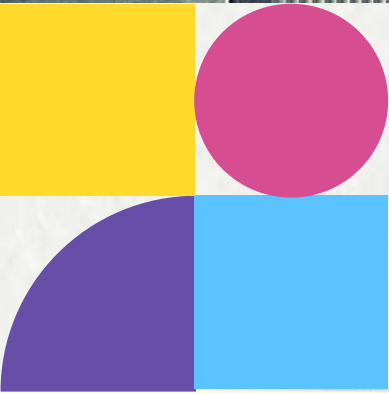




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HOW TO GAIN A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE THROUGH EMPLOYEES



Explore how employee intelligence
can provide a competitive edge to
your organisations.

MAR
2022

OVERVIEW

The World of Work is becoming exceedingly complex. At the same time, its complexity provides ample opportunities for innovation, creativity, and new design in the ways we approach challenges. The two years of the pandemic we all went through have accelerated many **changes**. With this comes much excitement and innovation. However, this also creates complex problems for us to solve.

The past two years have clearly shown to employers and employees alike that **virtual and remote work works!** There are definitely challenges to overcome, but a lot can be achieved; in many cases, with immense cost savings (monetary and time-wise) for both the company and the employees. For this to be a viable and sustainable option, employee intelligence will be the key.

We believe that **employee intelligence** has to be a critical priority for organisations going forward. This is because it can have a direct correlation to employee engagement, which then leads to higher profitability and sustainability. Gathering useful data and intelligence internally, and comparing it to external market trends can help one get the full picture of what employees want now, and may soon want. The analysis defines the needs, which then feeds into the **employee experience** design, which then leads to higher **employee engagement**. This in turn leads to profitability because of the ripple effects that higher engagement has on productivity, retention, and customer service.

The more we look at workplace trends for the year ahead, the more it becomes evident that employee intelligence can make all the difference. Having the right strategy for data collection, timely analysis, and action on this information can differentiate an employer. It will allow the organisation to **retain and nurture** its talent for the years ahead.

In the following, we will explore some trends that have been identified for the workplace in the year ahead, and we will then explain how employee intelligence can provide a significant advantage to organisations.



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TREND 1

HIGH POTENTIALS, TALENTED PROFESSIONALS ARE IN DEMAND

Organisations are searching for what seems to be scarce, highly talented individuals with specific skills. These people in high demand will have plenty of suitors to attract them to a new place of work.

The trouble with high potentials (or your star employees) leaving an organisation is that it would cause ripple effects to the team. The ramifications may be very severe,

depending on who these individuals are, how much of work depends on them, and how connected they are across the organisation. Having the right employee intelligence will allow organisations to predict, or rather to catch the early signs of someone who is starting to be unhappy in his or her current role. This will allow time for conversations and interventions to be taken to correct the situation, potentially eliminating their desire to leave.





HOW DATA INTELLIGENCE HELPS?

Once an employee starts looking out for other opportunities, disengagement at the current workplace tends to set in, and this is harder to reverse. Therefore, it is very important to be able to **identify** those who are about to consider leaving before they start seeking other opportunities.

If you do end up losing the talent, at the very least, the organisation may have a good understanding of the situation early on, **predict** potential ramifications, and take timely steps to prepare. **What kind of intelligence can help with this?** Understanding people's aspirations, how they feel on a daily basis, history of moves and reasons for doing so, networks across the organisation, interconnectedness, appetite to be participative in company-wide initiatives, and many more.

To understand more about identifying your high performers, you may have a look at our guide [Finding the Stars in your Organisation](#).

TREND 2

GIG WORK AND CONTRACT EMPLOYEES ARE MORE COMMON

Flexible staffing solutions are becoming more popular in the region. It was a trend talked about for years but once again accelerated by the uncertainties organisations have faced in recent times with lockdowns and WFH (work from home) measures.

Challenge for the current employer of these individuals: Engaging with, managing and aligning with these flexible employees poses a change in mindset, processes and structures for organisations. Additionally, the need to maintain an understanding of these individuals at a deeper level to fully harness their talents for the organisation's benefit is an area that will occupy HR, top management and line managers alike. With gig and contract workers, expectations are also different from both sides regarding alignment and loyalty. Getting aligned quickly is the key to success.

