

What's Shaping the Workplace in 2021 — And How Your Company Can Adapt

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There has always been competition for talent — high performers are always in demand and businesses in similar geographic areas compete for the same talent pool. With the proliferation of hybrid and remote workforces, businesses can now expand their range and recruit employees from anywhere. But to successfully recruit and retain these workers, they'll need new strategies, new technology tools and new approaches to old ideas.

In a recent webinar sponsored by technology service provider BMC, Dr. Alex Alonso, chief knowledge officer for SHRM presented fresh data about the current business environment. Dr. Alonso explored the current state of the workforce, what's causing employees to leave their jobs and what employers can do to retain their best people (as well as recruit some new ones).

New Approaches For a New Normal

While some are quick to label the current situation a “new normal” or a “new reality,” Dr. Alonso points out that the current search for talent isn't much different than what's come before it. “What currently shapes the workforce is a constellation of challenges that have existed for decades,” Dr. Alonso says. “Over the last forty years, we've gone from talent shortage to talent abundance and back again. What hasn't changed are employer demands.”

What has changed, according to Dr. Alonso, are the ways we approach old ideas. “Things have been lingering in the background — how we define mental health and wellness in the workplace or the social compact between employer and employee — have been reborn during the pandemic,” Dr. Alonso says. Technology is also a critical part of work, and technology solutions exist to improve well being, foster communication between disparate workers and encourage collaboration — even from afar.



Maintaining a Positive Work Culture

Much has been written about the importance of work culture, but culture took on extra significance during the COVID-19 pandemic. “Our research shows that 74% of working Americans felt that their organization’s values guided their thinking during the pandemic,” Dr. Alonso says. “Workers told us that a positive workplace culture built up resilience among the team.”

Going forward, how can organizations maintain or expand their cultures (especially if workers are no longer coming to the office every day)? One way, Dr. Alonso suggests, is to leverage technology. “It’s been said that ‘culture eats strategy for breakfast,’ which is true. But there’s another component to that saying, which is ‘convenience is king.’ Leverage convenience in culture to prove you care about your workforce. Culture bots, culture reminders and the development of people manager tools and guides can all ensure culture is kept in place.” Any opportunity your business has to add a culture component prevents employees from being disengaged and shows investment in the workforce.

Solutions

Dr. Alonso believes the current situation is leading some employees to develop innovative ways to source talent. “What we’re seeing is that HR professionals are trying everything,” Dr. Alonso says. “From sourcing to more investments in development, reskilling and upskilling, HR professionals are doing all they can to retain their current workers and attract new ones.”

How to win the talent search? Here are some actionable insights from HR professionals:

- Recognize that pre-employment selection hurdles might be preventing you from finding the right talent. **Eliminate these selection hurdles if possible.** Post-hire assessments can ensure you hire quickly while objectively evaluating new-hire quality.
- **Leverage boomerang workers** — former employees looking to return to the workforce. As these workers are a known commodity, they can help you regain institutional knowledge.
- **Embrace automation.** Divesting workers from low-level non-creative tasks can increase productivity and engagement. Eliminate what distracts employees from their real work.

Conclusion

The search for high-performing talent has certainly changed over the years. Organizations will need every tool at their disposal to remove the hurdles that keep you from finding great talent, build trust through regular communication channels and develop a strong work culture that encourages retention.

Along with providing “digital assistants” to address mundane, routine tasks, technology solutions should be evaluated not only on their ability to keep open communications but also how they can foster meaningful employee engagements. As Dr. Alonso says. “By being open and honest with employees about what they can expect from a career with you, not only will you be able to recruit talent, you’ll also be able to keep the workers you want.”

Be sure to watch the full webinar, Workplace Origami: Making Sense of The Forces Shaping the Workplace in 2021 [here](#).



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