Working Remotely and Corporate Culture Wars in the Post-Pandemic Era

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Abstract

Organizational culture is a sacred element of any organization. It is the lifeblood and the guiding force that makes each organization unique in its ability to navigate day-to-day and longer-term perspectives of corporate operations. Strong cultures help identify direction and philosophy and provide confidence in pursuing innovative ideas and solving problems. Since 2020, the core values and the strength of many organizational cultures have been tested due to the increased reliance on working remotely and the adoption of a hybrid model of business operations not previously utilized to a great degree. While many survived the strain of modified operations under COVID-19 restrictions, many organizations are now faced with the critical question of how they go forward after the COVID pandemic era has seemingly passed. Such a realization will significantly impact all critical elements of the organization, especially company culture.

Introduction

Highly involved corporate cultures are a way of life in terms of how things are done. Corporate culture is the collective personality of an organization. It is the accumulated experience, knowledge, and strategic and moral compass that organizations follow to build and maintain consistent success in a competitive environment. A healthy, well-stated, and understood corporate culture can be why people join and stay with an organization. Strong and uncompromising corporate cultures create and encourage purpose, a sense of value, and a shared commitment to achieving organizational goals and sustained competitive advantage through team development (Rebello, 2021). High culture organizations that are distinctive and offer an employee value proposition are effective attraction, retention, and motivational tools that offer a model for employee success and satisfaction (Morey, 2022). Employee value proposition is the concept of the rewards and benefits derived from the collective sum of work experiences resulting from the ongoing exchanges between employees and the organization that create a desirable workplace (Hussein et al., 2022).

Before the COVID pandemic, many organizations offered employees a primary psychological contract of fair exchange between their relative contributions and the organization's responses to these efforts. Corporate culture is based on a clearly defined and tacit social order, which is a constant reminder of expectations and behavior that is shared, pervasive, enduring, and implicit that some say eats strategy

for breakfast (Groysberg et al., 2018). Corporate cultures that include total value propositions (TVP) were developed out of the necessity of attracting and encouraging genuinely productive and creative employees who can survive and even thrive in a workplace with high expectations based on collaboration, growth, recognition, equity, and the nature of work that was challenging and rewarding (Elisman & Quarles, 2022). The real dilemma at times is to develop corporate cultures and work expectations that support employee talents and creativity, not limit or destroy them (Kuzel, 2021).

COVID-19 and Beyond

Throughout the pandemic, many organizations and their employees faced a myriad of rules, regulations, and changing expectations of acceptable behaviors and procedures for working in a safe environment as determined by health officials, the government, and their respective organizations. On top of all the rules and regulations, the overriding need to have employees work remotely added to the stress and confusion. Such demands and jolts to an organization's mode of operation and established culture may lead to botched or poorly modified organizational cultures (Spicer, 2020). Any attempts to change an organization's culture require experimentation and using pre-existing cultural toolkits to fashion a new culture that better aligns with new environmental challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Howard-Greenville, 2020).

While the widespread mandated application of remote work was a new phenomenon, the concept dates back about four decades. The concept of telecommuting, as coined by Jack Nilles, emerged in the 1970s as a solution to the response to the worldwide energy crisis of the time and as a way to reduce air pollution and traffic congestion (Allen et al., 2015; Avery & Zabel, 2001). While the concept was known, its use over the years was slowly accepted in light of technological advances and as a recruiting tool (Caldow, 2009). The pandemic opened up a new type of recruiting tool for organizations that appealed to potential employees as a method of work and a way to expand the recruiting area well beyond the near vicinity of the company's location.

