

The Strategic Guide to Empowering Employees



4 data-driven approaches to improve productivity and workforce satisfaction





The mindset of the modern workforce

Your workforce is more than just the face of your organisation - it's the heart and soul.

Studies consistently show that highly engaged teams are significantly more profitable, while disengaged employees cost companies billions of dollars per year. Gallup reports that organisations with the highest employee engagement see a 41% reduction in absenteeism and 37% less turnover.¹

But it's not just about making work more "fun," it's about equipping your employees with the tools they need to do their jobs well. Keeping up with modern demands for productivity and customer service means an

increasing need for new technologies in the workplace.

The [2019 Insight Intelligent Technology Index²](#) indicates that industry leaders recognise this need and are prioritising accordingly. 37% of IT decision-makers report the primary objective for digital innovation initiatives is to improve operations and business procedures with 44% reporting fewer complaints around poor user experience, leading to more engaged and productive employees.

Common goals include:

- Transforming data into business intelligence to drive decision-making
- Rising to employees' expectations and need for personalisation
- Mobilising and empowering employees to work efficiently wherever they are
- Automating routine tasks to free time for innovation or creativity

So, where should you begin?



Rising to the challenge

The most successful businesses are employee focused. They empower their workforce with clear expectations, tools and support, and they create seamless user experiences that ultimately make their organisation a place people want to work.

The consumerisation of IT, coupled with an increasingly distributed and digital-native workforce, has undoubtedly raised the bar for technology in the workplace. Better tools, interfaces and processes are needed to help every employee and every decision-maker consistently perform at his or her best.

Businesses across every industry are finding new and innovative ways to leverage emerging technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the Internet of Things (IoT) to meet these needs.

Those organisations that find the greatest success have a few things in common:

1. Focus on the user, not the tech. Before you can develop a solution, you need to understand the problem. This means conducting interviews or surveys to identify where frustrations, siloes or bottlenecks currently exist for your employees. Only then can you begin to evaluate which technologies offer the best solution and the highest potential Return on Investment (ROI).

2. Overcome organisational inertia. Change can be difficult to initiate, especially on a large scale. You'll need to start with a plan to help employees understand the value and purpose of adopting new technologies and new ways of working. Concrete data and examples of success can help build support from the ground up.

3. Harness the power of leadership. Co-ordinating across cost centres can mean one area of your organisation may need to make sacrifices for the greater good. Executive buy-in will be required to ensure every part of your organisation embraces growth, stays open to experimentation and ultimately sees the benefits.

4. Take a holistic approach. It can be easy to get excited about the potential for new technologies, but it's important to recognise that these initiatives are not a "quick fix." A digital transformation is just that; it often requires a shift in mindsets and a need for new skills, resources or partnerships. Initiatives that lack a comprehensive approach are doomed to fail.

With these principles at the heart of your transformation efforts, you can begin to consider which technology solutions best meet the needs of your employees.



Approach #1: Prediction

The ability to accurately foresee issues with productivity, safety or cost makes predictive data an invaluable decision-making tool for your workforce. When employees and leadership teams are able to anticipate future business needs, they can optimise plans to deliver on those needs well before problems arise.

When leaders at [Steward Healthcare](#) wanted to reduce patient Length of Stay (LOS) and optimise staffing, they turned to predictive analytics for a solution. A unified data platform provided the visibility needed to not only identify time gaps in patient care, but also to forecast workloads with 98% accuracy up to a week in advance. The result of this predictive solution was more effective scheduling that reduced unexpected on-call shifts and saved millions of dollars in operating costs per hospital per year.³

Similar predictive technologies are being leveraged within the retail, restaurant and hospitality industries to anticipate customer demands. Combining historical data with information about upcoming holidays, events or even weather patterns can help to ensure the right employees are on staff and the right products are on the shelves at the right time.

In the world of [manufacturing](#), predictive analytics are used to monitor the health of equipment, simplifying maintenance scheduling and reducing employee frustration by ensuring machines are always up and running when they're needed.

