



DSM USA
DES MOINES, IOWA



WORKFORCE TRENDS AND OCCUPANCY STUDY PLAYBOOK

ACCELERATE YOUR ORGANIZATION'S EVOLUTION
TO SUCCEED IN THE NEW WORLD OF WORK



INTRODUCTION

In early 2022, the Greater Des Moines Partnership commissioned a study of knowledge workers in Greater Des Moines (DSM). This **Workforce Trends and Occupancy Study** (WTOS) for DSM provided leaders and community members with insight into what future residents and workers want to build engaging professional spaces in a robust environment.

This is the first community-level study of its kind. It captured insights about the actual behaviors and priorities of workers while also considering their physical environment. For the participating organizations, leaders gained insight into the perspectives of their unique knowledge workers. The study provided information directly from their employees about behaviors, engagement, mobility patterns, cultural perceptions and more. To date, there is no other study that has obtained this much detailed, crowdsourced data addressing the future of work.

There have been thousands of surveys and analyses completed globally in the last few years in response to the pandemic. Some studies took a very broad approach across multiple cities worldwide, other focused on either working or living, while several attempted to dabble in both. This study is different, not only in its approach but also with the **source** and **subjects**.

The **source** of our data is hyper-local. The respondents were all knowledge workers in and around Downtown Des Moines (DSM). Other studies are not specific to any one community and/or do not gather qualitative input. The largest study reviewed was done in partnership with the World Economic Forum. This 2021 study spanned 29 countries and had 12,445 respondents. In our case, we had 5,197 respondents, all representing one specific place: DSM. This made our sample size sufficient to have confidence in the results.

We addressed multiple **subjects** with this study. The Partnership along with the research teams at Bâton Global and Reworc carefully crafted a set of questions to ensure the survey experience would provide robust data to make decisions with and was reasonable in length. The survey covered five primary subjects:

1. **Work Behaviors:** The types of things our workers are actually doing day-to-day
2. **Mobility:** Where our workers have been working and plan to work
3. **Attributes:** Key characteristics of their organization and the surrounding environment
4. **Work Culture:** Both current and desired—with the competing values framework
5. **Downtown:** The priorities, satisfaction and utilization patterns of our workers

A majority of the WTOS research focused on workplace environments and needs. We also know that Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) are essential to talent development, attraction and retention. The content in this WTOS Playbook is applicable to many organizations and we suggest utilizing this tool alongside the Employers 4 Equity Playbooks that will soon be published in the coming weeks by the DSM USA 4 Equity Collective, an initiative of Captial Crossroads. Pairing all Playbooks will provide for comprehensive workforce resources for our region.

The following pages present the findings of the study as well as detailed insights and actionable steps that can be taken now to address the current and future needs of our local workforce.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	THE TOTAL PACKAGE	4
	Work-Play #1: Celebrate wins in a variety of ways	5
	Work-Play #2: Discuss performance regularly, with data	6
2	A NEEDED SHIFT	7
	Work-Play #3: Nurture psychological safety and reduce the fear of failure	8
	Work-Play #4: Create forums for reflection about the team	9
3	THE FUTURE OF HYBRID	11
	Work-Play #5: Articulate and invest in your Workplace Value Proposition	13
	Work-Play #6: Expand your hiring geography to find specific skillsets	13
	Work-Play #7: Consider tailored remote working policies, linked to the work being done	14
4	DEEP WORK	15
	Work-Play #8: Delegate growth opportunities	17
	Work-Play #9: Demystify automation and invest in new tools	18
	Work-Play #10: Create policies, practices and places that promote flow	19
5	JUST DO IT	20
	Work-Play #11: Conduct a Start-Stop-Continue retrospective with your team	21
	Work-Play #12: Use the 4 Ps framework for effective meetings	22
	Work-Play #13: Create business process maps	22
	REFERENCES AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES	24

1. THE TOTAL PACKAGE

Most surveys present a specific topic to the participant and ask about their level of satisfaction. This assumes the topic at-hand is important to the participant. This approach can leave surveyors and stakeholders with little insight about what to prioritize. To avoid this, participants in the Workforce Trends and Occupancy Study (WTOS) were provided with a substantial list of organizational attributes. They were first asked to select attributes that were important to them and their satisfaction about those things was gathered after.

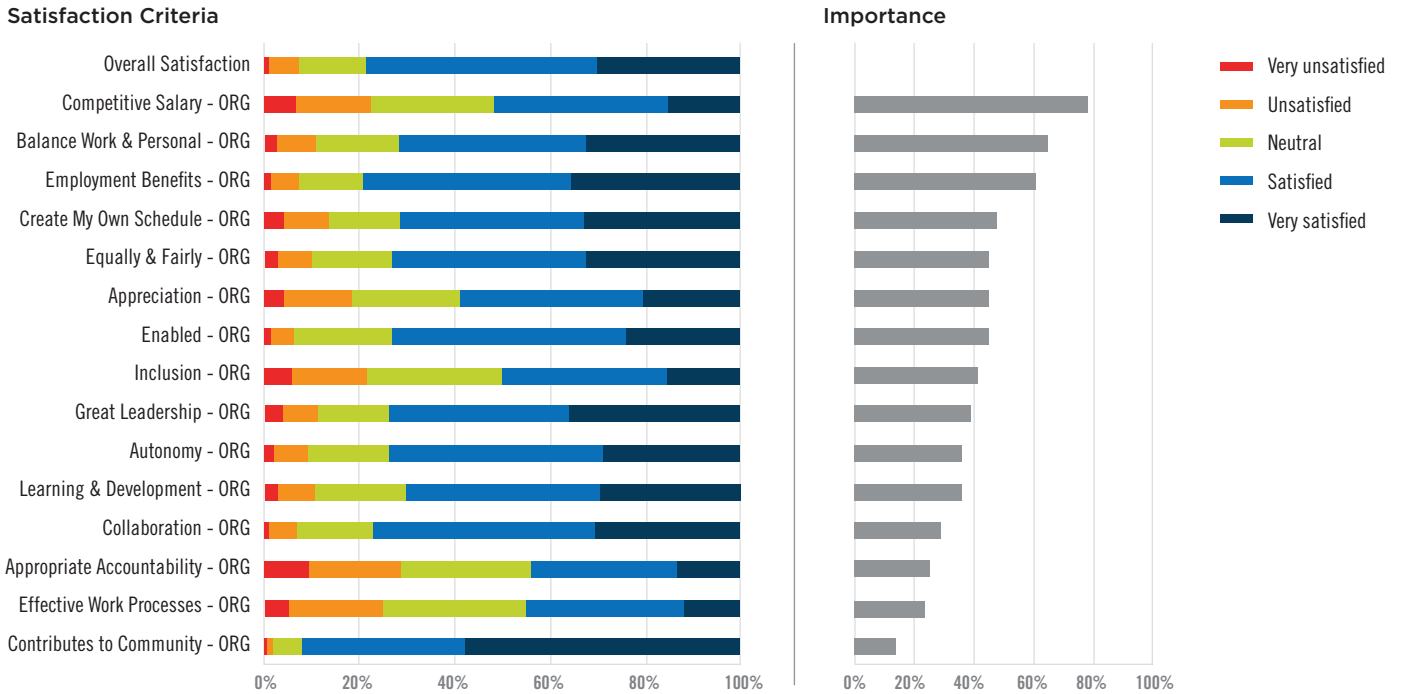


Image 1
Image provided by Reworc

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Knowledge workers in DSM deem three things as most important to them from an organizational perspective: 1) a competitive salary, 2) being able to balance their work and personal responsibilities and 3) employment benefits. These items make up the total package that you should be attentive to and raise up with existing and prospective employees. And while importance is not quite as high as the top three, there is opportunity for growth in terms of showing appreciation and including people in the decisions that impact their work (based on the elevated levels of neutrality and dissatisfaction).

