

HR MASHUP

2021 WORKFORCE TRENDS

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02

EDITORIAL

What. A. Year.

As we are about to wrap-up 2020 and reboot over a well-deserved summer break (for most of us), it is essential to think through the lessons from these last 12 months, to identify the opportunities and gaps our businesses and we, as professionals and business leaders, can capitalise on to build sustainable growth in 2021.

Here are some of them.

- 1 The changing hiring landscape
- 2 Diversity & inclusion: what does it really mean?
- 3 Diversity & inclusion in a remote working environment
- 4 Company cultures under pressure
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- 6 Legal challenges in the workplace in 2020 and 2021
- 7 The five skills for virtual leaders
- 8 COVID-19 burnout: who is at risk?
- 9 The evolution of performance reviews



MARKET REPORT

In April and August 2020, the people2people and Frog Recruitment group sense-checked key workforce areas to understand how employers were feeling about the Australian and New Zealand markets during COVID-19. The survey covered:

- 600 senior managers representing over 356,000 employees.
- 750 career seekers across both countries.

page 3 To get your copy and the salary information it includes, visit our [webpage](#).

WEBINARS

page 5 In 2020, the people2people group started the talent and leadership webinar series to support organisations as well as business leaders and professionals to approach an unprecedented work environment by collaborating with Australian and New Zealand experts and providing forward-thinking business ideas, including:

- page 7 How to ride the waves from disruption to recovery?
- Positive change leadership: a 4 step model for today's leader
- Bold & brave questions to co-create resilient digital businesses
- page 8 Ask the economist - Where to for the labour market in 2021?

To check all of them, visit our website www.people2people.com.au/webinars

PARTICIPATE

page 10 If you want to collaborate with us in the making of our periodical HR Mashup, contribute to an article, or if you'd love to know more about a specific HR topic, please get in touch:
Page 11 insights@people2people.com.au or insights@frogrecruitment.co.nz

THE CHANGING HIRING LANDSCAPE

CONVEYING YOUR COMPANY CULTURE TO CANDIDATES WITHOUT ANY IN-PERSON CONTACT

Company cultures are being tested. For many organisations, culture comes out most in person through office interactions, hallway chats, and team-building events. Maintaining a strong culture with an entirely remote workforce looks different but it is no less important – especially when trying to hire.

Storytelling has been a key component for talent acquisition leaders and recruiters, so an all-remote candidate journey makes it even more important. Just as you ask behavioural questions to get real-life examples of how candidates work, telling stories about how your company has handled different situations will help your candidate imagine themselves as part of your team.

Now is a good time to refresh or recreate any assets highlighting your company culture – whether it is a new slide deck or fun video. For example, when LinkedIn recruiting coordinators confirm an upcoming interview, they will embed a video highlighting #LinkedInLife or link to a page where candidates can learn more about what it is like to work there.

Source: LinkedIn Talent Blog. The Biggest Challenges Recruiters Are Wrestling with Right Now.

WITH AN ALL-REMOTE CANDIDATE JOURNEY, STORYTELLING IS EVEN MORE IMPORTANT.

EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE COULD BE THE NEW HR

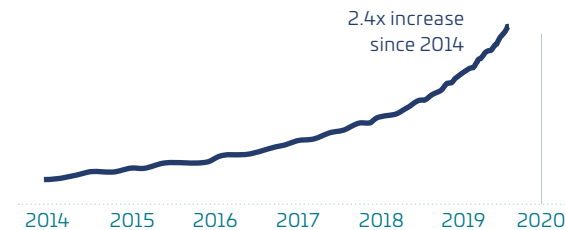
Managing the concept of employee experience can feel daunting when it covers everything an employee will encounter.

One trick is to break this down into four core components: people, place, product and process. For each key moment along the employment journey (hiring through to exiting), aim to understand and improve the impact of each factor.

