

A Day in the Life at Work: 2020

By Katherine Jones, Bersin by Deloitte

You are late for work! Racing out of the house, your wrist device automatically lowers your thermostat, turns off all the lights and activates your security system. Your driverless vehicle is waiting to take you to your office, once archaically dubbed the “office of the future.”

The same wrist device—or perhaps the cuff of your sleeve—admits you to your building, clocks you in if applicable—and will track your whereabouts during the work day—not for stalking purposes, but so your peers know where in the work complex you are (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Your Potential Workplace of the FutureSource: Bersin by Deloitte. 2015.

The workplace has become a totally unethered environment as walls and windows become active “screens” and those old-fashioned keyboards, left over from desktop computer days, are replaced by voice activation, all accepting natural language directives and queries. Your personal device tells you your agenda but more importantly, tells you what your business goal is for the day, (whether it involves quality of food prepared in a restaurant, number of spotless rooms in a hotel, or progress in creating a major RFI with your teammates, as examples). Because the computing system in use knows you and your position, knows your teammates and knows what you are working on, the applications you use are intuitive, personalized and, although

very sophisticated, easy to use. You are there to do your job, not fail miserably with complex technology.

By mid-morning, you look at your wrist device—checking on Leo, your Bassett hound at home—a dog selected for you by computer matching for your gait and walking speed (your partner has a Vizsla, reflecting a much faster pace than yours...); the automated feed and water device in your kitchen reflects his normal feeding time and you tell Leo he is in fact a very good boy for not tipping over the garbage, which you ascertain by a quick scan of your kitchen via the connected home monitoring device that displays in your mobile device.

Back to work! Because your goals are presented to you daily, you know not only what is expected of you, but also what level of quality is expected. As you meet with teammates and converse with your global counterparts, biometric readings let you and the others know the tone and tenor of the conversations, scored to demonstrate the level of what used to be called “engagement” in the task at hand. This application also alerts you if a colleague is troubled or overly stressed—so you can respond more appropriately.

Likewise, in a check-in session with your manager, you find she wants to have a “stay” interview, as she sees in her predictive app on her mobile device that while your engagement level codes remain high, it has been some time since you’ve had a bonus; she sees you as a high performer—confirmed by her performance predictor, and she doesn’t want you to get restless and leave the company. Furthermore, at a manager’s meeting, you have been discussed as a successor in two different roles—she wants to discuss career options with you and allow you to design a path to the career opportunity of your choice. Just-in-time, just-enough learning nuggets—often via video—are available so you can review the pre-reqs for either of these next-step positions. You look at one now, again on your

mobile device. Hmm...that position in the other division does look attractive. The application shows the delta between you and those successful in that role – looks doable and interesting – definitely something to consider. You never would have even thought about it had it not been for your manager, despite a career-related pop-up from your organization that appears on your refrigerator screen when you open it in the morning...easy to ignore before coffee. Meanwhile, your manager reviews your goals and progress, and in a one-touch process approves a spot bonus for you; it goes right into your spending card—talk about immediate gratification!

You meet with your global team on your project—using a face-to-face communications program with shared “virtual whiteboards” where notes and comments written by any team member are visible to all. They are digitally saved, of course, and the synthesized summary is sent to each individual participant. The efficiency and ease of communicating and getting work done makes you feel good—no technology overwhelm here!

Intuitive business software, transparent to your entire team, allows your team to study then make decisions on future supply chain sourcing issues, the topic of your meeting. Because you are empowered to act on decisions without multiple layers of control (that was “so 2015”), you can make decisions and put them into play immediately.

At the close of the meeting, teammates rate their feelings – of accomplishment, satisfaction, how the meeting matched their expectations, and the degree of progress made. Awesome—the contingent workers, the home office participants and the widespread group all feel their goals for the time spent were met. A quick “headline” goes to your manager with a thumbs-up – she pops a smiley face to the group as a whole; but the positive notification is automatically noted in each member’s folio; the progress on the project is also automatically recorded and saved, showing up on the project tracker. She also sees an assessment of your collaborative skills in addition

to the business accomplishments derived from your meeting. This creates an automatic prompt for her and her manager—(good skills for promotion!), linked to a succession plan for a colleague whose datasets indicate he is likely to leave the company.

Your wrist device prompts you to a “body break” – part of your company’s fitness incentive plan. You decide to run on the course outside the structures you are working in, knowing that your profile will keep track of your record automatically – allowing a long term look at progress toward a healthier you. Corporate incentives in terms of both spendable points and prizes prove a motivator, as well as the waistline inches lost. Your voice messaging system leaves a text/voice message for your friend who will meet you for your run. Your devices keep a running tally of your profile and your goals, your distances and suggestions for improvement, which are maintained for comparison for next time – all private to you of course.

You feel good – that run allows you to adopt the slower pace Leo will require when you arrive home.

Back From the Future

Some see the world of work in the future as a world of robots; instead we see a world where technology has optimized the abilities of people to do those things that people are uniquely qualified to do. Rather than a technocratic “big brother” environment, technology in the future should allow the mundane, reiterative, and sometimes “mindless” tasks that often frustrate the workers of 2015 to be accomplished automatically – clock-ins and time tracking and reporting; all automatic. Punitive performance management is replaced by ongoing optimization of the individual’s talents. The focus in the future world of work—is work itself: the achievement of organization goals as efficiently and expeditiously as possible, using technology but not driven by technology. Those robots? Manual manufacturing processes will benefit from the continual advance of automation – that is where the robots likely are. By 2020, however, the bulk of the archaic industrial age processes created and adhered to from factory floor days are replaced by business processes that advance the abilities of people to achieve and thrive in the workplace.

About the Author



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