How Visual Collaboration Can Empower Teams as they Transition to the 'Next Normal'

The 451 Take

Modern work environments demand new ways of collaborating and, in particular, bringing together visuals to help teams collaborate more effectively. The COVID-19 pandemic may have accelerated this; forced to work in different ways, many employees are finding that more visual collaboration is not only better for remote work but an improvement for work overall. In fact, 64% of organizations expect the significant increase in remote work to be a permanent change, according to 451 Research's Voice of the Enterprise: Digital Pulse October Coronavirus Flash Survey. With remote work likely to become a permanent part of our 'next normal,' more organizations may consider visual collaboration tools that can better support remote teams, allowing them to work together in digital spaces that were designed for sharing ideas and making employees feel connected.
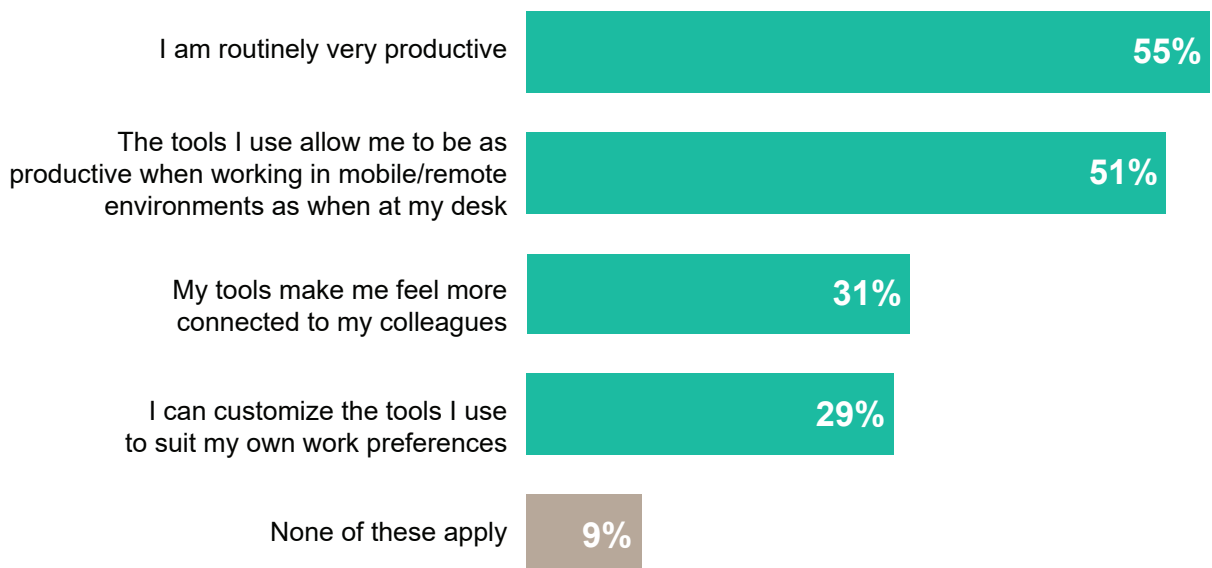
Visual collaboration tools are not only conducive to helping employees feel connected to their colleagues, but they also provide a customizable user experience, giving employees greater control on how they interface with the tool within their day-to-day workflow. Connection to colleagues and tool customization are two weak areas in workplace technology, according to a recent 451 Research employee engagement survey (see figure below). Eliminating digital tedium and creating a more engaging, flexible and collaborative method of work motivates employees to get to higher-order tasks more quickly. As such, visual collaboration tools will likely have a lasting impact on how employees collaborate, think and communicate at work.

Two Areas Where Workplace Tools Are Failing: Connection to Colleagues and Customization

Source: 451 Research's Voice of the Enterprise: Workforce Productivity & Collaboration, Employee Engagement 2020
Q: Which, if any, of the following statements apply to the tools you use as part of your day-to-day work?
Please select all that apply.

I am routinely very productive	55%
The tools I use allow me to be as productive when working in mobile/remote environments as when at my desk	51%
My tools make me feel more connected to my colleagues	31%
I can customize the tools I use to suit my own work preferences	29%
None of these apply	9%

Business Impact

ACCELERATED DECISION-MAKING AND LEARNING: Visual collaboration tools aid in getting the right infor-mation to the right people quickly so they can spend more time resolving issues, brainstorming plans of action and learning. Visual tools allow workers to manage and visualize large quantities of data in one place at one time, which limits tool toggling and allows them to focus their attention on the task at hand. Visual collaboration tools address challenges that get in the way of decision-making and learning by enabling synchronous and asynchronous collabo-ration; empowering workers who may feel more comfortable participating within digital environments vs. in person; and providing easy ways to build in existing work processes.

LESS TEDIUM, MORE ENGAGEMENT: Perhaps now more than ever, employee engagement needs are at the forefront as uncertainty due to COVID-19 places pressure on organizations to ensure employees have everything they need in their remote environments to be as productive – and in many cases, more productive – as before the pandemic hit. Visual collaboration tools allow for fewer distractions; less toggling in and out of disparate tools; less dependence (for some) on video conferencing for collaboration; and more action-orientation.

EASIER PATH TO PRODUCTIVITY: By encouraging greater engagement, visual collaboration tools create an easier path to productivity. As visually immersive tools prove their value across the enterprise, they will become an impactful productivity archetype that will empower workers who have long been unorganized and saddled with too much 'work about work.' Visual collaboration tools offer a digital experience that can enable employees to do more within one tool via robust customization options; enable employees to stay better organized and focused; and streamline complex processes.

FACILITATE CREATIVITY: Companies have adopted standardized tools that may no longer be versatile enough to meet the complex needs of employees. Indeed, they may even be impeding the creative thinking of employees. Visual collaboration tools can provide more flexible digital environments that allow users to think creatively; a more enjoyable work experience for some who find traditional work tools frustrating; and easy-to-use visual components that aid in brainstorming, planning, collaboration and problem solving.

Looking Ahead

It is important to address and recognize the needs of workers who have had to adapt their thinking to fit standardized tooling. Moreover, it comes down to organizations understanding that in order to get and keep employees engaged with their work and performing at their best, they must be given the option to use tools that offer more flexible, cus-tomizable digital environments and enable a sense of connection with not just their work but with their colleagues.

451 Research's Voice of the Enterprise: Workforce Productivity & Collaboration, Employee Engagement survey 2020 saw an increase in employees who said that their organizations provide them with the tools and technologies they need to succeed. Some 38% of respondents answered that they completely agreed with the statement, up 11 per-centage points from 2019. It's no coincidence that organizations are responding to enforced remote work by listening to their employees and providing them the technologies they need to succeed; this is a shift in company dynamics that may positively impact overall employee engagement. As employees across the globe are forced to continue to deal with the obstacles of remote work, there is no better time for organizations to embrace more visual technologies that could bring in higher levels of productivity and overall enjoyment for employees, not only now as the impact of COVID-19 continues, but long after we transition to the 'next normal.'

Lucid is the visual collaboration suite where teams come together to see and build the future. Join over 30 million users across 99% of the Fortune 500 that rely on Lucid to move from idea to reality.

Learn more at lucid.co.