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THE CULTURE SOFTWARE

5 STRATEGIES TO RESET CULTURE FOR HYBRID & REMOTE WORKFORCES

A Guide for Powering Your Teams from Wherever They Work

SUMMARY

Deloitte's 2021 Global Human Capital Trends Report identified five trends to watch for in 2021, one among those being an increased focus on building teams (or 'superteams') that use technology to enhance natural interaction and collaboration.

In early 2020, the escalating COVID-19 pandemic forced organizational leaders to quickly reset business and workforce priorities. The pandemic's scale and severity challenged most organizations' views about what work was essential to deliver to their customers, shareholders, and stakeholders during a prolonged period of heightened uncertainty. To rapidly reorient their goals and operations, we saw that the most successful organizations turn to teams and teaming as the go-to unit for organizational performance.

Teams – newly forming, growing, and reconfiguring – were supercharging organizations' ability to pivot and get work done amid turbulent and demanding conditions. Teaming became an organizational life raft during COVID-19 because teams are often built for adaptability rather than predictability and stability. Teams can learn and adapt faster than individual workers alone, since teams of motivated individuals will challenge each other to come up with better, more creative ideas.

With Gartner's poll from the end of last year indicating that nearly 50 percent of employees expect to work remotely at least part-time after the pandemic subsides – up from 30 percent before COVID-19 – and 98 percent of the 3,500 remote workers surveyed by Buffer in *The State of Remote Work* said they would like the option to work remotely for the rest of their careers, data suggest organizations must invest in supercharging their teams – now in the context of permanently remote or hybrid work models – if they want to drive success and growth. To do it, future-thinking organizations have become increasingly determined to reshape and reset their culture in ways that better support fully remote teams or teams that include both on-premise and remote employees.

Intended Audience
This guide is for CEOs, organizational leaders and HR leaders looking to reset and transform culture in 2021 and beyond. With the right strategies in place, you'll start (re)shaping your culture into one that better supports your employees, enables collaboration, and increases engagement so that your organization's teams can power growth and success.

Strategy 1: Equalize to Engage
Strategy 2: Shift Communication Expectations
Strategy 3: Connect Rather than Transact
Strategy 4: Recognize Employee Contributions
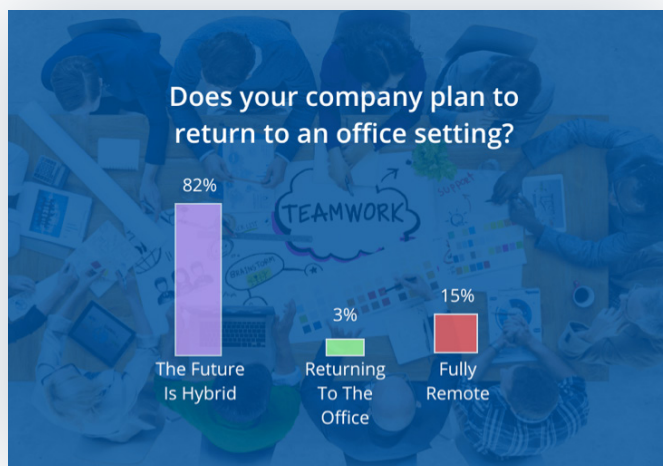**Strategy 5: Culture-as-a-Service: Invest in Technology**

STRATEGY 1: EQUALIZE MEETINGS TO ENGAGE

In a live webinar poll of more than 200 participants conducted in February 2021 by Humantelligence, a majority of human resource leaders indicated that the future of their workforce would be hybrid long term. It's clear that whether planning projects, collaborating on tasks, or conducting other types of meetings, leaders will need to operate differently, especially in a hybrid work environment when on any given day, some employees will be present in the office while others work from home offices.

Does your company plan to return to an office setting?

82% The Future Is Hybrid
3% Returning To The Office
15% Fully Remote

Source: Humantelligence - *Remote Culture Shift: Six Ways to Keep Culture Intact*, 2/24/2021

While unintentional, team members who are physically onsite are likely to get more attention from leaders who are also in the office. Remember back in the day when some team members called into a meeting, it was considered an exception, and they were often treated as observers instead of active participants. And the data confirms it.

According to the 2019 State of the Digital Workspace report from Igloo, 70% of remote employees feel left out of the workplace or continually miss information. As more people work remotely than ever before, identifying meeting shortcomings is critically important in order to ensure workers are involved and productive. This helps ensure that those working from home remain invested and productive without favoring on-site employees.

If leaders don't find a way to equalize the input from both on-site and remote team members, offsite workers may slowly grow distant and more removed. In this case, you're likely to see burnout increase, and productivity and engagement decrease – the opposite of supercharged teaming. But you can prevent this by conducting engaged virtual meetings in a more deliberate way. Here are some tactics that once implemented can start transforming your meeting culture.

Level the Playing Field: If there's a meeting that involves workers both in the office and offsite, rather than have onsite employees sit in the conference room for the meeting, have all meeting attendees log into the meeting individually, from wherever they are.

Increase Efficiencies: Don't make assumptions about silence. Solicit input from participants by name. This might also make meeting leaders think twice about who needs to be involved, optimizing the number of participants for greatest efficiency.

