



Work Smarter, Not Longer

Traditional workplace culture is changing – rapidly. Gone are the days when new employees feel they have to climb the corporate ladder as rapidly as possible, putting in punishing hours in order to do so. Today’s employees are more likely to be demanding a healthy work/life balance. Forward-thinking companies are well aware of this and have changed, or are changing, their corporate structure accordingly.

Generation X employees may be the children of ‘baby boomer’ moms who bought into the ‘superwoman’ ideal prevalent in the 70s. These women were programmed to feel they needed to put in 70-hour weeks at the office while simultaneously raising their children, whipping up gourmet meals, enjoying an active social life and maintaining a household. The message passed to the next generation was that work was more important than family, a message that understandably may have caused a strong reaction, leading today’s generation to seek more flexible working conditions. ‘Latchkey kids’ themselves, they want a different scenario for their own children if they have them; even if they don’t, they still want time to enjoy life outside of work.

There was considerable social media buzz recently about a video where Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg (Forbes 5th most powerful woman) admits to leaving work at 5:30 every day so that she can eat dinner with her children. Apparently we are still shocked that someone in her position would admit to leaving the office – at the designated close of business – to spend quality time with her family. In fact, she herself states that it is only in the last year or so that she has been comfortable admitting this. She also remains in touch via email late at night and early in the morning; nevertheless, she has made a decision to be present with her family every evening because she feels that is very important. In fact, she suggests that this should be the norm for any employee, regardless of gender or family obligations.

Many employees in their 30s are still carrying student loans while simultaneously taking on larger mortgages, car loans and after-school care/daycare fees. They are certainly not looking to opt out of the rat race and start an alpaca farm - what they do seem to want is to work smarter rather than longer, without being perceived as shirkers. Flexi-time is only the beginning; this generation wants to be able to telecommute, at least part of the time; working from home has gained huge popularity in the last decade or so. The advent of widespread wireless Internet availability and smartphones has enabled office personnel to work from almost anywhere and still remain in constant touch with other team members.

Forward-thinking employers will provide their employees with the flexibility they desire and foster a workplace culture that encourages professional development and movement within the corporate structure while actively discouraging long hours spent in the physical workplace itself. Working remotely reduces stress and pollution from long commutes as well as allowing employees more time to enjoy life outside of work. Taking off early on a summer afternoon to head for the beach or the golf course and finishing that project later in the evening can do wonders for one’s stress levels, resulting in happier, healthier workers – wise employers are beginning to recognize this. Shift iQ’s Learning Management System is completely mobile compatible, allowing workers to access professional development anywhere, anytime.

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Benefits of Virtual Teams

Virtual teams can offer considerable benefits to companies, whether small, medium or large.

Accessing a wider pool of talent:

The pool of available talent is no longer limited to one city or town. While it is true that one could, for certain senior positions, hire employees from elsewhere in the country, this would normally involve paying removal expenses. Additionally, a higher salary would probably be required to compensate the new hires for uprooting spouses and families. While many people may be happy to move anywhere for the right position, many excellent potential employees are not – their spouses have good jobs, their children are settled in school, they have friends and family and commitments in their current community. Virtual teams avoid all these problems; suddenly the available talent pool is nationwide or even worldwide.

Cost savings:

Cost savings for some corporations using virtual teams are considerable, running into millions of dollars a year. Clearly relocation packages are no longer an issue. Additionally, there is a significant reduction in travel costs, commuting, and paying for office space. Of course, some of these cost savings are passed on to the employee, making the position even more attractive.

Time saving and increased productivity:

As mentioned above, virtual teams allow employees the luxury of flexibility; commuting is eliminated, employees are subject to lower stress levels and take fewer sick days, resulting in increased productivity. Additionally, having a team whose members are located across several time zones effectively expands the business day from eight hours to twelve hours, even twenty-four in some cases. Projects can be accomplished in a shorter period by utilizing more hours in the day.

Sales and marketing:

Having team members in multiple locations gives customers access to a physical presence nationwide or even globally.

Small/medium businesses:

Virtual teams can help level the playing field for small or medium businesses, giving them advantages that were previously only available to larger corporations since marketing and communications can be outsourced to different countries.

Obviously, virtual teams also present unique challenges but these can be readily overcome with experienced leadership and careful selection of team members. Virtual team members will need to be self-motivated and capable of working alone without the stimulus of co-workers. They will also need to be good communicators; maintaining effective communications may be one of the biggest challenges facing virtual teams. Cutting-edge technology - allowing cloud computing, video conferencing, email, messaging, etc. - will be the team members' strongest ally.

Effective team leaders will be able to establish clear performance standards and ensure that all team members are clear on the company's goals. A collaborative ethos that allows all employees to feel that their opinions are welcomed and respected, enabling positive discussions, needs to be fostered by the team leaders. Remote team members need to feel they are not being left out of the loop and that they have the support of the rest of the team. Successes also need to be celebrated, just as would happen if all team members shared the same corporate office space. Virtual teams clearly need to be able to communicate and access information anytime, anywhere. To this end, cloud-computing options offer the perfect answer for virtual team members.

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Client: GoAerius.com

How The Hospitality Industry Can Benefit From Cloud Computing

If hospitality businesses still have reservations about cloud computing, it may be time to revisit the idea. Cloud computing has been widely used for many years now – any business that uses Dropbox or Google Docs, for example, is already using the cloud.

The present economy is tough on many industries and the hospitality industry is no exception – customers have less disposable income and competition is fierce. Business owners need all the competitive advantages they can get. Being ‘in the cloud’ offers restaurateurs and hotel managers the opportunity to allow authorized staff access to data 24/7 from anywhere with an Internet connection. Cloud computing offers a highly cost-effective solution for the industry that minimizes risk, requires little in the way of infrastructure, has low startup and maintenance costs, is scalable and user friendly.

Return on investment with cloud computing can be seen within days or weeks; applications are faster and significantly less expensive to scale. Cloud computing services are available for a low monthly subscription allowing organizations to start small and scale as needed later. Low startup costs, with no heavy investment in expensive hardware, mean that there is very little financial risk in investing in the cloud. The cloud also makes data more secure; everything is backed up off site, offering added protection from hackers or viruses and significantly lowering the risk of a security breach.

Being ‘in the cloud’ is cost effective because it eliminates the need for expensive upgrades annually or for the cost of maintaining expensive hardware. Customers benefit from automatic upgrades as often as necessary at no additional cost. Restaurateurs no longer need an IT specialist to install, upgrade and maintain expensive hardware, freeing them to focus on developing their business. Switching from a traditional infrastructure will actually provide businesses with significant savings.

In the hospitality industry, the cloud can be used for inventory tracking, ordering, human resources and maintenance issues as well as for taking, processing and tracking orders from guests and providing point-of-sale facilities. With the necessary information readily available, it is quick and easy for staff to make changes to menus or track inventory. Reservations, special promotions, loyalty programs and customer feedback can all be handled by the cloud.

Regardless of the size of the operation, cloud computing allows restaurateurs to ensure that staff have up-to-date, relevant information at their fingertips when dealing with customers, resulting in smoother workflow and an enhanced customer experience. Use of wireless iPads, for example, means that employees have easy access to historical data at every touch point. aireus is a revolutionary hospitality point-of-sale system offering easy-to-use solutions specifically designed for the restaurant industry. Its multi-unit enterprise, loyalty rewards, gift cards and delivery software operates on iPad, iPhone and iPod Touch, making it widely accessible on almost any budget.

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