

# Digital Workplace Impact

with Paul Miller



**Episode 70**  
**Digital Workplace**  
**of the Year Awards**  
**2020**

**Transcript**



UK's Leading  
Management  
Consultants  
2020

*So, this is a little mini-episode, a little extra shot of Digital Workplace Impact for you this time. Each year, Digital Workplace Group runs its Digital Workplace of the Year Awards; we do one for the Organization of the Year and also one for the Leader of the Year. There's a great judging panel and it's done as part of the peer recognition for individuals and organizations who've really made an impact on their digital workplace.*

*So, we've got little recordings, quite short brief recordings, that we did during Digital Workplace Group 24, our 24-hour event that happened a few weeks ago – and one of them is with Linda Lee. Linda is the Regional Head, Future of Work at DBS Bank in Singapore, and DBS won the Digital Workplace of the Year Award against some stiff competition.*

*The other award is to Priya Thummalapalli. Priya is the Vice President of Global HR and Digital Strategy at Prudential Financial, and she won the Digital Workplace Leader of the Year award.*

*The recording quality's not quite as clean as hopefully you might think of as normal for Digital Workplace Impact, but it was recorded live on DWG24, so this is the award ceremony if you like, plus a little conversation between Linda and myself, then Priya and DWG's Nancy Goebel, Managing Director, Member Services.*

*Note: This transcript has been edited for space and clarity.*

## Digital Workplace of the Year Winner 2020: DBS Bank

Paul                    So, now the big reveal of our DWG Digital Workplace of the Year Award for the organization that has won this for 2020 – the one that has excelled in creating well-executed, high-performing digital environments. We scrutinized many participating organizations and we are delighted to announce that **DBS Bank** is the winner of Digital Workplace of the Year 2020.

The judges were wowed by the entry from DBS Bank in Singapore, which demonstrated strong performance right across the board, unique strategy to make work joyful – yes, joyful – and, right through, elements such as multi-layered governance, thorough user engagement and strong rationale tied the bank's overall goals together. Impressive features like the “One-bot” virtual assistant, “Idea bot” for innovation and “I thank you” for peer reward really stood out. They also demonstrated impressive results, including 90% user satisfaction, thousands of employee hours saved and an estimated \$6 million of savings on travel costs across the company –

and I'm delighted to be joined by Linda Lee from DBS; great to have you with us.

Linda Hi, thank you, thank you so much for this award.

Paul Yes!

Linda It's a great honour to receive this on behalf of the bank. Thank you so much, Paul.

Paul That's fantastic and where are you, you're in Singapore today, Linda?

Linda Yes, I am and I'm glad to know that the plaque just arrived in time. Just about half an hour ago.

Paul Oh wow!

Linda Yes, it arrived. It rang on my doorbell and ah great! Thank you so much. This is amazing.

Paul That's fantastic. And was it difficult to have an ambition to make work "joyful" or is that something that the bank was keen to embrace?

Linda As we all know, empathy is key – in all the things that we do. We need to always put ourselves in the shoes of even our customers and, in this case here, the shoes of an employee. We need to see how we can bring out the best in all our employees at DBS. I mean, at the end of day, everyone was seeking joy and fulfillment. As we all know, we spend a lot of our hours, waking hours, at work, so it's best for us to be able to make it joyful and ensure that the hours spent at work are something that is enjoyable and not miserable – so that's a thought we have about how we make work joyful and just how we get joy and fulfillment at work.

Paul Fantastic. This has been a 10-year journey for DBS. Could you just briefly summarize the key phases or stages you've been through? And we won't do a live tour because we've already had that on DWG24 but just to summarize the key steps on the 10-year journey.

Linda I would say that the 10-year journey started off very much with the objective of the customer experience, the way that we improve processes and the qualities of the whole customer experience – so that was the initial part of the years. After that, in the second half of the journey, we thought very hard how do we get internal to catch up with external because our internal employees are also our customers; it's just that it's our internal customers.

That's where we started to have a shift in having the internal catch up with the external, and that was a kind of custom bridge of a standard kind of application with design thinking very much focused on user experience. So that was kind of our focus and making sure that in everything we do, we put our people at the centre of it. That way, just as when we develop any customer products, we put the customer at the centre of it, we just replicate whatever we do for the customer for our internal customer, which is our employees.

Paul      Fantastic, and so what's next for the DBS digital workplace? What are you excited about as you move forward?

