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## Global Human Capital Trends 2021

The social enterprise in a world  
disrupted: Leading the shift from  
survive to thrive

European special report

**MAKING AN  
IMPACT THAT  
MATTERS**

since 1845

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# Introducing Human Capital Trends 2021

## The social enterprise in a world disrupted

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in the largest work experiment in modern history, in which flexible working is just the tip of the iceberg<sup>1</sup>. In a devastating global health crisis, one of the few positives has been a glimpse into what people are capable of when traditional constraints such as hierarchies, bureaucracy and the 9-5 working day are stripped away.

This year's Deloitte *Human Capital Trends* survey generated over 6,000 responses from professionals across 99 countries, including 2,363 from Europe who are the focus of this special European report. For the first time in eleven years of the survey, non-HR business executives outnumbered HR executives, underlining the importance of human capital issues in these volatile times. In this report, we focus on the trends affecting HR and business leaders today, within five sections: 'Designing work for wellbeing', 'Beyond reskilling', 'Superteams', 'Governing workforce strategies' and 'Memo to HR'.

The survey results and our accompanying interviews with European people leaders confirm the transformational shift in workforce strategies in the market, as business leaders radically rethink ways of working to navigate future uncertainty. Executives are shifting their focus away from work optimisation towards fundamentally reimagining work in their organisation.

Throughout the five trends we see shaping the world of work in this report, the unifying thread is a need for executives to prioritise the abilities and adaptability of their workers by 'humanising' work. 2020 witnessed extraordinary displays of human and team reinvention in times of crisis; the challenge now is to sustain that momentum to discover new ways to thrive in the long term, even as disruption constantly resets the path forward.

Building a sustainable future of work will require a new style of leadership – visible, empathetic leaders who can inspire and empower their workers to fulfil their potential, not just for the good of the organisation but also for society at large. The COVID-19 crisis has put the social responsibilities and commitments of employers to the test. It has never been more important to combine financial results with social impact.

One year into the pandemic, COVID-19 is not yet under control, but the rollout of vaccination programmes across Europe offers a hope of recovery soon. Leaders now face a unique opportunity to move to a higher level of action and vision. It is up to them – and to all of us – to seize this moment, making meaningful decisions about how we approach work and the workforce to enable people, organisations and society to flourish.

Where do we want to go?



**Will Gosling**  
UK Human Capital Leader



# At a glance

The social enterprise in a world disrupted:  
Leading the shift from survive to thrive

## Key European findings from 2021 Global Human Capital Trends survey

Times of uncertainty call for organisations to fully embrace the role of the social enterprise; delivering lasting positive impact to workers and wider society. Organisations need to continue to humanise work, while empowering and enabling their workers with trust and tools to stay ahead of disruption and uncertainty.

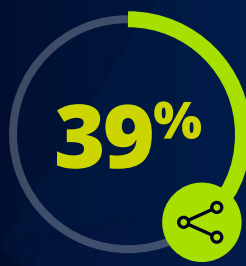
## Designing work for wellbeing: Building a sustainable future where workers can feel and perform at their best

The pandemic has brought wellbeing into sharp focus, pushing organisations to build a resilient workforce by shifting from wellbeing programmes adjacent to work to wellbeing as an integral part of thoughtful work design.

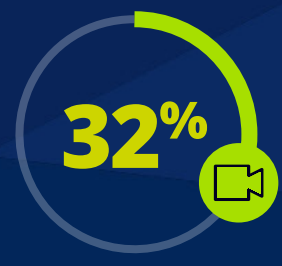
Three most important factors chosen by European executives in making remote work sustainable:



Allowing for **person choice** in determining how work gets done



Introducing **digital collaboration platforms**



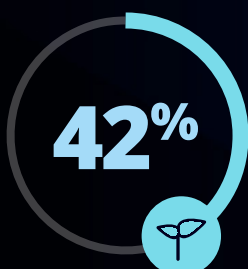
Establishing **new scheduling and meeting norms**

Yet there is still a **disconnect** between **employers** and **workers** when it comes to **prioritising wellbeing** in work transformation efforts, with workers prioritising it more highly than executives.

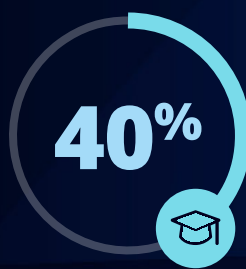
## Beyond reskilling: Unleashing workforce potential

The pandemic showed that, when given the opportunity to align their interests and passions with organisational needs, workers can fulfil their potential in ways that leaders may never have known they could.

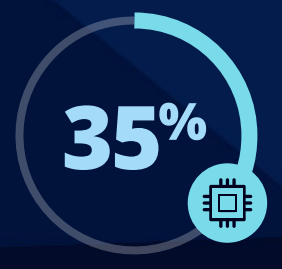
The most critical actions European executives are taking/will take to transform work:



Building **organisational culture** that celebrates growth, adaptability, and resilience



Building **workforce capability** through upskilling, reskilling and mobility



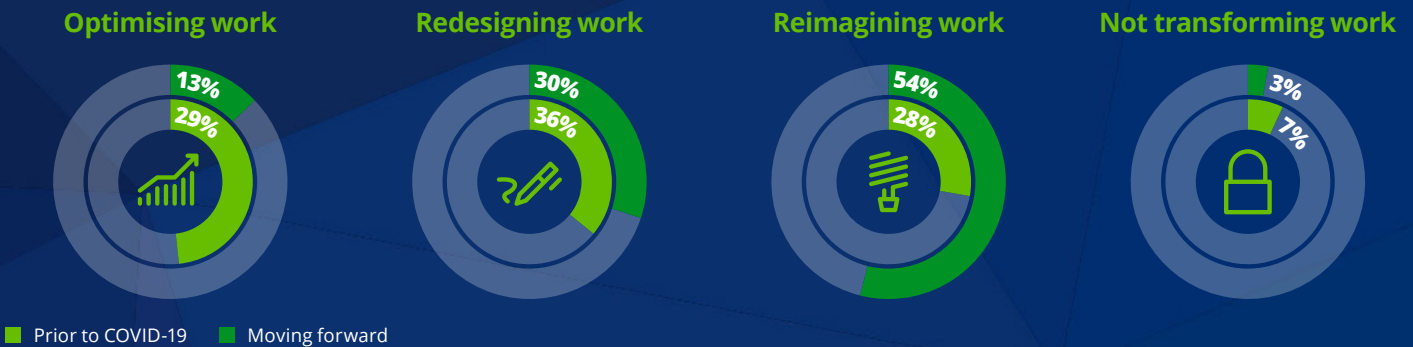
Implementing **new technologies**

“The ability of their people to adapt, reskill, and assume new roles” was identified by European executives as the top-ranked item to navigate future disruptions.

## Superteams: Where work happens

Driven by disruption and enabled by technology, leaders today should strive to take what they have learned to the next level by creating superteams – groups of people and intelligent machines working together to re-architect work in more human ways.

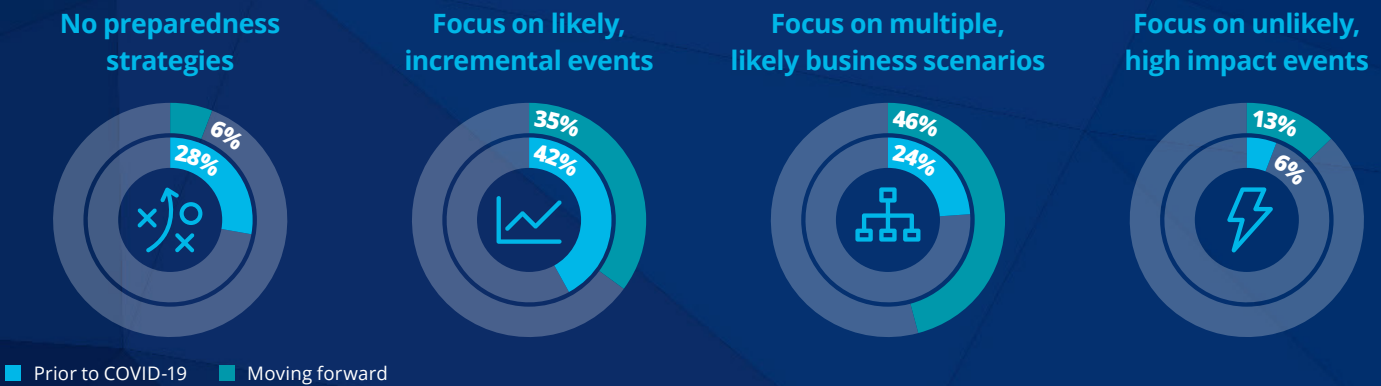
COVID-19 is driving significant changes to how work gets done, accelerating the pace of change and ripping up the status quo of traditional ways of working. This has sparked leaders to shift their focus away from work optimisation towards work reimagination.



## Governing workforce strategies: Setting new directions for work and the workforce

To navigate in the environment of perpetual change and disruption, leaders must move from leveraging retrospective metrics to govern their workforce to using forward-looking data insights used to constantly challenge their approaches to work and the workforce.

