HR Handbook to the
Transforming Workplace

Lattice

Table of Contents

Introduction

For years, workplaces evolved at a glacial pace. It was taken for granted that the majority of us would work in offices every day, spending hours commuting — while alternately sweating how we could create work-life balance. Compensation was a mystery to most employees, with little transparency into the how or why behind pay decisions. Learning and development didn't extend far beyond the basics of job training and stipends.

But in the last few years, the workplace hasn't just evolved quickly; it's seen the biggest, most transformational changes ever. We had a period of heavy investment and fast growth, with employees able to make demands while companies competed hard for talent. Companies that were plunged suddenly into fully remote work during the pandemic soon realized employees liked having flexibility around where and when they work. We saw compensation transparency laws and trends quickly erode the taboo of talking openly about salaries and total rewards. And as we transitioned from growing wildly in a bull market to an economic downturn, we saw retention and employee development become even more urgently important.

Amid all these waves of change, busy HR leaders are suddenly tasked with building a multitude of new strategies for the "future of work." The thing is: The future of work isn't really in the "future." It's happening now. The workplace is changing and — in many cases — has already changed.

That's why we created HR's Handbook to the Transforming Workplace. We tapped into Lattice's rich network of extremely seasoned, visionary HR leaders and CEOs to provide you with their first-person perspectives on how they addressed these emerging challenges. We broke this book into five sections, taking on the topics we've heard most often in conversations with people leaders, inducing how we're building community, staying productive, providing flexibility and benefits, and developing employees are all changing. We don't expect you to read this book straight through. Instead, jump around and explore the topics that matter most to you and your needs.

Finally, we would love to thank all the amazing leaders who shared their stories with us, so we could share their amazing insights and strategies with you readers. We hope you find these stories helpful, and that their approaches add to or inform your thinking for your own company.

Enjoy!

SECTION 1

How We Build Community Is Transforming

Community is the piece of the people puzzle that can take a workplace from good to great.

Helping employees be more productive, feel more connected, and improve their sense of belonging at work has always been a priority for forward-thinking companies. But the shift to remote and hybrid work in the last few years turned this challenge on its head in new and complicated ways.

Today's HR leaders have a series of tough questions to answer for their companies: How can you democratize communication in a hybrid or remote setting? How can you introduce new hires to your culture without face-to-face interaction? How can you make sure DEIB efforts are accessible to everyone? And how can people do their best work in spite of these challenges?

These questions don't have easy answers, but the industry's trailblazers are rising to the occasion. In this section, you'll hear from five experts about how they're cracking the code on building community, establishing connection, and promoting a high-performance culture within a hybrid structure — and why doing so might actually uncover a secret strength that new ways of working could give them access to.
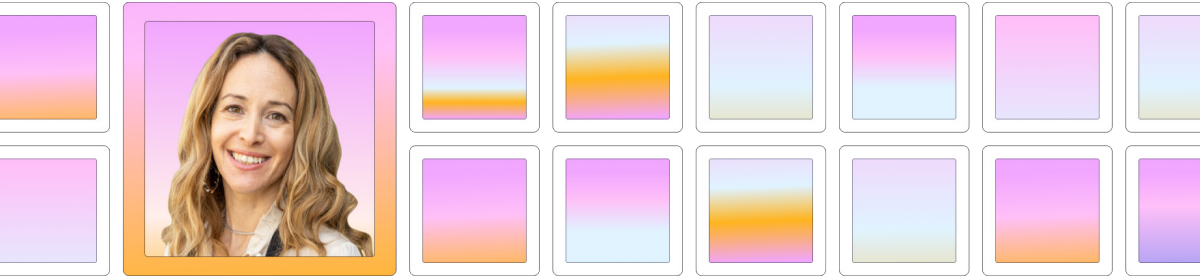
The Secrets to Our Remote Work Success – from Personal Connections to Trash TV

By **Courtney Cherry Ellis**, SVP of People at AuditBoard

As the SVP of people at AuditBoard, there are a number of questions on my mind on any given day, which are likely shared questions across people leadership in this moment. Questions like, which norms can we challenge? Which headwinds do we need to prepare for? And how can we best navigate today's talent landscape?

But by far, the biggest question I come back to time and time again is this: How do we build community, connection, and culture in a distributed environment?

The success of a remote workplace depends on its sense of community, and community is only possible with connection. Here's how we ensure our employees at AuditBoard feel connected from afar.

Bringing belonging into the Zoom room

Organizations can build community and connection as early as the candidate stage. Remotely, however, it can't happen without intention. In other words, leaders have to deliberately recreate the things that, in person, would happen organically or accidentally.

Let's use the example of wayfinding. When a candidate arrives at an in-person interview, their first taste of office culture is usually delivered by osmosis. They're greeted at the door and shown around the office, getting a sense of culture in the process.

Without intervention, there is no comparable experience in a remote setting. That doesn't mean we can't recreate it, though. At AuditBoard, we go out of our way to make sure candidates are greeted warmly as soon as they enter our space, even if it's virtually.
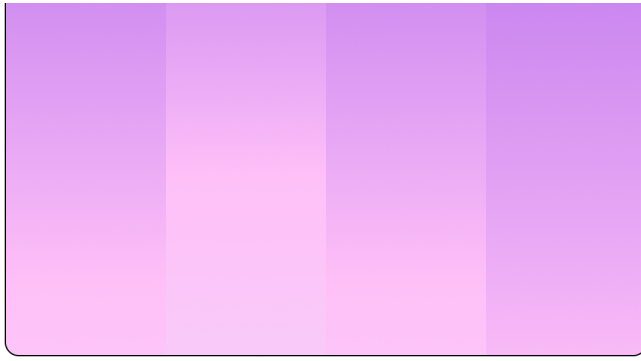
" When it's clear that our employees want to talk to one another, especially about non-work topics, we know we've done our job to create connection.

In a remote setting, this looks like someone from our talent acquisition team joining the Zoom meeting a few minutes early to greet the candidate, talk to them, and put them at ease. We've found this small change goes a long way in communicating our culture of warmth and belonging, as well as giving candidates a sense of what to expect from our people. Every day our team works to enable our employees to be their best selves at work, this extends to our candidates. We want them to be able to show up as their best selves in an interview process, and this means putting people at ease.

Trash TV talk as a community metric

Of course, it's not just candidates we want to build connections with. Our top priority is making sure our employees feel a sense of belonging.

One initiative we've put in place to give employees a chance to connect is our monthly office hours. This is an in-conversation open forum with our CEO and a select exec team member that focuses on current or upcoming programs. Office hours give our employees the opportunity to ask questions and hear from the execs they may not interact with in their day-to-day duties.

And though we're a remote-first workplace, we try to get our staff together in the same room as much as possible. Our regional "Rally Weeks" allow employees living in the same region to gather with the opportunity to engage in either "heads up" or "heads down" work. When our employees can meet in person, they can kick start personal relationships that they can continue online. We're seeing that enthusiasm ramp up, with an increased interest in bringing teams and departments together for both onsites and offsites

We see engagement grow when people can meet in person. We measure this by monitoring the amount of interest-oriented Slack channels that pop up afterward (our Trash TV channel is getting more traction than ever). When it's clear that our employees want to talk to one another, especially about non-work topics, we know we've done our job to create connection.

We've recently started to formalize this effort by hiring a team member to design our internal events and communications, with an eye toward creating connection and reinforcing culture. While it's great to see connection happen naturally, we also have to put resources into this effort to see it really take off.

Ultimately, when I think about community, I think about people wanting to win together. It's not just about collaboration; it's also about the notion of supporting each other. I feel honored to have helped create a remote culture that's supportive, fun, and growing stronger by the day.

Want a Better Hybrid Onboarding Experience? Lean Into Community

By **Gianna Driver**, Chief Human Resources Officer at Exabeam

As an HR executive in 2023, there are two things that still consistently surprise me. The first is when I hear that yet another tech company is mandating that all employees return to the office full-time. The second is seeing how many organizations are still failing to make their hiring and onboarding processes as inclusive as possible.

Everything I've learned from recent experience in my role runs counter to these two trends. When you're intentional about making both onboarding and day-to-day working life as accessible as possible for your employees, it will impact both culture and your company's bottom line positively.

Finding a common baseline

At Exabeam, my responsibility as Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO) is two-fold. I'm always thinking about how I can help employees have a great experience while they're here and which systems and processes will enable them to do their best work. It's my job to make sure our employees are nurtured, invested in, and can grow within their roles while also being productive from a business standpoint.

For us, operating under a hybrid model means that some people are working in person and others are completely remote. That distributed setup makes it essential for us to have the same systems, processes, and clear channels of communication in place for all of our employees, regardless of location.

While we can't offer an identical experience to both remote and in-person people, we can try to level the playing field while keeping the nuances of each situation in mind. This requires a lot of creativity. You have to really think things through and have the right internal systems and tools in place in order to create a great employee experience across the board.

Building community with our new hires

I believe the most malleable and impressionable time of an employee's tenure is the first few weeks after their start date. One of the most important things we can do to make this experience a positive one is to provide an amazing onboarding experience for new hires.

It's important to get everyone set up with the right baseline knowledge to be successful in the organization and also give everyone a good sense of who we are as a company, what differentiates us, and what norms we have in place. All of this is part of a great onboarding experience — virtual or otherwise.

The first two days of anyone's employment at our company are reserved for our highly-structured onboarding experience. Managers know that their employees will not really be available for productive work during these two days.

The key to doing this right is introducing structure. Whether you're in-person or remote, everyone attends the same onboarding sessions (remote employees can dial in via Zoom) on the first and third Monday of every month, which are the reserved new-hire start dates. Narrowing down the window like this allows us to give everyone the same experience.

We also ensure this day is flexible and interactive for everyone. To accommodate time zones, we run several onboarding sessions throughout the day. We also inject fun and breaks into the day so that no one's sitting through a bunch of meetings and being talked at — everyone's involved equally, no matter their location.

Community is a management issue

The final important piece of building a great new hire experience is manager involvement. For me, that means helping managers understand what their employees need in a hybrid world. It means being sensitive to time zones, access to connectivity, and the idea that life happens, making flexibility essential.

One blind spot I've often found is that managers fall short when thinking through access to executives and information. Implicit in a hybrid environment is the fact that those who are coming into the office have the benefit of watercooler conversation, casual office banter, and access to some of the informal relationships that are so important to success. The same kind of access is not available to remote employees.

Managers need to think through communication norms in this way: how are we disseminating and distributing information to employees at the same time, synchronously or asynchronously? How do we make up for that gap?

Ultimately, the world of HR is in a constant state of evolution. It's important for organizations, hiring managers, and leaders to be clear with people about existing norms, but the other side of that coin is being open to feedback and change. Never be afraid to try something new, and keep an eye on how it's being received. Keeping communication channels open is an invaluable part of succeeding in a hybrid setting.
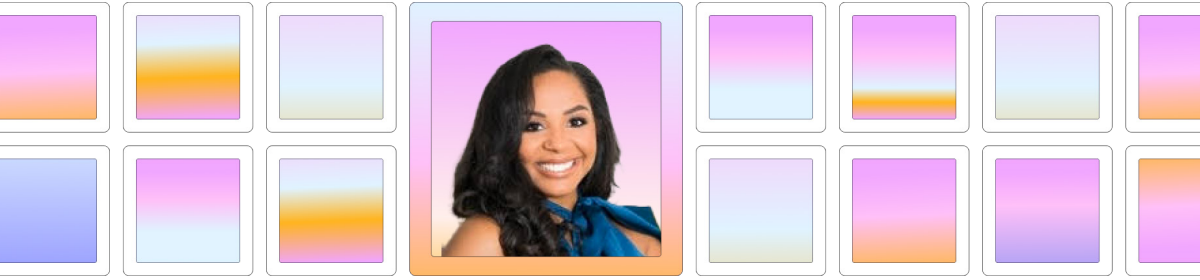
At Reddit, Our People Policies Welcome Every Employee as They Are

By **Christina Guckert**, Head of Diversity, Inclusion, Belonging and Emerging Talent at Reddit

Over the course of my career, I've developed a tried and true litmus test to evaluate policies: if it doesn't serve the person with the least amount of opportunity and access, it's not a policy worth keeping.

