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Reframing the Enterprise Approach to Workplace Communications

How Employee Experience Drives Successful Deployment

Researchers

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65%

Users believe their influence accounts for 65% of IT decision criteria. Often, organizational needs and preferences weigh in more heavily today than the technical needs and preferences of IT.

Introduction

In our work with enterprise decision makers, Wainhouse finds a gap in what they plan to do (what they say they will do) internally with workplace communications and collaboration, and what they end up doing. Why is that?

We believe it is primarily due to a) complexity, b) a shift in needs, c) a change in vendor strategies, and d) the difficultly in creating, executing, and maintaining a cohesive plan.

In many ways, selecting and deploying workplace communications is easier than ever – many workloads (calling, messaging, conferencing, sharing) have been unified on one platform, from one vendor.

However, in many ways it is also more difficult – a clean cutover to one platform is not always easy or preferable. It is often because organizational needs and preferences weigh in more heavily today than the technical needs and preferences of IT – creating hybrid technology and vendor environments or long transition time.

In fact, our research indicates end users believe their line of business experience accounts for approximately 65% of IT's decision criteria for workplace communications. IT thinks it is less, but not a whole lot less. Either way, workforce influence is stronger than ever.

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What matters today? It is our view that employee experience is as critical if not more than vendor apps and feature sets. Simply providing dial tone is not enough – and maybe not even relevant anymore.

Employee experience should be a principal objective within any new workplace communications initiative.

Deciding on, deploying, and managing workplace communications has become a critical function in the enterprise. But if employee experience is integrated within the right plan, (e.g., roadmap, playbook, framework), things like organizational and technical complexity, adjusting to shifts in your organization's needs, or changes in your vendor strategies can be managed more efficiently, more seamlessly, and with less disruption to all involved.

To help you visualize what employee experience means to your organization, let us frame up our thinking on this topic into three categories: the Workplace, the Workforce, and Workflows, and offer some steps to get started and move closer toward a communication and collaboration experience primarily driven by user and organization needs, and less by technology preference or a specific vendor.

Visualizing Employee Experience
Workforce, Workplace, Workflows

Workforce
The people with whom you work, and the influences that drive how they expect to communicate and meet.

Workplace
The places where workers communicate, collaborate, concentrate, learn and socialize.

Workflows
The tools, processes, and ways people get work done.

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75%

Historically, approximately 75%[1] of knowledge workers have worked in a physical, company-supplied workspace – an office.

Your Workplace

Everyone has a workplace. Yet that workplace may occupy different arenas with different challenges for end users and IT alike. Home, office, trains, planes, and automobiles each add their own dynamic to what can be done, how well it can be done, and who can do it.

E.g., a defense contractor on a plane who primarily works on classified projects may not a) be in the right environment to work, b) have the proper secure device to work on, and c) have a properly secured network to communicate.

Conversely, a technology account executive may be more productive working in the same environment.

Historically, approximately 75%[1] of knowledge workers have worked in a physical, company-supplied workspace – an office. In parallel, more and more people have been "telecommuting" (now dubbed as hybrid WFH) one or more days each week. But, prior to 2020, this transition had not started for everyone, and certainly these initiatives have not been adopted by every (or even many) enterprises.

And while the pandemic was an accelerant for WFH adoption, activity to overhaul the office had already been in place. E.g., there has been a drop in big conference rooms in favor of smaller huddle rooms with fewer people, and in moving employees out of dedicated offices to hoteling and hot-desking – each reducing the need for unused or underutilized public and dedicated personal space.

[1]Megan Brenan, "US Workers Discovering Affinity for Remote Work," Gallup, April 3, 2020, gallup.com.

When considering decisions on workplace communications, important questions should be asked:

- What is the office workspace for? What type of work should it facilitate?

- If "the office experience" is the standard – the best environment, tools, network, etc. – what support do we give the home office? Should the WFH experience mirror the office in quality and experience?