Become Inclusive Intentionally: What compounds the communication and collaboration challenges of remote working teams is the issue of inclusiveness – critical to culture and key to efficient communication. Different from diversity, inclusion is the degree to which employees feel valued, respected, accepted, and encouraged to fully participate in the organization. A company's workforce may

be diverse, but if employees do not feel safe, welcomed, and valued, that company is not inclusive and will not perform to its highest potential.

- *Prep and send your agenda ahead of time:* If you're organizing a meeting, provide your meeting agenda one day ahead of time. By sending out an agenda in advance, you're designing a more inclusive meeting.

- *Keep schedules in mind:* In our new working normal, many of us have exchanged in-office colleagues for new roommate-partner-coworker combos. Some of those new 'coworkers' are four-legged, non-humans and some are even mini versions of ourselves. Many parents are trying to keep their kids on track with virtual and hybrid learning while they work from home. And others might care for older family members. This could mean limited windows of quality meeting time during the day.

By default, we as human beings are introspective, and it doesn't matter if you're introverted or extraverted either. **87% of extraverts and 86% of introverts agree** that they pay a lot of attention to the meaning of your own thoughts and actions. So while it may require more time to formalize an agenda and try to account for the various situations of your team members, you're also ensuring that your attendees have time to prepare and come to the meeting with more thoughtful inputs – introverts and extraverts, parents and caretakers alike. If you do this, don't be surprised to find yourself with more engaged meeting attendees.

Welcome One and All: Take scheduling considerations to the next level by clearly articulating an 'All Are Welcome Here / We're in this Together' environment. Often, people feel the need to apologize when a child, animal, or parent interrupts or disrupts. In these situations, how you respond can make or break your meeting vibe. Based on the situation, you can foster a welcoming environment with one of the following:

- → *No need to apologize. X takes precedence.*
- → *I love having the opportunity to see X...*
- → *I know that X needs your attention. Please feel free to jump off if needed or turn your camera/ sound off – whatever's most convenient, and just rejoin when you can.*

Not acknowledging, not recognizing our new normal, and not responding in one of these ways will only make team members working from home feel less than, unwelcomed, or like they have to hide away important parts of their lives.

Speaking of important parts of our lives...many video meeting tools allow users to change their display names, and as you might have seen, some people have added their personal pronouns. Begin with yourself and encourage team members to insert their pronouns, and you'll start cultivating a culture that acknowledges you can't assume someone's gender, identity, or pronouns by looking at them. When you start welcoming one and all, you'll soon find a team **that's all for one and one for all.**

- *Don't Just Be Open, Be Accessible:* Look for video tech that can help everyone participate in meetings more meaningfully. Some video conferencing solutions offer live closed captions, which appear as someone speaks, for users who are deaf or hard of hearing. There is also video meeting software available for people who are blind/ have low vision and use screen readers that turn text, images, and other elements into audio or braille. Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, and BlueJeans all offer live closed captions that are created by artificial intelligence. Zoom offers live closed captioning if you type them in yourself or use a third-party service. All of these programs are also screen reader accessible.

The tools you or your company select to use are important. Advocate for more accessible platforms, and you'll be demonstrating a commitment to inclusiveness.

Make Feedback King: You can take a number of steps to make your meetings more inclusive, but don't forget that one of the best ways to improve everyone's experiences is simple... feedback. Just as in the many other aspects of our work, be sure to get your team members' feedback about what's working and what's not.

If you're a manager, start a conversation with your team about what they think could be improved on how video meetings are run – and make sure you're inclusive of ways to submit that feedback! Why is this important? Studies show that the majority of women in the workforce feel excluded from decision making and uncomfortable expressing their opinions. In fact, a recent survey **only 2/3 of women said they felt they could voice a dissenting opinion** without fear of repercussion (versus 80% of men), so be sure you're practicing inclusion with this very activity!

- → Encourage team members to write out a few simple suggestions for or submit feedback anonymously if possible.

While organizations are creating settings in which people feel that they can speak up freely without fear of negative consequences, such environments take time to nurture. You could use a shared "whiteboard" like Padlet, which allows people to give feedback or make comments anonymously.

You could also deploy a survey that covers video meeting inclusivity. Afterwards, disaggregate the data to look at race, gender, and other demographics, and you might find larger quantities of feedback from particular groups, such as women of color or those who identify as LGBTQ+, common feedback themes or specific issues among particular identities on your team.

Looking at the intersections of all of this feedback can help you identify if there are pockets of people who are not feeling included in how you're conducting meetings, and importantly, they may have suggestions that will make all the difference.

Don't Just Hold but Make Space: Hello quiet meeting people and those who have trouble getting a word in edgewise...this one's for you.

As the meeting organizer, pay attention to who is speaking the most—and who keeps getting interrupted. A few different studies have found that women are interrupted more frequently than men, and that men specifically interrupt women more than they do other men. Other studies have shown how men dominate **meetings, calls, and other contexts**. A **July 2020 survey** by the nonprofit Catalyst with Edelman Intelligence found that 45% of female leaders (and 42% of male leaders) agreed that "it's difficult for women to speak up in virtual meetings, and that one in five women reports feeling overlooked by coworkers during video calls. At some point in every meeting, say something like:

→ Okay, let's pause here, and I'd like to invite anyone who hasn't had a chance to talk yet to come off of mute and share their thoughts. Not only are you opening the floor to all (as opposed to calling on a specific person who might not be prepared at that moment), you're also demonstrating consideration to those who maybe just had a child potentially disrupt their train of thought by climbing into their lap – it's happening more than you think!

