

# The Daily Star

## The future of work in a post-Covid world

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The last two years have greatly impacted the world of work. The pandemic has taught us many lessons, and companies have had to transform their processes to embrace the new normal. Business processes, functions and methodologies had to be revamped, and this had an important effect on where, when, and how people work. In such a situation, it is imperative that HR professionals and business leaders evaluate the immediate and longer-term impact of these trends, and the degree to which they should change their strategic goals and plans.

### Hybrid has become more common

The pandemic has taught companies to be flexible. Using an onsite-offsite arrangement means leveraging the skills and competencies of a much larger workforce, many of whom are comfortable working from home. Even though most offices have resumed physical activity, the learnings from the pandemic are here to stay. We can expect hybrid work to become more common. Companies must create a new, human-centric model for the hybrid environment by designing work around employee-driven flexibility, culture connectedness, and human leadership.

### Roles and expectations are changing

Generation Z, also known as zoomers, had their first foray into professional life during the period of Covid. For a lot of these workers, their career started remotely with limited in-person experiences. This can create a disconnect and a feeling of detachment, especially when dealing with coworkers belonging to older generations. HR needs to step in and create onboarding opportunities where younger members can work with the core management team. This can help foster organisational cohesiveness and team spirit in the workplace.

Similarly, managers and supervisors need to put in the extra effort to manage and maintain a hybrid, intergenerational workforce. With fewer opportunities for spontaneous in-person interactions in the workplace, managers need to be more intentional in establishing and developing relationships with their team members. The manager-employee relationship is critical in shaping the employee experience and connection to the organisation.

#### Talent-sourcing needs to be redesigned

Structural unemployment has been a chronic problem for Bangladesh, with the recent unemployment rate indicating the toll Covid has taken on the labour market. In such a situation, HR professionals are under more pressure than ever to fill roles with those who possess critical skills to meet market needs and drive organisational change. While there's an urgency to obtain scarce, critical skills, there's also an effort to optimise costs in the current economic climate. To fill skills needs both effectively and efficiently, companies need to broaden the range of talent sourcing strategies under consideration, either as part of strategic planning or on an ad hoc basis. For example, companies need to develop processes, norms, and infrastructure that facilitate the mobility of employees from their current roles to other existing or newly created roles within the organisation. This shifting of employees creates an internal labour market and makes it easier and more attractive for employees to move jobs without exiting the company. Having such a system in place can enable companies to be more lean and responsive at a time when objectives and strategies are constantly being reevaluated.

#### Workplace discrimination could increase

Hybrid and remote work does not guarantee all employees will experience the benefits of this change equally. According to a report, 76 percent of managers say on-site employees are more likely than remote workers to be promoted. Considering that women and minority groups are more likely to use flexible work systems, proximity bias becomes a recipe for inequality. In Bangladesh, women's unemployment rate is twice that of men, at 6.8 percent. Flexible working policies, if unchecked, could worsen this situation. To support all employees in a hybrid future equally, companies must

monitor and control policies to ensure discrimination doesn't happen towards these groups.

Increased use of technology and data

While some companies track productivity, others monitor employee engagement and well-being to better understand employee experience. Even before the pandemic, organisations were increasingly using nontraditional employee monitoring tools, but this trend will only accelerate thanks to monitoring of remote workers and the collection of employee health and safety data. Companies need to make sure they're following best practices to ensure responsible use of employee information and analytics. Technology training also needs to be implemented for managers and supervisors, especially the senior generations.

The future of work

Human resources professionals and business leaders are facing historic challenges from an exhausted workforce and a highly competitive labour market. At the same time, this environment creates an exciting opportunity for HR professionals to lead talent into the future and differentiate their organisations as employers of choice. The new normal has significantly changed the way we work, however smart changes to existing policies can enable companies to face this upheaval and come out stronger.

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