Views of preparedness are **shifting** from a **focus on the familiar to planning for the unknown**.



## Memo to HR: Accelerating the shift to re-architecting work

HR was pushed to finally act in ways that future of work always demanded them to do – embracing change and shifting their role from managing workers to re-architecting work.



HR executives are more confident in their ability to **navigate changes** required in the **next 3-5 years** than business leaders.



# 1 in 4 HR

executives are **“very confident”** in their ability to navigate the changes with, only **11%** of **non-HR** executives sharing the same sentiment.

This highlights the importance of HR to closely partner with business leaders and workers to effectively re-architect a human vision of the future of work, while treating the re-architecture of work as an ongoing capability that needs to be embedded in operations.

# Diving deeper

## Five workforce trends to watch in 2021

In this European special report, we explore the journey from survive to thrive through the lens of five Deloitte's 2020 Global Human Capital Trends.

### 1. Designing work for wellbeing: Building a sustainable future where workers can feel and perform at their best



- **The Trend:** Organisations are taking wellbeing beyond work/life balance by starting to design wellbeing into work – and life – itself.
- **Surviving:** Supporting wellbeing through programmes adjacent to work.
- **Thriving:** Integrating wellbeing into work through thoughtful work design.

### 2. Beyond reskilling: Unleashing workforce potential



- **The Trend:** Organisations need a workforce development approach that considers both the dynamic nature of work and the equally dynamic potential of workers to reinvent themselves.
- **Surviving:** Pushing training to workers from the top down, on the assumption that the organisation knows best what skills workers need.
- **Thriving:** Empowering workers with agency and choice over what work they do, unleashing their potential by allowing them to apply their interests and passions to organisational needs.

### 3. Superteams: Where work happens



- **The Trend:** COVID-19 has taught organisations that teams and technology are even more important to thriving in constant disruption than they thought before.
- **Surviving:** Using technology as a tool to make teams more efficient.
- **Thriving:** Integrating humans and technology into superteams that use their complementary capabilities to re-architect work in more human ways.

### 4. Governing workforce strategies: Setting new directions for work and the workforce



- **The Trend:** Organisations are looking for forward-looking insights about their workforce that can help them pivot quickly and set new directions in the face of uncertainty.
- **Surviving:** Using metrics and measurements that describe the current state of the workforce.
- **Thriving:** Accessing and action on continuous workforce insights that can support better, faster decisions based on an understanding of what the workforce is capable of in the future.

### 5. A memo to HR: Accelerating the shift to re-architecting work



- **The Trend:** The Future of Work always needed the HR function to expand its remit and COVID-19 has accelerated this process by opening up a window of opportunity for HR to re-architect work throughout the enterprise.
- **Surviving:** Having a functional mindset that focuses on optimising and redesigning HR processes to manage the workforce.
- **Thriving:** Embracing an enterprise mindset that prioritises re-architecting work to capitalise on unique human strengths.





## Designing work for wellbeing

Building a sustainable future where workers can feel and perform at their best

Wellbeing was rising on the executive agenda even before COVID-19. The pandemic has brought its importance into sharp focus by making leaders acutely aware of the consequences when their workers' physical and mental health is put at risk. This has driven organisations to move beyond adjacent wellbeing programmes and stand-alone initiatives, to a drastic rethink about how to protect and support their most valuable asset – their people.

### Shifting realities

At the start of the pandemic, organisations took immediate and unprecedented actions to address the impact of the crisis on wellbeing and keep workers safe: from adapting workplaces for physical distancing, to establishing remote working arrangements and adjusting policies for emergency medical and caregiving leave. Some of these changes look set to have a lasting impact: for example Unilever announced recently that it will never return to five days a week behind an office desk, and will allow its people to shift to more adaptable and flexible working arrangements post-COVID-19<sup>2</sup>.

Yet with rapidly evolving epidemiology and extended lockdowns expected across Europe for much of the coming year, the longer-term effects of social isolation and economic recession on workers' mental health remains to be seen. As work itself changes at a rapid pace, the ways in which an organisation supports individual and team wellbeing must adapt in tandem.

This section explores how organisations can embed the positive changes imposed by the pandemic into their future ways of working and build a sustainable future in which all workers, regardless of where they are working, feel valued and supported to bring their best self to work.

## Our 2021 perspective

### OUR HYPOTHESIS

COVID-19 has reminded us of the dual importance of worker wellbeing and work transformation, but executives are still missing connection between the two. Organisations that integrate wellbeing into the design of work at the individual, team and organisational levels will build a sustainable future where workers can feel and perform at their best.

The COVID-19 pandemic has broken through technological and cultural barriers that in the past have prevented organisations from embracing new ways of working, and transformational change has been achieved in a matter of months. One of the biggest changes has been a widespread transition to remote working, at least for some jobs and occupations. In 2018, fewer than one in 20 European workers reported working from home regularly.

In July 2020 however, 40% of paid work by employees was being carried out at home, with a third of workers working exclusively at home<sup>3</sup>.

Seven in ten of the senior business and HR executives we surveyed are confident that today's remote working practices will be sustainable. When we asked them what factors they see as most important in making remote work sustainable (*Figure 1*), overwhelmingly they prioritised options intrinsic to the design of work itself, including allowing for personal choice in determining how work gets done, introducing digital collaboration platforms, and establishing new scheduling and meeting norms – all of which embed wellbeing directly into work. Encouragingly, executives also prioritised investing in team leader training – a critical factor in creating a supportive, healthy working environment, whether their teams are working on site, remotely or a combination of the two.

In our view, this marks a transformative shift from simply reimagining jobs, to rearchitecting the future of work with human considerations at the core.

**Figure 1. The top factors in making remote work sustainable were related to work design**

What are the most important factors in making remote/virtual work sustainable?

Allowing for personal choice in determining how work gets done

40%

Introducing digital collaboration platforms

39%

Establishing new scheduling and meeting norms

32%

Investing in team leader training

24%

Providing home access to the internet and needed technologies

21%

Reconfiguring the physical workspace at home

17%

Providing enhanced corporate benefits (e.g., family care support and resources)

8%

Offering new wellbeing resources

6%

Other

4%

Note: n=1,231

Source: The 2021 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends survey, European cut.



Some changes to ways of working have been widespread, such as offering greater flexibility in working hours, reduced meeting durations and initiatives such as “no meeting days”. The Spanish government, for example, has agreed to pilot a four day work week over three years, putting €50 million towards the cost of the project for companies that request to take part<sup>4</sup>. Others signal a radical change in approach to wellbeing. One example is regular Schwartz Rounds – an initiative used by healthcare provider Bupa, as well as in wider medical community, such as the UK’s National Health Service. Schwartz Rounds are regular events which aim to provide time and space, where all staff, clinical and non-clinical are encouraged to discuss the emotional and social aspects of working in healthcare. Healthcare workers will often find it challenging to spot the signs of exhaustion or mental health issues while focusing on patients. This forum can help staff to feel more supported in their jobs, and provides safe space and time to reflect<sup>5</sup>.

Considering mental fitness as a skill or capability that can be developed by the workforce is gaining momentum. This goes beyond resilience workshops or mental health first aid to making skills around mental fitness and wellbeing accessible for everyone. An example is Fika - an online and app-based skills development platform that enables employees to access courses on the key drivers for mental fitness. There is evidence that mental fitness courses prevent the decline of mental health, through skills development<sup>6</sup>.

However, despite positive signs of progress, our research also revealed a continuing disconnect between employers and their workforce when it comes to the importance of wellbeing in work transformation. When we asked senior executives, and individual workers about the most important outcomes they hope to achieve in their work transformation efforts in the next one to three years (Figure 2), we found that workers prioritise transforming work for wellbeing more highly than executives.

**Figure 2. Workers prioritise transformation work for wellbeing more highly than executives**

What are the most important outcomes you hope to achieve in your work transformation efforts in the next one to three years?

Rank	Senior Executives	Rank	Individual Workers
#1	Improving the customer experience	#1	Improving quality
#2	Reducing cost (i.e., eliminate spend or eliminate headcount)	#2	Increasing innovation
#3	Improving quality	#3	Reducing cost (i.e., eliminate spend or eliminate headcount)
#4	Increasing innovation	#4	Improving the customer experience
#5	Doing new work (i.e., new products or new customers)	#5	<b>Improving worker wellbeing</b>
#6	Increasing capacity	#6	Doing new work (i.e., new products or new customers)
#7	Growing market share	#7	Growing market share
#8	<b>Improving worker wellbeing</b>	#8	Increasing capacity
#9	Increasing social impact	#9	Increasing social impact

Note: n=1,496 (1,204 executives + 292 individual contributors)  
 Source: The 2021 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends survey, European cut.

“If I could give a piece of advice to other leaders, it would be: Don’t treat wellbeing as something adjacent to work or optional. To build a resilient workforce, leaders should support and develop a caring and nurturing environment that enables their organisations to design wellbeing into work itself.”

