



Utilizing Resources for the Future Work Arrangements

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Abstract

In today's VUCA environment, the world has faced many uncertain challenges, from technological disruptions to demographic changes that lead to new behaviors that result in inevitable business transformations. Adding to that, a global pandemic of COVID-19 has greatly affected all people's adjustments to the "new normal" ways of living. As a result, flexible work arrangements such as WFH or remote work have emerged as one of the key themes in the HRM realm following the changing terrain. Given that these arrangements have managerial implications for the leadership and decision-makers, this article aimed to portray the impact of the changes in global terrain on how people adjusted to the new way of working. Furthermore, given that COVID-19 outbreaks are likely to persist and become a local epidemic, this article attempted to forecast the future of work arrangements, including innovative ways for people to adjust to new ways of working. Key themes emphasized new skills and competencies required in response to the digital landscape, flexible work arrangements from the physical workplace to how actual tasks and work can be restructured to suit organizational needs, as well as fostering a sense of community that promotes human interactions to support learning and knowledge transfer. The article adds to the understanding of HRM through foresights that promote strategic policy making and contribute to the organization's sustainable growth in the long run.

Keywords: HRM; WFH; Remote Work; Flexible Workplace; Human Capital

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รูปแบบของการทำงานในอนาคต: มุ่งมั่นการใช้ทรัพยากรให้เกิดประโยชน์สูงสุด

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บทคัดย่อ

ปัจจุบันโลกโซเชียลกับสภาวะของความไม่แน่นอน ทั้งการดิสรัปท์เนื่องด้วยความก้าวหน้าทางเทคโนโลยี และความเปลี่ยนแปลงของพฤติกรรมผู้คน ที่ธุรกิจจำต้องมีการปรับเปลี่ยนเพื่อความอยู่รอด นอกจากนั้น สภากาณฑ์จากการระบาดใหญ่ของโควิด-19 ที่ได้ส่งผลกระทบต่อวิถีชีวิตก่อให้เกิดวิถีปกติใหม่ ที่ทั้งคนและองค์กรต้องปรับตัว หนึ่งในประเด็นเกี่ยวกับการจัดการทรัพยากรมนุษย์ คือ ความยืดหยุ่นของรูปแบบในการทำงาน อาทิ การทำงานจากบ้านหรือที่ได้ ซึ่งมีผลกับการปรับเปลี่ยนวิถีการดำเนินงานขององค์กรในหลาย ๆ ด้าน บทความนี้ได้วิเคราะห์ข้อมูลที่เกี่ยวข้องเพื่อคาดการณ์รูปแบบของการทำงานในอนาคต โดยเฉพาะเมื่อคาดว่าสภากาณฑ์โควิด-19 มีแนวโน้มที่จะคงอยู่ไปอีกช่วงระยะเวลาหนึ่งจนกว่าจะกลับเป็นโรคระบาดประจำถิ่นในที่สุด ประเด็นสำคัญที่ได้จากการสังเคราะห์ คือ องค์กรต้องมีการเสริมสร้างทักษะและสมรรถนะใหม่ที่ทันต่อการเปลี่ยนแปลงโดยเฉพาะด้านดิจิทัลและเทคโนโลยี รวมถึงเพิ่มความยืดหยุ่นทั้งในแง่ของวิธีการจัดระบบงานและสถานที่ทำงานภายใน โดยไม่ละทิ้งซึ่งมิติทางสังคมที่ยังคงอื้อต่อการมีปฏิสัมพันธ์ของบุคคลากรและส่งเสริมการแลกเปลี่ยนเรียนรู้ ทั่วโลก วิถีปกติใหม่ของการทำงาน การทำความเข้าใจถึงการเปลี่ยนแปลงและคาดการณ์ภาพอนาคตของการทำงานยุคใหม่ จะสนับสนุนการวางแผนนโยบายเชิงกลยุทธ์ในการบริหารจัดการทรัพยากรมนุษย์ เพื่อสร้างการเติบโตที่ยั่งยืนให้กับองค์กร

