Apexon

THE WORKPLACE OF THE FUTURE

4 WAYS TO OPTIMIZE THE MODERN EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

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The ongoing impact of the global health crisis has arguably changed our lives forever, but one element has been impacted more than any other... the workplace.

A shift from in-person meetings and socialization opportunities to what is essentially a virtual working life has presented a massive challenge for companies across the globe, even more so as the pandemic continues to disrupt what we consider to be traditional ways of working. For an increasing number of business leaders, distributed workforces are the new normal and it's extremely common for teams to be spread out domestically and internationally.

From a worker perspective – and it should be noted that it is essentially office-based workers that are now remote - the flexibility to work-from-anywhere with a Wi-Fi connection has allowed employees to not only skip the commute but also (in theory) work from the comforts of home. Employees with young families, for example, are now able to spend more time with them, the caveat being that being a remote worker doesn't always mean that your daily office commitments are lessened in any way.
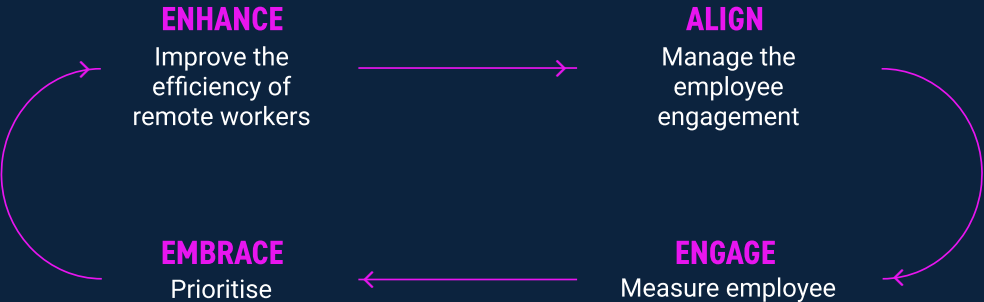
In the early months of the coronavirus, the number of U.S. employees working remotely doubled – the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimated that it went from 31% to 65% from mid-March to mid-May 2020, accounting for over 100 million American workers. More than a year later, a Gallup poll said that 45% of all full-time employees worked from home in September 2021, either all (25%) or part of the time (20%), respective.

Back in 2020, the question on everyone's minds used to be, "When can we go back to the office?" but this has evolved into companies asking, **"How do we develop a next-generational employee experience for our distributed workforce?"**

Both of these questions have relevance, but it is the latter that will define business optimization strategies and, crucially, employee engagement.

4 WAYS TO OPTIMIZE THE MODERN EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

Let's take a closer look at four ways to optimize the modern employee experience:

ENHANCE
Improve the efficiency of remote workers

ALIGN
Manage the employee engagement

EMBRACE
Prioritise

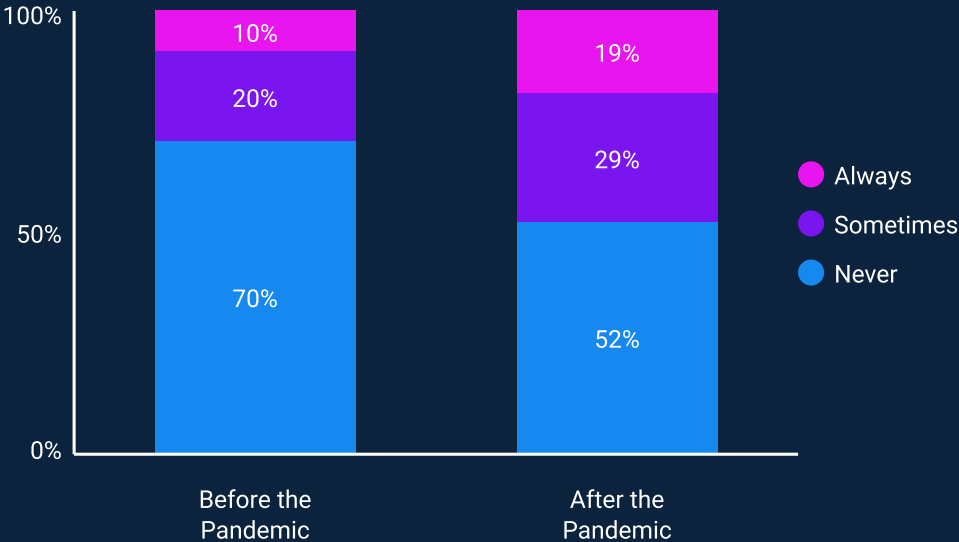**ENGAGE**
Measure employee

ENHANCE

IMPROVE THE EFFICIENCY OF REMOTE WORKERS

While the best time to design a more connected employee experience (EX) is before a crisis, and arguably not during one, enhancing EX by means of better integration, production, and management is now a major priority for all global organizations. Businesses are accepting the reality that long-term remote working is here to stay, so the focus has shifted towards improving EX and hiring the right people who are compatible with a culture of working away from a physical office location.

Various models exist for the work-from-anywhere approach. These include a hybrid mix of mostly remote days with some occasional time spent in the office, most of the time spent in the office with the option of working from home occasionally, or 100% remote.

According to a 2020 Gartner research study on organizational plans, more than three quarters of employers are planning to shift to a permanently hybrid workforce post COVID-19, giving employees unique flexibility opportunities like never before. That figure has remained relatively static as the long-term impact of the pandemic continues to drive workplace return conversations.

