Digital Workplace Strategy Primer for 2021

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The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that for most office workers, the digital workplace is essential — and the physical office is not. Application leaders responsible for the digital workplace must focus on employee digital dexterity to make this newly distributed workforce engaged and productive.

Scope

The digital workplace helps employees work in ways that support business capabilities. It is critical to understand how technology and digital dexterity enable ways of working, now and in the future.

In addition to applications and software engineering leaders and business leaders, other IT roles involved in this initiative are:

- Chief information officers
- Enterprise architecture and technology innovation leaders
- Infrastructure and operations leaders

This topics we cover include:

- Purpose and Vision — What is the digital workplace and why is it strategic?
- Leadership and Governance — Who leads the digital workplace and where are they located?
- Strategy and Roadmap — How should digital workplace leaders marshal digital workplace technologies and when should changes occur?

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Analysis
According to the 2021 Gartner CIO Survey, the majority of organizations have emerged from reactive postures taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Three-quarters of organizations are planning or implementing, or have implemented, a “new normal” strategy. Looking forward, only one-third predict a reduction in the proportion of staff working from home. Gartner’s 2021 View From the Board of Directors Survey reveals a similar sentiment. Remote work is one of the extraordinary changes arising from the pandemic that surveyed directors expect to persist. The digital workplace is mission-critical.
Yet, only half of all organizations have a formal digital workplace strategy according to Gartner's 2020 Research Circle Digital Workplace Survey, and less than one-third consistently follow a formalized approach. The informal approach is reflected in the job titles of those leading the digital workplace — less than 5% of surveyed organizations have a dedicated leader with “digital workplace” in their job title. The digital workplace lacks dedicated strategy and leadership.

Gartner's 2021 View From the Board of Directors Survey also reveals that although 56% of the surveyed organizations characterize their digital initiative as mature, 70% say it accelerated in the past year. As a result of the pandemic, the majority of respondents expect budgetary increases in IT and technology. Functional areas like marketing and HR are expected to see budget cuts. Rather than a radical shift, the majority of those who anticipate changes in their business model due to COVID-19 expect changes to business capabilities. Business capabilities are central to digital business transformation.

The digital workplace is a business strategy that leverages an engaging and intuitive work environment to boost workforce digital dexterity — the ambition and ability to apply technology to improve business capabilities. The digital workplace, and those who lead it, will shape the future of work.

Topics

Organizations must elevate the digital workplace — moving from the delivery of technology to the delivery of business capabilities. The digital workplace is abstract as well as tangible, and therein lies the key challenge — application leaders must understand purpose and shape a vision. The core purpose of a digital workplace is to enable employees to work in ways that deliver the capabilities the business needs to survive and thrive. Beyond technology, employee digital dexterity underpins these ways of working, now and in the future. Gartner refers to the intersection of employees and the technologies they use for personal and team productivity as the "new work hub." Guiding technology and elevating digital dexterity requires a strategy and a roadmap for change. A digital workplace strategy touches all employees, thereby engaging the whole business. Realizing a digital workplace strategy necessitates sound leadership supported by businesswide governance.

Our research in this area addresses the following topics:

Suggested First Steps

- The Digital Workplace Leader's First 100 Days
- Toolkit: Communicate How the Digital Workplace Enables Digital Transformation
- A Maturity Framework to Advance Digital Workplace Programs
- Toolkit: Digital Workplace Leader Job Description

Essential Reading
Use Change Leadership Principles to Propel Your Digital Workplace Program to Success

Measure Workforce Digital Dexterity to Optimize Digital Workplace Outcomes

A 6-Step Checklist for Effective Deployment of Microsoft Teams in the Digital Workplace

Benchmark Worker Readiness for Digital Transformation Using the Digital Dexterity Index

Drive Better Digital Workplace Employee Collaboration Using AI Chatbots and Advanced Analytics

How to Cultivate Effective ‘Remote Work’ Programs

Understand 5 Key Types of Worker to Energize Your Digital Workplace

Acronym Key and Glossary Terms

| OKRs | objectives and key results |

Evidence

2021 Gartner CIO Survey: This survey was conducted online from 14 July through 14 August 2020 among Gartner Executive Programs members and other CIOs. Qualified respondents are each the most senior IT leader (CIO) for their overall organization or a part of their organization (for example, a business unit or region). The total sample is 1,877, with representation from all geographies and industry sectors (public and private).

2021 Gartner View From the Board of Directors: This survey was conducted online during May and June 2020, among 265 respondents from the U.S., EMEA and APAC. Companies were screened to be midsize, large or global enterprises. Respondents were required to sit on a board of directors or be a member of the corporate board of directors. If respondents served on multiple boards, they answered for the largest company (defined by its annual revenue) for which they are a board member. The study was developed collaboratively by Gartner analysts and the Research Data and Analytics team.

2020 Digital Workplace Survey: This survey was conducted online from 28 April through 11 May 2020 with 131 completes from Gartner’s Research Circle Members — a Gartner-managed panel. The results of this study are representative of the respondent base and not necessarily the market as a whole.

Document Revision History

Digital Workplace Program Primer for 2020 - 16 January 2020

Digital Workplace Program Primer for 2019 - 10 January 2019

Related Priorities
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiative Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Digital Workplace Infrastructure and Operations</td>
<td>The digital workplace infrastructure and operations (DWI&amp;O) initiative helps those responsible for mobile and endpoint technologies build the foundation on which a digital workplace is built.</td>
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<tr>
<td>HCM Technology Transformation</td>
<td>HCM technologies support enterprise HR processes such as administrative HR, payroll, talent acquisition, posthire talent management, HR service management, workforce management and talent analytics.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analytics, BI and Data Science Solutions</td>
<td>Augmented analytics powered by AI, blurring boundaries between analytics styles, compelling cloud solutions and more collaborative analytics, define the next generation of analytics.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Digital Workplace Applications</td>
<td>Digital workplace applications deliver frictionless experiences and help employees create, collaborate and communicate. Organizations must align their business capabilities with the new work nucleus.</td>
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