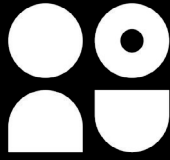


# HR and Remote Work

© 2021 PeopleGoal, Inc. All rights reserved.



# Content

## Introduction

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Significance Of Hr For The Remote Office | 2 |
|--|---|

## Performance

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Remote Objective Setting                    | 3 |
| Best Practices For Remote Objective Setting | 4 |
| Remote Feedback                             | 5 |
| Remote Check-Ins                            | 6 |
| Remote Reviews                              | 6 |

## Engagement

|                             |    |
|-----------------------------|----|
| Employee Engagement Surveys | 8  |
| Pulse Surveys               | 8  |
| Company Culture Surveys     | 9  |
| Wellbeing Surveys           | 9  |
| Using Data                  | 10 |

## Development

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Planning for learning and development whilst working remotely | 12 |
| COVID-19 and its impact on employee development               | 12 |
| Setting out your own effective development plan               | 13 |

## Onboarding

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Why does onboarding matter?                    | 15 |
| Long-term Remote Onboarding                    | 15 |
| Great onboarding is crucial to a great culture | 16 |

## Culture

|  |    |
|--|----|
| High-performance Culture                   | 18 |
| Handling changes in organizational culture | 18 |
| Company Culture Surveys                    | 19 |

## Wellbeing

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Understanding Employee Wellbeing         | 20 |
| Promoting well-being through remote work | 21 |

## Diversity and Inclusion

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Promoting diversity and inclusion through learning | 24 |
| Promoting better D&I through communication         | 24 |

## Future of Work

|                                   |    |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| Reskilling and the Future of Work | 25 |
| The Future of Workers             | 26 |
| Wellbeing in the workplace        | 26 |
| Evolving Responsibilities         | 27 |

## Conclusion

|    |
|----|
| 27 |
|----|

# Introduction

In the wake of the pandemic, leaders and their teams have been forced out of the office. Remote working is the new norm, and the return to the office will be a slow and gradual process. From an HR perspective, the separation of employees from their place of work presents challenges to maintaining good levels of engagement and motivation.

Faced with uncertainty around when remote work will end, it is imperative that the wellbeing and performance of employees is prioritized. Managing HR remotely can seem like an impossible task. However, in the remote workplace HR is needed more than ever to support distanced team members.

Moreover, many employees are planning to work from home even after restrictions lift. Consequently, it is important that organizations are prepared for the future of work with employees working from any location.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF HR FOR THE REMOTE OFFICE

Remote work has tested HR's ability to maintain a strong company culture. Nevertheless, distance between employees doesn't guarantee a decline in collaboration or productivity. When HR creates a positive and meaningful strategy, remote work offers the potential to develop a more resilient organizational culture.

At PeopleGoal, we provide organizations and remote teams with a holistic HR solution. We seek to promote cooperation, productivity and higher levels of engagement - and remote work should be no different. This e-Book lays the foundations for implementing a remote work strategy for your organization.

We will look at the 4 Core Pillars of HR for a wider lens on HR practices. Then, we'll deep dive into strategies you can implement to better support your team, from check-ins, to remote reviews and surveys. This will give you all the tools to thrive in the remote environment.



# Performance

In this section, our focus will revolve around the practices of performance management. Within this are many facets and it is important to consider how you can best maintain these various components whilst working remotely.

A continuous performance management system will not only allow HR leaders to keep track of contributions from their employees, but it will also facilitate employees in better understanding where their efforts should be focussed. As will become clear, a regular and predictable routine for the various aspects of performance management will give employees the best opportunity to perform to a high standard and fulfill the expectations put upon them by managers or leaders.

Through the shift to remote work, the approach to performance management has been slightly altered. Whereas previously face-to-face communication would be core to the process, the new approach has had to adapt to the remote environment.

## REMOTE OBJECTIVE SETTING

Going forward, company leaders must implement the right work-from-home strategies to ensure a productive approach to remote work. Reported side effects of remote work include reduced communication, working in silos, and lack of direction. In reviewing this, there is an apparent need for clear guidance in terms of how teams and employees are expected to perform. The delegation of responsibilities through objectives provides employees with clarity regarding their focus for work.

When used correctly, the Objective and Key Results (OKRs) framework allows teams to overcome the main challenges of remote working, setting them on the path to success. Whilst some remote teams may feel isolated when working from home, OKRs are a practical way to keep the team focused and aligned. Creating individual success metrics to analyze goals is an effective way to track progress and encourage personal growth.

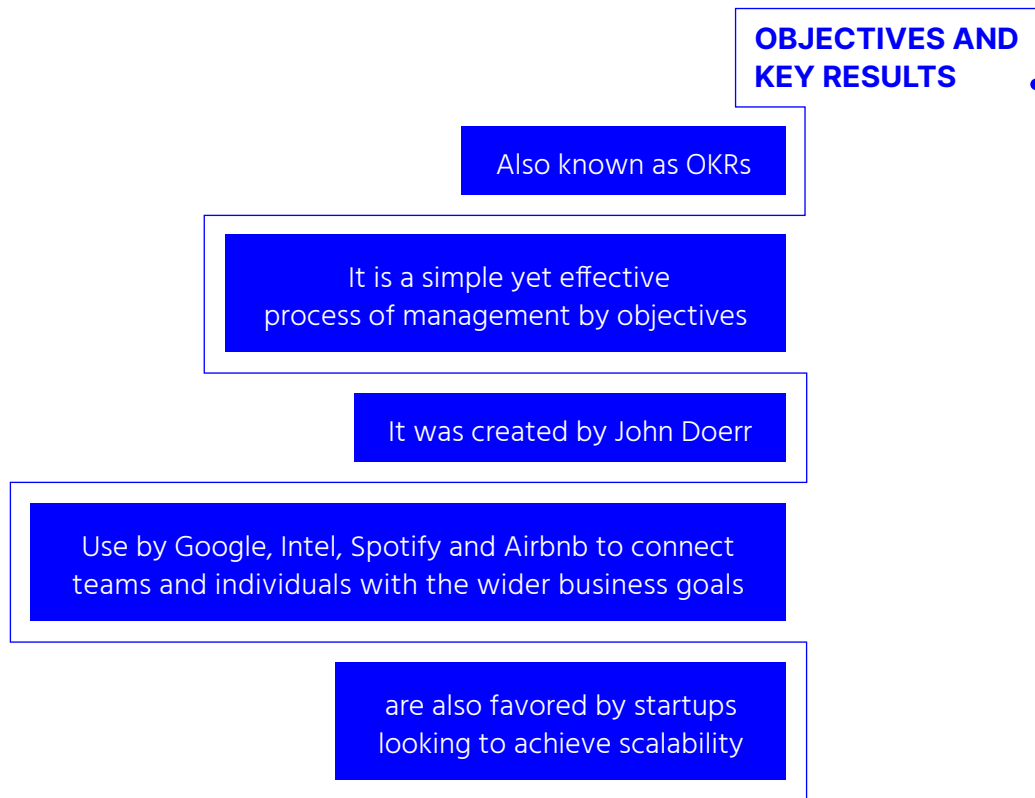
Some of the key benefits that can be achieved by setting OKRs for your remote team include:

- Encouraging more team engagement and alignment
- Assistance in tracking personal and team progress
- The OKR methodology promotes agile, adaptable and flexible teams
- Quantifiable results that can motivate teams



IMPLEMENTING THE OKRS METHODOLOGY FOR YOUR TEAM IS THE SECRET TO REMOTE WORKING SUCCESS





## BEST PRACTICES FOR REMOTE OBJECTIVE SETTING

### 1. Introduce methodology

First of all, it is essential that all team members understand the OKR methodology and thoroughly grasp what benefits measurable goal-setting will bring the team. If the team understands the importance of OKRs, they are more likely to engage with them effectively.