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Introduction

Flexible work arrangements have become mainstream in the realms of HRM for some years, even before the COVID-19 pandemic. Many organizations have urged their employees to determine their own mix between coming to work at the office and working remotely from other locations, resulting in more flexible work arrangements (Hayman, 2009; Hunter, 2019). Such arrangements have been known to be attractive to many employees, especially those who may have duties to take care of their family members such as the elderly or newborns, and have led to an increase in remote workers (Chen & Fulmer, 2018; Groen et al., 2018). With the aid of technological support, digital nomads are one of the phenomena that reflect this notion of flexible work arrangements, with the aid of which they can move around geographically and perform tasks and duties with the same levels of expected standards as if they were working from their office base (Olga, 2020).

The gig economy is also another form of flexible work that benefits from technology, which allows gig workers to utilize their skills, knowledge, time, and resources to generate additional work opportunities and income through outsourced assignments or task-based work (Sullivan & Jarrahi, 2017; Vallas & Schorr, 2020). For instance, full-time office employees may opt to become rideshare drivers after their regular working hours, and they may earn more from the likes of sharing economy platforms.

Furthermore, Work From Home (WFH) is considered to be one of the phenomena that has risen out of the COVID-19 pandemic to comply with social distancing measures implemented by most nations to control the spread of the disease. Therefore, WFH emerged as a global phenomenon where millions of employees around the world locked themselves in their confined spaces and utilized technology to continue operating in a new normal way. Many workers who have turned remote have adapted themselves to this new normal practice, including the conduct of virtual meetings in lieu of physical ones, so that they could maintain the efficiency and effectiveness of work performed compared to the pre-pandemic period (Jalagat & Jalagat, 2019). They also need to further hone and sharpen these newly acquired skills as organizations continue to operate on a fully remote basis (Galanti et al., 2021; Gallacher & Hossain, 2020; Wang et al., 2021).

In addition, natural resources are constantly depleted, and capitalism still encourages excessive consumption of resources. Therefore, sustainability issues become

a critical challenge in managing resources into the future (Feola, 2020; Pierleoni, 2020). Together with the continued decline in the global birth rate, it is inevitable that future work patterns need to be reflective and adaptive to these demographic and environmental concerns. Remote work technologies, in particular, would become the enabling condition that allows employees to create value for the organization regardless of location (Baker et al., 2007; Model, 2021; Toscano & Zappala 2021).

Assuming that these setups have strategic implications for leaders and executives, the purpose of this article was to illustrate the potential scenarios where employees transition to the new method of working as a result of changes in the global landscape. Furthermore, given that COVID-19 outbreaks are projected to continue and ultimately become a local epidemic, this article attempted to anticipate the future of work arrangements, suggesting innovative ways for workers to acclimatize to new ways of working. It used to be that flexible work arrangements were a luxury for only certain groups of working professionals, such as freelancers and digital nomads. Given the state of the pandemic, most office premises will likely be impacted, and hence their employees. A limited number of functions may still be required to operate on-site, such as building supervision, security services, and housekeeping. It is inevitable that their daily operations will be affected by public and corporate policies, and that they will have to navigate through confusion and uncertainties. Thus, most employees would be impacted by the circumstances to some degree, whether positively or negatively. As time goes by, people start to get used to working from their own space, though preferences differ from one group to another, indicating that there would not be one right formula for all.

The novel skills and competencies required in response to the adjusted landscape, flexible work arrangements from the physical surroundings to how actual tasks and work can be reconstructed to meet organizational needs, and fostering a sense of community that encourages human interactions to facilitate learning and knowledge transfer were all highlighted as key themes. The article contributes to a better understanding of human resource management by providing foresights that aid strategic policymaking and make a significant contribution to the organization's long-term sustainability.

