7 Myths about the Future of Work

... AND HOW YOU CAN CREATE TOMORROW'S WORKPLACE TODAY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Why it makes sense to think about tomorrow's workplace today

Globalization is changing how we work, and knowledge workers in particular need to be prepared. People in post-industrial economies and economies lacking in raw materials owe their prosperity to their high education standards, which are necessary for developing and producing complex products. This is exactly where Internet-based communication technologies can offer new and efficient ways to collaborate. Noticeable trends are the acceleration of work processes, globally dispersed teams and increased outsourcing of knowledge-intensive work.

This increasing globalization represents both an opportunity and a significant risk. Companies can draw from a larger, international pool of suitable candidates, but they face the challenge of retaining highly qualified employees for the long term. Additionally, these companies face stiff competition from other employers for the most talented staff. Universities prepare their students for the global labor market and set international standards with bachelor's and master's degrees. This, coupled with a stronger focus on foreign languages, puts the world at the feet of the educated elite.
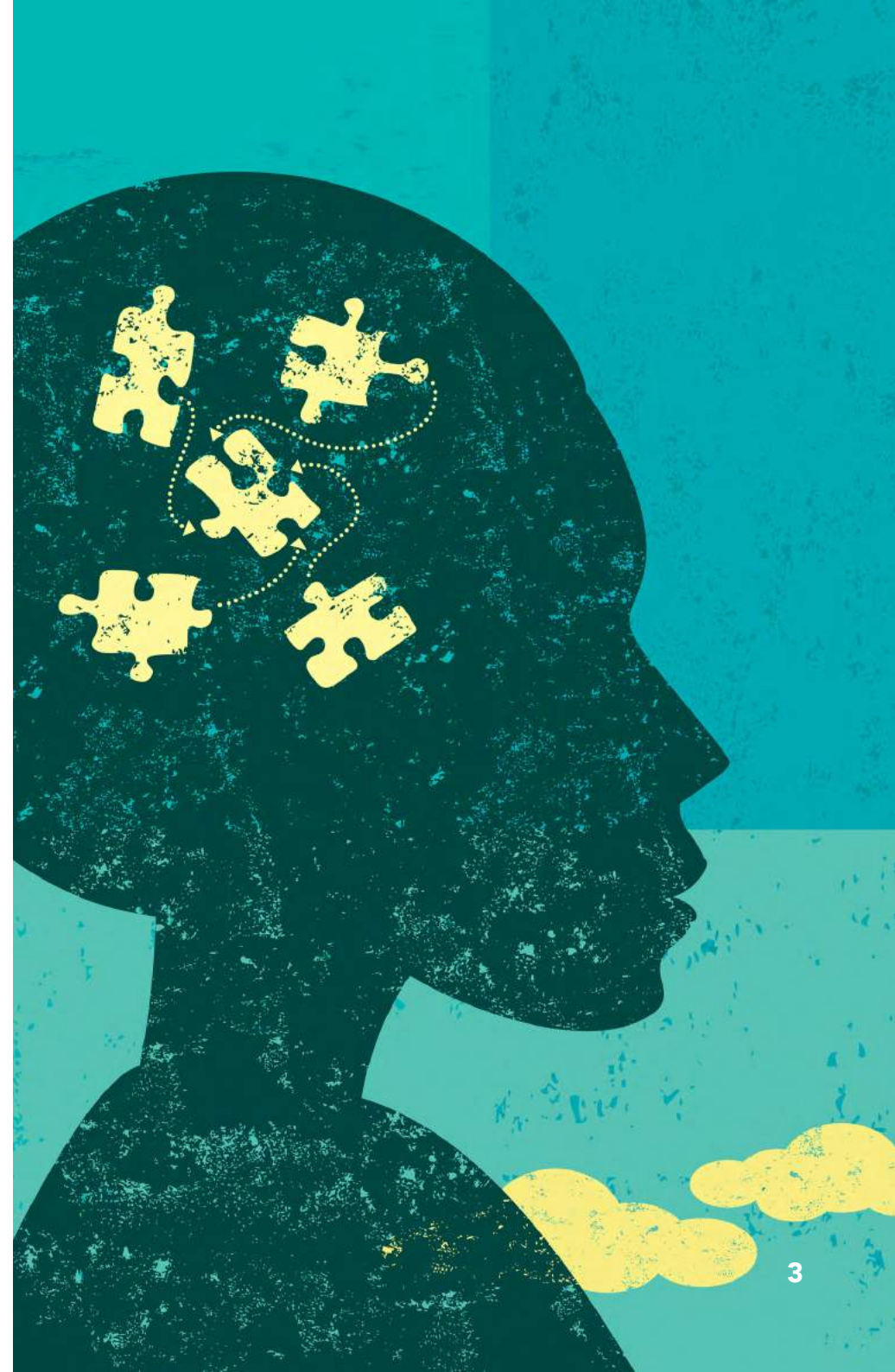
Employers must think about the workplace of the future and start preparing today.

