Build Your 'A Team' to Lead Successful Digital Workplace Programs

Published: 28 April 2017  ID: G00299506

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Leaders aiming to transform their organizations into digital businesses look toward their CIOs to design and execute digital workplace programs. This research will help CIOs build a team with the necessary skills and experience to lead winning digital workplace efforts.

Key Challenges

- To build the digital workplace "A Team," CIOs must recruit people from multiple diverse domains who can envision how new technologies, processes and work styles will enhance the employee experience.

- Creating a cohesive and committed core team with representation from IT, facilities management and human resources means CIOs need to balance the individual goals of each function with the broader opportunity of building a digital workplace that transforms the business.

Recommendations

For the CIO responsible for leading the digital workplace program:

- Recruit core members for the A Team by picking individuals who show a balance of knowledge, skills, experience and leadership behaviors.

- Establish the role critical members of the A Team play by clarifying how they participate in defining business outcomes, redesigning work activities and communicating digital workplace program value.

- Embrace the casual members of the A Team by ensuring they are welcomed into the team when they are needed for specific projects throughout the digital workplace project life cycle.

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Introduction

As CEOs realize the importance of employee engagement as a driver of business performance, and see their peers embarking on digital business transformation, they look toward their CIOs to design and execute a digital workplace program.

A digital workplace program is business strategy designed to transform how an organization harnesses technology to increase employees' engagement and effectiveness. It requires a multifaceted endeavor across people, processes and technology. Successful digital workplace programs are less about technology and more about understanding what affects the employee experience and making necessary changes to the work environment. CIOs need to build an A Team with the right balance of vision, expertise, talent and enthusiasm needed to create a digital workplace.

Let's see how this may play out with the following story.

You, the CIO, get an urgent message from your CEO. You stare at the following message, thrilled and nervous at the same time.
Because of the board’s growing interest in digital business, we have decided to create a digital workplace program. I selected you as the digital workplace leader for our company. The first thing I’d like you to do is recruit your digital workplace team. Let’s meet in a week so we can discuss how the team will achieve the company’s digital workplace objectives.

Good luck, your CEO

There are a number of questions that go through your mind: Where do you start to build the digital workplace team? What capabilities will you need? Where will you find the right people? Who will have them? Where should you look in the company? Will you need to recruit from other organizations?

CIOs know how to build teams with technical specialists. Building the A Team requires thinking more broadly to find people who can envision how new technologies, processes and work styles can be applied to meet workforce needs and enhance employee effectiveness. The members of the A Team must be able to work toward achieving a digital workplace and to represent the domain from which they came. They have an input and output for their domain toward the digital workplace success. In many organizations, the workforce will consist of employees and other types of workers, such as contractors and business partners.

This research provides guidance to CIOs responsible for digital workplace programs on what players are core, critical and casual members of the A Team and what skills they need to bring to the team (see Figure 1). This is the leadership model Gartner sees most often; however, any core member of the A Team may lead the digital workplace program. The A Team establishes and governs the digital workplace program, as well as oversees the delivery of individual projects.
Analysis

Recruit Core Members of the A Team Who Have a Balanced Set of Knowledge, Skills, Experience and Leadership Behaviors From Their Domain Areas

Creating a digital workplace requires technological reimagining and work model reinvention, along with a keen understanding of what inspires and motivates employees. Creating a work environment that will unleash the creative potential of employees performing high-impact work, empowering them to respond effectively to a wide range of situations, requires the blended perspectives of the digital workplace leader, human resources and facilities management. These people form the permanent core of the A Team.

The CIO who takes on responsibility for digital workplace program leadership needs the following skills:
A proven track record of leading and working with complex, multidisciplinary talent teams in new endeavors and delivering solutions

Deep knowledge of employee-facing services such as workstream collaboration tools, insight engines, intranets, content services, social networks and technology support

Work experience either in business management or IT management, preferably a combination of the two

Strategic technology planning experience

CIOs may take on the responsibility of digital workplace leader, or in some organizations, the CIO may decide to deputize another member of the IT organization as the digital workplace leader (see "Toolkit: Sample Job Description for a Digital Workplace Leader"). In larger organizations, there may be multiple digital workplace leaders who will consolidate their work under the CIO.

The Role of Human Resources as a Core Member of the A Team

Because digital workplace programs are so closely coupled with the employee experience, there needs to be someone on the core team with a detailed understanding of current and future workforce challenges. In progressive organizations, this will be the human resources professional. This person understands the talent needs across organization. He or she tracks demographic changes in the workforce and identifies needed changes to behaviors and leadership that are pivotal when designing a digital workplace strategy.

