

# Emerging Trends in HR and Workforce Management:

ONEDIGITAL'S 2020-2021  
INSIGHTS REPORT

PANDEMIC SPECIAL RELEASE



## **PANDEMIC SPECIAL RELEASE**

OneDigital's emerging Trends in HR and Workforce Management 2020-2021 Insights Report Special Release reveals that current realities and unresolved workforce debates will provide a future of opportunity for HR professionals in this new decade. Previous opportunities such as large-scale recruiting efforts and retention initiatives were seemingly halted by the coronavirus pandemic. The changes brought about by these uncertain times are not only disrupting the present-day workplace, but will set a new normal in how employees and employers work, operate and conduct business. To thrive in a post-pandemic environment, HR and business leaders must become champions of change and develop a more expansive view that focuses on a reimagined workplace.

## **CORONAVIRUS ADVISORY HUB**

The OneDigital Coronavirus Advisory Hub provides business and HR leaders with practical solutions that are actionable, timely and helpful in shaping workforce decision-making in response to COVID-19.

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## **ONEDIGITAL**

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# Be a champion of change in your organization.

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A 2019 poll of nearly 10,000 businesses revealed that importance exceeds readiness for the following workplace trends:

WORKPLACE TREND	IMPORTANT OR VERY IMPORTANT	READY OR VERY READY
Learning	86%	46%
Human Experience	84%	43%
Leadership	80%	41%
Talent Mobility	76%	40%
HR Cloud	74%	41%
Talent Access	70%	37%
Rewards	69%	33%
Super Jobs	66%	39%
Teams	65%	33%
Alternative Workforce	41%	28%

— Deloitte

# The workplace as we know it is transforming before our eyes.

**The makeup of a company's workforce including how, when and where it conducts work is revolutionizing the future of work at a remarkable pace, with employees being more diverse, purpose-driven and technologically driven than ever before. With nearly ten years of economic growth, disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the workplace will experience an unprecedented transformation, setting a new standard for how we live, work, operate and do business.**

Instead of reacting to change, human resources (HR) professionals must champion change and resiliency in their organizations to maintain a competitive advantage, leading the charge to transform into nimble operations that can meet the personalized expectations of today's evolving workforce, while maintaining business continuity amid COVID-19.

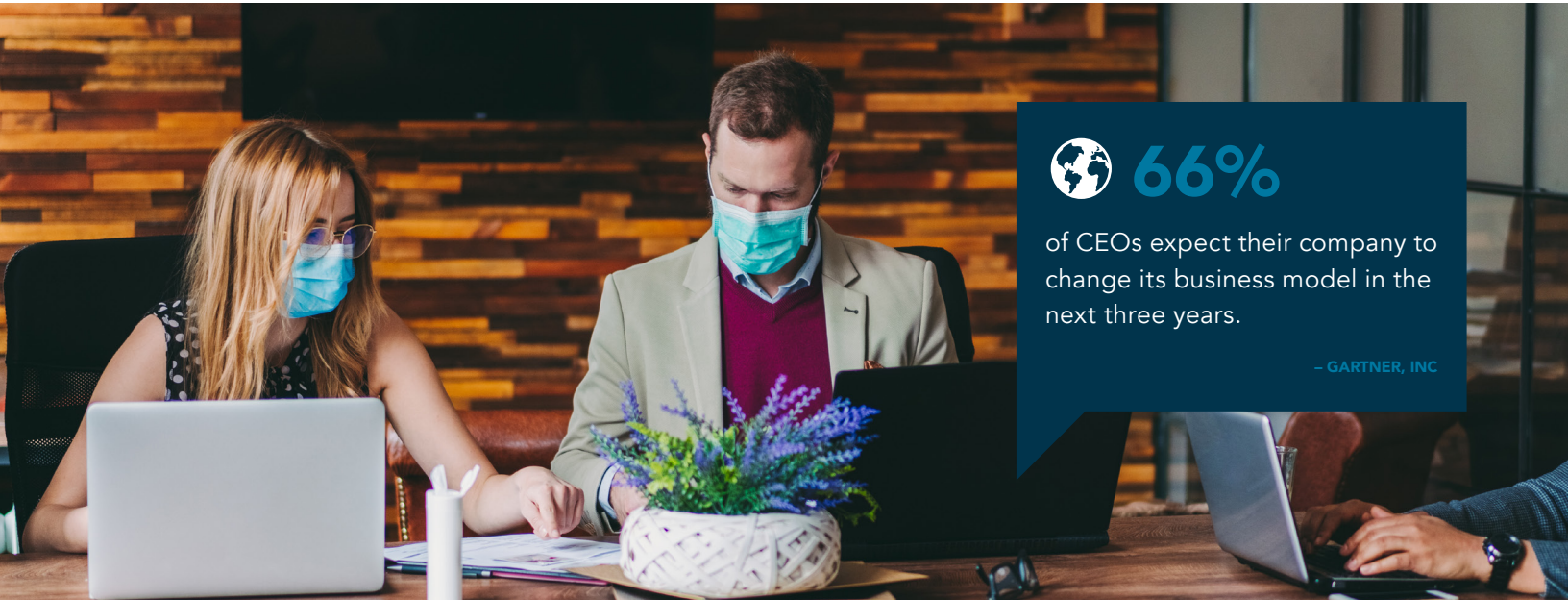
If HR teams can steward workforce agility within the organization, they have the opportunity to position themselves as strategic advisors in today's evolving world of work. By proactively preparing for the shifts that businesses will face in the next few months and the following three to five years, not only do they safeguard their business to weather the storm but to maintain top-line growth in the future.

In this report, we will examine how HR is responding to the ongoing changes in the workplace by addressing four critical areas:

- 1. The New Focus on Human Experience**
- 2. People Adhesion**
- 3. Technology in the Workplace**
- 4. Role of Strategic and Personalized Benefits**

# Introduction

COVID-19 has made HR the most important job in workplace change.



66%

of CEOs expect their company to change its business model in the next three years.

— GARTNER, INC

The rapid pace of disruptive change in the current business and social landscapes are shaping customer expectations and customer experiences, threatening to leave behind less receptive organizations. As experienced with the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been seismic shifts in the ways businesses operate, manage people and even work. Businesses that fail to adapt risk being overshadowed by more agile organizations that place business adaptability at the center of everything they do. These companies are disrupting markets, creating business models that can cater to the unique individual, now and in the future.

**Today's uncertainty, intensified by the pandemic, means the world relies upon one familiar function to tie business change together – human resources.**

Almost every industry has tales of massive, seemingly stable companies that failed due to a lack of innovation. An unwillingness to evolve puts any company at risk of failure but refusing to change in response to the market can be more devastating. However, this principle applies to more than the customer experience and extends to the employer and

workplace standpoint too.

