THE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION GUIDE BOOK

A BOOK FOR YOU AND YOUR TEAM
WHAT YOU WILL FIND IN THE EBOOK:

• A snapshot of the digital transformation of the workplace trend
• An in depth framework for effective digital collaboration
• Practical and easy to implement techniques to improve communication and productivity at the workplace

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01
The Digital Transformation of the Workplace
Most organizations acknowledge that they need to adapt to a new way of working, reshape their business processes and policies in order to attract, retain, and inspire the best employees. In the very near future, the workplace will be increasingly driven by the collective intelligence. In fact, the Millennial Generation is very different from its predecessors.

Hyper-connected, they aspire for a perfect work/life balance and expect the work environment to fit to their needs. From now on, employees are going to lead work management, and organizations will have to adapt their processes to this new workforce.

Furthermore, communicating is going to be increasingly faster, information will become more transparent, and knowledge sharing will prevail over personal expertise. Organizations can no longer avoid those changes, and the sooner they improve their work organization, the more competitive they will be.

So, what are the main challenges that organizations are already facing? How can they adapt to such environmental changes? What if collaboration was the key to the ongoing digital transformation of the workplace?

A Changing Work Environment

Organizations are embracing new ways of working, with the virtual expansion of the workplace and methods of communication being at the core of the change. In most companies, workers are using email to communicate internally and externally. In 2015, a typical worker received approximately 105 email messages per day.¹

And even if the growth of number of emails sent and received per day is slowing down due to the rise in other forms of communication, in 2019 a typical worker still receives about 126 email messages per day. Emails are a dead end because they don’t help people communicate in teams. In fact, they overcharge workflow, making internal information exchanges a waste of time.

Besides, in our connected world, employees are increasingly mobile. They need to access information wherever their location may be, and at any time. They need to communicate quickly with their teammates and third parties. Mobile devices offer the opportunity to access a wealth of information from practically anywhere. So, even if workers are not physically present in the workplace, they need to communicate as if they were, and to access information in order to focus on what really needs to be done. Intranets only accessible from the office must become a thing of the past.

The digital transformation of the workplace is about increasing mobility, access to information, and productivity, all while reducing work friction. We spend too much time doing work about work and not actually accomplishing our tasks. That’s why companies have to rethink their general process, and use new tools to facilitate their workers organization and communication.

In fact, the shift towards horizontal management has already started, and workers need to access their organization’s knowledge and share their own information quickly and easily.

The Place of Collaboration in the Digital Workplace

PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), the world’s second largest professional services network, released a report on the future of work and its effect on Human Resource departments.²

They gathered answers from 10,000 people across China, India, Germany, the UK, and the US. Though the report was conducted for, and with, human resource executives and other executive-level decision makers on talent

strategy, some of the trends can equally be applied to the future challenges of the digital transformation of the workplace - and more closely to the role of collaboration tools.

The analysis they conducted is based both upon the results of the study and on consultations with experts about how disruptive innovation may impact the world of work, and therefore by extension, the way in which we work.

— The Three Visions of the Future of Work

Three distinctive visions of the future have emerged from their analysis: the Blue World, the Green World, and the Orange World.

**Small is Beautiful**
Companies begin to break down into collaboration networks of smaller organisations; specialisation dominates the world economy.

**Companies Care**
Social responsibility dominates the corporate agenda with concerns about changes in climate and demographics and embedding sustainability becoming the key drivers of business.

**Corporate is King**
Big company capitalism rules as organisations continue to grow bigger and individual preferences trump beliefs about social responsibility.
— The Blue World

The Blue World is a world dominated by huge companies and represents capitalism in the most extreme sense of the word. Driven by profits and results, these companies will use precise metrics to measure performance, location, and health. Health monitoring, enabled by wearable technology, will enable the provision of health guidance and treatment in order to reduce sick leave, thereby resulting in a longer work-life span and increased efficiency.

In order to maintain a constant flow of opportunity, Blue World companies will rely on self-funding third-party research centers, innovation firms, universities, and startup incubators.

— The Green World

The Green World is, in terms of its ideological perspective, the opposite of the Blue World. Instead of being driven by profit and performance, Green World organizations will develop a social conscience of, and social responsibility for, their impact on society.

They make profits in a responsible way, and spend them on making a positive difference. They will play an important role in supporting and developing their employees and local communities.

Green World companies will reduce their carbon footprint to a minimum, replacing travel with online communication. The emphasis will be on the impact that the workplace has on employee health and wellbeing.

“46% of HR professionals expect at least 20% of their workforce to be made up of contractors or temporary workers by 2022.”
— The Orange World

The Orange World is more fragmented, where smaller is better. The big organizations are broken down into collaboration networks of highly specialized, freelance contractors. Work will become more flexible and workers will work on various projects, and with more than one company at a time.

Workers will be heavily reliant upon technology to manage their projects, to collaborate, and to build relationships. The key challenges will be to find the right person for each job in a competitive job marketplace, and to coordinate and cooperate at maximum efficiency.

— The Place of Collaboration

The results of this study can leave us wondering how collaboration tools will evolve to better adapt to each scenario.

**In the Blue World**, collaboration tools will need to focus on data generation and performance tracking. They will have to deliver real-time data analytics from all aspects of employees’ work, and maybe even their personal lives and health as well.

Wearables will have a significant part to play in this world where our quantified selves will be competing on the basis of data-driven performance reports.

**In the Green World**, collaboration tools will be used for two main reasons. First, co-creation to engage customers, partners, local communities, and others to create new products and services will require substantial collaboration.

Moreover, the necessity of reducing our environmental impact will encourage the use of collaboration tools in order to diminish long distance commuting.
64% of people around the world believe that technology will improve their job prospects.

In the Orange World, collaboration tools will rule the way in which we do business, and by extension, the way in which we create products and services.

Task-specific collaboration tools will continue to emerge and compete, while broader collaboration tools based on project management and communication will become crucial and act as hubs that ignite production.
02
The Digital Collaboration Framework
Creating, Structuring and Managing Knowledge and Collaboration
In order to best anticipate potential evolution in the way we work, we must first understand the fundamentals of what collaboration in the workplace truly entails.