As companies become more employee-centric, an increase in employee experience (EX) roles is occurring. Mature organisations are hiring dedicated EX experts, while smaller companies are rebranding their HR function as ‘employee experience.’

These new EX functions are often still responsible for core HR tasks like performance management, learning, and compensation, but they are also directing key parts of the employee experience, such as commercial space decisions and technology choices.

Employee experience roles are rapidly growing



Source: LinkedIn Talent Solutions. Global Talent Trends 2020.

POSITION WELL NOW FOR THE MONTHS AHEAD

Talent acquisition leaders are focusing on how a large-scale economic recession will impact their company and its long-term hiring capabilities. While some businesses are clearly negatively impacted by COVID-19 restrictions e.g. the travel industry, those companies that conduct their business completely remotely could be hurt by a global economy operating at half-speed.

Whether your business is booming or grinding to a halt, maintaining a strong employee experience during this time is not just an HR concern. How you treat your employees now will impact your employer brand long after the pandemic passes. Companies that prioritise employee experience today, will be the winners when it comes to attracting candidates when hiring en masse occurs again. It will also assist companies to retain their most valuable employees during these times of unrest and uncertainty.

Source: LinkedIn Talent Blog. The Biggest Challenges Recruiters Are Wrestling with Right Now.

This article is part of our 2020 market report. To request a copy, visit our [webpage](#).



DIVERSITY & INCLUSION: WHAT DOES IT REALLY MEAN?

2020 has been a massive challenge in many ways, and its set of ever-evolving conditions has sometimes led business leaders to leave diversity and inclusion on the side. However, by bringing different mindsets and people together, teams will become more innovative, creative, and adaptable in a world of work desperately in need of flexibility.

An interview with Christine Mudavanhu-Makumbe, Founder and Principal Consultant, Utano Consulting.

What are diversity and inclusion, and why does it matter to businesses today?

Diversity is the incorporation of all of the unique qualities of humanity into the fabric of an organisation's culture. Every person is different and as such each person brings all of the different aspects of who they are to the workplace. This includes, but is by no means limited to, their individual customs, cultures, beliefs, physical and mental abilities, ideologies, sexual identity, racial backgrounds, histories, lived experiences.

Inclusion is the act of embracing the full spectrum of diversity within an organisation. It involves giving all parties in the workplace an equal voice. Equal voice does not mean the same voice. It means all ideologies are given equitable space to be heard. There is space for different opinions, approaches and ideas to be posed.

In an inclusive environment the smallest voice is heard just as loudly and as clearly as the loudest voice. The dissenting view is given the same audience as the consenting view. Both points of view are weighed on their own merits. The organisation has transparent and accountable processes that support staff to voice different perspectives.

How can we embed inclusion within an organisation's culture?

Making inclusion a way of being within the organisation and not something that is left to the human resources department or the often-token diversity and inclusion person, an emerging role featuring in many corporations in recent times. Making inclusion about everybody and not about singling out those in the minority is what is needed. When we normalise inclusion



Christine Mudavanhu-Makumbe
Founder and Principal Consultant
Utano Consulting

it means we do whatever is required to be truly inclusive. We consider the needs of all people – leaders, managers, staff, clients, and customers. For example we take people's physical abilities into consideration when we plan office spaces. We support cultural diversity, different physical abilities, racial, religious and spiritual differences, gender and sexual identity.

Inclusion is valued and incorporated into fabric of the organisation. Inclusion is not something that is seen as special or unique to the organisation it's simply a way of being and creating a sense of belonging for all. Equitable opportunities are provided and there is recognition that equity does not mean equal. Sometimes the shortest person to see over the fence requires a higher step to be at par with the tallest person to see the same view.

How can we embed inclusion within an organisation's culture?

The question I would ask is why has so little changed in the implementation of effective inclusion strategies in the workplace? Why are people still scrambling with what appears in many respects to be a basic human right, which is respect for all?

