



Productivity and the Workplace

Defining, measuring, and managing business success among a hybrid workforce.



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Chapter 1

Introduction



The Productivity Debate

“Productivity is always a priority,” reads an April 2021 [Gallup study](#). “But the shift to remote work a year ago made it a burning issue. Businesses that had few — or no — remote workers were compelled to operate in an alien production context almost overnight, and it became a constant [topic of conversation](#) at Gallup’s Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO) Roundtable, the biggest group of large-company CHROs in the world.”

These CHROs approached productivity from a variety of angles as they navigated the challenges posed by the aforementioned abrupt shift to remote, then to hybrid, working schedules. Together, they revealed that the definition of productivity — especially how we measure it — has been in a state of flux for the past three years.

This, alongside the fact that large companies including [Google](#), [Microsoft](#), and [Twitter](#) have announced plans for hybrid enabled office returns, has significant impact on employees. Novel, innovative, and somewhat uncharted, such models often change the ways people use and interact with their office spaces.

Surely, then, these industry shifts indicate that how we define and measure productivity will continue to evolve.

As it changes, employers will need the right digital tools to stay ahead of the curve and support workers in doing their best work. These tools will allow them to take action in measuring and managing employee productivity, resulting in businesses that work smarter, harder, and more profitably — with engaged workforces using a [workplace experience platform](#) as a foundational driver.

Chapter 2

Productivity in Three Parts



Defining ‘Productivity’

Before we can begin to measure and manage productivity, however, we must examine the definition of the word in a professional context. Pre-pandemic, the concept of “productivity” was almost always linked to physical presence: in the office, in meetings, at desks.

Productivity was, perhaps subconsciously, measured in hours. We also looked at output, of course, but the idea of physical presence brought with it a level of managerial comfort. There was no need to trust employees who were in the office — they were there, after all, which meant they were working, and therefore productive.

A Fundamental Change

The sudden, seemingly permanent change in the ways organizations operate and employees work threw this notion out the window. Without the possibility of in-person work due to safety and health concerns brought on by the pandemic, managers, HR departments, and business leaders were left to answer a time-old question in an entirely new context: What is productivity?

In a September 2021 [article](#), Harvard Business Review wrote that it is up to managers to “expand the way they think about productivity to focus on well-being, social connections, collaboration, and the innovation they bring to drive business success.” [Internal research](#) at Microsoft supports this claim, with 70% of workers preferring to work from the office for collaboration, and 61% for social interaction.

Productivity Through Value

When measuring productivity, it is advantageous to consider what employees believe to be enablers for valuable work or spent time.

Deloitte touches on this in its report, [Humanizing Productivity and Performance](#). Productivity, the report states, is more than office time or time actively spent working. To focus on that — or to attempt to monitor employee actions while working remotely — is potentially “detrimental” to the organization. It cultivates an environment of distrust, condescending to employees’ desire and need to work independently. It also “confuses activity for productivity.”

Instead, we must look at productivity in the context of value. Additionally, employers must ensure that employees are aligned with their organizational purpose. Both productivity and alignment, Deloitte states, are “strong measures” of overall outcome.

But how can we take action? And if we define productivity through value, how do we define value itself?

