

**ASHER RICKAYZEN**

is a Partner at Relume Ltd.
Contact: asher@relume.co.uk
www.relume.co.uk

SPEED READ

- Outdated attitudes common
- Staff access to many sites blocked e.g. YouTube
- Fear hampering adoption of technology
- Change is inevitable – embrace, don't resist

RESISTANCE IS FUTILE

With the line blurring between the use of technology in our home and work lives, isn't it about time employees were trusted to reap the benefits of a highly connected world, asks ASHER RICKAYZEN.

We have generally accepted the important role technology plays in our private lives to keep us connected to each other and the benefits that this brings. We have also recognised the vital role and power it has in interacting with our customers. Just try tweeting a complaint to a large business and wonder at the speed of response when compared to fighting your way through their official customer support lines. The most uneasy ground, however, appears to exist within many of our organisations where the tools, policies and attitudes typically lag behind. Many organisations still block access to sites such as Facebook and YouTube as a matter of course.

We are straddling two parallel worlds in which the power and speed of a highly connected technologically savvy society rubs up against organisational rules rooted in a more industrial age. At the heart of it is a battle between the old model of order, hierarchy, control and planning and the new one of opportunism, rapid insight, emergence and learning.

NEW TECHNOLOGY, NEW THREATS

Business concerns about technology are real and understandable because of the risks to privacy, security and reputation. We are, however, well past the tipping point of societal acceptance and it is futile to keep sticking our finger in the dam. It would be more productive to learn to swim. We treat many of our organisations as the last bastions of a more ordered

world, clinging to an outdated paradigm for fear of what might be unleashed if we let go.

As the shift to a much more connected world occurs, the familiar barriers and distinctions between different aspects of our lives begin to dissolve, merge or disappear entirely... sometimes at breakneck speed. Our ability to keep pace with this and adjust our behaviours

STAY RELEVANT WITH NEW RULES

It is paradoxical that something so helpful is often treated with such suspicion. It is also paradoxical that even when we take the step, it is hampered by attempts to fit within the precepts of a world that was slower and less interconnected; a world that required (and could obtain) more certainty than today. For example, the business case for more social networking at work would be unlikely to pass successfully through many of our typical investment processes. The very notion that we might benefit from actively encouraging employees is anathema to many.

It begins to question some of our underpinning views of what work itself is.

The challenge is to embrace the opportunity and make the leap of faith. The sacrifice of predictability and control will be outweighed by the new possibilities created by the relationships fostered. The danger is that we throw the baby out with the bath water.

We risk losing the chance to create innovation through more informal connectedness, more collaboration and more haphazard colliding of ideas and people.

In order to thrive we will have to adjust to a working environment that requires more agility, less structure, more sifting of the wheat from the chaff. We need less predictability and more virtual presence, amongst other things. It is not surprising that this might feel uncomfortable. Given the dramatic transformation in the landscape around us, it also feels entirely necessary. ■



accordingly is equally tested. In the workplace, it is tempting to allow our default response to be to pretend it isn't happening. We may try to keep it out because we are not sure how and where it should fit with our existing practices.