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UNDERSTANDING AND DEVELOPING DIGITAL EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCES

Final report of DEX skills project

MUOVA Education 4/2023

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Preface

Digitalization experts change business by adopting information and communication technologies. In addition to the technical skills, digitalization requires softer skills, such as understanding of users, use processes and usability. Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture and its foresight forum Competence 2035 highlights the most important competences of the future as management, control and creative use of digital solutions, as well as customer-oriented development.

Challenges multiply

Digital work environment was critical during the Corona pandemic, which moved work to home offices in those fields and jobs in which it was possible. Remote work brings digital processes and their challenges into a new light. How do the information systems and software in companies and organizations support work? How could the use of software and systems be used more efficiently?

Operating on different platforms and with many systems and solutions, spreads the work into connected, yet not fully integrated sub processes. Fragmented work causes frustration and stress due to multitasking, continual interruptions, and information load. Therefore, we need to manage digital employee experiences on the personal and organizational levels.

The challenges in digital work environment are multiplied when a new employee learns organizational processes, culture, and ways of working in addition to the practical adoption of new software. It can be especially challenging to new employees with a foreign background who cannot use their native language in learning to operate in digital work environment.

DEX Skills project

DEX Skills project developed a training program for students and unemployed people who want to understand and develop their employee experiences in digital work in Finland. The training program aims to provide knowledge and tools to increase work satisfaction and productivity and decrease digital fatigue. It focuses on understanding the challenges in digital employee experience and the ways to improve it.

How do you perceive and feel interactions and tasks with digital technologies? The question is relevant to all knowledge workers in different digital work environments.

The training program is built upon the guided discovery which is suitable for novices in the topic. Since novices lack suitable mental models for independent discovery, we provide them worked-out examples for experiential learning and structured learning platform. The learning approach is scaffolding for problem-solving to bridge the gap between current and desired skill set by providing guidance to learners from knowledgeable sources, such as instructors. (See 1, 2, 3) It uses learners' self-explanations of subgoals and worked examples used as one type of assignments.

This is a final report of DEX Skills project contains different aspects of digital employee experiences. It covers organisational and personal viewpoints as well as digital skills needed in everyday work life. Also, it tackles digital technologies relevant now and in the near future. Through this report, we aim to support the development of softer digital skills relevant for all knowledge workers.

31rd August 2023, Vaasa

Miia Lammi

Project manager of DEX Skills project

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MIIA LAMMI Digital work through the eyes of employees

Opening the computer in the morning starts a workday. Checking emails and perhaps an urgent phone call starts work processes leading to operations on software and platforms. To-Do lists, cross-checking information, switching between windows, popping up notifications - the interruptions start to cause stress and chaos. Or do they? How is it possible to create a nice workflow with a feeling of success and fulfilment?

The digital employee experience, DEX, describes the employee's experiences about a digital work environment. It is a perception of interactions with digital touchpoints. (Gheidar & ShamiZanjani, 2020) The focus is on a person as an individual and as part of the work community creating interpretations of the digital interface at work. Digital employee experience explores person's behaviour and interactions with digital tools. Experiences explain reactions and meanings people attach to events which explain the reasons behind the feelings.

Experiences from interactions

Everyone can influence their own digital employee experience, even though the employer plays a significant role in impacting the experience. User experiences arise from using and interacting with software and devices, collaborating on platforms, and interacting, for example via e-mail and in remote meetings. The organisation defines most of the tools used at work, while the use processes can be modified based on user preferences within the organisational boundaries.

The organisational culture and practices affect the ways of using digital systems as a work community and as a business ecosystem. For example, the expected response time to emails can vary in different organisations and stakeholder. On the other hand, employees can influence on organisational practices and even participate in choosing and developing digital solutions if organisation enable it. Engaging employees in developing their work open possibilities for improving productivity and wellbeing.

The individual is in the centre of digital employee experiences since people owns their own experiences. Personality, competences, and previous experiences of employees explain experiences from personal point of view. However, it is important to understand the whole setting of digital employee experiences from individual, organizational and technologal points of view to improve work performance and personal well-being.

Organisational practices affect information load

Working life can be complicated. Employees need to collaborate with peers and external partners, who can have very different backgrounds and communication styles. The work roles can vary during a day and diverse technologies are needed to accomplish tasks. Often time pressure forces to handle many tasks simultaneously in a quicker pace. At some point information load becomes so high it turns into overload. (Yi, 2009)

When the mind is not able to cope with the information at work it can be perceived as a loss of job control. Job control is related to competences to handle work situations and authority to make decisions of one's work. Is it possible to prioritize tasks, scope, or timetable? Do you need more efficient digital tools, work processes or work practice. When workload is high it is good to ask if you are losing job control due to skills or decision-making power, in what situation it appears and what are the consequences of it. (Franssila et al., 2016)

Interruptions and multitasking

Organisational practices affect employees balancing with information load. Constant interruptions and availability can feel overwhelming, and it can waste 25 % of effective work time. Interruptions are especially harmful in creative work. Multitasking uses mental resources when a person switches between tasks. If employee cannot control their personal information space, they feel loss of job control causing stress. (Franssila et al., 2016; Karlsen & Ytre-Arne, 2021) Also searching for information in a time pressure causes stress. People can use one hour per day in information searching on average (Attaran et al., 2019).

