The Future Of Productivity

Scan Club output for October 2021

On October 2021, the Human Resources Innovation Foresight Team (“HRI”) hosted its monthly Scan Club on “The Future Of Productivity”. Participants from across the Government of Canada participated in the hour and a half activity.

HRI provided participants with three specific “Weak Signals”:

- Animal Crossing for the Office
- This Meeting Could Have Been a Video: The Asychronous future of meetings
- Brain Implant Lets People Type With Their Thoughts

Participants then discussed the importance of these signals and their potential impact on the Federal Public Service.

The following infographics summarize each Weak Signal and organizes the participant’s insights and discussions into various areas of implications using a STEEPV framework.

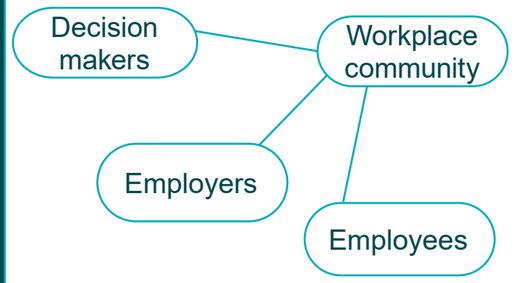
Visit HRI at:

- GC-wiki: https://wiki.gccollab.ca/EDSC_Innovation_RH_-_HR_Innovation_ESDC
- GC-collab: https://gccollab.ca/groups/profile/928221/esdc-human-resources-innovation-innovation-en-ressources-humaines-de-edsc

Animal crossing for the office

In an attempt to solve video fatigue from virtual meetings, Shopify built an open-world video game called Shopify Party, where employees can meet virtually with their customizable avatars. They quickly realized that it was both fun and restorative - having a break from video calls. The platform is simple as employees do not need to install any software; they simply share a hyperlink that connects them to the virtual world via their web browser.

Who's impacted?



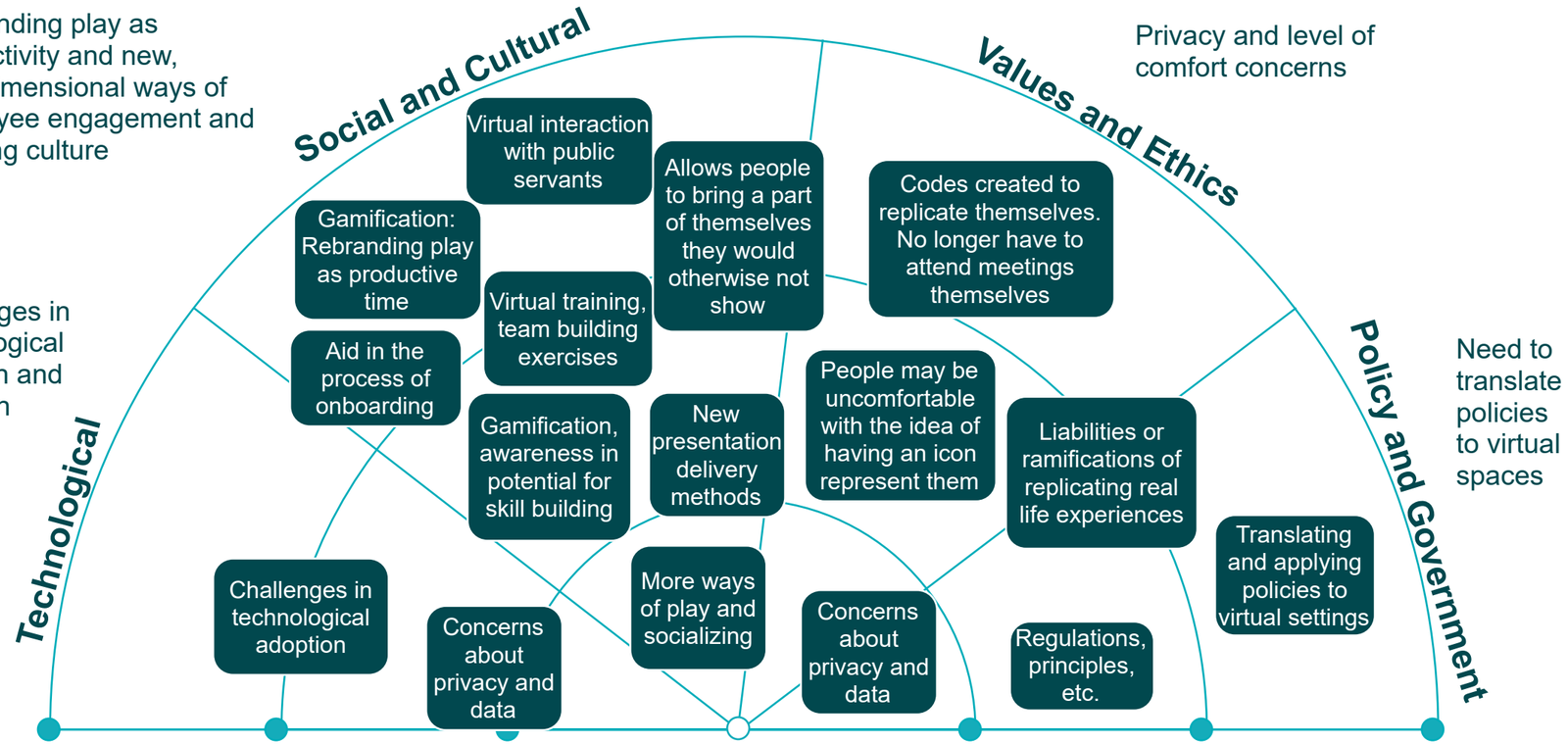
So what? How may this impact us in the future?

