



Will Your Document and Information Processes Attract and Retain Digital Natives?

You may know them as Millennials, Echo Boomers or the Peter Pan Generation. Whatever you call them, “[Digital Natives](#)”¹ will form [70% of the workforce by 2025](#)²—and the ability to attract and retain them will be critical to your company’s success. Because of their immersion in and ease of interacting with technology, Digital Natives are changing the way businesses must work in order to prosper.

Significant business organizations across different market sectors have already taken proactive steps to adapt to Digital Native work preferences. IBM supports the mentoring and collaboration, and not coincidentally the productivity, of Digital Natives who are filling the ranks of their iWorkers³ through a special internal program BlueIQ:

“BlueIQ provides consulting for IBMers on how to best use social software to perform collaborative work and quickly connect with the resources and people they need to reach. Since IBM is a large, global organization, BlueIQ, is especially beneficial for new employees to help them navigate around the organization and quickly find experts, share online materials, run effective online meetings, and locate resources from IBM global communities.”⁴

Best Buy has seen tremendous success with a corporate policy recognizing the changing attitudes toward where and when one can do effective work:

“Best Buy launched the Results-Only Work Environment (ROWE) program, where employees in participating departments are allowed to work virtually anywhere, anytime, as long as they successfully

¹ Prensky, Marc. [Digital natives, digital immigrants](#). From [On the Horizon](#), MCB University Press, Vol. 9 No. 5, October 2001. Note: Digital Natives was first coined by Marc Prensky to refer to those who have grown up with digital technology, as opposed to “Digital Immigrants”, those who have become acquainted with technology later in life.

² Business and Professional Women’s Foundation. [“Gen Y Women in the Workplace: Focus Group Summary Report.”](#) April 2011. Note: statistic quoted refers to both men and women in the workplace.

³ iWorkers are knowledge workers who rely on electronic and printed information in their daily jobs.

⁴ Koplowitz, Rob with Matthew Brown and Joseph Dang. [“Leveraging Millennials To Drive Enterprise Social Initiatives.”](#) Forrester, April 28, 2011.



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About Terrie

Terrie serves as Vice President, Strategic Marketing for Ricoh Americas Corporation.

In this role, she oversees the strategy, direction and execution of Ricoh’s Managed Document Services approach, as well as key vertical marketing strategies and programs for both direct and dealer channels.

Terrie is also the Global Leader for the development of process and tools to ensure consistent worldwide execution of Ricoh Managed Document Services.

A longtime member of the Ricoh and IKON teams, Terrie brings to her role deep experience in the areas of managed services, service delivery and customer satisfaction.



complete their assignments on time. This shift increased productivity 41% at headquarters and decreased turnover by as much as 90%, according to Ferris' Four Hour Work Week"⁵

Both of these initiatives address the different ways Digital Natives approach absorbing, using, and managing “business” information. One difference is the use of information is as critical to the way they live as it is to the way they work. In fact, there is a blurring of the distinction between the two. Another is the changing mentoring and collaborative processes Digital Natives require in order for them (and you) to succeed in the wired, global economy. The efficiency and effectiveness of your processes can serve as a kind of proving ground in your ability to attract and retain the best of this new generation of iWorker.

Who Are Digital Natives and How Do They Use Information?

In the U.S. at least, the Internet was already in place when Digital Natives entered kindergarten—making them the first generation to grow up in an online world. They went on to define the use of text, chat and social media as a primary communication medium. As adults, Digital Natives transact most of their personal business online (as opposed to their predecessors who prefer in person or a voice over the phone); immediate accessibility and self-service are the hallmarks of the highest levels of service.

These behaviors and expectations carry over into their work life. A recent speaker at World Economic Forum as part of the first Global Shaper delegation, a group of 70 millennial leaders from around the world, characterized her workday as a consultant:

“Last Friday, I had two work-related Skype calls, one to Nassau and another to England, during my Amtrak train ride from Boston to New York. For my work, I use Dropbox for online shared folders, Evernote to store and categorize information, and Skype videoconferencing or iPhone’s Facetime application to connect with my colleagues across the world. This flexibility and technology give me the freedom to operate my business anytime, anywhere”.⁶

⁵ Dhawan, Erica. [“Gen-Y Workforce and Workplace Are Out Of Sync.”](#) *Forbes*, January 23, 2012.

