What Is the Future Of Work? Technology or People?

Opinions expressed by *Entrepreneur* contributors are their own.

Over the past two years, there has been a heated debate on the future of work and its effect on businesses with exponential advancements in technology and artificial intelligence (AI). Many companies shut down as governments enforced the WHO protocols, lockdowns, cessation of movements and curfews. The Covid-19 pandemic has been detrimental to the financial economy.

As the economy starts to open up again, the biggest question many are pondering is, “how do we navigate from this point?” The majority of people are now required to work from home due to the pandemic. Advancements in technology have been a significant factor that enables this to happen, meaning businesses can benefit from using technology to augment human intelligence, not replace it.

More recently, tech giants such as Google have been at the forefront of ensuring that all their workers go back to the office. This is a huge indicator that the future of work does not lie in technology — it lies with the people.

Related: The Perfect Blend: How to Successfully Combine AI and Human Approaches to Business

The human-first approach

Workers have been experiencing burnout from endless Slack threads and Zoom meetings. The notifications prove distracting and often do not correlate to the tasks directed to them

specifically. As we become more inundated with notifications from different channels, this leaves us weary, and we begin to lose focus on what’s essential in our roles.

Nonetheless, nothing beats the joy of leading and working with a human-first approach. The significance of empathy and vulnerability has never been more vital. While there are numerous great tools to help nurture and foster business growth, there is no replacement for a thoughtful, open-minded approach to every interaction – whether on Zoom or in person. It is important to stay accountable to one another to move the needle forward in ways that technology cannot.

Figure out what works and what doesn’t

When it comes to effective management, successful organizations pay close attention to what works and what doesn’t.

Organizations can foster business growth by hiring management consultants to help improve business performance. Management consultants also leverage technology to pull and analyze data for troubleshooting. They also identify solutions and suggest rational, factual and logical changes, creating more efficient systems.

Although management consultants use technology to help augment their intelligence, technology cannot be used as a replacement as it cannot make accurate decisions. Without people, technology cannot function. The question remains: Who will operate those machines?

Keeping employees motivated

The probability is that people will still be using video conferencing apps to facilitate team meetings, with some

attendees at home and some in the boardroom.

The principles of effective management will remain unchanged even post-Covid. People want to celebrate their accomplishments and build a culture of respect and trust at every opportunity. This is what keeps them driven and motivated in their job. Therefore, you can never ignore the human element of work.

Also, when humans are acknowledged and recognized for their efforts, they find more joy in their job. Consequently, they are more likely to be loyal and more productive employees, reducing employee turnover.

Related: AI Won't Replace Us Until It Becomes Much More Like Us

Listen to your workers' concerns

Although technology is evolving and has many benefits in business, the future of work will remain with the people. Employees are more productive when they work cohesively as a team, and it's important to have managers who delegate work from a bigger picture perspective.

A survey by Gartner, Inc (via TechRepublic) revealed that 40% of remote employees are reporting an increase in the length of their workday. Therefore, employers and managers need to set a clear boundary between life and work. They need to listen to their workers' complaints regarding the struggle.

Managers and employers should also understand that not everyone operates the same. Some feel more productive in the office, while others find their best work at home or in their home office. Some are more productive working in teams around them, and some are more productive working solo without distractions. All these types of workers are valuable, and all reasons are valid.

Machine intelligence vs. human intelligence

Unlike technology, humans have practical communication skills and empathy. They can relate to and understand each other in ways machines cannot achieve right now. Therefore, humans are still vital in thinking creatively, making big decisions and providing unique insights when it comes to business.

While machine-intelligence technology is faster and can make more accurate decisions, they do not possess human-intelligence traits, which are emotional, intuitive and authentic. Success is achieved when businesses leverage technology while managing talent in a way that has people effectively fulfill their roles. Also, when it comes to customer engagement and support, it requires the human element to make it more personable.

Related: Why AI and Humans Are Stronger Together Than Apart

https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/425013