



• EBOOK



Everything You Need to Know About Connected Workers

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Introduction

Have you seen the term “connected worker” popping up everywhere? Are you wondering what this means and why it suddenly seems so important?

If so, you’ve come to the right place.

In this eBook, we’ll provide everything you need to know about connected worker solutions:

- What they are.
- Why they matter for your plant.
- What technology is required.
- What benefits you can expect.
- How to get started.

As you navigate connected worker solutions in the real world, you can keep this eBook handy to guide you through the questions and decisions you’ll face.

CHAPTER ONE

Connected worker vocabulary

Before you can appreciate what a connected worker really is, you need to brush up on some key vocabulary:

- **Connected worker:** A connected worker uses technology to advance their skills, communicate with people across the plant and perform tasks with more efficiency.
- **Frontline workers:** Also called “operators,” frontline workers are hourly employees who work on the manufacturing floor.
- **Learning Management Systems (LMS):** An LMS is a software solution that helps you plan, document and optimize on-the-job learning and skills tracking.
- **Network effect:** The network effect is the idea that networks (like connected worker platforms) get better when more people use them.
- **User maturity curve:** Technology should guide users from simple tasks to more complex utilizations — a user maturity curve. To use social media as an example, viewing a post is a simple interaction, while more complex functionality includes sharing images with a company-wide group to improve workplace safety.

CHAPTER TWO

A closer look at the connected worker approach

So, what does the connected worker approach really look like? Let's find out:

What does it mean for workers to be connected?

Connected work brings people together with technology, allowing them to support one another on the job. For example, someone lower on the user maturity curve can leverage connected technology just as easily as digital natives, creating a more equitable workplace. Managers, frontline workers and executives will use the technology differently, but all benefit from the network effect.

Why does it matter?

Connected worker solutions are the manufacturing version of digital evolution: People are finding faster, smarter ways to communicate regardless of time and location. The result is better conversations, better solutions and better work.

What will connected work look like in the future?

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CHAPTER THREE

Yesterday vs. today

Once you know the basics, the next step is to understand how connected work changes “yesterday’s problems.”

Yesterday

Before workers were connected, on-the-job learning involved word of mouth and historical knowledge. Everyone had their own way of doing things, which meant it was easy to get the wrong information or develop bad habits.

Furthermore, manual tasks were all too common. Employees had to walk across the plant to enter data that was old by the time they got there — and if technology existed, it always required lots of user support and overwhelmed workers with irrelevant information.

Today

Now that workers are connected, they can collaborate on one platform that becomes the single source of truth. Plus, employees can capture data in real-time even as it’s being created, while specific interfaces for different user maturity levels make it easy to interact with that data. Technology supports people instead of the other way around.

CHAPTER FOUR

What connects us?

As you've probably guessed, connected work is all about technology. But which tech tools make this approach a reality?

Mobile devices

Anywhere, anytime access allows workers to stay connected even in the middle of a task.

Wearable tech

Devices like Smart Glasses put artificial intelligence and augmented reality right at a user's fingertips, giving them the power to interact with their environment in new ways.

Tech convergence

The convergence of cloud, WiFi and mobile accessibility has made it possible for workers to connect like never before.

Manufacturing platforms

From real-time data capture to enterprise document sharing, manufacturing platforms enable many of the functions that keep people and tech on the same page.

If you've thought up until now that technology is a nice-to-have instead of a must-have, think again. You wouldn't deny a maintenance worker a torque wrench, so why deny them an iPad if they needed it?

Benefits of connected workers

While connectivity sounds great, it also comes with a long list of very real benefits, including:

- **Simplicity:** A more satisfying, less frustrating work environment makes it easier for employees to reach their full potential.
- **Employee satisfaction:** A connected worker approach makes your plant more attractive to potential hires, even in a tough labor market.
- **Standardization:** Real-time instructions improve efficiency and standardized work.
- **Visibility:** Supervisors, managers and directors have a clearer view of what their teams are doing, how they're performing against goals and more. Visibility allows leaders to compare best practices, ensure that people are following training materials, see problems and help correct inefficiencies.
- **Effectiveness:** Connected work allows corporate management to look across multiple plants and see this solution in action. It's easy to watch efficiency going up, scrap waste going down, workplace safety improving and more — all signs of high return on investment (ROI).

CHAPTER SIX

Getting started with connected worker solutions

As you begin to take part in the connected worker conversation and consider how these solutions fit into your factory, it's important to know where to begin this evolution.

The first thing to know is that connected work should be part of a larger digital transformation approach. You still need strategies for acquiring and implementing technology or utilizing a manufacturing platform.

Next, you should know which tech tools are necessary right out of the gate. For example, you probably need mobile devices and cloud connectivity on day one, but enterprise resource planning (ERP) and manufacturing execution system (MES) integrations can be phased in more gradually.

You also need to know how long this transformation will take. Unlike traditional enterprise software, modern connected worker platforms can be deployed in weeks instead of months or even years.

Finally, you need to know how to frame ROI for stakeholder buy-in. Remember that connectivity benefits everyone, from frontline workers to corporate employees.

Conclusion

It's a dog-eat-dog world out there, and manufacturers that embrace the connected worker mindset can thrive; everyone else will be left behind.

That's because the newer generation of workers demand technology on the shop floor. They know these solutions exist, so they quickly understand whether you're a competitive, tech-forward business — and whether they want to contribute their skills to your workforce.

To keep these digital natives in sync with workers of all tech comfort levels, you need a framework that connects everyone, regardless of location, skill level or role. Simply put, you need the right technology for the job — and that's a manufacturing platform. Manufacturing platforms can help you bring people and tech together, creating a truly connected workplace.

Ready to get started?

Take our [Digital Maturity Self-Assessment](#) to find out how much progress you've already made and how to utilize a manufacturing platform for connected worker solutions.



Learn more

Explore more tools and resources to optimize your operations at www.L2L.com.



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