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CONSULTING

Re-Imagining eBook

Evolving Your Workforce
in the Wake of Covid-19

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Re-Imagining - Why Now?

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Many papers and articles have been published (and continue to be) about how to manage the workforce, address recruiting and talent concerns as well as evolve business cultures and purpose in the wake of Covid-19. There is so much information to work through that it could become a full-time job for any individual with HR or C-level responsibilities to wade through each piece of content.

At Jarred Consulting we know that while this information is incredibly insightful you don't necessarily have the time to read and digest so much data and guidance, which is why we've created this Re-Imagining eBook. A tool for you to refer to, as and when you need it. We've carefully picked through the gems of experience and sound advice from the likes of Gartner, McKinsey, Deloitte, Bain and Company, to name a few, adding snippets from our own experiences of working with professionals such as yourself. The world is changing and there has never been a greater opportunity to re-assert your leadership and expertise to help build a new way of working that will create a sustainable path for the organisations and the people that you serve.

As highlighted in the **Economist**, Mark Carney, the retiring governor of the Bank of England, reiterated that the pandemic has caused a seismic shift in how companies will be judged based on how they treated their people during this crisis. He and many economists are challenging the status quo. There is no doubt that you, as an HR professional or business leader, have a vital role to play in this evolution.

Chapter One

Resilience, Reflection and Re-Imagining in the Aftermath of Covid-19

If the headlines are to be believed Covid-19 is anything but over. Organisations across the globe have risen to the challenge of mobilising their workforces in the blink of an eye and transforming their businesses in ways that some never imagined to be possible. As **Deloitte recently highlighted** it's estimated that some 2.7 billion people, or more than four out of five workers in the global workforce, have been affected by lockdown and stay-at-home measures.

Moving On

We're now moving from the initial shock and crisis management phase of equipping our people with the right tools for working from home. As we digest the news that the pandemic is likely to remain with us until some point in 2021 business leaders must become more resilient. Now is the time to reflect and re-imagine the very essence of their companies. As far back as 2003 a Harvard Business Review article **"The Quest for Resilience"** stated that:

> *"The world is becoming turbulent faster than organisations are becoming resilient."*
>
> Harvard Business Review, The Quest for Resilience

That was long before the last recession and now, 17 years later while many companies have improved their ability to respond to the ebbs and flows of trading it's fair to say that no one could have predicted the state the world is currently in for the economies or businesses or indeed countries. The 2003 article makes a clear point that today's leaders need to consider:

> *"In the past, executives had the luxury of assuming that business models were more or less immortal. Companies always had to work to get better, of course, but they seldom had to get different—not at their core, not in their essence."*
>
> Harvard Business Review, The Quest for Resilience

From Resilience to Evolution

Our ability to respond to the massive change around us now, and to re-imagine the very model on which our businesses were built, may be the biggest predictor of future success, and, indeed, survival for many.

Business resilience is both about being able to anticipate and respond to changes that impair the ability of the organisations to both earn money and deliver on their purpose – the real reason they exist – and to bounce back when change happens. Therefore, it's key that businesses set themselves up to withstand shocks and deal with uncertainty, remaining agile to change before change becomes necessary. However, at this time, when no one could have anticipated the shockwave that has been felt across the globe, businesses need to consider how they can now best support and respond to each other, their employees and the communities and countries in which they operate.

That is why now is a crucial time for reflection. In business, as in life, we all need some form of feedback mechanism, so we know we are on track and heading in the right direction. That's a key measure of resilience. The decisions leaders make today will inevitably have an impact on the results their organisations achieve tomorrow. As the Deloitte paper, **Workforce Strategies for Post-COVID-19 Recovery**, states:

> *"Reflection may be the most important step in the recovery process. Leaders need to dedicate time to reflect on what has worked and what has been missed in the crisis response."*

Productive Reflection

To reflect in a positive way doesn't mean one CEO sitting and thinking on his or her own. It means being brave and seeking input from all areas of the business and deliberately making time for it so that you can prepare for what comes next. The following steps will help you and your team to focus:

1. **Recognise that no one person has all the information**, and everyone has a view! Just because someone brings a different perspective to your own doesn't mean either of you is wholly right, or wholly wrong.

> *"In my experience, vertical ownership of strategy so that there is true involvement at all levels, is really helpful."*
>
> Dr Nigel Spencer, Saïd Business School, Oxford.

> *"Letting juniors lead projects and even 'teach' their bosses with activities such as reverse mentoring can be really effective; it builds engagement and helps you to create a truly resilient organisation."*
>
> Dr Nigel Spencer, Saïd Business School, Oxford

2. **Self-Awareness is key.** In any environment it's those who are most self-aware that have the most 'followers'! Leadership is about two things: leading from the front and generating 'followership'. Having an awareness of how you 'are', how you feel and how you react is key. Self-awareness leads to a greater authentic leadership style and at times like these true authenticity is needed.

Re-Imagining

Once you've asked the difficult questions you can take the positive step to re-imagining how your business should operate and how you want to engage your workforce.

1. **Encourage and drive innovation.** Businesses and people need to be able to use their ingenuity to get things done whether in the office, factory or at home. In turbulent times innovation is what drives success. What worked yesterday may not work today – it's time to rethink EVERYTHING. People need to be given the time, tools and permission to think differently. Innovation can't be left to one person or one department; now is the time to make innovation part of everyone's job description.

2. **Be optimistic but realistic.** Leaders in any business must lead when times are good and when times are tough. That's what the 'followers' expect. We may not have all the answers but keeping a sense of optimism grounded in the reality of the situation is key.

