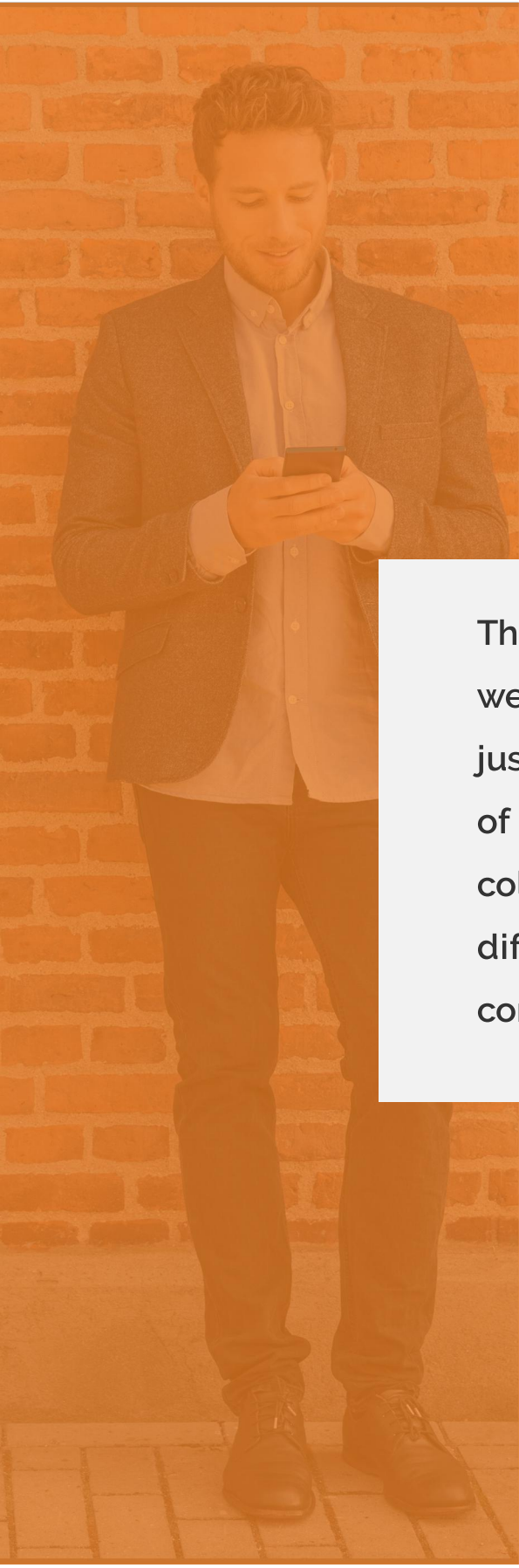


THE

TECH-ENABLED CULTURE

The role of
coaching and
feedback in a
digital-native
workforce





A few years ago, business leaders were spending a lot of cycles worrying about millennials. Article after article predicted the changes millennials—the first generation raised in a digital-native world—would make demands that would leave organizations, and the rest of the workforce, struggling to keep up.

That's not quite how it turned out. The truth is, as technology has integrated itself more and more into our work lives, it isn't just millennials who are experiencing and driving the transformation. It's all of us.

The advent of technology has changed how we all work, in deeply-rooted ways. And it isn't just the work itself that has changed. Because of technology we also interact differently. We collaborate differently. We manage differently. We communicate differently. We consume information differently.

Your remote employee who just used an iPad to watch a video training in your LMS? She might as easily be a Baby Boomer as a Millennial. As we approach 2020, every generation expects to have the same access to technology's benefits. Those expectations are driving companies to integrate technology into talent management in more and more organic ways.

According to the Pew Resource Center: 95% of American adults own a cell-phone, 77% own a smartphone, 73% own a laptop, and 54% own a tablet. Those numbers bump up considerably if you remove people over the age of retirement—with 94% of adults 18-29, and 89% of adults between the ages of 30-49 carrying smartphones. (Even among seniors, smartphone use has quadrupled over the past five years.) According to a 2018 IDC report, mobile workers will make up nearly 75% of U.S. workforce by 2020.



We are all digital natives, now.

| Age | Any Cell Phone | Smartphone |
|-------|----------------|------------|
| 18-29 | 100% | 94% |
| 30-49 | 98% | 89% |
| 50-64 | 94% | 73% |
| 65+ | 85% | 46% |

Unfortunately for many companies, the infrastructure of many of our talent and performance management solutions is vintage 1995. There are major companies who are still relying on mainframe, desktop, or even manual systems—solutions that haven't kept pace with our workers' needs or technological sophistication.

We have entered a period of the consumerization of UX and UI—where employees expect to have smart, responsive, mobile-friendly technology that mirrors the apps and other programs they use in their private lives. The continued use of antiquated or repurposed software for coaching, feedback and performance management is an ongoing source of frustration for employees and their managers.

