



The 2020 Workplace

How Innovative Companies Attract, Develop, and Keep Tomorrow's Employees Today

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Corporate learning professionals Jeanne C. Meister and Karie Willyerd bravely predict the nature of the workplace in 2020 despite the current white-hot pace of change – or, perhaps, because of it. They base their bold prognostications on two global surveys, one asking 2,200 working professionals what they want from their employers and the other asking 300 employers how they are preparing for the future. The authors also created case studies based on more than 100 interviews with the leaders of innovative organizations, including Cisco, NASA and Deloitte. They learned how progressive firms and their human resources departments plan to recruit, develop and retain top employees. *getAbstract* recommends this singular glimpse into the future to professionals who manage workforces and workplaces. This faultless book's revelations are fascinating and, for older workers, utterly unnerving. (As they prepare to take the stage, Millennials will love it.) Are you audacious enough for the new world? Brace yourself.

Take-Aways

- By 2020, the workplace will be highly personalized and social.
- Employers will need to adjust to the unprecedented challenge of having five generations of staffers working together.
- Expect to manage employees with vastly different interests and life experiences from varied regional and ethnic backgrounds.
- As recruiting, developing and motivating diverse employees becomes more critical, your firm's success will depend on the quality of its human resources (HR) department.
- Employers must provide 2020 staffers with fully individualized benefits and services.
- Traditional offices and nine-to-five work schedules will be largely passé.

- Knowledge workers will dominate. Lifelong learning will be the rule.
- Employees will expect and demand robust internal and external online connections.
- Prepare for this radical change, with the “Workplace Engagement 2020 Model,” based on “collaboration, authenticity, personalization, innovation and social connection.”
- The future HR staff will include positions that do not yet exist, such as “talent development agent.”

Summary

2020: A Whole New Game

Employers will face a huge challenge: to recruit, develop and motivate employees of all ages and backgrounds amid breakneck change. Soon, five generations of employees will work together at once, from aging Traditionalists and Baby Boomers to “Generation 2020” – people born after 1997. By 2020, offices will be mobile to serve employees and team members stationed around the globe. The best employees will demand innovative, imaginative contracts. Employers who are unable or unwilling to supply such new paradigm agreements will come up short – and suffer accordingly – as they try to recruit top talent.

“The 2020 Workplace: An organizational environment that provides an intensely personalized, social experience to attract, develop and engage employees across all generations and geographies.”

By 2020, 10 major forces will dramatically affect employers:

1. **“Shifting workforce demographics”** – Compared to 2010 workforces, US employee pools in 2020 will include more people older than 55, more Latinos (“30% of the US population by 2050”) and more women. “Age, gender and ethnicity” will challenge employers as five generations cooperate together in the workplace, specifically: Traditionalists (born before 1946), Baby Boomers (1946-1964), Generation X (1965-1976), Millennials (1977-1997) and Generation 2020. Because of a drop in fertility rates, the European and Asian workforce is “aging and shrinking.”
2. **“The knowledge economy”** – As work becomes ever more technical, it will need more “conceptual tacit skills,” which include “problem solving, judgment, listening, data analysis, relationship building, and collaborating and communicating with co-workers.”
3. **“Globalization”** – A significant number of *Financial Times* Global 500 companies are now based in Brazil, Russia, India or China. By 2020, experts forecast that BRIC nations will be among the world’s economic leaders. As the world flattens, workforces will become “virtual,” with fewer employees on-site and smaller centralized, headquarters operations.
4. **“The digital workplace”** – The realm of digital information, that is, data “created, captured or replicated in digital form,” is growing constantly and rapidly. Companies will need

employees who can manage immense amounts of such content while keeping it private and secure. Firms also must recruit personnel who can create new, accurate and appropriate digital content.