In response to this sentiment, a Gartner study found that 66% of CEOs expect their company to change its business model in the next three years.<sup>1</sup> The road ahead will require businesses to remain nimble, adopting new practices to protect financial stability. This view requires a laser-focus on the experience they provide their employees — their most valuable asset for driving innovation. While organizations must embrace change, HR teams need to be positioned to champion this shift.

In the face of increasingly accelerated transformation and competition, many employers don't realize that only 50% of change initiatives are successful. Over half

of all change success factors are related to talent, so the pressure to recruit and retain an agile workforce is high.<sup>2</sup> Fostering a high-performing culture and ensuring the driven insights and deliver on the needs of the business will remain top priorities for business and HR leaders in 2020 and beyond. Companies must put the greatest asset for growth — its people — at the heart of the business strategy. HR has the opportunity to partner with leaders and facilitate a shift in how employees are treated, which will directly drive business results.

**If HR teams can become the face of change in organizations, they have an unprecedented opportunity in today's world of work.**

EXAMPLES OF INDUSTRIES THAT HAVE BEEN DISRUPTED	
Taxi	Uber Lyft
Hotel	airbnb
Video	NETFLIX Apple TV Disney+
Fashion	STITCH FIX
Offices	wework
Contractors or Freelancers	upwork fiverr
Delivery and Logistics	DOORDASH POSTMATES
Music	Spotify

# The New Focus on Human Experience

## Evolving From the Employee Experience to the *Human Experience*

It's an extraordinary time in human capital management. CHRO's are in lock step with the c-suite as they determine how to fundamentally reshape how they operate. Leaders are quickly realizing there is no such thing as a "new normal." Rather, they must completely rethink the employer-employee relationship. What's more, is this process is taking place in real time. Agility has never been more important for HR, and emerging expectations completely transform in a post-pandemic world. As a result, the employee experience will also evolve. Leaders within the human capital community have cited an acceleration of change that is fundamentally altering how they view their roles and the business of leading HR. A multitude of factors, including technological advancements like big data, artificial intelligence (AI), mobile, cloud-based HR and labor technology, contribute to this rapid change.

**The distinction between professional and personal life is disappearing, and an increasingly remote workforce is redefining the traditional workplace.**

While this has been an emerging trend, this year fundamentally changed all the rules. Remote work, over "working from home" has become the norm. One unintended consequence of this global pandemic has been the wide acceptance of remote work. Aside from early challenges of adapting significant portions of the workforce remotely, the result is an entirely new expectation. Now, the requirement is not about the workspace. Rather, it's about connecting teams digitally, and engaging a workforce remotely. No longer is 'work' constrained to a physical space where employees convene during office hours. Organizations must commit to this evolution, otherwise they risk long-term growth and alienating one of the fastest-growing groups of workers in the market. In this digital business landscape, relationships matter most.

Prior to the pandemic, many workplaces were making the shift to becoming increasingly digital and employees were communicating and collaborating in new, unprecedented ways. Employers that were ahead of this trend





prior to the pandemic saw much faster gains in productivity. Late adopters have had to make investments in tools and technology in order to survive. As a result, employers have access to employee data like never before and are leveraging that data to deliver an informed, integrated approach to improve the employee experience. By providing an experience that reflects customization and attention on individual preference, responsive employers are naturally set apart from the rest and offer a competitive advantage in the battle for talent.

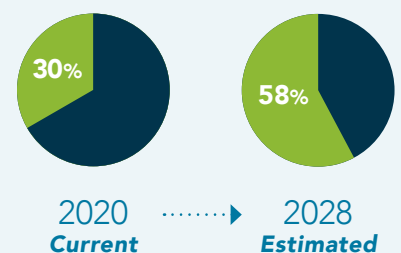
However, it's more than that. The Gen-Z and Millennial generations are the fastest-growing segment of the workforce, currently representing over 30% and growing to 58% by 2028.<sup>3</sup> These digital natives provide a new way of thinking about work and, more broadly, are partially responsible for advancements in the entire employer-employee relationship. This cohort introduces a range of unique expectations and abilities that are accelerating the conversation and pushing employers across industries to evolve.

Rather than focusing solely on engagement and culture, leading organizations are aiming to improve the entire employee experience, supported by a variety of feedback tools, wellbeing and fitness apps and employee self-service technologies.

**Representing roughly 33% of today's labor pool, working parents face a unique set of challenges as they attempt to balance their children's needs with concerns about productivity, finances, mental health and safety during the pandemic.**

This next section will highlight the key trends many forward-thinking employers are adopting, informing the next evolution of the employer-employee relationship, known as, "the human experience."

**Gen-Z and Millennial Representation Within the Workforce**



# From the Employee Experience to the *Human Experience*

**As work changes, so does the dynamic between employee and employer. An entirely new approach to engagement and performance is influencing the nature of work and challenging the fundamental elements of the traditional employee-employer relationship.**

The concept of employee experience originated as a parallel to customer experience; employers began applying a “guest and host” mindset to transform the relationship. Some companies utilize strategies often reserved for customers to improve how they connect with their workforce. Too often, these initiatives are a top-down, one-size-fits-all approach and gain limited traction, even with the best intentions. Centered on the assumption that employees engage with an organization’s ideals, culture, mode of work and results, many employers fall short by failing to capture the human side of their workforce.

The concept of employee experience became prevalent when organizations altered the standard approach, creating a

bottom-up dynamic with processes, policies and workflow designed around individuals’ existing trends and preferences, finally putting employees at the center of the equation.

Collectively, these factors create an environment of urgency driving forward-thinking companies to overhaul the way they attract and retain talent effectively. Shifting generational expectations require a new approach.

To cultivate a sense of purpose and meaning that improves employee satisfaction and productivity at work, employers need to change the conversation — and mindset — going from employee experience to human experience. Practices focused on the



employee as a human, taking into account the variety of facets that make up the individual, while also meeting psychological needs, can further set the stage for

optimal performance. At the intersection of bottom-up demand and personal design, organizations can offer the maximum human experience to experience every employee.

**The new human experience encompasses four main areas:**



CREATE MEANINGFUL WORK

**Understand the worker's aspirations and nature of the work.**



FOCUS ON THE INDIVIDUAL

**Take a concierge approach to the employee experience focused on the individual, including their work, environment, coaching and feedback and personalized skill and development training.**



BE SOCIALLY CONSCIOUS

**Think about the organizational impact on society and how to improve workplace climate, environment and communities.**



BE INCLUSIVE

**Develop open and collaborative policies and conversations.**

*What were once viewed as perks are now expectations.*

*Personal  
(The Individual)*

**Employee Engagement**

**Human Experience**

*Professional  
(The Work)*

**Work/Life Balance**

**Employee Experience**

*Organizational Lead  
(Top Down)*

*Employee Lead  
(Bottom Up)*

**When experience is bottom up and personal, it becomes focused on "human experience."**

*2019 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends*

# The Remote Workforce: New Expectations Are the New Rules of Engagement

There used to be a stigma that came along with not working in the office. The phrase, “working from home” sounded less legitimate. Today, a considerable percentage of the workforce has been forced into remote work. Wide adoption of remote work is a game changer for both employers and the workforce.

