

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Final Question

What post-pandemic practices (e.g., artificial intelligence) should be implemented given the increase of hybrid and remote workplaces? How will this impact an organization's culture and collaboration, and are there existing measurement tools?

Introduction

A McKinsey report shows that a majority of employees state that remote work has either increased or not affected their productivity compared to pre-pandemic [1]. Furthermore, a PricewaterhouseCoopers' U.S. Remote Work Survey found that 83% of employers reported the shift to remote work to be successful for their organization, and positive outcomes of such transition include reducing operating expenses and increasing employee satisfaction [1]. Technology companies (e.g., Slack) are primarily composed of knowledge workers and plan to allow employees to work fully remote [1]. However, companies requiring in-person work, including sales roles and other essential workers allow less work flexibility [1]. Therefore, the nature of a job plays a large role on employees' ability to work remotely. With a large remote workforce, robust technology systems and effective leadership are needed to operate and manage these employees, along with proper measurement tools.

Recommended Practices

In-person, hybrid, and remote work models have strengths and pitfalls, respectively. A study discusses tasks that involve working interdependently but without much integration (i.e., reporting, performing administrative tasks, making simple decisions, etc.) will mostly be done virtually. However, essential tasks that require team members to integrate their knowledge, create safe spaces for dialogue on difficult issues, and form emotional connections cannot be done productively while working virtually [2]. When your organization chooses not to return back to a traditional in-person work setting, you should purposefully switch your approach from what it used to be. In this summary, we propose to address this challenge from two dimensions.

Choose Effective Leadership Styles

The multimodal workplace is changing the types of skills required to lead teams virtually and in person successfully. There are four roles that leaders will need to play. [2] (see *Figure 1*)

Conductor ... A mostly virtual team leadership role, the Conductor ensures that plans, decisions, information, and accomplishments are shared to coordinate and motivate team members.

Catalyst ... When meeting in person, the Catalyst stimulates collaboration, spurs creativity and innovation, creates a shared culture, and fosters dedication.

Coach ... When working one-on-one with their reports virtually or in person, leaders need to play the role of a Coach. This means focusing on helping their people achieve peak performance, while building trust and focusing on their wellbeing and professional development.

Champion ... The Champion role requires leaders to advocate externally for their teams. It requires leaders to secure team resources, tap into essential information sources, communicate accomplishments, and build trust with peers and other key stakeholders both in person and virtually.

Adopt Proper Modes and Technologies

We recommend choosing proper meeting modes depending on situations. A study broke down 612 real-life business meetings into categories by business meeting objectives and revealed important capabilities for these categories and proper meeting modes; audio-conferencing, video-conferencing, telepresence, or face-to-face [3] (see *Figure 2*). We would also suggest using technology to foster collaboration, ensuring that in-person or remote teammates can be connected with each other with ease. In virtual meetings, you can consider utilizing various digital tools appropriate for increasing engagement [4] (see *Figure 3*). Moreover, to encourage workers to physically come into work, there should be visitor management systems, which use indoor mapping and allow for seat reservations. In order to streamline such systems, it is recommended to consolidate an organization's maintenance, real estate, space management data into a centralized place [5]. Additionally, workplace and HR systems can be linked to combine employees' locations and ability to schedule and perform team collaboration.

Measurement Tools

From one aspect, virtual work settings make it challenging to measure collaborations among employees. At the same time, however, because employees who work virtually inevitably rely on online communication tools, it is easier to capture collaborations in the form of quantitative data. As an example, Microsoft Adoption Score is a tool with which organizations can measure the level of communication, meetings, content collaboration, teamwork, and more. Such measurements are calculated by usage data from Microsoft software [6]. We would suggest consulting with the IT department to eliminate any security and privacy concerns when adopting such digital measurement tools. Even when tools are compliant and secured, employees' perception needs to be taken into consideration because any tools considered as an employee surveillance tool could face backlash.

Organizational Impact

Increasing hybrid and remote workplaces impact an organizations' culture and collaboration, including employees' levels of connectedness. Fifty-three percent of employees with radical work flexibility report having a high degree of connectedness at work, whereas only 18% of employees with low work flexibility report feeling connected [7]. More-connected employees perform better and are 36% more likely to have higher organizational retention [7]. Research shows that the following three strategies can be used to augment employee connectedness within a hybrid workforce [7].