Seizing the Opportunity to Redesign

As you reflect and re-imagine you will need to reset all workforce assumptions. The workplace and the way in which we work has changed forever. It sounds harsh but the skills and talent you needed yesterday may no longer be required for today and in this new world. Gartner research shows that 48% of employees will work remotely after the pandemic, up from 30% pre-pandemic. Organisations will need to re-imagine key aspects of their business models and, as such, business leaders and HR experts will need to assess and identify the impact on their company's talent and skills requirements.

> *"Organisations that can sense and seize on these new talent realities are going to secure a competitive advantage."*
>
> Scott Engler, VP, Advisory, Gartner.

1. **Adopt an agile planning approach** to identify skills requirements and their availability within your organisation. Assess talent retainment and management.
2. **Embrace remote working** but ensure you have the right tools and technology in place to enable flexibility, drive productivity and, ultimately, you will make cost savings. You may have to spend before you save!
3. **Employee experience** – provide flexible working options and rethink that experience for a remote/mixed workforce.

As a recent Korn Ferry report, **Crisis-Proofing Your Talent Processes**, highlighted:

> *"To succeed, you need to recognise that this is a completely new way of engaging and interacting with people – and you need to redesign your processes accordingly."*

> *"In the developmental heat of the situation, we need and are likely to see a new breed of effective leader emerge.*
>
> *This leader will need to:*
>
> - *Step into, not away from, development.*
> - *Embrace uncertainty.*
> - *Navigate complexity.*
> - *Lead with empathy, curiosity, passion.*
> - *Be fast, decisive, and bold.*
> - *Run towards the fire."*

How to Reflect and Re-Imagine

TOP TIPS

- ☆ Reflect in a positive way.
- ☆ No one person has all the information.
- ☆ Be optimistic but realistic.
- ☆ Encourage and drive innovation.
- ☆ Embrace the opportunity to redesign.

Chapter Two

Discoverability and the Need for Workforce Futuring

Once you have reflected and re-imagined how your organisation needs to move forward you need to assess the talent you have within your four walls and how you're going to re-engage them in this next phase. Although we're now officially in a recession as James Allen recently wrote in the **Bain report** "we will likely take two steps forward with the economy, and one or two steps back with the virus."

Discovering The Best

The report goes on to highlight that while customers have been at the forefront for businesses now is the moment that we are (finally) recognising that we need our people to fulfil that very role. It's time to celebrate that much needed 'essential' worker. It's time for CEOs to 'power up' and re-tool their firms to jumpstart this new beginning in their business. To do that they need to:

1. **Preserve the best of lockdown** – harness the smaller teams and more fast, agile way of working. Embrace the tight connections between the front line and C-suite to ensure the right people work together to make critical decisions. That could mean involving middle management far more than you used to.

2. **Co-ordination and accountability** – now is the time to strengthen both but without lumbering people with over-planning. Give them the right direction and then a free reign to achieve.

3. **Harness sustainability** – we are on this path for the foreseeable future. Empower your people but ensure it's done at a sustainable pace. The speed with which businesses and leaders adapted to the initial phase of Covid-19 was critical however no one can sprint all the time. Now is the time to become disciplined and act like Mo Farah as opposed to Usain Bolt!

4. **Define while remaining transparent** – this is extremely tricky, but employees will respect their bosses if they are open and honest. Some difficult decisions are being made so you need to communicate clearly why some roles are staying, being created and why some are no longer needed.

> *"80% of the workforce, 92% of managers and 77% of senior leaders feel poorly prepared for the future. Manage change and build resilience into your talent strategy by incorporating internal and external talent intelligence and enabling stakeholders across the organisation."*
>
> The Unbounded Workforce, Gartner

Shedding the complexities around people management will enable the business to move fast. One of the best ways to do this is to divide your strategy into two distinct agendas; (i) delivery and (ii) development. That way you'll be able to identify which employees can expertly deliver and meet customer needs while others can focus on finding the solutions for future challenges.

Your Talent Pool

This will help you to identify your needs and match the talent from within that is most appropriate for the task. It will also enable you to forecast what skills will be required to take the business forward and areas where certain expertise is no longer needed. If you're part of a larger organisation there is the opportunity to create a talent pool where other departments can embrace these skills instead. This means you can continue creating your dream team while allowing others to explore opportunities without facing the immediate threat of redundancy.

Only last year Unilever introduced an internal talent marketplace that matches employees to projects across the group to stretch their skills and knowledge. Little did they know how valuable that move would be but several large firms such as IBM and Infosys have taken similar smart approaches to HR and managing their talent. As Jeroen Wels, Unilever's executive vice-president of HR recently told the **FT** this:

> *"Gives us a frictionless way of letting people apply to jobs…because they've been selected based on their skills, experiences, and interests."*

The authors of a **McKinsey & Company report** highlighted in their 'Covid-19 and reskilling the workforce paper', that:

> *"Companies should craft a talent strategy that develops employees' critical digital and cognitive capabilities, their social and emotional skills, and their adaptability and resilience. Now is the time for companies to double down on their learning budgets and commit to reskilling. Developing this muscle will also strengthen companies' future disruptions."*

Developing The Right Mindset

Once you've identified and engaged the right people into roles you need to re-establish, or potentially, introduce a new social contract with your team. If dealt with in small steps this isn't quite the minefield it appears. You need to:

1. **Start with purpose**
   Set priorities so teams are clear on their objectives and how their day-to-day actions connect with the wider business purpose (more on this in Chapter 4).

2. **Remain organic and embrace the changes**
   Reiterate that the business is on a journey that will need to change and adapt as the world changes around it. If change is embraced, then the team should be able to cope with and address challenges as they arise.

3. **Maintain two-way conversation**
   Encourage open, candid conversations especially as you challenge your newly formed team to step up and embrace the journey ahead. But remember to listen.

