

ICXI-POST newsbriefing

Vol 1 – Issue 8. Jan 2022

Introduction From The President

**How has Covid experience affected the way upper quartile service quality is delivered?
Has Working From Home created a need to think about things from a new perspective?**

Covid has forced most organisations, large and small, public and private, to adjust the way they interact with their customers, some more successfully than others. From the backdrop of change a number of customer experience elements have come into sharper focus. Factors like Artificial Intelligence (AI), Sustainability, On-Line channel growth and Hybrid Working have emerged as potential drivers of major change. All of these could have, or in fact are having, a likely impact either negative or positive on both customers and employees.

Of these the development of hybrid working practices (working from home et al) is one that has been born from the Covid pandemic and has taken the idea of flexible working from a fringe tactical activity practised by some companies to mainstream adoption by a far wider range of organisations. In its wake there has been the so-called Great Resignation where it is estimated in the USA alone over 33 million people left their jobs (20% of the workforce). The variance by sector is wide as the impact of lockdowns affected some sectors more heavily than others but the underlying trend is that the employee work-life balance issue has moved rapidly up their agenda.



According to Bloomberg the issue is not going to change.

The Five-Day Office Week Isn't Coming Back. WFH Is Here to Stay

Their poll of 1,226 U.K. managers, conducted between Dec. 9-14, points to a profound shift in the labor market that's become known in the U.S. as the "Great Resignation."

People from Asia to Europe have been walking away from jobs as they re-evaluate their work-life balance amid high levels of burnout.

Have Organisations Been Part of The Problem?

According to a BBC.com article from WORKLIFE

“Since the pandemic, employees are leaving the workforce or switching jobs in droves. For many, employers have played a big part in why they're walking away”.

Alison Omens, chief strategy officer of JUST Capital, says

“Our data over the years has always shown that the thing people care about most is how companies treat their employees measured by multiple metrics including wages, benefits and security, opportunities for advancement, safety and commitment to equity.

In the wake of the pandemic, “the intensity has increased in terms of that expectation; people are expecting more from companies. The early days of the pandemic reminded us that people are not machines f you’re worried about your kids, about your health, financial insecurity and covering your bills, and all the things that come with being human, you’re less likely to be productive.

Workers expected their employers to make moves to help alleviate, or at least acknowledge, those concerns – and companies that failed to do so have suffered. The Workers expected their employers to make moves to help alleviate, or at least acknowledge, those concerns – and companies that failed to do so have suffered. The Personio study also showed that more than half of the respondents who were planning to quit wanted to do so because of a reduction in benefits, a worsening work-life balance or a toxic workplace culture.

Will All of This Reshuffling of the Labour Stop When Covid is Settled Down?

Anthony Klotz, an associate professor of management at Texas A&M University, US, and the originator of the term ‘Great Resignation’ says

These “pandemic epiphanies have helped many people find more of what they want out of work. As organisations make changes, employees are migrating to the work arrangements they want at this stage of their lives. We could see an unsettled labour market as people move around and companies try to provide solutions that bring out the best from their employees – and that takes a while.

<https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20210629-the-great-resignation-how-employers-drove-workers-to-quit>

Would More Money Do It ? Well it seems that money is not working as well as id did.

Ann Francke, chief executive officer of the Chartered Management Institute (CMI), said the January job market would become *“even more fierce as employees seek out new roles that meet their changing demands and aspirations. Just offering big budget salaries isn’t cutting it anymore,” she said. “Managers who aren’t adapting their working models will be left wanting - and their organisations will pay the price.”*

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-12-20/u-k-firms-fear-great-british-resignation-after-staff-departures>

And this raises a couple of key questions

- 1. If organisations have to develop new hybrid working models in order to keep key personnel how will the traditional inter-organisational interactivity be effectively managed tomorrow's world?
- 2. What will be the effect of the quality of the experience delivered to an increasingly demanding customer base?

On the first question.

It appears that the demand for the continuation of more flexible hybrid working practices are for many sectors a reality that is here to stay. It seems that those operating in sectors where hybrid practices have little choice if they are to remain competitive in the employment market

FROM



TO

A view point from the CX market

Susan Ysona is Vice President of Marketing, EMEA & Asia Pacific at Talkdesk

It would be fair to say that business leaders have faced more questions than they had answers for over the past 18 months. While at the time this might have felt like chaos, the pandemic opened our eyes to a completely new way of working. Now, CX businesses around the world are exploring new opportunities for more flexible working models and for many, 2022 will be a period of readjustment.

