How hybrid working affects productivity 2/23/22

Productivity has always been high on the agenda in organisations. Remote and hybrid working during the pandemic has brought some new advantages as well as complex challenges. When trying to put our processes back on track, we often focus on the process itself and how to streamline it, yet people play a big role in the productivity puzzle.

Productivity may be affected by new requirements, such as transitioning to work from home or adopting the hybrid model of work. Noticing changes in productivity, some businesses will try to simplify processes or introduce new technologies, assuming that with the right approach, performance will move in the right direction.

The main challenges we see in organisations are:

- Failure to prioritise the future through coaching, problem-solving and planning
- Untrained or inconsistently trained workers
- Psychologically insecure employees working remotely
- Inability to adapt to strategic constraints
- Unappreciated variations in practices and standards that are overlooked
- Lack of accountability and transparency
- Lack of accurate, complete, timely, and easy-to-use comprehensive data

Admittedly, none of these challenges is caused solely by bad processes – they all have to do with people. Such challenges should be handled by focusing on the organisation's employees. This approach delivers immediate results and works by addressing two areas:

1. Understanding – Leaders need to be able to identify and understand the problems in their organisation. This could be an intelligent, automated performance report that gives a clear picture of the organisation's performance – where it's going wrong and what's driving success, and helps identify areas for improvement. There are many tools that can help with this, such as PowerBI, Tableau, or Google Data Studio for visualisation, and programmes such as Microsoft Teams, Google Workspace or Cisco Webex Teams, to give all employees an opportunity to present and interpret the data so that decisions can be made quickly and confidently.
2. Capability – Organisations need leaders who are willing to address the problem areas. The company should equip its leaders with the skills to address challenges in meaningful ways – to solve the small problems of its people in order to achieve big change.

This can take the form of leadership coaching, simulations, virtual training/games, visual management boards or other tools and training, but the ultimate goal is to embed leadership skills through behaviour change. Leaders need to be exposed to areas they may not have been previously familiar with, such as new ways of working (e.g. Agile, Lean, behavioural economics), conducting effective meetings and performance conversations, adopting best practices for performance reviews, and properly defining problems or identifying root causes through problem-solving methods.

Leaders need employees who are able and willing to address challenges using their new skills based on a culture of trust and psychological safety. An organisation's processes are developed by interacting with its people. Some companies have found that by looking at these issues from a "people and performance" perspective, an average of 10–25% of capacity (and often more) is freed up in just three months.

Supported employees feel motivated to perform better, making it easier to maintain business continuity in

a crisis such as a global pandemic, and are more resilient in transitioning to an increasingly digital hybrid model of work. By building leadership capability and using the right digital tools, techniques and ways of working, you will not only provide better employee (and customer) experiences but also accelerate and boost your organisational productivity.