> *"Systematising how an organisation celebrates execution, builds business and drives change isn't something that is designed at the top and delivered, like tablets from the mountain. It's the result of long conversations with the people in your mission-critical roles. They have to be engaged in the design and own it. And it's a good thing if that engagement process takes time."*
>
> Sarah Elk, co-author, Doing Agile Right

4. **Clarify delivery and development agendas and scale them**
   These agendas will require different ways of working so ensure you are able to measure and test. That way you can celebrate the successes and easily identify areas for improvement. By taking this approach you'll have greater clarity and be able to integrate and co-ordinate across both as progress is made.

5 **Support mission critical roles**
The agility in business born out of Covid-19 and the urgency to survive means that traditional management hierarchies no longer exist. They don't need to be rebuilt for that matter either. However, CEOs do need to praise performance and delivery continually to ensure people feel a common purpose across the business and focus on being part of that commitment.

"As the operating model evolves quickly to accommodate a rapidly changing environment, the key is to iterate strategic workforce planning to determine the right skills to develop in a "just in time" manner. These learning journeys are tailored to each specific role, but companies can increase their scale and cost effectiveness by delivering the majority of training digitally."

"Organisations shouldn't launch reskilling initiatives and then disband them after the crisis passes; whatever talent reskilling or redeployment you do now should also be used to expand your reskilling capabilities going forward. By building your own institutional learning, and capturing what works and what doesn't now, you put yourself in a position to apply those lessons during disruptive events in the future."

McKinsey, Covid-19 and Reskilling the Workforce.

6 **Strike the balance between focus and co-ordination**
Teams that are ruthless in their focus are more likely to meet their goal. And while we advise that there is some form of fluidity it's important that they feel empowered to triumph. However, co-ordination with other areas of the business is crucial to the overall success. CEOs will need to demonstrate that true attainment comes from sharing resources, collaborating with other departments and ensuring they all reach their common goal.

Staying Alongside The Future

Re-imagining your business must now become the new normal. Just because you evolve and rise out of the ashes of Covid-19 does not mean there won't be another crisis on the horizon. Your business and leadership team need to be resilient and to do that they must never lose their newly found agile thinking and approach. This pandemic has presented an opportunity to question everything and adapt. Uncertainty is now the only certain part of all our lives.

"I'm an optimist and, for the most part, the Covid-19 crisis has accelerated trends we've been watching for a decade now. We will shed a lot of the complexity of the professional management system and we'll become more agile. And in this context, I tell CEOs to be bold. Make the hard decisions now to strip out complexity and essentially free those mission-critical roles."

James Root, Chairman of Bain Futures.

Workforce Futuring

TOP TIPS

- Harness the smaller teams and more fast, agile way of working.
- Be open and honest - communicate clearly.
- Shed the complexities around people management for a more agile business.
- Identify your needs and match the talent, within your organisation or explore talent pools.
- Re-establish or introduce a new social contract with your team.

Chapter Three

Culture and Purpose

Being open to reflecting and discovering or perhaps re-discovering what your organisation's new needs are will help you to develop your purpose and culture so that you can lead your workforce into the many phases of recovery from Covid-19. Despite the world-wide crisis research proves time and again that a positive work culture matters. This year's **"The Culture Economy"** found that 1 in 5 UK workers quit their jobs due to a bad workplace culture.

Culture Matters More Than Ever

There is no doubt that a business with a happy and engaged workforce that feels valued by their employers will succeed. **Glassdoor research** last year reported that poor company culture is costing the UK economy £23.6 billion a year. Now that change and uncertainty is an accepted norm, leaders within businesses will strive like never before to stay ahead. Business leaders need to continually check whether the organisational design in place is fit for purpose, for now, but more importantly, for the future. Or at least, they should if they want to cultivate the right work culture and retain, as well as attract, great talent.

If carefully developed, a company culture will enable everyone in the business to do his or her job more effectively. The culture will be significantly enhanced if the organisational design clarifies authority, responsibility, and accountability, and is aligned with the business strategy, reinforcing the values that are important to the organisation's success.

How to Build A New Culture

Now is the time to invigorate employees, build distinctive new capabilities, and attract and retain clients. It is critical to understand the culture you currently have, before trying to shift the needle. Cultural data driven insights and sentiment analysis is fast becoming a new method of measuring employee engagement. Organisational intelligence tools such as our partner **Temporall's Workbench** platform helps businesses and their leaders understand where they are, what to do next and in what order.

A strong corporate culture should support innovation, agility and operational efficiencies and consider the following:

1. **Ownership**
Leaders need buy-in from their employees and should encourage individuals to take ownership. If business leaders can build an 'ownership mentality' across their workforce, the odds of success increase dramatically.

'Owners' take responsibility for their team and organisation, signalling to colleagues and stakeholders their commitment. And all it takes to be an owner is to act like one. For employees to feel they can act like an 'owner', they need to be empowered and given permission to take charge of their 'part' of leading the business forward.

2. **Baby steps**
We used to say that wholesale changes can often seem overwhelming, however the last six months have proved that businesses can transform their operations overnight. However, as you start to evolve in this new world it is sensible to break goals into smaller components. That way the effort can become a more sustainable and successful way to consistently address and transform the business. Assigning these components to employees so they can 'own' the journey will enable everyone to feel that they can help drive the change required.

3. **Leading by example**
Leader's own conscious and unconscious beliefs drive decisions and behaviours, and repeated behaviours become leadership practices. Eventually these practices become the patterns of leadership culture. Everyone is responsible for creating these patterns.

