



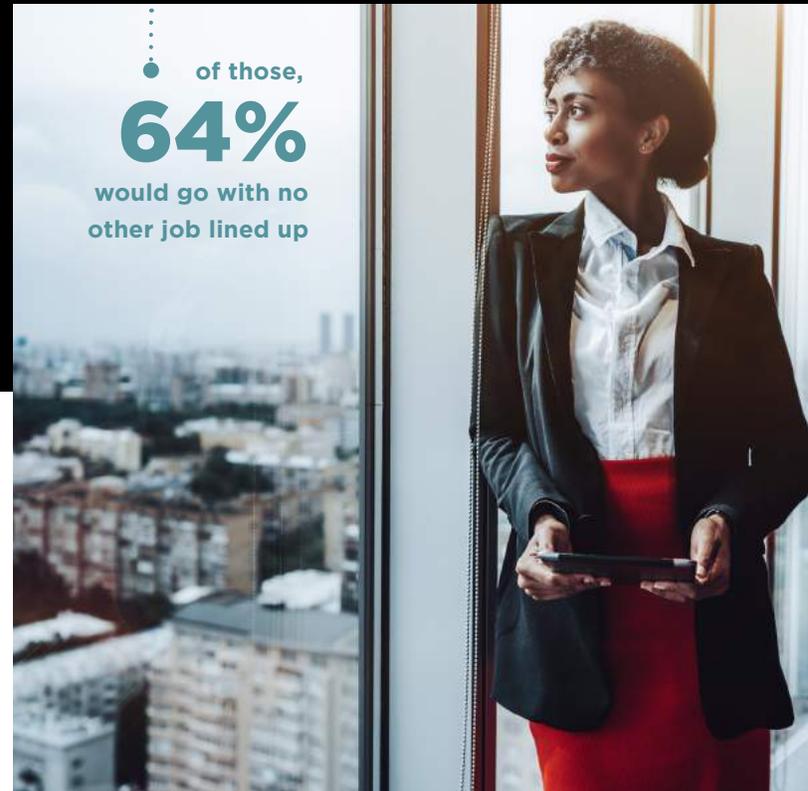
THE GREAT WORKPLACE RESET:

Adapting Your Company Culture
to Post-Pandemic Shifts

People are re-evaluating their relationship with work and the traditional workplace. Leadership may not be in touch with what their employees need. Now is the moment for employers to take the pulse of their workplace culture.

What is the canary in the coal mine that signals it's time for workplace culture to change? High turnover is one such indicator, but with data reflecting that people are increasingly thinking about quitting or quitting with no other job lined up, it implicates the state of the broader corporate world across industries.

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Social Cohesion and Employee Attrition

The pandemic has accelerated changes that were already in motion, primarily around technology and remote working. By the end of 2021, it's expected that 51% of knowledge workers worldwide will be working remotely¹. The mass influx of time spent at home has clearly given people time to reflect. A recent McKinsey survey² found that a staggering 40% of employees stated they would be somewhat likely to leave their job within the next three to six months, and of those, 64% would go with no other job lined up.

Tellingly, McKinsey's survey found that among the top reasons employees left their jobs, feeling valued by the organization and their manager, having a sense of belonging, and being surrounded by caring and trusting teammates ranked highest.

Forty-five percent also cited family as a crucial factor in their decision to leave. Other issues such as compensation, benefits or better offers from other companies were significantly less important than employers thought.

51%

of knowledge workers worldwide will be working remotely by the end of 2021



In a time when the Delta variant has put the possibility of a full return to the office on hold, what can employers do to get ahead of attrition?

The Role of Workplace Culture

The first step is understanding the role culture has to play in satisfying employees. Culture is the glue that holds a workplace together, driving a sense of value and pride in one's work, productivity and a focus on common goals. While it's inevitable that the switch to remote working would impact a company's culture, research has noted that teams that are socially cohesive at the beginning will function well regardless of distance or technology use³. That is a motivating factor for setting policies and cultivating values that will lay the foundation for a high-functioning workplace, distributed or not.

Understanding Your Workforce

Employers will need to continue to be sensitive to demographic trends as they consider cultural change. Today, the workplace continues to be multi-generational, with as many as five generations working together in an office at one time. A survey⁴ recently showed that while each generation shares certain expectations of the office environment, each prioritizes differently, with Gen Z valuing the office for visibility for promotions and Baby Boomers valuing the office for better access to resources and materials. Meeting the needs of people of all ages will factor into resetting workplace culture post-pandemic.