The main components of collaboration at the workplace in the digital world are the management of knowledge, the creation digital record, and structuring collaboration - each at the organizational level.

**The Networking of Minds: Managing Digital Knowledge**

The transmission and management of knowledge is an age-old concept that has developed as technologies have advanced. Some 15 years ago, before the Internet was a widespread phenomenon, Knowledge Management was the centralisation, storage, and tagging of information to make it more easily accessible.

Today, in the era of social networking and all that is digital, Knowledge Management means implementing good working practices, finding solid technical solutions, and fostering the right atmosphere – all so as to enable the collective brainpower of an organisation to function at its best.

**What is Digital Knowledge Management?**

Knowledge Management is above all an approach, a series of practices and the tools put in place to offer each and every team member better access to an organisation’s knowledge. It also eliminates the risk of knowledge getting lost when a team member leaves or retires, or when data is stolen, for example. For an employee, having access to the right piece of information means better decision-making on his or her part, but it also has a positive effect on the
decisions taken by other employees. The end result is that the organisation as a whole can make better, and faster, decisions.

These practices are at the crossroads between the management of human resources and inter-personnel relations on the one hand, and the digital tools linked to data storage capacity, access to information, and notifications on the other.

In order to achieve this objective, knowledge must circulate, the experts in a given field must be identified, there must be strong communication between them, and these same experts must also be willing to share their knowledge. An essential prerequisite to the practice of sharing is the principle of trust among its participants. Without trust, the concepts of interaction and sharing cannot be digitised.

— Trust as the Bandwidth for All Communication

Trust, with a capital “T”, is by its very nature difficult to instil. It is not enough just to say it. Trust must be put into practice every day, and comes into being in the long term.

It is the multiplicity of human interactions, both physical and digital, and in the long-term, which enable a climate of confidence to emerge.

When there are multiple, strong social connections, there is greater opportunity for reciprocity, for the flow of information, for collective action, for increased happiness, and the (serendipitous) result of all this is increased trust. The economy of knowledge — and of sharing — is also the economy of trust. Trust is an important vehicle in the creation of values and ultimately, the creation of wealth.

The primary cornerstone of trust is the attitude of the individual, multiplied by as many people. It is this that will be at the core of the knowledge and ethos of a company. It can start with a simple attitude: “saying what we do and doing what we say”, circulating the good news along with the bad,
maintaining a positive attitude without becoming complacent, going to the heart of problems without worrying about the reactions....

The organisation of a company also plays an important role in the circulation of knowledge. This means eliminating all bureaucracy, abandoning practices of micromanagement, and working towards a system of organisation that is as flat as possible, looking beyond the behaviour of the individual and the implementation of a good system of organisation, around the use of digital.

Web and mobile applications can help create transparency in day-to-day work, which is vital to nurture trust. Dedicated solutions enable an organisation to clearly display its work, breathing life into the concepts of transparency, synchronisation, and efficiency in an organisation that has little hierarchy and thus fosters creativity.

--- Collaboration, or How to Circulate Knowledge

Working collaboratively has many virtues. It results in an organisation that is prepared for action, ready to work more effectively and efficiently, and capable of generating new knowledge. But more importantly, it creates a climate of trust, marking the start of a positive cycle.

If the spirit of collaboration comes naturally to a Start-up – is in its very genes – it is sometimes not so evident for more traditional organisations. Establishing collaboration on a daily basis can require a great deal of effort at times. Three aspects must be taken into account and worked on:

• **The Human Factor:** Collaboration must be integrated into all forms of behaviour and ultimately into the very culture of a company, starting with greater transparency and where sharing should become a reflex.

• **Organisation:** Collaboration must be integrated into all structures and processes, favouring an organisation that is as flat as possible, based on merit and the recognition of knowledge and expertise.
Technology: Better tools for collaboration, sharing, and communication must be integrated with proper support mechanisms put in place.

Creating the Environment

In an economy in which we work daily to solve problems, knowledge sharing has become a vital element of productivity. It’s in all organizations’ best interest to take the necessary steps to adopt a Knowledge Management culture and structure.

Before applying the practice of collaboration, which itself can boost the transmission of knowledge, it is first and foremost a question of the creation of a digital record and then structuring collaboration in the organization.

The Collective Digital Record

Organizations willing to apply knowledge management need to build and maintain a collective digital record of their information, decisions, and evolution.
Most of us already have a personal digital record, intentionally or not. The use of social networks for example, creates and stores data about personal activities, preferences, etc. Recent smartphones are able to track and log your location almost constantly. Most of your online activity is monitored by websites with the widespread use of cookies.

For those who use online tools such as Evernote, OneNote, Google Keep, Box, and other similar applications, they realize that keeping personal information online is useful for many reasons. Businesses have also leaped into the dematerialise of their documents and processes.

All of this contributes to building a personal digital record that will allow us to find information and documentation easily, trace back on past activities, and organize our thoughts.

— A Personal Digital Record Isn’t Enough

At an individual level, we’re trying to build external assistants to record information that we’re using in our life. Recording and storage takes place in various forms and usually requires multiple solutions, with the goal of helping our brain. However, personal digital records can tenfold their benefits when accumulated and shared among a group of people, such as at the organizational level.

— Organizations Need a Digital Record for Their Teams

Knowledge workers face constant shifting between different problems to solve and other type of work. Whether it is on a personal, professional, or social level, we are always collaborating with different groups of people - and maintaining a thorough record, digital or not, of what is said, done, shared etc, is a tedious task.

On a larger scale, like that of an organization or a team, there is an increasing need for agile systems and tools to help build that collective record.
People spend more and more time trying to get in sync at work and build what ultimately are partial records.

With multiple job and career evolutions, collaborators end up leaving with the knowledge and experience that they built over time in the company. And if there was no formal organisation wide digital record, the company loses this valuable knowledge and experience.

— Enterprise Memory is the New Norm

Even with the ever-growing number of specialized tools that we can use to record the content we generate, collective information is still spread around various locations, none of which are easily accessible for other people. In fact, we routinely generate information without thinking about how our teammates and co-workers can find and use it in the future.