These ever-changing pandemic-related regulations and policies took a toll on employees and inevitably caused challenges to accepted corporate culture. Company leaders felt that the organization had lost its real identity when social and professional interactions were abandoned (McGovern, 2021). According to the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), about 24 percent of H.R. professionals indicated that overall workplace culture has worsened since the beginning of the pandemic, resulting in exhaustion and strained adherence to established workplace guidelines and company culture (SHRM, 2022). Many employees expressed feelings of disengagement and Zoom fatigue because of the overuse and over-dependence on technology to replace previous personal interactions (Klynn, 2021). In many cases, because of prolonged and inappropriate use of teleconferencing, conditions of enormous stress and exhaustion became more

common and prevalent, prompting some psychological studies to coin the term "chronic zoom syndrome" (Riedel, 2021). A resultant conflict arose because many vital elements of a successfully applied corporate culture had evolved based on personal interactions that created bonding experiences that shaped ongoing attitudes and behaviors (Hutchinson, 2021). While Zoom fatigue is real and well known, there are examples of how the use of Zoom enhanced and supported the employee's daily work experiences. According to Shoshan and Wehrt (2022), studies done in Germany and Israel found that a large number of employees used Zoom as a social support system to supplement work requirements in the form of online "coffee breaks" in what some call "Zoom as an island" positive interaction.

While this phenomenon was common during the pandemic, many speculate about its impact on a post-pandemic work environment. The obvious test to many corporate and organizational cultures during COVID-19, and now in a post-pandemic environment, was how organizations emphasizing collaborative, face-to-face work environments dealt with remote and isolated work protocols that have negatively impacted and severely limited successful group-oriented business procedures. The absence of clearly defined and constant reminders of expectations and behavior created obstacles that had to be dealt with to ensure that the organization remained competitive and successful. Almost immediately, the question became what was working and what degree of flexibility and adaptability was needed to carry on to be successful. Progressive organizations started to look at what improved due to remote work and areas where things needed to be improved and not what was lost (Morey, 2022). Company leaders began to reimagine their culture in an environment without routine face-to-face interactions. They worked to match the need for a workable and coherent culture that matched the current realities. Company culture does not disappear in a remote or hybrid context; it merely evolves outside of office-based routines, protocols, and daily personal interactions (Hinds & Elliott, 2021). Identified strengths are leveraged and built upon what proved successful once the tug-of-war started for people to return to the office. Some examples of early remote workplace success include Stylers, a time management consultant, Transcontinental University of Dublin, Ohio, both of which have experienced marked increases in productivity; Capgemini Invent, which reports overall better communication and collaboration, and PAN Communications, which is highly supportive of a hybrid-flexible model of work (Clark, 2021). In addition, a truly unexpected side benefit of working remotely during COVID was the unique opportunity to provide those with disabilities the chance to do work that was easily facilitated by working from home. Many of the most skilled and underutilized workers found a new lease on work-life that helped them overcome physical difficulties and mobility issues, as evidenced by the lowest jobless rate for those with disabilities since 2008 (Lee, 2022). Despite the move to remote work in numerous industries, tremendous pressure exists to return to complete in-person work procedures in daily operations. Many organizations insist that there is no substitute for a culture that exists and thrives based on daily work-related interactions. Bear Construction Company of Chicago is convinced that they

can only do business successfully and survive through in-person work that encourages and supports idea generation and work creativity (NBC, 2022). In addition, other organizations such as Google and Facebook are counting on the return to the office because they invested heavily in expanding their real estate footprint, which they find promotes a shared culture and helps mend their corporate social fabric (Padres, 2022). Besides the dedicated use of facilities that organizations have heavily invested in and the value of having in-person collaboration and sharing in innovative ideas, in-person work significantly enhances communication, professional development resource accessibility and increased accountability (Fermin, 2023). In many cases old-style management thinking and philosophies expect and demand employees to work in the office to have a clear separation between work and home, to avoid distractions and as a way to reinforce their power and authority over the employees (Wong, 2021).

Some examples of remote workplace failures include Nexthink, a management software provider that found that remote work cannot be easily uniformly applied to all workers, and Avanade, a Seattle-based IT consulting company that lamented the loss of water cooler culture creativity (Clark, 2021). Amazon announced in February of 2023 that it would be shifting all employees back to the office for a minimum of three days per week (Palmer, 2023).

While remote work has advantages and has generally promoted worker productivity, several fears and concerns exist about what remote work could do to some organizations' way of doing business based on in-person work cultures. The most common issues cited are a loss of consistency in dealing with work problems, a loss of role modeling and acceptable worker behaviors, the undermining of corporate diversity efforts and programming for women, a loss of collaboration and communication, an inability to manage employee workloads, increasing employee turnover, and ultimately the feeling of workers being nothing more than loosely associated gig employees (Agovino, 2022; Alonso, 2022; Padres, 2022).