Again, having the right sort of employee intelligence may allow the organisation to make **better decisions** regarding retaining, re-employing, or exiting these individuals. Data and intelligence become critical in such decisions and may qualify for better use of resources, be it time or money. Look for information like the type of projects in their portfolio, future aspirations, additional engagements they may have concurrently, phase of life, etc.



TREND 3

EMPLOYEES ARE EXPECTING AND LOOKING FOR REMOTE WORK OPPORTUNITIES

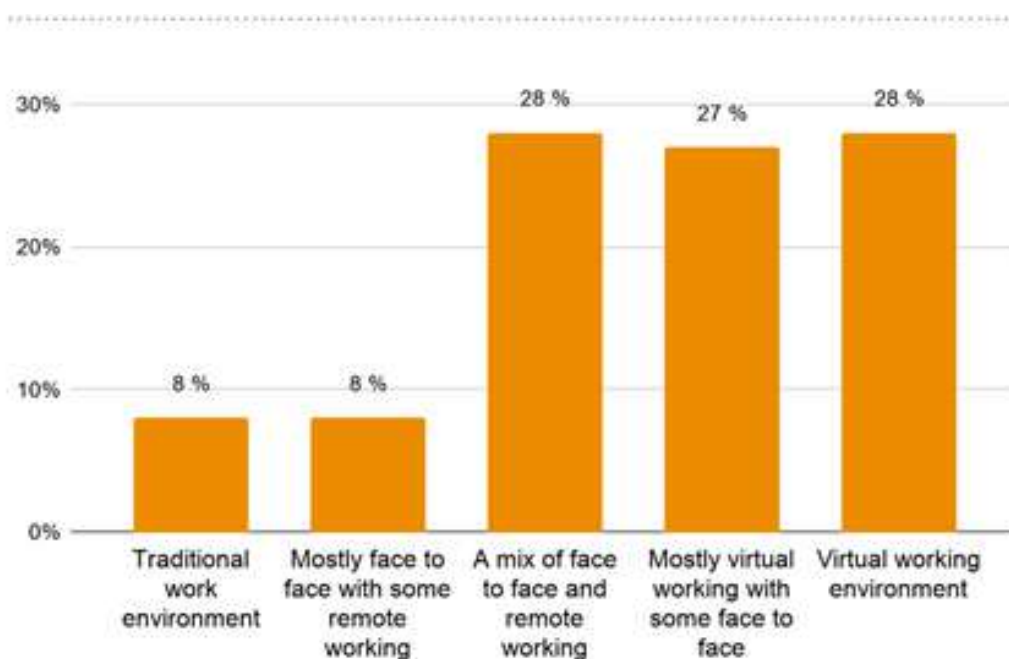
Reports note that most employees prefer a mostly virtual work environment moving forward, followed by a group that prefers a fully virtual work environment. The number of employees that actually prefer a **fully face-to-face work environment** is now a minority (only 20% according to a Robert Walters study). This comes with new challenges for organisations when it comes to planning, managing and aligning people across the group.

Challenge for employers: Maintaining a good engagement and relationships between individuals working from **different locations** and possibly from **different cultures** will be a challenge, especially when they are mainly “out of sight”. Keeping communication constant and transparency high, and maintaining a common work culture across the board will be a key to success.

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IMAGINE YOUR FUTURE IDEAL WORK ENVIRONMENT



Note: Total percentage does not add up to 100 due to rounding

Employee intelligence becomes crucial for the same reasons that it can help manage gig workers and contract employees. The stakes are higher with these full-time yet remote workers, as the integration and commitments are also higher. Therefore, having the right infrastructure to constantly communicate (both directions) as well as to understand sentiments on the ground will be key. Fortunately, options for technologies that allow for this seamless communication in fun, interesting ways while gathering and analysing intelligence are abundant. Check out [Budaya](#) for a good example.



TREND 4

**TECHNOLOGY IS SOMETHING
TO EMBRACE, BUT ANXIETY
ABOUT JOBS PERSISTS.**

IDENTIFY CONCERNS

People, in general, are quite used to utilising various technologies for work and for personal use. As such, they are a lot more open and willing to embrace new technologies presented to them. However, where these technologies are seen as **taking over one's role**, anxiety can set in. Therefore, steps to **overcome** this by reskilling, upskilling, or having some plan for a transition become critical.

Challenges for employers: Organisations are expected to quickly digitise to stay relevant, improve productivity, and be a desired employer. Along the way, they also have to help employees adopt these new technologies while easing fears of redundancy.