1. Diffuse culture through the work itself instead of via the office - Since remote workers' often have more time for deep work and their productivity increases, this creates an opportunity to generate culture via daily tasks, such that each time employees engage in work, they are reminded of the company culture [7]. Leaders can begin auditing the organization's work processes ensuring compatibility with the intended culture [7]. For instance, if the culture embodies a fast-paced environment, but the organization's technological systems experience recurring glitches, then this would undermine the culture, uncovering an opportunity for change [7]. Furthermore, companies should encourage workers to understand that their value comes from their role rather than location [7]. Employees can also determine what they value most in their work, and then collaborate with their managers to ensure that their role reflects those priorities [7].

2. Connect employees through emotional proximity rather than physical proximity - A survey found that emotional proximity increased workers' connectedness to their workplace culture by 27% , whereas physical proximity had no effect [7]. Since remote employees tend to interact with their coworkers less than physically-present employees, each interaction has a strong impact, which highlights the importance of identifying and removing toxic workers, particularly those in leadership roles [7]. Additionally, organizations should only require employees to go to meetings that they truly need to attend [7]. Leaders can also help employees understand how their work connects to the organization's mission and adds value [7]. For example, a Japanese pharmaceutical company assigned onboarding employees a medical condition that could be cured by the medications that the company produces; such employees could be pinged frequently to go to the restroom, mimicking a patient's condition [7]. These employees would also interview with the company's patients who explained how the medication improved the quality of their lives [7].

3. Foster microcultures instead of optimizing corporate culture - According to a survey, team-level experiences increased connectedness more than company-wide interactions [7]. Organizations can guide employees to instill a company-wide culture, while not fully prescribing the norms and behaviors happening amongst each team [7].

Conclusion

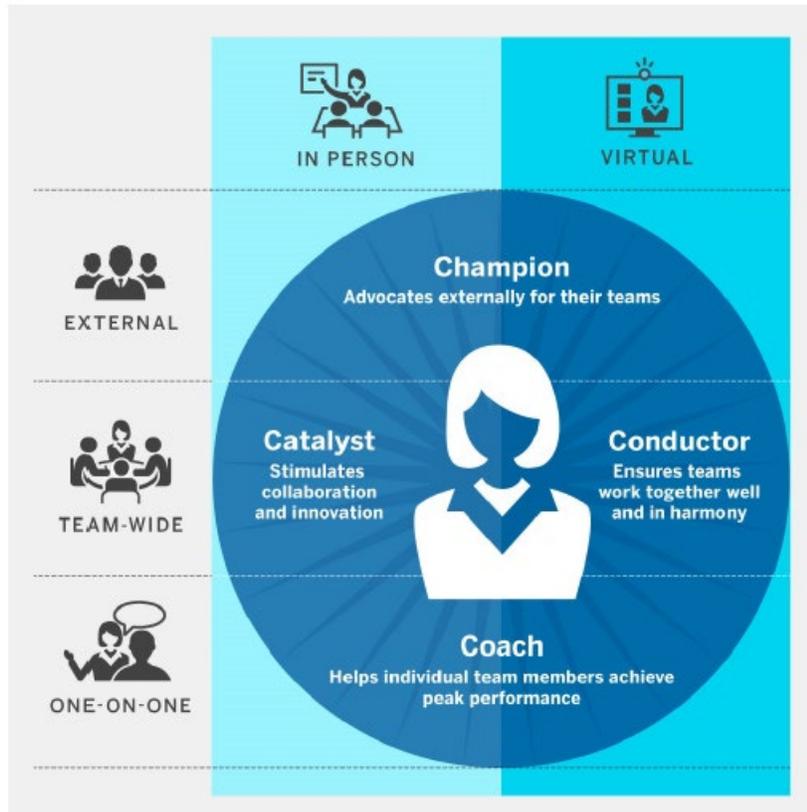
Remote work has increased in prevalence over years due to globalization and new communication technologies. The recent pandemic dramatically accelerated the trend, and we will not go back to the pre-pandemic work style. Post-pandemic studies are being widely conducted and gradually published to date [8]. Moving forward, we expect this knowledge to be accumulated and systematically reviewed. Transformation to the new working model will continuously drive new technologies to emerge and improve. To create a successful hybrid and remote workplace, we recommend that organizations stay updated with new studies and technologies and adopt them wisely.