These findings align with other recent research. A Gallup study of U.S. employees revealed that pay and work-life balance have both risen significantly in recent years, clinching the first and second spots as the most important factors for accepting a job elsewhere (Gallup, 2022).

With this data in mind, you might be asking yourself:

- How can I best motivate and appreciate my employees?
- How can I demonstrate an understanding for work and personal responsibilities through the recognition and rewards I offer?
- What should I do as it relates to salaries and other benefits?
- How can I involve my employees in decisions, but still provide an equitable experience?

Work-Plays to Up Your Game

WORK-PLAY #1: CELEBRATE WINS IN A VARIETY OF WAYS

Recognizing both the large and smaller accomplishments of teams and individuals encourages them to continue to strive and reminds them that you value their contributions. Aim to recognize individual and team performance in both public and private ways. Better yet, ask them what they prefer. Shoutouts on internal message boards or during team meetings are a great way to give positive feedback in a transparent and promotional way. Moreover, these types of efforts help employees remain grounded about who the strong performers are, which can help reduce surprises when salaries or promotions are revealed. You can also publicly acknowledge an employee's accomplishment on LinkedIn, write a good old-fashioned note or surprise them with an afternoon off and a gift card.

Not only can you celebrate a job well done, you can also celebrate a situation well-handled. You could give someone recognition for attempting something courageously, even if it didn't lead to tangible outcomes.

CASE STUDY: At X, a subsidiary of Google, employees famously get praise whenever they “break” a project (i.e., make it fail), because it stimulates their culture of bold experimentation. They approach projects that have the aspiration and riskiness of research with the speed and ambition of a startup.

PUTTING IT INTO ACTION: Present this list to each of your employees and have them rank the options in terms of how they prefer to be recognized or rewarded. Give them the option to indicate if they prefer not to experience any of these scenarios.

- a) A verbal shoutout at a team meeting
- b) A mention in a team-wide email or message thread
- c) A gift card and an afternoon off
- d) Additional responsibility or autonomy in subsequent projects

POWER-PLAY: Success is a process, not an end game. Find good moments *this week* to celebrate employees on the go rather than waiting for them to get to some final destination. Don't fall into the trap of making a grandiose show of gratitude once a year and otherwise showing disinterest at all other times.

WORK-PLAY #2: DISCUSS PERFORMANCE REGULARLY, WITH DATA

Performance reviews can be a tricky thing, particularly as remote work has become more prevalent. If you aren't seeing your employees as much in person, it means you don't have as much data from shared experiences as you used to. It's easy to count widgets built or tasks completed, but we can't stop there, especially with innovation and teamwork being critical to future success. If we don't regularly put thoughtful energy behind a well-rounded set of goals and targets for each person on our team, employees will recognize that their performance review is either a summary of rigid numbers that doesn't tell the full story, or an anecdotal conversation with severe bias to whatever has happened lately. This can lead to a variety of consequences: someone might internalize an inflated view of their performance, you might overlook one of your highest performers and so on.

Performance is an ongoing activity. Instead of trying to measure the value of employees' contributions after the fact, aim to regularly support and position workers to perform better in the future. Establish measurable goals and targets with each employee and review progress with them frequently to keep you and your employees rooted in truth.

CASE STUDY: Accenture has eliminated traditional performance reviews for its 330,000 employees and instead has implemented a more flexible system with ongoing feedback provided to employees immediately after an assignment. To read more, [click here](#).

PUTTING IT INTO ACTION: Open your calendar. Create a recurring 20-minute block each week for you to capture your answers to these two questions about each employee: What impressed me this past week? Why? Additionally, ask your employees to log their achievements. Review this information with them regularly to give both affirmative and corrective feedback.

POWER-PLAY: Along with measuring performance, measure capacity. This will instill a healthy amount of accountability amidst your team and ensure you aren't burning out your high performers. Find a system that works for your situation. There are plenty of tools to help you estimate how many hours a project will take and track your employees' hours. Check out tools with resource management features like [Hive](#), [Wrike](#) or [Float](#).

TOTAL PACKAGE LOCAL CASE STUDY EXAMPLES:

- Creativity in employee appreciation is how **Blue Compass** creates special moments for its staff. Surprise banners are a unique gesture that bring employees recognition while strengthening the company culture. Learn more about this example [here](#).
- **EMC Insurance Companies** encourages creative innovation and collaboration when it comes to employee benefits. One way the company has done this is through hoteling stations and an increased travel budget, among other strategies. Read about these benefits [here](#).

2. A NEEDED SHIFT

The cultures within our organizations are key to the overall success of our region. Culture can be defined as the unwritten rules and values of an organization, but it is rarely measured in an actionable manner. And while culture evolves with company strategies and lifecycle stage, research shows the greater the level of alignment between *current* and *future* states, the better an organization will perform. So, we asked DSM workers: How would you describe the current culture of your organization? Then we asked: What does the culture need to look like in the next five years if the organization is to reach its highest aspirations and goals?

Competing values

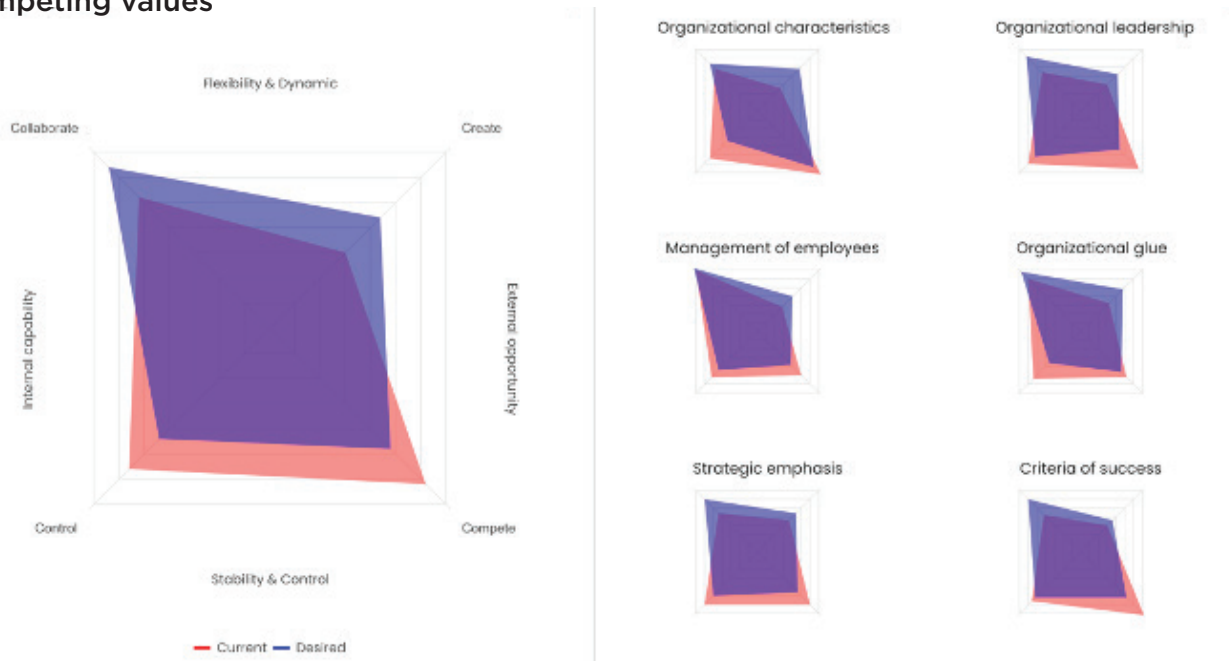


Image 2
Image provided by Reworc

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

We've discovered today's current organizational culture in DSM puts emphasis on stability, control and production. However, our knowledge workers feel that more innovation and teamwork will be necessary for maximum achievement in the future. Top-level leaders will likely have the biggest adjustment to make between current and future leadership and communication styles, which is seen in the less aligned "Organizational leadership" breakdown (Image 2, top right).

