

More than ever HR will be responsible for redefining **who, how, where and when** work gets done in 2021. As we contemplate how work will look - and which changes to the workforce, the workplace, workflow, and the employee experience are likely to remain following the COVID-19 crisis - HR executives must be prepared to attend to a wide range of intersecting issues.

Hybrid work model. With employees demonstrating that they can work remotely AND productively, more employers are committing to long-term flexible and remote work policies. A hybrid work model will take hold for most organizations post-COVID with a combination of in-person and remote work. **Maximum flexibility and employee discretion, increased training for managers and employees, and continuous feedback on performance** will be critical to keeping workers engaged and productive.

- Employers are [re-evaluating how hybrid teams can get work done](#) - leveraging technology and automation, redefining workflows, and rethinking workspaces, where some combination of office headquarters, new regional hubs, co-working spaces, and home office is likely.
- Flexibility will shift towards *when* employees are expected to work with less emphasis on a traditional 40-hour work week.
- With more fluid and borderless organizations, some predict a move toward [Work from Anywhere](#) policies in order to attract top talent and skills. However, at this time over half of BCCWF members (54%) consider a long-term Work from Anywhere policy "not at all likely".

Culture focused on agility and accountability. With the abrupt shift towards remote work due to COVID-19, workforces are increasingly distributed across geographies and time zones. There will be a renewed focus on designing and nurturing a **culture that prioritizes agility and holds teams together from a distance** - including the ability for leaders to embrace ambiguity. In addition, organizations will be expected to establish DE&I goals publicly, adopt stances on societal/political issues and invest resources accordingly.

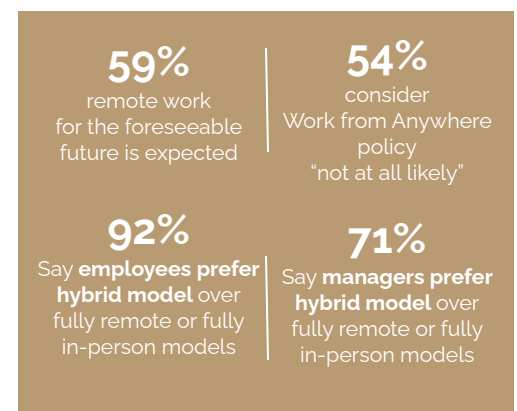
- In order for organizations to adapt in this uncertain environment, there should be less emphasis on a clearly defined "culture fit" and more emphasis on managing for a diversity of skills, backgrounds and perspectives - ["expanding rather than consolidating your culture"](#), as Chamorro-Premuzic (HBR) suggests.
- Organizations with a positive culture that is equally supportive of remote and on-site workers are more likely to attract and retain talent. In a [Gartner survey of over 5,000 employees](#), those who reported that culture improved since starting to work remotely were more likely to report high employee engagement, high discretionary effort and intent to stay, and high inclusion compared to employees who report their organization's culture has deteriorated.
- According to Gartner, 74% of employees expect their employer to become more actively involved in cultural debates of the day. CEOs who invest resources in issues that matter to employees will see more highly engaged employees.
- [Emerging HR roles](#) in 2021 and beyond may include Cultural Ambassador, Digital HR Lead, and Employee Experience Specialist.

"We are trying to figure out how to move into a hybrid model so that (1) leaders and principal investigators are comfortable; and (2) we meet the emerging needs/expectations of employees. Our big question is how do we do this and maintain our purpose, culture, and brand? Collectively those three things are the secret sauce for our organization."

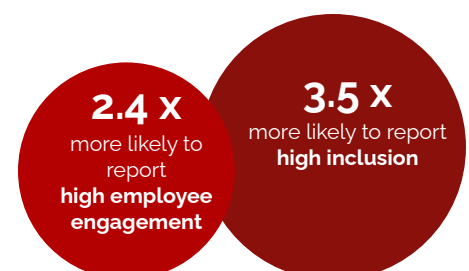
-BCCWF Member

A recent ADP Research Institute study found that **44% of employers** now have official flexible working policies in place, up from 24% before the pandemic.

According to a BCCWF member survey...



Those who report culture has improved since starting to work remotely are...



Source: [gartner.com](#)

Visible metrics for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion. Maintaining diverse and inclusive workplaces is **both a business imperative and issue of equality** that increasingly will be tracked and measured. The racial justice movement of 2020 shed light on the work that still needs to be done to move toward racial equity. Furthermore, due to COVID-19, women and underrepresented groups are at particular risk for dropping out of the workforce and rolling back hard-won gains in wages, workforce representation, and leadership.

- Job loss and voluntary departure from the workforce due to COVID-19 disproportionately impacted women, [specifically women of color](#). Four times more women than men dropped out of the workplace in September 2020, with an [additional 156,000 jobs lost for women](#) in December. It will be essential for organizations to improve benefits and flexibility to make work more sustainable.
- Sourcing for candidates should include [diverse institutions](#), such as Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), Hispanic and Latino organizations, or professional groups like the National Association of Asian American Professionals, LGBT Meeting Professionals Association and Women For Hire.
- The demand for authentic allyship and [concrete action](#) continues. Organizations will be under pressure to publicly state their goals and actions and hold themselves accountable. New SEC [human capital disclosure requirements](#) may complicate these efforts for some organizations.

