No Problem Can Withstand

THE ASSAULT of Sustained Thinking

—Voltaire

THE RESOURCE FULFILLMENT CENTER

It's funny how history repeats itself, and the same challenges & opportunities of the past come back around every 10 or 20 years, at least!

Our company has always had the desire to help the people we employ with training & developing new skills, to better position them for growth and progress in their careers.

For years we've discussed creating a program where we could train candidates with no prior experience to: drive a forklift, develop leadership skills, or simply try out a new job function in a manufacturing or distribution environment, among many other things - thus creating our own pool of qualified employees by giving them the skills to meet the needs of the job market.

Now that opportunity is here! We have a new facility in Winston-Salem - The Resource Fulfillment Center, where we are building not only a forklift training program, but also a full-scale contract packaging, product fulfillment, rework and warehousing operation.

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What do we want to accomplish? We want to train as many people as we can and equip them with new skills and abilities to help them better themselves and their families. At the same time, we create the workforce both we and our customer's need, and hopefully build a business operation that will thrive.

We firmly believe that through diversity, inclusivity, and opportunity-based learning we improve our community and the lives of all of our employees. Our innovative, compassionate, and process-driven team enjoys the opportunities and challenges of each new project we bring into our Fulfillment Center. We seek to empower and challenge our employees to be better everyday, working with them to improve their skills, enhance their job satisfaction, and expand their earning potential. As this workforce improves and employees become more successful in their roles at our facility, we can better assist them with landing the job in our community that they have been striving for!

CONTACT US TODAY to learn more about our Fulfillment Center, our full suite of services that may benefit your organization, or to gain access to the talent pool we're currently developing!

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THE RESOURCE

Kenneth Dalton
President

Early in his career, Kenneth worked as an Onsite Manager for The Resource's largest manufacturing client. His 30+ years of experience in the industry, coupled with his values & problem solving expertise make him a powerful resource for maximizing business potential. Kenneth is a member of TempNet, American Staffing Association, and has been certified by the National Safety Council.
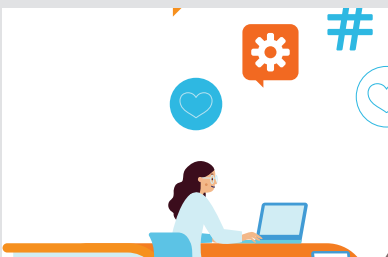
HR INSIGHTS Magazine

HR INSIGHTS

from the eyes of industry leaders

3 QUESTIONS EVERY BUSINESS SHOULD ASK ITSELF

BY SHARLYN LAUBY

Once everyone is back in the office, it will be important for companies to do some sort of debrief about what has (or hasn't) taken place in their organizations during the past few months of remote work and physical distancing. A few years ago, Kat Cole (former president of Cinnabon) gave a presentation in which she discussed three questions that organizations can ask themselves to create focus. Working through these questions can be a very useful strategy for companies trying to recenter themselves in the wake of the pandemic.

1   **"What do we need to stop doing?"** This question is difficult to answer but still worth asking. Organizations might want to break their answers into two categories: physical (reducing the amount of office space, for example, or modifying products that have been underperforming) and nonphysical (such as policies, procedures, or guidelines that no longer bring value).

2   **"What are people telling us?"** When thinking of people, businesses need to consider both customers and employees. Organizations want to know what it will take for customers to spend more dollars with them. They also want to know what they need to do to hire—and retain—the best talent. Companies that don't have this information need to start asking questions that help them find it.

3   **"If we could change only one thing to make work better, what would it be?"** Candidates and employees have different perspectives on this topic, but their responses to this question usually have some shared trends. They could express a common interest in better onboarding, for example, or more defined career paths, improved benefits to achieve work–life balance, or delivering a better customer experience. Organizations should consider seriously the responses to this question, because creating better work environments can lead to greater employee productivity, which in turn yields better business outcomes.

Organizations can use the answers to these three questions to establish priorities and goals that teams need for high performance. And this isn't a one-and-done process: businesses can (and should) go through this focus exercise regularly. An organization can use it as everyone is returning to the office after the crisis, and then do the exercise again a few months later when the company is increasing its operational levels—and then revise its plan according to the latest results.

Keep in mind, too, that these questions can also be used by individuals as personal check-ins on their own goals and career paths. It might be interesting to ask employees to start thinking now about their responses to these questions and share them with their organizations when they return to work.

