

When implementing a new technology:

How to better support workers with technological change

Prepare your team and build capacity

1. Prepare your team: Inform workers early about the changes. Give them time to prepare mentally and technically. Answer their questions and worries transparently (e.g. are their jobs at risk of being replaced? Will their work intensify?). Work with workers rather than imposing on them. Explain clearly how the new tool will support their work.

2. Training is key to managing change: Make sure workers receive enough training. Online e-training is fine but what workers value most is in-person and hands-on training, giving them a chance to ask questions and make mistakes. Giving workers sufficient training will pay back later with a more efficient use of technology.

3. Support new starters: Provide sufficient information and dedicate time to training new staff. Some of your workers may have never used any of the systems before, and it might be their first-ever job. This care-full approach will pay back in the future.

4. Create opportunities for continuous learning and development: Enable the development of skills. Both digital and interaction skills are important, one should not replace the other. Keep workers interested, curious and inspired. As a result, they will stay longer.

Anticipate issues, be ready to acknowledge and mitigate challenges

1. Anticipate challenges and acknowledge issues: If the tool is not working as anticipated, acknowledge issues and actively work with the team to provide solutions, giving more resources if needed and helping workers deal with these.

2. Be mindful of using data for worker evaluation and performance management: Consider how introducing performance management tools can be detrimental to your team rather than helpful. Numeric performance data has many limitations and needs to be critically evaluated. Metrics are context-blind, often incomplete and fragmented, with numerous gaps and glitches. When evaluating staff performance, nuances and context need to be taken into consideration, and data looked at with a critical eye.

3. Be mindful when using digital communication platforms: Online group chat platforms can be valuable communication tools if used well and positively. Keep important information for in-person meetings. This will help you mitigate negative impacts digital communication platforms can have on worker wellbeing (e.g. messages can come across the wrong way, workers might be off work when receiving communications). Reflect on how interactions between co-workers and managers are mediated via technology and whether there is enough face-to-face contact. Inform workers about the right to switch off after working hours.

Be worker-centric, flexible and inclusive

1. Be inclusive: Acknowledge that different workers deal differently with change and support them through it, e.g. older workers, international staff and new starters might need additional support. Do not assume digital abilities in workers; not all young workers are good with tech and not all older workers lack confidence with tech. Offer support where needed as different workers will react and adapt differently. Be aware that some workers might need more time and support.

2. Be flexible and give workers choice where possible: For those who struggle more with technology or prefer alternative ways of working, give them choice where possible and consider allowing for different ways of doing things.

3. Be aware of potential negative impacts of technology on well-being and mental health: Be aware of what brings workers joy at work and enable that so that work does not become too mundane and too disrupted by technological tools.

4. Create meaningful quality jobs to make hospitality jobs more attractive: Make sure your workers are valued and visible, their jobs are meaningful and challenge them in positive ways.

Observe, reflect, listen and act

1. Listen to your workers, seek feedback and act on it: Action feedback when tech issues are reported so that staff feel they can raise problems. Make sure they know how and where to raise tech issues. Do not assume they will just get on with new technologies. Collect (anonymous if possible) worker feedback and act on it.

2. Drop tools that are detrimental to the team: If the tool is having a negative impact on the team (e.g. not working as expected or causing staff more work), explore ways of dropping it.

3. Get customers' views on customer-facing systems (e.g. digital key cards). Do they want a more personalised contact or prefer using technology? What matters to them? While some customers want speed and low cost, others appreciate interaction with workers and a personalised approach.

4. Evaluate regularly and watch out for the unintended consequences: Do a pulse check with your staff every so often to see how your team is getting on with new tools. Evaluate, identify unintended consequences and assess whether the tools are bringing anticipated benefits or are adding more pressure. Enable anonymous ways of feedback for staff to express their views and concerns. Engage in continuous reflection. Identify how tech helps and supports workers, but also how it distracts or disrupts work and workers.

Create a supportive and collegial environment

1. Create a collegial environment: Nurture a collaborative environment where staff can help each other and support each other with tools. Make sure to maintain a strong social element in your workplace, providing opportunities for the team to come together and support each other.

2. Enable human interactions: Make sure that in-person interactions with customers and co-workers remain at the centre. This helps keep the spirit of hospitality and puts community at the core, which in turn will make workers and customers more loyal and committed.

3. Celebrate good practice: Do recognise and reward workers. However, be mindful of not creating an overly competitive environment that can negatively affect the team.

Be transparent

1. Transparency is key: Be transparent about the reasons why the new system/tool is being brought in and how it will be used. In particular, be open about what performance data it collects and how that data is used or not. Give workers a chance to ask questions and reassure them about fair use of data.

2. Be transparent about using incentives: If using incentives and rewards, make sure these are inclusive and not just data-driven and metrics-driven. Reflect on how the system introduces competition and its impact on team spirit and collaboration.

3. Have a clear policy on AI use at work: This will help workers avoid issues with data privacy etc. If relevant, provide training and foster critical reflection on AI tools and its negative aspects. This will help minimise hidden use of AI in the workplace and AI-related errors.

4. Share learnings with other employers: In this way you can create a community of learning and support as well as enabling critical discussions about technological change.

About the Author:

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Find out more: hospitalityfutures.co.uk/reboot

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