In this white paper, we expose the most common myths about "the workplace of the future." We offer some recommendations which you can implement in your company right away – on your own or with the help of a consultant.

We do not seek to highlight all aspects of the workplace of the future; instead we focus on the following question: With the communication solutions available today, how can we communicate more easily and efficiently with colleagues, leaders and external business partners?

As a rule, we look at communication independently of location and time. And only companies that are able to communicate effectively will be able to remain sustainably competitive in a global market and position themselves as attractive employers.

THE MOST COMMON MYTHS ABOUT THE WORKPLACE OF THE FUTURE

Myth 1: Email is dead

For too many of us, the workday is a chore. We're constantly interrupted while we're trying to concentrate, which affects our productivity. And email, studies suggest, is one of the biggest interruptions. This has led some companies to drastically cut back on emails. For example, Atos, a French IT services company, has launched a _zero email initiative_ to eliminate internal email use across the organization.
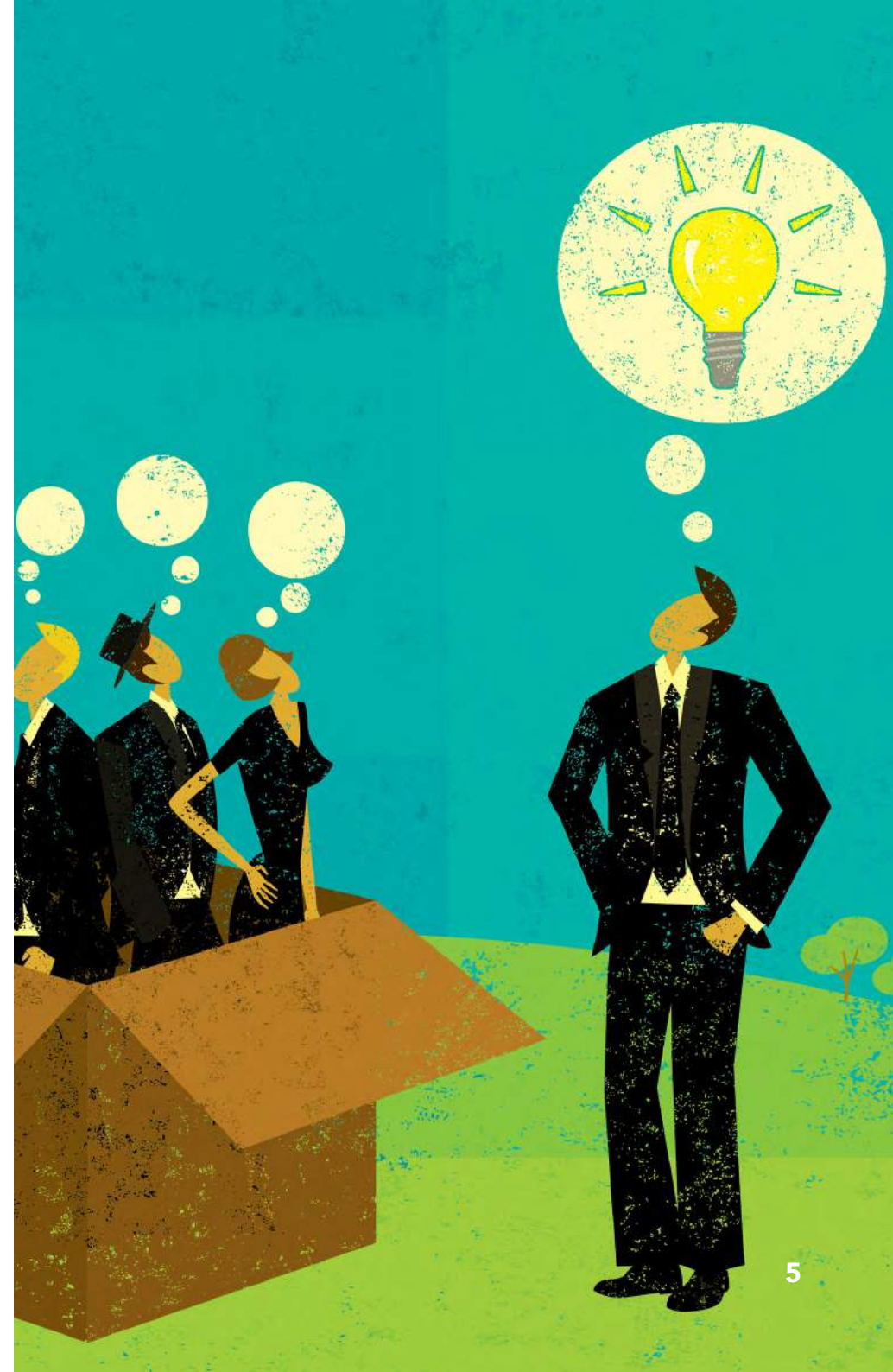
Young people already tend to use email less, preferring instead to use mobile Facebook applications or messaging services like WhatsApp. But do these indicators apply to the future work environment? Yes and no. "Yes" because the trend for collaboration is moving toward the virtual workspace in which project members can meet and communicate anywhere, at any time. Citrix Podio, a flexible social collaboration platform, is one such tool. And "no," email will not be rendered obsolete, as it will remain central to collaboration with customers, suppliers and business partners.