### 2. Set OKRs as a team

OKRs should be created and executed as a team. Hold a conference call to come up with ideas and discuss company objectives. It is good practice to warn employees beforehand, and encourage them to bring ideas to the meeting. This way, everyone will feel prepared and ready to actively participate in the discussion.

After setting the objectives, it is important to work together to devise a list of measurable outcomes that will help define the success of the objective. This could be done in a follow-up meeting, giving the team time to digest the objectives and draft some ideas.

### 3. Consider investing in OKR software

If you wish to set goals at an organizational level and cascade objectives down to departments, it would be worth investing in OKR software for high-performing teams. Using a performance management platform will reduce manual tasks, and allow different people to weigh in on the objective setting. Bonus points if your software can tie OKRs into the performance review!



## REMOTE FEEDBACK

‘There is no failure, only feedback’. Employees face many challenges during remote work, and feedback - both positive and constructive – is what they need. Since working from home is here to stay, it begs the question - how can managers support remote employees?

When given effectively, feedback can provide guidance as employees adjust to working from home. In contrast to a traditional feedback system, ongoing feedback recognizes that feedback is not merely a way to praise or scold. Instead, it is part of a collaborative working environment – in which employees offer guidance and pointers to fellow employees.

Communication can often go awry with remote work, so managers need to make the most out of one-on-ones. Grounding feedback in specific events avoids miscommunication. Ongoing feedback enables managers to identify issues as they arise. Importantly, positive feedback reassures employees that they are on the right track.

Gone are the days when an annual performance review was the employee’s main source of feedback. The problem with relying on formal reviews overmuch was that providing feedback for the whole year is often less precise and actionable than more regular, informal feedback. This is especially true for remote working teams, for whom it is ever more difficult to quantify and establish what good performance is.

Employees shouldn’t have to face remote work’s challenges alone. Feedback is a resource. It should be ongoing so that we can learn from it again and again. The key proponent of an ongoing feedback loop is its capacity to facilitate better employee performance through the improvement of communication and clearer guidance towards achieving objectives. Make sure your teams know how they can improve, for example, by setting personal development plans and holding frequent check-ins.

**COMPANIES THAT PROVIDE  
ONGOING FEEDBACK SEE  
PERFORMANCE IMPROVE BY  
AS MUCH AS 12%**

According to Gartner



## REMOTE CHECK-INS

Regular check-ins are the foundation of a continuous feedback culture and positive employee experience. Since the shift to remote working many companies are implementing a structured approach to check-ins. It is more important than ever to have continuous conversations with employees about their performance, so in this section we take a look at employee/manager check-ins, exploring how to create a check-in culture.

### WHY ARE CHECK-INS IMPORTANT?

1. Establish a clear channel of communication
2. Continuous feedback improves progress
3. Solve problems before they escalate
4. Build trust between employees and managers
5. Boost motivation through involvement and productivity

Simply put, check-ins are regular employee/manager meetings that cover a wide range of topics, from progress, goals and personal development to employee well-being. In the past few years, there has been a shift away from annual appraisals to a continuous feedback model, which revolves around regular check-ins between employees and managers.

When regular check-ins are implemented correctly, they set the foundation for positive employee-manager relations, and drive both performance and engagement. The fact is employees need regular check-ins more than ever before, as they establish a dialogue and create an environment that is most conducive to positive working relationships.

Evidently, feedback and check-ins are heavily intertwined - the relationship between these two processes of performance is one of co-dependence. A greater frequency of check-ins will contribute to a stronger continuous feedback loop. In a remote working environment, without opportunities for informal interactions, there is an apparent need for this structured provision of feedback in the form of regular check-ins.

## REMOTE REVIEWS

Performance reviews are a talent engagement process that ensures a set of activities and outputs meet the company's objectives. They provide direction to employees and increase accountability, guiding them to meet their individual objectives, as well as align them with the wider organizational objectives.

There is a common misconception that HR teams need to do a major overhaul of the performance review process to account for the remote environment, but this is not the case. Great remote performance reviews follow similar principles to in-person reviews.

Through practicing frequent performance reviews, employees are far more likely to feel happy, productive and engaged. Leaders regularly miss opportunities to recognize the efforts of their team members, however, it has come to light that this has adverse impacts on talent retention.

Performance reviews measure employee achievement and celebrate accomplishments as well as provide an opportunity to receive meaningful feedback and voice any concerns. These discussions can lead to compensation, promotion or development which is vital in terms of succession planning. Moreover, regular review processes can strengthen company culture and reinforce values by creating alignment throughout the organization and building stronger working relationships.

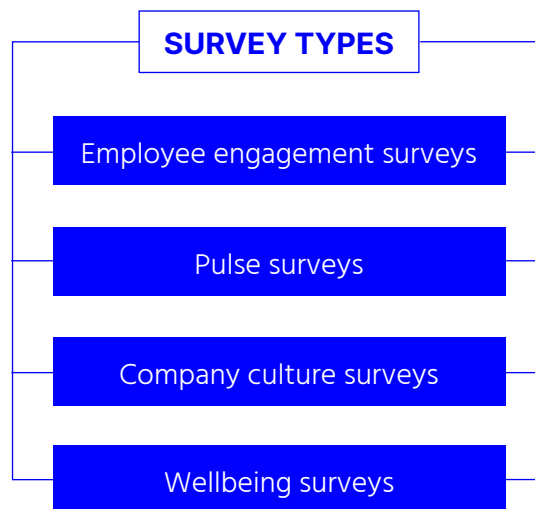
At the core of a good performance management process is the persistent and reliable current of feedback that circulates throughout the various different processes. From setting distinct objectives to maintaining a consistent channel of communication through check-ins - even the most distant of teams can produce successful results whilst working remotely.