→ You can also break groups up so that people who have trouble speaking in larger settings have a chance to contribute ideas with just a few colleagues. For instance, if you're having the team brainstorm for an upcoming project, you could split them up into smaller breakout groups for a set period of time, and then have a representative from each group report back to with the best ideas.

> " *Meeting culture is indicative of the broader company culture. It's when you communicate, when collaboration happens, and when and how decisions are made. Improving meeting culture can improve the company culture.*"
>
> **– Employee Listening, Research, & Talent Strategist at Boeing**

Reminder:

Changing your meeting culture to equalize and include will help reset your team culture.

If every team in your company did it, imagine how company culture would improve.

Key Action:

Consider trainings with functional leaders to provide a strategy for team meetings.

When you level the playing field, increase efficiencies, and become inclusive intentionally, you'll begin nurturing the kind of culture that fosters new ideas, engagement, and collaboration – and be well on your way to supercharging your team.

STRATEGY 2: SHIFT COMMUNICATION EXPECTATIONS

According to the Harvard Business Review article **Collaborative Overload**, the time employees spent on collaboration in 2016 increased by 50% over the past two decades — and we can be sure this has only increased over the last year. Researchers found it common for workers to spend a full 80% of their workdays communicating with colleagues in the form of email (on which workers' spend an average of six hours a day); meetings (which fill up 15 percent of a company's time, on average); and more recently instant messaging apps (the average Slack user sends an average of 200 messages a day, though 1,000-message power users are "not the exception").

What's your biggest struggle with working remotely?

20% 🔵	Collaboration and communication
20% 🔵	Loneliness
18% 🟡	Not being able to unplug
12% 🔵	Distractions at home
10% 🟠	Being in a different timezone than teammates
7% 🔵	Staying motivated
5% 🟢	Taking vacation time
3% 🔴	Finding reliable wifi
5% ⚪	Other

State of Remote Report 2020
buffer.com/state-of-remote-2020

Of course, in-person meetings and other types of synchronous communication like the above can be the most efficient solution in many situations. It's understandable when everyone wants immediate answers to their "quick" questions. So while working remotely means you're not going to bump into co-workers around the water cooler to answer or ask those quick questions, it certainly doesn't mean you're unreachable. It simply means we collectively

must shift our expectations in communications timing and employee response times—and for good reason. Communication and collaboration continue to be a top pain point for remote teams.
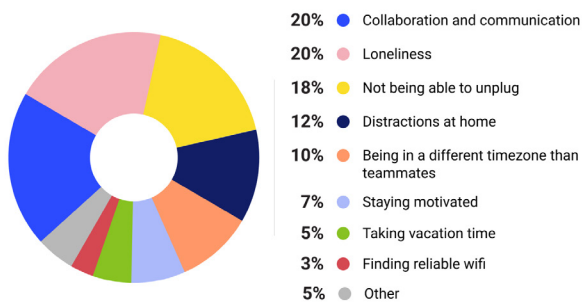
In another **poll of 1,000 professionals** who transitioned to working from home, 63% rated the flexibility of hours as the most important benefit of this new working reality. With this flexibility, part of being a successful remote employee means schedule sharing, so people know availability. Doing this helps shift expectations of when you can/will respond. And if employees are doing their part, it's time for companies to do theirs.

Constant real-time communication, such as via chat or expectations of immediate responses to emails, is detrimental to productivity. It prevents the uninterrupted time that is necessary for team members to bring their full range of talents to their work, which is what makes them feel satisfied at the end of their work days.

Additionally, when people are working remotely, leaders have less control over the hours their team members work. This makes synchronous communication much harder. Remote work offers inherent flexibility, but if your communication doesn't adapt, flex-time quickly becomes 'always on' time and can result in **burnout**.

Asynchronous communication – the transmission of data, generally without the use of an external clock signal, where data can be transmitted intermittently rather than in a steady stream – is a driving force behind successful supercharged teams, helping people focus on important work and collaborate more thoughtfully. An added benefit of prioritizing asynchronous communication methods is that it will encourage planning and more thoughtful responses. Some ways to do this:

- Encourage the use of "do not disturb" mode in your team communication tools
- Set clear and realistic expectations around email response times
- Designate a specific channel for real emergencies or crisis that require immediate response
- Implement guidelines for and by the people

When goals are clearly communicated, workers, whether in office or not, know what is expected of them and feel empowered to perform to the best of their capabilities. No matter what expectations you set, it's critical that team members have input. With input comes buy-in as well as engagement—both of which are key to productive employees.

However, there are likely to be limits on what your team can decide with regard to where, when, and how team members work. Perhaps headquarters already decided that employees must spend 12 hours per week onsite, and maybe you already know you want everyone in the office together one full day a week. These structures make sense, but there's still plenty of room for the team members' feedback on other operational guidelines that enhance their daily experience, such as input on which day of the week will they all come into the office, other flexible in-office time, and ideas on how to work better as a team.

Finally, synthesize these inputs and put your new team policies into a shared document or team management tool so that everyone can see and revisit them periodically as a group. Commit to a schedule of review and revision as you and your team learn more about what works (and more importantly, what doesn't). In the end, you'll supercharge your team and allow them the space and time to work on deeper, more fruitful work.