Social collaboration platforms such as Podio can be considered kind of a "Facebook for companies" and are used by a diverse range of corporate departments to manage their work, store documents and hold business discussions. Project teams can plan entire projects, record progress and results, assign each other tasks and discuss outstanding issues. All participants communicate via one central platform without writing a single email.

Experts discuss how communication is shifting from email to social media. Current _research by McKinsey & Company_ has revealed that in the USA, email usage has decreased by 20 % from 2008 to 2012.

Myth 2: One communication method fits all

Using email communication and social collaboration platforms properly will allow you to communicate more efficiently and more effectively. However, these methods will probably not meet all your communication needs. To chart a sustainable communication future today, companies and employees need to collaborate using additional communication tools.

Online meeting solutions and video conferencing have been proven to be effective communication tools. Services such as Citrix GoToMeeting complement in-person meetings, reducing travel times and costs significantly. First, though, your company must integrate a robust online-meeting culture.

Doing this means creating a culture of collaboration based on respect, trust and consideration. It is up to managers to create this culture. Tools for better collaboration – such as online meetings or webinars – help to establish a collaborative culture, as they enable employees, customers and business partners to work together across distances in real time. They can communicate face to face with each other as if everyone were in the same room.

It is important to select tools that are as easy to use as a phone. Think about your phone: you just pick it up, dial a number and talk. If there were various complex functions and settings, you and your business wouldn't make calls unless they were absolutely necessary. The same principle applies to web-based communication tools.

If you have to first read through a manual before holding an online meeting or a video conference, you have already chosen the wrong solution. Never assume that your colleagues or meeting partners will read the manual before the meeting.

