5 EXPERTS SHARE THEIR BEST INSIGHT:

Post COVID-19 Workplace Trends

motivosity

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Introduction

Social Connection, We Took it for Granted.

Remote work is not a new thing. However, companies that are entirely remote are a very new thing. The majority of companies have been at this "work from home" thing for only about 5 months.

Initially, the idea of people working remotely seemed great. Early data showed that everyone was efficient and even more productive. "We should always work from home!" Well, the honeymoon phase is over. As more data comes in, people have underestimated the need for social connection in the workplace.

Currently, most companies don't have a choice, everyone must work from home. As the newness of this all rubs off, the question arises: How can leaders provide social connection when everyone is "wfh"?

FIRST, TAKE IT SERIOUSLY!

If you want productive employees, you need engaged employees. If you want engaged employees then you cannot overlook the importance of social connection. The biggest obstacle in company culture is with companies that think productivity is the only thing that matters. The companies that are thriving right now are the ones that invest in relationships in addition to caring about the work and output of their employees.

SCOTT JOHNSON

CEO & Founder
Motivosity, Inc.

Scott Johnson is recognized as a technology leader and entrepreneur who has spent his career focused on making people's time at work count for something more. As Founder and Chairman of Workfront, Scott has helped knowledge workers around the world be more productive. As Founder of Motivosity, Scott is helping people be happier about being at work.Scott is passionate about leveraging technology in social ways to ultimately help people be more effective and get more value out of life. When he's not stuck behind a computer screen, you can find Scott trying to live up to his personal motto of 'Stay Young'.

Mckinsey recently did a study and wrote an article titled "Reimagining the office and work life after COVID-19" stating that three themes of trusting relationships, social cohesion and individual purpose will have a "disproportionate impact on employee well-being and work effectiveness".[1]

Among the top 10 employee needs and experience factors listed from this study were: being rewarded, being recognized for my work, having supportive coworkers, and balance of work and private life. Not to go for the quick sell, but I can think of a software platform that can help all of those things... *cough cough, Motivosity, cough cough.*

SECOND, GET PERSONAL.
A company can make a big difference by telling managers that it is okay to take the time to be personal.

Employees are people, be personable with them. More than ever we are seeing people's work life and home life thread together... on the same screen.

A key part of a good employee experience is consistent feedback, especially during these times. More importantly, prioritizing 1 on 1's is a great way for managers and employees to socially connect. Working from home is affecting everyone differently. Managers need to devote more time to talking with their people. Providing more opportunities to have open and transparent communication on non-work related topics: their interests, their families, their pandemic experience, etc., helps managers have a better understanding of each team members' needs as well as bring back the social and human connection piece of work they are missing.

THIRD, PROVIDE TOOLS FOR THE ENTIRE ORGANIZATION TO BE MORE CONNECTED AND UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER BETTER.
A lot of companies have implemented more frequent "Town Hall" or "All Hands" meetings to help employees stay up-to-date on

> *Trusting relationships, social cohesion and individual purpose will have a disproportionate impact on employee well-being and work effectiveness.*

leadership tactics and company's changing goals. There have been increases in pulse surveys and employee engagement surveys. These actions have helped leaders stay transparent with their employees. However, these actions don't do anything to replace the daily dose of water cooler talk and social connection employees once had. I would challenge leaders to think about how their tools are impacting the social connection. Deloitte stated in a study titled "The Future of Work After Covid" that "they must enable a deeper connection by drawing visible linkages as to how their contributions are making an impact on the organization and society as a whole".[2] Is there a way employees can highlight some fun personal things happening to the team? A way to see what other teams are accomplishing? A way to recognize individual employees? I promise, these things matter.

FOURTH, PROVIDE SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES.

...to the extent that you can without being chastised by your state governor with their brand new law. Some companies are taking time to send cookies and do virtual happy hours, but what can companies do to move past zoom? Because employees are done staring at a screen. The top of everyone's list is to make sure their employees are safe. Yet social connection adds to a person's mental and emotional safety. This will differ greatly depending where you are located, but keep up-to-date on local and state guidelines. As places open up, look to promote ways for employees to get together in a safe and comfortable environment.

At motivosity we have always taken the idea of community seriously and we have built tools to help our customers be connected and appreciated.