This point of view guides everything I do as the Head of Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DIB) at Reddit. In my role, I evaluate, develop, and execute our company's DIB roadmap which means that I'm continuously thinking about how to further integrate DIB into Reddit's values-based culture.

The perks of being flexible

At Reddit, one of our greatest assets as a company is that we have a flexible-first workforce, meaning that we empower our employees to decide where they want to do their best work – whether that's working from our offices, remotely, or some combination of the two.

From a DIB perspective, there are many advantages to this approach; the most obvious being that it makes it easier for us to tap into a diverse talent pool throughout the U.S. and the world. Just because someone can't afford or doesn't want to live in an expensive metropolitan city doesn't mean they can't make a substantial impact on our business, and our flexible-first model removes that potential barrier.

Looking through an ideological lens, organizing our workforce this way passes the test I mentioned earlier with flying colors. When you remove the requirement for employees to be in the office at all times, you open up more possibilities including diverse talent, increased productivity, and more collaboration across employees.

"

I ensure that our leaders are equipped with practical and prescriptive steps to ensure every single member of their team is receiving the opportunity to establish relationships, tackle highly visible projects, and receive timely feedback, regardless of where they are.

How we support remote employees

Being flexible first doesn't automatically level the playing field for all employees. It's a great start, but you have to continue to find ways to support employees regardless of their location.

If we don't consider that remote and in-office employees have vastly different experiences, we could potentially be setting our remote employees up for failure. For example, let's say we hire an employee who chooses to work remotely 100% of the time. Without putting the right policies and programs in place to support this employee, they could fall victim to proximity bias — meaning the team members who do get regular face time with their manager get a leg up.

This is where my work comes in. I ensure that our leaders are equipped with practical and prescriptive steps to ensure every single member of their team is receiving the opportunity to establish relationships, tackle highly visible projects, and receive timely feedback, regardless of where they are.

For example, we've built a playbook for leading a distributed team that lays out specific scenarios and how to handle them. It covers things like how to run meetings, how to hold team events, and how to communicate updates in an equitable way. Building resources like this is a crucial part of weaving DIB into our everyday operations and company culture to ensure that everyone is supported. If we're not intentional, we can't be effective.

DIB is also personal

When other leaders ask me how they can be better at addressing DIB, I always give the same advice: vibe outside your tribe. As leaders, it's very important for us to intentionally expand our networks beyond their current boundaries.

For most people, networks are built through proximity bias. We meet people through school and through work, and at a certain point, most people can look around and realize that their network looks pretty homogenous. The consequence is that when we hear about opportunities and open positions, we pull from the same homogeneous network.

If leaders are serious about DIB, they have to go out of their way to interrupt this pattern. Introducing a flexible first workplace is a great start, but the power to promote DIB lies within all of us. It's a human issue that needs human intervention to improve. True change requires intentionality.
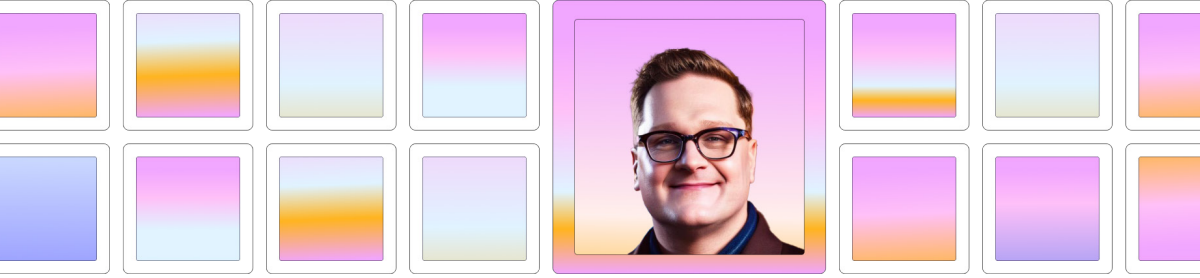
Bridging the Hybrid Divide With More Inclusive Meetings

By **Iain Morrison**, Director of People Operations at Tony Blair Institute For Global Change

In the face of a global shift towards remote and hybrid work, opinions among leaders diverge. Some yearn for a full return to the office, while others, including myself as the Director of people Operations at the Tony Blair Institute, appreciate the benefits of a hybrid structure.

Why I'm a hybrid evangelist

I often hear people say that being online is no substitute for the real world; that it's not very creative, it's not very collaborative, and it doesn't help teams generate ideas. Yet, we've seen first-hand how the power of technology can be harnessed to create an inclusive and effective work environment.

In my role, my focus is to make the operational side of our HR as efficient and effective as possible — to make sure people can do their jobs as best they can. I've found that hybrid working unequivocally levels the playing field for people with different types of lifestyles to participate in the world of work. People can be more flexible about shaping their lives and work days. People can work the way they want, and we can bring more people in who are right for the job.

But being hybrid or remote doesn't automatically make everything better. When a company works with a distributed workforce, either in a hybrid or remote setting, great communication is a necessity. When our team first began to work remotely, we quickly realized that we'd need to start communicating better.

At first, making sure everyone knew what was happening at an operational and strategic level at all times felt like over-communication. But before long, this became our default and, eventually, our superpower. Now, it's a huge part of why we excel as a team.

How hybrid meetings can facilitate great communication

Hybrid meetings can potentially create a divide between remote and in-office workers. Online collaboration can make it very clear who the loudest voice is in any meeting. But if teams are willing to put in the work, they can ensure that every voice is heard.

Meetings and communication are how we ensure connection, whether we're in person or online. In a hybrid setting, there's the risk that those joining the meeting remotely could get shut out. Since they're often relying on a webcam, they may not be able to interact with those that are in the room in the same way.

But meetings are better when they serve as a vehicle to democratize communication, and that's what we at TBI lean into. We've been deliberate about setting up an equitable meeting structure.

For us, that means a few things. We recommend a "one person, one laptop" rule. If people are joining the meeting remotely, the people who are joining in person are encouraged to turn their cameras on as well. This levels the playing field and helps us avoid an "us vs. them" dynamic.

We also encourage the person leading any meeting to make sure everyone has the opportunity to speak. It's the leader's responsibility to make sure everyone gets the chance to contribute their thoughts and ideas. Framing communication this way has made our town halls and staff meetings much more effective.

There is no magic bullet to make communication better, but working remotely highlights where communication gaps occur. If you're willing to do the work, you can close those gaps and make communication your strong suit rather than your weak link.
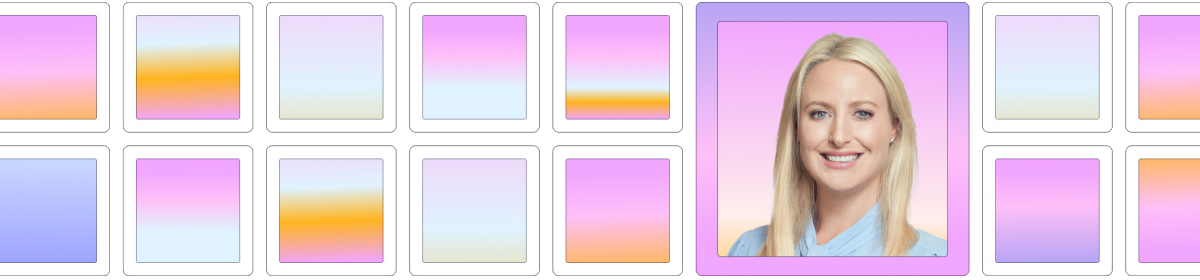
Tuning Into Remote Employee Engagement Is All About Consistency

By **Cara Allamano**, Chief People Officer at Lattice

At Lattice, we've always known that engagement is far from just a vanity metric; it's the thing that makes work meaningful for employees. Everything we do as a company is in pursuit of exactly that: making work meaningful.

Engagement is especially important to track in a virtual-first environment because it's much harder to find anecdotal evidence. What's more, in a distributed environment, most employees have to learn new skills. We all have habits we developed by working in an office every day, and we have to be flexible about what we continue to hold onto.

But there are also tremendous opportunities that arise with being virtual-first. In this environment, there's the opportunity to have more equity in experience. And if you do it right, you can help to accommodate people's lives in a more productive way.

Improving engagement in a virtual-first environment is something we're always tapped into and trying to improve. Here's how we do it.

How virtual-first can be a boon to engagement

Making sure Latticians (the nickname Lattice employees go by) feel empowered and engaged isn't just great for our business — it's great for our product. If we can create a best-in-class employee experience, that's great news for our employees, of course, but it also means we can be our own best use case for our customers.

This requires a high degree of intentionality. We're not just virtual-first in name; the way we run on a day-to-day basis hinges on a virtual experience. Here's an example: let's say there's a five-person meeting that involves three in-office and two remote employees.

As a rule, we run meetings so that each person is dialing in from Zoom on their laptop. We're aware of the imbalances that can creep up in hybrid settings, and we actively get ahead of them to create equity.

This attention to detail helps to accommodate our employees' lives in a more productive way, and as a result, we're seeing consistent levels of engagement across the entire company. This is an important detail. When companies fail to implement policies across the company, it results in some pockets of folks feeling very engaged and others feeling forgotten. We're actively building one virtual-first experience that touches everyone.

We keep a close eye on engagement using our own tools, like regular Pulse surveys and an annual survey through our Engage platform. The results are clear: a virtual-first setup can create a measurably good and consistent experience for employees.

How we're growing and changing

Again and again, we're finding that focusing on employee engagement is a virtuous cycle. When people feel like they want to be a part of what we're doing, they're able to do their best work. When they do their best work, there's a bigger impact on our business.

In other words, the business is growing, and people are growing right along with it. That level of growth and energy only begets more engagement.

Every change we make at Lattice is in pursuit of higher-quality employee engagement. This means both giving people the right level of support and training and also the right tools. I often see companies trying to navigate change with one of these things or the other, but companies really need both in order to change meaningfully.

At Lattice, we're changing our processes right along with our tools to keep improving. We've upgraded from a twice-yearly feedback cycle to a continuous one. This means nothing stands in the way of employees doing their best work and being able to speak up when something is standing in their way. Along with that, our tools are only getting more intuitive and easy to use.

I truly believe we're in the best age of enabling employee engagement. Before 2020, we were trying to make the same changes we're making today, but without the right tools. Now, we finally have the right technology, platforms, training, skills, and policies to support this. We're already seeing amazing results, and I can't wait to see what happens next.

SECTION 2

How We Stay Productive Is Transforming

In a challenging economy, productivity becomes one of the most valuable business metrics, because it indicates how much a workforce is able to get done with their existing resources.

No surprise, therefore, that a recent Gartner survey of CEOs that highlighted growth as a top priority for 2023 also predicted that "productivity [would] be a top five CEO strategic business priority by 2025."

In times when companies are focused on increasing productivity without raising budgets, that's when HR's unique relationship to productivity can truly shine.

Unlike other areas of the organization, this relationship is not only built around business goals and individuals' performance targets; it's also understanding what people need to thrive in their jobs. In other words, knowing how to enable productivity. What do they need to consistently do excellent work? What does it take to be a workplace where everyone is engaged in their tasks, excited to be there, and motivated to go above and beyond?

HR teams can't teach sales how to sell more or customer success how to provide better support for clients. But they can understand and build the kind of environment teams and managers need to be successful. They can work to understand employee motivations and how to play to these in their daily work. They can choose tools that keep employees connected and help them develop their skills. They can make sure people feel engaged with the culture and with the mission and values.