Rebranding play as productivity and new, multidimensional ways of employee engagement and learning culture

Privacy and level of comfort concerns

Challenges in technological adoption and inclusion

Need to translate policies to virtual spaces



Conclusion:

Promoting employee engagement emerged as a central theme amongst the participants within implications for this signal. Virtual spaces that transcend physical limitations have the potential to rebrand "play as productivity" in the future. However, challenges like difficulties in uniform adoption across different age groups, privacy concerns and applying new policies to virtual settings are some points to ponder.

References:

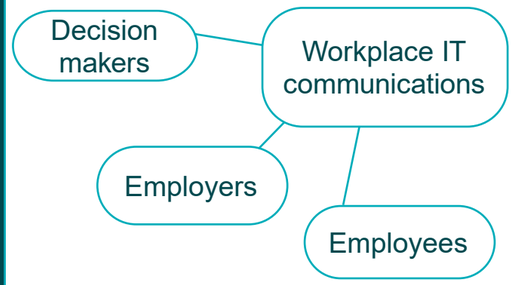
Animal Crossing for work: Is Shopify Party the future of the office? - Protocol — The people, power and politics of tech

Four causes for 'Zoom fatigue' and their solutions | Stanford News

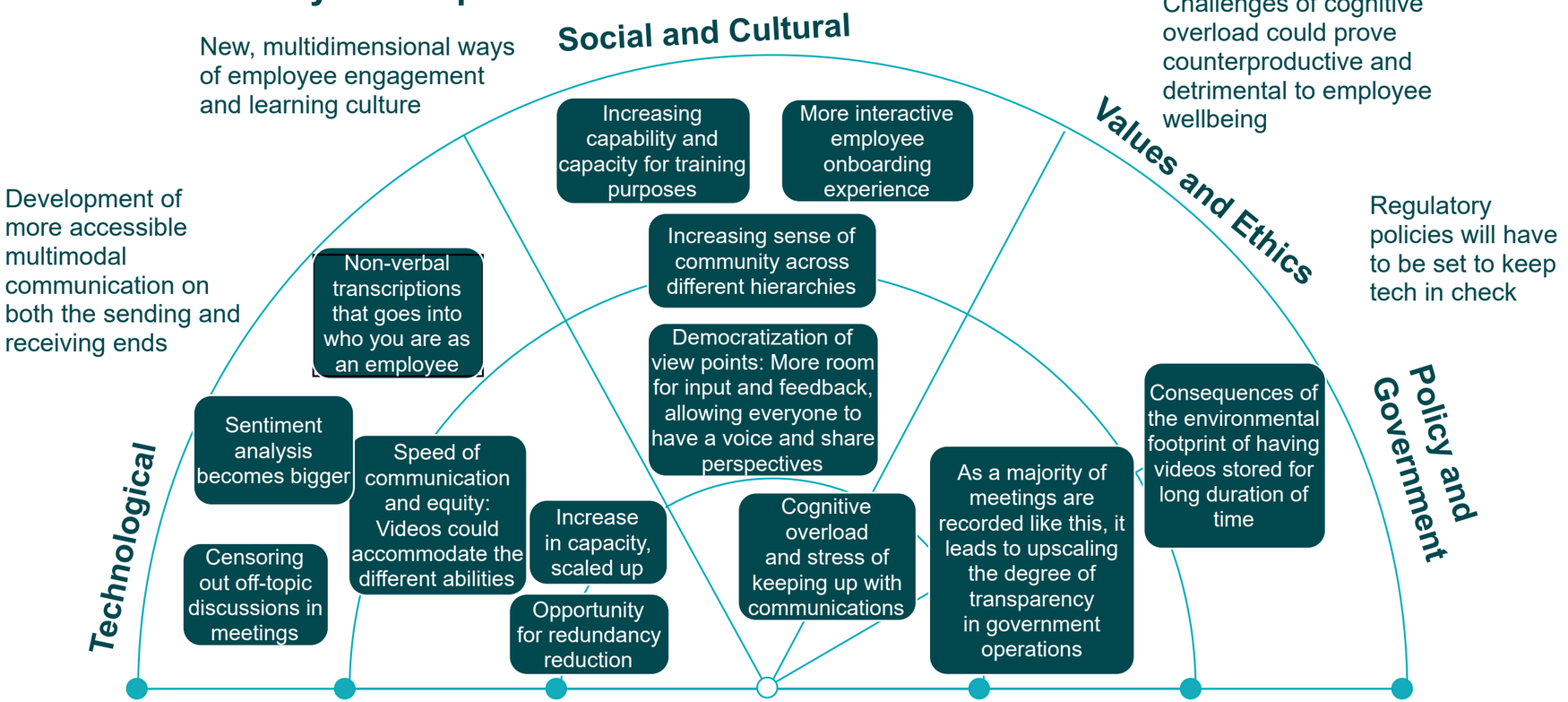
This meeting could have been a video: the asynchronous future of meetings