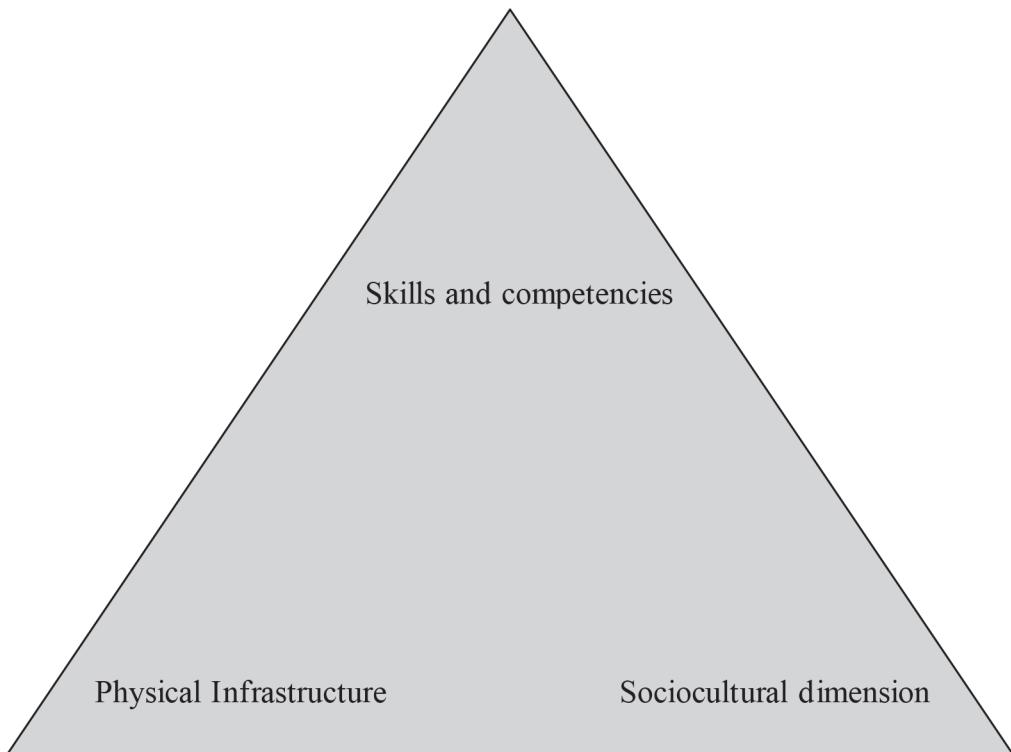


Figure 1: Diagram Illustrating Three Critical Areas of Future Work Arrangements

Following the aims stated, three critical areas are identified to reflect the changes required to thrive in the future work environment. They cover the areas of skills and competencies, physical infrastructure, and the sociocultural dimension. That said, people have to possess new skills and competencies that are compatible with the digital era and the new norms. It is important as knowledge and skills become obsolete at a much faster rate than ever. Skills that have been useful may be totally irrelevant in the years to come. Thus employees have to be well prepared to relearn and unlearn to acquire literacy in things that have never existed in the world before, such as the Metaverse.

As for physical infrastructure, it should be equipped with the elements that cater to a highly diverse workforce who may operate on different terms, from public transportation to urban housing. Given that more employees have the luxury of working from any remote location, the infrastructure as well as policy designs should be inclusive to provide what these diverse workers have come to expect. Finally, human interactions and socialization continue to be pivotal enablers that foster a sense of community and drive knowledge

sharing and transfer. Without these relationships and connectedness, employees may not feel engaged with the organization and team, and may face adverse psychological effects of being removed and neglected. In the subsequent sections, these emergent themes will be further elaborated to demonstrate how they may be of significance to organizational change and transformation amid the volatile future.

Future Work Arrangements in Thematic Areas

Skills and competencies

Employees will be required to develop new skills and competencies to cope with the disruption and the pandemic. Organizations have to engage in transformations that leverage technologies to bring about desired outcomes. Automation, virtual realities, and the metaverse are some of the recently upgraded technologies that may be useful for future operations. Employees must learn new skills and competencies that are up to date and can be applied to changing terrains in the post-pandemic era (Nash, 2020). Agility and resilience would be critical elements that support the organizations' adaptability, whereas human capital, structure, and processes will be revisited to align with the changes in strategies and practices under the new normals (Cheese, 2020; Micelli et al., 2021).