More than 26 million Americans — about 16% of the total workforce — now work remotely at least part of the time, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.<sup>4</sup> Between 2005 and 2015, the number of U.S. employees who telecommuted increased by 115%.<sup>5</sup> The adoption by employers to embrace remote workers is providing huge benefits.

**According to an extensive 2017 Stanford Study, it was concluded that remote workers are more productive, 13% more productive, to be exact.<sup>6</sup>**

Additionally, there was 50% less attrition and a savings average of over \$2,000 per employee on rent costs. Expect this trend to increase as real estate and worksite requirements shift. The business case for remote work is proven. Now, it’s about how to create an equitable arrangement across organizations about remote vs. worksite requirements. HR needs to consider all the facets resulting from this shift: compensation, communication and

engagement norms require a different set of skills in leading teams remotely. Still, now that many progressive employers have embraced all that remote workforces have to offer, additional cautions regarding inclusion and proximity bias have come into play.

Proximity bias is the inaccurate assumption that employees will produce better work if they are physically present in the place of work and leaders can see or hear them doing their jobs. With the sophisticated technology available and access to a range of communication platforms, this belief is no longer valid. Despite entire workforces being forced into remote work for the full extent of the quarantine, some managers and leaders still hold these incorrect views —creating conflicts and divides between the office and remote workers. If a remote-friendly organization inadvertently establishes a culture that considers remote-workers second-class citizens, it risks squandering all the hard-won differentiators the remote workers bring to the workplace.

## The Remote Workforce

↑ 13%

More productive

↓ \$2,000

Less expensive cost per seat

↓ 50%

Less attrition

There are several effective techniques organizations can implement to combat proximity bias and help enhance the reputation of a remote culture, even with limited face-to-face time.



CREATE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONTACT:

**Impromptu brainstorms at the office at one point were all too common, but communication and collaboration that leave remote workers out of the loop can be damaging to company culture. Ensure that every verbalization of work accommodates multiple location types. Leverage video conferencing and conferencing to accomplish this.**



SUPPORT PARTICIPATION FOR PEOPLE:

**Take a proactive approach for including remote workers in meetings, focusing on the “who needs to be in the conversation,” question instead of basing invitations on location and proximity. Video conferencing is a crucial component and allows nonverbal communication cues to be visible.**



PRACTICE INTENTIONAL MANAGEMENT:

**Adopted from the “butts-in-seats” mentality, early adopters of remote work utilized a “time on chat” to measure the output of remote workers. Shift to a results-led management style so that workers within and outside of the organization can work under similar performance indicators.**



ADOPT AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY MENTALITY:

**Don’t allow a lack of physical presence to let an employee be overlooked for major opportunities or promotions. Set the example that an employee’s work will determine their success, not their location.**

Especially now, employers must be deliberate in creating and implementing a culture that validates remote employees and views them as equals to the rest of the workforce. An organization that hires top talent from remote locations but harbors a culture that fails to recognize these employees alienates high-performers and limits immediate and long-term business growth. While it sounds simple, employers have to prioritize communication and recognition of their team regardless of physical location, including consequential events, and personal achievements or significant milestones.

However, the responsibility of carrying this out at varying levels of management falls on HR. The HR department must have systems in place to monitor the satisfaction, manage expectations and create accountability of employees across all locations.

**U.S. Workers Discovering Affinity for Remote Work**



◀ The number of U.S. workers who did their jobs from home during the coronavirus pandemic and would prefer to continue to work remotely once restrictions are lifted.

# The Gig Economy: Benefits for the Employer and the Employee

How people live, work and earn their money has changed dramatically over the past decade, especially with the advent of smartphone technology. The “gig economy” is altering the way work is viewed and performed, and businesses must be ready to respond with innovative policies and programs.

In 2019,  
57 million people  
worked as freelancers  
in the U.S., up from  
approximately  
53 million in 2014.<sup>8</sup>

– UpWork and Freelancers Union

One of the groups hardest hit during the global pandemic have been gig workers. Contingent labor (temporary employment, and independent contractors) were the first to be impacted. Gig workforce platforms like Upwork have witnessed a substantial decrease in work opportunities on their platform. Some of the industries hardest hit by the pandemic also utilize contingent labor like entertainment and shared economy jobs such as Uber and Lyft. Recognizing the significant portion of U.S. jobs represented by gig workers, the federal relief and stimulus packages offered unemployment benefits to independent contractors. This is a first for the U.S., signaling an awareness that this classification of worker is an essential

component of the workforce. Economists expect this group to emerge faster than other segments of the workforce as the economy resets in the post-pandemic world.

The gig economy is a category of work that is still largely undefined and unrecognized by U.S. policy, from the local up to the federal level. Nevertheless, the gig economy is growing and influencing the way that Americans view work, which poses several challenges for employers. Many current workforce policies were established much earlier in the 20th century with a distinctive work culture in mind. Up until recently, employees were more likely to work at the same company until retirement and receive

benefits from that company. Now businesses need to be prepared to adapt to the changing labor arrangements.

One of the most striking changes in the employer-worker relationship is the classification of the relationship. Is an employee employed or a contractor? Although not new, the gig economy is the fastest-growing segment of the U.S. workforce. People have always worked “gigs;” but now there is a higher concentration of new technology-enabled kinds of work, with app-based technology platforms as the middleman connecting consumers and producers quickly and easily and allowing individuals to perform a variety of tasks for strangers based on real-time demand. In 2019, 57 million people worked as freelancers in the U.S., up from approximately 53 million in 2014<sup>8</sup>

Because the gig labor force is primarily freelance and contract-based, often, these workers must procure benefits, such as health insurance, on their own. Many employers are exploring classifications for dependent contractors or gig workers, who receive the majority of their income from a specific company. That company would provide the worker with benefits and adhere to certain regulations as part of the employer-worker relationship. Some gig workers are investing in portable benefits, or benefits that are

employee-owned and follow the worker. As a result, workers could accrue benefits such as unemployment insurance, workers’ compensation protection and paid time off working with different employers or on various projects.



**See Section Four for additional insights on the role of strategic employee benefits design.**

With such a large percentage of the workforce lacking the benefits frequently provided to full-time employees, this can turn into a severe social and economic problem as this workforce will get injured, sick and eventually age without employer-backed insurance or retirement opportunities.

As more workers in different professions are switching to on-demand or gig-based jobs, it’s become increasingly clear there is a need for a progressive benefits system that can address these challenges.