For example, fresh hires seldom get the necessary information that they need to perform their job right away because this information is not properly recorded. Instead, it is spread out and lost in the very bottom of someone else’s email inbox, chat log, and file sharing applications. Most importantly, newcomers are not able to immerse themselves into what has been said, done, and shared in the past.
Using dedicated solutions to create and manage a digital record for organizations are now available, and are gaining ground in enterprises.

These solutions sought out to revolve around the pillars of collaboration, include:

- Collaborative task management
- Team communication
- Document sharing

Such solutions enable collaboration within the organization and contributes to the formation of a collective digital record of organizational knowledge. Each member of the organization gain de facto access to a wealth of information about the company, its industry, its challenges - which, in turn, raises engagement on the short and long term.

Typically built as cloud solutions, they enable collaborators to access them anywhere at anytime, granting them more flexibility in their work-life balance.

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Increasing Transparency with the Collective Digital Record

Informational transparency enables detailed tracking of progress of projects, teams, and individuals performances and success. This correlates with the ability to easily identify individual’s duties and contributions, which makes collaborators feel more responsibility for their work.

However, it is not only a technical aggregation of individual records, it is also a collective digital record built by these individuals daily contributions and value creation, creating a common shared mix of information, leading to an increasingly structured collaboration.
CASE STUDY

Spencer Anderson from Fulton Beers Co.
Fulton beers is a craft brewery founded in 2009 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. They produce and sell around 400,000 cases of beers every year from their two local breweries, both located in Minnesota. Fulton beers use Azendoo to create a digital record of their communications and operations.

Spencer is the Director of Brewing Operations. He started using Azendoo as his personal task-list before inviting a few other managers, so they could assign each other tasks. Rapidly, the rest of the team was invited and almost everyone in the company uses Azendoo now.

Their team used to rely on emails for internal communication. Now they use Azendoo to communicate more effectively:

**Azendoo is great for communicating with specific teams. I use Azendoo’s activity feed instead of e-mail for updates to specific teams. Whether it is a quick update, “Chris will be out sick today” to something much more complex, it is a great way to send updates in real time. Fulton’s Azendoo has different organizations divided by different internal teams, so it is very easy to select whom to communicate with!**

Having teams in separate locations, Fulton needed a system that they could rely on to assign tasks. They now are more productive because each member has their own to-do list.
The most important organization that Azendoo provides is its task management. Being able to assign tasks to yourself or others, or teams, with due dates, and followers, and explanations is amazing! Most of our company’s improvements, whether it be an accounting system change or new equipment install, are tracked through Azendoo now.

By putting all their work in their Azendoo environment, the Fulton beers team has successfully achieved creating a collective digital record for their organization. Not without a few positive side effects.

Our project meetings, to discuss the constantly changing list of projects at a growing brewery, have been cut in half, and some weeks we don’t even need to have them. We just say, “it's all on Azendoo”.

With Azendoo, creating a company wide digital record happens naturally and constantly. All team communications, documents and tasks are entered in Azendoo - making it de facto the central hub for your company. Once in place, Azendoo will enhance your communication, reduce your meetings, and make it easier to follow-up on projects and tasks.
Structuring Digital Collaboration

Structured collaboration aims at bridging the gap between brief collaboration - which tends to happen in informal communication tools like email or chat - and extended collaboration – which takes place in formally structured project management or document management tools.

The goals are to become more efficient collectively, without requiring too much effort from participants - as well as to provide a grey area between formal and informal where sharing information and knowledge is encouraged at worst, the core of the company culture at best.

One of the most important aspects of structuring collaboration resides in finding a platform that provides constant context to each piece of information.

— Collaborative Tools are Not Tools of Collaboration

Collaboration takes place at every stage of the value creation in organisations. In order to collaborate, workers use specific sets of tools, depending on the nature of the work, the degree of collaboration needed, and many other factors.

Email, or chat for example, are more communication tools than collaboration tools, although they can be useful to speed up steps or interactions in the collaboration process.

The tendency to use specific tools for specific tasks, such as for example, a collaborative design prototyping software, multiplied by the number of areas such tools are needed, collaboration becomes increasingly disorganised at an organisational level.

Thus, the necessity to structure all of this collaborative work under the same platform - adapted to organisational processes - that serve as a bridge between the team and all of its material.
Ad hoc collaboration happens almost in an informal way, through private conversations or messages - and does not benefit to the rest of the organization because it is not shared.

Centrally-structured collaboration is when information that has been “officially validated” is shared to the rest of the team, on a one-way basis. There is no way to spontaneously adjust the information with the input of others, and changes need to go through a validation process that takes time and energy.

Structured collaboration is between these two states of collaboration - where collaboration happens without the need to be validated, and is open to the rest of the team.

Structured collaboration should be able to support brief or informal collaborative activities, that can be ephemeral as well as ongoing activities. Each of these activities becomes documented and can be picked up, improved, or completely reversed to best suit the present and future needs of the team and organisation.
When collaboration is built around topics - or subjects - rather than around projects, it enables the team to collectively build the collaborative structure of the organisation. Step by step, the structure evolves to match the organisational activities and ultimately its goals and objectives.

Such topics can initiated by any collaborator, to help the team perform and provide an easy way to interact around this particular topic. This categorisation becomes even more valuable when a piece of information can be cross-categorised. It tremendously enhances accessibility to information, and removes the bureaucratic way to organize files, projects or interactions.

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Transforming Accessibility To Collaborative Content

A central tool, given the role to provide structure to all collaborative work, completely changes how much more specific collaborative work is accessed - and consumed.

With an increasing number of work solutions getting collaborative - which still heavily relies on email for access, structure is utmost important. While task specific collaboration depends on the nature of the task and the software, it still needs central aspects of effective collaboration: easy access and quick communication.

Sharing such work on the centralised structured collaboration system enables immediate access to each concerned collaborator, as well a support for communication that will stand the test of time.

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Social, But Another Way...

With Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, and all other social applications, getting real time updates has become natural for most of us.