Information ergonomics studies information load in knowledge work to improve productivity and wellbeing. The aim is to keep information load on a manageable level and avoid overload. The challenges in information load can be searched from work content, processes, or environment. The organisation of work or ways of working can also be causes of stress and overload. (Franssila et al., 2016) Therefore, it is important to study the true causes of the information load to improve efficiency and wellbeing.

Improving experiences

Messages alert every second, orders are given on mysterious platforms, and data search takes days without success – this exaggeration reveals a seed of truth. How can an employee influence on organizational aspects of digital employee experience? Digital employee experience evolves in the intersection of person as an employee and organisation as an employer, which both influence on experiences of digital work. Employees can influence their work tasks and practices, even though employers have a big role in organising the work and defining the ways of working. Also, competence development can be supported by the employer, yet many acquire new skills on their own time. Personal development happens at work and on leisure time based on personal motivation, while it could be guided more strategically to benefit person's productivity and well-being at work. (see Batat, 2022)

Design thinking can be used for improving the digital employee experiences as organisational or personal development. Design thinking aims to understand root causes of problems and generating ideas to solve them. It tests the solutions in practice to learn how well they solve the problem. The design process is both analytical and creative development and it uses visualisation as a tool to make sense of both problems and solutions. (Ludike, 2018)

Managing information load

Improving digital employee experience in knowledge work is typically related to information load. Organisations, teams, or employees can manage information load by defining boundaries to interruptions and multitasking that confuses focused work. On personal level, it is possible to create, test and maintain new routines by self-awareness and management. (Karlsen, 2021) Setting small, concrete goals and tasks enable efficient learning of sustaining new practices. Repetition is key to long-term changes.

Quiet physical spaces limit interruptions if digital work environment is also in quiet mode. Social spaces enable interactions with peers and support informal communication supporting the performance of employees. (Palvalin et al., 2017) Remote work provides flexibility and self-determination to choose workspaces to match the needs. Enterprise social media platforms facilitate interaction, information sharing and collaboration by digital means. Suitable physical and digital work environment for different work tasks improve digital employee experience. (Dittes et al., 2019)

Work is meant to provide economic value. It can also cause positive emotions and pleasure as well as sense of purpose and meaning of life. Therefore, employee experiences can be improved by stimulating curiosity and problem solving, allowing employees to be excited and reflect their work. Employees could also influence on ways of working and work situations to potentially create positive emotions. Emotions are energy for action and positive spiral evolves. Work can even offer spiritual value when work is meaningful and in line with personal values. However, it may need reflections to define the connections and create a storyline between organizational and personal value. (Batat 2022)

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JOÃO PEREIRA Evolution of digital technologies

"It has become appallingly obvious that our technology has exceeded our humanity." - *Albert Einstein*

It is hard today to live a life far from the digital world. Digital technologies have become an integral part of our lives, transforming the way we live, work, communicate, and explore the world around us. Digital technologies have empowered businesses to innovate and adapt, enabling them to reach new markets, streamline operations, and deliver personalized experiences to customers. They have revolutionized healthcare, making advancements in diagnostics, treatment, and patient care. They have democratized education, providing access to knowledge, and learning resources to individuals across the globe. They have changed entertainment, allowing us to immerse ourselves in virtual worlds and connect with stories and experiences like never before.

Throughout history, several digital technologies have made significant marks and milestones that have shaped the world we live in today. Here are some highlighted digital technologies and their impact:



FIGURE 1 THE MAIN TECHNOLOGY ADVANCES IN RECENT HISTORY.

While this timeline captures only a fraction of the countless inventions and key developments, it offers a captivating glimpse into the building blocks that have paved the way for today's technological marvels.

From the humble beginnings of telegraphs and transistors to the ground-breaking concepts of Turing machines and microprocessors, each innovation represented a small yet significant step forward. These advancements acted as the foundation upon which our smartphones, computers, and electronic devices now stand.

Current global digital trends

Currently, several digital technologies are playing a significant role in shaping the present and future. Here are some of the important digital technologies:

Cloud Computing: Cloud computing allows users to access and store data, applications, and resources over the internet instead of relying on local infrastructure. It provides scalability, flexibility, and cost-efficiency.

Internet of Things (IoT): IoT refers to the network of interconnected physical devices embedded with sensors, software, and connectivity, allowing them to collect and exchange

Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) AR overlays digital information onto the real world, enhancing the user's perception and interaction with the environment. VR immerses users in a simulated environment. These technologies have applications in gaming, education, training, marketing, and more. In the future, AR and VR are expected to become more pervasive, revolutionizing areas such as remote collaboration, virtual tourism, and immersive entertainment experiences.data. IoT applications are found in smart homes, industrial automation, agriculture, healthcare monitoring, and transportation systems.