The last few months have been tumultuous, to say the least. As part of their preparations for bringing everyone back into the office, companies should start thinking about what questions need to be addressed to help with this transition. The answers they get can help both organizations and their employees focus on being more successful as they move forward. ■

Sharlyn Lauby is the author of HR Bartender (www.hrbartender.com), a friendly place to discuss workplace issues. When not tending bar, she is president of ITM Group Inc., which specializes in training solutions to help clients retain and engage talent. She can be contacted on Twitter at @HRBartender.

HOW DOES LEADERSHIP INFLUENCE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE?

BY O.C. TANNER

The strong correlation that exists between effective leadership and great organizational cultures comes as no surprise. After all, by virtue of their roles, leaders have tremendous influence that can (depending on leadership style and execution of strategy) be either positive or negative. Because their positions enable them to reinforce values while simultaneously holding people accountable, leaders need to be deliberate in their efforts to create cultures in which employees can thrive.

A strong company culture includes several key elements:

Meaningful work. Employees should feel a deep and personal connection with the work they do daily. Having opportunities and motivation to be the best they can be in their roles allows people to feel more connected to their work, stay engaged, and contribute in meaningful ways.

Appreciation. Rather than risk losing top talent because of poor organizational culture, companies should invest in their employees by celebrating career milestones and achievements. Personal recognition makes employees feel valued by peers, friends, leaders, and family members.

Well-being. More than just physical fitness, well-being also encompasses emotional and social wellness. Company culture should reinforce healthy lifestyles, create a sense of community, and help people feel their best.

Leadership. Leaders can reinforce organizational values by helping people grow through goal setting, opportunities, and recognition. Through frequent one-on-one conversations and regular feedback, leaders can engage in open and ongoing dialogue with employees about their work, thus strengthening their trust in the leadership.

Connection. Employees have experienced increased isolation and burnout in recent years, in part because many face-to-face interactions have been supplanted by social media–based interactions that leave employees feeling less connected to their organizations and to each other. Such connections are vital for collaboration and a sense of belonging and purpose at work.

Because they set the agenda, prioritize work, manage, lead, and delegate, leaders have a tremendous impact on company culture. Strong leaders provide a sense of vision, purpose, mentorship, and inspiration to those they lead. However, traditional leadership styles fail to resonate with younger generations, who thrive on more coaching and are redefining personal and professional success. The relationship between a leader and an employee is a critical connection: when that link is weak or negative, employees will disconnect from other elements of the company—including its culture.

Therefore it's more apparent than ever that today's workforce needs an effective leadership style that accommodates changing organizational principles and employee needs. The first step toward achieving that is to debunk five myths about the relationship between leaders and company culture.

MYTH: **Leaders can't rebuild company culture.** Just as a broken culture can be a byproduct of poor leadership, strong leadership can lead to a strong culture. By connecting everyone to a common purpose, building dialogue, and fostering a sense of accomplishment, leaders can rebuild a culture of appreciation and help people feel valued.

MYTH: **Accountability doesn't really matter.** Benchmarks and goals reinforce accountability in everyone's work, regardless of their roles.

MYTH: **Mentorship is ineffective.** Because leaders are in a unique position to advocate for and mentor their teams, one of the most useful things they can do is focus on developing the people who report to them. Organizations should teach managers how to support their employees and their careers instead of just being their project managers.

MYTH: **The annual review is effective.** Frequent feedback is the new trend—and for good reason:
Regular check-ins provide more opportunities to ensure that employees are aligning their work to purpose, finding development opportunities, and creating a more impactful dialogue.

MYTH: **Employee recognition doesn't matter.** By praising positive behavior and endorsing employee behaviors that exemplify company values, recognition programs embed recognition into daily work and hold people accountable in a positive way, thus spurring them to do their best—which in turn has a positive impact on their careers and on the company's bottom line.

The lack of a strong culture is detrimental both to the company's employees and to its bottom line. Because of their roles and their skill sets, leaders are well positioned to have a significant impact on the shape of a company's culture. When they use their influence to effect positive change, the results spread throughout—and connect—all elements of the organization and strengthen its culture. ▪

O.C. Tanner helps organizations inspire and appreciate great work. Thousands of clients globally use its cloud-based technology, tools, and awards to provide meaningful recognition for their employees. Learn more at www.octanner.com.

When managers provide weekly *(versus annual)* feedback, team members are:

5.2x more likely to strongly agree that they receive meaningful feedback

3.2x more likely to strongly agree they are motivated to do outstanding work

2.7x more likely to be engaged at work[1]

1.   Robert Sutton and Ben Wigert. 2019. "More Harm Than Good: The Truth About Performance Reviews." Gallup website, May 6, www.gallup.com/workplace/249332/harm-good-truth-performance-reviews.aspx.

