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2022 Work Trends

A Promising New Age for the
World of Work

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Workplace Culture in 2022: New Year, New Era

Despite the pandemic causing mass uncertainty, it has also brought about the biggest reform to the way we work in a century. Work-life balance has improved substantially, and the objection to remote work due to "lowered productivity" has been widely disproven.

In short? We've adapted.

All sectors are experiencing a period of rapid transformation. However, as new trends like hybrid work evolve from a luxury to the norm, we see clearly that the workplace culture has forever changed. This presents new and exciting opportunities for employers and employees alike.

"AS WE'RE PREPARING TO GET BACK TO BUSINESS AS USUAL, IT SEEMS PROFESSIONALS DON'T WANT BUSINESS AS USUAL."

- PATRICK MULLANE, HARVARD SCHOOL DIRECTOR

What these opportunities are and what they mean for businesses are far-reaching. The 2022 workplace culture will see increased flexibility in work hours, greater employee support, agile working strategies, reimagined project management, and much more. It is set to be a true **"game-changer."**

These changes should have lasting positive effects for all of us, however, no reward comes without some effort. As it stands, we are witnessing worldwide phenomena such as employees reshuffling en masse to new companies, and businesses, therefore, fighting harder than ever before to retain quality talent.



The determining factor for winning the war for top talent will be to understand the emerging work trends of 2022 and to rethink some of your past engagement strategies. Below are the top 4 trends that you should be aware of:

1. Shifting to Agile Operations
2. The Great Resignation
3. The Rise of Hybrid Work
4. Greater Employee Engagement

Utilising the latest research from trusted publications we will explore what these trends mean and what their knockoff effects are. We will also reveal how you can leverage technology and digitalisation to survive in this new workplace culture and achieve a successful business year by doing so.

Ready to enter the promising new age of the world of work? Continue reading below.

THE YEAR OF AGILE OPERATIONS

Agile Organisations: Skills, not roles

The trusted research and advisory resource, Gartner, commented: "To build the workforce you'll need post-pandemic, focus less on roles – which group unrelated skills – than on the skills needed to drive the organisation's competitive advantage and the workflows that fuel this advantage." This dictates that skills will be more critical as they address and resolve core business obstacles. Unlike roles that, typically, describe the way individual members of a business related to a specific structure of hierarchy. Therefore, we expect to see a move towards "flat" organisational structures that focus on skills first. Businesses anticipate that this will be the key to driving innovation and problem-solving in this digital enterprise.

For workers, this focus on **skills development rather than role fulfilment**, will allow them to capitalise on new career opportunities with greater ease in future.

Greater Use of Project Management Tools

In 2022, project managers will be expected to take on more of a leadership role. In fact, more organisations are hiring under the title 'project leader' as opposed to 'project manager.' This means project managers will get the opportunity to lead cross-functional teams and have a far stronger influence on



the future direction of the business. Previously, the ever-changing work environment meant this could be difficult, but the availability and functionality of task management tools in our digital workspaces will help lighten the load of project managers and leaders. In 2021, Microsoft released a productivity tool for hybrid workers called **Loop** which has lightweight project management features. As hybrid work becomes more common and awareness of Loop grows, we anticipate it will become a staple of more digital workplaces.

What's more, the research is suggesting a shift from the traditional pre-set approaches in favour of a hybrid methodology. This will allow teams to pre-plan projects while dividing development into short-term tasks. Meaning you can be more considerate of hybrid workers' variable schedules, making you – as a business – more appealing to the growing talent pool.

THE GREAT RESIGNATION

Job Switching en masse

In times of crisis, most people will evaluate if they're happy with things as they are or if they need a change. In 2020, this evaluation was suddenly thrust upon many. The result? The aptly described 'Great Resignation.' A Microsoft study of 30,000 workers worldwide found that **41%** were considering changing professions by 2022 – either by choice or necessity.

Therefore, companies must prioritise employee engagement and satisfaction or risk losing human capital and their talent.



Attracting and Retaining Talent in 2022

For now, it is not clear that there is a one-stop solution to attracting and retaining new quality team members for businesses. While a conclusive answer remains undiscovered, the discussion continues, so we wanted to explore the key talking points for the effects that hybrid work may have on recruitment and staff turnover in 2022 and for years to come.

Below are their key topics of debate that we expect to shape this discussion in 2022:

- **If a job can be done at home, is it better for the work culture?** The cultural impact of collaboration, camaraderie, mentoring, and work-life balance is put into question under the remote model.
- **Will the productivity of remote work exceed that of office work?** Some state that people work longer hours at home now due to commute times being removed. Others argue that people are less productive as they are distracted at home by non-work items and are demotivated by lowered supervision. The question of managers' suitability to handle teams remotely better rather than in-person is also debated.
- **Job Equity: Is it fair to people whose roles cannot be done remotely and require a physical workplace?** This topic covers points like safety, expenses, team culture and fairness. The rapidly evolving work environment may see certain work models generating greater benefits than others. As workplaces strive to be more inclusive and equal, this debate may become more prevalent. Emphasising the need for organisations to deliver a consistent experience for both in-office staff and homeworkers.

