Retaining colleagues post Covid-19

Revisit your talent framework

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Introduction

After over a year of uncertainty, we're **finally moving back towards a point of stability**, with restrictions hopefully easing as we move into spring 2021. But with the gradual return to normality will likely come significant increases in turnover, at the exact moment that many organisations will need stability and consistency of service in order to provide excellent customer service.

In this paper, we'll break down what these mean for you, and provide you with the insights and guidance you need to prepare for the new world, get your business ahead of the trend, and minimise disruption for your people and your customers.

There are four trends that we predict are likely to become noticeable in 2021.

1. Increased turnover
2. Changes in skill requirements
3. Increased need for skillset diversity
4. Huge shifts in expectations regarding working practices and conditions

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Covid's post-lockdown impact on your resourcing model

To start with, let's take a look at the four biggest factors likely to impact your resourcing model in the coming year.

1	Post-lockdown appetite for change
2	Cross-sector disruption
3	The vastly changing landscape
4	Flexibility and wellbeing

Attrition across most sectors in 2020 was lower than in previous years, with a big factor being dwindling job availability across the market leading people to choose to stay in their current roles. This can be attributed in part due to the uncertainty surrounding the post-Covid future of the job market, as well as to positive changes to working practices such as remote working and flexible hours.

With a return to what we previously thought of as normal ways of working, the concerns around taking a chance on a new vacancy will begin to quickly evaporate. In addition, the reversal of what often came to be seen as unintended benefits – flexible and remote working – could provide the catalyst that is needed to make a move.

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2 Cross-sector disruption

One specific impact of the disruption in 2020 was a flow of labour from affected sectors such as hospitality, aviation and non-essential retail into growth sectors like logistics and health & social care. A lot of these moves could be seen as essentially stop-gap, with people moving back into their preferred sector once it opens back up.

This subsequent shift could be additionally impacted by two factors

- The Brexit trade deal is expected to lead to shortages in labour supply in the health and social care sectors, among others

- For those in the health and social care sectors the past year has been tough, and a higher than normal level of career changes should be expected as a result of burnout

As a result, expect to see significant shortfalls and surpluses across different sectors.

3 The vastly changing landscape

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Having looked at the impact on supply over the past year, it's worth observing the changes to demand behaviours, and what that means for 2021.

Due to the accelerated impact to the bricks-and-mortar retail footprint, customers very quickly switched to a digital model for a large portion of their interactions, from grocery shopping to mortgage applications and GP appointments. The question we need to consider is, what proportion of customers will want to go back to the old model?

In line with this digital shift, many (and in some cases all) of these interactions are being managed by colleagues who are themselves working remotely. This is in many instances a marked sea change to the traditional mode of working, with added complexity for managers combined with differing expectations from their employees. Coming out of lockdown and into the new world, it's important to understand these changes to the operating model, their impact on ways of working, and the skillsets required of your people in order to pull it off.

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4 | Flexibility and wellbeing

It won't be the greatest surprise to hear that over two thirds of the workforce would prefer to continue with 'vlexible' (virtual/flexible) working arrangements post-pandemic (source: Forever Flex Report). With studies reporting increases in productivity as a result, organisations will want to ensure this is a visible part of their employee value proposition (EVP).

But the ease and simplicity of working from home does have implications that need to be thought through carefully as we potentially move towards a new and very different working model. These include
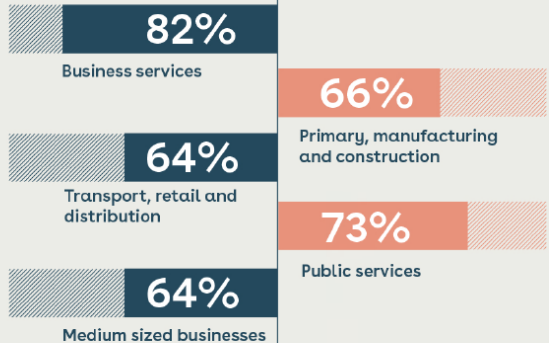
**Physical Wellbeing
Mental Wellbeing
Virtual Expectations
The Social aspect**

72%

of all employers want to keep working from home

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82%
Business services

66%
Primary, manufacturing and construction

64%
Transport, retail and distribution

73%
Public services

64%
Medium sized businesses

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Physical wellbeing

carrying out risk assessments and providing equipment, including chairs and screens

Mental wellbeing

upskilling line managers to have awareness of mental health best practices, based on rigorous, proven academic research. Promoting wellbeing and self-care in a way that goes beyond simple box-ticking, and involves meaningful changes in **approach to people practices and management**

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These are the primary concerns businesses will need to confront in 2021 and beyond in order to minimise attrition, and performance disruption. In the next section, we've outlined our core principles in constructing a solid working model to address these concerns.