“Talkdesk conducted research and interviewed over 650 global CX professionals working in SMEs across healthcare, financial services, insurance, retail and e-commerce. The research aimed to highlight the challenges and opportunities CX businesses may face in the coming months, as flexible working arrangements become more common.

61% of contact centres found that a hybrid workforce model appears to be the “best fit”

45% planned to introduce flexible shifts: employees can work varying days and hours every week.

32% favoured a rotating shift pattern, meaning employees rotated between day and night shifts.

19% were open to shift bidding, where employees can express an interest in a specific shift window.

39% expect to continue to use the traditional ‘fixed shifts’

There presumably being a mix of solutions in each organisation according to the needs of the organisation and its employees.”

While these working models are sure to bring greater flexibility, agents need to continue feeling supported and engaged with their roles.

Supportive employers recognise the changes in working practices that agents have experienced as a result of the pandemic and the importance of new habits. But they also make hybrid working possible so that agents can interact and engage with colleagues professionally and socially when together on-site. This can drive stronger employee satisfaction which has a positive impact when it comes to retaining and attracting talent.

The research found that organisations plan to invest more in Workforce Engagement Management (WEM) tools over the next three years, with improved productivity and customer satisfaction the two main drivers in fact, 57% of those surveyed expect to see an improvement in efficiency and productivity, while 48% believe the implementation of WEM tools would lead to higher rates of customer satisfaction. Looking more closely at the bottom line, 37% hoped to see reduced running costs, while 30% believed these tools would lead to a decrease in staff turnover.

The importance of an engaged workforce in delivering the best customer experience cannot be understated. It all starts with a driven team – whichever shift pattern they might be working.”

Final word from Talkdesk

It will come as no surprise that communication and collaboration challenges ranked among the top two issues expected by organisations planning to use a hybrid or remote workforce model. Digital tools offer the perfect opportunity to foster effective employee communication and collaboration whether working in a hybrid world or not, as well as improving customer experience and we anticipate seeing them being deployed at speed throughout 2022.

[https://cxm.co.uk/Should you build a hybrid working model in 2022](https://cxm.co.uk/Should-you-build-a-hybrid-working-model-in-2022)

Not All Can Choose !

One interesting unexpected counter trend report comes from a major international market research organisation that has been hugely successful in the pandemic, has had to recruit large numbers of extra staff and now if forced to have a WFH strategy because their offices do not have the space/facilities for all personnel to be in the office at the same time!