With extra pressure to deliver right now, remember that behind every business goal met, quota exceeded, and bottom line boosted is a person who had a really good day at work. Behind that person is an HR team that figured out how to set them up to be their most productive.
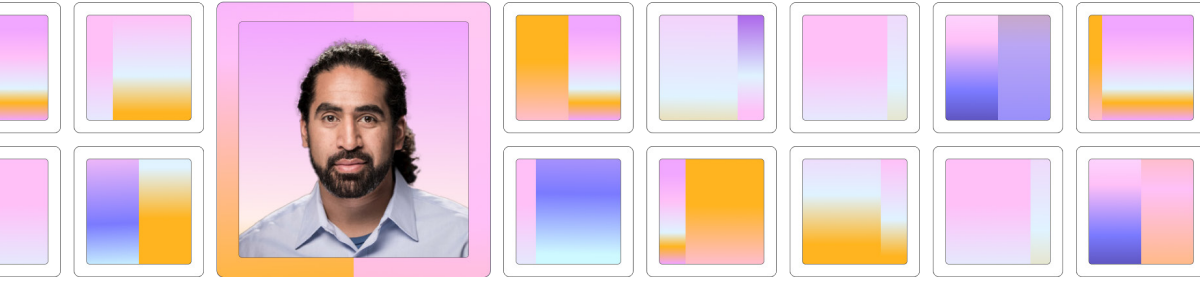
How Mission and Values Can Be the Compass for Employee Focus

By **Maurice Tuiasosopo Bell**, Sr. Director, DEIB & People Analytics at Lattice

As people leaders, we put a lot of emphasis on our company's mission and values. We look at your values as defining who you are as a company. How do you want people to describe you? Meanwhile, you should view your mission as your organization's "why." Why do you exist — beyond "to make money?" What makes what you're doing or the way you're doing it unique? At most companies, we put our values up on our company website and on posters around our offices — but if they're really meaningful, they're infused into everything you do.

Your mission and values should work like a compass. You refer to them when you want to change direction or you're feeling adrift, and you need something to point you the right way. You turn to your mission and values when you have to make big decisions. They remind you who you aspire to be and why you started out on this journey. However, in between those make-or-break moments, come the everyday tasks of running a business. That's when companies get confused about the role of mission and values.

When your people sit down at their desks at the start of the day, they're not thinking, "What is my mission? What are my values?" At least not consciously. They're thinking about the tasks on their to-do lists and their deadlines for that week.

That doesn't mean that mission and values aren't directly relevant to employees. It means that even though you're not talking about them every day, you have to find a way to live up to them — as an organization and especially as a people leader.

Live, don't lecture

Employees are mindful of mission and values only to the extent that leaders and HR make them present in the organization.

If a company sets its mission and values and then doesn't ever talk about them, employees won't either. They become ornaments that hang around without any meaning.

Your mission and values should be living artifacts that are embodied in all your communications — memos, blogs, all-hands meetings, and company goals. That's how you get employees thinking, "These things keep showing up, and the leader keeps referencing them. They must be important, so I'm going to refer back to them too."

The people team for a larger organization has a special responsibility and opportunity to show employees that their company walks the walk in their mission and values.

We design the processes, policies, and practices that people interact with most, including benefits, compensation, and a company code of conduct. We're at the intersection of engagements between the employees and the business, so we're often seen as a personification of the company. If a process is cumbersome or bureaucratic, what does that say about the organization?

Say one of your core values is clarity and honesty. At Lattice, we call this "Clear Eyes." You consistently remind your employees that this is important to your organization and something you expect from them.

However, if the company's process for booking vacation involves nine steps and five approvals, and it takes weeks for confirmation to come through? That runs counter to this supposed belief in clarity and undermines your values in the eyes of your employees.

Employees might not be consciously thinking about values and mission every day, but they notice when their interactions with the company are not authentic. When you live these aspirations in communications, processes, and policies, you remind employees what you expect from them, and you show that you'll live up to them too.

" If a company sets its mission and values and then doesn't ever talk about them, employees won't either. They become ornaments that hang around without any meaning.

How your compass can guide your priorities

Your mission and values can help you figure out where you want to go — but you still have to plot a route to get there. Most of the time, mission and values are happening behind the scenes, quietly influencing the goals and objectives that are more obvious drivers of day-to-day work.

If I asked my three kids, "What does it mean to be a member of the Tuiasosopo Bell family?" they would say things that align with our values. But when we're planning our week, we're not talking about these big questions. Those conversations are more along the lines of "What are we having for dinner?" and "What time do we need to get up in the morning?"

That doesn't mean they forgot the principles that are important in our family. It's just that we're focused on addressing the practical tasks we need to do to have a successful week.

It's the same in a company. People understand the mission and values and can refer to them when they need to. But day-to-day, everyone is working around shorter-term, practical planning — like strategic pillars that determine your quarterly and annual goals.

The moment mission and values really come into play on the business side is when it's time to make a big strategic decision. If leadership is confronted with three different options, they refer back to the mission and values — their compass — to see which approach they line up with most clearly. Which option feels most authentic to who the company is and how they show up in the world? Having that constant to come back to can help keep things in perspective when you're under pressure to make the right choice.

Mission and values are important. They keep you and your people anchored, bringing you back to your core purpose and beliefs if you start to stray. Communicate and live them so your employees know that you're serious — and then trust them to follow your lead.

How HR Can Keep Your CEO in Touch with the Employee Experience — and Also Make Them Lead It

By **Heather Doshay,** Partner at SignalFire

Employee experience can be the difference between an engaged, high-performing, productive workforce with low attrition — and an employee base who are clockwatching, treading water, and leaving. That experience exists whether leaders make the effort to influence it or not, so it's in their best interest to actively steer it toward the positive.

HR cannot do it for them. That's something leaders often have to learn. The CEO's job is to set the direction, and HR's job is to create systems and policies that drive the necessary outcomes. However, if you play it right, you can still influence their decisions.

Positive employees are productive employees

I define employee experience as what it's like to be an employee at a company in every way unrelated to the specific job held. Obviously, every CEO will say that they want the employee experience at their company to be positive. But many underestimate how much they impact this component of the workplace — and how much it, in turn, impacts productivity.

Creating a positive employee experience requires thought and precision from the executive team. Think of it as putting the right inputs in — transparency, listening — to get the right outputs out — a motivated and engaged employee base.

The dynamic between leadership and employees hinges on communication. It's like a romantic relationship. One partner tells the other that they want to buy a house, and their partner immediately disagrees: they've often thought about wanting to spend their money traveling the world before laying down roots. But what if the second

partner never makes it clear why? This is like when executives make a big announcement that has been the subject of hours of discussion behind closed doors but, to employees, it feels like it came out of the blue.

The issue in these examples is the lack of context. If you drop a decision on someone — romantic partners or employees — without explaining your reasoning, they feel blindsided. They believe that you haven't considered them. When this kind of black-box communication style is embedded in the employee experience, employees will leave or resort to doing the bare minimum to get by. Neither of these leads to a motivated, engaged, productive workforce.

HR bridges the executive-employee divide

Employees want to feel heard. They want executives to factor in their opinions so that decisions reflect their real needs and desires. HR has a critical role to play as the bridge that connects leadership and employees. HR is responsible for collecting that data, often through feedback and surveys, and making that critical interchange happen.

Surveys should ask about all the dimensions that could possibly be relevant, including communication, collaboration, and workload. From those responses, you find out the hot-button topics employees are unhappy about and what they really want.

By listening and collecting this information, you're giving leadership the opportunity to understand their employees' most pressing issues, improve the employee experience, and meet employees' real needs. For example, promising a gym stipend when people are asking about work-from-home policies won't move the needle in the right direction.

Once leadership has analyzed employee feedback and incorporated it into their decision-making, HR provides the mechanisms that make those decisions possible. If leadership decides to restructure management, for example, HR facilitates the discussion of what that structure should look like and how to support those managers. They may also communicate the decisions to employees.

It's this stage that was missing from the earlier relationship analogy. Maybe each party considered the other in their decision — but they didn't take the time to explain that to them.

It's normal for people to have different ideas about how things should go. But if you take the time to communicate all the factors you considered when making your decision — including the other person's feelings and needs — it is easier for them to understand your point of view. Even if they don't agree, they can appreciate that you did think about them and that you've made the effort to explain yourself.

This can be the difference between a workforce that feels ignored and sidelined and a workforce that feels respected and appreciated. The former feel disconnected from their leaders, unmotivated, and ready to quit. The latter might not always agree with their leaders' decisions, but they have seen examples of instances where their input mattered, and they feel heard.

HR as influencers

People often think it's HR's job to orchestrate employee experience, but in reality, the CEO should set the tone for the entire leadership org, then put HR in a position to facilitate and drive the actions that follow.

That said, HR can coach and influence leadership in decisions that impact employee experience. We can make sure they get appropriate context so they see the same big picture we're looking at. But it's a fine line to walk — getting executives to join your cause instead of seeing you as the bad guy bearing your list of complaints.

Once you come to agreement, HR also needs a strategy for communicating leadership's decisions with employees. Surveys can be useful here, too. If you implement an initiative raised in an engagement survey, share that loudly. (Even if you were going to do it anyway, say, "You told us you want this, and we did it.") This proves to employees that they're truly being heard, and that they really can have a say in policy. And you might even see replies to future surveys increase.

Often leaders talk too much instead of listening, without thinking about the impact their words have on employees. HR is the influencer connecting them, breaking through the noise and turning words into actions. Done right, employees will feel like executives truly care about their experience at a company, boosting engagement and productivity.

Hybrid Work's Success Hinges on People, Not Just Tools

By **Ashley Thomson**, VP of People and Retail at DECIEM

One reason I got interested in the people field was through my psychology degree and learning about systems theory. Think of your organization as a system made up of teams and departments all working towards a mission. It's fascinating how people are able to come together and be productive within a larger system and how those processes scale as the organization grows.
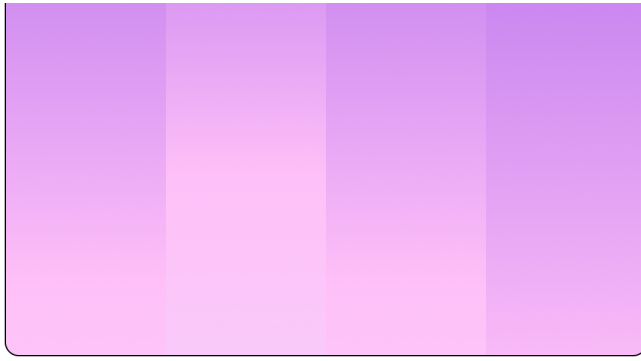
I've always been excited by how technology and tools can help facilitate communication and connection within a system. As a relatively young, global company, DECIEM already had a pretty strong digital culture when I joined in the summer of 2020. Today, we are a truly hybrid workforce: Our office-based employees work remotely three days a week, and our retail, distribution, and laboratory-based employees work in-person every day.

It's been wonderful to see people at DECIEM embrace the new ways of working through tech tools we bring to them. But while technology can help us fill some of the gaps that open up in a hybrid environment, no tool is good enough on its own. They will always require support and human intervention — especially when you need them to work for so many different types of users.

Tools provide structure and connection

When I joined DECIEM, the organization's existing system was under pressure from two major challenges.

DECIEM was expanding — we doubled in size, from around 600 to 1,300 — but didn't yet have the formal structures and processes in place to accommodate that larger number. On top of that, COVID-19 meant we were managing remote work for the first time.

" The requirements of different roles mean that we can't treat everyone exactly the same — but we want all our people to experience an equally enriching development journey and company culture.

These things changed the ways we all had to work together. With that many people all spread out, we couldn't rely on bumping into someone in the office to get an update. We needed tools that could digitally recreate those avenues of communication.

For top-down, cross-functional sharing, we already had a learning management system (LMS) called Thrive. We use it as an intranet and social platform to keep everyone in the organization updated on what's going on. That's where we broadcast live updates and post a three-minute video from our leaders every week.

We also really needed a way for teams and individuals to stay connected and aligned on their goals and progress. That's why we started using Lattice for our performance enablement program, which we call Human Journeys.

We've built structures within the system for people to connect with their managers, set up peer meetings, get feedback, set goals, and have reviews. It's where people can connect and organize with a line of sight into their priorities whenever they need to. It's been a game-changer.

When you think about your organization as a system, there are lots of different ways that the people within that system are connected. For example, through the org chart, in their departments and their teams, and by working in the same building or on the same floor. Expanding and moving to hybrid work made it harder for us to maintain these connections. The tools we use have helped restore them.

But as excited as I am about how these tools can help us meet these challenges, I know that they won't solve anything on their own.

Getting tools into people's hands

Our team puts a lot of energy into making sure that all our people have access to these platforms, regardless of where they work — whether they're working remotely, in a store, or on the production side. It's paying off: We have a 97% engagement rate on Thrive, including our production and retail employees, which I think is pretty impressive.

The requirements of different roles mean that we can't treat everyone exactly the same — but we want all our people to experience an equally enriching development journey and company culture. Finding the tools that support these goals is just the first step. It's down to us to make sure people can benefit from them.