Virtual expectations

shifting performance management approaches away from time-based measures, to focus more on measurable outputs. Cruder, more traditional methods such as hours logged or meeting attendance, can quickly and negatively impact employee trust and begin to encourage 'e-presenteeism', a sure fire sign that productivity is going to take a dip

The social aspect

considering the positive impacts of a collaborative working environment, and how best to fluidly incorporate this into a working model that's more frequently remote

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The four pillars of a retention framework

An effective talent retention framework covers four key pillars:

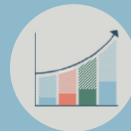|			
what resources and skills do you need, now and in the future? And what do your recruits and potential recruits expect from you?	how do you recruit talent?	how can you ensure your people are engaged and satisfied in their role?	what's your approach to developing your talent?
Knowing	**Attracting**	**Retaining**	**Growing**

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Knowing – what resources and skills do you need?

As of October 2020, the UK unemployment figure sat at 1.69m. With that number expected to rise across 2021, employers are likely to find themselves in a surplus labour market.

This presents three challenges:

- Ensuring you understand the market for the talent you need. What do you need to do, to provide, or to ensure, in order to bring in people with the best skills and experience for the role? To this end, it's crucial to build and refine employee personas for key employee types. It's also important to treat employees as consumers, and apply a service mind set. Use customer and employee experience tools like empathy mapping and employee journeys to understanding the key 'moments of truth' for employees

- Ensuring that you're specific and accurate in outlining the skills and capabilities you need, in order to meet the current and future needs of the business. A lot will have changed in working practices since 2019, so your company will need to be certain your employee personas and recruitment requirements are fully alighned to your strategy, as well as being suited to market conditions

- Provision of increased resource agility. That is, creating and/or having access to an active, engaged talent pool to draw upon when needed, for example in the lead-up to expected spikes in work volume. Establishing strong third-party relationships (for example, business process outsourcers) can help ensure your short-term demands are met. Additional untapped resources for short-term, short-notice talent can be found by embracing new working practices that have grown over the past few years, such as the gig economy and remote working

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The labour market surplus presents an opportunity for organisations to select candidates from a much wider talent pool. The Royal Society for The Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA) have identified five principles that provide the foundations for good work in the current age of technological change.

Revisiting recruitment strategies to ensure these elements are effectively implemented will help to create that competitive advantage you need when attracting top talent.

Retaining Colleages post Covid-19

1 **Security –** work that provides enough economic security to participate equally in society

2 **Wellbeing –** work that doesn't harm one's physical and mental health

3 **Growth –** work that grows and develops one's capabilities

4 **Freedom –** work that provides freedom to pursue a larger life

5 **Nurturing identity –** work that nurtures one's subjective working identity

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The recruitment strategy can, in turn, be further informed through three lenses:

1 Learnings: understanding why applicants dropped out of the application process in in the past (e.g., it took too long, career paths not being clear)

2 Expectations: evaluate the expectations for specific roles against aspects such as working practices, location flexibility and so on

3 Personalise: tailor your recruitment approaches to specific roles (e.g. profiling, presentations, case studies, demonstrations)

Retaining Collegues post Covid-19

The growth in remote working also creates a need for recruitment approaches that can also work in virtual settings. It's vital to carefully consider how standard practices can be adjusted, to ensure candidate selection still meets high standards. Alternative methods include virtual presentations, role plays, assimilation exercises, or some combination of all these, that help to replicate some of the demands colleagues will encounter when in their role.

"Working at distance has accelerated the appetite to conduct the recruitment process all online. Previous concerns about candidate drop out from a digital assessment process have been negated by solutions that are engaging and tailored to each role.

-Chris Bryson,
MD, Global Analytics, Gobeyond Partners

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Case study: using A.I. to transform your hiring model

Rhonda Lloyd, Webhelp's Recruitment Director, talks us through the impacts of automation and A.I. on their recruitment model.

How it was

The candidate journey required human intervention at every stage

- The process was recruiter rather than candidate led
- There were inefficiencies when arranging interviews
- Not all applicants had the opportunity to interview
- Unconscious bias could have been present
- Feedback to candidates was not always timely

Retaining Collegues post Covid 19

The A.I. implementation

In early 2020, the first stages of our candidate journey were brought into the digital space

- Every candidate is invited to be interviewed via a chat experience that is easy and engaging
- Candidates are in control, they choose when, where and on what device they interview
- Screening is unbiased and inclusive, no personal data or video is used
- Every candidate receives a personal feedback report and we get tailored interview questions for the next stage in their journey
- Personality Theory, Natural Language Processing and Machine Learning helps assess and rank candidates so we know who to contact first

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How it is

The shift to A.I. has seen notable improvements in candidate experience and inclusivity, and serious reductions in inefficiencies and cost

- The candidate experience has been greatly improved - first interview with personal feedback immediately follows application

- 100% of applicants are invited to interview

- Inefficiencies when trying to arrange first interview have been eliminated

- Due to the digital shift, cost per hire has reduced by 40%

- Inherent bias in hiring is massively reduced with A.I. implementation

- Traditional selection events / assessment centres have been removed with recruiters having more time to focus on the individual

Crucially, the model is continuously shifting, learning, and improving, with data gleaned from exit interviews and non-hires used to refine the A.I. understanding.
While the benefits of incorporating A.I. into your hiring model are clear, it's also important to consider the impact of A.I. on the perception of your organisation. As this is quite a new process, it's important to handle the transition sensitively in order to ensure the human element is not lost.