5. **“The ubiquity of mobile technology”** – In some countries, mobile phones now outnumber people. Going beyond communication, they also function as learning devices. The field already offers 7,200 education-related applications for the iPhone, one trend is that some financial institutions, such as Wachovia and Bank of America, now use mobile phones increasingly for “sales training, compliance training, product knowledge and online performance support.”
6. **“A culture of connectivity”** – Facebook. iPhones. Instant messaging. Today, most young people – and many older people – are “hyperconnected,” that is, constantly in touch, thus blurring the boundary between home and office.
7. **“The participation society”** – Increasingly, consumers will participate in improving products, services and business. One example is the Zagat Survey, which gathers and publishes consumers’ ratings of restaurants. Employees now unite via online social networks to improve business operations, forming collaborative groups like Best Buy’s Blue Shirt Nation, which has 24,000 employee users.
8. **“Social learning”** – The 2010-2020 decade will be a time of “social networking, social media and social learning.”
9. **“Corporate social responsibility”** – CSR, already a pivotal trend in big companies, will be even more crucial in 2020. Already, 88% of “new college hires” want to work for “companies with CSR ideals that reflect their own.” One exceptional example is IBM’s Corporate Service Corps, which places staffers on CSR projects in emerging countries where the company will experience growth over the next decade.
10. **“Millennials in the workplace”** – Wired since birth, they expect companies to furnish the same networking, collaborative and brainstorming tools they’ve used all their lives.

“Workplace Engagement 2020 Model”

The Workplace Engagement 2020 Model (WE 2020) will enable competitive organizations to recruit and engage top talent in the future.

“Growth in new technologies and increases in the speed of business will mean a need to develop skills as rapidly as possible.”

Its four aspects are:

1. **“Social recruiting”** – Use real and virtual professional and social networks. For example, in May 2008, TMP Worldwide recruiters set up Network in World, a “virtual job fair” on Second Life. Ernst & Young has groups on Twitter and Facebook.
2. **“Über-connection”** – Leverage all available social media tools. Examples: John Fluevog Boots & Shoes uses its Open-Source Footwear Social Network to solicit customers’ shoe designs. Starbucks gathers consumer ideas on its My Starbucks Idea social network.

3. **“Social learning”** – Meaningful, cooperative teaching combines mentoring, peer learning, formal “competency” training and experiential “context-based” learning. Deloitte’s leaders estimate that its Coaching and Career Connections site has helped save between \$120 million and \$150 million through retaining employees.
4. **“Accelerated leadership”** – PricewaterhouseCoopers grooms leaders with “team-based learning” modeled after the way hospitals train doctors. Trainees go on rounds in a group. They receive individual feedback after “formal observation” and again when a senior manager shadows their work at a client site. They participate in “after-action reviews” and in team workshops on new material.

“Most employees desire a company name on their résumé that gives them a sense of pride.”

In 2020, employees will expect five principles to resonate strongly in their workplaces:

1. **“Collaboration”** – This calls for interwoven work, internally and externally.
2. **“Authenticity”** – Core values and transparency demonstrate genuineness.
3. **“Personalization”** – Employees want tailor-made career paths.
4. **“Innovation”** – In a changing world, new thinking enables sustainability.
5. **“Social connection”** – Workplaces will be based on sharing and forming a community.

The Crystal Ball

A highly cooperative, engaging social atmosphere will dominate the future workplace.

“Your honesty - or dishonesty - will be quickly noticed in the social media environment.”

Twenty additional predictions:

1. **“You will be hired and promoted based upon your reputation capital”** – To advance, workers will need extensive, high-quality social networks, strong personal brands and demonstrated expertise. These components comprise reputation capital.
2. **“Your mobile device will become your office, your classroom and your concierge”** – Smart phones and tablets are replacing personal computers as the internet connection devices of choice. Easy to use, superb connectivity and great versatility, these gadgets let you work anywhere. By 2020, this trend will be the rule.
3. **“The global talent shortage will be acute”** – Manpower’s global research finds a mismatch between available job applicants and the educated, trained, skilled candidates companies want. By 2020, this talent shortage will certainly have grown.
4. **“Recruiting will start on social networking sites”** – In the future, don’t expect to find a job unless your profile is posted on sites designed for networking. All recruiting will start on social networking sites.