Examples of Shallow Work
Processing the emails in your inbox
Responding to colleagues on team chat tools like Slack
Making phone calls to arrange logistics
Attending status update meeting

Examples of Deep Work
Drafting a launch plan for a new feature
Programming
Preparing for an upcoming keynote presentation
Researching information on a specific problem

Reminder:

Collaboration overload and struggling to collaborate and communicate are not mutually exclusive.

A key difference is in the quality of collaboration and inputs you receive from team members. With a new take on communication expectations, you can prioritize higher-quality communication versus knee-jerk responses. While it takes more time, you give employees the time to think through a particular problem or idea and provide more thoughtful responses. You'll also find a less stressed team. When ASAP requests aren't an option, advanced planning is a must, and people learn to plan their workloads and collaborations more carefully to give enough time for coworkers to see and respond to their requests. This leads to less stressful collaborations, and deep work becomes the default.

Key Action:

Shift expectations in communication timing to get better response.

Instead of immediate responses, consider asynchronous communication, whereby you seek feedback from your team members on how and when communication can take place. As a result, your team members will feel more control over the workday = happier and more productive employees.

STRATEGY 3: AIM TO CONNECT RATHER THAN TRANSACT

Social psychologists have been studying the human need of belonging for many years. It's been found that feeling a sense of belonging is an important intrinsic motivator. Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs includes a sense of belonging as a major need that motivates human behavior – just like food, shelter, and safety. And there's data to prove it.

The **Harvard Study of Adult Development** tracked the lives of 724 men for 79 years. Researchers hoped to discover the secret to success, happiness and a good life. The study found that relationships tremendously impact our health, happiness and quality of life. It was also found that the quality of relationships mattered more than quantity.

40%

It's no different at work, where we spend nearly 40% of our lives! Strong social connections make people happier and physically healthier, which can translate into work performance – and employers that support social connections in the workplace and help employees form strong relationships with one another are helping to build a more successful workforce. This link between connections and performance has become more important than ever.

In that same poll of 1,000 professionals, two of the highest rated pain points of working remotely and in distributed teams included a loss of connection to team members and feeling isolated – all of which can lead to decreased productivity. So what's clear is that when you do invoke synchronous methods like real-time meetings—whether one-on-one, with the team, or all-hands— prioritizing quality interactions over transactions can have a tremendous impact on driving connections, and as a result, performance.

When team members are physically together, informally interacting with colleagues before a meeting or during lunch helps create a bridge for connection, making the work more fun and rewarding. But now, with back-to-back video calls, agendas are often stripped to transactions—all the objectives, budgets, and projects that must be addressed, all the items missed from last time, and nothing more.

If leaders want to foster an inclusive culture – one based on connection and support in which team members care about each other – they must provide opportunities for colleagues to connect on a personal level. Try some of the following:

1. Virtual coffee or happy hour... Put together a virtual coffee break plan, having team members across functional teams reach out to one another to set up 20 minute coffee breaks to connect. This is especially helpful for people to connect with others outside of their own department or team. Want to provide some structure and ice breaking suggestions, here's some help from **ConceptBoard**, makers of a collaborative online whiteboard solution to support remote and distributed teams.

2. More hands make for lighter work... Flashback to your school days, when teachers and professors assigned group projects. The idea was to help us build collaboration skills and operate more effectively within a group dynamic. Whether the goal is to achieve a business outcome or to enable connection, grouping colleagues together to complete projects can increase engagement. Try hosting mini **hackathons** or giving teams the opportunity to present their work to smaller audiences.The potential groups have to be more productive, creative, and motivated than individuals on their own is something managers should leverage during workforce planning resets.

3. Schedule personal 1:1s... One-on-ones don't always have to be work related. Schedule weekly or biweekly 1:1s during which you and one of your team members can simply chat and catch up. Not only will you get to know your team members better, you will be able to identify potential matches for collaboration and connection with other team members for potential group work.

4. Virtual watercooler chats... Watercooler chat, or watercooler talk, or watercooler conversation (whatever you want to call it), is what happens when colleagues take a break from work and socialize with each other. It's a chance to let everyone reset by talking about less stressful things, like hobbies and personal interests—fun topics not associated with work. Many employees now miss the watercooler now more than ever. If you use a standing virtual breakout room link as a watercooler and encourage employees to visit it when they need a short break. Instead of surfing the net or social platforms, virtual breakout watercoolers could help amplify social interaction among your team members, spark new ideas, and increase morale.

5. Create S/O channels... Create a channel within your organization's chat tool where employees can post uplifting and positive shout outs. Besides putting a smile on everyone's face, shout out channels that celebrate even the smallest wins and recognize contributions can increase engagement – consider it the virtual high five equivalent.

6. Milestone celebrations... birthdays, holidays, anniversaries and more! Don't underestimate the power of a virtual celebration. Everyone at some point likes to have the spotlight, so even though we cannot gather collectively for birthday cake feasting, plan to celebrate your team members with a 30-minute meet up to sing and play a game or be sure to honor team members' work anniversaries. Host virtual holiday events with an optional secret gift exchange. Put a price limit in place and experience the joy of opening these gifts together on a live stream (have in-office team members call in from their desks!).