Our knowledge workers are usually on a computer at home or in one of our buildings, so it's easier for them to log into the platforms. We've actively taken steps to give our other employees the opportunity to engage with these tools, too, as part of their workday.

"

Flexibility is key for us. If a tool can't accommodate all our people, it doesn't work for DECIEM.

We set up iPads in the lunchroom of our production space so that people can access Thrive and Lattice when they have downtime. We've carved out hours in our retail employees' weeks when they can step off the floor to engage in e-learning, work on a development goal, or get up to speed on Thrive.

We also set aside working hours for people to progress through their human journeys, filling out the engagement survey or doing their reviews. And we have specific listening sessions to hear from our production and retail workers.

We've come to rely on technology to keep us in touch and on top of our work. Flexibility is key for us. If a tool can't accommodate all our people, it doesn't work for DECIEM. But it takes a combination of the right technology, feedback from our different employee groups, and innovations in the people team to set everyone up for success.

Don't underestimate the human touch

I think the reason I'm always excited to explore new technology goes back to my psychology degree. When you think about an organization as a large-scale system, these tools help the system perform better by making it easier for the people within it to communicate and connect.

However, I'm also mindful that tools will only ever be as effective as the people using them. We chose the platforms we use because they accommodate our specific needs. We made them a success by listening to our people, actively supporting them in their use cases, and finding new ways technology can help all of us as the ways we work keep on evolving.
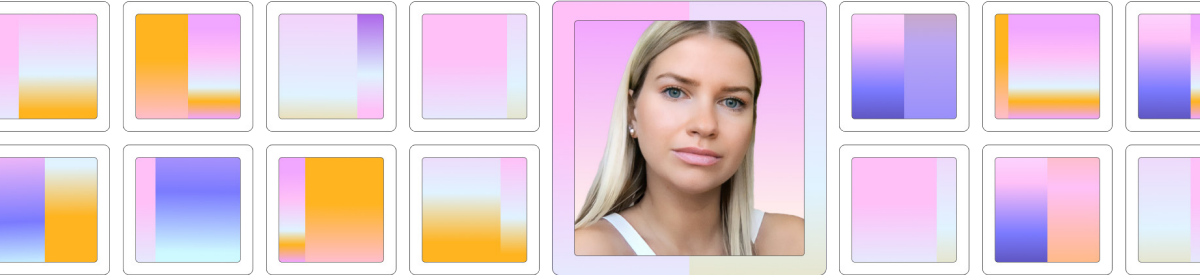
High Performance Begins With Total Motivation

By **Balbina Knight**, VP People & Culture at Thrive Digital

I love the science behind why people in organizations think and behave, so I'm always excited to talk about total motivation (ToMo to those in the know).

Developed by Neel Doshi and Lindsay McGregor in their book "Primed to Perform", ToMo shows organizations how to build a high-performing, high-energy culture based on research into employees' motivations.

When you know what's driving individual employees to come to work every day, you can use those insights to optimize their personal workflows. This improves individual productivity, which at scale leads to increased output and higher performance in the organization as a whole.

But this isn't just about hitting numbers. ToMo counts success as knowing that people are coming to work for the right reasons, feeling connected to what they're doing and the organization, and genuinely enjoying their working lives.

When you actively help people find motivation at work, you create a positive ripple effect that spreads across the organization. Everyone is more inspired to problem-solve, innovate, collaborate, and create on a higher level. Put simply, high motivation equals energized employees, which leads to high performance.

Direct and indirect motives

In their research, Doshi and McGregor identified six key motivators behind employees' drive to work. Three are known as direct motives and are directly connected to daily work. The other three are indirect motives and are derived from external influences.

The direct motives are play, purpose, and potential. Play is the fun, joy, and satisfaction people experience doing their work. Purpose is the sense that the outcome of the work will have an impact that aligns with their personal values. Potential is the understanding that the work will ultimately move them closer to achieving their goals.

All these things are personal to each employee. Whereas a graphic designer might get their fun from drawing, an accountant might get an equal thrill from reconciling their client's accounts. ToMo isn't about forcing a template on everyone, it's understanding individual feelings and needs.

The first indirect motive is economic pressure — when someone is motivated to work by financial anxiety. They might have a mortgage, be the sole breadwinner, be concerned about the general economy, or feel under pressure to make a certain amount of money to achieve a higher social status.

Second is emotional pressure, which usually comes from a person's peers or relatives pushing them to work in a certain job. For example, maybe they only became a lawyer because everyone in their family is a lawyer.

Third is inertia: when people can't even remember why they chose their job — they've just been doing it so long that they've stopped thinking about other options.

Here's the part that analytics geeks like me really get a kick from. Using employee engagement surveys, you can calculate individual and collective ToMo scores. It's a way to put a numerical value on motivation, so you can get a baseline and see where you're doing well, and where you need improvement.

To calculate the score, add the direct motives and subtract the indirect motives. Each motive is weighted differently, with play being the highest. The exact formula is available in the book. The score will be between -100 and 100, with a negative score indicating that you have more indirect motives at play, and a positive score indicating the opposite. Through this, you can see how each motive is affecting someone's work, and make plans to increase or decrease them accordingly.

ToMo at work

I love that ToMo is quantifiable — there's a science to it. But like any people initiative, you're still trying to put a number to someone's experience, which is hard. It's when you look away from the spreadsheets and at how ToMo functions in everyday interactions that you really see why it's helpful to have a sense of individual and organizational motivation levels.

For example, the impact and value of ToMo are on display in conversations between employees and managers. It gives people a shared language they can use to express what they're getting or missing from their daily work, how it's affecting their productivity, and ways to address these issues.

" It gives people a shared language they can use to express what they're getting or missing from their daily work, how it's affecting their productivity, and ways to address these issues.

Someone at Thrive can go to their manager and explain that they've been lacking play and purpose and that without that motivation, they're struggling to do their best work. Based on this feedback, the manager and employee can work together to add more play and purpose to the latter's daily tasks. A couple of months later, they can review to see if the employee feels more motivated and if they feel their work has improved.

Executives and people leaders can also use ToMo in work that impacts the whole organization — for example, in change management.

Say you're about to roll out a new benefits plan. That could trigger economic pressure in people. Suddenly they're thinking about their work not as something they do because they enjoy it and their team but because it's tied to their healthcare.

It's much easier for organizations to impact direct motives, but they can address indirect motives to some extent. For example, you could check your most recent organization-level economic pressure score. If it was relatively high, you might want to adjust the way you communicate about the benefits plan to address people's concerns and hopefully lessen the impact.
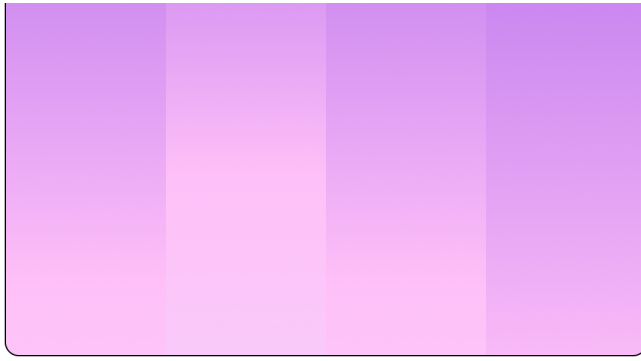
Think of the numbers ToMo provides not just as more data but as data-informed insights into how your employees are feeling, which you can use to adjust workflows and strategies accordingly.

How to implement ToMo

If you want all your people to embrace and benefit from ToMo, you have to embed it in the culture. It should be part of your internal language. At Thrive, we've been exploring ToMo for around five years, and we intentionally emphasize it in conversations and actions throughout the organization.

It starts with onboarding. A lot of people have never heard of ToMo when they join Thrive — which can be a big shift, especially if they're coming from a culture where play in work wasn't allowed. We explain what ToMo is — that it's a powerful tool they can use in conversations with their managers to design their day-to-day workflow and career growth opportunities, in team collaboration, and to unlock creativity. We give them the vocabulary and walk them through exercises to help them identify opportunities to introduce play, purpose, and potential in their new job.

Once they've had that introduction, they'll quickly see that ToMo is something we reference and use frequently at Thrive. It shows up in quarterly reviews, feedback templates, and coaching sessions to help people introduce more direct motives to their workflow and address indirect motives that might be impacting them. We talk about it, and we act on it; and that's how it's become core to our culture.

" Think of the numbers ToMo provides not just as more data but as data-informed insights into how your employees are feeling.
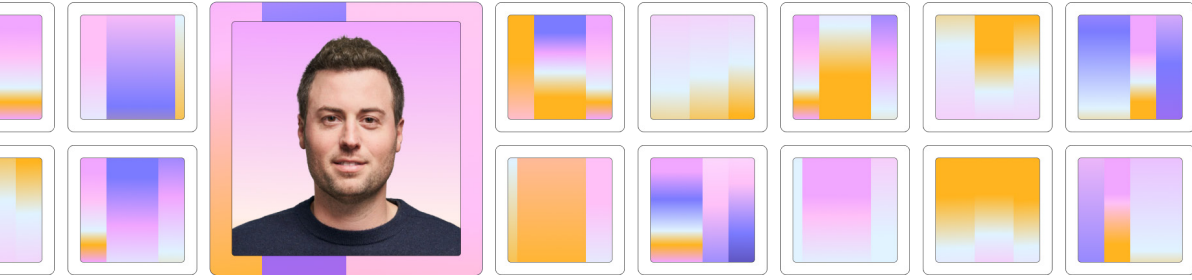
SECTION 3

Where We Work Is Transforming

Of all the topics covered in this book, where people work probably holds the most day-to-day significance for employees. This is particularly interesting given that just a few years ago, the majority of people had no option other than commuting to a workplace every day.

A Gallup poll found that in 2019, 60% of employees worked on-site full-time, but that dropped to 19% by February 2022 over the course of the pandemic. In the same period, the number of remote workers increased from 8% to 39%. Hybrid workers increased from 32% to 42%.

But as COVID fears subside and tougher economic headwinds make companies more mindful of productivity challenges, more and more employers are looking to bring workers back into the office, just as employees value flexibility around when and where they work more.

This has left businesses — and particularly HR leaders — trying to marry employee preference with business needs. They're looking to answer a multitude of questions: How many days — and which days — should employees be in the office versus remote? How many choices should employees have, and which employees, if any, should be exempt?

While there's no easy answer, the last few years proved the respective merits of both remote and on-site work. The challenge is designing just the right schedule and right plan for in-office space that will make hybrid work best for both business productivity and employee connection. The only certainty is just how uncertain things will continue to be, and often people leaders are the ones trying to fit the pieces back into place in a way that works for employees and the business. Let's explore how different HR teams are adapting in real-time with new and thoughtful solutions.

The Secret to Hybrid Work Success Is Building Business Trust

By **Jack Altman**, CEO and Co-Founder at Lattice

When Lattice first switched to remote work in 2020, along with much of the world, I was worried that we wouldn't be able to function effectively because we were so used to interacting in person. I was surprised and delighted that the group not only kept functioning but we were also actually more productive in some ways. I understand why many companies are leading the charge of forcing people back to the office full-time. Some things are legitimately hard to do at a distance, particularly within large companies with thousands or tens of thousands of employees.

For example, younger, more junior employees don't get the level of apprenticeship remotely that they used to have access to in-office. I think about how I grew professionally, and so much of it came down to being in person with great leaders. Another example: It's easier for someone working remotely in a big organization to slip by without doing the work while someone else picks up the slack and burns themselves out. It's easier to monitor that sort of thing in the office where you can physically watch people working.

The truth is — there are advantages to both ways of working, and deciding which model you choose comes down to what is important to your organization's structure and priorities. I hate to say that there's a single best strategy for companies to decide where their people should work; life is full of tradeoffs. But I've certainly come to deeply appreciate the hybrid work approach, and think this is an excellent path for many companies.

Working from home really can be more productive

The last few years have proved that not only can people work from home — it's actually a better environment for some types of work.

" This is why I'm a huge fan of choice. You hire adults, you give them options, and you respect them enough to let them choose their most productive setup. That said, it can be complicated — and I say this as the CEO of a company that tries to give people as much choice as possible over where they work.

