



HYBRID WORKFORCE: A STRATEGIC DRIVE FOR DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Zahara Banu V* Dr. Shyam B R**

*Management Student, Department of Management Sciences, Maharaja Institute of Technology Mysore.

**Associate Professor & Head, Department of Management Sciences, Maharaja Institute of Technology Mysore, Karnataka, India.

Abstract

Due epidemic, changes in business environment toward digital transformation & its impact on organizations have given real-time check to the HR domain people who are key players to assimilate employees and technology to complete the projects virtually with a view to operate efficiently in organizations working & apply innovative solutions to sustain in the competitive market. This has been led to emergence of concept of hybrid workforce which is basically a fusion of the time in office and work-from-home. The hybrid workforce model is gaining a positive trend as many employees and business leaders prefer it & as it offers work life balance for employees & increased productivity to organizations. As digital transformation is a foundation for the new hybrid work model, emphasis is majorly done on advanced digital tools, training to employees for new technology, collaboration, reduced operational costs, constant virtual interactions & monitoring both office & remote employees & their work. Nevertheless, the hybrid model has its set of drawbacks such as employees lack physical presence especially in brainstorming sessions, ineffective management direction, manager bias towards office based workers, cyber security, technology barriers & employee burnout are some of those. The paper aims to understand the hybrid work model as a current digital transformation in regard with managing organization workforce effectively. Keeping the drastic evolution of the model & its adoption the researchers have set 1 primary study objective to provide a glimpse of what exactly hybrid model of workforce is all about, how it is utilized wisely by most of the organizations across globe. The study also suggests that it is very beneficial model in today's work system & has a wide application in near future, if the organizations concentrate on building an appropriate leadership culture and retaining talent heads.

Keywords: Digital transformation, Hybrid workforce, Productivity, Employee satisfaction, Collaboration, Retention, Advanced tools, COVID-19.

Introduction

The global pandemic has created new challenges and opportunities in almost every industry, & as the economy reopens competition is being in intense. Winners will be those who most clearly understand & collaborate to identify multiple solutions, prototype, iterate & bring new ideas to market. Those behaviours will only happen when people come together in the new modern workplace. A few months into pandemic, the companies were forced to rethink their long-term business strategies & realign their priorities for a new way of working. Advanced tools were employed to ensure that business went on as usual, as the workforce grew more remote than ever before. To excel in post-pandemic era, organizations are moving to hybrid work a blended model where an employee splits their time flexibly between remote work & office collaboration. The idea of a workplace where employees gather to do their job is a concept that harks back to the industrial revolution. Working in a more flexible way, avoiding daily rush-hour & the need to stay in the office for a certain number of hours, has a positive effect on employees. Gartner's 2021 *Digital worker experience survey* found that among employees whose work-from-home time had increased since January 2020, there had been a 36% increase in productivity. The primary way hybrid work situations may influence production is through the work arrangement's effects on the working staff. In addition, a strong workforce relies on collaboration, & when part of the team is working remotely, this may influence the team's overall production. Digital proficiency is very essential to become more productive when working remotely. Extended worker-to-worker lateral mentoring and training to ensure that no employees are left behind as technology mastery becomes the expectation. Before COVID-19, only 30% of employees were working remotely, according to Gartner's recent report, business leaders expected that figure to rise to 50% after the pandemic. In contrast, 78% of employees hope to work remotely at least part time. Over a third (40%) of the global workforce is considering quitting



their jobs this year, according to Microsoft's recent Work Trend Index report. However, the very same report also establishes that a hybrid work environment will be the saving grace, with such a model becoming critical for attracting and retaining staff, especially in regards to diverse talent.

Need for the Study of Hybrid Workforce

In 2020, the onset of a global pandemic made digital working an essential way of working for large swathes of knowledge workers in what has been referred to as 'The world's largest work from home experiment'. A gradual shift to remote working system accelerated as digital technologies became the primary way for large numbers of workers to remain productive and connected. To greater or lesser degree, remote working or, more likely, a hybrid work model of remote and office working is here to stay. Fast tracked by the pandemic and the catalyst to digital transformation, hybrid working will help enable increased job satisfaction, adopting fresh work models and productivity within organizations across the world. Transitioning to a hybrid workforce means rewiring the company's processes in order to meet new employee expectations, encompass flexible work policies, connect a more disturbed workforce, and provide tools for employees to create, innovate and work together to solve business problems. All of these factors help unlock greater productivity and flexibility for employees' which in turn boosts employee engagement. A research study among business leaders across Western Europe stated that almost 9 out of 10 leaders (88%) expect a more hybrid way of working in the longer-term. There are three most consistent models- remote- first model, occasional-office model and office-preferred remote allowed model organizations can adopt any of these feasible to their culture of work.

