

Digital  
Leadership  
Forum

# Session Report

## How to Create a Successful Digital Workplace

November 2019



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## What is the Digital Leadership Forum?

At the Digital Leadership Forum, we help our members and their organisations to innovate and grow in the digital age.

We design and run highly interactive and collaborative sessions where our members can share experiences and gain valuable insights to help support their digital strategies.

We tackle a range of core strategic business issues including digital transformation, AI & automation, digital marketing strategies, the future of work, and diversity in the workplace.

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# Presentation Videos



## The digital workplace in action at Monzo Bank

How does Monzo bank effectively use a digital workplace? Amy Dicketts, Product Lead at Monzo Bank shows the ways in which they have integrated the digital workplace into their everyday work environment.



## How to create a team-centric workplace with GoSpace

How can we build a successful digital, team-centric workplace? Neil Usher, Chief Partnerships Officer at GoSpace and author of The Elemental Workplace presents a new way to approach the digital workplace and explains how to create a positive working environment for everyone.



# Executive Summary

## How to Create a Successful Digital Workplace

21st November 2019 | Baker McKenzie



In November 2019, members of the Digital Leadership Forum met at Baker McKenzie in London to discuss how new digital workplace technologies and working styles can be successfully implemented within their organisations.

Representatives from leading organisations including GSK, BT, Dell Technologies, Slack, EDF Energy, Schroders, Octopus Investments, BDO, Zoom and many more discussed the varied challenges that they are facing, whether as legacy companies transitioning to a digital workplace or as digital-first workplaces.

Attendees heard presentations from Neil Usher, Chief Partnerships Officer at GoSpace, who highlighted the importance of the team-centric workplace, and from Amy Dicketts, Product Lead at Monzo Bank, who presented a case study which gave insight into what a digital workplace looks like in practice.

We were also joined by a panel of experts from Zoom, Slack, Artificial Solutions, Baker McKenzie, and Immerse, who discussed best practices and common challenges when introducing new digital technologies into the workplace.

Attendees then broke into smaller groups to discuss how to demonstrate the value of changes, how to identify which new technology is appropriate for your organisation, the evolving role of leaders in the digital workplace, new skills requirements and training, and how to create and design a digital workplace strategy.

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# How to Create a Team-Centric Workplace

Neil Usher, Chief Partnerships Officer at GoSpace, spoke to attendees about the importance of building your workplace around teams rather than individuals.



## 1. Build your workplace around teams

We go into our workplaces to collaborate with our teams and share knowledge. In a dispersed workforce, it is important to make sure that teams can easily work together and identify opportunities for collaboration.

## 2. Dependence on individual organisation can be counter-productive

Usher described the dangers of “parking lot” stress when offices use hotdesking, where individuals experience the added anxiety of trying to find a workspace with their team. When organisations make it easy for teams to work together they create a more productive workplace as that energy is refocused into the work itself.

# How to Create a Team-Centric Workplace

## 3. The desk isn't going anywhere

Despite experiments in redesigning the workplace, the desk has remained an essential setting for knowledge-work. Organisations should prioritise creating a guaranteed desk space for each team to work at, with the option for individuals to work away from that space if necessary.

## 4. Face-to-face meetings are still essential

Agile working technology still relies on face-to-face interaction. While most of the technology that we use today liberates us from physical space and enables us to collaborate in new ways, our primary aim is to be working closer together.

## 5. Create psychological safety

True collaboration is driven by mutual interest, supported by trust that is developed over time. Usher emphasised the importance of creating an environment where employees feel trusted and safe to express themselves in the workplace, both within their teams and the larger organisation.



# The Digital Workplace in Action

Amy Dicketts, Product Lead at Monzo Bank, presented a case study showing what the digital workplace can look like in practice, and shared Monzo's learnings on how to succeed.



## 1. Build Trust

The digital workplace is built on trust. Monzo uses Slack for all of their internal communication, and most of these channels are visible to everyone in the organisation. This means that employees can access and contribute to discussions across the company, creating a culture of transparency across the organisation and in its decision-making. Dicketts also emphasised that it is essential that an organisation trusts that everyone is doing great work, wherever they are working from.

## 2. Choose The Right Set-Up

Workplace technology and working practices should be carefully chosen to ensure that they are accessible and flexible. Dicketts explained that meetings at Monzo take place over Google Hangouts so that they are remote-friendly and can be recorded for those unable to attend. By selecting the right tools to enable people to do their best work and creating parity for those working from home, Monzo is able to attract and retain talent.



