

Digital Culture –A Hurdle or A Catalyst in Employee Engagement

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ABSTRACT

Employee engagement plays a very important role in an organization when it is desired for high productivity, high quality services and speedy strategic improvement, keeping in mind the company's role and performance.

In this 21st century the technology plays a very important role in order to collaborate the preferences and roles of an organization with those of the employees working within the organization, so that mutual goals can be achieved in an effective and efficient manner. This can be achieved by encouraging a work environment which uses different technological and cultural factors allowing its employees to succeed.

In order to create an enriching employee experience, effective strategies need to get started right from new joiners to the conduction of exit interviews, which are often ignored by many organizations. HR managers need to focus on beyond its traditional role of handling different areas under employee engagement separately. Although the understanding of these areas may include monetary and non-monetary rewards, employee benefits, conducive environment and learning atmosphere which greatly requires a digital framework where all of these factors may converge. Although artificial intelligence, automation and other higher digital technologies also create a feeling of insecurity among the employees. This paper throws some light on the issue that how the technology or the culture leads to the real digital transformation and contributes towards employee engagement.

Keywords: Employee Engagement, Digital Culture, Importance, Challenges in Digital Age.

INTRODUCTION:

Some of the employees just follow a regular routine, perform their job, and return back home as they are just physically engaged in their work. While on the other hand, there are some other employees too, who work with passion, and feel a great connection with their work groups and team within the organization. Such employees are engaged psychologically and emotionally.

Employee engagement has always been linked to the individual performance as well as the organizational outcomes or results, such as, customer satisfaction, higher productivity, higher profitability, less turnover rate, low absenteeism rate, more safety, etc.

Whatever is the case or situation one always desires to have completely engaged employees and without such employees one cannot execute different business strategies or achieve business goals.

Briones, et al. (2011) interviewed 40 individuals from the American Red Cross to identify the role of social media in organizations. His research discussed how the public relations can be maintained through social media which includes Facebook and Twitter, reducing the wastage of time. Another research work by Despres and Jean (1995) says that in the knowledge age, monetary incentives are only a starting-point and the main focus shall be on the way to encourage intrinsic motivation. According to him, the reward systems must shift from objective approach to a subjective approach related to performance measures. McKeever (2014) explains three types of employees:

- **Engaged-**employees who are self-motivated and feel a close connection with their organization. They go for new innovations and take the organization to new levels.
- **Not engaged-** employees who complete their tasks but are not passionate about their work.

● **Disengaged** –employees who are unhappy at work and act as liability rather than an asset for their organizations. The larger is the size of the company, the more likely one will find disengaged or not-engaged employees. So, as a company grows, it's more likely to increase the disengaged employees as the number of levels and functions become more complex and it's difficult to keep a check on each and every employee directly. So, one can say that Employee disengagement is a common side effect of growth of a firm. As employees move away from their common goal of the organization, they will become less personally motivated to go the extra mile. But, working hard cannot be considered same as being engaged.

How to increase the number of Engaged employees?

Following factors have been studied and shown to have a positive impact on engagement:

- Support of supervisors and coworkers
- Regular performance feedback
- Autonomy or freedom
- Motivating challenges
- Transparent or open communication