**Nigel Sullivan, Chief People Officer at Bupa UK**

In our view, leaders who prioritise wellbeing as a foundational part of work are more likely to reap huge rewards<sup>7</sup>. Having a healthy and resilient workforce is a key strategic advantage, while an organisational culture built around promoting wellbeing serves to attract and retain talent. Seven in 10 young workers in Deloitte's 2020 *Global Millennial* survey agreed that their employers' actions to create a diverse and inclusive work environment during the pandemic made them want to stay there for the longer term<sup>8</sup>. Organisations that demonstrate a commitment to employees, especially over the pandemic, will be seen as more attractive employers in the years to come.

### Emerging priorities

The radical changes imposed by COVID-19 offer a unique opportunity for organisations to re-architect work to be better for people and to make people better at work. Putting wellbeing at the centre of work transformation will yield benefits in employee engagement, performance and overall resilience.













Organisations looking to build wellbeing into work should consider actions and policies across three levels: individual, team and organisational. Everyone must take responsibility to thrive collectively.

To be effective, the design of wellbeing into work must be developed, strengthened and flexed over time. While the pandemic has been a universal experience, it has reinforced the reality that while we may all be in the same storm, we are not in the same boat. It is critical to tailor wellbeing strategies to accommodate the needs of multiple worker segments, rather than taking a one-size-fits-all approach. Employers need to consider how to enable and empower individuals to identify and manage their wellbeing needs as part of their work instead of simply offering a range of standard wellbeing resources. *Figure 3* shows a starting point of actions that organisations should take to integrate wellbeing into work, driving cultural change from both the bottom up and top down.

### The bottom line

Having a healthy and resilient workforce is a key strategic advantage. Putting wellbeing at the heart of work transformation will set the stage for long-term success both during and after COVID-19.

**Figure 3. Listen, Respond, Monitor and Improve**

		Individual	Team	Organisation
<b>Listen</b>	Identify the real factors that make work stressful, especially in a COVID-19 context. People often struggle to articulate their preferences and it is a joint responsibility to get to the crux of what they need to thrive.			
	Define the critical workforce segments or 'personas' to further understand unique wellbeing needs and 'pain points' that need to be addressed for different parts of the organisation			
	Create an environment of psychological safety where people at all levels feel safe to speak up and be listened to.			
<b>Respond</b>	Formalise wellbeing as a core talent KPI, embedding it into performance and management processes, leadership evaluations, and rewards and recognition programs. Co-create wellbeing metrics with workers to have a meaningful impact.			
	Give workers the agency to decide how they work. Provide line managers with the autonomy and upskill capability in creating Human-Centred Leadership to understand and accommodate their team's needs.			
	Establish team norms and model wellbeing behaviours accordingly, such as taking micro-breaks or only making certain meetings video-focused.			
	Leverage technology to support wellbeing and collaboration, but also give people the right to disconnect.			
	Embed Mental Fitness into L&D, focussing on proactive skills development for wellbeing (over reactive support).			
<b>Monitor and Improve</b>	Show the human side of the organisation, with senior leaders remaining visible and supportive champions of the wellbeing agenda going forwards.			
	Actively listen to the pulse of the workforce, collecting regular insights, rather than just once or twice a year. Create an empathetic dialogue, measuring and communicating progress continuously.			

Source: Deloitte analysis.

## Lessons from the frontline

### Together we use technology for good

In April 2020, as a part of its wider learning and development employee engagement programme, NTT Ltd. launched its own TV channel – NTT Live. The aim of NTT Live was to break through social and informational isolation by connecting their people with their leaders, while looking after their physical and mental health.

NTT executives realised early on that an honest and authentic leadership with deepening empathy was vital to a people-centred response to the pandemic. Therefore, NTT Live was used by the leadership to communicate honestly and share the reasoning behind some of the hard decisions that they had to make during the crisis, and so reinforce trust. This helped NTT to be more resilient against the pandemic, by giving people psychological safety and sharing essential information across their vast organisation.

Since the launch, over 10,000 employees have participated in 600 online events, with content available in seven languages. NTT Live offers a variety of internally moderated content – such as Q&A sessions with the CEO, employee-led virtual yoga classes, external R&D forums with clients, and cloud training sessions.

Learning and development is another focus of NTT Live. Pre-COVID-19, access to online learning was already a key pillar of NTT's learning and development portfolio. NTT Live has accelerated this and provided a much more personal, "live" and authentic way of enabling employees to connect with leadership and learn.

NTT Live provided a timely complement to more traditional employee engagement channels and enabled NTT to go through the pandemic as a more human and connected organisation, helping its staff to thrive in an environment of rapid change and uncertainty.



“In the absence of a rulebook, we used our purpose and culture to guide us and make sure our people are connected and get the necessary information and support. We realised early on that this crisis is not a sprint but a marathon, and it was very clear that we needed to put physical, mental and financial wellness at the heart of our approach to get through it and emerge stronger, together.”

**Marilyn Chaplin, Chief Human Resources Officer at NTT Ltd.**



## Beyond reskilling

### Unleashing workforce potential

During COVID-19, leaders called upon workers to expand their roles to do whatever needed to be done – and workers rose to the challenge, identifying critical needs and deploying their capabilities against them from the bottom up. The pandemic showed that, when given the chance to align their interests and passions with organisational needs, workers can fulfil their potential in ways that leaders may never have known they could.

### Shifting realities

2020 helped organisations understand the power of workforce potential. Throughout the pandemic we have seen remarkable displays of individual and team reinvention. Manufacturers transformed their assembly lines to produce ventilators for COVID-19 patients<sup>9</sup>. Laid-off cabin crew members used their medical training and customer care skills to retrain as assistant nurses<sup>10</sup>. Meanwhile thousands of volunteers are working to roll out the UK's mass vaccination programme. Although many have medical backgrounds, others have no previous healthcare experience and are training from scratch<sup>11</sup>.

In this year's *Human Capital Trends* survey, European executives identified "the ability of their people to adapt, reskill and assume new roles" as the most important factor in navigating future disruptions.

When we asked senior executives about the most important actions they are taking to transform work, their responses showed that they are now prioritising workforce capabilities through upskilling, reskilling, and mobility, as well as the implementation of new technologies (*Figure 4*, see on page 11). Workers themselves are also recognising the need to change: 60% of the 10,000 workers interviewed in this year's *Voice of the European workforce* survey identified the "capacity to adapt" as the most relevant skill they will need to thrive in the labour market<sup>12</sup>.

This section explores how organisations can unleash workforce potential by becoming better at identifying and cultivating the critical capabilities needed to thrive in an era of perpetual disruption.



## Our 2021 perspective

### OUR HYPOTHESIS

Empowering workers creates more value than overly prescriptive approaches. Organisations that give workers the agency and choice to explore areas they are passionate about will be able to more quickly and effectively activate workers around emerging business priorities than organisations that take a prescriptive approach to filling skills needs.

2020 highlighted a gap in organisations' understanding of their workforce – not just their skills and capabilities, but also their interests and capacity for continuous reinvention. In our view, the most effective way organisations can unleash workforce potential is by providing individuals with agency and choice about the work they do, and the freedom to explore areas they are passionate about. Carving out time for such “passion projects” give workers new development experiences and opportunities to learn in the flow of work, rather than on top of it, is critical to success. Another key to success is fostering an organisational culture, where mobility and personal growth are encouraged and expected.

Artificial intelligence (AI) and intelligent automation have a key role to play, not just in capturing insights on the latent potential of the workforce, but also in freeing up workers from routine low-value work to focus on uniquely human capabilities such as creativity, curiosity, empathy, teaming and imagination.

However, every organisation implementing AI and intelligent automation has to ensure it is accompanied by a clear message that the workforce is trusted to be productive and efficient, and that the technology is being used ethically.

One solution is opportunity or talent marketplaces – platforms that match workers' interests, passions and capabilities with strategically valuable opportunities within and outside the organisation – mentorship, training, promotions, networking, projects. This benefits organisations by shedding light on their workers' capabilities and interests, enabling greater agility to redeploy workers to meet critical business needs<sup>13</sup>. Workers meanwhile become more motivated and purpose-driven, while gaining valuable skills and experiences via their ‘passion projects’.

COVID-19 has accelerated the adoption of talent marketplaces<sup>14</sup>. Consumer goods company Unilever used its internal talent marketplace FLEX Experiences during the pandemic to redeploy more than 8,000 employees and 300,000 hours of employee work<sup>15</sup>. Healthcare provider Bupa facilitated the creation of a marketplace in which medical professionals, such as dentists, could find volunteering opportunities in other parts of healthcare, while their usual workplaces were shut due to COVID-19<sup>16</sup>.

Some organisations are not yet ready to take that leap and consider talent marketplaces or the extensive use of AI and other intelligent automation technologies as a solution. However, a good start is to develop a comprehensive strategy that looks into the definition of skills and identifies the impact of technologies on skills and roles.