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(1) Emmett, Jonathan, et al. "COVID-19 and the Employee Experience: How Leaders Can Seize the Moment." McKinsey & Company, 2020, www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/covid-19-and-the-employee-experience-how-leaders-can-seize-the-moment

(2) Volini, Eric, et al. "Returning to Work in the Future of Work." Deloitte Insights, 2020, www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/focus/human-capital-trends/2020/covid-19-and-the-future-of-work.html

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Social Connection matters more than you think and as leaders we need to do everything in our power to make sure our employees have it... so TAKE IT SERIOUSLY!

- More than ever we are actually seeing people's work life and home life on the same screen. Employees are people, be per-sonable with them.

- You want your employees to feel connected to their teams and the company as a whole, and honestly... Motivosity will help.

It Takes Dream Work to Make the Team Work

I was on a client call in early April at home when a grocery delivery came earlier than expected.

My whole day spiraled into chaos as we tried to get the groceries moved into the house safely. All the while, I was fretting about the meetings I was missing and the time I was "wasting" in the middle of a workday. I was completely stressed out. And as I joined the next Zoom, it struck me that everyone else in the meeting was feeling the same way as me, more or less.

In the middle of the pandemic, how we were working wasn't working. So together with my executive team, we implemented two ways we could help our people.

QUIET TIME AND FOUR-DAY WORKWEEKS

Quiet time is simply a 90-minute block of time when communications are shut down in the agency. No meetings are scheduled, messages and emails are paused. Combined with lunch, it created a space of three hours when we could flow on projects or take care of things that stress us out.

Personally, I've used the time for everything from completing an investment thesis to cleaning toilets.

Four-day workweeks every other week are more self-explanatory. They helped create personal space instead of additional work time.

BRET STARR
CEO
The Starr Conspiracy

Bret is founder and CEO of The Starr Conspiracy, a marketing and client experience agency that has served thousands of Work Tech clients around the world since 1999. He has dedicated his career to developing brands, messages, and marketing strategies that help businesses connect with buyers on a human level.

The impact of quiet time and four-day workweeks was immediate and significant. People looked better, felt better, and worked better. And far from being irked, our clients were both curious and supportive (some have even implemented similar policies). We told them that these changes would be in their best interest, and we lived up to that promise.

But it still wasn't enough. We had to do more to truly take care of ourselves, each other, and our clients.

REBUILDING FROM THE GROUND UP

By mid-June, we came to recognize that we had a more significant opportunity than time blocking. What we actually had was the opportunity to tear everything down to the foundation and rebuild.

The traditional ways of working don't work in a global pandemic. At the same time, we came to realize that they never really worked in the first place. COVID-19 was just highlighting things we already knew instinctively. Issues like management burden, bloated software solutions, unnecessary administrative processes, and the custom nature of our work became more painful and weren't mitigated by simple changes to our working schedule.

So what did we do? In short, we:

- Eliminated departments and created a fluid organizational structure where people choose the work they want to do and where leaders are defined by their ability to master skills and bring others up to their level
- Eliminated anything that smelled like management, system or administrative burden, including our project management tech stack, unnecessary meetings, management processes like performance reviews and administrative burdens like tracking non-billable time or over-processing information for financial reports

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What we actually had was the opportunity to tear everything down to the foundation and rebuild.

Those are two big bullet points! And there are a lot of little things that go into each one (like taking an "interest inventory" to find out what new skills people want to develop, or running a "re-teaming" workshop to redistribute work among a broader pool of "billable resources"). It's been scary at times. And it's been stressful at times. But you want to hear something surprising? We committed to get it all done in 30 days.

And we did it.

RALLYING AROUND WHAT MATTERS

The results have been profound. This new way of working has been the most productive in agency history. And I don't mean that in an abstract way. We have produced more work as an agency than at any other period in our company's history. And it's not half-ass work. It's world-class work for some of the biggest and coolest Work Tech brands on the planet.

Sure. We have a few things to work on. We have a few questions that have yet to be answered.

But they are not existential questions or issues. In fact, for the first time in my life, I feel like we have finally gained a foothold in the future of work (especially in a professional services context, but certainly not limited to it).

