



THE IMPACT OF REMOTE WORK

On Your Mission Statement, Core Values
and Employee Value Proposition

THE IMPACT OF COVID 19 AND THE COVID VARIANT ON AN ORGANIZATION'S MISSION STATEMENT, CORE VALUES AND THEIR EMPLOYEE VALUE PROPOSITION IS SIGNIFICANT. WHEN COMPANIES SCRAMBLED TO REACT QUICKLY AND ADJUST THEIR BUSINESS OPERATIONS AND POLICIES CAUSED BY THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC OVER THE PAST 21 MONTHS IT HAS HAD A RIPPLE EFFECT ON THE HUMAN CAPITAL IN THEIR ORGANIZATIONS. WHILE THE MAJORITY OF COMPANIES WERE ABLE TO SWIFTLY AND ADROITLY ADAPT TO A WFH REMOTE BUSINESS MODEL FROM AN IN-OFFICE WORK ENVIRONMENT, IT HAS RESULTED IN MANY ORGANIZATIONS NOW HAVING A DISCONNECT WITH A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF THEIR EMPLOYEES WHO HAVE BECOME COMFORTABLE AND PREFER TO WORK REMOTELY.

Perhaps no better indication of this issue is illustrated by the recent Robert Half Survey of Hiring Trends in July 2021 which revealed that 49% of employees prefer a hybrid work environment. The same study also showed that 71% of employers prefer an in-office work environment. As a result of this significant work environment preference gap between employers and employees, companies are evaluating the impact this has on retaining their top talent and their approach to recruiting new talent while trying to uphold their mission statement, core values and employee value proposition that were developed prior to the advent of Covid 19.

Post-Covid 19, some organizations' mission statements now have inherent friction embedded within them. For instance, quite a few companies espouse delivering high quality, personalized customer service as well as being dedicated to serving the needs, safety and well-being of their employees. The impact of Covid 19 has resulted in many large corporations like AT&T suspending customer business travel for their employees unless approved by senior executive management, so personal face to face customer meetings no longer occur as frequently. Likewise, with organizations requiring all employees to return to work in the office, many employees feel that their company doesn't care about their safety. In addition, some organizations state that they are practicing CDC guidelines but fall short in enforcing these policies. Employees cite examples that their office cubicles are not located 6 feet apart from other employees, the Security Department does not enforce mask wearing by food delivery

service workers who walk around the office without a mask or match the names on driver's licenses with the covid vaccine cards for un-masked employees, consultants and contract workers.

One common example of an organization's core values listed on their website is being innovative and using technology to serve customers' needs without compromising personal service. Although companies that have leveraged technology to work remotely have maintained or enhanced worker efficiency, the tradeoff is less face-to-face interface with customers which may detract from customer relationship building or personalized service. The benefits of a remote or hybrid working environment are that it can enhance a company's employee value proposition. Many technology companies have seized the opportunity to reduce their office space footprint and enable existing and new employees to work from anywhere remotely. This allows them to attract more talent, obtain high quality employee referrals for new positions, increase worker flexibility and quality of life, improve employee engagement and productivity, save employees' commuting costs, reduce corporate office lease expense and improve employee physical and mental wellness. Likewise, companies that allow employees to work from home or on a hybrid basis enable their employees to have more flexibility to assist with childcare when school is not in session, elder care and assist those family members that are immuno-compromised. This is critical to employees given the fact that the Covid Variant is more contagious and has been proven to be more easily transmitted by children as well as vaccinated employees.

Although remote work and hybrid work environments may work well for technology companies and other industries, it may not be suitable for industries or departments of companies where personalized face to face meetings are critical for success. Some organizations highly value collaboration and require their employees to be high touch and responsive to their customers' needs, thus their work environment is more conducive to face to face interpersonal discussions. For instance, companies that require complex, multi-year, high-ticket sales and relationship building are better suited for in-office face to face meetings rather than Zoom or Microsoft Teams videoconference meetings. Therefore, the Aerospace, Energy, Semiconductor and Machinery & Equipment industries are generally not as conducive to a work from home or hybrid working environment. However, for some companies that primarily are a work from office environment, individual departments within their organization may be more suitable to a work from home environment. For instance, while senior management may be required for in office work for cross-functional lateral thinking meetings to optimize business decision outcomes, that same company's customer service call center, order entry or back-office administration department could possibly operate more effectively in a remote, work from home environment.

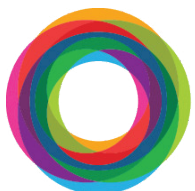
During Covid 19, some individuals missed the socialization and interaction with their fellow employees and prefer to work in an office environment, or at least a blend of work from home and at the office, or hybrid work environment. Conversely, some self-disciplined workers who like to complete work ahead of deadlines, who don't like idle banter, or a noisy office environment prefer to work remotely. Employees who enjoy quiet time to create new ideas, like Marketing or Advertising staff may be more effective in a remote work environment. Some professional services and financial services firms that have allowed their staff to work from home also require the employee to accept a lower salary since they can now work remotely from anywhere and the company no longer needs to compensate them to commute and work in a higher cost of living area like New York City, Los Angeles, Boston or the Silicon Valley.

Likewise, departments who are geographically dispersed and work in different time zones have adjusted effectively and are very productive in a work from home environment. They have become accustomed to working independently as well as collaborating on Zoom or Microsoft Teams videoconferences. In addition, they feel safer working remotely than previously where they have had to join ad hoc conference call meetings on a hands-free cell phone while trying to drive home commuting.

Covid 19 has also caused organizations to review their benefits programs and be more flexible to meet their employees changing benefit needs. The pandemic has increased the need for employees to have more childcare services, children and elder care health services and has required employees to cook more from home to avoid crowded indoor restaurants and spend more time with house cleaning in order to follow CDC guidelines. Some companies have surveyed and responded to their employees' changing benefit needs while others have not, resulting in an increase in employee disengagement.

Whether a company has chosen a work in the office, work remotely, or a hybrid work environment, the common denominator for high performing organizations which have effectively responded to the remote work environment brought on suddenly by the response to Covid 19, is utilizing clear and consistent communication and messaging to employees. The more progressive Human Resources Departments of well managed corporations have proactively initiated discussions with their employees about the issues they are facing from Covid 19 and the Covid Variant and their current needs in order to work effectively. They are also providing their managers with coaching skills to be empathetic, flexible and supportive to their staff to ensure a safe physical and emotional work environment.

Communicating a clear and consistent message about the new benefits available to cope with Covid, new policies for companies and departments, exceptions to policy for employees (for those with immuno-compromised relatives) or departments with unique needs is imperative to mitigate confusion and inconsistencies that could lead to work force disengagement and costly turnover of high performing talent. These policies should be communicated to all levels of employees as well as new hires and existing staff, along with the business rationale for them, in order to maintain a high level of employee engagement.



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