Converting Instructor-Led Training for the Virtual Classroom

BY STEVE DOBBEROWSKY

"Just deliver the training online!"

That's easy to say, but converting in-person instructor-led training (ILT) for use in a virtual classroom setting takes real work—and is now more vital than ever before. In the midst of an unprecedented period of transformation and disruption, the importance of having truly effective training and development can hardly be overstated. Traditional methodologies are going to need a makeover, and developing ways to foster real human connection will be critical. Melissa Chambers, director of online instruction at MSC Consulting, and Chris King, chief technologist at Training Officers Consortium (TOC), recently shared their insights and tips for converting ILT for use in virtual classrooms.

Not a One-for-One Exchange

One common pitfall in translating preexisting in-person training to synchronous online training is believing that the virtual session should be a near-clone of its predecessor. However, "just because it was an eight-hour, full-day course does not mean that it needs to be an eight-hour, full-day course again," Chambers pointed out. Besides, who would want to participate in an eight-hour, full-day course virtually? Moving the training online necessitates rethinking the best way to format the course from many different angles.

Get Regular Feedback

In an in-person instructor-led session, the instructor is usually paying attention to the learners' body language and eye contact as indicators of engagement. Because those signals are less clear online, instructors need to proactively build opportunities for interaction into their virtual classrooms. At the outset of the session, they should set the expectation for participation, then be sure to check in regularly with participants throughout the training ("so they're less tempted to

multitask while they're in the virtual classroom," King said). It can be difficult to know whether online participants are truly engaged, but Chambers and King pointed out that instructors don't necessarily know who's engaged in in-person classrooms, either, despite the nonverbal cues available in that setting.

Online Time Is Different from Face-to-Face Time

Some things are faster online, whereas others are much slower. Although it's great to have participants get to know each other, a round-the-horn virtual introduction with webcams can easily eat up a significant chunk of the session time. Think about how to maximize time efficiency (for example, it's much faster to do introductions via chat).

Have a Deliberate Design

Whether an instructor is thoroughly grounded in instructional design or is just winging it, they need to have in place a plan that, according to King, should include "a little bit of project management discipline and . . . a deliberate design." At minimum, the plan should address the following questions:

➜ *What technology will be used?*

➜ *How long are the sessions?*

➜ *Exactly who will be involved?*

➜ *For successful delivery, does the session need a producer, a moderator, and an instructor?*

Design First, Then Select the Tools

Everyone loves a shiny, new toy, and some platforms are packed with tools that make for fun experimentation and engaging user experiences. It can be tempting to think, "We have these cool widgets, so let's have a breakout room and do some whiteboarding!" But rather than try to incorporate all of those tools at the outset, instructors will have more success if they figure out their designs first and then identify the most appropriate tools for them. They should ask themselves what they want their learners to be able to do at the end of their sessions and which tools are really needed to achieve engagement. Design should aim to reduce the cognitive load of both students and facilitators: people who are worried about how to use a dozen unfamiliar tools won't be absorbing the content or having effective learning experiences. Instructors should choose their tools very carefully—and practice using them, too!

Mitigate Lurkers and Q&A Challenges

Although a virtual classroom doesn't have a literal back row, instructors may encounter the occasional disengaged learner who is slouching and seems to be tuning out of the training. Just because someone never turns on their camera or talks in chat, that doesn't necessarily mean they aren't engaged, of course. But if interactivity is important, facilitators may need to solicit it.

Chambers described some of the potential problems with questions during virtual training. For example, instructors should be wary of asking closed questions that can be easily dispatched with a simple "yes" or "no," and should be prepared for open-ended question (such as "Do you have any questions?") to be met with crickets. (She added that instructions should not be afraid of occasional crickets, especially during online training, because it can take participants a few seconds to gather their thoughts and type their responses or unmute their microphones.) She also suggested using a version of hand-raising that requires everyone to chime in without having to step into the spotlight (such as "If you have any questions, please click the green box; if you don't, please click the the red box"), and pointed out that because extroverts often dominate voice-driven Q&A, instructors should try to mix it up between audio and text.

Always (Always!) Have a Plan B

The unexpected can upend even the best-prepared session. (In an updated version of "my dog ate my homework," Chambers once had a puppy eat through a vital computer cable right before an online session!) Sometimes the electricity goes out. Or demo sites refuse to load. Or sessions aren't recorded properly. That's why instructors should always have contingency plans. They also need to make peace with the fact that perfection is rarely attainable (but that doesn't mean that the sessions aren't successful). ■

Steve Dobberowsky is a principal consultant for Cornerstone OnDemand (www.cornerstoneondemand.com). With 11 years of competitive service in the federal government in HR and HR IT leadership roles ensuring effective talent management processes, he is a proven, business-savvy leader with a track record of providing high-quality, innovative services and solutions.