The bottom line is easy. Take care of yourself. Take care of each other. And take care of your customers. If you can keep those promises, the hard questions answer themselves.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- The pandemic has caused new sources of stress and uncertainty in the lives of your employees
- While dedicated quiet time and four-day workweeks can help alleviate new pressures, it's not enough
- The pandemic gives organizations permission to rethink the way they work in radically new ways
- The Starr Conspiracy reoriented our team for the good of ourselves and our clients, while driving record productivity and working less
- Sounds impossible? Not if you keep the right priorities in mind

2 Solutions To Help You Lead Your Remote Teams More Effectively

COVID has changed the way we work now and in the future. While working remotely has advantages, it also has challenges.
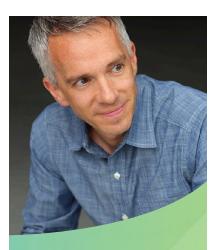
Here are just a few:

- Learning to manage your time
- Trying to figure out how to communicate with different people in a new environment

TRIAL: LEARNING TO MANAGE YOUR TIME
TOOL: 5 GEARS

The same distractions that interrupt office productivity also penetrate remote work environments. There can be spouses, kids, pets, laundry, and yard work to manage. So, how can you be simultaneously present and productive? By learning to set boundaries using common language and simple tools like the 5 Gears.

5th Gear - Task-centered, fully focused and moving quickly

You need this gear to focus and get things done. Alerts and notifications are disabled, the door is closed, the calendar is blocked off, and maybe headphones are on playing your favorite Mariah Carey hit (if that's your thing).

SKOT WALDRON
Internal Brand Strategist and Communication Expert

For the past 18 years, Skot Waldron's work for clients such as J.P. Morgan Chase, CDC, Georgia Tech, Royal Caribbean, Sesame Workshop, The Home Depot, and The Coca-Cola Company has included national and international employer brand development as well as company culture programs.

His focus is on helping people and businesses learn how to communicate more effectively. Skot believes you have to be healthy on the inside (culture) in order to truly be healthy on the outside (marketing).

He helps with both.

4th Gear - Multi-tasking; working hard in various ways

We tend to spend a lot of time in this gear. The door is cracked, with multiple things going on, or an occasional interruption from a kid showing you their favorite Lego creation.

3rd Gear - Present with people and can shift up or down easily

We call this gear "water cooler talk" or "small talk." Talking about the weather or last weekend might happen when you begin a Zoom call.

2nd Gear - Present with family or friends without work

This is the gear that we all need to pay attention to. How many of you are guilty of checking your email or work messages while watching a show in the evening with your family? That's what I thought. Second Gear is when we are fully present with our family or friends. Sitting down and talking over dinner, or having a bigger conversation via Zoom with a work colleague.

1st Gear - Personal recharge, completely unplug

You need time to recharge. Read a book, ride your bike, watch Netflix, or go and talk to your neighbor. Do what gives you energy but rests your mind.

A few tips:

- Teach your team about 5th Gear and start blocking out time on your calendars. Respect each other's boundaries.
- Teach your family about 2nd Gear so they can help keep you accountable the next time you reach for your phone while watching Hamilton for the 23rd time.
- Know which gears you should be in and when.

Know which gear you should be in and when.

CHALLENGE: TRYING TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH DIFFERENT PEOPLE IN A NEW ENVIRONMENT
SOLUTION: 5 VOICES

News Flash! Not everyone thinks or wants to be led like you. I know, surprising, right?

People want to feel valued, heard, and understood in every environment. So, how do you know which team members want to be led in which way? First, seek to understand yourself, then seek to understand others. The way you communicate will lead to building or destroying your workplace culture (aka Employer Brand).

Your team is made up of diverse types of people that all communicate in different ways. Let's walk through the 5 Voices and see if you can identify yourself and those on your team.

Nurturers (43% of the population)

Champions of people, relational harmony, and values. Quiet voices who undervalue their contributions to the team. You need to draw them into conversations.

Creatives (9% of the population)

Champions of future ideas, innovation, and organizational integrity. With a lot going on upstairs, they may struggle to communicate their ideas effectively.

Guardians (30% of the population)

Champions of due diligence, resources, and efficient systems and processes. Guardians can be right in what they say, but wrong in how they say it. They may also struggle to see the value in social networking and conversation that seems to "waste time."

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Your human capital is one of the most valuable intangible assets you have.

Connectors (11% of the population)

Champions of relational networks, collaboration, and effective communication. Connectors can be very inspirational and will always push us to be better, but they can critique or take criticism personally.

Pioneers (7% of the population)

Champions of strategic vision, results, and problem-solving. Pioneers are driven to win the war, not the battle. They are very competent but can be dismissive (to put it lightly) of those they see incompetent or that jeopardize the chance of success.