**Figure 4. Both workforce capability and technological capability are critical to transforming work alongside cultural change**

What are the two most important actions you are taking/will take to transform work?



Note: n=1,192

Source: The 2021 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends survey, European cut.

The importance of creating and sustaining a culture of learning was a prominent theme in our research interviews with European business leaders. Marc Howells, VP & Head of Global Talent & Learning at AstraZeneca told us during our research interview: “Learning is the only future-proof skill we need”<sup>17</sup>. Incentivising and empowering people to re-skill and upskill continually requires a total rethink of traditional reward structures and prescriptive curriculum-based learning. Organisations should be transparent about their future skills requirements and democratise learning opportunities, supporting workers to adapt and grow in line with organisational priorities.

## The bottom line

The unforeseen circumstances and challenges of 2020 uncovered the extraordinary untapped potential of workers and teams. To capitalise and position themselves to thrive in the long-term, organisations must adopt workforce development and deployment strategies that are as dynamic and adaptable as the business problems they are trying to solve.

## Emerging priorities

Strategic workforce planning requires an ability to continuously predict, access and curate skills to future-proof talent. Organisations seeking to unleash worker potential should make learning and development a strategic priority, and consider the following actions to embed a culture of learning and a growth mindset among the workforce:

Figure 5. Unleashing workforce potential: Actions for leaders



Source: Deloitte analysis.

## Lessons from the frontline

### 'Spotify of learning' – learning for everyone

To support a culture of lifelong learning from A to Z, AstraZeneca has taken a holistic approach to its learning transformation, from looking at governance and its operating model, to using shared services, and deploying a learner-centric platform – aka a 'Spotify of learning'. This platform offers learning options based on both the employee's learning preferences and the learning relevant to their role. This approach unlocks the potential of their people, enabling AstraZeneca to deliver a better service to customers and have a positive impact on society.

Since start of the pandemic, employees at AstraZeneca engaged with learning offerings including this new platform: 90% of employees said they were able to develop new skills, grow capabilities and engage in learning activities; and 84% felt they had enhanced their opportunities for future career progression. As the company has expanded outside of its core business areas to play a role in the response to COVID-19, the ability to re-skill at scale has been another benefit.

The platform democratised learning by providing access to a series of self-directed learning experiences, and access to a wealth of resources – ranging from LinkedIn Learning to the content of business unit academies. Similar to Spotify, the platform gives suggestions on future learning opportunities based on learners' role, interests and previous learnings.

Using behavioural science to understand employees' appetite for learning was a major breakthrough in delivering continuously evolving content. The new business-led governance also helps ensure that learning doesn't become an isolated HR initiative.

An enhanced approach to learning governance (with cross-business membership) together with a shift in the approach to budgeting for learning, was another aspect that helped to future-proof the learning transformation. The company's Talent and Development Centre of Excellence partnered with business leaders to introduce a 'membership fee' for every part of business, linking the learning budget directly to payroll. Therefore, if headcount increases the learning budget increases; and when headcount drops the learning budget is reduced. The 'membership fee' enabled the business to contribute to and help maintain the quality of a more global learning offering.

AstraZeneca's reimagining of learning and reskilling has empowered their people to make learning a habit, and nurtures the workforce to be more capable of weathering any disruption, while helping AstraZeneca's ambition to be a great place to work.



“COVID-19 became the chief digital transformation officer for every company on the planet. Everyone had to accelerate their digital transformation, whether they liked it or not, since those that didn't had no chance to survive.”

**Marc Howells, Vice President & Head of Global Talent & Learning at AstraZeneca**



## Superteams

Where work happens

In the turbulent times of COVID-19, organisations turned to teams and teaming as a survival strategy to ensure adaptability, speed and agility. Driven by disruption and enabled by technology, leaders today should strive to take what they have learned to the next level by creating superteams – groups of people and intelligent machines working together to re-architect work in more human ways. By amplifying human contributions to new and better outcomes, superteams can play an integral part in enabling organisations to recover, grow and thrive.

### Shifting realities

The power of human potential is undoubtedly the strongest theme in this year's *Human Capital Trends* report. In March 2020, the UK government made an urgent call for manufacturing industry to help save lives by delivering Rapidly Manufactured Ventilator Systems for the NHS. McLaren alongside other engine manufacturers including Airbus and Ford rose to the challenge. The McLaren's role was to design and build bespoke trolleys on which ventilators could be fixed to for use in clinical settings. A newly gathered team of engineers was set up to solve the unusual engineering challenge. After just three weeks of testing and trials, the first ventilator design got the green light for building thousands of ventilators – a process that would normally take around a year. This ability to pivot operations and deliver a totally new product shows the importance of teams' agility and cooperation amid demanding and ever-changing conditions<sup>19</sup>.

Agile project-based teams have been a life raft for organisations during COVID-19. Teams can learn and adapt much faster than individual workers alone, since motivated individuals can challenge each other to come up with better and more creative ideas, so that extraordinary results can be achieved<sup>20</sup>. As organisations continually re-adjust their strategies and operations to support new priorities, we expect to see a greater reliance on teams to drive adaptability and growth.

The next frontier in teaming is superteams – combinations of people and technology leveraging their complementary capabilities to pursue outcomes at a speed and scale not otherwise possible<sup>21</sup>. Superteams have yet to take hold as a widespread organisational strategy, as many organisations still appear to view technology as a tool. When parts of jobs are automated by machines, the work that remains for humans becomes more insight-focused and experience-oriented and uses the output of machines to interpret data and solve problems.



The top three factors that European executives identified as important in transforming work were organisational culture, workforce capability, and technology – all of which must work together to help envision and assemble effective superteams. Moreover, 20% of European executives prioritised “building portfolios of humans and machines working together” among their top two most important actions they were taking or will take to transform work.

This section will focus on the benefits of superteams and how organisations can discover the potential of technology in re-architecting work, while elevating employee experience and potential.

## Our 2021 perspective

### OUR HYPOTHESIS

Superteams can give organisations the opportunity to re-architect work in more human ways, leveraging technology to elevate teams’ ability to learn, create and perform in new ways to achieve better outcomes.

COVID-19 is driving significant changes in how work gets done, accelerating the pace of change and transforming ways of working. This has sparked leaders to shift their focus away from work optimisation towards work reimagination. The 2021 *Global Human Capital Trends* survey showed that 54% of European senior executives will focus on reimagining work in their organisation in the next 1-3 years, compared to just 28% before COVID-19 (Figure 6).

**Figure 6. Organisations are shifting their focus away from work optimisation to work reimagination**

How were you thinking about work transformation prior to the COVID-19 pandemic?  
How are you thinking about work transformation in the next one to three years?

Optimising work



Redesigning work



Reimagining work



We are not transforming work



■ Prior to COVID-19 ■ Moving forward

Note: Prior to COVID-19 n=1,216; Moving forward n=1,230  
Source: The 2021 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends survey, European cut.

### WORK TRANSFORMATION DEFINITIONS

- **Optimising work:** Doing the same work more efficiently
- **Redesigning work:** Achieving the same work outputs with new combinations of technology and people
- **Reimagining work:** Achieving new or different work outcomes with new combinations of technology and people

To be successful however, leaders must rethink how they leverage technology to make work better for people, and people better at work. Many organisations are failing to take a human-centric approach to technology implementation or in preparing their workers for the change it will bring. Deloitte’s latest *Automation with Intelligence* report found that 58% of organisations using intelligent automation have not calculated how roles in their workforce will change as a result<sup>22</sup>.

Organisations must think beyond the use of technology to automate or substitute labour; doing more of the same and doing it faster is not where the real value lies<sup>23</sup>. Instead, they should strive to use technology to augment and empower their workers to perform higher value work, such as problem-solving, innovation and decision-making.

During 2020 there were plenty of examples of ingenuity when people and technology work together in pursuit of a common goal. However, even now, many European executives lack the ambitious visions of their employees. While individual workers see improving quality and increasing innovation as the top priorities of work transformation over the next three years, senior executives are still disappointingly more focused on reducing costs (Figure 2, see on page 7).

For organisations to capitalise fully on superteams as a key to unleashing human potential, a human-centric approach to work design is critical. The three examples alongside our guidance on Emerging Priorities below illustrate the difference in impact between using technology to replicate human tasks and using technology to transform how people work.

## Emerging priorities

Superteams offer great potential to re-architect work: using technology to transform ways of working to optimise human capabilities. To create an environment where superteams can flourish, leaders should consider the following:

- **Set bold goals:** Stop focusing on how to improve existing processes and instead aspire to new, better outcomes. Not every endeavour will pay off, but nobody learns from success alone.
- **Re-architect work to create new meaning for the workforce:** Free up workers from repetitive, low-value tasks, and allow them to focus on the higher-value, creative work they thrive on.
- **Use technology to design work to help people perform at their best:** Working collaboratively in teams, breaking down silos to work across functions and businesses, creating knowledge, learning in the flow of work and personalising the work experience.
- **Make the creation of superteams an organisation-wide imperative:** Leverage the best thinking from HR, IT, the business and the workforce itself.
- **Repeat and refine:** Don't just set up superteams to solve a specific issue and leave it there - redeploy the teams and technological solutions to tackle other challenges.