The newly acquired skills and competencies will nonetheless be interrelated with various types of literacy, i.e., digital literacy, artificial intelligence (AI) literacy, virtual reality (VR) literacy, and other tech-related literacies. Such understandings would empower the employees to apply technologies to their regular functions effectively, while bringing out key strengths and limiting the weaknesses of the systems. Meanwhile, organizations would be able to plan ahead in terms of policy formation and strategy implementation, which focused on the achievement of goals and objectives at both the organizational and individual levels.

Apart from mastering the above-mentioned literacies, empathy remains a crucial aspect that employees need to consider when working alongside emergent technologies (Lim & Okuno, 2015). This is because humans still hold an edge over technology when it comes to understanding each other and interpreting revolving contexts (Leite et al., 2013; Montemayor, Halpern & Fairweather, 2021). Therefore, human capital would likely

develop the skills and competencies required to govern and work alongside these intelligence systems in order to fulfill organizational mission and goals. For instance, firms may still require personnel to control and troubleshoot the automated call center given that the system may not be able to handle customers' special requests, which it has not been programmed to function.

In terms of developing the skills and competencies, Human Resources (HR) ideally consults with respective units to familiarize themselves with the role of emergent technologies. HR should point out how such technologies will influence the way of working both during and after the pandemic so that employees have ample time to adapt and adjust to the changes in work-related contexts. HR is also responsible for job analysis and key competencies that need to be developed and elevated in response to the changes. HR also acts as a catalyst to encourage staff to capitalize on the application of technologies in order to enhance work effectiveness. Training and development have become a key aspect of staff continuous learning and development (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020). In particular, HR should prepare employees to learn, relearn, and unlearn with the aim of providing new skills and brushing up on those that need updates, as well as to urge the depletion of obsolete skills and knowledge to support the transformation after the disruption (Becker, 2019; Cegarra-Navarro & Wensley, 2019).

This article attempts to use the futurist integrative lens to identify and envision potential changes in work arrangements in the future. Job reclassification emerges as an important area in which the emphasis will be placed upon task-based and output-based types of jobs rather than the standard position-based or functional-based jobs. Furthermore, outsourcing and the flexibility to work multiple jobs with the aid of gig economy platforms will likely come mainstream, especially with the Gen Z population that has just entered the workforce in recent years. This group of people values freedom and flexibility, as reflected in the popularity of freelancing, short-term projects and contracts, as well as entrepreneurial endeavors, which offer higher freedom and flexibility compared to traditional office full-time work (Baldonado, 2018; Maloni, Hiatt & Campbell, 2019).

From the job analysis perspective, tasks are the elements that make up a role profile. While the job description clearly states the roles, responsibilities, and scope of

work for the given functional position. This allows the organization to conduct workforce planning by optimizing the headcount that suits the size of the entity in attaining its mission. When the future work prospects require organizations to transform and change, they need to consider reorganization by grouping the work and its structure to align with new technology adoption and corresponding changes in future work arrangements.

Organizations should break down the high-level tasks into smaller pieces, as in the form of sub-tasks, which would allow for other colleagues or team members to substitute and carry on others' tasks when in need, irrespective of their functional positions. As a result, jobs and tasks are better reallocated to the actual emerging needs of the organization. Flexible job reclassifications are ideal for reaping the benefits of a matrix organizational structure, and resources can be effectively allocated to meet the demands and needs for manpower. On the other hand, personnel could further develop expertise for career growth and advancements in a diverse manner, not technically bound by the seniority system or, as usually the case, a vertical hierarchy with its typical linear structure (Huvanandana, 2022).