# Engagement

Employee engagement surveys are crucial for improving any organization. Making the most of feedback is dependent on how responses are collected and evaluated. In any organization, employees form the foundation blocks, and so much more, for the realization of its interests. As a result, employee engagement surveys must be used to understand how the organization is perceived by its employees and how much they are engaged by their work. Implementing an engagement survey that brings employees into the discussion, whilst also gathering informative data, will enable any organization to monitor variations in motivation and increase productivity.

It is self-evident that the best way to engage employees is to engage with them. Consequently, creating surveys gives a voice to the workforce, encouraging feedback and facilitating a discussion regarding how to best handle various operations and relations within an organization. Furthermore, it is beneficial as it can bring to light a true reflection of the organization's strengths and problem areas in accordance with the opinions of its employees.

The feedback from surveys can inform the decision-making and execution of actions to correct anything that is disengaging employees or preventing optimum performance. This is especially important with the impact of remote working and the newfound lack of spontaneous office interactions.





## EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT SURVEYS

Engagement can be measured in a number of ways, the primary being through the Employee Engagement Survey. You should send this survey out at least annually, or every three to six months if you're finding you have a high employee turnover. Using the results of your survey you can engage key stakeholders and build action plans to implement changes to improve your organizational health.

Employee engagement surveys allow HR professionals to benchmark progress. They provide feedback from employees on how your strategy is working. With a regular feedback loop, everyone from top to bottom level can share their opinions, enabling better employee engagement throughout the organization. It is through surveys that your employees can inform more meaningful resolutions that will improve the experience of work for the organization as a whole.

### COMMON BARRIERS TO MEASURING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

- Lack of clarity regarding the definition of employee engagement
- Unfamiliarity with the employee engagement process
- Designing an employee engagement survey takes time
- Survey owners are rarely psychometric experts
- High risk of designing ineffective questions
- You only have one chance to get it right

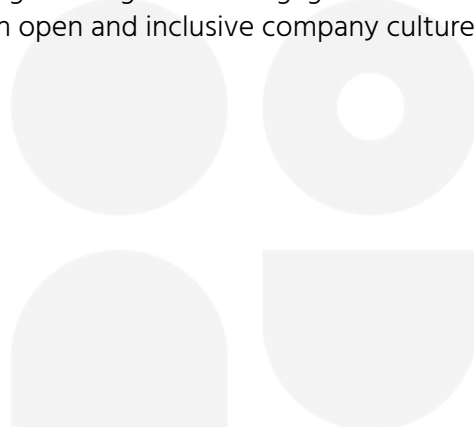
## PULSE SURVEYS

With advancements in technology and particularly with COVID-19 forcing many employees to work remotely, there has been a push for more regular pulse surveys. These surveys might be circulated daily, weekly, or monthly and their strength is seen in their capacity to provide organizations with current figures on employee engagement and wellbeing. This is especially important with the impact of remote working and the newfound lack of spontaneous office interactions.

Through the use of more regular surveys, responses to any feedback can be enacted quickly and so the feedback loop circulates, informing an organization if amendments are well received or not. It becomes far easier to conduct an employee pulse survey to determine how different focus groups might be getting along, for example in fulfilling their career goals.

Pulse surveys have been found to increase positive company culture and this goes to show something that is already well known - people like being listened to. The opportunity to more regularly share thoughts and feelings in the work environment has been effective in ensuring employee engagement.

As pulse surveys are fundamentally a more commonly occurring type of engagement survey, the questions can be relatively targeted and specific to current events within the company. In this way, unwanted organizational changes can be quickly identified and, if necessary, rescinded. Of course, this regularity does come with a fair warning - if employees feel they are being surveyed too often this can also contribute to disengagement. Striking the right balance is key to establishing a strong level of engagement and promoting an open and inclusive company culture.



## COMPANY CULTURE SURVEYS

Running a regular company culture survey will help establish a strong and positive organizational culture. Every organization has a unique culture. In theory, all involved share a mutual understanding of what it means to be a part of their organization. When the entire workforce is aligned in its perception of the company culture, no one will feel left out. As a result, employees are able to perform at their best level as they feel comfortable in the workplace. The best way to measure employee perception is undoubtedly with a company culture survey.

To best understand what your company stands for it is important to find out what your employees think. Culture surveys highlight how employees feel towards the company, as well as any red flags. Since organizational culture is formed through those involved with it, the survey results will present extremely useful insights.

It is through employee surveys that companies are able to improve the experience of work. Building on the feedback obtained from the workforce is an effective and efficient technique for ensuring better employee engagement and satisfaction. Since engaged employees are far more productive than their disengaged colleagues, it is desirable for any company culture to instil positive feelings in the workforce.

## WELLBEING SURVEYS

Helping employees to be happy and healthy at work is essential for their overall well-being. It also has a direct impact on their productivity and your business outcomes. In the wake of COVID-19, companies rapidly shifted to working from home. Away from the office, employees are facing a new way of life, with different caring responsibilities and schedules. This has an impact on employee wellbeing.

According to Gallup, Americans were more likely to think social distancing will harm their mental health than their physical or financial security. It is really important that companies focus on employee wellbeing in light of this. Employees who are mentally and physically healthy perform better in the long-term.

A quick well-being survey asks employees to rate their well-being with regards to their mental health, home life, and future plans. Respondents may then rate their physical health and have a section to ask for any help and support. Surveys allow you to track employee wellbeing even through the challenges of remote work. They keep your wellbeing strategy grounded in the facts - what is working and what needs to be improved.

While HR can sometimes see the benefits of their wellness program or wellbeing strategy intuitively - Sharon Florentine points out that gathering survey results allows you to convince C-Level executives of the 'correlation between well-being and better outcomes'.



## USING THE DATA

Employee survey results require careful analysis. Employee surveys are the bedrock of evidence-based HR. They allow HR leaders to measure how committed, engaged and satisfied employees are. However, HR teams accumulate an overwhelming amount of survey data. This information is meaningless if it is not properly analyzed and evaluated.

You can only make sense of the data you collate using the correct metrics. They are the lens you wear to measure the success of your HR initiatives.

To find your metrics, HR teams should reflect on what their goals are. Jeff Bladt and Bob Filbin argue in Forbes that we need to differentiate between 'vanity metrics' and 'meaningful metrics'.

Your team might be flattered by the popularity of an internal social media initiative. However, if job satisfaction and wellbeing are plummeting, consider the relevance of this success.

HR teams' ultimate goal is often to improve employee engagement. Focus on metrics associated with high engagement, for example, long-term interest in working for the company, belief in the organization's values, productivity and satisfaction. Collate data relevant to these indicators and start evaluating from there. Employee surveys can measure a particular area of employee experience. For example, HR runs pulse surveys on employee engagement, wellbeing or diversity and inclusion. These areas speak volumes about how your organization aligns with its culture and values.

Consider the data in terms of company culture. Group together the survey questions or sections that relate to company trust, work-life balance or employee satisfaction. Use a reporting system to visualize this data. Your people deserve to have their voices heard. Employee surveys are transformative if results translate into an effective HR strategy. Put your analytical skills to work so that you can create real organizational change.