If you want to address multiple people who work at several different locations, webinars are an ideal solution. The word "webinar" is a combination of "web" and "seminar," and they have many uses. HR departments use them for nationwide company meetings or training sessions, sales and marketing departments use them for customer product training and presentations, and marketers find them helpful for lead generation.

There is no solution that fits all purposes. Ideally there should be several applications that are bundled together. For example, online meetings can start from a social collaboration platform. The advantage: all the participants can communicate with one another both synchronously and asynchronously. This way, participants collaborate through video conferencing and screen sharing, have access to all relevant files and can document tasks and progress.

WHICH TOOL FOR WHAT?

CITRIX GoToMeeting

Meetings or video conferencing between employees, business partners and customers

Here you need an online meeting or video conferencing solution such as *Citrix GoToMeeting*, which allows you to host online meetings and video conferences on a PC, Mac, smartphone or tablet. Participants can join a meeting via VoIP or telephone – whichever they prefer. Users can share their screen and applications with other participants, letting them hold presentations or collaborate on documents. You can also start a one-to-one or group video conference in HD quality with just a mouse click.

CITRIX GoToWebinar

CITRIX GoToTraining

Customer events or employee and customer training

For events, you need a tool that enables you to easily reach hundreds of participants. *Citrix GoToWebinar* allows users to conduct online events for large audiences. These webinars can take place anywhere. Key applications or use cases are lead generation for marketing and sales purposes, as well as hosting company-wide meetings.

CITRIX® Podio

Shared virtual meeting place for anytime collaboration

In addition to real-time communication through online meetings and video conferences, you should also provide a secure, shared meeting place for your team members and project groups to exchange ideas and information.
With _Citrix Podio,_ you can set up a shared virtual work environment, in which employees can manage their workflows within workspaces. Social media-like functions allow users to post comments and messages, assign tasks and create file archives. If several workspace members are online at the same time, they can send instant messages to each other or engage in video chat.

CITRIX® ShareFile

Secure corporate file sharing

It's crucial that you also be able to safely access and exchange company files. _Citrix ShareFile_ allows distributed team members to access files from almost anywhere and on any device, including mobile. Designed for business, this file sharing, synchronization and archiving tool includes powerful functions that allow administrators to set up custom access permissions, monitor file sharing activities and delete files remotely if a security violation occurs.

Myth 3: The home office is a thing of the past

In 2013, Yahoo CEO Marissa Mayer recalled all remote employees back into their corporate offices. However, we feel that such black-and-white thinking needs to be critically questioned.

Studies in North America have reported productivity increases of up to 40 % when employees are allowed to work from home. In Europe, the home office is also a modern, task-oriented way of working, with the advantage that employees are demonstrably more productive and take less sick leave. There is also a green side-effect that results from less travel as CO_2 emissions are reduced.

The correct introduction of workshifting is a step-by-step process. It involves identifying employees and checking requirements such as a suitable work environment – ideally a separate room – and a stable broadband connection. The main thing to bear in mind is that workshifting does not necessarily mean weeks of isolation and only working from home. Initially, it is generally sufficient to reserve one day a week for telecommuting, and then document and analyze the effects.

Myth 4: The right work-life balance will solve all problems

To ensure that their employees will have a good work-life balance, global car manufacturer Volkswagen decided that emails can only be forwarded to company BlackBerries during a shift and for 30 minutes at either end. Only senior managers are excluded from this regulation. Most psychologists likely tell you that such measures don't work. You cannot just separate life and work, as this separation would devalue work. It would mean that work is merely an activity to earn money and not to make you happy. This may apply to working on an assembly line, but for most knowledge workers, work is an important part of life. Thoughts cannot be turned on and off depending on the time of the day.

Instead of constantly talking about work-life balance, it's key to maintain an inner balance and listen to the body's signals. That includes enjoying work and the right balance of focused activity and spare time.

Myth 5: Leading remote teams is no different from leading local teams

Many leaders do not manage their telecommuting employees effectively because they never learned how to lead remote teams. There are also not enough professional training opportunities in this area, and if they exist, not many medium-sized businesses take advantage of them.

