

At its core, the company of today is made up of two types of worker: the digital native and the digital immigrant. The question is – how many of each kind work in your company already? And more importantly, are you prepared for the significant growth of the digital native population?

### Coming of age

To clarify the terms here, the digital native is someone who has only ever known a world powered by the Internet and operates ‘digitally’, producing, storing and communicating their life online. On the other hand, the digital immigrant has witnessed this technological change in business and is having to adapt to this new environment as quickly as possible.

This is now important to consider because the digital native is coming of age – ready to become your star employee or your top customer. Engaging effectively with this new generation will require whole business structures to incorporate the digital native’s tools and way of thinking. If you don’t speak their language and use their tools, your new customers and new staff will move on and your company will wither and die.

### A different business model

The networked business model made possible by the digital native completely redefines how an organisation operates with the rest of the world and, likewise, fundamentally alters the assets at its disposal. Instead of an industrial production line of depleting resources in need of replenishment, the networked community grows the more it is used and its lifeblood is shared information.

As such, the technologies of connectivity are making this shared information a utility to service the networked information economy. This is key because the consumer expects a consistent level of quality from any utility and the customer will expect no less of the information your business provides in this new environment. Only with collaborative technology will this be possible in the digital age – but fully engaging with this technology is not straightforward, requiring proper guidance through its many steps to realise the full potential.

### Housing the new model army

The industrial business model was founded on mistrust – the first organisational chart, for example, was designed to manage the New York Railway, created so the manager would know who to blame when there was an accident. Conversely, the new digital information model will create a hyper organisation, cut free from outdated technology and decision-making, founded on trust in co-creation, and engaged in a worldwide conversation of many thousands of knowledge-sharing stakeholders.

One of the fundamental side-effects of this is the redefining of the office space. According to the Telework Association<sup>1</sup>, 80% of Britain’s workforce will be removed from the nine-to-five, fixed-office environment in fifteen years’ time. As a result, the physical office building will have become an anachronism with full-time, fixed place employees largely a thing of the past. Instead, a virtual office of connected network relationships will emerge, providing an agile and efficient environment in which the best specialists can be employed solely on the projects relevant to their expertise. Companies will need to establish themselves within this networked business model to gain the most advantage.

### Minding the gap between home and office technology

The home is the digital native’s natural habitat and it is no surprise that like-for-like domestic IT is far more advanced than in the office. From in-depth conversations that Fujitsu conducted with leading European CIOs from FTSE100 organisations, what is surprising is how fast this gap is widening. Indeed, the CIO of one company was facing up to the death of the desktop as the cost of running one in the workplace amounted to between £1,000 and £2,000 per year. At the same time, the technology involved was several generations out-of-date. The CIOs of two other multi-

<sup>1</sup> A membership organisation dedicated to the analysis of mobile, flexible and home-based working. [www.tca.org.uk](http://www.tca.org.uk)

nationals have reacted to this by offering IT allowances to staff to purchase their own equipment. The overall message was that the traditional IT estate was losing its relevance, to younger employees especially.

Even the traditional tools of business aren't safe – email is now seen as cumbersome, a time-consuming and inefficient means of communication. All the while, the digital native is part of the worldwide conversation on MySpace and Facebook, exchanging information through instant messaging and writing on walls. To them, email is archaic. So much so that one large consumer-products company has severely limited staff inboxes simply to force their digital immigrant employees to think and communicate differently. In this way, data inefficiently spread via email is now being incorporated into an anytime-anywhere, information-sharing virtual workspace. And these workspaces are networked into a self-supporting collaborative ecosystem that is growing constantly, organically and in unison.

### **To collaborate, to innovate – the business value**

The many are smarter than the few, so they say, and we've seen that collaborative technologies can offer long-term cost reduction, but how can the worldwide conversation be harnessed effectively in the business space? An important part of the collaborative framework is the way it can be used to develop the innovation process and it is in this area that some businesses are already witnessing significant returns.

Zara is one example of 'shelf-centred collaboration'. The Spanish fashion retailer divides its offerings into three categories, one of which – the 'trend' line – is driven by a network of staff and customer interaction to capture new fashion ideas as they happen. Through this network, Zara can alter its 'trend' line to suit customer demand almost as soon as it is demanded – with 'trend' now accounting for over 50% of total sales. Similarly, Proctor & Gamble has launched its vocalpoint.com website to create an online community of young mothers whose opinions and discussion are guiding its whole parenting product programme. This is a cost-effective alternative to spending many millions of dollars in laboratory research without the risk of introducing a product the consumer doesn't want.

### **Why so pressing? Collaboration and IT productivity**

So, what does the IT community think about collaboration? According to Fujitsu's recent survey, many CIOs felt it was essential for IT to improve the productivity of the work environment. In fact, 89% of companies recognised this. However, almost as many – 79% – felt that reduced operational costs are also essential. Even if the digital native's

collaborative tools can improve productivity, what of their impact on IT budgets?

One organisation has deployed a single, integrated IT infrastructure to improve productivity in a way not possible with the many fragmented infrastructures of previous years. In itself, this infrastructure does not guarantee improved productivity – that is up to its users – but, without it, any improvement is impossible. Interestingly, cost was lower because the incumbent infrastructures were so inefficient in storage, communication and hardware terms that a refresh could be justified on efficiency savings alone – a stark demonstration that the current IT operating model is very broken.

Collaboration has much to offer the innovative organisation with the strategic possibilities of staff and customer interaction. If implemented properly, collaboration is both cost-efficient and business-effective. Crucially, it is also the only realistic way a business can engage with the digital native. And this is key to business survival in the digital age.

Dr James Bellini and Roger Camrass, from presentations at Fujitsu's Breakfast Briefing, Collaborate or die: the rules of business have changed – have you?, 9 July 2008.

#### **WHAT NEXT?**

**Want to engage in collaborative business but need help with how to get there?**

Struggling with operational issues such as:

1. Communication disconnects preventing accurate information distribution across virtual teams?
2. Employee data confusion hampering productivity?
3. Resultant ineffective document production and workflow?
4. Excessive internal and external staff travel for unnecessary face-to-face meetings?

Get your organisation fully connected by contacting Fujitsu Services at [mspractice@uk.fujitsu.com](mailto:mspractice@uk.fujitsu.com) to discuss how best to accommodate the digital native, develop your networked business model and take part in the worldwide conversation. For more information, please visit <http://www.fujitsu.com/uk/services/microsoft>.

#### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

If you require any further information, please contact [mspractice@uk.fujitsu.com](mailto:mspractice@uk.fujitsu.com) or ring +44 (0) 870 242 7998