### IN THE NEWS

Recently signed into law, California’s AB5 Law entitles workers classified as employees to greater labor protections, such as minimum wage laws, sick leave and unemployment and workers’ compensation benefits, which typically do not apply to independent contractors. (Note: During the the pandemic, independent contractors were made eligible for relief benefits, unemployment and in some cases Payment Protection Program loans.)

## SECTION TWO:

# How People Adhesion Is Powering Higher Productivity

## Create a Sense of Belonging, Enable Deeper Expertise and Build Trust

Large-scale technology disruption is happening across industries, and organizations are undergoing transformational changes while rethinking the development of a skilled workforce. In a workforce slowly adjusting to a gradual reopening, organizational success hinges on an employee's ability to collaborate, communicate and connect, forging productive co-working relationships within and beyond natural workgroups while enabling knowledge-sharing across the organization, now more than ever.

**Though most business leaders recognize the necessity of breaking down silos to enhance collaboration, they struggle to make it happen.**

Leaders were forced to shift thinking in days when the coronavirus spread across the world.

Organizational behavior and leadership professors Tiziana Casciaro, Amy Edmondson and Sujin Jang, tackled the issue of cross-silo

leadership; and determined several strategies to connect individuals and teams across functional silos. Their research confirmed how, "the vast majority of innovation and business-development opportunities lie in the interfaces between functions, offices or organizations. Employees who reach outside their silos learn more, sell more and gain skills faster."<sup>9</sup>

Arguably their most valuable discoveries lead to effective strategies for organizations to embrace horizontal collaboration by emphasizing the importance of empowering employees who are naturally inclined to cross-pollinate. As many have discovered, these types of employees, or "cultural brokers," possess a range of experiences and relationships, allowing them to instinctively and unofficially connect people across many functions.

### PEOPLE PRACTICES AS PEOPLE ADHESION

Coined by a team of organizational behavior and leadership professors in a June 2019





**Employees who reach outside their silos learn more, sell more and gain skills faster.**

– Tiziana Casciaro, Amy Edmondson, Sujin Jang

Harvard Business Review article, the concept of people practices, or people adhesion, is the action of connecting colleagues who do not consistently work together. The adhesion can occur at the beginning of employment or later, through intentional connections forged between functions or business units. People adhesion can be organic or organized by leaders; either way, it works to drive productivity. Connections can arise naturally when employees collaborate to address a customer's need or find commonalities in remote working situations: living alone, juggling children or competing for WIFI with their spouses. These connections empower employees to direct efforts from the bottom up, build communities of interest, drive knowledge management and collaborate in ways best suited to each individual while delivering measurable business value. The more HR can facilitate or manufacture these opportunities for connection, the more invaluable they become to a company's operations.

The concept of "horizontal teamwork" is not new and many of today's most progressive leaders embrace the value and reap the benefits of a cross-functional culture. Yet, people adhesion specifically can serve a different function, especially when leaders make a connection between two colleagues. The bridge between individuals or adhesion among co-workers will create a sense of belonging, drive sophisticated individual skills and build trust that supports accountability and results. People adhesion naturally occurred while employees searched podcasts and webinars that addressed their specific needs. Employees made connections across functions, across communities to share concerns and solutions with each other. These new COVID-19-inspired relationships, we believe, will continue in the future as employers re-open their office doors, these employees will build expertise and elevate trust throughout the organization.

# Employ People Adhesion to Enhance the Power of Belonging

According to vulnerability researcher Brené Brown, when employees feel comfortable in their work culture, they are more likely to find work interesting and connect with colleagues. It enables employees to have a greater connection to the workplace, creates a sense of belonging and fosters higher engagement. Brown has updated her advice and suggestions in April 2020, on [Unlocking Us](#).

In most cases, when a person feels uncomfortable or unwelcome in a situation, they can choose to avoid that situation. Pre-COVID, avoiding these situations at work can be another story. If an employee does not feel comfortable at work, it can be much harder to make a change. When someone is stuck in a

workplace that isn't functioning well for them, not only is it an unfortunate situation for the individual, it hurts the company as well. Working from home, employees can manage challenging co-workers and the feeling of lack of belonging using different strategies.

A recent survey of over 7,000 employees measured employee experience across seven factors of diversity, belonging and inclusion. The results showed that "belonging factors" are most strongly and consistently correlated with employee engagement.<sup>10</sup> Regardless of an employee's gender, ethnicity, age or sexual orientation, employees are more likely to be engaged if they feel they belong. Since employee engagement is directly linked to productivity, retention and overall business outcomes, leaders must create an environment where employees feel connected to the workplace and understand how their role contributes to the greater goal.

Many companies have employed virtual happy hours, breakfast with the boss via laptop and a range of other activities that



**A recent survey of over 7,000 employees measured employee experience across seven factors of diversity, belonging and inclusion.**

Results show that "belonging factors" are most strongly and consistently correlated with employee engagement.

— Culture Amp

contribute to a sense of belonging. For example, one organization encouraged employees and parents to share on social media, some of the goodness, grace and peace of mind that has come from the increased family time together; while


acknowledging that these are trying times. When employees feel seen and supported they are better positioned to focus on the positives, which improves resiliency and can make overwhelming challenges seem more doable.

**If organizations want to build a robust and healthy business, they cannot afford to overlook belonging.**



## Establish a Culture of Experts Through People Adhesion and Cross-Collaboration

When employees form bonds in the workplace, it can foster a sense of connection at work and enhance productivity. A sense of connection, or adhesion, can deepen expertise.



Creating a sense of shared work experience is the foundation of people adhesion.

Think about your relationships at work at the beginning of 2020 and then in April 2020. What relationships do you prioritize in your day-to-day job? Across multiple industries and company sizes, in the past, the answer was probably the vertical relationships; people you manage and the people who manage you. When considering which relationships are most important in creating value for the customer and business objectives, the answer is usually the exact opposite.

The majority of innovation and business growth develops from collaboration between functions, offices and even organizations. During the height of the pandemic, new relationships were forged with colleagues that shared commonalities like similar challenges, living or family situations. HR professionals have the unique opportunity to cultivate this cross-pollination of departments, or horizontal collaboration to drive growth. Naturally, employees have integrated across

functions and broken through silos to share solutions and best practices, from recipes on intranets, to late night calls with children struggling with their concern of the moment. Across your organization, employees are creating and enhancing communities and connections, maybe out of desperation, and mostly out of care and concern of the other.

The trust that develops as a result of working with other team members can increase engagement and foster a sense of people adhesion. Fostering these connections is not a complicated process. People form bonds naturally over starting work on the same day, working on the same team or being assigned the same project.

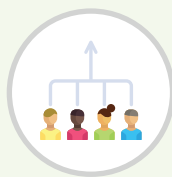
When you consider how 55% of CEOs articulated concerns about the lack of trust

within their company, building collaboration and relationships between departments becomes crucial.<sup>11</sup> Large-scale technology disruption means organizations will need to undergo transformation and rethink the way they approach developing and enhancing the skills of their workforce.

