Is Your Workplace is Motion? Exploring the New Employee, the New Work, and the New Workplace

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Do you encourage collaboration between departments?

Are you ready for a changing demographic in your workforce?

Do you know how technology will change your organization in the future?

This past spring, Queen's IRC hosted a summit to explore our workplaces in motion. We thought of our summit as a discovery space. We invited people to come together to reflect, share and re-imagine how their workplaces could become more transparent, integrated and inspiring. Through an old world – new world lens, we explored how four inter-related trends (see model), are shaping the new employee, the new work, and the new workplace.

A MODEL FOR THE NEW WORLD AT WORK

GLOBALIZATION
Work without borders.

Attract, develop, engage and retain future talent.

HR

Cultivate strategic allies and partnerships for mutual growth.

LR

KNOWLEDGE ERA
Knowledge is the new competitive edge in a specialized world.

Forces and Capabilities coming together to create organizations that are **Relevant, Sustainable and Successful**

MILLENNIALS
50% of your global workforce by 2020.

OD

Build and nurture structures, teams, values, strategies and leadership to support the new world.

TECHNOLOGY
Big data enables lightening-speed engagement and decision making.
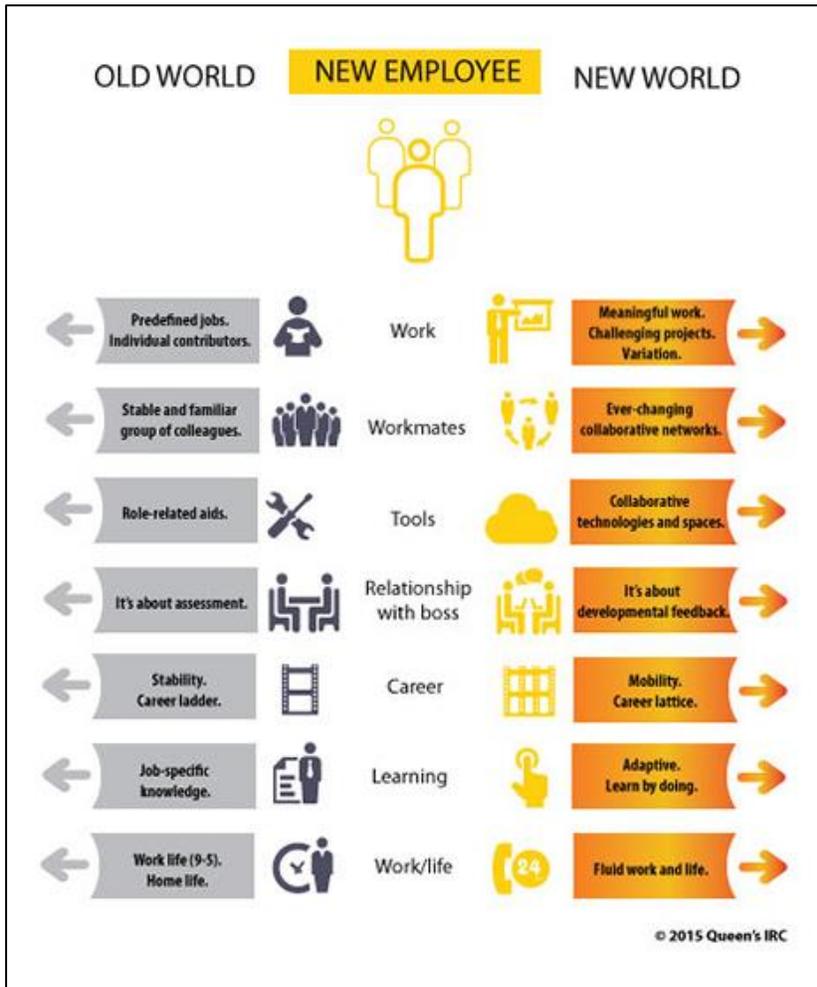
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Our lofty aim was to reveal how the workplace principles and frameworks that worked in the past no longer serve us. While we all appreciate that the era of centralized governing systems and rigid hierarchies is over, many of the legacy principles are so deeply engrained, we simply do not see or question them. Our task was to surface the principles that no longer serve us, and define a new set of workplace fundamentals promoting connectivity, innovation and adaptability.

In service of keeping those conversations going, we offer our old world-new world models as a starting place for you to ponder the future of your workplaces. As you reflect on each of the three models (the new employee, the new work, the new workplace), gather your colleagues together and answer the questions in the box below. We've employed a technique called reverse brainstorming to surface the organizational practices and systems that may, inadvertently, be rooting your organization in the past.

