

Work Culture Trends We Hope to See Continue in 2023

Summer Fridays, we would like you to stick around.

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In the last three years, more than a few aspects of life changed—some of them forever. The pandemic and its resultant lockdowns forced us to work in ways and environments we had not before. As a result, work culture and the way we work look different now than they ever did, with changed expectations around how we do our jobs and what we want from them.

According to McKinsey, amid a tenfold increase in remote work since 2019, 58 per cent of Americans (92 million people) are working from home at least some of the time. Among those who can work remotely, 87 per cent choose to do so. Water cooler conversations and after-work drinks have been traded for video calls and virtual meetups. It is not just virtual meetings, though; significant changes to employee benefits and employer priorities have also surfaced. Work culture trends emerged and were strengthened in recent years—what are they and which ones do we want to see stick around?

What is work culture?

First, what is work culture? In short, the term refers to the atmosphere and experience in the workplace, as affected by the attitudes and behaviors of those who work there. It is also called company culture, and there are different types of it. For example, an organization could have a very formal, structured work culture in which the hierarchy and roles are clearly defined and there is not much flexibility. Or the work culture could be informal and relaxed, with lots of room for creative thinking and flexibility. Neither of these is necessarily right or wrong: what is important is that the work culture aligns with the company's mission statement and the best way to reach the company's goals, and that it allows employees to be productive and fulfilled.

There are many factors that affect work culture, including national culture. For example, due to its stricter labor legislation, Canada's work culture is more employee-centric than that of the United States, with shorter work hours, more breaks, more vacation time, and more benefits such as paid parental leave.

84 percent of companies introduced new or expanded benefits as a result of the pandemic.

That said, even in countries with more employee-centric cultures, healthy work culture is not a given in every workplace. With poor leadership, a toxic work culture is possible anywhere, with issues like poor communication, workplace bullying, little or no room for growth, poor work-life balance, burnout, and high employee turnover rates the order of the day.

Workplace culture trends we want to see continue in 2023

For several years now, forward-thinking companies have been looking at ways to attract and retain top talent, with tech companies especially known for their rewards. However, ping-pong tables in the break room can seem like an empty gesture when you must work sixteen-hour days. So, what are the work culture trends that have arisen in the past few years that we hope to see continue in 2023? Here are our top choices:

Flexible working hours

Even before the pandemic, flexible work hours were a highly desirable job reward. In 2018, StatsCan reported that 61 per cent of men and 60 per cent of women who had a high degree of control over their work hours reported a high level of job satisfaction, compared to less than half of those who had less flexibility in their work hours. Why is that? Being able to choose their hours helps employees find a healthy work-life balance. It also acknowledges that different people are more productive at different times of day.

Employers are catching on: according to a 2021 study by Robert Half Talent Solutions, 48 per cent of senior managers let their employees choose when they work.

Remote or hybrid work

One of the most significant changes the pandemic caused was on our work environment: the rise of remote work. In 2021, a StatsCan study analyzed new teleworkers, or workers who only started working from home when the pandemic hit. Of these, 90 per cent reported that they were at least as productive at home as at the office and 80 per cent would like to continue working from home at least half the time in future.

There are many benefits to remote or hybrid work. For employers, these include lower overhead costs, more productive employees (reported by 94 per cent of remote employers), and the ability to recruit from a wider talent pool without geographic constraints. Employees spend less time commuting, which can save money and time. They can work more autonomously and can attend to their household and family throughout the workday. The drop in traffic from reduced commuting has environmental benefits and employees not having to live close to work can help some find more affordable housing.

Is remote or hybrid work feasible long-term, though? It depends on the industry. An estimated 59 per cent of Canadians with bachelor's degrees or higher education levels hold jobs that they can do from home. Of those who work in finance, insurance, or in the professional, technical, and scientific services, 85 per cent can work from home. However, only about 6 per cent of workers in accommodation and food services can do so. Not all industries can embrace remote or hybrid work, but many can (at least to an extent).

The right to disconnect from work

The Robert Half study on working flexible hours found that there are some negatives to working from home, too. One major issue for many remote workers has been that when the office is a nook in the living room, it is hard to switch off from work mode. And it is not just the physical environment that causes blurred lines—employers who cannot switch off from work may expect their employees to be always available, too. This digital presenteeism, where remote workers are always in work mode, is a fast track to burnout.

The idea of the right to disconnect started with a 2001 ruling by the French Supreme Court and has since been adapted to include digital tools. Several other European countries as well as the Philippines adopted similar legislation. In 2021, Ontario followed suit, requiring companies with twenty-five or more employees to have a written policy on what they expect from their workers in terms of being available for work-related communications after hours. While this does not guarantee workers' rights to disconnect, it encourages employers to think about whether they really need a reply to that email at 10 pm on a Saturday night.

