hunt for “new opportunities,” but it may be easier for companies to foster loyalty than they think. We don’t really care about beer pong Fridays or free breakfast burritos (ok, that’s a lie, we love breakfast burritos), but what we really care about is the feeling that our employer is doing everything they can to support our efforts to work hard and be at our best. That’s why the right tech and an inspiring environment are the secret keys to both retaining us and motivating us to work at our peak. They show us that the people we’re working for both believe in us and trust us to take advantage of every opportunity we’re given.

Technology

It may sound obvious, but the devices we use at work need to be cutting-edge, connected, and mobile. This isn’t just a demand for demand’s sake. It stems from the fact that we are totally and utterly connected in our personal lives, and can’t fathom functioning, let alone performing at our best, with anything less than what we’re used to using at home. Connectivity is momentum, and nothing stops momentum like an old, janky device or an Internet malfunction.

On a personal level, having worked at multiple corporations (both large and small), one of the tell-tale signs of a company’s health is the way they set you up on Day One. I’ve worked at companies that give employees laptops and optional desk spaces while entrusting them to work anywhere they feel most productive (including home). I’ve also worked at places where technology (or lack thereof) has prevented me from collaborating, taking my work home, or even relocating it to different areas of the office.

The best and most innovative companies understand that in order to concentrate and do meaningful work, both teams and individuals need technology that fosters, not hinders, creativity. And as it turns out, this is not just something that works for millennials and gen Z-ers. Smart, streamlined technology that serves a company’s mission and helps it thrive can benefit everyone in the organization, not just the next generation of workers spurring on the change.

Environment

Hand-in-hand with the right devices is creating the right working space. The ideal environment values flexibility, fosters human connection, and protects

peace and quiet. Once seen as the obvious answer to the cramped, outdated office, the open-plan working model is starting to come under some scrutiny, and is no longer seen as the end-all be-all by millennials and gen Z-ers. To see the CEO sharing a cubicle with a sales rep used to feel truly special, but now, we’re all realizing what we really want is simply to successfully get our work done.

In all likelihood, the answer isn’t to swing wildly from cavernous open spaces to closed-off cubicle farms, but rather to find the balance that younger generations are rightfully looking for: areas that allow for deep concentration, quiet and focused work, and easy connectivity with our teams. What’s more, companies are getting hip to the fact that ambiance, lighting, and even temperature can have a real impact on work and work culture.

Critics of workplace investment often point to the next generation’s desire for flexible schedules, generous PTO, and remote working opportunities as an indication that there is no return on reinventing the traditional office, but the reality is quite the opposite. 72% of gen Z-ers want to connect face-to-face with colleagues at the office.

Elina Cardet of global architecture and design firm Perkins + Will says, “Beautiful spaces that have exceptional technology and facilitate work may even attract more remote workers back to the office on a regular basis.” The opportunity for remote work, like all things new and different, used to be the holy grail of a company’s offerings, but

it’s now taking its natural place as just one element of a holistic and healthy approach to work.

When things click in 2019 and beyond, it will be because they’re offering a connected environment that is conducive to today’s flexible working style, and equipping their employees with the devices and tools they need to thrive in that environment. These critical elements are at the core of what millennials and gen Z-ers are seeking, and successful companies are definitely taking note. Work culture is absolutely evolving, and what we’re seeing—what I’m seeing—is a more meaningful and authentic desire to do great work. Maybe with a side of breakfast burritos.

More than anything, millennials want to be properly equipped to do innovative work.