What many companies viewed as a short-term situation in dealing with COVID-19 quickly realized that this was a long-term outcome based on the many positive results achieved during the pandemic and the increasing demands of workers who insisted on working remotely. Significant trends in worker relocation, the Great Resignation, and the role of technology such as Zoom created a significant paradigm shift not expected to occur for years. While many companies made a strong argument for the return of face-to-face interactions with some success, others were willing to compromise to the extent that remote work is here to stay and to rapidly increase its use in the future. In addition to the expectation of remote work as an accepted workplace procedure, the insistence of those being recruited who demanded it made it the new normal (Arora, 2020). Those being recruited are two and a half times more likely to apply for remote jobs, where 1 in 7 jobs are now classified as remote compared to pre-pandemic remote jobs, which were 1 in 67 (Whitaker, 2022). As a result of accepting the fact that organizations may not have large numbers of employees congregated together daily to perform work, the

consideration of how to extend physical culture virtually in a hybrid workplace began to take place (Hutchinson, 2021).

Post-Pandemic and Corporate Culture Clashes

Some still doubt if we are beyond the COVID pandemic in any way that spells a new normal. However, if we are indeed ready to at least declare a post-pandemic era, what does the near future hold in store for us as far as a coherent response from business organizations? Through it all, it seems clear that those who were able to bend without breaking were the winners in the last two years. It was a challenge that brought about a new reality of how to reinstate, or more to the point, adopt a new corporate culture that would work and be supportive. A corporate culture that is dynamic and flexible performs better than those less adaptable and is usually in a better position to innovate, experiment, and more easily take advantage of new opportunities (Chatman et al., 2014; Chatman & Gino, 2020). Besides promoting flexibility and adaptability in corporate culture philosophy, company leaders and Human Resource professionals also depend on holding to true values with new practices, leveraging company ideals, transparency, integrity, a reliance on company structure, and a willingness to change culture when called to do so (McGovern, 2020). Many Human Resource departments have found solutions to current issues involving COVID and factors outside COVID. For example, the development of Human-Centric Cultural Values helps achieve a healthy balance between remote and in-person work requirements in terms of investing in human capital development as related to social interaction, emotional support, and innovation as supported by behavioral elements as well as technology (Ingram, 2019).

With all the changes that have been seen along with those to develop over the next few years, many in Human Resources are eager to learn about and embrace a significant paradigm shift in workplace behaviors, norms, and the role of the corporate culture. Reforming corporate culture should include previously held values and beliefs or the organization as tempered and reshaped as a result of the pandemic. The importance of continued remote work should be balanced with the notion that some organizations still prefer to emphasize in-person work, collaboration, teamwork, and idea generation. Despite trends and employee demands, many organizations expect workers to return to the office. Workplace and corporate culture are defined by shared norms and routines that are challenged by remote work (Pardes, 2022). This is no small task for many organizations, and it may prove to be a non-starter for some jobs where remote contributions may be viewed as wholly inadequate and unacceptable. While there are clear examples where remote work arrangements were productive for amany employees and their organizations, the nagging concern is that face-to-face work relationships are difficult to recreate using remote means based on the reliance on technology to mimic interpersonal contact and information sharing (Rojas, 2021). Post-COVID battles will most likely be looming in a variety of work-related issues**.** For example,

although remote work for those with disabilities has greatly boosted the opportunities of those who face physical challenges that resulted in reduced joblessness for them, several organizations have revoked at-work opportunities because of the need for in-person participation. In a recent case at a hospital in Kansas City, an appellate court ruled that the hospital provided reasonable accommodation for temporary remote work. However, it was not meant to be a guarantee in all cases (Lee, 2022).

Remote Work: Employment for People with Physical and Mental Impairments

 According to Shu (2022), remote work holds promise for promoting employment for disabled people for various reasons. People with disabilities face various employment obstacles, including transportation barriers and the setup of the physical work location. Working from home could help increase their employability due to access to their medical equipment, the fact that their home is already optimized for their movement, it reduces the stress of having to prepare for and travel, and those living with allergies or environmental sensitivities can control their environment. Those with episodic or unpredictable symptoms can better manage them in a home setting (Shu, 2022, pp. 12-13).