Wellness days and mental health days

According to the 2021 Benefits Canada Healthcare Survey, 64 per cent of full-time plan members took fewer PTO days in the previous year, jumping to 71 per cent of members who worked exclusively from home. At the same time, work stress had a negative impact, with 21 per cent of members being diagnosed with a mental health condition such as depression or anxiety.

To combat some of the negative effects of work on employee health, more and more companies now offer the opportunity to take flexible mental health days or pre-scheduled wellness days (sometimes called Summer Fridays). These extra paid days off can allow employees to disconnect, refresh, and take care of themselves. Remote work is also a potential contributor to better mental health, with 70 per cent of respondents to a Mental Health America survey saying that a remote job would have a considerable positive impact on their mental health.

Shorter work weeks

What if every weekend could be a long weekend? Iceland started testing the four-day work week in 2015 and since then, companies in several other developed countries, including the UK,

New Zealand, and Canada, have been doing the same. A four-day work week can mean that employees now work four ten-hour days, but forward-thinking companies would rather slash the number of hours worked to thirty-two for the week, with no change in salary or benefits packages. While shortened work weeks make little sense for hourly workers, there are many benefits to shorter work weeks for salaried employees. The Robert Half study found that 31 per cent of senior managers surveyed did not mind if employees worked for fewer than 40 hours a week if their work got done.

As Indeed points out, shortening the work week improves employee wellbeing, which in turn leads to increased productivity and loyalty to the company. It reduces overhead costs for the company, while employees save on costs like commuting and daycare. Because working mothers are more likely to have to step away from their jobs to care for children, they may find a shorter work week less challenging to balance with family commitments. Thus, shortened work weeks can promote gender equality in the workplace by offering more balance between work and childcare. Additionally, a company that offers a shorter work week has a greater chance of attracting the best candidates. Automation through the kind of partnership program you can find through Partner Stack makes a shorter work week more feasible because it lets employees work smarter, not longer.

Improved employee benefits

Companies that want to attract the best talent are finding that the traditional benefits package just does not cut it anymore. However, employees want meaningful benefits rather than free snacks. Ping-pong tables and pizza lunches are nice, but they are not actual benefits.

According to a study by Mercer, 7 in 10 companies are increasing spend on employee benefits as a result of the pandemic. Further, 84 per cent of companies introduced new or expanded benefits as a result of the pandemic. What are some of these benefits? Parental and family leave is one, with some top employers now offering not only improved parental leave (only 1 in 4 employees in the United States has access to paid family leave), but also IVF and adoption subsidies to help employees become parents in the first place. On-site daycare is still a scarce but sought-after job reward, though.

Expanded benefits go well beyond health spending accounts and time off, though. On the hunt for creative ways to meet the needs of their employees, more unusual rewards like vet bill insurance are cropping up. It is becoming evident that the more ways an employer can help their employees, the better—for retention, satisfaction, and productivity overall.

No matter which works culture trends your employer is embracing, the important part is that each employee feels supported and fulfilled by their job and each employer aims to make the employee experience the best it can be. Here is to even better work culture in 2023 and beyond!

Cultural Barriers to Effective Communication in Business

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As a modern business owner, it is important to be aware of the potential cultural barriers to communication that may exist within your company. By understanding and recognizing these barriers, you can take steps to overcome them and ensure that your business runs smoothly and efficiently.

But what are the cultural barriers to effective communication? How do they apply in a business setting — and how can you overcome them? This comprehensive guide will answer all of those questions and more so that you can develop a better understanding of [how to effectively communicate internationally](#).

Why is Effective Communication So Vital in Global Business?

Proper communication is the key to success in any business. It is the process of relaying information from one person to another so that everyone is on the same page and understands what needs to be done. In the globalized business world, this process becomes even more vital. With people from all different cultures working together, there is bound to be a clash of communication styles.

When this happens, it can lead to misunderstandings, arguments and even project failures. That is why it is so important for businesses to be aware of the potential cultural barriers to communication and take steps to overcome them.

What is a Cultural Barrier in Business?

Cultural communication barriers in business can take many different forms. It could be something as simple as a [language barrier](#), or it could be something more complex like differing levels of formality. It is important to remember that not all cultures communicate in the same way. What may be considered polite and professional in one culture could be seen as impolite or even offensive in another.

Cultural barriers to communication can also arise when there are different expectations about the way meetings and negotiations should be conducted. In some cultures, it is perfectly normal to interrupt someone who is speaking. However, in others, this would be considered very rude.

Preconceived notions, stereotypes, and discrimination can also create communication barriers. For example, if a person from one culture assumes that all members of another culture are lazy, they may have trouble communicating effectively with them.

6 Cultural Barriers to Effective Business Communication

Language Skills

The most crucial barrier to [effective communication in international business](#) is language. If you cannot speak or understand the language of your counterparts, it will be impossible to communicate with them effectively.

Even if you are able to use a translator, there is always the risk that something will be lost in translation. It is also worth noting that different languages have different levels of formality. For example, in German, the word "du" is used for friends and family, while the word "Sie" is used for business associates. If you use the wrong form of address, it can cause offense.