But when it comes to digital collaboration, keeping control of your information “feed” is important to stay focused on your own responsibilities.
Being able to choose what information each collaborator want to receive updates on is a central aspect of the structured collaboration. Thanks to the collaboratively build structure, it also comes naturally to figure out which topics each collaborator should get notified of, and therefore should actively participate in.
03
The Transformation of Communication - The Core of Effective Collaboration
The Tipping Point - Replacing Email with Collaboration Tools

Email has been around for decades and is still the main communication channel for businesses today. But emails have become a drag on productivity as we all spend time organizing, prioritizing, reading, responding, cc-ing, forwarding, attaching, and so on.

A report from The Radicati Group estimates the average number of business emails sent and received per day to be around 125 in 2015. Those daily emails consume, on average according to a 2012 study by McKinsey Global Institute, 28% of total work time.

The study also found that email is the second most time-consuming activity for workers, and that introducing social networking communication would reduce time spent on email by 25-30%, thereby freeing up some 7-8% of total workweek time that could be allocated to other tasks.3

Improved communication and collaboration through social technologies could raise the productivity of interaction workers by 20 to 25 percent.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Interaction workers tasks</th>
<th>Increased value-added time</th>
<th>Productivity improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading and answering e-mail</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>7.0-8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Searching and gathering information</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5.5-6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication and collaborating internally</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.5-5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role-specific tasks</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>4.0-6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>20-25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: International Data Corporation (IDC); McKinsey Global Institute analysis

Until better communication channels are available and widely used, we will have to keep using email. Even though recent efforts have been made to make mail inboxes less overcrowded and to tackle spam, email still remains a drag on productivity.

Email isn’t appropriate for group conversations and transparency of communication. We could even go one step further and say that it isn’t meant for effective internal communication at all, and that it should therefore be used for external communication purposes only.

Social networks and mobile platforms have redefined how we communicate outside the office with chat-like messaging, status updates and content sharing, all of which are available anywhere, anytime. Today social collaboration software is redefining how we communicate at work, using similar mechanisms to make communication more effective and improve our overall productivity.

Whether these tools are task-specific or are for general communication and project management, social collaboration software is a clear step forward in the way we work. Effective collaboration creates a synergy, and greatly improves the quality of the work produced.

The goal and ability of collaboration is to help people share information as naturally as possible, in order to exchange their knowledge and expertise on a given topic. But it also can be a great way to empower people by enabling them to work when, where and how they want to. It can help to foster creativity and generate new ideas, as well as making problem-solving faster and easier.

Another benefit of social collaboration software is that it flattens your organizational hierarchy, such that any one person is able to collaborate with anyone else. Better interaction simplifies the workflow and saves time.

All of these benefits will allow organizations to achieve more and get closer to their goals than they would by continuing to rely on emails for internal collaboration. The challenge is to replace old habits of communication and create new ‘norms’ of internal communication. In other words, banishing emails.
Banishing Email At the Workplace

— Email – a Bonus or a Block?

There’s no doubt that email has helped make businesses operate faster. It offers a means of communicating across thousands of miles, regardless of time zones, in a cost-effective manner. However, it has also multiplied the volume of work people have to do by increasing the need to respond to urgent messages in a timely manner. Improvements in Internet connectivity speeds worldwide have increased people’s demand for instant responses and their urge to spread information. Emails these days are looking much more like to-do lists, indicating that the amount of information is outpacing our ability to process that material.

— Email Statistics

Here are some data that offers insights on the current status of email: ⁴ ⁵ ⁶

• 205 billion emails were exchanged daily in 2015, and the numbers are projected to increase by 3% yearly until 2019 ends

• 38% of emails in a regular inbox are relevant and significant. The rest are just dead weight

• Previously, relevant and significant emails comprise 42% of the inbox. There is a downtrend in the amount of relevant content in the inbox

• Redundant emails at work cost businesses all over the world an approximate sum of US$650 billion every year

• It takes a regular employee six seconds to react to an incoming email

• A person dedicates 28% (13 hours) of his work week to reading and

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⁵ http://blog.sanebox.com/2016/02/18/email-overload-research-statistics-sanebox/
answering to emails. That’s 650 hours of inherently unproductive labor

• The typical worker cost an employer $10,000 annually for email-induced distractions alone

• Computer users who are cut off from email access change windows 18 times an hour while those connected to email did so 37 times an hour

• Mid-level managers that use up to 100 hours for managing low-value emails preferred constant email access and decreased inbox email volume

Although the amount of emails sent and received is projected to increase, the relevance of every inbox worldwide looks like it’ll take a turn for the worse. Based on the data above, email overload won’t show signs of slowing down, a trend which won’t help with overall productivity. It’s time to find solutions.

— Improving Your Communication

Communication is absolutely vital within any business operation, so getting rid of email does not necessarily fix internal communication and organization. It is more effective to open up different communication channels for different business operations.

The most popular channels used by companies are email, video call software, and online collaboration platforms. The aim is to target three goals:

• To reduce the amount of internal email exchanges
• To deepen teamwork, transparency, and relationships
• To optimize internal communication and business operations
Achieving these goals can be accomplished in three ways:

• Development of organization mind-set and email platform management
• Use of live communication (voice calls, face-to-face communication), especially in team projects
• Use of project management and online collaboration platforms to conduct internal business operations

Although digital by nature, email is created to emulate a postal mailbox. It may have a huge capacity, but it’s not meant to be a channel for instant communication. The result is that email can’t adapt to the speed of the current era.

However, this does not mean that e-mail is obsolete. If used as intended, email can be very effective. The issue with email arises when you attempt to utilize it for other purposes, such as a file storage system, or an instant messenger, or group chat app.

Email does not eat up much memory or bandwidth, especially if it has been optimized for mobile. This feature, plus its user-friendly list-panel format, makes it accessible from virtually any electronic device. Sending an email is like sending a letter; you mail it as required, and wait for the response. It is not intended as an instant messaging service.