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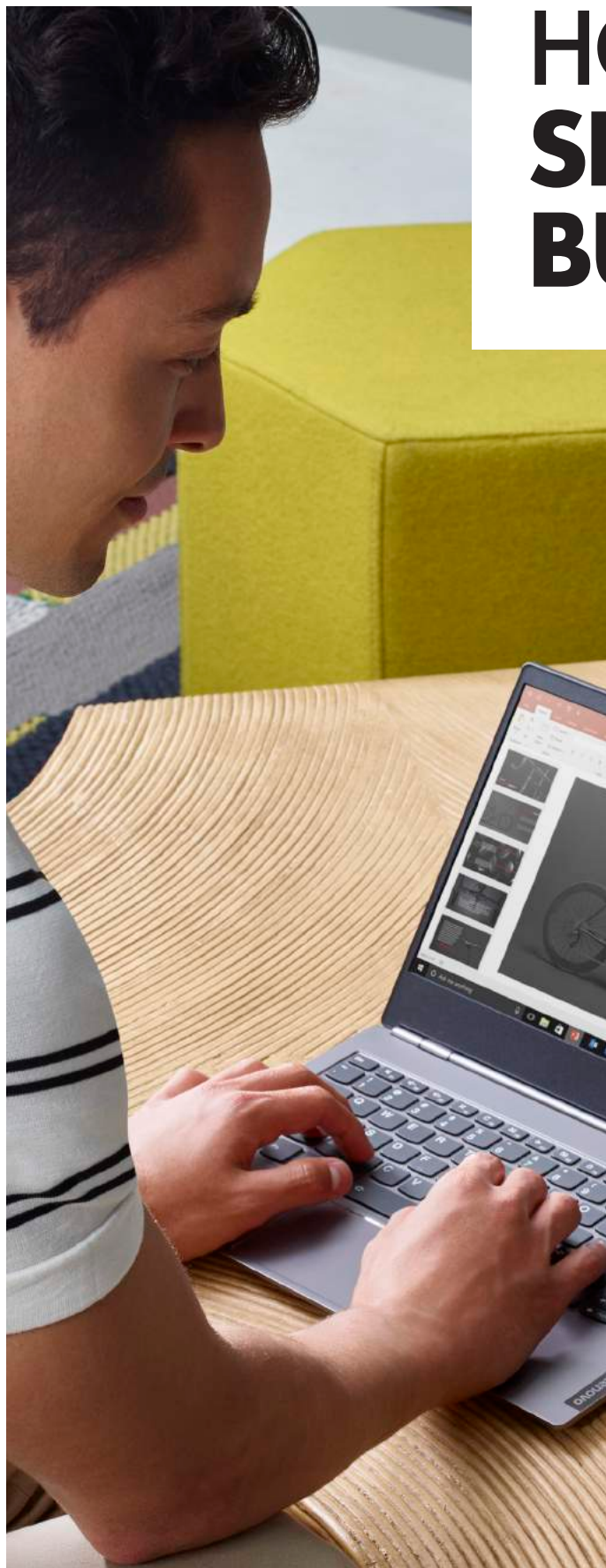
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HOW SMART IT SECURITY CAN DRIVE BUSINESS GROWTH.

Words By Laura DiDio

In the 21st century digital age of interconnected systems, networks, applications, people, and mobile devices, strong IT security is a necessity, not an option, no matter how big or small your organization is.

This is especially true of the small- and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) that make up the overwhelming majority of companies. A World Bank Group study suggests that globally there are 125 million SMBs and micro enterprises (companies with one to six employees), including 89 million in emerging markets. This accounts for over 95% of formal businesses.

Companies, no matter their size, that want to stay in business, retain loyal customers, and take advantage of new opportunities, must take a proactive approach to their own security. Too many fail to protect their data and assets, assuming they're safe simply because they haven't yet suffered a security breach. They are in for a rude awakening.

SMBs face increase in cybersecurity attacks and rising costs

While the security lapses of the Fortune 500 dominate the headlines, cybersecurity threats are just as present and dire to SMBs as they are to large enterprises. Cisco's 2018 SMB Cybersecurity Report which polled 1,816 SMBs in 26 countries found that over 50% of SMB firms experienced a data breach. And 40% of respondents say they experienced eight or more hours of system downtime due to a severe security breach in the past year. Four-in-ten firms reported that at least 50% of their systems, including employee-owned devices like laptops, were impacted by a severe breach.

