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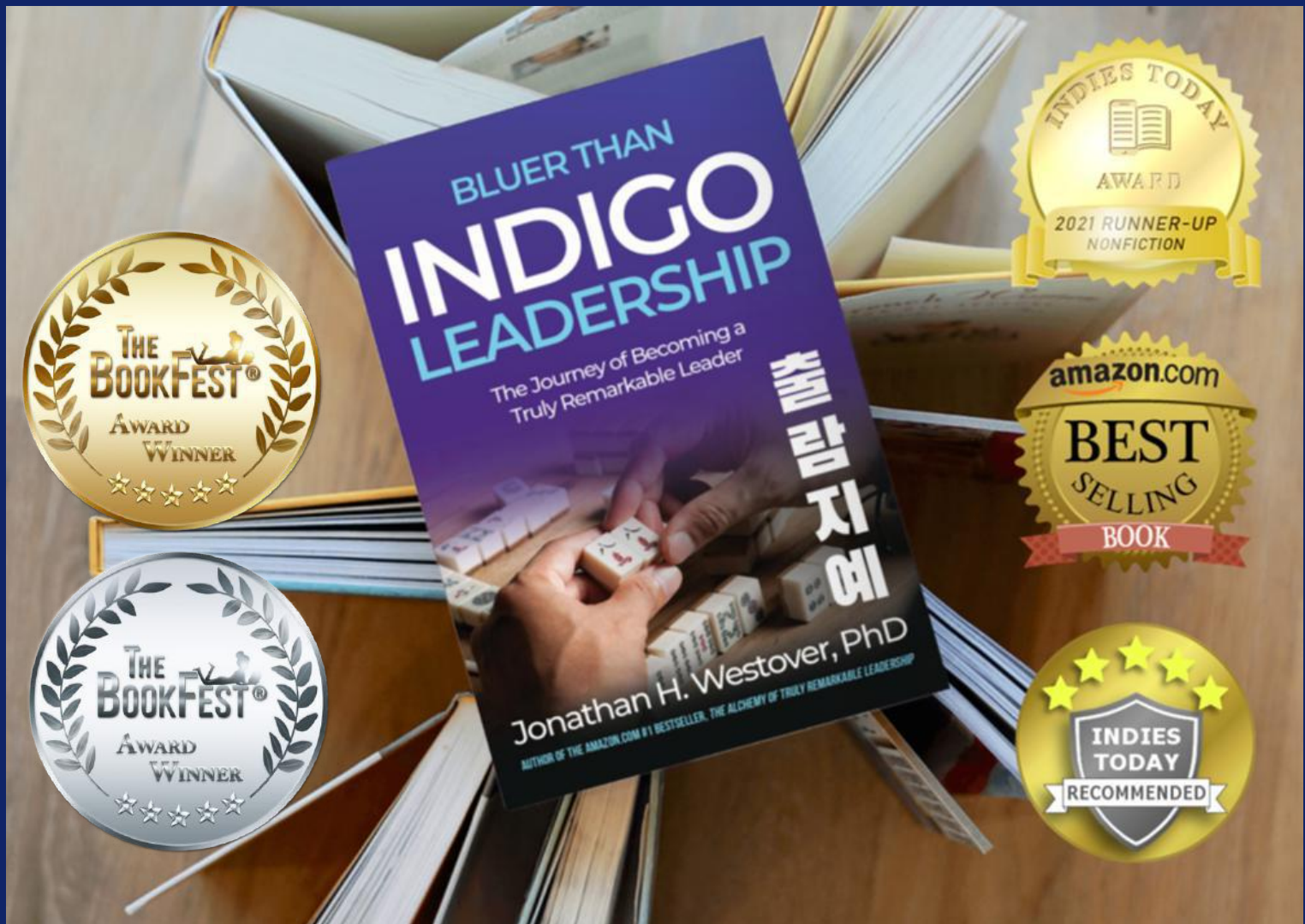
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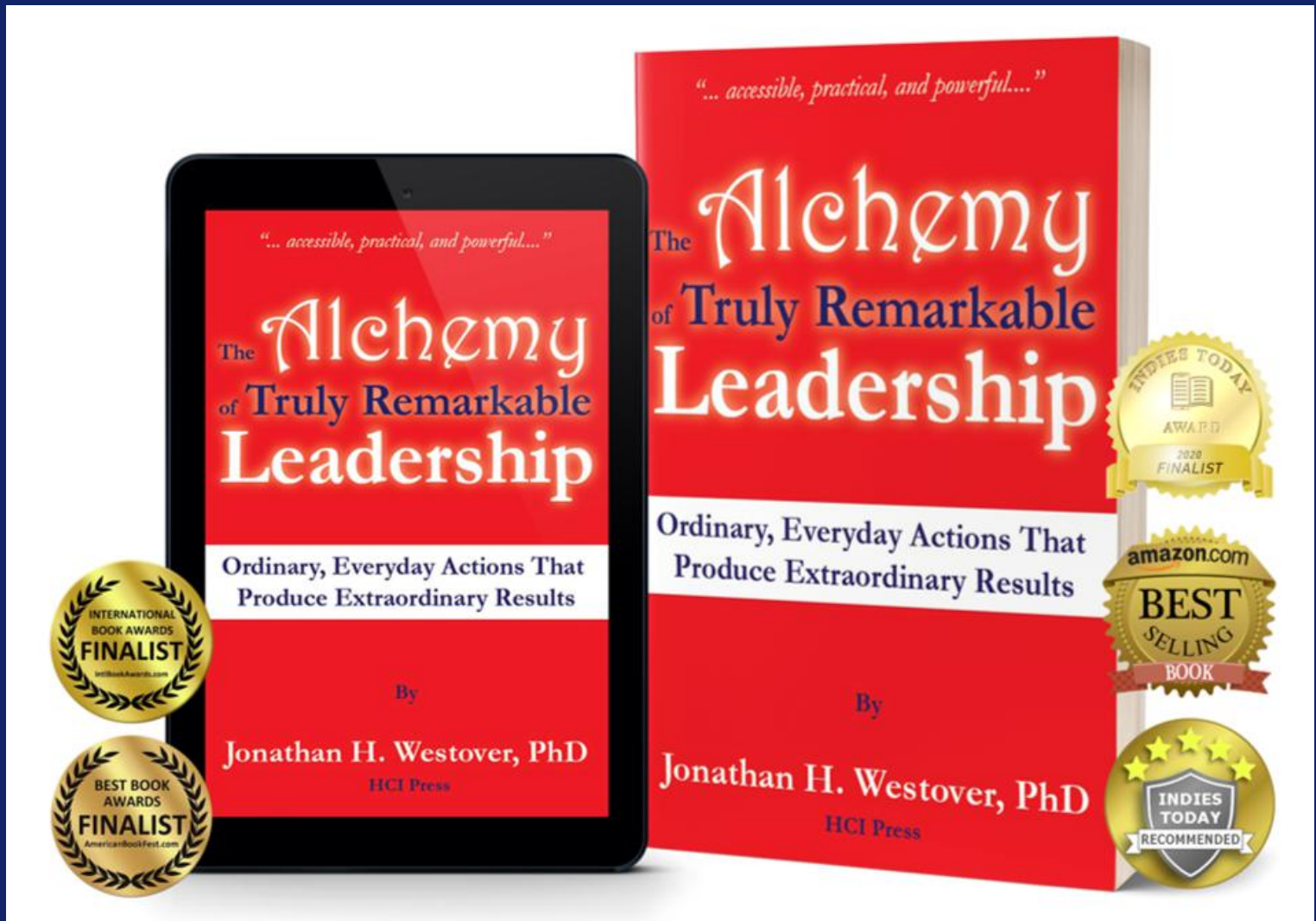
~ Dr. Amy Dufrane, SPHR, CAE, CEO of HRCI

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How Innovative Human Capital Programs Can Keep Your Company Competitive

by Rob Whalen

As the COVID-19 pandemic finally appears to be waning, there's a lot of talk about recovery – from how long it will take to what it will look like. However, now that companies are confronting stratospheric inflation, ongoing supply chain disruptions, and one of the tightest labor markets in many years, it's clear that there will be significant economic headwinds for a long time to come.

One of the most daunting challenges CEOs and other company leaders face today is how to maintain a healthy workforce at a time when labor is highly mobile, talent markets are extremely tight, and the threat of turnover is more serious than it has been in decades. decades.

Employee demands and expectations shifted dramatically during the pandemic, particularly around workplace flexibility and benefits. This is why one of the most important steps companies can take to recruit and retain employees is to offer benefits that meet their unique needs.

The companies in the strongest position to navigate the economic fallout from COVID-19

are the ones capable of attracting and retaining top talent. The best way to do this is to offer robust and customized benefits packages that will help employees through this period of economic uncertainty and demonstrate that the company genuinely cares about their well-being.

Employees Need More Support

The past two years have been difficult for employees and consumers, from layoffs and reduced hours in the early days of the pandemic to surging inflation. While the unemployment rate is back down to 3.6 percent, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that the number of quits hit 4.5 million in March – the highest level since the BLS started tracking the statistic.