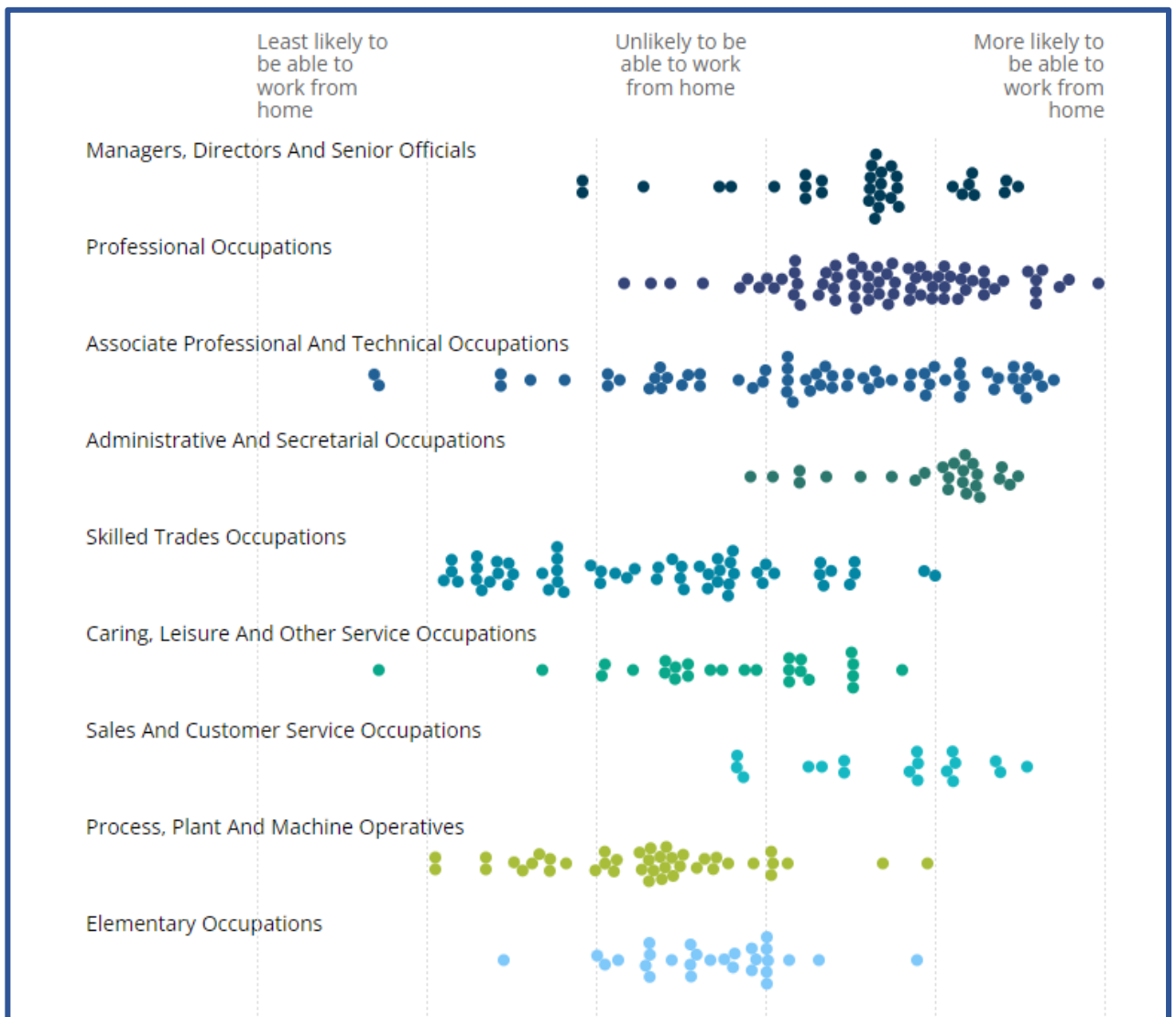


Is Hybrid Working Just for Office, CX and Tech Staff ?

Should elements of retail, manufacturing, public sector operations fit the model if they too are to remain competitive in the employment market?

Professional occupations are most likely to be adaptable to home working

Somewhat obvious but are there any activities in the organisation that could benefit from WFH?