With this data in mind, you might be asking yourself:

- What can I do to foster a culture of collaboration and innovation?
- What if my team is signaling for a work culture that differs from what I envision, or from what our senior leadership envisions?

Work-Plays to Up Your Game

WORK-PLAY #3: NURTURE PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY AND REDUCE THE FEAR OF FAILURE

In a psychologically safe workplace, people feel free to share ideas, mistakes and criticisms. This quality was shown to be the most significant driver of team effectiveness in a recent study by Google.

MAIN DRIVERS OF TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

People in psychologically safe teams are less worried about protecting their image and more focused on doing great work. To create cultures where psychological safety is nurtured:

- a) Share the innovative behaviors you’re looking for that employees can activate in the day-to-day. For example, encourage employees to ask questions or challenge old ways of thinking.
- b) Let go of perfectionism. If employees believe nothing short of perfectionism is good enough, it will impact their willingness to openly share ideas and beliefs, limiting creativity and innovation.
- c) Make it okay to share failures as well as successes. When something goes wrong, talk to your team using language such as, “I failed at this. Here’s what I thought. Here’s what I learned.”

CASE STUDY: At Spotify, “Squads,” or teams, go through postmortem analyses of failures to ensure learning, and some squad rooms have “fail walls.” Every few weeks, squads conduct retrospectives to evaluate what is going well and what needs to improve. To read more, [click here](#).

PUTTING IT INTO ACTION: Reflect about your team. Can you think of times where they’ve been vulnerable with each other, sharing their lessons learned? If so, share these stories with your team. If not, you and your team probably have some room for growth here in terms of fostering psychological safety. A simple way to start is by having your team read the aforementioned Google study and then discussing it. Before your discussion, ask them to anonymously submit answers to the survey to the right.



Image 3
Images provided by Reworc

	Strongly disagree		Neutral		Strongly agree
Part 1: Individual safety					
1	1	2	3	4	5
1	In this team, it is easy to discuss difficult issues and problems.				
2	I won't receive retaliation or criticism if I admit to an error or mistake.				
3	It is easy to ask a member of this team for help.				
4	I feel safe offering new ideas, even if they aren't fully-formed plans.				
Part 2: Team respect					
5	1	2	3	4	5
5	In this team, people are accepted for being different.				
6	My teammates welcome my ideas and give them time and attention.				
7	Members of this team could easily describe the value of others' contributions.				
Part 3: Team learning					
8	1	2	3	4	5
8	In this team, people talk about mistakes and ways to improve and learn from them.				
9	We take time to find new ways to improve our team's work processes.				
10	Members of this team raise concerns they have about team plans or decisions.				
11	We try to discover our underlying assumptions and seek counterarguments about issues under discussion.				

(Source: Amy Edmondson, 1999, "Psychological Safety and Learning Behavior in Work Teams," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 44 (2): 350-383)

WORK-PLAY #4: CREATE FORUMS FOR REFLECTION ABOUT THE TEAM

It's easy to get hyper-focused on the work to be done, but for your team to operate at its full potential, you have to get the people part right. While socials and team-building activities are beneficial, it's imperative to build the team's understanding of each other within the context of work.

a) Moderate an activity about current and desired culture with your team. Break into small groups of about three people each and provide the Competing Values Framework (CVF) picture below (Image 4). Describe the four quadrants of the CVF and ask each team to indicate what they think today's team culture is, as well as the culture you'll need in the future to maximize success. They will have 100 points to divide as they indicate today's culture, and another 100 points to indicate their desired culture. Ensure you give your team enough time to compare their scores (and shapes), explain their reasoning and identify themes.

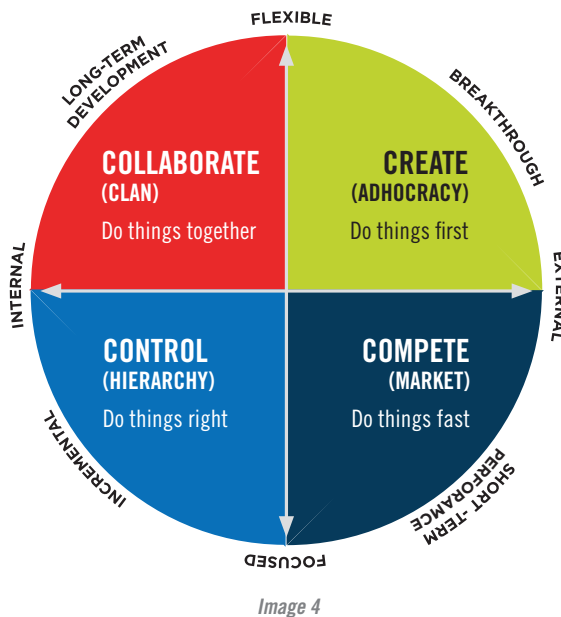


Image 4

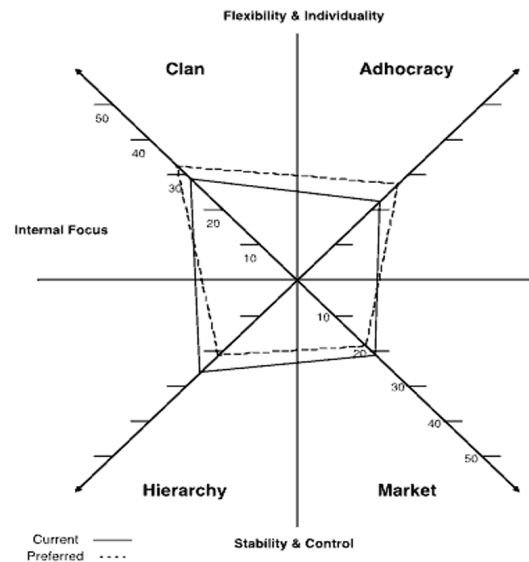


Image 5

Images provided by Reworc

b) Find a behavioral assessment that fits your budget. Consider software platforms like [The Predictive Index](#) that provide your team more than a one-time report alongside materials like [these Zoom backgrounds or desk placards](#). Use this people data to reinforce the fact that everyone has natural strengths and blind spots.

continued

WORK-PLAY #4: CREATE FORUMS FOR REFLECTION ABOUT THE TEAM

PUTTING IT INTO ACTION: Read [this summary](#) about the Competing Values Framework. Then, send it to your team as pre-work before conducting your current vs. desired culture activity.

POWER-PLAY: Consider asking your team what specific opportunity they see to creating the culture they want (or need) and then brainstorm ideas to get 5% closer to that culture. (The 5% allows them to think small and incrementally rather than feeling overwhelmed. The 5% increments also helps to make slow adjustments for those who might be resistant to cultural changes and makes it less scary to them.)

A NEED SHIFT LOCAL CASE STUDY EXAMPLES:

- **The Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines** leans on the Pillars of Purpose to remind employees how to show up and serve others in the workplace. This allows the team to reflect on their culture as a team and achieve together. Learn more about the Pillars [here](#).
- Helping your team to reflect on their needs and embracing changes as a leader during unpredictable times will create increased productivity, accountability and engagement with your organization. Collaboration is key in how **The Ingenuity Company** approaches work — one where a culture of exchanging ideas is preferred over the sit-and-get model. Find out more about this collaborative approach [here](#).

3. THE FUTURE OF HYBRID

Participants in the WTOS were asked about their needs, not wants. In terms of mobility, the survey asked where they worked before the pandemic, where they were working presently and where they would work from most effectively in the future.

We discovered our knowledge workers' pre-pandemic location ratio was 90/10 (office). It's now 40/60 (home) and they think it should remain that way in the future. Nonetheless, Executives, VPs and Directors feel differently than the overall population. They believe they'll be most effective working in the office 60% of the time and 40% of the time at home, which supports their unique working patterns.

OVERALL

Where did you work before the COVID-19 pandemic?