Although remote work has a great deal of benefits, not all people with disabilities need or want to work remotely. Shu (2022) shares that for some, working from home could exacerbate their condition, for example, the solitude of remote work on mental health conditions. However, for those individuals who are able and willing, remote work has the potential to vastly improve employment availability and opportunities for disabled workers. Shu (2022) shares that "disabled workers perform, on the whole, just as well as or better than non-disabled workers, and employers can draw from a wider talent pool and increase workplace diversity" (p.14).

The Impact of Remote Work on Gender Equality and Proximity Bias

 The consequences of working remotely on women's career equality have garnered significant attention during the pandemic's shift to remote and hybrid work. While some scholars and experts claim that it hurts a woman's career equality, others claim that it may decrease the discrimination women face in the workplace (Hill et al., 2021). According to EY Americas (2022), 2.5 million women have left the workforce in the U.S. alone since the pandemic struck, compared with 1.8 million men. Even with the mass shift to remote and hybrid work and the flexibility it brought, these options were not fully accessible to all women. Given that women are more highly represented in industries that could not move their work remotely, they remained active in the workforce while facing demands such as children who needed to be educated at home while schools were shut down. Examples of these industries include nursing, hospitality services, caregiving, and retailing (How Gender Parity Can Make up Lost Ground after the COVID-19 Pandemic, n.d.). To

address the issues females face in the workforce, organizations can focus on creating family-focused policies that will help drive gender equality. EY Americas (2022) suggests expanding access to affordable, high-quality childcare and openly acknowledging the demands of caregiving.

In some areas of the United States when schools returned after the pandemic there were shifts to a four-day school week for children in K-12. The shift to a four-day school week can also introduce complex dynamics in gender equity within the workforce, influenced by many factors. Regional variations, socioeconomic conditions, and community-specific dynamics are pivotal in determining the impact. This transition may pose challenges for working parents, particularly mothers, who often bear a substantial burden of childcare responsibilities. The condensed school schedule might lead to heightened demands for childcare on non-school days, potentially affecting women's capacity to maintain full-time employment. Differential effects on work-life balance could emerge, especially if women are more prone to taking on additional responsibilities at home. Reducing school days might intensify the balancing act between work and family obligations for women. Furthermore, the impact on gender equity may be shaped by occupational choices, as women may be concentrated in professions offering greater flexibility in working hours, yielding distinct consequences compared to industries with more rigid schedules.

In a recent study done by Boston Consulting Group (BCG) (2022), they found that the United States desperately needs workers, and those workers desperately need help taking care of their children and increasingly, their parents. In their study, they give an overview of the care economy. The care economy is described as unpaid and paid caregiving, which has three types: unpaid caregivers, employed caregivers, and paid-care workers. "Nearly nine in ten employed caregivers depend on other care providers-either paid-care workers or unpaid caregivers-to free them up to perform their jobs" (Kos, DasGupta, Novacke, & Sajdeh, 2022, p. 4). This report sheds light on a silver lining. The United States currently has eleven million job vacancies; however, there are four times that amount of people aged 18 to 64 that are currently out of the workforce (Kos, Dasgupta, Novacke, & Sajdeh, 2022). While some of these individuals are unable to work due to disability or health reasons, BCG found that ninety percent of them are women who are stay-at-home parents or unpaid caregivers tending to adults. Women having a much lower workforce participation rate than their male counterparts make them a critical source of new talent. This report highlights the fact that affordable and quality paid care could both enable and encourage more women to join the workforce (Kos, DasGupta, Novacke, & Sajdeh, 2022).

There is a dire need in the U.S. to strengthen the care economy. According to BCG (2022), by 2034, more people will be 65 and older than 18 and younger for the first time in U.S. history. As the demand for elder care rises, employed females who typically take on the caregiver role due to gender norms will be forced with decisions to leave the workforce due to the care economy's lack of employees.