4. **Anti-hierarchy**
An article in Forbes in late December 2019 highlighted a number of work trends that would significantly change how people think about jobs, how they work and how their time is valued. Little did the contributor, **Charles Towers-Clark**, realise at the time how pertinent some of his observations would be:

"Another trend… is that of companies forgoing traditional roles and departments – and all the territorialism that goes with them – to focus on purpose-built projects that thrive without the need for departments. Focusing on specific projects encourages a more concentrated effort from project members to complete a distinct goal and have a greater effort/reward ratio than the status of a role and department ever could. While this trend is harder to measure, I expect a slow and steady shift towards project-based organisational structures. This is because the same workforce that rightly expects equality, honesty, and respect from their employers, also has no patience with the 'because I said so' rhetoric that comes with fixed departments and arbitrary role definitions."

Charles Towers-Clark, Contributor, Forbes

The New Culture Club

As discussed in the previous chapter, the key to ensuring the best level of success of any change programme is to identify people in the business who have the right mindsets, energy and enthusiasm to help drive the change. Of course, it is also important to assess, in advance, what skills, behaviours, knowledge and capabilities will be required to drive the change the organisation is looking for. Planning in advance is critical to success but as we've all discovered time is a luxury that few can afford at the moment.

Once individuals have been identified and the planning process has been completed the leaders of change need to equip their people. Empowering others isn't about giving people 'enough rope' it's about aligning their capabilities and investing in them to help them drive change. They need to be prepared and not just left to hang.

From there they need to have clarity of direction, underpinned by the agreed purpose and values of the business. And this is where the senior team need to lead by example – they need to trust, engage and most importantly, empower others.

Driving Change

Driving change throughout an organisation takes commitment. Everyone, across the entire business, needs to persist; they need to trust one another and support one another through challenging times and celebrate the small wins along the way.

The last decade has been one of the most restless of our time and that turmoil is now the one constant we know. Businesses that create and maintain a culture capable of riding the waves of change will be the ones that survive and thrive.

Finding Purpose

Never doubt people's ability to find purpose. When they identify with it, they will embrace it wholly and commit to it in a way that leaves you bursting with pride. As the HR professional or business leader it is your job to find and communicate that purpose that taps into the abundant talent around you. Backed up by our partner's **Contexis research**, we believe that three key cultural markers; ownership, trust and contextual clarity are the foundation of an organisation's purpose. The Contexis Index provides robust metrics that reveal how purpose is working and where its effect is blocked. It employs rigorous scales and reports metrics, in detail, by demographic (age, sex, seniority, time in business etc.) and location. Remember when Covid-19 first hit the UK:

"More than a million UK people volunteered (for free) to help their neighbours during this crisis. Hundreds of thousands went out to find new roles when their old jobs suddenly disappeared. People want to be included and to have a mission in life and to help. Your role (or People Team as the author conveys) is to ensure that your business has a clear purpose and lets everyone know how they are important and how they can play a part."

Matt Collington, HR Director

Culture and Purpose

TOP TIPS

- Understand the culture you have before trying to shift the needle.
- Encourage individuals to take ownership across your workforce.
- Identify people who have the right mindsets, energy and enthusiasm to help drive change.

Chapter Four

Responsibility Like Never Before

Much has been written about when life returns to normal but if we're all honest with ourselves, life will never entirely return to the way it was pre-Covid-19. And some of that is good news. Remote working now means that presentism in the office has been quashed for good, or has it? Has video conferencing taken over from the expectation to be seen in the workplace?

> *"Talent decisions made now will define employer brands for years to come. Organisations demonstrating their commitment to employees now will be viewed as top-tier employers."*
>
> Gartner, Future of Work Trends Post-Covid-19

Evolving Responsibilities

Senior leaders have never faced so much complexity in their working lives. Trying to ensure their business survives while also faced with responsibility of the psychological and physical welfare of employees as well as their own is a massive ask. But that is what the modern leader is now faced with and, as the **Bain report** highlights, the degree of uncertainty about these harsh realities will limit the promises CEOs can make to their people. They need to let the truth be their guide as they consider the following four issues:

1 **Employment**
CEOs cannot promise job security to anyone as the early furloughing and now endless redundancies demonstrate. Leaders and employees need to enter a mutual understanding that the working world has changed for good and promises should not be made or taken seriously. As James Root, Chairman of Bain Futures says;

> *"I'm not sure we understand how fast economies will recover yet. And I'm not sure CEOs know how deeply they may need to cut their organisations. They may have scenarios, but the difference in outcomes are vast."*

2 **Resilience**
Rapidly adapting operations, working practices and even output has been the strength of the stealthy CEO however, building true resilience into an organisation is something else. Ensuring every element of the business can't be broken if a supplier goes bankrupt or only limited numbers of the workforce can return to their place of work is critical. Building a buffer around every aspect of the business is the only way to survive. Once again, many organisations are now taking a step further and trying to measure their organisational resilience.

3 **Culture**
We've talked at length about culture but as James Root warns;

> *"I applaud the confidence of many CEOs who say they will build working from home into the heart of their organisations, because I applaud flexibility. But I don't think we know how a culture will be created and nurtured in a world with fewer offices. I fear the 'cultureless firm.' We need to pause and consider this before we rush to new configurations of how we work and live."*

There are simple things that companies can embrace as new practices that will enhance remote working and try to retain key elements of the culture:

- Centralise information so that everyone can access it.
- Provide benefits that actually matter. Ask don't tell! Do they want technology to create a better working from home environment or do they want more time to spend exercising, meditating or being with their family? Now is the time to break the mould.
- Find socially distanced ways for people to re-group with their colleagues. Can you turn the annual kick off into an outdoor event with smaller groups or allow budget for teams to travel to a mutually accessible WeWork space so they can collaborate?

4 **Define while remaining transparent** – this is extremely tricky, but employees will respect their bosses if they are open and honest. Some difficult decisions are being made so you need to communicate clearly why some roles are staying, being created and why some are no longer needed.