**Creating a sense of shared work experience and collaboration across departments is the foundation of people adhesion.**

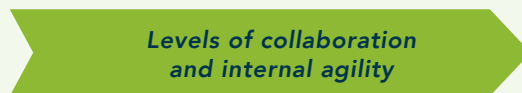
The connection of two colleagues can create more in-depth expertise, double the brainpower and can exponentially excel learning, knowledge and trust.

### THE EVOLUTION OF WORKPLACE TEAM STRUCTURES



#### FUNCTIONAL

*Siloed  
Operating Model*



#### NETWORK OF TEAMS

*Collaborative  
Operating Model*

# Harness Trust to Enhance Employee Engagement

**One of the most significant challenges currently facing companies is employee engagement. Leaders are beginning to understand the link between their employees' dedication and the success of their business goals.**

The ability to build and sustain high levels of trust and engagement is crucial for business leaders today. In our fast-paced society, new products, competitors and business models emerge overnight. One of the few competitive advantages organizations possess is its people. In the employer-employee relationship, trust requires more than the exchange of reliable work and reliable pay.

The communication process, messages and timing of the information has impacted trust within many organizations. The impact has been both positive and not-so-positive depending on several factors. Interestingly enough, during the initial six weeks of the coronavirus pandemic, the number one trust factor was the ability to ask for help. Deloitte suggests COVID-19 is both a “shock and a catalyst” to our work systems and an opportunity to re-build trust. When leaders focus on and address the four dimensions of trust: physical, digital, emotional and financial, employees are hearing this message in a new way, through a new lens.

For leaders who transitioned to a remote workforce, initially, the physical locations, office buildings, desk configurations and

breakroom set ups were not the most immediate issue. However, as organizations consider returning to the workplace, it's now one of the main priorities. Creating a perceived safe environment must be addressed clearly to all employees. General work habits of grabbing a “quick bite to eat” and office visitor policies are being halted and adjusted.

## Management Tips to Increase Trust

- Recognize excellence
- Induce “challenge stress”
- Give employees discretion in how they do their work
- Enable job crafting
- Share information broadly
- Intentionally build relationships
- Facilitate whole-person growth
- Show vulnerability

Remote meetings have proven that employees can successfully “do the work of the work” without in-person meetings. The face-to-face is now via video, and employees, clients and vendors have all found ways to work through this new means. How

organizations may wish to leverage these digital ways of building trust should be considered, evaluated, tested and adjusted based on experience.

As leaders and human resource professionals have suggested prior to COVID-19, the ability to acknowledge the emotional needs of the workforce is critical to productive collaboration. Now more than ever, front line managers need know when and how to encourage and motivate their team members. Senior managers need to empower immediate supervisors to be nimble and flexible with the shifting nature of employees emotions. One simple effective tool is clear concise communication. The six-foot distance has been communicated in myriad of messages; in the store, in homes and parking lots. Leaders can use these techniques in their teams, communicating

often, providing the right equipment for their employees, and building trust in new, unanticipated ways.

People at high-trust companies report: 74% less stress, 106% more energy at work, 50% higher productivity, 13% fewer sick days, 76% more engagement, 29% more satisfaction with their lives, 40% less burnout.<sup>11</sup>

To become an organization that successfully creates an environment of engagement, organizations must connect the dots between trust, leadership, management style and engagement. Trust is the foundation, leadership is the driver and engagement is the result.

**People at high-trust companies report:**

↓ 74%  
Less stress

↑ 106%  
More energy at work

↑ 50%  
Higher productivity

↓ 13%  
Fewer sick days

↑ 76%  
More engagement

↑ 29%  
More satisfaction with their lives

↓ 40%  
Less burnout

— PwC

SECTION THREE:

# The HR Strategy Shift: Technology in the Driver's Seat

## How Future Technology is Shaping Business Today

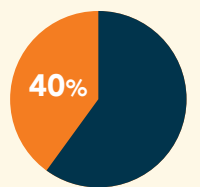
**An organization's capacity for investing and adapting to advancements in technology significantly affects its ability and strength to acquire and engage talent. The smart use of data and analytics will let HR play a prominent role in helping their organizations return to prosperity after the calming of the coronavirus pandemic.**

Despite the rapid pace of technological change, we absorb its effects into our daily lives far more slowly, especially at work. Faced with the option of retiring familiar ways of working in favor of more streamlined, emergent alternatives, the sentiment is usually, 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it.' Change gets deferred — until one day something happens and suddenly everything that was

familiar, is no longer suitable for the way work needs to be conducted. At a moments notice, all the optimizations that have been waiting on the sidelines are pushed to the top of the docket, and the coronavirus pandemic has made way for one of these types of moments in the workplace.

The HR technology market is evolving to meet organizational needs. Now there are more than 1,400 HR technology vendors in the market, many incorporating AI, cognitive interfaces, advanced analytics, sentiment analysis and other new technologies designed to make work easier.<sup>12</sup> According to the World Economic Forum, the estimated value of this digital transformation will exceed \$100 trillion in the next ten years alone. The influx of options has overwhelmed the market and leaders have to determine the products most useful for their specific need while continually monitoring for the next progression of the tool that can inevitably accomplish the same function in less time, for less money and with greater ease.

**Only 40% of HR leaders said they have a plan in place to address increases in digital work at the enterprise or HR level.**



— KPMG





What does this mean for business and HR specifically? Currently, about two-thirds of HR executives agree that HR has undergone or is undergoing a digital transformation. But only 40% of HR leaders said they have a plan in place to address increases in digital work at the enterprise or HR level.<sup>13</sup> This presents both a challenge and an opportunity for each organization and will determine its future success or failure.

Organizations must adapt to a data-driven culture and ensure technological advancement is embedded and leveraged in daily business processes, especially in regard to how technology, data and machine learning benefit an organization's most valuable asset — its people. By shifting to this mindset, businesses can move from decisions based on "gut instincts" and anecdotal suggestions to a strategy based on analytic-backed insights. In addition, more than 70% of employees indicated that a company's use of the latest digital tools and innovative culture would greatly influence

their decision to join a company, while more than 60% said a company's reputation as a digital leader would impact their choice.<sup>14</sup> An employer's ability to maintain relatively seamless operations during the coronavirus pandemic will very likely influence future candidate's perception of the organization and even inform their sense of job security if they chose to accept a position within that organization.

**The bottom line: HR faces many challenges concerning technology in the workplace, but the pace of change is accelerating, and organizations now have a tremendous range of options from which to build and adapt within this new era of work. By successfully integrating aspects of a technology-centered approach, workplaces can better prepare for the continued growth, or potential disruption, ahead.**

# Getting Personal With Employee Analytics: How Can It Be Used To Drive Business Outcomes

The realm of people analytics is growing, offering new opportunities to optimize the workforce. As more organizations utilize people analytics, they are exposed to new risks and opportunities, bearing the question “when it comes to people data, how far is too far?”