This reduction in unscheduled downtime not only has a positive impact on production, it also improves worker safety by removing humans from high-risk situations related to inspecting heavy machinery.

Putting prediction into practice

Predictive analysis is a branch of advanced analytics that uses patterns in historical data to determine the likelihood of a future occurrence. By monitoring trends surrounding a particular object or situation, models can be programmed to identify ideal operating conditions and calculate when adjustments will need to be made. Machine Learning (ML) models can also be layered in for improved efficiency over time.

Developing a predictive solution requires a large body of clean, quality formatted data as a foundation for data mining, modeling and analytics

techniques. A business looking to build a predictive staffing solution, for example, would require extensive historical data on past sales, scheduling and ideal staff-to-customer ratios.

When considering an investment in predictive solutions, start by talking to your employees, conducting surveys or interviews to learn where challenges exist - particularly when it comes to areas of waste or lack of visibility. Once you know where gaps exist you can begin to evaluate your data accordingly:

1. Data quality - Data must be relevant and accurate in order to have value in providing business intelligence. Begin by assessing how existing data may (or may not) align to your specific operational goals.

2. Data quantity - The more historical data available, the more accurate the prediction models will be. If you have not been collecting “quality” or relevant data, the first step will be to build a modern data collection strategy.

3. Data champion - Transformation initiatives are far more likely to succeed when driven by a passionate internal advocate. Identify a few individuals who can help your team stay motivated and inspired throughout the process, then allow these data champions to manage connections across silos throughout your organisation.



Approach #2: Automation

Automation is expected to have a significant impact on the modern workforce. 49% of IT professionals say their organisations invested in more self-service and automation features over the past two years. This investment appears to be ongoing, as 46% report plans to continue to invest over the next two years.

These technologies have a tendency to be perceived as a threat to human employees. But, in reality, automation is most valuable when it’s used to enhance your workforce, rather than replace it. Automating tedious or monotonous tasks frees up more time for innovation or creativity, improving employee satisfaction and retention in the process. Automated tasks also encapsulate best practices, ensuring tasks are delivered to specification every time.

Automated notifications are growing in popularity among modern businesses. By continuously monitoring environmental factors like temperature, humidity, capacity, etc., automated systems are able to trigger real-time alerts whenever there’s a shift outside of “normal” conditions.

Notifications can immediately alert employees to potential issues through a variety of mobile devices and displays - even lighting or sound systems.

The digitisation of many business processes has also opened the door for Robotic Process Automation (RPA). RPA involves the use of data science to automate predictable and repeatable workflows, leveraging metaphorical software “robots” to complete repetitive digital tasks. This means a reduction in monotonous data-entry work for your employees, faster processing time, lower costs and fewer human errors.

[Automated chatbots](#) also provide an opportunity to optimise staffing and empower self-service among employees. Conversational agents can help your workforce better serve customers by answering basic questions or directing phone calls appropriately. Chatbots can also be used to reduce internal HR or IT help desk tickets, allowing users to quickly find the answers to common questions and guiding them through simple step-by-step procedures.

Putting automation into practice

Automated notifications and RPA technologies require a foundation of rules-based business logic and structured inputs to create the custom software, or “bots,” that can generate alerts or automate routine workflows. Implementations can be as simple as an automated ping or email response, or as complex as deploying thousands of bots within an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system. The more complex your goal, the more complex the automated system will be.

Chatbots apply similar techniques to collect, interpret and provide pre-selected verbal or written responses to human conversation. Automations can be enhanced with cognitive technologies like ML, speech recognition and natural language processing, as well as [AI](#) allowing conversational agents to become “smarter” or more effective over time. The more people engage, the more responses will improve.

Deciding where to invest in automation depends on the needs of your employees. Is much of your workforce consumed with manual data processing? Is your call centre overwhelmed by routine customer service requests? Is your IT team so busy helping teammates reset their passwords that they struggle to make time for innovative initiatives?

