

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE POST-COVID FUTURE OF WORK

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With the global pandemic affecting virtually every sector of business – and every workforce – the eventual return to work will be in a decidedly different climate. That is true for agribusiness employees at many levels, from those who work the fields to managers who develop partnerships with new customers to leaders who must design the future of work.

As leaders think about this process, they can keep the momentum of individual and organizational resilience going while leveraging the power of technologies. Indeed, the traditional perception of human-technology relations as competing has evolved to an interest in combining human competencies and technologies.

That combination is potent in the return-to-work phase, when organizations should capitalize on what they have learned during the pandemic and achieve a dynamic stability. Instead of fighting inevitable changes, they can proactively and positively design the future of work.

Here are some hallmarks of the here-is-now future:

- **Belonging:** COVID-19 reminded us that people are motivated at the highest levels when they can connect their work contributions to a greater purpose and mission. Consider, for instance, how workers in the food industry found meaning in their jobs as their companies provided much-needed sustenance for consumers concerned about feeding themselves and their families.
- **Designing work for well-being:** Now is the time to embed well-being into every aspect of the design and delivery of work itself and to fundamentally redesign work toward outputs instead of activities. Ultimately, this opens up the possibility for workers to both live and perform at their best.
- **The post-generational workforce:** COVID-19 proved that generalizing by age alone can lead to incorrect conclusions. While initially thought to be a virus that only affected the elderly, people soon learned that others were not invulnerable. Organizations staging a return to work can apply this lesson to the workforce, using a data-driven approach to better understand workers' unique attributes, needs, and dimensions and segment their workforce accordingly.
- **Putting AI in superteams:** The pandemic confirmed that while technology can augment and supplement work, it does not replace what is needed from humans. Organizations can rethink ways they integrate teams of humans and technology, using these tools as augmentation or collaboration strategy and build a culture of knowledge.

As they plan for the next phase in their organizations – and their teams who are returning to work – organizations can tap into the expertise of a professional services network on topics ranging from investing in re-skilling for uncertain futures to reevaluating principles that serve as the foundation for the future of work.

For information on the California Agribusiness Center of Excellence, visit:
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