The collaboration platform Slack has launched a feature called Slack Clips where users can record a short video that teammates can engage with later. The clips can be sped up or slowed down so people can intake the information at their own pace. This is part of an increasing movement towards asynchronous video replacing some video calls and meeting, which can have significant dead time and require synchronized schedules.

Who's impacted?



So what? How may this impact us in the future?



Conclusion:

The virtual workplace could profoundly change how organizations communicate, engage, develop, and upskill their employees. Investment in technologies that allow for multimodal communications is likely to increase. Communications could be more accessible, and the quality of employee engagement and learning will be much richer using this format. At the same time, organizations will have to monitor these technologies' impact on the environment, individuals' mental health, and privacy violations.

References:

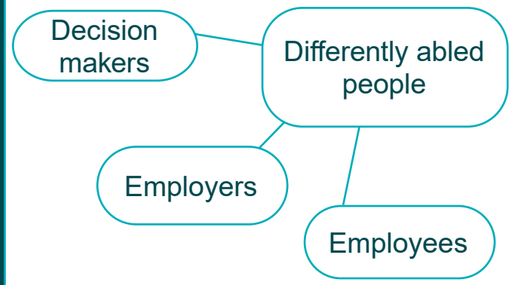
Asynchronous videos: Can the TikTok generation save us from meeting overload? | ZDNet