THE FUTURE OF WORK

TURNING CRISIS INTO POSITIVE

Over the course of a few short months, nearly every organization has had to completely reimagine how it manages workforce operations and its bottom line. As the dust begins to settle and both employers and employees gain confidence in their new routines, business leaders are beginning to look forward. The long-term impact of the pandemic on government policies and financial projections remains uncertain, but now is the time for organizations to begin developing comprehensive people strategies that will work for the future of work after COVID-19.

The pandemic has created many challenges and devastating job losses, but it has also pressure-tested and accelerated many potentially positive changes. As everyone waits to see the long-term impact of the crisis on the economy, organizations, and the whole country in general, business leaders should take this opportunity to reevaluate conventional ways of working and consider how to apply today's hard-earned lessons to a reimagined tomorrow.

CHANGE

BY KARINA SCHULTHEIS

What's more, employees have been clamoring for more flexible arrangements for years. Before the pandemic, one survey found that "only 19 percent of onsite workers say they do not want to work remotely at any frequency" and "more than a third of workers would take a pay cut . . . in exchange for the option to work remotely at least some of the time."[2] And many organizations have been supporting flexible schedules for years: back in 2016, Gallup revealed that 43 percent of the workforce was already working from home at least part time.[3]

Once employers can fully reopen, it's likely that many employees will desire more flexible options after experiencing firsthand what it's like to work from home. Furthermore, data suggests that working from home can be a boon for success. One 2019 report revealed that, on average, virtual employees are not just surviving but thriving: compared to their in-office peers, remote workers feel more productive and in 2019 were actually "40 percent more likel y to have been promoted during the past year."[4]

BENEFITS FOR EMPLOYERS: COST SAVINGS, RETENTION, AND ENGAGEMENT

Remote and flexible work opportunities are often viewed as employee-facing benefits, but they hold incredible value for employers, too. Recently, remote work has been touted as a powerful recruitment and engagement tool. But because "a typical employer can save an average of $11,000 per half-time telecommuter per year," many employers started to encourage remote work back in 2008 as cost-cutting measure during the Great Recession.[5]

Hopefully, their experiences in guiding remote workers through this pandemic has also reduced employers' and managers' fears about their teams' abilities to perform well remotely. The outdated concept that "in-seat equals productivity" has been disproven many times over, yet concerns persist about managing remote workforces. As organizations have seen the efficacy of working from home (and during a pandemic, no less—with employees negotiating significantly heightened stress levels, lack of childcare, and other unusual considerations that negatively affect productivity), they will likely find more creative and effective ways to measure output, productivity, and results.

LOOKING TO A MORE FLEXIBLE FUTURE

Every period of rapid transformation brings progress. Now is the time for companies to step back and consider how they can best meet the needs of their customers and their people. This crisis comes on the heels of a decades-long push to reevaluate longstanding norms about how work gets done. In the wake of the pandemic, the business world may realize that traditional conventions (such as rewarding employees for their visibility in the office more than for their effectiveness at their jobs, regardless of location) aren't compatible with the future of work. As more organizations begin to emerge from the immediate crisis of this pandemic, more organizations will apply these lessons, giving employees greater choices in how their work and families fit together and ultimately supporting healthier, happier, more productive employees and better-performing organizations.

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THE ROLE OF FLEXIBILITY IN THE FUTURE OF WORK AFTER COVID

Organizations that were able to transition their people to remote work faced initial challenges in doing so. But thanks to enhanced technology, collaboration tools, and communication platforms, most of them have successfully settled into new routines—and many are planning to retain some of those routines even after the crisis is over. One recent survey found that "nearly six in 10 respondents . . . expect their work-from-home policies will remain in effect after the pandemic ends, while roughly half (49 percent) expect to continue offering flexible work arrangements."[1] And some organizations (such as Twitter and Square) have even announced that they will allow eligible employees to work from home permanently.

Such flexibility is operationally imperative for the short term, at least. Many schools and daycare centers will remain closed until the fall (perhaps longer), making it simply impossible for many employees to return to the office. And even employees without dependents may be afraid to return to work (or actively participate in their communities, for that matter) until it's been demonstrated safe to do so.

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How to Increase the Value of Feedback

BY HOLLIE AGHAJANI

Although feedback can play a large role in improving learning and increasing performance, it must be given frequently and effectively for it to hold any power. In many organizations these conversations about improvement happen only annually or quarterly. But they should really be taking place at least weekly. So why aren't they happening more frequently?