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Retaining – how can colleagues be engaged and satisfied in their role?

You should look at talent retention from two perspectives – **preventative** and **reactive** as part of an Employee Value Proposition (EVP) strategy.

Preventative strategies involve prior analysis to measure such disparate elements as wellness and engagement (to flag potential causes of attrition), recruitment profiling (to get an understanding of candidate profiles who are more and less likely to stay), and thoughtfully managed exit interviews (a hugely rich source of information, that should be fed into your EVP strategy).

For example, despite current low levels of attrition, there is a strong feeling among organisations that working practices will be a significant retention factor. To this end, having a well thought-out operating model that successfully executes a hybrid model of 'office + homeworking' could be the EVP differentiator of the future. In local markets where alternative employment options are available, working conditions will inevitably play an even bigger role again.

Reactive strategies include utilising behavioural data to create models that help mitigate attrition in the short term (such as additional coaching, changing shift patterns etc) and creating early warning systems to identify potentially impacting changes across the operation.

Absence is a key early warning factor that can lead directly to attrition. It's also a factor that would benefit from being viewed through a different lens. By having a conversation around self-care, happiness and job satisfaction rather than job performance, this can be a hugely important long-term factor. Additionally, adopting advanced predictive models could help to measure behaviours that indicate a colleague's psychological contract with the business is under threat. This can help to move mitigating actions from reactive to preventative strategies.

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Growing – what is the approach to developing your talent?

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The high-level data is clear on this one - Gartner research on top 5 priorities for HR leaders in 2021 put 'Building critical skills and competencies' at a clear #1 (68% of 767 responses). Helping your people grow and improve their skills is a vital aspect of retaining those skills within the business. To this end, take a fresh look at individual development plans and career paths to ensure these are personalised as well as aligned to the future capability needs of your organisation.

Another consideration would be a focus on the initial stages of talent development, when colleagues start a role, as technology can play a major part of the induction process. For example, using digital assistance to upskill new starters more quickly (next best action, machine learning, A.I.).

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Our key recommendations for Q1 2021

1. Review your operating model

Ensure your operating model is aligned against any revisions to corporate strategy in the post-Covid world.

This would encompass any increased agility or resilience required within your current resourcing model, as well as understanding the cultural and technological impact on your company and your people's preferred ways of working.

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2. Consider the effectiveness of your talent framework

Assess the talent framework against your current and future needs. The big shift to online management, learning and hiring was done quickly - and often in a rush –so it's very likely that there's significant waste in the processes that have been set up.

It's also likely that the outcomes of the processes may not be what's actually needed, as they were built on previous assumptions. There's ample opportunity to digitise and streamline talent processes like onboarding, but there's danger in optimising a process that's no longer fit for purpose (for example, if new recruits are never going to visit the office or meet their team members).

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3. Keep close to your employees

Regular touchpoints with colleagues from across the business through formal channels (such as engagement surveys) and informal channels (such as working lunches) will provide early signs of colleague intentions, as well as support your engagement approaches

It sets an expectation that people will be involved in creating, or at least having a say in, new ways of working. Rather than trying to run improvements or experiments from a program office, upskill employees with Continuous Improvement (C.I.) tools and techniques, and give them time to collaborate with others to quickly solve the problems they encounter every day.

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"Covid-19 has affected people in such different ways, that really understanding the impact on each individual will be absolutely key. Mental health is and was already a huge consideration for any employer, but moving forward, organisations will need to go beyond "take care of your mental health" platitudes, to provide much more direct support and action.'

-Jonathan Shawcross
Chief Growth Officer, Webhelp UK

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About the authors

An experienced operations consultant across a number of industries who enjoys successfully delivering large scale improvement programmes

With over 15 years' experience, Stewart has successfully led major business transformation projects in the UK, Europe and North America. He's a skilled coach specialising in managing change and implementing programme controls that ensure effective delivery of improvement projects. An integral part to his approach is the enjoyment and energy he gets from working with client staff. Balancing the need to transfer skills and deliver tangible benefits is always at the forefront of his mind.

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Andy has held numerous senior HR roles in business organisations, and has consulted to leading companies in the UK and Australia.

With 20 years' experience in organisational development and change, Andy is at his best working with clients setting up for growth and navigating unfamiliar organisational challenges. He is a Chartered Member of the CIPD and has studied at Ashridge Business School. Andy is the Co-Founder of My Leadership Strengths. Clients describe him as curious, insightful, practical, intelligent, fun and open.

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About
Gobeyond Partners

Customer behaviour is changing. But many organisations are not keeping pace.

With legacy systems, cost pressures, and agile new competitors, businesses need to think differently about the way they look at things.

Gobeyond Partners is a new type of consulting firm that partners with you to solve complex customer journey challenges.

By combining deep sector expertise with an award-winning approach to client service and value, we bring your transformation vision to life.

As part of the Webhelp group, our people understand what it takes to deliver great customer experience. This means we connect design and transformation with the real world, working alongside your people to embed lasting change.

Our customer journey view is broader and deeper, so we help you break down organisational silos and deliver a fully connected omnichannel experience.

Every client and engagement counts, and every objective is guaranteed.