- And if the remote and mobile worker are part of the equation (they always are), what experience is provided to them?
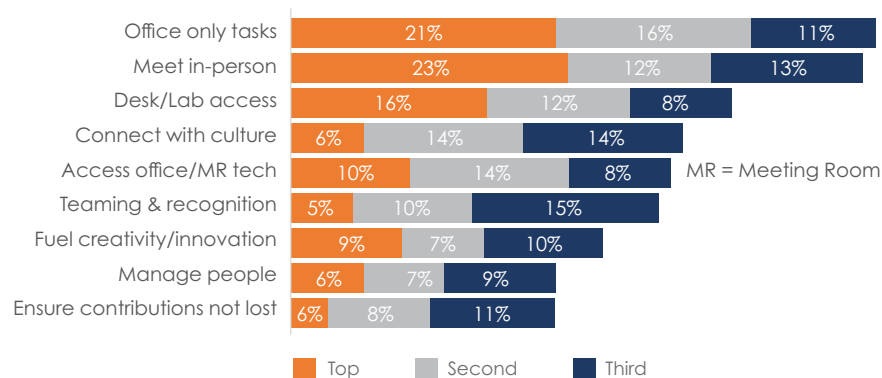
The pandemic accelerated a trend already underway – enterprise workspaces have been in transition for the last two decades.

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So, where does this leave us? The office might become the "Hub" and "Club"

Many of today's workspace implementations suffer from blindly carrying forward the same assumptions of yesterday's workspace culture, and some do not go far enough to provide a modern workspace experience. In other words, some organizations have made very little movement forward. And some have (maybe) gone too far.

- As people return to the office, their reasons for being in-person are becoming more succinct. In a Q4 2020 end-user survey[2], Wainhouse asked end-users for their top three reasons for going into the office. Nearly half of the panel (48%) place office-only tasks (tasks they cannot do from home) and meeting in-person in their top three, making these the strongest drivers for workers going into the office. Other notable reasons included connecting with the business culture and fueling innovation.

- Not everyone will have the same in-person schedule. As several countries allowed their citizens to resume in-person work, many enterprises explored new methodologies such as a rotating schedule for the corporate office. As a result, the workspace needed to adapt to new challenges – what tasks are employees trying to accomplish during their time in the office? Who is in-person and who is not? Can I continue the work I started at home or on the train while I am at the office?

- Satellite offices are playing a new role in the corporate real estate mix. For corporate real estate planners, the pandemic appears to have emphasized that location now matters more than ever. In Japan, a 40,000-person study conducted by the Ministry of Land Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism concluded that the most accessible place for those who worked remotely was a satellite office. Satellite offices are a viable option when a company desires for its employees to come into the office, but those same employees want to avoid the long commutes and crowded public spaces of downtown work locations.

Reasons for Going into the Office

Reason	Top	Second	Third
Office only tasks	21%	16%	11%
Meet in-person	23%	12%	13%
Desk/Lab access	16%	12%	8%
Connect with culture	6%	14%	14%
Access office/MR tech	10%	14%	8%
Teaming & recognition	5%	10%	15%
Fuel creativity/innovation	9%	7%	10%
Manage people	6%	7%	9%
Ensure contributions not lost	6%	8%	11%

MR = Meeting Room

Legend: Top, Second, Third

[2]Source: Wainhouse Research, November 2020, Survey Insight: Meeting Room and WFH Technology Trends and Drivers – End Users Q4 2020

Source: Wainhouse Research (2020) Survey Insight: Meeting Room and WFH Technology Trends and Drivers – End Users Q4 2020. N=348

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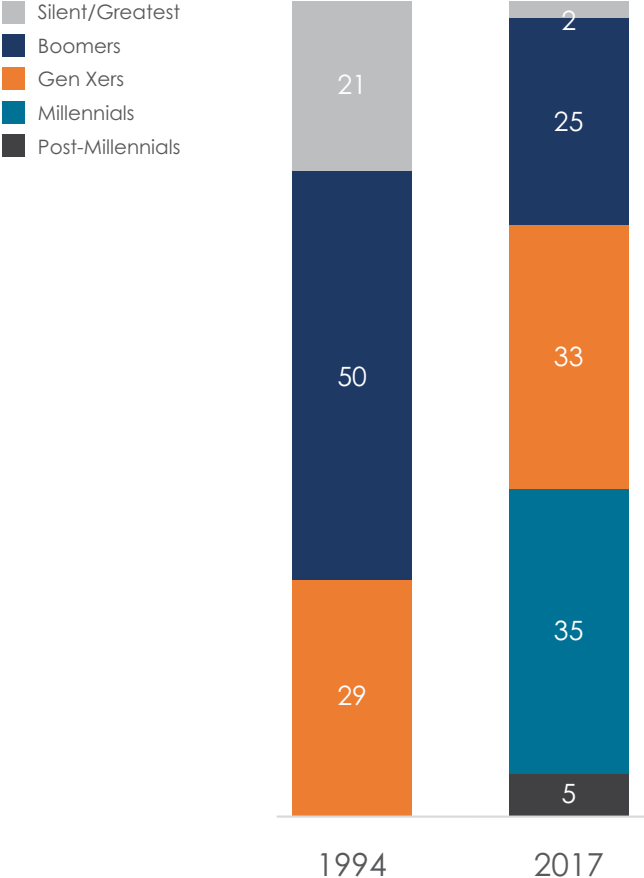real.objective.insight.

