



Addressing the impact of COVID-19 Elevating the human experience during crisis

The COVID-19 virus has disrupted the work, workforce, and workplace of today. In its disruption, the virus has illuminated our strong desire and need for meaningful human connection. With country-wide quarantines and social distancing requirements in place, organizations have had to rely more heavily than ever upon technology to continue business operations. However, with that dependency comes a substantial risk to the human connection we all need in order to feel fulfilled, engaged, and authentic at work. This risk to the human connection is the human ‘experience debt’¹ – a cost that, in the wake of a pandemic, is being exacerbated at exponential rates and compounding with the overall concerns of the workforce through these unprecedented times.

Despite the challenges, COVID-19 presents opportunities for organizations to re-emphasize their commitments both to their people and their missions. By emphasizing the organization’s purpose, leveraging rewards and relationships, and driving with authentic leadership, organizations can foster an engaged workforce dedicated to moving the company through the uncertainty of today.

Why elevating the human experience is imperative at this time

As organizations around the world are facing the difficult task of maintaining business in these uncertain times, it may seem counter-intuitive to prioritize the human experience. However, investment into the workforce experience will compound into loyalty and growth through the creation of high-performing and engaged digital teams. As technological advancements impact every aspect of daily life—especially in this newly evolved workplace—members of the workforce are demanding similar levels of technology at work², and organizations need to leverage technology to help the workforce build human connections. Challenges such as COVID-19 only illustrate further the need for businesses to prioritize their people and provide the tools needed to enhance their experience and enable their work.

Human ‘experience debt’ – the unintended consequence of human isolation due to technological advancement

- In the absence of a virtual workplace culture, people who do not feel their values are aligned with the organization’s are less loyal, engaged, and productive
- The fine line between work and life continues to blur as workforce are unable to distance themselves from the virtual workplace
- The workforce is distracted and concerned over the physical, mental, and emotional health of themselves and others
- The illusion of 24/7 connectivity has left people feeling lonely and isolated from colleagues, organization, and leaders
- Managers struggle with the ambiguity and flexibility that virtual work provides to their teams

Three key areas for elevating the human experience at work

- **Emphasize the Social Purpose:** Make your organization’s values and brand come alive in this virtual workplace. Understand how the organization can enable an employee to feel connected to their work, team, and organizational vision.
- **Leverage Rewards and Relationships:** In times of uncertainty, it is imperative that organizations demonstrate commitment to workforce through how workforce’ health and well-being are provided and prioritized.
- **Drive with Authentic Leadership:** Employees are looking to leadership for clear direction, confidence, and honesty. Authentic leaders balance transparency, thoughtful messaging, and resilience to align stakeholders to new ways of working.

Questions to consider to elevate the human experience at work:

How are we connecting workforce to the organization's purpose?

- **Put the mission first.** Meaningful work is a critical motivator and sustains effort over time. In fact, workforce's desire for meaningful work can surpass even monetary gain³. Organizations successful at connecting workforce to their overall vision are those that have bridged business goals with values considered meaningful across broad employee segments.
- **Activate the organization's virtual culture.** Now is the time for companies to explore how their social culture can expand beyond physical boundaries. Programs aimed at improving digital collaboration should provide new ways of working not tethered to the limits of physical desks and further enable individuals to bring their authentic selves to work.

Are workforce needs supported through rewards and relationships?

- **From Rewards to Relationships.** Organizations must create a broader relationship that prioritizes employee's physical condition, emotional resilience, social connections and financial health. This relationship between the organization and employee is critical for creating an experience that attracts, motivates, and retains the high-talent workers of tomorrow.
- **Allow for flexibility and autonomy.** Employees tend to feel more satisfied when they're enabled to take ownership over their work arrangements (e.g., working schedule, location, and physical setup). Flexibility also allows for workforce to remain productive despite potential family and schedule issues arising out of the current COVID-19 scenario.

How can we actively and strategically build trust in our leaders?

- **Emphasize commitments to the workforce.** Leaders must take this opportunity to re-emphasize their commitment to workforce' health and well-being. Supportive leadership and recognition programs also signal the organization's continued focus on the workforce experience.
- **Embrace transparency.** Transparency can go both ways. In addition to sharing up-front, realistic expectations with stakeholders, organizations should also be continuously seeking input from workforce and managers.
- **Engage high-performing, digital teams.** Align stakeholders to adapt to new technologies, ways of working, and behaviors.⁴ Front-line Managers will require support and training on how best to develop a high-performing digital team.

COVID-19 presents opportunities for organizations to re-emphasize their commitments both to their people and their missions.

By emphasizing the organization's purpose, leveraging rewards and relationships, and driving with authentic leadership, organizations can foster an engaged workforce dedicated to moving the company through the uncertainty of today.

Contact:

For more information on how to respond, recover and thrive:

- Connect to Deloitte leaders www.deloitte.com/COVID-19-leaders
- Visit www.deloitte.com/COVID-19

Sources:

1. <https://deloitte.wsj.com/cmo/2020/01/27/are-you-paying-down-experience-debt/>
2. <https://capitalhblog.deloitte.com/2020/02/04/elevating-the-workforce-experience-the-digital-lens/>
3. <https://capitalhblog.deloitte.com/2019/10/11/elevating-the-workforce-experience-the-personal-lens/>
4. https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/ie/Documents/Technology/IE_HC_infographic.pdf

Deloitte refers to one or more of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited ("DTTL"), its global network of member firms, and their related entities (collectively, the "Deloitte organization"). DTTL (also referred to as "Deloitte Global") and each of its member firms and related entities are legally separate and independent entities, which cannot obligate or bind each other in respect of third parties. DTTL and each DTTL member firm and related entity is liable only for its own acts and omissions, and not those of each other. DTTL does not provide services to clients. Please see www.deloitte.com/about to learn more.

Deloitte is a leading global provider of audit and assurance, consulting, financial advisory, risk advisory, tax and related services. Our global network of member firms and related entities in more than 150 countries and territories (collectively, the "Deloitte organization") serves four out of five Fortune Global 500® companies. Learn how Deloitte's approximately 312,000 people make an impact that matters at www.deloitte.com.

This communication contains general information only, and none of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited ("DTTL"), its global network of member firms or their related entities (collectively, the "Deloitte organization") is, by means of this communication, rendering professional advice or services. Before making any decision or taking any action that may affect your finances or your business, you should consult a qualified professional adviser. No representations, warranties or undertakings (express or implied) are given as to the accuracy or completeness of the information in this communication, and none of DTTL, its member firms, related entities, workforce or agents shall be liable or responsible for any loss or damage whatsoever arising directly or indirectly in connection with any person relying on this communication. DTTL and each of its member firms, and their related entities, are legally separate and independent entities.