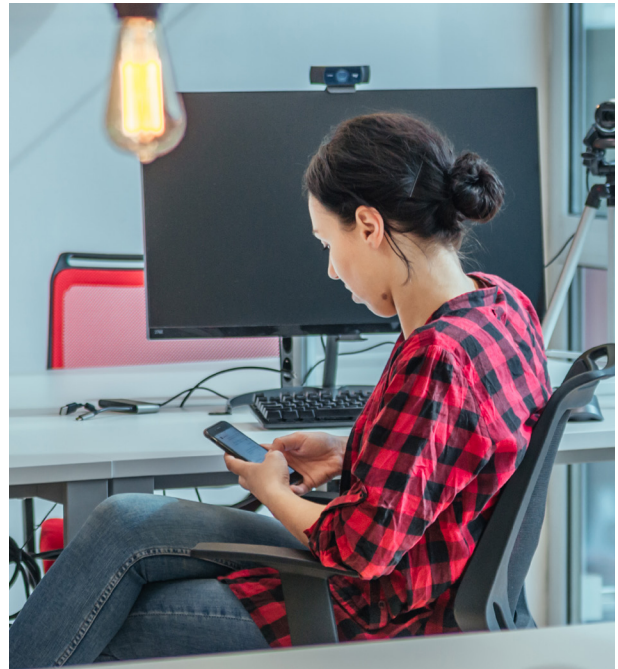
Defining Value

The meaning of value will differ depending on industry, organization, department, team, and individual role. Regardless, according to the previously mentioned Deloitte report, “teams need to jointly define how they are going to work together in this new virtual environment, check in on how their ways of interacting are working, and refine them over time as necessary.”

By offering employees the means by which to collaborate, connect, and innovate — simultaneously fostering a culture that is aligned to organizational purpose — we can ensure that we are driving productivity through value, which will in turn better position ourselves to achieve or deliver positive outcomes.

Employers can do so with tools like HqO’s [Workplace Experience Platform](#), which provides both employees and business leaders with the capabilities they need to be valuable and productive. This can be made possible through capabilities like instant, real-time connections; easy methods of collaboration; aligning meeting schedules; seamless resource booking to cut down on time; or even increasing employee engagement in the workplace with fun and unique digital programming initiatives.

Now that we have a new way to talk about productivity, we can also use such a platform to measure and manage it.



*Right and Top:
Employees may find they work best using
technology to communicate with their peers.*



Measuring Productivity

As we continue to define productivity through value, we can examine three popular criteria of its measurement. By taking a look at how they can affect an organization and its workforce, we are able to cultivate increasingly productive environments.

Efficiency

In a [recent blog](#), Deloitte again focused on productivity:

“Amid the pandemic, employers made significant investments in digital workplace tools to enable connection and collaboration, yet many of these platforms are not being used efficiently or to their fullest potential. Despite robust digital collaboration tools, there has not yet been a reduction in emails or meetings. This can impair productivity, as it has the effect of unnecessarily taking employees away from the tasks they actually have to perform.”

The right workplace experience platform, however, can provide ways through which employees can more efficiently plan their days and interact with their colleagues and offices — from wherever they’re working and from a single, easy-to-use mobile app interface.

Another [blog](#), this one from HR management software company Bamboo HR, breaks down three focus areas that can boost efficiency — and with it, productivity:

- » **Time Management:** Giving employees the autonomy and flexibility to work in the ways that best suit them.
- » **Collaboration:** Providing employees with the tools (digital or otherwise) they need to connect and work alongside colleagues.
- » **Performance:** Regular evaluation of and communication regarding employee performance.

Here, employers can leverage a workplace experience platform as an enabler by offering digital features such as easy room and desk reservations; efficient visitor management; workplace convenience services such as dry cleaning and retail; food ordering; communication tools; and other methods through which employees can make better use of their time.

Combined, these result in streamlined schedules that are free from unnecessary or confusing administration. This allows every employee to take control of their work

day in a personalized manner and put forth their best results.

Performance

Employee performance is a direct indicator of overall productivity. When employees are able to do their best work, positive outcomes typically follow. A [Gallup report](#), however, revealed that only 20% of employees feel their “performance is managed in a way that motivates them to do outstanding work.” On the other hand, those who did feel that their performance was managed well were 3.6 times more likely to be engaged.

“Performance is substantially affected by situational circumstances and human nature — what people need to be successful and how they uniquely experience performance. No matter how well managers define performance expectations, employees still need unwavering support from their manager and teammates to consistently perform at their best,” the report states. “Employees’ performance development needs change as their job demands, environment, teammates, manager and aspirations change.”

Autonomy, too, has an influence on performance. And in a hybrid work environment, an increased amount of autonomy is a given. However full, island-like autonomy isn’t a feasible long-term strategy. Instead, “companies such as Spotify, GitHub, and Google have publicized their policies allowing employees to self-select the projects and teams they work with, arguing that by spurring higher levels of ownership and creativity, this strategy leads to better, more innovative ideas.”

By providing a modern toolset for autonomy-led collaboration and communication, organizations can see teams that are “50% more likely to succeed than those with no autonomy, and 49% more likely to succeed than those with full autonomy.”