Diversity, Individuality and Flexibility

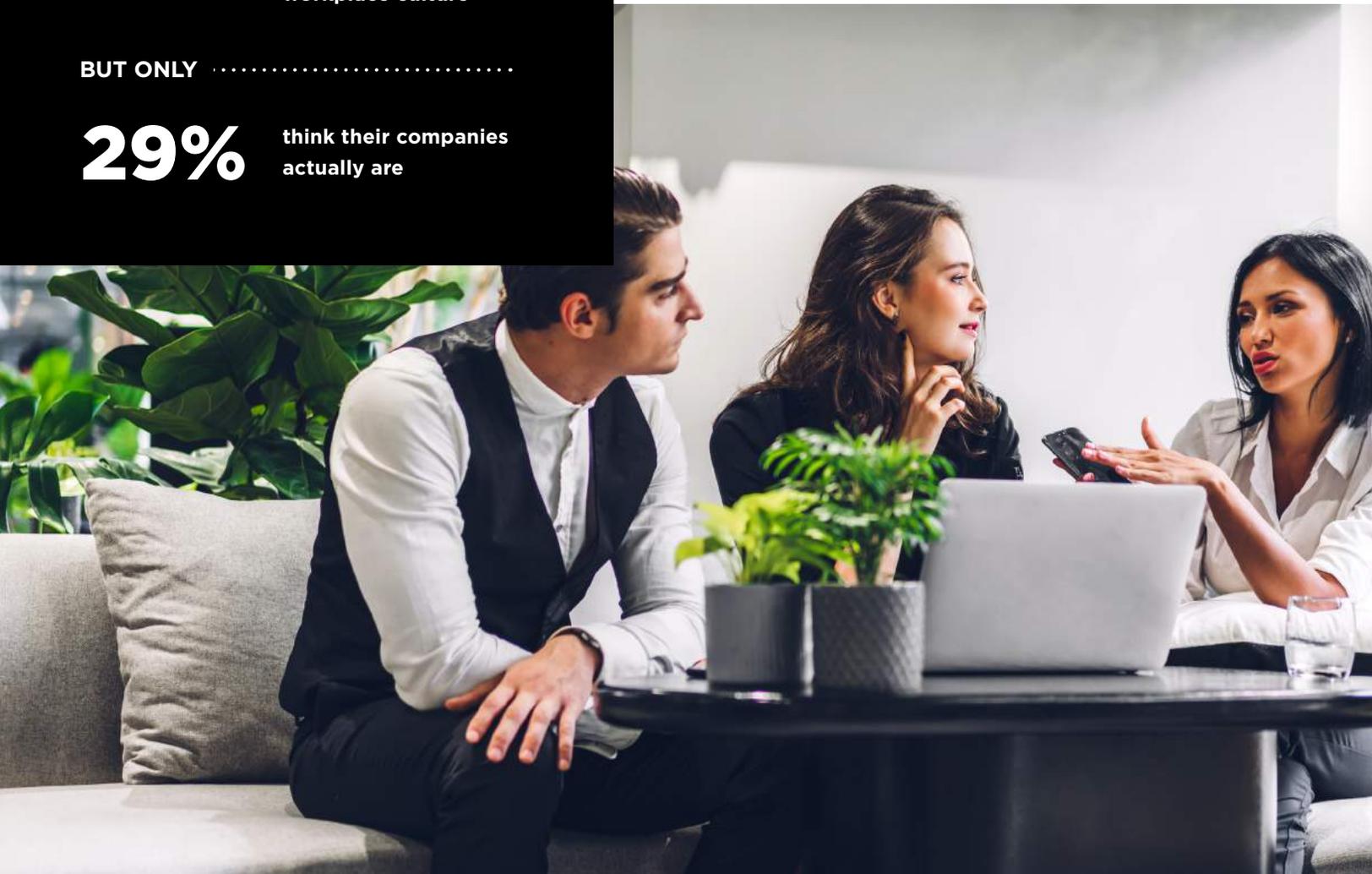
We also know there is an increased focus on diversity and renewed initiatives around equity and inclusion. A recent survey⁵ found that although 81% of employees consider diversity important for an effective workplace culture, only 29% felt their companies actually exemplified these values. Against this backdrop, the pandemic has also driven a greater desire for flexibility in the workday to attend to individual obligations and mental health needs.⁶ These trends speak to a need for more empathy, sensitivity to diverse backgrounds and greater attention to the individual within the corporate workplace.

