

Dave Coplin, Chief Envisioning Officer, Microsoft Session Summary: Business Reimagined – The Future of Work

Dave kicked off the conference with a stirring keynote address on the use of technology in the workplace. As Microsoft's Chief Envisioning Officer, Dave is charged with anticipating just how the use of technology will evolve in the near to medium term future. And while he didn't pretend to know all the answers, he certainly left delegates with a host of thought-provoking questions.

Dave began with a quick show of hands which revealed that the majority of the delegates consider their home technology to be more advanced than the technology they access at work. This, he claimed, is a truism throughout the developed world, leading to what he termed "the consumerization of technology" – when workers demand that the superior technology they enjoy in their personal lives finds its way into the workplace.

While the first wave of technology consumerization may be behind us, Dave asserted that the second generation of this phenomenon has just begun. In this wave, employers and employees will allow technology to facilitate change in the way people work – challenging conventional notions of where, when and how work gets done. Why should people go to the office at specific times, to perform tasks that could be better accomplished in other places and at other times? If the technology permits, why not work at the time and place that best fosters innovation and creativity?

This leap asks employers to "let go" of the daily task of monitoring employees, and it requires a great deal of trust. According to Dave, it also requires a new way of measuring performance – one that is much more outcome-based and much less behaviour-based. Only when employers and employees have the courage to embrace this new approach to work, will the full potential of each be realized.

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