Linda     I would say that only thing we do share is that we wish everybody to be able to achieve more and be less frustrated. That's what we know that, today, many people are spending too much time in their work, and it is really, you know, not really productive work. It's still a question mark, as Nicole was saying, about how you measure productivity – and we do know that much of the time we are doing work that is not productive. So our mission from here is to be able to achieve more and be less frustrated, so that we spend a meaningful 8 hours doing real work.

Paul      That's fantastic, and if you had to give one piece of advice to organizations that are tuned in, people are tuned in to the show, what would it be?

Linda     Change is very, very tough in the beginning, messy in the middle and with difficulties at the end! Take a reasonable size project and problem to solve. And show results and do it from there – that's how you gain trust from your stakeholders because "seeing is believing". It's more convincing to have that result before you go to them and suggest it. That's how DBS started on this journey.

Paul      Yes, and it really helps having somebody who's an inspirational figure, such as yourself, I think.

Linda     Yes, we have a lot of leaders that want to talk, our CEO for one, want leaders that believe very much that people are our greatest asset. We must make sure that we ? employee because that is distracting for us to do good work.

Paul      That's great. Well congratulations to you Linda, and congratulations to DBS Bank on becoming the DWG Digital Workplace of the Year Award for 2020.

## Digital Workplace Leader of the Year Winner 2020: Priya Thummalapalli

Nancy

This is really an opportunity to bring Priya Thummalapalli back into the mix as our Digital Workplace Leader of the Year. Priya, I have to start with a fundamental question, which is: you've been in this field for 20-plus years now, what was your motivation for coming into this crazy world of the digital workplace?

Priya

I would say it was a very classic experience. I think my professional journey hasn't been unusual. I'm sure it's very similar to everybody out there, all the digital leaders out there.

But why I came here... after spending so many years in digital land, you've navigated through e-business and e-commerce and, you know, the bricks and mortar of the world, at some point fundamentally I'm very motivated by a very copious dose of self-criticism and curiosity. So, when I landed on the digital workplace, I think the amount of problems that needed to be solved were very challenging. And it was random. So I'm very comfortable with randomness; in fact, it motivates me. So there was this experimental side to, how do we start solving all of this differently, that came into the front place. So I think that I would say is really my motivation.

Nancy

And what would you say are the most important tools you've been able to dip in to transform the digital HR experience?

Priya

I think there are many things when it comes to HR experience in general, right? The first thing I would say is, in our own journey, I think maybe these are what I'm going to say – a couple of milestones that happened. When I was brought into Prudential HR, and especially HR technology – and I've moved between various roles at Prudential – but this is, I think, the most fun ride I would say and the most challenging of all. So our HR CIO brought me in and the first thing we did was really ask how do we reinvent the way we work? And that's got to be most important. So that was foundational for us. It was instead of when you want to start something new and you dip into your old habits and your old ways of thinking – that is never going to work.

So the first thing we did is we actually went to Silicon Valley and we spoke to a couple of companies, SAP and Intuit and Pivotal Labs, and we learned so much that you can kind of realize your assumptions. The way you start is then completely different. And so we literally sat there, in a coffee shop actually, and

we drew on a whiteboard how we wanted to work. And we came back, and in the last three and a half years we've had so many different milestones collectively that today I think we can very proudly say that the ecosystem we built together was very, very foundational for the workplace to move and start adding more layers to it.

So there were three important things. One is, how do we change mindsets? I think that is such an important question that everybody's asking. And we said the first question we're always going to ask is the "Why?". Because I'm telling you, we save money by asking that question with regards to investments, by asking the question "Why?". So I'm sure I think everybody has understood the value of asking the question "Why?". And innovation is one stream of really improving where the company is going.

The other side, that always stays with me, is this line I read long back by some Roman poet – that good is mostly the absence of the bad. So there's another way of looking at it – how do you start looking at removing things that are not working for you and that really starts with that question. So, that was the key thing, right: how do we change mindsets?

The second thing was how do we change the process from being really, I would say, very structured, and that's very important, right? The main thing that digital leaders need to do is to step back and to look at the whole ecosystem. It's not just your workplace ecosystem, but what's happening in the industry. How are you connecting the different dots, disparate ideas? And so it was important to build structure and lead with strategy. So I've always seen that when you're a good leader, you're always reminding your team of the big picture. That's where it becomes really, really valuable because the team is actually doing the hands-on keyboard work. You've got to remind them of what the big picture is.