THE RISE OF THE REMOTE WORKER

Hybrid Work: From Novelty to Normality

With offices across the world opening their doors again, the requirement to remain remote is phasing out, and workers are returning to offices. Although many of us have already braved our old commute and took our places (with a little more space than previously) at our desks. The questions are will this become full-time? Is it necessary for everyone? And will it continue into 2022?

A recent survey of 500 software professionals revealed a positive reception to hybrid work that listed several benefits:

- **90%** claimed they were happy with remote work, at least partially
- Just over **50%** encountered fewer distractions at home
- Almost **50%** stated it improved their working relationships

What's more, this applied to managers and employees, who spent similar percentages of weeks working from home (66.4% and 64.4%, respectively.) So, this trend should not only continue but evolve in 2022. As hybrid work shifts from novelty to normality, tweaking processes to keep it effective will be essential.

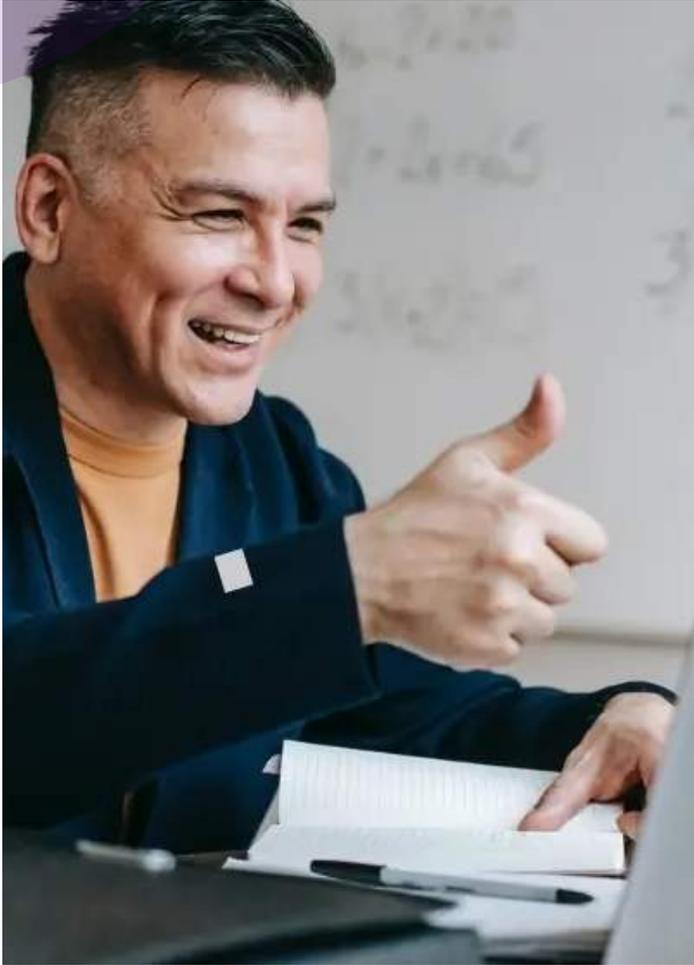
We expect this need for a technological shift to accelerate digital transformation across many industries.



The Rise of Digital Transformation

The pandemic reframed the idea that digital transformation is a futuristic concept. Offices are not, and will not be, the sole site for productivity. In fact, experts state that digital transformation has been advanced by over 7 years due to recent circumstances. Apps like Microsoft Teams and Office 365 demonstrated that meetings from home are not only viable but effective.

Other apps like SharePoint have facilitated cloud-based sharing that further increases productivity when remote working thus creating a digital workspace that facilitates seamless collaboration.



In 2022, we recommend that companies establish a hybrid model not just for the short term, but a model that facilitates successful hybrid working for years to come. Key inputs into this design should include the company's plans for future expansion and direction, business strategy, and workforce plan. As hybrid work is here to stay, digital transformation will be essential to improving business activities, processes, and competencies.

More Emphasis on Worker Retention

Amid the great resignation, it is no wonder that **87%** of HR professionals listed 'worker retention' as their top priority in the next five years. In past years, employee engagement and

team morale are two parameters that many employees criticized as lackluster. This predicament has been a large motivator for the mass-scale job reshuffle we have witnessed.

In 2022, the focus on competition in the job market is moving from employees to organisations and recruiters. Companies must do more to make their job offers attractive to fresh talent. According to LinkedIn, nowadays job seekers are researching the reputation of an organisation before applying to them. They want to feel safe and find a motivation that binds them to a company more than a simple paycheck.

The pressure is on for organisations to attract employees with a healthy workplace culture and attractive remuneration packages. Employers must also factor in the added factor of the hybrid work environment, and therefore separate job perks and the physical office. In other words, gone are the days of pool tables or Pizza Fridays.