One aspect that could strengthen the care economy is to pay care workers a better living wages so they will not be forced to shift to other employment options to survive. Careers in female-dominated fields, such as paid care, have been historically undervalued. According to BCG (2022), the average daycare employee earns $25,000 annually, while home health aides earn slightly more. Paying care workers more is an extremely complex issue due to many aspects, such as the fact that early childcare and elder care markets already operate on low margins. In contrast, others, such as public health and K-12, are constrained by tax revenues (Kos, Dasgupta, Novacke, & Sajdeh, 2022). In addition to low pay, the emotional and physical toll that some of the care economy positions take is a challenge for employee retention, and remote work for this group of hands-on caregivers is not an option. Organizational leaders should take note that helping to address the care economy issues will further help them hire and retain workers. It will also enable more women to go to work, generate wealth, and break traditional gender norm stereotypes.

Female workers who were able to shift to remote work said they wanted to keep the additional flexibility and enjoy working remotely. According to SHRM (2022), 52 percent of the women surveyed say they enjoy working from home and would like to continue to do so, compared with 41 percent of men. More than 60 percent of women state that they feel more working from home, and 58 percent say they feel more engaged. Managers, however, do not hold working from home in high regard. Nearly 80 percent of managers believe that remote workers are more easily replaceable than onsite workers (SHRM, 2022). This phenomenon is referred to as proximity bias. Proximity bias exists for all remote workers, not just females.

The Percipio Company and SHRM (2022) describe proximity bias as an unconscious bias where you favor what is closest in time and space while undervaluing those in remote locations. The bias refers to the fact that it is easy to favor workers that are in one's immediate environment, resulting in the fact that in-office workers get consulted more often, participate in the office community more efficiently, and in addition, can have body language read more quickly than those on zoom or via electronic communication methods. Stronger relationships may develop in the office where an inflated view of those nearby may form, while the skills and expertise of those with whom they have less contact may be undervalued. Studies show that in some hybrid work environments, bosses view those around them in person as more hard-working and more trustworthy than their remote colleagues (Hello Hybrid, n.d.). In addition to proximity bias, workplace loneliness may be felt if there is no sense of belonging for the employee.

It is crucial to acknowledge that proximity bias is not exclusive to remote or hybrid work environments; it can also manifest in entirely in-person organizational settings. Proximity bias occurs when individuals physically closer to decision-makers or leaders receive preferential treatment, impacting opportunities and fostering unintentional exclusion.

Proximity bias can manifest in various ways, influencing decision-making, collaboration, and organizational opportunities. Employees in close physical

proximity to decision-makers may have greater access to informal communication channels, potentially leading to unintentional exclusions of physically distant people. Traditional office settings often emphasize face time and visibility, which can disadvantage individuals with alternative work arrangements, such as part-time schedules or flexible hours.

The impact of proximity bias extends to mentorship and career advancement opportunities, as employees near supervisors may have more access to guidance and exposure to advancement prospects. Recognition and rewards can also be skewed, with physically closer employees receiving more visibility for their achievements than remote or less accessible counterparts. Addressing proximity bias requires a proactive approach that combines awareness, policy development, technological solutions, and inclusive practices. By implementing these strategies, organizations can cultivate a work environment that is both equitable and supportive, irrespective of employees' physical locations.

To mitigate proximity bias in all organizations, leaders and employees must be aware of these dynamics and actively work towards fostering inclusivity. Implementing inclusive practices, encouraging open communication, and ensuring equal opportunities for all employees are essential steps toward mitigating the effects of proximity bias and cultivating a workplace culture that is diverse and supportive.

Leading and Motivating Remote Workforces – What Can Leaders Do to Make Sure That Out of Sight Does Not Mean Out of Mind

Numerous scholars and executives agree that the first step to dealing with proximity bias is acknowledging it exists (Hello Hybrid, n.d.). After the acknowledgment, leaders can begin brainstorming strategies to reduce the bias and level the playing field for remote workers. An example cited by SHRM (2022) of a successful remote-first proximity reduction strategy is Synchrony Financial, located in Stamford, CT. Synchrony conducted a survey before returning to the office that showed that 85 percent of its workforce wanted to remain remote full time, so it gave its entire workforce the remote option full time and required all employees to work a minimum of one day remote to reduce proximity bias. In addition to reducing real estate, the company implemented an app reservation system for remote workers wanting to reserve space to work in the office. The employees may reserve desks, conference rooms, and offices via the app (SHRM, 2022). Additional suggestions from H.R. managers to create an inclusive environment for all employees include creating a writing-based culture using virtual town square communication platforms such as Slack, establishing multiple sources of quantifiable merit systems, and providing leadership training on creating equitable and cohesive teams in hybrid environments.

