Including your Firstline workforce in your digital transformation

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In a successful digital transformation, every employee must be completely on board, from executives to Firstline Workers, i.e. those workers who interact with customers, build and test products, or ensure operations run smoothly. Almost every industry depends on them, especially those such as manufacturing, retail, food services, travel, hospitality and healthcare. And because Firstline Workers are on the front lines, they play an especially important role in any digital transformation journey.

Making Firstline Workers part of your digital transformation is, in one sense, straightforward: give them the tools they need to do their best work, train them well, create and reinforce a culture that includes them in communications, and keep everything secure on any device they need to use.

However, successful transformation doesn't just happen. As organisations commit to digital transformation, they must invest in the same areas – people, processes, technologies and tools – for Firstline Workers as they do for all of their other employees. Overall, the challenge is about finding new ways to empower all employees to do their best work, but it is important to realise that Firstline Workers require particular focus.

Why should you care?

Organisations that outperform their competitors tend to have very high levels of employee engagement. Gallup research[1] indicates that this performance can be reflected in improved earnings per share, higher-quality work and lower turnover. Therefore, building a more engaging, inclusive and connected culture is at the heart of successful digital transformation because more engaged employees can help drive business value and growth. Because of the nature of their work and work environment, Firstline Workers present unique challenges in this regard. Companies therefore need to prioritise investments that help to keep Firstline Workers engaged in the company culture and connected to outcomes that promote growth, spark innovation and drive real business results.

Providing Firstline Workers with technology and access to company data extends the need for data and device security. By focusing on four areas – driving Firstline Worker productivity, helping create and leverage culture and community, sharing training and video content, and providing security for all employees and endpoints – organisations can begin to unlock the full potential of their Firstline Workers.

[1] Glassdoor for Employers, "The Cost of a Disengaged Employee", Alyssa Retallick, blog post, 25 May 2015.

The benefits of digitally enabling Firstline Workers

Firstline Workers are an essential part of the digital transformation that strategic decision-makers take on, but they're typically far removed from those decision-makers themselves. Forward-thinking business leaders realise they need to extend their digital efforts to focus on the unique needs of this sector of their workforce. In fact, the vast majority of respondents to a recent global survey from Harvard Business Review Analytic Services (Building for Success at the Firstline of Business, Harvard Business Review) believe that digitally enabling their Firstline Workers will be essential to their organisation's success in the future.

Engaging Firstline Workers can have a positive impact:

More job commitment[4]	**32%**
Less absenteeism[3]	**41%**
Lower turnover[3]	**59%**
Fewer safety incidents[3]	**70%**
More sales[3]	**20%**
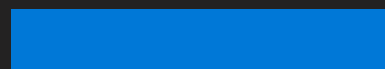
[3] Gallup, "State of the American Workplace 2017", Gallup.com.

[4] McKinsey Quarterly, "Why frontline workers are disengaged", Michael Bazigos and Emily Caruso, March 2016.

And there's a downside
to disengagement:

USD 450-550 billon

USD 30.5 billon

USD 2,246

USD 450 to USD 550 billon
in total losses per year for US companies.[1]

Disengagement contributes to millennial turnover that costs the US economy
USD 30.5 billon annually[3]

Just one disengaged employee can cost a company
USD 2,246 per year[2]

[1] Glassdoor for Employers, "The Cost of a Disengaged Employee", Alyssa Retallick, blog post, 25 May 2015.

[2] American Express Open Forum, "How Much Disengaged Employees Really Cost You", James O'Brien, PhD, 22 Oct. 2013.

[3] Gallup, "State of the American Workplace 2017", Gallup.com.

Firstline problems need Firstline solutions

Firstline Workers often face issues that other workers don't. These issues can cause them to disengage, slowing down the organisation's digital transformation. For instance, a retail worker might resent the hassle of having to check shift schedules in person or a cumbersome process for swapping shifts. That worker's manager might be frustrated by having to spend hours every week creating schedules. Or maybe a floor worker in a plant spots a problem but can't reach a supervisor to find a way to fix it, so he or she moves on to other duties and leaves the problem for someone else to solve. Many companies can't afford to have workers off the clock, so training Firstline Workers can be challenging and expensive. Firstline Workers can also find it frustrating to communicate with workers in the rest of the company, which can drive disengagement. Businesses need a way to keep their Firstline Workers as well informed as every other worker.