Despite the deafening conversations around inclusive workforces, we must ask ourselves:

- Why are the ones who are doing this well still the outliers?
- Why are the commitments to strategies that will actually drive real change still so scarce?
- Why are the resources being invested in this space so scarce?
- When a company can answer these and other tough inward-looking questions for themselves; then they are on a path to wanting and seeking real change?

What to do is easy, what is difficult is garnering the will, passion and drive to do it. You need organisational change champions that are committed and who take a long-term view. There is no magic wand here, much as we may want there to be one. We, as a society have been in this space for an exceptionally long time and the status quo is not working. Change happens in my view when the cost of doing something outweighs the cost of maintaining the status quo. Let us not forget that it took the United States of America 100 years from the time women got the right to vote to actually electing a female Vice President. That is the long game of this change process.

DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND REMOTE WORKING

"Virtual teams are good for diversity, but there's still work to do when it comes to ensuring inclusion within a remote team and not allowing team members to feel isolated." Rebecca Coles-Reid, FPH Group.

Inclusiveness is a principle often preached in corporate cultures, but it is not always practised. Being forced to be indoors away from others and working long hours as a result of COVID-19 precautions has had a negative impact on the mental health of millions of people. Research explains why right now is such an important moment to work on more inclusive practices among employees:

"A recent Gartner survey shows that 25% of HR leaders have found that the pandemic has had a negative impact on mental health, and we expect that statistic to grow as the pandemic drags on. Belonging is a critical aspect of overall inclusion and engagement. Employees need to feel that people and the organization care about them..." (source: HRExecutive.com)

CHALLENGES TO INCLUSION IN THE REMOTE SPACE

Do not think for a moment that remote work means there are never challenges to inclusion, but many employers have focused on engagement and inclusion since the beginning of the pandemic. Here are some challenges that pop up in most workplaces:

Isolation — Outside of the dog barking at the mail truck, some employees find themselves without much interaction with another living thing at all. Companies try to provide the technologies necessary to communicate business-related messages back and forth among co-workers, but that doesn't necessarily lend itself to the kinds of social interactions that everyone was accustomed to prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Difficulty Speaking Up In Meetings — Not everyone working in an office is an extrovert ready to share his or her ideas. No amount of prompting will make it any easier for those who are not inclined to speak up to do so. This makes them feel less included as they find it challenging to share their ideas.

Differences in Personal Lives — Whether we are working parents, adults flatting with other people, or single professionals living on our own, remote work forces us to deal with both our personal lives and the set of challenges they bring, and work, and a one-size-fits-

all approach won't build a happy work-from-home environment for everyone.

COMPANY CULTURES NEED TO ADAPT

Company culture is created over many years as individuals within that company strive toward a common goal. Some companies get branded as hard-driven and forceful while others are more laid-back and friendly. Much of this culture has to do with the kinds of products or services a brand offers as well as the target audience they seek to serve and the messages they want to convey to an audience. The same culture that worked in the office may not thrive when that work goes remote.

Lack of spontaneous interaction — Conversations that happen in the hallway or staffroom don't happen anymore in a remote working environment. The noticeable absence of small talk between virtual workers may lead to a reduction of innovation and collaboration. These peripheral relationships play an important role in organisational performance, building trust and workplace happiness.

Challenged new employee onboarding — Engaging in activities to help new employees see how their strengths fit in and to express themselves gets more difficult virtually. The danger here is that new employees could feel disconnected, isolated from their teams and overwhelmed, while managers may not know how to approach this new situation.

Productivity versus burnout — People with certain personality traits find it tough to adjust to working remotely. Those who tend to have higher anxiety, worry or fear levels had difficulty adapting to all-virtual work. Add factors such as partners losing their jobs or wage cuts and work becomes exponentially complicated.