Email is ideal for ‘no-pressure’ situations. It’s not meant for high-frequency, high-volume mail traffic – which is exactly what gives rise to email overload. Email’s platform design offers the user time to go through the email list and deal with each at their own pace.

The best way to manage your email is to:

• Trust your instincts and delete whatever looks like garbage
• Write short and clear messages so that your recipient won’t have to respond for clarifications
• Re-use short messages and subject lines, especially when you have a unique email vocabulary or if you have recurring sentences and projects
Other Methods of Communication

Unfortunately, the ‘relaxed’ trait of emails does not contribute to the improvement and stability of the company’s performance. Time is money in business and each delay can add up to millions.

Video Calls
To avoid risk, it’s advisable to conduct team business operations through Skype group call or better yet, team meetings. Here are some advantages of video calls:

• Enables real-time communication and is also remote
• Makes communication possible in almost any situation
• Devices for phone/video calls are portable
• Gives confidence to people who can talk but can’t confront in person

Face-to-Face Meetings
Advantages of face-to-face meetings include:

• It develops trust between people
• It improves credibility
• It lets communicators build better relationships
• Business operations can be communicated using all five senses, making it the most efficient channel
• Body language, in the form of facial expressions, hand and arm gestures, vocal modulation, and other forms of nonverbal behaviour, help demonstrate the genuine character and motives of other people

Face-to-face communication and video calls are the best channels if you want to quickly send your thoughts or ideas across, or if you need to produce immediate results. Face-to-face and video calls also develop stronger bonds within teams, by allowing direct interaction and empathy building.

As powerful as face-to-face and voice calls are, they do fail at one important business process (that email is good at): storing and extracting data.
To push internal communication to its peak performance, a company must develop or adopt a culture of transparency and objectivity, combined with a workplace that stimulates openness and creative thinking.

However, if you do want a communication channel that doubles as a business platform, a beneficial option is to choose project management and collaboration software. These programs or apps offer the following benefits:

- The whole team can monitor the progress and productivity of one another
- Remote employment is not only possible, but also effective
- Stored data is accessible to everyone in the team at any given moment
- The team’s bonds are strengthened through shared experiences
- Availability for urgent calls is increased
- Optimize space, travel time, and money
- Physical limitations on business are bypassed.

These collaboration software platforms can make a big positive difference in company culture and work ethic. An orderly and transparent working environment, even if it’s digital, helps team members strategize their personal work systems to match others, creating harmony in the workplace.

The Information Age is pushing us to create new ways to communicate freely and deliver results. When techniques, such as email, start causing nothing but inefficiency and stress in the workplace, their effectiveness needs to be addressed.

Although email does have a place in business, it is often misused. Employing other means of communication can take the burden off your inbox. Whatever resources you utilize, take advantage of their strengths and manage them in the way they were intended. In this manner, you can help increase your productivity and ultimately achieve your goals.
CASE STUDY

Eddie Opara from Pentagram
Pentagram is an independent design firm with a difference. Exclusively run by designers who are partners in the firm, Pentagram employs 200 people across nineteen different teams spanning the globe.

The team based in New York adopted Azendoo as an antidote to email frustration, however, use of the platform has spread organically among Pentagram teams. Eddie Opara, one of Pentagram’s designer-partners, explains:

The conversation that I had with one of my partners was just on a whim, where she said: “what is that, let me have a look at it”. I told her what it is and immediately she was on it, and then her whole team was on it! Then my other partner was on it, because someone from my team started talking to them about Azendoo, and then they were using it!

These days, Eddie’s team use Azendoo as their sole means of internal communication. Documents are attached to tasks, and by using Azendoo on their smartphones and other devices, alerts and notifications ensure no messages get missed — putting an end to nagging emails (and snarky replies) for ever.

I really don’t like working with email. I don’t find it useful at all, especially if I need to be reminded to do something. Azendoo has been incredibly beneficial in that regard.
Azendoo works for Pentagram because the simplicity of delegating and viewing progress on tasks allows for transparent and assured team communication.

We’re right on time. We’re able to relay that information to the client, and that has been a very, very hard thing to do previously.

No matter which project the team is working on, from branding quirky toy apps to dealing with exclusive architecture consultants, meeting and exceeding client expectations is easier with Azendoo.

Keeping up-to-date used to be arduous for Eddie and his project coordinator, necessitating tedious team meetings to update each other on project progress. Using Azendoo, Eddie can simply view, update and follow up on delegated project tasks — and reserve meetings for talking about the really interesting stuff.

What Azendoo has done is that it allows to actually have team meetings without going over projects. We want to talk about design and new ideas, or what event or books we are reading. We don’t want to be talking about “did you do this task, did you do that task” in a meeting. I just don’t think it’s viable, I don’t think it’s right. And Azendoo has started to take that away very, very quickly for us, which is fantastic.

With Azendoo improving team task management and meetings – and pushing their productivity up another notch – Pentagram’s continued ascent to world notoriety seems assured.

LEARN MORE ABOUT AZENDOO
Improving Team Communication

Communication has always been one of the most important aspect of work collaboration. Now, more than ever. With the multiplication of support of communication, having a set of best practices for your team communication becomes an absolute necessity.

— Communication - Joining Separate Parts

Teams within a business collaborate together on projects and tasks, with the aim of using different strengths within individual components. This is all well and good, but a team that doesn’t communicate well is like an engine that has been broken down into its separate parts. All are in great working order, well-oiled and cared for, but without the rest of the engine components, the individual parts just won’t work how they were supposed to.

Your team is no different. Each member will be working on their individual projects, which when combined create the completed picture. By implementing an ongoing communication strategy throughout, the whole project will gel together seamlessly at the end.

— A Well-Oiled Engine

When communication is increased and developed, it is like pouring more oil onto that proverbial engine – it just glides along, with all the different bits slipping naturally into place. Understanding of the overall project is developed, productivity increases, projects are completed on time, continuity improves, and results begin to soar through the roof.

So, your business turnover will likely see an increase, but there are other benefits as well. Team members build trust in each other, create strong bonds, and have a sense of loyalty to each other. All of this provides a safe, secure, and pleasant working environment for your team, helping to increase efficient working practices.
A report by AON demonstrates that when communication improves, so does employee engagement.\(^7\) When employees are engaged, they speak more positively about the organization, they stay longer, thus increasing retention rates, and are more motivated within their job role.