Microsoft 365 is a complete, intelligent solution that empowers employees to be creative and work together securely to help drive digital transformation. In addition, we've created Microsoft Firstline Worker productivity tools specifically to meet the needs of Firstline Workers and support digital transformation across the entire organisation, including:

- **Drive productivity with Microsoft StaffHub**

- **Build community with Yammer**

- **Collaborate with your colleagues with Microsoft Teams**

- **Share training and video content with Microsoft SharePoint and Microsoft Stream**

- **Enhance management and security with Microsoft Enterprise Mobility + Security (EMS)**

Drive productivity with Microsoft StaffHub

StaffHub is a purpose-built Office 365 app that Firstline Workers can use to start and end their workday, and which streamlines tasks in between. StaffHub provides a single application for Firstline Workers and managers to organise their workdays, simplifying schedule management, tasks, integrated messaging solutions and access to important resources, training documents and company news. General APIs mean you can also connect StaffHub to workforce management systems and other tools.

Build culture and community within your organisation

A strong culture is vital to any successful organisation, so it is especially critical for your Firstline Workers to feel connected and able to share in that culture. Microsoft Teams and Yammer help organisations build more connected cultures that are focused on employee empowerment, engagement and passion for the business.

Firstline Workers are part of a broader team. Microsoft Teams allows all team members to connect in a single hub for teamwork that includes calls, meetings and files. Microsoft Teams is also optimised for mobile, so Firstline Workers can see their notifications and chat with other team members easily. Because Teams comes with Office 365 apps built in, Firstline Workers can access apps such as Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Planner directly from the desktop or mobile app.

Yammer is a social media platform built specifically for internal audiences. For Firstline Workers, Yammer provides easy access to information and collaboration channels across mobile, tablet, web and desktop. For managers, Yammer helps drive Firstline engagement by making it easier to notify employees of important announcements and view internal videos hosted in Microsoft Stream.

Share training and video content with Microsoft SharePoint and Microsoft Stream

Training is a critical part of developing productive Firstline Workers, but leaders have to address the challenge of different roles, needs, tenure and technical knowledge for this population. Enabling Firstline Workers to access training content online helps drive exposure and compliance and eases the burden on managers who can't afford to have their workers away from the floor. With Microsoft 365 F1, Firstline Workers have more options to access, use and share the latest training and on-boarding resources via SharePoint Online, Office Online and OneDrive for Business.

This tool also help managers:

- **Distribute on-boarding materials and training to any supported device**

- **Share dynamic, role-based content and video**

- **Enable employees to find and build on the work of others**

- **Retain and manage institutional knowledge in one place**

Employees want to be more versatile and valuable.
Providing effective training and upskilling
programmes to your Firstline Workers will help
them achieve that, and help organisations achieve
substantial payoffs in loyalty, talent, knowledge
retention and performance.

*There is a widening skills gap
where the existing workforce
has been educated and trained
to obtain the jobs of yesterday
and not the jobs of today and
tomorrow.*

Jeff Weiner
CEO of LinkedIn

Managers can simplify training programmes, centralise
and scale learning content with team sites, solicit
feedback, and appeal to multiple learning styles.
Making career development easy helps your Firstline
Workers stay engaged.

Enhance security with Enterprise Mobility + Security

Firstline Workers can often represent the biggest portion of the workforce, so it is critical to include them in security planning for any digital transformation. Securing data and systems is a top priority for every organisation, but it gets more difficult as the sophistication of attacks grows, employees bring a wider array of devices and applications into the workplace, and data flows into and out of the business in more ways.

As an enterprise-grade solution, Microsoft 365 has management and security functionality with Microsoft Enterprise Mobility + Security (EMS) that supports Firstline Workers. Identity and access control driven by Azure Active Directory (Azure AD) Premium allows companies to manage who has access to secure information, extending a digital identity to Firstline Workers to protect corporate assets while empowering user productivity with capabilities like single sign-on to apps and self-service password reset.

It also provides flexible mobile device and app management controls to allow Firstline Workers to be productive using the devices (shared or personal) and apps they need, while at the same time protecting company data and information, even wiping company data from devices when Firstline Workers leave. In a world where "assume breach" is a must for the enterprise, Microsoft 365 also provides the ability to detect and remediate cyberattacks with Advanced Threat Analytics. You also gain the ability to report on data access and usage history to trace the cause and impact of breaches, so IT has visibility into threats even on the edges of their organisation.

Put Firstline transformation first

Your Firstline Workers are at the forefront of your business, and they're uniquely positioned to benefit from digital transformation. Make sure they're at the forefront of your digital transformation strategy.

→ **Learn more about Microsoft 365 Enterprise and Firstline Workers**