There are many reasons employees are quitting their jobs at nearly unprecedented rates. According to a survey conducted by Pew Research Center, ow pay and a lack of

lopportunities for advancement were the top reasons employees wanted to quit in 2021. However, a lack of flexibility and insufficient benefits were also major contributors to churn – 45 percent and 43 percent of employees, respectively, said they wanted to quit for these reasons.

At a time when millions of employees are reassessing their professional lives and asking for more support from employers, rampant inflation has given them yet another reason to seek out companies that will focus on their individual needs and concerns. Companies have to adapt to the new economic landscape to remain competitive. Reducing turnover has never been more critical, and HR teams in the strongest position to do so will be the ones that meet employees where they are with comprehensive and flexible compensation and benefits packages.

Treating Employees as Individuals

At the beginning of the pandemic, millions of employees made the overnight transition to remote work – a shift that has permanently changed how and where people work. Many employees have grown accustomed to more independent and flexible work, and this is reflected in their priorities. According to a 2021 IBM survey on employee expectations, the top reason respondents cited for changing employers was a need for greater flexibility. The third-most-cited reason was the need for "more benefits and support for my well-being."

Companies can meet both of these demands at the same time by offering flexible benefits like convertible paid time off – a form of PTO that can be repurposed to meet a wide range of employee needs. PTO is a widely underused benefit – our research indicates that just 40 percent of employees use all their allotted time off, while 75 percent report that they've taken an "unneeded" vacation to avoid losing time they've earned. During the pandemic, 44 percent of employers say they increased the amount of PTO available to employees, despite the fact that they were even less inclined to use it.

Convertible PTO allows employees to redirect resources from time off to a range of other benefits, such as retirement contributions, student loan payments, and health savings accounts.

When the majority of employees don't use their PTO, companies that fail to offer alternatives are telling their employees that they don't care enough to provide support that actually makes a difference in people's lives. By building your benefits package around your employees' actual needs, you'll show them that you're committed to their well-being.

It's Time For An Innovative Approach To Human Capital

Your company's productivity is inextricably tied to the health and morale of your workforce. Beyond the fact that turnover is extremely costly for companies (from the loss of institutional knowledge to the expenses associated with finding, onboarding, and training new people),

employee dissatisfaction also leads to a lack of engagement and worse job performance. Just one-fifth of employees are engaged at work, and Gallup estimates that this costs the global economy over $8 trillion in lost productivity every year.

As the labor market remains tight and employees continue to quit their jobs at an unprecedented rate, companies have to make retention a central focus of their HR platforms.

The one-size-fits-all approach to compensation and benefits alienates diverse members of your workforce, increases turnover, and limits productivity. Flexible benefits, on the other hand, will meet the core demands of today's employees and ensure that your workforce is as healthy, engaged, and loyal as it can be.

Rob Whalen, co-founder and CEO of PTO Exchange

These are all reasons companies need to drop antiquated and ineffective approaches to managing human capital, such as benefits programs that employees don't use. While HR teams face a series of the biggest challenges they've ever confronted, these challenges also present opportunities. Over the next several years, the most competitive companies will be the ones that stop treating employees as if they're interchangeable with one another.

Adaptive Organizational And Work Design For The Future Of Work

by Jonathan Westover

We've all been there: wading our way through yet another crummy workday, in a job that we are merely tolerating, in an organization that just seems to be lagging and slowly dying on the vine. Despite the best of intentions, leaders often inadvertently create lackluster workplace environments that are stagnant and fail to enculturate vision, mission, capacity and learning to help their teams not only survive but thrive.

I once worked in such an organization, in a job that was, shall we say, lousy. The company was the epitome of stale bureaucracy, and the prominent leadership style was authoritative. My coworkers and I were constantly micromanaged, there was little to no trust between management and the employees and work each day was a slog. We got stuff done, but only just. Innovation and adapting to the needs

of the customer weren't even an afterthought of leadership, as far as I could tell, or at least such a mindset didn't manifest itself in the way the organization was led or how the work was designed and carried out.

This may seem like a bit of a straw man, but as I have consulted with organizations and teams over the past two decades, I have seen similar scenarios play out again and again. The truth is, despite what are usually good intentions, many (if not most) leaders and organizations aren't well equipped to be adaptive in the face of an ever-shifting business landscape.

A Brief History of Organizational Design
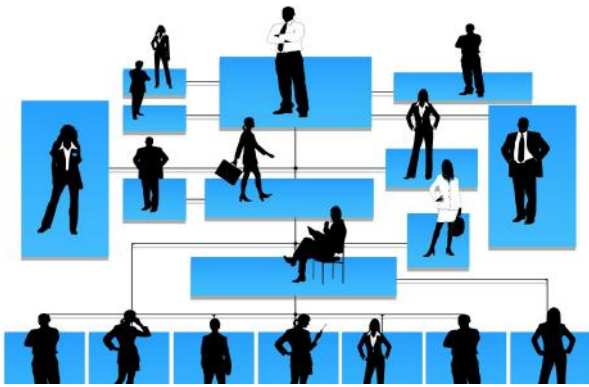
Organizational design is a topic examined by scholars and organizational leaders for decades. Academic research dating all the way back to the 1950s has specifically explored this topic, in an effort to better understand how to design effective and efficient organizations and the work that they perform, but efforts in organizational and work design go back even further, to the early days of the Industrial Revolution, Taylorism and Fordism and the development of mechanized work and the assembly line.

However, even as early as the 1980s, researchers were recognizing the limitations of Taylorism and Fordism. In recent decades, there has been a significant shift from a mechanistic approach to work and organizations to adaptive, people-centered organizations. Scholars and practitioners alike recognize that we are now firmly enmeshed in the fourth industrial revolution (Industry 4.0), characterized by ongoing digital transformation and disruption, or in other words, "the intelligent networking of machines and processes for industry with the help of information and communication technology."

We are experiencing greater and greater levels of automation driven by artificial intelligence (AI), deep machine learning and advanced robotics, and the name of the game is consumer personalization and customization.

The Development of Adaptive Organizational Design

While it is important to note that organizations are indeed complex systems, the context of Industry 4.0 requires a different set of leadership competencies and capabilities, with much more agile and adaptive organizations. As one thought leader recently argued, "Robust adaptability has still not fully made it to the way we design and manage organizations—even though the organization's needs and focus are constantly changing." As the pace of change and disruption continues to increase, are we creating agile and adaptive teams that can not only respond to the constant change but also proactively prepare for and anticipate (at least to some extent) the shifts that will continue to put a strain on our people and our business?

Furthermore, it has been argued (in this adaptive organization design manifesto) that "This era of sharp evolution for human society requires and allows for organizations that are able to cope with increasing amounts of unrelenting change, co-learning with their context and evolving accordingly and continuously." The writer further argues that as leaders we must learn to move away from a focus on structures and rules (the bread and butter of bureaucratic organizations), rather prioritizing organizational dynamics and guiding principles that allow for rapid iteration, experimentation, continual learning and adaptability.

Moving Toward Vibrant Work Design

An adaptive organization will not only be in a stronger position to rapidly respond to an ever-shifting internal and external environment, but leaders with an adaptive organizational design mindset and skill set will be better prepared to help their people grow and evolve in their roles to meet the shifting demands of the market. Leaders need to design work that is meaningful and purpose-driven and provides employees with the opportunity to learn and grow a little every day. Additionally, flexible work design can lead to a more vibrant job design that is better situated to more rapidly adapt to both the needs of the organization and the employee.

Organizational Learning To Survive and Thrive

In addition to ensuring meaningful job design and a flexible workplace design that allows for the evolution of the roles and responsibilities of a given job, leaders need to create and sustain a culture of continual organizational learning if they hope to have an adaptive organization ready to respond the ever-changing demands in the shifting world of work. In a hypercompetitive labor market that is already experiencing severe skills gaps, leaders don't have the luxury of just hiring new talent with evolving specialized technical competencies and capabilities; they need to develop effective strategies to reskill and upskill their people to meet both present and future organizational and market demands.

Most of us want to work for and lead dynamic organizations and teams that are positioned to creatively and sustainably add value to the market. In order to stay relevant amid a rapidly changing world, leaders must rethink the how and why behind the designs of their organizations and the work they and their teams perform. Focusing on adaptive organizational design and moving toward more flexible and dynamic work design will help you and your people to create a vibrant environment and culture of organizational learning and growth that will allow you to meet the ever-changing demands of the market, better respond to disruption and not only survive but thrive in the future of work.

Companies Are Investing In Productivity To Reduce Costs

by Andy Mowat

As layoffs continue and the size of teams are reduced, it's critical to become more efficient in business operations. The less time employees spend sifting through unnecessary items, losing focus, the more time can be devoted to staying productive in this stressful business climate. We all know time is money.

In these economic conditions, you need to start doing less of what doesn't matter and more of what does. By focusing on being intentional with your time, ignoring or minimizing distractions, and generally being more purposeful with your time you can add valuable minutes back to your day. What's my advice on how to do so? I'll share some simple ways to be more productive.

Be intentional with your time – it's limited!

It can be a bit too easy to fall into unproductive patterns and routines, especially during uneasy times. Waking up, going to work (or rolling out of bed and into your desk chair), and going through the motions happens to the best of us. One of the most impactful things you can do to snap out of this and develop a more mindful routine is to be intentional with your time.

can do to snap out of this and develop a more mindful routine is to be intentional with your time. Now, this is certainly easier said than done, but working on slowly shifting your mindset over time is the best place to start. You can do this by making the transition from thinking "What do I have to do today? How many tasks do I need to complete?" to "What is the one priority thing I should focus on today?"