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Despres and Jean (1995)-The author tries to clarify business-related knowledge and the resulting areas that HR managers must look to ensure its success in the knowledge era. Markos and Sridevi (2010) studied that the Engaged employees are more attached to their organization and actively involved in their job with a higher enthusiasm for the success of their organization, going beyond the employment contractual agreement. Jenkins and Deuze (2008) worked upon the rapprochement between industrial studies and the audience research where media can be seen as the key drivers and as a catalyst to collaborate between culture and commerce. Briones, et al. (2011) worked upon the paper where practicing public relations through social media is very effective in the emerging digital age, as shown through the Red Cross' by a two-way communication with the younger community. McKeever (2014) discussed the three type of employees as determined by the State of American Workplace Report (2013) under Gallup also gave some ways in which the corporate culture can influence the employee engagement. Parry and Stefan (2014) - This research focuses on the impact of changes on HRM, in relation to changes to the workforce. Li, et al. (2014) in their research found that leading organizations with strong digital employee engagement can conquer the market more easily as compared to the other organizations by having good expertise latest technologies, effective decision-making practices. Jain and Kaur (2014)- This research paper focused on the work environment & work culture at the Domino's pizza. This study is conducted in Jaipur city only. According to Arnault (2015), digital culture is a blanket concept that explains the main idea that technology and the Internet are responsible for the way we interact, behave, think, and communicate as human beings in a society. It is the byproduct of technology and access to information which is in abundance which in turn is a result of technological innovation. Buchanan, et al. (2016) discussed the face of digital workers and how can one implement digital culture in a better way. Jemielniak (2016) in their paper revealed many analogies showing connections between cross-cultural management research, and studying digital societies. Capgemini consulting (2017)-gave an iterative approach which helps to shift the paradigm from corporate culture towards a digital mindset in an effective manner. Digital technology can unlock the hurdles in the potential and can bring right culture. Alshehri, et al. (2017) provides a link between organizational culture and employee engagement by studying the enablers and inhibitors at Saudi banks. According to Clarke (2018) cultural change in any respect is an incremental change which requires a lot of patience as it doesn't happen in a day. So, changing the culture within the organization is one of the biggest hurdles in digital transformation. Shaughnessy (2018) discusses that in order to promote the cultural and technical changes which are required for a successful digital transformation, a few leading firms have adopted an agile framework designed specially to support small teams to achieve goals related to customers and maintain other network system within and outside the organization.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To study the importance of digital culture on employee engagement in an organization.
2. To study the various challenges faced in promoting digital culture.
3. To study different ways to boost happiness among employees through digital culture.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

In order to understand this concept an attempt is made to review the literature on digital culture and the employee engagement. So, this conceptual paper gathers necessary information mainly with the help of secondary data including books, articles, research papers and survey reports.

WHAT IS A DIGITAL CULTURE?

Professor Ethan Bernstein, (Harvard Business School) says that ‘Culture is the glue that either keeps us doing things well or keeps us doing things poorly’.

In other words, *a corporate culture is the integration of values and experiences of the employees as well as the mission and vision of an organization*. Thus, according to Capgemini consultation (2017), the digital culture is based upon the following factors:

- Innovation: Disruptive thinking and new ideas.
- Ability of an organization to adapt itself.
- Considering the Customer feedback as an opportunity.
- Open culture between internal and external customers.
- Data driven decision-making processes
- Digital mindset to provide timely solutions.

According to Curtis (2018), Microsoft believes that “Digital transformation is cultural transformation which affects the majority of the people working. It has to be a leadership task. If it is followed, you have a high chance of success. If you delegate it, there is a chance of failure.”—as well said by Andreas Schierenbeck, CEO, Thyssenkrupp Elevator. In order to understand how best to empower the employees, Microsoft conducted a research on over 20,000 employees across 21 different countries to analyze the collaboration of technology and people at the workplace. So, in Ireland, an online survey was conducted on over 1,000 people working in medium and large-scale companies across five generations to measure their attitudes about their jobs. Jemielniak, D. (2016) discusses that the cross-cultural management which requires digitalization, is one of the most important and serious issue for any organization, and still it is being ignored.