HR and the digital workplace leader together can decide what technology investments can boost employee motivation and well-being by recognizing the impacts, both positive and negative, of technology on the overall employee experience. Successful digital workplace programs require more than technological change; they also involve culture and organizational structure. The HR rep on the A Team must be able to convince others in the organization — HR colleagues and employees across the entire organization — of what changes are needed and why they should support the changes.

Knowledge, Skills and Experience Profile of an HR Representative

- Experience working in human resources capacity, preferably with the organization
- Practiced at leading employee engagement initiatives
- Strategic workforce planning and talent analytics ability
- Capable of carrying out organizational network analyses

The Role of Facilities Management as a Core Member of the A Team

Employees' work environment has a significant impact on their effectiveness and engagement, yet only 34% of workers like their workspace.¹ The digital workplace program needs to reverse this perception. Facilities managers focus on physical design of the workspace, which complements IT's
focus on the virtual design. Facilities managers understand innovative ways to match the fluid needs of today's workforce, which demands a more flexible, intelligent and connected workspace. In some organizations, this role is performed by someone in the corporate real estate function.

Technology forces such as the Internet of Things (IoT), artificial intelligence and mixed reality (augmented reality and virtual reality) are introducing a myriad of new possibilities for creating smart workspaces that can boost employee effectiveness, such as "hot desking" and hoteling, activity-based space working, and efficient resource scheduling.

Facilities managers and IT working together have the ability to determine how to combine technology and physical space to create truly collaborative work environments that improve the employee experience.

Knowledge, Skills and Experience Profile of the Facilities Management Representative

- Considerable experience in a facilities management space within the organization
- Experience working on strategic workspace projects
- In-depth understanding of workspace designs and smart workspace technologies
- Ability to create a connection between workspace, culture and effectiveness

Establish the Role Critical Members of the A Team Play in Defining Business Outcomes, Redesigning Work Activities and Communicating Digital Workplace Program Value

After setting up the core team for the digital workplace, the next step for the leader is to identify the critical members of the A Team. The critical members are permanent members of the team, but their responsibilities and roles vary across the different stages of a digital workplace program. The critical members include the business unit leader sponsoring the project, and organizational design and corporate communications professionals.

Digital workplace initiatives typically require considerable change to an organization's internal processes, departmental structures, incentives, skills, culture and behaviors. Ultimately, digital workplace initiatives will affect every system, process and role within the enterprise. Hence, the A Team requires professionals who can aid this change and also effectively communicate the digital workplace value proposition.

The core members of the A Team craft the vision and strategy for the digital workplace program overall. The critical members are pivotal in designing of the specific digital workplace projects. For example, if the senior VP of sales sees improving the onboarding process as a pressing need, the organizational design representative working with HR should redesign it in a way that improves the new-hire experience. IT leaders suggest ways to leverage technologies, such as workstream collaboration tools and videoconferencing, that enable the new hire to assimilate into the organization quickly.
The Role of the Business Unit Leader as a Critical Member of the A Team

The business unit leader is the champion of a new way of working in the digital workplace. This is the person who identifies the desired business outcomes. He or she should have a good understanding of how work actually gets done, as opposed to the operating procedures and models that management thinks are the way people work. This person will develop the business case and establish the measures by which success is determined. The business unit leader should work with the organizational design professional to reinvent business processes that enable more effective ways of working. IT can then advise them about technologies that enable work activities.

Knowledge, Skills and Experience Profile of the Business Unit Leader Representative

- May be new to the organization, especially if the organization wants to leapfrog its competitors by bringing in someone from a more aggressive industry
- Must have a clear vision of the benefit he or she expects from the digital workplace initiative
- Demonstrated ability to champion and support change, not just talk about it
- Must have the courage to model the new behaviors they want employees to mirror

The Role of the Business Process Analyst as a Critical Member of the A Team

The business process analyst needs to take a close look at how employees currently work and what activities they spend most time on. This examination and subsequent redesign of work activities lead to a more effective process design, significantly improved business results, and employees who are empowered and committed to the organization.

Organizational change activities range from identifying the stakeholders who will be affected to nurturing and supporting new ways of working once the business transformation and technology implementation are established. Achieving these significant changes requires that the core members of the A Team get active support from business process analysts. In some organizations, enterprise architects may be heavily involved in organizational change and redesign efforts.

Knowledge, Skills and Experience Profile of the Business Process Analyst Representative

- Strong evidence of successful change management and user adoption methods
- Knowledge of, and practitioner experience in, multiple process analysis approaches and methodologies
- Ability to organize people around core processes for the project the business unit leader has selected and to identify head count necessary to do that work
- Ability to assist in breaking down a silo mentality
The Role of the Corporate Communications Professional as a Critical Member of the A Team

Initially, the corporate communications professional is essential for creating a brand for the project and a marketing campaign that not only makes employees aware but also excites them about the opportunity to create a better workplace. As specific projects are approved for implementation, they should ensure all stakeholders buy into the purpose and the plan, and have a clear understanding of how it benefits them.

