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2022 Global Workforce Trends

Continued adaptation and striking work-life balance in the age of hybrid work models and AI-augmented workforces



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Where do we go from here?

2021 was a year of resilience. Leaders and employees globally had to assess, pivot, and establish new ways of working in order to survive in the shadow of Covid-19. Company leaders had to build stronger connections with their employees and peers, and promote greater support on a personal level, as wellbeing and mental health became more significant during this period of immense uncertainty.

The world continues to experience changes; therefore, resilience will remain central to retain stability and longevity — the pandemic will continue to play a significant role in shaping the way workers do their jobs. As such, companies should consider the following trends as they begin organizing and shaping their workforces for 2022, including decisions around growth strategies and approaches to talent acquisition.

1. The increasing popularity of hybrid working

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Companies like Twitter, Dropbox, and Amazon are taking a fully remote approach and allowing their corporate employees to work from home indefinitely.”

- Dan Schawbel, New York Times bestselling author and Managing Partner of Workplace Intelligence.

In an [article](#) for LinkedIn, Schawbel noted that companies will continue on the path of adopting hybrid or remote-first working conditions in 2022. Research performed by Workplace Intelligence and WeWork found key stats emphasizing the increasing popularity of flexible work policies among employees today:

- A balance between in-office and remote work options will be key, as research revealed that 64 percent of employees would pay for access to an office space, and 75 percent would give up at least one benefit or perk for the freedom to choose their work environment.
- Seventy-nine percent of C-suite executives plan to let their employees split their time between corporate offices and remote working if their job allows for it. Another 76 percent say they are likely to give their employees a stipend to work from home or access to a coworking space.

Post-Covid, employees want to split their time between their company HQ, home, and other locations such as satellite offices, coworking spaces, and public “third spaces” like a library or café. A dynamic work model gives teams the freedom to work from anywhere — this flexible approach has been associated with higher job satisfaction and employee engagement.

An updated work model not only offers greater flexibility for employees in terms of where they work but also when they work. Schawbel’s research captured that C-suite executives and workers alike recognize flexibility, work-life balance, and schedule control as the top advantages of the new hybrid work model. Companies such as [Kickstarter](#) and [Bolt](#) are also trialing four-day workweeks to lessen burnout among their remote employees. In 2022, the dual focus

on where and when employees work will demand intentional efforts from leaders — a key factor to preventing a decline in productivity.

To foster a happy and productive hybrid workforce, business leaders must ensure that HR professionals and managers are not favoring in-office workers, avoiding any biases against remote employees.

“In 2022, business leaders will need to focus on overcoming this bias if they want the hybrid model to succeed for their business,” explained Schawbel. “A cultural shift will certainly be required, and managers will need to take steps to ensure that all workers are treated equally and feel included. However, our study revealed that best-in-class collaboration technologies can also play a critical role in ensuring a fair workplace for all.”





2. Artificial intelligence and automation

Predictions by the World Economic Forum state that AI and automation will lead to 97 million new jobs by the year 2025. Many workers in existing jobs will also find their roles evolving with the popularity and use of AI technology — they will be expected to augment their abilities to keep up with the changing times.

The increase of AI in the workplace will predominantly be used to automate repetitive tasks, so workers can focus on other areas, such as emotional intelligence, high-level strategy, and creativity. For example, with a growing array of readily available tools, it will become increasingly easy to execute marketing strategies like audience targeting, and workers in

the manufacturing and engineering space will have greater access to technology that assists in understanding how a particular machine works.

Below are a few examples of how increased AI automation and investment in AI robots for the workplace impacted the business world in 2021:

- The Pennsylvania Turnpike made the switch to a cashless electronic system, eliminating toll collection by hand.
- Procter & Gamble, the maker of household goods, added robots to its assembly lines to increase production, while also complying with social distancing guidelines.

AI predictions for 2022:

Improved hiring practices: AI is expected to assist companies in expanding their talent pool by helping hiring managers take their recruitment strategies farther afield and consider a more diverse group of job applicants. In order to reach this goal successfully, however, talent acquisition teams must be sure to select technology designed to incorporate the voices of a diverse community of individuals.

Enhancements in the food and beverage industry: New technologies and AI applications will be more present in the operational side of the food industry, including technology that allows restaurants to automate and scale food preparation.

There are also other innovative serving and preparation robotics coming, such as Flippy, a robot that flips hamburgers, and self-service kiosks at popular fast-food restaurants.

3. Building strategies around resilience

Prior to the pandemic, it was more common for companies to structure their hiring practices around achieving greater efficiency. Following 2020, [recruiting priorities](#) shifted to a greater focus on employee resilience and appreciation of workers with an overlap in skills.