⁶ Dhawan, Erica. [“Gen-Y Workforce And Workplace Are Out Of Sync.”](#) *Forbes*, January 23, 2012.

“The efficiency and effectiveness of your processes can serve as a kind of proving ground in your ability to attract and retain the best of this new generation of iWorker.”



Let's look at four characteristics of Digital Native information handling, their expectations and specific behaviors.

- They expect the same immediate access to information at work as in their personal transactions—they make less of a distinction between the two;
- They do not want to be bound to a desk, but use the same, smart mobile devices for work and personal life. This may encourage working off-premises and outside of traditional business hours. At the same time, these work preferences might also limit the more traditional “hands on,” face to face collaboration and mentoring relationships for effective knowledge transfer;
- They are energized, not stressed, by technological change: they are unlikely to be satisfied with last year's technology. Some 37 percent of Millennials (ages 18-27) globally say that state-of-the-art technology is a vital consideration in selecting an employer;⁷
- They rely less on static information acquired through research and more on experiential knowledge to inform their work. And they share experiences and expect to collaborate online and remotely through social media;

“These younger employees are driving the consumerization of IT, which includes how business intelligence is delivered. They want business intelligence to be as intuitive, social and collaborative as the tools in their personal life. Thus traditional reporting and ad hoc query are flat or declining, whereas data visualization in dashboards and interactive visualization are experiencing growth.”⁸

Of course, Digital Native expectations and behaviors are not monolithic across all cultures or geographies. The different rates of access to newer technologies (from Internet-enabled desktops to smart phones and tablets), as well as cultural attitudes toward work and personal life, are also a part of the Digital Native panorama.

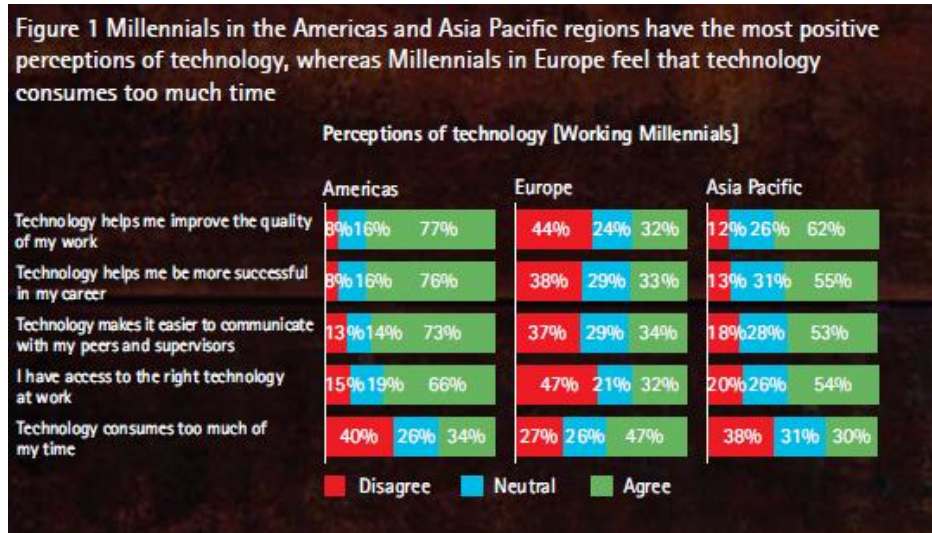
⁷ [“Jumping the boundaries of corporate IT: Accenture global research on Millennials’ use of technology.”](#) Accenture, 2010.

⁸ Robb, Drew. [“Gartner Taps Predictive Analytics as Next Big Business Intelligence Trend,”](#) Enterprise Apps Today, April 17, 2012.

“These younger employees are driving the consumerization of IT, which includes how business intelligence is delivered. They want business intelligence to be as intuitive, social and collaborative as the tools in their personal life. ”



Figure 1 Digital Native Expectations and Behaviors Vary⁹



Source: *Accenture*

But despite some variations the direction is clear—Digital Natives have higher expectations for accessing business information and using the newest technology for work and communications. The ability for your processes to not only accommodate these behaviors, but to empower them remains critical.

Processes Can Make or Break Your Appeal to Digital Natives

Our own research, published earlier this year, provided clear evidence that broken processes are detrimental to business success, both in terms of [increasing risk](#) and stifling [revenue opportunities](#) in the here and now.