5 **Growth**

The days of career paths striding side by side with growth plans are now a thing of the past. People will be grateful to simply be fully employed on their full salary while others are working full-time on a reduced salary because it's better than the other option, and, of course, many are simply being made redundant. Whatever the scenario, businesses can address growth in a different way that benefits the individual as well as the organisation.

For those on reduced salaries introducing training to enhance or explore skills and knowledge will pay dividends in terms of mutual relationships. Similarly, providing support to redundant employees to help re-skill and prepare them for this new world of working and future opportunities is the very fabric of being a decent employer and taking responsibility for some harsh decisions in an appropriate way.

Businesses that grow will be cautious of how they employ or retain talent in this new era. Everyone has to adjust their expectations, be patient and allow time for the dust to settle. Again, this is where transparency from business leaders is an absolute must.

In Gartner's 'Future of Work Trends Post-Covid-19' employers are urged to act as a social safety net for employees, noting that the "societal role of employers has grown, including above-market minimum wage, increased parental leave and push for gender equality."

To remain alongside this and the current changes HR needs to

> *"Expand the bounds of employee experience, especially to account for personal factors, such as family responsibilities. In addition, as HR becomes more strategic businesses should consider the need for a Chief Well-Being Officer or Chief Mental Health officer to advocate for the pandemic-changed needs of employees."*

Avoiding The Snap Back

> *"At this time of unprecedented disruption, both for businesses and for humanity, we can expect to see an extremely broad spectrum of responses from our leaders…There is no better time to observe the quality of leaders than when seismic challenges are rocking their world."*
>
> Korn Ferry, Crisis Proofing Your Talent Processes.

Now is the time to shift some undesirable behaviours for good. It is the responsibility of leaders and HR advisers to ensure expectations change and people don't replace what happened in the office with similar stressful behaviours remotely. If Covid-19 can help businesses to remove presenteeism then it needs to ensure we don't fall into digital versions;

1 **The Meeting Is Dead, Long Live Zoom**

Introduce practices to ensure your employees aren't spending every working hour on video calls. Just because physical meetings aren't taking place doesn't mean Zoom or Teams calls have to take over.

2 **Streamline Discussions, Give Back Time**
Create respect for one another by helping people to use one another's time more productively. Introduce practices such as:

- Meetings can only take place with agendas.
- Minutes must be taken so people focus on actions to reach their goal.
- Limit calls to 45 minutes only so people aren't drained and encourage them to block a 10-15 minute break after their calls so they can re-group and prepare for other work.
- Prepare and share crucial information ahead of a meeting. Ideally with enough time for individuals to review and prepare their own thoughts. That will create a more productive and collaborative engagement as well as a shorter call.
- Calendar cleanse – encourage teams to review their diaries together and agree whether everyone needs to be present on certain calls. If you're providing minutes and information this will help to stop virtual presenteeism.

3 **Goodbye Commute, Hello 12-hour Day!**
The hours gained back from commuting should not be used to lengthen the working day. People have lost their natural start to the day or wind down on the commute home. With only a few small steps from bedroom to desk people need to be encouraged to exercise or take the time to rest their brains. Otherwise burn out will become a very real problem.

The Korn Ferry Crisis-Proofing Your Talent Processes paper calibrated the top 300 leaders of one of their clients in the equivalent of a day, finding the key principles of effective virtual delivery by taking the following steps:

- Make it simple.
- Keep sessions short and focused.
- Include practical and interactive components.
- Incorporate elements that create emotional connection on a human level.

Trust and empathy almost burst from the seams of every being in the initial weeks of the pandemic. While it's hard to sustain such a level of goodwill the businesses that take responsibility for the well-being of their workforce and introduce better working practices and behaviours will be the ones with the committed and flexible support to see them through the challenges ahead.

Taking Responsibility

TOP TIPS

- ☆ Don't make promises.
- ☆ Build a buffer around every aspect of the business for operational resilience.
- ☆ Be transparent, patient and let the dust to settle.
- ☆ Share critical information centrally for easy access by all parties.
- ☆ Don't replace what happened in the office with similar stressful behaviours remotely.

Rethink Collaboration

Collaboration has also made some significant advances as a result of the pandemic as discussed by Kevin Martin, Financial Times in his **'Why HR chiefs must rethink talent management after Covid-19'** article. In the piece, Martin discusses how collaborative partnerships have been formed by complementary companies and industries, adapting to the challenging environment.

> *"For example, pharmaceutical firm Novo Nordisk and drinks maker Carlsberg recently worked together to convert ethanol into hand sanitiser, while innovative group 3M partnered with carmaker Ford to develop N-95 face masks at scale."*

As he goes on to say,

> *"Imagine how much more powerful collaborations can be with planned rotations of employees and cross-business programmes to strengthen understanding of the wider enterprise, or to build relationships with stakeholders such as customers and suppliers."*

If you're re-imagining your business and assessing your existing skills and knowledge, then re-defining your business does not need to be limited to your own four walls. As we've already highlighted it is the agile leaders with courage that will transform their organisation's very existence and enable it to thrive in such a tumultuous world.

> *"In 2017, the McKinsey Global Institute estimated that as many as 375 million workers – or 14% of the global workforce – would have to switch occupations or acquire new skills by 2030 because of automation and artificial intelligence. In a recent McKinsey Global Survey, 87% of executives said they were experiencing skill gaps in the workforce or expected them within a few years. But less than half of respondents had a clear sense of how to address the problem."*
>
> Covid-19 and Reskilling the Workforce, McKinsey

Thinking Big Means Uniting On Purpose

If significant enterprises like 3M and Ford can collaborate then it's possible for other businesses too. However, taking the time to assess whether your future collaborator is driven by a similar or complementary purpose to your own is crucial to a successful outcome and longer-term partnership. Just as you need the right talent and skills in your post Covid-19 organisation you need to look for the same attributes in your partners, whether it's an external business or another department within your group. A common sense of purpose will take you far and many of the points we covered in Chapter Four are relevant here.