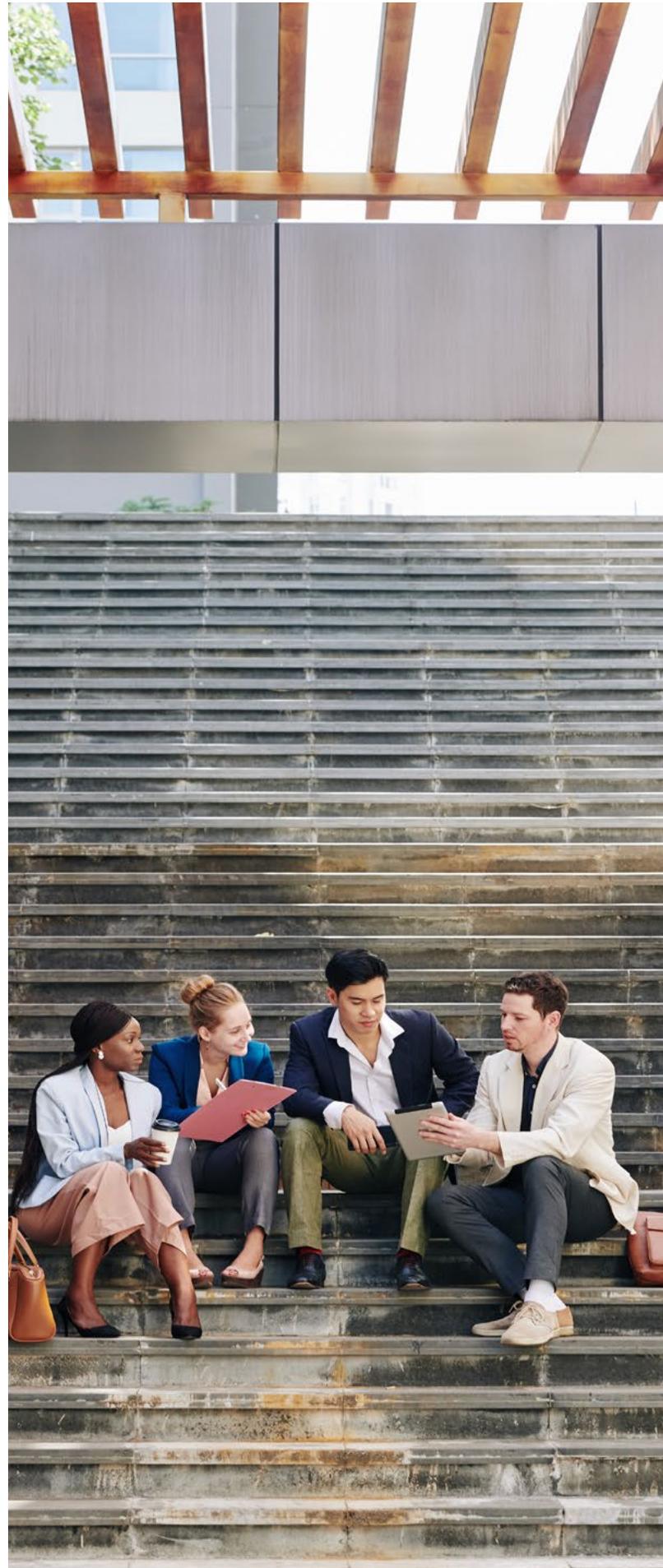
In addition, leaders are incorporating more flexible processes and automating their workflows to ensure higher operational efficiency and a reliable safety net — the importance of preparing for the unexpected was a lesson learned the hard way in 2021. This increased flexibility, efficiency, and safeguarding against future global disasters has done more than prepare companies in the event of turbulent times but will also continue to greatly improve daily operations for both leaders and employees in 2022.

4. Wellness

A subtrend of this priority shift, but no less vital, is the evolution of how employers view employee healthcare, mental health, and wellbeing. Employee wellness is set to become an increasingly prominent part of companies' overall business strategy. Leaders are taking more responsibility for helping employees maintain mental, financial, and physical wellness, which can help team members:

- Reduce their anxiety.
- Improve their mood.
- Achieve clearer thinking.
- Maintain a greater sense of calm or inner peace.

One challenge that may arise in 2022, however, is respecting employees' privacy, while companies attempt to meet these new mental health and wellness objectives.