## The bottom line

When you combine exceptional people with the right technology, the possibilities are endless. There is promising evidence from 2020 that effective use of superteams can become a catalyst for recovery and enable organisations to thrive in their rapidly changing environment.

## Lessons from the frontline

### Tech for tech's sake vs. tech for human's sake

#### Superteams – Augmentation

Assistive technologies use AI to enhance worker performance.

- Microsoft has embedded 'AI for Accessibility' tools into its services to make workplaces more inclusive, particularly in the context of COVID-19. Microsoft Teams uses automatic speech recognition to create captions, so people with hearing impairments can participate in video calls.
- Microsoft Eye Gaze uses eye movement tracking to enable people who cannot use a mouse or keyboard to operate their computer.
- Microsoft Dictate uses natural language generation, so blind or partially-sighted people can type in Outlook, Word or Powerpoint<sup>24</sup>.

#### Superteams – Collaboration

AstraZeneca, one of the world's leading pharmaceutical companies, pulled together hundreds of scientists from across therapeutic areas – respiratory, cardiology, and oncology, among others – and from the University of Oxford to work together to develop a vaccine and other therapeutics. Additionally, AstraZeneca played a critical role in setting up the testing laboratories for the national COVID-19 testing programme within the United Kingdom, enlisting scientists from across its organisation and from its partnerships with the University of Cambridge Laboratories and GlaxoSmithKline. The organisation used collaboration technologies to enable real-time partnership and data-sharing that increased the speed and level of the teamwork necessary for rapid progress<sup>25</sup>.

#### Automation – Substitution

However, substituting people with technology is not always the right answer. Sportswear manufacturer Adidas trialled robot-staffed 'Speedfactories' in Germany and the US in 2017. However, two years later, the business announced it was abandoning the project because its existing human-powered factories in Asia offered greater production flexibility<sup>26</sup>.



# Governing workforce strategies

Setting new directions for work and the workforce

COVID-19 was a rude awakening for organisations using retrospective metrics to govern their workforce strategies. With persisting uncertainty about the future of work, leaders must use forward-looking data insights to constantly challenge their approaches to work and the workforce. Asking – and answering – different questions can help organisations meet constant change with the confidence that comes from planning ahead.

## Shifting realities

The need for workforce data is nothing new. What has changed is how urgently organisations need to act on it. Last year's *Global Human Capital Trends* survey found 97% of leaders needed additional information on some aspect of their workforce. The challenges of 2020 have only exacerbated this information gap.

Resilient and agile organisations need new workforce metrics and governance to gather forward-looking insights that can help them evaluate risks, inform strategy, and meet the challenges in today's rapidly changing environment. 59% of European executives reported that they are now planning for multiple future business scenarios and unlikely high-impact events, compared to only 30% before COVID-19 (Figure 7).

This section focuses on how organisations can take a more action-based approach to harnessing workforce potential and transforming work to meet the demands of the future.

## Our 2021 perspective

### OUR HYPOTHESIS

We are entering a world in which it's becoming a paramount requirement for organisations to shift from using workforce insights to improve old patterns of work to using them to set new directions.

To deal effectively with multiple possible futures and unlikely events, leaders need to be able to pivot quickly and reset their strategy. One driver of uncertainty is the speed at which technological advances and economic change make some skills obsolete, while other skills are experiencing a surge in demand. As organisations are turning to work re-architecture work by creating superteams – integrating humans and technologies – they need access to real-time information about the current and future capabilities of their workforce.



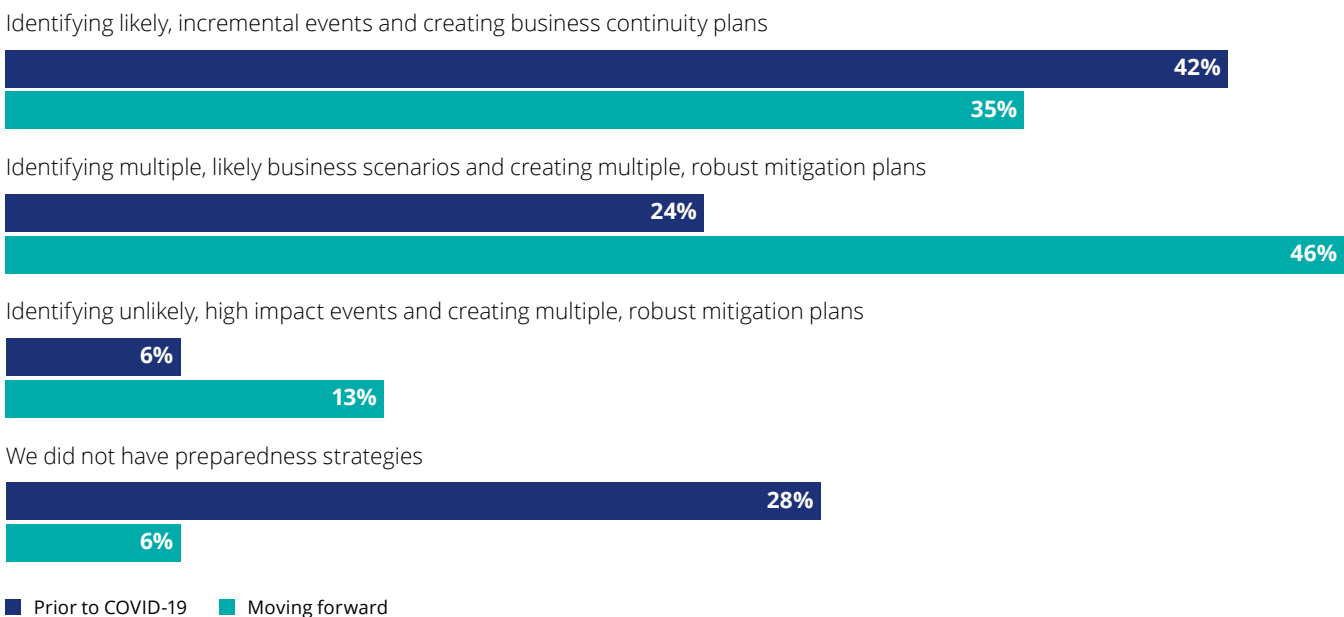
Another driver lies in human-centred design that demands more transparency and action around inclusion, leadership, culture and wellbeing. Asking the right strategic questions is key to achieving a more dynamic workforce strategy.

One powerful example of using workforce insights to adjust for the needs of workforce is Bupa’s use of regular pulse surveys coupled with advanced analytics. This approach enabled the leadership to understand better their workers’ sentiments about a wide range of matters – from their concerns around safety and the need for flexibility to their overall wellness and their take on inclusion.

The power of advanced analytics gave team managers an insight into their team’s needs, while benchmarking their team’s responses against those of other teams and suggesting an action plan that could help improve their team’s performance. Using those insights enabled team leaders and the wider organisation to have an agile and more focused response to those needs. It was used, for example, in designing a return to work strategy after the first lockdown that put the various needs of people at its heart<sup>27</sup>.

**Figure 7. COVID-19 has prompted many organisations to shift their approach to preparedness towards considering multiple and unlikely futures**

Which statement best describes your organisation's preparedness prior to the COVID-19 pandemic?  
Which statement best describes how your organisation will define preparedness moving forward?



Note: Prior to COVID-19 n=1,252; Moving forward n=1,241;  
Source: The 2021 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends survey, European cut.



We have identified three themes on which organisations should focus in the coming year: worker potential, talent ecosystems and translating organisational values into action. We have compiled lists of questions that leaders should be asking to achieve a meaningful impact.

## 1. Capitalising on worker potential

COVID-19 has demonstrated that workers have the capability and motivation to reach far beyond their job description. However, many organisations are still not capturing either the skills or capabilities they already have, nor their future skills requirements. This makes it difficult to redeploy workers at short notice and impossible to plan how to acquire or cultivate the talent they will need further down the line.

As leaders assess their workforce capabilities and knowledge gaps, they need access to deeper workforce insights to identify their employees' potential for growth, as well as their passions and preferred working conditions that allow them to thrive.

Questions to ask to capitalise on worker potential:

- **Job evolution:** How often are jobs changing, which ones, and to what degree?
- **Future workforce readiness:** How ready is our workforce to perform the work of the future? What are the gaps in our capability, experience and skills, and how are we going to close them?
- **Change ability and agility:** Are workers and their leaders able to adapt quickly and effectively to constant change?
- **Wellbeing and ways of working preferences:** How can we help our workers feel and perform at their best?
- **Future leader readiness:** What new trends, challenges and scenarios are leaders being prepared for? How many of our leaders have the attributes required to succeed?

