

Reimagine work, redefine productivity



By [Lauren Hartzenberg](#)

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We are in the midst of a technological revolution, and it's not only blurring the lines between the physical and digital spheres but between how we live and work. According to Dr Chakib Bouhdary, digital transformation officer at SAP, this shift presents a huge opportunity to reimagine the workplace as we know it.



Dr Chakib Bouhdary

As the multinational software company's digital guru, Bouhdary mentors and guides businesses on their journey towards digital maturity. In his new white paper, [Reimagine Work](#), he details how digital innovation can cut through corporate cholesterol and impact the workplace.

As noted in the report, the integration of smart machines and consumer-grade technology into the workplace is empowering workers and ushering in a new level of productivity. These new technologies have the potential to [enhance productivity by 20–50%](#) and are essential to attracting and engaging new talent.

And speaking of talent, by 2020 [more than a third](#) of the desired core skill-sets for most occupations will be skills not yet considered crucial today, and by 2025 [75% of the global workforce](#) will be millennials. It's evident that a seismic shift in workforce dynamics is coming.

As we come to the end of [#BizTrends2017](#), Bouhdary shares some expert insight into how the incoming workforce and smart machines can benefit business, and how to prepare for it.

What impact will automated technologies and machine learning have on business, and how will the role of humans evolve?

Many new technologies are reaching a stage of maturity where they can drive innovation and create significant value for business. By adopting digital technology such as AI and deep learning algorithms, certain process steps can be automated or eliminated, dramatically reducing cycle time.

The impact of digital capabilities like real-time and human-machine collaborating can already be seen across multiple areas of business. Financial books can now be closed in days, not weeks. Highly responsive supply chains can produce and distribute personalised products with shorter lead times and smaller runs. Smart automation is helping drive higher throughput while ensuring safe operations.

The redesigned business processes allow companies to respond quickly to their customer needs and serve them better. They can also deliver significant value across several dimensions – from helping companies grow revenue and profit, to managing risk, and improving productivity and return on assets.

As the interface between machines and people continues to blur, humans still have a competitive advantage in creative thinking, relationship management, and strategic decision making, but machines dominate in precise, repetitive and data-driven tasks.

These forces working together to improve human decision making and driving value with innovative automation will be the new standard, but it is still new territory for even the most innovative companies.

■ ***According to your whitepaper, 75% of the global workforce will be millennials. What impact will this have on business and innovation?***

The incoming workforce will dramatically change the way organisations work and innovate. Millennials are highly connected and technology-savvy and use mobility and collaboration tools to share information, cut through complexity, be more efficient and innovate.

Given this reality, traditional workforce management strategies won't work when engaging millennials. Work is being reimaged: from working nine to five to working anytime; from working in a corporate office to working anywhere; from using desktop computers to using a choice of devices.

Millennials also won't stand for poor enterprise technology and demand that business systems behave like the consumer systems they use every day. Consumer-grade technology is entering the enterprise, powered by Big Data, machine learning, mobility, and highly customised applications. This is critical to attract and engage millennials. New talent wants employers to make work easy and fun, empowering them to make the best decision every time.

Leveraging the new workplace dynamic being ushered in by millennials and consumer grade innovation, we can now reimagine work with next-generation tools. For example, cross-enterprise team collaboration that drives innovation can be dramatically enhanced with unique technology offerings and software platforms.

Organisations are now able to create a cross-functional team to exchange information and solve critical business issues, enable seamless collaboration with internal and external stakeholders in a secure fashion and provide intelligent data from all sources in real time. Companies can leverage these collaboration capabilities and innovate in the digital world; this is something which comes naturally to millennials who have grown up with technology at their fingertips.

■ ***Talent is a big challenge for innovation. What are some basic strategies that businesses can use to overcome this?***

Digital innovations are data-driven and require modern IT architecture and new skill-sets and capabilities. Regardless of where the companies are on the digital maturity curve, two key enablers of digital transformation should be considered to overcome talent challenges.

1. Raise digital IQ - invest in understanding digital capabilities and potential applications in your business

- Conduct a management offsite for one to two days to raise digital awareness;
- Embrace new ways of innovation such as design thinking;
- Avoid long planning cycles and strive to quickly pilot, learn and scale new ideas.

2. Upgrade talent and skills

- Appoint chief digital officers;
- Grow and attract new talent such as data scientists, customer experience designers and digital technology experts;
- Build a network of strategic partners for new products, services and capabilities.

■ ***What are the most important tech investments digital businesses should be making in 2017?***

Digitalisation is all about a data-centric platform. Companies need to start thinking about how to bring together transaction and decisions making tools, where the analytics is using machine learning and how their transactional systems are used in real-time.

Digital business is also about robust open business. Companies must ensure that their platform can integrate to other business partners' platforms in real-time. Finally, any platform under consideration must be customer-centric and focused on a consumer-grade experience.

Where companies invest first will depend on where they can find the most value. But, all need to make a road map to migrate to a 21st century architecture.

[Click here](#) to read the *Reimagine Work* white paper.

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