

Experts warn managers to prepare for employee resistance post-lockdown

New research from Soldo warns of disruption if managers try to force their teams back to the way things were before lockdown, and suggests ways to ensure a positive and healthy transition.

Temps de lecture : minute

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As mandatory working from home lifts, managers should be aware that employee expectations around how they work have evolved significantly.

A special report released by fintech startup Soldo, in collaboration with several leading UK universities and management experts advises that companies need to radically redesign their business processes.

Employees who worked productively at home throughout the lockdown will strongly resist managers enforcing limitations on where and when they do their work.

The report reveals five key areas in which managers need to redesign how they run their teams:

- Structure their teams for agility
 - Transform key employees into leaders
 - Be aware of their duty of care for the physical and mental health of their teams
 - Distribute company money efficiently to empower autonomy
 - Leverage technology to facilitate new levels of productivity
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“UK businesses must be prepared for employee resistance if, post-lockdown, managers try to force their teams back to exactly the way things were before.” - Dr. Naeema Pasha, Director of Henley Careers, Henley Business School (HBS), University of Reading

The team at HBS, who before the lockdown created the three-stage model for remote working to help companies structure a gradual move to distributed teams, have now added a fourth stage covering employees moving back into shared workspaces called ‘Reconnect and Revive’. This addition to the model means that businesses need to acknowledge that their employees will expect their original working conditions to be revised.

“If you have remote workers who return to the office environment, expect to see some degree of permanent change in their attitudes and needs. Some will ask whether the business needs everyone in the workplace at the same time. Equally, others will never want to work from home again - “too much proximity to the fridge is not good for me!” - Dr. Naeema Pasha

These differences clearly point to the fact that companies need to consider a hybrid model that allows much greater flexibility for workers to do their jobs from the locations where they’re most productive.

“This report highlights the fact that businesses need to redesign their relationship with their staff. Even with the lockdown lifting, many of our customers are talking about the need to be prepared for potential future lockdowns. Obviously everyone hopes for the best, but smart business leaders have a plan for the worst. It’s simply a commercial reality that every company needs to have the right tools in place to ensure business continuity in all possible scenarios.” - Darren Upson, VP of Small Business Europe at Soldo.

Embracing a hybrid working model will have some major implications that businesses need to consider. With team members distributed across geographies - some preferring the office environment and others getting more done without the long commutes - managers need to look at what has been successful during the lockdown and apply that to a more permanent way of working.

There’s a clear consensus among the academics who contributed to this report that, while there will be challenges, with the right mindset, strategies and technologies, businesses will achieve happier and more productive workforces, enabled and connected in new ways, and capable of delivering targets with new-found resilience.

"If an employer provides equipment (mobile devices) for mobile working, and expects employees to use them during their work, they

have legal duties to educate their employees on any associated health risks, to assess those risks, and to provide additional equipment to help control the risks. Employees also have a legal duty to follow instructions and training, and to use equipment provided to them for the purpose of managing and reducing risks." - Mobile Working Risk Management Report, The Chartered Institute of Ergonomics & Human Factors

Download the full Soldo report [here](#).

Opinions from Future of Work experts

“Many businesses have already got the message about agile teams – what we sometimes call ‘distributed leadership’, where people work very effectively in small, tightly-knit and connected teams on clearly defined projects.” – Dr Naeema Pasha, Director of Henley Careers, Henley Business School

“Our research tells us that remote working seems to create a greater degree of complexity and responsibility per employee. It’s too much of a workload for one person to lead at a distance. It’s better to have more leaders with specialist skills.” – Dr Petros Chamakiotis, Associate Fellow, ESCP Business School

“Lower-paid workers are likely to have smaller homes which are less comfortable to work in and a harder environment in which to juggle work and family life. So there is a subtle potential for remote working to create

multiple inequalities which managers should keep in mind.” – Dr Carl Benedikt Frey, Oxford Martin Citi Fellow, University of Oxford

“There is one rarely considered difference that is exceptionally generational. Younger people don’t read the manual, in fact, often there is no manual. They will download an app, see if it works and push buttons; or learn by video on YouTube. I, and most people of my generation, however, are book learners. A small investment in training, a buddy system, or just the occasional PDF manual to support older employees who had a pre-digital education, will give everyone a chance to perform effectively.” – Professor Todd Landman, Professor of Political Science, University of Nottingham

"Many questions around whose responsibility it is to pay for home office setups, wifi, Zoom subscriptions, and all the other equipment and technology associated with remote working have revealed a need for a fast and efficient way to distribute company money to remote workers." – Darren Upson, VP of Small Business Europe, Soldo

“Give remote employees a budget and the freedom to spend it. Make it obvious that budgets can be used for equipment, for example, but not other classes of a product; and that purchases must be tracked.” – Kishore Sengupta, Associate Professor, Judge Business School, University of Cambridge

“There is an opportunity to effect change. It’s a big issue because we have a productivity problem across the UK economy, and it’s been going on for a long time. Achieving improved productivity involves organisations looking at work in radical ways: across the wider business strategy, processes, management practices etc. and flexing them accordingly, too.” – Professor Mark Stuart, Pro Dean for Research and Innovation, University of Leeds

Founded in 2015 by tech veteran Carlo Gualandri, Soldo is one of Europe's fastest-growing fintech companies. In 2019, the company raised a \$61M Series B round led by Battery Ventures and Dawn Capital with the participation of Accel and other existing investors - the largest round of funding ever secured by a spend management company.



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