Your Workforce

Over the last ten years, there has been a dramatic change in the workforce. Historically, about three generations of workers were in the workforce at a time. But around 2017, some employers saw up to five different generations working side by side – the first time in modern history.

Why? Two reasons are very influential – those just entering the job market and those about to exit their careers. First, the sheer size and impact of the Millennials entering the job market is substantial. Second, instead of fading into retirement, the Boomer generation is living longer and retiring later.

The modern workforce is the most generationally diverse it has ever been. The implications of this generational diversity lie in the fact that each generation approaches "work" differently, with noticeable inconsistencies between the three largest factions – the Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials.

For example, the largest, fastest-growing, and most influential generation, Millennials, value culture, experience, and a strong sense of purpose "why are we doing this???" over career, continuity, and loyalty.

% of US Labor Force[3]

Legend:
- Silent/Greatest
- Boomers
- Gen Xers
- Millennials
- Post-Millennials

1994:
- Silent/Greatest: 21
- Boomers: 50
- Gen Xers: 29

2017:
- Silent/Greatest: 2
- Boomers: 25
- Gen Xers: 33
- Millennials: 35
- Post-Millennials: 5

[3]Pew Research Center analysis of monthly 1994 and 2017 Current Population Surveys (IPUMS)

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Today's workforce? The focus on a paycheck and pension have been replaced by purpose.

This new breed of workers wants to participate in the purpose of the company. They also have strong beliefs in the tools and services that enable them to participate.

From management's perspective, this looks like empowerment (how do we provide flexibility, choice, and authority?). From the employee's perspective, it looks like experience (how do I participate in the purpose of the organization?). From IT's perspective, it looks like enablement (how do we deploy services by digital relevancy that empower and delight?).

Put in the right order – if IT enables employees with the right tools and services, employees are empowered to conduct their roles, within an experience that gives work meaning and purpose.

Of course, all this needs to be aligned with the organization's need to attract and retain talent, enable agility, ensure security and compliance, and measure the success of these initiatives.

As we stated earlier, in some ways, workplace communications and collaboration have become easier to deploy and manage – and in other ways, more difficult.

Digital
enablement

Employee
empowerment

Fulfilling
experience

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Your Workflows

Many have heard the phrase "the cure is worse than the disease." In the rush to enable WFH, have we over-rotated toward video meetings?

Or, to put it more subtly, "to a hammer, everything looks like a nail." A personal video conferencing service is not the sole solution for all. Nor is the enterprise habit of unscheduled calls or instant messages where instant replies are expected.

One tool cannot address the needs of all the different roles and responsibilities in our organizations. And different tools are preferable by role and responsibility.

Do you expect to make an unscheduled call to the CEO of a global company and get connected immediately? No. But you might make that connection with a peer.

Who is determining your employees schedule – them or their untamed workflows?

All-day, non-stop video meetings is not the cure for not being able to gather in the office.

The culture of exponentially increasing meetings, unscheduled calls, and an onslaught of messages in channels and spaces creates an environment of disruption where less gets done, often late, or not at all.

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Most people move into and out of different roles, relationships, and responsibilities throughout the day. Some people need to communicate all day, and others have fixed tasks with significantly fewer needs in communication and collaboration.

When considering the workforce, it is critical to determine their workflow – what they do daily in their jobs. Some find it helpful to break up the workforce into two categories to determine workflow: knowledge workers and frontline workers.

Knowledge workers often fit into one or multiple roles[4]:
- Expert Thinking: jobs that require problem-solving outside of a rules-based environment, e.g., engineers, executive managers
- Complex Communication: interacting with other people to acquire or convey information, e.g., managers, salespeople