GROWING LEADERSHIP VALUES

Managers have frequently turned over entire virtual meetings to their employees to allow them to voice ideas, concerns, and anything else on their mind during this time. This serves two purposes. First, employees can blow off some steam related to the stresses they may feel as a result of COVID-19 and their work/life balance. Second, these meetings can be a way to see if there are some standouts who might make great leaders going forward. Managers should keep a keen eye and ear open for those who might show real leadership growth potential at this time.



COMPANY CULTURES UNDER PRESSURE

Summary of an interview with Mona Bamta, HR professional based in Sydney, Australia about company culture during the COVID storm.

HOW CAN COMPANY CULTURE BE PORTRAYED TO NEW HIRES?

In this era of remote working, onboarding should appear at the top of all HR Professionals' priority list. Nevertheless, the onboarding process is more than just setting up new hires with a workspace. It's a crucial process where HR professionals have to initiate the new hires into their company culture, communicating and demonstrating to them the company vision, mission, and goals.

An onboarding process that focuses on the company culture and values ensures that its new hires are engaged from the start. It also increases a company's chances of retaining loyal and dedicated employees.

HOW IMPORTANT IS COMPANY CULTURE TO ADAPT TO THE RESHAPED WORLD OF WORK POST COVID-19?

As employees continue to work from home, many of the elements that make up corporate culture aren't within the control of corporate leaders in the same manner and to the same degree as they were pre-pandemic. For most of the organisation, values and purpose are being redefined.

Corporate leaders should concentrate on how the pandemic is impacting their employees' working experience and what they can do to guarantee a positive corporate culture for their remote employees. Business leaders will have to concentrate on agility, adaptability, expressing, and enforcing the company culture and values through constant coaching and training.

WITH LESS THAN 10% OF WORKERS WANTING TO RETURN TO THE OFFICE FULL TIME, HOW CAN ORGANISATIONS RETAIN THEIR COMPANY CULTURE?

As employees work from home, there's potential for some of them to lose their connection

with their organization's core values. To prevent this from happening, there are various ways business leaders can positively remind their remote workers about what it means to work for the company. They can do so through online events, virtual awards ceremonies, social responsibility initiatives, etc.

Business leaders should leverage available communication channels like email, virtual conferencing, and messenger to inform remote employees about the changes that might occur and the steps they'll take to support those experiencing individual challenges.

When it comes to creating and developing company culture, business leaders play a crucial role. It's essential for business leaders to set the tone for how employees should behave and provide a sense of purpose, vision, inspiration, and mentorship to those they lead.

WHAT ARE THE KEY FACTORS FOR A HAPPY WORKPLACE?

Integrity — Integrity is one of the most vital traits of professionalism. Not only is it essential when it comes to customer relationships, but business leaders and employees who possess this important trait develop deeper relationships with their coworkers, and gain their colleagues' respect and trust.

Trust — Employees are expected to be honest and reliable in every aspect of their duties and responsibilities. Reports indicate that the more employees feel like their superiors trust them, the happier and the less likely they are to search for greener pastures.

Empowerment — There are different ways of empowering employees. It can be as simple as providing enough motivation, opportunity, training, and resources they need to carry out their duties. Providing employees with guidance and support while being attentive to their individual needs enables employees to feel assured that they are treated fairly. When employees feel empowered at work, they are happy, perform better, and tend to be more loyal to the organisation.

WHEN IT COMES TO CREATING AND DEVELOPING COMPANY CULTURE, BUSINESS LEADERS PLAY A CRUCIAL ROLE.

THE MOST IMPORTANT SKILLS IN 2021

The COVID-19 crisis has substantially changed both hiring and job seeker expectations, and emphasised the importance of specific skills to succeed as a professional.

SOFT AND TRANSFERABLE SKILLS EMERGE AS ESSENTIALS IN THE COVID-19 WORLD

Time management and self motivation — While in the office, understanding how much work someone had to do was a given, it gets harder to know how a remote worker is coping with his or her workload. That same way, working alongside someone gives visual clues about how a person is feeling, and it's common to see team members encouraging each other during difficult situations. Working from home forces professionals to verbalise those struggles and seek motivational support - a situation some might resent or avoid.