# The Digital Workplace in Action

## 3. Commit to Change

Everyone in the business needs to believe that a digital workplace is the best way to operate, across all roles and teams, in order to avoid silos. It is important to effectively communicate the benefits of change, including increased speed of execution, efficiency and transparency. While Monzo started as a digital workplace, Dicketts suggested that legacy organisations trying to transition could pilot new technology in teams or departments to test it and then use the results as evidence to demonstrate the value of change.

## 4. Focus

While Dicketts acknowledged that it is important to still have fun in the digital workplace – for example, Monzo has a dedicated Slack channel for their office dog - once a digital workplace has been set up there needs to be discipline in teams to focus on tasks at hand and prioritise, as well as clear communication within the organisation about when to jump in on urgent tasks.



# Panel: Succeeding with Workplace Technologies

Panelists: Magnus Falk, CIO Advisor, Zoom; Thomas McErlean, Head of Solutions Engineering EMEA, Slack; Frank Burnett-Alleyne, Director, Banking & Financial Services; Kim Sartin, Partner, Baker McKenzie; James Watson, Chief Marketing Officer, Immerse.



Our panel of experts discussed how to succeed with new workplace technologies. Here are our 4 key takeaways:

## 1. Create user buy-in across your organisation

Instead of approaching the introduction of new technology with the IT department, start with the end-users and see where there is currently friction in their work. Then, identify how technology can be used to help remove that friction and improve the employee experience.

## 2. Identify and communicate the benefits of a digital workplace

It is important to identify the specific benefits that any new technology will have for your organisation and then to clearly communicate these internally. Transitioning to a digital workplace can increase efficiency, productivity, and retention. Panelists warned that if an organisation does not evolve there is a risk that they will not be able to attract digital native talent. Similarly, they noted the importance of retaining talent through more flexible working, and codifying existing knowledge before the baby boomer generation retires.

# Panel: Succeeding with Workplace Technologies



## 3. Be aware of regulations

As technology rapidly evolves and develops, regulation is still catching up. Organisations should be aware of the implications of a digital workplace on employee rights. For example, how working time regulations apply to the “always-on” culture. New “Right to Disconnect” laws may be introduced in France, Spain and Italy and are gaining popularity, so organisations should plan for how these may affect their workplaces.

## 4. Transparency can be gradual

Transparency is important in a digital workplace, however initiating a cultural change within an organisation can be met with resistance and complete transparency from day one isn't always possible. Legacy organisations can begin with team transparency, opening up within a department or specific project from day one. Wider organisational updates can then feed into this as appropriate.

## 5. Avoid silos

There is a difference between digital transformation and being a digital organisation. Organisations need to ensure that everyone across the organisation is invested and engaged in the transition to a digital workplace in order to avoid silos. Conversely, if an organisation is slow to adapt to new innovations, they may find that departments and individuals are already using new software, choosing how they work and using digital technology before it comes from the top down.

# Group Discussions



Attendees broke into smaller groups for in-depth discussions on specific aspects of the digital workplace, including making a business case, forming a digital workplace strategy, choosing the right technology that is fit for purpose, and the importance of leading cultural change across an organisation. They then shared key points from their discussions with the other attendees.

## How can you transform your digital workplace culture?

- Start by defining your workplace culture and ways of working.
- Recognise that a failing digital workplace highlights existing failures in workplace culture.
- If you're not moving forwards, then you're likely to be moving backwards.

## How can you identify the new technologies you need?

- Consider whether you are addressing a problem and/or creating an opportunity.
- Identify that there is a need for the technology rather than following personal preference.
- Legacy technology will gradually disappear as needs change.

## How is the role of leadership changing in the digital workplace?

- Trust your employees and identify the skillsets that people already have.
- Empower existing digital leaders within your organisation.
- Leaders don't always have to be bosses – it is a descriptor rather than just a title.



# Group Discussions



## How to make a compelling business case for investing in the digital workplace?

- Businesses will fail (even if slowly) without a digital workplace.
- Need to deliver digital strategy in order to service customers in the way that they expect.
- Create a sense of urgency, introduce incremental changes, and have a clear vision.

## What new technology skills and training are required to help build and develop digital workplaces?

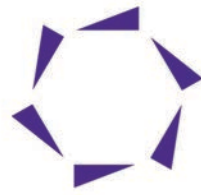
- More than just understanding coding, individuals need to understand digital and what it means for business.
- Need for continuous learning throughout the organisation as new technologies emerge.
- Diversity of thought is needed to give a wider perspective on decisions.

## How can you create and design your digital workplace strategy?

- Depending on teams, adapt your working style to their needs: if more visual communication and social interaction is needed, include more face-to-face interactions.
- Work globally so that you can serve the right people at the right times.
- Digital strategy is necessary as we adapt to a blended workforce.

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