



# Managing Talent During Pandemic

**Mona Tripathi, Anjaneya Tripathi**

Retired Professor, Finance Student

Ambalika Institute of Management and Technology

Lancaster University

Higher self-assessed productivity masks an exhausted workforce

54% overworked

34% exhausted Digital overload is real and climbing – weekly time spent in meetings has doubled since July 2022, team chats are up

42% of emails have doubled

Gen Z (single, young) feels more isolated and struggles with motivation. Managers/leaders have done better.

Networking, meaningful connections, and "hallway conversations are very difficult remotely.

Remote work has made teams more tightly bound, but interactions across teams and innovations are difficult.

The forced confinement at home may have added to the stress.

The CEO job description just got a bit longer.

CEOs have always carried a heavy workload, but the issues they confront today add several fresh layers. Climate change requires a new way of looking at asset value that models the potential impact of various types of risks. COVID-19 and its aftermath mean leaders must engage empathetically in topics relating to their employees' well-being.

COVID-19 brought on a new set of employee pressure, including trying to take care of work and children at a time when schools doors close suddenly and managing the 24X7 nature of working from home. These burdens also imply a new set of pressure for CEOs and other leaders as they attempt to support an overburdened workforce.

CEOs can respond by expanding recruitment efforts to people who have work experience but don't have degrees; supporting more 'getaway jobs' or stepping stone positions that provide an income boost and by challenging the organizations to embrace a more inclusive skill-based approach to hiring and talent management.

Across industries, product development functions are encountering a perfect storm of supply chain issues arising from the pandemic, the current labor mismatch, and evergreen themes of managing cost, quality, and time. Rather than becoming part of the much-bemoaned war of talent, companies can develop the capabilities of their existing workforce to fill skill gaps.

Compared with non-parents, employed parents are likely to miss days of work because they are experiencing symptoms of burnout. Companies need to understand what the compound pressure of employment and parenting during a pandemic are doing to these workers and consider a list of interventions to counteract their experience of burning the candle at both ends.

Women are also reporting higher than average rates of burnout. A recently released report in Women in the Workplace 2021 states that 42% of women report being burnt out, a percentage that is higher than it was last year and higher than it is for men. Reasons include the fact that one in three women and 60% of mothers with young children, spend five or more hours a day on housework and caregiving.

The Strategies:

In the COVID-19 era, HR officers are playing a central role in how companies reimagine personnel practices to build organizational resilience and drive value. There is no shortage of new responsibility from fostering connectivity early in the pandemic to developing and implementing plans for the return to offices.

Additionally, the COVID-19 crisis is now accelerating pre-existing talent managers trends.

A strong and durable talent strategy can be drafted.

1. Finding and hiring the right people: HR officers should take a fresh look at tools that make it easier to connect people to employment; based on a deeper understanding of their skills and how that match with available jobs.
2. Learning & growing: HROs must consider the effects of large workforce transitions accelerated by the COVID-19 crisis and the key role that re-skilling plays in helping close talent gaps.
3. Managing and rewarding performances: The crisis is accelerating shifts in how organizations manage and reward performance. It has dramatically affected goals and performance plans while making remote workers further reliant on performance management for feedback. To encourage effective performance management now and beyond, this should:

Invest in managers coaching skills

Keep ratings for the very 'highest and lowest' performers but also celebrate the broad range of good performers.

4. Tailoring the employee experience: HROs must help establish norms of working that foster engagement and inclusion for all employees. The solution will be based on the talent needed, which roles are most important, how much collaboration is necessary for excellence, and where offices are located today, among other factors.

5. Optimizing workforce planning and strategy: Given shifts in how value is created in the post-COVID-19 world, the talent base required may need to shift as well. Workforce planning, strategy, and change in the HR spending category are most likely to increase over the next 12 months.

