

The Evolving Workforce

Report #2: The Workforce Perspective

Australia





Australia Insights

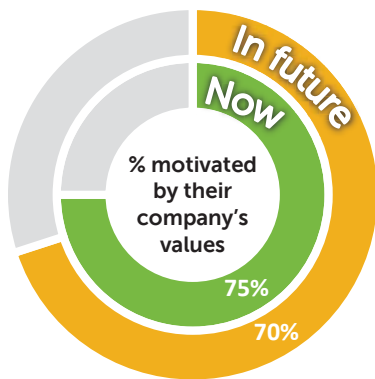
Executive Summary

Australian workers tend to be responsible with data, are trusted by their employers, and in agreement with their organizations' values.

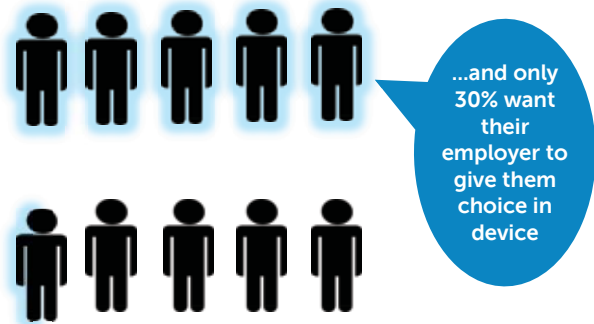
Australians are pragmatic and take a predominantly functional view of their technology. As such, technology has not yet worked its way into the fabric of the workplace in the way that it has done elsewhere in the world. Only 53% indicated a need for technology in order to work effectively. 30% feel it is important to them that their employer gives them a choice of device, and only 45% think it's important that their organization uses the latest technology. These figures tend to be noticeably higher for men than for women, but as a whole, and consistently across sectors, the Australian worker is not that excited by technology. In fact, a large number see it as a security risk and a cause of frustration and stress.

Perhaps most significantly, this coolness towards the internet and associated technologies is going to change. There is a striking division, across a wide array of indicators, between older and younger workers. The under 35s see technology as a way to improve productivity, and they care much more than their elder colleagues do about how well their employers perform on IT issues. Australian employers should take note - the rising generation in their workplaces is going to demand much, much more when it comes to technology.

75% of Australians are motivated by their company's values and **70%** expect this to describe their situation in 10 years



Only **53%** of Australian workers feel they need technology to work effectively



More than 40%

of Australian workers feel their company monitors how they spend their time during the day

Magnitude of threats perceived by Australian workers

work life encroaches on private life

Working remotely erodes team spirit

employer monitors daily role

erosion of team spirit

IT resources slowing productivity

Trend #1: Crowdsourcing and Crowdsourcing service



Hypothesis

The workforce of the future, for many industries, could be thousands of people working in different places. Is cloud computing and other ICT applications going to make it easier to distribute more tasks and services and to invite input from a community through crowdsourcing?

Top insights

Australian workforce.

Comparatively speaking Australian workers consider themselves less reliant on technology, compared to other countries around the world. Only 53% claim they need technology in order to work effectively, with similar numbers agreeing that technology and the Internet are important aids in problem solving (54%), and that technology helps them work more productively (57%). However – these still represent a majority of the

There are signs this could be set to change. Younger Australian workers are considerably more engaged in the technological revolution than their older colleagues. 70% of 25-34 year olds responded that they need technology in order to work effectively and 70% of under 25s believe technology is an important aid to problem solving.

Our survey also revealed some interesting differences between verticals. 70% of those in retail recognize technology's role in improving productivity, rising to 86% in central and local government.

Furthermore, our Australian respondents were quite sharply divided along gender lines. 53% of Australian men believe that technology is important in helping individual employees 'to make a bigger contribution to their organizations', but only 39% of their female colleagues agree. Looking to the future, 84% of respondents believe that the Internet and technology will 'create opportunities for organizations to do business in different ways.'

Implications

Still early days for this trend in Australia, where awareness of the potential for IT and technology to help realize the benefits of crowdsourcing – bringing together resources and people in new and productive ways – is growing, but still has some way to go before it becomes universally established. There are important pockets of engagement: those aged under 34, those working in government, and to some extent males are leading the way. The imperative for employers and a potential opportunity for the IT industry is to fast-track awareness across groups in the working population where the benefits of this trend are less apparent.

Trend #2: Productivity measured in outputs, not hours

Hypothesis

Standardized measures of productivity based on numbers of hours inputted would become less relevant in a knowledge-based economy. What are going to be the newer, softer metrics to assess productivity?

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The overwhelming majority (78%) of Australian workers do not want their productivity to be measured by the time they spend in the office. Although interestingly this fell to 68% amongst the youngest workers, perhaps an indication of a more task-driven role for those under 25 and at the beginnings of their careers.