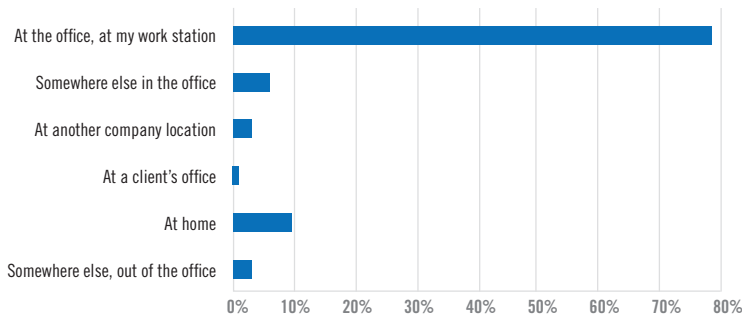


Image 6

OVERALL

Where would you work from most effectively in the future?

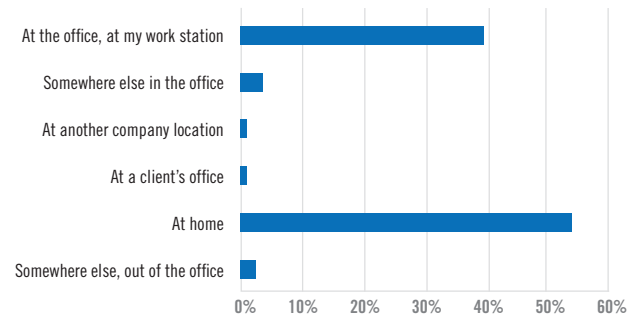


Image 7

EXECUTIVES

Where would you work from most effectively in the future?

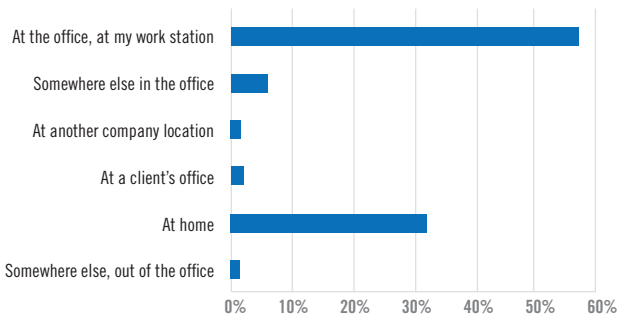


Image 8

EVERYONE ELSE

Where would you work from most effectively in the future?

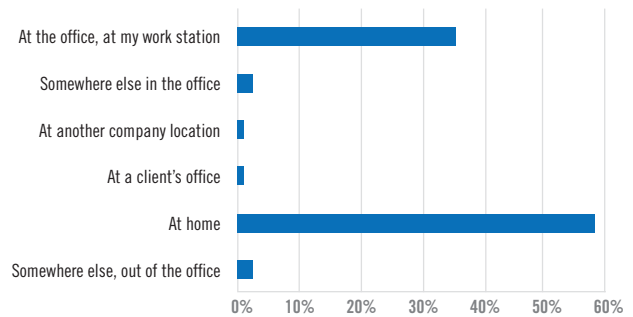


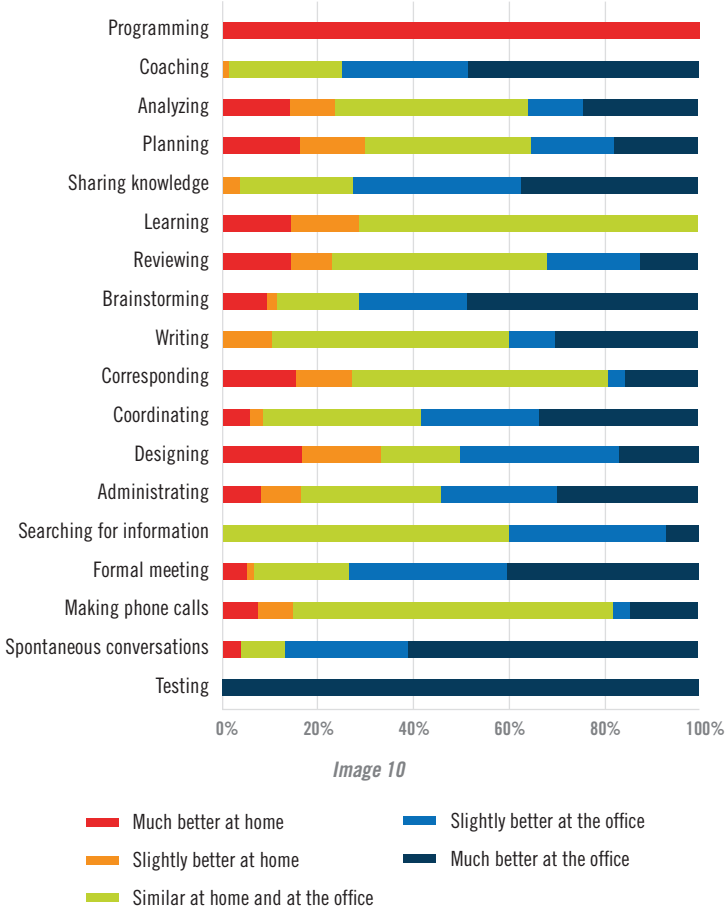
Image 9

Images provided by Reworc

3. THE FUTURE OF HYBRID *continued*

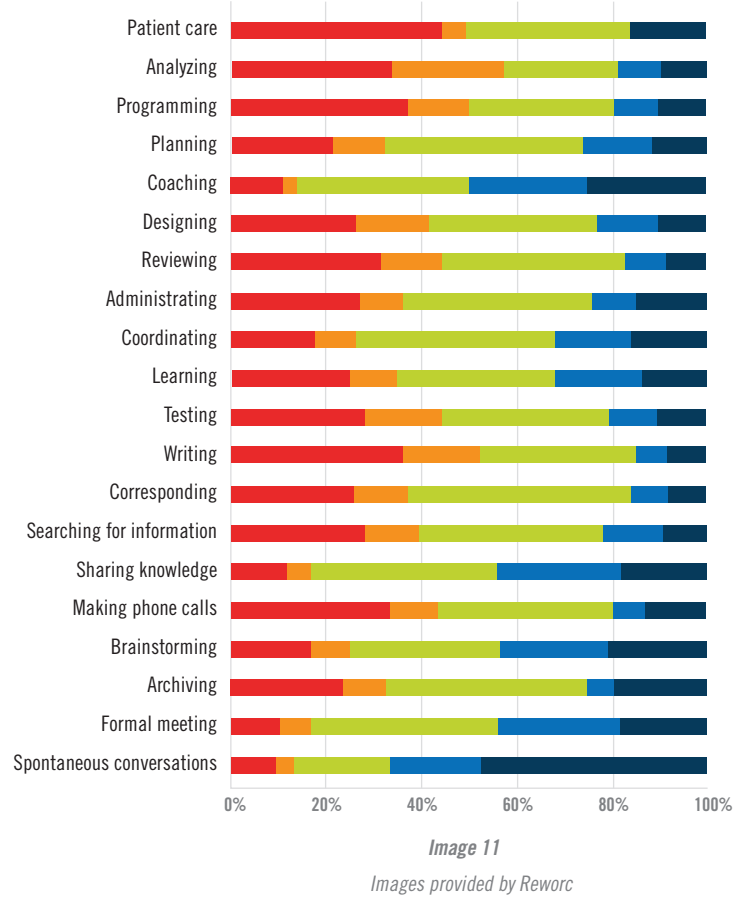
EXECUTIVES

Where can you perform these activities to the best of your ability?



EVERYONE ELSE

Where can you perform these activities to the best of your ability?



WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

In years past, the office was where work was expected to be done. Today, there's choice as to where work occurs. The labor market could shift these dynamics in the future, but for now, working remotely is becoming a key criterion for more employees and jobseekers. While a generic, organization-wide policy is easy to create and maintain, this data makes it possible for leaders in DSM to custom-mold their hybrid working policies to each team or role. Moreover, it reinforces the notion that hybrid work will continue to be desired by our workforce in the future (Images 6 and 7, page 11).

