



Organizational Reinvention: Managing Transition Quick Tips



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There certainly have been many challenges to navigate with the COVID-19 pandemic, including many that will not subside for some time while new ones continue to emerge. Several of the changes in organizational life that have likely been put off for one reason or another — for example, technology transformation, revitalizing employment policies that reflect a global workforce and ever-growing gig economy — forced companies to act nearly overnight in light of the pandemic. As the world is navigating and combatting the pandemic and the many effects it is having on our lives, employees and organizations are preparing for what's next. However, **it's not about returning to pre-pandemic operations, it's about looking ahead and creating a new way of working** that bolsters organizations for the future and creates an environment where employees can truly thrive.

In order for your organization to successfully reintegrate and define your new “normal”, you need to start by looking back — where have

you been as a company? What are existing people practices, norms, practices, or values that have continued to work well for your company? How has the pandemic amplified existing organizational issues? How has it shed light on new organizational issues or gaps?

Conversely, look around you *today* — how has this new reality presented areas of opportunity for you and your employees? For example, maybe it's strengthened communications between managers and employees — or maybe employees have been encouraged to focus more on their well-being and have greater opportunity and more time to do so.

When preparing for tomorrow, we need to leverage learnings from *both* our old reality as well as our current one. We must create organizations that are flexible enough to adapt to changing environments, while *also* remaining grounded and stable in who they are. Organizations in which employees are always encouraged to focus more on their well-being while *also* pursuing excellence in their work. Although organizational practices tend to live in polarities (innovation vs. scalability, emphasizing care vs. expecting excellence, connection vs. autonomy), we must work hard to lean into the difficult paradox of living out *both* in order to thrive tomorrow.

With the myriad of recommendations being published to help organizations reintegrate — from legal policies, facilities management, HR policy, etc. — we offer a few relevant recommendations centered around common polarities in how employees thrive. These are just a few strategies based on existing research that will help employees, teams, and organizations grow from today, rebuild more positive work environments and become more agile *and* resilient for the future.

Emphasizing Care AND Expecting Excellence — Communicate Clearly

Change creates a great deal of uncertainty. When change is coupled with concerns around injury, safety, or health risk, that heightens stress. Individuals tend to be better able to navigate highly stressful environments and perform better when there are visible cues in their environment¹ that demonstrate care and encourage actions aligned to new ways of operating. Here are a few ways to reduce the cognitive and emotional burden on employees so they can more effectively **contribute while also bolstering their confidence that their well-being comes first.**

EMPLOYEES	MANAGERS	LEADERS/ORGANIZATION
<p>If you are unclear about new policies, speak out and ask.</p> <p>In your own teams, when new procedures or norms are established are there visible cues to easily reference?</p> <p>Bookmark and organize the information you need so it's easily referenced.</p>	<p>Quickly communicate and reinforce new standards, policies, and ways of working to your team.</p> <p>Engage your team in conversation so they can ask questions.</p> <p>Connect them to why and how these changes will help support their work and well-being.</p> <p>Be proactive, and ask your teams what else they may need.</p>	<p>Examine your communications channels — do you have appropriate reach to all employees to convey important information that keeps employees informed and points them in new directions? Where and how do you need to visibly display new policies for safety or new ways of operating? Simple checklists can also go a long way.</p> <p>Clearly convey how, when, and why you are implementing the 'return to work'. For example, which roles are prioritized to return first or at all and how you will support and handle employee segments who are at higher risk for possible illness.</p>

¹ Hofmann, W., Friese, M., & Strack, F. (2009). Impulse and self-control from a dual-systems perspective. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 4, 162-176.

Connection AND Autonomy — Enhance Flexibility

In an ever-growing globally distributed workforce, autonomy and flexibility in how and where work gets done becomes increasingly important. Autonomy is a key ingredient for fostering greater ownership in work, commitment and connection to an organization^{2,3}. Further, having flexibility in determining how and when work is accomplished leads to better employee performance and reduces absenteeism⁴, whereas more restrictive arrangements lead to greater exhaustion and conflict between work and non-work roles⁵. As employees continue to navigate the demands in all spheres of their life, which are more complicated by the social restrictions placed by COVID-19, there is much that can be done to enhance meaning in work and connections across teams — and provide the atmosphere where employees can thrive.

EMPLOYEES	MANAGERS	LEADERS/ORGANIZATION
<p>Reflect on your current demands and resources – what drains you, and what lifts you up.</p> <p>Identify in what areas you have control or don't have control.</p> <p>If your work environment is changing — more flexible between office and remote work or more remote work — talk with your manager about the tools and support you'll need to be effective.</p>	<p>Talk to your team to help them focus on key priorities — those that yield the most value.</p> <p>Understand each person's unique situation that they are navigating. Help each team member craft their work and priorities to optimize their resources and limit and prioritize the demands placed on them.</p> <p>Ensure you are supporting the transition to new working arrangements in a sustainable way. Do employees have the right technology and ergonomic set-ups for 100% remote work or more flexible work environments?</p> <p>With increased flexibility, it's important to intentionally create space for connecting with others.</p>	<p>Take a hard look at your employee work policies. Be clear and prioritize what those policies are, and how you are staging 'returns to work'.</p> <p>Show trust in and care for your employees by implementing new flexible work policies that provide the right structure for employees to do their best work, and also have some say in what works for them. "The office" mentality must be re-evaluated where possible.</p>

² Deci, R.M. & Ryan, E.L. (2000). *Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being*. *American Psychologist*, 55, 68-78.