The preference for measuring productivity by quality of outputs is most evident among government employees, with three-quarters of whom said that is how they like to be assessed.

However, 76% of Australian workers already believe that they are currently assessed mainly on quality. Only four in ten highlight concerns that the time spent at work remains a major influence, with most seeing no sign of this reducing in the future. There is a real appetite for flexible working in Australia. 72% believe that flexible hours allow them to work more productively, and this rises to 80% among the 25-34 age group.

Yet the same isn't true of remote working. Only 30% of Australian workers believe that working remotely results in productivity gains. Although men (50%), private sector workers (47%) and those in larger organizations (53%) are more likely to appreciate the positive impact that remote working has on productivity.

Unlike many of their European counterparts, Australian workers are generally able to conform to traditional working hours. 61% of them claim to complete all their work between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. This figure is higher among women (67%), and interestingly within the private sector (63%). Unfortunately, 59% of Australian workers aged under 25 find it difficult to switch off after work – well above the 43% result for Australian employees of all ages.

Implications

The outputs-based model is already established in Australia. Flexible hours are also common, although remote working is less so. Australia's geography of a fairly small population spread over an enormous land mass, adds weight to the case for remote working, but employee perception still lags. Employers must also take note of younger workers – although often highly engaged, there are concerns over their ability to switch off at the end of the day and the potential for problems this may cause long-term. Is there an opportunity for the IT industry to promote how technology could help improve work-life balance rather than aggravate it?

Trend #3: Changes in the adoption of devices



Hypothesis

The number and types of devices are proliferating and changing. Choice of device would become more about the situation, location and occasion. Are employers and the current systems and processes going to allow for increased end-user utility and choice?

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Compared to many other countries, workers in Australia have a more pragmatic and less aspirational attitude towards their technological devices. Only 30% overtly claim that it's important their employer gives them a choice of device.

This is mirrored by the number of workers who already have that choice, just one third across all verticals. It is worth noting, however, that the figure is somewhat higher among men (43%) and that this rises to nearly half (49%) of Australian workers who expect to have this choice in the future.

The Australian workforce appears well attuned to the issue of data security. While 60% of them are allowed to use their PCs for both work and personal reasons, 40% are concerned that using personal devices for work will make it more difficult to protect their organization's data and IP rights. This attitude is even more prevalent among those working for smaller organizations, 45% of whom share these concerns.

Interoperability is a big issue for the Australian respondents. While in some countries the emphasis is on combining functions within a single device, in Australia it's more important to be able to share data between devices and operate within cloud-based ecosystems. 45% of Australians, rising to 56% of Power Users*, believe it's critical that in future their devices are able to share data in this way, and critically 74% believe it will be universal in the future.

Implications

While in many other countries employees are highly keen to have a choice of work devices, Australian employers place less focus in this area. Instead their emphasis, and by extension that of the IT industry, should be on improving flexibility and promoting the ability to work across multiple devices without concern about breaching corporate IT policy.

Trend #4: Intergenerational kiss and punch

Hypothesis

There will be more intergenerational knowledge transfer between younger 'digital natives' and the older generation. However, is there an increased risk of conflict and tension between workers of different ages, backgrounds, knowledge and skills?

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Broadly speaking, Australian workers under 35 have a quite different view of technology and its effect on the world of work than the over 35s. 70% believe technology is an important aid to problem solving and productivity in the workplace and 66% believe they need technology to work effectively compared to just 53% of the overall Australian workforce.

52% of them believe their time at work is monitored, compared to just 32% of over 45s. 55% of under 25s feel under pressure to work longer hours compared to 40% of all Australian workers. While 59% of those aged 25-34 find it difficult to switch off after work compared to 43% of all Australian employees.

Interestingly, just over half of under 35s (53%) are also worried about remote working and its impact on team spirit compared to only 36% among all Australian employees. Half of under 35s are also concerned by the data security and IP protection issues that may be presented by the personal use of work PCs (versus only a third of all workers).

Implications

There are significant differences across a wide range of indicators by age and generation in Australia. Unlike in some other developed economies, there is less difference between under 25s and 25-34 year olds, although the older employees are generally more tech savvy and attuned to implications it may have on working practices.

Rather than tensions emerging between young and old employees as originally hypothesized, this latest research indicates that younger people are more likely to have higher IT expectations of their employers. The need to engage with this group is paramount, and Australian employers will need to decide whether an issue should be addressed for younger employees or the workforce as a whole, and take note of the outlook prevalent among the youngest workers that will offer a glimpse into the attitudes of tomorrow's workplace.

Trend #5: Values versus rules



Hypothesis

It would become easier to tell what employees are doing, but harder to tell them what to do. In this scenario, would employers use pervasive technology to oversee their workforces at any given time? And if so, would distrust accelerate?

Top insights

Feeling trusted is very important for Australian workers. Seven in every ten declare it to be important, rising to eight in every ten among those who also believe that technology plays a big role in the workplace.