As you can tell, each one of these voices will need to be led differently. We stick to the platinum rule. The Golden Rule says "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." The Platinum Rule states, "Do unto others as they would want to be done to them." Lead them how they need to be led, not how you think they need to be led.

Want to find out your Voice? Take the free 5 Voices Assessment at www.giant.tv/30days.

Remote working isn't new. But it has become a new normal for almost everyone.

Embrace it.

Find ways to thrive.

Be intentional about building yourself as well as those around you. Your human capital is one of the most valuable intangible assets you have.

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KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Learn to be both productive and present while working remotely for the benefit of your family and coworkers
- Learn to communicate with other voices that are different from yours
- Invest in yourself and the people around you

Your Post-COVID Workplace Needs to Feel Safe and This Wristband Will Do the Trick

The COVID-19 pandemic pulled the rug out from under the world. Overnight, many people went from having their basic needs – like safety and belonging – met, to feeling unsafe and disconnected.

In early-April 2020, someone shared with me that the world would not get back to some semblance of normal until a vaccine is developed. I remember thinking, "Absolutely not! People won't let this get the better of them – they will push through it." Unfortunately, I was wrong. Really wrong.

COVID-19 has a done a job on our collective sense of community, connection and safety, and until people feel safe, they are more than willing to shelter in place - even for a prolonged period of time.

So, when I saw this wristband image on LinkedIn, I smiled. Why? Because for the good of all of our mental health and organizational financial health, it's important that we get back to 'the new normal' as quickly as possible and that will happen faster if people feel safe.

These rubber wristbands communicate to others where we are on the COVID-fear spectrum, so a person can go back to a physical workplace without having to worry that someone is going to get too close or invade their personal space.

JILL CHRISTENSEN

Employee Engagement Expert | Best-Selling Author | Intl Keynote Speaker | Top 101 Global Thought Leader

A former Fortune 500 Internal Communications business executive with a Six Sigma Green Belt, Jill understands how organizations operate, and what they need to do differently to attract, retain, and engage employees. Her book, If Not You, Who?, is a global best-seller, and her popular weekly blog was named a Top 100 Corporate Blog alongside of Apple and Microsoft.

An employee can choose to wear red, yellow or green on their wrist, and the band speaks for itself – no explanations are necessary and no one has to defend their feelings through a conversation:

- **Red** – Hi! I'm keeping my distance.
- **Yellow** – OK with talking, but not touching.
- **Green** – OK with hugs and high-fives.

In addition to doing an excellent job telling our co-workers 'where we are' and 'how far to stay away,' the wristbands remind us that people are in different places as it relates to feeling safe, so we should respect everyone where they are at.

However, it's not enough to go on the Internet, find a wristband vendor, order a set for all of your employees, and communicate how employees should use them. (I say a set, because people are going to move between wearing the red, yellow, and green wristbands as time passes, and as they feel more comfortable being physically closer to other people.)

The wristband initiative is a great opportunity to reiterate your Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) philosophy, and we all know that based on what is going on in the world related to the Black Lives Matter and other cultural movements, the timing could not be better.

In addition to sharing your philosophy, the wristbands enable your employees to see that you are putting your money where your mouth is and bringing your D&I philosophy to life.

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> *Trusting relationships, social cohesion and individual purpose will have a disproportionate impact on employee well-being and work effectiveness.*

By understanding that employees are in different places as it relates to feeling safe, giving them a non-verbal way to communicate where they are, and respecting where they are, you are promoting diversity in your workplace.

You are declaring that, "It's OK everyone is not ready to jump back in. Employees have diverse feelings about physical distancing and as an organization, we understand it, respect it, and have launched an initiative that supports employee's where they are at."

In terms of benefits, employees will appreciate being able to communicate their feelings about COVID-safety non-verbally, and your organization will show that it cares about people's emotional well-being and respects everyone for who they are and how they feel. In addition, employees will feel safer in your work environment and because they don't have to focus on physical distance issues, they can focus on the task at hand – executing on their job flawlessly. A win-win all around.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Yes, maybe, but people need to move at their own pace
- Organisations should promote that they value everyone's safety and feelings about the situation
- This is a great opportunity to showcase that a company is living its Diversity and Inclusion philosophies.
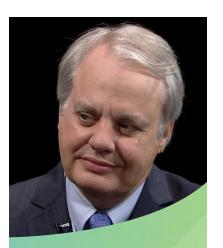
Pandemic-Driven HR Transformation

Marketers will tell you that the words price, quality and value have been so overused that they've become meaningless. Today, we are getting earfuls from consultants, authors, pundits and technology vendors on three other words: agility, resilience or flexibility. These nouns are also losing their meaning and impact because of overuse during this pandemic.

