



The Digital Foundations of a High-Performance Workplace

5 technology layers that underpin the best workplaces

High-performance workplaces are built on carefully selected digital technologies. Five foundational technology layers separate truly effective organizations from those struggling with digital chaos.

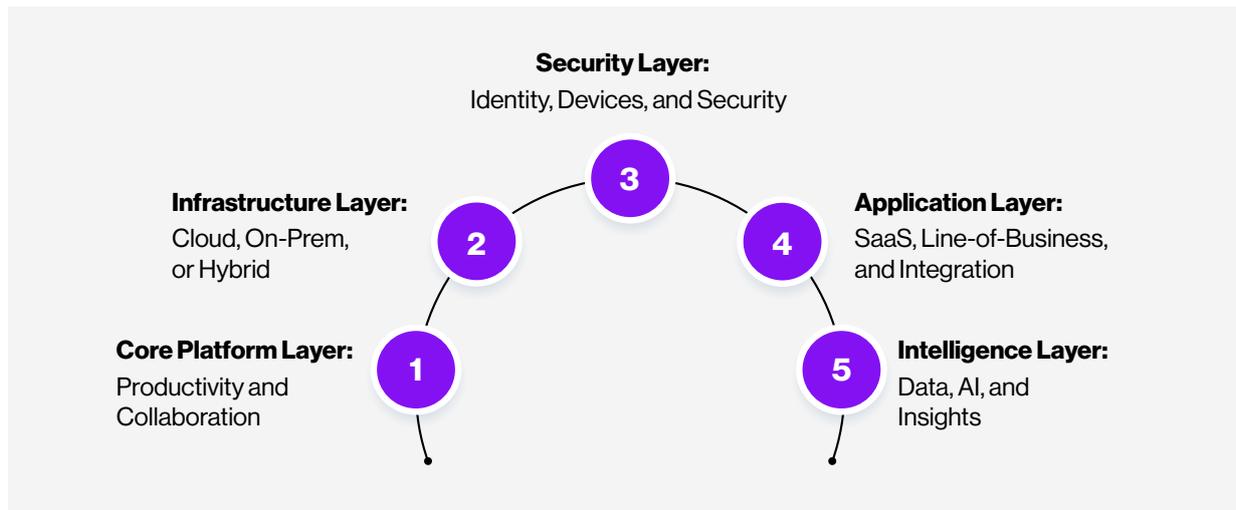


What is a high-performance workplace?

High-performance workplaces don't happen by accident. Like any iconic achievement in design—the Eiffel Tower or Sydney Opera House—high-performance workplaces require deliberate architectural planning that transforms vision into operational reality.

Yet most organizations approach workplace technology haphazardly. The paradox is stark: organizations deploying dozens of advanced tools often struggle with chaos and dysfunction, while others achieve extraordinary productivity with carefully selected core systems. Success stems from strategic selection, not tool proliferation.

Five foundational technology layers separate high-performing organizations from the rest:



Companies that have high-performance workplaces tend to share certain characteristics:

Efficiency

Processes are streamlined, resources are allocated optimally, and employees can accomplish tasks quickly and easily.

Collaboration

They break down silos, communicate well, and share information securely and effectively.

Data-driven decision-making

Decisions are based on facts—not gut instinct or tradition.

Agility

They rapidly identify and effectively respond to changes in the market.

Innovation

New technology is adopted early and deployed in ways that enable better working practices.

Personalized employee experience

Companies with high-performance workplaces recognize the needs of employees and provide tailored support, tools, and working culture.

Exceptional digital workplaces energize teams through intuitive design and seamless workflows. Poorly designed environments drain productivity through friction, confusion, and systems that turn simple tasks into frustrating obstacles.

Would you quit a job due to poor technology?

Several recent studies have found that surprisingly large numbers of people would consider quitting a job due to a poor digital experience. For example, one 2024 survey¹ found 30% of employees would look for another job if their current company's digital experience didn't meet expectations.

A poor digital experience is often a symptom of wider problems at companies—resistance to innovation, disregard for the employees' day-to-day experience, and lack of direction. This inefficiency can cause unnecessary delays and directly impact an individual's success in their role. And, in an era of rapid technological advances, no one wants to feel like they're still working in the 1990s.

¹ Outdated workplace tech is really getting on workers' nerves now | TechRadar

Five digital elements of a high-performance workplace

Understanding what constitutes a high-performance workplace is just the beginning. The next step is implementing the right technology foundation. Rather than getting lost comparing hundreds of vendors selling similar products, we recommend taking a strategic approach using the following five foundational layers.

#1. The core platform layer

The core platform layer serves as your business's primary workplace environment foundation. This system choice will influence every other technology decision you make.

Your core platform layer refers to the technology system you will use as your business's primary workplace environment. Each platform is high quality, but they have different features, and some may be better suited in different situations.

Almost all businesses rely on six global technology companies to provide their core platform layer:

Microsoft

Ubiquitous, with familiar products and world-class innovation, Microsoft is trusted by millions of companies of all sizes around the world. Microsoft offers a truly comprehensive range of technologies that enable a high-performance workplace, and these tools “speak” to one another seamlessly.