Work can be measured. Hours can be tracked via security badges; locations monitored using GPS; keystrokes recorded. With nearly every point in the employer-employee relationship subject to measurement, employers need to proceed with caution, focusing on utilizing people data to drive positive workplace improvements or risk severe employee, customer and public backlash.

Businesses are hyper-focused on driving efficiency, and employee data promises key insights into productivity and performance. Examples include, monitoring the time spent on applications seen as productive versus nonproductive to make decisions about team makeup, reviewing workflows that are hampering productivity and even signaling the need for more training. Another way this information is being utilized is streamlining processes and even measuring customer service quality by evaluating email and chat interactions with customers.

Innovation, disruption and market shifts, such as those created by the COVID-19 pandemic, are creating new roles and forcing other roles to adapt to a changed environment.

Predictive employee analytics can provide insights for businesses to understand what is going on within their talent pool so they can take early action. The key to workforce forecasting is to make it a company-wide initiative, in which experimentation is embraced. In order to continuously add business value, HR must partner with executives, finance leaders and data scientists to test alternative staffing scenarios that guide the business to higher levels of efficiency and create opportunities to quickly change the makeup of a workforce. Some examples include:

- ▶ When employees are promoted to managerial level positions, how does their output and revenue increase?
- ▶ How does an increase in employee benefits or pay impact key business outcomes such as retention or productivity?

- ▶ If 20% of a sales team is driving 80% of total sales, how can a team be restructured to ensure peak business performance while maintaining overhead costs?

As organizations collect more personal, health and productivity data from their workforce, they face increased risk and ethical concerns about data security and transparency. It is critical to stay transparent and communicate what information is being collected and for what purpose, while also implementing robust safeguards to minimize compliance risks and potential misuse. Technology is evolving at a faster pace than the regulations that govern it. A company's reputation may have taken decades to build, but it can be destroyed in minutes through improper access and handling of employee data.

### Getting Started with Employee Analytics:



#### CONSTRUCT THE RIGHT TEAM

Teams should be multidisciplinary, combining leaders with the necessary business knowledge and technical skills.



#### UTILIZE EXISTING TOOLS

Leverage existing tools built into spreadsheets as a starting point before making a more significant investment in solution platforms.



#### PARTNER WITH YOUR IT DEPARTMENT

Enlist the assistance of an IT professional to ensure the data is accurate and authentic.



#### FOCUS ON IMMEDIATE BUSINESS NEEDS

Connect the information to pressing business issues, such as turnover or sales success, and determine the people factors driving those outcomes.

# Artificial Intelligence: Utilize Machine Learning to Empower the Human Touch

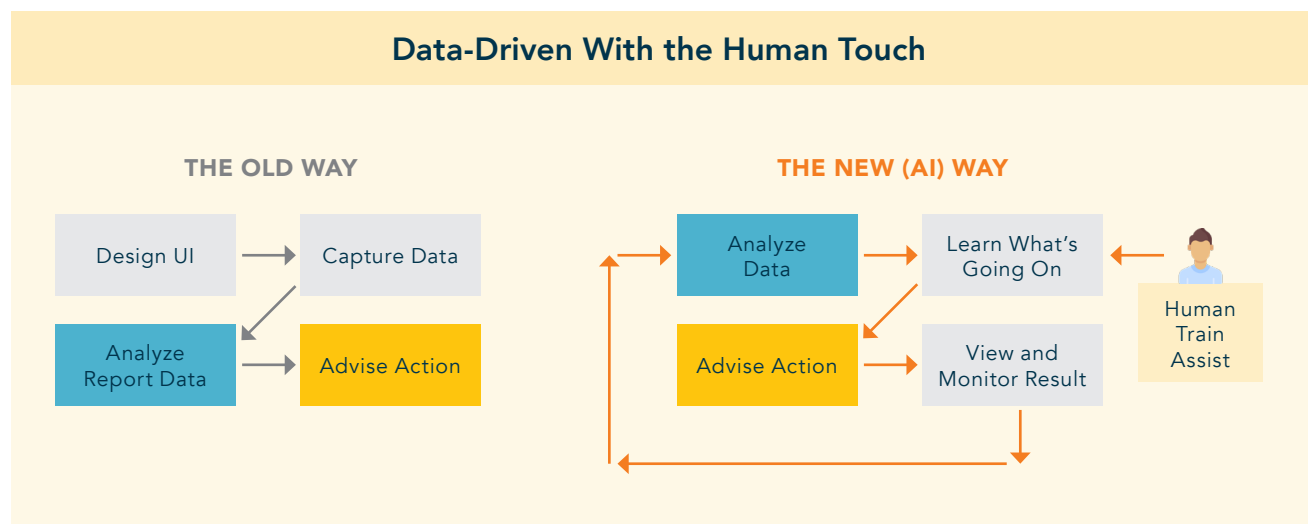
Artificial intelligence (AI) is predicted to drive the future of work, yet multiple reports indicate that HR professionals are ill-equipped to make this happen successfully.

What is AI? The premise of AI is the creation of algorithms that imitate the human brain; in other words, computers that have been calibrated to utilize immense amounts of data to create insights, drive decisions and make predictions. In this context, it's most accurate to look at AI as an umbrella term for smaller subsets such as machine learning or deep learning.

HR is no stranger to AI. Many HR functions already utilize unsupervised learning and predictive modeling, especially in recruiting and training. Employing AI for some of the repetitive parts of the job like sourcing, screening and nurturing candidates will increase and grow into more sophisticated

tasks, like scheduling interviews and engaging with and interviewing candidates. Currently, hiring decisions, team makeup and assignments are based on the subjective judgment of HR and managers. Yet every one of those decisions can be made with data-backed intelligence.

IBM predicts that 120 million workers in the world's ten largest economies will need to be reskilled in the next few years to adapt to an AI-driven marketplace. Deloitte's "2018 Global Human Capital Trends" report reveals a similar sentiment stating that, while 72% of respondents think adopting AI is vital for their business, only 31% feel ready to address this transformation.<sup>15</sup> Failure to implement





wholesale changes backed by digitization and insight-driven learnings will result in the loss of an organization's competitive edge, and HR departments will have to account for the ensuing adverse effects on long-term growth.

The responsibility of leveraging systems of intelligence to better inform decisions on recruitment, assessments, learning, management, career advancement, compensation, wellbeing, compliance and productivity, among others, will fall squarely on the shoulders of HR departments. Utilizing machine learning to assist the human touch will soon become the price of entry, versus the exception to the rule.