Projected ratio of employees working remotely, before and after the pandemic

Before the Pandemic
- Always: 10%
- Sometimes: 20%
- Never: 70%

After the Pandemic
- Always: 19%
- Sometimes: 29%
- Never: 52%

Legend:
- ● Always
- ● Sometimes
- ● Never

n = 421 HR leaders; 4,535 employees; 317 finance leaders
Source: Modeled based on 3 Gartner COVID-19 polls (2020)

Enhancing the employee experience is great for business.

Even before the pandemic started, many organizations were already investing in improving the employee experience for distributed teams. Studies show that employees are more productive when they have greater flexibility around their schedules.

It's increasingly clear that in order to succeed in this environment, companies must trust their remote workers to get the job done. This is best achieved through a centralized hub that connects people, technology and project management tools to work seamlessly together.

Video meetings play a central role in the day-to-day communications of many distributed teams, but teams should only schedule meetings that have an agenda where all participants play an active role. It's also important to keep video calls short, preferably no longer than 30 minutes, to help employees avoid so-called "Zoom fatigue."

ALIGN

MANAGE THE EMPLOYEE JOURNEY

Delivering a high-quality, consistent experience from the moment a company connects with a candidate is critical to building trust and establishing a foundation for loyalty.

With virtual interviews and hiring taking the place of traditional onboarding practices, IT and HR leaders are redesigning a digital experience to give everyone in the company greater control in managing the employee journey. In fact, the modern HR experience follows the philosophy of treating employees like customers. This leads to greater employee satisfaction and engagement right from the start.

Key benefits of aligning employees with a virtual HR experience:

Accelerated onboarding
Organizing the process from virtual interview to new hire paperwork

Intranet access
Easy access to timesheets, important documents, and FAQ for employees in one centralized place

Performance management
Progress reviews and feedback

Career development
Tools to manage and track the employee journey

ENGAGE

MEASURE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Employee engagement is getting a lot of buzz these days, and for good reason.

Defined as the strength of the emotional and mental connection that employees have to their places of work, employee engagement is the driving force behind building a strong company culture and retaining talent. And, according to recent research, **companies with a highly engaged culture perform better, with higher stock prices, higher productivity, lower turnover and greater customer satisfaction.**

> **"Only 16% of employees worldwide are fully engaged. This means that 84% of workers are merely 'coming to work', and not contributing everything they can to their organizations."**
>
> Source: ADP

Many factors play into improving employee engagement, such as training, communication and programs centered around growth and development. In the vast majority of cases, improving employee engagement is only possible if companies first take the time to find out what's engaging and/or disengaging their employees.

Checking in with employees regularly is one of the best ways to gain insight into what they like about the company, the challenges they face and possible ideas for growth.

This attention to engagement also helps establish trust and keeps everyone in the organization on the same page. The first steps in improving employee engagement within an organization are to define which KPIs are essential to measure success over time.

So, which KPIs should you use to measure employee engagement? The following is not an exhaustive list, but it will give decision makers a platform on which to build:

Employee Net Promoter Score
Would the team recommend the company to a friend or family member? Evaluate NPS on a 0-10 scale and track over time

Absenteeism
Engagement obviously suffers when colleagues are absent, but it also affects the morale and engagement of their peers

Retention Rates
Pay attention to the tenure of employees who quit; establish a baseline turnover rate and compare each quarter

New Hire 90-day Failure Rate
If new hires leave within 90 days, that could be a sign of failure in the onboarding process

CSAT
Use pulse surveys to benchmark and measure customer satisfaction over time

Platform Adoption Metrics
Colleagues that feel engaged will heavily use the collaboration tools made available to them

EMBRACE

PRIORITIZE PEOPLE FIRST

There is little doubt that the challenges of the workplace have been elevated by the pandemic. On the flip side, it's important to remember that employees are people first and almost everyone is going through their own daily struggles, from new hires to senior leaders.

In addition to the right tools for working efficiently, employees need a strong support system for life's many curveballs. Concerns about bills to pay, children going to school from home, and many outside distractions that can play into people losing focus in their work.

From a wellness perspective, companies that prioritize the physical and mental health of their employees see the impacts hit the bottom line and stretch far outside of the new office. That means that the employee experience should be primarily centered around empathy.

Here are some tips to promote employee wellness within the organization:

- Foster a culture of diversity and inclusion
- Offer access to physical and mental healthcare
- Allow flexible schedules for juggling home duties
- Invest in upgrading employees' WFH technology
- Maintain regular mental health check-ins
- Deliver positive and consistent communication from leadership

"85% of businesses confirm productivity has increased due to remote working."

Source: International Workplace Group

THE WORKPLACE OF THE FUTURE IS HERE

The modern challenges of distributed teams are causing global organizations to reevaluate how to approach creating a positive employee experience.

The workplace of the future isn't a single location, but a mobile environment of technology and people fused together. Even if most of us return to our offices again full-time in the near future, it's possible that we won't be able to walk away from the habits ingrained in us from months of productive remote work.

Companies that make the commitment now to an **Elevated Employee Experience** will be the clear winners in this future marketplace. And while the black swan event of 2020 was the catalyst for the workplace of the future, employers must understand that there is essentially a blank slate for continued improvement.

Please contact us for more information on what Apexon can do to digitally transform your infrastructure and improve the lives of your employees.

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We deliver custom solutions that meet customers' technology needs wherever they are in their digital lifecycle. Backed by Goldman Sachs and Everstone Capital, Apexon works with both large enterprises and emerging innovators — putting digital to work to enable new products and business models, engage with customers in new ways, and create sustainable competitive differentiation.

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