--- **Methods of Communication**

Communication is more than just talking face-to-face, although this form of communication should never be neglected. However, individual people and projects may dictate different types of communication. Technology plays a big part of our communication toolbox and, when used effectively, can save time and help team members work more efficiently.

Normally, a combination of methods works well on most projects, but the key here is how to increase the overall communication across the whole team. By implementing a few simple strategies, you should start to see an increase in team interaction. To give you a head start, we’ve come up with some tips, but don’t stop here; be creative and think outside the box!

--- **Open Door Policy**

When everyone is shut behind closed doors, it creates an atmosphere of secrecy. This applies physically as well as psychologically. As outlined in an article on Forbes, by physically opening your door, or encouraging an open plan environment, you are clearly communicating that everybody is part of the same team.\(^8\) You are effectively removing the barriers.

This also offers the team a message of transparency, an important concept for building trust and clarity. Your team should also know that they can come to you at any time for help and guidance, and that you encourage interaction between colleagues.

Another positive aspect with an open door policy is that it encourages communication on a regular basis, rather than as a blast of communication (as

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often seen in meetings). With an open door policy, the status of the project can be continually discussed, leading to issues resolved immediately. Waiting until a weekly meeting to address problems in one go is like pressing the button too many times in quick succession on your computer – eventually it reaches overload and crashes!

— Encourage Two-Way Feedback

Knowing how to give detailed and constructive feedback comes into its own as a method of increasing team communications. Learn how to offer feedback that coaches your team members rather than creating extra boundaries.

Although verbal feedback can be a positive experience for all, encouraging a two-way conversation that enables your team to self-evaluate, it is difficult to retain all the information this way. Make sure you back it up with a written record, whether via your task management system or individually. If you are using task management software, feedback is visible to all which can help increase the overall communication and productivity.

Furthermore, using online feedback as a form of communication to virtual teams has been shown in a study in Small Group Research to increase performance, as well as increasing motivation and satisfaction.9

— Clarity of Roles and Responsibilities

Unclear instructions and miscommunications are the cause of many problems at the average workplace. If a team member is unsure exactly what is required of them, they are likely to flounder and not complete the task to the correct standards.

By clarifying roles and responsibilities you are jumping the first hurdle to increasing communications. By using techniques such as Responsibility Chartering (RACI), accountability for each task is placed with the most appropriate person, which helps to clarify conception, expectation, and behavior of each different role.10

9 http://sgr.sagepub.com/content/37/5/459.short
— Build the Team Spirit

If the team gets on well, they will automatically communicate better. Do you remember when you first joined a firm as a junior, standing awkwardly at the coffee machine, not knowing what to say to all your new colleagues? Even now, there are probably still a few people in the office who you just smile and say hello to in passing, without ever having a real conversation.

Building team spirit not only gives everyone the opportunity to get to know each other better, but helps to create an environment where everyone feels they have an investment in the outcome. According to team bonding specialists, Teambonding, this in turn improves communication channels.11

Meeting together socially gives the team a chance to relax together without the boundaries of the work environment. You may find it effective to all go out to lunch occasionally, or have “dress down Friday”, or even a weekly fitness class one lunchtime a week can be enough to break the ice. Or even better, an interdepartmental sports challenge can really bring your team together, as the competitive spirit drives them to work together.

— Use Time Wisely - Monday Morning Coffee Time

Coffee breaks seem to be randomly distributed within some companies, with different team members breaking at different times. Why not consider going back to the “good ol’ days”, when coffee time was at a set time every day. The whole office downs tools and meets up in the canteen for a cuppa and a chin-wag, providing the ideal opportunity for informal meetings and discussions.

Coming together face-to-face in an informal situation provides the ideal environment for team members to relax and go over what they have been working on, and any issues they are facing. Of course, they do need downtime too, when they can forget about work for 10 minutes, but just being together and practicing the art of conversation as a group will often be enough to encourage the team to discuss work as well.

11 https://www.teambonding.com/reasons-for-team-building/
Another option is to offer an extended break period once a week – Monday works well – where the second half of the break is purely for work based discussions. A report on Harvard Business Review details research carried out on improving communications through set coffee breaks, and results demonstrated how social time could account for more than “50% of positive changes in communication patterns”.

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**Training**

When it comes to communication, you should never overlook the virtues of training. Training does take time, effort, and money, but according to Warkentin and Beranek, improved interactions were achieved by teams that were given relative training.

This particular research concentrated on the benefits to virtual teams that rely on communications software, where much of the traditional training has focused on use to the software rather than “interpersonal communications dynamics”. Communications training is often overlooked in this area, yet implementing this type of training helps improve the quality of work overall.

Various courses are available to improve communication skills, aimed at improving ability to deliver your message, inform, and persuade.

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All the basics are covered, including verbal, written, face-to-face, building relationships, giving presentations, presenting feedback, and much more. Research published in PubMed demonstrates how communication skills courses improved inter-collegial communication, which although not obvious immediately after the course, became more pronounced 6 months after the course was completed.14

— Online Tools Instead of Meetings

According to a report from Mckinsey & Company, the average team member spends over a quarter of their day in their inbox.15 On top of that, nearly 20% of the day is spent chasing information or seeking someone to help with specific tasks. That is a lot of lost productivity time, which is why more companies are turning to cloud-based task management software.

This type of software allows you to centralize whole projects in one place, allowing every member of the team to access the information quickly and easily. It eliminates the need for backwards and forwards emails, plus decreases the amount of meetings.

As a manager, you can quickly see the status of the project through progress reports, keep on top of any issues that arise, and monitor team interaction and communication. Your team can click on the status report, upload pertinent information, communicate directly with colleagues, and so much more. The end result is better communication, saved time, and increased productivity.

— Succeed at Communication

Whether you are working with a remote team, or in an office environment, good communication is an important factor to the success of any project. Therefore, increasing effective communication should be high on the agenda of any business manager.

