

TJ: Hi, I'm T.J. and I welcome everyone to this special edition episode. HCL has recently released a whitepaper in collaboration with the Harvard Business Review Analytic Services, titled *Reconciling Cultural and Digital Transformation to Design the Future of Work*. It is full of insightful information that is bound to help leaders across industries identify and prioritize initiatives as they plan to transform their workplaces to be more resilient, adaptive, and future proof. We invited prominent leaders to discuss some of the interesting observations outlined in the White Paper.

In this episode, we have with us Rakshit Ghura, the Vice President and Global Head for the Digital Workplace Services here at HCL Technologies. We will talk to him about his interpretation of the findings. And if you would like to ask him a question or two to write to us at dwp@hcl.com.

Here we go. Hi, Rakshit

Rakshit: Hi, TJ.

TJ: Thank you for joining us for this conversation.

Rakshit: Glad to be here. Thanks, TJ, for organizing this.

TJ: Let's start with a term that is mentioned multiple times in the report – what do you mean by a Fluid Workplace and how do you go about architecting it, and what is its relevance to the future of work?

Rakshit: Great question, TJ. The recent pandemic has put a spotlight on operational and technological gaps in existing workplace designs. Organizations without a robust tech ecosystem that could absorb shocks and disruptions were left in the fray. Resilience, adaptability, and customizability have become the key attributes of the workplace of the future.

We created the Fluid Workplace strategy in response to the recent turbulence. It essentially translates to providing the workforce with intuitive, personalized, and on-demand workspaces designed for change.

The Fluid Workplace blueprint incorporates many aspects of the workplace that were once only good to have but are not absolutely necessary. These are the importance of inculcating an attitude of adaptability in the organization, a shift from integrating systems to integrating experiences and as a result, driving employee experience, leveraging cutting-edge AI, ML, and automation to create resilient future workplaces, and improving the digital dexterity of a multigenerational hybrid workforce,.

TJ: According to the report, employee experience is slowly taking center stage for many enterprises. Can you tell us more about this shift in priorities and what it means for organizations in the near future?

Rakshit: TJ, traditionally, customer experience has been given a lot of importance by organizations and enterprise with that delivers great CX will build more loyalty, grow revenues, and gain new customers. Now the same concept is slowly being applied to employees within the organization.

It is now more critical than ever for organizations to retain great talent. The right kind of talent may make the difference between gaining or losing a competitive edge. A positive employee experience has been shown to result in greater business benefits – workers are 30 percent more likely to stay, 33 percent more likely to report higher discretionary effort and 44 percent more likely to be high performers, according to some of the industry studies.

Traditional workplace environments are by default, not equipped to deliver superior EX. In order to deliver superior consumer-grade experiences to employees, businesses must reinvest in personalized, on-demand workplaces. HCL has actively been advocating employee-centric workplace transformation and this is reflected in our XLA-led engagement models – an area where we are considered to be pioneers by the leading analyst.

TJ: So, the pandemic has led businesses to adopt a hybrid approach to managing their workforce. While one portion of the workforce works remotely, another will go to physical offices. What must enterprises do to enable this new way of working?

Rakshit: The pandemic has put the spotlight on operational and technological gaps in existing business continuity plans. Enterprises are now in need of a Fluid Workplace that can deliver a personalized experience to employees working from anywhere using any device, while at the same time ensuring the health and safety of their workforce present in physical offices. In order to facilitate such an adaptive workplace, enterprises need to focus on largely two areas:

- 1) Creating a robust, remote working environment that can deliver superior experiences and retain productivity
- 2) Adopting computer vision, IoT and other emerging technologies in the physical workspace to ensure workforce safety.

TJ: You mentioned two very critical points in your answer. May I request you to elaborate more on this, starting with the need to create a robust, remote working environment.

Rakshit: The first area should be addressed in a comprehensive manner, starting first with the remote productivity and remote working readiness assessment that identifies gaps and gauges requirements unique to that enterprise.

Enterprises need a comprehensive roadmap that can effectively tackle the challenges commonly involved in undertaking remote business operations at scale – these include issues with infrastructure availability, adoption and adaptability issues, and problems with ensuring optimal remote productivity. An adequate end to end remote working setup would include appropriate solutions to all these challenges.

In order to create such an environment, enterprises must ideally implement all of the following things:

- 1) **Virtual workspaces:** Intelligent, flexible, and secure digital workplaces that enable end-users to be productive while working remotely and which also uphold end-user experience.
- 2) **Remote collaboration:** It's very important – unified and personalized chat-centric remote collaboration for teams that need to engage from anywhere anytime.
- 3) **Remote support and guidance:** Cognitive AI and Augmented Reality-based immersive remote support to ensure minimal downtime.
- 4) **Remote UX monitoring:** Big data analytics-based preventive support and real-time remote worker user-experience monitoring
- 5) **Adaptive security:** Cloud-based, software-defined remote access security solutions based on zero trust principles
- 6) **Compassionate change management:** Contextual behavior change strategies incorporating multiple channels and management, focusing on improving employee productivity and understanding their user needs.

TJ: And the second point you mentioned was about the safety of the returning workforce. Kindly elaborate.

Rakshit: As more and more enterprises begin to open up their offices in a staggered manner, it's crucial to implement the right set of solutions that can ensure employee health and safety. An ideal setup would include the following:

- A tool that can enable contactless and precise **body temperature screening** before employees enter the office – this solution could prevent employees showing signs of fever from turning up to work.

- Then, an effective **computer vision-powered face mask detection** that accurately identifies workers who fail to wear masks and break safety protocols. This solution could help minimize the chances of infection spread.
- Social distancing is a norm now and will continue to be for a while. Organizations can enforce this safety protocol with **Smart-ID cardholders** that can provide visual warnings when proximity limits are breached. These devices can also help immensely in contact tracing and effectively curtail infection spread in case of an outbreak.
- In large enterprises, employees tend to stand in queues at critical bottlenecks. A **digital queuing system** can effectively prevent crowds at such bottlenecks and ensure unobstructed workforce flow. Employees can simply book their slot in the queue well before-hand.

It's going to be a while before workers sit at unmarked desks. An **occupancy management solution** could very well help them overcome such fears. This solution could allow for desk booking only after ensuring its sanitization status

TJ: Thank you very much, Rakshit. This is a very well put together report that is proving to be very helpful for the readers. Congratulations on the same. As always, we hope to speak to you soon.

Rakshit: Thanks TJ! Thanks for having me.

TJ: The link to the whitepaper is in the description. I thank our listeners for joining in. We want to hear from you. We need your feedback and suggestions for future topics. You can send us your questions at DWP@HCL.com. Comment, share, recommend, and subscribe. See you all in the next one.