



The Future Workplace Experience

10 Rules For Mastering Disruption in Recruiting and Engaging Employees

Jeanne C. Meister and Kevin J. Mulcahy
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Rating

8 ⁹ Applicability
7 Innovation
8 Style

Focus

- Leadership & Management
- Strategy
- Sales & Marketing
- Finance
- Human Resources**
- IT, Production & Logistics
- Career & Self-Development
- Small Business
- Economics & Politics
- Industries
- Global Business
- Concepts & Trends

Take-Aways

- To meet your employees’ expectations and needs, make them a top priority, right alongside your customers.
- Design your workspace to promote your company’s values and culture.
- Future-oriented leaders are agile and adapt quickly to change.
- Technology enables productivity, but it disrupts traditional job roles.
- Use data, analytics and advanced technology to recruit and hire the best employees.
- Leverage the singular capabilities, sensitivities and perspectives of multiple generations of employees to enhance innovation and productivity.
- Vest in your employees’ “continual learning.”
- Pay and promote male and female employees equally.
- Plan for a blended workforce of full-time employees, freelancers and other contingent workers.
- Be a “workplace activist” who plans and channels the changes necessary for success in a changing environment.

Relevance

What You Will Learn

In this summary, you will learn: 1) How providing a “future workplace experience” for your employees will help shape your company’s future; and 2) What 10 rules to follow to create a positive, engaging workplace experience for your employees.

Review

For companies to succeed, they must treat their employees with consideration and create a nourishing culture. Workplace experts Jeanne C. Meister and Kevin J. Mulcahy explain how to meet that standard in their report on how the workplace faces radical transformations. They organize their information as 10 rules for optimizing your workplace into a livable, enjoyable environment for your employees. *getAbstract* recommends this informed overview of the newest HR, corporate training, office technology, data management, facility planning and gig-economy trends to senior executives, managers, HR officials and small-business owners who want to encourage their employees to be fully engaged and committed.

Summary

“A workplace must meet employees’ emotional, intellectual, physical, technological and cultural needs, and this can lead to creating a deeper bond with employees.”

“All generations of employees...are approaching the workplace with a consumer mind-set.”

Anticipate and Shape Your Company’s Future

Today’s most effective firms embrace the future, as uncertain and confusing as it seems to be. These companies address the future as learning organizations that cultivate flexibility, adaptability and proactivity.

Organizations that fail to anticipate the future will falter. Consider that “52% of Fortune 500 organizations have merged, been acquired or gone bankrupt since 2000.”

Modern, successful firms accommodate and cater to their employees by developing workplace environments that are “transparent, connected” and “personalized.” They offer their employees a menu of options. They fulfill the wishes of their staff members by creating workplaces with a culture and environment that resemble the lives people lead away from the office – that’s the true “future workplace experience.”

“Ten Rules”

To accomplish this goal, follow 10 rules:

1. “Make the Workplace an Experience”

All employees – not only millennials – now tend to approach their jobs with the mind-set of a consumer. They seek companies with workplaces that evoke an environment and culture that resemble their personal lives as closely as possible. To meet staff members’ expectations and needs, organizations must make their workforce their top priority, right alongside their customers.

Companies must go out of their way to create a “seamless experience for both employees and customers.” Among other things, this means delivering memorable, fun workspace experiences. Consider Airbnb. Its workspace features “a kitchen, a library, a nerd cave, the demo den...and a green atrium.” It also provides “a place to meditate, practice yoga or write on the walls.”

“Today, top talent with in-demand skills can choose to work anywhere, anytime – which may mean working at home, working in a client’s office or going to the workplace.”

“Never have so many companies actively encouraged employees to act like entrepreneurs on the job – to be intrapreneurs inside their organizations.”

“One [way] to create an open and transparent workplace is through communicating and sharing on a regular basis.”

“IBM...is experimenting with sensor-based systems that can recommend and even modify temperature and noise levels to best suit an individual employee’s needs.”

2. “Use Space to Promote Culture”

Astute companies design workspaces that promote, advance and influence their corporate cultures. As Airbnb illustrates, creating the right workspace enhances employee engagement and productivity. These companies “align workspace and culture.”