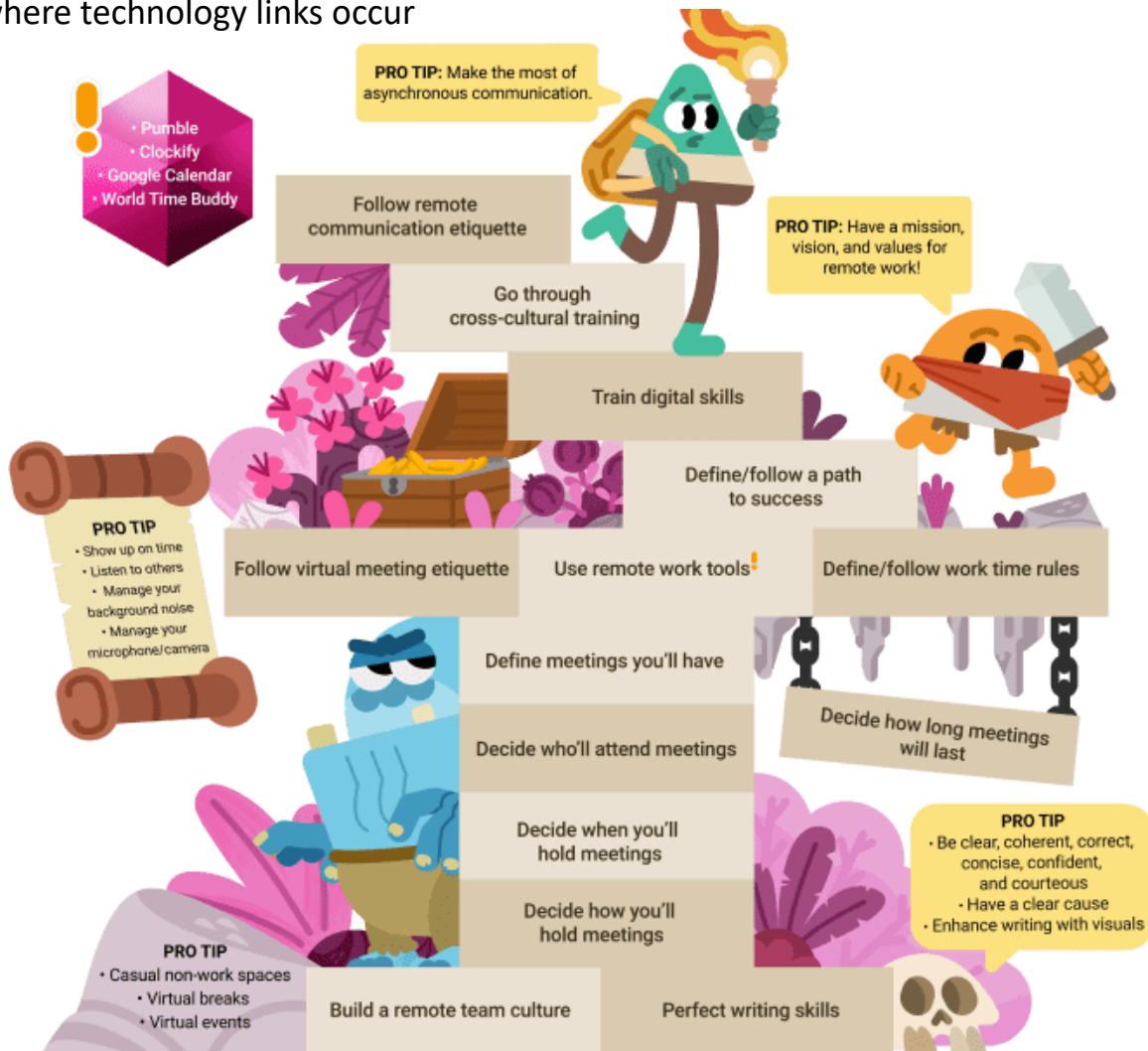
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/whichjobscanbedonefromhome/2020-07-21>

It is without the scope of this news letter to pursue this issue beyond the point of considering to what degree does the organisation's ability to compete effectively in the labour market reduce its ability to remain effective in the customer experience market.

A matter for the leaders of such organisations to ponder.

On the second question - What will be the effect of a hybrid strategy on the quality of the experience delivered to an increasingly demanding customer base?

It is easy to imagine the service quality chaos that could occur from a disparate group of people all working in remote locations without supervision. Not to imply that any organisation has set up a hybrid system without planning and preparation particularly where technology links occur



However Pumble.com offer much sound advice on the matter including many links to further data on the topic, their website is a “should read” for those engaged with issue and includes the four key resource essentials.

4 RESOURCES

Team communication tools for business

Improving team communication when working from home

Improving team communication

Planning internal communication for the team

<https://pumble.com/learn/communication/wfh/>

The key link across all of these resources is clearly “TEAM”

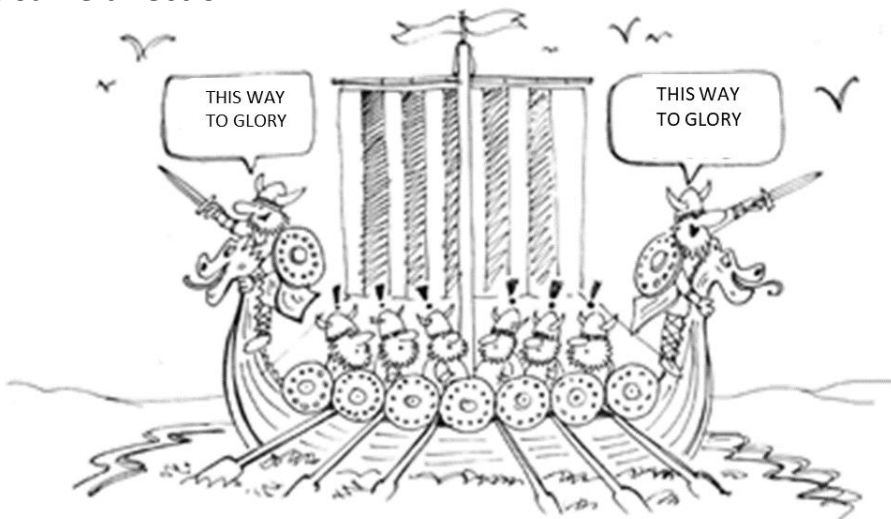
Teams and Teamwork

Teams come in many formats.