Is your company's culture prepared to accommodate the complexities of the post-pandemic era?

81% of employees consider diversity important to workplace culture

BUT ONLY

29% think their companies actually are



Using Workplace Strategy to Evaluate Culture

Navigating the realities, trends and shifts in expectations will require a new savviness in planning from employers. It will take a willingness to use workplace strategy as a tool not just to gather data on headcount and space utilization, but to listen to employees and discover what they need to allow them to work happily and productively.

Employers can address employees' real concerns by studying and fine-tuning their workplace culture, while ensuring the physical space, growth plan and strategy support the organization's cultural goals. We see the following as essential considerations to effect meaningful change:



RESPONDING TO THE WHOLE EMPLOYEE.

Employees have always had responsibilities and stressors outside of the workplace. It's time to start creating workplace cultures that embrace this, not stigmatize it. The ability of organizations to flex and adapt to remote working during the pandemic is a testimony to the fact that work, and productivity, persist in and around home environments. If the two can coexist successfully, why not consider how your workplace can better accommodate the whole employee to create a greater sense of trust, value and belonging?



DON'T JUST LOOK AT WHAT YOUR COMPETITION IS DOING.

It's important to understand how your competition is operating, but obsessing too much over keeping up with the Joneses can distract you from what's happening in your own house. Human capital is your greatest asset, and your employees' unique needs should come first. Listen to your people, and you will hear what your organization needs to prosper and retain talent.



EXAMINE ROOT CAUSES - DON'T USE BAND-AIDS.

The corporate world's adoption of wellness programs has brought a welcome focus on physical and mental health in the workplace, supporting positive habits such as exercise, yoga, meditation and good nutrition. But if your company's culture is characterized by overwork and burnout, chances are, your wellness program is functioning as a band-aid. Meaningful change comes from examining root causes of employee frustration or attrition, such as overwhelming workloads, poor management or lack of support and resources⁷. Addressing employee concerns with honesty will build a culture that lets employees know their work and well-being are valued.

RE-PRIORITIZE COMMUNICATION.

Current attrition rates are all the more surprising given that we have just come through a period of high unemployment and unprecedented uncertainty. This shows that periods of doubt have the power to rattle confidence and inspire people to question their circumstances and direction. Organizations can balance out periods of ambiguity or anxiety by re-committing to consistent, clear and empathic communication with their employees. That will become even more important the more distributed teams become.