Talent Pools

Similarly, if you establish a talent pool you may quickly find that some of the skills you don't necessarily require in your own organisation can be outsourced to projects with external partners. As Scott Engler, VP, Advisory at Gartner recently said:

> *"Organisations that can sense and seize on these new talent realities are going to secure a competitive advantage."*

Skills Clusters Not Roles

> *"By some estimates, Covid-19 is fast forwarding consumer and business digital adoption by five years. This "digitalisation at scale and velocity" is triggering massive skills shifts, with over 58% of workforces reporting skill transformations just since the onset of the pandemic."*
>
> The Unbounded Workforce, Gartner

As the Gartner paper goes on to highlight, official roles, once the currency of talent plans are now breaking down into clusters.

> *"These clusters determine an individual's capabilities and change the way we think about building and buying 'critical skills'. You're no longer bound to an organisation chart to assign critical workflows. 40% of employees say they frequently complete tasks that are outside of their job description, proving that roles are ill-designed to capture the skills required for today's workflows."*

Freelance And Gig Workers

According to **Micro Biz Magazine**, in January 2020, there were over 2 million freelancers in the UK, contributing approximately £125 billion to the UK economy. No doubt that number has already increased and as larger enterprises start to re-imagine their operations and structure the opportunity to select individuals with critical competencies will be greater. These workers are already used to working on multiple projects, different teams, workflows and across different technologies. Their ability to contribute to a future-ready workforce should not be underestimated.

According to **Gartner**, employers are using contingent workers to reduce costs and augment staff with 32% replacing full time employees (FTEs) with contingent workers as a cost saving exercise and 12% to fill labour shortages due to illness.

Location, Location, Location

For the majority, it no longer matters! The new remote workforce has, in the majority, proved to senior stakeholders that it can more than deliver the desired results. If leaders set workers up with the right technology and tools, then it really no longer matters whether the talent you need for your company resides in London or Luxembourg.

> *"75% of companies plan to permanently shift to more remote work post Covid-19. HR's imperative is to identify the estimated cost of talent across locations for target skills to capitalise on the cost-saving opportunities presented by remote work."*
>
> **The Unbounded Workforce, Gartner**

This should make recruiting diverse talent for future proofing your business easier and, in many ways, more cost-effective as overheads are greatly reduced.

Collaboration

TOP TIPS

- ☆ Think beyond your own four walls.
- ☆ Assess whether your future collaborator is driven by a similar purpose.
- ☆ Re-imagine your operations and select individuals with critical competencies.
- ☆ Invest in the right technology and tools to support your workforce, wherever they are.

Chapter Six

Re-Tooling In Preparation For More Turbulence Ahead

If you haven't done so already now is the time to review and shift your talent management practices and behaviours. If we're realistic we really have little choice but to adapt. So, if we're going to introduce changes then let's make it the best transformation possible. There will be winners and losers amongst business leaders across the globe and it's going to take courage but it's time to make some brave decisions.

A recent global study from **Webexpenses** revealed its users expect Covid-19 to accelerate digital transformation within business. 93% of respondents said they believe the pandemic will be a catalyst for digital transformation, with over a third (35%) stating they'll be looking to review their own departmental processes as a result of the enforced lockdown.

More than eight in 10 (84%) of those surveyed found themselves working from home during lockdown – mirroring the latest ONS data revealing 86% of those who worked from home recently did so due to the pandemic. However, this research also highlighted some not entirely unexpected home truths that business leaders must take note of when it comes to problems experienced by remote workers:

- 62% experienced access issues (such as accessing software, networks, files and broadband).
- 19% found themselves having to support colleagues to use technology.
- And 18% had inadequate equipment and hardware to support their work.

It's critical that if you're going to retain and attract the best talent for your business that you urgently review the tools and technologies in use. While cut-backs are being made there is no excuse not to provide your employees with the best future-proofed technology to help them be more productive and efficient. The knock-on benefit of this investment is that if people aren't feeling frustrated with poor technology then they will feel far happier in their work which drives loyalty as well as performance.

Once you have the right technology in place you also need to re-define your processes including your talent management practices. As the Korn Ferry report, **'Covid-19 and reskilling the workforce'** highlights there are four key principles to ensure your talent processes withstand the current crisis and help you shape the knowledge and skills that will steer your business to future success.

In the **'The Unbounded Workforce'** paper, Gartner encourages business leaders and HR to embed talent analytics to drive better planning decisions and resilience. By doing this you will be able to:

- Understand business strategy and talent implications.
- Analyse internal supply.
- Analyse external supply.
- Analyse external demand.
- And, ultimately, create a talent plan.

In taking this approach you will be able to identify the actions to take at each of the above stages, noting the barriers and then, as the report says, 'turbocharge' the decision process with business leaders thanks to the data-driven insight provided.

1 **Seize the moment**
There's no such thing as business as usual (BAU) so with leadership front and centre of everyone's minds you have the opportunity to re-define and refine your talent processes. It is the golden opportunity to remove those that have been less than effective.

2 **Measure what matters**
The pandemic has revealed clear differences between existing leaders. Some are rapidly figuring out new solutions to the unprecedented challenges their organisations are facing. Others are falling back on old playbooks, which may or may not work in the current environment. This will only further highlight the need to ensure your leaders have the right capabilities. The best approach for this is to build success profiles of the leaders your business needs and measure against them.