³ De Cuyper, N. & De Witte, H. (2008). *Volition and reasons for accepting temporary employment: Associations with attitudes, well-being, and behavioural intentions*. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 17, 363-387.

⁴ Pierce, J.L. & Newstrom, J.W. (1983). *The design of flexible work schedules and employee responses: relationship and process*. *Journal of Occupational Behaviour*, 4, 247-262.

⁵ Kattenbach, R., Demerouti, E., & Nachreiver, F. (2010). *Flexible working times: effects on employees' exhaustion, work-nonwork conflict and job performance*. *Career Development International*, 15, 279-295.

Innovation AND Scalability — Fostering Learning & Feedback

Individuals who approach their work from a learning perspective (versus achievement), especially during challenging situations, are much more likely to put forth greater effort, remain persistent, and seek future challenges⁶. Seeking feedback⁷ additionally helps individuals *continuously* learn, navigate through stressful situations, adapt to change, and perform well. In these unprecedented times, fostering a mindset around continuous learning and feedback will help employees better navigate those challenges and creating positive change. **Learning and innovating today may mean finding new ways to scale services currently offered.**

EMPLOYEES	MANAGERS	LEADERS/ORGANIZATION
<p>Set concrete goals that are reasonable but also stretch you.</p> <p>Track your progress and ask for feedback from your manager and peers along the way.</p> <p>Set work blocks to maintain progress on ongoing goals is important, and also set aside time to stretch yourself into thinking in new ways.</p>	<p>Clarify role and responsibilities changes with your team. Help them align new work to new performance expectations.</p> <p>Coach within the frame of learning — not right and wrong. Be constructive and positive.</p> <p>Identify and connect your team to the opportunities where they are involved in building new ways of working.</p>	<p>Evaluate your approaches to assessing performance. It's likely that with a new normal, roles and responsibilities are changing, so be proactive in redefining those and aligning performance expectations to new work.</p> <p>Establish or re-evaluate the tools and support for how to give and receive feedback. In new working arrangements, now is a time to reassess those important cultural reinforcing mechanisms that either help or hinder employee growth and your company's likelihood of thriving.</p>

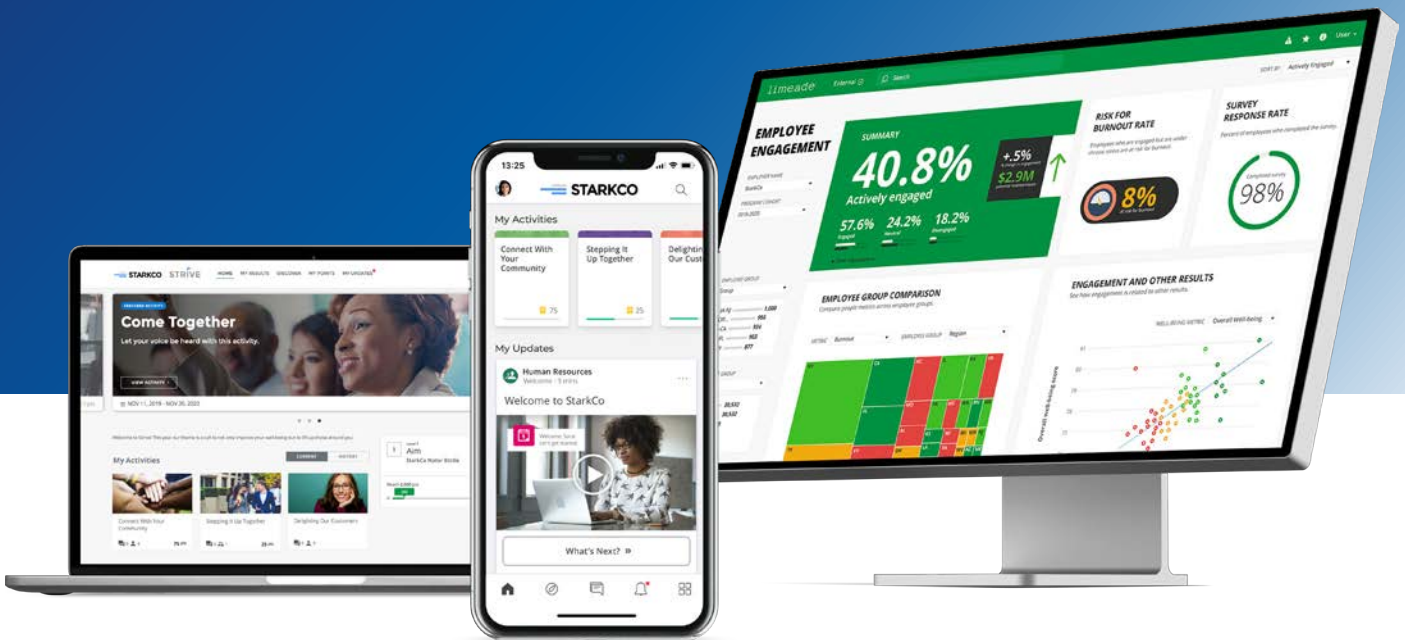
⁶ Dweck, C. S. (2006). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. New York, NY: Random House.

⁷ Kluger, A. N., & Nir, D. (2010). *The feedforward interview*. *Human Resource Management Review*, 20, 235–246

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