Outcome

Because trust is such an important factor in maintaining a productive environment, organizations are increasingly unwilling — if not outright unable, especially under hybrid working schedules — to closely monitor the minutiae of the employee work day.

Instead, organizations are turning to outcomes. The shift from output to outcome-based measurements of productivity is a result of both the pandemic and a modernized take on what it means to work.

“We don’t really worry about whether a person is spending eight to 10 to 12 hours. [Instead], we provide a measurable task with deadlines and enable a self-evaluating mechanism to measure performance. Then, the entire team is involved in the review, so we create a collaborative environment for enabling and measuring productivity,” Umesh NV, Managing Director of Otis Global Shared Service, said in a [EY-hosted podcast episode](#) entitled, *Measuring Productivity in a Virtual Environment*.

This isn’t to say that a laissez-faire approach to the workplace is encouraged; structure is necessary not to keep tabs on employee activity, but to ensure that processes are in place that enable employees to stay efficient, communicative, and productive. Employers also need structure while receiving the feedback they need to continue improving the workplace experience.

[EY’s article](#), *How Organizations Can Evolve Outdated Ideas of Human Productivity*, reiterates this fact — and again refers to productivity through value.

“We need to recognize that humans create the most value — not when they are more ‘efficient’ like machines, but when they use their judgment, experience, collaborative skills and imagination to experiment, iterate and innovate. We cannot measure these powerful and uniquely human abilities in a linear way using the input-output machine notion of productivity.”



Discussion between managers and employees helps make performance expectations clear.



Managing Productivity

Definitions and measurements are one thing. It's another to focus on actions that employers can take to maintain or elevate productive workplaces. In many cases, it's up to the managers and business leaders themselves. Gallup [agrees](#):

“Managers are responsible for creating the conditions that spur productivity — or squash it.”

But, how do we ensure that our workplaces are optimized for employee productivity? To start, we can categorize and closely examine catalysts for productivity:

- » **Engagement**
- » **Well-being**
- » **Trust**
- » **Time Savings**

If we understand how to cultivate optimal conditions — and combine them in a seamless, intuitive, digital package — productivity will bloom. We dive in to each category below.

Engagement

As stated above, productive employees are those with keen (and aligned) senses of purpose. Business leaders and managers can develop and sustain purpose-led organizations, which often contain engaged, happy employees. Managers and leaders are extremely influential here, able to control as much as “70% of the variation in a team’s engagement.”

As EY [explains](#): **Productivity needs to be linked to purpose and employee experience to drive long-term value.**

A recent [Forbes article](#), however, asserts that while engagement and productivity are closely linked, engaged employees are not always productive. Again, it's up to the manager to cultivate it. By working with teams and individuals to set meaningful goals and expectations — and tracking progress towards achieving them — managers are able to ensure that their already engaged employees are productive.

“Engagement matters,” the article concludes. “It only matters, though, if it leads to productivity. If it doesn't, it may actually represent lost opportunity and wasted resources.”

Well-being

Well-being has a direct effect on employee performance. It is also linked with engagement in much the same way engagement is linked with productivity — as an indicator, but not a surety.

Those who are engaged but do not report high or satisfactory levels of well-being are more likely to worry, suffer from burnout, and report feelings of sadness and anger. These are potentially costly issues; both personally for employees, and financially for organizations. Gallup, however, has found that “less than 50% of US workers strongly believe their organization cares about their well-being.”

“Career well-being is the foundation for the other well-being elements,” the report states. “And [employee engagement](#) is the single biggest driver of career well-being. When organizations intentionally address both well-being and [engagement](#), the effects are additive and mutually beneficial for employees and business outcomes alike.”

There appears to be a disconnect, however, between what organizational leadership believes to be effective approaches to well-being, and what employees actually believe to be effective. As [reported by](#) the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), only 17% of employees “feel supported at work in managing their physical well-being,” while 38% of HR leaders “strongly agree their company offers employee resources to support physical well-being.” The same goes for mental well-being, with 18% of employees feeling cared for, against 40% of HR leaders believing their organization offers significant resources and support.

