

Canadian Business Leaders Must Enable A Culture of Creativity and Collaboration to Survive In the New World of Work

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New research from Microsoft Canada and Ipsos Canada sheds light on the biggest changes and challenges to Canadian workplaces

TORONTO, Jan. 18, 2018 /CNW/ - A new culture of work is emerging, resulting in profound implications for Canadian businesses. New research from Microsoft and Ipsos shows that if leaders want to drive growth and innovation, they must foster a workplace culture that unleashes their employees' creative approach to problem solving and desire to collaborate in order to generate fresh ideas. The study of 500 Canadian business decision makers found that adapting new cultural and technological changes are key to this transformation.

In fact, according to the research, the overwhelming majority of business decision makers (88 per cent) point to the value of motivating and empowering employees to be their most creative selves as an important factor in creating a successful workplace. Nearly the same number (88 per cent) place an emphasis on leveraging technology for success because it helps employees collaborate with each other regardless of the physical location. That said, unlocking creativity is proving to be difficult with one in four business leaders saying that motivating and empowering employees to be their most creative is one of the greatest challenges.

"Business leaders are faced with profound challenges in a rapidly evolving economy and it is critical that they rethink everything from the organization's culture to the physical and digital tools they provide to their workforce to drive value and stay competitive in this new world of work," said Jordan Sheridan, General Manager of Modern Workplace, Microsoft Canada. "In response, this represents a fundamental shift in how Microsoft is designing solutions. We're constantly challenging ourselves to deliver the technology, devices and services that enable businesses and their teams to be better connected, more productive and more secure than ever before."

Changing employee expectations, more diverse and globally distributed teams – including more generations in the workplace today than ever before – and an increasingly complex threat landscape are all shaping this new world of work. As a result, businesses need new ways of communicating, connecting and sharing in order to drive creativity and collaboration, confirmed by the research. The overwhelming majority (84 per cent) of business leaders say that modernizing how employees work, including the introduction of flexible hours and work arrangements, is important to the success of business.

"Historically, the workplace was designed to prevent communication," commented Bruce Mau, Co-founder and Chief Executive Officer, Massive Change Network. "What we realize now is that communication flow within an organization is the most powerful creator of wealth, so we as business leaders need to find the synthesis between our physical and digital workspaces to facilitate this communication."

Shifting priorities from work *places* to work *spaces*

The research, conducted by Ipsos to understand the pressures placed on businesses to stay relevant in an increasingly competitive climate, reveals that as business decision makers consider the evolution of the workplace, it is more important than ever to empower employees with the right spaces and technologies they need to do their jobs. For instance, designing a digital environment that includes upgraded technologies to improve business processes is the highest priority for 65 per cent of Canadian business leaders. More than three-quarters (86 per cent) of business decision makers recognize that technology devices that make it easier for employees to do their job is critical. Additionally, 55 per cent of this same group indicate that it's very important to redesign an office space with fewer walls and more collaborative spaces. Ultimately, the marrying of the digital and physical is critical to the success of any organization in the modern world. Companies need to lead with the digital tools but it's important to support this new reality with the physical workspaces that drive creativity and collaboration.

An example of this is the recent collaboration between Microsoft and Steelcase. The two organizations joined forces to explore the future of work and together they developed a range of technology-enabled

spaces to help organizations foster creativity and better collaboration. These spaces seamlessly integrate the best of Microsoft Surface devices with Steelcase architecture and furniture, helping every employee unlock creativity.

"The problems people face at work today are much more complex than they used to be. They require a new creative way of thinking and a very different work process," said Gale Moutrey, vice president of communications at Steelcase. "Creativity is a process in which anyone can engage and requires diverse work modes as well as different types of technology. People need to work alone, in pairs and in different size groups throughout a creative process, and they need a range of devices that are mobile and integrated into the physical workplace. Additionally, spaces should inspire people without compromising performance. Together, Microsoft and Steelcase are helping organizations thoughtfully integrate place and technology to encourage creative behaviours at work."

Increased focus on safety and security

The research also revealed that business decision makers are looking to create a cohesive environment that allows for collaboration and creativity in a secure environment that blocks threats, regardless of where or when an employee needs to work.

In fact, 84 per cent of business decision makers confirm that transforming business to address the needs of the modern workplace by giving teams the tools to be mobile and work remotely cannot come at the cost of sacrificing the company's data and information – it must remain safe. More broadly, the research also highlighted that more than three quarters (78 per cent) of business decision makers see security as a high priority, placing an importance on ensuring their business is protected against data breaches.

Despite the acknowledgement of the importance of security, fewer than three in ten business decision makers feel very confident that their organization is currently well protected against security threats, including data breaches and loss of devices. This means many organizations may be leaving themselves vulnerable to security breaches.

The research is part of Microsoft Canada's Modern Workplace campaign that is aimed at helping businesses better navigate the changing world of work in Canada. The campaign – which launches this month – includes a series of interviews with Canadian thought leaders, such as Bruce Mau, Founder of the Massive Change Network, Gale Moutrey, VP of Communications at Steelcase and Jonathan Lister, VP, Sales Solutions & Canada Country Manager at LinkedIn for a "how to" series on the modern workplace. Data from the research will also be leveraged for a whitepaper on the same topic. All the information, including details on Microsoft's modern workplace tools, such as Microsoft 365, can be found here:

Microsoft.ca/ModernWorkplace

Methodology

These are the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted on behalf of Microsoft. A sample of 500 Canadian business decision-makers (BDM) was surveyed online between November 27-30, 2017. The overall data has been weighted by number of employees and region to be representative of businesses in Canada based on the latest Census data. The precision of online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the results are accurate to within +/- 5.0 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what the results would have been had all Canadian business decision-makers been polled. Credibility intervals are wider among subsets of the population.

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