

The Future of Work

After more than two years of disruption, the workplace will never be the same. We examine the key issues that will shape the future of work in 2022 and beyond, from diversity and inclusion to hybrid offices, new benefits and perks

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Jason Goodman/Unsplash

Analysis

As the Great Resignation charges on, we examine how the lingering behaviours and trends accelerated during the pandemic will affect work, offices and lifestyles for the next three to five years.

Workers across the globe are looking for more. Though the conversation around the Great Resignation has been mostly about white collar workers, data shows job turnover has also been occurring in low-wage sectors, including service, hospitality and retail. [Resignations in the US](#) are at the highest rate since 2000. 20 million workers left their jobs between April and August 2021, up 60% from the same period in 2020.

Shifting attitudes towards work, identity and life balance are forcing employees to re-evaluate their choices. Dr Wu Pei Chuan, a lecturer at the National University of Singapore's Business School, cites "boreout" as a factor; worker values are misaligned with corporate values and feeling disconnected from fellow employees. In a post-pandemic landscape, workers will seek autonomy in their jobs and as work shifts from input-based to output-based, employers will need to put more trust in their employees.

This report discusses emerging occupations, looks at technology's increasingly vital role in the future of work and offers solutions for how businesses can best support workers' mental and emotional health.

"We're not necessarily looking at a negative future in terms of jobs, but what we are looking at is a major shift in terms of the set of skills within each job and the types of jobs that will exist in the future – whether that is in the care economy or the education sector or the IT sector, there are a number of growing roles."

Saadia Zahidi, managing director, World Economic Forum



Worker profiles

When it comes to allocating investment in the future and tailoring communications, companies should survey which workers make up their labour pool to know their challenges and priorities.



Gig worker

The gig economy is slated to be a \$455bn industry by 2023. 11% of workers in the EU have participated in the gig economy and in Korea, gig work makes up 8.5% of the workforce. Though these workers contribute a large portion to the economy, there is currently a lack of professional resources and support, creating a white space for brands and services.



WFH worker

According to a September 2020 study by Mercer, 94% of US employees reported remote work did not affect, or even increased productivity. This, combined with cutting costs and the streamlining of communication, leaves many employers continuing exclusive work-from-home. This is ideal for many, but employers must ensure people feel supported in career development and combat loneliness.



Hybrid worker

According to the Harvard Business Review, “more than 90% of employers are planning to adopt a hybrid working model for their knowledge workers in 2022”. As the pandemic retreats, there will be a push/pull over returning to the office and employers must balance performance and office culture with the expectation of flexibility.



Onsite worker

For onsite workers, many of whom were the backbone of their workplaces throughout the pandemic, maintaining mental, physical and also emotional health will be of utmost importance. Though day-to-day flexibility may not be possible, perks, benefits and incentive programmes will be key to retain staff.

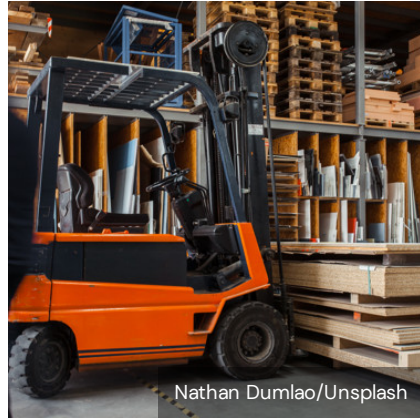
Growth employment fields

The consumer adoption of all things digital is pushing tele-related jobs to the fore, while the growth in STEM and healthcare careers speaks to the global ageing population and need for innovation.



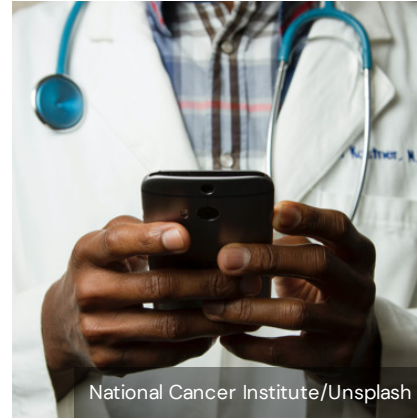
In-home care

As populations age across the globe in countries such as the US, UK, France, China and Japan, health aids, tech and in-home care workers will become even more essential to the caring economy and see a 2.7% increase in employment by 2030.