Avoid distractions

One of the easiest ways to spend time on what matters most is to avoid distraction. Identifying the tasks that are eating away at your valuable time is typically a good place to start. For most executives, the first thing you do in the morning, sometimes before you even get to work, check your email. If you're lucky, maybe you have 20-30 to read through. If you're like the rest of us, you probably have 100+ to sift through.

The first step is to turn off unnecessary notifications and allow yourself to disconnect from what isn't serving you throughout the day. With the overflow of notifications we receive on a daily basis, it can be easy to get distracted and overwhelmed, so turning these off and allowing yourself to maintain focus is a great first step to avoiding distractions.

Using a tool such as Gated, which reduces unwanted distracting email in your inbox, can help you avoid that tedious task first thing in the morning. Also, avoiding distractions throughout the work day can make a massive difference in lost time. Using tools that limit distractions, such as Forest or SelfControl, or browsers such as Brave, can help you avoid visiting other websites, inspire you to stay on task, and overall help you maintain the focus you need to get through your work.

Planning ahead

While you certainly do not need to block your calendar by the minute (although that has been proven to be effective for many executives for increasing productivity by up to 80%) planning out your day ahead of time can be a simple, transformative action. Take a few minutes at the end of the day to plan out what you need to get done the next day or take some time in the morning to sort out your day, whether it be a written task list, priority ranking, plugging items into your favorite productivity app, etc. Additionally, this will save you quite a bit of time over the course of the day. You'll stop having to step back and ask yourself what to prioritize or what to ignore.

By planning out tasks or scheduling with intention, you'll find that you feel more powerful and prepared each day.

To multitask or not to multitask?

That is the question. While some people tend to find peace in purposefully multitasking, other people find it awful and stressful to maintain focus on multiple items at once. In terms of saving time, you might immediately assume that multitasking is the way to go. However, it can actually be just as effective, or even more effective, to spend time focusing on one task before switching to the next. The Pomodoro Technique has been widely recognized for helping people effectively switch from one important task to the next. By setting a timer for however long you need, maybe 30 minutes, you can focus on your task for the allotted time period and then take a brief break before switching to the next task. Now, instead of stressfully switching gears every 10 minutes, you can remain focused on the task at hand before moving on the next.

For those who find multitasking to be more efficient, the idea of 'batching' tasks might be one to consider. Batching similar tasks together enables you to complete multiple tasks at the same time, since they all relate or go hand-in-hand. Ultimately, the choice between multitasking and focusing on one task at a time will depend on personal preference, but both have been widely proven to increase productivity and maintain focus at work.

Be mindful of your mind

There is an abundance of tools available that can increase productivity, keeping us on track and helping save time. Some have a monthly subscription or expensive download, but many quality productivity tools are free or extremely cost-efficient. There are a few different ways in which tools and solutions can save you time. For example, a tool such as Calendly can help you save time by managing your calendar and helping you avoid that extra time you're taking to schedule meetings, interviews, etc. Whereas a tool such as Asana can help you manage projects and stay on top of important to-do's. On the other hand, there are also tools such as Gated that allow you to avoid spending time on unnecessary tasks, like trying to maintain inbox zero, and allow you to shift your focus to the more important tasks at hand.

Working long hours, not taking breaks, and avoiding caring for yourself may put your career and wellbeing at risk. It's important, now more than ever, to prioritize your mental health and your needs at work. Consider setting more boundaries in terms of meetings and prioritizing asynchronous work. Also ensure that you're utilizing any mental health benefits provided to you by your employer. Using these tips to develop your focus is by far the best thing you can do for yourself during these stressful times. By being more focused, it will be easier to find a work-life balance, enjoy your weekends, give yourself time before and after work to care for yourself, and spend time with family and friends. You'll find that as you apply these tips to your daily life you'll start to feel more intentional, powerful, and equipped to handle whatever the world throws at us next.

Andy Mowat, Founder and CEO of Gated Over the years, Andy and the teams he managed have sent millions of emails and struggled with deliverability. Andy himself also gets quite a lot of cold emails, which inspired him to start Gated. Today, Andy's vision and expertise set the tone for the entire Gated team - as we build a solution and a movement to fix email, for everyone.

Rethinking How And When We Work To Maximize Human Potential

by Jonathan Westover

Years ago, I was working in the corporate offices of a global tech firm headquartered in South Korea. Consistent with the Korean corporate work culture, the typical employee would show up to work around 7 a.m. and usually stay until late into the evening. During my time at the company, I made several observations about the way we worked and what we accomplished.

First, I noticed that while everyone spent tons of time at work each day, productivity wasn't particularly high and there was a lot of wasted time. Second, for me specifically, I realized there were some serious diminishing returns in my work quality and quantity the longer I worked in the day. Third, I found that while I was the most productive and creative in the morning hours, there were other co-workers who dragged in the morning but were way more productive in the afternoon or evening hours.
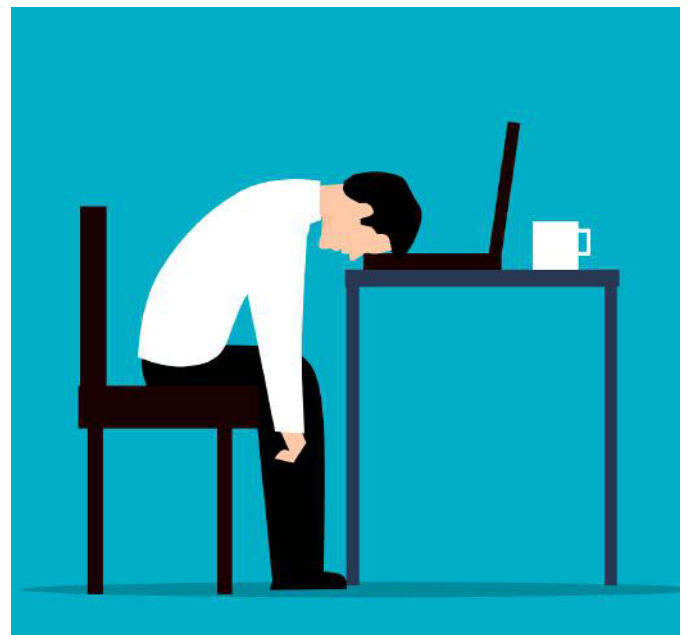
The realization set in that a one-size-fits-all approach to how we structure the workday doesn't work. Butts in seats doesn't necessarily mean anything when it comes to actual productivity and the creativity and innovation we need to help us continually add value to the market. We need to rethink how and when we work if we want to maximize our own potential and the potential of our team members.

Flexible Scheduling And Reduced Work Hours

There is no question that the Covid-19 pandemic had dramatic impacts on individuals' lives, including their work lives. Many had to adjust to a virtual work environment on a dime, which brought challenges but also many benefits.

One of the greatest benefits has been increased work and scheduling flexibility and the democratization of the labor force. While there are many ways leaders can approach a more flexible and distributed workforce, a recent MIT Sloan Management Review article notes that many companies are moving toward a four-day work week and/or six-hour workdays.

Four-Day Work Weeks

There is a growing body of research identifying the benefits of moving from a five- to a four-day work week. Recently, NPR interviewed economist and sociology professor Juliet Schor to discuss the four-day work week and revealed that benefits can include overall lower office overhead costs, increases in employee well-being and sometimes staggering increases in productivity.

However, despite the many documented benefits to some organizations, a four-day work week won't be a fit for everyone. In a recent Harvard Business Review article, the authors identify some of the challenges and potential pitfalls of moving to a four-day week, including a reminder that "reducing working hours does not necessarily reduce work" and the warning that "reducing hours should not increase work's intensity," each of which can lead to higher levels of employee burnout and turnover.

The Six-Hour Workday

A growing number of researchers have also been examining the optimal number of hours in a workday. One such study, conducted by researchers in Sweden, found that employees who work just six hours a day get sick less, have lower stress, work harder and are significantly more productive in the reduced time.

Additionally, Alex Pang, a researcher and consultant, has found that "...five hours is about the maximum that most of us can concentrate hard on something. There are periods when you can push past that, but the reality is that most of us have about that good work time in us every day."

In fact, most people may only be able to perform two to three hours of concentrated, focused work a day. Of course, not everything we do in a workday needs to be so intense and concentrated, but these findings beg the question, why are we spending so much time at work each day, especially when there are obvious diminishing returns in the quantity and quality of our work the longer we are working?

Achieving A Flow State

If employees work fewer days and fewer hours, how are we supposed to get work done? One possible answer is to support conditions that will help our people in achieving their flow state, or getting "in the zone."

So, what is a "flow state?" While neuroscience hasn't yet been able to provide all of the answers, we do know that it is a distinct mental state. As a recent BetterUp article puts it, flow "arises only when the level of challenge of the task and the level of skill of the person are in balance... our minds are fully engaged in the task at hand in a way that seems to free up other parts of our brain to make connections."

 In order to achieve flow more regularly, we need to have clear, challenging but achievable goals, put ourselves in an environment where we are free of distractions and can focus and practice self-care and develop a pre-flow ritual or routine.