In a [Ricoh-commissioned global survey](#), 75.9% of respondents experienced serious business risk and/or compliance issues as a direct result of ineffective processes over the past five years—and the second most frequently mentioned consequence (by 30.2% of respondents) was that they *lost key employees*.¹⁰ We’ve all

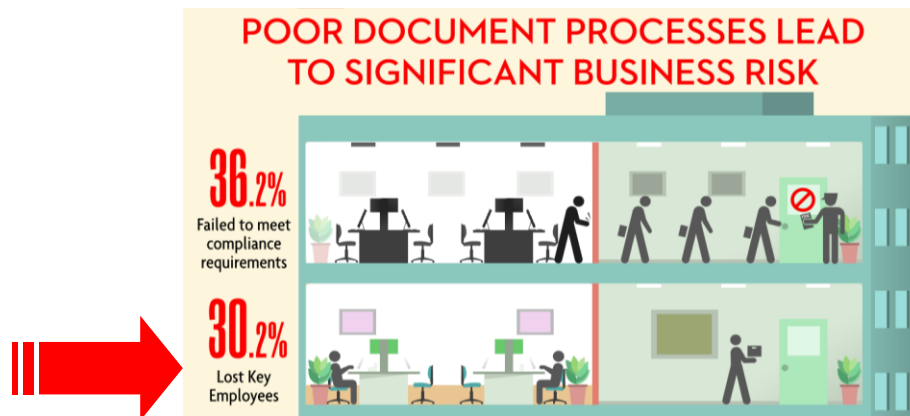
⁹ [“Jumping the boundaries of corporate IT: Accenture global research on Millennials’ use of technology.”](#) Accenture, 2010.

¹⁰ IDC White Paper Commissioned by Ricoh, [“It’s Worse than You Think: Poor Document Processes Lead to Significant Business Risk,”](#) doc#6352, June 2012.



experienced the frustration of being unable to find the information we need to be productive.

Figure 2 When Processes Break, Key Employees Leave



Source IDC White Paper Commissioned by Ricoh, [“It’s Worse than You Think: Poor Document Processes Lead to Significant Business Risk,”](#) doc#6352, June 2012

It’s reasonable to expect broken information processes would be even more frustrating to Digital Natives, given their expectations, and the frustration would be compounded if older technology is thrown into the mix. Taking a step back, frustrated Digital Natives may not hesitate to find a more efficient and energized work environment, leaving you with a growing talent shortage in the years to come.

Let’s look at some other potential disconnects between the way your processes may work—and the way Digital Natives expect to work.

If Digital Natives expect:	They’ll be frustrated by:
<p>Immediate access to information, preferably self-service</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to locate silo’d information and/or inaccessible to them because of system incompatibilities • Slow response time in locating the right information • Too many people to consult and manual processes along the way to getting information • Being blocked by security rules that they don’t understand or are perceived to be inconsistent



If Digital Natives expect:	They'll be frustrated by:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tracking down hardcopy (one third of all business information is still on paper)¹¹
To be highly mobile (work from anywhere) using the same device for personal and work use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of workplace support and subsidy for Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) initiatives Gaps (lack of bridges) between their communication styles and co-workers of earlier generations Inadequate infrastructure to support working remotely
Are energized, not stressed, by changes in technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outdated (“boring”) technology Inflexible processes that cannot accommodate change Slowness of getting to market with new products due to sluggish processes
Rely less on static and more on experiential knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fixed processes with lots of checkpoints and little opportunity to try things out Data heavy, not visual enough Restrictions on use of social media Lack of easy access to the experiential stores of earlier generations

The global survey also showed the upside of improving broken processes, benefits that would appeal to Digital Natives and their co-workers.

Over 83% of study respondents indicated that optimizing customer-facing processes would increase revenue — on average by 10.1%. Respondents estimated that they could speed the time to get products

¹¹ IDC White Paper commissioned by Ricoh, [“It’s Worse than You Think: Poor Document Processes Lead to Significant Business Risk,”](#) doc#6352, June 2012.



to market by 13.4%, by streamlining new product development, manufacturing, and supply chain functions.¹²

This responsive, more agile workplace is the kind of culture that appeals to Digital Natives, enabling them to get more out of, and do more with, timely information. When information processes are better tuned, they can result in higher productivity, broader collaboration, and greater agility—often using fewer resources (paper, toner, real estate) as well as being great for your top line.