Another language-related issue that can lead to communication problems is the use of idioms and colloquialisms. These are expressions that cannot be translated literally and often have different meanings in different cultures.

Stereotypes & Ethnocentrism

Stereotypes and [ethnocentrism](#) can also cause communication problems in business. Ethnocentrism is the belief that your own culture is superior to other cultures, while stereotypes are oversimplified or exaggerated beliefs about a particular group of people.

It's vital to be aware of these issues arising in a culturally diverse workplace, as any form of discrimination can lead to a breakdown in communication and even confrontation or conflict.

Behavior's & Beliefs

Cultural norms and values can also lead to communication problems in business. Different cultures also have different ideas about what is considered to be polite behavior, how to treat positions of authority and the appropriate conduct for business meetings.

For example, in some cultures, it is perfectly acceptable to bargain over prices, while in others this would be seen as very rude. It's vital that businesses have a cohesive understanding of the values and expectations of their employees, clients and suppliers to avoid any potential misunderstandings and ensure that [negotiations are handled appropriately across different cultures](#).

Culture Shock

It's also important for businesses to account for a certain level of culture shock in global projects. This is the feeling of disorientation that people can experience when they are exposed to a new and unfamiliar culture.

Culture shock can lead to communication problems as people may find it difficult to adjust to the new way of doing things. It's important to be patient and understanding with employees who may be experiencing culture shock and to provide the appropriate resources, accommodations, and support.

Non-verbal Communication

Body language, eye contact, facial expressions, and other forms of non-verbal communication can also vary significantly from one culture to another. For example, in some cultures, it is considered rude to make direct eye contact, while in others it is seen as a sign of respect.

It's important to be aware of these cultural differences to avoid any misunderstandings. Misinterpreting body language or non-verbal cues can lead to communication problems and can even cause offense.

Signs & Symbols

Written language and communication are also affected by culture. Different cultures have different ways of conveying meaning through signs and symbols. For example, in the west, a white rose is often seen as a symbol of purity, while in China it is seen as a symbol of death.

It's essential that businesses are aware of these cultural differences to avoid any misunderstandings or offense to a cultural background your business is targeting.

How To Overcome Cultural Barriers to Effective Communication

Invest in Business Language Training

As mentioned, the language barrier is one of the most common cultural barriers to communication in business. The best way to overcome this is to [invest in language training for your employees](#).

This will ensure that everyone in the company has a good understanding of the languages spoken by your clients, suppliers, and other key stakeholders. It will also help to build relationships and trust with these people, which is essential for effective communication.

When you can speak the same language as your clients and coworkers, it makes it much easier to understand each other and to build strong relationships. Offering your employees business language training is a great way to reap [these benefits](#).

Encourage Cultural Diversity

Another way to overcome cultural barriers to communication is to encourage cultural diversity in the workplace. This can be done by hiring employees from a variety of different backgrounds and by promoting cross-cultural understanding and respect.

By encouraging cultural diversity, you will create a more inclusive environment where everyone feels comfortable communicating with each other. Diversity is a driving force for innovation, so it can also help to boost your business's creativity and competitiveness.

Create a Code of Conduct

It's also a good idea to create a [code of conduct](#) that outlines the company's expectations for communication and behavior. This should be designed to promote respect and understanding between employees of different cultures and outline how the business plans to accommodate cultural differences in its workforce.

The code of conduct should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis to ensure that it remains relevant and effective. All employees should be made aware of the code of conduct and should be given the opportunity to provide feedback.

By having a code of conduct in place, you will create a more positive and cohesive work environment for employees of all cultural backgrounds.

Promote Clear & Open Communication

As discussed, clear and open communication is key to overcoming cultural barriers in the workplace. To promote clear communication, you should encourage employees to ask questions and to speak up if they don't understand something.

It's also important to provide employees with the resources they need to communicate effectively. This could include things like [language training](#), cultural awareness training or even just a simple glossary of terms.

When everyone is on the same page, it will be much easier to avoid misunderstandings and build strong working relationships.

Offer Cross-Cultural Training to Employees

To help your staff understand a new cultural perspective, you can offer [cross-cultural training](#). This type of training is designed to promote understanding and respect for different cultures.

[Cross-cultural training](#) can be delivered in a variety of ways, such as through workshops, seminars, e-learning courses, or even cultural immersion experiences. It's important that the training is relevant and tailored to the needs of your employees.

By [offering cross-cultural training](#), you will help your employees to understand and appreciate the cultural differences within your organization, communicate effectively with people from different cultures, and build strong working relationships.

Empower Your Leadership Team

Diverse cultures should be represented at all levels of the organization, including in leadership positions. This will send a strong message that your company is committed to promoting cultural variance and diversity.

It's also important to **empower your leaders to champion cultural inclusion and understanding**. They should be given the resources and support they need to create a positive and cohesive work environment. By leading by example, they will encourage and motivate others to do the same.