## 2. Tapping into the entire talent ecosystem

Talent ecosystems are becoming increasingly complex, with most organisations engaging not just employees, but also a mix of contingent workers: contractors, gig workers, professional service providers, developers, crowdsourced contributors, and more<sup>28</sup>. Ensuring that this distributed workforce stays aligned with the organisation's strategic goals and values is becoming a critical necessity<sup>29</sup>. Similarly, knowing where to find capabilities to plug operational gaps is a key competitive advantage.

Questions to ask to translate values into action:

- **Workforce social contract:** How does our organisation treat its employees, contractors and service providers of every type?
- **Meaningful diversity:** Are workers from diverse communities in a position to wield influence in the organisation?
- **Human capital brand:** How is our culture, workforce and leadership being portrayed externally?
- **Culture risk sensing:** What signals are we seeing that point to outliers in worker behaviour and norms?

Organisations will need to adopt common systems of tracking, measuring and governing workers across their entire ecosystem. To tailor their workforce needs and get the most value out of talent ecosystems, a data-driven approach to understanding workers' skills, motivations and performance is essential.

## 3. Translating values into action

2020 saw an intensified focus on organisational values such as ethics, fairness and inclusivity. The rise of The Black Lives Matter movement has prompted organisations to re-evaluate their commitment to diversity and inclusion, while widespread redundancies and furloughs during the pandemic put the quality of social contract between employers and workers in the spotlight. The most recent story with Uber confirming their workers will receive pensions, minimum wage and holiday pay is a positive sign of coming change<sup>30</sup>.

Organisations are judged today just as much by their impacts on society as by their financial results<sup>31</sup>. To deliver measurable change, leaders must use data-driven insights to gain a holistic view of their workforce and their culture, and share them with workers and the wider community, to drive both direction and accountability.

Questions to ask to tap into the entire talent ecosystem:

- **Workforce footprint:** How many workers provide direct or indirect services to our organisation?
- **Internal talent market health:** How healthy is our internal talent market?
- **Talent ecosystem health:** How much capability can we access across our broader ecosystem?
- **Retention drivers:** Which of our workers are at risk of leaving, and why?






## Emerging priorities

While workforce insights will not predict the unpredictable, scenario planning and keeping a finger on the pulse of the workforce enables organisations to respond to change in a more informed and effective manner.







As disruption becomes the new normal, there is increasing pressure for organisations to be able to demonstrate to stakeholders how they are measuring success and how they are using the resulting insights to make better business decisions – both from an economic and social standpoint.

## Dos and don'ts of workforce insights

### Do

-  Use data to inform meaningful action towards better outcomes
-  Leverage continuous data insights to constantly challenge and improve the actions you're taking
-  Ensure workforce data and insights strategies are organisation-wide and include the whole potential workforce – from permanent to contingent
-  Integrate external data sets where possible and be transparent about what you find. Stronger insights and open commitments lead to stronger action
-  Make workforce measures regular and expected organisational KPIs (such as employee sentiment, productivity, and diversity and inclusion). Only then can you measure progress and drive change.

### Don't

-  Collect data for data's sake
-  Wait for the perfect data set before getting started. Inconclusive or not-quite-perfect data can still identify patterns and provide insights
-  Get so caught up in the mechanics of collecting data that you lose sight of what you're trying to achieve
-  Restrict your insights initiatives to inside your organisation or just within individual departments or teams
-  Collect data in sporadic reporting cycles or only for one-time specific events
-  Consider workforce measures a nice-to-have for HR and leave them forgotten in spreadsheets or unread presentations

The challenges of the past year have demonstrated to leaders and other business stakeholders the value of workforce data; it's time to act on it.

## The bottom line

If you can't measure it, you can't manage it. The events of 2020 write the business case for workforce insights. With so much at stake, guesswork isn't an option. Organisations that leverage continuous, forward-looking workforce insights, will emerge more resilient and prepared to thrive in this new unstable normal.

## Lessons from the frontline

### 'My Navy' app to navigate the gap

The 'My Navy' app is a great example of a digital transformation element accelerated by COVID-19. During the first UK lockdown in March 2020, the Armed Forces were immediately called upon to provide up to thirty thousand service personnel to serve the needs of the nation amid the crisis. The Royal Navy had to pivot its operations and mobilise its people to fulfil a wide array of tasks – from driving oxygen tankers for the NHS to supporting border security, while continuing to deliver ongoing naval operations around the world.

As part of its ambitious digital transformation journey, the People and Training function of the Royal Navy had developed a digital service – the 'My Navy' app – to be a one-stop-shop for information. It was released at the start of January 2020 and by the middle of that month it had six thousand registered users. However, as the threat of a pandemic grew, so did the user base, and over 90% of the Navy's personnel were registered users by the end of March, the majority of them using the application daily.

At its inception, 'My Navy' app was designed to be a centralised and democratised way to share information that was previously hard to find. However, its remit rapidly expanded, giving HR, commanders and divisional leaders a view of the health and deployment status of personnel at their fingertips. As a next step, the Royal Navy included a COVID-19 reporting tool, encouraging personnel to report daily on their health and their deployability status. Once mapped with HR systems, this generated insight enabled the Royal Navy to find the right personnel in just a few clicks and taps, in order to establish who was fit and well and in the right location with the necessary skills and experience to support critical COVID and non-COVID tasks.

The 'My Navy' app had an impact that is broader than managing a pandemic response. The insight and engagement which has been generated is now an integral part of the Royal Navy's wider digital and cultural transformation ambitions.



“Cultural change is at the centre of our transformation and yet an organisation's capacity for change is always limited. As we return to a different normal, my role as a People and Training Transformation Lead is to grow the Royal Navy's capacity for change, exploit the many lessons we have learned and accelerate digitally-enabled ways of working to improve the productivity and lived experience of all our people.”

**Rear Admiral Phil Hally, Director of People and Training for the Royal Navy**



## Memo to HR

### Accelerating the shift to re-architecting work

COVID-19 has required people to work in radically different ways, whether remotely or in-person with safety and social distancing procedures in place. HR was pushed to finally act in ways that the future of work always demanded them to do – embracing change and shifting their role from managing workers to re-architecting work. The big question is – will COVID-19 go down in history as an unseen early disruptor or will it prove itself as a ‘time machine into future’? As organisations emerge from the pandemic, HR has a mandate to ‘bottle the brilliance’ achieved during this challenging period and drive better outcomes that position organisations to thrive.

#### Shifting realities

Of necessity rather than choice, organisations were forced by the COVID-19 pandemic to rewrite, trial and test new ways of working far beyond just remote working. Workers were propelled into cross-functional task teams to solve business-critical challenges and were provided with the autonomy to make rapid decisions. Meanwhile digital transformation and automation were accelerated, providing workers with the agency to create new products and delivery models rapidly<sup>32</sup>.

In this real-life experiment, where workforce issues became a core business issue, HR was thrust to the forefront and extended its influence beyond workforce management and policy enforcement, to orchestrating work across the entire enterprise. It is now time for HR professionals to apply what they have learned and re-define work to elevate worker potential and experience.

Deloitte's *2021 Human Capital Trends* survey found that 54% of European HR and business leaders combined are now focusing on work reimagination, compared to only 28% before the pandemic. Organisations are shifting their focus from work optimisation and redesign towards work reimagination.



However, only 25% of HR executives are currently “very confident” in the ability of their function to navigate the changes required in the next 3-5 years. Confidence in HR among other business executives is lower, with only 11% “very confident” (Figure 8).

This section will focus on how HR functions can ensure they understand and meet the business needs, while taking confident ownership of the work transformation agenda and drive stronger organisational performance.

## Our 2021 perspective

### OUR HYPOTHESIS

The Future of Work always needed the HR function to expand its remit and COVID-19 has accelerated this process by opening up a window of opportunity for HR to re-architect work throughout the enterprise. HR professionals now need to build on this momentum and take confident ownership of the work transformation agenda, to re-architect and reimagine ways of working to benefit both their people and the organisation.

Throughout this edition of *Human Capital Trends*, we have discussed the notion of reimagining the future of work to unleash worker potential, improve performance and drive new organisational outcomes. We believe the future of work is not just about producing outputs; it’s about humanising work to strengthen organisational relationships, unlock creativity and innovation, and embed collaboration at every turn.

With people matters at the heart of their remit, HR is uniquely positioned to lead this change. However to be successful HR professionals need to shift from a functional mindset to an enterprise and impact mindset. In the context of the four other 2021 *Human Capital Trends*, Figure 9 (see on page 24) illustrates how HR can expand its focus to deliver increased value to the organisation and shape the future of work.