The home and the office are optimized for different types of work. For example, I prefer doing focused work and back-to-back video meetings at home. In contrast, I like the camaraderie and connection that you get at the office and the ability to work through nuanced topics or hard conversations when you're face to face. I also strongly believe meetings with a lot of people are usually better in person.

My theory is that if two people have a clear set of tasks they need to do for the day — and they know how to do them — the at-home person will outperform the person in the office. The latter is going to waste time commuting and get distracted talking to people, so the at-home person will win.

However, if you look at the team or company level, the in-person company will have better alignment and be better at new creative generations over time.

It's like the in-person company is going to have a better rudder, and the remote company is going to have a better motor.

That said, this isn't necessarily the same for everyone. I can shut the door to my office and concentrate, even with my young kids and my very loud dog around. However, for some people, their home is super distracting, and the office is the place where they can get quiet work done.

This is why I'm a huge fan of choice. You hire adults, you give them options, and you respect them enough to let them choose their most productive setup. That said, it can be complicated — and I say this as the CEO of a company that tries to give people as much choice as possible over where they work.

Hybrid success relies on trust

When we decided to be a hybrid company, we understood that it would require us to lean strongly into what I call business trust. Business trust is the belief that the employees you're managing will reliably deliver their best work, even when someone isn't looking over their shoulder. Similar to interpersonal trust, where friends never want to be the one to let their group of friends down, business trust creates that same feeling within teams where employees feel accountable for meeting business standards for delivering great work.

Building business trust requires intentionality and effort on the part of the company and leadership to create an environment where there's a shared commitment to reliability and going above and beyond, even in a remote context.

At Lattice, we've worked to create that environment through a thoughtful set of values, policies, processes, and documentation that took months of work and that evolve as our work evolves.

- Company values have the ability to shape business trust at a foundational level. At Lattice, two of our values are particularly relevant to our view of business trust: "Ship, Shipmate, Self" and "Chop Wood, Carry Water." We want Latticians to always put the company and their teams ahead of personal gain, as well as put great work that delivers great outcomes ahead of work that simply delivers personal credit.

- We established communication norms to help ensure we're using channels like Slack, email, Zoom, and in-person meetings to collaborate most effectively and productively.

- We set up policies and processes to bring on-site and remote teams together — from onboarding to meetups — so there are plenty of opportunities for remote employees to contribute.

- We established manager training and resources to ensure employees are getting the best guidance around expectations for completed work and top performance, and we also use our performance and manager tools within Lattice to make it easier to coach and track conversations, even virtually.

- And finally, we document all of these in multiple places. We use Notion for referencing all policies, from values to communication norms. We use Lattice to track manager communications and goals. And we regularly reference these resources in company-wide meetings and communications.

It will be interesting to see what happens over the coming years. I'm sure we're not at the endpoint yet. But I know building business trust through intentionality is where the process of determining the best solution for most companies has to begin. And I personally look forward to seeing what new models emerge from that intentional thinking.

If You Want People Back In The Office, You Have To Give Them a Reason

By **Ash Alexander**, Head of People at Front

Our executive team was always committed to getting people back into the office in some form.

We sent detailed surveys to find out how people felt about remote work while also making it clear that we planned to return to in-person work at some point. We learned that people were feeling very disconnected and lonely. We also saw silos pop up across our workforce over time after going remote.

We tried really hard to generate a sense of connection virtually. We ran remote lunches, lots of activities, and an all-company virtual off-site that was very successful. But while there were definite benefits to remote work — like spending less time commuting and having more time with family — people still missed the serendipitous, casual interactions you get in an office.

We reopened the offices on a voluntary basis in June 2020 with a COVID protocol in place. Over the next two years, we kept setting dates to bring the company back in person permanently, only to be forced to cancel with every surge. Finally, in June 2022, we decided we were bringing people back no matter what.

Now, 75% of the company is hybrid, coming into the office on at least Tuesdays and Thursdays. We've created an exemption process that allows 25% of the company to work remotely based on certain criteria. It's required a lot of intentionality and some hard conversations — but now it's a decision we all stand by with confidence. But it wasn't always easy, particularly at the start.

"

For many people, just having others around is what makes their office experience worthwhile.

Preparation is the first step to return-to-office success

We set the expectation that we would be coming back to the office in some capacity early on, so it became part of our values, making hybrid work part of our company DNA.

Then we really leaned into why it was so important to come back, which is something I wish we had done sooner. You have to tell people why working hybrid matters to the business and what they'll get out of it themselves. Otherwise, it's a much harder road, and people feel resentful. To me, it was intuitive that we needed to be together, but we needed to articulate that more clearly.

Lastly, timing is important too. We made our intentions clear from the start, so people weren't surprised. If you haven't done that, and people haven't been coming in, they'll have built their schedules around being remote — they might have even moved — and they'll need time to adjust. As a result, we gave everyone one quarter to prepare to come back to the office.

Make the office worth the commute

Having argued that the office is integral to the business, we've pushed to make sure the in-office experience really is worth people's time. Every Monday, I find myself thinking about how we're making sure the office is more interesting and useful than your house!

We put together a comprehensive guide to help hybrid employees make the most of their workday, depending on where they are. We recommend they use the days at home for video calls with people in different time zones and days in the office for creative collaboration.

There are also small things that make a big difference, like adding more collaboration spaces, putting out more whiteboards on the floor, and rearranging the seating so people are sitting together. Everyone eats lunch together — we provide lunch on our Hybrid days (Tuesdays and Thursdays and Wednesdays for anyone who comes in that additional day. Outside work hours, we do happy hours and game nights, and we're trying to add more morning events like breakfasts.

At the same time, we work hard to include the 25% who are remote. For example, customers sometimes come in to speak, and we recently did an Ask Me Anything panel with our marketing leaders. We record these sessions so that anyone can watch them.

For many people, just having others around is what makes their office experience worthwhile. Maintaining a critical mass can be important. For example, the only times I've heard people express real frustration is when a lot of their colleagues are on PTO, and the office feels like a ghost town.

It's okay if hybrid is a dealbreaker

We had some attrition when we announced the return to the office, and there were basically two categories of people who saw hybrid as a dealbreaker: those who just didn't want to work in a hybrid environment and those who couldn't balance it with their personal life.

We tried to see if there was anything we could do to make hybrid work for them. For example, we assessed whether they would fit into our exception group and, if not, whether there was a different role they could move to that would meet those criteria. However, we had to think about the business side and take into account whether they could really do their job successfully from home.

Ultimately, we are committed to having 75% of our workforce being hybrid. In cases where we couldn't make it work, we had to accept that Front wasn't the right fit for that person and have that hard conversation. Sometimes you have to move on, and that's absolutely okay. There are remote roles for people who want that, and that's awesome. However, I see more and more people thinking, "I wouldn't mind getting out of my house twice a week and actually seeing my colleagues."

The period when we were preparing for people to come back was so turbulent. Even though our surveys said people wanted to, we still wondered if they would actually do it when push came to shove. But now that it's been some time, I see it working — people come in, they have nice days in the office, that's it. Employees themselves now say they are more productive, can make faster decisions, share information live, and feel more connected to their teammates. Now that the drama has died down, I wish I could tell my past self and my team that it really would be okay. And it has been.

At times it was uncomfortable going against the grain of going permanently remote. Some people have even asked me if the system we've built is the worst of all worlds. But truthfully, it's not. Front's leaders and I have always believed that this is best for the business. That's why I can look any employee in the eye and say that we are committed to this strategy, believe strongly that it's the right direction, and that it's something we expect from them.
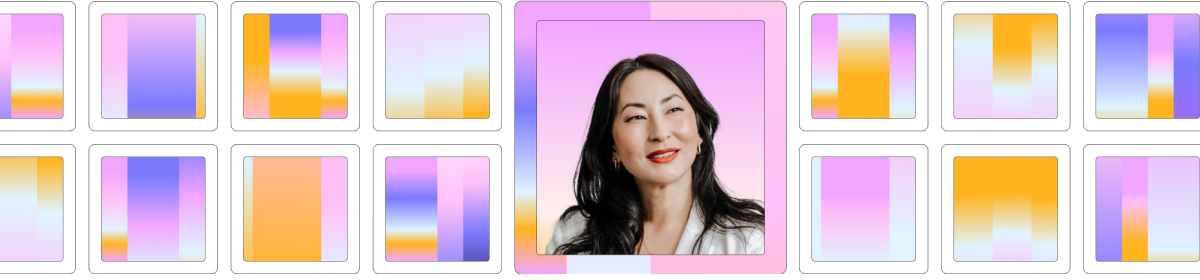
Let Your People Work Where They Want

By **Amy Hsuan**, Senior Vice President of People and Strategy at Mixpanel

Our people and culture are the number one thing people highlight when we ask them why they want to continue building their careers at Mixpanel. One of our core values is about "leading change," which means that everyone has the power to identify a problem and find a solution. This drives a sense of ownership and responsibility, and it's something we look for in candidates when we're hiring. Embracing change to create lasting impact has served as a strong foundation for our policy of letting people choose where to work. Having these traits as part of our culture enables us to trust people to operate with Mixpanel's best interest in mind while providing the power of choice.

This concept of giving employees choice in where they work marks a fundamental shift for all of us. Any company that thinks that the future of work looks like five days a week in the office is overlooking the benefits of flexibility.

More than before, we understand that you have to treat employees as people with a wide range of needs. And that's why Mixpanel's default policy is to let people decide what works best for them.

Choice as a competitive advantage

Having so many people working from home for so long proved two things. First, people not only can work from home, they can actually be more productive at certain types of work when they aren't in a crowded office. Second, people like having a choice about where they work.

The result of these two revelations is that flexibility has become more important than ever. Now that they've had the choice, they don't want to go back to being forced to work a certain way which may not be the best in all circumstances.

" Letting people choose where to work has become a major differentiator when it comes to attracting and retaining top talent.

For businesses, this means that letting people choose where to work has become a major differentiator when it comes to attracting and retaining top talent. For one thing, expecting everyone to come into the office effectively narrows your talent pool down to people within commuting distance. Your offer is fundamentally less attractive to people who know they can find a handful of other jobs that do offer flexibility.

If choice is not part of your recruiting and retention strategy, both will become harder.

Choice requires support for success

At Mixpanel, we support people so they can access the resources they need to make our flexible environment work for them.

For example, we make sure that people who know they get distracted at home and need a separate workspace can use one. If they're not near one of our offices, we give them a WeWork membership so they can go to a coworking space. We'll help make their most productive choice happen.

One of the things we're very aware of for our primarily remote employees is the need to maintain connection. That doesn't have to happen in person — but there's no way over Zoom to fully replicate the connectivity and trust you build in an in-person interaction. With this in mind, we have an annual in-person connection event called Mixcursion that brings every Mixpaneler in the world together. Instead of presentations and speeches, we spend the time getting to know one another, delving into our relationships and making memories together through excursions. To keep those relationships alive, we host a lunch at our offices every month, and we pay for employees who aren't near an office to meet up with other nearby Mixpanelers. In addition, every team has a generous budget each year that they can use in any way they wish to drive connection, whether that be at offsites or regular meetups.

We also consistently monitor employees' feelings about the support they receive. One question that we take a regular pulse on in our bi-annual engagement survey is, "I am satisfied with my current flexible working model, whether it be in-person or hybrid, or fully remote." To us, that's really the ultimate measure of productivity — if people feel like they're set up to succeed wherever they work.

Culture should be built on trust, not fear

Trusting people with choice says a lot about your company. There are many CEOs who are afraid of giving their employees choice about where they work. They worry about how they would hold them accountable and how they would track productivity. Instead of running from that fear, I think they should explore deeper and probe the underlying

root causes. Are there ways they can embed a sense of ownership that will motivate employees to self-direct effectively? Why have they hired people they don't trust to work outside of an office to run their business? If that's the case, maybe they haven't hired the right people or created the right expectations andculture — and that raises much bigger issues than where employees should be empowered to work.

Change is always scary, but that's how you know you're innovating. Companies that support employees in choosing where they work are the ones that will win in culture and engagement — and that ultimately translates into a more productive business.

SECTION 4

# How Flexibility and Rewards Are Transforming

Three years ago, the idea of flexibility and competitive benefits looked very different. Remote work was an anomaly at most companies, and "cool" benefits included things like in-office perks. What a difference a shift in the world of work makes.

