

REMOTE/CONTROLLED = THE NEW TRUST EQUATION

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Guides

Radical upheavals in working life are taking hold at a global level as remote and hybrid working leave lasting changes across industries in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. In response, employers are more inclined to advocate about geopolitical and social issues, use technology to manage and monitor the new ways of working, and adopt new leadership styles, risking tensions in labour markets already facing substantive change.

To chart these shifts, our second flagship Future of Work report draws on responses from leaders at more than 375 international employers to identify emerging trends and dynamics of the workplace driving employee activism.

Key findings include:

- 84% of firms plan to measure output rather than time worked
- Nearly half of employers are looking to differentiate pay between remote and office-based workers, likely inflaming social tensions
- Four-in-five employers plan to use digital tools to monitor well-being in future, with 43% already doing so
- Three-quarters of firms expect to dislocate their workforce and significantly expand remote working within five years, while 80% use software to monitor location of staff

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With the pandemic fuelling long-running workplace trends and obscuring other forces shaping work like automation and digitisation, the challenge for employers is keeping track of the big picture while addressing short-term upheaval. High levels of staff activism, a more prescriptive regulatory environment and rising social obligations on the horizon demand that companies consider and plan accordingly to mitigate risk, adapt and thrive.

1. Look ahead. Rising social and environmental expectations and the reverberations of remote working promise to have far-reaching implications for governance, operations and policies. Look ahead and plan for a different future.
2. Don't forget underlying trends. The pandemic has distracted from powerful forces such as automation and tech-driven industry disruption but such dynamics will return to the fore with a vengeance.
3. Be clear on corporate advocacy. With employers under mounting pressure to take positions on social and political issues, it will be key for firms to have coherent and transparent processes for setting policy.
4. Re-evaluate the role of HR. The long-term shift to remote working is making very different demands of HR teams and talent strategies – successful firms will embrace that change not as compliance but a means of securing competitive edge.
5. Prepare for difficult conversations. A rapidly changing workplace is throwing up challenging issues. Be clear on your risk factors, response and proactively engage.

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