Tools of the Tech-Native Workplace

- SaaS and Cloud Apps
- Laptops
- Smartphones
- Tablets
- POS solutions
- Wearables

At-A-Glance: How We Work Today

- Flex work: anytime, anywhere
- Continuously connected
- Video, chat, email and cloud savvy
- Bite-size micro-content consumption
- Virtual, global, dispersed teams
- Online coaching and learning
- Continuous, instant feedback
- Peer recognition and mentoring
- Always-on performance management

What does a digital-native solution for talent & performance management actually look like? What features should you prioritize to meet the needs of a tech-savvy, multi-generational workforce?

This guide will take a closer look at our modern, tech-enabled, mobile and often global workforce and then offer some advice for choosing and employing tech-forward performance management platform to better manage them and meet their needs.

Meeting Employees Where They Are

Most people in the Boomer or even Gen X generations are old enough to remember a workplace without internet, email, or even desktop computers. Those days are long gone. Today tech has pervaded almost every industry—from table-side tablets in restaurants to point-of-sale retail, to automation on a factory floor.

Even in highly manual industries, workers communicate with one another and clients through tech. It's critical for companies to understand how we are used to consuming information and adapt accordingly.

Conducting an employee survey can be a good start to understanding how your employees use (or would like to be using) technology. But remember, it isn't just about meeting the minimum for your employees. The systems you set up today should be future-proofed, so they need to meet employees where they are, but also be able to adapt to continued migration into tech. You also have an opportunity, with smart choices, to move along employees who may be lagging technologically and bring them along with you, expanding their knowledge and develop their own skill sets.

It helps to know where we stand as a work culture. Here's a rundown on some of the latest statistics about how we work:



We work from anywhere

According to a 2018 Gallup poll, 43% of workers spend at least some time working remotely, and that number has steadily increased over recent years. In one analysis of US Census Bureau data, 80% to 90% of the US workforce says they would like to telework—at least part time. More and more companies are getting on board with remote work—perhaps because (again, according to Gallup) employees who spend three to four days working off-site turn out to be both more productive and more engaged at work.



We work from everywhere

Remote work has another dimension: it is mobile. When we telecommute, we don't just work at home on a laptop or a home computer. We work in coffeeshops, in our cars, and while traveling. We grab training on a tablet between sales calls, we join conference calls from the car on our commutes, we check email at 7pm from the checkout line in the grocery store.

According to Frost & Sullivan, 98% of enterprises say their employees use smartphones for business and 93% say their employees use tablets for work. Mobile work is becoming so pervasive, in fact, that some companies are skipping the desktop altogether, and focusing on a mobile only workplace.



We work on distributed, global teams

The advent of modern tech has created a phenomenon that is somewhat unique to the twenty-first century: the real-time, global, distributed team. Many global companies have direct teams of colleague that work closely together but have never even met face to face. In fact, according to one 2016 survey, 41% of employees never meet their entire teams in person, and 48% of teams include members from other nations. Juggling time zones, these teams use video, instant messaging, email, and coaching/feedback software to create robust, connected and communicative working relationships.



We work at any time

One byproduct of work from home and flex work policies and a global, distributed team is that our employees are often working at different times in different time zones— when other employees may not be available for calls or meetings. According to SHRM, 70% of employees check email from home after 6pm and PwC shows that 63% of workers say they expect the standard eight-hour workday will soon be obsolete. This has driven the need for solutions such as SaaS feedback software, where employees in different places can still capture and send their thoughts to peers at any time.



We juggle lots of devices

As we mentioned earlier, 77% of American adults own a smartphone, 73% own a laptop, and 54% own a tablet. Of internet users in the U.S, 94% have smartphones. (By comparison, only 76% have a PC or a laptop.) And companies routinely expect employees to use those devices in their work. According to one 2016 survey, “87% of companies rely on their employees using personal devices to access business apps.” Mobile solutions are no longer a luxury—they are a prerequisite.



We juggle jobs

The team you work with may be from diverse areas of the country or globe—but it might also be a composite team assembled from different organizations. A sharp rise is occurring in freelancing and contract work, and many companies are opting for ad hoc teams. In fact, freelancers currently make-up 36% of the U.S. workforce and are expected to increase to 50% within a decade. This “uberization” of work means even more employees are virtual to your team and relying on technology to keep them close and in alignment with your goals.



Micro-Consumption: *The Way We Work Now*



In addition to where, when, and which tools we use for our work, there is another dimension that we need to consider. That is how all of the above variables have changes how we actually do our work.

Though there is scientific disagreement on whether or not our average attention spans are shrinking, there is no question that our brains are becoming trained to consume content in smaller and smaller pieces. For example, according to film historian Barry Salt, the average length of a shot in English language films declined from 12 seconds in 1930 to 2.5 seconds in 2010. The rise in on-demand, Netflix, social media and YouTube-style consumption is a clear trend. We are accustomed to consuming information in short bursts and on our own schedule.



This kind of micro-consumption is becoming more and more prevalent in adult learning and is also beginning to find application across the array of talent management solutions at work. Here's how:

Training

According to the Journal of Applied Psychology, learning in bite-sized pieces makes the transfer of learning from the classroom to the desk 17% more efficient, and in [another recent survey](#) conducted by the Rapid Learning Institute, 94% of Learning and Development professionals say bite-sized online learning modules are preferred by learners.