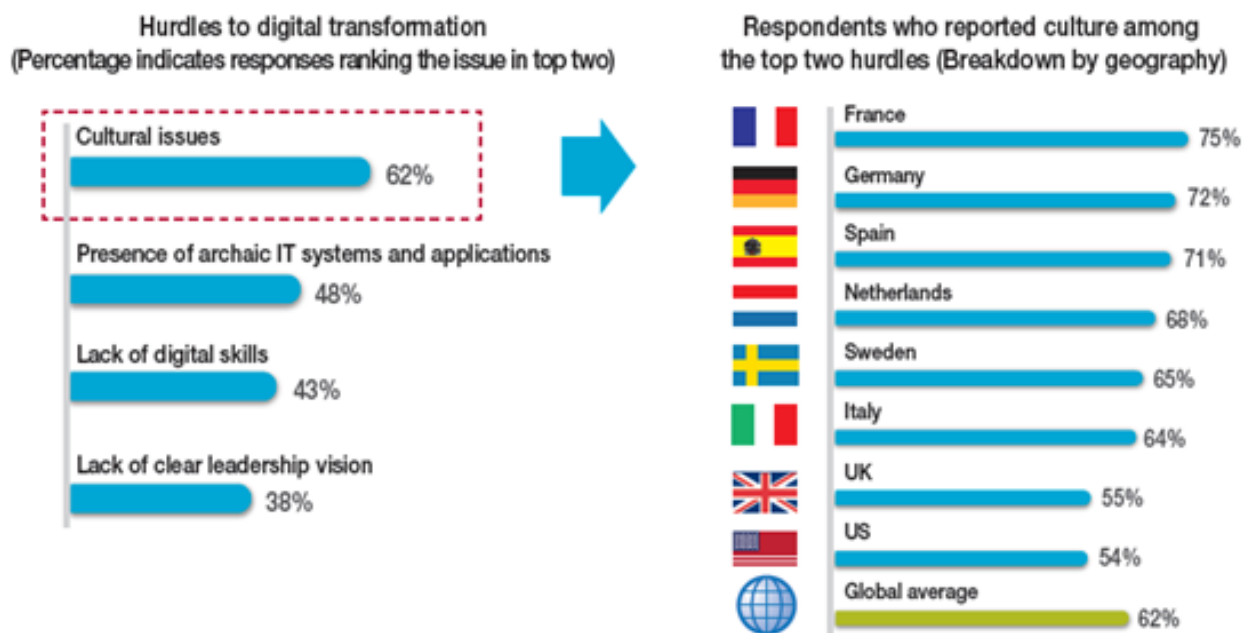
WHY CULTURE IS SO IMPORTANT FOR DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION?

Culture is the most important determinant for successful digital transformation. We can change everything, such as switching to latest technologies, new infrastructure, new processes, but without the help of human resource it is very difficult to impart change. Culture is the heart of any organization. It is like oxygen which we can feel but cannot see and without which we cannot survive. Now, the question arises that why we are so concerned about the culture? The answer to this question is that Culture leads to technology adoption. By technology adoption we mean new innovations. That is why culture plays a very important role in the digital transformation. Li, et al. (2014) believes that there are various challenges and hurdles to overcome; the final result of a strong employee engagement strategy is the complete transformation of not only the organization, but also of the persons who are acting as the stakeholders within the organization. One of the studies done by Jain and Kaur (2014) indicates that workload, stress, overtime, fatigue, boredom are some of the factors that increase job dissatisfaction while on the other hand proper working conditions, timely refreshment & recreation facility, health & safety facilities, fun at workplace greatly increase the degree of job satisfaction which is directly influencing the culture of the organization. The results analyzed by Alshehri, et al. (2017) found that enabler factors that contribute most to employee engagement were training and development, organizational communication, reward system and recognition and Islamic culture has a great influence on employee engagement in Saudi banks.

According to Capgemini consultation (2017), a survey was conducted on 1,700 people—including not only senior executives, but also managers and employees—in 340 organizations across eight countries and five sectors by the Capgemini consulting group. It can be seen in Fig 1 that cultural factor act as a number 1 hurdle in digital transformation. For most of the organizations, cultural issues act as a block in digital transformation and day by day, this problem is getting worse. In 2011, a majority of respondents (55%) said that culture was the no. 1 hurdle in digital transformation but in one of the latest researches, this figure actually rose to 62% (see Figure 1).