Managing employees who work from home or travel frequently means that managers must communicate their goals and expectations clearly and precisely. Annual or quarterly target agreements and monthly – or even weekly – personal reviews should be a standard practice.

Management and employees must both build a culture of mutual trust, be aware of their tasks and responsibilities and work toward common goals.

Myth 6: The individual office space is becoming less important

Workplaces have become more colorful, brighter and much more modern. Status symbols such as the individual office space seem to have become less important. The modern office has different areas where people can work together and often desks are no longer assigned to specific employees. Ultimately, the most creative ideas arise in places where people meet.

But this type of flexibility is not suitable for all areas of a business. For example, people working in accounting, receptionists and many employees who can't work from a home office still need a fixed workstation in the office. Also, there are still many people who simply don't perform well in a flexible office space. That's why it is important to conduct a detailed analysis and offer employees the work environment that suits them best.

Myth 7: Good IT solutions are multi-functional

Collaboration solutions are continuously being expanded to include an abundance of new features that most users will never need. Some of these functions don't increase productivity, but will have the opposite effect. Few providers have managed to make IT management easier and limit the functions to the essential.

In a work environment, it is critical to choose communication solutions that are easy to use. Only then will the solutions get accepted and used, and the anticipated productivity benefits of these systems realized.

MUCH SOUGHT-AFTER: GENERATION Y

The competition for highly-qualified young employees is intensifying. Companies are no longer just competing for sales – they're competing even more fiercely for suitable employees.

The people of generation Y – who were teenagers around the year 2000 – have different value expectations: A career is not the main focus in their lives, they have less loyalty towards their employers and material possessions are a lower priority.

Family and friends, on the other hand, increase in importance. Members of Generation Y are globally oriented, act with self-confidence and prefer performance-oriented compensation models.