15 http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/high_tech_telecoms_internet/the_social_economy
All forms of communication should be encouraged but some methods will be more effective for certain projects. However, you can easily increase communication across the workplace by implementing these simple strategies.

As Plato said; “Wise men speak because they have something to say; fools because they have to say something”. Increasing communication is great for business, but as with all things in life, always make it count.
Digital Efficiency & Personal Productivity
Training for Digital Efficiency

Established companies have but one goal: resilience. During most of the 20th Century, it was enough to ensure not only their survival, but their dominance. In the 21st Century, new challenges arose. With the emergence of new technologies, companies absolutely need to train their workforce to adapt, develop new skills, diffuse radically new cultures, and find unsuspected opportunities. Here are a few ways to help your team to adjust to these new challenges and embrace innovation.

— Learning Expedition

Some organizations, such as Orange, decided to send a large part of executive managers to a “learning expedition” in San Francisco. There, they discovered the startup ecosystem and were present at an opening of chakras on big data by a professor from Berkeley. This experience ended with community work on a group of startups. The exercise was to help a whole group understand how to develop collaboration inside the team.

— Digital Academy

Another organization, Edenred, created a “Digital Academy”. Internal training with instructors have been practically replaced by online training. For example, Orange employees have learned how to use 4G, social networks, and internal tools like web conferencing. Quietly, employees got into the habit of using PC, mobiles, and tablets. They also passed tests in the form of quizzes, in order to evaluate their level and keep tracking their progress.
— Reverse Mentoring

In Axa, an insurance company, 55 young people explained to 250 older employees how to make the most out of online research, social networks, and showed them Axa’s presence on the Web. Here is a great example of a “Reverse mentoring” program.

All of the generations communicate and share their skills. There is more harmony in the company because digital natives and laggards work together.

— The Power of the Need

A lot of people, mostly with over 20 years’ experience and outdated habits, are still reluctant to adopt new tools or new technologies in the workplace. The key to this problem is to demonstrate their real benefit for the employee. Forcing someone into a new usage never works. When employees understand all the advantages of new technology, they quickly adopt it. At FedEx, 4,300 iPads were distributed to jet pilots. The benefit was clear: the end of papers and heavy navigation guide. As a result tablets were rapidly adopted.

— Employee Exchange Program

To improve marketing initiatives on Internet and employee skills, some companies, such Google or P&G, performed an “employee exchange program”. Each employee is embarked on the other company’s learning program.

This way, they discover new ways of working and see by themselves the benefits of collaborating differently. They come back with new skills and business ideas. Bottom line for P&G: the company dramatically increased online sales!
— Serious Game

Axa chose another way to help their workforce development, using with a “serious game”. The principle is easy: to let employees enroll on a « game » that develops new skills or ways of solving problems.

In 3 weeks, 15% of target employees at Axa connected spontaneously to the game, which the purpose was to satisfy a virtual client. Each player received a score at the end of the conversation. Bottom line: 15,000 hours of learning and around 375,000€ of savings for the company.

— COOC

MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) have initially addressed schools and colleges needs. After a massive success in education, they now provide the same light and professional infrastructure to companies to train their workforce (renamed “COOC” for Corporate Open Online Course). Some medium and large organizations have well understood the benefit of going online for staff training: the programs propose a versatile approach to training, with high quality, and at a very low cost.
Innovating at the required pace, or as radically as necessary, is a challenge for most organizations. The power of habits, an overconfidence in their current models, or the reluctance of their staff to change things are the three main hurdles. Innovating from the inside is not always the best way to manage high-speed transformation.

Some aging companies simply buy startups that are trying to disrupt their value chain. Others prefer to work with accelerators and come with corporate partnerships: they jointly find a viable idea to develop, then the accelerator builds the perfect team, and the company funds it. The new startup is tied to the incumbent staff and ignites new ideas or ways of working. Sowing by doing, in a nutshell.

Change is not about new competitors entering the market anymore. Software is eating the world and startups can deform or disrupt the value chain in the blink of an eye. Some believe that the best ways to prevent from the dislocation of entire industries are to invest in staff and help them embrace change.

Enhance Personal Productivity

There are only so many hours in a day to complete all your tasks. Using those hours wisely to increase your productivity is a more feasible option right now. Luckily, there are some simple ways to improve productivity.

Being organized is key to increased productivity in the workplace, particularly when the task at hand is extensive and involves several team members. This organization applies across the entire team if getting more productive is your focus.

When your team is charged with a large project, it can be pretty daunting. Considering the time and effort to complete can have the effect of making your mind go blank. The solution is to break the project down into manageable chunks.
Is your Productivity Up or Down?

According to research, when staff are happy, their productivity increases by 12%.\(^{16}\) Creating an environment that is pleasant to work in goes a long way to increasing this feeling of contentment at work, as does managing workload, providing support, giving regular feedback, communicating well, and being clear on job roles and responsibilities.

On the other side of the scale, stressed workers suffer a lowering in productivity.\(^{17}\) Major stress can be the result of too much work, and it is this type of stress that leads to burnout and lowered productivity.\(^{18}\)

Balance is critical here. By planning each project carefully, plus managing it on an ongoing basis, it is possible to cut through the chaos and create a plan that improves the productive process for the whole team. The manager is ultimately responsible for this, but the job can be made much easier by careful planning, and employing virtual help such as cloud-based software to aid management.

Start With a Plan

To be able to break down your tasks, you must first have a plan. Planning is the most important stage of any project for creating workflows, and has to be handled by the manager. Controlling schedule planning and task management is a task that should not be delegated out to other departments.

“Productivity is never an accident. It is always the result of a commitment to excellence, intelligent planning, and focused effort.”

- Paul J. Meyer -

\(^{16}\) https://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/economics/staff/epROTO/workingpapers/happinessproductivity.pdf
\(^{17}\) https://www.academia.edu/309089/The_Impact_of_Stress_on_Employee_Productivity_Performance_and_Turnover_an_important_managerial_issue
The first step in the creating processes is to record the project and start looking at what tasks are involved. For example, let’s imagine your project is to improve your content marketing strategy. How exactly are you going to achieve that, and with maximum productivity?