While yesterday's workplaces treated pay transparency, inclusive benefits, and malleable workweeks as nice-to-haves, today, these offerings are essential for any company to offer the best mix of both to their best performers and may even be legally required. And the most exciting bonus: They're driving great results.

Today's strategic HR leaders have to demonstrate that their policies are driving the best use of a company's huge investment in its people. This new world of comp and flexibility helps HR show that their company's willingness to help employees live their best lives ultimately attracts and retains top talent and, in turn, enables them to be their most productive and to do their best work.

In this chapter, people leaders tell us how they're edging out the competition, setting employees up for success, and achieving excellent outcomes by offering things like radically transparent pay, equitable compensation structures, and empathetic flexibility measures.
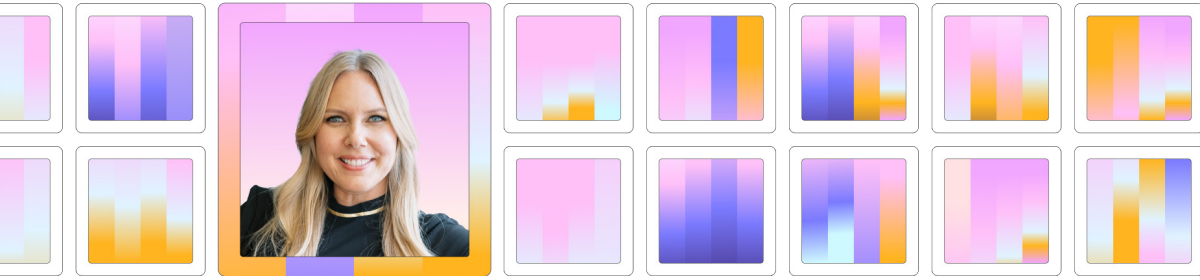
The Secret Ingredient to Making Flexibility Work Is More Structure

By **Katelin Holloway**, Founding Partner at Seven Seven Six

At this point, I think we all know: Flexibility is a must if we want to attract top talent and make our workplaces welcoming and accommodating to every employee. The way I see it, if you're not making your workplace hybrid, you're falling behind.

But yet I still see a lot of companies making the same mistake of not offering proper flexibility — and, in turn, losing out on productivity as a result. Let me be absolutely clear: "Flexible" does not mean unstructured. In fact, I've personally witnessed that hybrid workplaces that are intentional about adding structure to their day-to-day operations are able to do the most impactful work.

As a partner at 776, here's how I work with our portfolio companies to ensure they're providing their employees with an environment they can thrive within.

Why flexibility and structure go hand in hand

Today's workforce is largely composed of caregivers of all kinds, whether they're caring for children, aging family members, disabled family members, or others. When workplaces ignore the needs of this population, they're not only missing the mark on how to let their employees thrive — they're also excluding top talent, which will hurt their bottom line.

Caregivers need more flexibility. Being flexible does not mean turning everyone's schedule into an unstructured free-for-all. But when you let people work when it's best for them, you also let them do their best work. I see a lot of companies misinterpret this philosophy, however.

" When workplaces ignore the needs of this population, they're not only missing the mark on how to let their employees thrive — they're also excluding top talent, which will hurt their bottom line.

Let's consider two scenarios to illustrate this point. First, a hybrid workplace has a policy that allows anyone to come into the office at any time. The second has clearly defined in-office and work-from-home hours.

In the first scenario, employees are missing meaningful time together when their schedules never match up. In the second, employees can use in-office hours to plan and work face-to-face while reserving at-home hours to focus and execute with fewer distractions.

I always recommend that companies try to schedule collaboration around agreed-upon "golden hours" — the few hours in the day when people in different time zones and lifestyles are all available. Being intentional about this can reduce the "in group/out group" dynamic that many unstructured hybrid workplaces fall into.

Start by making the unspoken rules spoken

I get that it can feel overly bureaucratic to be explicit about work times and styles in a hybrid setting. But I promise, it delivers results. Being hybrid and flexible invites people to approach work differently, and if you can provide the right resources and expectations to let them play within that structure, great things can happen.

I encourage companies to write down what's organically happening around office rules — when people should be in the office, when they can schedule meetings, etc. Doing this makes unspoken patterns explicit and also makes it clear that outside of those rules, employees can be free to do what works best for them.

It's also important to set expectations around communication. For example, it's not unusual for caregivers to be commenting in documents or responding to emails later in the evening than other employees. This is often their heads-down time to gather their thoughts and execute them. But other employees shouldn't feel that they have to respond to those emails right away. When you have clear guidelines in place, everyone can choose how to flex their time outside of them.

If you're not following the culture, you're falling behind

Great talent will only increase their expectations of employers in the coming years. We're in the midst of huge cultural shifts and changes, and with Gen Z entering the workforce, there's a new set of values that employees are holding their workplaces accountable to. When I think about the future of work, I feel very optimistic. Strategic HR leaders have the chance to help their employers rise to the occasion, and I hope they all do.

With the 4-Day Workweek, We Lost a Day — But Gained a Lot

By **Natalie Breece**, Chief People + Diversity Officer at thredUP

Who would have thought the secret to unlocking productivity would be working less? Well, at thredUP, we did; it's been a year and a half since we started piloting the four-day workweek. In that time, we've only gotten better.

I strongly believe that the four-day workweek has the potential to revolutionize business at large and our relationship with work as a society. Here's how we did it at thredUP — and how it's going so far.

Challenging the status quo

The workweek has operated on a "five days of work, two days of rest" model for a long time. But why is that still the status quo? This was a question we were asking ourselves in January 2021. At this point, we were coming out of the pandemic and not only learned new ways that employees wanted to work but how we could all be more efficient with our time.

First-principles thinking is core to how we operate at thredUP and we used this same line of thought to redesign the work week. The goal of the four-day workweek was to show employees with action that we care about their work-life balance and happiness.

We kept a number of success metrics in mind: specifically, we thought about what would happen if we gave one day per week back from both a people perspective (team satisfaction and quality of life) and a business standpoint (productivity and outcomes). By 2022, each of these metrics had improved, and we had our answer. This was the way thredUP worked now.

" These minor adjustments have made way for big benefits. The biggest by far is that our employees are able to index more on the things that bring them joy. People use their extra day to spend more time with family, follow their passions, and rest and recharge.

How we make the 4-day week work

Even before we introduced the four-day workweek, thredUP has always been passionate about work-life integration and how employees can show up as the best version of themselves every day. Prior to 2021, Tuesdays and Thursdays were known as "maker days" — heads-down, meeting-free days that allowed people to focus and produce a higher level of thinking and execution.

When we transitioned into a four-day workweek, we had to re-prioritize our workflow again. This took some adjusting. For example, we've had to pare down the number of meetings between team members to allow everyone the time to get things done. We've also found that, in general, we have to be more nimble throughout the week in order to conquer our to-do lists.

But these minor adjustments have made way for big benefits. The biggest by far is that our employees are able to index more on the things that bring them joy. People use their extra day to spend more time with family, follow their passions, and rest and recharge.

We're seeing this play out in amazing and inspiring ways, like the father who spends Fridays caring for his 10-month-old and has told us how much he values that time to bond and connect. Or the mom who is finally able to join her daughter for behavioral therapy on Fridays and has seen meaningful changes in her daughter's progress as a result.

Our employees aren't just taking a more active role in their lives outside of work — this also carries over into their workdays. There's been a noticeable increase in productivity as a result of prioritizing everyone's time. In a 2022 employee survey, we found that 93% of our employees agree that the four-day workweek has made a positive impact on their overall productivity. We encourage our leaders to run regular calendar defragmentation exercises to make sure all meetings are essential and that all meeting attendees are essential to the conversation. This makes us more nimble and better able to get things done fast.

The future of the 4-day week

I truly believe that any company that's going to thrive in the future is going to have to embrace flexibility. For some organizations, this will take the form of a four-day workweek.

The best talent out there is capable of getting their job done regardless of the length of the week. And I'd be willing to bet that these same people are more inclined to join a company that invests in who they are outside of their working hours, too. It just makes sense for companies to move towards giving people more time to invest in the activities that matter most to them. I share with certainty that if you invest in them, they will invest in you.

> "The best talent out there is capable of getting their job done regardless of the length of the week. And I'd be willing to bet that these same people are more inclined to join a company that invests in who they are outside of their working hours, too.

For any company that's toying with the idea of a four-day workweek today but isn't sure how to proceed, I'd start by asking yourselves what kinds of issues you're trying to address. Do you want to give employees more flexibility? Test the boundaries of productivity? Design a policy that takes employees' life demands more meaningfully into account? The answer to all of these questions — and many more — may be the four-day workweek.

So if you're curious whether the four-day week can work for your company, perhaps it's time to test it out the same way we did. I think the results might surprise you.

Open Salary Models Leave No Place to Hide — And That's a Good Thing

By **Jenny Terry**, Director of Business Operations
and Head of Finance at Buffer

There was a time when talking about salaries was a taboo topic. The good news is that's changing, and it's not nearly as off-limits as it used to be.

In fact, many of today's companies are getting on board with transparent pay models. A lot of that has to do with local regulation — state laws are, one by one, encouraging employers to pull back the curtain on compensation. But the move to transparent pay also highlights a larger cultural shift — one that Buffer helped pioneer.

When we made the decision to switch to a transparent pay model back in 2013, it wasn't about compliance. For us, it was all about our commitment to transparency. As the Director of Business Operations and Head of Finance at Buffer, I've also been personally passionate about this subject for a long time.

Here's why transparent pay helped us be accountable and get better as a company and why I think all companies should consider it.

How we became the pioneers of pay transparency

From the very beginning, "default to transparency" has been a core value at Buffer. Transparency is key to establishing a culture of trust which helps us work better as a company.

When we introduced a transparent pay model, it was part of a larger effort by our cofounders to align with our core values wherever possible. They knew there was another layer of accountability that happens when you're sharing more as a company, and there was an early feeling that being open about compensation both within and outside of the company would keep us accountable on a level above other companies.

" A lot of companies realize that transparent pay doesn't happen overnight, especially if they haven't put the time, effort, and research into introducing pay practices that are equitable and fair.

But it wasn't just a quest to make all things transparent that drove us forward in those days. We also created an open model out of necessity; to provide the data we couldn't find elsewhere. In other words, as our cofounders did their own market research to establish a compensation model, they had trouble finding any real data about what people made for different roles at different levels within the industry.

Rather than perpetuate that pattern, they decided to become a resource for other startups in similar positions. After all, if they had questions about what other companies were doing, didn't everyone? By being the first company to say, "Let's make it a little easier for those who are coming up behind us," we found that it bred a high level of trust, both within and towards the company.

Uncovering equity in unexpected places

Our transparent pay model has empowered our culture in a number of ways, but the bottom line is that it gives us a way to strengthen our culture by really living fully up to the values that we've set.

Perhaps a more surprising outcome of this model is that it's allowed us to have a better pulse on pay equity. See, when we look at two people in the same role at the same level adjusted for geographic location, there is no pay gap. But in 2018 and 2019, we noticed that when we looked at the average across all men vs. all women, there was more of a gap than we had anticipated. Once we saw that a gap existed, we could develop a plan to close it.

That's just one example of how this model increases accountability. In general, being transparent about pay opens us up to questions. If anyone sees a discrepancy, they can come to us and point it out. This has led to a lot of really interesting internal discussions that have forced us to improve in ways we may not have even been aware of otherwise.

Starting with a phased approach

Having a transparent pay model doesn't have to mean posting each person's name, location, and salary on the company website. (Though, we choose to do that.) Any amount of transparency is an improvement over none. This is why I recommend a phased approach.

Easing into transparent pay can happen over time. Many companies start by posting pay ranges for different roles and publishing data internally. Once their current team has a chance to respond to that change, they can plan the next phase. Of course, pay models affect real people, so it's normal for there to be a lot of feelings and feedback when things change. This is really when those ideas of compensation being a taboo topic creep in (though it shouldn't).

This is also generally the moment when a lot of companies realize that transparent pay doesn't happen overnight, especially if they haven't put the time, effort, and research into introducing pay practices that are equitable and fair. Step one is to get your total compensation in order. I really encourage companies to take a hard look at what they're offering new hires, but also at how they're keeping up with market trends for existing employees.