With this data in mind, you might be asking yourself:

- Should I have one remote work policy for my whole team?
- What's the right mix of being together and being flexible?
- With this new precedent of remote work, what opportunities should I be looking to capitalize on, and what problems should I try to get ahead of?

Work-Plays to Up Your Game

WORK-PLAY #5: ARTICULATE AND INVEST IN YOUR WORKPLACE VALUE PROPOSITION

A Workplace Value Proposition (WVP) represents the culture, benefits and interactions employees experience when working at the office. If asked why they chose to work from the office on any given day, responses given by your employees should include at least one element from your WVP.

Given the increased levels of remote work, you must be deliberate in crafting the in-office experience. Design is one factor, but your planning shouldn't end with just the physical space. Make sure employees feel a sense of belonging — it's the office's biggest competitive advantage. Make it a point for the team to come together for a purposeful activity, even something as casual as brainstorming an issue over lunch with a whiteboard.

On-site is the new off-site. Remember how much effort you'd put towards team-building or strategic planning retreats before the pandemic? You must bring a similar level of intentionality to the office and ensure whatever time spent there is distinctly valuable compared to the other places your employees are choosing to work from. You need to design something employees won't want to miss — whether that's a two-week in-office retreat or a recurring ritual that helps your employees feel part of a group.

PUTTING IT INTO ACTION: What distinct value do you want your workplace to provide your team? Are your answers different than your team's answers? What investments or guidelines will be supportive? If you value face-to-face time but also let people come in a few times a week at random, they'll pass like ships in the night, thereby erasing your WVP.

WORK-PLAY #6: EXPAND YOUR HIRING GEOGRAPHY TO FIND SPECIFIC SKILLSETS

Talent is moving between jobs more than ever before. This provides an opportunity for you to expand your geographic reach for those who have the skills needed to fuel essential workflows and bolster your organization's competitive advantage. While expanding your geographic reach and talent pool may seem overwhelming and time-consuming, here are a few tools that can help you quickly shrink your funnel to find the right person.



UPWORK: "Find talent your way. Work with the largest network of independent professionals and get things done — from quick turnarounds to big transformations."



THE PREDICTIVE INDEX: "Make the best hiring decision for any role using millions of data points with PI Hire — a leading pre-employment testing tool."

WORK-PLAY #7:

CONSIDER TAILORED REMOTE WORKING POLICIES, LINKED TO THE WORK BEING DONE

One size does not fit all when it comes to remote work because everyone is not doing the same type of work (as shown in Images 10 and 11 referenced on page 12). You and your team will be well-served if you shape hybrid strategies around *productivity*. With more interdependent teams, be explicit about when people need to be on-site together and when they need to be available to their teammates. For more independent teams, more autonomy and flexibility can be applied to work schedules. As flexibility increases, increase communication about work priorities, progress and handoffs between team members. Remember, clarity is caring. Clear expectations will put your team members at ease and save them from expending time and energy wondering if their actions and decisions are in or out of bounds.

CASE STUDY: Salesforce is leaning on its Success From Anywhere culture, letting each division in the company dictate its ideal schedule of working at home and in the office. These “flex team agreements” give these smaller groups the leeway to work as they see fit, with some in-person time built in to maximize creativity, collaboration and socialization. To read more, [click here](#).

PUTTING IT INTO ACTION: Carve out 15 minutes during your next 1:1 with someone on your team for this activity. The first five minutes is for separate reflection. Have your team member fill out the table to the right, with the five behaviors they feel occur the most in their role. You should do this separately too, based on your understanding of their day-to-day. Each of you should also indicate how complex and collaborative that behavior is for this employee (high or low). Spend the final 10 minutes comparing and explaining your answers. Look for tweaks you could collectively make to the employee’s schedule, work environment and available resources that will make them more effective with these five critical behaviors.

Behavior	Complex	Collaborative
Meetings	↓	↑
Searching for information	↑	↓
Analyzing	↑	↓
Coaching	↓	↑
Planning	↑	↑

THE FUTURE OF HYBRID LOCAL CASE STUDY EXAMPLES:

- Boldness, kindness, collaboration, accountability and flexibility are how **ARAG** embraces its workplace value proposition. The goal? To leave employees empowered and committed to the ARAG mission. Read more about ARAG’s WVP [here](#).
- **Bankers Trust** prioritizes employee value proposition by having conversations with employees and generating feedback that leads to positive changes in the workplace, such as expanded options for flexible work, professional development resources and more collaboration with the organization’s leadership. Learn more about collaborative conversations [here](#).
- Hybrid work has helped **Nyemaster Goode** retain workers and alleviate burnout since the pandemic. Appreciating employees during challenging times ensures employees know they are the organization’s most valuable assets. Find out how your organization can do this too by clicking [here](#).

4. DEEP WORK

Workers were presented with a list of universal work activities (such as programming, coordinating, brainstorming and writing) and proceeded to choose the five activities they spent most of their time doing. Then they had to rank these activities based on what helps them most achieve success in their role. In Image 13, dark blue activities are the most important activities to achieving success and redw are the least important. The size of the bars represents the amount of time spent per week.

Respondents were also asked to indicate the levels of complexity and collaboration that occur within each of their activities. In Image 12, each bubble corresponds to one of the universal work activities. The size of the bubble is another representation of the amount of time spent per week. The further to the right a bubble is, the more complex that activity. The further up a bubble is, the more collaborative that activity is.

Activity Rank

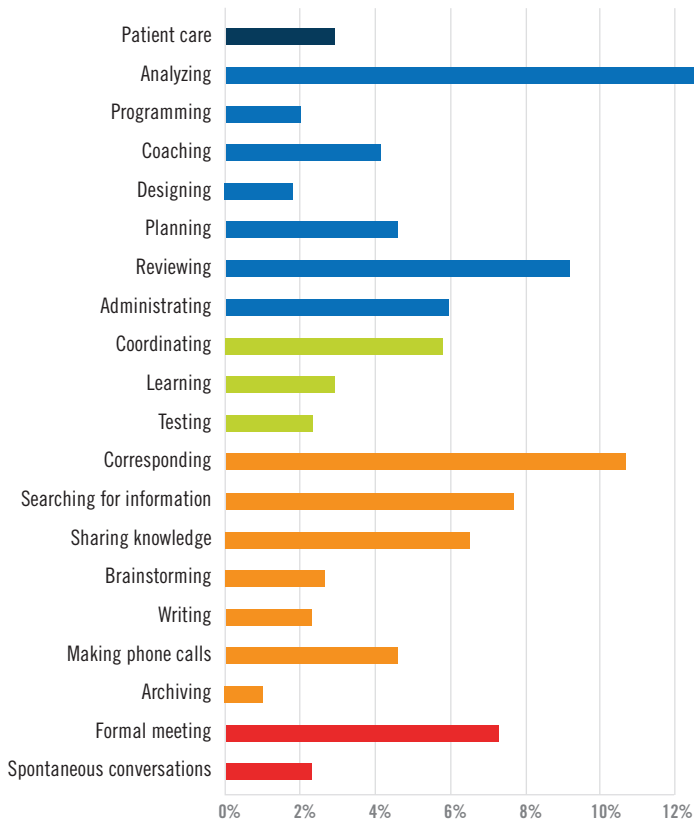


Image 12



Work Dynamic

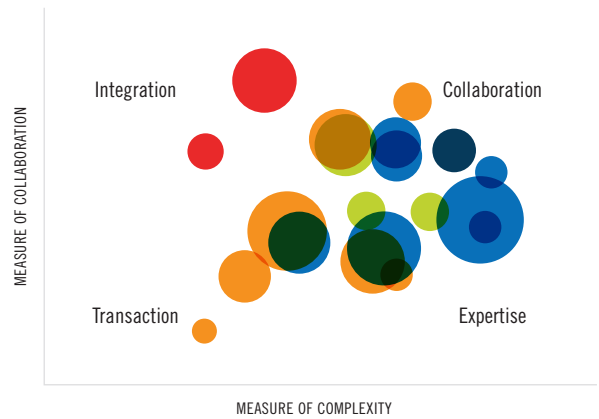


Image 13

Human Capital

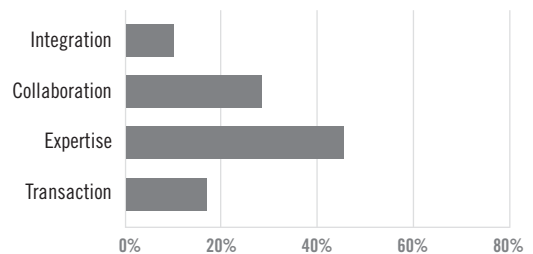


Image 14

Images provided by Reworc

4. DEEP WORK *continued*

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Based on this data, our workforce says it is the complex, judgement-based, nuanced work that leads them to success. They are spending most of their time doing things that fall under the experience category which entails more complexity and independence. Analyzing, programming, coaching, designing, planning, reviewing and administrating are critical behaviors.