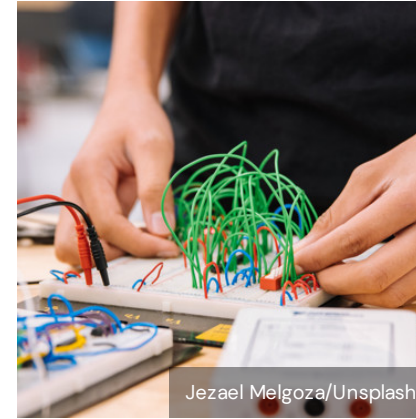
Warehousing and transportation

The increase in e-commerce and delivery on-demand will be a boon for warehouse and transportation-related jobs in the future. McKinsey reports in China, e-com and delivery jobs grew by more than 5.1m during the first half of 2020.



Telehealth

Consumers adopted telehealth during the pandemic and they aren't looking back. Austin startup Wheel raised a \$150m series C round of funding, while Practo, a telehealth company based in India, reported growing tenfold from April to November 2020.



STEM jobs

As nations deal with the climate emergency, cyber security, global health crises and an ageing population all at once, they will require a workforce with the training and imagination to design and maintain new tech. STEM careers also pushed towards gender equality and diversity, with more diverse workers moving into the space.

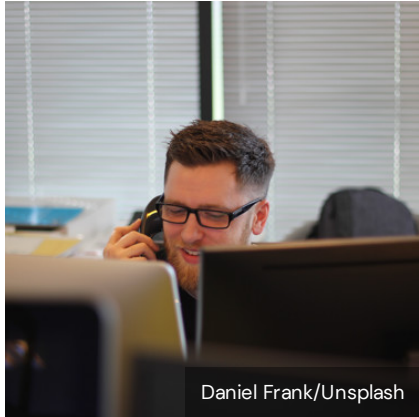


Tele-education

The global e-learning market is set to reach \$457.8bn by 2026. Institutions were forced to fine-tune distance learning over the past few years, but the introduction of newer tech including AI, VR and cloud-based learning management systems will help make tele-education more interactive and inclusive.

Declining employment fields

The pandemic forced jobs that require close proximity to others to adjust to social distancing and many were automated, making it difficult to return to 'normal'.



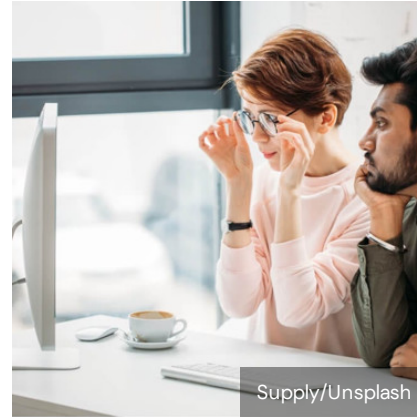
Customer service

The future of customer service has always been digital, but the pandemic accelerated the push to mobile messaging, machine learning and chatbots, with travel, health, banking and insurance implementing automation. According to Gartner, 70% of all customer interactions globally will involve tech in 2022.



Retail

As outlined in [The Post-Pandemic Retail Associate](#), consumers leaning towards e-commerce will mean less physical stores and more brand performance for retail workers, including content creation, live selling and brand ambassadorship.



Administrative

Computer-based admin work accounts for nearly one-third of employment in advanced economies, according to McKinsey. It requires only some human interaction and as more businesses, from factories to hospitals to law enforcement, adapt to automation, admin workers will no longer be needed.



Food service

Homebody lifestyles and the decline of business travel is making certain foodservice roles obsolete, especially in places such as airports, business parks and city centres. Spain and Japan are estimated to have a decrease in foodservice roles by near 9% by 2030, while the US, UK and France will see roles decrease by 1%.



Hospitality and travel

The global shift to remote work and the resulting decrease in business travel will have a severe effect on the leisure, hospitality and travel industries. While recreational travel is anticipated to bounce back post-pandemic, it is estimated 20% of business travel may never fully recover.

The great reset

A 2021 global survey by Microsoft found that 40% of people are considering leaving their current employment, but for those without the privilege of choice, the great reset will be a time of upheaval and upskilling, with the gig economy providing a safety net as workers find their footing.