Questions:

1. How are these trends playing out in your organization? What are you noticing about:
   - The new employee?
   - The new work?
   - The new workplace?
2. If we designed a workplace to neglect the new employee and impede the new work, what would we do? How might we guarantee failure?
3. As you reflect on your organization, what's your ah ha?
   - What do we need to let go of? What do we need to let come?

What's the new employee?

OLD WORLD				NEW WORLD
Predefined jobs. Individual contributors.		Work		Meaningful work. Challenging projects. Variation.
Stable and familiar group of colleagues.		Workmates		Ever-changing collaborative networks.
Role-related aids.		Tools		Collaborative technologies and spaces.
It's about assessment.		Relationship with boss		It's about developmental feedback.
Stability. Career ladder.		Career		Mobility. Career lattice.
Job-specific knowledge.		Learning		Adaptive. Learn by doing.
Work life (9-5). Home life.		Work/life		Fluid work and life.

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While all employees, independent of their generation, want to feel valued, respected and empowered at work, there is a new breed of employee now entering the workplace and in vast numbers. Generational research reveals that the 35 and under crowd (born between 1980 and 1995) are leading the quest for new ways of working. What are some of the core characteristics of the new employee?

Work: Millennials define work broadly, as a changing series of assignments. It's not so much the job description that matters to a millennial, but the contribution that one can make on any number of projects. Ambitious and credentialed, millennials expect to be involved in purposeful and meaningful work.

Workmates: Hyperconnected, millennials are innately collaborative and accustomed to working in ever-changing collaborative networks. Indeed, millennials report being uncomfortable with rigid corporate structures and information silos.

Tools: Millennials expect the digital technologies that empower their personal lives to be available in the workplace. Drawn to organizations that offer comfortable and stimulating spaces, they expect to work hard, but not in a cubicle all day.

Relationship with boss: Millennials value frequent feedback and want a developmental relationship with their boss, whereby they receive coaching encouragement and recognition. Indeed, millennials ranked the opportunity to interact with and learn from senior management as a top priority.
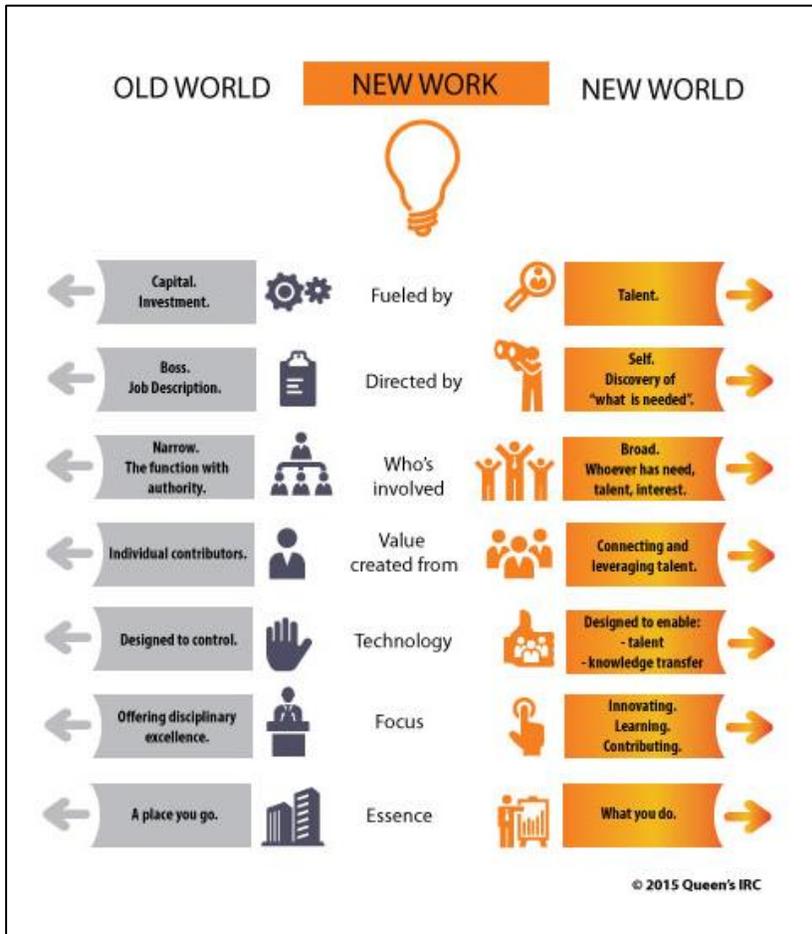
Career: Millennials value results over tenure and expect a varied and interesting career with more rapid opportunities for advancement.