Frontline workers often fit into one or multiple roles:
- Routine Cognitive: mental tasks that follow prescribed rules, e.g., call center agent
- Routine Manual: physical tasks defined by rules, e.g., assembly line worker
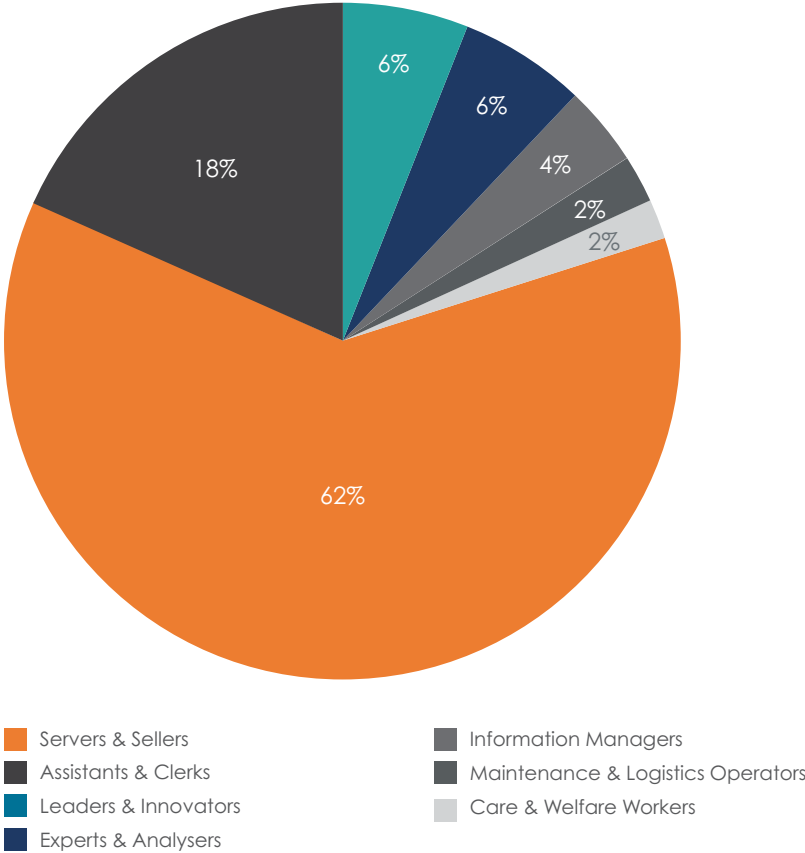- No-routine Manual: physical tasks hard to define by rules, e.g., truck driving

Every industry has a different distribution cluster of workers, e.g., the hotel and restaurant sector[5] will have a cluster similar to the graph below.

Distribution of workers' clusters within the hotel and restaurant sector[6]

- Servers & Sellers
- Assistants & Clerks
- Leaders & Innovators
- Experts & Analysers
- Information Managers
- Maintenance & Logistics Operators
- Care & Welfare Workers

[4]Autor, Levy & Murnane, 2003. The Skill Content of Recent Technological Change: An Empirical Exploration. Quarterly Journal of Economics
[5]Brinkley, Fauth, Mahdon, Theodoropoulou, 2009, Knowledge Workers and Knowledge Work
[6]Autor, Levy & Murnane, 2003. The Skill Content of Recent Technological Change: An Empirical Exploration. Quarterly Journal of Economics

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In the corresponding graphic, leaders & innovators, experts & analyzers (analysts), and information managers fit into both categories of Knowledge Workers and often require a full suite of communication services. Maintenance & logistics operators, care & welfare workers, servers & sellers, and assistants & clerks all fit into the Frontline Worker category and will likely require wireless and mobile communications with push-to-talk (2-way radio), messaging, and contact center features.

This is where digital relevancy comes in. Based on workflow – what an individual does each day – what are the relevant communication and collaboration services for each?

The bottom line is that organizations need to proactively wrangle the "fast and free" culture of communicating. Like most modern enterprise challenges, the solution typically involves a combination of a change in how people behave, the defined process they are asked to follow, and the technology that enables them to follow the process.

Determining your organization's distribution of worker clusters informs and guides your governance policy on digital relevancy.

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Next Steps

Wainhouse recommends a structured, clearly defined, and well-communicated plan. However, we also recognize that each organization, and the groups and individuals within it, are unique, and there is no single prescription. Therefore, planning should always be customized.

Planning de-risks deployments

In summary, as stated in our introduction, any plan should be created with the goal of aligning individual and organizational needs toward an employee experience that enables meaning and purpose.

What about governance, compliance, and security? Yes, each should be a wrapper around each workload (e.g., calling, conferencing, message) and the workforce, but this needs to be done in a way that does not dilute, damage, and deter the workforce from effective use of communication services.