The future of hybrid and remote work is likely to be a significant part of the way we work and develop workforces in the future. It will likely be shaped by employee preferences, technological advancements, company culture, and industry norms.

The balance between remote and in-person work may vary depending on each organization's specific needs and goals. However, it is clear that companies that adapt to this new reality will be better positioned to thrive in the years ahead.

Remote work has highlighted the importance of work-life balance as well as the need for leadership to develop new approaches to areas such as onboarding, training, and team building. Remote work also may create opportunities for companies to tap into a wider talent pool and expand their global reach.

Quiet Quitting: The Case of Authentic Leadership

In lieu of the recent labor shortage, as well as the shift to remote and hybrid work, the need to retain talented employees is at an all-time high. Quiet quitting is a new term for the behavior that has been seen for many years where employees are not inclined to go above and beyond their job duties and are counting the seconds down until they can go home. SHRM (2022) data shows that quiet quitting stems from managers' lack of ability to build relationships while undervaluing and underappreciating their employees. The adage that employees do not leave their jobs; they leave people rings true with quiet quitting. While quiet quitting may be a buzzword, it represents the mentality that setting healthy work-life boundaries is here to stay. Gallup poll data shows that the percentage of workers who say they are not engaged at work has stayed above 50% since 2000. Leaders and organizations must address the movement to increase retention while also becoming a desirable place of employment for job-seekers. Organizations can address quitting through self-reflection, leadership development, building positive relationships, showing that you care and value them, showing concern for their overall well-being, working on their job expertise, and being consistent with their efforts to build a more positive relationship (Folkman, 2022). One leadership tool that can help leaders address quitting is to embrace and become authentic leaders. Authentic leaders are true to their morals and ideals and strive to be true to themselves as they develop and lead others (George & Sims, 2007). According to Northouse (2016), the four components of authentic leadership are Self-awareness and Self-regulation, internalized moral perspectives, balanced processing, and relational transparency. Self-aware leaders actively attempt to understand themselves, their motives, weaknesses, and strengths (Northouse, 2016). Authentic leaders exhibit balanced processing, actively avoid favoritism, and seek to minimize biases in decision-making (Northouse, 2016).

The need to address leadership development for the remote and hybrid workforce is starting to garner more attention. Cornell recently added an online certificate called Leading Remote Teams (Cornell University, 2023). IBM is looking to help leaders develop these skills as well. In a recent blog post, IBM shared that they encourage their leaders to use transformative leadership styles to embrace and encourage fully remote and hybrid workforces (IBM, 2022). In addition to universities and consulting groups addressing the need for leadership reform, numerous authors have published books on the topic. A few books on the topic of

remote workforce leadership include Leading Remote Teams by Alexis Gerst, Remote Leadership by David Pachter, The Remote Leader by Kevin Eikenberry and Wayne Turmel, Remote-Office Not Required by David Heinemeier Hansson and Jason Fried, and the HBR Harvard Business Review Guide to Remote Work. According to BCG (2023), "As leaders navigate the future of work, they must balance two fundamental goals: to manage the operational challenges of near-term decisions regarding a return to premises and to invest in innovative work and talent models designed to address customers' and employees' changing demands." To achieve these goals, BCG (2022) shares that organizations must excel in six areas to survive: shape the future of work, return to the office, enable hybrid work models, win the talent competition, understand trends in jobs and skills, and transform their operating models. BCG offers consulting and vast white paper studies to help organizations stay relevant and alive.