By utilizing more flexible work arrangements, HR should place a strong focus on designing performance appraisal systems that deploy suitable measures and tools to reflect upon the enhanced degree of work flexibility as well as an applicable flat organizational structure. For instance, in terms of rewards, HR may utilize pay or incentives issued per output or performance to focus on the outcomes and impact that genuinely matter to the attainment of the mission.

From the employee's perspective, they may utilize their skills, competencies, and expertise to create value and impact for numerous entities. They may enter into multiple contractual work agreements or even register on a roster list of technical experts so that their skill sets can be deployed in a variety of opportunities.

Networking site like LINKEDIN is viewed as a potential databank that contains invaluable information on human capital profiles and their skill sets could be identified through hashtags. Such data processed by AI may be worthwhile in matching the needs of job seekers and recruiters. Platform features may be upgraded to support subscriptions based on the skill sets' hashtags. Subscription hashtags would benefit many small- and medium-sized organizations with limited resources to hire, develop, and retain

full-time employees given that their actual manpower needs are lower. For example, a small nonprofit that runs a bi-annual charitable event may find the fundraising hashtag useful to identify a short-term project contractor with the desired experience and skills to run the event on a seasonal basis.

Physical infrastructure

The aspect of physical infrastructure also needs to be adjusted to align with new ways of working, just as with the aspects of human capital and technology. Urbanization will help shape diverse work patterns in the future since more residents will move into less established neighborhoods. Some of the more established areas will likely be gentrified to reflect new demands from populations. Nonetheless, the areas will reflect the inhabitants' identities. For instance, more expats are priced out of the inner CBD areas i.e. Lumpini and mid-Sukhumvit which become more unaffordable. They have migrated into the less known albeit more cost-friendly areas like Phrakanong, it has brought about many changes to the locals and resulted in many enterprises and business opportunities that sprung up as a result (Freshbangkok.com, 2019).

Not only that many areas have been gentrified to reflect altered demands of professionals and residents alike, the office rentals sector has adjusted to the changing needs and patterns of use as well. Many office rental spaces have become more flexibly designed to cater diverse needs. Many co-working areas have been developed to be shared amongst remote workers given that more workers continue to engage in work across time zones. This concept may be juxtaposed with restaurant spaces that serve as typical diners during the day and are turned into full bar services after hours. Hence, office spaces that have been idle during the night could be utilized to serve more users. This will help generate additional cash flows to the renters provided that they manage their costs e.g. electricity and manpower effectively.

Therefore, it is inevitable that modern offices should possess high flexibility and could be well adjusted to suit the targeted users' needs and preferences. Co-working space is a well-praised practice that could be thought of as a key driver for cost savings or income-generating models in order to optimize resources per the economic demand and supply rules. Furthermore, employees should be empowered to select the flexible patterns that suit their working and living preferences and conditions. They may determine

the number of days in a given week to work on-site and off-site. Meetings could be arranged in both face-to-face and remote formats tailored to the needs of staff, provided that the quality of work is not affected at both individual and team levels.

Therefore, urban administrators have a significant role in catering to the foreseeable growth in the demand for remote shared offices, ideally round-the-clock 24 hour spaces. These spaces should be dispersed like a clustered mini CBD across populated areas of the city. The derived benefits include a reduction in the time and expenses spent as well as the psychological stresses encountered during the commute (Giovanis, 2018). After all, such a facilitative infrastructure would allow organizational members to remain effective in carrying out tasks at remote locations and eliminate prior limitations so they could have a better quality of life and work outcomes.

Public service is another critical driver for flexible work arrangements. For instance, the public transportation system not only provides services to day travelers but also commuters who may work night shifts or flexible hours. The system may have to adjust the schedule to operate 24-hours with more frequent trips offered to night commuters. Global metropolises such as New York have provided public transportation services to serve the needs of their urban residents. Train trip frequencies may be adjusted to suit the actual demands of the night commuters, yet they remain operating throughout the night without compromising the standardized level of services.