Five factors drive this alignment:

- **“Culture”** – Smart corporate leaders understand their workspaces serve as physical expressions of their corporate values, and design these spaces accordingly.
- **“Choice”** – Modern employees want options so they can select “how, when and where” they work. Responsive firms give them this kind of latitude.
- **“Wellness”** – Your employees’ well-being directly correlates with their work environment. Factor this into your facility planning and management.
- **“Engagement”** – More appealing workspaces fuel increased worker commitment.
- **“Community”** – The places where people work have changed dramatically in recent years. This includes co-working locales – where staffers from various organizations work in the same place. Such innovations promote a heightened sense of community among workers.

3. “Be an Agile Leader”

Agile leaders adapt. They are honest and transparent with their workers and they hold themselves accountable for their words and actions. They are “intrapreneurial”; that is, they act with an entrepreneurial mind-set internally on behalf of their organizations. Agile leaders remain “future-focused” by working to anticipate changes in their business environment.

“Team-intelligent” leaders make better management decisions because they understand the value of productive teams. They hire and assign inclusively and they are champions for diversity. They develop people and promote “on-demand individual and peer learning.” This results in sustained productivity and strong business results.

4. “Consider Technology an Enabler and Disruptor”

Employees work with the same advanced technology they use at home, including “smartphones, tablets, fitness trackers, smart glasses, smart watches and, most recently, augmented reality applications.” The rush to new high-tech innovations makes keeping up difficult. While some new high-tech devices enable increased work productivity, others may disrupt traditional jobs.

Modern corporations place a premium on teamwork and employee collaboration. Many advanced tools are now available to support these functions, including Salesforce Chatter for “collaboration and file-sharing”; Cisco Spark for “group messaging and desktop sharing”; Jive for “user-friendly collaboration”; Microsoft Lync for “audio conferencing” using Office 365; and Slack for “messaging, archiving and search.” Up-to-date firms also embrace VMWare Socialcast, Cisco WebEx, IBM Connections, Google Hangouts and Microsoft Yammer.

5. “Build a Data-Driven Recruiting Ecosystem”

The era of “passive job candidates” is over. Today, even employees with good jobs are willing to move if they hear of interesting opportunities. Astute companies make it easy for potential candidates to learn about and apply for their most current job openings.

“A growing number of employer rating sites promote themselves as making it easier to find the match between what we want as an employee and what the company offers.”

“Recruiting in the data-driven ecosystem is...about refining analytical efforts so they generate the best matches.”

“Quality referrals are key to the recruiting ecosystem...internal referrals in particular are a significant factor in recruiting success.”

“If we spend about a third of our lives sleeping and about another third working, doesn't it make sense for a company to provide a workplace experience that allows us to fulfill our personal and professional goals?”

For example, take Sodexo, a food and facilities services corporation. For years, the company has operated a very advanced, “mobile-optimized career site,” along with a smartphone app, so interested parties can quickly and easily access all relevant recruiting information. Applicants can use their mobile devices to apply directly for Sodexo jobs. Sodexo’s mobile platform accounts for “35% of job traffic from potential new hires.”

6. “Embrace On-Demand Learning”

In a complex, demanding and changing business universe, leaders know their organizations’ future depends on helping employees enhance their professional knowledge and capabilities through “continual learning.”

Randall Stephenson, AT&T’s chairman and CEO, is an advocate of continual learning. He urges AT&T employees to devote five to ten hours weekly to online self-education. According to Stephenson, if AT&T failed to make this investment in learning, its employees “will obsolete themselves with technology.” Companies should enable “employees to take charge of their own learning.”

7. “Tap the Power of Multiple Generations”

People live longer than ever before. They will need more money to pay for their extended years. As a result, many older workers keep their jobs into their late 60s, and some even into their 70s. Your company could easily have five generations of employees in its workplace: traditionalists (born before 1945), baby boomers (born up to 1964), gen Xers (born 1965 to 1981), millennials (born 1982 to 1993) and gen Zers (born 1994 to 2009).