For organisations to be able to deliver outstanding customer experiences via a hybrid system they need to understand which teams are involved in web of activity of their delivery processes

- In Department Teams
- Interdepartmental Teams
- Multi Location Teams
- Internal and External National /International Teams
- Supply Chain Teams

There is a myriad of data available from the internet oracles on teams, teamwork and how to overcome the barriers that deliver ineffective results and optimise the opportunities that are available when all team members are fully engaged and pulling in the same direction.



Can Technology Help to Build Cohesion in a Hybrid System?

One interesting approach comes **Integro Learning** in South Africa who state that *The Internet Operating Support System[®] (IOSS[®]). A UNIQUE interactive Internet based process and system, the only one of its kind in the world that enables a team to become completely self-organised and self-managed. It transforms your team into a cohesive, coherent and highly focused self-organising operational and management unit which includes the following elements*

a	Goal Achievement	e	Team Spirit
b	Continuous Improvement	f	Resource Utilisation
c	Teamwork Practices	g	Customer Satisfaction
d	Visible Leadership	h	Skills Application

All of these designed to enhance bottom line performance .The last element includes the mot juste that The Customer is The Business

<http://teams.co.za/team-performance-management-solutions/>

Another Interesting Approach Takes A Focused View of the Teamwork Issue

Dr Michael O'Connor droconnor@ocresults.com has identified via research and performance analysis the elements that are essential for teams for achieve their optimum performance.

*“Based on sound research and practical, proven experience we know that these **ARE** the 5 key factors for cohesiveness, productivity, and collective success and satisfaction of performers and those they serve”*

The Five Key Dimensions Are

1. Common Purpose (Focus)
2. Clear & Agreed Accountabilities
3. Sound Communications Practices
4. Effective Decision-Making & Problem-Solving Practices
5. Leveraging & Developing Key Strengths Of Each Team Member

These dimensions form the platform for an online data gathering and analysis process in which the teams identify their perceived strengths and weaknesses versus the criteria for each dimension.

The image shows two overlapping forms. The top form is titled 'Our Team Assessment' and contains a table with columns for 'Team', 'Assessed by', 'Date', and 'Score'. Below the table are five sections of criteria, each with a list of checkboxes:

- 1. Common Purpose**
 - Operate from a set of agreed upon business strategies and responsibilities (no more than 3)
 - Consistently act in alignment with our company business culture and core values (Vision, Mission, Values, Strategic direction, and shared business goals) on a daily basis
 - Have both agreement and genuine commitment among all about how we should work together as a team
- 2. Clear Agreed Accountabilities**
 - Individual roles are clear to both the performer and all other team members
 - Have clearly defined performance requirements, role descriptions, and do not exceed these boundaries
 - Consistently use sound management practices to successfully manage and develop performers and the team including through effective work direction, monitoring, feedback, coaching, development, evaluation
- 3. Effective Communication Practices**
 - Conduct operations for all relevant individuals and team meetings that focus on performance issues as well as other critical business opportunities
 - Conduct analysis of monthly team meetings that includes appropriate, single communications by email, phone or in person among team members between phases as needed
 - Effective one-to-one communication practices are used by both our team leader and all team members, including listening, feedback, and recognition for successful efforts, progress, milestones
- 4. Sound Decision-Making & Problem-Solving Practices**
 - Successful and clearly define processes, objectives, expected results, decision criteria, response, quality
 - When reviewing a problem we search for multiple possible solutions that could work for all key company stakeholders (not just myself)
 - Consistently review and agree over with follow-up monitoring, adjustments and evaluation
- 5. Leveraging & Developing Key Strengths Of Each Team Member**
 - Recognize and personally affirm each member's key strengths that have helped us help both our team and company succeed
 - Seek or deliver help from other willing and qualified resources in situations where past success has been achieved or is likely to be especially higher risk, higher impact ones
 - Individuals are 1) to do more requested, and 2) talk to a more appropriate person at the lowest possible cost to be present and result faster, and encourage to further build their capacity

The bottom form is titled 'Performance Action Plan' and contains a table with columns for 'Impact', 'Success Focus', and 'Success Measures'. Below the table are five sections of criteria, each with a list of checkboxes:

- Step 1: Current State**
- Step 2: Desired State**
- Step 3: Key Actions Required**
- Step 4: Impact and Success Measures**
- Step 5: Achieved Results**

This output data is analysed to inform a Higher Performance Action Plan which enables Leaders, Managers and Team Members to take the steps required to improve performance.