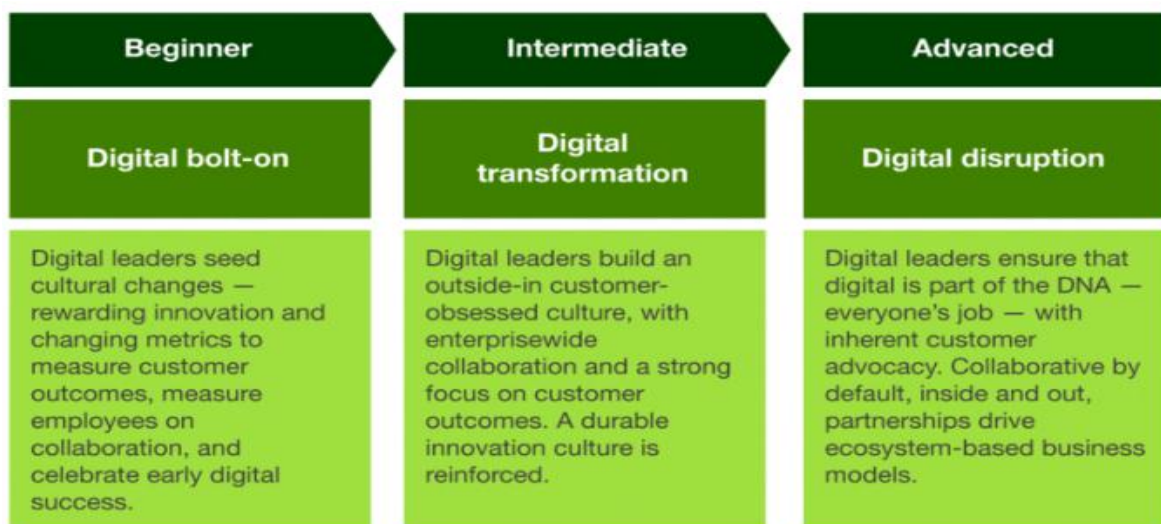
According to Clarke (2018), Successful digital business leaders identify the intrinsic importance of the right digital culture to sustain competitive advantage in the market – these reports show you how. A study was conducted to see that how successfully the firms drive change with digital culture by three maturity levels shown as is the figure 2.

Figure 1: Culture is the number 1 hurdle in digital transformation



Source: Capgemini Digital Transformation Institute, Survey, March-April 2017

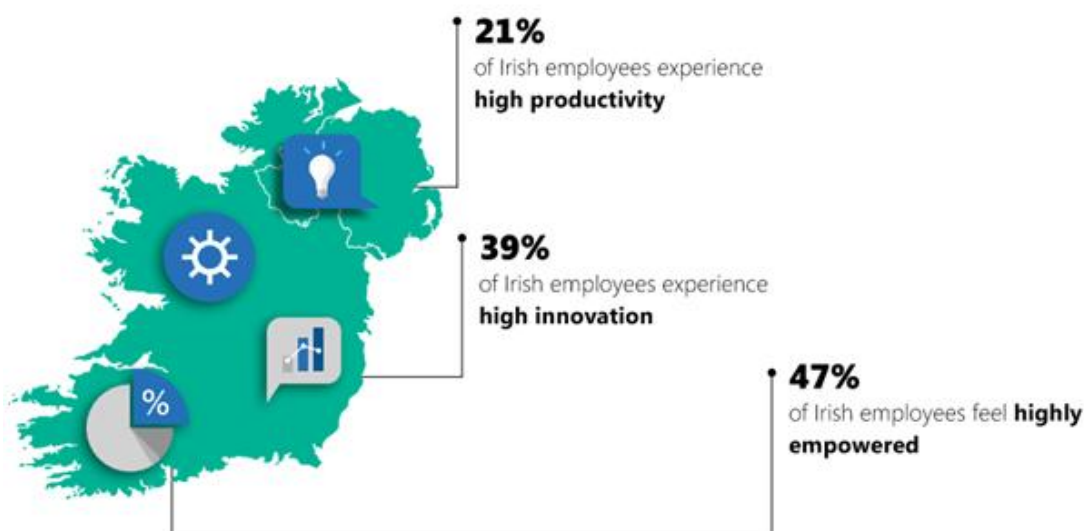
Figure 2: Three maturity levels in Digital Culture



Source: Clarke ,2018

Thus, here we can see clearly that digital transformation takes place in the intermediate stage where innovation culture is reinforced. According to Curtis (2018), Microsoft conducted a survey on Digital Culture with about 1,000 Irish employees, across 5 generations, having 25 to 44 years of age. Digital Culture exists where an organization promotes and supports technology usage to get work done in the most effective and efficient manner. So, it can be clearly seen from the figure 3 that a research shows that Strong digital culture led to 21% high productivity, 39% high innovation and 47 % high empowerment among Irish Employees.

