

Don't Miss Out on These **WORKPLACE CHANGES IN 2021**



NO ONE SAW 2020 COMING.

It became a matter of urgent necessity to create people-centric policies and initiatives to create a safer world---and to move fast. At first, it was business as usual: the Olympics in Japan were going to happen, Brexit owned the headlines, and the ramping up of the 2020 Presidential election.

Then, COVID-19 dropped into our world.

Because of the pandemic, the workplace won't be quite the same. In general, expect lots of positive changes---more flexibility, more human connection, and more resilient leadership.

[Here's the key changes to expect in 2021](#)

OFFICE LIFE IS TRANSFORMING

Your office will have to make a pretty good case to have you back.

Many workers have experienced working from home for the first time. People have found they enjoy the balance and ease of flowing between the office and home. After a year of working from home, power dynamics have shifted. Companies will need to give employees a reason to return to the office. One suggestion is designing office spaces that foster human connection and that focus on rest and relaxation.

What employees have found out: the office is a great way to connect with people. That's the main reason why people are interested in returning to the office. "There's a credible value to real life in-person contact," says Liz Burow, the former WeWork vice president of workplace strategy.

In an interview with LinkedIn, Burow says she foresees offices going into a different direction. Two principle ways that spaces will function include gathering for personal development and as clubhouses, where they congregate and collaborate. Time will be limited and intentional. Gathering as a five day week will no longer be the rigor de jour.

Employees also want more fluidity in their own seating. Surveys from Nike show employees want to work in an office, but only twice a week. What employees want are spaces where they come together for a time of intention and activity, so spaces need to be flexible and spacious.



Other work experts believe that there should be further amenities to draw back employees to the office. It will be more than a ping pong table and free coffee. Creating a unique experience that an employee can't find anywhere---like a coworking space---is essential. Companies might consider setting up flexible working space in uncommon spaces, like the scenic countryside. Employees could collaborate there while enjoying a more leisurely experience that promotes a healthier work-life balance. Greater flexibility about what employees want will be demanded.

This kind of flexibility will vary depending on the company, its industry, and where it's located in the world, but it is a reality for nearly all organizations to consider. One study showed that half (47%) of U.S. professionals believe their companies will allow them to be – at least partially – remote after the coronavirus pandemic wanes. For other industries, like tech and finance, the percentage is even higher.

SAFETY FIRST

We want to feel safe again. Companies that make employees feel that they're taking safety seriously will rank high. The pandemic has shown us that we're less interested in shinier, fast technology; and we're more in need of tools that offer protection and security. For example, the sales of pulse oximeters increased.

These tools monitor blood oxygen levels. If a person were to contract COVID-19, this tool would help determine the seriousness of the sickness. Even Apple's latest watch is checking blood oxygen levels due to consumer interest. Traveling on planes has been a point of contention, as clean air is not necessarily guaranteed. Electrostatic sprayers or air purifiers are becoming important tools in making us feel safer in the public.

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Physical and health safety lies on top of data safety. Tech companies have long been cautioned about using their users' data for third-party services. The public outcry resulted in the EU's General Data Protection Regulation.

Safety about data information is an ongoing discussion---and a continuing worry for employees. Technologies like facial recognition, voice recognition, artificial intelligence, and drones need greater regulation to give the public ease about engaging with these innovations. Ensuring the safe handling of our data is another strategy to win over employee trust. Using tools that are GDPR-approved or block third-party usage are first steps.

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

We're in thirist of principled leaders. Leadership within our governments, health systems, and in our companies have been revealed (for better or worse) through this pandemic. Through the implications and effects COVID-19 has brought us, we need leaders who are competent as well as imbued with character. Being a servant leader is now more in-demand than ever. Leaders encourage people to do their jobs by providing them with guidance, direction and motivation. The skill of servant leadership is a leader who sees their main responsibility as providing service to the people they lead.

Psychology even explores the literature behind servant leadership, offering one model consisting of 7 critical behaviors:

To sum it up, adjectives can be used to describe people's personality and classify it along a taxonomy.