Among the ways to bridge the gap, according to SHRM, are flexible work schedules, easy and transparent methods of communication, and convenient access to mental health services, classes, or check ins — all of which workplace experience platforms offer.

Trust

When employees are able to work in the ways or style that best suits them individually, they are happier and more engaged — thus boosting productivity, no matter how you measure it.

Trust, however, works both ways: Employers must trust employees, just as employees must trust their employers. A September 2021 [Forbes article](#) quotes a study by HR technology & services company Elements Global Service, in which 83% of the 1,000 workers surveyed said they trusted their HR manager or department — a number that, at first glance, is hopeful and inspiring until we see that two-thirds of respondents said “they’ve neglected to report something to HR because they didn’t think HR would fix the issue.”

Meanwhile, 49% said they did not report a workplace incident out of fear of retaliation, while 74% of remote workers said they are “concerned about their employer monitoring when and how much they work.”

Thus to empower human value creation, we need to give individuals choice over where, when, and how work is done.

These numbers are worrying, especially when, [according to Gallup](#), workers who lack trust in their employers are less likely to be engaged. “And employee engagement, or the lack thereof, also affects workers' productivity and performance outcomes.”

Time Savings

Employers can ensure that the above interactions are seamless with a workplace experience platform, increasing employee efficiency through features such as indoor navigation; the pre-booking of office resources like meeting rooms; desks and parking spots; and even on-site services like food ordering, dry cleaning, and manicures. Alongside digital communication tools to help employees ensure the people with whom they want to meet are present at the office and their resources are reserved, these capabilities combine to save hours of planning time and let employees focus on what matters: their work.

By creating workplaces that are transparent, communicative, open, and focused on physical and mental well-being, we can foster a trusting atmosphere and employees that are productive, engaged, and purposeful. With the ability to connect, communicate, and collaborate when and how they want, employers and employees alike can ensure that their needs are met and cared for.



The Values Behind Productivity in the Workplace

[Rockhill Management](#) is a dedicated property services management company that serves commercial and residential properties in gateway cities throughout the United States. With its focus on personalized service, premium amenities, and proactive relationship management, Rockhill employs the latest technologies and a concierge-like approach to property management in order to foster an elevated workplace experience across approximately 21.3 million square feet of real estate.

To get a better understanding of how individual employees are leveraging the workplace and its resources, we spoke to Rockhill building app user Noelle, who works out of their 75 State Street property in Boston, MA.

Thank you for joining me, Noelle! To kick things off, tell me a little more about your current work schedule.

As of last week, I have started to go back into the office. Before that, I was a fully remote employee during the majority of the pandemic. Starting this month, my company asked employees to spend at least 60% of their time back in the office. So, I'm starting that transition and look forward to getting more integrated with my workplace and resuming that in-person experience that has been so foreign to many people over the past few years.

Why do you think your company is encouraging employees to spend more time in the office?

We've operated well over emails and zoom meetings during the past couple years, but there's something to be said for in-person interaction; some things just can't be replaced. Although many of us have become comfortable with our remote work schedules, there are certainly important aspects of face-to-face communication that's missing from our daily routines. We have had new employees start during the pandemic, and many people are excited to catch up with one another and resume the in-person collaboration.

What is your preferred way to work? Fully remote, partially remote, fully in-office?