Skills that can't be automated: according to research by McKinsey, more than 100 million workers in eight countries including India, China, France and the US will need to switch occupations by 2030 to keep up with changing demands of the modern economy. This will affect women and young people the most, in particular workers with high human interaction such as in customer and foodservice. Many of these jobs have already been disrupted by automation during the pandemic, but knowledge and executive-level jobs are also at risk. Harvard Business Review anticipates up to 65% of managerial tasks have potential to be automated by 2025 and younger workers are feeling the need to upskill in order to progress. In a survey of new graduates in Japan, 66% said they were in the process of changing jobs due to “lack of skills” and “not growing”.

Case studies: businesses and governments must collaborate to support workers moving into new fields. In Europe, the Pact for Skills pledges to upskill and reskill more than 1.5 million workers throughout the continent and is partnering with brands including Nestlé, Google, Cisco, Microsoft and Ford to develop training programmes. In the US, Merck and GM's OneTen initiative promises to upskill, hire and promote one million Black Americans over the next 10 years.



Grand Circus, a Detroit-based learning institute for aspiring programmers, announced a collab with Amazon as part of its Upskilling 2025 initiative

Improving gig work: the desire for flexibility, along with uncertainties in the labour market and the rise of the digital economy, are causing gig work to become the only option for many workers. According to MBO Partners, there are now 51 million people in the US employed in “untraditional ways”, such as contract work, self-employment, temp and on-call work, up 34% from 2020. Last year, the International Labour Organization reported that the number of web-based gig workers has tripled over the past 10 years, while the number of delivery-related gig workers increased by more than 10 times. Gig work is known for bad conditions and low wages, but as it becomes more mainstream, businesses will have to offer more to compete, including training, skill development and a culture of community.

Case studies: benefits such as paid leave, unemployment insurance, retirement plans and affordable healthcare must be the bare minimum, especially as labour unions and workers’ rights organisations go head-to-head with institutions. Launched last year, the App-Based Work Alliance includes DoorDash, Instacart and Uber among members. Its goal is to “advance policies that protect independent workers’ ability to set their own schedules and earn income on their terms, while also gaining important benefits and protections.”



Freelancing marketplace Upwork hosts regional events, webinars and talks for its members to network and share skills in real life. Pictured is the Regional Freelance Summit in Ukraine

The future is hybrid

After over two years of remote work, it will be difficult for employers to cajole workers back into the office full-time. In response, companies are investing in hybrid work models that combine flexibility with collaboration and in-person connection.

Hybrid goes mainstream: according to Microsoft's 2021 [Work Trend Index](#), which surveyed 30,000 respondents across 31 countries, 73% of workers want flexible and remote work options, but 67% would also like to have in-person interactions. The future of work will be a hybrid of both, blending virtual workplace solutions with physical infrastructures. A December 2020 [survey](#) across 100 managers operating in Asia, Latin America, US and Europe found that one out of 10 leaders are choosing hybrid solutions for their teams, as 58% recorded increase in productivity under this model of work.

Case studies: many major companies are embracing a hybrid future. After making remote work a permanent policy, Twitter increased flexibility by implementing a new operating strategy. Called "asynchronous work", teams are not expected to be online simultaneously to collaborate; instead, they can complete tasks independently while operating in different timezones.

An internal study at PepsiCo found that when given the flexibility, workers see a 15% increase in productivity and 31% less absenteeism. As a result, it announced in 2021 Work That Works, a new policy giving its associates the freedom to choose what work format they prefer at any time. This will allow the company to scale down its physical presence, reducing rent cost and utilities.



According to a KPMG study, 85% of Brazilian companies plan to embrace hybrid work in 2022

Community offices: as hybrid work solutions become more widely adopted, offices will respond to the emotional needs of the workforce via connection and collaboration. According to a [PwC study](#), 87% of US employees believe the physical office is relevant for building relationships. In Asia-Pacific, 50% of companies expect to expand their physical presence in the long term. City locations will attract a fluid workforce that operates on a flexible week and is based largely outside the city, impacting the nature of hospitality services in [city centres](#). Businesses will also invest in remote working hubs for digital nomads, combining a "vacation feel" with tech-secure locations, for example, Cape Town, Lisbon and Brisbane.

Case studies: after renting parts of Renzo Piano's Central Saint Giles building in London since 2012, Google has invested £730m to stay permanently, signalling its confidence in offices. Designed by BDG Architects, renderings show spaces such as "quiet zones" for focused work, as well as "team pods" that can be reconfigured according to various needs.