— Prioritize

The next step is to prioritize each individual task. List your tasks and consider them against your overall aim. Some will naturally have to be completed prior to moving on to other tasks, and these need to be top of the list.

Other jobs may be important to the overall completion but don’t necessarily impact the day-to-day flow of the project. These can be scheduled for later.

Divide these tasks into now, soon, or later (with dates attached). Use any scale that works for you, or if you are using management software, input the tasks into the relevant time pane.

— Use your Team’s Strengths

Delegating is a crucial aspect of increasing employee productivity, so getting to know your team is critical. Dividing the project into smaller tasks is only one part of the story; knowing who to give each task to is equally important. This will also help improve your company’s overall collaboration.

Assigning roles should not be completed carelessly. Instead consider the strengths and weaknesses of the team and compare these with the tasks in-hand. A system called the RACI matrix – responsible, accountable, consulted, informed – can be used to help clarify all roles and responsibilities. This then helps you pinpoint capability, availability, and skills so that tasks are not given to someone unable to fulfill them.

19 https://project-management.com/understanding-responsibility-assignment-matrix-raci-matrix/
“Talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence win championships.”

- Michael Jordan -

Delegation can be difficult, yet letting go is crucial to development, and if you don’t, progress will stutter. Make the process easier by creating a delegation plan that demonstrates the tasks across the whole workforce.

— Keep it Clear

Next step, ensure that everything is clear and well defined. Every different task within a given project needs to be recorded to maintain the productive workflow, with all the necessary detail. State the deadlines, aims, title, work required, task leader, and how it fits into the overall project. The project should be completely transparent, and presented in such a way that all members of the team can access all task details.

— To-Do Lists

Encourage staff to produce to-do lists at the beginning of every day. The back of an envelope may be the preferred medium for some people, but point out that these have a habit of ending up in the bin. Instead, use a cloud-based task management system that allows you to track and manage your to-do list.

The added bonus is that the whole team can view each to-do list, enabling you all to track progress. It also makes it much easier for you to delegate, comment, or interact with advice and guidance, as well as making the whole team share good practices.

This type of task management software frees up huge chunks of time spent on unnecessary meetings, and waiting for email replies and phone calls. Plus,
there is no need to search your files for the information you need, or to scroll through your emails; it is all available under the project button.

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**Multiple Smaller Tasks**

Breaking important tasks down into manageable smaller bits really comes into its own. Start bullet-pointing your ideas and strategies. Say you come up with 20 points, that is now 20 separate subjects to consider. Now you have 20 small tasks to complete, each one corresponding to your bullet point. On each task, set an achievable time goal that fits into the overall larger task. If you don’t have a deadline, it is easy to procrastinate.

“If you spend too much time thinking about a thing, you’ll never get it done.”

- Bruce Lee -

Just focus on that one small subject, treat it like a complete project in its own right and when it’s complete, tick it off, and move on to the next one.
Batching Tasks

Task switching can lead to a 40% reduction in productivity, according to Psychology Today.\(^{20}\) This is where batching can come into its own. Batching means doing the same thing for several different tasks at once, instead of flitting between tasks.

What this does is focus a particular part of your brain, rather than forcing it to switch back and forth between different processes. The creative part of your brain works differently to the analytical part, for example.

Sticking to one type of task at a time uses less time and energy, so if four of your tasks require some detailed research, why not dedicate your day to research? Not only will your brain thank you for not switching, but you’ll also get more work achieved as a result.

Use a Timer

Concentration times differ between individuals, but if you find your mind wandering towards what is happening on social media, then you’ll know you have drifted off-task.

A method to stay focused on short tasks is to set a timer. Mindtools discusses how the Pomodoro technique works by breaking down your work intervals into manageable periods, often 25 minutes, followed by short intervals of up to 5 minutes.\(^{21}\)

This is backed up research that demonstrates how short breaks help keep you focused and thus more productive.\(^{22}\) Depending on your tasks, you can set a certain number of intervals before taking a longer break, or moving on to a different topic.

The important aspect is to mark off the Pomodoros, which gives you a sense of achievement. It also increases the flow and focus of work, without allowing for unnecessary interruptions. Setting a time scale helps to break the tasks down into manageable chunks, particularly if it is an in-depth or complicated subject.

\(^{21}\) https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/pomodoro-technique.htm
\(^{22}\) http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21211793
Putting It All Together

That big project needn’t be so daunting. In order to encourage higher productivity, all you need to do is be organized and plan ahead.

• First, break the project down into sections, and delegate job roles to the most suitable team members, based on mutual agreement.
• Then, guide each team member to break their individual tasks down into bite-sized chunks, and view each aspect as a separate task.
• Create to-do lists and prioritize each task, working with the whole team to ensure the tasks interlock when required.
• Monitor the tasks, offering advice and guidance as required,
• Mark off each task as completed, and move on to the next one.
• Use techniques such as batching, time-keeping, and frequent short breaks to further increase productivity.

Personal productivity and digital efficiency are bound since most of our work happens digitally. Mastering new tools and trying out different systems are the new requisites for increasing productivity, which in turn, affects your whole team’s goals and objectives.
Conclusion

The digital transformation of the workplace is no longer a question of when, but of how. As this ebook outlined, there are systems that are already used and that are efficient in building a collective digital record, structuring collaboration, and enabling the circulation of knowledge in a company.

Internal communication has to evolve away from email to become more accurate and reliable. Communication should be based around context, without withholding information - and easy to find. However, these new digital communication tools require training to adapt and improve overall communication in the company.

Digital efficiency should be a priority for businesses because they are the base of the gains in productivity and collaboration for your teams. Personal productivity enhancement needs to be encouraged upon - through the use of collaborative task management tools.

Such tool enables collaboration on tasks around collective goals and objectives, thus fostering collaboration on the smallest pieces of the puzzle, working outward to make digital collaboration the norm, and achieve adapting your company to the digital transformation of the workplace.
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CHANGE THE WAY YOU WORK