While 29% of SMBs reported that the cost of the breach was less than \$100,000, 20% of the respondents to Cisco's survey say security hacks cost their firm between \$1 million and \$2.5 million.

SMBs seem to inherently understand the risks they face by not securing their physical environments. But many IT departments struggle to convince executives that purchasing secure equipment like servers, desktops, and especially laptops—as well as trusted security solutions—are worth what they see as a prohibitive cost.

This is akin to being "penny wise and pound foolish" when you calculate the actual cost of a security breach: the value of the lost, damaged, destroyed or changed data, the necessity of repairing the tech infrastructure that allowed the breach, the man-hours spent dealing with the fallout, and all that needs to be done to handle the ensuing damage to the company's reputation. Additionally, if an SMB or any firm is found to be non-compliant with regulatory laws, it can face litigation in the form of civil and criminal legal action and fines. In certain instances, corporate executives are subject to jail time.

The Better Business Bureau's "2017 State of Cybersecurity Among Small Businesses in North America" emphasizes the severe financial consequences facing SMBs in the aftermath of

a significant security breach. Some 50% of SMB companies said their firms would be unprofitable in less than a month and only 35% reported that they could remain profitable for more than three months.

The ubiquitous nature and myriad types of threats further heightens security risks and significantly raises the danger that every organization, irrespective of size or market, will be a target. The accelerated pace of new cybersecurity heists via social engineering, (such as phishing scams, malware, and password attacks), makes the IT security administrator's job extremely daunting.

Consider the following:

The AT&T 2017 GlobalState of Cybersecurity, Mind the Gap: Cybersecurity's Big Disconnect found that 80% of worldwide organizations acknowledged getting hacked within the last year, despite the fact that 65% of firms said their in-house cybersecurity capabilities adequately protect against cyber threats.

Strong foundational security using trusted vendor enterprise equipment

SMBs face well-documented challenges in responding to security threats due to limited security budgets, resources, and a dearth of IT administrators. They can however take steps to proactively bolster security, starting with their core infrastructure. End users—particularly remote and mobile workers that use their own or company owned devices—constitute one of the biggest threats to corporate security.

A strong foundation of IT security that begins with powerful and secure desktops and laptops, can not only keep your business safe, but foster a culture of innovation, drive business growth, and help ensure customer confidence and satisfaction.

Purchasing computers, tablets, and smartphones, and their corresponding security platforms, through enterprise solutions provides SMBs with access to far

better resources and faster, more efficient technical support than buying off the shelf.

"The days of purchasing multiple off-the-shelf security solutions are over," says Steve Sommer, CIO at Stromberg & Forbes, an SMB real estate investment firm based in Marcos Island, Florida.

Sommer stated that security threats have become more numerous and more dangerous in recent years, and that one-off cheap solutions have just become inadequate for his firm. "Threats are everywhere and because everyone is connected and increasingly mobile, cyber attacks can circumnavigate the globe faster than you can say 'Magellan.' We can't take the chance." He notes that many of Stromberg & Forbes' employees are mobile, which makes it harder for the IT to monitor and track their usage. "Our business demands air tight security. I will always opt to buy a security solution from a trusted enterprise. They offer better protection and more advanced comprehensive features and functionality," Sommer says.

Another plus: Enterprise security solutions for laptops and other mobile devices purchased from a trusted vendor means better support. "Security tools and software purchased from desktop and laptop vendors are properly supported and the vendor will respond quickly with upgrades and patches when issues arise or when I call for technical support," he says.

According to Sommer, it's common sense. "Security tools purchased from trusted vendors ensure that we can scan and lock down the machines and devices. At the same time it enables our firm to move forward and deploy innovative technologies like cloud services, IoT (Internet of Things) and emerging technologies like AI and Virtual Reality (VR) that can drive business growth and be confident we've got strong security," he says.

An IT Manager at an SMB manufacturing firm based in the Asia-Pacific region agrees. His company is focused on taking a proactive security approach to push back against the escalating threat of cyber attacks.

