



## THE ROLE OF MICROSOFT WORKPLACE ANALYTICS IN THE COVID-19 ERA

## Abstract:

The COVID-19 pandemic has compelled organizations across the world to fundamentally change their workplaces overnight and heavily underscored their ability to efficiently support the remote workforce's collaboration needs. Microsoft 365 has become crucial for enterprises by providing them with toolsets for a safe and productive remote workplace.

*This transition to the “new normal” has made enterprises ponder over:*

- How are businesses and productivity of individuals impacted?
- What are the ways to continue employee's engagement?
- How is work culture impacted?
- How is work-life balance and organizational health impacted?
- What is the right workplace model going ahead?

*As more people start adjusting to a remote workplace model, we see early trends around adoption-*

- Meetings are getting shorter
- Quick check-ins, one-on-ones, and scheduled social meetings have increased
- People are collaborating 4 hours more per week on an average
- Senior managers are impacted more as they are spending an additional 8 hours per week

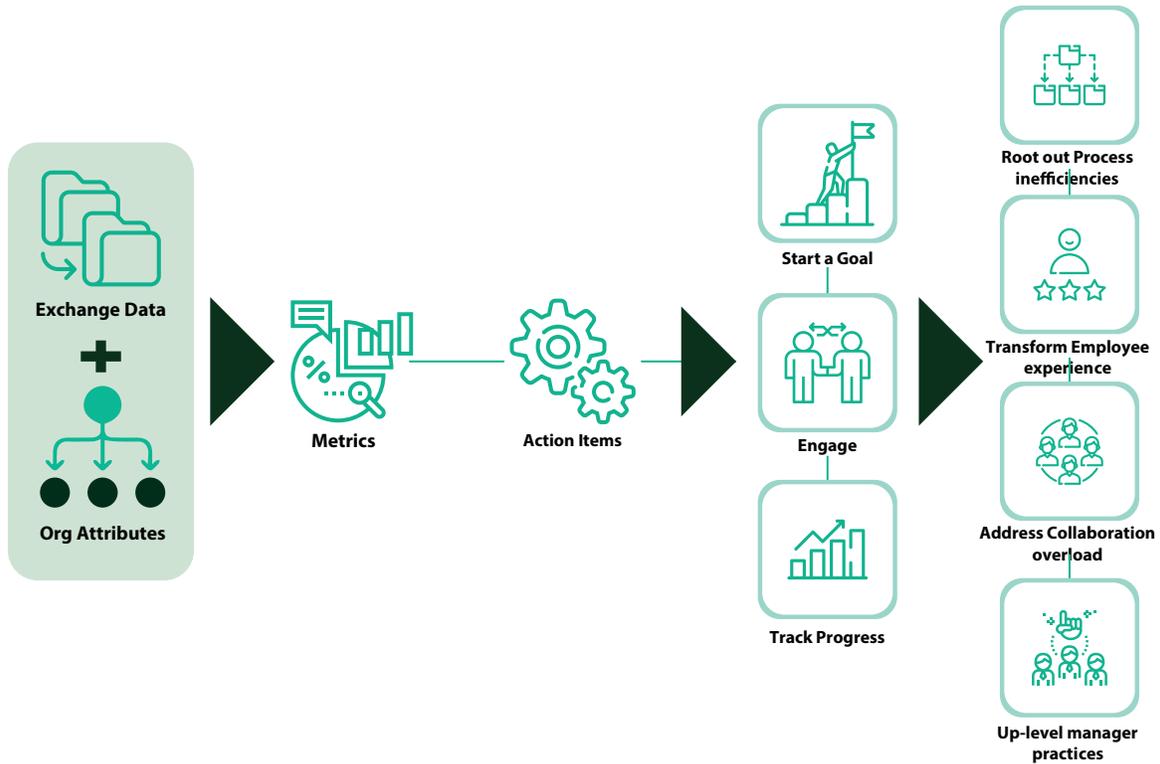
Now the question is how do organizations find answers to these burgeoning questions? The solution lies in using Microsoft's Workplace Analytics.



## What is Microsoft Workplace Analytics and how does it work?

Microsoft Workplace Analytics quantifies Microsoft 365 behavioral metadata (meetings, emails, chats etc.) to provide actionable insights into:

- How an organization spends its time
- The ways people network internally and externally
- The effectiveness of collaboration across teams



Microsoft Workplace Analytics starts with processing metadata from Microsoft Exchange. This is simple transactional data giving insights into the duration and type of interactions that takes place between employees.

This data is securely processed and mapped to organization data which provides descriptive information about employees. It typically includes data around geographies, roles, engagement ratings etc.

