

Workplace Trends You Need to Know for 2023

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The New Year always brings a fresh perspective to our lives and work. And as with any fresh start, savvy leaders are identifying strategies to increase productivity, keep their workforce engaged and help take their business to the next level.

A nuanced look at gender equality, closer-knit workforces and unique ways to engage staff through wellbeing are just three trends we're likely to see in workplaces come 2023. It's hoped they'll make corporate culture in the U.S. much more hospitable for employees.

In 2022, the buzzwords included flexible working, prioritizing purpose and increased transparency to help leaders better connect with their staff. So what will 2023 bring?

1. Closer-knit workforces

This time last year, Covid-19 was slowly rearing its head again for a dark and gloomy winter. Some employees had already started returning to the office, but many companies U-turned and sent staff home again. Fast forward to the present; a lot has changed in a year. People are back in offices, hybrid working has solidified and a seismic shift has happened.

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What has been the result? While many employees are happier, 65% of businesses say it's been "challenging" to boost morale

and create a cohesive company culture while people are remote working.

In 2023, these issues are likely to be addressed head-on: How can we make hybrid working work better for everyone? This could be more full-team meeting days while people are in the office, so their commuting time is productive. It could also mean cultivating a more appealing place to work to ensure when people do come in, they experience the benefits.

2. Meaningful social impact

While many businesses have focused on corporate social responsibility in the past few years, some have fallen into the trap of “greenwashing”: Making others believe their company is doing more to protect the environment than it really is.

Alongside that, the generation now entering the workforce – Generation Z – is prioritizing working in companies that contribute to making the world a better place.

So as the need for corporate social responsibility grows, companies should focus on what meaningful action they are taking now to protect our planet and the people on it.

What are you doing this week, month or year, to make a difference?

Focusing on this will have a desirable effect on your business. In a 2022 Gartner study of more than 30,000 people, 87% said companies should take a public position on societal issues. They found when corporations do take a stand, they can expect an increase in the number of employees who go above and beyond at work: 18% more employees showed high levels of “discretionary effort” at vocal employers compared to those companies that stayed silent.

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3. A focus on wellbeing

Mental health and burnout have long been part of the conversation when we discuss improving work and the culture surrounding it – especially since the Covid lockdowns.

But as we near the end of 2022, a shift is happening – for the better. The U.S. Surgeon General reported that 71% of employees believe their employer is more concerned about their mental health and wellbeing than ever before. This is a huge step forward and one we must grasp and run with. In response, the U.S. Surgeon General released a framework that aims to support workplaces in better improving the mental health and wellbeing of their employees. This includes: Ensuring there is an opportunity for growth, valuing employee contributions, enhancing social connections in the workplace and focusing on achieving better work-life integration.

We're likely to see more mental wellbeing initiatives and strategies employed across businesses that deliver meaningful and practical help to their employees – from self-care days off once a month to increased wellbeing benefits, mental health first aid training and even adaptations to the workplace.

4. A nuanced take on gender equality

In late 2022, Harvard Business Review surveyed high-performing professional women in the U.S. and found that while some women are, on the surface, flying high – they are taking on a set of specific maladaptive behaviors and beliefs to get by, and suffering because of it.

Women reportedly are sacrificing their needs, beliefs and sense of individuality to stay at the top or even simply to “fit in” to get that promotion. One woman said, “Denial is the

only way I can survive and do the job I was hired to do.”

While gender equality has been part of workplace discussions for decades, the conversation will become more nuanced this coming year. Companies will aim to not only reduce the gender pay gap and bring more women into senior-level positions but also listen to women. Listen to their voice, their ideas and their creativity. Hiring women for powerful positions while leaving them feeling disempowered will not shift the equality landscape. Ultimately, it's the understanding that women bring their strengths and ideas to the table and don't need to adapt to traditional corporate values and structure to be successful.

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5. Leadership investment

It's never been easy to be in a leadership position, but now more than ever, it can be complex to navigate. Leaders already deal with business pressure, budgets, negotiations, strategy and more. They also have to support and lead on communication, transparency, wellbeing, engagement, inclusion and equality for every single one of their staff. And now? They need to lead change: Prioritizing social impact, their employees' and customers' needs and wants and adapting their businesses to a changing social landscape.

In a 2022 HR Insights Survey, CCI Consulting found more than 50% of businesses lack one critical skill that can make a difference: “leading change.” This is why, in 2023, we're likely to see an investment in leadership through coaching, courses, training and exposure to diverse strategies that could work.

There's a lot of hope that 2023 will make positive strides for the corporate world, enticing those who left the labor force

to reenter it. But to do that, there needs to be a real commitment to the issues discussed above and a belief that things will improve with dedication and effort.

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