Artificial Intelligence (Ai) and machine learning: AI and machine learning algorithms enable computers to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence. AI is being used in various domains, including natural language processing, computer vision, robotics, and autonomous systems. It has applications in healthcare, finance, customer service, and more. In the future, AI is expected to continue advancing, driving innovations in areas such as personalized medicine, autonomous vehicles, and smart cities.

Challenged by digital technologies

The advent of new technology often brings about a mix of excitement and anxiety. While technological advancements offer massive possibilities, it is not uncommon for individuals to feel overwhelmed when faced with the task of learning and adapting to new technologies. This sense of overwhelming arises from various factors, including the rapid pace of technological change, the fear of being left behind, and the perceived complexity of new tools and systems.

One fear associated with new technology is the fear of the unknown. When encountering unfamiliar technology, individuals may worry about their ability to grasp and effectively use it. This fear can stem from a lack of confidence or previous negative experiences with technology. However, it is important to remember that learning new technology is a gradual process, and with patience and persistence, one can gradually overcome these fears.

Another common concern is the fear of change and disruption. New technologies often disrupt existing systems and processes, leading to a sense of uncertainty and apprehension about the future. Individuals may worry about job security or the need to relearn skills. However, it is essential to recognize that technological progress also brings opportunities for growth, improved efficiency, and new career paths. Embracing lifelong learning and adapting to technological advancements can lead to personal and professional development.

To alleviate the overwhelming feeling associated with learning new technology, it is helpful to approach it with a positive mindset. Breaking down the learning process into smaller, manageable steps can make it less daunting. Seeking support from peers, online communities, or training resources can provide guidance and encouragement. Additionally, taking the time to explore and experiment with new technologies in a safe and supportive environment can boost confidence and alleviate fears.

Ultimately, while the fear of learning new technology is understandable, it is important to embrace the potential benefits it offers. By recognizing the transformative power of technology, staying curious, and maintaining a growth mindset, individuals can navigate the ever-changing technological landscape with confidence and adaptability.

Finland, a hub of digital technologies

Finland has been an important enabler in technology development in different industries:

Telecommunications: Finland is a leading player in the telecommunications industry, with Nokia's groundbreaking innovations driving mobile communication advancements. The country's expertise in infrastructure and wireless technologies has fostered a culture of innovation, empowering startups and pushing the boundaries of connectivity. With a strong focus on research and development, Finland continues to shape the future of communication technologies. Finland has been at the forefront of 5G technology development and implementation. The country has made significant strides in adopting and leveraging the potential of 5G networks. Finnish companies have been actively involved in developing 5G infrastructure, services, and applications.

Game Industry: If you play games, probably you played a game developed in Finland. Some well non and successful titles, such as Clash of Clans, Angry Birds and Max Payne were developed by Finnish game studios. These examples highlight Finland's strong presence and impact in the game industry, showcasing the country's talent, creativity, and ability to

produce globally successful games. The Finnish game industry continues to thrive, attracting international recognition and contributing to the country's reputation as a hub for game development.

Linux: as an open-source operating system, has brought significant advancements to the computing world. It has fostered the open-source movement, promoting collaboration and sharing of code. With its stability, security, and flexibility, Linux has become a trusted choice for critical systems and offers extensive customization options. Its compatibility with various hardware architectures has expanded its reach, powering devices ranging from smartphones to supercomputers. Linux has also played a key role in driving emerging technologies, such as Android, cloud computing, and IoT deployments. Furthermore, its cost-effectiveness has made it a popular choice for organizations and individuals alike, revolutionizing the way we use and interact with computers.

Machine industry: Finland has achieved remarkable success in the machinery industry, particularly in sectors such as forest machinery, industrial machinery, marine and offshore machinery, and metal and engineering machinery. Companies like Ponsse, Metso Outotec, Wärtsilä, and Sandvik Mining and Construction have spearheaded advancements in technology, precision engineering, and sustainable practices. Finland's expertise in innovation, automation, and environmental sustainability has positioned it as a global leader in machinery manufacturing, contributing to its economic growth and international competitiveness.

Learn new technologies

Learning and improving technology skills is crucial in today's rapidly evolving digital landscape. Learning new technologies empowers individuals to stay relevant, adaptable, and competitive in a rapidly evolving job market. With automation and digitalization becoming prevalent, acquiring new skills and keeping up with technological advancements is crucial to secure employment opportunities and advance in one's career. Employers increasingly seek professionals who are well-versed in the latest tools, techniques, and technologies, and the ability to learn and apply new technologies is often a differentiating factor.

Learning a new technology can be overwhelming. However, it can be useful to establish a learning process where fundamental questions help the student to achieve their desired results.

Firstly, it is crucial to establish clear goals of the learning outcomes: What do you want to learn? What is the purpose of it? What problems does it solve?

Secondly, why do you want to learn it? What are the specific goals or objects to achieve? Having very clear objectives is one of the important components of the learning process (1).