Learning: Millennials could also be called the learning generation, due to the importance they place on continuous development. They place a high importance on working for a company that develops their career and life skills and they value experiential over classroom learning.

Work/life: For millennials, finding a balance between work and life seems irrelevant, because work is part of life. What's important is flexibility—the ability to blend home life and work life using technology to expand the boundaries around when, where and how work is completed.

Core message: Given that millennials will form 50% of the global workforce by 2020, the ability to attract, motivate and retain the new workforce will be vital. Are you transforming the core dynamics of your workplace? These include: workplace culture, work styles and tools, rewards, career development and opportunities, and work/life balance.

What's the new work?

OLD WORLD		NEW WORK		NEW WORLD
Capital. Investment.		Fueled by		Talent.
Boss. Job Description.		Directed by		Self. Discovery of "what is needed".
Narrow. The function with authority.		Who's involved		Broad. Whoever has need, talent, interest.
Individual contributors.		Value created from		Connecting and leveraging talent.
Designed to control.		Technology		Designed to enable: - talent - knowledge transfer
Offering disciplinary excellence.		Focus		Innovating. Learning. Contributing.
A place you go.		Essence		What you do.

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In many ways, we are all experts in knowledge work, because that's what we do for a living. As knowledge workers we invent things, identify and solve problems, converse and collaborate. In doing so, we develop tacit knowledge associated with our disciplinary expertise as well as around social, analytical and problem-solving skills. Indeed, in today's economy, most jobs require at least some degree of knowledge and discretion to perform them successfully.

The pioneering theorist Peter Drucker was amongst the first to suggest that managing knowledge workers requires a paradigm shift. In essence, he said that knowledge work is fundamentally different from routine and programmed work and, therefore, needs to be designed and managed in a fundamentally different way. Drucker boldly suggested that re-learning how we manage and enable knowledge work is the single most important competitive factor in the new economy and the single greatest management task of our time.

What differentiates knowledge work from routine and pre-programmed work?

Fueled by: Knowledge work is fueled by the talent, ingenuity and will of employees, more so than capital investments. Those capital investments must be in service of your people talent.

Directed by: Innovation and responsiveness can't be pre-programmed. It is the employees themselves who discover problems, opportunities, and innovations.

Who's involved / Value created from: Knowledge work is inherently collaborative. That's because challenges don't fit neatly within disciplinary boundaries, and innovation comes from diversity. The question is no longer: who owns this challenge? The question becomes: who needs to contribute?
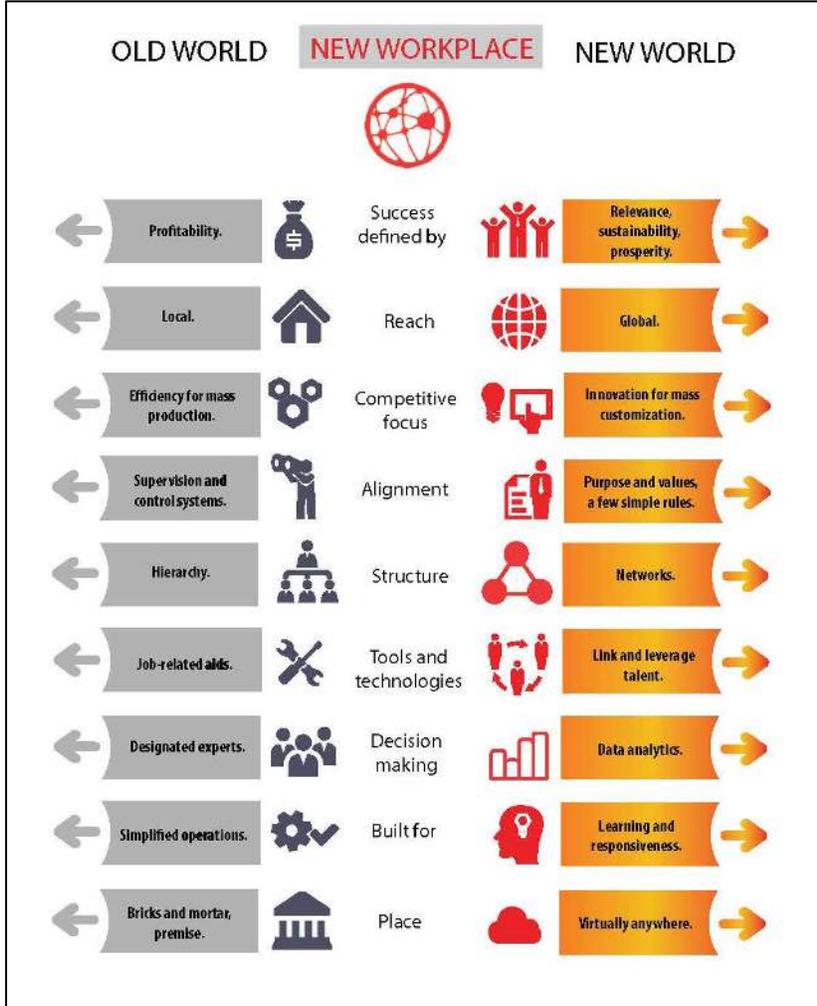
Technology: If people are going to interact across the boundaries, they need to have tools and technologies that enable them. In the words of academic Paul Alder, those technologies need to be enabling, not coercive. This means that the role of technology shifts from controlling what people do to amplifying their effectiveness.