It's not an easy process to implement, but I promise it's a worthwhile one. When companies lead with transparency, they gain trust. And with an abundance of trust, they can do anything.
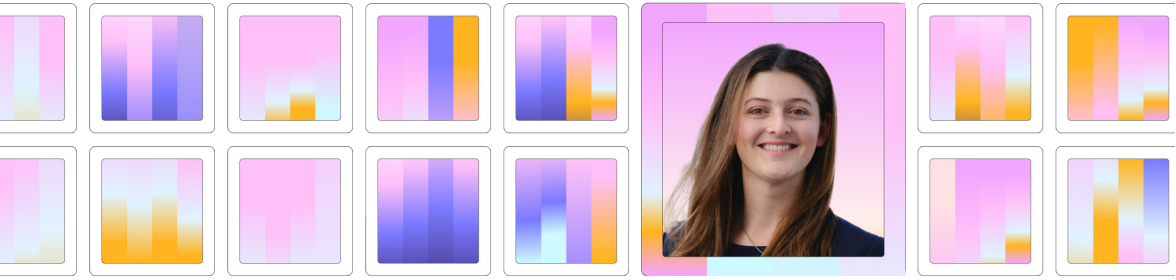
Equitable, Not Equal: Getting Compensation Decisions Right

By **Melissa Theiss**, VP People Operations at Resilia

I always like to say that people operations is like product management for the employee experience. If employers aren't providing a great product to employees, employees won't renew their subscriptions (read as: they'll quit).

The job of a people operations leader is all about making sure the product we provide our employees is excellent so that they'll keep their subscriptions going. That means offering competitive benefits, total rewards, and an overall excellent experience from the moment a candidate is hired until their last day with the company.

Here's my philosophy on how today's employers can craft compensation and benefits that are uniquely suited for today's workforce.

Talent strategy must come first

The role of HR is to enable the entire employee base, which means understanding each employee's experience and how their work drives the business' mission forward. This is impossible to do well without a talent strategy.

Before you can nail down what you'll be providing to your employees, you need a complete understanding of the kinds of employees you want to attract. This is different for every organization. One employer might be looking for mostly early career talent, while another is looking for seasoned tech professionals who are well-versed in AI.

Once you understand who you need to attract, retain, and convert, it's easier to start building out the foundation of your compensation and benefits. It's also easier to make the difficult decisions that will inform what your compensation and benefits do — and don't — include.

" Before you can nail down what you'll be providing to your employees, you need a complete understanding of the kinds of employees you want to attract. This is different for every organization.

Why you can't cut-and-paste compensation and total rewards

Providing an amazing employee experience to everyone would be much easier if we could simply copy-paste great policies. But we're living in a new world of work, with more hybrid and remote employees than ever. At Resilia alone, we have employees working in 15+ states, plus a hub of people in Mexico.

As distributed workforces become the rule rather than the exception, the challenge of designing equitable packages gets heightened. Different local and state regulations require employers to offer different things, which makes it virtually impossible to offer an equal experience for all employees.

As people ops professionals, we have to think about equity over equality. In other words, how are we giving different resources to different populations to help them achieve similar outcomes? There are so many lenses to view that experience through, and remote workplaces add another layer of nuance to consider.

Shorter runway, greater impact

If today's HR professionals have one universal experience, it's that they have to figure everything out a lot sooner than they used to.

It used to be that smaller companies were more geographically consolidated, but even that's not true anymore. Lots of companies with less than ten employees are distributed throughout a number of states (or countries). This has created a radical shift, where getting talent, compensation, and benefits strategies formalized isn't something that happens later. It's table stakes.

Overall, this is a really good thing. As I mentioned, location is just one vector through which to consider a workforce. There are many factors that make an employee base diverse, and each of those factors comes with its own set of data that HR needs to disaggregate, analyze, and act on in order to give their employees the experience they deserve. The more people ops can provide equity based on each vector, the better.

SECTION 5

How Employee Development Is Transforming

Through all the shifts in the ways we work, people's desire to learn and grow in their careers has remained consistent. Beyond where development happens, what's also changing is how employees define career advancement — along with their expectations of companies and HR leaders.

We've all heard that employees want more flexibility, and that's also the case when it comes to development. Ultimately, it's about options. It's letting employees design their own career paths, the shape of that path (a ladder or web?), where learning happens, and working for one company or many. Bottom line: It's not forcing them down a single track that doesn't lead them where they want to go.

This has pushed HR leaders to rethink their role in guiding people along these newly shaped paths. It starts with recommitting to the people already working for you, particularly in times of tightening budgets and headcount. You need to recognize their talents and show them that you're out to help them develop and succeed — which ultimately helps the business succeed.

That said, hybridization made it harder for people to shine in their jobs. It's up to managers to connect them with opportunities to gain new skills and grow. That no longer means sending people through tedious training courses. People learn best when the material is relevant to their daily lives. Make skill development part of their job, not separate from it.

Our challenge isn't forcing people to care about learning and advancing — they already do. It's understanding how they think about those things, so we can lay a foundation that supports them as they forge ahead.
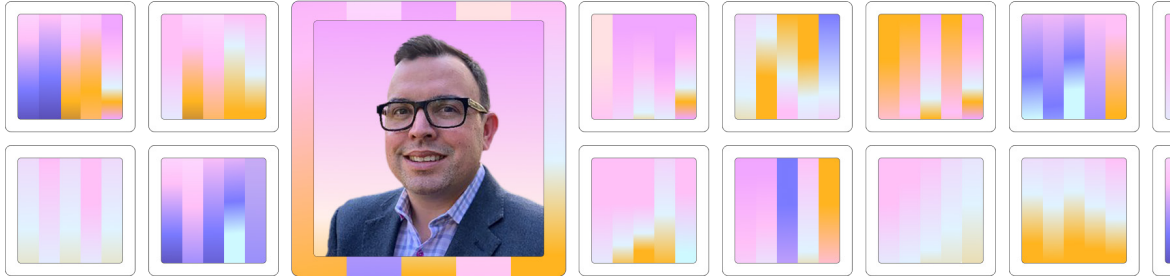
The Career Ladder Is Broken. Long Live the Career Web.

By **Jacy Escoffier,** VP of Learning and Development and Organizational Well-being at Upwork

The world of work continues to expand in terms of both choice and flexibility. People no longer look at their career as a ladder, with every step leading automatically to the one above it. For many, it's more like a web with many different experiences that connect to form a more interesting and complex picture.

This expansive approach to career development used to be treated with suspicion. The idea was that you got good at your job by sticking strictly within your own field. But that's never really been true.

For a very famous (and old) example, look at Leonardo Da Vinci. Although he's best known for his paintings, Da Vinci also studied science and medicine, even venturing into the field of autopsy studies. He was literally a Renaissance Man. Through these interests, he developed a keen understanding of human anatomy that allowed him to break boundaries in his most famous artworks.

People who are curious about the world and actively step outside of the narrow bounds of one role have more diverse experiences and skill sets. Many display greater learning agility, innovation, and problem-solving — all benefitting the companies they work with, which can be more than one at the same time.

Blend freelancers and FTEs

To attract people who value a broader range of experiences, organizations must adopt a flexible workforce strategy and create an environment that recognizes and supports different ways of working. Some of the most successful companies accomplish this by engaging both independent talent and full-time employees (FTEs).

"

Rather than constantly checking to see what each member of your remote team is doing every day, set a clear goal and a deadline, and trust them to meet them.

Freelancing allows people who want to build a career web to explore multiple opportunities, pursue their passions, and take on a variety of projects. And it pays off for companies who work with them: In Upwork's Future Workforce Report 2022, 79% of businesses agreed that working with independent talent enables their business to be more innovative. Having access to highly specialized contractors enables companies to fill gaps and expand their offerings. And the freelancer mindset of constantly improving and adding skill sets in order to win higher level contracts is a beneficial example to FTEs. Personal development doesn't have to be limited to freelancers: FTEs who have access to the right support can also reap and deliver the benefits of exploring subjects outside of their 9-to-5. The end goal for HR is the same for both types of workers: to understand what workers want from their jobs and help them access and achieve it.

Treat flexibility as an opportunity

Managing workers' career development in the way they want has become harder since people stopped thinking about career growth as a ladder. When you switch from methodically climbing rungs to choosing from a long menu of options, it gets harder to know what move to make next.

Alternately, managers often resist flexibility. For example, they may see working with a mix of FTEs and freelancers — some in-person and others remote (and in multiple time zones) — as chaotic rather than liberating.

But, instead of fixating on the challenges that can come with flexibility, embrace the opportunities that come with engaging independent talent — like access to specialized talent and a larger talent pool, increased diversity, and the ability to quickly scale up and down as needed. Focus on expectations rather than micromanaging every single process. Rather than constantly checking to see what each member of your remote team is doing every day, set a clear goal and a deadline, and trust them to meet them. When you do, you'll reap the benefits that hybrid teams can offer.

Also choose trust over control when it comes to development. Instead of the prescriptive ladder approach, be transparent about growth opportunities and let workers choose what suits them. This entails making sure they are all aware of the projects and developmental initiatives you can offer them and how these can help them achieve their goals. Freelancers tend to be more attuned to the need to push themselves since they're constantly striving to impress their clients. This is why the community team at Upwork built the Upwork Academy, a place for independent talent on our platform to develop their skills. A similar auto-didactic model could also be adapted to benefit your organization's workforce.

This commitment to supporting workers who want to keep learning speaks to one of Upwork's three learning and development pillars: organizational well-being. We're committed to using data to understand our team members' experiences and make informed decisions to improve them. This includes supporting team members to stretch themselves with new challenges — and also taking the time afterward to reflect on what went right, what could have been better, and lessons to apply in the future.

Think outside the written details of the job

If you're used to thinking of career progression as taking methodical steps in a strictly upward direction, the concept of a laterally moving career web may feel flat. However, as both an optimist and a pragmatist, I see it as progress.

We're starting to understand that we don't have to choose between Da Vinci the inventor and Da Vinci the painter. Not only can we celebrate both, but each one has a skill set that contributes to the other. It takes an artist to dream up a walking mechanical lion and an engineer to build one. Although Da Vincis may be few and far between, all the people in your organization may benefit from the opportunity to explore interests beyond the narrow confines of their current role description.

In the past, we were thinking more about how to fit people into the rigid constraints of what it means to work at a specific company or in an office. But now, the question is becoming, "How do we allow work to rise to the potential of people?" With that change, work is becoming human-focused, not the other way around.

Employee Development Is More Than a 2-Day Offsite

By **Mollie Duffy**, Head of Learning and Development at Lattice

Think about the last time you learned a new skill for fun. Maybe you got really into bread-making, knitting, or pickleball. Did you pick it up just by watching a few YouTube videos? Or did you have to do it yourself to really understand?

When we learn for fun, we intuitively know that we won't get very far just staring passively at a screen. We use a combination of hands-on experience, educational materials like books and videos, and maybe a mentor. As we experiment and explore, our new skill stops being something we're learning and becomes something we do.

In contrast, when we think about traditional learning offerings at work, we often forget two things: 1) that learning should not be something boring to check off a list, and 2) that learning doesn't happen overnight.

First, when designing manager development programs, it certainly would seem easier to assign managers a bunch of videos to watch. But when we think about how people actually become better managers, it's not by watching videos or going through a checklist of skills. It's by engaging in the content in a hands-on way, watching and shadowing those who are excellent managers, connecting with other managers to create community and learn from one another, and then getting the chance to practice and apply new behaviors.

Second, when we send employees to a two-day offsite and assume that they are now 100% trained, we're fooling ourselves. Learning doesn't stop when the box is checked; learning happens over time. If we don't build in time for people to apply the learnings, they immediately forget everything they were told. Instead, we need to design our learning programs with time for reflection and application built in.

" It's turning skill development from something that feels like a separate requirement into something that feels empowering, and that they look forward to engaging with every single day.

My goal with learning and development at Lattice is to build a deliberately developmental organization. That means finding ways to make learning opportunities part of the everyday flow of people's jobs, not separate from them. It's turning skill development from something that feels like a separate requirement into something that feels empowering, and that they look forward to engaging with every single day.