Google

Innovative, easy to use, and cloud-based, Google's business technology systems are also used by millions of companies worldwide. Google's range of products is not as extensive as Microsoft's, but it is more than adequate for most firms.

Amazon Web Services

AWS may be a less familiar name in the world of business technology, but its suite of tools offers enormous quantities of computing power (especially helpful for innovative firms), communication tools, and business applications.

Oracle

With a comprehensive suite of solutions designed to streamline business processes, Oracle is trusted for its robust cloud infrastructure, powerful database management systems, and advanced analytics capabilities.

IBM

With a broad and complex portfolio of continuously evolving software and services, IBM continues to be trusted by countless firms as a supplier of quality technology.

SAP

SAP is a mission-critical foundation for tens of thousands of enterprises, and its Intelligent Enterprise solution is the backbone of many businesses.

These core platform layers are not mutually exclusive. Many firms find their ideal solution involves a blend of two or more of these providers' products.

Case Study:

How Italian insurer Bene Assicurazioni migrated to AWS

Italian insurance company Bene Assicurazioni is ambitious—the startup aims to transform and modernize the country's insurance sector. The company was using on-premises servers and several custom applications. However, they were fully focused on migrating to the cloud to give their customers a better experience and enable a high-performance workplace where employees could innovate with new products and services.

The firm was already using AWS for its customer contact operations, so they decided to migrate wholesale to Amazon's cloud. With minimal business disruption, the company migrated 50 servers and 10 applications to AWS, optimized their workflows, and cut IT costs by 40% in the process. [More »](#)

#2. The infrastructure layer

Once you've established your core platform, the next decision involves where your business applications, networks, and data will be physically stored. This infrastructure choice will significantly influence how your digital workplace functions. There are three approaches: cloud, on-premises, and a hybrid of the two.

Generally speaking, a strategy that uses the cloud (either pure-cloud or a hybrid of cloud and on-premises) more easily enables a high-performance workplace. That said, there are situations where on-premises solutions are the best option.

Pure cloud

By migrating all your data, workflows, and business applications to the cloud, you can create a highly efficient working environment. Gone is the need to manage physical servers and infrastructure. Instead, you "rent" computing power from a cloud provider and pay for what you use. The cloud enables a high-performance workplace in several ways—it allows truly remote work, the ability to use the latest SaaS technologies, and an extraordinary degree of flexibility and scalability.

Hybrid cloud

In this approach, you keep some of your company's processes, software, and data in on-premises servers, but also use the cloud for other functions. To enable remote work, for instance, you might use the cloud for some core business productivity apps (email, video calling, project management), but store sensitive data (e.g. customer financial information) on-prem.

On-premises

In this approach, work can only be done when employees are physically connected to the company network. In certain sectors or regulated industries (e.g. nuclear power plants, military, or pharmaceuticals), on-prem remains the only real choice. Nevertheless, this does not mean you're obliged to rely on outdated technology to get work done.

Case Study:

How Spanish media group Vocento migrated to Google's cloud infrastructure

Vocento is Spain's leading mass media group, and owns over 100 companies in the country, including many leading titles. Each of the companies in the group was using a range of on-premises and cloud-based systems to share information and images, and for journalists to file articles. In a major transformation, Vocento brought all these systems into a single, unified Google Workspaces platform.

Not only did this dramatically reduce Vocento's costs, it also enabled a high-performance workplace by helping journalists, editors, and business teams to share information faster, work more efficiently, and manage documents more consistently. [More »](#)

#3. Security Layer

Security is an essential consideration when planning a high-performance workplace. You need to determine who can access what systems, how they'll authenticate, and what safeguards protect your data.

Without strong security, the workplace faces a higher risk of data breaches. But just as important, the security layer is about building trust. Security by design enables trust with your clients that you are transacting their data safely; trust with your users that they are operating daily operations safely, providing safe parameters to get work done; trust that your business is minimizing risk by adhering to regulatory compliance, and correctly categorizing data for safe AI integration.

The security layer is built with several core technologies, including:

Firewalls

These protect the perimeter of your organization and allow only people with correct credentials to enter.

Antivirus

This is the first layer of defense. It should be installed on all devices that are connected to your network. It helps protect against common types of malware and can prevent people from downloading unsafe files.

Endpoint detection and response (EDR)

This technology monitors activity inside your network. If attackers have bypassed your initial defenses, EDR monitors for suspicious behavior (such as attempts to download hundreds of files).

Zero trust

This security model requires users to verify their identity each time they try to log into your systems or view new files. It is enabled by identity and access management (IAM) tools.

Multi-factor authentication (MFA)

Passwords can be guessed or stolen. MFA requires people to provide more than one piece of evidence that they are who they claim when logging into your systems—typically email confirmation, access codes sent to verification apps, or biometrics.

Case Study:

How Japanese manufacturer Ahresty modernized its security layer

Ahresty is a global aluminum die-casting manufacturer. They were using a traditional on-premises Microsoft Active Directory for verification when staff around the world wanted to log in. But using this on-premises approach was creating security risks, particularly for staff working abroad.

