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Gartner Says the World of Work Will Witness 10 Changes During the Next 10 Years – Scan No. 7670

"Work will become less routine, characterized by increased volatility, hyperconnectedness, 'swarming' and more," said Tom Austin, vice president and Gartner fellow. By 2015, 40 percent or more of an organization's work will be 'non-routine', up from 25 percent in 2010. "People will swarm more often and work solo less. They'll work with others with whom they have few links, and teams will include people outside the control of the organization," he added. "In addition, simulation, visualisation and unification technologies, working across yottabytes of data per second, will demand an emphasis on new perceptual skills."

Organizations will need to determine which of the 10 key changes in the nature of work will affect them, and consider whether radically different technology governance models will be required.

1. De-routinization of Work
The core value that people add is not in the processes that can be automated, but in non-routine processes, uniquely human, analytical or interactive contributions that result in words such as discovery, innovation, teaming, leading, selling and learning. Non-routine skills are those we cannot automate. For example, we cannot automate the process of selling a life insurance policy to a skeptical buyer, but we can use automation tools to augment the selling process.

2. Work Swarms
Swarming is a work style characterized by a flurry of collective activity by anyone and everyone conceivably available and able to add value. Gartner identifies two phenomena within the collective activity; Teaming (instead of solo performances) will be valued and rewarded more and occur more frequently and a new form of teaming, which Gartner calls swarming, to distinguish it from more historical teaming models, is emerging. Teams have historically consisted of people who have worked together before and who know each other reasonably well, often working in the same organization and for the same manager. Swarms form quickly, attacking a problem or opportunity and then quickly dissipating. Swarming is an agile response to an observed increase in ad hoc action requirements, as ad hoc activities continue to displace structured, bureaucratic situations.

3. Weak Links
In swarms, if individuals know each other at all, it may be just barely, via weak links. Weak links are the cues people can pick up from people who know the people they have to work with. They are indirect indicators and rely, in part, on the confidence others have in their knowledge of people. Navigating one's own personal, professional and social networks helps people develop and exploit both strong and weak links and that, in turn, will be crucial to surviving and exploiting swarms for business benefit.

4. Working with the Collective

There are informal groups of people, outside the direct control of the organization, who can impact the success or failure of the organization. These informal groups are bound together by a common interest, a fad or a historical accident, as described by Gartner as "the collective." Smart business executives discern how to live in a business ecosystem they cannot control; one they can only influence. The influence process requires understanding the collectives that potentially influence their organization, as well as the key people in those external groups. Gathering market intelligence via the collective is crucial. Equally important is figuring out how to use the collective to define segments, markets, products and various business strategies.

5. Work Sketch-Ups

Most non-routine processes will also be highly informal. It is very important that organizations try to capture the criteria used in making decisions but, at least for now, Gartner does not expect most non-routine processes to follow meaningful standard patterns. Over time, we believe that work patterns for more non-routine work will emerge, justifying a light-handed approach to collecting activity information, but it will take years before a real return on investment for this effort is visible. In the meantime, the process models for most non-routine processes will remain simple "sketch-ups," created on the fly.

6. Spontaneous Work

This property is also implied in Gartner's description of work swarms. Spontaneity implies more than reactive activity, for example, to the emergence of new patterns. It also contains proactive work such as seeking out new opportunities and creating new designs and models.

7. Simulation and Experimentation

Active engagement with simulated environments (virtual environments), which are similar to technologies depicted in the film Minority Report, will come to replace drilling into cells in spreadsheets. This suggests the use of n-dimensional virtual representations of all different sorts of data. The contents of the simulated environment will be assembled by agent technologies that determine what materials go together based on watching people work with this content. People will interact with the data and actively manipulate various parameters reshaping the world they're looking at.

8. Pattern Sensitivity

The business world is becoming more volatile, affording people working off of linear models based on past performance far less visibility into the future than ever before. Gartner expects to see a significant growth in the number of organizations that create groups specifically charged with detecting divergent emerging patterns, evaluating those patterns, developing various scenarios for how the disruption might play out and proposing to senior executives new ways of exploiting (or protecting the organization from) the changes to which they are now more sensitive.

9. Hyperconnected

Hyperconnectedness is a property of most organizations, existing within networks of networks, unable to completely control any of them. While key supply chain elements, for example, may be "under contract," there is no guarantee it will perform properly, not even if the supply chain is in-house. Hyperconnectedness will lead to a push for more work to occur in both formal and informal relationships across enterprise boundaries, and that has implications for how people work and how IT supports or augments that work.

10. My Place

The workplace is becoming more and more virtual, with meetings occurring across time zones and organizations and with participants who barely know each other, working on swarms attacking rapidly

emerging problems. But the employee will still have a "place" where they work. Many will have neither a company-provided physical office nor a desk, and their work will increasingly happen 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In this work environment, the lines between personal, professional, social and family matters, along with organization subjects, will disappear. Individuals, of course, need to manage the complexity created by overlapping demands, whether from the new world of work or from external (non-work-related) phenomena. Those that cannot manage the underlying "expectation and interrupt overloads" will suffer performance deficits as these overloads force individuals to operate in an over-stimulated (information-overload) state.

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