"The best defense is a good offense," the IT Manager says. "For us that means getting more security awareness training for our IT staff and the employees, and we're also purchasing our core infrastructure security solutions from enterprise vendors that have tried and proven products," he adds. "What [threat] will come next? We don't know and that's a challenge. We are going to

fortify our security so we can lower our risk and grow the business."

Conclusions

There is no such thing as 100% fool-proof security. Any device, network, and application can be vulnerable to a breach. And end users can be relied upon to make mistakes that compromise the business.

SMBs, in many respects, face greater security risks than large enterprises, as they're typically more cost- and resource-constrained. Hackers know this and consider them "soft targets."

It is exactly for these reasons that SMBs must adopt a proactive, tough approach, and secure their desktops, laptops, and mobile devices with security from trusted enterprise vendors. In the digital age where nearly everything is interconnected, and SMBs must innovate

fearlessly to stay competitive, the "attack surface" is potentially limitless. The threat landscape is constantly evolving. The hacks themselves are more pernicious, and hackers are more and more organized, sophisticated, and determined.

But the reality remains that the cost of securing your technology

environment is far less than the expense and consequences of a dealing with a security breach.

Good, solid enterprise level security is good business. It creates greater economies of scale, and mitigates risk to an acceptable level. This drives business revenue and growth. Enterprise level security also fosters customer satisfaction which in turn, bolsters the corporate brand.

In the end, your intellectual property and your data are the lifeblood of your company, and no one else is going to protect them for you.

"The size of a company is irrelevant," says Stromberg & Forbes' Sommer. "Security breaches are democratic; a single individual can spread a virus through an infected USB stick, or the company can fall victim to a targeted attack costing my firm tens or hundreds of thousands and compromise data."

Security risks, Sommer says, are "too numerous and too great." "Enterprise level security is the best defense. I will not risk the business and its data assets playing a game of Russian Roulette with inexpensive and inadequate security tools," he concludes.



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How to help your employees feel more connected to their work.

Words By
John McDermott

The workplace has undergone a number of seismic changes the past decade—open office plans, remote work, the gig economy—but perhaps none of them has been more revolutionary than workers now expecting their work to be meaningful.

Employees young and old are no longer content to punch the clock and collect a paycheck. Globally, 75% of millennials believe business should have a positive impact on society beyond just the pursuit of profitability and job creation. They want something deeper from their jobs: a sense of purpose and the feeling they've made a difference.

A 2017 Pew Research poll found that people's careers are generally more meaningful to them than their friends, their religion, and their health (only family ranked higher). An ISSP study from 2015 featuring 33,105 participants from 24 countries confirmed that holding meaningful jobs lead to a general willingness to turn down higher-paying opportunities. And 90% of American workers say they'd take a pay cut in exchange for more meaningful work.

But how does someone find significance working at the widget factory if it doesn't have a socially conscious mission? It's unrealistic to think everyone can have a job at a non-profit, or that every company will save the whales.

And that's okay! Because enriching an employee's experience can be as simple as enhancing the work itself. Oftentimes, the best ideas for improving a company come from the rank and file. To that end, we've assembled recommendations for what employees can do, with the help of leadership, to make the workplace more purpose-driven.

Create a chatroom to celebrate your team's successes

One way to help employees feel fulfilled at work is to explain how



they factor into the company's overall success. And technology affords organizations the tools to identify and celebrate each person's individual contribution.

Introduce a chat client to your organization and encourage teams to discuss each other's projects and who is thriving on them. The workforce will feel more appreciated, and will learn to see how their labor creates value for the company.

The best part is that these shout-outs will come bottom-up, from peers, and thus feel more genuine than any award doled out by management.

As an added benefit, instant messaging keep teams connected when people are traveling, in different offices, or working from home.

Have a quarterly pitch day for introducing new ideas

It's impossible for management to know what makes each individual tick, and how to tap into that unrealized potential.

The best way is to have your team propose those changes themselves. In that vein, institute a quarterly pitch day, when anyone can come before management and present a new initiative for the company.