Companies can reframe the integration of AI as a complement to human expertise rather than a zero-sum game in which humans fill in for what machines cannot yet accomplish. With the increase of automated software and chatbots, AI has the power to become a secret workhorse for HR departments delivering exponential growth in the next three to five years.<sup>16</sup> This will enable HR professionals to focus on developing

strategies to propel the business forward, retain top talent and foster cross-functional teams across the organization.

### ONEDIGITAL'S COVID-19 HEALTH PLAN COST IMPACT TOOL

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, OneDigital launched the Health Plan Cost Impact Tool, enabling employers to confidently forecast the expected instances of infection, hospitalization and cost implications in response to the pandemic. The predictive modeling tool allows businesses to interpret the immediate and potential financial constraints of COVID-19 on their organization, and forecast how the virus will impact company health expenses.

Learn more [here](#).



# Leveraging Workplace Analytics to Create Workforce Efficiencies

Utilizing analytics to determine and address inefficiencies puts an organization at a competitive advantage. However, without applying insights to talent placement, businesses miss an opportunity to align top performers with projects and initiatives that would otherwise drive substantial impact, create growth and consequently increase retention and loyalty.



**Only 30% of U.S. employees show up to work committed to delivering their best performance.**

— Gallup

At its core, workplace analytics are being used by business and HR leaders to address the most common challenges: the complexity of tasks, productivity and engagement and providing insights to form effective strategies.

**Currently, only 30% of U.S. employees show up to work committed to delivering their best performance.<sup>17</sup>**

Having a workplace analytics strategy to drive employee efficiency and engagement is necessary to lead a more competitive, agile organization.

An organization's most valuable asset is its people. However, without actionable insights and data, it can be challenging to discern what distinguishes top talent from other workers. Workplace analytics can extract behavioral insights from an employee's email, calendar, documents and other tech stack platforms to provide insights for companies on how they can drive productivity, improve retention and reduce process inefficiencies.

Data insights can help leaders quickly pinpoint a problem. For example, pulling data from employee calendars may allow a manager to discover that employees

are spending 60% of their time attending meetings and only 40% doing work that drives business results. Armed with this data, management and HR teams can quickly develop a strategy to address the exposed inefficiency.

Organizations are continuously trying to discern what makes top talent so effective. Uncovering this formula would enable workers to spend less time on tasks not directly tied to business outcomes and utilize expertise where it matters most.

**Imagine the impact if your employees could spend 90% of their time on the most effective tasks that contributed to the overall productivity of the business?**

As companies embark on digital transformation, there's a keen focus on process and technology. Businesses that account for the most important asset – people – have a better chance of driving holistic change.

### Workforce Analytics in use During a Pandemic

- Understand what employees are closest to hotspots so that preventative action can be taken.
- Make better decisions on how to best support employees with high-risk profiles.
- Determine which roles are business-critical.
- Understand which departments or employees can be productive remotely.
- Discover how travel bans will impact the business and productivity of specific departments.
- Analyze future workforce talent gaps and opportunities.

**Disengaged employees have:**

↑ 37%  
**Higher absenteeism**

↓ 18%  
**Lower productivity**

↓ 15%  
**Lower profitability**

— Gallup

## SECTION FOUR:

# The Power of Employee Benefits in a Fast-Changing Workplace

Employers are at a crossroads. Employee benefits play a crucial role in differentiating a company from its competitors and are an essential component in attracting and retaining top talent.

**The majority of candidates expect benefits coverage as a term of employment; 88% of employees see it as a fundamental condition of hire.<sup>18</sup>**

However, benefits represent a significant percentage of a company's overall expenses, or roughly 30% of an employee's total compensation costs, so determining thoughtful cost-control measures while ensuring the integrity of the benefits package will remain at the top of the agenda for businesses.<sup>19</sup>

For many employers, providing benefits is a given. Health insurance is an expected

offering across industries. Still, there remains a sizable discrepancy concerning what employees require from employers and what is being offered. Employees enrolled in a benefits plan are patients and true consumers, calling for options that use data about themselves and providers to get the best treatment at a time, place and cost convenient for them.

With the shifting workforce demographics, newly emerging healthcare pandemics and rapidly changing innovations in technology, healthcare policy and employee preference, the next few years will represent a tipping point for how businesses approach their employee benefits strategy. HR and benefits professionals alike need to address existing gaps in their plans that, until recent years, they were able to get away with, while also implementing innovative ways to control costs and meet the needs of a changing workforce.





According to Deloitte's 2019 Human Capital Trends Study, many organizations are reluctant to raise wages to keep up with general inflation, and some businesses are extending noncash benefits to their workers instead.

The pandemic has created a heightened level of transparency between businesses and the workforce. When employees don't feel safe, supported or secure in their positions, productivity suffers. This remains especially true for working parents. An astonishing 66% of working parents felt that their productivity at work suffered while trying to manage both work and child-care duties from the pandemic, further underlining the need for unique benefits packages that tailor to the individual. <sup>20</sup>

**This pandemic has served as an accelerator for full-scale business transformation, placing increased value on a completely different set of employee benefits, changing how they are utilized, and how employers can best ensure the overall wellbeing of their workforce.**

Business leaders will need to change their mindset to understand their employee base better, and to consider what they are delivering and how. Ultimately, this will drive a more engaged and loyal workforce.



**Employee benefits have evolved from offering the basics to being a crucial tool for attracting and retaining a high-performing team.**

# How Customer Experience is Changing Healthcare Delivery

The 2020 workforce has different values, priorities and expectations than generations before. Instant access to resources and information is expected. Not only must benefits offerings evolve, but the delivery and experience must too.



Traditionally, health information was thought of as something to be kept private and any technology that infringed on this privacy was seen as invasive. The narrative has largely shifted, much in part due to the coronavirus pandemic, as consumers were encouraged to remain home and engage with technologies that can provide healthcare services.

Over the last several decades, many efforts have been made to change the delivery of healthcare, all to reduce costs while improving patient health outcomes. Improved technology, increased access to smart devices, heightened consumer expectations and the transition to value-based care are driving virtual healthcare adoption, specifically telemedicine.

**Consumers of all ages are using technology in many aspects of their lives, and healthcare is no exception.**

Among the most compelling motivator for the continued growth of virtual health is the mounting evidence of improved health outcomes, cost savings, better access and increased convenience for patients.<sup>21</sup> Not only does virtual healthcare offer a better

connection to treatment, especially for older patients with physical disabilities or who lack transportation, it can also mean savings for an organization.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the insurance and healthcare world made a giant pivot to be able to offer medical care in a virtual environment virtually overnight. This change was propelled by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), which began to permit telemedicine in the Medicare and Medicaid population for the first time.<sup>22</sup> Much of the healthcare delivery world follows the lead of CMS, so with telemedicine receiving an endorsement at the federal level, many healthcare providers began to incorporate this service within their offerings. With the changing environment, many employees would prefer to meet with a doctor online before going to a brick and mortar facility – or they may be required to.

