

A large, vertical, decorative graphic on the left side of the page, composed of a dense grid of small dots. The dots are arranged in a shape that tapers from top to bottom, with a curved right edge. The color of the dots transitions from light blue at the top to a darker grey at the bottom.

THE NEXT GENERATION WORKSTYLE

Sun Open Work Services Group
Infrastructure Design and Development
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Introduction

Sun's next generation work environment blends workplace and technology enablers to support the next generation workstyle. The co-evolution of network technologies and the culture of interaction they enable has introduced a growing number of options for people to work together across distance and time.

A next generation workstyle capitalizes on these options and changes the demands the workforce has for technology and the design, location, and purpose of the physical workplace. Analyzing, understanding, and designing solutions for the next generation workstyle is the goal of Sun's next-gen work environment transformation projects.

Physical location and design remain essential enablers of work, but determining what is needed and at which locations has to account for the new patterns embodied in the next-gen workstyle. The network is conceptually emerging as the primary place work gets done and working from any network-connected location efficiently and effectively is making location less relevant.

Cultivating the next-gen workstyle allows Sun to meet the challenges of a rapidly shifting market, and its positive impact on Sun's business is significant. Sun's margins grow when real estate investments are used more efficiently, when travel is less necessary, when talent can be sourced from anywhere, and when the associated cost savings go straight to the bottom line.



Open Work

Sun's 14-year-old Open Work program is integral to Sun's strategy and mantra — *The Network Is the Computer*— and Sun's vision of a network-centric workforce. The program provides an integrated combination of workplaces, technologies, and work practices to enable and support an evolution to a next-gen workstyle.

Open Work metrics show that at the end of March 2009, almost 18,200 employees (more than 56% of the workforce) were working away from the office at least one or two days a week. And, over 4,000 employees (or 12% of the workforce) are home assigned.

What Defines the Next-Gen Workstyle?

The next-gen workstyle is an evolving cultural norm for employee interaction within a dynamic, increasingly distributed corporate community. It not only defines the actions of each contributor, but goes further to set the expectations they have for each other. At Sun, it includes the range of distinctive behaviors and best practices that enable employees to excel in a work environment that promotes and fosters mobility, on-line collaboration, distributed teams, minimal physical infrastructure, and the recognition that work is an activity not a place.

A hard-walled private office is something that once served as an incentive for talented people to choose Sun as an employer. Though that may still be the case for some, the next-gen workstyle suggests the need for a different sort of attractive work experience for new talent. Digital natives, their managers, and their managers' managers all find much to like about a dynamic, networked community that is inclusive and engaging without requiring relocation or a daily commute.

Sun's Evolving Culture

Corporations are often described as big ships that are difficult and slow to turn. However, this metaphor doesn't match up with the reality that a corporation is actually a fluid community of contributors. As a community, it is the agility of individuals that provides the basis for the agility of the whole.

As a competitor in fast-paced, crowded markets, Sun counts on the contributions of each individual as key to its ability to adapt and grow. Both the need to mobilize for first-mover advantage on new opportunities and to maintain pace and focus during times of significant change benefit from a next-gen workstyle. Evolving Sun's corporate culture such that everyone expects to work collaboratively across the network more routinely than they work face to face provides a foundation of versatility that gives Sun a competitive edge.

Individual

The most familiar form of the next-gen workstyle is demonstrated at the individual level. Team members, customers, and partners can be located all over town or all over the globe. Working effectively requires flexibility and communication skills that get the most out of modern workplaces and technologies.

Increasingly, visits to a Sun office are tied to a need for tightly coupled group work, periodic team gatherings, and hands-on projects involving special equipment. When balancing these needs with work otherwise done across the Net, individuals develop strategies for finding one another and collaborating regardless of who is in or out of the office.

Forrester estimates that 73% of enterprise employees will be mobile in some form by 2012.¹



Staying engaged through communication tools that leverage voice, data, video, instant messaging, shared calendars, and on-line professional and personal profiles is necessary to ensure a rich experience and sense of connectedness in a next-gen work environment.

Team

When individuals adopt the next-gen workstyle, they come together to form effective, networked teams. Teams agree how to manage group communications, how to combine work products, how to work as transparently as possible, and they agree on the frequency and locations for distributed and in-person meetings. These agreements are crucial and set expectations that help each member keep pace with the team.

A strong, effective team relies on its members' commitment to and cooperation with team culture and operating conventions. Being explicit about this is even more important in a next-gen work environment. Though network-centric teams can combine the strengths of distributed talent, they can also be hindered if even a few members fail to adopt the protocols of the group.

Teams embracing the next-gen workstyle offer management the traditional benefits of a high-performance unit with the added advantages of flexibility and adaptability for navigating changing conditions and objectives.

Corporate

The next-gen workstyles of individuals and teams come together to create a corporate culture and community with the competitive advantages needed to win in dynamic global markets. The ability to quickly grow Sun's presence in emerging markets while fully supporting business in more mature markets is a balance more easily struck when resources are less dependent on place and real estate.

Corporate culture defines the character of the workforce community. In addition to fueling a competitive spirit, it is essential that the corporate culture offers its members a sense of identity. Though this is always a priority for an enterprise, the next-gen workstyle demands that new behaviors are adopted that continue to cultivate community in an increasingly distributed environment.

The more employees operate over the network and the less Sun finances long-term commitments to physical infrastructure, the more agile, potent, and prepared Sun is to meet business challenges. The optimal balance includes well-designed physical environments in those places where it is critical to have a corporate location along with a much wider community of contributors that meets and collaborates over the network. The network is the computer, and it's also where employees go to work.

1. Michele Pelino for B2B Market Research Professionals, October 9, 2008. *Enterprise Mobile User Forecast: Mobile 'Wannabes' Are The Fastest-Growing Segment*. Forrester.

