

HR Managers, **HELP** **YOUR PEOPLE ADJUST** to a new way of working

What the transition to Hybrid Work means for HR Managers.

Whether intentional or by default, 'hybrid work' is becoming the norm as large companies announce their transition to remote work policies (e.g.: HSBC, AON, Spotify). Hybrid work specifically allows employees to choose to work from home, the company office or remotely from a professional space such as a co-working space.

Since what's often referred to as the world's "Greatest Work from Home Experiment" started back in March 2020, there have been frequent studies analyzing remote work and the results are in.

Remote work has been a success, and productivity improved over a prolonged work-from-home period.

As monumental changes generally go, the experience of change varies for people, organizations and across geographies. Inherently, this means HR Managers will play one of the most important roles throughout this fundamental shift of how humans work, and are crucial to the long term success of companies with remote and distributed employees.

In this article, we'll briefly review notable benefits in the transition to hybrid work, and top-level strategies that HR Managers can take to enhance the process.

BENEFITS OF HYBRID WORK

Accessibility

One of the brightest outcomes of the pandemic-induced remote work experiment is the democratization of opportunity.

Minority groups that were once marginalized because of their location, family care schedule, travel flexibility, etc., now have more equal access to jobs, and people with disabilities can use tools such as speech recognition software to perform jobs at home.

According to LinkedIn, remote job postings on their platform increased five times since the beginning of the pandemic, and women, Gen Z and those without graduate degrees are most likely to apply.

INCREASED TALENT POOL

If a company no longer requires its employees to come into a specific location, their talent pool increases and allows for a wider range of diversity in candidates across many facets such as cultural, experiential, social, economic and geographical.

There is also a higher chance of hiring the best candidate for the role when boundaries are not involved, and reducing the risk of dissatisfaction in relocated employees.

EVOLUTION OF HIRING PRACTICES

Companies are more likely to have completely



BY NICOLE VASQUEZ
NEW WORLD OF WORK



virtual hiring practices for remote employees, which opens the door to use innovative software and interviewing techniques, and easily invite team members to join or collaborate on hiring decisions.

Employee satisfaction and productivity
People have different types of work and thus different environmental needs when working. Add that to the variance in productive workspace areas within people's homes, along with their family obligations, and it's clear that each person has a unique set of workspace needs. When employees can choose where, when, and how they work (with thoughtful guidelines as we'll discuss in the next section), job satisfaction and personal productivity increases.

WHAT HR MANAGERS CAN DO

The shift to hybrid work is a change in how humans perform their work, so naturally Human Resources must have an involved role in the process.

Before change occurs, the company as a whole must clearly define their beliefs about work going forward.

A shining example is Spotify's Work From Anywhere policy stating their beliefs that "Work isn't something you come to the office for, it's something you do" and "Effectiveness can't be measured by the number of hours people spend in an office - instead, giving people the freedom to choose where they work will boost effectiveness."

Once a company's hybrid work statement has

been clarified, HR Managers can create, revise and implement policies and procedures in accordance with those company beliefs.

CREATE CLEAR RULES AND A FORMAL STRUCTURE FOR REMOTE WORK

Is a suit still required when hosting a sales pitch from home? How often should an employee be expected to meet with their manager or team in-person? Which professional environments are approved as appropriate locations to work from when not at the company office? When are the core hours that you expect employees to be online and available?

These are just a few of the many questions that both companies and employees are asking and it's up to HR to create clearly defined guidelines for remote work, keeping in mind the different environments an employee may be working from.

Reassess existing policies that were not designed with remote work in mind

Traditional HR policies like benefits, expenses and paid time off should all be reassessed while keeping in mind the increased use of technology, recent innovations in available products and services, and location independence of employees.

Childcare for remote employees may be the most important benefit a company can offer, and there are a range of options such as online learning or virtual activities, memberships to babysitting services, and stipends for educational purchases.

REVISE ON-SITE COMPANY POLICIES

If and when employees return to your company office, it is the company's responsibility to convey what health and safety measures they have taken, and to uphold that pledge to keep employees safe. Similarly, employees must easily understand how to use the office safely in terms of occupancy, cleanliness, and personal interactions.

Don't forget the human component is crucial. It's not long ago that people were making small talk around the water cooler, and most studies have shown that employees still want at least a few days a week working in person with teammates. However, remote work has shown us that being at one location from nine to five is no longer a requirement to have relationships with colleagues or career advancement opportunities from interactions with management.

Consider policies and expenditures that give employees the freedom to choose where and when they meet with teammates or clients such as workspaces nearer to home, or at a 'hub' office, rather than trekking to the company HQ.

For remote teams that will never meet in person, companies must learn how to inclusively bring together employees from various backgrounds, across different time zones, languages, and cultural experiences.

UPGRADE TECHNOLOGY AND TRAINING

Invest in virtual collaboration tools, and teach

both managers and employees how to use new software and tools fully so no one gets left behind.

As for personal skills, don't assume that managers will be able to utilize their previous skills in a virtual environment and invest time and effort into remote leadership training for managers at all levels.

Things to remember

In a recent WSJ Article, Kevin McCarty, CEO of consulting firm West Monroe said hybrid work "is going to redefine expectations, rules, permissions."

Knowing that the future of work is a new frontier, HR Managers can learn, observe and adjust as companies continue to evolve.

Reference

1. According to a PwC US Remote Work Survey of 133 US executives and 1200 US office workers on January 12, 2021. ■

NICOLE VASQUEZ is the Chief People Officer of Deskpass, in Miami, Florida, US. Nicole was named one of the "35 Under 35 Making an Impact in Chicago", won the 46th Ward Innovator Award, the RedEye Chicago Big Idea Award for Community, and was a Professional Fellow through the US Department of State traveling to Europe to speak about how to build and maintain collaborative communities.