Review of Literature

Hybrid workplace: The future of work – Kanwar Muhammad Javed Iqbal, Farooq Khalid and Sergey Yevgenievich Barykin (July 2021) The arrival of COVID-19, organizations had their fair share of crisis as it led to adopting new policies and guidelines regarding social distancing and lockdowns and also stakeholders' restructuring the work system. This led to companies' opt for remote working model which involves the fusion of physical work arrangement with the remote work system. The hybrid model was accepted as a preventive measure for pandemic crisis. Hybrid workplace due to advancement in digitalization has been a talk of the town and adopted by most of organizations worldwide. The hybrid work system comes as a boon to employees who are enjoying the flexibility in their work and added benefit to organization by enhancing the productivity and creativity in work through enthusiastic workforce.

What employees are saying about the future of remote work- Andrea Alexander, Aaron De Smet, Meredith Langstaff and Dan Ravid (April 2021) As organizations gear up for post pandemic future, most of them are planning a hybrid virtual model as this sensible decision is followed due to solid productivity increases during pandemic. Even though the productivity has increased, many employees showed distress, anxiousness and burn out due to remote work system. According to survey reports the source of anxiety among employees is unexplained and working arrangements made by their employer post COVID-19 and unshared detailed guidelines, policies, expectations and approaches. Unless leaders address the sources of employee anxiety pandemic-style productivity gains prove unsustainable in the future because anxiety leads to reduced job satisfaction, decrease work efficiency and performance and also hinders the interpersonal relations with the colleagues. The study suggests, the employer need to communicate more frequently with their employees- even if the plans have yet to solidify fully.

Opportunities, problems and limitations of digital transformation of HR management- EA Mitrofanova, VG Konovalova and AE Mitrofanova (2018) The study is mainly focused on relevance of artificial intelligence and digital technologies in HR management. There are three highlighted directions of the impact of digital technologies on the field of HR management; digital workforce (introduction of new management methods, practical skills that contribute to the creation of new network organization), digital workplace (designing of the working environment which results in use of modern communication tools and enhanced performance) and digital HR management (using digital tools and applications for experimentation and innovative solutions). The study identified the problems in implementing digital technologies in domestic



practice which are complexity of digitization of HR management functions, existence of restrictions on digitization imposed and under- prepared HR employees to the practical use of digital technologies. The study suggested need for cultural changes in order to obtain successful digital transformation with regard to HR management.

Research Gaps

- 1 Employees' digital literacy concept in view to understand wide variety of technologies is neglected.
- 2 The literatures give less emphasis on the dark side of the hybrid work model such as employee burnout, manager's bias etc.
- 3 Gap regarding the transformation of leadership and organization culture is less explained.
- 4 Ignores the repercussion and difficulties faced by Gen X to cope up new technologies.
- 5 No review regarding to how to attract employees back to traditional workplace is made

Objective of the Study

The objective of the research article is to assess the real effectiveness of digital transformation in connection to the emerging trend of hybrid work system. It aims to provide a glimpse of how organizations are striving hard to bring the idea of hybrid model into real time picture as a new practice. It also gives a brief about how hybrid work model is perceived by both employees and organization. It also discusses the benefits and ill effects of model in context with organization and employees.

Results and Discussions

1. Snapshot of Digital Transformation:

It is interesting to note that this paradigm shift has been a long time in the making. Digital transformation has essentially been setting the stage for a future better enhanced by technology, and the pandemic only accelerated this shift. One of those transformation is companies are heading slowly to a hybrid future. As we now stare at the doors of hybrid workmodel that awaits us all, we are faced with the question, "how do you streamline your technology stack for the future of hybrid work?" As many organizations begin to re-open their offices, they are in need to re-evaluate the needs of their office, remote, and hybrid workers. As organizations fit new digital solutions into a constantly transforming digital workplace, they must take stock of what is currently in their tech stack and what is missing. The future of work mandates modern solutions that include indispensable communication, collaboration and remote technology tools. There are three B's required to reimagine work- "Bricks, bytes and behaviours". Any strategy to reimagine the digital workplace must consider the physical workplace, bytes defines a digital workplace that streamlines the top- down flow of critical information in alignment with connecting people and behaviour is the way of work suited for the people. A survey by *Physical Return to Work Reimagined* (PRWR) shows that 79% of employers are looking to extensively or moderately change digital workplace tools. In order to create an outstanding digital experience, the digital workplace must be designed with the end-user in mind. It is also vital to build a secure digital workplace that stands secure amid rising cases of cyber security threats. Going forward, humans with more meaningful jobs will guide machines with intelligence which is uniquely "humane" to tackle situations and quick solutions.

The rapid advancement of digital technologies such as smart technology, artificial intelligence (AI) and automation, robotics, cloud computing and internet of things (IoT) is fundamentally changing the nature of work and organizations. Collectively termed as fourth industrial revolution or Industry 4.0, the speed and scale of current technological change are raising concerns about the extent to which new technologies will radically transform workplaces or displace workers altogether.



