

A woman with long blonde hair, wearing a black face mask and a black top, is looking at a laptop in a modern office setting. Other people are visible in the background, some also wearing masks. The office has large windows and modern furniture.

4 ways the pandemic is changing
the employee experience

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Introduction

Since early 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has sent shockwaves through the business world. As a result, most organizations believe the pandemic will permanently change the employee experience (EX) to a high degree. According to the Institute for Corporate Productivity:¹



26% of company leaders believe the impacts of COVID-19 will alter EX to a moderate extent.

48% expect these EX changes to occur to a high extent.



21% anticipate a very high extent of change to EX.

But what do these changes look like – and, more importantly, how can human resources (HR) leaders evolve and offer continual support?

This guide will highlight four specific changes, with proactive solutions employers can implement to support a more seamless transition today as well as a more sustainable tomorrow.

1.

Widespread adoption of remote work models

When companies urged employees to start working from home at the start of the pandemic, many business leaders were not expecting to see such high levels of productivity. But, with employees proving their resilience and trustworthiness, businesses that perhaps never considered remote work have now realized it can be a viable and sustainable option.

A survey by S&P Global Market Intelligence revealed that 67% of organizations expected work-from-home policies to remain in effect for the long-term or permanently.²

This new way of working requires companies to embrace cloud-based solutions, as well as tools that support collaboration and communication among remote teams. Amid the pandemic, employees now cite having the right tools and technologies as the No. 1 EX factor.¹

²<http://press.spglobal.com/2020-06-18-COVID-19-Shakes-Up-the-Future-of-Work>



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Related EX factors like safety and security, trusting relationships and individual purpose **“are having a disproportionate impact on employee well-being and work effectiveness.”**

2.

A renewed desire for stable, trustworthy employers

After COVID-19 forced businesses to close or scale back significantly, the U.S. unemployment rate spiked to 14.7% in April 2020 and gradually dropped to 7.9% in September – but this is nowhere near the record lows the workforce saw in previous quarters.³

For the fortunate employees who have retained their jobs, priorities have changed. Factors like job fulfillment, recognition and great coworkers are currently less important. Now, job security and financial stability hold more weight, according to a McKinsey study. Related EX factors like safety and security, trusting relationships and individual purpose “are having a disproportionate impact on employee well-being and work effectiveness.”⁴

As a result, employers will need to continue proving themselves by being transparent, demonstrating proactive leadership and building on the trust earned over the past several months.

³<https://www.bls.gov/charts/employment-situation/civilian-unemployment-rate.htm>

⁴<https://www.gartner.com/smarterwithgartner/9-future-of-work-trends-post-covid-19/>

3.

Virtual hiring, onboarding and professional development

Professionals whose entire industries have come to a halt will likely emphasize transferable skills when seeking new opportunities. Similarly, experienced professionals who are adjusting to new ways of working have realized they require new digital competencies. Both groups will eventually have to make up for these skills gaps.

This means new hires and seasoned employees alike will likely benefit from additional training in the coming months. A Gartner forecast advises that employers who want to stay ahead should “focus less on roles – which group unrelated skills” and reinvest in “the skills needed to drive the organization’s competitive advantage.”⁴

From the hiring process to continued training and development, cloud-based learning management systems and HR solutions will become more important than ever. Completely paperless and virtual workflows are now essential for activities ranging from remote onboarding to professional development.



4.

Realignment of benefits with employee priorities

The pandemic has shed new light on a wide range of issues, ranging from mental health and wellness to the importance of having the right health insurance coverage and paid leave options, as the Society for Human Resources noted.⁵

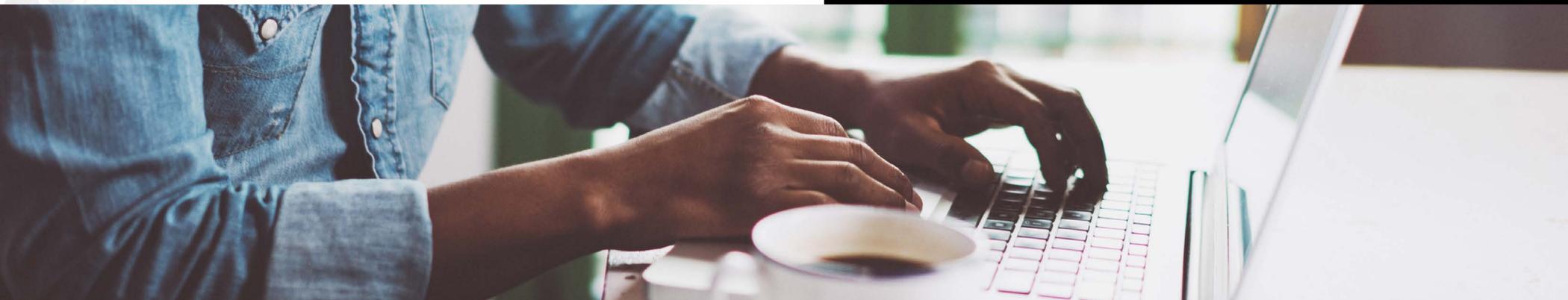
Employees will now look for benefits that support their new priorities and lifestyle, rather than perks that are no longer relevant. This means out with the pre-tax commuter benefits and minimal health care plans, and in with the home office stipends and mental health coverage.

⁵<https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-magazine/summer2020/pages/how-the-coronavirus-pandemic-will-change-the-way-we-work.aspx>

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has already changed how and where people work, with work-from-home models becoming widespread. It's also defined who can continue their careers and who must pivot. As the workforce adapts, the when and why are being reevaluated as well.

Organizations that can prove themselves as proactive, tech-savvy leaders as well as trustworthy and stable employers will see EX improvements despite the uncertainty.



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