The knowledge is widely available online. Where can you start learning? Which resources exist to learn the technology to achieve the establish goals? Finland is a well-known hub for excellency education system with many programmes and courses taught in English. Here are some platforms and courses that are worth for consideration:

- <u>Studying in Finland</u>: General information about universities and studying in Finland
- **FiTech:** FITech Network University offers selected studies from all Finnish universities of technology free of charge. Courses are open and available for everyone from high school students to adults in working life.
- **Open UAS:** Finnish University of Applied Sciences that offers open studies. The programmes are part of the Finnish adult education system. Open UAS courses are individual, fee-charging courses. Visit individually each University of Applied Sciences to know more.
- **Elements of Al:** A series of free online courses created by the University of Helsinki. It encourages people to learn what Al is, what can (and can't) be done with Al, and how to start creating Al methods.
- **Coursera:** Coursera works with universities and other organizations to offer online courses, certifications, and degrees in a variety of subjects.
- <u>Udemy:</u> Udemy is an education technology company that provides an online learning and teaching platform.
- **Learning Digital with Google:** An online digital skills courses hub that teaches everything from marketing to coding and beyond. Created by Google.

Most of these platforms offers courses with theoretical and practical components. However, extra efforts in thinking about other projects and exercises can reinforce the learning process.

Documenting your learning journey is also an important aspect of the learning process. Having a good strategy about taking notes and tracking the achievements are an excellent way to latter show your competences.

It is important to notice that the learning process never ends. As technologies are in constant development, keep looking for updates in the topic are an excellent way to master the subject. Conferences, webinars or events are great opportunities to get updates.

Lastly, what will you do with it? How will you apply your knowledge learned in real-world scenarios? What projects can you do with it? Combining your learnings and projects in a

portfolio is an excellent way to showcase your knowledge to potential employers or collaborators.

Further reading

Key digital technologies https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O7OcVioX7Xg What is Cloud Computing? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mxT233EdY5c Internet of Things (IoT) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LlhmzVL5bm8 Example AR app https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cdv0b0nBqPk Rewise VR demonstration platform https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zAKmHOH8eM0 Service Digital Twin https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_5l8ljUDOBw chatGPT https://chat.openai.com/ Digital work environment in Finland https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oCuYk24-RVE https://futuremobilityfinland.fi/why-finland/digital-excellency-2/ Finnish Government (2022). Competence secures the future. Parliamentary policy approaches for reforming continuous learning. Publications of the Finnish Government 2022:2 https://fitech.io/fi/

SANNA PELTONEN Digital skills build employee experiences

In recent years, the role of technology in working life has grown. Technology and digitalization play a central role in the development of organizations and societies as a whole. (Cazan, 2020) The use of digital technology has profoundly changed society, business life and private life. (Vuori et al., 2019) Actually, digitalization has changed the way we work, study, communicate, get information and spend our free time. The ability to use digital tools and media has therefore become a key requirement in all areas of life. (Ala-Mutka, 2011)

The constantly changing digital environment is challenges individual's digital competence. (Digital and population data services agency, 2022) Furthermore, according to Vallo Hult & Byström (2022), the transition to digital workplaces goes beyond automating and optimizing current tasks; it fundamentally transforms work practices, necessitating the adaptation of established practices and the creation of innovative ones.

Explaining digital competence

Digital landscape has become an integral part of our personal and professional journeys, affecting our communication methods, work practices, information acquisition and goal achievement. Digital competence covers a wide range of skills that are necessary for individuals to navigate skillfully and responsibly in the digital environment and to effectively utilize digital technologies in different fields and contexts.

Consequently, to cope with change as individuals and members of society, individuals must have the ability to learn and develop their digital skills. (Digital and population data services agency, 2022) People who do not have sufficient digital skills run the risk of being excluded from important activities and being unable to take advantage of all available opportunities. (Ala-Mutka, 2011)

Digital competence covers more than using a smartphone or navigating social media platforms. It goes beyond basic computer skills and dives into a world of endless possibilities where individuals can harness the power of technology to drive innovation, improve productivity and shape the future.

Digital competence involves the confident, critical and responsible use of, and engagement with, digital technologies for learning, at work, and for participation in society. It is defined as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes. (European Union, 2019) The bedrock of digital competence lies in knowledge. It covers the foundation of understanding digital technologies, tools, platforms and concepts. This knowledge includes knowledge of digital devices, software applications, information management, online communication, cyber security and other matters related to the digital environment. (Skov, 2016)



Digital competence includes also the development and application of practical skills related to the effective use of digital tools and technologies. It includes the ability to use software, navigate digital platforms, analyze and interpret data, utilize digital communication tools, search information online, and adapt to evolving technologies. Digital skills enable people to perform tasks effectively and achieve goals in the digital world. (Skov, 2016)



Attitudes refer to the way people think and approach the digital technology. Digital competence requires a positive attitude, being open to learning and embracing new technologies, as well as awareness of ethical aspects and responsible use of digital resources. (Skov, 2016)



Knowledge can be strengthened effectively, for example, by teaching methods or by using informative resources such as books. Skills can be strengthened by actively solving concrete and practical problems or participating in relevant tasks. Attitudes can be both the most significant and the most challenging domain. Many people are deeply affected by their attitudes, which makes it a complex area to work in. The process of improving attitudes can include giving up old habits, building confidence in one's own abilities, motivational discussion and adjusting expectations through open discussion and active participation in the change process. (Skov, 2016)

It is important to recognize that learning areas are interconnected and interdependent. For example, a change in attitude can be a direct result of knowledge in a certain area. Similarly, a strong interest or attitude towards a certain field can lead to desire to acquire more knowledge and understanding about it. The interaction between learning domains emphasizes the dynamic nature of competence development. (Skov, 2016)

DIGITAL SKILLS - SELF ASSESSMENT

Digital skills are in high demand in today's job market. Also, digital skills directly affect individual's work performance and productivity. Strong digital skills enable employee to effectively use digital tools, software and platforms, improving efficiency, accuracy and overall performance.