Employees need to know what is happening and the degree of change they can expect. They need to understand both the longer-range plan — the "destination postcard" as Chip and Dan Heath describe it — and the first steps they must take. The corporate communications professional is responsible for making sure communication is effective, consistent and understandable throughout the digital workplace program as well as during specific projects. He or she should provide regular updates, using multiple channels for ongoing employee awareness. Communicating using a variety of mechanisms accommodates the learning preferences of a multigenerational workforce.

Knowledge, Skills and Experience Profile of the Corporate Communications Representative

- Experience working in a corporate communication capacity
- Experience designing, developing and implementing communications plans for strategic initiatives
- Ability to translate technical and business concepts into clear, concise messages
- Facility using multiple communication channels such as email, intranet, videoconferencing and social media

Embrace the Casual Members of the A Team as They Are Needed for Specific Projects Throughout the Digital Workplace Project Life Cycle

A digital workplace A Team also includes casual members who may not have a permanent seat but are consulted on an ad hoc basis, depending upon the specific project underway. For example, if the goal is to create a more connected workforce, it would be wise to consult someone with experience in videoconferencing and immersive collaboration technology. If the project focus is enabling activity-based working, then someone who knows integrated workplace management systems would be helpful.

The digital workplace A Team can play a coordinating role, ensuring business alignment and alignment with ongoing initiatives. In addition to members that have specific organizational roles as listed below, representatives from existing or planned centers of excellence (COEs) that relate to digital workplace should also be included. Some suggestions include COEs that relate to mobility and digital design (see "Put a Mobility Center of Excellence in Place to Maximize Return on Mobility" and "CIOs Should Balance Digital Design Centers and Digital Design Centers of Excellence").
Not all casual members of the A Team will come from IT. The following list suggests some other casual members who may participate periodically:

- **Enterprise architecture:** Making sure the architecture supports the digital workplace vision. For example, before a company can consider cloud-based SaaS deployment, it needs to have sufficient bandwidth to support employees working remotely as well as workers in a corporate facility.

- **Legal and compliance:** Addressing the organization’s concerns about data for initiatives where data might be relocated, such as cloud initiatives (e.g., cloud office, bring your own device [BYOD], etc.).

- **Security and risk:** For initiatives involving larger audiences, such as in crowdsourcing and making sure what people share when you open to social networks.

- **IT specialists:** Depending upon the project, specialties such as mobile application development, workstream collaboration applications, or user experience (UX) design might be needed.

**A Team Participation Varies During Four Phases of a Project Life Cycle**

Participation of the various members of the A Team varies across the life cycle of a project. Figure 2 is a representation of what participation might look like.

Organizations that are implementing multiple digital workplace projects at the same time need to make sure the core members of the A Team are available to coordinate activities across these projects so the digital workplace program as a whole is coherent (see "Recipe for Digital Workplace Execution: Transform the Employee Experience" and "Recipe for Digital Workplace Execution: Transform the Corporate Culture" for two examples of A Teams).

The activities are:

- **Discover/refine:** Uncover the opportunity and refine the project as more experience is gained.

- **Design:** Develop project roadmap, execution strategy; redefine organizational processes for greater employee effectiveness.

- **Pilot:** Limited deployment and status check.

- **Build out:** Full-scale rollout of the selected solutions.
Throughout the life cycle of any digital workplace project, the A Team needs input and feedback to ensure the project achieves the outcomes from the perspective of the people it is designed to serve. Gartner recommends seeking advice from the senior leadership team, the employee advisory council and potentially a customer advisory council (see Figure 3).
Figure 3. Input Into the A Team

Source: Gartner (April 2017)

Gartner Recommended Reading

Some documents may not be available as part of your current Gartner subscription.

"Working With HR on Digital Workplace Initiatives"

"Create a Catalog of Activity-Based Spaces in the Digital Workplace to Improve the Employee Experience"

"Designing a Digital Workplace That Works the Way You Do"

"Toolkit: Sample Job Description for a Digital Workplace Leader"

"Toolkit: Survey Your Workers on the State of Your Digital Workplace"

"Five Steps to Build Your Digital Business Dream Team"
"How and When to Use a Center of Excellence"

"Designing for Employee Experience Will Increase Engagement and Business Impact of IT Projects"

Evidence


More on This Topic

This is part of an in-depth collection of research. See the collection:

- Leadership in the Digital Age: A Gartner Trend Insight Report