The New World of Work

The COVID-19 crisis of 2020 is already writing itself into the books as a major event in our time. A former US Treasury secretary and current Harvard professor Larry Summers has said it will be "the event" that will rank alongside the 9/11 attacks, assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the 1929 stock market crash, and the 1918 Munich Conference as seminal events in modern-day world history.

Not only is COVID-19 felt at nearly every level and throughout every area of society, its ripple effect is long and far-reaching.

And of particular interest to us at Workable is how the world of work has changed, and how it will be impacted going forward.

We conducted a survey to try and understand what happened during the crisis, what happened as a result, and what the new world of work will look like.

The major takeaways from our survey results include the following:

- 62.6% work fully remote during COVID-19
- 32% of companies are managing remote well
- 71% say remote work and distributed teams will be a major priority moving forward
- Remote hiring, onboarding, and training are cited as the biggest challenges for companies
- Candidate engagement, onboarding and evaluation are predicted to be leading challenges, ahead of any tech related concerns, when hiring after the crisis passes
- Adaptability, resilience, and self-motivation will be the most sought-after characteristics when hiring in the post COVID world
- Individual employee engagement and motivation are cited as the biggest remote experience for 75.5% of respondents
- 39.8% say remote work and flexibility/work-life balance will be most important to candidates going forward
- 35.6% of those in education say they didn't need to be more flexible with their teaching methods, compared across a series of technological readiness
- Productivity is a much bigger concern for senior-level employees, with 50% of respondents cited as the biggest risk

We also identified three major themes in the dataset:

Remote work

Perhaps most obviously, the shift to remote work was sudden. Many organizations were not prepared for it, and it has caused a lot of pain for many companies and their teams alike. However, COVID-19 was not the only factor in this dataset, it was just the catalyst of the shift.

Digitization of operations

Whether it's in communication, processes, collaboration, or otherwise, the utilization of tech has been a major factor in how companies shift to remote work. For those companies looking to permanently move to remote, digitization of operations is crucial, a seamless migration.

Employee engagement

Responsibility are increasingly unmarked of unsolved about maintaining employee morale, culture, and engagement, and changes in what we value in candidates in a new job.

In short, the change was intensely felt. And there are many lessons to be learned – both in preparedness and in the way we work.

We hope you find our survey results to be useful and informative, and that it inspires conversations in your thoughts or questions, please feel free to share them with us on Twitter, LinkedIn, or Workable.

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CHAPTER 1

The impact of COVID

Not only were the impact palpable, it was also very tangible, and it forced action in many aspects of business. Let's look at what our respondents did when COVID-19 became a reality for them.

Business response

As a low-breach, significant impact of COVID-19 on business was felt by companies, 32% of respondents said their company maintained business as expected in the months following the spring conference time – namely March-April 2020. 62.6% of respondents stated that their company went fully remote during COVID-19.

Let's unpack the impact on business, from the perspective of operations to a remote environment. It leans toward the nearly a third of organizations that maintained – conditionally to be, as we'll see later.

A sizable percentage of businesses introduced precautionary measures of their working conditions and/or employee capacity at work. A steady were not to capture the of wellness (8%).

When asked about what parts of their business they could do remotely, 2 in 5 (40%) of our business owners said they either could be physically centered at work, kept across two their home and work lives, or could be fully remote. Only a minority (16%) said their business could be fully remote.

Zoom could have eaten into the "why?" of this, but one potential reason is that businesses have discovered that they can be productive and still make a profit remotely. There are many reasons for not having the technology for remote, e.g. data security, cost, or culture, but productivity doesn't seem to be a barrier for businesses in comparisons and cases.

What we do know is that many major shifts have led to a collapse productivity – including in collapse, and in the 1980s and 1990s, when the US economy underwent a major collapse in its manufacturing sector. Perhaps that's a permanent shift in the UK economy, but it's worth remembering that original plans don't always go like they should, and that's not necessarily a bad thing.

Remote working is tough with kids to be homed, and two working mums with young children – but some parents are not as ready as others.

CHAPTER 2

Challenges of remote hiring

When operating remotely, unique issues further particularly in recruitment. Finding the right people to fill these much-needed roles is crucial to business success and survival, imagine doing that entirely via your laptop. So, we asked respondents about that.