Finding our flow will look a bit different for each employee, so we need to create a culture to encourage and support our people in discovering their personal approaches to achieving flow, which can result in significantly higher productivity, increased satisfaction and improved emotional regulation; it's in the best interest of everyone to foster more flow at work!

Conclusion

My realization that a one-size-fits-all approach to how and when we work is not a groundbreaking observation. In fact, it is an incredibly obvious and intuitively simple recognition that the diverse circumstances and needs of our people matter a lot as we design how and when they are able to do their work—ideally in a way that will give everyone the best chance to consistently achieve their flow state.

Working more hours usually isn't a sustainable answer to increase creativity and productivity, but as we explore flexible options like four-day work weeks or six-hour work days, we can create a strategic work plan to help us maximize the potential of our team.

The Power of Social Learning

by Nellie Wartoft

Humans are the most powerful species on the planet. Why is that? Is it thanks to our vast intellect or collection of superior skills? Perhaps our ability to face obstacles bravely and seek out adventure? While all of these factors play a role in our success, there is one that trumps them all — social learning.

Social learning is the process of acquiring knowledge or skills by observing and imitating others. It's how we learn to speak, walk, and behave like those around us. And it's by far one of the most critical aspects of our lives.

Think about it — most of what we know comes from observing others and imitating their behavior.

Think about it — most of what we know comes from observing others and imitating their behavior. We learn how to speak by listening to our parents and repeating the sounds they make. We learn how to walk by watching them take steps and then copying their movements. And we learn how to behave by observing the social cues they give us.

Social learning has led to many of today's most significant innovations. Boeing took the inspiring work of the Wright brothers and developed it into a global industry. Steve Jobs revolutionized global communications (and community) by building on world-changing ideas from Alexander Graham Bell and others.

Social learning allows us to move ahead without starting from scratch over and over again. By looking to the role models who have come before us, we can learn from their successes and failures and build on their progress. We can upskill our existing workforce, create new opportunities for those who are willing to learn and drive innovation in our economy.

It's all about learning from other humans, based on human experience, together with other humans.

Social Learning in the Modern Workplace

While social learning has resulted in many of the world's most significant innovations, it is also playing a critical role in the modern workplace.

Every day stellar leaders and colleagues are retiring from the workforce.

In their place, fresh graduates come onboard with little to no experience in how to write emails or host meetings. Yet we all seek for ways to make our workplace more innovative, efficient, and profitable.

If we follow the concept of social learning, then it should be true that all the data and guidance that someone needs to be successful at work is readily available. Online courses and e-learning platforms allow employees to learn new skills at their own pace. But these traditional methods of learning can be quite isolating, and are proven to be far from as effective as social learning is with knowledge retention rates of only about 10 % compared to 85 % in social learning.

Social learning fills in the gap that mere information dumps leave behind. When individuals have access to the right mentors and influencers, they can quickly develop the skills they need to be successful. But it starts with understanding the underlying forces of social learning and how it works best in a business setting. Let's dive into the three primary forces powering successful social learning in the workplace.

The 3 Forces of Social Learning

When it comes to social learning in the workplace, there are three key forces at play:

1. Learning from Others

2. Role Models

3. Social Technology

These three forces work together to create an environment where social learning can thrive. Let's take a closer look at each one.

1. The Power of Learning from Others

One of the most significant workplace learning methods is learning from others with a shared experience.

When individuals have the opportunity to learn from those who have gone before them, they can develop the skills they need to be successful more quickly. They can avoid making mistakes that have already been made and focus on the things that matter.

In his work, The Social Learning Theory, Albert Bandura posits that "most human behaviour is learned observationally through modeling from others." From observing others, one forms an idea of how new behaviours are performed, and on later occasions, this coded information serves as a guide for action.

Think of the famed 70/20/10 model of learning. In this model, knowledge comes from three sources — 70% from challenging assignments on the job, 20% from exposure, observations and social interactions with others, and 10% from formal educational experiences.

Learning through modeling from others does not only include watching another person engaging in an activity but also hearing verbal instructions, listening to other people's experiences, reading, and even watching the actions of characters in books and films.

Cross-training is an excellent example of learning from others. When new employees are paired with more experienced staff, they have the opportunity to learn the ropes and develop their skills more quickly.

Mentorship programs are another great way to harness the power of social learning. By pairing up new employees with mentors, they can get one-on-one guidance and learn the ropes more quickly.

2. The Power of Role Models

Learning from others isn't the only way social learning is possible in the workplace. It can also occur when individuals have the opportunity to learn from role models.

Role models are people who we admire and look up to. They possess the qualities that we want to develop in ourselves. Seeing these people behaving in a certain way gives us a reference point for how we should behave.

According to The Motivational Theory of Role Models, a role model serves three distinct functions influencing goals and motivation: acting as behavioural models, representing the possible, and being inspirational.

We can think of role models in three recurring and interrelated themes:
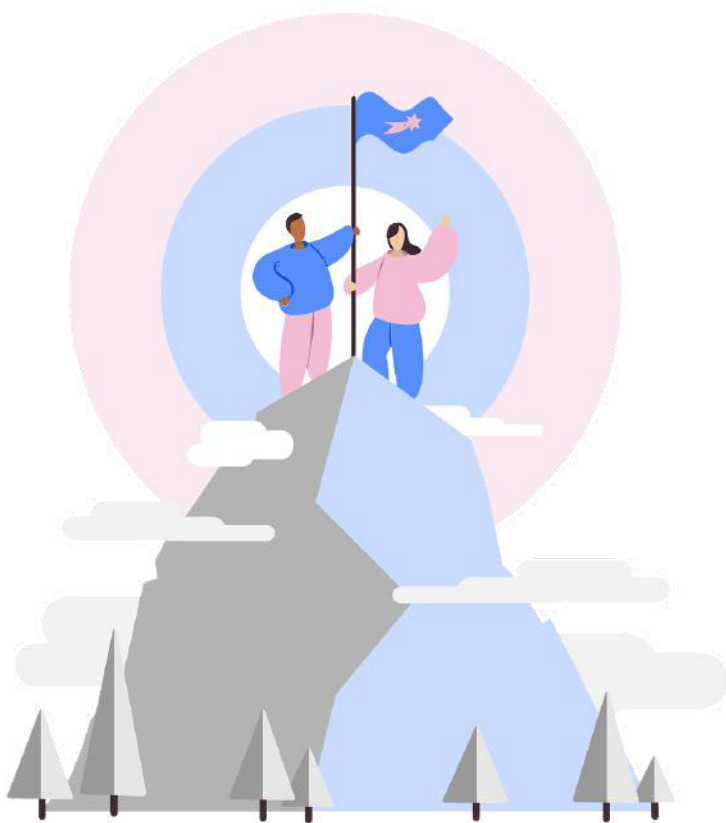
1. Role models show us how to perform a skill and achieve a goal: They are behavioural models. They show 'how' someone can do something. The role model demonstrates how to achieve the goal. This isn't just for behaviour, but also for cognitive and emotional strategies that the role model uses to achieve success.

2. Role models show us that it is possible to achieve our goals: They are living examples of what is possible. This is critical for children and adults alike. We need to see proof that it can be done to have hope that we can achieve it too.

3. Role models make a goal desirable: They are inspirational. They make us want to achieve the goal because we admire them and their accomplishments. We want to be like them because we see how their outcomes have impacted their life and legacy.

Role models are more powerful the more they embody a person's already existing goals. A role model needs to showcase success in the environments the aspirant is operating in to be highly effective. This can include having skills and competencies the aspirant is trying to build and achieving goals the aspirant is aspiring toward.

In short, a role model is someone who's been there, done that — and done it well.

Interestingly, for role models to succeed in being inspirational, they also need to be seen as someone the aspirant can identify with.

If the role model is seen as someone too far away from the aspirant's own environment, identity and values, the role model will be seen as unattainable and not inspirational by the aspirant.

Important to note is also that once goals have changed, it might well be that a new role model is needed — a role model who embodies these new goals. This is why a single mentor throughout your career may not be as effective as having access to various role models across your different life goals.

3. The Power of Social Technology

The third force in social learning is social technology.

Social technology encompasses a wide range of tools that facilitate communication and collaboration. This includes everything from social media platforms like TikTok and Twitter to video conferencing software like Microsoft Teams and Zoom.

Consider that the average person spends 2 hours and 27 minutes daily on social media. What keeps them coming back day after day?

One of the key reasons is that social media provides us with a constant stream of information. We can learn about what's happening in the world, connect with friends and family, and find new things to be interested in — all from the comfort of our homes.

But social media isn't just a time sink. You can also use it for learning.

In fact, social media is one of the most powerful learning tools at our disposal. Why? Because it allows us to connect with other people and learn from them.

Think about it: when you have a question, who do you ask? Most likely, you'll turn to Google or another search engine. But if you can't find the answer you're looking for, you might ask a friend or family member.

And that's exactly what social media does. It gives us access to a huge network of people who we can learn from.

We all know you can use these technologies with bad intentions too. Still, taken into a learning context, they can remarkably impact building habits and learning new skills together with others.

Part of the potential within social technology is the connection between dopamine and learning. Likes, comments, mentions, and push notifications generate a dopamine rush that hooks people to their accounts.

