

*Unbundling “Contactless” Work: Marketing Workforce,
and Workplace Differently?*

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Abstract

The Corporations resilience during Covid-19 relies heavily on being able to adapt swiftly to changing circumstances. Technology has changed the way we work, and the Future of Work (FoW) demands building a new social contract. Employee-centric work practices with flexibility and choice are the new mantra of future-oriented organizations. A new world of work built on trust and flexibility provides more success for organizations and career fulfillment for workers. The organization’s senior executives (C-Suite) are marketing their products and services differently to change customers’ wow experiences. This research explored the long-term marketing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the FoW. With the rise of technological, social, and cognitive skills, this study investigated: How C-Suite leaders reshuffle workplace marketing priorities to cultivate a more resilient, future-ready workforce where both employees and organizations can succeed now and in the long term? The author examined the insights from surveys and research studies to present a marketable and agile employee engagement strategy for the FoW. Findings offer guidance to the emerging trends—a flexible remote work phenomenon and where and how of the FoW. The results revealed the C-suite decisions primarily shifting towards a flexible and hybrid world influencing the FoW. The study recommends organizations look for untapped talent, the workers that are, left out of traditional recruitment processes. The study concludes that in the post-pandemic market, employee engagement, protection, and empowerment are more crucial to an organization’s suc-

cess in managing work to benefit both workers and businesses. Implications for academics, practitioners, and policymakers discussed.

Introduction

Accelerated by the pandemic, the future of work is at the forefront. The Covid-19 pandemic upended a marketer's playbook, challenging the existing rules about customer relationships and building brands (Balis, 2021). The increased connectivity and the cognitive tools change the nature of work. New talent models the new economy unleashed the energy and endless possibilities of human potential.

Based on the U.S. Remote Work Survey conducted by Price Waterhouse Cooper (Voytsekhivska & Voytsekhivskyy, 2021), the executives expect that fifty-five percent of their employees will work remotely. Eighty-three percent of employees are in favor of working remotely at least one day a week. Hoey, Konkel, Biaggi & Srivastava (2020) emphasized the guidelines issued by the U.S. Department of Labor on managing remote workers amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Sako (2021) examined the long-term socioeconomic and technological impacts of the increase in telecommuting during the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic required a quick adaptation of the work-integrated learning programs (Pretti, Etmanski, & Durston, 2020) offered. Manko & Rosinski (2021) identified and analyzed managing online, work-from-home business operations as the key considerations for employers. Bowen (2020) argued that the complexities of remote working, specifically as it impacts students on work-integrated learning (WIL) placements. The shift to remote work had altered responsibilities (Dunatchik et al., 2021) for domestic labor among partnered couples and single parents. Organizations continue to face social, political, technical, environmental, and economic-related challenges (Bolick, 2021) highlighted those employees adopted remote work successfully.

The study highlights that working together no longer requires being in the same place. The study demonstrates how organizations successfully pivoted to remote work in response to COVID-19, the organizational shifts necessary for the current and the FoW.

Literature Review

The remote work phenomenon, in general, is becoming permanent. Work is getting done from everywhere. Employees are driving the company's culture. What is going to happen to the office? Companies will have to reshape offices for a modern workforce beyond pandemics.

The study shows that employees still want to come into an office for team building, connecting with management, and socialization. However, companies may have to go the extra mile to show employees they care about their health and well-being. Several questions facing the organization's leaders: How can hybrid create a better world of work? What technology and data are needed to power the future workplace? How to shape a healthier work environment for people? How to create workspaces that attract and retain people? How to accelerate the sustainability journey? Choudhury (2020) argued the notable benefits of remote work such as companies can save on real estate costs, hire, and utilize talent globally, mitigate immigration issues, and experience productivity gains, while workers can enjoy geographic flexibility. The author's research into work-from-anywhere (WFA) organizations, United States Patent and Trademark Office, Tata Consultancy Services, and GitLab highlighted the concerns including how to communicate across time zones, share knowledge that isn't yet codified, socialize virtually and prevent professional isolation, protect client data, and avoid slacking. Mosley & Irvine (2020) argued that making work human shows how to implement a culture of performance and gratitude in the workplace and seize a competitive edge, increase profitability, and drive business momentum. The authors also emphasized that by building a sense of belonging, purpose, meaning, happiness, and energy in every employee, the company creates a profound connection between your organization and its goals.