# Development

Plan for organizational development and success. Starting with professional development plans for your employees, you can generate an exponentially more productive and efficient organization by taking some time to focus on business goals and the path to enlightenment.

When it comes to making a successful team, the steps taken in preparing and executing a development plan are crucial for ensuring that all involved are prosperous and grow as result. By taking the time to properly assess and enact a plan that will fulfill your desired outcomes, you have the best chance of producing more engaged employees, and therefore, a more productive workforce.

Leaders that commit to giving their employees great training and learning opportunities will experience the biggest return on investment. Improving your human capital and finding programs that can help fill existing skill gaps will promote a better employee experience for all involved. In each organization, you are guaranteed to find certain stronger or weaker areas of performance.

The puzzle for every human resource or talent development department is then establishing how to go about filling these skills gaps and encouraging team members to accomplish their career goals. After all, the purpose of a professional development plan is to create a career path that allows for a win-win scenario. For an organization, it is the attainment of business goals, whilst on an individual level, development programs enable team members to progress along their career path leading to evermore engaged employees.

Setting out clear development plans whilst working remotely may present some challenges, however, these are often surpassable. What is most important in setting development goals is the clarity of the plan along with the frequency of communication that will follow this. Whether the individual is looking to further their career through specific training programs or other aspects of learning, the key is to define particular milestones for an individual or the organization to work towards.



## PLANNING FOR LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT WHILST WORKING REMOTELY

The significance of a learning and development (L&D) plan is demonstrated by its capacity to clearly illustrate the purpose and outcomes of the training. A clear plan provides employees with a better understanding of what they need to be doing and by when. Moreover, it enables them to see how the training will facilitate their individual career development.

Poorly executed L&D programs with little planning can lead to external business performance issues such as decreased customer satisfaction. As a result, talent development must prepare properly for such training and development.

The significance of a plan is its capacity to inspire a team to strive for the fulfillment of it. Beyond motivating those who must execute the plan, the benefit of a structured plan is that it can allow an organization to better predict and understand how they will meet their requirements and desired outcomes. This is especially important whilst working in a remote environment. Distanced employees and managers will find it more difficult to look ahead to the future and recognize the necessity of learning whilst working from home.

Without a defined L&D plan, it is significantly harder to motivate employees to work engage with their learning. Whether through learning or reskilling, employees that are engaged in some form of training will demonstrate better performance. Research shows that there are significant benefits to reskilling or upskilling your workforce. In fact, one study found that 91% of companies and 81% of employees stated that upskilling your workforce boosts productivity at work.

## COVID-19 AND ITS IMPACT ON EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT

The world of work is in constant flux. In the past year, that flux has been exacerbated by the outbreak of COVID-19. Consequently, there has been a seismic shift in this sphere - for some, it has meant completely altering how they go about performing their work. Whilst unfortunately for the millions who now find themselves unemployed, it has resulted in a lack of it.

Even prior to the events of 2020, there has been a growing appreciation for the importance of learning and development in the workplace. According to Gartner, more than two-thirds (68%) of HR leaders in the United States feel that learning new skills would be the most pressing issue for the coming year, followed by organizational design and change management (46%), current and future leadership (44%), the future of work (32%) and employee experience (28%). Reskilling is one option that leaders and employers alike might consider as a means to change the skill sets of their teams.

### RESKILLING

Training a current employee in skills required for the tasks of tomorrow.

### PREVENTING SKILL GAPS IN THE WORKPLACE

By ensuring that employees are equipped with the necessary knowledge and understanding required of them in the coming years



Shifting the understanding of leaders from having individuals in particular jobs to identifying individuals with specific skills, they can better plan and execute organizational objectives. By adopting a more agile approach that highlights particular learning programs for skills required today and in the future, strong teams can develop and support each other more effectively.

The digital transformation is at the forefront of all business leaders' minds, especially following the impact of the COVID-19 crisis.

Reskilling programs are learning in service of an outcome, whether in preparation for moving into a new job or becoming more capable to manage new responsibilities. Reskilling goes beyond learning job-specific technical skills and encourages the acquisition of core competencies including creativity, communication and adaptability. The ability to successfully promote business models that emphasize the importance of job training and learning experience beyond an individual's immediate responsibilities are vital for long-term success.

How you go about instigating and realizing the reskilling and training of your workforce can make all the difference in how successful your efforts turn out. Unlock the power of your people and create a strategy that is sustainable and forward-thinking. As long as you have a clear and desirable target to strive for, this will make for much more traceable and attainable long-term goals.

Be sure to demonstrate to your employees the personal value and gains that can be made from training programs. Upskilling and reskilling the workforce leads to a better informed and more productive organization. Every time you are able to successfully reskill an employee, this will contribute to their own professional development whilst also contributing to the depth in human capital for your organization.

## SETTING OUT YOUR OWN EFFECTIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

In a nutshell, an effective employee development plan is a process that promotes individual growth and encourages employees to learn skills for their current role as well as developing an understanding of new roles and responsibilities in their organization.

Creating an employee development plan entails taking some time to understand the needs of your company and that of your employees. There is an increasing interest, particularly from the continuous flow of younger employees that are onboarding to establish opportunities to train and learn on the job. 72% of young workers are more likely to value opportunities for learning and career advancement. Consequently, organizations that are recognized for great learning prospects when recruiting, onboarding and training new employees will attract better talent.



# Onboarding

As remote working is here to stay, there is a need to consider the process of remote employee onboarding. Nonetheless, remote employee onboarding doesn't have to be a compromise. The process is a new one, yet, this does not necessarily mean that it can't be as successful. Employee retention is significantly affected by the experience of onboarding, therefore remote teams must take further steps to ensure a positive remote employee onboarding process.

The move to remote-work led HR to rapidly adapt their onboarding strategies. Virtual onboarding programs require additional planning but they can be very impactful.

Not always but for many individuals, the prospect of joining a new company can be fraught with feelings of uncertainty and anxiety. Questions circle through the mind of an onboarding employee, speculating over how they should introduce themselves to their new team members or dreading doing something unforgettably embarrassing. These concerns are only exacerbated when employees are met with the prospect of having to do all of these introductions through a screen.

As evermore companies have resorted to remote working, the onboarding experience presents very different hurdles for new remote employees to overcome. Proper preparation and handling of this new onboarding process will have significant benefits for your organization, particularly with maintaining a high level of employee retention.

When welcoming a new employee into your company, you should set out to make sure that they feel comfortable on 'arrival'. Given that remote employee onboarding won't be physically entering the company office or workspace, there must be an additional effort to ensure a positive experience of remote onboarding.

It takes employees time to adjust to new working practices and schedules. This is why SHRM recommends that any onboarding program lasts at least a year. Of course, your strategy will change over this period as employees develop their skills and independence. Ensuring that they continue to have the support they need is crucial, however.