Employee intelligence can help identify the specific concerns from different groups of employees and even individuals. Analysis can offer a more targeted approach in assisting those struggling with technology adoption. In cases where jobs may indeed be taken over by technology, the organisation needs to address concerns effectively and kickstart a plan to prepare for the next steps. A good understanding of areas requiring upskilling and reskilling will help for more effective planning and execution towards the change. Instead of doing company-wide campaigns, intelligence will help **target specific groups** to address different dimensions of anxiety and needs.

We can also identify different areas of interest and areas of need for various employees. This allows for better planning when offering a personalised learning plan. Identifying where the **gaps** are in the organisation allows for better decisions regarding hiring, attrition, and retention strategies.



TREND 5

BURNOUT IS A BIG ISSUE

Remote work has **increased expectations** on employees to respond to work queries and schedule meetings **outside of official work** hours. This means that people are generally more tired and more stressed, leaving little time for their recreational activities and personal family matters in many cases. The **lack of face-to-face interactions** also leads to a sense of isolation, which accelerates burnout.

Challenge for employers: While it is great to have committed employees willing to go the extra mile, in the long run, this is **not sustainable** for individuals and the organisation as a whole. Having policies and processes in place to help employees stick to normal work hours, and/or having additional assistance to help with areas of wellness become a big **priority** for organisations. To find out more about planning wellness initiatives for your organisation, have a look at our guide to [Implementing a Wellness Campaign.](#)

Once again, employee intelligence can provide invaluable information to **understand** which individual or department may need more **attention**. It will help guide the solutions of initiatives that are more likely to succeed by understanding the issue at hand. Wellness and burnout can have many factors, and we need to ensure we are addressing them **correctly** with the right employee insights.

TREND 6

EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE IN THE EMPLOYEE'S COMMITMENT

Employee experience is often found to be an area that directly affects perceptions and sentiments towards the organisation by the employees. Areas that have been identified by employees for improvement across industries in Malaysia are indicated in the following.

Challenge for employers: The biggest challenge is to understand what is important for different groups of people and how to prioritise them. This could be impacted by socio-economic backgrounds, past employment history and many other factors, including their age group. Michael Page found the following:



Transparent leadership communication



Professional development



Mutual respect / Relationship with colleagues



Embedded ESG in corporate culture (Environmental, Social, Governance)



IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

BABY BOOMER Born in or before 1965	GEN X Born in or between 1966 and 1980	GEN Y Born in or between 1981 and 1994	GEN Z Born after 1995
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1 Transparent leadership communication2 Mutual respect / Relationship with colleagues3 Professional development plans	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1 Transparent leadership communication2 Mutual respect / Relationship with colleagues3 Professional development plans	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1 Professional development plans2 Mutual respect / Relationship with colleagues3 Transparent leadership communication	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1 Professional development plans2 Mutual respect / Relationship with colleagues3 Transparent leadership communication

Employee intelligence can help pinpoint specific interests, circumstances and needs for a better understanding and a more targeted approach when it comes to helping employees. Looking at information like the feedback given, demographics, career aspirations, performance and tenure length in the organisation can help organisations make the right decisions on what is needed for each group of people.



FINAL THOUGHTS

It is predicted that this year is the year of the employee – **the year that employees** may have many more demands and expectations from the companies they work for. Organisations should look at this as an opportunity to reset and establish some good practices that can take them into the future. They will have to find innovative ways to keep up to speed with the changing needs of their most important asset – their people. This can be done by understanding the mind and hearts of existing employees and refining the value proposition. By acting on insights, organisations can show their people how much they value them, which will naturally spill over to better customer service, the better quality of products and services, and higher productivity.

Understanding how people feel allows managers and top management to have **targeted approaches** for individuals or groups. This ensures that the challenges they are facing are addressed and resolved rather than hoping that a general campaign will address everyone's needs. Giving managers and top management the power to take action based on objective data and methodical analysis turns what has always been seen as the 'soft side' of running a business into something that is a lot more intentional, effective, reliable and scalable.

The proposition of acquiring **the right employee intelligence** allows the organisation to truly understand its most valuable asset and creates a significant advantage. Knowing and subsequently acting on this knowledge will make all the difference and influence profitability and sustainability in a direct way.

If you would like to get started on this journey towards utilising employee intelligence, [talk to us!](#)

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Photo resources
pexels.com

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