Del Sol & Joyce (2020) highlighted that analyzing occupations in terms of their parts provides a much richer way of looking at jobs than estimating the effects of automation more broadly. Schwartz, Hagel, Wooll, & Monahan (2019) highlighted that by reframing the current future of work efforts to encompass the broader understanding of the opportunities ahead, leaders can better define the series of stages and initiatives that will make up the journey. Analysis of Twitter data by Zhang, Yu, & Marin (2021) from over 1 million tweets from March 30 to July 5 of 2020 using keywords such as 'telework,' 'work from home,' 'remote work,' using natural language processing (NLP) techniques showed generally positive attitudes expressed by remote work-related tweets, with minor dips during the weekend. Virtual mentoring (Yarberry, & Sims, 2021) is essential for providing emotional support, creating opportunities for dialogue, helping employees discover a balance between work and life, implementing a reward system, and enhancing an overall sense of well-being and belongingness for employees working in virtual/remote environments.

The research of Gandhi, Madan, & Arora (2021) touched upon dimensions like whether Work from Home (WFH) is a good idea for the ecological balance or not. The authors divided the various factors affecting the success of WFH into two broad categories. First, Internal Factors i.e., human psychology, the level of technical know-how, mental health, time management, etc., and second External factors i.e., India's lack of IT infrastructure, people's

access to various resources required, the organizational environment of the employer company, etc. The results of this research provide clarity and a better understanding of the impact that the concept WFH can have on society both directly or indirectly while also motivating and sensitizing the audience to have an open mind before deciding. Pretti, Etmanski, & Durston (2020) argued how the COVID-19 pandemic required a quick adaptation in the way work-integrated learning programs are offered. The authors conducted semi-structured interviews with 50 co-operative education students and a grounded theory approach was taken to analyze the transcripts. Findings reveal the importance students associate with socialization, productivity, and meaningful work in the remote context.

Grelle, & Popp (2021) research focused on contextual factors, organizational barriers, and leadership strategies that may influence success and job satisfaction in remote roles and virtual teams. The authors discussed how understanding which traits and competencies are related to success and higher job satisfaction in remote roles can help design training and manager-to-subordinate interventions to yield positive outcomes through the duration of this crisis and beyond. Galanti, Guidetti, Mazzei, Zappalà, & Toscano (2021) argued how employees' family-work conflict and social isolation were negatively related, while self-leadership and autonomy were positively related, to Work from Home (WFH) productivity and WFH engagement. Family-work conflict and social isolation were negatively related to WFH stress, which was not affected by autonomy and self-leadership. Individual- and work-related aspects both hinder and facilitate WFH during the COVID-19 outbreak. Limoncelli (2020) discussed several nonobvious techniques utilized by the engineering firm Stack Overflow for remote work, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. The techniques include holding videoconferences if even one employee is working remotely, employees accurately setting chat status in messaging systems, and scheduling video-chat social gatherings. A. Avdeeva, & Iontseva (2021) argued that the managers pay attention to the adaptation process of new employees, but they do not always consider that the transition to a remote format of work for most employees can cause a stressful state. The authors highlighted the socio-psychological features that allow them to pass most effectively the adaptation period in the conditions of the tendency to switch to a remote format of work.

Birkinshaw, Gudka & D'Amato (2021) presented the results of three surveys conducted before and during lockdown to understand what changed. It shows how managers became more blinkered: turning inward, becoming task-focused at the expense of relationship-building, and finding few opportunities to develop new skills. The authors offered practical suggestions for how the evolution of managerial work might be accelerated so that managers can become more effective in this changing environment. Arnow-Richman (2020) presented a private law analysis on an employee's right to remote work in the U.S. The author also emphasized how

the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the legal uncertainties on the status of remote work, the possible breach of contract that may be faced by firms if they terminate employees with job security rights for refusing to return to work in person, and the public law rights of at-will employees. Cooke (2021) discussed the benefits and disadvantages of remote or home-based work based on the forecast by Alvin Toffler on remote work in his 1980 book “The Third Wave,” the move by firms like Yahoo and IBM to stop remote work in the 2010s, and the support by architect Frank Lloyd Wright of telecommuting.

Tramontano, Grant, & Clarke (2021) presented a multifaceted e-Work Self-Efficacy Scale, which supports a recently developed Digital Resilience Competency Framework (DRCF), assessing e-skills, trust-building, self-care, remote social skills, and remote emotional self-efficacy beliefs. Data from 670 non-managerial employees (54.0% males) from a telecommunications company based in the Czech Republic were analyzed, providing support for a bi-factor model. Latent Profile Analysis identified three clusters, characterized by different profiles: the Well-adjusted (with a reasonably good balance in engagement, satisfaction, and productivity), the Unhealthily dedicated (suffering some difficulties in setting boundaries), and the Distrustful self-shielding (the most compromised) remote workers. The results reinforce the importance of focusing on digital resilience competencies to promote sustainable, productive, engaging, and healthy remote working. The e-Work Self-Efficacy Scale is a practical and effective organizational tool for managers and employees to use to assess and build digital resilience and sits alongside the Digital Resilience Competency Framework. Senatori & Spinelli (2021) addressed the complex model of regulation of remote work existing in Italy, composed of three distinct schemes: telework, “ordinary” agile work, and the special form of agile work temporarily established to tackle the pandemic emergency. It compared the structural and functional features of the three bodies of rules by the systematic analysis of the relevant sources of legal and contractual nature to explore possible ways to prepare the transition of this form of flexibility in the post-pandemic world of work.