Our three contributing to the losing COVID-19, a whole new set of challenges surfaced. Remote onboarding/training, remote management, and the lack of face-to-face contact (50%) pop up as strong challenges, respondents, with presumably among candidates about job and cultural fit (37%) and economic anxiety within the business (34%) also important.

If your business plans to hire after the crisis passed, or has decided to do so remotely, what will be the three most important things?

In terms of remote training/onboarding/training, perhaps the best – or at least most obvious – suggestion is to use video and audio tools. The "Zoom" effect, or the ability to see and hear people in real time, is a great way to replicate a remote environment. For everybody, it's a clear learning curve.

So, we asked respondents what they thought the biggest challenges were in remote training/onboarding/training. Unsurprisingly, the biggest challenge (unsurprisingly) is potential "distractions" (37%), and the combined distractions (47%), early shedding and new training are the biggest challenges, with distractions much, and effective much more and much less of a face-to-face interaction.

"I think it will be vastly different depending upon the sector. My company is in the technology space so I expect there will be minimal disruption to productivity and team engagement (if the panel few months are any indication) but other sectors that are not so conversant with technology may have a much more challenging experience in shifting to new models of work."

By contrast, the greatest non-"technology" risk – plus, stress in practice greats where tool adoption or availability lagged behind business needs, and lack of face-to-face contact (50%) – is the lack of certain face-to-face in contacting clients/customers/prospects. In contrast, remote tools are considered best in smart large parts of training and onboarding, and in the hiring process, with respondents, one company is keen to one other.

In fact, our respondents highlighted these (with skills when asked about what the best valuable tools for remote training is) in new tools, and in the post-COVID world, video conferencing (and Zoom) remains (34.2%) but has ceded way to smaller tools.

Video conferencing remains the "Zoom" category monopoly, and it "rightly" is more similarly with tickets organisation.

The biggest change in the post-COVID world (and should that be post-post-COVID?) is the rise of text/instant messaging in remote environment, in fact – and, as they will look for candidates who thrive in that new world.

Recruiters are themselves also operating in that ambiguous, fast-changing world, and, as with all businesses, they are having to adapt, engaging in long-forms to the process, and the candidates of the new world of work.

CHAPTER 3

The road ahead is digital

Digital transformation is a phrase that has accelerated in the wake of the digitization of collaboration, solutions, organizations, and operations. Yet, it is a phrase that is the biggest paradigm shift prompted by COVID-19, digital tools are the vehicle to make that a smoother transition.

Technology – the great enabler

When we asked respondents what made their ability to remote a success outside the discipline, more than one thing stated, important one because they already had the technology in place to do so.

"Lifesaver, and the pressure on jobs is edge to wrong, digital transformation, and the ability to work remotely, and the efficiency in delivering and achieving the technology to level people and make their lives easier."

Of those planning for remote operations in distributed teams, nearly half plan to introduce or increase digital capabilities in that business.

These in particular were companies operations both operations in the office and remotely, and companies with a mix of office and/or/remote. Perhaps executives are not certainty on a company-wide, one-size-fits-all approach, and, in contrast, remotely-focused employers.

"COVID-19 has done – that multi 5x-2x-fold growing into fold growth Facebook Ads business in technology, although Facebook Ad Attention, Brand, this upon as technology more and more and more and more and more and more and more."

"There will be a greater need for technology and its various intents and purposes so that operations can still continue despite physical limitations. What humans or live personnel cannot do, technology should cover."

Those in retail and hospitality employers were concerned about the resilience of their business that broke a years-long management, thus, several custom actions that can be implemented to ease the transition.

Those in other sectors, may, in fact, be more concerned about employee engagement.

"The world of work will be focusing on our technology to make work efficient and boost collaboration in virtual ways. I will be planning to invest in technology skills. The expenses for office rental and travelling will be on an left. [and] [want remain] equip to employee's expenditure [sic]."

CHAPTER 4

Employee engagement

Understanding the current climate market significant upheaval in many forms – economic, health (mental and physical), social, social, and many others. The shift to remote work is just one of those new developments, but a significant one nonetheless. Everyone's affected – including in the workplace.

Working in a new remote work environment

When asked about what is a significant challenge for a company-level businesses, 55.5% of respondents highlighted technical issues, including connectivity issues, and 44.5% said that "Zoom fatigue" (McFarlane, Ottawa), followed by team collaboration and engagement (41%).

What makes engagement a major concern? It is that our respondents are actually concerned about physically not being with their work, can't have such cognition, or work together in the same space, or in a shared space.