This shows our workforce in DSM is positioning themselves well for the future. Research has found the most needed type of skill in 2030 will be advanced technical skills (such as programming), followed by emotional skills (such as empathy) and higher cognitive skills (such as decision-making).

Truly understanding the actual work behaviors of your employees, and which activities they deem most important, puts you in a great position to maximize the likelihood of success for each of your team members. Productivity, engagement and satisfaction will naturally follow.

With this data in mind, you might be asking yourself:

- How can I help workers develop Deep Work skills and enable them to adequately conduct this type of work?
- What does my organization need to offer to support these critical behaviors?

Work-Plays to Up Your Game

WORK-PLAY #8: DELEGATE GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

As a leader, you're often the one who knows the work inside and out. It's also likely the expectations of speed fall on your shoulders. Therefore, it's only natural to fall into the habit of solving a problem yourself or narrowly assigning a task. In either case, this removes an opportunity for someone else on your team to grow. When an issue arises, your first step should be determining if it should be delegated or not. Ask yourself: How urgent and important is this? The following Eisenhower Framework will help:

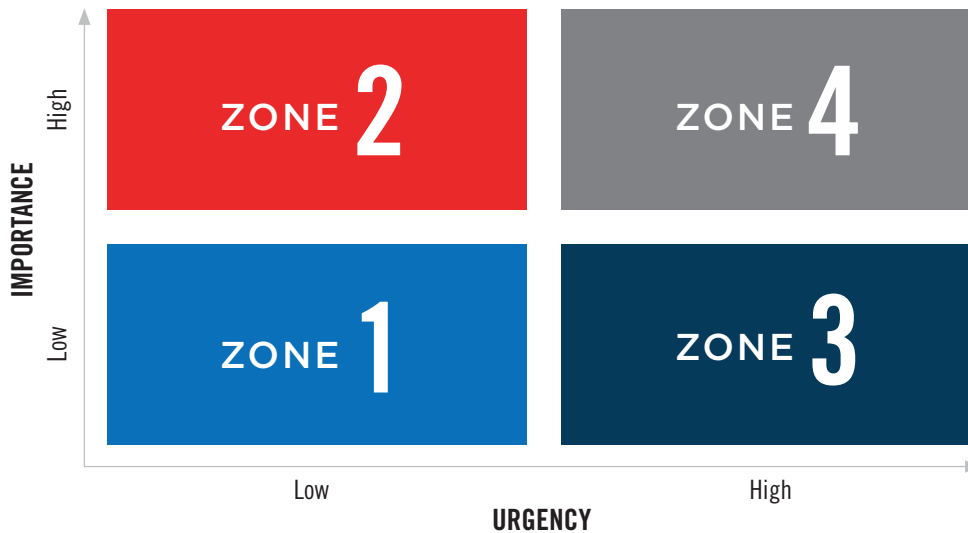


Image 15
Image provided by Reworc

- **ZONE 1** is ideal for delegation because there is ample time and low exposure to address the problem. If outputs are unacceptable, you will still have time to course-correct.
- **ZONE 2** is when the issue is not terribly urgent but does have high exposure or potential for impact. This is a great development opportunity for someone on your team who may not have as much experience. Make sure to give coaching on a somewhat regular basis.
- **ZONE 3** is also a development opportunity for others, particularly those who are somewhat acclimated to the work. Issues here are not as much about quality as they are about speed, so keep an eye on milestones but, otherwise, take a step back and let them go.
- **ZONE 4** means delegation should be limited. It is justifiably best for you to retain responsibility and ownership for the project or issue.

PUTTING IT INTO ACTION: What are the top three growth opportunities you will delegate? To whom? By when?

WORK-PLAY #9: DEMYSTIFY AUTOMATION AND INVEST IN NEW TOOLS

Our workforce has signaled complex work is what really matters, but that doesn't mean the more basic, transactional tasks magically disappear. There are still plenty of routine (and often manual) things that must get accomplished to keep our businesses running smoothly. These sorts of processes tend to be well-known, especially by your employees who are more risk-averse and like to work on things that are familiar. This combination of a process having a patient expert who knows the ins-and-outs of the information and systems involved means it is ripe for automation, but your team might need a nudge to make changes, because doing so will transform the familiar to unfamiliar, even if only for a short time.

Automation can be a divisive word — it attracts some and intimidates others, especially those in less technical roles. It's easy for many of us to check out and think that automating something, manipulating data or moving data between systems are things for people in IT to handle. And yet, our own workforce is acknowledging that programing and analyzing are critical behaviors for success. Creating automation can be an easy first step.

There are numerous tools available with detailed training materials and events that can help your team members create basic automations. Doing so will enable them to spend more time doing the nuanced, judgement-based work they believe matters most, and it will also increase their confidence with the technical type of work that will be much needed in the future. Here are a few tools to consider (click the logos to learn more), many of which have free or low-cost subscriptions:



“Connect the apps you use every day and automatically move information between them.”



“Empower your team to build automations without compromising data security.”



“Everything your team needs to plan, capture, manage, automate and report on work — and get up to speed, fast.”



“A simple, free and powerful way to manage your team's recurring checklists and procedures.”



“Increase efficiency and integrate end-to-end operations on a secure, low-code workflow and business process automation (BPA) platform.”



“We make software robots, so people don't have to be robots.”

PUTTING IT INTO ACTION: In the next round of 1:1s with your team members, ask them to name three processes that are burdensome, and why. Take notes of their responses and look for trends. Now you have criteria to use as you evaluate tools to experiment with.

POWER-PLAY: Combine work-play #8 and #9. Communicate your desire to reduce manual, repetitive tasks amidst your team and then delegate this as a growth opportunity. Provide someone with your criteria and links to a few tools for exploration (such as the ones above). To explore additional tools and read reviews, check out [G2.com](https://www.g2.com).

WORK-PLAY #10: CREATE POLICIES, PRACTICES AND PLACES THAT PROMOTE FLOW

Working in a state of sustained concentration — with no distractions — can help increase productivity and ensure the biggest work is completed to the best of someone’s ability. Psychologists have given this an official name: **flow**. As Image 16 shows, to achieve flow we must have the skills required for the work, and the work must push us outside our comfort zone.

There are several ways to help your employees find flow:

- **ALLOW CONCENTRATION HOURS.** Encourage employees to set aside blocks of time for uninterrupted work. It’s best if these are scheduled on a shared calendar so everyone can see each other’s blocks and respect that virtual “do not disturb” sign. Make it okay for chats and emails to be ignored during this time.
- **PROVIDE THE PHYSICAL SPACE TO SUPPORT DEEP WORK.** A completely open-plan office will not enable your colleagues to properly focus when they need to. Designate an area where silence is the norm.
- **AVOID TASK/CONTEXT-SWITCHING.** Constantly switching between tasks expends extra energy and decreases the likelihood of finding flow. Encourage your employees to stay focused on one task for as long as they can, with continued practice and encouragement.
- **WORK-PLAY #8.** Delegating growth opportunities is very likely to push someone outside their comfort zone, in a good way. (See page 17.)