7. Virtual office games... In-office games are always fun, but what about including your remote employees? There are many different virtual games you can host while on a video call, like trivia for example. This is one way to boost engagement within your virtual teams and you can even provide gift cards as prizes for winners to increase participation.

Put it all together and doing these things will create intentional conversations and connections that otherwise would not have happened—and even the most introverted of introverts will find it valuable! Once people engage with one another and there's some laughter, you're bound to have more energetic and fruitful interactions rather than just transactions.

Reminder:

Unfortunately, forming connections and relationships in the workplace can seem a bit intimidating for many employees, and even more difficult when teams are distributed.

No one wants to overstep any boundaries, and sometimes it can be difficult to find ways to bond with colleagues on a personal level. This is why it's important that employers promote a workplace culture that encourages social interaction and helps employees connect – and it's up to leaders to empower their managers and people leaders ways to do it.

Key Action:

Formalize opportunities for people to connect in hybrid and remote work environments.

Add a fun fact or question to meeting agendas and set aside a few minutes at the beginning or end to have each participant answer. Designate one day a week for a department (no work allowed!) lunch over Zoom. However you do it, remember that the goal is to provide runway for people to support one another so that interactions are more about connecting and less about transacting.

STRATEGY 4: RECOGNIZE EMPLOYEE CONTRIBUTIONS IN NEW WAYS

Studies show that remote workers tend to put in more hours than their in-office counterparts, but they often don't feel part of the team when hybrid. One solution is to make employee recognition a priority for all team members no matter where they work. The most successful businesses know that the **more gratitude in a company**, the more productive and engaged teams and the better it performs.

The data proves it, over and over again. Appreciation, gratitude, and recognition are integral to creating a positive employee experience. Workhuman's Employee Experience Index with IBM Smarter Workforce Institute – based on a study of more than 23,000 workers – showed that when employees receive recognition for doing good work, 83% report a more positive employee experience. When workers don't receive recognition, only 38% have a positive experience. Data from the Workhuman Analytics & Research Institute showed that retention and engagement rates are higher for employees who receive recognition, and even higher still for employees who both give and receive recognition.

Organizations adopt employee recognition programs to raise employee morale, attract and retain key employees, elevate productivity, increase competitiveness, revenues, and profitability, reduce employee stress, absenteeism and turnover, as well as improve customer service. In a SHRM/Globoforce survey, **Using Recognition and Other Workplace Efforts to Engage Employees**, 68 percent of HR professionals agreed that employee recognition has a positive impact on retention and 56 percent said such programs also help with recruitment.

> " *People leave when they don't feel appreciated. That's why we've made recognition a really high value. Our business is people-capability first; then you satisfy customers; then you make money."*
>
> **David Novak, Founder and CEO of David Novak Leadership & retired Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of YUM! Brands**

The results of recognition: morale goes up, employees create stronger social connections, and productivity increases.

But take note, not all employee recognition programs are created equal. When recognition is private, it can come across as stale and inauthentic. The best recognition programs publicly highlight successes, allow peers to celebrate one another, and are tied to individual, team, or organization goals. And above all, your recognition program should align with your core values and cement their importance.

Although organizations typically recognize employees' length of service as milestones and instances of strong individual or team performance, many organizations are beginning to focus on other, less traditional areas for recognition because they acknowledge greater impact and reinforce the kind of behaviors the organization values.

Among them include:
- The ability to manage or champion change
- Innovation
- Systems improvements
- Customer or client retention
- Morale-building or culture championing
- Talent acquisition and retention
- Market diversification
- Technological advances
- Significant personal development
- Actions that embody the organization's core values

Authentic recognition serves three greater purposes:

1. Showcase Goal Achievement

Why does it feel so good to get a simple "thank you" from someone? All humans feel the need to be praised at some level. They want to know that their hard work and achievements aren't going unnoticed. When a person achieves a goal, personal or work-related, they feel a rush of achievement, and that good feeling is only amplified when others recognize and acknowledge the achievement.

2. Motivate Effort

Celebrate when employees go above and beyond. This helps them develop emotional connections to the workplace which fuel future performance.

3. Reinforce Values

Achievements and actions that are recognized more frequently show employees what is valued by managers, leaders, and the organization as a whole. When we receive positive recognition for an action, we tend to associate that action with a reward and try to achieve that feeling again in future actions. So recognizing certain actions can reinforce the values an organization wants in its culture.

Types of Recognition

The "how" part of recognition is very important. Every employee embraces recognition differently. Some get a boost from public praise, while introverted workers prefer a subtle or private gesture. After identifying the employee's personality type, openly encourage them through the types of recognition and appreciation that mean the most to them and use the following types to create a recognition mix across your organization.

Peer vs. Superior... Social Recognition can be defined as an employee reward and recognition methodology. Specific tools are used to provide a "communal forum" where workers of every level can come together, share their experiences, and assign rewards to or recognize their peers for their accomplishments. With employee recognition, workers recognize each other and make the workplace feel more inclusive and human. This kind of recognition is one of the most important factors in driving workplace engagement, productivity, and employee retention. Receiving positive feedback from a manager or higher up is a validation of good work. Impressing a superior increases job security and the likelihood of future growth with the organization. Regardless of where it comes from, recognition feels good.
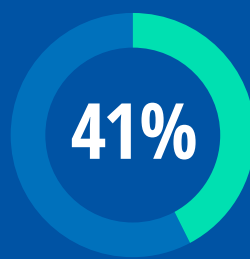
41% of companies that use peer-to-peer recognition have seen positive increases in customer satisfaction. (SHRM)

Attributed vs. Anonymous... Most recognition is given by a known party. There's typically no reason to separate recognition from the giver. But sometimes an anonymous shout-out or thank you card on an employee's desk can have just as much power. It removes the thought that the giver is doling out recognition to seem like a team player rather than authentically expressing appreciation.