Other companies, such as Deloitte and KPMG, are exploring the concept of decentralisation, investing in satellite hubs placed in strategic locations around or outside cities.



The Crown Estate

Designed by Fathom Architects for property group The Crown Estate, these new London offices are for client meetings and internal get-togethers, or "for all the stuff that happens away from your computer screen"

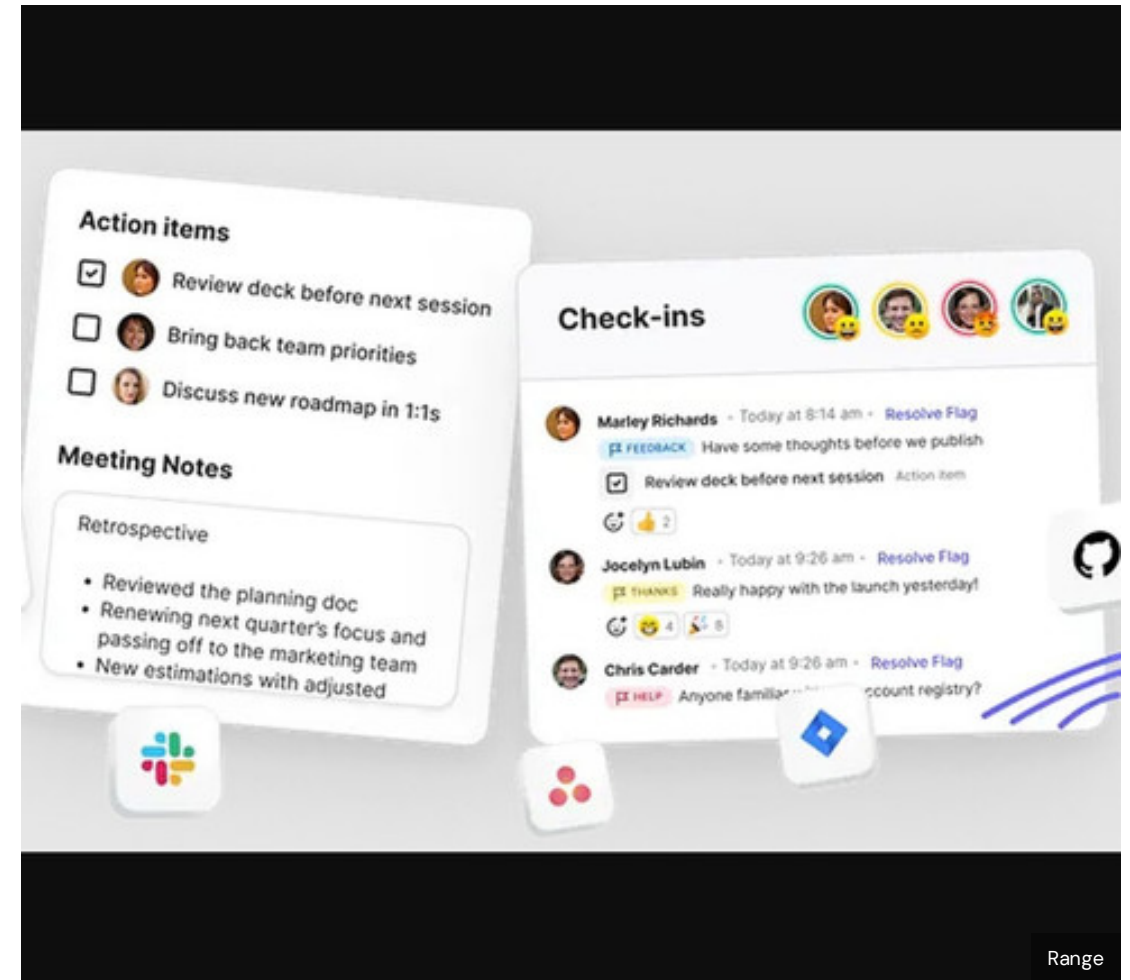
Human-centred workplaces

Employee wellbeing must be top of mind for executives. New tech is harnessing data to give businesses better insights into employees' mental health and day-to-day needs.