Following this, the exchange data is articulated in the organizational context based on which, metrics are generated in six different categories that data analysts can use to understand how employees work, network and succeed.

These key metrics are:

- Week in the life, which summarizes the collaborations that happen every week. These metrics help measure the

collaboration shifts and patterns providing indication on nature of collaboration culture within the organization.

- Meeting Overview gives a summary of the meeting norms within the organization. This can be used to gain insight into the qualitative aspects of a meeting as it provides metrics about specific meeting components which has impact on its efficiency and effectiveness.
- Management and Coaching summarizes the collaborations happening among management and employees. This can be used to gain insight into relationships between employees, their managers and other leaders.
- Internal Networks give a glimpse of the network between different people within the organization, e.g. between the marketing and the human resources department.

- External Collaboration summarizes employees' networking patterns with partners outside the company. This can be used to understand how certain groups of people within an organization interact with external stakeholders.
- Teams Collaboration provides communication insights and trends about how employees use Teams for collaboration and communication.

Analysts can also use a flexible query interface to control the data they want to analyze and how they want to do it.

Once the improvement opportunities are identified, the Team Plans feature can be utilized to help teams become more productive, use their time effectively, and make the most of their collaboration time.

Finally, the progress and the ROI of the plan can be measured after the entire process is completed.

## Relevance of Workplace Analytics in the present context

Microsoft has developed a framework based on analysis of remote work using Workplace Analytics data to help guide leaders on how to adapt to the “new normal” of working. This framework that translates into a Workplace Analytics dashboard operates on four principles:

1. *Measuring the most relevant insights – Using Workplace Analytics and inputs from Teams to understand -*
  - a. The time, duration and medium of user collaboration: By measuring swings in collaboration patterns, one can ascertain the magnitude of the impact, understand the trends, and take actions to adopt the “new normal”

- b. Daily and weekly usage patterns
- c. Insights into customer relationship management through channels such as emails and meetings
- d. Employee engagements through manager one-on-ones, small group interactions to give leaders a quick sense of engagement levels

2. *Looking past norms and averages – Impact of any crisis varies across different set of people and focusing only on norms and averages can abstruse a lot of fascinating insights and findings. Distinctive problems and solutions can be found by carefully looking into set of data which is out of the norm without ignoring the general trends.*
3. *Monitoring trends over time – An ever-evolving collaboration landscape makes it vital to monitor and compare trends*

*over time. Near real-time data can inform leaders about key problems and help respond quickly.*

4. *Connecting experiences with data – Data needs to be supplement and provide context to the organizational attributes, research, and learnings to help leaders connect them and make meaningful and quick decisions.*

How can Workplace Analytics help an organization? The possibilities are inexhaustible-

- Root out process inefficiencies
- Transform employee experience
- Address collaboration overload
- Edify managerial practices
- Break down organizational silos



## Some use cases:

Following are some examples where organizations used MS Workplace Analytics to optimize their process, change their culture and fine-tune their strategy based on collaboration pattern and trend analysis:

### 1. Optimizing processes at a Global CPG

**Goal:** Discovering the most efficient

instance of a financial process that happened on a monthly basis across the company's subsidiaries around the globe

**Challenge:** Different accounting rules and regulations across markets prevented ideal standardization and this, coupled with the geographical spread of the teams posed difficulties in

surveying for important information using traditional techniques.

**Solution:** The teams utilized MS Workplace Analytics data instead of traditional information-gathering techniques to measure the time spent for the process in each subsidiary and chart the groups of people involved.



**Result:** It was discovered that one of the subsidiaries was 16% more efficient than the average. This process instance was studied to find the salient differences against the others and process improvement findings were replicated across other subsidiaries.