1. Conceptualizing.

This involves the leader utilizing his or her experience and the resources provided by the organization to help solve problems.

2. Emotional Healing.

The servant leader is supportive of followers and sensitive to their feelings and ideas. The goal is to be available and listen to followers and their concerns.

3. Putting Followers First.

This is the core of servant leadership. It's not about the leader.

4. Helping Followers Grow and Succeed.

As in all theories of exemplary leadership, servant leaders grow the leadership capacity of followers – leaving them better off and better able to lead in the future.

5. Behaving Ethically.

Caring about others first, and doing the right thing are critical to servant leadership.

6. Empowering.

It is through the process of empowering followers that the servant leader builds followers' leadership capacity.

7. Creating Value for the Community.

Rather than focusing on the outcomes for the leader and the followers, the servant leader is concerned about having a positive impact on the larger community – the organization, the sector, the nation.

As the world seems uncertain, we're looking for leaders who instill a sense of confidence, optimism, and care into our lives. When it comes to recruiting and retaining talent, having servant leaders become a competitive advantage. They'll be the ones who foster community in times of crises and will find creative solutions to avoid layoffs or find resources. In short, they're givers, not takers.

MORE WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

Female leadership is taking the limelight during the pandemic. Currently there are more female CEOs in the Fortune 500 than ever before. In 2020, Jane Fraser became the first female CEO of a major Wall Street bank and Karen Lynch became CEO of the world's largest health care company, CVS Health. According to LinkedIn data, more women are moving into executive leadership.

Perhaps one reason is how the pandemic highlighted the importance of leading with empathy. Though men have the characteristic of empathy, research shows women tend to exhibit more empathy than men. This may be a useful trait as health concerns arise in the workplace, childcare issues, balancing work from home duties, and more. Having leaders that relate to the difficulties their employees are enduring is necessary to navigate through the pandemic.

It's not only about moving women into senior leadership. It's about making sure the women that do come to work have the right support to do their best work. Women are often primary caretakers in their household and the pandemic has shown that being a primary caretaker needs to be supported at the workplace with programs like paid time off or childcare resources.

RACIAL EQUITY PUTS ON ITS WORKING BOOTS

In 2020, the death of George Floyd and other Black Americans created huge momentum in corporate America to commit to racial equity. Organizations across the country and internationally have pledged to do better about systematic racism. This year, customers and employees expect to see change. This means organizations need to take a stance on where they stand on the issue. It means seeing people of color in leadership positions. Racial equity means training and development.

One survey conducted by Forbes found that 85% of surveyed companies with over \$500 million in revenue either agreed, or strongly agreed that "a diverse and inclusive workforce is crucial to encouraging different perspectives and ideas that drive innovation." This year organizations ramp up and implement their diversity and inclusion initiatives.



THE REMOTE WORKPLACE IS GETTING STREAM-LINED

The biggest challenge, surprise, and frustration of 2020 was the massive and sudden move to online tools. Downloads for the video conferencing tool, Zoom, skyrocketed in March. The company's profits soared to \$186m, while customer growth rose 458%, compared with the same period in 2019. Organizations had to get serious about moving online and working remotely.

While moving everyone to remote learning, organizations struggled to master how video tools could be used for their meetings and collaboration sessions. It also put a massive strain on other usual in-person activities, like job interviews or training sessions. Companies had a difficult time in sorting these and other business processes. Recruitment and training had to take a different approach, moving to remote infrastructure that could streamline the application process all the way to the onboarding----all remotely.

Few companies had tools like this in their arsenal. Retorio's advantage is not only its artificial intelligence in saving time and offering tailored insights for hiring managers and employees, but it can all be done from anywhere and at any time. This kind of rapid flexibility matters during a time many employees continue working remotely; they'll still need to train and want to foster their skills. Recruiters and hiring managers still need ways to find and interview people quickly and thoroughly despite the lack of in-person interviews. The remote workplace is being rebooted with tools like Retorio, Slack, Zoom, and others.

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