Network 24

Transformation of Work

Transformation and personalisation: A case for digital workspace in a post-COVID-19 era

Digital workplace transformation is on the rise, with the business process automation market expected to grow to $19.6 billion by 2025. This accelerated growth is changing the way we do business - requiring a tech-forward approach to the workplace.

Managing Executive for Cloud, Hosting & Security at Vodacom Business, Kabelo Makwane says the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we work, possibly forever. "[It] fuelled transformation and the desire for more technology-enabled ways of doing business," he says.

The digital workplace has become increasingly important, with 72% of organisations viewing it as a priority. And it's not about losing human resources but rather about making employees' work lives more efficient. "It is not about the concept of machines replacing humans, but it's about machines performing those mundane tasks, which don't require human ingenuity, so to improve performance," says Makwane.

Flexibility

For small business owners, digital workspaces and cloud-enabled technologies can provide more flexibility. "A small business owner is an accountant, the information technology officer, and the salesperson all wrapped into one," says Makwane. "Being flexible, by working from their mobile devices and managing their channels, their distribution, and their customer base, is invaluable to keeping their businesses sustainable."

Personalisation and the Gen Z Effect

Advancements in the digital workspace have also empowered employees to personalise their work experience, which is key for employee satisfaction - and can have a direct link to productivity. "As a manager, I'm now faced consistently with people that are wanting to join the organisation on their terms," explains Makwane.

He says this is especially true for Gen Z and Millennials who currently make up approximately 38% of the global workforce and are expected to make up 58% by 2030. These generations are digital savants born into the technological era.

"What that means is they want agility. They want flexibility. They want to be able to work in hybrid formats. It's become a prerequisite for how they evaluate organisations that are forward-looking and visionary, as opposed to those which are more stoic and traditional," Makwane says.

Trends

One of the key trends that businesses need to be aware of is data analytics. "Data analytics has almost been an evolutionary process instead of a revolution," says Makwane. "Both structured and unstructured data drive how organisations gain insights. Data is the so-called new gold."

Digital solutions

While embracing the digital workspace transformation might seem daunting, Vodacom Business is here to help you each step of the way. Makwane describes the five Cs of digital workplace transformation:
- Cybersecurity
- Connectivity
- Collaboration
- Cloud
- Consumer

"We are at the nexus of those five Cs," Makwane says.

"We are known for providing ubiquitous connectivity end-to-end, both fixed and mobile. We've also been able to provide collaboration and unified communication to enable this digital and hybrid way of work," he says.

"From a cloud continuum perspective, we house private cloud and offer private cloud hosting services, which can be extended through our partnerships with cloud hyper scalers, like Microsoft, Huawei and AWS into hybrid and public cloud services."

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Consumer

Hyper-personalisation is perhaps the most significant impact AI has had on how businesses interact with the consumer. AI has allowed us the ability to improve inclusivity for both employees and customers, helping to create a working, shopping, or service experience that suits their needs. This is especially true for those who are differently abled.

The granularity that analytics, machine learning and AI can achieve in terms of augmenting search data and accelerating insights has also improved customer experience across sectors. The ability to provide customers with tailored offers has dramatically affected customer expectations, enhances share of wallet for businesses, with generic offers no longer being seen as sufficient. However, it is crucial to be conscious of the fact that these programmable large language AI models are not immune to developer bias. Utilising globally produced software can be effective if it aligns with the needs and demographics of your client base.

In an African context, the adoption of these technologies is not only helping us to remain competitive, its meeting a fundamental demand. Due to the numerous challenges faced in the region, many are excluded from the digital economy and the traditional economy. Using the 5 C's model, farmers, for instance, can now connect to broader suppliers and markets. Similarly, AI can enable innovation in credit and lending risk models to provide much needed capital to those who do not meet traditional requirements to access loans by augmenting data from their cyber profiles using large analytics models to assess creditworthiness. These technologies are not only supporting digital and financial inclusion, but they are also driving new skills development in the future workforce.

Vodacom Business invites organisations of any size to Turn to Us to become Fit for the Future. Any organisation can unlock new potential and achieve significant growth with well-suited support and fit-for-purpose technologies.

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