Generation Y grew up with the Internet and information technology. Businesses can capitalize on this, with Generation Y-appropriate, web-based tools for collaboration. By doing this, they can provide a more flexible work environment, both in terms of their choice of workplace and working hours.
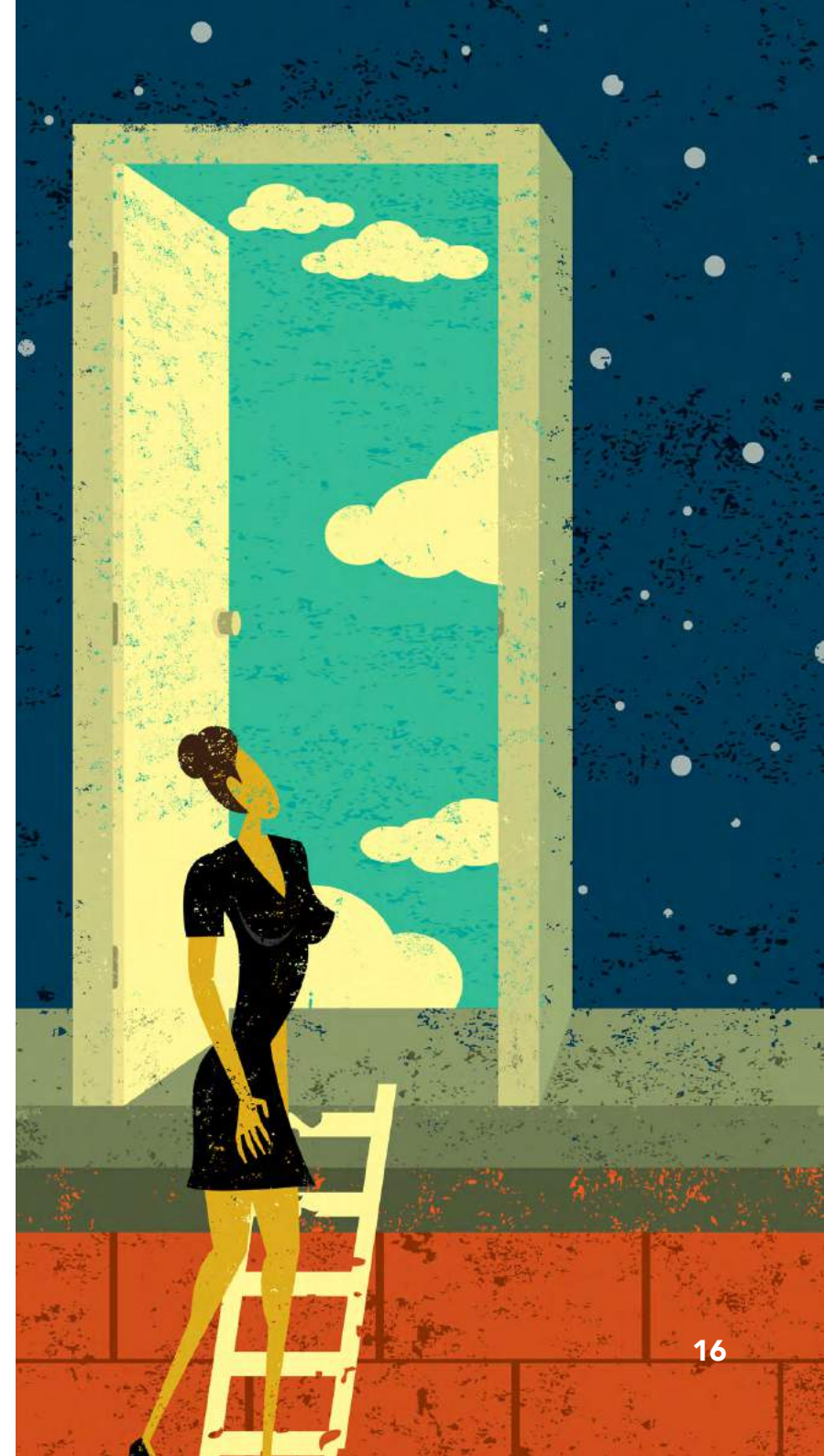
THE BOTTOM LINE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Creating the workplace of the future has many different aspects, and we recommend tackling that project in small steps – without losing sight of the whole. It is important to take individual circumstances into account, and include both leadership and employees in the discussion.

With regard to communication and its new forms, we recommend the following process:

- Taking stock: analyze the determining factors in conjunction with internal and external communication means and processes.

- Create a list of expected changes within the company over the next three years.

- Working with both leadership and employees, define a target strategy as well as precise key performance indicators (KPIs).

- Select the appropriate communication solutions, with stability, security, support and user friendliness at the center of your considerations, or better, as your central considerations.

- During the initial implementation stages, use one-to-one coaching for managers and online training for employees.
  Form groups with "generational diversity" – a mix of older and younger employees.

- Establish a sustainable online communication culture across the company.
  Important: Management must lead the way in this process.

- Implement a company policy for home-working.

- Analyze the target/actual deviations for all KPIs and initiate a continuous improvement process.

At first sight, the challenges may appear substantial. But over the long term, the goal is to find new and more effective ways to collaborate, both internally and with customers and business partners. Instead of calling or emailing a multitude of people, just hold an online meeting. This way collaboration won't be perceived as inconvenient or complicated, but as beneficial.

About the Author

Daniel Holzinger has some 20 years' experience in the information technology sector. He has held international management positions in sales, marketing, public relations, partner management and business development. In addition, for many years he was lecturer for marketing and sales management at the Technical University, Vienna. More recently, at Netviewer/Citrix, the Colited founder has been acting as Managing Director for Austria, and internationally as Vice President for webinar strategies.

About Colited

Colited was founded by Daniel Holzinger in 2011. The company helps corporations to develop and implement online collaboration and workplace flexibility (workshifting) strategies. By optimizing internal and external communication processes and making collaboration more flexible, increased productivity and job satisfaction can be achieved, together with decreased costs. For more information about Colited, please visit _www.colited.com_

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