

## Reimagine Work by Reimagining Business

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When you want to know the future, acknowledge the past. As citizens of a rapidly accelerated world, we are seduced by the idea that our situation is unique. In many ways it is - not the least how the workplace is changing. But change in the workplace itself is not new, nor is the regression invited by

companies that do not heed this shift.

Technology can rapidly alter how work gets done. When the steam engine started appearing in the late 1700s, many sectors were not enthusiastic. They couldn't see the benefit when the existing worker's order seemed sufficient.

Yet, while the old guard waved such ideas away, the newfound industrial sector was very interested. Even the simple act of pumping water out of shafts was so attractive that mines adapted it rapidly. The laborious manual task was mechanised, opening up new ways of doing things. Workers adjusted their skillsets and expectations. A new breed of employee emerged out of the silt. Within less than a generation you simply weren't attractive to workers if you weren't using steam.

We are again experiencing a revolutionary change to how we work. New technologies are shifting workplace expectations at a breakneck speed and employees realise their value more than ever before. A nice salary and good coffee just doesn't cut it anymore: people who invest in their skills and worth at work, want to see reciprocation from employers. They want to see the new technology work for them.

You don't transform your company for the sake of employees. You transform your company to stay competitive and innovative. New technologies boost the bottom line and fortunately these go hand in hand with modern employee expectations.

A number of forces are shaping both sides of the fence. Smart systems, real-time data and mobility are creating a family of services that redefine all our expectations. These will, by SAP's estimations, boost productivity by 20 to 50 percent. The aforementioned technologies create true paradigm shifts on the work-floor.

Smart systems underpin a new breed of automation that goes beyond taking menial work off an employee's plate. These are increasingly better at collaborating *with* employees. Real-time data parallels this, delivering insight when and how employees demand it. Mobility and the connectivity behind it define the new coalface of business interactions.

To achieve these tiers, companies invest in several technologies, including in-memory processing, big data, machine learning, Internet of Things and the cloud. All of these create more agile and modern businesses, hence the argument that meeting employee expectations is the same as boosting business prospects. In this case, you actually do build it and they will come.

Let's contrive a hypothetical situation. A team needs to present a new strategy for a customer. Yet the scope of the customer spans across numerous departments, including site visits. The customer generates a lot of data, which needs to be exploited. In addition, to meet the customer's challenges, employees need to interact with partners and other third parties. One group is ultimately responsible for the strategy, though they do not have the mandate to commandeer the other departments or partners outright.

In old business terms, this would be shifting a mountain. But modern technology has turned this on its ear. Real time data combined with smart automation allows for on-the-fly analysis and reporting of the data. Collaboration tools enable seamless communication across departments and partners, without losing jurisdiction or control. Mobile devices foster accurate site visits and boost collaboration conversations. Automation frees valuable time and skills to apply to the problems. Modern HR systems fluidly identify and allocate team members to appropriate roles. The strategy can be organically adjusted and tested by a core group focused on the outcome, without trying to

herd the cats of corporations.

The result is a hive mind approach, without disrupting the other operations and hierarchies in your business.

This is very attractive to modern employees. They are increasingly expecting the malleability of a smart, real-time environment: an environment where they are treasured for their skills. Their functions are determined by vision, not by an attempt to fit circles into squares.

Technology, however, is only part of the journey. As business leaders we need to reimagine what our employees can do, if appropriately empowered. We must appreciate and realise the value which modern technologies bring to our workforces as much as to our businesses. People are the lifeblood of our company cultures: if we enable them to do more and do it better, they will.

SAP has invested heavily in this. Admittedly, we did it to create better products for our customers. We foresaw a future of smart technology and collaboration. But, if I may be honest, we didn't realise how much it would impact our own organisation. By using new business tools such as Ariba for procurement, SAP Jam for collaboration, SuccessFactors for talent management, Fiori for new mobile applications and SAP HANA for real-time data processing, SAP has transformed itself.

Today the vast majority of our revenue comes from services that did not even exist a decade ago. Innovation culture is driven by our people, who we in turn support and value. In 2016 SAP won over 130 global awards for being a top and attractive employer. I can confidently say that these technologies work, because I have seen it in action. It has made me a better business leader.

Smart people surround themselves with smarter people. This is a fundamental of success. Modern technology makes that almost too easy. The smarter people are out there and they want to do their best. You can help them achieve that, while also taking your business into the digital era. Don't be the dinosaurs who ignored the steam engine. Reimagine work, reimagine business and you can shape the future with people who want to follow your lead.