Fighting loneliness with tech: according to new research for the [upcoming book](#) *Connectable: How Leaders Can Move Teams From Isolated to All In*, 72% of global workers feel lonely at least monthly, while 55% feel it at least weekly. Data suggests that the impact of loneliness is equal to the risk of smoking 15 cigarettes a day, far greater than the risks of obesity or excessive alcohol intake. In addition, Wharton organisational behaviour professor [Sigal Barsade](#) reported that lonelier employees feel less committed to their employers and co-workers. To combat this, businesses are relying on new technologies to promote worker wellbeing.

Case studies: at MGME Neurotech in Zurich, developers have created tools that can identify what causes an individual's stress, along with circumstances that may cause them to make a poor decision. MGME claims this tech can predict when workers will experience stress 300-400% more accurately than other methods, which, when used by employers, could prevent burnout.

At Microsoft, teams use a personalised email system called Viva, which nudges managers to let them know which team members they haven't contacted recently and offers a prompt to send an email or schedule a call.



At HR software provider Range, workers do a daily mood check using green for happy, yellow for stressed and red for upset, with emojis to reflect how they feel. Based on the signals, managers can reschedule deadlines or offer a mental health day

The Gen Z effect: the human-centred workplace will be driven by Gen Z. This pertains to the ways in which workers relate to one another, but also speaks to the value placed on purpose-driven work. In Brazil, 28% of Gen Z cited “purpose” as mattering most when choosing a company and in a global survey by Team Lewis and UN Women, 66% of Gen Z respondents felt that company values matter the most when seeking employment. As more Gen Z move into the workforce, they’ll expect employers to be politically active and socially responsible, but also more sensitive to emotional wellbeing. The New York Times, in a recent article on the differences between Millennials and Gen Z at work, cited a business whose “managers were distressed to encounter young employees who wanted paid time off when coping with anxiety or period cramps”.

Case studies: Gen Z will force businesses to rethink prior company cultures. Dating app Bumble gave employees a “burnout break” – a company wide week-long vacation to be fully offline. LinkedIn, Mozilla and HubSpot have followed suit. At a Ziva Meditation company retreat, employees took part in the Suffie Awards, a mock awards ceremony where they shared personal stories of suffering as a means of connecting with co-workers.



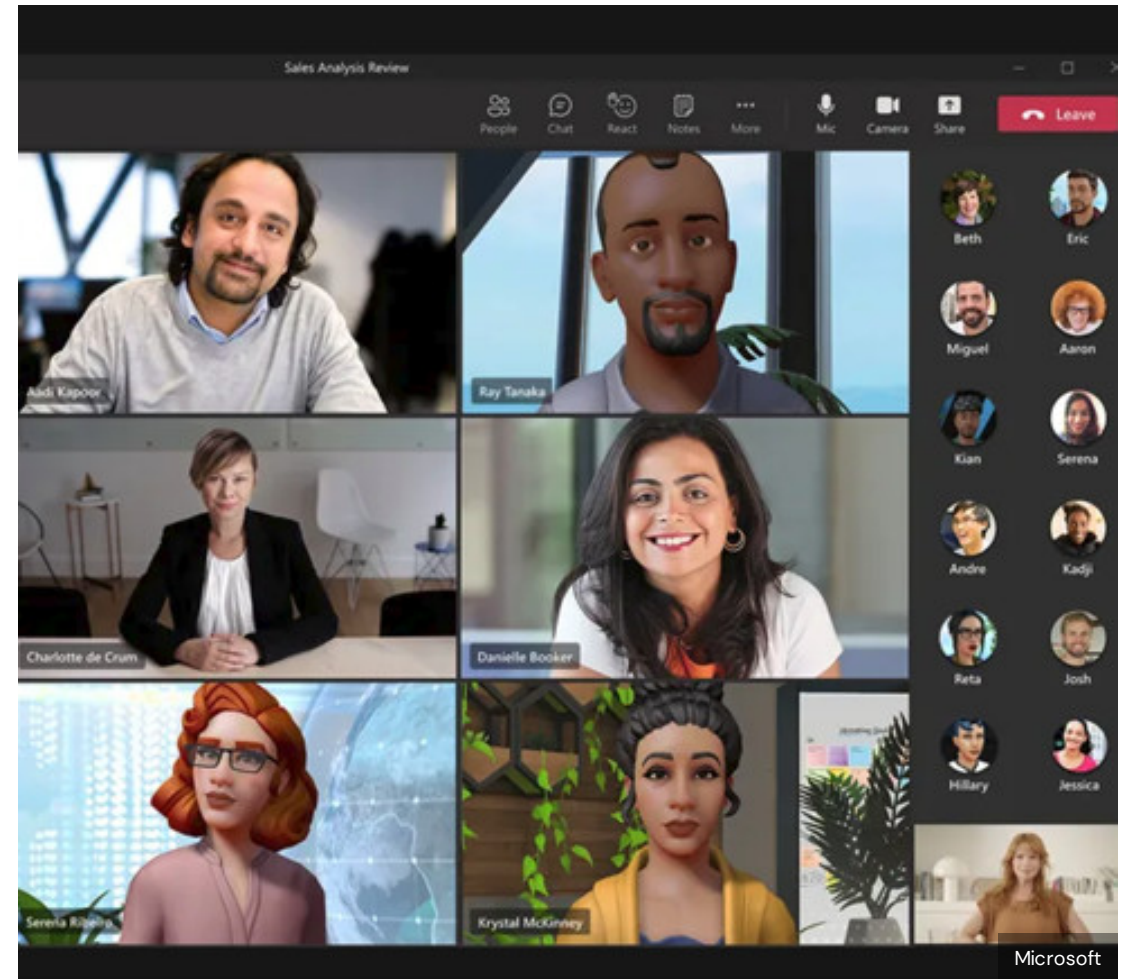
A survey by Tallo showed that Google, Apple and Netflix are the top three companies that US Gen Zers want to work for