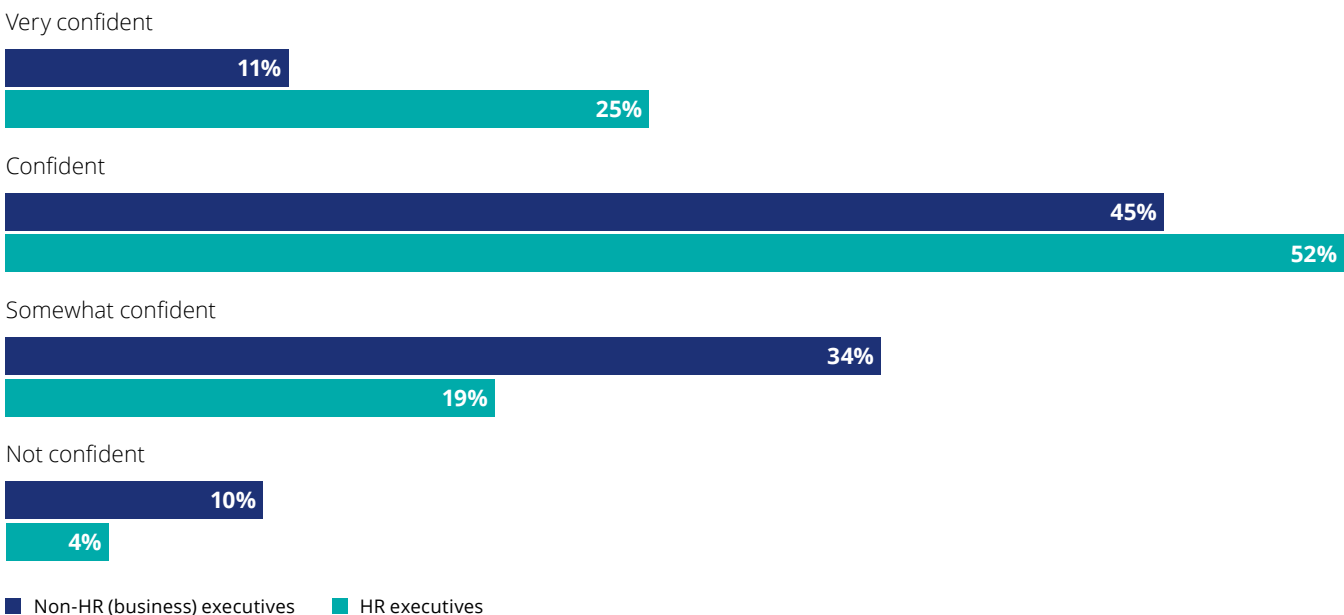
For example, when considering remote working arrangements, a traditional HR response may have focused on providing home office equipment subsidies or providing access to wellbeing support. However, by looking more broadly, HR can contribute a bigger impact by evaluating feedback from employees to embed positive learnings into future work models.

### DEFINITION: RE-ARCHITECTING WORK – REIMAGINATION IN ACTION

The reimagination of work to achieve new value has been a consistent focus of Deloitte’s *Human Capital Trends* series. If reimagining is the destination, re-architecting is the path to get there. The *how* of effecting change, re-architecting work turns the potential of reimagination into a reality. It is one thing to envision new work outcomes, but it is quite another to deliver those outcomes in a way that unleashes worker potential by delivering a distinctly human future of work.

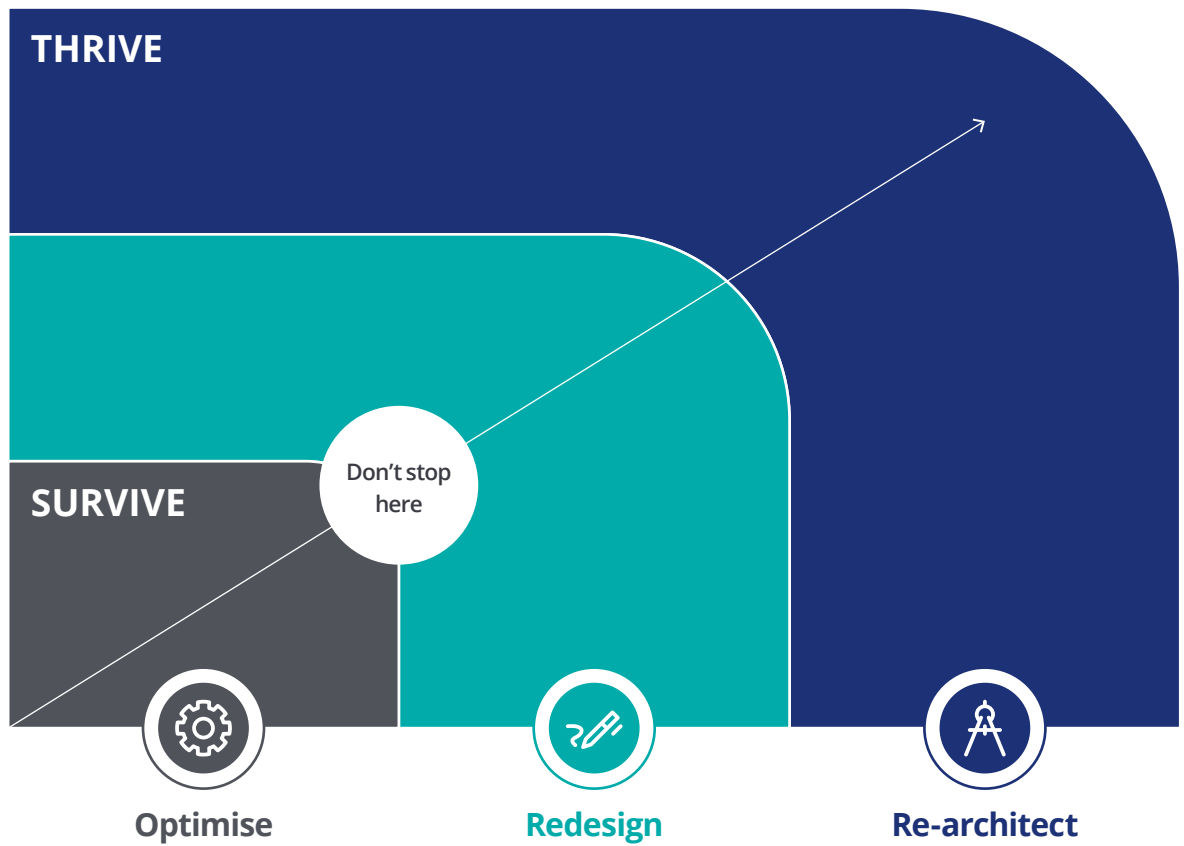
**Figure 8. Highest confidence in HR's ability to navigate changes required in the next 3-5 years**

Based upon HR's role and impact during the COVID-19 pandemic, what is your level of confidence in HR's ability to navigate changes required in the next three to five years?



Note: HR n=533; non-HR n=716  
Source: The 2021 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends survey, European cut.

Figure 9. From optimise to redesign to re-architect: HR's path to achieving new outcomes



	Threshold 1	Threshold 2	Threshold 3
<b>Wellbeing</b>	Improve employees' health and safety and their access to tools and programs for remote work	Extend wellbeing from employees to all workers and all aspects of workforce wellbeing	Lead the integration of workforce wellbeing in the flow of work (and life)
<b>Beyond reskilling</b>	Accelerate skill development programmes for high-demand skills and roles	Implement new learning technologies and talent marketplaces to build new skills, and provide employees choice in development	Focus on and unleash worker potential, and play a lead role in re-architecting work for new outcomes
<b>Superteams</b>	Implement and manage change around work automation	Focus on building "superjobs" to augment workers' skills to improve their productivity with technology	Facilitate and develop superteams, integrating workers and technology for new solutions and services
<b>Governing workforce strategies</b>	Improve the generation of and access to historical employee data	Extend to the full workforce ecosystem with analyses to improve performance, establish benchmarks, and identify issues	Generate forward-looking, real-time insights to sense opportunities and set new directions and actions for business leaders, workers, and external stakeholders

Source: Deloitte analysis.

## Emerging priorities

To effectively re-architect a human vision of the future of work, HR will need to partner closely with business leaders and workers, treating the re-architecture of work as an ongoing capability that needs to be embedded in operations. The following eight steps demonstrate how HR can take the lead in shaping the future of work:

1. **Manage people not numbers:** Instead of treating workers mechanically in terms of their static job descriptions, HR should consider them as a creative force: individuals with diverse experiences and interests, capable of continuous growth. Capturing workforce capabilities and interests requires a data-driven approach, while unlocking potential requires HR to open up opportunities for more personalised meaningful work.
2. **Elevate the employee experience:** Employee engagement, wellbeing and effectiveness are all influenced by their experience at work. HR must create an inclusive, flexible environment where individual working styles and schedules are respected, so workers can feel and perform at their best.
3. **Ensure technology works for humans, not the other way around:** HR must challenge IT and technology buyers within the enterprise to take a human-centric focus when implementing technology solutions, striving towards superteams of humans and machines. Technology should augment worker performance and experience, freeing up capacity for more rewarding work.
4. **Future-proof talent:** HR should move beyond traditional mandates of recruitment and distributing centralised learning curriculums, to leading strategic workforce planning – advising the business on how to best utilise their talent ecosystems, identify the critical skills for the future and continuously revise the current learning offering and curriculum to build strategically critical skills from within.
5. **Keep taking the pulse of the workforce:** Instead of irregular quantitative reporting, HR should leverage continuous qualitative insights to inform their workforce strategy and measure the impact of their actions. Employee wellbeing and diversity and inclusion should be formal talent KPIs, and continuously monitored and challenged.
6. **Shape the next generation of leadership:** The future of work will require leaders and managers to be capable of maximising worker and team performance across hybrid ways of working. HR will need to shape leadership development plans and performance indicators to support this.
7. **Drive a culture of collaboration, learning and growth:** Shifting from viewing career progression as a linear path, HR can drive a culture of internal and external mobility, designing reward and performance incentives to encourage development – reinforcing the concept that employees work for the organisation, not the department or manager<sup>33</sup>.
8. **Lead by example:** As the pioneers of re-architecting work, HR should disrupt its own operating model, breaking down functional silos and becoming adaptable, agile, human-focused and technology-enabled<sup>34</sup>.