Why Traditional Feedback Doesn't Work

The feedback process is often an unpleasant experience that can even take a physical toll on employees. One study found that receiving unsolicited feedback was as stressful as public speaking (enough to cause umping heart rates!). Under those circumstances, feedback can lose much of its effectiveness:

> Our brains suffer in these moments of duress. Stress causes a decline in cognitive function and a narrowing of the senses, limiting our ability to think critically or learn. To serve their crucial function of helping employees improve and grow, feedback conversations should avoid this threat response.[1]

For decades, feedback has been led by managers as a means to help employees course-correct and grow. On the surface that probably doesn't sound so bad. However, only "26 percent of employees strongly agree that the feedback they receive helps them do their work better."[2] Worse, one analysis found that one third of the time, feedback actually led to "reduced performance."[3]

Unfortunately, organizations can never completely eliminate the need for stress-inducing, unsolicited, manager-driven feedback. However, leaders can increase the amount of effective feedback present in their organizations by fostering feedback-seeking environments and providing tools that empower employees to actively seek feedback. When people are empowered to ask for their feedback, they feel trust, which makes them more open to learning.

Better Feedback by Request

Most people want to do better—and they want to start their improvements right away. Real-time feedback (i.e., immediately following an event) has the greatest impact on performance, and engagement peaks when employees receive feedback weekly. Yet less than 20 percent of people report getting weekly feedback, and only 27 percent find that the feedback they're getting is actually useful.[5]

When useful feedback is given on a timely and regular basis, mastering new skills and correcting certain behaviors takes a fraction of the time when compared to traditional feedback loops. This is how organizations can help employee development and engagement soar.

Asking for feedback is a surprisingly powerful approach to self-development, especially when it's part of basic performance management. It can even be considered a deliverable—the last step of a project. Regardless, requested feedback allows teams to demonstrate the care that everyone needs to feel engaged.[4]

—*Chris Musser, team lead at Gallup*

An Effective Tool

Companies can empower their employees to take charge of their own development by giving them a tool (such as an application or platform) they can use to actively seek feedback themselves:

Users get a structured environment in which to solicit feedback from their managers and from their peers. When given the ability to define the type of feedback they are looking for (positive or constructive—or both) and the people from whom they want it, employees can get a more holistic view of their performance and are more likely to make improvements. Organizational psychologist Adam Grant recommends that employees seek feedback from their challenge network, "the group of people that you trust to push you to get better."[6]

In-application tips can help everyone become masters at providing constructive feedback. Users should be encouraged to ditch the "sandwich approach," which consists of surrounding constructive feedback with positive feedback. Although that method may feel more comfortable for the giver, it undermines the feedback being offered and is confusing to the receiver. Increasing the amount of solicited feedback in organizations promotes cultures in which teams feel psychologically safe enough to seek feedback from others.

Flipping the script and enabling employees to ask for the feedback they need when they need it—rather than having to wait around for it—puts employees in the driver's seat of their own development. This both improves performance and contributes to building a more collaborative company culture.

Hollie Aghajani is the director of product marketing at 15Five (www.15five.com), which offers continuous performance management software that facilitates weekly check-ins, objectives and key results (OKR) tracking, peer recognition, one-on-ones, and 360° reviews.

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A GUIDE

Even before the arrival of COVID-19, the talent marketplace had been evolving in recent years to include a broader, more dispersed, and more remote workforce. With this shift has come a growing understanding that the ability to work remotely is more than just a perk for high-performing teams. It's fundamental to making work accessible.

The New Remote Workforce

The past decade and a half have seen a dramatic increase in the number of remote workers in the USA. In fact, "the number of people telecommuting in the U.S. increased 159 percent between 2005 and 2017" alone.[1] As the COVID-19 pandemic shut down many on-site workplaces this spring, even more businesses shifted to remote working, with some estimates now placing as much as 50 percent of the U.S. workforce in that category.[2] To navigate this shift, companies have implemented more and more new technologies and practices that facilitate remote work.

These new structures and guidelines have the potential to have a particularly strong positive and long-term impact for one particular segment of the workforce: people with disabilities. Approximately one in four Americans has a disability[3], and about 30 percent of white-collar workers self-identify as disabled.[4]

There are clear business incentives for transitioning to remote teams, such as less office space overhead and the ability to employ people who live in areas with lower costs of living. At the same time, it makes work more accessible to one of the most underserved groups of people in America—people with disabilities—and gives employers access to a potential talent pool of more than 10 million people.

