

Aruna Jayanthi, Chief Executive Officer, Capgemini India

What is the future of conventional ideas of 'work' and the 'workplace' as we know it?

This is one area that is witnessing a big change and will continue to do so. The conventional idea of a workplace—as a place where everyone comes, physically sees one another, and works together—is changing. I would say that there are four trends that define it.

01 Social

02 Mobile

03 Digital

04 All-the-time, all pervasive or 24 x 7

I will [put] each of these in context (in no particular order)

Work is no longer a 9-to-5 schedule. Given the availability of technology—blackberry and smartphones—you are expected to work anytime of the day. If you do not respond to an email within an hour or two—irrespective of the time it was sent—people tend to wonder if something is wrong. **This is the kind of environment that exists and work is extended to 24 hours a day, seven days a week.**

Infact, I find the whole notion of 'out of office' messages archaic. You can no longer tell people, "I am traveling and will get back to you in two days." It is irrelevant whether you are at work, traveling or on a vacation—work happens 24 x 7.

The second is mobility. What do I mean by this? I am referring to the fact that there is technology today that helps you work irrespective of whether are at home or at a movie theatre. And, companies recognize this and are giving employees the access to company data and applications to enable them to work from any place. As you can see, mobility and the all pervasive nature of work are interconnected.

The third aspect is that it is completely social. By social you can also say it is collaborative [especially with the availability of channels such as] Facebook. If you look at the conventional methods of marketing, these are existing but they are also rapidly changing. Today, if we fail to use the social media—the whole collaborative and viral experience—then it is a shame. So I think it is completely changing the concept of marketing, talent management, HR and most other things. It is changing because of the social nature of work in collaboration.

And, I think finally all of it is digital—without technology enterprises will find it very difficult [to function/survive].

Given the rampant invasion of technology in learning and education, what do you think is the future of human interaction and personal mentorship?

Training and learning and development are certainly becoming more and more technology enabled. At Capgemini too, we encourage e-learning and virtual learning. Now having said that, I think one has to distinguish. There are technical skills where you could get around 99-100% [results] from technology-based learning. However, there is part which is related to action and experiential learning built around knowledge. These are softer aspects of learning, which cannot be taught through technology. You may get the basics across but these cannot be transferred without a person-to-person interaction. And actually, despite all the technology additions, I see companies investing in coaches and mentors.

At the end the end of the day you have to have the personal touch, especially at the senior level—from level A to the next level- it is absolutely essential. I think personal relationship and human intervention will never go away and if it is going away, it is a big mistake.

Ten years from now, in your opinion, what will be the most overrated and overused management principle that will lose its relevance?

Organization structure as we know it today [will longer be relevant]. The very clear lines of responsibility and accountability, the heavily drawn lines and hierarchical models, those will completely go. I can, already, see it today. I think organization structure will be amorphous. Intuitively, I feel that the very well drawn organization structures will not be relevant anymore.

The single most important thing that a manager will need to know, in order to succeed.

The single most important skill is how to get the best out of people. I think a manager's or a leader's success will not depend on her knowledge, skills and capability but will actually depend on how she can build the best team and get the best [from] the environment and people around her.