Complementary programmes regarding hiring the right personnel and individual performance improvement support the High Performance Teams programme to produce a suite of tools that will assist an organisation to focus very precisely on the right actions required to optimise results

Dr O.Connor stresses the imperative of an organisation developing and “All Win” whole organisation team dynamic as opposed to a “Self Win” culture which is often the root cause of a silo based outcome so often a barrier to whole team performance.

<https://ocresults.com/crisis-leadership-managementthat-is-sustainable-fulfilling/>

So What Could Help

An interesting insight comes from skillcast.com who in a very useful website *Working from Home Compliance & Training Roadmap* call upon a model from the past,

Dr Abraham Maslow and his Hierarchy of Needs.

Once very popular in the 1960’s and 70’s for a wide variety of performance improvement programmes it is interesting to see this slightly updated model being applied to a WFH application.



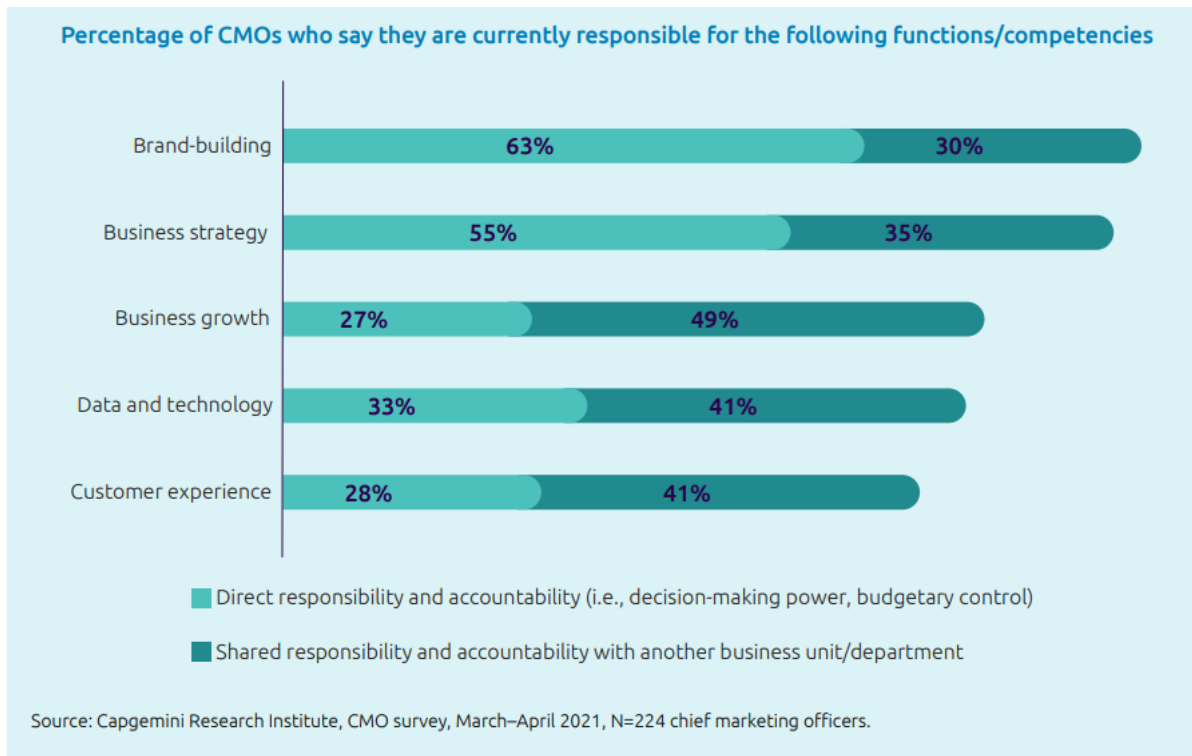
Within this article and its associated weblinks is useful advice both on designing a WFH strategy and the associated skill development necessary for both managers and employees

<https://www.skillcast.com/blog/maslows-hierarchy-working-from-home>

<https://www.skillcast.com/blog/working-from-home-compliance-advice-guidance?hsCtaTracking=9561c133-8cd1-45d5-b487-17a780c3bf9a%7Ccb0ca869-5a9b-4f08-b9b2-6d3b2ca27ac2>

So Who Has Responsibility for Managing The Team's Customer Experience Performance in An Organisation?

