



THE FUTURE OF WORK *PART II*

WHERE DO LOTTERIES, OTHERS GO FROM HERE?

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There is no escaping the impact of the pandemic on almost every industry. Unable to hire wait staff, restaurants have reduced hours. The shipping industry has been crippled due to a shortage of truckers and other disruptions. Childcare businesses have cut back on their headcounts, forcing some people to leave jobs because they must be with their children. Even if an office worker wants to return to their workplace, health and safety protocols at many businesses mean rotating schedules and no more cubicles – everyone must be in an office.

Even for those employees who are able to work from home, the news is not all positive. According to a recent survey by Gartner, Inc., 85% of employees have experienced higher levels of burnout while 40% report declines in their work-life balance. An excessive workload, keeping up with constant communication channels and back-to-back

online meetings are some of the noted triggers. This dramatic increase in daily screen time is not only impacting mental health and well-being but also productivity and job satisfaction.

Lotteries have many responsibilities that involve in-person presence and inter-personal interaction. There are jobs with customer-facing responsibilities, field work which includes in-store visits with retailers, and work that must be done in the office. It has been a challenge to properly safeguard all of these areas. But without lots of options, lotteries have made it work.

“As the saying goes, ‘Necessity is the mother of invention,’” said Justin Rock, Deputy Secretary of Product and Sales at the Florida Lottery. “The pandemic forced the world to adapt, and we developed many new ways of doing business that will serve us well into the future. Top among these is maximizing the efficiency of our prize payment process and exploring opportunities that do not require

a player to visit a Lottery office. We are also providing retailers and players with more ways to self-serve, streamlining the in-person Lottery office experience with a wide range of scheduling, payment, and service options.”

Of course, not all experiences are the same. At the Idaho Lottery, there was a brief period of office closure and then everyone came back. Again, the emphasis was on safety.

“Some of us never left the office,” said Becky Schroeder, Chief Operating Officer at the Idaho Lottery. “Our headquarters workspace allows for all employees to have an office with a door. The exception is customer service who are in cubicles and have always been behind bullet-proof glass. Social distancing is maintained. Virtual meetings remain common. We are fortunate to have nice weather and a large city park adjacent to the Boise River within view of our office where we hold meetings when a larger group of attendees is required.”

WHAT ARE THE TRENDS?

As lotteries have demonstrated, flexibility is key. But what workplace trends will continue, and which will go the way of the two-martini lunch? According to the workplace experts at Forbes magazine, here's what to expect:

1. Communication and Collaboration

When the pandemic forced many businesses to make operations remote, it also forced them to explore new ways of communicating. Video Conferencing platforms like Microsoft Teams and Zoom showed businesses it's possible for employees to stay connected and productive even if they aren't in the office. Going forward, organizations are likely to explore solutions like these in more depth, further integrating them to enable more resilient operations and a more flexible workforce.

Essential to the success of these solutions is a focus on the employee experience as well as the desired business benefits. Open floor plans, for example, were introduced to increase innovation by encouraging employees to collaborate throughout the day. An unintended consequence of the open-floor-plan can interfere with focus and productivity, and even cause employees to feel burned-out from all the distractions.

Collaboration software can provide employees the tools they need to connect, but organizations need to consider how these tools are integrated organically into the work-flow to enhance effectiveness and ensure they're helping employees rather than getting in the way. Businesses are studying the best mix of low-tech connectivity (in person, over the phone) and high-tech or remote-first options. We are not yet clear on the role that personal and informal interaction has in the building of the corporate culture and the role of corporate culture in supporting productivity and results. Most agree, though, that high-tech tools that enable remote communications need to evolve and combine with old-style personal interaction to produce optimal effectiveness.

2. Employee Well-Being and Productivity

In the early months of the pandemic, some businesses reported increased productivity from employees who had started working from home. One potential reason for this is that employees felt happier at home than in the office and were therefore more productive.

Digital well-being is essential to a successful hybrid work model. Business leaders need protocols to prevent digital exhaustion among employees and help them set healthy boundaries between work and home life. Leaders need to set a healthy precedent by exploring ways to manage workloads, encourage breaks when needed and embrace synchronous and asynchronous collaboration. We may feel liberated from the forms and structures of the office environment. Now we just need to construct a new set of routines and disciplines that provide a comfortable and productive work-flow in the home.

Developing teams in this hybrid-work environment also requires employers to rethink their approach to networking, team-building, and project management. Attracting, retaining and developing talent remotely takes additional time and effort. Teams need to take a more proactive approach to talent development, encouraging managers to prioritize building social capital at work and to create a truly supportive culture. Project management tools are already built for the digital world. But they have typically been augmented by a robust old-school component of in-person meetings and interaction. Managers need to figure out how the purpose of all the in-person connectivity can be accomplished remotely. Of course, some are discovering that maybe we did not need all those in-person meetings. Some are even discovering that video-conferencing unlocks a higher degree of objective-oriented focus and structure.

3. Security and (Zero) Trust

Fully remote and hybrid work models also require updated cybersecurity programs to secure remote employees, protect their digital assets and manage rising cyber threats. Zero-trust frameworks are on the rise with remote work because they provide increased security and flexibility simultaneously. Traditionally, organizations built a security structure around their on-site operations and employees accessed company data primarily from within that perimeter. All access and operations within that perimeter were assumed to be safe.

The shift to remote work moved operations beyond that perimeter and made it clear that companies need a more flexible security program that can keep up with a mobile workforce. Rather than assume all actions within a network are safe, a zero-trust framework operates from the idea that all

transactions must be verified, even within a network. This trust-nothing-but-verify-everything approach strengthens organizational cybersecurity while allowing for more flexible network perimeters.

LOTTERIES ADAPTED QUICKLY, AND ARE NOW LOOKING AHEAD

At the Washington Lottery, any policy changes were driven by the need to be adaptable and flexible to what was happening throughout the state. They extended the length of time for district sales representatives to pick up unactivated packs from retailers on closed games. Employees were encouraged to take the time necessary to attend to competing demands and adjust their work scheduled accordingly. The Lottery quickly expanded its approach to working from home, as the majority of employees moved to at-home work.

As the pandemic has moved into another phase, the lottery has faced different headwinds but nothing they aren't able to handle. "The most significant hurdle is how to return staff to the office in a safe way," said Marcus Gasper, Executive Director of the Washington Lottery. "We are being flexible in allowing staff to determine what office environment best fits their needs. One challenge with this approach is how to maintain a culture with a strong sense of 'team,' camaraderie and inclusion as a result of some staff being onsite and others off-site.

"I think the future will see us be more flexible as we have learned that we can be just as productive working remotely as we are in the office," he said "Some of the online tools we have learned to use (Microsoft Teams, Zoom, etc.) have become commonplace and an ingrained part of our culture. We expect the learning to operate in a hybrid environment while continuing to grow in a healthy and inclusive culture will be key. We will look for ways to include remote workers equally in our communications and interactions."

From the field workers to the office workers, lotteries are no different than thousands of other businesses making their way through changing work norms and policies. The decisions made today will impact workforces for years to come and while that can result in sleepless nights for decisionmakers, past experience shows that the industry is in good hands with today's executives. ■