## WHY DOES ONBOARDING MATTER?

Research by Glassdoor found that companies with a strong onboarding process improve employee retention by 82% and productivity by over 70%. If you give a great first impression, employees are more likely to stick with the company long-term. New hires with direction and the resources they need will achieve better results.

Any organization that seeks a cohesive company culture should pay attention to onboarding. Remember that values are the building blocks of culture – ensure you are direct about what these are.

What are your expectations for employees? What are the behaviors you seek, or the workplace environment you strive for? These fundamentals are so crucial when we are new – they help keep us grounded as we navigate the challenges of onboarding.

New hires in companies across the world are onboarding virtually on a scale we haven't seen before. This can be a strange process – with many employees working for months in a job without meeting their colleagues in person!

There are clearly potential issues here – as well as opportunities. Remote work provides the advantage of greater flexibility, with employees no longer required to commute every day. It can support a healthy work-life balance. Make this clear in your messaging – that your company seeks to adopt a positive remote work environment.

## BENEFITS

### GREAT ONBOARDING PROCESS

- Boost employee retention
- Improve productivity in the long-term
- Better employee relations
- Help new hires develop necessary skills
- Supportive work environment
- Clarity over company values and culture

## LONG-TERM REMOTE ONBOARDING

How you approach your onboarding strategy will change as a new hire's first year progresses. Keep track of important intervals, e.g. 3 months, 6 months and a year down the line.

One-on-one check-ins with HR can help new hires communicate what could be improved. Are they struggling to find community at the organization? Perhaps inform them of employee resource groups. Is their work-life balance unsustainable? Sometimes this is a result of a poor onboarding experience – as expectations are not communicated clearly. Open communication is key to longer-term onboarding. Make sure you recognize their contribution as they move forwards, and celebrate first work anniversaries.





## GREAT ONBOARDING IS CRUCIAL TO A GREAT CULTURE

Taking the time to create a great remote employee onboarding strategy reaps benefits for the whole company. New hires have a sense of purpose and direction, it improves awareness of company culture, and it ensures employees work to the best of their ability.

Give your new hires the best start possible. Many managers underestimate the role of company culture in the onboarding process. Be true to your values and culture. Do you view open communication as a cornerstone of your company's success? Then ensure that you provide an open-door policy to your new recruits.

Some managers assume that pay is the main reason for turnover. In fact, according to a Harvard Business Review study, more than 9 in 10 employees are willing to trade a proportion of their lifetime earnings for meaning at work. The work environment can go a long way to creating more meaningful work. Tell a story that encapsulates what is meaningful to you about work – and what opportunities make the job worthwhile for them.

Building community is really crucial to effective onboarding. This won't happen overnight, but a buddy system can ease the transition. Buddies provide the '411' for your new hires, introducing the company's expectations and offering wider context on their role. Setting clear expectations for all employees is crucial to retention. When we know what is expected of us, a sense of purpose drives our actions – and we try to exceed those expectations.

When duties are unclear, employee satisfaction can wane. This can lead to the blurring of roles – for example, when an employee works around the clock on tasks that do not match their job description. This can leave employees feeling deflated and undervalued.

With a strong onboarding process, you can encourage your employees to stick around for the long haul. Employee retention is fundamentally about company culture which itself stems from onboarding. Even whilst working remotely, you have the ability to build a community with sticking power.

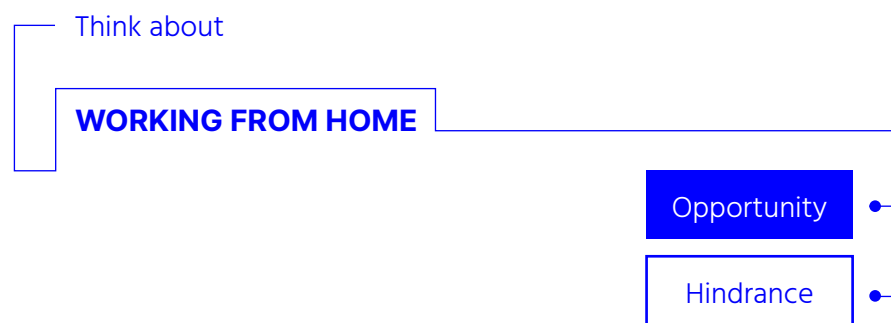


# Culture

The transition to work-from-home has left company culture in the lurch. But it's possible to see remote-work as an opportunity to reflect on your organizational values.

We tend to think of remote work as something imposed on us from on high, without our consent. It's easy to feel nostalgic about water cooler conversations and the buzz of a morning coffee with colleagues. Company culture appears thwarted by the move away from all this.

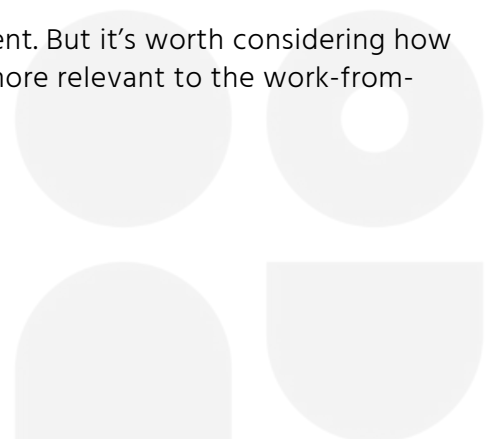
While we've seen a rapid acceleration of the trend, the move to remote-work has been happening for some time. As early as 2016, Gallup found that 43% of the US workforce spent at least some working hours remotely. Work-from-home was part of a pre-pandemic vision for a new world of work - a more inclusive, flexible and creative one.



The tasks an employee has to complete in a job may not vary drastically from company to company - but the way they think and feel about the work will change. It might seem soft, but in fact company culture deeply drives output from employees. All transactions, relationships and goals fall under its umbrella. Culture is the working environment at your company. It's the stories you tell about what it means to work there. It's how employees relate to each other, and the long-term intentions of your brand.

Values are the building blocks of a strong organizational culture. Ensure these are clearly defined from the outset. They are a touchstone for all interactions with employees - from onboarding, to offering feedback, to examining staff turnover. They keep managers grounded in times of uncertainty - allowing us to approach problems with our 'better angels' to guide us.

Culture and values should be consistent. But it's worth considering how these values can evolve to become more relevant to the work-from-home world.



## HIGH-PERFORMANCE CULTURE

Establishing a high-performance culture will help create a positive employee experience and boost overall company performance.

### HIGH-PERFORMANCE CULTURE

Set of values, beliefs and behaviors that enable an organization to achieve excellent results and a high level of growth

High-performance cultures build effective performance processes and prioritize them at all levels of the organization, creating a working environment most conducive to growth. By expressing your company culture through your people processes, HR departments can consistently achieve excellence and support employees on their professional journeys. Having a high-performance culture boosts overall organizational performance - and there are many factors that contribute to this. Firstly, a performance culture encourages employees to feel empowered and therefore achieve their best work. Employees working in this environment will be more productive, engaged and motivated.