Understanding your digital skills will allow you to assess them against the demands of your intended job or industry, undertake appropriate training and position yourself for career development opportunities.

In 2013, the European Commission originally published a digital competence framework for citizens, known as DigComp. Its purpose was to strengthen citizens' digital skills, assist decision-makers in the development of effective policies, and promote educational

initiatives aimed at improving digital skills. DigComp also sought to create a common language for identifying and describing essential aspects of digital competence.

DigComp aligns digital competence in five key areas, which can be summarized as follows:

- 1. **Information and data literacy:** This include expressing information needs, locating and retrieving digital information, evaluating the relevance and reliability of sources, and effectively managing and organizing digital information and content.
- 2. **Communication and Collaboration:** This is about participation, communication and collaboration using digital technologies while considering cultural and generational diversity. It also includes participation in society through digital services, digital identity and reputation management.
- 3. **Digital content creation:** This domain focuses on creating and editing digital content, connecting information to existing information, understanding copyright and licensing principles, and providing clear instructions to computer systems.
- Security: Security covers the protection of devices, content, personal data and privacy in digital environments. It also includes promoting physical and psychological well-being, knowing the social effects of digital technologies and understanding their environmental effects.
- 5. **Problem solving:** Problem solving in digital environments includes identifying needs and problems, solving conceptual challenges, utilizing digital tools in innovation and staying up-to-date in a constantly evolving digital environment. (EU Science Hub, n.d.; Vuorikari et al., 2022)

SELF-ASSESSMENT OF DIGITAL SKILLS

In the self-assessment of digital skills, the individual reflects on his own grasp and competence in relation to digital technologies. Self-assessment can be carried out in a number of ways, including self-examination or online assessment tools. It is essential to approach self-evaluation openly and impartially, recognizing both strengths and areas that require development. Understanding your existing skills will help you identify areas where you lack expertise, and you can take proactive steps to improve your digital capabilities.

How do you see digital technology?

Digital technology evokes different reactions in people. They depend on the previous experiences, the nature of the matter and the situation. Digital tools can be interesting and exciting, but they can also cause fear, uncertainty or anxiety. (Digital and population data services agency, 2022) Understanding your experiences and approach to digital technology creates a starting point for developing your own digital skills.

Next, we present three fictional personas whose confidence in their own digital skills, willingness to try new things and feelings towards digital technology differ from each other.



NEW MAIL REAL PROVIDENCE OF A CONTRACT OF A DIGITAL ENTHUSIASTS: "I am very confident with digital technology and enjoy using it to make my life easier and connect with other people, both at work and in my free time. I'm not afraid to test digital tools/applications. Instead, I'm constantly looking for new digital tools and platforms to experiment with. Sometimes I do get overwhelmed with information overload or screen addiction, but overall I see technology as a positive force in my life."

DIGITAL ADAPTABLE: "I'm pretty confident with digital technology, but I tend to use it for specific tasks more than as an integral part of my daily life. I'm willing to try new tools and platforms when needed, but I'm not really into new technology. Sometimes I find technology helpful, but other times it can be frustrating or difficult to understand. I am adaptable and able to learn new skills as needed but may need more support or guidance than someone who is tech savvy."



DIGITAL RELUCTANT: "I am not very confident in my digital skills and try to avoid using digital technology whenever possible. I am concerned about the impact of technology on my privacy and security. I may need more time and support to get used to the technology, and I may need to be convinced of its benefits before I'm ready to try new tools or platforms."

Having met these three fictional personas, take a moment to reflect on your own digital behavior and attitudes. Which persona do you think aligns most closely with your own approach to digital skills, trying new technologies, and your overall feelings toward digital technology? Can you identify any aspects of each persona's behavior or mindset that resonate with your own experiences?

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Transition of Workplaces

Digital transformation involves the structure, processes, functions and business models via implementation of digital technologies. The widespread adoption of digital technology in work influences the interaction method with the environment and the nature of work has changed due to changes in how information and knowledge are accessed and processed.