## The bottom line

The experiences of COVID-19 have shown that nothing is impossible. Millions of workers across sectors experienced a big change in their ways of working from the start of the coronavirus crisis, and HR was at the centre of that work transformation, pushed to the forefront to effectively navigate the disruption. A moment of opportunity has occurred to 'bottle the brilliance' achieved due to the disruption. It's time for HR to lead their organisations and humanise the future of work by shifting the way they think about human potential, superteams, wellbeing, and workforce governance.





## Leading forward

Leading the shift from survive to thrive

Since Deloitte launched the first edition of *Human Capital Trends* eleven years ago, considerable economic, social and technological disruption has shaped the world of work. 2020, though, brought disruption of a new magnitude – it was the year of change and the year to change.

The COVID-19 pandemic, and the political, economic and social upheaval it caused, shone a light on the inextricable link between business and society<sup>35</sup>. The time has come to embrace fully the role of social enterprise – combining revenue growth and profit-making with respect for the environment, while delivering a lasting fairer, ethical and positive impact to workers and wider society.

### The 'Great Reset'

As part of its 'Great Reset' mission to transition to a fairer, more sustainable post-pandemic world, the World Economic Forum is calling for business leaders to reset their future of work agendas and invest in their people as core drivers of long-term resilience and future success<sup>36</sup>.

Our 2021 *Human Capital Trends* research shows signs that this reset is starting to take shape: over half of European business leaders are planning to fundamentally reimagine work in their organisation over the next one to three years (*Figure 10*, see on page 27) and they see upskilling and reskilling their workforce as the route to get there.

As we have explored in our deep-dive discussions on wellbeing, reskilling, superteams, workforce strategies, and the role of HR, preparing work and the workforce for an uncertain future is impossible without embedding the human element into everything that organisations do. Organisations should continue humanising work, while empowering and enabling their workers with the trust and tools to stay ahead of disruption and uncertainty.

### Lead with the heart... and the head

Times of uncertainty call for bold and resilient leaders who express empathy and compassion for the human side of upheaval<sup>37</sup>. Marilyn Chaplin, Chief Human Resources Officer at NTT Ltd., stated during our research interview: "It's about doing what's right every time, even when no one is looking."<sup>38</sup>

In our final call to action in this year's 2021 *Human Capital Trends*, we call upon leaders to embrace three core attributes to position their organisation to thrive in a world of perpetual disruption.



**Figure 10. COVID-19 is shifting organisations' views of preparedness from a focus on the familiar to planning for the unknown**

Which statement best describes your organisation's preparedness prior to the COVID-19 pandemic?  
Which statement best describes how your organisation will define preparedness moving forward?

Identifying likely, incremental events and creating business continuity plans



Identifying multiple, likely business scenarios and creating multiple, robust mitigation plans



Identifying unlikely, high impact events and creating multiple, robust mitigation plans



We did not have preparedness strategies



■ Prior to COVID-19 ■ Moving forward

Note: Prior to COVID-19 n=1,252; Moving forward n=1,241;  
Source: The 2021 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends survey, European cut.

## Adopting a thrive mindset – three actions for tomorrow’s leaders

### 1. Purpose: Establish a North Star

Organisations that embrace purpose can unite workers to overcome competing priorities and solve critical business and societal issues. Leaders should strive to create a shared sense of purpose which will help mobilise their people to pull in the same direction when they face current and future challenges.

### 2. Potential: Capitalise on human capabilities

Organisations that dynamically analyse and activate workforce potential are better able to capitalise on human ingenuity and achieve organisational speed and agility. Leaders must trust people to work in ways that allow them to fulfil their potential and offer them opportunities to align work to their interests and passions, while putting wellbeing at the centre.

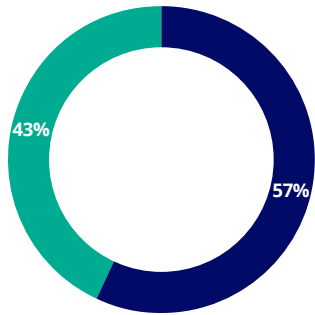
### 3. Perspective: Re-architecting work to take bold steps forward

Organisations that view uncertainty as an opportunity to set new directions and write their own future are better placed to navigate disruption. Leaders should embrace the perspective that reimagining work is the key to achieving new and better outcomes in a world that is itself being constantly reimagined.

# Appendix

## Survey demographics

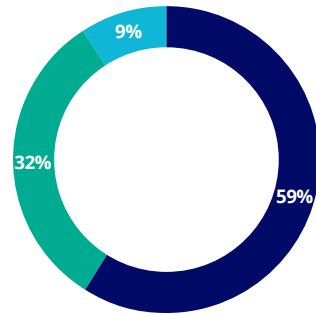
### Function



■ Business  
■ HR

Note: n= n=2,363;  
Source: The 2021 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends survey, European cut.

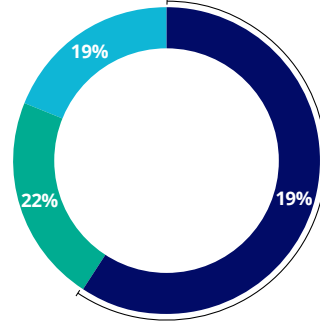
### Sub region



■ Western Europe  
■ Central & Eastern Europe  
■ Nordic Countries

Note: n= n=2,363;  
Source: The 2021 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends survey, European cut.

### Level

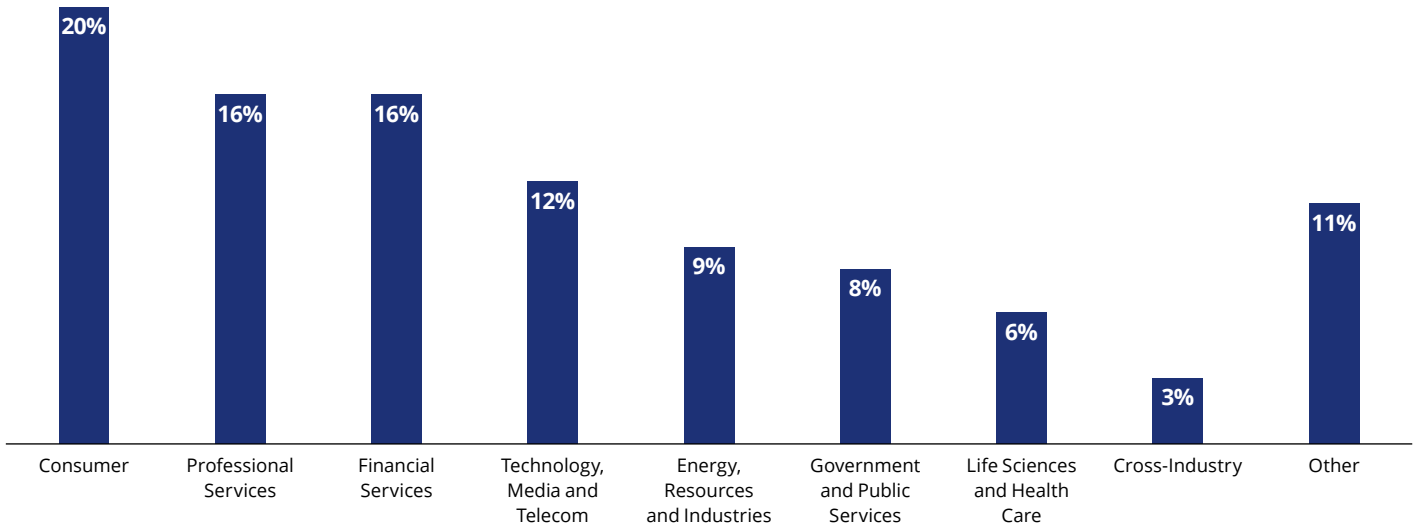


■ Executives  
■ Managers  
■ Individual Contributor

Note: n= n=2,363; because of rounding, numbers may not tally with the total  
Source: The 2021 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends survey, European cut.

Executives:	
Vice President & Director	23%
Senior Manager	17%
C-Suite	12%
Board Member	7%

### Industry



Note: n= n=2,363; because of rounding, numbers may not tally with the total  
Source: The 2021 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends survey, European cut.

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# Endnotes

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