Slack introduces Slack Clips, more Salesforce integrations | ZDNet

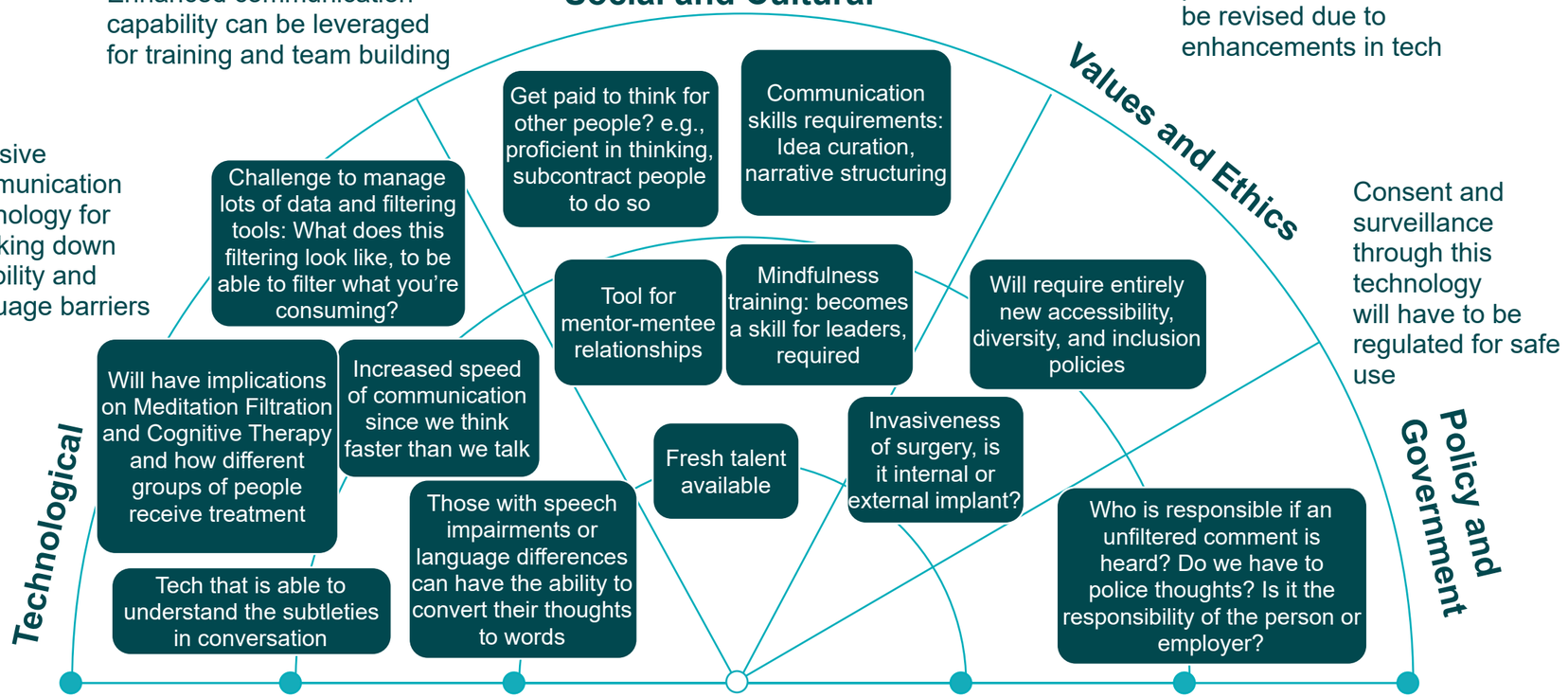
Brain implant lets people type with their thoughts

Scientists at Stanford have made a major leap in visualizing thoughts through technology. When our brain is thinking about anything, e.g. when it is speaking or writing or drawing, it makes specific patterns of electrical activity. The new paper, published in Nature, explains how the scientists were able to turn the brain activity of a 65-year old man with full-body paralysis into text. The study subject was able to type at a speed of about 90 words per minute which is roughly the pace at which seniors are able to send text messages on their phones.

Who's impacted?



So what? How may this impact us in the future?



Conclusion:

People with disabilities or who have experienced traumatic brain or spinal injuries will now have an opportunity to communicate more simply and easily. People with mobility or visual or hearing impairments could suddenly more easily enter the workforce. Data ownership and privacy questions will be a significant part of the conversation. Notably, as the line between technology and biology blurs - who owns whose thoughts?

References:

New Brain Implant Turns Visualized Letters into Text - Scientific American