Once you’ve determined which areas of your organisation will benefit most from automation, use the following guidelines to help ensure successful implementation:

- **Consider the human impact.** Rather than looking for ways to replace employees entirely, consider ways that automation technology can enhance your workforce, allowing them to focus on more creative, meaningful, high-value tasks.



- **Implement an automation centre of excellence.** A dedicated team can help navigate the pitfalls of implementing and maintaining automated solutions, from change management to ongoing compliance.
- **Set realistic expectations.** While quick wins are possible, rolling out an RPA or chatbot solution at scale can take time and effort to perfect. Starting from a position of cautious optimism will help ensure ongoing support from leaders and employees.

Approach #3: Augmentation

Augmentation is an umbrella term referring to technology that adds a layer of intelligence to our world. This includes Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR) and IoT. Augmentation often relies on actionable intelligence, which encompasses any other form of refined data delivery that boils complex problems down to a simple probability, percentage or likelihood. These solutions leverage different devices and systems to put information at our fingertips, driving more strategic decision-making and simplifying otherwise complex tasks.

The possibilities for augmentation are vast, especially in situations where information or experience is limited. Rather than training and preparing for every possible scenario, AR or heads-up displays can provide the information users need precisely when they need it, combining live data with intelligent feedback through an immersive interface. VR takes immersion one step further, providing the opportunity for technicians, surgeons and even first responders to practice high-risk work in a secure, simulated environment.

IoT solutions connect and share information across environments as a whole, creating a solid foundation for actionable intelligence - especially when it comes to matters of health and safety. Manufacturing, energy and transportation companies have found innovative ways to leverage image recognition techniques

to alert technicians to possible areas of concern without requiring them to enter high-risk environments. Similar techniques are being applied to help doctors detect early warning signs in patients, allowing them to develop personalised advanced-treatment plans.

In the event of an emergency, IoT devices can also be used to request assistance or sound the alarm, connecting those involved with security personnel or providing instructions for evacuation. This has tremendous implications for every industry from banking and retail to hospitality, public sector and beyond. Providing your employees with a secure, connected, forward-thinking environment contributes to overall job satisfaction and helps to attract the next generation of workers.





Putting augmentation into practice

As the bridge between physical and digital infrastructure, IoT technology provides a clear opportunity to empower your employees with actionable information and intelligence. Connected devices and sensors provide the potential for true end-to-end visibility across your organisation. Aggregated data then allows users to observe universal trends, explore correlations or drill down to examine anomalies on a granular level.

AR and VR devices can be leveraged independently or in conjunction with IoT solutions to bring digital information to life in the real world. Machine learning models can take augmentation one step further by correlating inputs and desired outputs, providing actionable intelligence when data wanders outside of the normal threshold. AI allows these systems to “self-educate” by observing new correlations and fine-tuning recommendations based on the most effective outcomes.

As with other solutions, it’s important to begin with a clear goal in mind. Consider where pain points currently exist in your business. What information is lacking in those scenarios? How can you put that information in front of your workforce in a seamless, integrated way?

Once you have a clear goal in mind, use the following guidelines to help direct your planning and implementation efforts:

- **Interoperability** - IoT, AR and VR devices will need to connect on a unified platform and “speak the same language” in order to provide accurate information to your employees. As you begin to select devices and build out your infrastructure, make sure you’re taking this into consideration.
- **Automation bias** - When automated recommendations are 99% correct, humans tend to lose focus or make mistakes that should otherwise prevent those 1% errors. Instead of using technology to tell employees what to do, systems should provide recommendations, allowing the human to maintain active responsibility for decisions.
- **Extending to the edge** - Making information available across your organisation in real-time requires a robust IT architecture. Operating on the edge makes it possible to analyse petabytes of data from millions of devices without having to transfer that data to a central location. This reduces latency and allows IoT applications and devices to respond instantly - even when used in remote locations.

Approach #4: Mobility & collaboration

Modern business is global, which means employees need to be connected across branches, locations and time zones. But this isn't as simple as just deploying an app or a few mobile devices.

