

Engaging differently in the workplace

 By [Gys Kappers](#)

7 Jan 2019

The South African workplace is evolving. And while many of these changes have been gradual, based on our engagements and experience, we expect them to become more pronounced in 2019 and beyond.



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Integrated employee experience

Thanks to the connected environment in which we live and work, expectations from employees are changing. The consumerisation of technology has given impetus to this shift with digital transformation reinforcing it. People expect to be engaged differently. In turn, organisations must drive workplace strategies in new ways.

This kind of employee engagement is driving the consolidation of apps, processes, and software that run amok in companies. It is now about getting a consolidated view. Part of this will entail accepting the potential of human resource automation to better integrate all these disparate areas. Similar to what happened with customer experience, this [internal employee experience] focus is driving companies to work outside the silos that still dominate the way organisations are structured today.

Companies are recognising the value of personalisation in reinforcing the employer/employee work contract. Merging data, drawing insights, and performance measures are helping achieve this. However, poor data management and integrity are some of the biggest hindrances in delivering on the employee experience strategy. This can largely be attributed to how software and systems do not solve compliance issues around the business or its people.

Employee communication changing

Building on from the employee experience, the natural outflow will be a changing communication environment placing more focus on the employee engagement team.

Companies are realising that they are either under-resourced or underqualified to deliver on this new employee experience environment. We are seeing companies not only wanting help in getting the work done, but also getting the training they need to identify the gaps and resources they require. Great news for those HR and comms professionals who have been stuck in the transactional aspects of their work at the expense of strategic work.

Employees want direct and personable communications. And even though many organisations are deprioritising collaboration due to concerns around how it's polarising employees and creating 'noise', data-driven decision-making will empower companies with the insights to adapt their strategies accordingly.



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Going mobile

Traditional channels are being replaced with digital ones leading to one of the major shifts taking place within the internal communications agency landscape. Local and international organisations we work with, particularly those in the large workforce sectors, have realised that post box communication and traditional channels are ineffective. Instead, they're going mobile to employees and as a result, operating processes are being reengineered to become more responsive to employee requirements as well as responding to any concerns they might have.

Connected workplace

Ultimately, this will drive a more connected workplace where all employees are in the same communications environment. Global organisations want to connect better with workers in remote parts of the world. As with the employee experience, integrating and automating employee touchpoints, including HR processes, will help drive efficiencies within the business.

Finally, conversations around integration, big data, and the importance of transactional comms are behind us.

Companies are becoming 24/7 service organisations. This means support processes must be available outside normal

working hours, which is especially important for organisations with shift workers. What this doesn't mean is having resources available 24/7 to provide this service, but using technology cleverly to help create a more personalised experience. This connected work environment is also being driven for productivity and safety reasons. Already, companies are making productivity performance statistics available and relevant to individual employees. This, in addition to safety information, helps employees better understand the direct impact they have on their own earning potential and that of their workplace to ensure future sustainability.

AI cometh

One of the most significant influencers will be artificial intelligence (AI). Instead of replacing people, it's focused on automation in the workplace. Even though AI and machine-learning are used by some companies to great effect, true adoption will likely only happen within a year or two. By automating many of the administrative-intensive tasks, employees will have more time and more time to focus on their actual work.

This year will be a significant one for change in how employee's get to experience their workplaces and for leadership the ultimate benefits of engaged employees. The degree to which businesses are willing to invest in this change will depend on how serious they are about growth and their people.

ABOUT GYS KAPPERS

Gys is an experience businessman and entrepreneur who is passionate about the role of business and the Open Innovation paradigm. Gys's enterprising technology spirit was clearly evident at a young age when in his 20's he started an online and offline transaction platform company that was eventually sold to SourceCom when the family business beckoned. What followed was a highly successful 18 year career in building the largest privately owned Concrete Masonry Business in South Africa. At its peak, the business consisted of 19 factories across the country with a staff complement in excess of 600 people and a production capacity of more than 600,000 tons per annum. In a multi-million rand buyout in 2008 Gys sold the company to a JSE listed group and after seeing his three year earn-out through it was time to take a break. Hesitant to jump into another commercial venture straight away, Gys decided to further his studies at UCT's GSB by entering into an Executive MBA Programme (EMBA) which he completed this in 2012. His thesis topic was "The Delay of Social Business Software Adoption in the enterprise and its effects". Gys is also a member of the Young president's organisation and Endeavour and was recently awarded the Graduate School of Business Alumni leadership trophy. Wyzetalk, was also named one of twelve finalists at the 2017 FNB Business Innovation Awards. Social media handle: Twitter: @gysbertkappers

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