Now that providers are jumping in with both feet, it will be critical for employers to ensure that their workforce has the appropriate education on how to access and properly utilize telemedicine.

By offering convenient, easy-to-access care options and encouraging employees to utilize them with thoughtful communication and transparency, employers can play a significant role in keeping employees out of waiting rooms and helping to lower health plan costs for all involved. This tool is valued across generations and can improve employee perception of benefits by fulfilling the need for an effortless, modern experience. As employers launch into a new decade, technology will continue to play a pivotal role in the growth of the employee benefits industry, creating more efficient ways of conducting business.



With avoidable ER visits in the U.S. costing **\$32 billion in 2018 alone**, finding ways to encourage employees to utilize telemedicine, when available, should remain an essential strategy for employers today.

— The American Journal of Emergency Medicine

# More Informed Consumers Are Creating the Need for Increased Transparency

Nearly ten years after the Affordable Care Act (ACA) was passed, access to medical care has improved. Yet, underlying medical costs have not. Public outcry over rising healthcare costs is forcing legislation changes to promote cost transparency, allowing consumers to control how much they are spending on healthcare.

Pricing transparency can enhance a patient's healthcare experience. The push for transparency in healthcare pricing has been going on for years, but the industry undoubtedly remains one of the nation's most opaque. Healthcare is unlike every other consumer experience in America. It would be unimaginable to leave a broken-down car with a mechanic before getting a cost estimate, for example.

**The pressure on providers, insurers and drug-makers to offer pricing information is intensifying as the nation's healthcare spending continues to grow above general inflation rates and patients burdened by rising deductibles demand the information needed to shop for healthcare services.**

Recent high-profile cases of price gouging, such as the one endured by users of the EpiPen, may shed light on what seem like illogical and even corrupt pricing strategies in the healthcare industry.

Slated to go into effect in January 2021, legislation from the Trump administration will aim to increase price transparency in hopes of lowering healthcare costs on everything from hospital services to prescription drugs. However, the legislation is controversial and likely to face court challenges. The plan comes as healthcare remains a top issue for voters ahead of the 2020 presidential election.

If it is passed, payers will be required to inform patients about out-of-pocket costs and private negotiations with providers to enforce healthcare price transparency. Payers, providers and self-insured group health plans would be required to either furnish the patient with out-of-pocket cost information or make the costs associated with their procedure available, ultimately enabling the patient to determine the estimated costs before receiving treatment.

Transparent prices will help employers eliminate the sometimes-counterproductive middlemen and contract with other entities

that will incentivize employees to utilize lower-cost providers, including ones outside of their local region. The slight threat of consumers leaving a local market puts pressure on local providers to bring prices down.

Although transparency alone is not the antidote to the healthcare cost crisis, employers need to be prepared to educate their workforce on what this means for them as consumers. When employees have more insight into what their medical costs look like, they're able to make more informed decisions about their health — and a healthy workforce will pass those savings on to their employer.



A 2019 study of more than 2,500 people who had either visited a hospital, healthcare clinic, doctor's office or other healthcare organization for treatment in the last 12 months revealed that **75 percent of patients utilize either healthcare provider or payer/ insurance websites, among other sources, to research healthcare costs.** The youngest generations – Gen Z and Millennials – tended to conduct the most research.

— TransUnion Healthcare



## CONCLUSION

# From Insight to Action

The road ahead will require businesses to remain nimble, protect financial stability and look beyond traditional ways of maintaining a competitive advantage, from both a business and workplace standpoint. Rapid and regular organizational change is the new normal in most industries, and people leader departments are no exception. In addition to championing change and agility in the workplace, business leaders must decide if their workplace and business strategies will be able to weather a potential economic downturn. They must appreciate and recognize the role their people play in ensuring business success. HR needs to be the face of change.

### **ADOPT A NEW MINDSET FOR THE WAY WORK TAKES PLACE, AND EVOLVING EXPECTATIONS**

The employer-employee relationship of ten years ago, and even last year, has changed drastically. In an incredibly fierce and increasingly remote labor market, employees are in the driver's seat. With the nature of work becoming increasingly remote or even contract/gig-based, employers need to maintain an effective strategy that responds to the changing workplace climate, meets employee expectations, while also keeping employees engaged.

### **FOSTER PEOPLE ADHESION, BUILD TRUST, DEEPEN EXPERTISE AND PRODUCTIVITY WILL FLOURISH**

Increasing employee engagement is a large and complex challenge that organizations spend millions of dollars trying to solve. With large-scale technology disruption and workplace climate changes taking place, organizations need to respond in a transformational way, rethinking how they

approach and execute organizational and skills development. Fostering connections beyond the boundaries of employee geography and departments will allow organizations to build communities of interest, drive knowledge management and collaborate in ways tailored to the individual that delivers measurable business value.

### **GET UP TO SPEED WITH TECHNOLOGY**

Technology has never been more relied upon than it has been today, with some technology solutions being a business' lifeline when work could not take place in the office. As businesses shift from a digitized environment to one that centers around data-backed insights through technology, HR must utilize the abundance of data to make better decisions, create happier workplaces and lead to greater business success. About 50% of HR leaders feel unprepared to use the technology available to them, so it is critical for businesses

to ensure they have skilled leaders in place to pave the way for future demands of the workplace — otherwise known as the merger of human capability and technology.<sup>23</sup>

### **EMBRACE A NON-TRADITIONAL APPROACH TO EMPLOYEE BENEFITS**

Historically, employee benefits were not believed to have any significant impact on organizational goals. Plans were offered with the current population in mind and did not address the potential for business growth. As benefits become a tool to attract and retain talent, HR and business leaders must embrace change and creativity with how to control costs and deliver an impactful benefits package. Challenged to do more as healthcare costs rise, the responsibility lies squarely on the shoulders of HR and business leaders to find strategies for controlling costs while delivering an impactful benefits package.

Remaining competitive over the next year will require HR professionals to shift from a reactive and process-oriented position to a boardroom strategist, becoming a trusted workforce advisor that can utilize people analytics to forecast needs. In the early months of 2020, HR professionals represented a significant voice in war rooms dedicated to responding to and strategizing for the coronavirus pandemic, accelerating their

positions as strategic workplace advisors. The inevitable transformation that businesses will face in the next 12-18 months will require HR leaders to reimagine the employee experience and improve an organization's ability to maintain operations and, ultimately, business survival.

Through the combined commitment of experienced, local consultants and the sophisticated technology-driven experience that high-performing businesses need to compete in the market, OneDigital is the team that can power yours.

During these extraordinary times, how an organization responds will have direct impact on employee satisfaction and define organizational culture for years to come. Contact OneDigital to help transform your benefits and HR practices to develop a culture of resiliency, allowing your team to overcome today's challenges and continue to drive your business forward.



Visit [onedigital.com/2020insights](https://onedigital.com/2020insights) to get started.

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