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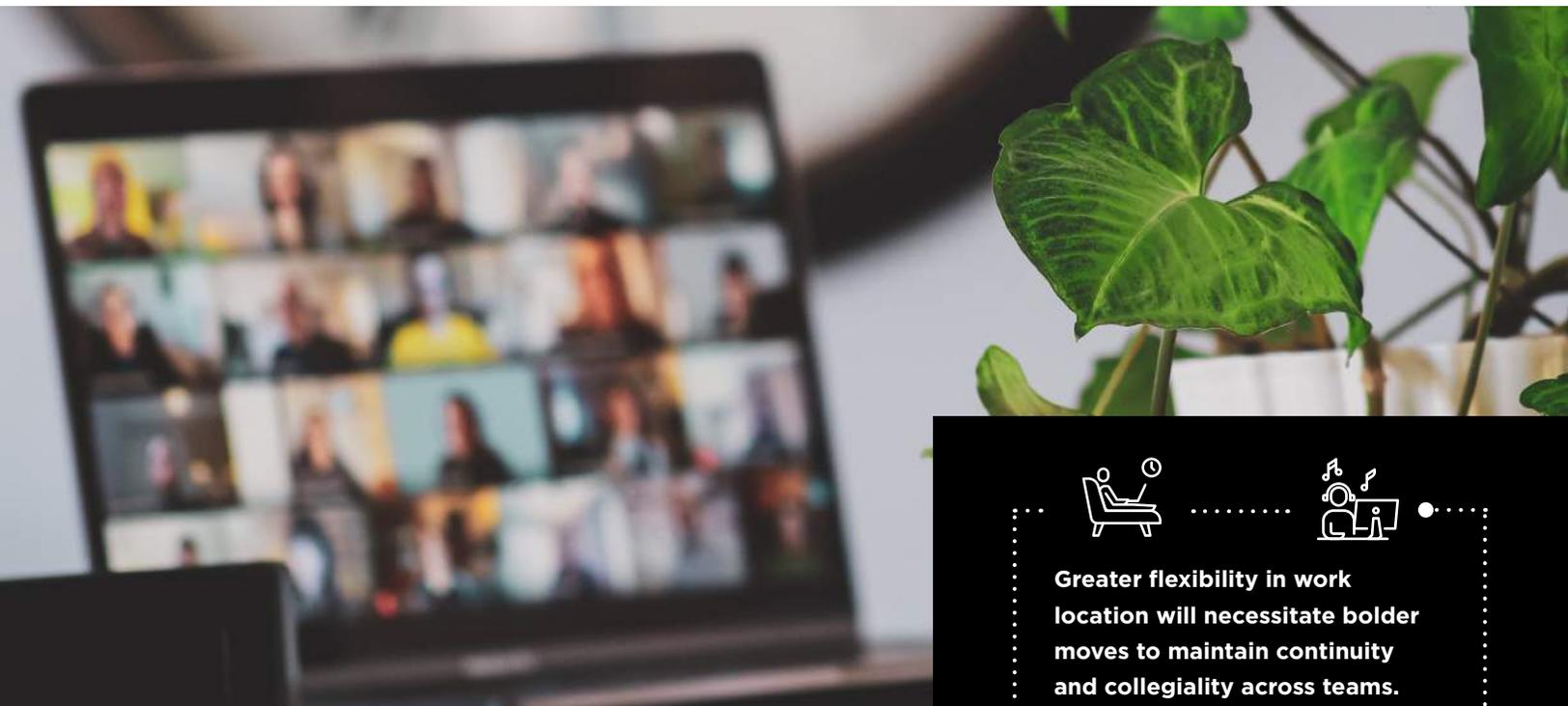
EMBRACE TECHNOLOGY THAT BALANCES THE SCALES IN A HYBRID WORKPLACE.

With so many companies anticipating or turning to hybrid models that allow working from either home or office, organizations must prepare for how it could affect their culture. To avoid creating a two-tier system, wherein employees feel they are treated differently working from one location over another, investing in appropriate IT infrastructure now will help bridge the gap. Though it may seem far-fetched to some, companies are already investing in virtual reality technologies⁹ that will attempt to marry the feeling of collaborating in person while still remote. Greater flexibility in work location will necessitate bolder moves to maintain continuity and collegiality across teams.



HIRE FLEXIBLE LEADERS.

Management is the key to maintaining the spirit of teamwork across a distributed team. Having some employees at arm's length and others less so will require managers to flex their styles to accommodate a variety of circumstances. Developing best practices and training that equip managers to maintain connections and strong teams regardless of location will perpetuate healthy workplace culture, whether it's taking place on Zoom or in a desk pod.



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Building a Workplace Culture that Makes Sense in the Post-Pandemic Era

The corporate world adapted to the challenges of the pandemic at record speed. But the challenges keep coming in the form of rising attrition rates as people demand more of their jobs and the workplace. Organizations serious about rising to the occasion will take a deliberate and sophisticated look at their



culture and build their findings into a comprehensive, human-centric workplace strategy. Addressing gaps or shortcomings with honesty, humility and empathy can breed the mutual satisfaction and success that enable employees and companies to thrive.

SOURCES:

- ¹ Gartner (2021). Press release. [\[View Source\]](#)
- ² De Smet, A., Dowling, B., Mugayar-Baldocchi, M. and Schaninger, B. (2021). “‘Great Attrition’ or ‘Great Attraction’? The choice is yours.” McKinsey Quarterly, September 2021. [\[View Source\]](#)
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- ⁴ McLaurin, J.P. (2021). “How Younger Workers’ Preferences and Workstyles Will Define the Future Workplace,” Gensler. [\[View Source\]](#)
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- ⁷ Gallup. (2020). Employee Burnout: Causes and Cures. [\[View Source\]](#)
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