3 **Update your data**
In times of extreme pressure people are thrown into a new light. You'll quickly find things out about your leaders that you never knew before. Prepare to be disappointed as well as surprised. Fortunately, there will be people who will quickly establish themselves as genuine successors. While it's a difficult process your updated criteria will help to formally or informally assess your talent to support difficult but necessary decisions so that you can build a better workforce for the future.

4 **Virtual by design, not by default**
Do not be tempted to take the talent processes of the past and simply insert them into a different channel. They won't be fit for purpose and people will quickly notice. To be successful you need to accept that this is a completely new way of working and interacting with people. If you want a workforce for the future, you need to redesign your processes to reflect that desire.

Re-Tooling

TOP TIPS

- Review all tools and technologies currently in use.
- Redefine your processes including your talent management practices.
- Embed talent analytics to drive better planning decisions and resilience.
- Build success profiles of the leaders your business needs and measure against them.
- Assess your talent to support difficult but necessary decisions to build a better workforce for the future.

Future Learning and Development

As we've learnt from this pandemic sitting still is not an option. The opportunity to further enhancing skill has never been more important. A recent **Gartner CFO survey** revealed that almost three in four CFOs plan to "shift at least 5% of previously on-site employees to permanently remote positions postCovid-19". As the McKinsey report highlights:

> *"The learning landscape has changed in ways that will foster teaching new skills to employees, wherever they may be. Covid-19 has accelerated the adoption of fully digitised approaches to re-create the best of in-person learning through live video and social sharing. This transformation makes it possible to scale learning efforts in a more cost-effective way and permits greater personalisation for learners – and in turn, greater effectiveness."*
>
> **McKinsey, Covid-19 and Reskilling the Workforce**

How we continue to develop our own mindsets and that of our people, virtually or otherwise, is going to be critical to how our businesses continue to be agile and flexible in the future. It's therefore important that you introduce a variety of ways to continue people's development despite the challenges taking place. There will always be an unforeseen event which is even more reason to better skill our people so that we can all adapt to the world around us.

If you've re-imagined your business as highlighted in earlier chapters you should now be in a position to know what further training is required to support your newly formed team to enhance their abilities or add further skills. You're going to need to prepare a variety of options and support for all your people. Future proofing your learning and development strategy is key, with many organisations moving to a more self-directed, agile and inclusive approach. Blended learning is not a new concept however, organisations have previously struggled to shift mindsets from face to face learning. Now, thanks to the pandemic, we are noticing a sharp rise in tech-enabled blended learning.

The old 70:20:10 approach to learning is also moving towards 40:30:30, allowing for the fact that people aren't able to learn 'on the job' in the same way as they used to. This trend is set to continue as new working patterns settle in.

Where to start

In the McKinsey paper **'Adapting workplace learning in the time of coronavirus'** it recommends that you start by:

> *"Designing and executing a plan to support employees that is consistent with the most conservative guidelines available from leading local and global health authorities, such as the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and WHO. Communicate clearly and often with employees on upcoming learning programs and include specific criteria for when programs will be deferred, modified, and cancelled."*

While that may seem obvious it's important that you can demonstrate the due diligence taken to ensure no employee is put at risk. It also means you can justify investments into different learning approaches. The paper helps to take you through each option;

Adapt in-person learning

There are going to be times when face-to-face learning is still critical. Adapting where, when and how these sessions are delivered is important so that those taking part can feel safe and not distracted from the aim of the session(s). If you need to deliver this kind of training then make sure travelling to a venue is as easy as possible and that the facilities enable easy social-distancing. If you're training a larger number of people you may need to create bubbles to reduce contact or commence the training face-to-face but introduce elements via video conferencing to further the experience for people but in the comfort of their own homes.

Embrace technology

There's a variety of ways to deliver training via webinars, virtual classrooms and video conferencing. But as the McKinsey paper highlights you need to remember that:

> *"Such platforms may not work well for deep socio-emotional and interpersonal-skill building. To address this shortfall, consider what you can do before, during, and after the session to maximize its impact."*

1 **Before the session**

- Test the technology and make sure you can use it.
- Make sure it's easy for others to access and participate. Rehearse if you need to so that the experience is as smooth as possible.
- If you're holding a conference with a large number of people ensure you have a moderator to help handle questions and move speakers along in a timely matter.
- Send information in advance so that participants can review and prepare.
- Set out a clear agenda of what you're hoping to achieve.

2 **During the session**

- Use the technology to help keep people engaged.
- Keep the video on but switch off your self-view, you wouldn't normally be aware of your own actions in a meeting room. Encourage participants to do the same as it's distracting for them.
- Use polling, chat and Q&A tools.
- Virtual break out rooms in video conferencing means you can introduce natural breaks into the sessions and encourage discussions amongst smaller groups before coming back to the main sessions.

3 **After the session**

- Follow-up with people attending the session. It's important that you get their feedback so you can not only enhance what has been delivered but so that you can ensure they really engaged with what you were trying to share.
- Keeping refining the technology and the experience. Remember one size does not fit all.

Digital learning

> *"It is too early to say how COVID-19 will ultimately affect the accelerated adoption of digital learning. What is clearly different today is that keeping people safe and reducing risk has, for now, displaced cost as the key driver behind digital learning. For learning leaders, that opens an opportunity to promote existing digitally enabled portfolios of learning offerings as a way to help colleagues during challenging times. Targeted communication that reminds employees that learning doesn't stop when travel is curtailed, for example, may boost attention to available digital offerings."*
>
> Adapting workplace learning in the time of coronavirus, McKinsey.

It's important to remember that this pandemic is going to be with us for some time to come. Building flexibility into your training programmes is really important. You should be able to deliver courses no matter the circumstances. For example, if you're working with external providers make sure you can flip a face-to-face session to online without any complications or contractual or financial repercussions. The devil is in the detail at the outset so review existing contracts with providers and make sure they adapt with you to support you, your people and the business in this learning evolution.