5. Skills development versus role development

Employers used to be hyperfocused on the official role of employees instead of the skills and ideas they brought to the table, which determined the company's internal communication and decision-making process. The role of an employee has always dictated the way individual members of any company relate what they do to the overall organizational structure. However, most companies' organizational structure has shifted over time as the traditional hierarchical team model evolves. It has become much more standard for

companies to implement and nurture the "flat" organizational structure, which promotes a more collaborative approach to communication, problem-solving, and reporting. The change in approach also modified the way company issues and business challenges are viewed.

The flatter organizational structure altered the way management perceived the contributions of individual team members. Rather than just management being responsible for addressing

company challenges, with this more collaborative structure, employees can also use their skills to solve business issues. This change from a role- to skills-based approach will continue to further drive success and innovation.

Employees are better positioned to capitalize on future career opportunities and goals if companies continue to focus on skills development, rather than specific role development. This new approach is likely to be a top trend through 2022.





6. The importance of employee feedback

According to a [global study](#) by UKG and Workplace Intelligence, 86 percent of employees feel that people at their organization are not heard fairly or equally.

Regularly engaging with employees and seeking feedback enhances innovation; workers may have a different take on an existing issue or offer a fresh perspective but may not speak up if they feel their voice is not valued. In 2022,

company leaders and managers will go beyond merely listening to employees by implementing employee feedback programs, leveraging technology, and utilizing various channels to gauge the pulse of employees. Annual feedback gathering strategies like rolling out a company-wide survey will no longer be sufficient. Companies will be looking to go beyond surface level engagement and aim to understand the voices of their workforce.

7. Emerging markets and the global talent surplus

According to a [study by Oxford Economics](#), the U.S., Canada, Russia, Japan, and Australia faced a lack of local talent in 2021. On the other end of the spectrum, nations such as India, Indonesia, South Africa, Brazil, Morocco, and Colombia experienced a surplus of local talent.

The abundance of college-educated professionals in these emerging markets **will help emphasize the importance of expanding once-local talent acquisition strategies across borders, causing** a global shift in where industrialized nations look for new and skilled talent. This trend, and the ease with which companies can hire globally, will impact the international workforce in 2022 and beyond.

8. Inclusion and advancing diversity efforts

In 2022, as companies continue to manage diverse teams, a greater focus on goals like improving international language skills will further advance workforce's diversity and inclusion efforts. Organizations will commit to embracing [intelligent inclusion](#), which refers to the implementation of inclusive behavior that becomes

so ingrained among teams, it becomes a habit.

Leaders will also focus on emphasizing the why behind inclusion, showcasing how it positively impacts overall employee wellbeing, performance, productivity, and workplace culture. One tangible example cited by

[Deloitte](#) showed that demographically diverse teams can enhance innovation by 20 percent and reduce risks by up to 30 percent. Hiring from a diverse selection of candidates also increases the chances of finding the right person for a role. New recruits that feel valued and part of an inclusive work environment are also [less inclined to resign](#).

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9. The advantages of collaboration

Coworking spaces, or collaborative office environments, have become more than just a place to work — they are spaces where employees and companies can network, create partnerships, and share and learn from other industry leaders.

Internal collaboration ultimately leads to opportunities for companies to create diverse teams with various skills and levels. The benefit of fostering a culture

around skills diversity is significant: Encouraging a cross-pollination of expertise for different projects can often produce faster and more cost-effective results, as well as greater innovation and overall efficiency. Collaborative workspaces will continue to increase in popularity throughout 2022. A [study](#) by CoworkingResources and Coworker.com predicts a 21.3 percent yearly growth rate in the coworking market until 2024.



10. The evolution of virtual meetings

The pandemic forced a steep learning curve onto the global workforce – suddenly, the balance between in-person meetings and video calls collapsed, and leaders and employees made a full-time switch to Zoom, Teams, and Google Meet for most of 2020 and 2021. The world has become more comfortable and adaptable to video meetings, and in 2022, that comfort and adaptability will lead to greater online meeting efficiency.

Workforces will learn to make better use of the [chat functionality](#) while in virtual meetings. This will create an avenue for questions, comments, and

responses to be addressed through chat, so meeting attendees can see and interact with the topic at hand, without having to interrupt the speaker.

These trends will shape the workforce throughout 2022 as company leaders and their teams work to adapt to a post-pandemic business world. Factors like employee acquisition, retention, and engagement strategies will continue to evolve to ensure companies are doing more than attracting the best talent — but supporting this talent with everything they need to navigate the new era of work.



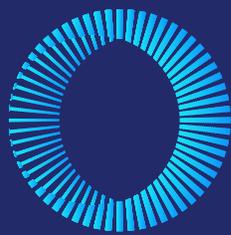
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