Communication — Communication is showing up as more valuable lately as remote work pushes us all to learn how to express our thoughts and ideas in more creative ways. For those who weren't great at providing clear guidelines and relied on face-to-face meetings to clarify a topic, their need for help will become significantly higher with remote working.

Other soft skills on the rise include empathy, leadership, critical thinking.

CANDIDATES NEED TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

Lockdowns and border closures have become the norm throughout the world in 2020 as nations adapt as best as they can to the COVID-19 reality that is upon us. These moves have been necessary to stem the tide of the spread of the virus in certain areas, but they have also been crushing to economies and to the personal finances of millions.

Transferable skills that work in different types of jobs across borders and in different time zones are more valued than ever before. An individual who is trained on various software systems or who speaks a language other than their native tongue can likely find work more easily than someone who has only developed one particular skill to handle the job that they do at present.

AVOIDING BURNOUT

It would have been easy to convince someone in pre-COVID times that an individual who was able to work from home would rarely if ever face burnout in their job. That is not such an easy sale anymore. One such recommendation is as follows:

"It can be tempting to roll out of bed two minutes before you're supposed to log in, but pretending you're getting ready for a day at the office can help to get you into a productive mindset. Make a plan for what you'll complete and when during the course of the day. If there are distractions that can't be avoided, set expectations with your manager as to when you'll be logged-on." (source: lifespan.org)

Working from home may afford us the luxury of not having to commute to work, but we should try not to deviate from our schedules too dramatically whenever possible. Other essential anti-burnout skills include maintaining a regular exercise schedule, keeping an organized desk, planning out your day ahead of time with a specific set of tasks to accomplish, and drinking enough water for a healthier lifestyle.

OVERTIME HOURS AND RECRUITMENT

Unpaid overtime hours have begun to creep into the routines of many Australians and Kiwis, and plenty of others around the world as well. New surveys show that the average Australian is now putting in approximately five hours of unpaid overtime per week. Added up, that equals around two-hundred and fifty unpaid hours per year.

Unpaid work can lead successful professionals to frustration, resentment towards employers and in the worst case, resignations of high performers. There's no better time of the year to review peoples' workload to assess the burnout risk within each business unit. If the workload is recognised as too significant for one professional or a team, hiring one extra worker might save organisations the cost of an A-player going through burnout or resigning. More specifically, temp workers are a fair and good short-term solution to increased workload when organisations don't have the budget for a permanent contract.

For all contracting, temporary, remote or permanent staffing requirements, we are ready to assist. Contact us on 1300 121 727 (Australia) or 0800 GO FROG (New Zealand).

LEGAL CHALLENGES IN THE WORKPLACE IN 2020 & 2021

WHAT LEGAL CHANGES HAVE WE EXPERIENCED IN 2020?

The unexpected COVID 19 pandemic undisputedly took the world by storm, with its effects stretching out to almost all sectors of the economy. Perhaps the most eminent of this was that most employees were now legally required to do their work from home. This was not limited to top-level employees like personnel managers, who now had to find a way to manage their employees remotely, and sufficiently enough to get the job done.

Other challenges included understanding around stand downs, JobKeeper or Wage Subsidies and redundancies, [changes to Awards](#) specifically because of the pandemic, dealing with illness and injury in a changed environment, and difficulties with performance management.

WHAT HAVE BEEN THE BIGGEST LEGAL CHALLENGES THIS YEAR?

The pandemic caused a significant downturn in business confidence, and immediate responses to the pandemic meant many employers were uncertain about the future of work. As we all got to work from home during lockdown, the [notions of work and productive work](#) were brought to the boardroom tables, and with it the concerns regarding productivity and performance management in a remote working context.