We don't need to hear those words. Instead, we need to hear how HR can help reimagine the nature of work in the enterprise and within HR. We need to hear what a reimagined enterprise looks like and how best HR can support this vision. We need to know where HR will get the advanced skills it will need and will source more of the same for the operational parts of the company. We need answers not marketing platitudes and we need them now.

Interestingly, we will need a mix of some stop-gap, incremental solutions and bolder, longer-term changes to processes, skills and technology. The key is to not get swept up in a bunch of the little improvements and ignore the bigger, more challenging efforts. Small improvements, while often necessary, will rarely yield big results. Many HR leaders need to adopt the unofficial motto of Texas: "Think big, be big!" if they hope to really add value to their employer.

BRIAN SOMMER
Founder
Vital Analysis

Brian Sommer is an award-winning HR & ERP technology industry analyst, a three-time book author and a former Accenture partner in charge of their global HR and Finance practices. Brian continues to work with clients on large shared service, ERP and business transformation initiatives. Connect with him on Twitter at @BrianSSommer

The incremental steps many need to consider depend on where your firm is at during the pandemic. Some firms are still in a fire-fighting mode, others are stabilizing while others are actually growing. Obviously, the response from HR needs to correspond with the state the company is in and where it be going in the next few months/years.

For some firms, these incremental efforts will include actions like:

- Moving off of on-premises software to cloud apps so that HR can work remotely and work very efficiently
- Acquiring more self-service solutions for HR and other employees so that HR workload is reduced
- Acquire mobile first technology so that workers can access their information and process their own requests (e.g., PTO requests, answers to common questions, etc.) without tying up HR personnel
- Eliminate as much of HR's technical debt as possible
- Finally automate manual processes and integrations
- Relentlessly attack any use of paper and spreadsheets

The longer-term, more strategic needs require homework. People must be aware of what is the art of the possible. That means they need time to find, explore and understand what new technologies exist; how these could change processes and enhance business results; and, what kinds of competitive/strategic advantage they could create. These are the tools that a reimagined HR could deliver and trigger material, positive change for their firm. This is not innovation at the margins.

This is the time to seriously understand the art of the possible – to embrace all that HR can be. Now is the time to evaluate:

- AI/ML solutions that identify flight risks, generate recruiting recommendations and more
- chatbots help non-HR people get immediate answer and improve HR productivity

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Trusting relationships, social cohesion and individual purpose will have a disproportionate impact on employee well-being and work effectiveness.

- smart workflow tools that automatically process routine transactions and allow HR pros to focus on anomalies
- etc.

But HR alone won't be changing. The firm will be changing too and it needs HR's help. HR must proffer its best counsel re:

- how Work From Home (WFH) can be made more successful technically, efficiently and emotionally
- how HR can assist in new enterprise digital transformation initiatives (e.g., Factory of the Future, Industry 4.0, new business models)
- how it will source new, critical skills needed for the firm (e.g., data science)
- how HR will succeed in engagement, employment brand and other soft matters in spite of the challenging times

These challenges are definitely doable but they need HR people who are willing to lead and expend some of their political capital. But beware of the inverse: the firm will suffer, possibly fatally, if you choose to do nothing. Inaction, especially in light of the fast, dramatic changes triggered by a pandemic, is not a viable strategy.

The best strategy is to change – it's time to get on with it.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- HR's plate during this pandemic may already be full but recent events are triggering even more work
- Two kinds of responses are needed: those that address immediate, short-term requirements and those that deliver longer-term value to the enterprise
- The first step is to understand the art of the possible and lay out an aggressive plan of action
- Change is not optional – it's clearly a must-do item today!

About Motivosity

Motivosity is a modern employee engagement software with the mission to help people be happier at work. Our products are designed to attack the top three drivers for employee motivation and engagement: being recognized and appreciated for what you do, feeling connected to your manager, and having a strong sense of community in the workplace. With an avg 95% user engagement rate, our software drives amazing results by making visible all the great work your team members are doing. This platform allows recognition between peers and managers, connects all employees to each other, facilitates consistent communication between managers and employees, and provides actionable insights for company leadership. #thanksmatters and don't forget it!.