## 2. Improving Managers' Team Engagement at an Engineering company

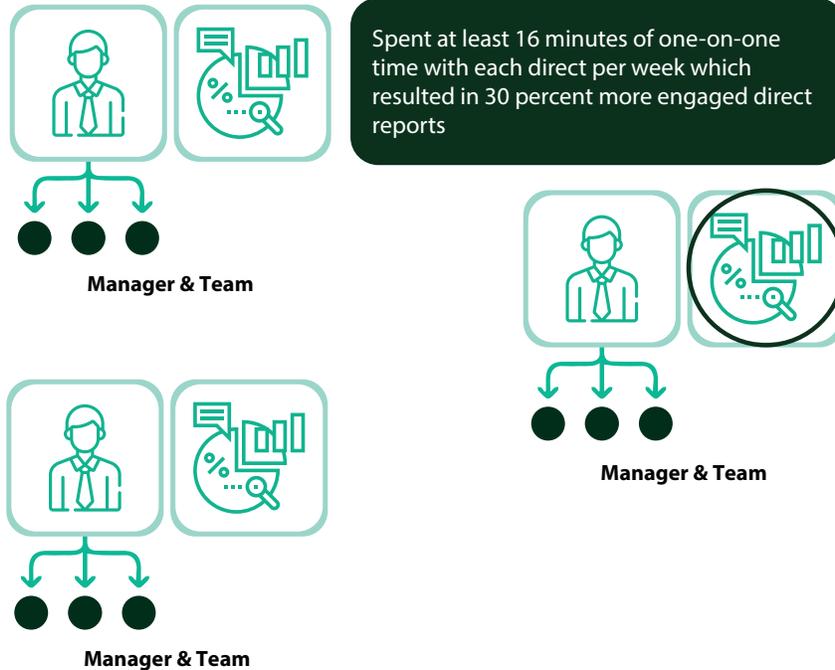
**Goal:** Creating better engagement between managers and teams

**Challenge:** A "sink or swim" culture was

widespread among managers that made it difficult to enable an inclusive and humane workplace culture.

**Solution:** Microsoft Workplace Analytics data analysis showed that teams whose managers spent at least 16 minutes of one-on-one time with each direct report

per week had 30 percent more engaged direct reports than an average manager who spent only 9 minutes a week with directs. This data-driven story was brought to the forefront, which caught the managers' attention and culminated into a work culture shift.



### 3. Enhancing Productivity at a Financial Services company

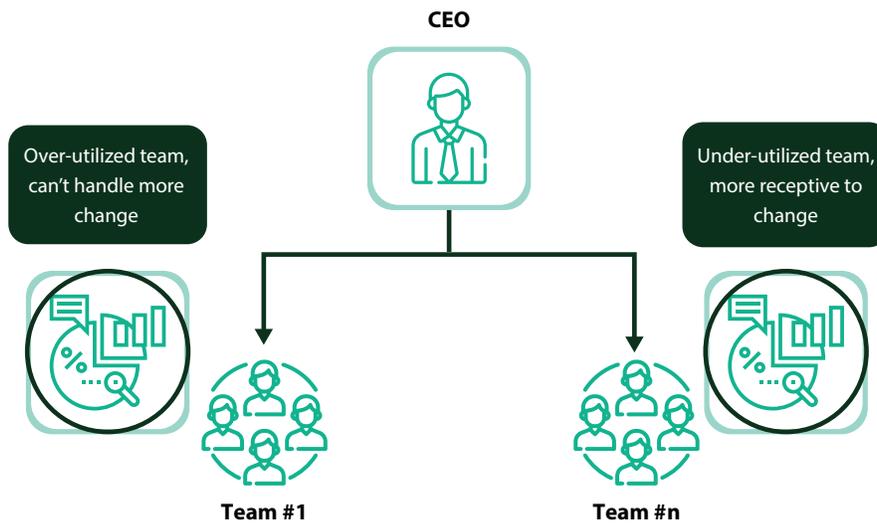
**Goal:** Enhancing business productivity and growth through proper capacity utilization.

**Challenge:** Teams were given directions to improve the utilization with faster and improved results which led to change

fatigue, burnout and unsustainable pace.

**Solution:** Analytics team used MS Workplace Analytics to develop a dashboard for the leadership which depicted number of active hours for each knowledge worker across different teams. With the help of this dashboard leadership can ascertain which teams are

over-utilized, which are under or unevenly utilized, which might be more capable of handling change. Dashboard also provided leadership with data by tenure which helped them to find out if new hires are effectively on boarded and utilized before going for more hiring to take up extra work.



Like with any digital transformation, knowledge workers are the ones who get impacted the most. The current Covid-19 crisis is no different but a digital transformation on steroids. Organizations are gradually realizing that productivity

and engagement of knowledge workers is directly linked to magnified business outcomes. Analyzing human behavior provides a rare window into how these knowledge workers collaborate and communicate across teams which directly

impacts the productivity of employees as well as organizations. Armed with Workplace Analytics, enterprises will be equipped to infer from collaboration patterns and respond and adapt quickly in the face of any crisis big or small.

## About the Author



**Anshuman Agrawal**, *Microsoft 365 Transformation Strategist at Infosys*

With over 16 years of experience, Anshuman specializes in Digital Workplace Services. He leads multiple Microsoft 365 transformation engagements with a wide array of services involving legacy collaboration workload transformation, implementation, adoption and sustain services spanning across multiple industry domains.

Anshuman holds a Bachelor's degree in Information Technology.

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