

How to make the digital world work for your business

 By [Rosalind Davey](#)

4 Apr 2019

We frequently hear terms such as the 'digital workplace', the 'internet of things', 'automation in the workplace' and the 'future world of work' bandied about. But what does all of this mean for your business?



© Cathy Yeulet – [123RF.com](#)

Information and communication technologies have led to significant developments in the way we work. The digital office is becoming the norm and has resulted in more people working from remote locations – the advent of the tele-commuter or tele-worker. This is an exciting new digital world for employees and employers alike. It is critical that employers embrace this brave new world but in doing so they must tread with care and make sure they understand the possible traps that may ensnare the unwary.

In order to make the digital workplace work for your business, it is important to have a proper strategy in place. A good starting point is to analyse your business environment so as to identify your strategic focus and enhance your ability to meet customer demands and other business objectives. The process should also incorporate risk management – recognising the issues associated with operating in the digital world will enable you to identify what steps should be taken to address these issues. Implementing a crisis management plan to deal with virtual business crises is essential for safeguarding your business and your employees.

The next step is to ensure that you put appropriate policies in place to guide the business's strategy. For example, a communications policy is essential for governing online communications and providing clear guidelines within which employees conduct themselves online. Similarly, a tele-commuter policy should provide guidance on flexible work arrangements, hot-desking, job-sharing and working from remote locations. Further, the IT policy should highlight security protocols and data protection obligations. Policies dealing with automation in the workplace should identify the roll-out of artificial intelligence, robotics and virtual reality so as to provide understanding of how these technologies will impact on existing career paths.

Once the necessary policies have been developed and implemented, the next step should be to educate your employees on the policies. The aim here is to ensure that employees understand the risks associated with conducting a virtual business, communicating online and implementing flexible work arrangements. Knowing what they can and cannot do in this digital world is essential to minimise business risks such as brand damage arising from inappropriate online communication, data leaks and cyber-bullying.

This process should also be aimed at encouraging a focus on performance output and addressing potential employee dissatisfaction due to the fear that automation in the workplace will result in job losses. Upskilling and reskilling employees to work in the virtual workplace is also crucial.

Policies need teeth

Education and training is, sadly, not enough. In order to properly safeguard your business, you need to ensure that your rules and guidelines, as set out in the policies, are properly monitored and enforced. A failure to enforce the policies may render them redundant.

Operating in the digital world requires dedication, care and effective management. If used properly, the virtual world can eliminate boundaries and enhance business performance but if the proper precautions are not taken, this could spell disaster for your business.

ABOUT ROSALIND DAVEY

Rosalind Davey is a partner at corporate law firm Bowmans and obtained BA and LLB degrees from the University of Natal and was admitted as an attorney in 2002.

- How to make the digital world work for your business - 4 Apr 2019
- Disciplining employees for off duty misconduct - 16 Feb 2016
- Legal consequences of social media in the workplace - 11 Nov 2015

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>