The ADA and Accessible Technology

A broad, antidiscrimination law that protects people with disabilities, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guarantees equal opportunity for those with disabilities in employment, state and local government services, public accommodations, commercial facilities, and transportation. Under the ADA, an employer that offers a remote work option to its workforce must also allow its employees with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate. Additionally, the ADA's reasonable accommodation

obligation, which includes modifying workplace policies, might require that employers modify a remote work program to accommodate someone with a disability who needs to work at home.

The key to maintaining ADA-compliant remote workspaces is providing accessible technology and communications for teleworking. Accessible technology is technology that can be used successfully by people with a wide range of functional abilities. Some examples include captioned video conferencing for people who are

> *Competing for a larger share of available talent is a pretty big opportunity for advantage, and people with disabilities have historically been profoundly underrepresented in the workplace. As we navigate far-reaching change to the organization and distribution of work, there is an opportunity to recalibrate what we do in the name of inclusion and talent, and in doing so put more talent in play.*
> **—Joe Gerstandt, inclusion specialist**[5]

deaf or hard of hearing and screen-reader–friendly remote-communication technology. With digital devices, platforms, and documents the primary communication tools used by remote workers, digital accessibility has become a high priority.

Digital accessibility is of course different from physical accessibility, but they are both premised on the belief that accessibility should remove barriers. This means that employers should promote ADA-compliant remote workspaces by making every effort to ensure that commonly used work-from-home tools are accessible.

TO VIRTUAL WORKPLACE ACCESSIBILITY

BY JESSICA MILLER-MERRELL

Making Virtual Meetings, Presentations, and Messaging More Accessible

In remote work settings, coworkers use both planned and impromptu meetings to check in on projects and assignments, just as they would use face-to-face meetings in a shared physical office environment. Presentations, whether for small groups or for the entire company, are still held virtually to share information and knowledge.

The process for ensuring that virtual meeting and presentation platforms support full accessibility for people with disabilities is the same as the process for choosing any other technology. First, incorporate accessibility into the procurement process. Then see which technology providers promise to fulfill those requirements and evaluate how they deliver on their promises. Platforms should include features that make virtual meetings and presentations accessible, such as closed captioning, sign language interpreters for company-wide video conferencing, and transcription.

Content- and document-sharing tools are crucial for a remote workforce, but companies must consider the accessibility of these types of applications. For example, captions can help make internally shared videos accessible to all employees. The color contrast in written documentation should comply with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), and all images (particularly graphs and charts) should include alt text.

Communication, Education, and Accommodation Strategies

Staying connected in remote workplaces isn't as easy as it is in physical offices that permit face-to-face conversations. Messaging platforms and collaboration tools are now widely used in most physical workplaces. In remote work environments, they are absolutely critical to effective and efficient communication. Lisa Sterling (cofounder of the Virtual Women's Network) highlights how they can increase accessibility: "When [collaboration platforms are] leveraged effectively, individuals, regardless of their disability status, are provided a far better experience when working remotely and one that is equitable to all."[7]

Accessibility is a team effort, so companies should also train all of their employees on the basics of disability inclusion and digital accessibility. Such training should include primers on how to plan and host accessible remote meetings and offer specific guidance on the accessibility features of the organization's selected platforms. One possible starting point is the staff training resources produced by the Partnership on Employment and Accessible Technology (PEAT), which include detailed guidance on training employees in specific roles (e.g., management, HR).[8]

To increase accessibility even more, a company's CIO or procurement officers should undergo training on handling office equipment requests for remote employees with disabilities; such training should cover how to communicate with vendors about accessibility policies and how to build accessibility into procurement processes. Organizations should also implement formal BYOD ("Bring Your Own Device") policies, which can be very helpful to employees with disabilities who are already satisfied and familiar with the accessible devices they already own. Such policies can obviate the need for those employee to learn how to operate new workplace technology (and, in some cases, retrofit it with accessibility features). Not all employees own their own accessible devices, however, and certain assistive technologies work only on desktop computers.

First Steps

As with most efforts to bring needed changes to workplaces, awareness is the first step. Even after new policies and procedures are developed, employers and employees will still need to work together to implement accessibility-friendly remote work technology to ensure that all staff can do their jobs effectively.

