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Where can assistive technology take us?



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Importance of documentation for assistive technology



An HR view of digital tech in your practice

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Digital technology is essential in modern workplaces – from computers, software, smartphones, tablets and apps to websites, social media, and video conferencing and recording.

Here are some key HR considerations involving the risks and benefits of digital technology in the workplace.

Privacy and Work Health and Safety

The use of the internet, email and social media can have privacy and Work Health and Safety (WHS) implications in your practice. It's important to have a code of conduct, a privacy policy, a suite of WHS policies and an IT and social media policy to guide employees on appropriate use of technology and online platforms.

Any personal information collected in your workplace must be kept secure. This includes images and any information that can be used to identify someone. A data breach, privacy breach or any mishandling of personal information could trigger a range of serious consequences for your practice and the individuals involved.

Practice owners can be held liable for any harm caused by mishandling personal information. For example, the following scenarios pose serious risks:

- An employee distributing discriminatory or offensive content, such as comments or images, about the practice or clients/colleagues via email or social media
- An employee disclosing personal information about clients or colleagues via email or social media

Disclosing or mishandling personal information can expose the practice, employees or clients to increased risk of harm, for example from stalking, bullying or family and domestic violence.

Businesses increasingly use technology such as CCTV surveillance, apps, monitoring software and tracking devices to protect and supervise employees/clients. This can have potential legal implications. For more information on using technology to monitor employees/clients, refer to the Surveillance Devices Act in your state or territory.

Performance and hybrid working arrangements

In the allied health sector, the increasing use of technology such as telehealth allows practitioners to maintain flexible or hybrid working arrangements away from home or the usual workplace. Managing staff remotely presents a range of HR challenges and considerations, such as being able to effectively do the following:

- Track and measure staff performance
- Implement changes to workplace systems and processes
- Address workplace conflict
- Protect employees' mental and physical health and safety

Practice owners should ensure their workplace policies and processes are up-to-date and reflect the use of digital technology in relation to remote or hybrid working arrangements, health and safety checks, performance management and ongoing supervision.

Protecting your technological assets

It's important to have systems in place to protect your technological assets such as your hardware and software. Conducting a risk assessment can help identify the key business risks associated with the technological assets in your practice.

All employees have a general duty to not intentionally or recklessly interfere with or misuse anything provided in the workplace, including technology. When new employees

are inducted into your practice, they should receive information and training on accessing and appropriately utilising the technology in your practice. When a staff member ends their employment with your practice, make sure they return any business property or access to technology, including digital files.

Does your OT practice shut down over the Christmas holidays? Use these tips to protect your technological assets

- Make sure your IT systems are backed up and secure, including functioning generators
- Turn off any equipment that won't be needed
- For equipment that will be needed, ensure it has been serviced and the power supply is backed up
- Check all security and emergency procedures

With the right policies, systems and processes in place, along with regular staff training, occupational therapists and practice owners can safely reap the exponential benefits of digital technology in the workplace. For more information and professional HR advice, contact an HR consultancy that works closely with the allied health sector such as WorkPlacePLUS.

All OTA members receive special OTA member benefits through WorkPlacePLUS for support with HR and IR issues. For more information, contact Anna on (03) 9492 0958 or visit WorkPlacePLUS.com.au.

About the Author

Anna Pannuzzo has more than 25 years of senior HR management experience in the healthcare and social services sectors. Her nursing background provides a unique insight into the HR challenges facing many employers.