A high-performance culture focuses on employee growth and development, as well as encouraging employees to experiment and innovate. This will improve overall organizational agility and accelerate the implementation of change. What's more, employees that are engaged with their company's culture are far more likely to stay in their role for longer, improving retention rates.

### HANDLING CHANGES IN ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

For every change in an organization's culture, there must be a concentrated effort to facilitate the workforce in transforming their understanding of work in alignment with new ideals and values. As employees bear witness to the shift to working from home, many leaders were presented with an opportunity to use the change to establish a new organizational culture.

Every organization has cultivated its own culture. The purpose of this is to enable all employees to understand and align with the unwritten workplace ethos. Organizational culture change can result in a variety of difficulties and grievances from leadership to the individual employee. In a diverse workplace, the culture of an organization has the power to bring all employees onto a common platform. All employees must be treated equally and no one should feel neglected in the workplace. When employees feel welcome and adjusted to a company's culture, they can deliver their best performance.

After all, it is the culture of the organization which extracts the best out of each team member. High performance from a workforce, implies a shared understanding and alignment with a strong culture.

Measuring change is good culture management. Using accurate measurements will enable you to develop confidence that the investment in culture is making progress towards the desired outcomes. By specifying the precise qualities and intentions for the new culture, it is easier to monitor their efficacy. Leaders and other individuals responsible for inciting change are to be held accountable.

Culture change can be tracked through aspects such as the assessment of organizational behaviors of team members. This alongside other company culture traits relevant to the organization. Culture change tends to be administered through top-down methodologies. In this regard, it is then beneficial to measure the adoption of change from a bottom-up perspective. When junior employees are committed to following the latest values, it demonstrates effective change management.

## COMPANY CULTURE SURVEYS

The most explicit method to gather employee feedback towards types of organizational change can be attained through surveys. For example, a weekly pulse survey would present an immediate indication of how the workforce has received the change.

To best understand what your company stands for it is important to find out what your employees think. Culture surveys highlight how employees feel towards the company, as well as any red flags. Since organizational culture is formed through those involved with it, the survey results will present extremely useful insights.

It is through employee surveys that companies are able to improve the experience of work. Building on the feedback attained from the workforce is an effective and efficient technique for ensuring better employee engagement and satisfaction. Since engaged employees are far more productive than their disengaged colleagues, it is desirable for any company culture to instill positive feelings in the workforce.

It is pivotal for an organization to identify what cultural shifts are needed to better achieve the wider company objectives and resolve points of internal friction. Surveys are a great way to ensure that culture initiatives are data-driven and that improvements can be measured over time.

A survey tool created through Human Resource Management Systems is a sure-fire way to improve your people processes. Using an HRMS will take the bulk of administrative work off the hands of HR professionals. Such a survey tool will allow you to build a sophisticated, custom survey that is tailored to your organization's needs. It will make gathering large amounts of data much easier, and as a result, increase productivity levels. You will also be able to gain strategic insights and be certain in decision-making.

Using an employee engagement survey tool will streamline the process, save time and boost response rates, allowing you to make better informed strategic decisions that will benefit the business.



# Wellbeing

2020 taught us about the importance of looking after the mental health and well-being of employees. In order to sustain and carry through the lessons we've learned, we look to foster wellbeing initiatives that can make your business a better place to work.

As remote working continues for many employees, it has never been more crucial for HR leaders to develop strategies to look after the welfare of their staff, and introduce employee well-being initiatives. The pandemic has magnified well-being issues due to the increasingly blurred boundaries between work and home life and it has also highlighted the link between poor mental health and reduced productivity.

Workplace health and wellbeing have been placed front and center as anxiety, depression and burnout have skyrocketed due to social isolation and the disruptive changes to the daily work routine. Remote work has rapidly changed routines and practices. It's important that HR keeps track of employee wellbeing - and cultivates a healthier company culture.

Businesses have come to realize the importance of prioritizing flexible work, remote corporate well-being programs and giving employees a voice within the organization. They responded to the new forces by introducing company well-being initiatives for employees. According to Gartner, by June 2020 over two-thirds of organizations had introduced new wellness benefits to support employees' mental and emotional wellbeing.

## UNDERSTANDING EMPLOYEE WELLBEING

### THE FIVE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS THAT INFLUENCE OUR WELLBEING

- **1. CAREER WELLBEING**  
Meaning you derive from work, sense of purpose
- **2. SOCIAL WELLBEING**  
Supportive and loving friendships and relationships
- **3. FINANCIAL WELLBEING**  
Feeling financially secure
- **4. PHYSICAL WELLBEING**  
Having the energy and health for your daily routine and goals
- **5. COMMUNITY WELLBEING**  
How connected you feel to the community in which you live

Tom Rath.

Well-being reaps benefits for an organization – improving employee retention and business outcomes. Like plants with sunlight, water and oxygen – we require certain conditions for us to grow and perform at our best. A psychological safety climate brings creativity. Good well-being starts with culture. There are so many great programs, products and resources on the market for wellbeing, and the evidence suggests small and medium-sized companies are buying in! But no matter how extensive your wellbeing program - if your company culture undervalues and exhausts employees – they really are just a sticking plaster.

Wellbeing isn't just about how we take care of ourselves (which is very important!) but also how we take care of each other. Social wellbeing is one of the pillars of wellbeing. How do we create a culture embellished by community?

Employee resource groups can be great for creating supportive communities for diverse teams. Remember that inclusive cultures are also well-being cultures. Vandana Juneja, VP of Global Growth Markets at Catalyst, says that inclusive communication requires us to 'suspend judgment' and 'demonstrate vulnerability'. This is also crucial to conversations about mental health. Initiatives can start small. Small support groups on mental health are effective, as participants get to know each other personally.

The challenges of work-from-home sometimes require a sense of humor. We make ourselves a little bit vulnerable every time we video call from home – and this can be very powerful for building community. Managers can reflect on the challenges they've faced openly.

For remote workers, maintaining well-being is strongly reliant on one taking good care of one's self. Self-care is anything that you do with the intention of caring for your physical, emotional or mental wellbeing. Setting boundaries is a form of self-care – for example, turning off notifications outside of working hours. Ensuring we enjoy our full break hour. Communication can also promote self-care. Simply reminding employees to look after themselves can actually reduce workplace stress – sometimes all we need is permission!