A great DEX depends on successful digital transformation and includes components such as individual, organization internal and external factors, technologies and data, digital networking and digital resilience capabilities. A great DEX is the effect of the employee's digital literacy skills. (Daud et al., 2019)

Disruptive digital business models can quickly overturn entire industries. The transition of work and emergence digital workplace has shaped the modern work. Some features include:

- Increasing the amount of uncertainty and unpredictability
- Unstructured challenges requiring flexible solutions
- Higher degree of independence and self-organization

This transition requires employees to tackle challenges with confidence and self-efficacy with their own efforts. (Maran et al., 2022)

Workforce high in self-efficacy drives organizations' agility

Employees' mindsets build critical success factors. Organizations view employees as valuable resource and are considered as internal customers and end-users who directly utilize technology and digital platforms to contribute to the organization's profitability. (Daud et al., 2021). Employees high in digital self-efficacy make up and agile workforce, enabling the organization to become agile and succeed in the complex and rapidly changing market environment (Maran et al., 2022)

Self-efficacy is defined as individual's belief in the ability to succeed in specific situations or capacity to reach specific goals, accomplish a task, execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations:

- Power to affect situations
- Belief in ability to complete a task
- Face challenges competently
- Achieve a goal (Hassan et al., 2015)

This also includes the confidence in the ability to have control over motivation, behaviour and social environment. A strong self-efficacy promotes accomplishment and well-being.

Indicative presuppositions for digital self-efficacy development are e.g., the personality dimensions of Openness to Experience and Emotional stability in addition to Investigative and Realistic Vocational interests. (Maran et al., 2022). People with high self-efficacy tend to take a wider view of a task to determine the best course of action and experience obstacles as stimulating, leading to greater efforts. In contrast, low self-efficacy can lead people to believe tasks to be harder than they are, resulting in poor task planning and increased stress, and experiencing obstacles as discouragement. (Hassan et al., 2015)

Developing Self-Efficacy

Developing the central belief in our capabilities is an important factor in our development. Self-efficacy can be developed in various ways and the four key sources are mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion and psychological arousal. (Lopez-Garrido, 2023). Personal efficacy is derived from performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and psychological states (Bandura, 1977).

Mastery experiences: Being successful in an activity or mastering a skill increases selfefficacy. The mastery experience is the most important factor determining self-efficacy. Success builds more success. Both positive and negative experiences influence a person to perform a specific task. If one has been successful, they are more likely to feel competent and perform well in similar tasks. Each accomplishment builds on the previous one.

Vicarious experiences: Modelling and watching others similar to oneself can lead to positive self-efficacy beliefs. Seeing someone like you successfully perform a task can be motivating and inspiring. Modelling is especially useful for people particularly unsure of themselves.

Verbal/Social persuasion: Encouragement and positive feedback from others can help improve self-efficacy. Hearing positive words from others can increase one's sense of competence. Note that self-efficacy is influenced by both encouragement and discouragement.

Emotional and physiological states: People experience sensations from their body. How they perceive this influences their beliefs of efficacy. This can include various signs of distress such as shakes, nausea, fear, fatigue etc. These signs can be interpreted as inability by a person with low self-efficacy or as normal physiological signs unrelated to ability by one with high self-efficacy. Positive emotions and reduced stress positively influence self-efficacy. Achieving a state of calmness and relaxation can help increase confidence and motivation. (Hassan et al., 2015)

Practical tips on developing self-efficacy

There are several ways to develop self-efficacy. Some of these can include the following:

Setting achievable goals: Break down your long-term goals into smaller, realistic and achievable tasks and manageable subgoals by utilizing e.g., the SMART goals. Achieving these goals builds confidence and motivates to advance to tackle bigger challenges (Celestine, 2019). Achieving small goals can foster a sense ownership and accomplishment and increase confidence and empowerment.

Positive self-talk: A link exists between self-efficacy and performance, as well as connections between self-efficacy and self-talk (Hunter & Sullins, 2020) and motivational self-talk is shown to increase level of self-efficacy (Zourbanos et al, 2013). Be aware of and monitor your inner dialogue. Challenge your thoughts and replace negative thoughts with positive affirmations. Visualize yourself succeeding and celebrate your small wins (HealthDirect, 2023).

Leveraging social supports: Having supportive relationships and network of people willing to help and encourage can enhance self-efficacy. Build a supportive network from coworkers, experts, teachers, friends or family members that can provide encouragement, guidance, and support to achieve your goals. Surround yourself with positive and supportive people who can offer constructive feedback and encourage you in your professional journey. (Davis, 2023).

Developing coping strategies: Developing effective coping strategies for dealing with obstacles or challenges can increase self-efficacy beliefs. Positive coping positively predicts self-efficacy (Mete, 2021). Being able to handle difficult situations with confidence and resilience helps build self-efficacy.

Embrace failure: You may encounter obstacles, setbacks, failures and mistakes. Performance accomplishments influence self-efficacy (Lane et al. 2001) and failure can be damaging to a learner's self-efficacy, especially if it is repeated. Experiencing difficulties or failure can have virtues if the learner has good self-efficacy in the activity engaged and can remind that sustained effort is required for success. (Meilleur, 2021). To prevent undermining self-efficacy and confidence, adopting a growth mindset is critical. This is a belief that abilities and skills can be improved through effort and training. (Linkedin community, 2023) Failure is a necessary part of growth. Rather than dwelling on mistakes. learn from them and use that knowledge to improve.