CASE STUDY: After Microsoft employees went virtual during the Covid-19 pandemic, company research found that employees’ satisfaction with work-life balance dropped. Why? Unsustainable work practices that kept them tethered to technology. To improve well-being, they reevaluated work practices. To read more, [click here](#).

PUTTING IT INTO ACTION: Decide when your concentration hours are going to be and lead the way! Let your team know and create a shared calendar. Ask them to add their own blocks and share which spot in the office they’d like to deem as “Deep Space.” This practice might take some trial and error. Encourage employees to determine what time of day works best for them to do Deep Work. Perhaps it is a consistent time of day, perhaps it changes, but always have them put it on the shared calendar.



Image 16
Image provided by Reworc

DEEP WORK LOCAL CASE STUDY EXAMPLE:

- With **Tero International’s** Skills and Interest Chart diagnostic tool, **Connectify HR** created a way to connect with employees on a deeper level. By doing so, turnover has decreased and engagement has increased. Embracing new tools and technology will create an environment of opportunity and innovation that will lead to employee growth and development. Learn more about this [here](#).

5. JUST DO IT

Of the 20 activities workers were able to select, formal meetings were the second least important activity, and yet it was the fourth highest in terms of time spent (Image 17). Applying the data to our historical daytime worker population of 80,000, our estimates are 204,168 hours per week are being applied to this activity our workers say isn't moving the needle. That's about \$1.1 billion per year! Most of these meetings are to share status updates, with brainstorming and decision-making meetings happening much less (Image 18).

Image 6 also suggests additional behavioral waste with things like corresponding, searching for information and sharing knowledge. Our workforce is spending lots of time on these things and deeming them as less important.

Activity Rank

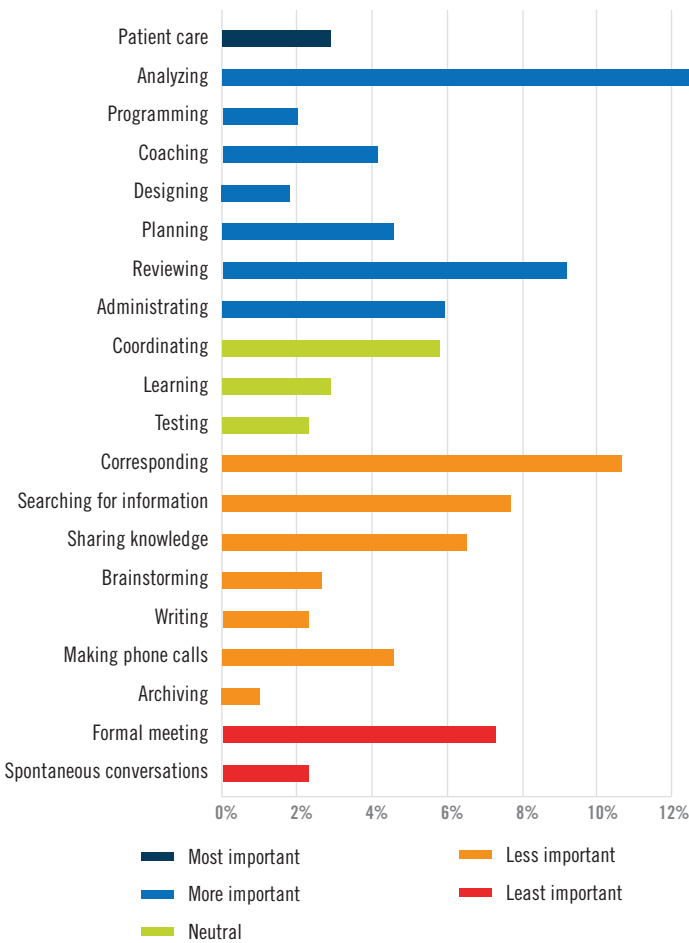


Image 17
Images provided by Reworc

Type of Meetings

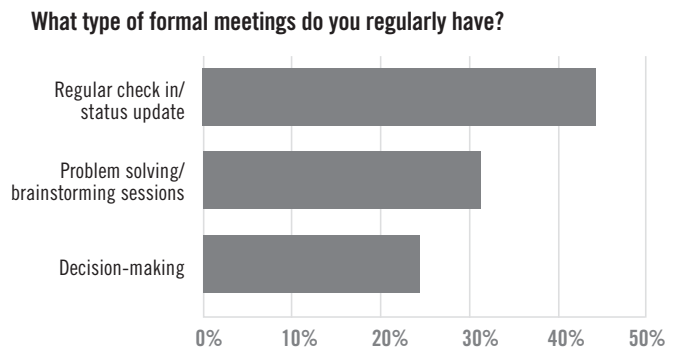


Image 18

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

This data from the WTOS is not the first indictment on meetings and other sub-optimal work behaviors. A recent study by Korn Ferry revealed that 67% of people feel too much time spent in work meetings and on calls distracts them from making an impact at work. We have slack in the system. If you can optimize people's time spent at work and reduce the number of meetings, productivity and engagement gains will ensue — meaning you may not have to worry about hiring as many people in today's tight labor market. Moreover, employees will appreciate your efforts to improve their day-to-day, which will only boost your odds of retaining them.

With this data in mind, you might be asking yourself:

- When is a meeting worthwhile?
- What else should I do to stay on the same page with my team?
- How do I reduce other types of behavioral waste?

Work-Plays to Up Your Game

WORK-PLAY #11: CONDUCT A START-STOP-CONTINUE RETROSPECTIVE WITH YOUR TEAM

Start-Stop-Continue is a popular retrospective technique that encourages participants to come up with practical ideas for team-based improvement. It allows you to look back at recent events, while also looking forward. Let your team add their ideas on sticky notes — tangible and intangible, big and small. (Of note, this exercise can be about more than formal meetings.) Then, group common sticky notes together and discuss the themes. Be sure to take notes and produce a set of actionable points the team should adopt going forward.

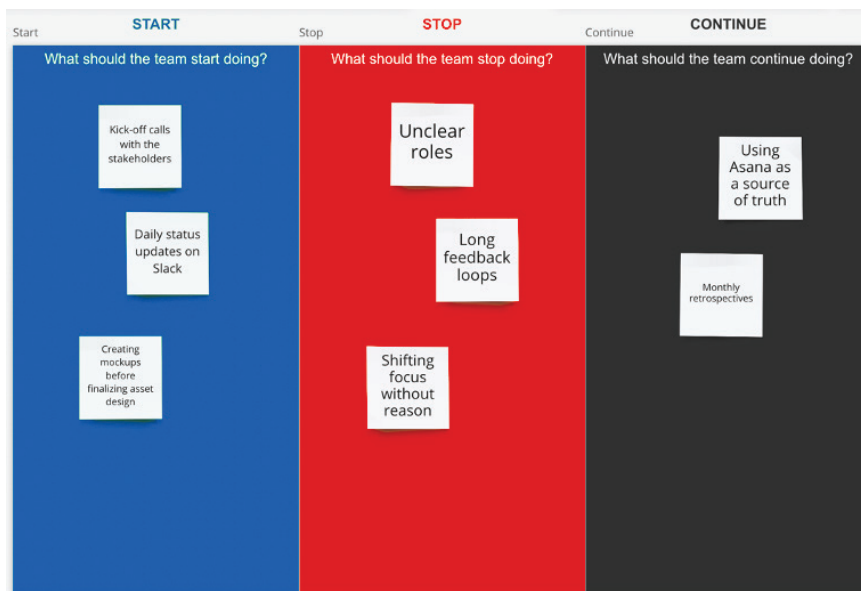


Image 19

Images provided by Reworc

PUTTING IT INTO ACTION: Look at your team’s calendar. If there’s an upcoming meeting that’s mostly for status updates, repurpose it for this exercise. If there’s not a meeting you can repurpose, schedule one and explain its purpose.