Wainhouse believes in a simple, four-step process:

Insight → Alignment → Preparation → Execution

Insight:

Individual, team, and larger organizational needs and preferences should first and foremost drive the communications strategy and all technology decisions. If these needs are not first understood, any other plan is likely to fail. Tasks here include understanding the distribution of worker clusters in your organization, role-based workflows, and emerging needs based on organizational strategy – this is employee experience mapping.

Alignment:

These needs should be aligned to a governance plan that provides the guardrails for security, compliance, and adoption. How do you protect your organization and individuals with the tools and services they use? How do you ensure your organization meets governmental requirements for your industry and activity? Are there consistent and straightforward rules of use and engagement for workplace communications that enable everyone to use these services safely and productively? Are there recommendations and guidelines outlining the best tools and services for each individual and group (digital relevancy based on the distribution of worker clusters)? Tasks here include creating governance policies and setting and adopting a change management plan.

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> **Preparation:**

Abraham Lincoln famously stated, "give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe." Preparation through attention to detail will determine what works optimally. Tasks here include current network, app, and device assessment with an eye toward new services and devices that are aligned to employee experience mapping conducted in the Insight stage. Think Keep, Cut, and Convert – what are you going to Keep, what gets Cut out, and what gets Converted over to new services and devices?

> **Execution:**

Wouldn't we all like the help desk to go away? Dream on. However, proper preparation and deployment can significantly reduce the need to contact help. Everyone in IT knows there is no such thing as "one and done." It is more like "on and on." Execution needs to be done constantly and consistently. And if conducted with the right plan, then things like organizational and technical complexity, a shift in your organization's needs, or a shift in vendor strategies are managed more easily, more seamlessly, with less disruption to all involved. Successful execution is the natural outcome of Insight, Alignment, and Preparation.

Easy for us to say, right?

How are you going to get this all done?

We do not think you should do all this work on your own.

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Why Consider NTT?

First, let us get this out of the way – NTT commissioned this study. Wainhouse is not endorsing NTT, but they have many admirable traits that align with the thinking in this ebook. There are a multitude of service partners that can assist organizations in planning, purchasing, and deploying workplace communications and collaboration. Why consider NTT?

1 **Managed Services.**
2020 pushed most departments to the edge of their capacity to service their workforce. And more, new work needs to be done. NTT has thousands of experts deployed globally working with hundreds of organizations solving workplace communications and collaboration challenges. They have experience and an economy of scale that no single enterprise could match.

Next Steps: NTT offers Cloud Unified Communications, Cloud Voice, Advisory and Managed Services. You can find more information on NTT's Cloud Communications website.

2 **Cloud Deployment Framework.** Digital transformation is complex and lengthy, and without experienced planning, most projects often fail. A detailed audit of existing technology preferences and infrastructure is critical to success. NTT's Cloud Deployment Framework (CDF) is a comprehensive set of workshops and assessments to guide organizations on their journey to the cloud. CDF ensures projects are delivered on time and on budget by exposing the risks at the very beginning.

3 **Addressing the New Dynamic.**
While much of WFH for many is new, for the last couple of decades NTT has been addressing the emerging dynamic between the office, WFH, and remote and mobile. NTT has a complete Intelligent Workplace portfolio of services refined with decades of experience.

4 **A Calling Plan.**
NTT is a SUPER BIG Telco. How big? A global Tier 1 IP backbone provider, the parent company is ranked #55 in the Fortune Global 500, providing over US $100 billion in IT services every year. They provide a robust IP network and global calling plan – think SD-WAN, SIP trunking, and more.

5 **Details, Depth & Delivery.**
The value is in delivering all the pieces – typically more than one technology vendor can, and often much more than other partners can – including planning, recommending, deploying, and continuing to manage the entire communications and collaboration estate – calling, meetings, and office environment apps and devices.

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About Wainhouse Research

Wainhouse Research provides strategic guidance and insight on products and services for workplace communications and collaboration. Our global client base includes established and new technology suppliers, service providers, the financial community, as well as enterprise users of voice, video, streaming, and web collaboration solutions. The company provides syndicated market research and custom research and speaks at client and industry events on the emerging impact of technology trends.

About the Research Team

Marc Beattie, Senior Analyst and Partner. Located in Boston, MA, Marc's area of expertise is cloud-based workplace communication and collaboration. He has authored public and private reports on product strategies, distribution structures, emerging technologies, and industry applications. He is a trusted advisor with end users, established vendors, emerging companies, and the financial community. Prior to joining Wainhouse, Marc was an early member of PictureTel and Polycom — holding positions as market analyst, product management, sales management, and business development — spending 13 years working within the industry.

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