This is observable in social media usage: when an individual gets a notification, such as a like or mention, the brain receives a rush of dopamine and sends it along reward pathways, causing the individual to feel pleasure.

So how can this work in social learning in the workplace?

Nudging people to learn and share others' experiences can produce dopamine rewards. So turn that into practical social learning experiences!

Leveraging gamification such as streaks to help people build a sustainable habit of learning and stay on track with their professional development, daily or weekly instead of the ad-hoc training session once a quarter.

It has been reported that self-disclosure on social networking sites lights up the same part of the brain that also ignites when taking an addictive substance. When people share their knowledge and experiences on social learning platforms, the same brain reward centers activate as when people talk about themselves in person.

But what about the drawbacks of social technology?

Social media use becomes problematic when someone views social networking sites as an essential coping mechanism to relieve stress, loneliness, or depression. Social media use provides these individuals with continuous rewards that they're not receiving in real life, so they engage more in the activity.

On the contrary, rewards received through social learning are more 'real' as you're actually developing professionally and can apply the skills and knowledge you've learnt through the platform behaviours.

Humans have a massive desire for social validation and a "fear of missing out" (FOMO).
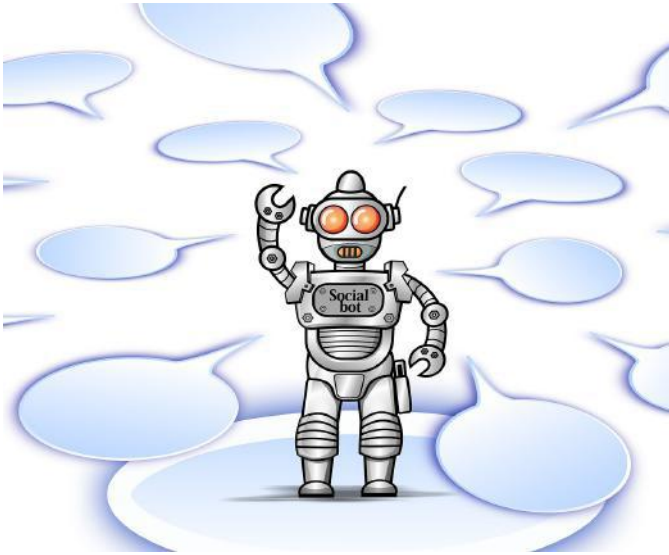
This is a downside of other digital learning modes — you have no incentive to stay up to date with a video learning platform where you're all alone on your own.

Put the Power of Social Learning to Work

Taking the three forces together, we can see the immense power of social learning. When used effectively, you can leverage social technology to help people learn directly from role models together with others.

When we share our knowledge and experiences with others, we not only help them learn, but we also get a dopamine rush that reinforces our own learning.

Social learning is how we've learnt for centuries and generations and is the reason we have phones, airplanes, and vaccines today. Why let it stop there? What if your workplace became a learning organisation that actively harnessed the power of social learning to stay ahead of the curve?

The power is in your hands. Will you use it for good?
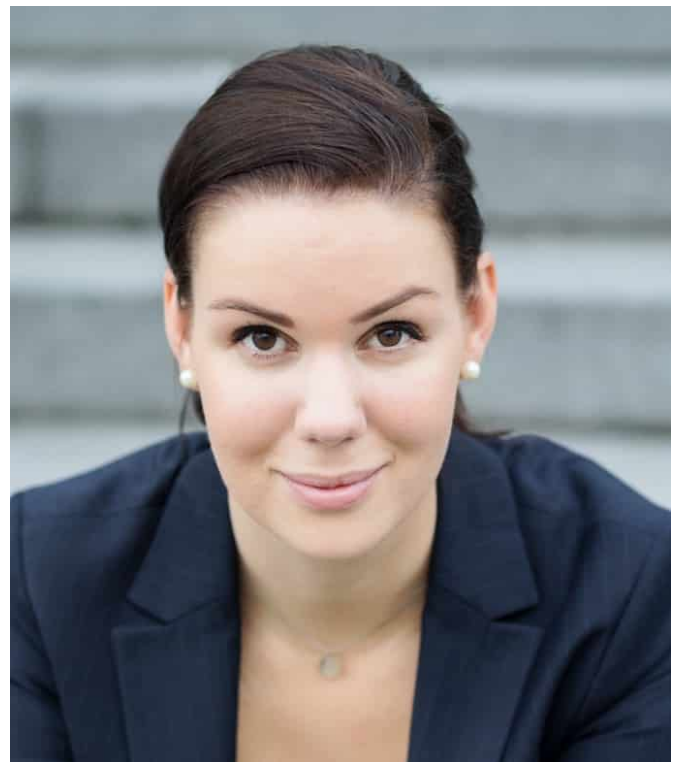
Nellie Wartoft is Founder and CEO of social learning platform Tigerhall. She is based in Singapore and the US and writes and cares about people development, leadership and digital skills.
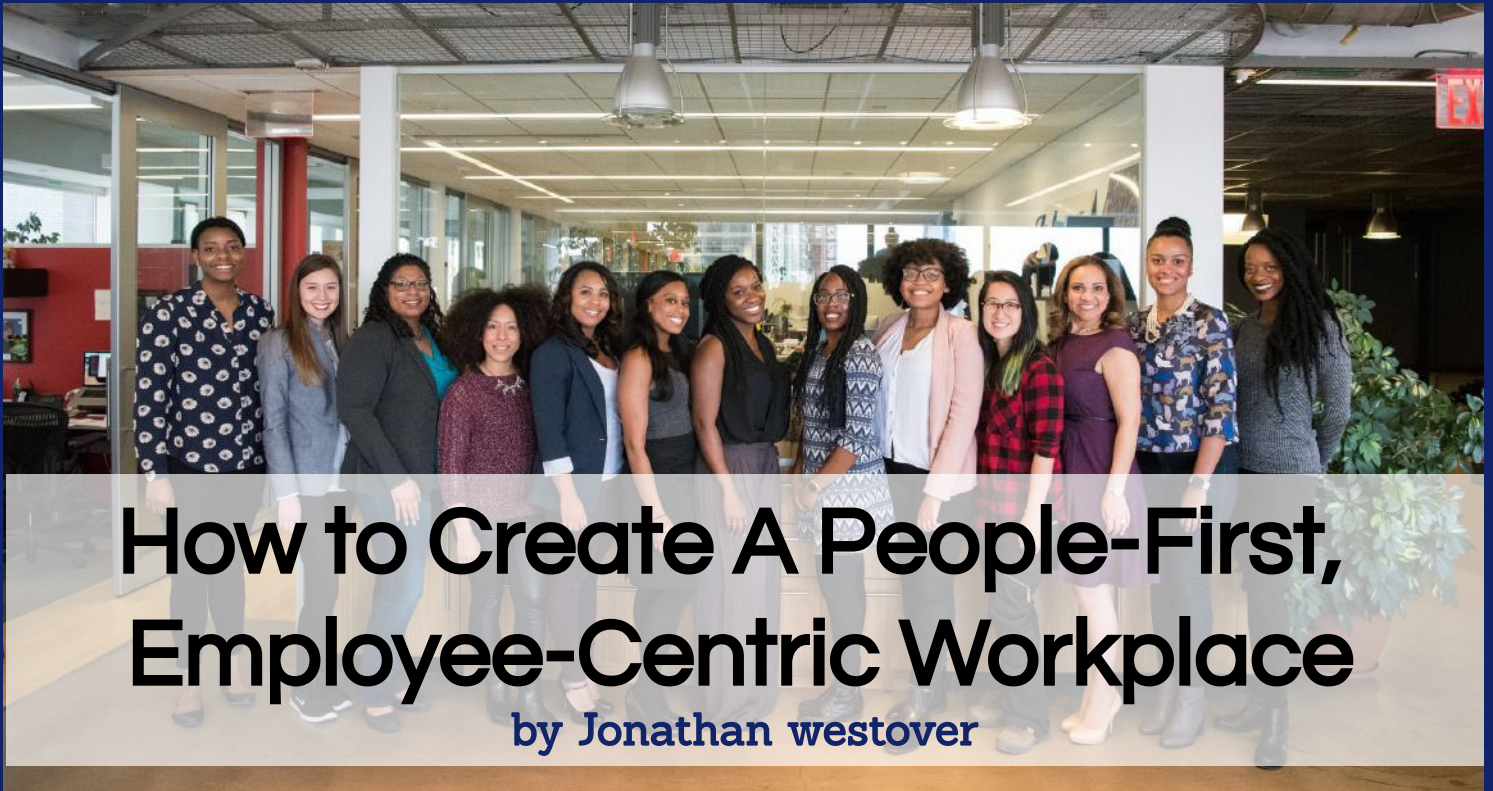
How to Create A People-First, Employee-Centric Workplace

by Jonathan westover

Have you worked in an environment where employees were seemingly an afterthought, treated like expendable cogs in a machine? Alternatively, have you worked in an environment where employees were the primary focus of leaders, where your value was recognized and rewarded and where you were continually invested in and developed? In each case, how did that make you feel? How did you perform? How long did you last in that organization?