Invest in building competence and skill development: To build mastery experiences, invest time and effort to master your skills and knowledge. Challenging yourself to learn something new can help to build self-efficacy (Miles, 2022). Utilize self-learning or attend courses or

workshops to boost your expertise. Developing new skills or improving existing ones can give individual useful tools to advance in their personal development and professional life. Continuously learning and investing in personal development can increase confidence and a sense of agency.

Take responsibility: Owning your actions and choices. Being accountable and responsible builds your confidence and trust in your abilities.

Learn from role models, observe others: Vicarious experiences via role models can support self-efficacy. Look up to people in your field who have overcome obstacles and achieved success. Study their strategies and techniques and adopt them to your own circumstances. In workplace you might just observe others (Miles,2022).

Take action: Action is the key to empowerment. Taking action however small it may be, can help to break through personal and professional barriers and increase a sense of control over one's life. Procrastination only feeds self-doubt. Progress towards your professional goals every day, and you will gain momentum and feel more confident in your ability to succeed.

The Circle of Concern and Influence

The circle of Concern and Influence is a concept that refers to the things that individuals worry, or care about (concern) compared to the things they have control over or can influence. The circle of concern includes broader range of external factors, circumstances and issues that are mostly beyond an individual's control, such as the economy, global events, weather patterns, and societal problems. (Schaffner, 2023) The circle of influence on the other hand refers to the things that people can act on, such as relationships, personal health and work-related tasks. Understanding and focusing on the circle of influence can help individuals feel more empowered and effective in their life and career.

Locus of control is the degree to which people believe that they, as opposed to external forces (beyond their influence), have control over the outcome of events in their lives. A person with an internal locus of control believes that the things and events that happen to them are greatly influenced by their own abilities, actions, or mistakes. In contrast, a person with an external locus of control feels more that external forces (e.g., random chance, environmental factors, or the actions of others) are responsible. (Psychology Today, 2023)

There is a significant relationship between self-efficacy and locus of control (Malarkodi, 2019). Some research shows a positive relationship between self-efficacy and internal locus of control (Corrado et al, 2021) I.e. People with high self-efficacy tend to have an internal locus of control. They believe events in their life are primarily a result of their own actions.

Where does the power to alter your life reside? Internally in you (internal locus of control) or outside of you (external locus of control)? (Ackerman, 2018)

Personal development for digital employee experience

The aspect of personal development should be on the agenda of every professional. There are many ways or approaching the subject. This section will cover key aspects of personal development and offer a planning tool to support your journey through self-evaluation (see Picture 1). The aim is to aid in identifying and documenting your self-reflection and create focus, recognize ways and opportunities to develop forward and organize a process for self-improvement. A good plan also supports taking action. In addition, a good development plan will boost your motivation and improve employability and clarify your sense of purpose.



PICTURE 1. PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT CANVAS

With this development plan we will not start with goals but with looking inwards into understanding personal outlook and mindset on things. After this, personal values and fundamentals are explored.

The canvas proceeds to identify opportunities, skills, and available resources. The tool concludes by focusing on action creating, i.e. establishing routines and documenting your personal goals and waypoints to achieve your vision.

The canvas also helps to measure your progress. You can fill a follow up version after some time to see, what has changed and how you have progressed. This canvas is a suggestion, as to how to start with your personal development. You can continue to utilize it after the course as well and integrate it with other tools, such as the SWOT analysis, and dive more into aspects of personal Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.

The most important thing: when you are done with the exercise, it's time to put it into action. Follow the plan you've created. Initiate with small steps. Track your progress. Identify possible problems in execution. Review your actions. Do you experience changes in your demeanour, personal values and core beliefs? And remember, personal development is a continuous process that continues, even after you get hired, decide to start a business, enrol into a school or something else.

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Challenges in remote working

In this section we'll discuss issues including remote working challenges and best practices, setting up your home office, how to manage distractions, overcome procrastination and take a look into some productivity techniques.

Challenges and best practices

Several issues can present challenges while working remotely. Most often these are related to difficulties in communication, maintaining focus, lack of social opportunities, coping with loneliness and isolation, setting boundaries with work and personal time and overlapping, working across several time zones or diverse working hours, hosting and running effective online meetings and difficulties in team collaboration. Issues may also occur in relation to organizing your own workspace to support effective and active remote work. In addition, challenges related to career advancement and professional growth should be identified.

Best practices of remote work take into account e.g., building constructive daily routines, establishing boundaries with office time and personal time. Prioritizing communication with coworkers and managers is one of the key actions you can take to navigate some of the challenges related to working off-site. Congruent communication builds trust and makes your work visible to others. Upholding to good online meeting etiquette is also supportive.

You can also experiment on what makes you productive. This could mean utilization of specific applications, productivity tools or methods and experimentation of different routines. Creating opportunities for social interaction is also needed. This could take the shape of unofficial coffee breaks or similar. You should still aim to have in person face-to-face meetings regularly. Best Practices can include:

- Building structure for your workday helps productivity. Establish routines and schedules that outline your workday. Define when will your workday begin and end. When do you have your pauses and breaks.
- Set up a designated workspace. A workspace that supports your workflow is critical. This will help in ergonomics, focus and distraction management.
- Regular communication with team and managers. Stay in touch with your colleagues. Define best ways to do this, is it email, instant messages or video calls?
- Select the best tools. Many tools are available to help with remote work. These can relate to e.g., time, task and project management.