Organisations also had to deal with a plethora of unfair dismissal and general application claims, as well as some issues with contracts and policies insufficient to deal with a pandemic or major changes in the world of work. Finally, uncertainty was at its highest with a number of "Zombie Companies" relying upon JobKeeper or Wage Subsidies to stay afloat.

"In the future, organisations should be prepared for a dismissal claim for every single termination and ask themselves: has the risk and liability been assessed in this context? If so, what were the steps taken to mitigate the risk and liability? [Policies, procedures and contracts need to be overhauled](#) and reviewed on a regular basis. Finally, [management](#)



Jonathan Mamaril
Principal and Director
[NBL Lawyers | Lawyers for Employers](#)

[communication and transparency must be reviewed](#) too in the context of the pandemic to assess and adapt to the new world of work."

WHAT DO YOU FORESEE WILL MOVE THROUGH TO 2021?

Jonathan Mamaril first mentions a steady increase in unfair dismissal and general protections claims in 2021. As [laws may change around EBAs and the BOOT Test](#), it is likely to see more EBAs being put up. The gig economy should increase their value over time, more and more businesses will be established, targeting a very unique niche with a specific skillset. Changes to Awards may provide further flexibility. The last prediction would be a rise in [underpayment claims and "wage theft" cases](#).

WHAT GUIDANCE TO PREPARE FOR THE NEW YEAR?

"It's time to consider an HR strategy or, if you have one, reviewing it in the context of the pandemic and the changes that will likely need to be made."

Other legal issues must be considered, related to employment law issues, such as [confidential information - use and misuse](#); terms and conditions being sufficient for paying terms; [shareholder agreements](#); [loan agreement](#); [leases](#).

As mentioned before, [2020 has seen a rise of claims against employers](#). This legal risk should be assessed and addressed to solve them before problems occur. Contractual documents, and specifically employment contracts and contractor agreements need to be reviewed. Business leaders should consider the powers of legal professional privilege in engaging a law firm. Law firms and their expertise can be extremely advantageous in the context of difficult or larger scale issues around termination of employment or underpayment of wages



VIRTUAL LEADERSHIP: FIVE SKILLS

While leadership has been under tremendous change in the past few years, COVID-19 has disrupted the way we manage and lead our teams, adopting a more human approach to coaching.

VULNERABILITY: AN UNDERVALUED LEADERSHIP SKILL

If we watch any Hollywood film about great leaders, we will likely see the management stereotype of a leader who pushes others around, makes unreasonable demands, and always gets what he or she wants. This model ignores vital skills which are essential to building trust within a team.

Vulnerability is a top skill for leaders of all kinds because it leaves the door open for others to express themselves and their ideas openly. When a leader can admit his or her shortcomings, it makes it easier for others to do the same and to look for solutions to problems that stem from those shortcomings. Vulnerability fosters team cohesion and transparency, which helps leaders to identify the roots of the issues faced by their teams

VISION: INSPIRING YOUR PEOPLE

It is easy to get caught up in the day-to-day details at any given job or any other aspect of life for that matter, but true leaders think several steps ahead. They are focused on the big picture and view the details as stepping stones for where they need to go.

More importantly, great leaders know how to share this vision with their teams, and bring meaning to pieces of work that are in many ways repetitive and not necessarily fulfilling. They don't let day-to-day tasks confine them, but they are aware that their vision is a good reference point to look to when working out any given issue that arises or when looking for motivation to keep pushing the boundaries of the world of work.

ADAPTABILITY: BECOMING FLEXIBLE TO ANY SITUATION

The adaptability skills of entire workforces have been put to the test this year as COVID-19 tore up any game plans previous laid out. Working from home rather than from a physical office space has been the biggest change experienced by the most people, but there have

been plenty of other situations when adaptability becomes essential. Decreased profit margins, layoffs, personal work/life issues are just a few of the challenges that have required this skillset in spades. Adaptability doesn't mean constantly changing course. Processes that are working properly do not require change. However, the ability to make dramatic changes when they are called for is a skill worth admiring.