Most of us have probably worked in both types of organizations and most of us would likely point to the second type of organization as the one where we would like to work and where we feel we would have the best chance for both personal and organizational success. So why are so many organizations perpetually behaving badly and creating the first type of workplace environment? Are we that ineffective as leaders? The reality is it is hard to change mindsets and systems. But it can and should be done for the sake of both the business and the people that make up the business.

What is an employee-centric culture?

Perhaps the most important aspect of creating a people-first, employee-centric workplace is creating a strong employee experience that can serve as a firm foundation for all of the systemic scaffolding (e.g., norms, values, policies, practices, procedures, etc.) to support a sustainable people-first culture.

In a recent Business.com article, Jennifer Post explains an employee-centric culture as one where "Ideas, creativity, free-flowing communication and innovation are encouraged throughout an organization. Employees . . . feel safe making suggestions and challenging a structure they may feel is interfering with productivity and performance. These employees have a connection with their team and organization, as well as a strong, secure sense of identity at work . . . both challenges and ideas are received positively, which allows the employees to feel valued, respected and like there is an opportunity to grow in the company."

Among other things, this means that openness and transparency, psychological safety, positive team member relationships and interpersonal and institutional trust must reign supreme for the modern organization to be successful. In this kind of an environment and culture, employees are fully supported, developed and given the opportunity to thrive and fulfill their potential.

A strictly laissez-faire, shareholder capitalism approach to business clearly has its limitations, including producing a myriad of negative externalities and often resulting in employee, customer and environmental exploitation in the name of profits at all costs. However, in recent years, there has been a steady move away from shareholder capitalism to other alternate approaches, such as stakeholder capitalism, a focus on the triple bottom line, social entrepreneurship and organization-driven social impact work. Each of these variations put value on the humanness of the markets and recognize the need for the social good in organizations. In fact, the modern consumer expects, if not demands, that the organizations they patronize be invested in making a positive difference in the world—hence the rise of the people-first, employee-centric organization and workplace.

There is a strong business case for focusing on your people first.

Establishing and maintaining an employee-first focus in your business may sound counterintuitive, but a litany of research has demonstrated why it is not only the right thing to do for the humans in your organization but also the right thing to do for the bottom-line success of the business. Some of these benefits include:

• Combatting employee disengagement. When employees feel that they are valued and that their employer is willing to invest in them, employee engagement levels go up.

• Increased person-job alignment. In a people-first, employee-centric workplace, leaders work with their people to ensure they have the opportunities to do what they do best every day.

• Reducing employee turnover. When employees are engaged and there is clear person-job values congruence and alignment, withdrawal cognitions diminish and employees choose to stick around longer.

• Increased productivity. A satisfied, engaged and aligned employee is a hard-working and productive employee. They are more efficient, they get more done and their work is of higher quality.

• Increased innovation. When employees experience psychological safety at work and are encouraged and supported in their continued growth, a learning organization is formed and creativity and innovation increases.

• More positive customer experience. All of this leads to happier customers and a better overall customer experience, increasing customer loyalty and retention, increasing sales and strengthening the bottom line of the company.

You can create an employee-centric workplace

Recognizing the benefits, fully buying into the prospect and even having clear aspirational intentions is great, but how do you move from recognition and aspiration to actual implementation? It isn't rocket science, but it does take discipline. Following the steps below will help get you a long way toward your end goal:

1. Establish a baseline understanding of where you are at today. You can accomplish this through pulse surveys and regular one-on-ones with your people.

2. Articulate a clear vision and core values that are people-focused. Repeatedly communicate these values and integrate them into all aspects of the employee experience from onboarding to company retreats.

3. Develop key strategic pillars to guide your ongoing efforts. Your values should inform your strategy, but be sure you can articulate that strategy clearly and succinctly with your core pillars.

4. Create a detailed, yet flexible action plan. Don't become rigid and dogmatic around your plan; rather build in checkpoints when you can revise and update your plan.

5. Get to work and celebrate the victories! Use ongoing pulse surveys to measure progress and when you see improvements, invest in the celebration to re-enforce your desired culture and strategic direction.

We have all experienced both soul-sucking and invigorating places to work, and I am a firm believer that most organizational leaders intend for their organization and team to be the latter. But it doesn't happen by accident. As we work to create a people-first, employee-centric organization and culture, our people can thrive, as well as the organization.
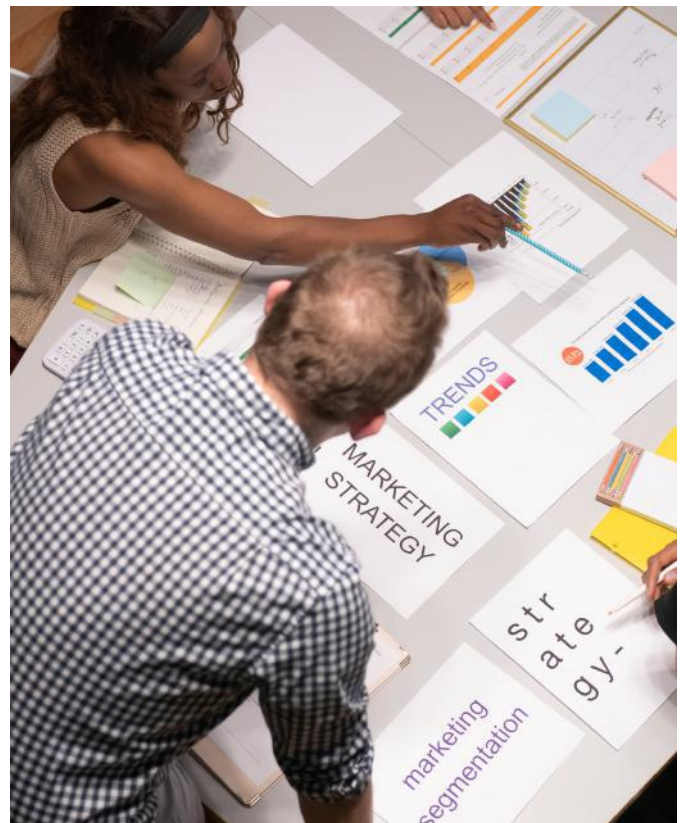
Talent Mobility is Critical for Employee Retention

by Josh Millet

Despite surging interest rates, stubbornly high inflation, and a looming recession, the job market has remained extremely tight. This means companies have to continue investing significant resources into finding and hiring employees at a time when their balance sheets are shrinking and economic conditions show little sign of improving. Meanwhile, rapidly shifting employee demands and high turnover rates have made things even more difficult for HR teams.

For Criteria's 2022 Hiring Benchmark Report, we surveyed over 500 hiring professionals to determine how they're approaching dramatic changes in the workforce during a period of relentless economic volatility. One key finding from the report is the fact that just 28 percent of organizations have talent mobility programs, even though these programs lead to lower levels of turnover. As companies struggle to find and hire talent, employee retention has become all the more important – and talent mobility is critical for keeping employees around.

Another surprising finding is that while companies tend to think compensation is the top employee priority, our survey demonstrates that this isn't the case – they rank opportunities for career advancement above pay. This is why it's no surprise that employees are more loyal to companies that give them a chance to improve their skills and advance their careers by moving to different positions within the organization. This won't just help companies redirect human capital to where it's needed most – it will also strengthen their workforces.

Solving Talent Problems Internally

When HR teams think about hiring and recruitment, their focus often turns to candidates outside the company. But with around twice as many job openings as there are candidates to fill them, companies should make talent mobility a core priority. This will help them ensure that the right people are in the right positions while motivating employees with promotions and other professional development opportunities – an effective way to reduce turnover.

Our survey found that 47 percent of the companies with talent mobility programs consider turnover a major issue – a proportion that jumps to 55 percent among companies that lack these programs. When employees feel trapped in their jobs, they're more inclined to search elsewhere for work that meets their professional goals. another 18 percent aren't sure if such a program exists at their companies.

Although talent mobility has never been more important, 26 percent of hiring professionals say they don't have a program in place to encourage it, while While just 28 percent of companies report that they have a talent mobility program, another 28 percent say they're creating one. This proportion will almost certainly rise in the near future, as companies increasingly recognize that they can put human capital to use more productively and maintain employee loyalty by facilitating talent mobility.

How Talent Mobility Meets Employee Demands

At a time when half of companies say turnover has been a major issue for them over the past couple of years (according to our survey), it's especially crucial for HR teams to be attuned to shifting employee demands. For example, a significant proportion of employees now expect flexibility at work – Deloitte reports that 94 percent of employees say they would benefit from greater flexibility. After two years of working remotely, employees have grown accustomed to remote work and the independence that comes with it.

This is consistent with another key finding in our report: while hiring professionals believe compensation is the top employee concern, it actually ranks third – behind work-life balance and opportunities for career advancement. There's a clear connection between both of these priorities and the demand for flexibility. Work-life balance is all about employees' ability to work where and how they want, which will give them the flexibility to travel, spend time with family and friends, and allocate their time effectively. Our survey found that companies which are mostly or partially remote are considerably less likely to say turnover is a major issue (41 percent and 50 percent, respectively) than companies which are mostly in-person: 56 percent.