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> *Equitable access to technology can become the new normal. The virtual workplace should be a place where everyone can fully access all software applications from their desktop and mobile devices to complete their work activities. All workers, including people with disabilities, should also have the ability to access their files, navigate websites, and join and participate in meetings and collaboration spaces—whether in-person or virtual.*
> **—Partnership on Employment and Accessible Technology (PEAT) website[6]**

Planning Now for Post–COVID-19 Business Recovery

BY TOM MCGUIRE AND LINDA BRENNER

In the face of an escalating and prolonged global pandemic, in March 2020 the U.S. stock market lost a third of its value almost overnight. Even after receiving a multitrillion-dollar injection, the market remains unstable months later—and the worst is still yet to come. American lives, the national economy, and the U.S. healthcare system will face daunting challenges for some time, with most experts estimating that this crisis could last as long as eighteen months.

New Realities

The pandemic's impact on businesses from a talent standpoint varies tremendously. At the extremes, some industries (e.g., travel, hospitality, in-store retail) are shedding tens of thousands of jobs, while others (e.g., health care, e-commerce, retail pharmacy) are hiring in similarly large numbers. Everyone in the middle is experiencing disruption due to greatly accelerated remote-work arrangements as well as financial pressures that may lead to workforce reductions. Many of these organizations will likely face permanent changes in how they staff and conduct their businesses in the future.

As 2019 turned into 2020 (before COVID-19 hit the USA), market values reached unprecedented highs in a knowledge economy that has emerged and expanded rapidly over the past several decades. The majority of value that is created in most companies (which include far more than the "obvious" industries, such as technology, pharmaceuticals, and consumer products) is directly related to the intellectual capital that drives cash flow today. Brands, patents, research, and technologies, for example, make up more than 80 percent of the average company's market value already—and in many cases a much larger portion. Companies such as Apple, Visa, and Microsoft are almost exclusively valued for their intellectual capital rather than for the relatively few tangible assets they own. Perhaps surprisingly, even companies with large manufacturing and warehousing operations (such as P&G, Home Depot, UPS, and Caterpillar) are valued more for the intellectual capital they have accumulated than for the substantial physical assets they have in property, plants, and equipment.

All of the intellectual capital—and most of the market value—for today's companies originate with people rather than with the tangible assets of the industrial age. Regardless of their evolution, all companies acknowledge this fact, and most have some version of a public statement asserting that "talent is our most important asset." But many companies, especially those more than 30 years old, have not designed or codified a talent strategy that matches this modern economic reality. Even though the "war for talent" talk has been popular for years, many companies continue to embrace outdated beliefs about the reliability and availability of highly skilled talent.

In light of these facts, companies should unceremoniously discard any pre–March 2020 analysis that provides the foundation for their talent strategies. New talent risks have emerged that supersede previously existing factors, and their remediation requires different plans and capabilities. Even as business continue to struggle to address the near-term fallout of COVID-19, strategies for driving post-pandemic business recovery are coming to the forefront alongside a clear need for identifying critical roles and building strategies to ensure an uninterrupted process for putting the right people in those jobs.

These critical roles vary by industry and produce the valuable intellectual capital—and, ultimately, the cash flow—for their companies. Locating these value drivers usually entails identifying the vertical parts of the organization that house this talent rather than following the longstanding practice of looking in the horizontal, hierarchical bands of jobs.

New Risks

In addition to the health risks it poses to existing employees and their families, COVID-19 is likely to have many other direct and indirect consequences on talent. For example, for roles where skilled talent is already at a premium, what business risks exist if even more such talent unexpectedly leaves? For roles where talent is (in theory) widely available, how can companies handle a rapid increase in turnover? How

can organizations identify those roles for which they need to continue recruiting and hiring throughout the crisis? Right now, only one thing is certain: from this point onward, companies must expect the unexpected and do their best to prepare for it.

Companies must expect the unexpected and do their best to prepare for it.

that support—rather than drive—business value may now also be considered critical. Risks to business recovery might be significant if the organization is unable to backfill these roles rapidly. Because these support roles are key to effectively reinvigorating a company's growth curve, they merit essentially the same strategic consideration as roles formerly defined as "critical."

New Solutions

New approaches are needed immediately to mitigate the pandemic's impact on talent availability—and for making strategic (and very different) talent investments. For example, planning for a higher number of unpredictable, yet rational, risks may warrant investment in building new internal or external pipelines of talent for certain roles deemed essential to a company's post-virus recovery. Borrowing (i.e., contracting) talent may be a necessary alternative for some roles for which it was not needed in the past. The key to ensuring successful business recovery is to plan for multiple options and secure the ability to execute those plans.

Where should organizations start? Unfortunately, many businesses will struggle to balance the economic pressure to reduce workers now with planning to ensure talent for business recovery in the future. This is at best a very difficult (but unavoidable) position to be in. But the bottom line is that business recovery plans must prioritize investment in talent.