Social vs. Private... As mentioned above, no two employees prefer recognition the same way. Some crave the spotlight; others avoid it like the plague and would prefer subtle praise. Recognition should be tailored – when possible – to the preferences of each individual's personality. But when in doubt, deliver it publicly if the only other alternative is not delivering it at all.

Behavior vs. Achievement… Recognition is often linked to metrics, such as hitting a sales goal or staying with an organization for 20 years. But praise can also be lauded for working extra hours, going above and beyond to aid a coworker, or for successfully organizing an awesome company party.

The Organizational Benefits

The old-school line of thinking says that employees shouldn't need recognition to succeed. They should be motivated to keep their job and increase their salary. There's some truth to that – employees should take pride in their work and be motivated for reasons other than praise. But spotlighting strong performance is the frosting on the cake. It transforms a satisfied employee into one who actively pushes for greater things. Here are just some of the other organization-centered benefits:

1. Drives Excellence – Employee recognition is the foundation for creating a culture of excellence – one that fosters appreciation and empowers individuals. It strengthens relationships and provides a clear purpose aligned to achievable goals. A culture of excellence allows business leaders to drive toward key goals like retention, culture, and employee happiness by connecting people and culture to shared purpose.

2. Increases Engagement – Many people leave their jobs due to lack of recognition, while recognition is one of the top drivers for attracting candidates. Recognition not only reduces turnover by helping to stabilize your work environment, but it can help bring top talent into your organization. 84 percent of those surveyed in the SHRM/Workhuman Employee Recognition Survey said that social recognition measurably and positively impacted engagement.

3. Reinforces Company Values – Employee recognition puts the power of gratitude to work, aligning your people and culture to a shared purpose. Because employee recognition should be designed with rewards that map back specifically to each value, it integrates those ideals into employees' everyday thoughts and actions.

4. Nurtures Trust – According to a 2017 study, nearly 90 percent of employees who received recognition from their boss indicated high levels of trust in that relationship vs. just 48 percent for those who received no recognition. Strong organizational trust is a key indicator for profitability. Research has shown that workers who trust senior leaders are nearly 2x as likely to be engaged and love their jobs.

5. Impacts Bottom Line – A Korn Ferry study estimates the cost of replacing an employee is between 50 and 150% of salary. For specialist, senior, and executive positions, the cost per employee rises to up to 213% of salary. When you factor in the intellectual loss, and the time and productivity lost to vacancies and onboarding, you begin to see just how significant the "hidden costs" of employee turnover really are. Research overwhelmingly shows that recognized employees are more likely to stick with you. Organizations with formal recognition programs have 31% less voluntary turnover than organizations that don't have any program at all? And they're 12X more likely to have strong business outcomes.

6. Delivers Vital Data – Employee recognition provides the crowdsourced data that will deliver deep insights into your culture and quickly spot your cultural energizers and top performers. Culture intelligence tools and talent maps provide insight into your talentscape and let you visualize the connections among employees and identify key performers and influencers for the purposes of performance management, succession planning, and retention. Data delivered through an employee recognition program is a kind of true and impartial performance data for your company. Read more in the investing in technology section.

Regardless of your workforce model – but especially if you are shifting to remote-first or hybrid teams – employee recognition is critical to connecting and engaging employees and no better time to implement than when resetting your culture.

Need some inspiration to get your recognition program rolling? Here are some examples of employee-praising recognition programs.

"CRUSH IT" MEETINGS

The entire team from this healthy snack delivery company gathers Friday afternoons to recognize one another. The staff goes around the room nominating other team members who "crushed it" over the past week. It's helped the company maintain its connected culture even as it's expanded from 30 to more than 100 employees.

'G' BOOK

Employees are encouraged to recognize each other by writing complimentary notes in the company's book of "good stuff." Submissions, both personal and work-related, are read aloud weekly at a company meeting. Employee recognition ideas like this have helped the company be featured on *Today*, *The Talk*, and *The Ellen Degeneres Show*.

WEBSITE CALL-OUT

This Denver-based communications firm has a section of their website dedicated to a featured team member who's performed well recently. These posts recognize employees for their lives and passions outside of work in addition to their contributions to the company.

WELLNESS GOALS

Recognition doesn't have to be all about work. Ergodyne, a protective workwear manufacturer, encourages its employees to stay healthy, recognizing and incentivizing them for hitting personal fitness or nutrition goals.

SOCIAL SHOUT-OUT

Extend recognition beyond your organization's population. A Chicago location of the hotel chain created a Facebook page for employee Wallace Pope, calling him a *Star of the Industry*. Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn are all easy ways to share standout employees with a greater audience.

Reminder:

Businesses that are outperforming others know their humans are their greatest asset.

And their biggest differentiator – and so they've put human connection at the center of everything they do, starting with giving gratitude.