Security emerges as another main concern for many night shifters, especially female workers who have to commute to work during late hours. Public transport options may enhance its security with more eclectic surveillance cameras as well as placing more staff on site. The municipality should also prepare to set up brighter night lights from the main streets that lead up to smaller alleyways so that those who travel feel safe on their way. Public authorities shall survey the residential areas and request budgets to upgrade public infrastructure so that people have less worries about how they get to and from work.

Furthermore, policymakers should facilitate other relevant services that will support night shifters. Food deliveries and night diners should be encouraged to operate across geographical locations, particularly during the night hours, so that employees are less concerned about the availability of meals. Diners in countries like Japan have started

to operate during the night and extend their service hours into late hours. In some cases, the restaurants operate with the least amount of manpower given the technological advancements. Robots are used to greet customers and hand queues. Orders are taken through automatic tablet devices that are sent straight to the kitchen. As stated, humans are still required on-site to govern and administer the automated systems and robots. They have the edge over these machines in that they are able to recognize and make sense of complex human needs as well as being able to notice customers' emotions and respond to them in a more empathetic and meaningful manner.

Real estate development is another area that may support flexible work trends. Developers have been cognizant of the demographic and technological changes over the years and the new normals that come with them. They need to analyze the rapid changes in the behaviors of the residents that resulted in more flexible working and living conditions. Such trends, popular with the younger generations, include startups and freelancing, which could utilize remote workspaces that offer a decent balance between living and working. As such, many projects have upgraded regular library or sitting areas into vibrant co-working and meeting spaces that capture the preferred modes of work for younger clients, from night-owl tutors to freelancers. Some spaces even provide live broadcasting stations or corners specifically designed to cater to ecommerce influencers, including YouTubers, TikTokers, or Facebook Live. Nonetheless, the facilities should remain strictly operated under social distancing and hygienic measures issued by the public authorities and the estate during the pandemic. Modern office spaces thus provide flexible operating hours together with facilities and necessary office equipment such as automated photocopying services to substitute normal office space and set the real estate development standards that support future workers who may opt to work remotely from anywhere.

Social and cultural dimension

Moreover, modern workplaces should not overlook the importance of the sociocultural dimension. Flexible work arrangements must not diminish the importance of human interactions in traditional workplace settings. Shared spaces should be designed to promote interactions amongst workers, such as the use of virtual coffee break corners that support the sharing of diverse ideas. They also foster a community of

practice that in turn unleashes the potential for knowledge transfer within the shared space (Bouncken & Reuschl, 2018). Such a sociocultural dimension provided the consolidated basis for integration of all realms, starting by promoting the right culture that fosters skills and competencies development, while yielding benefits from the external environment, ideally the supportive infrastructure. Therefore, it is proposed that all these aspects will need to be strategically integrated and yield resources to tackle the adaptive ways of working.

Organizational socialization is the process by which new employees learn the attitudes, actions, and information they require to participate as organizational members (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). The employees thus learn about the organizational culture and pass their knowledge onto others. When they are not working at the office, they are more distant from their peers which may limit the degree to which they engage in socialization process with others. Therefore, HR shall develop strategies on how to keep their employees engaged given that virtual technologies allow them to remain connected.

Many staff also expressed WFH fatigue, a state in which remote workers are unmotivated, disconnected, and unsatisfied with their working environment which may eventually lead to burnout, according to the survey conducted by www.teambuilding.com (2021). One of the most common causes of such state is loneliness. Many remote workers concentrate on their work and only have a few unproductive chats with colleagues which may result in a sense of separation from peers. Remote team members have less opportunity to develop natural connections with coworkers and HR needs to counter that by offering the opportunities to interact and connect.

Gibson et al. (2003) defined stress as “*An adaptive response, mediated by individual differences that is a consequent of any action, situation, or event that places special demands on a person*”. A stressor is a potentially threatening external situation and stress is a result of handling things that place extra demands on people. Outcomes of stress range from behavioral and cognitive including but not limited to, dissatisfaction, absence, frustration and burnout. In the organizational context, this may lead up to turnover. Unsurprisingly, employees may experience stress during their WFH and may need assistance in managing stress levels.