De-biased and personalized approach to talent management. Talent acquisition and management strategies will evolve to meet the changing world. Technology and training will be utilized to source, reskill and redeploy a more diverse workforce. **Hybrid skills** that combine hard and soft skills will be highly valued along with a focus on **continuous learning** and **ongoing feedback** on performance and objectives.

- [Technology](#) will play a larger role in the acquisition process, including systems to help with digital-driven sourcing, remote interviewing, and AI to remove bias.
- With a more remote workforce, sourcing a diverse talent pool will become easier. Organizations are considering cost of living adjustments and tax implications that could accompany this shift.
- A strong [virtual onboarding process](#) will be more important than ever to ensure employee satisfaction and retention. Bringing managers into the process early, frequent and scheduled check-ins, and assigning "buddies" are some of the ways organizations can build a new process.
- Organizations must identify and address at-risk groups, at-risk jobs, and skills gaps to match their talent to their work. Tracking and tying learning and upskilling to reward programs will enable organizations and individuals to remain competitive.
- [Dynamic and flexible goal-setting](#), supported by frequent and informal feedback and coaching will be at the center of performance evaluation.

Organizations with inclusive cultures are...

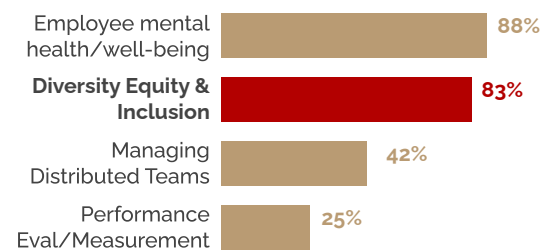


57% of businesses and HR leaders surveyed globally say that it is important to use data analytics to de-bias hiring and rewards.

Source: World Economic Forum, HR4.0 White Paper, 2019

Diversity Equity & Inclusion is among Top Future of Work Issues for BCCWF Members

(% of organizations who say it is a top issue)



Source: BCCWF member survey, December 2020

"The only viable management style going forward will be ongoing coaching conversations that establish a rhythm of collaboration and create shared accountability for performance and development."

-Wigert and Barrett, Gallup

Expanding definition of the employee experience. The trend toward the "whole person" approach to workforce management will continue with an emphasis on a **more data-driven and personalized rather than homogenized approach to managing people**. The pandemic has laid bare the details and struggles of employees' personal lives and, in response, employers are shifting to "[managing the life experience of their employees](#)" across a wider set of measures, including mental health and financial well-being.

- Organizations are investing in "people analytics", a data-driven approach to understanding workforce needs, attitudes and productivity in real time, enabling them to adapt quickly.
- [Data](#) show that organizations with high-performing employee experience outperform the sector average ROA by 2%, ROE by 3%, and gross profit margin by 12%.
- According to Gartner's 2020 [ReimagineHR Employee Survey](#), employers that support employees' life experience see a 23% increase in the number of employees reporting better mental health and 17% increase in the number of employees reporting better physical health..

Increased budget and focus on mental health and well-being. The emphasis on employee mental health and well-being will continue into 2021. Blurred boundaries between work and home are here to stay; as such, **employers need to create new norms around attending to well-being** as it directly impacts engagement, productivity, and retention.

- Mental health has been trending downward throughout the pandemic, as people battle loneliness, fatigue, burnout, and overwhelm. 29% of respondents to a [BCG survey](#) indicated that they have experienced worse overall mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic. The stress and anxiety brought about by the pandemic underscore how critical it is for employers to recognize the links between mental health and productivity.
- According to a 2020 BCG global study of working parents in the US, UK, France, Germany, and Italy, 60% of respondents reported that they had no outside help in caring for and educating their children.
- With increased responsibilities for unpaid work, such as caregiving and homeschooling, employees are at risk for burning out. According to McKinsey's [2020 Women in the Workplace report](#), 3 out of 4 senior-level women cite burnout as the primary reason for downshifting or leaving the workforce.
- [Use of virtual mental health services](#) is rapidly growing. In September 2020, telehealth provider Ginger reported that utilization of virtual therapy and psychiatry was up 302% compared to pre-COVID averages. An Amwell study finds that 62% of consumers would prefer a virtual visit for regular mental health visits, even after it is safe to return to in-person visits.
- Virtual mental health care will continue to grow as a more scalable and effective method for delivering timely support for isolated and far-flung employees. With the help of analytics, virtual care can also provide a preventative benefit to employees and employers.

"Well-being initiatives understandably grew in 2020, and in 2021 companies will create larger budgets for well-being than ever experienced in the past, as well as implement dedicated leadership for the function if not already in place."

-i4cp 2021 Priorities & Predictions

According to a December 2020 BCCWF member survey, **71% of respondents reported that feelings of well-being have decreased among the workforce** in the last 3 months, while productivity (74%), job satisfaction (77%) and job commitment (77%) have stayed the same.

Employer Support for Mental Health & Well-being

21% increase in the number of high performers in organizations that support employees' life experience ([Gartner](#))

Employee mental health and well-being is the **top future of work issue** for BCCWF members.

Employees want the **ability to text or or video chat** more than any other mental health service. ([Ginger](#))

A 2017 Canada study finds that companies whose mental health programs have been in place for 3+ years have a **median annual ROI of \$2.18 for every \$1 spent**. ([Deloitte](#))