There are so many digital learning providers in the market such as Udemy through to specific providers for particular markets that it really shouldn't be too difficult to find online courses that match your people and the skills that need enhancing or introducing. Involve people in these decisions so you can find the course that best meets their needs and their own learning journey. What works best for one member doesn't necessarily mean it works for another.

Agree a schedule for their learning and stay in touch to monitor progress and motivate people. As the McKinsey paper reminds us:

> *"…it is important in these rapidly evolving times to reinforce the link between **business outcomes** and longer-term capability building. Learning doesn't occur only in one-off, discrete events; it should be thought of as part of broader learning journeys that last 12 to 18 months and tie clearly to business outcomes. Travel restrictions may affect in-person learning programs in today's environment, but capability building needs to continue in order to advance long-term goals."*

Future Learning

TOP TIPS

- ☆ Introduce a variety of ways to continue people's development.
- ☆ Embrace tech-enabled blended learning.
- ☆ Assess what you can do before, during, and after training sessions to maximise impact.
- ☆ Remember what works best for one employee doesn't necessarily mean it works for another.

Keeping Perspective and Building Trust

As Bruce Feiler said in his book **'Life is in the Transitions'**, life is not linear and anyone who plots their lives by significant events is going to be continually disappointed.

"The idea that life follows a series of carefully calibrated progressions – childhood to young adulthood to middle age to old age; dating to marriage to children to empty nest; low-level job to senior-level job to retirement – seems preposterously outdated. Instead of passing through a series of preordained life stages interrupted by periodic crises on birthdays that end in zero, we experience life as a complex swirl of celebrations, setbacks, triumphs, and rebirths across the full span of our years.

"The once routine expectation… is deader than it's ever been. This is what it means to live a nonlinear life, and it has profound consequences for decisions we all make every day."

Bruce Feiler, Life is in the Transitions.

Rather than losing hope at the current situation it should be your mission as an HR professional or business leader to help those around you keep perspective. Life has thrown multiple 'curved balls' at vast numbers of people – no man, woman or child is alone and no one person's pain is unique in this current crisis. Rather than wringing our hands with despair we need to encourage people to embrace the change. If enough business leaders and organisations adopt even half of the practices outlined in this eBook, then the world and our working lives will be enriched.

In her book, A Short History of Myth, Karen Armstrong discusses that "every time humans take a step forward, they revise and update their understanding of the world". If we are to not only survive, learn from and thrive in a post Covid-19 world we need to embrace that change is constant and we need to trust in the organisations and leaders that will help us ride the waves, no matter how stormy. If they can have the courage, and energy, to create a working environment that continues to adapt to cope with the challenges ahead then our world will be a better place.

To achieve that purpose, culture and values need to be at the very core of any enterprise and in the very heart of every business leader. Employees and the communities in which we serve have never mattered more.

Recommended Reading

Books

- **Mindset** – Dr Carol Dweck
- **Courageous Leadership** – Diana Osagie
- **Switch** – Chip & Dan Heath
- **From Values to Action** – Harry M Jansen Kraemer
- **The Age of Agile** – Stephen Denning
- **Lost in Control** – Wouter Hart
- **Leading for Organisational Change** – Jenni Emery
- **The Culture Code** – Daniel Coyle
- **The Advice Trap** – Michael Bungay Stainer

Articles

- https://www.strategy-business.com/article/The-urgent-need-for-sophisticated-leadership?gko=57cc5
- https://www.pwc.co.uk/services/consulting/purpose-led-business/purpose-driven-recovery-transformation-in-wake-of-cris.html
- https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/issues/succeeding-in-uncertainty/six-paradoxes-of-leadership.html?utm_campaign=sbpwc&utm_medium=site&utm_source=articletext
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- https://www2.deloitte.com/global/en/pages/about-deloitte/articles/covid-19/covid-19-workforce-strategies-for-post-covid-recovery.html
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- https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/services/people-organisation/workforce-of-the-future/workforce-of-the-future-the-competing-forces-shaping-2030-pwc.pdf
- https://www.pwc.co.uk/services/consulting/purpose-led-business/purpose-driven-recovery-transformation-in-wake-of-cris.html

Appendices

- Why HR chiefs must rethink talent management after Covid-19, FT.com
- COVID-19 Workforce strategies for a post-COVID-19 recovery Workbook, Deloitte
- The 5 C's of Covid-19 and workforce strategy, KPMG
- Workforce Strategies for Post-COVID-19 Recovery, Harvard Business Review
- Workforce Planning for Competitive Advantage Post-COVID-19, Gartner
- 9 Future of Work Trends Post-COVID-19, Gartner
- A New Social Contract: Talent in a Post-Covid-19 World, Bain & Company
- Talent Management & Acquisition, KORN FERRY
- To emerge stronger from the COVID-19 crisis, companies should start reskilling their workforces now, McKinsey & Company

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About Jarred Consulting

Experienced talent management specialist, Jarred Consulting, was founded in 2007 and comprises a core team of highly experienced talent management specialists and an extended network of specialist consultants.

We pride ourselves on the strength of our team. Having worked in-house to a senior level, our consultants understand the challenges and opportunities HR, talent and development professionals face on a daily basis – and how to work with you to overcome these.

We're proud of our diverse client base which includes a range of 'blue chip' clients, including major professional services firms, law firms, global financial services firms, not-for-profit, public sector employers and major retailers, as well as smaller niche or middle market businesses. We are always excited by the opportunity to work with new clients and in different industry sectors.

To find out how we can help your organisation navigate your HR, Talent management and development challenges **click here**.