The final thing is to give them a framework where it's not really deep entrenched processes, but you've got to give them a very elastic framework they can work in and we've seen that some of the most creative ideas have happened when the team did not play by the rules, and I think you need to give them that structure to play with. So, if you really sum it up, the journey in Prudential has been great. But the fun part of the journey is when you're dealing with people and how you start to make sure you introduce structures and ideas that change mindsets. And that's foundational. After that, everything is mind technology, connecting dots. That's the easy part.

Nancy

And I think what you've described is not only the path that you followed, but the roadmap for others to stand on your shoulders and make inroads around transforming this digital workplace into the *essential* workplace.

I think, just based on time, we'll need to pause there Priya. But we're just so excited for you and this moment to acknowledge the work that you've done in embedding innovation in the work that people do across the HR organization and recognize that it's a blueprint for others to follow.

Paul

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# Overview of services.

Digital workplaces (now) = Essential workplaces

## Why journey alone?

The digital workplace has become the essential workplace for thousands of organizations around the world, as teams have had to rapidly implement advanced remote working from home.

Digital Workplace Group (DWG) is a strategic partner, covering all aspects of the evolving digital workplace industry through membership, benchmarking and consultancy services.

**"We've found Digital Workplace Group to be invaluable partners in our journey toward a more effective digital workplace.**

Whether we need insights, benchmarks, or just a quick sanity-check, the DWG team is there for us. It's almost as if they're 'riding shotgun' for us as we move the stagecoach along the digital trail."

**Pete Fields**

Head of Digital Experience

**Wells Fargo**

### Membership

A confidential member forum for improvement and networking



### Benchmarking

Objective data for making critical decisions



### Consulting

Independent expertise to guide strategy and plans



## An expert partner to transform your company's workplace

DWG provides independent guidance to more than 80 Fortune 1000 and equivalent companies as well as public-sector organizations to advance their digital workplaces through peer learning, impartial evaluations, research and practitioner expertise.

DWG has been recognized by the Financial Times as one of the UK's leading management consultancies in digital transformation for 2020.



## Sample members and clients



*The Coca-Cola Company*



**Fidelity**  
INTERNATIONAL



**MCKESSON**



**Nestlé**



**HORIZON**

# Overview of services.

## How do DWG's three services advance your workplace?

### Member Forum

#### Confidential learning, ongoing improvement

The DWG Member Forum is a confidential, members-only group. Membership combines online and in-person peer learning with expert research and practical insights into how others have solved challenges, based on more than 700 evaluations of major organizations.

#### Peer learning

Rich interaction and sharing with teams from other major organizations.

#### Expert research

New members-only reports every quarter and a vast archive of papers and videos.

#### Members-only events

Live online Q&As with experts, research-driven webinars, member meetings.

### How to contact DWG



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### Consulting Services

#### Strategic interventions, discrete projects

DWG Consulting Services provides vendor-neutral, unbiased, high-quality advice and practical hands-on support for digital workplace and intranet programmes, such as:

#### What does "good" look like?

External insight into industry best practices – to inform strategies and plans.

#### Define vision, strategy & roadmap

Methodology and expertise to establish the road ahead.

#### Facilitated workshops

Engage stakeholders across a global organization or within a function – so the whole team starts on the same page.

### Annual Benchmarking

#### Strategic evaluations, baseline performance measurement

DWG Benchmarking provides in-depth analysis of your sites and/or digital workplace environment, and comparison with other similar organizations. We have a range of benchmarks to choose from:

#### Intranet

- Modern Intranet Management
- Digital Communications Channels
- Intranet Usability

#### Digital Workplace

- Digital Workplace Management
- Digital Collaboration
- Digital Workplace Experience
- Digital Workplace Maturity

### Why do so many leading companies choose Digital Workplace Group?

**Large company expertise:** We've worked with Fortune 1000 / FT 500 (and comparable) organizations for more than 18 years. Our expertise and insights focus on the successes, challenges and needs of such major organizations.

**Measurement and research focus:** Our consulting and evaluations rely on measurement derived from more than 700 benchmarks and our robust research programme, to provide a unique reservoir of statistics and case studies.

We provide "data and metrics in a world of opinion".

**Real-world practitioners:** Our benchmarkers and consultants have previously managed intranets and digital workplaces at major organizations. Our expertise is rooted in experience.

**Independence:** All our work is vendor neutral and our consulting and evaluation framework is proudly technology agnostic.



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