When companies emphasize talent mobility, they give employees a chance to demonstrate their skills and move into positions that better suit them. This form of flexibility will simultaneously increase employee retention while allowing companies to efficiently adapt to changing economic and labor market conditions.
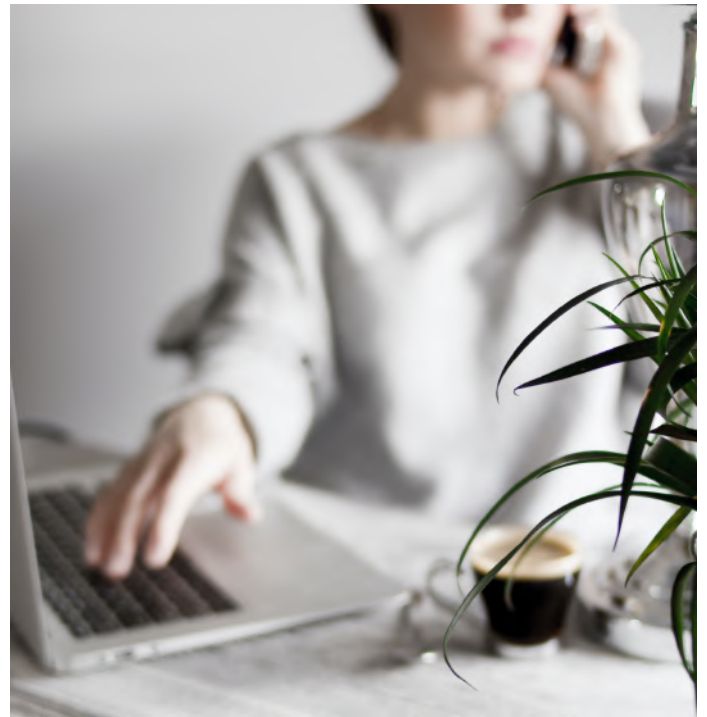

How Companies Can Enable Talent Mobility

As HR teams figure out how to navigate economic turbulence and a persistently hot labor market, focusing on talent mobility is a strategic move that would solve many problems at once, from turnover to the restricted hiring pipeline companies face today. But this doesn't mean companies should start shuffling employees around without a plan in place – they have to identify the best ways to fully leverage their workforces. This means making objective, informed decisions on which employees should fill particular roles. One of the keys to enabling talent mobility is to create mechanisms by which existing employees can be matched to internal job openings. Creating a multi-dimensional view the competencies and transferable skills of each employee is a good start here: assessments, post-hire performance data (e.g. from performance reviews) and other data can be used as inputs in creating these employee profiles.

HR teams can use the same assessments that evaluate external candidates to determine where to allocate talent within the company. They should also have open conversations with

employees about their professional aspirations, skills, and which types of work will help them find the right work-life balance. According to Gallup, essential elements of engagement include employees' perception that their development is encouraged, that they have opportunities to do what they do best every day, and that someone from the company has discussed their progress recently. These are all reminders that talent mobility will increase job satisfaction.

When companies prioritize talent mobility, they'll demonstrate that they want to invest in their own employees. This will help them avoid costly hiring and onboarding processes while increasing morale and maintaining a healthy workforce. Meanwhile, it will allow them to get the most out of that workforce by making sure employees are exactly where they need to be.
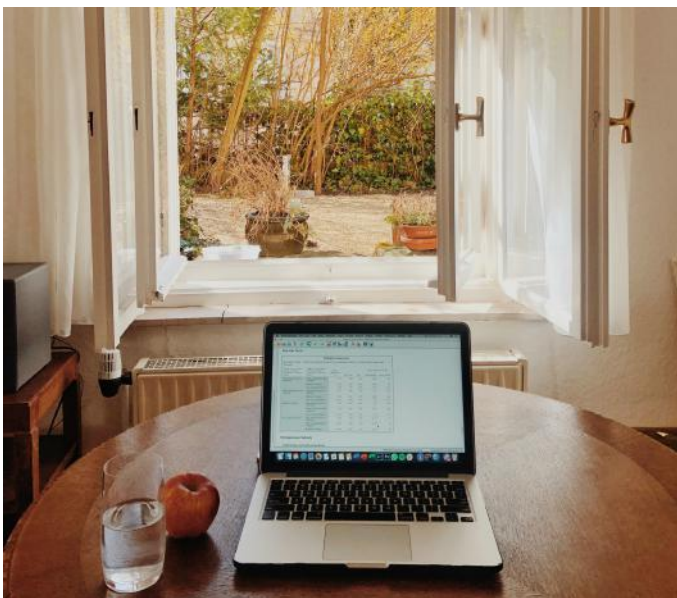
Josh Millet, Founder and CEO, Criteria Corp

Deliberate Job Design And How You Can Craft More Purpose Into Your Work

by Jonathan westover

I, like many of you, have had a lot of different types of jobs in my lifetime. Back before my university and professional life began, I had a long string of what some might deem to be "crummy" jobs (e.g., paper route, waiter, telemarketing, construction, factory work, etc.). Of course, any form of honest work is noble and worthwhile, and what may be a "crummy" job for one person might be an ideal job for someone else. For me, I had an idea from a young age about what I might like to do in my career, and none of these jobs were it. But each job taught me many valuable lessons, the value of hard work and how to navigate a complex and messy world.

After a year of college, following a two-year hiatus to complete a non-paid service mission for my church, I was needing to earn money to continue my university studies and ended up working at a nearby factory. The work was hot, grimy and monotonous, and while many of my coworkers enjoyed the work, for me it was merely a means to an end: earn enough money to pay for college and then leave and never look back. Suffice it to say, I probably didn't have the best attitude; but I worked hard and tried to improve every day, and I sought ways to derive value from the work I was doing.

Revisiting The Classic Job Characteristics Model

Nearly 50 years ago, social scientists Richard Hackman and Greg Oldham studied the nature of work, what drives employee satisfaction (and dissatisfaction) and the factors that would increase the likelihood of an employee sticking around and staying engaged in their work (or choosing to leave). Since then, Hackman and Oldham's job characteristics model, as it came to be known, became the foundation of literally thousands of studies across various social science disciplines interested in understanding the employee experience at work. While other more recent models of worker motivation, satisfaction and engagement are more sophisticated and nuanced, their original job characteristics model continues to be the most commonly cited and utilized model in scholarly research and use by c.

Hackman and Oldham's job characteristics model is made of five key components:

1. Skill Variety. The degree to which a job requires a worker to develop and utilize a wide variety of skills and abilities to complete the work.onsultants and leaders in the workplace.

 2. Task Identity. The degree to which a worker can complete entire processes in their work, or at least they can see how their discrete work connects with a larger tangible outcome.

3. Task Significance. The degree to which there is meaning and purpose embedded in the work performed and the worker can see how their efforts impact other peoples' lives.

4. Autonomy. The degree to which the job empowers the employee to own the outcomes of their work and allows for decision-making freedom and discretion on the part of the worker.

5. Feedback. The degree to which performing the work provides clear, specific and actionable results and information that allows the worker to improve over time.

Each of these five factors have been shown again and again to increase meaning and purpose at work, employees' experience of ownership and responsibility for the outcomes of their work and employees' knowledge of the results of the work to drive ongoing development. Furthermore, each leads to higher intrinsic motivation, higher satisfaction and engagement, higher performance and lower negative outcomes like absenteeism and turnover.

A Modern Interpretation

In 2011, Daniel Pink popularized the decades-old job characteristics model in his popular book Drive. For Pink, worker motivation, satisfaction and engagement (along with outcomes like productivity and innovation) come from three core elements: autonomy, mastery and purpose. Of course, autonomy directly links back to Hackman and Oldham's autonomy construct, while mastery connects back to skill variety and feedback, and purpose connects back to task identity and task significance. Through explaining decades' worth of research across a wide array of academic disciplines in a clear and accessible way, Pink revitalized conversations around work design and employee motivation.

Even in work like my factory job described above, there are myriad low-cost or no-cost ways to intentionally infuse that work (manual labor, dirty, hot, repetitive, etc.) with more autonomy, mastery and purpose. In fact, though I didn't realize it at the time, in retrospect that is exactly what I was doing on my own, in an effort to make the work more bearable. It is a pity that the factory's leadership didn't take a more strategic approach to job design, which would have yielded a great deal of both positive bottom line and human benefits.

Deliberate And Strategic Job Design

Often consultants will utilize these five key elements (or some slight variation) when analyzing the nature of work in specific jobs, conducting job evaluations and performing job redesign to enhance worker motivation, satisfaction and engagement.

However, this isn't rocket science, and any leader can start the process of examining the work of members of their team and further embedding the five factors more fully into the daily experience of each member of their team. Additionally, every individual worker can take ownership over their work and find creative ways to more fully infuse one or more of these factors into their work.

Crafting Work With More Meaning And Purpose

Using Hackman and Oldham's job characteristics model (skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback), or Pink's modern popularized application (autonomy, mastery and purpose), organizations, leaders and employees alike have the framework and tools necessary to immediately improve work design, infuse any job with more meaning and purpose and increase a range of employee outcomes, such as motivation, satisfaction, engagement, productivity and innovation. Let's take ownership of our work, strive to improve the work of our people and make every job a job we are excited to go to.

Personalized Leadership: The Path Forward Starts With Your People

by Patricia Carl

As a graduate student in social work, I had the opportunity to read the musings and research of those in the psychology canon; theories related to human motivation and performance from Maslow, Herzberg, Jung and others were some of my favorites to read and digest.

