

Transformation: The changing face of leadership

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The global health, economic and social crisis is accelerating transformation across businesses globally. Coupled with uncertainty, the emergence of new workplace trends that are unfolding rapidly, and new technologies that are being rolled out at an accelerated pace, organisations need to transform their workforces to ensure that they have the skills and competencies needed to face what lies ahead.

Companies are transforming, implementing new technologies, managing employees remotely, upskilling employees and, as they prepare for an uncertain future, they need leaders that can navigate the workforce through the new “work” order.

Engaging remote teams

According to the ManpowerGroup Future for Workers Report¹, 43% of workers think the Covid-19 crisis marks the end of every day in the workplace as they seek flexibility and have declared that post-pandemic, they will opt to work remotely. While this has several benefits for the employee, it impacts how leaders would traditionally interact with and lead their teams and requires a new approach to managing the remote workforce.

The digital era has changed the way people interact and even speak, which affects what we hear and can lead to misunderstanding and confusion. People who work on remote teams face these challenges consistently as remote communication distorts the normal pace of conversations, leads to delays in responses and removes the emotional reactions and body language that we often rely on when communicating. These misinterpretations create anxiety and affect morale, engagement, productivity and innovation.

This presents a big challenge for leaders as they can often second-guess themselves, get distracted and grow frustrated with their remote teams. To overcome this, leaders are expected to perform at a higher level and find better ways to operate to get the best out of remote teams.

The best way for managers to drive team performance is by focusing on reducing the remote distance where possible by using new technologies and tools that are at their disposal. For example, leaders would benefit from using video calling rather than written communication to engage teams, establish rapport and create empathy. Further leaders should seek out opportunities to encourage teams to interact regularly and collaborate.

Sustaining worker wellbeing

Workplace health and wellness is important for employees as it impacts the workplace culture and the business. During a global pandemic, the need to help employees stay mentally and physically safe and healthy becomes more urgent than ever. It also becomes more challenging than ever as every workforce has been affected by the changing working conditions with workers on the front lines dealing with physical health concerns, while remote workers face isolation that can lead to mental health challenges and burnout. As such employee concerns for health, employment security and skills development are on the rise.

¹ <https://go.manpowergroup.com/futureforworkers>

According to the ManpowerGroup Top 21 Trends for 2021², employee wellness is increasingly becoming an employer responsibility that requires more duty of care, including ways to help employees switch off and disconnect. There is also a growing need for empathetic leadership skills to help employees cope. Further, leaders need to find ways of using technology for good to engage employees, support their overall health and ensure that they protect employee personal data and keep it secure at all times, whether employees are working on-site or remotely.

New technologies need new skills

The impact of the pandemic accelerated changes with new technologies being rolled out rapidly and bringing the future of work to the fore. The adoption of these technologies has led to a sudden need for new, in-demand roles and according to the World Economic Forum Future of Jobs Report³, companies estimate that 40% of workers will require reskilling.

As such there is an urgent need for leaders to focus on upskilling and reskilling workers, providing access to the soft skills and technical skills they will need to navigate the jobs of the future. While training employees on new and relevant skills can provide peace of mind and happiness, many leaders need to first equip themselves with the tools and knowledge needed to upskill their teams.

Changing face of leadership

Large-scale changes in 2020 shifted workforce needs from industries like aviation and hospitality to driving, healthcare and technology, all at an unprecedented scale. The transformations reinforced the need for employees to reskill and upskill themselves for this dramatic change. As part of this, the need for soft skills, or human skills, is growing in popularity. These human skills include leadership, persuasion and influence.

As organisations rely more heavily on computers and technology to replace hard skill duties, humans are needed to manage teams, provide customers with human interaction and focus on developing the business strategy. It is believed that in the workplace, soft skills such as leadership and coaching are becoming well sought after critical reasoning skills for businesses and these are skills that require constant upskilling or reskilling.

In times of rapid transformation and uncertainty, soft skills are more important than ever in workers and leaders. As we move forward, leaders must emphasise abilities such as adaptability, communication and human connection to help themselves and their organisations navigate the changes that are driving forward the jobs of the future.

About ManpowerGroup

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² <https://workforce-resources.manpowergroup.com/management-and-retention/mpg-21-trends-infographic-2021>

³ <https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-future-of-jobs-report-2020>

recognised consistently for our diversity - as a best place to work for Women, Inclusion, Equality and Disability and in 2021 ManpowerGroup was named one of the World's Most Ethical Companies for the twelfth year - all confirming our position as the brand of choice for in-demand talent.

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