• Take breaks and disconnect. Keeping regular breaks is important and keeps you refreshed throughout the workday. Disconnect from work in your personal time to avoid burnout.

Setting up your home office

The home office should also support your daily work. Building the User Interface to your work is one of the best ways personalize your work to suit you. While setting up or developing your remote office, you should consider at least the following: what constitutes the ideal workspace for you, what atmosphere and desk setup is preferable. Setting up ergonomics with adjustable chair and desk, utilizing standing mats and having suitable desk size. For ergonomic setup consider the optimal back and leg support via adjustability, armrests and desk height.

Information workers, designers, and engineers can realize up to a 42% increase in productivity through the use of multiple displays. (Peddie 2017).

Ask yourself, what do **you** need in terms of tools and furniture. Some items of consideration can include computer and peripherals, mouse, keyboard, monitor(s), scanner, printer, stable internet connection, video conference tools and setting e.g., audio and video setups, web camera, microphone, video light, headphones or speakers. Also take a look at your background for video calls. Examine also your physical space: utilize a good chair, desk, have sufficient storage and good work light. Introduce plants and decor to support. Consider issues that help support work-life balance.

Consider what drives you and creates wellbeing? Is it functionality, minimalism, aesthetics, comfortableness or something else? Also, consider security and privacy issues. Establish strong measures to protect confidential information and access to your computer and materials to prevent any security breaches.

Distractions management

Distraction - a thing that prevents someone from concentrating or directs attention away from something more important.

Distractions can be a common challenge in remote working. These can take the form of computer related issues. e.g., pop-ups and constant email notifications, receiving non-relevant emails etc. Challenges can also relate to your workspace. Some strategies to help manage distractions can include creating a designated workspace, utilization of noise-cancelling headphones. If the space is shared or you live with others, establishing boundaries around your work time is important.

Make it clear to others that you are working and ask everyone to respect that time. Also look at minimizing multitasking. It might be tempting to handle a variety of tasks simultaneously or during your breaks, multitasking can reduce your productivity and increases the likelihood of distractions. Try to focus on one task at a time and keep to your planned breaks throughout the workday.

Some suggestions for distraction management:

- Create a designated workspace
- Use noise-cancelling headphones if in a noisy environment
- Establish boundaries
- Use productivity applications and tools
- Set up project deadlines
- Minimize multitasking

Procrastination

Procrastination - the action of delaying or postponing something until a later time because you do not want to do it.

Procrastination can be a challenge in remote work settings because the lack of structure and accountability. Note that procrastination is different from being lazy. It is an active process, where usually an unpleasant, but likely a more important task is being ignored, in favour of one that is more enjoyable or easier. Characteristics of tasks connected to procrastination are e.g., boring, frustrating, ambiguous and unstructured.

Some helpful actions you can take to overcome procrastination can include creating a to-do list to help you identify tasks that you need to complete. This can also help you to stay organized and prioritizing between multiple tasks. Breaking tasks down into smaller steps will help in overcoming tasks that seem daunting. Breaking them down into more manageable steps will feel less overwhelming and help you get started.

Utilizing productivity techniques like the Pomodoro Technique or the Eisenhower Matrix can help you stay focused and effectively prioritize tasks. Establishing deadlines for task completion will help you to create action and accountability. Utilizing rewards after completing a task or meeting a deadline can also help to motivate you, crate positive association with your work or create a small element of gamification around your tasks.

Some strategies to help you create accountability and overcome procrastination:

- Start something, anything to get you moving
- Creating to-do lists
- Breaking task down to smaller steps
- Adopting productivity techniques
- Disconnect from devices
- Setting up deadlines
- Rewards and gamification

On productivity

Studies show a difference between office and remote work setting performance. In general, productivity is show being higher with remote work than those working in a physical office also boosting focus and concentration among the employees.

Productivity techniques can be helpful for office or remote work setting if you need extra support to create and maintain focus or support motivation. Some examples of productivity techniques you can try are:

Pomodoro Technique - a time management technique based around 25-minute task time and a 5-minute break. Repeat the cycle four times and then have a longer e.g., 30-minute break. Tips for Pomodoro include utilizing the technique consistently, planning tasks in advance, minimizing distractions during the work time, use of a timer and deciding how to utilize the micro breaks.

Eisenhower Matrix - categorizing task in four different quadrants based on urgency and importance.

The 80/20 Rule - (AKA. Pareto principle) suggests that 80% of your results are the product of 20% of your work. Identify and focus on the tasks that have the greatest impact.

Eat the Frog First - tackle the most difficult or undesirable task first thing when you start your workday. You are often most energized in the beginning of your day and best able to hold focus.

To-Do Lists - write down all the tasks you need to accomplish. Prioritize in order of importance. Finish each one by one.

Experiment with various tools to find productivity tool or technique that works for you.

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