Initiatives to Attract and Retain Digital Natives

Making processes more appealing to Digital Natives takes some careful planning and management of change.

Process is paramount: identify where processes are clogged or broken and develop a game plan for specific places you can [streamline processes](#) and [optimize information](#) access. Look for opportunities to transform information access to a secure, self-service capability, similar to giving access to employee benefits online. Look to include subject matter experts (who are likely to be Digital Natives) in the planning and implementation phases of process improvements.

Conduct regular process reviews—a [recent study](#) showed that a surprising number of companies do not: 56% only spent up to one day reviewing processes, and a little over a third of the respondents admitted that they felt not enough time is spent reviewing processes.¹³

Interestingly, employees agreed:

“When asked which single thing they would tell senior managers about how to improve the way their business manages document processes, the number one employee response (29 per cent) was to more regularly review the way they work or manage processes and business critical information.”¹⁴

“When information processes are better tuned, they can result in higher productivity, broader collaboration, and greater agility—often using fewer resources (paper, toner, real estate) as well as being great for your top line.”

¹² [“Organizational Blind Spot: The Role of Document-Driven Processes in Driving Top-Line Growth,”](#) IDC. September 2012.

¹³ [“A New Perspective: Ricoh Document Governance Index 2012: Part 1: Business leaders puzzled by process priority jigsaw.”](#) Ricoh, November 2012.

¹⁴ [“A New Perspective: Ricoh Document Governance Index 2012: Part 3: What employees really think about the process puzzle.”](#) Ricoh, November 2012.



Promote the Digital Native's love of mobility and the latest technology. If you aren't in the vanguard of companies supporting and even subsidizing tablets and smart phones that support new work styles, consider taking a more [strategic approach to your information infrastructure](#). Supporting more mobile work styles will allow the organization to benefit from a more blended work/home life.

Increase the channels and depth of experiential knowledge transfer to Digital Natives by building bridges between workforce generations. This is especially important to the youngest Digital Natives (born after 1990), referred to in one [recent study](#) as "Generation C," for connect, communicate, or change.¹⁵ Empower Digital Natives to be mentors themselves, helping Boomers and Gen Xers learn to leverage mobile devices and cloud solutions.

Finally, build your brand as a great place to work. Make sure that talent management promotes the transformations you are making supporting the latest devices, more open BYOD policies, and the collaborative use of social media. Encourage Digital Natives to promote your workplace through social media. And don't forget your web presence; your corporate sites should reflect the dynamic nature of your culture—looking for information on your organization needs to be a great experience, to demonstrate your processes are working smoothly.

Conclusion

Your processes can be viewed as a proving ground for your ability to attract and retain talent from the growing Digital Native workforce. Improved processes also bring more immediate benefits in making your business more agile and productive. And that's a win-win for all the generations in your workplace.

For more information on Digital Natives and the changes their use of technology is bringing to the work place, check out these and other blog entries hosted at our [Knowledge Center](#)

- [Millennials, the iPhone5 and Streamlining the Enterprise Information Infrastructure](#);
- [Tablet Computing: A Small Pain with a Potentially Big Payoff](#)

¹⁵ "A New Perspective: Ricoh Document Governance Index 2012: Part 3: What employees really think about the process puzzle." Ricoh, November 2012.

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- [Social Media: Aligning Information Infrastructures with Your Hybrid Information Environment - Ricoh Managed Document Services](#)

Ricoh Company, Ltd.

Ricoh Company, Ltd. is a global technology leader, specializing in the office and production printing markets. Ricoh works with organizations around the world to modernize work environments and optimize document efficiency. With more than 108,500 employees worldwide, Ricoh operates in Europe, the Americas, Asia/Pacific, China, and Japan. Ricoh's worldwide sales were more than 2,016 billion yen (\$21 billion USD) in the year ended March 31, 2010.

Ricoh's Managed Document Services (MDS)

Ricoh's MDS approach is an extension and evolution of MPS, which addresses the three fundamental functions relating to the entire document management ecosystem of input, throughput, and output. Ricoh's MDS aims to streamline core business processes by focusing on process, people, and technology and innovation to create a state of continuous improvement. Ricoh aims to help organizations better manage and leverage information for improved business outcomes through a flexible, partnership-led approach. Services management is the fundamental pillar to govern the print and document services program, aided with expert consultancy as well as proven project and change management methodologies. Ricoh is recognized today by both IDC and Gartner as a leader in the industry.

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