INCLUSIVENESS: IMPROVED WORKFORCE OPTIONS

Recruiting is a lot easier in an environment of inclusiveness. As a company gains a reputation for being inclusive, they enjoy the benefits that come with that. This includes having a larger pool of talent from which to draw. Many more applicants want to work somewhere they believe they have a shot at being included.

Another advantage stemming from a more diverse workforce is improved creativity. As leaders gather employees from very different backgrounds, creativity improves, problems are solved in a faster manner, and as the spectrum of employees gets more diverse, organisations will get better at understanding their audiences and customers.

EMPATHY: PUTTING YOURSELF IN ANOTHER'S SHOES

Everyone brings to work a different set of personalities, life experiences, political and religious views, and so much more. It is easy to view the world simply from our own narrow perspective. It is much more challenging expressing empathy with the views of another. That being said, it is well worth the endeavor and is a great leadership skill.

Mike Martin, Executive Director at the Halogen Foundation, has always had a keen interest in the qualities that make powerful leaders tick. He has run an in-depth study of those traits which mentions the importance of the ability to experience the feelings of others.

"The hallmark of successful leadership wherever I have seen it is a person's ability to put themselves in the shoes of everyone around them. Whether they be their superiors, subordinates, friends and even enemies. If you can master this skill, it can take you to some interesting places..."

Taking other viewpoints into account and using what others have to say to help grow a business is the sign of a great leader.



COVID-19 BURNOUT: WHO IS AT RISK?

Mental health issues are impacting millions around the world, but much of this suffering is not discussed in public. Businesses today need to identify those who are at risk to provide the support needed.

WORKING PARENTS, AT THE HEART OF THE COVID STORM

Working parents are one group that stands out as more likely than most to have significant mental health issues in the COVID-19 world that we all now inhabit. They now have to juggle the demands of a team at work and the demands of young children at home all simultaneously. They are even more at risk than before pandemic: when [8.5%](#) of adults were showing strong signs of depression, this number has skyrocketed to 28% since March 2020. This results in feeling down or hopeless; loss of interest in things that normally bring joy; low energy; trouble concentrating; or thinking about self-harm.

MANAGERS, EXTRAVERTS AND NEW HIRES FACE MOUNTING STRESS AND BURNOUT

If one were to think about one category of people that might be better insulated from the mental health impacts of COVID-19, they might not think of managers. However, there are reasons why managers are having a great deal more trouble with this situation than most. Managers are often highly concerned about the stability of their jobs. Plenty of managers have been forced to lay people off as COVID-19 related restrictions have cut down on their business revenue significantly. Dealing with the pressure of a smaller team, negative feelings towards redundancies, and a to-do list that gets longer and longer as the team gets smaller are few of the top ingredients for burnout. On top of that, when a manager is laid off, it can get extraordinarily difficult to find work in a similar position, which adds to the stress and frustration that a manager may feel today.

New hires are in much the same place as managers. They have just now been brought on to a company that might be looking to make a cutback. New hires are easier to cut because they don't have as much institutional knowledge of the company's processes. In other words, their skills are not as valuable to the company as someone who has worked there for

a longer period of time. A layoff for a new hire also means an awkward gap of time on their resume.

Finally, is it any wonder that extraverts are feeling the cold sting of COVID-19 restrictions even harder than the rest of us? This group has personality traits that are directly impacted by the way that societies are currently structured in response to this virus.

- Gain energy from being around other people
- Are known to want to speak up in groups of people
- Like to receive attention from their peers for good ideas
- Solitude can make them feel low energy and frustrated

There is no clarity about exactly when things will return to normal. As we navigate through lockdowns, social distancing and border restrictions, assessing your teams and the specific conditions that might make their lives harder during the COVID-19 era will help to keep them engaged, loyal and happy.

