

State of the Workplace in Fall 2020

How are you rethinking culture, wellbeing, productivity, and innovation amid the shift to remote work?

We're in a time rife with contradictions. The stock market is soaring and so is unemployment. Some people are feeling less stressed and more productive and others are facing new and heightened mental health challenges. The massive disruptions to life and work over the past six months have been beneficial to some people and devastating to others.

Learn more about...

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What the Data Says

Current data on the workplace is confusing. A recent [article](#) by Brian Elliott, VP of Slack, offers some intriguing findings:

- Only 12% of knowledge workers say they intend to return to work full-time; 72% are looking for a combination of office and remote work.
- “Work-life balance” is the thing workers like most about remote work—with 52% saying it is better, and only 18% saying it is worse.
- Stress and anxiety about work is improving—with 42% saying it is better with remote work, and only 20% saying it is worse.
- Many workers see an improvement in productivity, although the results on this one are surprisingly close: 37% say it is better and 26% worse.
- “My sense of belonging at work” is where remote workers took the biggest hit, with 35% saying it has gotten worse, and only 22% saying it has gotten better.

However, other recent studies appear to suggest that the sudden move to remote work has come at a high cost, especially to our wellbeing:

- A Korn Ferry survey of 7,000 employees found that by May 2020, [73 percent](#) of American professionals were suffering from burnout.

- A CDC study of 5470 respondents carried out in June 2020 found that [40.9 percent](#) of American adults reported an adverse mental or behavioral health condition over the previous 30 day period. In addition, over 30 percent of respondents reported an anxiety disorder or depressive disorder during this period. Worse yet, some demographics appeared to be more at risk, including young people, racial and ethnic minorities, and unpaid caregivers.
- [Morneau Shepell's August Mental Health Index for the US](#) found, "The Mental Stress Change score for August 2020 is 56.1" which "reflects an increase in mental stress when compared to the prior month." The report further emphasizes, "A continued increase in mental stress over the last five months, when compared to the benchmark, indicates a significant accumulation of strain in the population."
- A September 2020 survey conducted by Dr. Camille Preston of AIM Leadership found that the situation may even be worse than the national data suggests; AIM Leadership's study found that 45 percent of those surveyed are currently experiencing more stress and anxiety than they were before the start of the pandemic; 48 percent feel their sense of belong at work has decreased; and 55 percent feel their work-life balance has eroded.

Even before COVID-19 upended how and where we work, the cost of [burnout](#) was estimated to be anywhere from \$125 to \$190 billion annually. As the pandemic persists, it is difficult to predict how much this estimate will increase over the coming twelve months.

The Complex and Multivariate Nature of Today's Challenges

If the road ahead promises to be challenging, it is because what we are facing now is new and complex.

- [Burnout](#) may be on the rise, but we're not just dealing with burnout.
- Morale may be low and [workplace culture](#) may be suffering, but we're not just dealing with a morale or culture crisis.
- In addition, different regions, industries, generations, and remote work setups are also profoundly influencing how we're experiencing this current shift.

So, how do we solve a problem with so many different variables?

Wellbeing As the New Currency

As a culture, we are first and foremost concerned with what is transactional. But there are a few abstract forms of currency that also matter:

- Social capital - based on interpersonal connections and privilege
- Educational capital - based on degrees (level of and pedigree)

- Health capital - our perceived level of fitness (body size and height)

The pandemic is changing what we value and how we approach investing.

- Health is becoming increasingly valuable
- Time (e.g., to focus without distractions) is becoming increasingly valuable, especially to parents with small children.
- Relationships are becoming increasingly valuable, including those with friends and colleagues that may now seem cut off.

What other types of currency do you want or need to increase? Why? How can you do it with the lowest investment of time and energy?

How can you replenish your personal bank account and yield the benefits most quickly? What investments will pay back now and over time?

How to Take Action

By developing awareness about small, sustainable, micro-behavioral changes, you can:

1. Build individual agility, resilience, wellbeing, and effectiveness amid stressful conditions
2. Enhance remote collaboration, teambuilding and onboarding.

➤ Focus on Self-Awareness and Self-Regulation

- Great leadership starts by investing in yourself--know who you are and what you need to thrive, even under pressure.
- Increase your accountability to others (i.e., your ability to consistently support your team) by paying attention to your own self-efficacy..

➤ Acknowledge and Accept the Present Situation

- We are stretched, stressed, and strained in ways we don't fully recognize or understand; recognize that there is no one-size-fits all solution to the current challenges we're facing.
- Appreciate that change will require sustained effort.
- Recognize that any solution will need to be build many different tools:
 - [Resilience](#)
 - [Wellbeing](#)
 - [Growth mindset](#)

- Be prepared to invest in a solution (e.g., you may need to invest money in or allocated more time to an existing workplace wellness program, but assume your investment will yield a long-term return at the level of increased retention, higher productivity and so on).

➤ **Rethink How and Where You're Investing In Your Employees**

Covid-19 has created a new economy, new currency, and new expenses.

What you were investing in last January likely no longer makes sense. So what should you be investing in now? What types of investments in your employees will yield the greatest benefits?

- Physical health - Pre-pandemic, many employers had in-house gyms and yoga programs; since the pandemic, these in-house wellness programs have ground to a halt. Can or should you find a way to replace these programs with alternatives that can support workers remotely (e.g., could this money be used to help workers purchase ergonomic desks and chairs for their home or needed technologies)?
- Mental health - Are their ways to encourage higher use of existing mental health resources provided through your wellness program?
- Emotional health - How can you keep promoting a collaborative and supportive workplace culture?
- Economic health - What should compensation look like in this new workplace? If you had to cut employees' salaries or benefits early on in the pandemic, when will you reverse these cuts? If you offer bonuses or merit pay, what does success now look like? How will you measure it?

➤ **Communicate**

- How often will you communicate major decisions?
- Which decisions will you share and when?
- How will you build transparency and trust?

Accelerate Relationships More Effectively (ERX)

The fastest, most impactful way to drive long-term change is focus on what you can control--yourself.

ERX integrates twenty-five years of hands-on experience working with leaders, executives, and other peak performers.

Few individuals can identify what they need to be at their best. ERX is designed to do this work. It helps you identify the practices, habits, and insights that consistently support your success. ERX is "you decoded." It gives you the knowledge needed to amplify your impact.

Based on over 10,000 hours of coaching, training, and studying human dynamics, ERX will help you better understand:

- Communication / Collaborations
- Relationships
- Daily Rhythm
- Finances
- Values
- Purpose

In the face of all the current challenges we're facing as individuals, as a nation, and even as a species, AIM Leadership wants to give something back to help our community regain the focus, energy, and precision needed to keep doing great work. In response, we've decided to share a beta version of ERX. This tool is designed to help you foster the agility to thrive, even in a rapidly shifting world.

We look forward to sharing ERX with you and benefiting from your feedback. Ready to explore?

[Contact us](#) to start using ERX now and learn more about AIM Leadership's other programs.

AIM Leadership's Organization Level Offerings:

- Assessments: Collect data to understand where your company is at; leverage new insights to become more focused and impactful.
- Engagements: Company-wide keynotes and retreats can help renew your workplace culture and infuse your team with energy.

Individual and Team Level Offerings:

- Coaching: Choose from a wide range of coaching packages designed for individual leaders and teams.
- Facilitation: Sometimes, a second pair of eyes is needed to navigate the road ahead; our facilitated discussions are designed to assess where you are, build core skills, cultivate common understandings, and develop team cohesion.

[Learn more.](#)