Key Action:

Make recognition of your employees a priority – formalize and be consistent!

Research found that employee recognition is a top driver for employee engagement. Regular recognition from peers and managers helps employees feel connected, appreciated, and valued. Identify the areas in which you'll recognize employees, determine how you'll recognize and honor employees, and make sure it's regular – you'll be that much closer to unlocking their full potential.

STRATEGY 5: CAAS – INVEST IN CULTURE TECHNOLOGY TO SUPERCHARGE TEAMS

"While it's a huge but necessary effort to untangle or reset a misaligned culture, technology can help you start to get a handle on it and give you a snapshot of your organization's culture," says Alexander Nicolaus, Chief People Officer at Paysend. "If you want to be at the forefront of the future of work – that is, of our new remote and hybrid workplaces – you should consider this sooner rather than later because you most certainly need to understand how people are feeling, gauge engagement, solicit feedback – and since you aren't in the office to do it, technology can help."
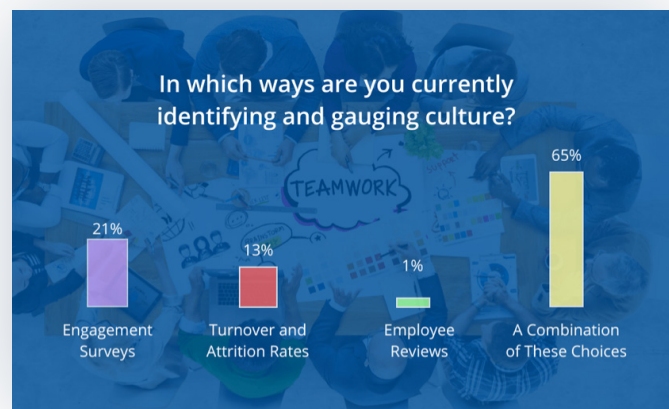
A Humantelligence poll of 200 HR leaders in March 2021 indicated that the majority use a non-centralized combination of surveys, turnover rates, exit interviews and external review sites to gauge culture.

Use a centralized, data-centric approach to measuring culture in order to keep a pulse on what needs to change. With a psychometric-based approach to measuring and managing culture that goes well beyond the qualitative data of engagement surveys, you can identify current culture and compare against a target culture by highlighting adaptations to be made.

Juan Betancourt, CEO of Humantelligence, adds that with pandemic-imposed changes to business models, you'll need to build and enable a culture and working environments that support those models – office perks can no longer be charged with this responsibility. As your company grows, it's key is to implement solutions that empower cross-functional collaboration and increased employee productivity. There are ways now, using technology, to measure and address culture, connect more meaningfully with one another, assess team members' ability to work remotely and where to focus training and support, and to get a pulse on how people are feeling in our latest new normal. And it doesn't have to be a daunting, expensive undertaking.

A cost-effective way to think of this is to create a baseline KPI, such as profit per employee. As you invest in productivity tools, your profit per employee has the ability to increase. This assumes you are growing the business. If revenue is consistent, then you would be looking at productivity solutions that allow you to reduce costs and overhead.

Either way, explore implementing culture intelligence solutions. It's one of the most important technology tools in the culture building toolkit. Plus, as we transition into more long-term commonplace remote and hybrid work models, it's going to be imperative to infuse culture and individual emotional intelligence into your day-to-day processes, especially if you're working to foster a culture of better understanding, inclusion, collaboration – and who isn't?

Emotional Intelligence is Critical

This can begin as easily as putting **emotional intelligence insights** at the fingertips of every employee, where they

communicate most often – and for most of us now, that's in virtual meetings and via email. You're probably already using communication technology like Slack, Microsoft Teams, Gmail, and more! But you're probably not optimizing your use of those tools by integrating emotional intelligence for your team. With a simple integrated plug-in, you can give your staff the kind of information needed to better communicate and collaborate with one another, taking all of the guesswork out of it and allowing them to spend time on the work that matters.

Imagine being able to click on meeting participants and see real-time tips and recommendations for communicating, motivating, and influencing. Imagine seeing this same information in aggregate for your meeting group. Imagine knowing who best to tap on for pre- or post-meeting action items, for helping leading certain initiatives while identifying those better suited to document or support, and who might benefit from a heads up on particular messages — all of which take into account your team members' behaviors, motivators, and work styles in an easy-to-understand way.

What's more in this transition to remote, hybrid, and distributed workforces, managers often have little insight into how well their team members will work remotely. That doesn't have to be the case. You can use **Remote Work Scorecards**, which provide insight into understanding the psychometrics around one's behaviors, motivators, and ideal work styles. In just a click, you'll have recommendations to help maintain productivity, tailor communication, and enable better performance while working remotely.
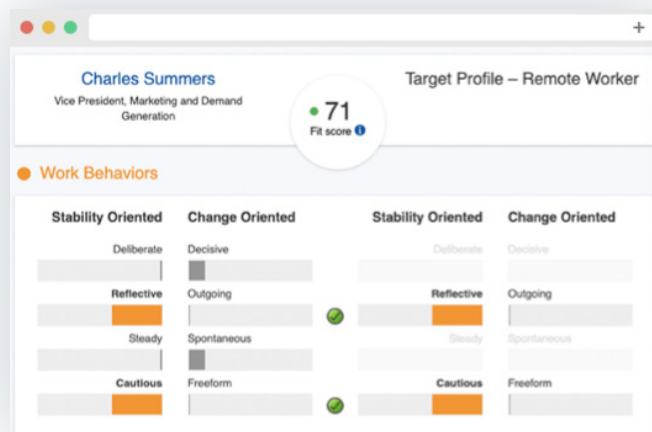

Use a Remote Work Scorecard for an individual employee, a team, or a team leader to see an assessment of the eight most important characteristics for working remotely and how you can help support them.

