



## Capitalizing on Today's Technologically Talented Organization

### Overview and Guide

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The technological savvy of employees has changed dramatically. Basic technological and computing proficiency are pervasive. Information access, mobility, and collaboration form the new paradigm. But corporations are still in transition, because requisite technological capability isn't evenly distributed, and they struggle to adjust both work and management methods to capitalize on the talents of people who connect, work, and think in new ways. We are still learning how to use the technologies of collaboration in substantive ways that increase knowledge and productivity, without information overload.

This Outcome Project explored the importance of technological talent, what it means to be technologically talented, what HR and IT can do to build and leverage a technologically talented workforce, and how to close the technological "generation gap" common in corporations today. This project was conducted by Stryve in partnership with Dave Ulrich, Norm Smallwood and Joe Grochowski of The RBL Group.

The *Capitalizing on Today's Technologically Talented Organization* research report is in five sections, published both individually for focused distribution and in consolidated format. Here is a brief overview and key points of each section.

#### **Why Technological Talent Matters**

Addresses why corporations must care about having a technologically talented workforce – because businesses and their markets run on IT, and because IT is the glue that maintains coherence in an increasingly complex and dispersed business. The section also introduces an RBL Group framework for organizational capabilities and examples of how technology can enhance them.

- The contemporary corporation cannot operate effectively, improve those operations, build and leverage capabilities, determine and execute strategy, participate in an electronically-mediated marketplace, or maintain its identity and shared values without a technologically talented workforce.
- Few organizations pay enough attention to their technological talent. They offer training in the mechanics of using specific technologies, but not the behaviors of using them well. Few define the common toolkit that employees are expected to use, and fewer still hold employees accountable for using it effectively.

- Most organizations think about both talent and technology primarily in terms of what it takes to deliver products and services. They should also think in terms of building and maintaining distinctive organizational capabilities.
- Companies should be asking: What organizational capabilities are most-central to our definition and performance? Do we have sufficient talent in the pipeline to leverage and expand those capabilities? Are we deploying information technology in ways that leverage and expand those capabilities?

### What Does it Take to Be “Technologically Talented”?

Describes the technology-based skills needed in the workforce at large, the common technological toolkit, and how to segment employees and their needs according to the nature and communication patterns of their work.

- Basic technology-based skills include: electronic communication, filtering, search/connect/inquire, input/feedback/revision, and the ability to manage, visualize, and analyze information.
- People who are adept at these skills make themselves and those around them more productive. People who aren’t adept do the opposite. If it’s culturally the norm for people to provide one another with frank, well-intentioned feedback, then people can reinforce desired skills and behaviors in one another.
- A company should document the standard toolkit and communicate expectations to employees for its use. That’s something companies tend to do only for new employees. We recommend periodically reminding everyone about the toolkit and how to use it effectively.
- There are a variety of roles where people need to be especially technologically talented, including people in communications roles, on dispersed project teams, in learning and innovation roles, and in staff functions like IT and HR that work across the enterprise. People who are managing others remotely also need to learn to use technology in place of face-to-face time.
- For purposes of developing skills and deploying tools, you can start with segmentation by type of work – production, problem-solving, and development.

### Human Resource Implications

Outlines what it takes for HR organizations to deliver high business value, provides a framework for understanding and assessing HR practices, and shares examples of information and technology being used to improve the business performance of those practices.

- Whether you are implementing new social media tools to improve collaboration within and among teams, or trying to understand how to build the technical capabilities of your workforce,

it is important to consider the role of HR and the implications on HR practices and competencies.

- The RBL Group's HR value framework begins with the need to look outside the company – to customers, investors, the community, and government agencies. HR needs a deep understanding of the business context, including social, technological, economic, political, environmental, and demographic trends.
- HR practices fall into four major groups: people, performance and reward, information and communication, and work and organization. IT can be directly leveraged in many of the specific practices within each.
- Some applications of social media and gaming technology are becoming commonplace. The percentage of companies using social networking sites in their recruiting efforts rose from 34% to 56% in the past three years. In 2010, 70% of organizations used video games in employee training and development.
- Social media have created unprecedented transparency into companies' employment practices. Some sites specialize in information and discussion about employers. This transparency should motivate companies both to keep their practices functionally and technologically up-to-date, and to monitor what's being said about them in cyberspace.
- To be successful in the future, HR professionals need to improve the efficiency of HR systems, connect people through technology, and leverage social media for the business. Like employees generally, HR professionals need to become more technologically talented.

### Information Technology Implications

Explores the challenges of being a technology services provider to a technologically talented workforce, including how to deploy technology in ways that build skills and deliver value. The changing talent profile of employees has profound implications for the roles and work of the IT organization.

- IT has to find an evolutionary path to a computing environment that is much more open to new technology and employee choice, and that focuses on enablement as much as control. For some, this seems a discontinuous shift, but for many it's simply the next phase of the changing role of IT – from technology provider to services integrator.
- Today's wave of consumerization of IT in the enterprise drives self-service. Employees want to use the same powerful consumer devices on the job as at home. Just as importantly, they expect the same ease of use they experience with consumer devices and applications. As part of the bargain, many are happy to own, maintain, and manage their devices.
- The biggest changes with employee self-service are not technical. They involve adjustments to governance, risk management, and compliance (GRC), starting with the basic method of governance. Employee self-service is a matter of enablement, and companies have to ease up on traditional controls to make it happen.

- Businesses are migrating to a decoupled approach to managing and protecting technology assets. Protection is managed in four domains: perimeter, physical, device, and data.
- The destination is “IT as a Service.” From the business standpoint, IT is a collection of services that are easily understood, consumed, and managed. IT is less the organization that builds applications and manages technology, and more the conduit for a full range of useful services available on demand and often pay-by-use. Some services are sourced in house, but many (and eventually most) are not.

### Generation Gap?

Addresses the issue of the “generation gap” between younger employees who have “grown up digital” and older colleagues who are comfortable with a much more limited technological toolkit. Despite technological and generational differences, employees are remarkably alike in what drives their engagement. A highly engaged workforce is the foundation for bridging any generation gap.

- Today’s workforce generation gap is attitudinal and behavioral as well as technological, but the technological part – given the Internet and Web 2.0 – is more pronounced than ever before.
- As younger employees advance in numbers and responsibility, their methods will prevail. It’s incumbent upon older employees to close the gap by adopting new tools, because younger employees aren’t going to close the gap by abandoning theirs.
- Truly engaged employees of all ages find ways to bridge any differences and work together toward the common goals. They are motivated to use the best tools available to do the best job possible. They are also motivated to learn from each other.
- If your organization wants to drive engagement – and with it collaboration across the workforce – then make sure that people’s work conveys growth and progress, that management practices are fair, and that the workplace is congenial.
- One way to close the technological generation gap is to be specific about what information and technology related skills and behaviors are expected of *all* employees, and what tools they are expected to use regularly. Then incorporate these expectations into development plans and performance management.