

The importance of workforce transformation during Covid-19

Leading the future workforce

June 2020

For many of us, Covid-19 presents one of the largest challenge of our lifetime. It has accelerated digital transformation across every industry as firms invest heavily in remote working capabilities ensuring employees can work from home productively. With up to 30% of staff estimated to remain home-based post-crisis, questions are being raised around the future of our workforce.

In the short-term, organisations and employees face large periods of uncertainty driven by fast moving changes in customer demand. Organisations have already begun to significantly adapt their workforce to flex to a Covid-19 environment. In the longer term, we expect a fundamental impact on workforce transformation.

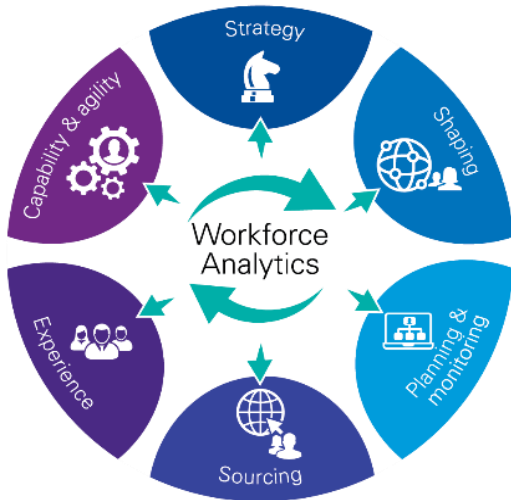
In our experience, not many organisations have embraced the fundamentals of the Fourth Industrial Revolution driven by higher digitalization, nor have they developed an effective approach to holistic workforce management. Those that have, are stealing a march on their competitors and are able to move more quickly to effective remote working and rebalancing of teams to meet changing customer demand. This is visible in e-stores that sustained their operations to some extent and continue serving their customers compared to their competitors. The importance of developing the employee experience as to enable the customer experience is accelerated now and remains a vital part of workforce transformation.

Our Workforce Transformation framework helps organisations respond to macro changes in the external environment and understand the resulting workforce implications on each component. It looks across the core components: Workforce Strategy, Shaping, Planning & Monitoring, Sourcing, Employee Experience, Capability & Agility and underpinning Workforce Analytics, to ensure the workforce is in line with the business objectives.

We are seeing most activity on the Workforce Shaping and Employee Experience elements of the framework in the medium-term, however longer-term impacts will reach across all elements.

Overall, in setting your organisation up to survive in the short term and thrive in the post Covid-19 world, it is key to:

1. Ensure you have the right skills, at the right time, in the right place to constantly adapt to uncertain external trends, agile operating models and rapidly changing customer demands;
2. Lead people authentically and with compassion in order to reset your employee experience that thrives in a digital and remote workplace



Sources: Financial Times, Half of UK companies seek to furlough staff over coronavirus, 2020; Transport for London, 2020; Global Workplace Analytics- Work at home after COVID-19- Our Forecast, 2020; BBC/AA, Coronavirus will transform UK work and travel, 2020

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To respond to the impacts, many organisations have had to rapidly review, redeploy or furlough much of their workforce. This has already had a fundamental impact on the strategy, structure and shape of the workforce across organisations and across industries. Some companies made an impact by taking the opportunity to brand themselves as people-oriented through hiring the employees who were laid off by their competitors.

As and when we emerge into a post-Covid-19 world, organisations will need to rapidly pivot the workforce to deliver new things: quickly change skillsets and capability areas; source through new and different channels; and remobilise people and capabilities across business lines.

Key Insights for Workforce Shaping:



Know your workforce and have a plan



Make re-skilling and internal mobility second nature



Re-think the optimal Workforce Mix



Prepare for a post Covid-19 world with an injection of critical new capability

Actions to prepare your organisation over the next 6 months:

- List out your critical skills of the pre-Covid-19 and current workforce and map current resource availability.
- Plan for when the curve flattens and an orderly return to work. Consider who remains remote, who goes back to the office, and in what order.
- Re-write your recruiting strategy by deciding who can and should be hired in remote locations to give you best talent and resilience. Plan for how you scale for variability reflecting on the optimum mix of employees, contractors and consultants.
- Decide which technologies you can use to immediately replace on-site tasks. Even consider re-prioritising your automation investment roadmap for this matter.
- Lastly, assess the need for remote mentoring and knowledge transfer programs to support the rapid reskilling of the workforce and to further develop capability in new or related competencies.

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Lead people authentically and with compassion in order to reset your employee experience that thrives in a digital and remote workplace;

In a short space of time, companies all over the world have achieved high volumes of remote working - something that in normal circumstances would have needed months of planning to implement. Leading by example, government, international forum, and organization also facilitated global collaboration through digital platform and hosted several virtual meetings some of noticeable examples are G20 and OPEC. We need to learn how to thrive in a digital work environment, we simply have no choice. Anecdotally, Generation Z believes that the rest of the world is finally being forced into a way of working that they have long considered completely normal. The numerous expected changes have a knock on effect on employee experience, requiring organisations to act now to address the many areas of employees' working life which will be impacted.

Key Insights for Employee Experience:



Don't lose the human connection



Focus (even more) on the wellbeing of your employees



Learn how to build relationships virtually



Respond to the needs of your multi-generational workforce

Whilst many of the points have long been on the HR agenda, their importance has been accelerated due to this crisis. Companies now have the opportunity to reassess everything they do, embracing concepts such as agile operating models and design thinking principles, to evaluate their processes and break down the great complexities.

And of course authentic leadership is a critical element of Employee Experience in uncertain times:

In the immediate term employees will be looking for their leaders to be flexible, open to changes in work patterns and empathetic to personal situations. Open and honest communication as well as integrity will build trust. This has been further intensified, by the quarantine period which provides time for self-reflection. Am I happy in this role? Am I fulfilled in my career? And most importantly: why am I here? These are questions which lead to a personal reassessment of purpose within the work context.

Coming out of this crisis our workforce will be looking for employers who have their backs, whom they can trust to lead them through difficult times authentically as and when they arise again; and who will be providing a sense of purpose throughout and after. This could be the greatest chance yet to attract and retain the best talent by creating a sense of belonging and loyalty, even amongst our restless workforce.

If you would like further information about workforce transformation in your organization, please contact us:

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