By better understanding how individuals and your meeting team teaches and learns, you'll even find yourself combatting meeting fatigue – one of the largest drawbacks to remote work.

Culture as a Service: Identify your Organizational Identity to Reset It

Take EQ deeper and use culture analytics and talent mapping to gain new insight into how your organization operates so you can optimize teams, drive change, and reset your culture.

Imagine being able to compare under- and high-performing teams within the organization to identify and address issues faster. Using a simple and fun 12-minute assessment, you can then culture map core values to your team's measured motivators, behaviors and ideal work environments to gauge alignment and identify gaps – allowing you to build an action plan to achieve your desired culture. When you implement culture intelligence solutions, you're leveraging often unknown and unnoticed insights about your team to establish more effective communication, working structures, and talent acquisition plans. You'll maximize effectiveness when you have a more holistic view of your organization's identity.
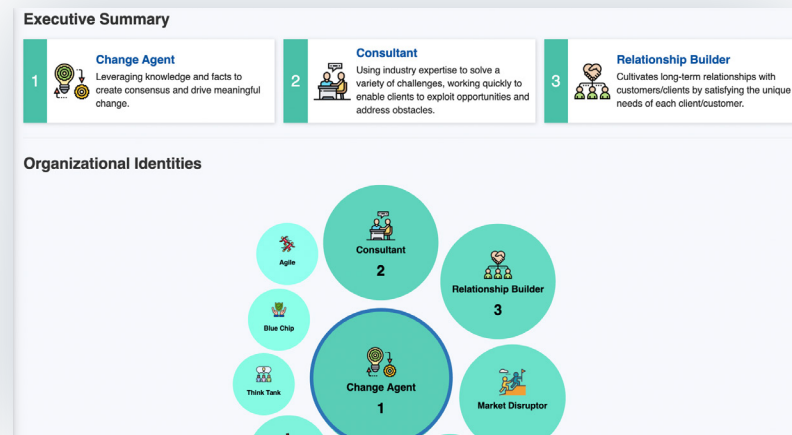
Your Culture Scape: Gain a total picture of your organization's identity to understand how and where to drive change and optimize teams.

- Map current to target organizational cultures, pinpointing strengths and gaps to identify necessary shifts.
- Align talent development & workforce planning strategies to goals.
- Advance data-informed leadership and team composition changes that foster innovation.

- Hire more intentionally for culture fit, performance, and diversity of thought needs.
- Power effective teaming and meaningful collaboration to drive performance and profitability from wherever your teams work.

It's important to give your employees the opportunity to thrive and do the job they were hired to do – instead of requiring them to spend their valuable time figuring how to work better with one another. This work will only wear them down, when there are easier, faster tech-enabled ways to do it. Doing so drives trust in your processes and leadership ability, and keeps employees engaged and performing at their highest levels.

Reminder:

Key to productivity and growth, culture is difficult to measure and harder to change.

But when you leverage culture intelligence technology, you can get new insight into how your organization operates so you can optimize teams, drive change, and transform culture.

Key Action:

Consider Culture-as-a-Service to determine where and how your team needs to adjust.

With tools that support better collaboration, remote working, and culture mapping, you'll have all the data you need to address issues in real-time, provide your team with the communication insights needed to collaborate more meaningfully, and drive changes that optimize organizational effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

PEOPLE + TECHNOLOGY

Superteaming is the combination of people and technology leveraging their complementary capabilities to pursue outcomes at a speed and scale not otherwise possible (Superteams: Putting AI in the group, Deloitte Insights, May 2020).

Organizations are investing in new technology and using it to change the nature of work so that it makes the most of people's distinctly human capabilities. From collaboration tools that enhance teaming and connection to artificial intelligence technologies that can guide people in making decisions, technologies integrated with humans on teams can enable those teams to pursue new and better outcomes at greater speed and scale. This investment in technology combined with prioritized strategies to change your meeting culture, shift communication expectations, connect for quality, and recognize employee contributions in new and ongoing ways could spell the difference between just surviving another year, or thriving.

As your company grows and changes, as new faces join, and as roles and teams shift focus, remember so too can your culture. Use this guide as a reminder to regularly assess culture and consider the adjustments you can make in communication, structure, recognition, and technology in order to sustain and engage your remote and hybrid workforce so that your teams can perform to their highest potential.

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THE CULTURE SOFTWARE

LET US HELP!

Humantelligence is the leading cloud-based platform for the accurate measurement of culture at every level of an organization, from individuals and teams to overall corporate culture. HT has the quickest, most comprehensive self-assessment that measures behaviors, motivators, and work energizers so that leaders have the culture and talent intelligence needed to measure, manage, and hire for fit, optimize collaboration while reducing turnover, and build engaged high-performing teams across the organization. For a consultation, contact us at www.humantelligence.com.