Outdated or inefficient technology has a tendency to alienate workers. More than 93% of those surveyed by ZenBusiness said that problems with technology have a severe impact on overall job satisfaction and performance.⁴

True mobility and collaboration strategies take a holistic view of the employee journey from entry to exit, identifying various touchpoints where devices and applications can be used to simplify processes, accelerate workflows or streamline communication.

Put into practice, this has the potential to transform the way your employees engage with one another - and in turn, the way they engage with your customers. In hospitals, nurses and care teams can use mobile devices to scan patient wristbands, streamlining paperwork and reducing errors. Mobility solutions and custom applications allow doctors to easily administer medications, track progress during recovery, order prescription refills or host virtual check-ups. After discharge, patient-friendly apps can help answer follow-up questions and direct ongoing care.

Within the airline industry, micro-applications and collaboration platforms are being used to help employees track passenger movement from check-in and baggage handling to security and boarding. Other solutions can help retail or manufacturing workers locate products, receive inventory alerts and place orders on demand, providing customers with access to an "endless aisle" of products, even when an item may not be in stock locally.





Putting mobility & collaboration tools into practice

Developing a mobility and collaboration strategy requires a complete understanding of when, where and how employees work.

You'll need to consider which devices will best fit user needs and how these devices will be distributed on a daily basis, as well as whether custom applications are needed or how experiences can be personalised. If you choose to develop an app, there are benefits to focusing on a single-purpose solution rather than trying to meet all needs in one. A single-task app reduces the cognitive load, simplifies navigation and often lowers development costs.

You'll also need to ensure the proper support structures are in place to promptly resolve any issues that may arise and help prevent employee frustration with new technology. This may mean implementing additional training for your IT team or the addition of [managed services](#).


When preparing to take on a mobility or collaboration initiative, refer back to the employee journey and use the following factors to guide your conversations:

- **Accessibility** - As with augmentation, actionable intelligence has the greatest impact when it's delivered to the right person, in the right place, at the right time. Consider not just what information will be useful, but when and to whom it will need to be provided.
- **Security** - Every connected device represents a possible entry point for a data breach; focusing on security from a software perspective isn't enough. Security protocols and encryptions must be built into your system from the ground up.
- **Ongoing adjustments** - Data-driven solutions are never "set and forget." These systems will need to be managed and modified over time to meet evolving operational needs. It's important to understand this going into the project in order to properly manage expectations, build appropriate strategies and prepare solutions.



Why Insight?

Digital transformation efforts involve a cyclical process of planning, implementation and management. Attempting to tackle large-scale transformation on your own can lead to frustrations and failures.



We undertake the full scope of a digital transformation project.

There are clear tactical challenges with planning, developing, procuring and managing the technologies required to implement these advanced solutions. Between building custom software, extending your infrastructure and connecting devices across distributed locations, few organisations have the in-house expertise to tackle these projects at scale. Contracted independently,

it can take an average of up to 10 IT partners to complete a digital transformation initiative. System integrators can help streamline some of these efforts, bringing things like procurement and asset management under one roof.

Insight can offer the true end-to-end capabilities required to unify digital transformation efforts. We undertake the full scope of a digital transformation project - orchestrating both people and technologies to assist with everything from ideation to change management. By taking a streamlined, holistic approach, we help reduce risk, guide processes, prevent siloes and accelerate time to value.

With the right strategy and partnerships in place, your organisation can successfully leverage data-driven technologies to optimise operations and transform for the future.

To learn more about what Insight can do for you, visit be.insight.com/what-we-do

About Insight

Today, every business is a technology business. Insight Enterprises Inc. empowers organisations of all sizes with Insight Intelligent Technology Solutions™ and services to maximise the business value of IT. As a Fortune 500-ranked global provider of Digital Innovation, Cloud + Data Centre Transformation, Connected Workforce, and Supply Chain Optimisation solutions and services, we help clients successfully manage their IT today while transforming for tomorrow. From IT strategy and design to implementation and management, our 11,000 teammates help clients innovate and optimise their operations to run business smarter.

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