Next-gen Workstyle Scenarios

Local and Flexible

When an employee's work is not attached to a specific physical place or fixed equipment, there is a range of workplace possibilities. Balancing work time between a handful of local options is a common scenario. Many employees have changing needs based on a project's life cycle, the day of the week, or even the time of day. Working from home for some tasks while working with a team in a collaborative space for others requires mobility and flexibility.

Working from home, the office, and nearby places in between requires a portable set of enablers. The necessary tools, connectivity, and visibility to others are core to being effective in this range of work locations. These work patterns can be both consistent and flexible, including multiple familiar locations frequented on a regular basis. The key to the next-gen workstyle for this group is to have options that support a variety of needs.



Following the Customer

Some employees are always on the move, and work locations are unpredictable from one day to the next. A majority of time is spent at or between customer sites, with occasional stops at wifi locations or Sun drop-in facilities. This next-gen workstyle isn't new to those who live it today, but it has to include taking action to make sure others know how, when, and where to connect with this type of employee. Next-gen work environment design accommodates the brief, often unplanned, but necessary office visits from roaming contributors.

Fixed Yet Connected

The next-gen workstyle is no less relevant to an employee with an assigned workspace. Coming into a corporate location every day doesn't diminish the need for advanced collaboration skills when the majority of the company is on the move. Office- or lab-bound employees also need core competencies in finding others, making online status and availability visible on the network, and working across distance effectively to be contributing members of a team.

Optimizing Sun's real estate investments also means changes to physical space designs. Creating more open settings with flexible layouts allows Sun to maximize space utilization while supporting collaborative activities that prompt individuals to gather. These changes require that assigned staff adopt a workstyle suited to the redesigned surroundings.

Two Fundamental Changes

More Work Done Outside the Office

The next-gen workstyle changes the level of dependence that the workforce has on physical offices. Utilization metrics of Sun's facilities consistently show that the company supports more physical infrastructure than needed. This natural shift results from the growing number of choices employees have to work at the same, or often greater levels of productivity without commuting to a corporate location to work.

With more work done outside the office, the size, number, and design of facilities that Sun invests in will adjust to meet changing work patterns. With the next-gen workstyle, work is something you do, not a place you go. And, it requires a robust kit of network tools that enable full engagement from any home, office, or public network connection.

Offices Have Fewer Walls

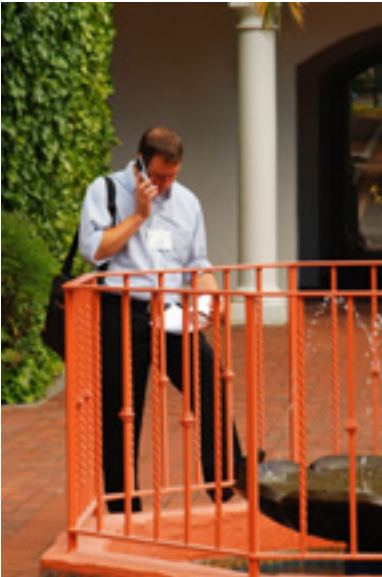
Historically, Sun buildings were designed with hallways of offices to support a workstyle defined by employees coming in to the facility everyday to sit and work in dedicated, private spaces. The new designs reflect the expectation that Sun facilities are primarily for those times when groups gather to work together, or for occasional visits of convenience.

Fewer walls mean more flexible floor plans, denser seating, lower costs, and greater utilization of physical assets, while reducing the overall carbon footprint and energy consumption of Sun facilities. Although privacy is reduced, it is consistent with an environment designed for in-person collaboration. It's not about less privacy overall, just less privacy at the office.

What About Employee Engagement?

There are challenges associated with an evolving next-gen workstyle. Some may initially feel less connected when routinely working from a non-office location — and this is no trivial concern. It is critical that Sun's culture embraces network options for connecting and cultivating engagement. In order to stay connected and feel part of a multi-dimensional community, individuals need to make the commitment to be visible, reachable, and online.

One easy way to stay connected is to log on to instant messenger every day. Basic desktop video conferencing added to some routine meetings can also help. Signaling availability, communicating effortlessly, and participating in on-line group discussions all contribute directly to a sense of cohesion and engagement — from anywhere.





“Face-to-face is overrated; I care more about the frequency and fidelity of the communication.”

Jonathan Schwartz, CEO and President
Sun Microsystems

Quoted in Andreas Kluth, “The New Nomadism,”
The Economist, April 2008

This Isn't Business As Usual

These changes are not intended to sustain business as usual. The next-gen workstyle is an adaptation to new possibilities in workforce provisioning, retention, and infrastructure investments. Sun is competing in a tough market, and resources are scarce. It is not practical for Sun to continue supporting physical spaces that only exist to enable work that is increasingly done over the network.

More activity on the network, more connectivity in more places, highly distributed and more modular businesses — all demand more from the data center. Sun is ahead of many companies and behind others in this work environment evolution, but a more pervasive next-gen workstyle means more demand for Sun's products.

Making It Work

Sun continues to fortify its reputation as the leader in emerging technologies and as the employer of choice for top talent in computing. The next-gen workstyle is another example of Sun's thought leadership in evolving a corporate culture and an operational mindset that keeps pace with the rapid changes facing modern business.

Sun counts on the benefits of a next-gen workstyle — to use real estate more efficiently, make travel less necessary, source talent wherever it is, and to have every member of the workforce outfitted with the tools needed to be competitive and successful.

Everyone's contribution from top to bottom is key to Sun's success. Changes in the market and changes in the tools of business are a reality that demands rapid adaptation, and progress hinges on a team commitment to making it work.



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