Given the proliferation of multiple generational co-workers, diversity in the modern workplace extends beyond gender, race, ethnicity and other markers to encompass age as well. Companies benefit from having different generations of workers. A multifaceted workforce offers a variety of perspectives that firms can leverage profitably to spur creative thinking and maximum innovation.

8. “Build Gender Equality”

In the United States, female employees earn only 78% of male employees’ earnings. This parallels a similar global gender pay gap for women. Despite this inequality, women are, on average, better educated than men. The average US working woman comes up nearly a half a million dollars short in wages compared to men in parallel jobs over a typical 40-year career.

Companies should institute new, enlightened compensation and family-friendly policies – equal pay for equal work, fair promotion practices and adequate paid maternity leave. A workplace culture that honors and respects women employees is essential, as are support services that meet their distinct needs. Four of ten employees in the global workforce are women, so intelligent, profitable, forward-looking organizations implement functioning gender equity at work.

9. “Plan for More Gig Economy Workers”

In 2015, 34% of all US workers were freelance (“gig”) workers. Expect this number to climb to 43% of all US workers by 2020. Considering these numbers, HR and other managers must embrace contingent workers. This means factoring a blended workforce into your management and operations planning. Freelance workers offer many positive attributes, including strong self-management, solid problem solving and effective performance as team players.

“The gig economy landscape is still in flux but growing rapidly... blended workforces composed of full-time employees and gig economy workers will increasingly become the norm.”

“We want work that is more than just challenging; we want meaning, purpose and an emotional connection to our work [with] opportunities to learn and grow.” (Swarthmore College professor Barry Schwartz)

“Continuing to understand where, how and in what type of space your current and prospective employees want to work...will be a lasting form of competitive advantage.” (consultant Bernice Boucher)

To find gig workers of proven skills and quality, HR professionals and managers can turn to local temp agencies and numerous online sources, including Field Nation, Upwork, HourlyNerd, Toptal, Work Market and PwC Talent Exchange. Workers can find gigs at these websites, among others: Work Market, Field Nation, Dispatcher, Opus for Work, BlueCrew and WorkGenius.

10. “Be a Workplace Activist”

Far-sighted, thoughtful HR executives ask intelligent questions about their companies’ overall needs to try to anticipate what the future may bring. People who do a good job of asking and answering the core questions involved in planning for the future are workplace activists. Being in touch with the future helps them make the changes needed to operate in the years to come. Workplace activists can approach spearheading change by using three methods:

- **“Recognize your job is not your job”** – View your role more in terms of outcomes than in job description or title. Determine what your job really is.
- **“Reframe your job description”** – Consider ways to diagnose your organization’s real future needs. Ask how the way you do your work can help it get ahead in a “volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous” (VUCA) environment.
- **“Rethink how to break HR”** – Figure out how to shake up and refashion your HR processes to enhance future hiring needs and practices.

“Expect the Unexpected”

Playwright Oscar Wilde believed, “to expect the unexpected shows a thoroughly modern intellect.” Smart people plan for all contingencies. In the face of so many disruptive commercial trends, this capability comes in handy.

As you head into an “unexpected future,” consider these “unexpected assumptions” and predictions about the future, each linked to the 10 rules:

1. Policies that honor employees will become even more personal.
2. Companies will work hard to make the office just like home.
3. The prestige of super-productive work teams will surpass that of company “hero leaders.”
4. Companies that can’t adapt to disruptive changes will disappear, as will jobs once considered sacrosanct.
5. Advances in recruiting technology will enable companies to hire applicants without face-to-face meetings.
6. Corporate learning professionals will teach more nonemployees than employees.
7. Employee groups uniting different generations and cultures will gain major influence.
8. Once-ubiquitous gender labels will fade away.
9. Freelance workers in the gig economy will join together to lead self-organized projects.
10. Employees increasingly will depend on traditional values as steadfast, unshakable anchors in a world of constant, unsettling flux.

About the Authors

Future Workplace LLC founder **Jeanne C. Meister** consults with organizations trying to reinvent their workplaces. **Kevin J. Mulcahy** coaches senior executives and speaks on workplace trends.