

ARE WE HEADED TOWARDS A WORKFORCE REVOLUTION?

BY JOELLE MONACO

Over the past two weeks, I've found myself having the same conversation quite a bit. What impacts will our current situation have on the workforce of tomorrow; each time I've found myself calling it a workforce revolution when considering the recent changes to a virtual workplace that many of us are currently experiencing. A revolution is defined as a complete or radical change of any kind; it's easy to consider this definition when we assess the changes in any and most industries within the past month. Additionally, I've found this same conversation concluding with what impacts will this have on the workforce when organizations begin to transition back to the new typical. How will employee engagement look, and what role does leadership play?

Most leaders have only imagined the day when 80 to 100 percent of their workforce could or would work remotely. Maybe we thought it wasn't possible right now; we don't have the infrastructure, or it may not support all of our employee roles and preferences. Well, we've taken the fast track, and it will be essential for leadership teams to start discussing what the leadership of their organization looks like today and tomorrow. What does employee engagement, development, succession, or better yet retention look like?

- ***64% of employees plan on leaving their current positions in 2020 cited a "lack of being heard" as the primary reason. [Business & Legal Resources, 2020]***
- ***35% of employees would change jobs for the opportunity to work remotely full-time, and 37% would do so to work some of the time remotely. [State of the American Workforce, Gallup, 2016]***
- ***Flexibility is one of the highest-ranked employee benefits stated by Millennials, which outranks student loan or tuition reimbursement. Boomers also ranked flexibility as a benefit they consider in their employer. [State of the American Workforce, Gallup, 2017]***
- ***Additionally, research has shown that positive organizational efforts can lead to an engagement increase even in a turbulent environment. [Measuring Employee Engagement During a Financial Downturn: Business Imperative or Nuisance? 2011]***

All of the facts above are more important to leaders and organizations now than ever; it will be essential to consider each of the following in how you engage and choose to move forward. Employees have the time and space in many cases to step back to think about the larger picture, assessing where they are and where they are looking to go. Given this drastic change, employees will be considering both their current employer's culture, the role they play within the organization, the recent transition, and the reaction and responsiveness displayed by leadership.

Essentially our current situation has created a perfect storm for leaders to grow, engage, and lead an organizational shift in a time of need. Here are three things to consider if you are a leader today:

- Ask your employees what they need. Be willing to listen and meet them where they are within reason.
- Consider your organizational culture; what have you learned? Will there need to be adjustments moving forward? Have you learned new ways of doing business that benefits employees that you want to foster and continue to grow?
- Consider what will the next transition look like? What will the work environment expectations be? Start working towards those transitions now.



Leading from what you've learned, not from what you've always done, will be essential. A great leader listens to employees and encourages innovation, creativity, and is flexible to meet employees where they are today and where they want to be tomorrow. Think about how you can leave a lasting impact on your team and organization as we re-define what the workplace and its experiences look like. I leave you one question, what will you do today to have a positive impact on employee engagement within your organization?

**Keep up the great work engaging employees and teams of tomorrow,
Joelle M. Monaco**