Figure 3: If strong Digital culture exists at a workplace



Source: Curtis, A. (2018)

According to Shaughnessy (2018) the FLOW framework gives a visual representation of a company's flexible and value adaptive process which are implemented by its Agile teams. Thus, FLOW-Agile mainly focus on the employees and the power of their innovations. Jemielniak (2016) discusses how the internet revolution have completely transformed the definition of our lives. According to Jenkins and Deuze (2008) media companies are also learning to accelerate the flow of information and content across various delivery channels to increase the profits, increase market share and to increase the consumer commitments towards them. Users are learning how to control these different technologies and interact with other users. Sometimes, these two forces conflict and sometimes they are rewarding.

ARE THERE SOME CHALLENGES IN A DIGITAL AGE?

Yes, of course just like the 2 sides of a coin Digital age also have some challenges. Most of our communication today is through emails, text messaging, cloud-based communication and we lack face-to-face communication as we are short of time. Parry and Stefan (2014) found that digital technologies play an important role in the lives of both employees as well as human resource management (HRM), which indirectly impacts an organization. It focuses on the impact of these changes on HRM, in relation to changes to the workforce, to HRM in general and more specifically to the use of technology in delivering HRM activities. According to Weldon (2018) there are the main challenges to become a digital organization which are as follows:

1. A Change-Resisting Culture
2. Various issues related to ownership and control of different processes, information flow and systems make people resistant to share their knowledge.
3. Always Keep in mind that digital may just not be feasible for all the parts of the organization.
4. Handling talent gap also act as a challenge for an organization.
5. Highly structured, complex and traditional processes may not work for digital.
6. It is often very difficult, challenging and costly to make digital work platforms as creating an ecosystem of a network incur costs time, different resources and lot of money.

Fully Engaged organizations create a strong connection between its culture, values, beliefs, vision, mutual goals, challenges, and growth opportunities which can be increased by:

- By answering the questions in the form of agreement (Who, what, when, how, where).
- By communicating this agreement to the whole company.
- Reviewing organization's vision, their goals and specific roles played by both company

SOME EASY WAYS TO HELP TO BOOST THE HAPPINESS OF WORKFORCE THROUGH A DIGITAL CULTURE:

a) Peer recognition:

Improper recognition or no recognition is one of the main factors to poor workplace engagement as the value-based

recognition program positively affects the engagement in the workforce. It's not always easy for the heads to give feedback on a regular basis, especially in such a complex environment with a really busy schedule so you can use technology to recognize them. Nowadays, social networking plays a very important role to allow our employees as well as the organization to give their positive feedback or reviews. Employees must be treated like customers.

b) Build your own unique culture to support digital

According to Buchanan, et al. (2016) it is the responsibility of an organization to develop the type of culture they want to have in near future. So, culture is just as important as the implementation of an effective strategy when it comes to create a highly productive and successful organization where latest technology can be used to have flexible work arrangements.

c) Avoid duplication of work by digital aids

In this digital age, work arrangements can be made, changed according to the convenience. All you need to do is use cloud software such as Google Drives, common shared folders so that the employees can access important documents and files wherever they are without the loss of data. This is not only inexpensive, but also reduces duplication of work and reduces the wastage of time without any stress in turn increasing the productivity.

d) Be open to innovation

Buchanan, et al. (2016) says that an organization must be open to new and creative employee solutions as great ideas leads to unique solutions and innovations which is the future requirement of any company.

e) Getting unbiased feedback

Just as you can use various social mediums for employee recognition, they can also act as the tools in our hands to get feedback by the employees under different departments. Today polling can help to analyze whether people think your new assignment will work or not, and also you can get the suggestions for improvisation.

f) Digital Communication

An employee can be disengaged if the manager never communicates. Emails, text messages and social media sites can be a way to facilitate this, but don't forget that face-to-face communication is always the best way to deliver a message which can influence those most.

CONCLUSION:

Culture plays a very important role to engage the employees in this digital age whether it acts as a catalyst or it acts as a hurdle, in both the ways it is providing an opportunity to an organization to adapt itself in the changing environment. Thus, Employee engagement can also act as a catalyst for the new ideas and innovations. By engaging a team, an organization is engaging the new business opportunities and strategies which is the key requirement for the success of any organization. Thus, it all depends upon the organization, how they face this cultural challenge or the opportunities with the help of the latest technology in this digital era and finally extract the maximum output in the form of higher productivity, employee retention, brand image, low costs, optimum utilization of resources, customer satisfaction as well as employee satisfaction.

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