When employees feel empowered to effect positive change, you're guaranteed to increase their satisfaction. They'll likely propose philanthropic initiatives such as food drives, recycling programs, and volunteer opportunities in the surrounding neighborhood.

To prevent wasting your time, require every presenter to prepare a slideshow. That caveat will weed out the people with

half-baked ideas and ensure the plans are well-considered and serious. It will also give your team the chance to test their presentation chops, acquire some new skills, and explore the tools at their disposal.

Some of the ideas might even end up benefiting the company directly. Don't be surprised if workers pitch an intra-office mentorship program or a weekly meditation sessions, both of which can positively affect performance. There might even be an idea for how to save the business money or lead to a new revenue stream. And having a tangible effect on the bottom line is a great way to feel like a meaningful part of the organization.

Give time off for philanthropic projects

Even companies that recognize accomplishments and allow employees to submit their own corporate responsibility projects struggle to connect with every last individual.

In these scenarios, it might be best to allow people the flexibility to pursue their passions outside of work. Biotech company Genentech offers up to a week of volunteer time off (essentially PTO, but for philanthropic activities).

It's a powerful way to engender loyalty and a sense of purpose among workers, HR experts say, as their job will not only give them a paycheck, but also the autonomy to engage in projects they care about.

In all cases, it's crucial to make your employees feel they have the power to make work more meaningful for themselves, along with the institutional support to enact those ideas. There's no easier route to meaning than feeling like you're in control of your own destiny.

Ninety percent of American workers say they'd take a pay cut in exchange for more meaningful work.



To hug or not to hug? How to navigate the increasingly informal work place.

Words By Alyssa Albert

You'd be surprised just how much friction can be avoided by being forthright about whether or not new people should participate in an established behavior. Allowing cliques to form within a workplace is never a good idea, and directly explaining the interpersonal dynamic to recent hires can go a long way toward preventing them. It may feel a little unnatural, but once your newest team member knows that a hug or a nickname is part of your culture, and not something they have to earn, they are much more likely to decide which behaviors are comfortable for them.

Scenario 2: Avoiding the awkward hug

You have a long-standing client that prefers hugs to handshakes. But more than once you've seen your employees unsure of how to handle the exchange. They may be meeting for the first time, or just don't know if their short relationship with the client shares the same level of familiarity as your long term one. Instead of speaking up, they mill around the edges of the conversation, waiting for the client to initiate the greeting, which generally leads to either an awkward hug, an awkward handshake, or worse, no greeting at all.

As a leader, you have the ability to set the terms of an interaction. If it's a first meeting, handshakes are probably a good idea. So rather than embrace your old friend and leave it to your team to figure out the rest, lean in for an over exaggerated handshake. Your client will hopefully mimic what you're doing, and your employees will follow suit with a handshake of their own. If a big bear hug is on the menu once they've all met each other, be just as enthusiastic about that so that your team knows that a personal greeting is welcomed as well.

How should a new hire try to build relationships within their team if they don't feel comfortable acting like old friends right off the bat?

Scenario 3: The shy new guy/girl

You're a small business with a tight-knit group of employees. But as you grow and hire new people, it's inevitable that the dynamic of the company will shift, and being super social shouldn't be a job qualification.

It's important to bring on people that you feel add value to the workplace and enjoy spending time with, but not everyone needs to be "Work Best Friends." Make sure your team knows that their socialization and informality is a perfectly fine reflection of your culture, but it's not the root of it. Some of your staff will inevitably want to keep it more professional, which might be interpreted as shyness or coldness, and it's important that their success not be tied to how sociable they choose to be.

Whether your business has found itself dealing with one or more of these issues, a common truth always prevails: being proactive and establishing open communication with your team is crucial to success of your company, especially if you want to lead this ever-changing workplace revolution. We can all agree that our social, technology-driven universe will continue to complicate inter-office dynamics for years to come. Knowing that, the best approach is to welcome what's new without sacrificing what matters. That's how you build work culture (and businesses) for the future.