Zoom Towns and Amenity Migration

One benefit of a remote lifestyle is the freedom to travel while fully employed. Remote workers can move freely to any area they desire to live. The forces that are discussed in this paper are not only reshaping organizations, but they are also reshaping cities and communities around the country. During the pandemic, Americans fled cities to seek safer environments in the countryside and the coasts, and now they are realizing the lifestyle benefits of these sought-after locations. The term Zoom towns refers to places experiencing an extreme population increase due to the shift to remote work. As previously discussed, the pandemic has increased this shift drastically. The highest population growth of these Zoom towns is in small towns and cities outside of national parks, scenic public lands, and other natural amenities. According to Utah State University (2022), many gateway and natural amenity region (GNAR) communities have experienced the most extreme population growth as a result of amenity migration and, as a result, are experiencing many pressures and challenges. Some challenges found in the Utah State study (2022) include housing affordability, cost of living, and congestion. Many towns, leaders, universities, state and local governments, non-profits, and individuals are concerned with the destructive consequences of this movement. The GNAR initiative hopes to support research and educational efforts to address this issue.
Other towns and corporations have taken a different approach and have actively created programs to recruit and entice remote workers to move there to reverse population declines. The Life Works Here talent initiative was launched in November of 2020 with a $1.5 million investment from the Walmart heirs and gives 100 people $10,000 to relocate to Arkansas for a minimum of one year, plus numerous outdoor perks (Johanson, 2022). Similar incentive programs exist in Tucson, Arizona. Remote Tucson is giving outdoor enthusiasts $7,650 in cash, goods, and services to use as a base for work and adventure (Johanson, 2022). Ascend West Virginia offers $12,000 to relocate plus a year's worth of outdoor

adventure and gear in the Appalachian Mountains. The total value, including networking and educational workshops, is worth $20,000 (Johanson, 2022).

An additional force that is helping to spur moves to rural areas is the federal infrastructure law that contains 65 billion dollars for broadband internet (Yancey, 2022). According to Yancey (2022), it is the modern-day equivalent of the rural electrification of the 1930s.

In light of this, as the new work norms in the hybrid workplace have been taking shape, the need for employees to recognize and accept them becomes very important, which may be achieved by facilitating a smooth transition from the old to the new. Such an acceptance of this idea will allow organizations to move forward successfully. To achieve a way to close the gap between existing and the revised culture, organizations need to identify and leverage successful new habits and routines that were developed and used during COVID, to leave behind old cultural elements no longer applicable to the new environment, and to effectively communicate the new practices and norms that now seem to work well in a hybrid workplace (Klynn, 2021). Many have found that in-person and virtual town halls and other events such as brainstorming sessions and social events have worked well to get the word out about the revised culture and to adjust to the new way of doing things.

Conclusion

As a result of COVID-19, organizations were subject to the greatest forced experiment in history, which was extensive and highly accelerated (Green, 2020). The pandemic facilitated the rapid transition to a system of complete remote work or a hybrid format. As made abundantly clear by the pandemic, cultures that are good in one situation or period may become dysfunctional in other circumstances or times driven by disruption and significant change (Furnham & Gunter, 2015). In a period that may be the beginning of a truly post-pandemic era, organizations are now faced with the significant challenge of sustaining a positive and successful work environment based on known and accepted corporate culture. In a post-pandemic era, talent and supportive work environments need to be nurtured and supported to navigate the near future and to be ready to deal with other crises that may occur (SHRM, 2022). Many organizations have already been involved in developing an extremely flexible culture that promotes the philosophy of structure and coordination (Chesky, 2022).

Interestingly, a change in company culture, once driven by health and safety concerns, is now a function of what is practical and necessary. The new reality of remote work both challenges and inspires organizations to consider shifting work paradigms that offer valuable and positive experiences that encourage them to continue and necessitate adjusting corporate culture norms to embrace it (Market et al., 2022). Companies, therefore, have the choice to either proactively embrace and take charge of corporate culture initiatives as they move forward or become the victims of an inevitable and overwhelming force that will take the organizations to

places not considered desirable or workable to promote and sustain overall success. Whether old or new, a successful corporate culture should always emphasize flexibility, innovation, and team-oriented success. The fact is that many challenges remain to be addressed, such as effective communication, conditions that support creativity, and finding the best balance between home and work life. Whether organizations wish to admit it, the effects of remote work are now part of the routine work process and position businesses to take advantage of opportunities to be better prepared for future pandemics that are likely to occur.

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