5. **“Web commuters will force corporate offices to reinvent themselves”** – The corporate office (“the first place”) is becoming passé. So is working at home (“the second place”). By 2020, workers will increasingly wish to be in the “third place,” any location where people can work, be it a coffee bar, client’s office or motel lobby.
6. **“Companies will hire entire teams”** – Some companies already recruit teams of employees to work on projects. As this trend grows, team members will form guilds, moving as a group from one company to another.
7. **“Job requirements for CEOs will include blogging”** – Senior executives must master new communication tools to use with their customers and employees.
8. **“The corporate curriculum will use video games”** – Alternate reality games and simulations engage young people, so that’s how companies will teach them tomorrow.
9. **“A 2020 mind-set will be required to thrive in a networked world”** – Social media and networks will be the main way workers “communicate, connect and collaborate.”
10. **“Human resources’ focus will move from outsourcing to crowdsourcing”** – As collaboration increases, HR departments will increasingly rely on the “wisdom of crowds” (crowdsourcing) for corporate learning, e-coaching, and so on.
11. **“Corporate social networks will flourish and grow inside companies”** – Conversation-based knowledge work is the core of social networking.
12. **“You will elect your leader”** – Collaboration’s true believers (Millennials and Gen 2020s) expect to be able to choose their leader.
13. **“Lifelong learning will be a business requirement”** – For knowledge workers, how could it be otherwise? To further such education, firms will set up “Lifelong Learning Accounts” (LiLas) so their employees can continue to develop.
14. **“Work-life flexibility will replace work-life balance”** – As people move seamlessly from work to personal activities, nine-to-five hours will become outmoded.
15. **“Corporate social responsibility programs [will] attract and retain employees”** – Young employees focus on the “triple bottom line: people, planet and profits.”
16. **“Diversity will be a business issue rather than a human resources issue”** – By 2020, four out of 10 US workers will come from a minority background.
17. **“The lines among marketing, communications and learning will blur”** – To illustrate, Sony’s Backstage 101 is a branded site that offers interactive tutorials.
18. **“Corporate app stores will offer ways to manage work and personal life”** – Taking a page from the iPhone and its 100,000-plus apps, companies will offer something for everyone: first aid for dogs, GPS locations, you name it.
19. **“Social media literacy will be required”** – This will be as basic as reading.
20. **“Contract jobs will be the path to...permanent full-time employment”** – Projects let firms test potential employees’ capabilities before hiring them full time.

Get Ready

Human resources departments face a big job preparing for 2020 and thereafter. Big companies must organize globally to deal effectively with workers, consumers, shareholders and supply chain members scattered worldwide. They must put CSR at the top of their to-do lists, right next to learning, and they must use wikis, blogs, social media and social networks for widespread connectivity. Employers should adopt a systems approach to their operating processes, foster inclusion, offer wide choices in employee benefits – and do it all with complete transparency.

“Preparing for the future is best accomplished by shaping it yourself.”

Human resources professionals must be aware of each local community’s nuances, smart about global concerns and willing to innovate by using new techniques, such as crowdsourcing. Their insider’s understanding of the company enables them to work with high-level executives. HR personnel should become fully adept with social technologies and should master “blogs, rating, tagging, video uploads, mobile device capabilities, social networking [and] instant messaging.”

“We will soon be overwhelmed by the hyperconnected needs of Gen 2020. R U RDY?”

By 2020, HR teams will grow to include certain new specialists, potentially including:

- **“Capability planner”** – Ensures that the company develops needed skills.
- **“Chief technologist”** – Serves as HR’s IT expert.
- **“Community gardener”** – Helps create and nourish online communities.
- **“Futurist”** – Works with companies to anticipate their future needs.
- **“People capability planner”** – Maps out employee development.
- **“Place planner”** – Ensures that site-specific features work well at presentations and at “virtual and collaboration sites.”
- **“Social connector”** – Provides expertise in using social networks and media.
- **“Talent scout”** – Spots emerging talent and experienced professionals for hiring.
- **“Talent development agent”** – Helps plan and create “accelerated learning opportunities” for employees.

About the Authors

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