## TOPICS

### EMPLOYEE WELLBEING SURVEY

- Impact of childcare/ other caring responsibilities on stress levels and mental health
- Ability to balance work and home responsibilities
- Whether working hours have increased due to remote work
- Whether productivity has increased/ decreased
- Loneliness and Isolation

## PROMOTING WELLBEING THROUGH REMOTE WORK

Positive psychologists argue that 'flow', total immersion in work or a creative activity, gives us a sense of accomplishment and meaning. Research shows this improves overall wellbeing and lowers stress levels. In particular, we experience flow during tasks that match our skill level (rather than being too easy or too challenging). HR might consider employee self-evaluations – which invite them to think about a time when they experienced 'flow'.

This rewarding, absorbing work drives employee engagement. Even if employees can't experience this at work, encourage them to pursue hobbies or volunteering opportunities outside of work.

Creating a strategy for a good level of well-being is the first step. Building on this we have to measure its effectiveness. While HR can sometimes see the benefits of their wellness program or wellbeing strategy intuitively - Sharon Florentine points out that gathering survey results allows you to convince C-Level executives of the 'correlation between well-being and better outcomes'.

Gather information through employee wellbeing surveys. This will invite employees to rate their well-being in terms of work-life balance, mental

health and future plans. They can be customized to align with your company's values. Move between overall wellbeing at work and specific touch-points. Sometimes employees don't question unhealthy work patterns - and may believe burn-out and chronic stress are a normal part of working life. Ask questions that provide insights into what working at your company is like, rather than only asking for opinions - this gives you a more objective perspective.

If ever there was a moment to be tracking changes in employee wellbeing, it is in the midst of a pandemic! Use employee wellbeing surveys to find out how employees adjusted to remote-work. In particular, focus your questions on the impact on work-life balance, caring responsibilities and loneliness. Make it explicit that the HR team is working to find out how they can better support staff during difficult times.

Employee engagement is inextricable from employee wellbeing. Gallup found that employees who are engaged and have high well-being are also 27% more likely to report "excellent" performance at work. Feeling challenged and that we have a sense of purpose at work gives us a reason to get out of bed in the morning.

A change in mindset and shift of economic resources to initiatives that better support employee well-being and good mental and physical health is needed more than ever before. As we get accustomed to the 'new normal', we need to learn how to leverage technology and resources to give employees the best support possible, helping them to succeed in both their personal and professional life.

The future of employee health and well-being is very promising. It was often a neglected topic before the pandemic, viewed as a "nice-to-have" rather than a "must-have" employer strategy. The pandemic subsequently revealed how flawed this approach was, and now it's up to businesses to take the necessary steps to reap the rewards of a happy and healthy workplace.

A holistic well-being program will not only result in better employee engagement and organizational performance but also help foster a positive company culture where employees feel heard and understood.



# Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity is about recognizing and embracing all people as individuals. It is about empowering people by celebrating what makes them different from others, whether that be in terms of gender, ethnicity, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation or education.

Many use the word inclusion interchangeably with diversity or even equality. In fact, inclusion is the overarching culture that encompasses diversity and equality as well as many other aspects of our working lives. Inclusion is the culture in which all people feel included, are given equal opportunity to contribute to business success, and feel comfortable expressing their true selves. Creating an inclusive culture ensures that all employees feel valued, regardless of who they are and where they come from.

In order to establish a high-performing culture of inclusion in the remote workplace, it is essential that company leaders implement a specific D&I strategy that addresses structural issues within the organization. Many initiatives fall into the trap of being superficial, corporate box-ticking exercises that in reality do very little to address diversity in the workplace.

An effective strategy should go back to basics and systematically establish diversity and inclusion as a cornerstone of company culture and policy. It should implement regular training at all levels. This strategy must ensure that all employees work within an inclusive environment throughout their life-cycle: from recruitment to promotion to exit. Barriers created by remote work should not create barriers to meaningful approaches for diversity and inclusion.

Fundamentally, the proper fulfillment of D&I strategies comes down to education. Learning and Development embolden your D&I approach. Learning clarifies expected behaviors. Values are more concrete when linked to everyday actions. Remote-work makes this interactive: through podcasts, virtual book groups or online anti-bias training.

L&D is powerful as employees want to learn! According to FastCompany, 68% of employees say training and development is their company's most important policy. Engage this love of learning by making D&I efforts an ongoing learning experience. Rather than an HR outpost, employees view cultivating an inclusive culture as a responsibility for all.

Online courses and serious discussions aren't the only ways to inform. Casual settings can be helpful. Mark National Disability Employment Awareness month through a virtual Lunch and Learn. Aim to facilitate discussion and raise consciousness in a fun and natural way.





## PROMOTING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION THROUGH LEARNING

D&I does not begin and end with recruitment. Creating a diversified workplace that motivates your teams requires communication and development strategies. HR leaders know that a diversified workplace is a key component of a thriving company culture. A culture that recognizes and appreciates the differences between people, whether that is gender, race, sexual orientation or identity, age, or physical ability.

Inclusion practices are your route to a diversified workplace. It's not enough just to hire employees with a range of skills and experiences (although this is important!). HR also needs to make diversity and inclusion a continuous focus.

A diversified workplace reaps tangible benefits for companies and employees alike. 44% of the millennial workforce is part of a racial or ethnic minority group. The workforce is aging, with a widening age disparity between employees. It's key for HR to create a strategy for a great diversified workplace. Companies with great diversity and inclusion strategies reap rewards – with better motivated, happier and more collaborative teams.

Accenture is one of the leaders in this area, and has seen increases in the diversity of their employees. They have strategies to maintain employee retention - to ensure their inclusion practices are benefitting their diverse employees longer-term.

## PROMOTING BETTER D&I THROUGH COMMUNICATION

Inclusive company cultures have strategies for communication. A diversified workplace involves understanding multiple perspectives and concerns. Reflective listening is one way to ensure every voice is heard. This involves mirroring - repeat back or paraphrase what the individual has said. Then, reflect on the emotions or subtext the individual might be communicating.

Communication strategies need to make the most of a range of mediums. Not everyone expresses themselves best in one-on-ones. Virtual manager town halls might be a way for employees to hold managers accountable or ask questions. Consider using a diversity and inclusion survey to inform your

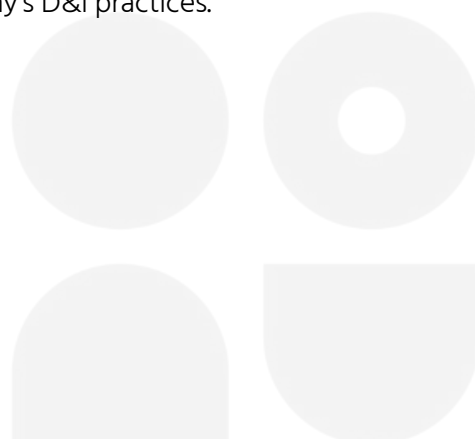
## QUALITIES

### SUCCESSFUL DIVERSIFIED WORKPLACE

- Improved innovation and creativity: a range of worldviews and experiences are incorporated
- Culture of open communication in which employee voice is key
- Improved employee retention: employees feel valued
- Collaborative work improved: boosting business outcomes
- More resilient employee wellbeing
- Community building: through employee resource groups, lunch and learns, etc
- Wider talent pool

communication strategy. These help you to get an inside view of how your company is performing against its core values of inclusion. As complex humans we have differences – but great company cultures recognize the strength in our diversity! HR can do so much to make diversified workplaces more inclusive.