Table 1: Benefits and Ill Effects of Model in Context with Organization and Employees	
Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased productivity and engaged employees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harder to collaborate with remote employees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimized operations cost 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faster employee burnout
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimize employees finances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical glitch and remote training issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved retention rates, bigger talent pools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cyber and operational security
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved company culture, more efficient workplaces and transparency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty in maintaining organizational culture due to remoteworking

2. Strategic Drive of Hybrid Workforce

“The Convenient, enjoyable and meaningful” these are the new principles needed to guide all employees in a hybrid workplace design. Salary is not a top priority anymore, to attract and retain top talent; employers must offer some level of preferences. Increase flexibility and aid employees to strike a work life balance. Round the corner bench conference and cubicle infrastructure is a concept which evading slowing as a hybrid is a new normal. However, using of right tools and technology such as video conferencing software, messaging applications, collaboration software and other forms of management technology. Many workplaces have used technology and hybrid work software to amend issues hindering productivity, provide better communication channels for staff. Work co-ordination is essential to a productive workforce structure. Hybrid work software provides management with the tools that work to improve productivity for their organization. Some software programs exclusively for HR management and hybrid work model:

- Objectives and key results tools and employee performance management software help HR members track employees’ accountability and goal achievements, set refined goals for improvement and alert them of those goals through the software system.
- Smart sheet promote co-ordination by organizing employees’ work around centralized task. Communication and collaboration are made simpler for remote workers through intranet programs like Powell Software, which allows for interactive communication between staff members.
- In addition, digital adoption platforms like Walkme and other training software like ezTalks Cloud meeting help teach skills or conduct lessons to train staff members. By 2024 in fact, only 25% of business meetings will take place in person video footprint in every organization is bound to continue growing as employees get more comfortable using it.

3. By adjusting their workforce structure, companies and organizations can achieve positive effects on productivity. Engaged employees perform better when the leader motivates employees to align their knowledge and skills with the appropriate tools. Benefits from hybrid work structure can be brought on through employee satisfaction and flexibility. However, workforces should promote proper management, communication and collaboration for team members to succeed with the model. Gartner’s 2021 *Digital worker experience survey* found that among employees whose work- from-home had increased since January 2020, there had been a 36% increase in productivity. According to Whit Andrews, distinguished research vice-president at Gartner, in working hours was the most cited factor enabling greater productivity, selected by 43% of respondents. Andrews adds, many workers have tasted the flexibility of work that remote work offers, it will be a key factor in hiring and talent acquisition. In fact, 69% of workers in a survey said they were more likely to consider a new role that allows them to work from a location of their choice and 64% were more likely to consider a role that allows for flexible hours. More than two in five



working adults(42%) are willing to give up a percentage of their salary for flexibility in work (*Mom Corps*). In addition, 82 percent of company leaders plan to allow employees to work remotely some of the time (*Gartner*). The study also found that Generation Z will soon become the largest segment to adopt hybrid work model, 74 percent of Gen Z would prefer either work-from-home or splitting time at home and work (*Salesforce*). Done rightly, a hybrid work program reduces fatigue by 44%, improves intent to stay by 45% and improves performance by 28% according to Gartner.

Conclusion

From the above study, it can be concluded that hybrid workforce model is for long-term stay. In a hybrid workplace, it's likely that employees will be spending half or more of their working days at home. Employees need access to high quality collaboration tools that provides the capabilities of office environment. It's hard to find top talent, and to retain the versatile talent is a main key in transformation of traditional work system to hybrid work model. Employees expect their managers to ensure they have those tools at their disposal. As a conclusion, in context with hybrid work policy things that need concentration are- craft human centric design, flex to fit the underlying work and apply intentional planning to shape collaboration. On contrary, things to avoid are- making decisions based on gut instinct rather than data, assuming innovation can only happen in the office around the office corners and one-size-fits-all rules, regardless of underlying work.

Bibliography

- 1 “What employees are saying about the future of remote work”-Andrea Alexander, Aaron De Smet, Meredith Langstaff and Dan Ravid(April 2021).
- 2 “Opportunities, problems and limitations of digital transformation of HR management”-EA Mitrofanova, VG Konovalova and AE Mitrofanova (2018).
- 3 “Hybrid workplace: The future of work”-Kanwar Muhammad Javed Iqbal, Farooq Khalid and Sergey Yevgenievich Barykin (July 2021).

Webliography

- 1 <https://whatfix.com/blog/hybrid-workplace/>
- 2 <https://technologyadvice.com/blog/human-resources/hybrid-work-on-productivity/>
- 3 https://www.ey.com/en_dk/consulting/how-can-you-reimagine-your-digital-workplace-for-a-hybrid-future
- 4 <https://planonsoftware.com/us/resources/blogs/the-future-of-work-is-hybrid-what-your-business-should-consider-when-moving-to-a-hybrid-work-strategy/>