The firm migrated to a cloud-based identity and access management solution using Microsoft's Entra ID, as well as Conditional Access, Microsoft's zero trust policy solution, and other security tools.

Wherever they are in the world, Ahresty's employees now benefit from a single sign-on so they can securely log in and get on with their tasks. It helps Ahresty become a workplace that simply works. [More »](#)

#4. The application layer

The application layer needs to be tailored to your specific business needs and workflows. Modern businesses use dozens, or even hundreds of apps to help their staff be productive. One analysis² suggests that firms with more than 1,000 employees use an average of 177 apps. These apps fall into various categories, such as:

Core productivity

Word processing, spreadsheets, presentation, and notebook software

Communications

Email, voice and video call apps, and chat apps

Line of business apps

Specialized tools for project management, inventory management, customer relationship management, financial forecasting, HR, etc.

File storage apps

Sync documents, images, and video files of various sizes

Custom apps

Apps, widgets, and tools built in-house to support specific tasks

Managing all these applications can be complicated, and it's important to find a balance between enabling productivity (letting people use the tools they want to work with), and avoiding bloat, overspend, and security risks.

Whatever approach you take to the application layer, it's very helpful to create a policy about app usage. This should state:

- What kinds of apps can be used
- What apps cannot be used
- The process for integrating apps into your environment
- How you monitor these apps for usage, security, & compliance

There is no one correct way to configure the application layer. Some companies use apps from dozens of providers, choosing the most specific or targeted tools. Others opt for a major supplier, such as Microsoft, Google, or IBM, who provide a large number of products that meet most companies' needs and that work together well.

² <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1233666/average-number-saas-apps-usage-by-organization-size>

Case Study:

Germany's VdS Schadenverhütung future-proofs apps with Microsoft 365

Fire and burglary protection firm VdS Schadenverhütung had been relying on several on-premises apps (including custom-built apps) to support employees and customers. This on-premises approach was becoming a barrier to scaling.

The company decided to move their app layer to the Microsoft 365 cloud environment. Staff now have access to modern communication tools and Microsoft's entire range of productivity apps. They could also rebuild their custom apps in the Microsoft Power Platform (an easy-to-use, no-code app building tool). The new apps integrate seamlessly with the rest of their Microsoft cloud environment.

This means VdS Schadenverhütung now has a truly high-performance workplace where employees can innovate and be more agile.. [More »](#)

#5. The intelligence layer

Almost any company can now benefit from highly sophisticated generative AI. When configured correctly, these tools can be a boon for productivity, efficiency, and employee satisfaction, contributing to a high-performance workplace.

To get the intelligence layer to function correctly, it's essential to organize your data and company information so that:

- It is readable and accessible to AI systems
- It complies with national and international data safety regulations
- It is unable to leak into AI labs' training systems
- AI systems must not show internal company data to employees who do not have appropriate access rights

The intelligence layer integrates various advanced technologies:

AI assistants

Solutions such as Microsoft's Copilot or Google's Gemini can work almost like assistants for your workers, finding documents, summarizing information, and even carrying out certain tasks that win them back time.

AI agents

Going a step further, AI agents are autonomous AI systems that can perform tasks and make decisions independently. These are tailored to the business and are often able to complete workflows or analyze data.

Targeted AI tools

Some AI tools are particularly helpful for completing certain tasks, including producing transcriptions, generating images, producing text, or analyzing data.

Data preparation

A business's intelligence is only as good as its data. High-performance workplaces usually have highly organized data and information management methods that feed into their business intelligence apps, train their AI bots, and help them understand their customers.

Case Study:

Hong Kong's AAMI transforms workplace habits with Copilot

Semi-conductor manufacturer AAMI immediately understood the value of AI assistants. So, when Microsoft Copilot was launched, the firm launched a trial as soon as it became available. After an initial deployment with a small team, Copilot has now been rolled out to the entire business.

A key part of the AAMI's success with Copilot is a focus on training. The firm helps users understand which of their everyday tasks can be improved, made faster and more efficient by using AI assistants. As staff grow more comfortable with the technology and more confident using it, they are cumulatively saving thousands of hours every day. [More »](#)

Lay strong digital foundations for your high-performance workplace

Digital technologies play a central role in creating a workplace that truly works. They allow you to scale, adapt, innovate, and be more efficient. AI assistants give employees tools that increase productivity while eliminating tedious, repetitive tasks.

However, achieving a high-performance workplace requires strategy and planning to ensure these five technology layers work together coherently. By implementing these foundational layers, you can be confident your workplace is built for the future.

Turn your organization into a high-performance workplace

SoftwareOne is a global leader in digital workplace solutions that helps organizations create secure, high-performance workplaces. We have the expertise, the partnerships, and the portfolio to help you transform your workplace and achieve your performance goals. We work with the world's leading technology providers to deliver transformation all in one.

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- Sophos
- Symantec
- Skyhigh Security
- Tenable
- Trend Micro
- Trellix
- Zscaler

Are you ready to become a high-performance workplace?

If you're ready to take your workplace to the next level, contact us today and let us show you how we can help you realize your vision.



**CONTACT US
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