Research Methodology

Data Collection & Analysis

This study used qualitative content and conceptual analysis methods and relied on recent marketing research articles and FoW surveys. This research study also demonstrates the advantage of mixing traditional research methods (research articles and surveys) with the analysis of existing content (e.g., McKinsey, Accenture, and Gartner) by identifying additional insights which complement traditional research results.

The approach of creating additional value is highlighted by analyzing existing data focused on innovative and creative insights when addressing the primary question examined by this research study on the FoW. The following surveys offer insights, particularly the hybrid nature of the FoW.

Surveys - Conceptual Analysis

1. Gartner

Gartner, Inc.'s surveyed of more than 20,000 employees between January 2020 and March 2021 revealed that COVID-19 has negatively impacted the health of 55% of the global workforce. . The Gartner Workforce Resilience Employee Survey (2021) measured the change in the workers in the health across multiple employee well-being elements, work-life balance, psychological safety, burnout, collaboration, innovation, and responsiveness. By the end of 2024, the change in work means that up to sixty percent of all employees will have the option to work remotely. In delivering on all aspects of this human deal, workers perceive emotional value in employment by the enablement to feel more understood, autonomous, invested, cared for, and valued. The reinvented EVP (Gartner, 2021), designed to deliver an exceptional life, not just work, experience, results in higher employee satisfaction.

2. McKinsey

In the post-pandemic future of work, nine out of ten organizations will be combining remote and on-site working, according to a new McKinsey's 2021 survey of 100 executives across industries and geographies. The survey confirms that productivity and customer satisfaction has increased during the pandemic. The sustainability of pandemic-style productivity gains might well depend on how organizational leaders address the anxiety their employees feel—and the associated levels of burnout. Before the COVID-19 crisis, the majority of organizations required employees to spend most of their time on-site. As the pandemic takes the backstage executives to argue that the hybrid model—in which employees work remotely and in the office—will become far more common. The executives expect that (for all roles that aren't essential to perform on-site) employees will be on-site between 21 and 80 percent of the time, or one to four days per week.

3. Accenture

Accenture Research fielded a survey during March 2021 to 9,326 global workers. An extensive statistical cluster and regression analysis revealed the mindset of the workers and what resources were necessary to make people feel healthy and productive remotely, onsite, or in a hybrid model: (83%) prefer a hybrid work model. In addition, a variety of factors influence their ability to thrive, whether they're onsite or off. Responsible leaders are to move beyond physical location to shape the future of work by giving people resources tailored to their needs. 63% of high-growth companies have already adopted a "productivity anywhere" workforce model.

4. PwC

Between August 2 and August 6, 2021, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) surveyed 752 US executives. Seventy-two percent of respondents were from Fortune 1000 companies. Employees have had more than a year to reflect on their needs and aspirations, and many want a new FoW model. The Pulse Survey found that 65% of employees are looking for a new job and based on the discussion with executives, 88% mentioned a higher turnover. The survey offers insights into the executive decisions as they redesign work and center many of those decisions around people.

5. Pega Systems

Pega Systems surveyed over 3,000 senior managers and frontline IT staff (2020-2021) on how work is changing. Pega found that connecting customers and employees to the outcomes they want— while also delivering consistent and relevant experiences — requires managing intelligent automation from end to end across channels, devices, and interfaces. The state of the world has motivated organizations to adopt new technology and reflect on how they can better serve their customers and employees. Organizations are growing and adapting during the pandemic — so they can take on whatever comes tomorrow.

6. LinkedIn

LinkedIn commissioned YouGov to survey 500+ C-level executives from U.S. and U.K. organizations with 1,000+ employees and US\$350+ million (£250+ million) annual revenue from August 4 to 24, 2021, to understand how they are considering the future of work. The online survey revealed that three-quarters (71%) of leaders felt pressure to change working models. In addition, the survey suggests to adapt workplace policies to allow for greater flexibility,

which may not be surprising given that 87% of employees would prefer to stay remote at least half of the time. Over half (58%) are optimistic that flexibility will be good for both people and business. (51%) say that offering hybrid, remote, and flexible working options that their companies will operate going forward.