The best approach to ensure an effective business recovery is risk-focused planning that addresses certain key questions:

➔ For which critical roles is vacancy not an option in order for a business to recover?

➔ What is the steady state (pre-virus) availability of that talent, and what post–COVID-19 availability can be expected?

➔ What risks exist relative to potential turnover? Succession?

➔ What current scenarios heighten those risks for the most critical roles?

Although all roles are important to an organization, critical roles are normally defined as those that drive business value. In a steady state (pre–COVID-19), these roles might merit most of a company's talent strategy focus and decision making; post–COVID-19, however, this may no longer be the case. Because of the specialized, institutional knowledge incumbents possess, roles

No doubt many tough weeks and months lie ahead, but it is strategically imperative that companies position themselves to accelerate business recovery as soon as that is possible. A company's ability to successfully execute a recovery will depend on whether it can identify its critical roles and ensure talent availability for them. This will require different and rapid talent-planning efforts that must be developed and institutionalized now.

Tom McGuire and Linda Brenner are founders and managing partners of Talent Growth Advisors, which advises organizations on their talent planning, talent acquisition, and talent management.

A Better Staffing Partnership

BY MIKE MCKERNS

One of the value propositions that staffing companies offer is access to their talent pools. However, the depth and quality of those pools can vary (for better or for worse) by position and by market. So in order to maximize the effectiveness of your partnership with a staffing agency, be sure you know what your organization's needs are and whether the agency can meet them. Start by answering these three questions:

"Why are we engaging the staffing agency?" If you're hiring the agency to fill a temporary role, just step back and let its staff do what they do. If you need help with a tough-to-fill direct-hire position, however, you've probably chosen an agency so you can tap into its network and expertise. But if you're still conducting your own search at the same time, be wary of duplicating the agency's efforts: when an agency ends up competing with its client to fill a position, it might feel like it's spinning its wheels and, as a result, may adjust its priorities.

"Are we clear about the type of candidate needed to fill the role?" Job descriptions aren't going away any time soon, but simply meeting the criteria listed in them doesn't guarantee that someone will be a good fit for a position. Being very clear with your staffing partner on what you are looking for in a candidate beyond what is listed in the job description will pay off in droves. Today more and more companies are using a "hire for fit and train for skill" approach—a shift in hiring practices that, in my opinion, yields much stronger hires.

"How can we work better together?" Staffing agencies know that when their clients succeed, they succeed too. They have a vested interest in building a mutually beneficial relationship and want to be trusted business partners. All relationships need attention and upkeep, though, and that's why it's important to meet regularly with your staffing partner to discuss what is (and what isn't) working and make adjustments as needed.

Engaging a staffing agency can have a dramatic positive impact on your organization's ability to find the right people for your open positions. With so much on the line, why enter into this relationship half-heartedly? Take the time to be sure that your company and your agency build a partnership that gets you the results you expect and need. ■

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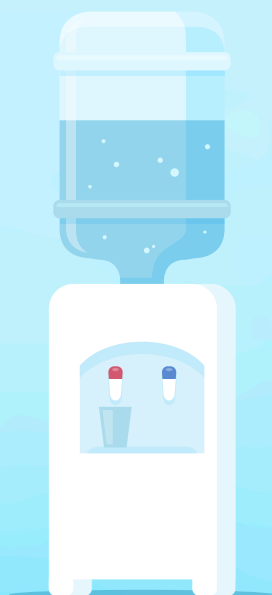
Watermelon Agua Fresca

When temperatures soar and you want a cool refreshment without having to do a lot of work, whip up a batch of agua fresca (Spanish for "fresh water"). With a history that goes all the way back to the Aztecs, this versatile drink is popular in Latin America, Mexico, and the Caribbean. Consisting of water and sugar flavored with fruit, flowers, grains, or seeds, this beverage is incredibly easy to make and the perfect solution to the summer swelter.

YIELD: 4 servings

TIME: about 3 minutes

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:
4 cups fresh watermelon, in chunks

3 tsp fresh lime juice

1 Tb sugar

3 cups water

DIRECTIONS
Put everything into a blender and process at high speed until well combined.

NOTES
For a smoother texture, pass the agua fresca through a fine strainer before enjoying it.

Don't like watermelon? Feel free to substitute another type of melon or even another type of fruit. Strawberries and cucumbers are two great options to try.

Experiment with the flavor profile by adding hibiscus for floral notes or fresh ginger or mint for some zip!

Nutrition Facts	
Amount per Serving	
Calories:	60 cal
Fat:	0.2 g
Dietary fiber:	0.7 g
Sugars:	12.7g
Protein:	1 g

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