



## **A New Era - The Future Workplace**

By: Mary Chan

The Covid-19 pandemic has posed several challenges within the workplace. Most of these challenges revolve around flexible and hybrid workspaces and has created the “Great Resignation” era. As we enter the precipice of 2022, if we do not adapt the path ahead will be grim. In times like this, agility is important for companies to be sustainable for the future. Now is the perfect time to seek opportunities during this rapid evolution. This is the time to build a foundation for the future workspace to adapt to shifting workspace paradigms. The most important core value is reassessment and strategizing for this new era, and how we create value for our organization during this opportune time.

In today’s “Hybrid” Era, also known as the “Synchronize/Asynchronous” Revolution, we are history in the making. There is a rapid movement occurring, and the focus has been set on COVID-19 procedures, policies, and practices, as well as hybrid work schedules. But we should not make the same historic mistake of looking at only the best business practices for the organization. Consider looking beyond the reactionary, and begin building a solid strategy for the resilient economy. The future of the workplace goes beyond the mask and vaccine mandate, and its practices and procedures. It goes deeper than whether a two or three-day in-office work schedule will produce more input/output. Binary relationships between employers and employees are a thing of the past. It’s time to look ahead and prioritize our most valuable assets, our talent...our people.

Reassessing Human Capital, as a whole, should be the core value, and answering the most important question: what is our Employee Value Proposition?

- For example, from a talent acquisition standpoint: How are we recruiting? What are we recruiting for? How are we bringing people into the organization? How do we make them feel?
- From an employer branding standpoint: how can we differentiate ourselves?
- Overall: How can we improve our complete talent management experience, not only for today but for the future?

A Human-Centric business model is desperately needed. Reports have concluded that when employees are given flexibility and an option, it empowers employees and increases engagement. According to a survey completed by Deloitte, in 2020, when employees were given the option, employee motivation increased by 40% and work productivity has increased by 45%. Shifting from traditional managing to leading with empathy, trust, and understanding during this rapid evolution is the sustainable future.

Artificial intelligence (AI) will also aid in the new wave of the future. AI will have the ability to combine optimization with humanization. The current technology was designed to track input and produce output, but AI will be the bridge that works with the people of the culture to produce outcomes, which will be the future of our workspace.

As we wait for AI to be redefined, we start the preparation by relying on current technology and human interaction which are crucial during this beginning/experimental phase of our era. As such, now is the time for leaders to be open-minded to the rapid evolution.

One size has never fit all when it came to strategic planning, but more so now, than ever, individualized strategizing was forced to the forefront in this resilient culture and economy.

Shifting from Process and Data Driven business model to Human-Centric business model is the beginning steps to laying out the foundation for a sustainable future. Reassessment and realignment should be focused



on the culture, real estate, technology, and reskilling and shifting talent internally. The four core foundations will have an immediate impact on Human Outcome & Business Outcome and start the foundation for a longer-term strategy in the near future.

### 1. **Culture:**

To reexamine our culture, we need to seek answers to the questions: How is our culture viewed internally? How does our culture differentiate from our competitors?

In order to keep engagement amongst employees high, they must feel accepted and supported with their voices heard. To accurately take people's feedback into consideration, companies will need to work hard to ensure that modalities of communication are adequate and open. Companies will also need to consider options that weren't previously offered, such as flexible and hybrid work schedules, and assess the compensation and benefits plans, as well as the total rewards incentives, offered to employees to convince talent to stay.

### 2. **Real Estate:**

Real Estate is another reason leaders are adamant on having employees back at the office 100%. For those that are leasing, consider renegotiating the lease to give back some space and reconfigure to accommodate for desk hoteling. If permitted, consider subleasing when the lease is up.

If a company owns real estate, consider reconfiguring space for hoteling workspaces. Consider subleasing the space out to other organizations seeking to downsize.

### 3. **Technology**

During the Digital Transformation era, HR professionals focused more on technology. What is going on with technology? What are the trends that your company needs to be a part of? They are missing the mark. Consider looking at the problems and the issues...and how digital can solve that problem. In my experience, I focus on the people because that's where the problem and the issues start and then I seek digital to help solve those problems.

During COVID19, working relationships became transactional due to technology. There is no doubt that technology has increased dehumanization as a result of remote work. When in person, our dialogue is different than that digitally.

Now more than ever, is the time to revamp and invest in updated technology and software that will help better communications throughout the organization as well as smart intelligence to find creative ways to collect human-centric data.

### 4. **Organizational Redevelopment: Reskill and Shift Talent Internally**

Shift the mindset from managing to leading. Shift from managing the business, process, input, and output to leading outcomes and to a more personal and empathetic managing style. Retrain managers



to empower employees by encouraging resilience, affirm strengths, listen & offer advice, be vulnerable and transparent, show empathy, guide and help employees break through barriers.

Consider changing performance management to performance development. Shift to focus more on strengths and leverage them. Strengths equal Power and passion. Tap into people's strength and shift their positions to fill the gaps within the organization. Develop strengths not only up but across.

Reevaluate the succession plan and conduct an overall skills reassessment to shift talent around but be inclusive of employee's long-term goals.

**About the Author:**

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Mary Chan serves as Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO) and Operations for Colliers Greater Philadelphia region. In her current role, Ms. Chan is responsible for leading the region's overall human resources strategy, which consists of risk mitigation, talent acquisition, leadership development, diversity and inclusion, organizational design and cultural development, employee education and development, compensation and benefits, HR operations and technology, employee relations, and security. Under Ms. Chan's leadership at Colliers, the company was named the "Best of Workplace" for several years consecutively and is continually listed as one of the top five Brokerage firms by the Philadelphia Business Journal.

Ms. Chan's achievement includes the HR Excellence of the Year award by SHRM and honored by the Philadelphia Business Journal as a Minority Business Leader and Insight Philadelphia Leader. Ms. Chan has been a keynote speaker with SHRM, HR Management Institute, Chamber of Commerce, and Business Journals on several HR topics. Ms. Chan is also a member of the Philadelphia SHRM Thought Leadership Team.

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