Hiring, training and retention

In a hybridised work environment, businesses need to invest in team building and collaboration and pay special attention to how their most junior employees are progressing.

Gamifying onboarding and team building: according to an [IBM study](#), 60% of executives had changed their approach to management during the pandemic. They've had to rely on technology to keep employees engaged, facilitate work and nurture relationships, while new initiatives are aimed at helping workers and employers succeed. Presented at the [IAM Weekend](#) tech conference in London, Virtual Encounter is an AR ritual designed by nonprofit Atlantic Institute, which welcomes new remote fellows into the organisation. It consists of a physical artefact delivered to new hires, which, through AR and QR codes, unlocks a series of phygital experiences that help the new employees get to know their colleagues. These types of experiences can strengthen relationships between workers and build camaraderie.

Case studies: new technologies are gamifying the remote workplace by tapping into the metaverse. Microsoft Teams recently announced Mesh, a collaborative platform for virtual experiences. Here, users can implement 2D and 3D avatars of themselves if they're not feeling camera-ready. Meanwhile, the Seoul Digital Foundation has developed its first metaverse branch office, which is identical to its HQ office, with the hopes that its remote employees can meet monthly in the metaverse.



Microsoft Teams' new venture, Mesh, is a collaborative platform for virtual experiences. It will offer 2D and 3D avatars for users who don't want to appear on camera

The new perks: flexible hours and working from home used to be atypical perks for many white collar jobs, but now that these conditions are the norm, businesses must think creatively about how to retain employees. Ice Cream Fridays and free lunches used to be enough to lure talent, but even salary increases aren't a surefire way to keep employees happy now. Research by Harvard Business Review found that in the US, year-to-date salary increases have been more than 4%, compared to a historical norm of 2%. In the UK, salaries are also above pre-pandemic levels: the BBC reports that average weekly pay excluding bonuses rose to £550 in November compared to £510 in March 2020. Still, these increases aren't keeping up with inflation, and workers are looking for greener pastures.

Case studies: Reykjavik City Council and the Icelandic national government has just completed a five-year study which proved shortened work weeks to be beneficial for productivity and employee mental health. Companies including Kickstarter and Unilever New Zealand are now testing this mode of working for 2022. Financial services company United Services Automobile Association started offering coverage of some adoption, surrogacy and fertility-treatment fees. Smaller companies can be more creative. Brazilian architectural startup ArqExpress is letting each employee renovate a room of their home, with all expenses paid by the company.



In Brazil, Férias & Co is a travel platform that allows employers and workers to collaborate on travel perks, including remote working and vacations

Diversity, inclusion and fairness

According to an analysis of S&P 500 earnings calls by Harvard Business Review, the frequency with which CEOs talk about issues of equity, fairness and inclusion has increased by 658% since 2018. Employers must establish DEI programming to attract and retain a modern workforce.