References

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Appendix

Figure 1. Multimodal Leadership Roles



Hooijberg, R., & Watkins, M. (2021). The Future of Team Leadership Is Multimodal. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 62(3), 1-4. <https://www-proquest-com.proxy.library.cornell.edu/scholarly-journals/future-team-leadership-is-multimodal/docview/2502929503/se-2>

Figure 2. Business Meeting Objectives, Important Capabilities, and Proposed Meeting Modes

Business Meeting Objective		Important Capabilities				Proposed Meeting Mode		
1	Routine exchange of information	Hear attendees' voices (speech and vocal tone)	Use shared computer screens and/or work spaces	Experience co-location (the sense of being in the same physical location) (1, 3, 4, 11)	See attendees' body language and gestures (1, 3)	Discern attendees' facial expressions (1, 3)	Observe what attendees are looking at (3)	Audio-conferencing (or video-conferencing for longer meetings)
2	Non-routine exchange of information							
3	Clarify a concept, issue, or idea							
4	Exchange/share different opinions or views of a topic or issue							
5	Find a solution to a problem that has arisen							
6	Generate ideas on products, projects, or initiatives	Hear attendees' voices (speech and vocal tone)	Use shared computer screens and/or work spaces	Experience co-location (the sense of being in the same physical location) (1, 3, 4, 11)	See attendees' body language and gestures (1, 3)	Discern attendees' facial expressions (1, 3)	Observe what attendees are looking at (3)	Video-conferencing or telepresence
7	Show personal concern or interest							
8	Make a decision							
9	Give or receive feedback							
10	Generate buy-in or consensus on an idea							
11	Assemble a team and/or motivate teamwork on a project							
12	Exchange confidential, private, or sensitive information							
13	Maintain relationships and stay in touch							
14	Resolve conflicts and disagreements within a group	Hear attendees' voices (speech and vocal tone)	Use shared computer screens and/or work spaces	Experience co-location (the sense of being in the same physical location) (1, 3, 4, 11)	See attendees' body language and gestures (1, 3)	Discern attendees' facial expressions (1, 3)	Observe what attendees are looking at (3)	Telepresence or face-to-face
15	Build trust and relationships with one or more individuals							

Standaert, W., Muylle, S., & Basu, A. (2021). How shall we meet? Understanding the importance of meeting mode capabilities for different meeting objectives. *Information & Management*, 58(1), N.PAG. <https://doi-org.proxy.library.cornell.edu/10.1016/j.im.2020.103393>

Figure 3. Digital tools enhancing training and learning within Zoom sessions.

Digital tools and descriptions	How to utilize, webpage, video link or source	International Society for Technology in Education Standards/Explanation
<p>Using Zoom audio and video recording features. (Zoom.us) Zoom recordings create both audio and video files and recently also an automatic transcript that instructors can use in various ways to promote student learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Create an off-the-cuff informal (less polished) instructor podcast or video to clarify or answer questions about an assignment or project. Ask students to create a written or audio/video response to the instructor's recording. •Costa (2020) discussed 99 ways to create simple sustainable videos to introduce content, clarify concepts, or motivate students. 	<p>Knowledge constructor through sharing and creating content asynchronously by asking students to post reactions or ask written questions to the recorded media for building community.</p>
<p>VoiceThread (voicethread.com) is a multimedia slide show that may hold documents, images, documents, and video clips that allows users to view slides and leave comments in text, voice, audio recording, or video format</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Each slide can be recorded individually therefore making it easy to tweak it for additional/future courses; also, students can comment on the slides to build learning and community. •An example of how VoiceThread facilitated a virtual poster session: https://voicethread.com/blog/solving-a-pandemic-problem-hosting-a-virtual-poster-session-with-voicethread/ 	<p>Innovator designer by sharing content through various technologies and the design process for identifying and solving problems through the creation of useful, nascent, or imaginative solutions</p>
<p>Google Jamboard is an interactive whiteboard system developed by Google (G Suite)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Taylor et al. (2020) •See examples at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S9m4HCjOkcA and https://bit.ly/2ZIBed0 	<p>Knowledge constructor through sharing and creating content in real-time with small groups/ whole group through whiteboarding feature.</p>
<p>Wordclouds created in real-time in zoom using:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Poll everywhere (polleverywhere.com), •AnswerGarden (answergarden.ch) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Download the free guide for presenting PollEverywhere activities in zoom: https://www.polleverywhere.com/screen-share-zoom •AnswerGarden is an easy online tool using real-time class participation that will quickly create and update a word cloud. 	<p>Knowledge constructor through sharing and creating content in real-time with small groups/ whole group through polling feature.</p>