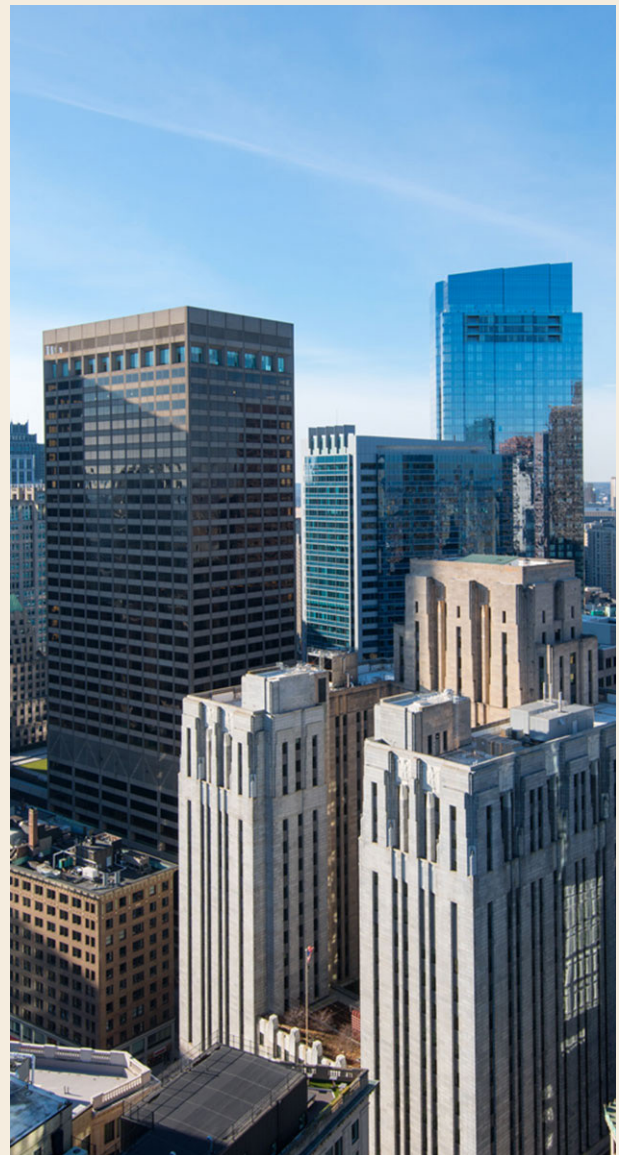
Our company has been great. We were given the opportunity to work remotely throughout the pandemic, but our offices remained open. It's been very useful. If people need to collaborate in-person with others or feel like they have a better work environment in the office, they are always welcome to go in and take advantage of that space.

Personally, I felt a little more comfortable working from home, so that's what I did for the majority of the pandemic. However, I understand the importance of working in the office a few days per week. Employees and teams have been given a lot of choice about when they choose to come in so individuals can work best. My company has been really good about easing into this transition, since everyone is in a different situation with their needs, family obligations, and so on.

That's great! May I ask why you were more comfortable working from home?

It all goes back to different people having different needs. For me, I've gotten into a groove working from home. I also don't have many other commitments at home, so I don't suffer from the distractions that other employees might face on a daily basis. I have a quiet workspace, great WiFi, and am able to focus well.

That being said, something that's been in the back of my mind throughout the pandemic has been that seeing colleagues will be really good for us collectively in terms of collaboration and socialization. It's just going to take some work to transition back to what we were used to before COVID-19. And in many ways, it may never be exactly the same. But the things like getting dressed in the morning, braving a commute, and heading into the office — which are things we haven't needed to do in a while — can make it a little more difficult to adjust to the new normal. So I think that many companies are going to make the change more manageable for employees, be it through flexible work policies or other things that can make everyone's lives a little easier.



*Previous and Right:
Views of the architecture from within and outside
of 75 State Street, Boston, MA*

I agree. Whether you're in the workplace or at home, what types of tools help you feel most productive?

I think tools that allow me to stay engaged with my team members help me be very productive. When the pandemic first started, my team got much closer than we ever were before — and we're spread out across various office locations. Virtual connectivity helped us not feel as separated, even though we were all working far apart. That really made me feel like an integral part of my team, which also pushed me to get more things done and pick up the pace as well.

Looking at the bigger picture, tools like the HqO app and the different contests that it has also get me really excited to start my work day. During the month of December, our building hosted a prize giveaway through our app that I submitted an entry for every morning. It's simple activities like these that keep people engaged and are really impactful. It's all about utilizing the tools that companies can design or gain access to in order to keep the camaraderie amongst their employees no matter where they are.

I love that! How often do you find yourself using your building app?

I use it regularly, typically a couple times a week — though I definitely use it more when those contests are happening. However, as someone who is new to the city, it has helped me find places and events of interest that I want to explore. I discover fun things I can do on my weekends, and it's great that those ideas can be introduced to me through a work app.

I'm glad technology can help you feel connected to both your office and the surrounding city! What other things help throughout your work day?