POWER-PLAY: If your team points out unessential meetings, consider increased use of asynchronous tools like [Slack](#) or [Asana](#).

POWER-PLAY: Create some friendly competition between departments. Set up a contest to see who can shift the most amount of time (and money) from status update meetings to higher-valued activities.

WORK-PLAY #12: USE THE 4 PS FRAMEWORK FOR EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

The Four Ps of successful meetings is an overarching checklist you can follow to ensure your meeting is set up for success before you step into the room or turn on Zoom. When designing your meeting, keep in mind the following questions to identify the 4 Ps:

- **PEOPLE.** Who needs to be involved in the meeting? Meetings are more effective and cost-efficient when invitations are limited to participants who have a contribution to make to agenda items, who will be engaged in the content and who will be responsive to performance feedback.
- **PURPOSE.** What's the purpose of the meeting? All meetings need to have a clear and discernable purpose. The purpose should be clearly reflected in the invitation and on the agenda and should inform the structure of the meeting.
- **PRODUCT.** What do we expect to achieve or produce because of this meeting? What questions do we need answered? If you cannot specify the "Product" at the start of the meeting, chances are you will not arrive at a clear destination.
- **PROCESS.** What approach will we take to conduct this meeting? The process and tools you use should be driven by the nature of the meeting's purpose. If you know you need to come to a decision, use a decision-making process. If you need to generate ideas and then prioritize, use a physical or cloud-based whiteboard like [Miro](#).

PUTTING IT INTO ACTION: Send this framework to each of your team members and ask them to apply it to any existing or future meetings they're in charge of. Better yet, document your answers to the framework's questions for a meeting you own, and share your thought process with your team.



WORK-PLAY #13: CREATE BUSINESS PROCESS MAPS

A business process map visually depicts the steps that a business takes to complete a process. Its purpose is to gain a detailed understanding of how information and decisions flow between systems and people, with the ultimate goal of making the process more efficient and/or improving outcomes. Here are a few leading practices to keep in mind:

1. Clearly define what is being mapped, what isn't being mapped and what you hope to gain from doing so. Make sure the scope is appropriate for your goals.
2. Interview one or two people at a time. Interviewing in groups is not as conducive to uncovering inefficiencies or discrepancies across roles.
3. Create a map earlier than you think you should, and have it pulled up as you interview colleagues. This will demonstrate progress and keep everyone on the same page.
4. Find someone to assist this effort who can serve as an objective third party. Your maps and related discoveries will be more detailed due to their probing questions as they seek to understand what is happening and why.

WORK-PLAY #13: CREATE BUSINESS PROCESS MAPS

PUTTING IT INTO ACTION: Think about the processes your team is involved with. Which ones are the oldest, the most manual or take the longest? Which ones have the greatest impact on your customer? Ask these questions to your team, compare your answers and pick a process to start mapping.

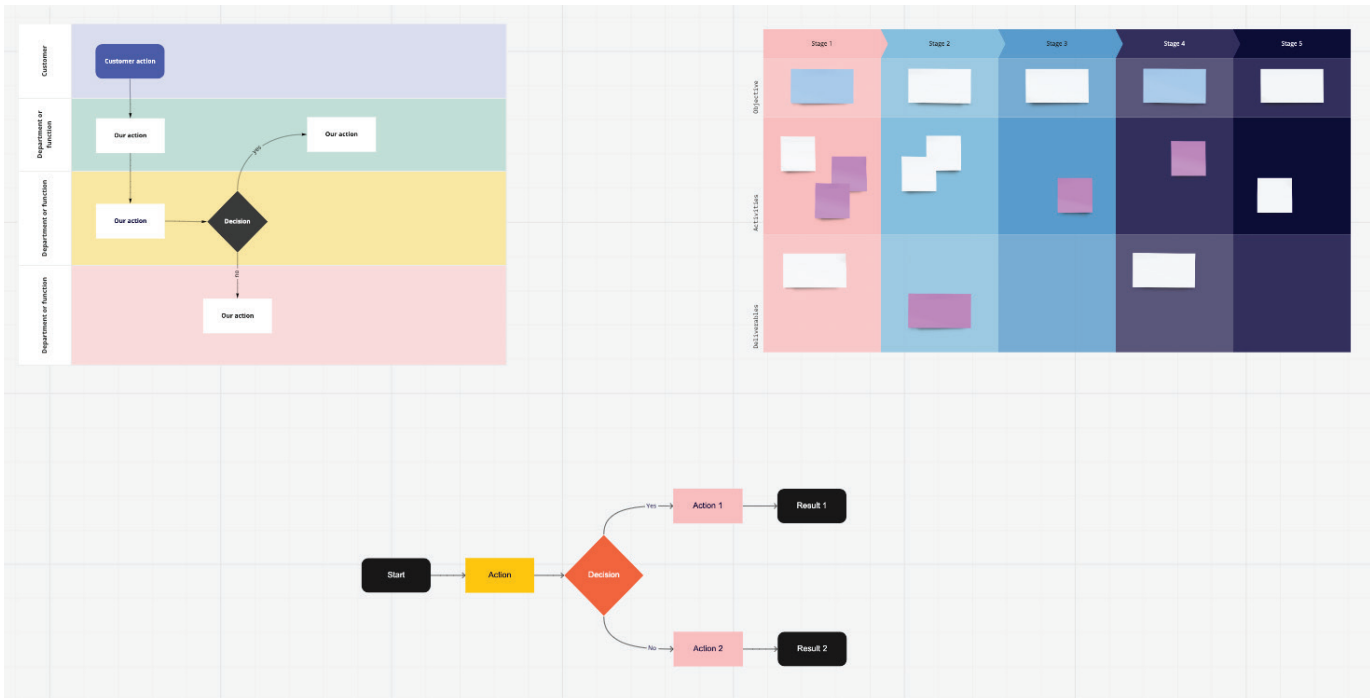


Image 20

Image provided by Bâton Global

POWER-PLAY: Make a map for a process (see example in Image 20) your team highlighted in your Start-Stop-Continue exercise (Work-Play #4). This will demonstrate you're listening and value their input.

JUST DO IT LOCAL CASE STUDY EXAMPLE:

- The **Holmes Murphy** Experience is a way for the company to be intentional about their purpose, mission and how they deliver on those things through seeking understanding, operating courageously, uplifting others and leading differently. Find out more [here](#).

REFERENCES AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

THE TOTAL PACKAGE

- [12 Smart Strategies For Celebrating Your Team's Wins Together](#)
- [23% of Workers Say Employers Are Offering New Mental Health Benefits. But Is It Enough?](#)
- [Bringing the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy to Life](#)
- [How to Do Performance Reviews - Remotely](#)

A NEEDED SHIFT

- [TED Talk: The Unexpected Benefit of Celebrating Failure](#)
- [How To Build Work Cultures of Psychological Safety Rather Than Fear](#)
- [The Art of Admitting Failure](#)
- [The Heard and the Heard-Not](#)

THE FUTURE OF HYBRID

- [What is a Distributed Workforce? Benefits, Challenges and Strategies](#)

DEEP WORK

- [Skill Shift: Automation and the Future of the Workforce](#)
- [5 Steps to Get in the Zone and Be More Productive](#)
- [How Leaders Can Use a Delegation Framework](#)
- [Flow at Work: The Science of Engagement and Optimal Performance](#)
- [How To Boost Employee Productivity With A Culture of Deep Work](#)

JUST DO IT

- [All About Business Process Mapping, Flow Charts and Diagrams](#)
- [Miro: The Online Collaborative Whiteboard Platform to Bring Teams Together, Anytime, Anywhere.](#)
- [The Surprising Impact of Meeting-Free Days](#)



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