Today's tech-savvy, social-media-driven workforce is blurring the lines between their professional and personal lives more than ever before. As we've established, this young generation of employees have unleashed a workplace revolution, forcing businesses to abandon their old archaic office norms in favor of a more mobile and inclusive work environment. To stay competitive and attract top talent, many small- and mid-size businesses are leading the charge—adapting their policies to create a more casual, modern workspace. But how relaxed is too relaxed, especially when it comes to office etiquette?

Walk into most offices and you'll see that traditional greetings like the handshake just feel too stiff and formal, with many teams interacting more like close friends. But what if you're not a hugger? Or have a client that likes to keep things more formal? How do you know what to do when you meet someone for the first time, or more frustratingly, for the first time face-to-face after weeks of phone calls and emailing?

Technology may have yielded a more informal workplace, but it's important for businesses to create a culture that balances new norms with an approach that ensures personal boundaries remain respected.

Finding that happy medium can be tricky. We've all participated in a totally innocent, but nonetheless awkward hug that started as a handshake and ended with a bizarrely unnatural embrace. After, you're left wondering how you missed the signs or could have avoided the incident all together.

While every business is unique, there are some best-practices to approaching these types of situations, and here are three scenarios you may encounter in some shape or form.

Scenario 1: The second impression

An employee's first day is usually a pretty standard affair, with intros and handshakes all around. But on the second or third day, interactions can become a bit more tricky, especially if your team is tight with one another. How should a new hire try to build relationships within their team if they don't feel comfortable acting like old friends right off the bat?



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Ways to Surprise & Delight Your Employees

1

Let them ask you anything



Ever heard of an “AMA” (Ask Me Anything)? It’s exactly what it sounds like, and chances are, your employees would love to have one with you! Members of the new workforce crave a sense of human-to-human connection, so open up and let them see you as more than just a boss.

2

Provide opportunities for them to give you feedback



Ask your team how you can better serve them. You’ll be demonstrating that you value growth—a passion point for many millennials, while modeling what it looks like to request and receive feedback with neutrality, grace, and gratitude.

3

Support their interests by empowering them to share



Got a team member who always knows what’s trending in tech? Honor their passion by inviting them to present what they know to the larger team. They’ll get to see the value in their unique gifts, and you’ll get to learn about emerging trends.

4

Hold a company off-site worth bragging about



Millennials expect their jobs to add to their lives, not take away from them. Show your employees that you value their time by providing non-work activities that are really worth their while. Get them access to something that’s Instagram-worthy, and that they’d be unlikely to pull off on their own.

5

Write a LinkedIn review for them



Many of your employees grew up on the Internet, and have spent quite a bit of time curating their online presences. For them, a glowing LinkedIn review from an employer is a great acknowledgement, and shows that you understand what matters to them.

6

Offer a self-care day at the office



You expect a lot out of your employees, and when they feel valued and supported, they want to deliver. Let your employees know that you’re committed to their well-being by holding regular wellness events that offer massage, yoga, healthy food, and spa treatments.

7

Launch a monthly speaker series



The new workforce needs to feel like the work they’re doing is aligned with their greater values. Introduce a culture that appreciates new ways of thinking by bringing in guest speakers that will inspire and motivate.

8

Create a meditation room



Gone are the days when workers were willing to turn off their humanity in order to come to work. The truth is, employees are much more “human” than “resource,” and that means they come with feelings, personal challenges, worries, and pain. Honor all the parts of your employees—not just the productive parts—by offering a space for them to take some time to feel.

9

Initiate a monthly appreciation circle



More than bonuses and titles, members of the new workforce want to be seen and acknowledged for who they are. Start the habit of sharing the gifts you see in them through a regular appreciation circle.

10

Allow them to bring their pets to the office



Nothing lightens a mood like the excited wag of a dog’s tail, or quick a snuggle from a furry friend. Allowing your team to bring their pets to work is a small thing that can create a major shift in the atmosphere of your office.



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