Focus and Essence: The focus of a knowledge worker shifts from simply acquiring a job-related skill to combining, leveraging and building on one's knowledge. Indeed, in the knowledge economy, one's contribution defines one's relevance.

Core message: Knowledge is the new competitive edge. Turning the organizational hierarchy upside down, the emerging challenge is for organizations to inventory, connect and nurture talent in service of renewal and innovation.

What's the new workplace?

Two inter-related trends are creating a dramatic reshaping of the organizational game and playing field; they are technology and globalization. Technology is shifting who is doing what work, where, and how. Collaboration platforms enable people to connect and contribute and big data enables better, faster decision-making. Social media enables widespread engagement. All fuel an expectation for greater speed, efficiency, and transparency. As companies expand their reach worldwide, they confront a volatile and fast-changing playing field. Standards, technologies, and customer preferences continuously evolve, often in unpredictable ways. Disruptive technologies erupt from the unlikeliest of places. To win, organizations must continuously learn, flex and innovate. The emerging challenge is for organizations to connect people and information to generate strategic insights and innovations.

OLD WORLD		NEW WORKPLACE		NEW WORLD
Profitability.		Success defined by		Relevance, sustainability, prosperity.
Local.		Reach		Global.
Efficiency for mass production.		Competitive focus		Innovation for mass customization.
Supervision and control systems.		Alignment		Purpose and values, a few simple rules.
Hierarchy.		Structure		Networks.
Job-related aids.		Tools and technologies		Link and leverage talent.
Designated experts.		Decision making		Data analytics.
Simplified operations.		Built for		Learning and responsiveness.
Bricks and mortar, premise.		Place		Virtually anywhere.

What differentiates the new workplace from the traditional hierarchy?

Reach and focus: Organizations are shifting their view-finder from a local lens to a global one. Even if an organization is not selling a product or offering a service abroad, it is competing with a global standard. Increasingly, organizational relevance depends on creating a continuous source of value for customers, shareholders, suppliers, partners and employees. It's about innovation to be ahead of the product and service curve.

Alignment and structure: Networks are replacing the hierarchy as a way to unleash talent and enable fluid, flexible, real-time innovation.

Tools and Technologies / Decision Making: Tools, technologies, and spaces link and align people and ensure that they have access to the right data for insightful decision making.

Built for: At root, the new workplace infrastructure is designed to connect people in service of learning and innovating. It's no longer about simplifying operations and streamlining decision-making, it's about engagement and responsiveness.

Place: The new organization is no longer just a bricks and mortar place – it is a pervasive space – fueled somewhere out there in the cloud.

Core message: There are no more boundaries. Organizations must be designed as eco-systems, focused on creating ever-evolving sources of value for customers, suppliers, shareholders, employees, partners, and communities.

The big, bold question?

Are you transforming the core dynamics of your workplace? Turning the organizational hierarchy upside down, the emerging challenge is for organizations to attract, connect and nurture talent in service of renewal and innovation. The big question for you is, how will your new insights lead to fresh models of working, organizing, developing, connecting, leading and rewarding?

About the Author

Brenda Barker Scott has extensive experience in all aspects of organizational development acquired over a twenty-year career in teaching and consulting. When working with leadership teams she combines strong theoretical knowledge with practical methodologies to ensure that the right people are engaged in the right conversations to design robust and workable solutions. Brenda was the Queen's IRC 2015 Workplace in Motion Summit Chair, and is an instructor on a number of the Queen's IRC programs including Building Smart Teams, Organization Development Foundations, and Organizational Design. Brenda is co-author of *Building Smart Teams: A Roadmap to High Performance*.

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