Inclusive futures: according to a [Glassdoor survey conducted in 2020](#) in the US, 76% of employees think a diverse workforce is important and 37% wouldn't apply to a company that had negative satisfaction ratings among People of Colour. As DEI becomes more embedded in company cultures, employers need to think beyond race to include people with disabilities and LGBTQ+ individuals. A 2021 [LinkedIn report](#) disclosed 31% of people who identify as LGBTQ have faced discrimination at work, while a 2021 audit by [Glassdoor](#) found, on average, LGBTQ+ employees rated their employers 3.27 stars out of 5 compared to non-LGBTQ respondents, who rated 3.47 out of 5.

Case studies: removing bias from hiring processes will be key to inclusion. Science Foundation Ireland's digital research centre Adapt is working on an AI product to end hiring discrimination. Called Laibre, the project will use "advanced natural language processing techniques to eliminate bias across human resources workflows".

Several companies, including Slack and Starbucks, are using fair chance hiring – hiring employees with criminal records – in their quest to be inclusive. As US data suggests that four in five of workers approve of their company hiring people with conviction histories, this will become the norm for progressive businesses.



JPMorgan Chase joined 29 major employers and organisations to launch the Second Chance Business Coalition in its commitment to give people with criminal backgrounds support in re-entry into the workforce, community and local economies

Supporting women: in September, Women in the Workplace 2021, a report produced by McKinsey in collaboration with Leanin.org, confirmed what many had known since March 2020: the pandemic has been catastrophic for women who work. 42% of women admit to being burned out and despite some gains, they remain underrepresented in the corporate ladder. A survey shows that 39% of women fear taking advantage of flexible work because they worry it will negatively impact their career growth, an issue known as “proximity bias”. For businesses to attract and retain female talent, it will be essential to offer working conditions and compensation that will level the playing field between them and their male counterparts.

Case studies: transparency is one way employers can end the pay gap and support women. In New York City, companies will, as of May 15, be required to include salary ranges in job openings to give workers, particularly women and People of Colour, more agency in salary negotiations.

Females In Food is an organisation built on transparency. The free-to-join community and website helps women in the food and beverage sector advance their careers and includes a database of food industry companies, each rated by the women who work there.



Opening this year, Jaego's House in London is a nursery and co-working space combining office spaces, a gym and library for adults, with a play area and cinema for children

Action points

1

Support employees through transitions

Offer upskilling and training programmes for employees whose jobs may have been negatively affected by the growing digital economy. If teams are working remotely, include a succession plan to train workers unable to learn from looking over the shoulders of colleagues

2

Prioritise mental health

Avoid employee burnouts by providing digital wellness solutions. Brands that offer mental health benefits like in-house therapy, meditation and unplugged days will win, as new, younger employees rewrite company culture

3

Go hybrid

Meet employees' need for flexibility and in-person connections by building hybrid work solutions that combine remote work tools with physical office space. Flexibility is the future of work and employers who fail to adapt will be left behind

4

Use the metaverse for connection

The metaverse is the new virtual office. Invest in a digital space for employees to commune and gamify team building and HR to keep them engaged

5

Combat hiring bias

Look to lo-tech and hi-tech solutions to remove bias from hiring and partner with local community action groups to break down the barriers to employment for any historically marginalised groups

Research matrix

Global Risks Report 2022 by World Economic Forum

The future of work after Covid-19 by McKinsey & Company

The Shift Project by Harvard Business Review

2021 Work Trend Index by Microsoft

Global Hybrid Work Survey by Google and The Economist Group

Quits levels and rates by industry and region by US Bureau of Labor Statistics

US Remote Work Survey by PwC

Connectable: How Leaders Can Move Teams From Isolated to All In by Ryan Jenkins and Steven Van Cohen

Asia's Gen Z: How they are different by GGV Capital Asia

New Rules: How Is Gen Z Changing the World of Work by Team Lewis

LGBTQ+ Employees Are Less Satisfied Than Colleagues at Work by Glassdoor

What You Can Do To Support LGBTQ+ Employees Year Round by LinkedIn

The Great Realization by MBO Partners

Fair Chance Hiring Report by Checkr

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[Retail & Strategy: Year in Review 2021](#)

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