Reassuringly, the overwhelming majority (91%) of Australians do consider themselves to be trusted with company resources, rising higher still among women (94%) and SMBs (93%). However, this figure drops to 86% who expect this trust to still exist in the future, which while still a high proportion in absolute terms, indicates that there are segments of the workforce who expect an erosion of trust to ensue.

Perhaps this could be attributed to a relatively high number (42%) of Australian employees who believe that they are being monitored, with 33% believing that their email communication is specifically monitored. This practice is far more prevalent in larger businesses, 47% of which appear to monitor employee email.

Three-quarters of Australians feel motivated towards their organizations' values. Interestingly, those working in larger businesses are generally more motivated (81%), as are those working in retail (88%). Even among those workers who say they are unhappy with their current roles, an impressive 68% remain motivated to the values of the overall organization.

There is also widespread awareness of, and adherence to, IT privacy policies. 83% of Australian employees across all verticals state they are fully aware of, and adhere to, their company's policies, with 85% adding that they also recognize the importance of such policies.

Implications

In general, Australian workers are responsible with data, trusted by their employers, and in agreement with their organizations' values. This is contrasted by the fact that a relatively large number of workers in Australia are being monitored, and trust levels are projected to decrease in the years ahead. A clear dialogue between organizations and their workers is essential to ensure trust is maintained, and the IT industry is advised to be mindful when recommending monitoring solutions to corporate customers.

Trend #6: Many hats of the IT manager

Hypothesis

As employee aspirations change to a greater onus on happiness, autonomy and choice, workplace IT would be one way of recruiting and retaining staff. Would the job of the IT manager increasingly resemble that of other functions, like the HR manager?

Top insights

A relatively low proportion of Australians (45%) think it's important that their organization uses the latest technology. But, this figure is higher among men (54%) and among those working in larger organizations (51%).

For Australian employees, it's also relevant that organizations provide good IT support (57%) and good hardware and software (57%), although this is comparatively lower than in many other countries, further reflecting Australians' pragmatic outlook on technology.

Similarly, Australian workers tend to be more pragmatic and less excited than workers in many other countries by the devices their employers offer them. Only 36% see PCs and other technologies that come with a role as a tangible perk of the job, although notably there's a clear gender divide with 44% of men in agreement compared to 29% of women. Although, it is also without doubt a greater issue for younger workers - 48% of under 25s and 51% of 25-34s see it as a perk versus just 20% of the over 55s.

Perhaps worryingly, a high proportion of Australian respondents said that they see technology as a cause of frustration and stress. 52% agreed that 'IT problems are a regular frustration,' rising to 61% among those under 35. However, there is still room for optimism, and only 45% expect this to remain a concern in the future.

Implications

Technology is a means to an end for Australian workers, and compared to many other countries this trend is somewhat less critical. Across all Australian employers, it is clear that motivations will vary considerably between individuals and that employees need to understand the subtleties that exist between key groups and respond accordingly. As the consumerization of IT phenomenon grows, the IT industry could potentially play a role in fast-tracking awareness of this trend and highlighting the role that technology can play in improving the quality of employees' working lives.

Hypothesis

The business software of the future will be adopted and designed by employees rather than management or the IT department. Are we going to see more networked, de-centralized organizations to facilitate this shift in corporate hierarchy?

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54% of Australians, rising to 65% of those under 25, consider it important that they can freely access the Internet while working. Yet only 35% feel it is important to have freedom of choice on downloads, and only 37% want involvement in IT decisions, reflecting a general sense that responsibility for such aspects lies with their IT department.

Encouragingly most Australian employers meet these requirements. 77% of Australian employees say they already can freely access the Internet when needed. Just over half (51%) also state that they have freedom to download the software they need, although this figure is notably much lower within large organizations (35%) where stricter and more centralized IT controls tend to exist.

A higher number of Australian workers (49%) report that they are involved in IT decisions, and encouragingly this figure rises to 60% who expect to have an opportunity to input in the future.

However, it's noteworthy that Australian workers are less interested in getting involved in IT decisions than they are in having freedom of choice within the workplace. 64% of them state that 'as long as they get their work done, they think it's important their employer gives them freedom to choose how to work.' This rises further to seven in every ten employees who are under 35 years of age.

Over half (53%) of workers in Australia also agree that 'you need to keep up with the latest technology to be effective at work' and this is increased among younger generations, strikingly some 80% of 25-34 year olds believe this is key.

Implications

It is still too early to predict whether this trend will take hold across the workplace. Australian employers already cater well when it comes to facilitating Internet and download freedom, and on the whole Australian employees welcome a centralized approach to IT infrastructure where ultimate accountability doesn't lie with them. However, there is an ongoing challenge to involve Australian employees in IT decision-making and create opportunities for feedback and input, while maintaining the degree of autonomy that many Australian employees have come to expect.