BE MINDFUL OF THOSE WHO HAVE HAD STRUGGLES BEFORE

Individuals who have struggled with mental illness in the past are the most at-risk for developing additional issues or for seeing a resurgence or intensification of pre-existing mental issues. It is best to draw those people in close as much as possible right now and to check in with them often. Millions of people suffer in silence, and there is no reason why we should knowingly allow that to happen.

**| MILLIONS OF PEOPLE SUFFER IN SILENCE,
AND THERE IS NO REASON WHY WE SHOULD
KNOWINGLY ALLOW THAT TO HAPPEN.**

THE EVOLUTION OF PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

While many people confuse individual employee performance for growth, workers can perform well and hit their company targets without necessarily growing professionally. This usually happens when employees are stuck in jobs that fail to optimise their skills and talents. The win-win situation is when work performance goes hand in hand with professional development, ensuring that both the employer and the employee benefit.

Employers can help their workers achieve peak performance and professional growth goals by setting up an ideal work environment and putting in place development programs to enhance the knowledge and skills necessary for progression. When employers focus on work performance and organizational goals instead of individual professional growth, they take the risk to create boredom and job stagnation, demotivating good employees in the process and leading to high turnover.

HOW REMOTE WORKING HAS AFFECTED PERFORMANCE

Remote working has challenged previous work culture and HR policies, including aspects of performance and growth. Apart from their company goals, employers have been forced to reevaluate how they perceive and measure performance.

[According to Forbes](#), a recent survey revealed that 63% of workers interviewed felt the pressure to perform and thus recorded their virtual meetings for future reference and improvement. Challenges in communication, technology, cybersecurity, and health remain huge obstacles to remote employees' performance and productivity. This is in addition to the outbreak of 'zoom fatigue' experienced by employees across the world due to the increased number of virtual meetings.

63% OF WORKERS FELT MORE PRESSURE TO PERFORM IN 2020.

TIPS FOR IMPROVING PERFORMANCE AND GROWTH IN 2021

Companies have to make many improvements in 2021 in response to the changes and challenges they have had to grapple with in 2020. These include:

Redesigning work and workforces — The workplace changes brought about by COVID-19 demand a new approach and set of skills for companies that want to flourish. Business



operations are now conducted virtually, and HR managers might consider this when redesigning tasks and goals for their employees. This has compelled companies that want to attract and retain top talent to redesign and recraft jobs according to their new demands. Additionally, rather than annual performance evaluations, HR managers opt for project-based and task-based goals that can reflect new development opportunities.

Upskilling is also one of the main focuses of 2021, with many companies prioritising the development of their employees. This is in response to various skill gaps that have been brought forth by new operation methods, the latest business trends and border restrictions. In particular, technological skills have become a must-have for many employees working remotely, and companies are training employees on how to use tech solutions to execute their roles effectively.

Prioritising Employee Wellness — Many employees have been negatively affected by work-from-home demands. Unfortunately, Mercer's study reveals that while nearly 48% of executives acknowledge their employees' well-being as a top concern, only 29% of HR managers have taken steps to implement health and well-being long-term strategies. Even though most business leaders are able to grasp the correlation between employee wellness and productivity, it's essential to formalise an employee wellness strategy to follow throughout the year to ensure the plan doesn't become an afterthought.

Data-Driven HR — Data-driven HR performance will be a much-needed upgrade for HR leaders who want accurate strategies for improving performance in 2021. Structured analytics can help companies gather insights on skill gaps, performance capabilities, and training needs. Talent assessments, psychometric tests, and risk assessments can yield important performance-related information for HR managers.

HR managers can use this information to eliminate the guesswork and effectively invest their resources in strategies that engage and motivate their employees, hence improving performance and growth. Some top-tier companies have already embarked on these new strategies to enhance employee performance and growth, and other companies will likely follow suit.



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