Incorporate learning into the flow of work

The reality is that most learning happens in the flow of everyday work. To build a culture of deliberate development, we've intentionally identified and created opportunities for employees to learn at work. Some programs are designed for individuals, and others for groups.

Everyone at Lattice receives an annual stipend they can put towards external development resources like books, courses, or training. In addition, we have partnered with an e-learning platform to provide access to a library of video courses. Plus, Latticians can join our internal mentorship program — either as a mentee to learn from other Latticians', or as a mentor to develop their coaching skills. We also offer voluntary development sessions for individuals who want to improve skills like feedback, communication, and navigating change. By giving employees access to these resources, we make it as easy as possible for them to fund and expand their professional development.

It's also important to us that we incorporate opportunities for development into existing workflows. We're building out team effectiveness sessions that will help teams intentionally come together at the beginning, middle, and end of every project. These sessions will create the space for development within the flow of the team's work. For example, whenever a new team forms or a team starts a new project, we'll ask every member to share a skill they'd like to develop during the course of the work. Then, at the middle and end of the project, we'll ask the team to give each other feedback. When everyone — including senior leaders — is willing to identify something in their job that they want to improve, it reinforces the understanding that not knowing something is not a weakness; it's a chance to learn.

By building these moments into workflows, we deliberately give employees the chance to continuously learn and grow.

Make learning a habit, not an event

Let's start with one thing HR leaders have been trying to do forever: improve program attendance. When learning requires people to pause their work and disappear to a conference room for a week, they see it as an interruption to their schedule and are unwilling to make time for it. When learning is incorporated into the work they're already doing, it becomes part of their existing workload rather than a distraction or a burden. They're more likely to participate — and bring a positive attitude.

Another advantage of incorporating skill development into daily work is that employees immediately see how it's relevant to their job. Rather than just being told how a skill might help them, they're practicing it every day.

We've also launched a manager development program, called Manager Blueprint. We designed the curriculum for the program specifically around the current needs of Lattice Managers, focusing on skills like difficult conversations and delegation. The program is a cohort-based model, so cohorts of 15 managers at similar levels (but across different disciplines and geographies) go through the program together and get to learn from each other. Manager Blueprint is six months long, which gives enough time in between the sessions for participants to reflect on the learnings and apply new behaviors each week. Each week participants learn a new skill, such as giving constructive feedback or helping their team prioritize, and then go back to their teams and practice the skill. The following week, they report back on how it went. Seeing the practical implications and benefits of a skill motivates them to learn and makes them more likely to retain the information after the official learning period is technically over.

When this type of hyper-relevant learning is happening throughout your company, it generates a culture of development. People realize that you walk the walk when it comes to supporting their learning goals and that it's not just a talking point: it's a genuine commitment. When employees feel they have the opportunity to continually learn and improve within a company, they are more likely to enjoy the work they are doing and stay longer. When you focus on growth in the flow of work, you are not only helping your employees reach their growth goals; your company gets more innovative ideas, more engaged employees, and a workforce that is constantly pushing themselves and the company to be better than it was yesterday.
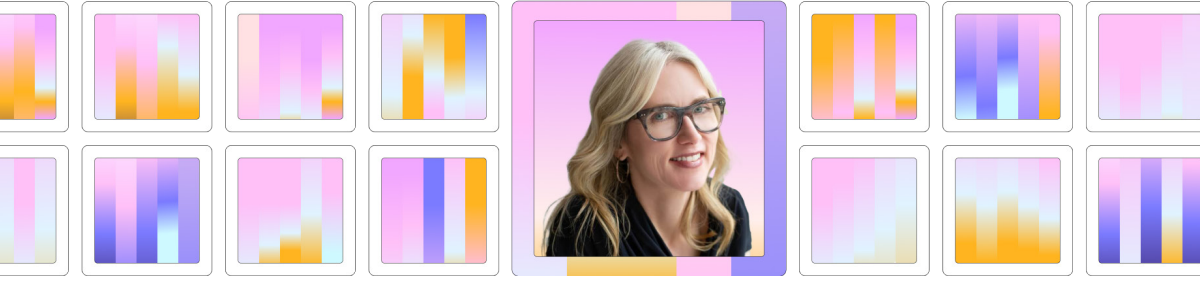
Hybrid Work Is Hurting Career Growth. Managers Can Save It.

By **Melissa Daimler**, Chief Learning Officer at Udemy

We're all used to having the physical office as a convenient place for the formal and informal opportunities employees need to grow their skills and careers. That could be sharing a quick update on a project with leadership, discussing goals as a team, or having a sync over coffee with a manager.

However, going remote and hybrid forced us to recognize that a physical office is a tool of work, not the source of it. And we can no longer rely on the office as the only tool we leverage when we think about career advancement.

Now that these casual interactions are fewer and further between, managers have to take responsibility for helping employees progress — and employees have to actively look for ways to continue developing their skills and advancing.

Digitize the watercooler

In an office, interacting with colleagues across departments and seniority levels happens relatively naturally — around the watercooler, in the kitchen, or at each other's desks. For example, earlier in my career, I would ask leaders to meet me for coffee in the cafeteria. These informal moments allow us to share updates on projects, convey our goals, and showcase our professional progress.

These kinds of opportunities still matter to a hybrid team, but they require more active effort. A motivated employee can still set up virtual meetings to discuss an issue, brainstorm a new solution, or get feedback from their manager. I still have informal coffee chats with my employees, colleagues, and manager, sometimes as part of an existing meeting and sometimes completely separate. However, most of the responsibility for this sits with managers and HR. It's a team effort.

" Even when employees work remotely, it's still companies' responsibility to make sure they are supported in their development goals.

Managers are the MVPs

Even when employees work remotely, it's still companies' responsibility to make sure they are supported in their development goals. Managers, in particular, now play a bigger role in exposing employees to different leaders and opportunities across the organization in line with the skills they're looking to develop.

To help employees really see progress, managers need to make the extra effort to find out the specific skills each employee is interested in or to tease out what those skills might be, if they're not sure. Together, they should build a skill development plan that lays out the kinds of opportunities each employee needs to access in order to achieve their aims while working hybrid.

Managers giving feedback may also require more formalized planning in a hybrid workplace. When most of us were in the office, it was easy to observe employees, let them know how they were doing, and give them a high five in the hallway about a job well done. With many of us now working remotely, managers have to actively check on employees' progress and book time to share their feedback or check in.

HR can also play a role. For example, they can help employees connect the skills they'd like to develop with internal opportunities via an internal talent marketplace that tracks available roles and projects, sometimes explicitly identifying the skills a person could develop working on them.

In some ways, the rise of hybrid work has helped employees advance their careers by loosening time and location restrictions. But it also requires organizations — and managers in particular — to take a more active role in arranging employees' career development. We've traded the buzz of the office for the ping of Slack messages and the crackle of video calls. Being physically further apart just makes intentionality the key to making development happen.

Moving Up Without Moving On:
The Benefits of Internal Mobility

By **J.D. Slaughter**, Group Vice President of Organizational
Development & Effectiveness at Huge

As a creative growth accelerator, Huge partners with the world's most ambitious companies to identify, enable, and accelerate transformative growth; to make Huge Moves. Our goal is to do the same internally — create an environment and experience that accelerates our people's growth and transforms their career. We do this, in part, through our focus on internal mobility and career growth. Our internal mobility philosophy is grounded in the idea that the best people for open roles at Huge are already at Huge. And we try to structure our program to support that. We want our people to have the feeling and the understanding that they have some agency and ownership over what their career trajectory and velocity at Huge might look like.

That philosophy isn't limited to staying within a single track or department; it extends to enabling people to move across teams and departments within the company as long as there's interest from the employee and a need within the organization. This approach allows our employees to raise their hands for opportunities and provides them with increased ownership of their career paths.

As a company, we believe transparency and shared accountability is critical, which is why we have infused these ideals directly into our development plans. Understanding the value every member brings to the organization, we have committed to investing in their development in return. We actively offer equal opportunities for growth through three key avenues: experiential learning, skill development, and candid feedback. With this, it incentives employees to work toward career advancements and development opportunities within the organization rather than taking their skills elsewhere.

" As a company, we believe transparency and shared accountability is critical, which is why we have infused these ideals directly into our development plans.

Making the case

To achieve success with internal mobility, employees of any given organization must have a clear line of sight on what roles are available and the qualifications required. And to provide additional support to our talent, we created our own development model. Unlike a traditional behavioral or skill-based competency model, it emphasizes experiences as an equally important component.

Furthermore, it provides tangible and real-life examples of how people have successfully applied their knowledge across the organization and in various contexts. By design, some of the skills and behaviors are shared across all crafts, providing employees who want to move across departments the opportunity to showcase transferable qualities.

When people know about internal opportunities, and that they need to demonstrate readiness, you see an increase in the adoption of individual development plans (IDPs). People understand that these aren't just to pacify HR; they're a guide to the steps they need to take to reach the next stage of their career.

Employees need to understand the role they play in their career paths and their managers' responsibility to facilitate, mentor, and coach them along the way. Ideally, managers can provide a more holistic view of what behaviors, skills, and experiences will drive further career growth depending on that employee's unique plan, while also working to identify areas of opportunity on a project level that can help supplement or challenge their skill and experience level. This is where shared accountability comes in.

To ensure employees are equipped with the proper tools they need to advocate for themselves — whether that's a promotion or a shift between crafts or disciplines — we created a promotion justification template. It's available to everyone within the organization, and we offer training on how to use it. The template is used to articulate how an employee has demonstrated readiness for a role of increased scope and responsibility, while also documenting the business case for the promotion. Often we are able to support these promotion requests, but if we feel like the business case isn't there, we'll likely ask their manager to assess it in more detail or defer to when there is a clearer business need.

Choose your own career adventure

To make sure everyone at Huge is presented with equitable opportunities to grow, we aim to accommodate the many varied ways people approach their careers.

For instance, someone interested in project management might take on an employee experience role as a way to begin their career journey at Huge, build up relevant skills and experiences once they are here, then prove they are ready to move into the project management side. Conversely, we also see a lot of people who want to specialize and build deep expertise in their craft and we also have a structure to support that approach.

A significant portion of the current and future workforce has expressed a desire for flexibility, ownership, and autonomy over their careers. That doesn't mean everyone wants a career map that allows them to move laterally. Instead, it means giving them the choice. It's developing both an open structure for people who want to explore different areas of the business as well as a more traditional, ladder-style architecture for people who want to grow vertically within their craft.

Organizations put a lot of effort into hiring people they think can take the business to the next level. But the investment and belief in our people shouldn't end there. Emphasizing internal mobility and encouraging people to take control of their own career development shows them that you're committed to helping them grow — whatever that looks like for them.

About Lattice

Lattice is the people success platform that enables HR leaders to develop engaged, high-performing teams. By combining continuous performance management, employee engagement, development, compensation, and growth in one solution, organizations get powerful, real-time analytics that lead to actionable insights turning managers into leaders, employees into high performers, and companies into the best places to work.
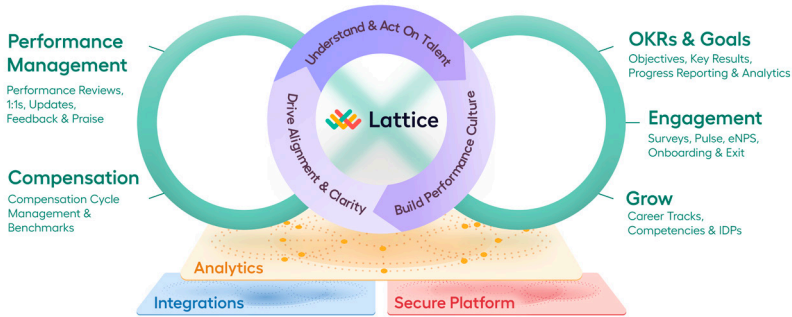
Lattice works with companies that aspire to put people first. Whether redefining the beauty industry or building self-driving cars, all of our customers have one thing in common: They value their employees and want to invest in the development and success of their people. To see Lattice's platform in action, schedule a product tour. Lattice works with companies that aspire to put people first. Whether redefining the beauty industry or building self-driving cars, all of our customers have one thing in common: They value their employees and want to invest in the development and success of their people. To see Lattice's platform in action, schedule a product tour.

Trusted by the best places to work

Request a demo