Feedback

[65% of employees](#) say they want more frequent feedback, and studies show that recognition and feedback given in a [continuous stream](#) is more likely to show a positive impact than infrequent, longer reviews.

Coaching

Taking root first among sales organizations, [micro-coaching](#) is becoming a common fixture, not just in the field, but in the office. In micro-coaching, coaches bring together a multitude of form-factors-including training modules, email, online feedback and check-ins-to keep up with coaches in a continuous, consistent way.

Performance Management

More and more companies are abandoning annual reviews for a stream of micro-feedback that many refer to as ["always-on" performance management](#).

What Your Employees Need

Technology has proven to be an invaluable tool for delivering more of what psychologists tell us employees need to thrive. According to experts and multiple surveys your employees require regular access to:

Mentoring and leadership

According to the American Society for Training and Development, 75% of executives say that coaching and mentoring “has been critical in helping them reach their current position”. Further, says the ATD mentees are more likely to receive professional development (36%) and a better understanding of organizational culture (30%) while coaches benefit by developing new perspectives (59%) and developing new leadership skills (49%). Technology solutions such as [cloud-based coaching and feedback](#) make these solutions equally accessible to all

Learning, development and growth opportunities

[According to Gallup](#), 87% of millennials rate “professional or career growth and development opportunities” as important to them in a job; and 69% of non-millennials agree. These opportunities also impact employee happiness, according to a [2017 TinyPulse survey](#), where “61% of employees valued support from their organization toward their pursuit of personal and professional goals.”

Clear goals and KPIs


Clear goal-setting, fairness, transparency and metrics are all very important to employee happiness and [mental and physical health](#). In fact, [Gallup found](#) that 72% of Millennials who agree that their manager helps them set performance goals are engaged, and [according to studies](#), simply writing down goals can help you to more effectively achieve them.

Feelings of belonging

Belonging scores high on Abraham [Maslow's hierarchy of needs](#), and [can be critical](#) to retention and engagement at work. Feedback, recognition, mentoring and coaching are all key elements to helping employees feel like an important part of the team.

What Your Employees Demand

As we mentioned at the outset of this paper, much of the momentum in the adoption of technology tools for productivity in the workplace is being driven by employees themselves—and the same is true for use of technology in HR, performance and talent management.



Companies that adopt technology as a method for better communication and development are more successful in attracting and retaining employees.

Today's employees have made it clear that they will jump ship for companies that are better at:

- Using tech to enable flexible work
- Using tech to better collaborate
- Using tech to better communicate
- Using tech to deliver timely feedback
- Using tech to deliver timely feedback

The Technology-Enabled Workforce

As we look at the above needs and wants of your employees, one question rises to the top of the list. What tools can you employ to deliver on these needs and demands? Here's a short-list of the solutions you should have in place to support your tech enabled teams:

- Performance management platform, inclusive of coaching and feedback (linked organically to your LMS)
- Enterprise instant messaging solution
- Social platforms for business
- Real-time, online file sharing
- Employee pulse survey tools

Challenges of a more mobile, tech-enabled culture

We don't mean to imply that the advent of technology into the workplace isn't without its pitfalls. On the contrary, not all tech solutions are created equally—some can actually increase feelings of isolation and disengagement. Particularly among highly extraverted employees who prefer face-to-face time. Here are a few of the pitfalls you should be careful of:

- Lack of face time/team bonding time
- Lack of communication or feelings of isolation
- Potential for misunderstandings arising from text-based communication
- Leaving technophobes or the less tech savvy behind

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Benefits of Tech-Enabled Coaching and Feedback:

The advent of SaaS-based solutions in recent years has revolutionized how we interact with employees as managers and HR leaders. Coaching and feedback software allows us:

- Clearer goal setting and tracking, measurement
- Regular, on-going feedback even when individuals are not in the same location
- Dynamic coaching check-ins that allow for a true coaching continuum
- Integrated training to support coaching and feedback efforts
- Employee self-direction/ownership, enablement
- Culture benefits; Life-work balance, productivity, happiness, retention
- Virtual team-building, relationships, multilateral communication

With that said, not all performance management solutions are created equally. Here are a few features you will want to see in your solution to avoid the pitfalls we mentioned earlier:

- Have an engaging interface/UI with gamification components
- Integrate or connect multiple systems together for simple access (Coaching, feedback, performance reviews, LMS)
- Customizable to meet the needs of diverse teams, under the umbrella of a single, unified solution
- Offer a wide range of analytics (dashboards and reports) to drive more strategic human capital decisions

Technology is a fixture in today's talent and performance management and it is steadily increasing its footprint.



As you build your own performance management strategy, be sure that you are aware of all of the options available to you, and that you are using them to their peak effectiveness! Check in with your team frequently so that you can calibrate their needs, and use technology as a way to bring them together more collaboratively and to increase their own comfort level with tech.

Perhaps most importantly, be sure you are using a coaching and feedback platform, like iCoach®, for performance management that is powerful, simple and engaging enough to enable all of your efforts!



Do you have the integrated coaching
and feedback tools you need to
support a digital-native workforce?
Take a tour of the iCoach®
performance management platform.



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