



A Workplace Revolution – The Digital Workplace in Life Sciences

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Biography

Elvis Pačelat is the Executive Vice President, Life Sciences at AMPLEXOR (www.amplexor.com).

Elvis is a business and technology executive with more than two decades of international experience in the Life Sciences market. With detailed technical understanding and expertise in compliance and regulatory content management solutions for Life Sciences, Elvis is a specialist in business impact analysis.

At AMPLEXOR he is responsible for driving the corporate strategy and market success of the AMPLEXOR Life Sciences business. Elvis is committed to delivering benefit for clients, partners and shareholders, whilst supporting client-centric strategies and spearheading ground-breaking innovations.

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Abstract

The way life sciences organizations work and collaborate has changed drastically over the past decade or so. The new digital workplace is thriving and the industry is reaping the benefits that come from collaborative working. But what technology is underpinning this and what further potential does it have?

Introduction

The concept of the new digital workplace is one that has grown over the past decade or so. Definitions vary as to the exact nature of the new digital workplace, but industry analyst group Gartner's is perhaps the most accepted take. It defines the digital workplace as a 'business strategy to boost employee engagement and agility through a more consumerized work environment'. There are three underlying strands to this strategy:

1. **Engaging Employees:** The strategy must ensure employees are engaged in the creation of a new workplace environment. This includes a blend of IT and business staff that act as co-owners of technology strategy and execution. Additionally, programmes must prioritize user experience, employees are more demanding of technology due to their personal technology experiences which are more streamlined than their work equivalents. In order to engage employees with their workplace environment, organizations must provide or support similar consumerized experiences.



Technology and Innovation

2. **Reimagining the Workplace and its Technology:** Creating a vision, strategy and implementation plan that exploits emerging technology to make employees more effective. Ideally a digital workplace would include technology that is cohesive (in that it provides an integrated experience) and adaptive (in that it can adapt to change and support personalized ways of working). There isn't one single piece of software that can be described as digital workplace, but typical catalysts for such a programme include intranet refresh programmes, cloud office migrations, and modernization of content services capabilities.
3. **Changing Nature of Work:** The strategy must be cognizant of the fact that work patterns are changing, influenced by many factors including globalization, workforce retirement, increased outsourcing, crowdsourcing, and the establishment of the millennial generation in the workforce. A digital workplace program should look for ways to reimagine not just the tools and environment they work with but how the work is actually executed. Such a strategy can help digitally transform an organization.

Life Sciences and the digital workplace

So if the new digital workplace involves using new tools and technologies to foster a more open and collaborative culture, how embedded are these ways of working within life sciences? As a heavily regulated industry there has certainly been a reluctance to adopt some of the underlying technologies that support the digital workplace, and for a number of organizations they are forced to remain in the technological dark ages because of legacy technologies in situ, and the perceived cost of changing the technological infrastructure.

System validation is in fact, a hugely important factor. The validation process typically leads to reluctance to implement any system changes regularly. Such principles can take deep root across an organization which can in turn restrict other areas of the business that might be able to move at a more agile pace.

Even implementing relatively straight forward technologies, such as a Cloud-based Office suite can be a challenge. The digital workplace is not about one particular technology or another, but cloud-based Office is a highly typical starting point.

It is also prudent to look beyond the technologies involved and focus on employee engagement aspects of the new digital workplace. By gathering the right blend of people to work on a digital workplace vision and strategy, initiatives and new ways of working will soon become apparent. A typical catalyst project within life sciences is an organization embarking on the modernization of its Electronic Content Management (ECM) capability. With enterprise content now coming in such a wide variety of file types, ECM is an on-going challenge for life sciences firms. Although this is a different challenge to the new digital workplace, it is also an effective place to start.

What can the digital workplace achieve?

The life sciences industry has always been incredibly innovative with how it uses technology to support standard work practices. However, as an industry, life



sciences has also become somewhat mired in restrictive practices, often applied across the organization.

A digital workplace strategy will help organizations challenge long standing principles and implement an agile, innovative workplace where people want to go whilst still maintain the levels of governance and compliance required. This is becoming more essential as organizations and partner eco systems become more diverse (particularly in research and new product development) and move beyond organizational boundaries.

One of the specific advances supported by the new digital workplace, is digital R&D. R&D has of course, always been a significant element within life sciences but a recent Accenture report¹, *Industry at a Crossroads: The Rise of Digital in the Outcome-Driven R&D Organization* – highlighted the fact that slow take-up of new digital technologies is hindering the progress of pharma in research and development (R&D) and improving patient outcomes.

The report focused on an ongoing shift from a product-orientated outlook to a patient and health system outcome focus, and reported that digital solutions are contributing process improvement and additional value across the enterprise, including R&D. Accenture's analysis revealed that those companies that have embraced digital technologies report stronger performance in R&D capabilities, improving trial design, collaboration with external organizations to better understand a patient's medical journey and provide improved data to medical liaison professionals during drug studies.

Measuring success

Such initiatives all need an effective, digitally dexterous, workforce and this is not possible without the execution of a strong and cohesive digital workplace strategy. And measurement is important too – organizations need some measure of how successful the new digital workplace investment can be, and capturing, interpreting and learning from metrics is a key component of a digital workplace programme. Only from measuring the effects of a holistic programme can the measures introduced be understood and refined.

This actual metrics here can vary widely, but common examples at a general level include workforce effectiveness, employee agility, employee satisfaction, retention and other organization specific goals. Within life sciences, several major firms have digital workplace initiatives that are intimately tied to R&D success. Connecting people, content and complex information across very difficult and dynamic functional domains (for example, scientific, clinical, and regulatory) is the name of the game.

Many of the incredible advances and innovation within life sciences have come about despite, not because of the working environment and culture in such organizations. Yet the adaption of digital workplace strategies can improve innovation, encourage collaboration and properly equip and prepare a workforce for modern working practices.



Technology and Innovation

Developing a more engaged and effective workforce, and equipping them with the tools that support and augment their decision making whilst unburdening them from the routine, are far more likely to drive change and innovation that can be truly transformative.

Reference

- ¹ <https://www.accenture.com/gb-en/insight-injecting-digital-rd-journey-patient-outcomes>