Take a look at a Diversity and Inclusion survey template as one solution. It's a great opportunity for your employees to provide an honest view of your company's D&I practices.



# Future of Work

The challenges of 2020 have created the potential for some great success stories in the years to come. This is the year HR can turn focus to the future and truly prepare team members for any occasion. There's been no other time that HR teams have been called to deal with as many unforeseeable workforce changes as the previous 12 months.

From reskilling your workforce to preparing for the automation of roles, there are a lot of changes coming to the future of work that could present great challenges for some. Nevertheless, with the right strategy, any organization can prepare for these new forces and use them to exceed their potential and flourish as they grow into the future.

COVID-19 has accelerated the departure from the office. A sudden and seismic shift to remote work has meant that in a very short space of time the employee experience has been significantly reimagined. This change presents HR departments with a unique and puzzling challenge to determine what needs to be done to ensure employees remain engaged with their work and continue to complete tasks in a productive manner.

Technology has been fundamental to enabling organizations to continue working under the restrictions of national and local lockdowns. As the reliability of remote connectivity becomes exponentially more accessible, hurdles that would have previously hindered employees have been overcome.

As we witness these marvelous advances in technological development, the digitization of the world of work presents further complexities. Artificial intelligence is accelerating automation in a large proportion of jobs. Organizations must now prepare for the future and the longer-term roles of their employees. In adapting to these changes, there is a very apparent need for employees to reskill in order to take on new responsibilities in their roles.

## RESKILLING AND THE FUTURE OF WORK

A workforce that is resilient and can adapt to new situations is far better suited to an unpredictable work environment. In comparison, a team of specialized individuals often lacks the necessary skills to handle any issues that they have not previously dealt with. At the heart of reskilling, the focus of HR departments and leaders is to give employees the best opportunities to be equipped in handling any unpredictable roles of the future. The future is uncertain. Therefore we must train employees with core skills that will provide organizations with a better-prepared workforce.

The aftermath of 2020 will persist for many years to come. The old 'normal' is a distant memory and the new working day is almost unrecognizable from a year ago. For many the anguish of commuting has been forgotten, our channels of communication are far more formalized and for employees with children, childcare has become part of their daily routine. It is important to bear all of this in mind when considering how you wish to see your organization grow. Charting a course for your company that is considerate of the precarious position of your employees will be beneficial for issuing training programs that are mutually constructive. Distribute

reskilling tasks based on the candidates who can gain the most from this learning.

In adapting to the new situation, your employees have already learned a lot. Use this moment to encourage their continued development and provide learning opportunities for a range of skills. The value of reskilling employees is its capacity to fill a range of skill gaps in an organization. Training programs will broaden the skills of your workforce as opposed to concentrating them in one specific area. Therefore, even when team members are uncertain about how they wish to develop, they can learn new abilities that will facilitate better handling of a wider range of responsibilities.

### THE FUTURE OF WORKERS

Next-Gen workers are your company's future. It's crucial your culture adapts to provide for this socially responsible, self-reliant and digitally adept age group. Gen Z are coming of age in tumultuous times. Many Next-Gen workers remember the impact of the Great Recession on their parents. They are entering a precarious and anxiety-inducing job market in light of the pandemic.

As these individuals approach the world of work for the first time, they are very likely to bring a new type of work with them - particularly exacerbated by beginning their professional experience whilst working remotely. It is supposed that many Gen Z want independence in the workplace and they generally like to work alone. They are resourceful, having grown up with 24/7 access to information on their smartphones and want to be judged on their own merits. They are also more likely to be competitive with their peers than previous generations.

How this compliments the remote working environment is yet to be seen. From an HR perspective, there must be an effort to make this transition accessible for all new employees. In the same way, when teams can eventually return to the office - there will be individuals reluctant to leave their remote environment. Younger employees in particular, who may have only known work from a home setting, could potentially feel a reluctance to leave all that they have previously known. This leads to the next development that has been brought to the

attention of most leaders - the psychological safety of employees.

### WELLBEING IN THE WORKPLACE

According to a global survey by Forbes, it became evident over the past year that wellbeing has been put to the forefront of attention for many organizations. Maximizing productivity was put on the back burner. Increasingly leaders saw the value in ensuring the good health of their team members.

There is a greater appreciation for the mental health of employees and how this affects performance at work. Opening this dialogue in a work environment will lead to more transparency and a safer psychological space for employees. This is especially important as people maintain work from home policies. Remote working presents fewer opportunities for team members to informally interact with each other.

Going into the future, the dynamic of the workplace will adapt to more remote social interactions. HR takes on an ever more important role in ensuring that employees are coping with the different working arrangements. Coming up with new ways to encourage remote socializing is an important part of promoting team building and maintaining employee morale.



## EVOLVING RESPONSIBILITIES

Beyond changes to the way we access our work, the future of work presents new horizons in terms of the type of work we will be doing. Forces such as automation and AI are contributing to the creation of a vast range of new jobs and roles. The demand for software developers and other tech-orientated roles is growing exponentially. As individuals from Generation Z, the first wave of digital native-workers start to enter the world of work, they are going to significantly benefit from their fluency and confidence with using tech.

It will be older and less tech-savvy employees that will be pressured to reskill. So senior executives watch out! Even today, only a very finite amount jobs are fulfilled without the need for a computer or other digital technology. The responsibilities of team members will shift to work with their algorithms. A cooperative approach between man and machine is what lies ahead for many in the future of work.

HR departments will have to find a solution to ameliorate the interactions between team members and their tools. Finding a means to promote productivity and maintaining a socially enriched experience of work is a hurdle that lies ahead for future HR. Maintaining good levels of engagement is crucial to this.

## CONCLUSION

Adapting to the remote environment is possible - but it takes a wide-ranging strategy. Work from home impacts every HR responsibility, from diversity and inclusion, to employee wellbeing. We hope this eBook supports you as you find new ways to support your staff.

This eBook acts as a foundational resource on core HR functions. Adapt our ideas to your own organizational culture and practices - every company is different. Organizations are responding to remote work in innovative ways, but whatever you do, make it relevant to your team. To learn more about HR in the remote environment, head over to the PeopleGoal website.

Our dedicated HR app store is the first of its kind. There you'll find a library of apps for HR processes, from onboarding to development. Remote work should not hold your teams back. With PeopleGoal's centralized HR solution, you can facilitate better engagement and productivity. Together with our best practices, you'll bridge the distance between your remote employees, so they can take on the next challenge.