This survey's content and conceptual analysis suggests that the organization with the highest productivity increases during the pandemic have supported and encouraged small moments of engagement (Mckinsy, 2021) among their employees, moments in which coaching, mentorship, idea sharing, and co-working took place. As Mirabela-Constanta et al., (2020) argued that there is an opportunity to rethink organizations from the ground up to ensure better efficiency.

Discussions and Implications

The remote work trend has accelerated the need for the evolution of global mobility. Companies that react and adapt quickly are finding business as usual, while others are struggling. The employee value proposition (EVP) for the post-pandemic workforce to orient toward employees as people, not workers; provide an exceptional life, not work, experience; and focus on the feelings, not just the features (Gartner, 2021) that match employee needs.

The forms of power and control (Miele & Tirabeni, 2020) changed with the adoption of work-related technologies and associated practices. The authors argued that exploring how workers use and incorporate digital technologies into their daily lives will reshape power in organizations.

As the global business environment faces uncertain times, scenario planning can assist companies with developing strategies for sustainability. Scenario planning is a tool that can help managers with the post-pandemic (Sparks, & McCann, 2021) future of work. Traditional management theory may not address the volatile changes in the work environment after the pandemic. Antonacopoulou & Georgiadou (2021) introduced the notion of inclusiveness. The authors argued it as a fresh conceptualization of the impact of meaning rendering from work, irrespective of place of work.

The study argues that sustaining workers' resilience requires organizations to be effective with workforce performance and workforce health. Human Resources Departments should focus on the following five areas:

- Support employees to achieve the organization's goals
- Assist employees with their personal success

- Encourage team's re-alignment for sustainable productivity
- Provide meaningful and empathic work environment
- Allow employees reasonable work autonomy.

As Levin (2020) argued, there is an opportunity for organizations to develop viable strategies for both their re-entry phase back to the workplace, and more importantly, in planning for a reimagined workplace where both the nature of work and place potentially redefined. It's a new era, one that's focused on hybrid and new flexible ways of working.

Results and Findings

In a competitive workforce market that is more automated, digital, and dynamic, workers will benefit from having a set of foundational skills that help them fulfill the following five criteria, no matter in the sector in which and where they work or their occupation:

- Think primarily digital
- Develop a problem-solving mind
- Grow a service-driven mentality
- Build trusted relationships
- Foster social and emotional intelligence

The conceptual analysis suggests that permanent, sustainable, and thriving work is beyond offices spaces. Covid-19 required organizations to rethink how they enable agile, sustainable, and new ways of working. The improved productivity, diverse talent, lower costs, and reduced turnover are result of the Covid-19. As Pataki-Bittó & Kapusy (2021) argued, a broader work value theory approach that highlights the work environment's convenience features and integrates values that support the employees' desired lifestyle and well-being. Organizations will have to be more flexible and adaptable; continue to shift towards increased employee choice; individualize programs and policies, where appropriate; and embrace technology for greater personalization and flexibility.

Conclusions and Contributions

The post-pandemic marketplace is persistently high inequality and unemployment. FoW is impacted by globalization, changes in technology, composition, and the size of the workforce. Organizations that embrace flexible work are better positioned to sustain operations and react quickly to the demands of navigating disruption. The purpose of the study is to guide stakeholders—workers, employers, educators, and policymakers—to make informed decisions in the following areas:

- Well-Being – A new level of support and engagement with the workers to prioritize well-being and utilization of technology to aid new strategies.
- Culturally Diverse - Diversity will be crucial for business leaders looking to attract and retain new talent while remaining competitive.
- Work Anywhere - Employees proved during the Pandemic that they work effectively outside the office hub, promoting the future of hybrid working.
- Digitally United - Addressing and managing the digital generation gap to attract multi-generational talent in a super competitive market.

Integration of technology into the workplace has changed how employees and businesses engage with work. At the same time, worker's expectations have begun to change for greater flexibility and more meaning. The way we work at is changing, and it has never been more crucial to understand and prepare for the future. A monumental shift has taken place in the work landscape. Borders have vanished, and the line separating the office from home is gradually being wiped out. Workers to adapt, up-skill, re-skill, and continue to think growth to stay relevant while still focusing on their well-being.

Acknowledgments

The author thanks Gartner, McKinsey, Pega Systems, Accenture, LinkedIn, and PwC for their extraordinary Surveys of 2020 and 2021. The author is also grateful to Choudhury, P. (2020) for his pioneering Harvard Business Review (cover story) – “WFA - Work from Anywhere”.

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