In 2022, benefits will no longer intrinsically link to the physical workplace. Instead, employees will look for more valuable benefits which will support them in and out of work. One study asked 1,500 UK employees which perks they would like to receive moving forwards. The top requests were for employee discounts and greater work recognition or holiday allowances. Clearly, pool tables are not a priority. Therefore, companies aiming for happier employees in 2022 must shift their mindset surrounding benefits.

"Businesses often forget about the culture, and ultimately, they suffer for it because you can't deliver good service from unhappy employees."
Tony Hsieh, late Zappos CEO

THE AGE OF EMPLOYEES

Leaders Will be Expected to Listen to Employee Feedback More Than Ever

The pandemic gave voices to employees that have gone unheard for too long. A recent global study found that **86%** of employees felt that workers had not been listened to equally or fairly. For those looking to retain talent and utilise innovative ideas, it's vital to join the the **14%** minority and begin truly listening to our people. For those looking to pave the way in retention and employee engagement in 2022 the solution could be straightforward. The literature suggests that if leaders pay greater attention to staff, consider their ideas, and translate their insight into action, this effort can pay great dividends to both employee and company outputs.

Whilst that may not sound fairly easy, and historically it may not have been, companies can now leverage technology and incorporate



multiple feedback channels. For example, managers can utilise Microsoft Viva to gain a clearer understanding of employees' overall mood from the time of their last one-to-one meeting and schedule a check-in with just a click.

Greater Support for Homeworkers' Mental Health and Wellbeing

A damning number of reports have shown that as many as **41.6%** of remote workers have experienced mental health decline. Work-related stress is anticipated to be the number one diagnosis in upcoming years, so leaders must work harder to provide vital support to their workforce. It will be essential to promote mental health care and remind workers of healthy work-from-home strategies. **Regularly having dialogue to assess employees' wellbeing should be integrated into whatever hybrid model your organisation deploys.**

It is also essential that all employees have a consistent working experience. Apps like SharePoint allow users to access documents with ease, regardless of location. In doing so, workers feel linked to the team, even while working remotely. Video conferencing technology is also highly recommended and we expect usage to rise across all industries. Microsoft is upgrading Teams meeting features every month to better simulate the face-to-face environment, allowing remote staff to feel a sense of normality and connection to peers.

Microsoft Viva: Empowering Leaders to Support Hybrid Workers

This year, Microsoft launched Viva, a solution with four modules designed to improve employee engagement, effectiveness, and wellbeing. Currently, the free 'Insights' module gives individual users personalised and actionable insights to support them. They are only visible to the individual and are personalised for every user. They help schedule time for focusing, learning, and regular breaks so users can manage their working day more effectively.

For example, the 'How are you feeling?' feedback button can be used to record workers' daily mental wellness. Managers can view the average wellness rating of the team and make changes accordingly e.g., organise a mental wellness seminar. This means workers can feel heard and taken care of while having their anonymity respected.



2022: A Promising New Age for the World of Work

Welcome to the new world of work in 2022.

It's a nuanced form of what we have been striving towards since the beginning of the pandemic. However, now it has blossomed into something revolutionising that we can all be proud to be a part of. The future seems far more adaptable, innovative, and inspired, focusing on treating human talent with greater compassion and humanity. Our last two years of struggle firmly taught us that it pays to work together. Being united doesn't just feel good – it generates results.

Indeed, we have entered a promising new age for the world of work.

Despite an initial struggle and an irreversible change to the world, we can now say with excitement that our ability to adapt to barriers imposed on us has improved immensely. Gone are the days of avoiding this momentous workplace evolution, now we are willing and prepared to embrace the incredible opportunity before us.

However, emerging trends like the need to appeal to staff or accommodate the rise of online collaboration, will

require effort. Companies that don't adapt to new working practices will find it difficult to retain and attract talent in this employment market that currently favours employees. Therefore, you must assess your business' readiness for these demands to guarantee a successful 2022. For example, consider the following: -

- Has your business undergone the digital transformation required to upgrade for the demands of remote work?
- Are your staff equipped with the correct hardware and software for seamless collaboration and communication online? (And have they been adequately trained to not just use it but thrive with it?)
- Have your staff been empowered to take time for personal development and wellness, even when out of the office?
- Has enough been done to retain talent by ensuring workers are engaged and satisfied?

Unsure about these questions or the suitability of your team's existing circumstances? If so, we challenge you to investigate these points and analyse what you have accomplished so far and what else requires a nudge in the right direction. Should you require any help, ThinkShare can support you, assessing your current situation and needs before providing solutions to any existing obstacles.

By recognising the areas you need to focus and improve on, you will keep up with the new trends of 2022, and thrive in this unprecedented and prosperous new age.

"Companies must work to adapt to the opportunities of the new hybrid work model rather than sticking to the rigidity of traditional models, and more importantly, evolve to better support their employee needs, wherever they are working."

ANDY HODGES
ThinkShare CEO and Principle Consultant