Setting a structure for my day helps me feel productive. It's very easy — especially when everyone's working from home — to start really early in the morning and have the day drag on without a stop. It's definitely been a struggle for everyone, but making sure I'm taking breaks throughout the day and being strict with my working hours helps. I tell myself I'll start at 8am and end around 6pm, so I can do as much as I can within that timeframe and still allow myself to shut down and focus on other aspects of life outside of work. It actually makes me more productive. I also keep a checklist to stay organized. I love checking

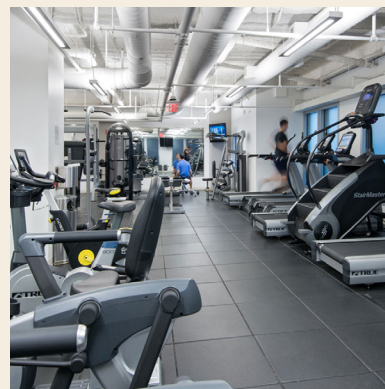
things off my list; it helps me feel more accomplished and it's good to look back on.

To wrap things up, what is your most important 'must-have' in the workplace?

Employees want to feel valued. And one of the easiest ways employers can go about making their employees feel appreciated is by trusting them and providing them with as much flexibility as they can. Employees can be responsible for themselves and still get their work done, as long as they have the resources and means to do so. It's one of the many reasons why I've enjoyed my time working so flexibly in these past few years; I have a great team and director who trust me, so I can choose how and where I work best.



*Above:
Large occupancy
conference rooms for
group meetings.*



*Left:
75 State Street's
fitness center is a
beloved amenity for
building tenants.*

Chapter 3

Bringing it All Together



Enhancing the Workplace Experience

As is with any healthy workplace, employees work best when they can be engaged, collaborative, and communicative. They will trust one another and their managers' leaders, and have a shared sense of purpose that is aligned with those of the overall organization. Ultimately, this will lead to high performers who are outcome-focused. And, of course, an enhanced model of productivity.

For employers, the key to harnessing that productivity lies in digital tools such as workplace experience platforms.

“[Such tools] promote productivity ... and encourage collaboration, mobility, and remote work,” EY writes. “However, [business leaders] often overestimates ease

of use, availability of needed features, and accessibility of provided tools.”

HqO's Workplace Experience Platform will boost and enable you to better manage organizational and individual goals such as:

- » **Purpose:** By better enabling employees to interact and engage with their workplaces on a day-to-day basis
- » **Engagement:** By unifying existing organizational tools and services that mirror the experience of everyday personal consumer services, from events, to the use of building resources, and even food ordering

- » **Collaboration:** With room and desk booking features and other tools that enable teams to get together and innovate
- » **Well-being:** Through features such as health and safety checks, fitness class bookings, bike-sharing, and a wide array of on-site or around-the-office healthy food options
- » **Efficiency:** By helping employees to save time, whether they are in the office, working from home or commuting to the office by picking from pre-ordering food and drinks, booking desks or meeting rooms, public transport advice/micromobility services and more

HqO's platform is also easy to use and streamlined, offering both broad strokes in the form of intuitive overviews and fine detail with granular control over a variety of office functions and features.

It also delivers a workplace experience in which productivity is definable, measurable, and manageable.

Ready to get started? [Schedule an HqO demo](#) today to see our workplace experience solutions in action.

"I don't think I've seen this high adoption this quickly before, ever. This shows that we have created a product together that the users need. And that's the goal: We want to offer something that gives value to everyone working in our buildings."

Trine Kristoffersen Eidem,
Product Manager, Digital Service Platform
at Entra

*Right and Top:
HqO's Workplace Experience platform provided employees the tools they need to be their most productive self either on-site or remote.*



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About HqO

HqO is transforming how people connect with each other and the places they work. The HqO Workplace Experience Platform makes it easy for companies and commercial property teams to create modern workplaces through world-class amenities and services that allow people to thrive and produce the best results. Active in over 250 million square feet in 25 countries, 57% of the Fortune 100 rely on HqO to enhance their workplace experiences, improve employee satisfaction, and drive operational excellence. For more information, visit <https://www.hqo.com/>.



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