HR may reach out to remote employees and offer them guidance in navigating WFH with the aim to provide them necessary support to cope with its impact. The support may range from assigning team members to conduct regular check-ins with others, to establishing hot-line or communicating platforms that offer prompt response in providing guidance. The essence lies upon understanding the needs of employees who may experience a high degree of separation from their colleagues, and keeping up with employees' state of emotions in order to address the lack of psychological needs. Leadership should direct organizational resources toward building effective virtual organizational culture so that employees' psychological needs are fulfilled and that social capital is embraced and valued during the pandemic (Huvanandana, 2022).

That said, a virtual workplace could utilize informal spaces set aside for colleagues to mingle and socialize. Ideas may be shared through collaboration in the virtual space. HR should also promote team building strategies that include virtual activities among colleagues so that they remain engaged with others on a regular basis i.e. Team building Tuesday on Teams in which games and fun events may be incorporated allowing colleagues to play together so that they could build and maintain good working relationships. Virtual organizational culture may be different from the usual corporate culture but it may become the norm in the future. As troops of younger generations have started to take over the workplace, it becomes apparent that these digital natives would likely be more comfortable in navigating the virtual workplace and its evolving culture. Such dynamics of a digital-infused workplace have indicated the importance of adaptability amidst uncertain situations of the VUCA era and beyond.

Many corporate events could be organized on a virtual basis for instance, corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs. There are many ways of doing good while being online as opposed to the usual onsite participation. Staff could book a slot to read for the blinds or they can co-create online public awareness campaigns on their causes of choice. The important thing to consider is that they come and work together so that they do not feel isolated and disconnected.

Based on the motives of employees, HR may seek to deploy reward strategies that capture their interests. As such, incentives may be given to those who participate in the virtual initiatives such as additional paid vacation leaves or extra benefits coupons

for redemption. Given that there is a trend of intergenerational employees in one workplace, HR needs to consider options that suit each category of workers. Different generations may prefer distinctive sets of reward that reflect their wants and tailored to their specific needs.

Conclusion

The future of work will involve a high degree of uncertainty, given the external disruptive forces and circumstances as in the VUCA business environment, as well as the prolonged effects of the pandemic. Changes to many circumstances have led many workers to reflect upon how their future workplace would become. Although it may not be possible to determine the exact scenarios on the future state of work, workers should prepare to adapt and adjust to forces of change. Key decision makers will discuss potential implications of how HR practitioners and policy implementers will actually adapt their business-as-usual around the new working arrangements in an attempt to predict the future state of work circumstances. These "how to" aspects would allow relevant personnel to get their job done while preparing to carry out further measures as necessary. Such innovative ways to adjust to such flexible work arrangements include the introduction of virtual dashboards to promote data utilization amongst virtual team members. Others include the virtual coffee hours that may replace informal meet-up sessions such as water cooler moments or after-hour parties. Strong emphasis will be placed on encouraging interactions and participation among colleagues, which may be lost during the pandemic because most employees are still operating from their private territories.

Remote work and flexible work arrangements have been sought as an optional solution to address the future of work and result in rapid changes that likely require strategy reformulations. This article deliberately outlines several critical dimensions that HR and decision makers need to be cognizant of and handle tactically. The emphasized areas are also interrelated as they focus on the internal human capital's skills and knowledge as well as guiding external support from the infrastructure. Without adapting to each of the elements and integrating them altogether to suit the future work trends, the organization would likely miss the opportunities to elevate their capabilities to cope with changes and adapt to new normals and practices while continuing to serve the diversity

of stakeholders' needs. As a result, policymakers and stakeholders must truly understand the organizational contexts as well as the external environment in order to determine how they should approach human capital, work, and its evolving prospects in ways that optimize resource allocations while retaining employees' work motivations, which will contribute to long-term organizational success.

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