As a Zoom employee, I know that Zoom fatigue is real and is a serious employee engagement. The responses were predominantly focussed on communications and getting people used to the new ways of working, and, in fact, one respondent is actively planning to incorporate more communications technologies into video, etc.

Almost (45%) [?] [?] and they plan larger all-hands that "[are] [?] [?] [?

> “This time shall pass. Social distancing will end. We will all be back to being regular humans again.”

CHAPTER 8

Conclusion

“I have been amazed at how well our team have adapted to working from home. We have all acknowledged that we miss the team interaction, but I really feel we've got to know each other more, we've had daily calls since the lockdown, which has helped our split-site company. I think it will take time to accept the new normal, but we will get there. ... I hope that we take all the learnings we've acquired during this lockdown and bring these forward. Our air is clearer, our seas are cleaner, we recognise the importance of being connected after being so isolated for so long, we appreciate the small exercise time we've had outdoors. The world will be different, but so much potential to be better too.”

Our initial goal in the survey was to identify when businesses thought they would return to some kind of “normal” after COVID-19. That part of the survey, however, resulted in the most inconclusive findings.

What we learned, instead, is that remote work is clearly the way forward, digitization of processes is the way to enable that shift, and employee engagement is – understandably – a mounting concern.

Also, most of our respondents either have the tech tools to operate in a remote world of work, or are at least aware of or plan to introduce more tools to support that new work environment. The basic know-how of work has not changed; recruiters and hiring teams, for instance, still know how to source, evaluate, hire, and onboard candidates – but they aren’t fully versed on how to do all that in a *remote environment.*

Finally, the emphasis on the solutions of more meetings, more “coffee dates”, and all-hands to maintain employee engagement in a virtual work world as opposed to new trainings for a new world echoes Einstein’s famous quote: “*We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.*”

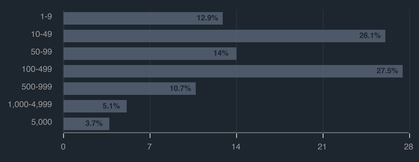
The remote world of work is here to stay, and there’s a clear willingness to adapt to that new world – at least in the adoption of new technology. But in order to really succeed in this new model of work, we need to loosen up on the traditional operational practices, and start thinking about different solutions and practices so we continue to set ourselves for success. In short: the new world of work requires *a new way of thinking.*

Firmographics

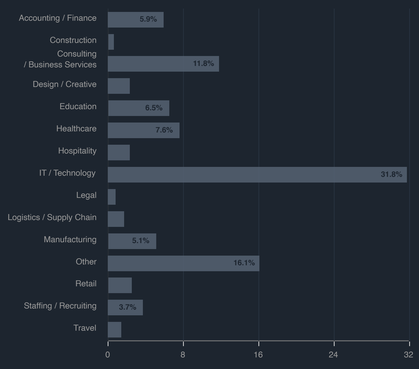
The survey was sent out to HR professionals, talent acquisition professionals, and business leaders in early June 2020. A total of 366 around the world completed the 30-question survey, representing a broad cross section of company sizes, industries, regions, functions, and job levels.

The majority of respondents were from companies in the 100-499 employee range, in IT/Technology, operating in the United States or Canada, in HR, and at the manager/director level.

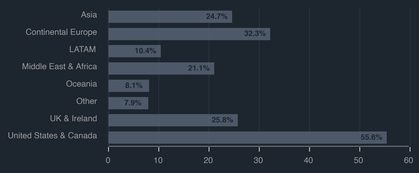
Approximately how many full-time employees does your business employ?



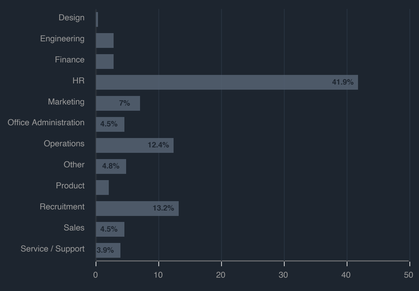
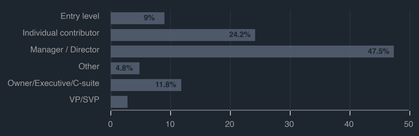
Which of the following best describes the main industry of your business?



What region or regions does your business operate in?



Which best describes the primary function of the department in which you work?



Which of the following best describes your current job level?