After graduation, working as a therapist, I was (and still am) curious about people and their "whys" – why they are who they are, and why they do what they do. When I shifted my career from social work to HR, I carried these questions with me with the goal of understanding and advocating for our most personal "whys," their indisputable effect on organizational efficacy, and how great leadership bridges the gap between the two.

Carl Jung, preeminent (and sometimes controversial) Swiss psychiatrist, focuses much of his work on individuation. One of his quotes famously championed this idea, "The shoe that fit one person pinches another; there is no recipe for living that suits all cases." In other words, embrace the "you do you" mindset. He's also well-known for his initial development of what became the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator test, a personality assessment now used by workplaces all over the world to create awareness about one's individual preferences.

In my twenty-plus year career in HR leadership, I have never witnessed so many people collectively feeling the "pinch" as Jung describes – the pinch of the job that isn't quite flexible enough, or inspiring enough, or challenging enough - nor have I seen the willingness of so many to make bold moves to find the "shoe" that fits. But we are living in extraordinary times: the pandemic catalyzed us to look closely and bravely at our lives and make changes. Maybe for the first time, people are looking for their work to configure to their lives, not vice versa. This shift demands something different from organizations: it requires a Personalized Leadership approach that meets the unique needs of each team member, to retain and engage them and to enable their success.

Personalized Leadership: Motivation fueled, People Driven

As people become more aware of their own needs in the workplace, they need managers who are attuned to each of their team members' situations and help them adapt the work environment to best enable their individual and collective success. They need what I call "Personalized Leadership:" a model for leading that develops people in the context of their unique motivations and preferences and creates an environment that allows them to do their best work. The personalized leadership approach is fundamentally about meeting people where they are and developing them in the context of their goals, having a deeper understanding of their strengths, purpose, and passions to drive performance and engagement.

There are two main factors behind what makes Personalized Leadership so effective, especially in today's climate:

Human-Centered Motivation Is Your Fuel

A number of psychologists have considered the optimal conditions for personal effectiveness. Consider Abraham Maslow's well-known hierarchy of needs pyramid. He outlines a set of innate human needs that allow us to develop and achieve fulfillment, starting with basic needs such as physiological, safety and security, to more advanced needs such as love and belonging, self-esteem and, ultimately, self-actualization.

Another psychologist, Frederick Herzberg, contended that there were two sets of factors that influence job satisfaction: "hygiene" factors, such as compensation, work environment and safety, that must be met or will become dissatisfiers, and motivators, such as engaging work and growth opportunities, that drive gratification. But each individual has their own perspective on both the more basic and the advanced needs: certainly, each career and growth path is bespoke, but people also have their own definitions and desires relating to things like remuneration, safety, and belonging. Leaders need to understand what each of these elements means to their individual team members and customize their experience accordingly to increase work satisfaction and engagement – and drive performance.

People Are in The Driver's Seat

The amazing thing about exploring and encouraging personalized motivators is that once they are activated, it's the individual who keeps them running. With the support of a Personalized Leadership approach, people learn to invest in themselves and their success, and run on the fuel of their abilities being used and appreciated by those around them.

The Practice of Personalized Leadership

So what does Personalized Leadership look like in action, day-to-day? Here are a few recommendations to start implementing a more tailored approach:

1. Zoom in on someone's purpose and goals.

Personalized Leadership helps someone clear the path between their current state and reaching their highest potential. To best facilitate their ascent, you first need to know what is important to them, what they value, and what their desired outcome is. In practice, this looks like:

Committing to weekly 1:1's where you and your direct report discuss personal and professional goals, satisfiers and dissatisfiers, progress made, and how to mitigate setbacks. The weekly cadence is crucial – it shows you are invested in their stead growth and fosters a strong connection between you and your team member.

Playing an active role in your team member's growth strategy. Ask them where they see themselves when they are at the pinnacle of their career; this will provide a clearer roadmap about the opportunities you must place in their path to collect the requisite experiences.

2. Identify and Illuminate X-Factors

An X-Factor, also sometimes referred to as a "superpower," is the unique intersection of passion and talent that only this individual brings to the table. It's as personal as personal can get, and when nurtured and utilized, it can transform team and organizational performance. In practice, discovering and promoting X-Factors looks like:

Observing your team members and keeping an eye out for what comes naturally. If Eliana always volunteers to plan the company holiday party and executes it flawlessly, she must have a talent for project management and community-building. Are these talents being utilized in her current role? If not, would she want to incorporate them more into her job? These are details to keep note of and talk about as you learn more about her/watch her in action.
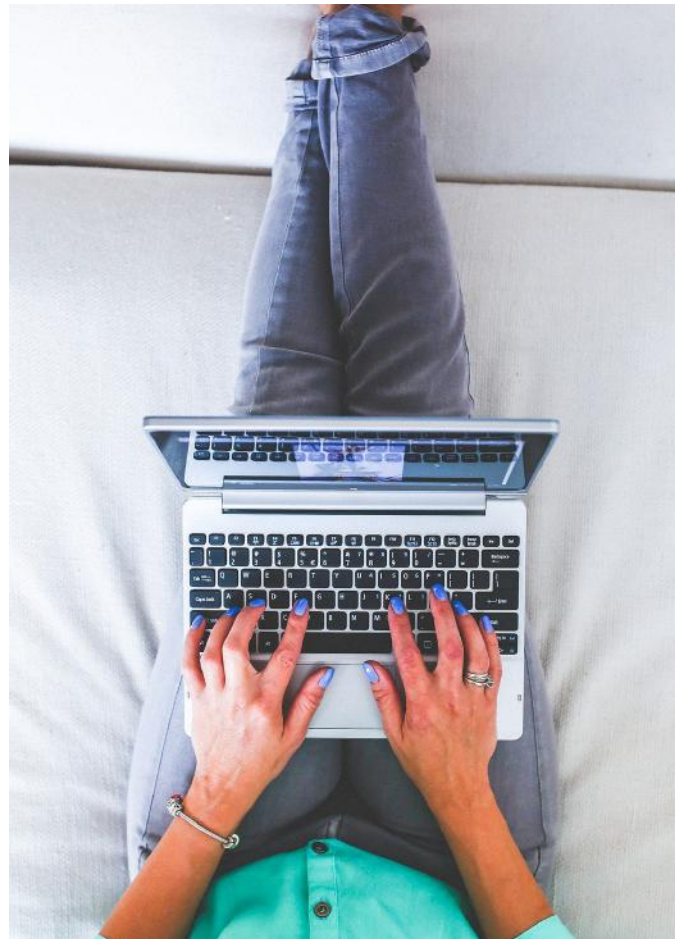
The late composer/lyricist Stephen Sondheim said that when writing a musical theater song, "content dictates form." A similar concept can be applied to job crafting: job content dictates a level of motivation within an employee. Herzberg calls this "job enrichment" – where jobs aren't just made larger in status, but deeper in meaning and skill in a way that aligns with the individual and boosts their productivity. Leaders an direct reports can co-create job descriptions and responsibilities that spark their interest and prioritize their growth instead of piling too much on their plate.

3. understand Someone's Unique Life Needs

People want their work to fit into their life, not the other way around. But the picture of work/life balance or optimal working arrangements looks completely different depending on who you're talking to. In practice, individualizing employee experience looks like:

Leaders discussing working styles and personal needs with their team members to understand what will enable them to do their best work, while still meeting the needs of the business. For example, if they want to attend their daughter's soccer games at 4pm, can they flex their work hours? If they are caregiving for an elderly parent, could they work from another location for a period of time? Do they work best when they can block uninterrupted time, instead of being expected to be available via chat during specific hours? When you consider the needs of your team, setting your employees and team up for success, they will do their best work.

Discussing communication styles – understanding what energizes an employee and how they prefer to receive feedback, praise, or development. Can you create opportunities or a team member to get exposure to senior leadership, if they value that? Does your introverted employee prefer private recognition, such as a lunch with you? Personalizing how you communicate with each unique person based on their preferences makes people feel "seen" and understood improving their perception about being cared for and supported by their managers.

As Jung said, "there is no recipe for working that suits all cases." The talent your organization wants are buying into this idea, and they are looking for organizations who are too. Embracing employees' unique gifts and letting them shine is where you begin.

Patricia Carl is a leadership consultant, speaker, and the CEO of Highland Performance Solutions, a woman-owned organizational consulting firm that works with leaders, teams and organizations to unlock potential and drive organizational performance. Patricia and her firm help organizations and leaders create thriving, dynamic, engaging cultures where people feel valued and motivated to do their best work. Her thought leadership has been featured in publications such as Forbes, Harvard Business Review, ATD and Entrepreneur Magazine among others, and she is currently writing a book on personalized leadership.

Human Capital Innovations

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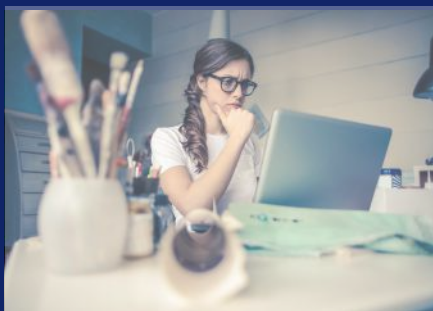

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