An interesting piece of data was seen on Linked In this month regarding the view point of Chief Marketing Officers (CMO) on the expansion and priority of their responsibilities



While this report examined multiple dimensions of the CMO role it asks the question about where the Customer Experience ranks in their responsibilities. is not marketing.

If an accepted definition of marketing is

“The skill of selecting and fulfilling consumer demand so as to optimise profitability per unit of capital employed “

Then

If the CMO's primary focus is not on their customer's experiences then it begs the questions regarding

To whom are they marketing?

For whom are they brand building,

To what use will the data and technology be applied and

What are the other 31% doing about their customer experience?

How can an effective marketing strategy be designed and implemented?

If it is true that business revenue plays a fairly significant role for every organisation and as there is only one source of revenue, their customers, then should Customer Experience be perceived as a higher responsibility by CMO's?

Policies	<p>Has the organisation designed a clear and workable policy for Working From Home?</p> <p>Has it looked at the viability of all departments to WFH</p> <p>Does it include allocation of the necessary resources for the implementation, communication, skill development and performance monitoring to keep the organisation competitive in the employment and customer experience markets?</p> <p>To what degree do the benefits outweigh the risk of damaging the customer experience?</p>
Products /Services	<p>Do the products/services need to be modified in any way to facilitate the needs of a WFH strategy</p>
Places	<p>Are the places through which customers interface with the organisation operated in a way which meets their experience expectations?</p>
Processes	<p>Have all the relevant processes been reviewed and the customer journey maps updated to ensure they are fit for purpose in a WFH environment?</p> <p>Is the omni –channel technology capable of competently managing in such a situation?</p> <p>How is the supply chain up and down stream engaged in the issue particularly with the growing sensitivity among customers for a positive experience?</p>
People	<p>How are employees views understood and taken into consideration ?</p> <p>How is performance quality to be managed and monitored?</p> <p>What level of skill development is being planned for leaders , manages and employees to ensure WFH delivers a positive customer experience?</p> <p>How the actual or potential threats of “The Great Resignation” being managed to maintain service quality Standards?</p>

Final Word

For many organisations hybrid working, to a greater or lesser degree, is a reality that is here to stay. It appears very important for those most affected for them to remain competitive in what has become an increasingly competitive employment market. The importance not just of teams but also teamwork among employees working in physically dislocated and less formal environments is paramount as Dr O'Connor advises that there are the *"5 key factors necessary to deliver cohesiveness, productivity, and collective success and satisfaction of performers and those they serve"* Added to this both effective communication and real access to customer data are equally imperative for those either in, or supporting, customer experience delivery roles and for an organisation to remain competitive in the customer equally competitive customer experience market. The solution should create an "All Win" outcome that is good for the organisation, its employees and most importantly the customers. Without customers hybrid working or any other kind of WFH strategy is irrelevant.

Recommended Reading

<https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20210629-the-great-resignation-how-employers-drove-workers-to-quit>

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-12-20/u-k-firms-fear-great-british-resignation-after-staff-departures>

<https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20211214-great-resignation-into-great-reshuffle>
<http://cym.co.uk/Should-you-build-a-hybrid-working-model-in-2022>

<https://pumble.com/learn/communication/wfh/>

<http://teams.co.za/team-performance-management-solutions/>

<https://ocresults.com/crisis-leadership-managementthat-is-sustainable-fulfilling/>

https://www.capgemini.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/CMO-Playbook_2021-10-21.pdf

<https://www.skillcast.com/blog/working-from-home-compliance-advice-guidance?hsCtaTracking=9561c133-8cd1-45d5-b487-17a780c3bf9a%7Ccb0ca869-5a9b-4f08-b9b2-6d3b2ca27ac2>

<https://www.skillcast.com/blog/maslows-hierarchy-working-from-home>

The ICXI One Question Quiz

Has the organisation a clear view of its employees' views on hybrid working?

YES

If "No" how will you decide what is the best plan for the future?

NO